

## **Memorial Minute for James Satterwhite (1947 - August 10, 2016)**

Jim Satterwhite, a beloved member of Broadmead Meeting, died at the age of 69 on August 10, 2016, after a 13-year struggle with Parkinson's disease. Jim was born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, but spent most of his growing-up years in Japan, where his parents were Southern Baptist medical missionaries. Throughout his life, Jim felt like he was partly an "outsider" no matter where he lived, though he was not uncomfortable.

While in college in Florida at the height of the war in Vietnam, Jim came to the position that violence and war are wrong. Along with his two brothers, he became a conscientious objector. At first, his alternative service was spent in a U.S. military teaching facility which did chemical and biological warfare research, where he was subjected to injections of unidentified substances. With the intervention of his horrified father, who was a doctor, he was instead sent to Eastern Europe to teach English to graduate agriculture students in Poland and Czechoslovakia. After the war, he began wrestling with the issue of war tax resistance.

Jim learned about Quakerism from his brother and sister, who both attended Friends World College. His brother went on to work for AFSC. He encouraged Jim to attend a Quaker conference on international relations held in England for American and British Friends and Soviet young adults, where he served as a translator for the Russians. At the conference, he met a British woman, Olwen Pritchard. In January of 1976 Olwen moved to Seattle; eight days later they married.

Jim earned academic degrees in Asian studies and Eastern European studies, and a Ph.D. in social theory which focused on Poland, Czecho-slovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. He had a great gift for languages, eventually learning seven: English, Japanese, Polish, Czech, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, and German.

After receiving his Ph.D., Jim taught European History and Political Science at Bluffton University, a Mennonite college in Bluffton, Ohio, starting in 1984, often as one of only two professors in the history department. His office typically had books piled from floor to ceiling. He was active in bringing students from Poland and Bosnia to the college, several of whom lived in Jim and Olwen's home as students. Jim enjoyed reading, especially science fiction, and bicycle riding around Bluffton. He had a lively sense of humor and especially delighted in making puns.

Jim served on Lake Erie Yearly Meeting's Peace Committee for many years, as well as on the AFSC Corporation. Feeling that a commitment to peace should include putting oneself on the line, in 1996 Jim decided to volunteer with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), which sends trained teams of volunteers to volatile areas of the world to act as international observers and to intercede as possible for the oppressed. He spent six weeks of intensive peacemaking each summer from 1996 to 2004, at first in Chechnya, Russia, and Belgrade, Serbia, then in Hebron in the Palestinian West Bank for seven years. One summer, he was arrested by Israeli authorities for attempting to salvage rubber irrigation pipes that the military had ripped out of the garden of a Palestinian family. He was released the following day.

Fellow CPTers in Palestine remember him as a great example of a dry, mild-mannered academic with the heart of an activist. One wrote, "I still have vivid images of him chaining himself to a Palestinian home threat-ened with demolition, and another time when he refused to leave a house about to be demolished and Israeli soldiers dragged him through a hole in the wall, resulting in major bruising of his ribs. And then returning to Bluffton, Ohio, to teach history." At home in Ohio, Jim continued to act and speak about Palestinian issues. Travel minutes in support of his work with the Christian Peacemaker Teams and his leading to travel among Friends with a concern for peace in the Middle East were issued by Broadmead Monthly Meeting and Lake Erie Yearly Meeting.

At the height of the war in Iraq, Jim urged people to join a “bag of rice” protest. He suggested that people put half a cup of uncooked rice into a bag and mail it to U.S. President George Bush with the words: “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. Romans 12:20. Please send this rice to the people of Iraq; do not attack them.”

Feeling that he could not “pray for peace and pay for war,” Jim decided to withhold the part of his federal taxes that went to pay for war. Each year, along with his tax return, he enclosed a letter explaining the reasons for his conscientious objection to taxes that support the military. For several years, Jim received IRS notices about the unpaid taxes. Later, he met with an IRS agent, who alternatively offered an easy way to pay the back taxes and threatened to take Jim’s wages or even go after Olwen. When the IRS placed a lien on their house in 2001, Broadmead Meeting set up a plan for acting quickly if the IRS took the extraordinary step of foreclosing. Over the years, the agent became intrigued with and sympathetic to Jim’s position, but constrained by his job. In 2004, the IRS dis-trained Jim’s wages, allowing him only \$500 per month.

Jim reluctantly left Bluffton University on disability in 2007 and in 2010 moved into an assisted living facility.

Jim is credited with inspiring generations of students with his passion for peacemaking. In 2009, Bluffton University created an annual award in his honor for leaving a heritage of Christian peace activism, called the Jim Satterwhite Award in Peace Scholarship and Activism, presented to a graduating student with a demonstrated commitment to peace scholarship and peace activism.

He served as a model for many as a war tax resister and in integrating the roles of peacemaking and academic work. He inspired a nun to join Christian Peacemaker Teams and become an advocate for Palestinians in the U.S. He served as a model and a challenge to students, colleagues, Quakers, and others to improve our world.