

Memorial minute for Henry Van Dyke
(1921 - Oct 27, 2018)

Henry Van Dyke died at the age of 98 on October 27, 2018 in Ann Arbor after a short illness. He was born in Pittsburgh in 1921 and did much of his growing up in Battle Creek, MI. After two years of college, he was drafted into the US Army in 1942 and married Ruth (Jackie) Jackson one year later. As a part of his work as a lab tech in a Florida army hospital, he was trained to identify malaria in mosquitoes. In 1944 he was assigned to a malaria survey unit and sent to Chengdu in western China. He greatly appreciated his cultural experiences in China and the relationships he established with American medical missionaries at West China Union University in Chengdu. Henry returned to the U.S., completed college and subsequently earned a PhD in parasitology at the University of Michigan. He taught biology for six years at Carleton College, MN. By the time he and Jackie had four daughters, they moved to Oregon where he taught at Oregon State University until his retirement in 1986.

Henry and Jackie joined the Society of Friends in Oregon and remained members of the Corvallis Oregon Friends Meeting for over 40 years, serving in various roles for his Meeting and North Pacific Yearly Meeting.

Henry and Jackie returned to Ann Arbor in 2002 to live with their eldest daughter, Rebecca, when Jackie developed advanced Alzheimer's dementia. Henry transferred his membership to Ann Arbor Friends Meeting that same year. He joined the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute in Ann Arbor at age 81 and worked on the lectures committee until the age of 94. After Jackie passed away in 2006, Henry continued to live with Rebecca.

Henry was a regular attender and loving presence in the 9am Meeting for Worship at Ann Arbor Friends Meeting. He walked with a cane and had difficulty in hearing, but he exuded a sense of peacefulness and appreciative participation in the worship. He did not contribute vocal ministry, but would occasionally give small updates or news of his travels to Britain to visit one of his daughters. He appreciated having a letter of introduction from Ann Arbor Friends Meeting addressed to the Quakers he worshipped with in England, and he always shared warm greetings from us to the British Friends.

Henry was always chatty when folks stopped to visit with him. As his hearing became less acute, one-on-one was the best way to communicate. When he became fragile, stopped driving, and began to use a walker when coming to meeting, Friends were watchful to make sure he was comfortably settled and helped only as much as he desired. He eventually had difficulty standing, but continued to attend meeting as able, and Friends would draw around him at the closing of worship so he could hold hands in the circle from his seat. He shared how much he enjoyed going to the Ann Arbor Symphony even though he couldn't hear the music very well, because he could "feel" it, and he loved the atmosphere...just as he loved the fellowship and atmosphere in meeting for worship.