

## **Memorial Minute for John Stratton (April 9, 1944 – August 28, 2016)**

[Largely from a published obituary in the *Ashland Times-Gazette*]

John David Stratton, 72, died at his Ashland home on August 28, 2016, with his wife, Dorothy, and his daughters beside him.

The previous evening they had celebrated John and Dorothy's 50th wedding anniversary, just a few days early. Sharing the memories brought a smile to John's face and even prompted a joke or two.

Friends and colleagues knew John as a man of integrity who lived his beliefs, often working quietly behind the scenes for the causes and organizations that were important to him. With a strong vision of pulling people together to resolve conflict and inequality without violence, he founded and served as the first Executive Director of the Ashland Center for Nonviolence. At his death, he was treasurer of the Ashland County Oral Health Services (9th Street Dental Center), which he also helped to establish. He also served on the board of directors of Directions Credit Union. While he won many awards for his work, he accepted them with humility, usually giving the credit to someone else.

He was an avid reader and collected far too many books. He loved music and collected far too many CDs. He loved art; major art museums were his favorite travel destinations. He had a deep knowledge of many subjects and loved to converse about them, often over a cup of hot tea. His garden of historic roses scented the neighborhood early every summer. Flowers were grown out of a love for beauty, vegetables for his more practical wife.

John was a loving son, brother, husband, father, and grandfather. Having fun, making jokes, and otherwise livening things up were second nature to him, as was gently offering support and encouragement to those in difficult situations. He was a generous man with a good heart. He encouraged others to do better simply by his example.

John was born in Southern California on April 9, 1944. He graduated from California Western University with a B.A. degree in 1966 and married Dorothy Jarsensky on September 3 of that year. They moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, where he completed a Master's degree and a Ph.D. in English at the University of Nebraska.

John taught English at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock from 1970 to 1984, when he gave up his tenured position to move to Ashland for his wife's new position as a faculty member in social work at Ashland University (then Ashland College).

John began teaching again in Ashland, first on a part-time and then on a full-time basis. He helped to establish AU's Writing Center and served in many capacities on campus, including Dean of Arts and Humanities at a time of organizational changes at the University. Colleagues and students knew John for his self-deprecating humor, his ability to challenge conventional thinking, his capacity for innovative problem-solving, and his work ethic.

John was a long-time member of the Religious Society of Friends. He attended Wooster Friends Meeting. Deeply spiritual and always seeking moral rightness, he had the ability to take matters seriously, but not so much himself. He often spoke of joy, which he thought was lacking in our serious and conflicted world, and did his best to bring a smile or a laugh to people's hearts. While John was a person with strong passion for causes he believed in, his views were not forced on others. He could move a discussion in a deeper direction by asking challenging questions without making judgement.

John is survived by his wife, Dorothy, daughters Catherine (Nathan) Stratton Treadway and Elaine (Florian) Stratton Hild, and three grandchildren, Tobias Hild and Oliver and Elise Stratton Treadway, as well as his mother, Mildred Stratton, sisters Marie (Paul) Cole and Judith (Karl Krauskopf) Stratton, sisters-in-law Patricia Reel and Sylvia (Jack) Elzner, and their families.

A memorial service was held on October 1. Memorial contributions in honor of John's life and work can be made to the Ashland Center for Nonviolence at Ashland University, either online at [www.ashland.edu/give-acn](http://www.ashland.edu/give-acn) or by mail: Ashland Center for Nonviolence, 401 College Avenue, Bixler 108, Ashland, OH 44805.