

C E L E B R A T I N G

Stephen McNeil

January 11, 1950 - June 18, 2022

STEPHEN WAS BORN on January 11, 1950 to Mary Stuart Elwell and William Merton McNeil, in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Stephen described himself as “a student of history,” who tried three times to complete a bachelor’s degree. Even without the degree he never stopped studying, researching, and learning new things.

Stephen was the youngest of four children: one brother, William Merton McNeil II; and one sister, JoAnne K. Wills predeceased him. His sister Stasia Linynsky, (Stacy) who lives in Annapolis, has been in regular touch with West Coast friends from the time of his fall on May 5, 2022.

Stephen spent his first nine years on a farm and enjoyed solitary time exploring the environs. At age nine he moved with his mother and one sister to live with family in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington D.C. His school classmates were largely African American.

While Stephen was raised Irish Catholic, he lost interest in the church because of the racial segregation he saw in Washington D.C. parishes. In the eighth grade, Stephen’s best friend, Karl Stanley, applied to Sidwell Friends School. Though he

passed the exam, he was not admitted because he was African American. This furthered Stephen's lifelong interest in the Civil Rights Movement. In the 10th grade, he visited a Quaker Meeting in the Maryland suburbs. That particular Meeting had some racial diversity, largely due to interracial couples affiliated with the University of Maryland. Stephen found that Meeting enjoyable and began attending regularly.

Stephen studied at Georgetown University from 1968-1971, majoring in Theoretical Linguistics and German. When his involvement in the anti-Vietnam War movement led him to turn in his draft card, though, his federal student grant was terminated. So Stephen left college.

In 1976 he interned with the Friends Committee on National Legislation, remaining involved with that group for the rest of his life, serving as a grant consultant and on committees.

Stephen moved to San Francisco in 1983, to join his partner, Daniel Joseph McTague. Daniel died in 1985 in the first decade of the AIDS pandemic, along with 17,000 other San Franciscans. This experience spurred Stephen's passion for AIDS-related services. He volunteered as a Kaiser Hospital AIDS Chaplain. He also volunteered for five years with the St. Martin's Soup Kitchen, a Catholic Worker effort with a large LGBT volunteer presence. From 1989-1995 he served with the AIDS Emergency Fund and, over the years, on the boards of The Family Link and Home Care Companions.

Stephen went to work for the American Friends Service Committee in 1984 as an administrative assistant and served AFSC in many capacities for the next 33 years. He retired in 2017 when he was director of the Peace Building Program in the San Francisco office.



IN 1996 HE MARRIED Brian Mailman with whom he shared his life until Brian's death in 2019. To their marriage they each brought deep-rooted faith traditions, Brian's Judaism and Stephen's Quakerism. They honored and supported each other in their spiritual lives and made a loving home with an array of cats over many years.

They shared many pleasures including annual traditions of host-ing their year-end "Stravaganza" bash; attending the Kung Pao Kosher Comedy Christmas Eve Dinner show; hosting gourmet fund-raising dinners; and going to the Frameline LGBT Film Festival which they attended together faithfully, seeing virtually every film made available (Frameline's mission is to change the world through the power of queer cinema.)

From 1999-2009 Stephen traveled and worked in Japan with the Soto Zen group, the Shanti Volunteer Association (Tokyo) and NPO-Pocket (Hamamatsu), creating partnerships for the Japan-US Community Education and Exchange organization. In 2008, he gave the Inazo Nitobe Memorial Lecture at the Japan Yearly Meeting (Quakers) on AFSC and Japan. He was tenacious as a key supporter and organizer for the Hibakusha – people who survived the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



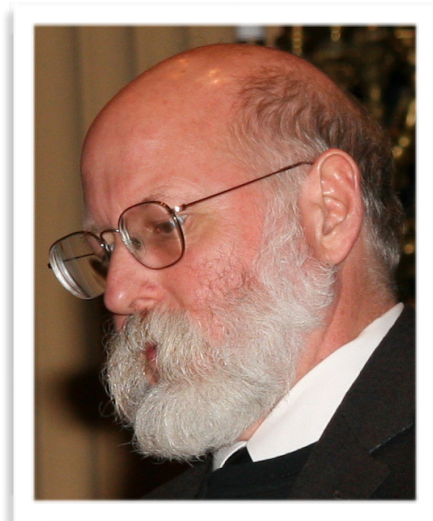
Within the Quaker community, in addition to his work with AFSC and FCNL, Stephen also served on the Board of Pendle Hill for many years and served his monthly and yearly meetings in many capacities. It is safe to say his life was consistently about service and about life-long learning. He studied Japanese, to be a more effective volunteer with his friends in Japan and with his anti-nuclear work. After he married Brian, who was Jewish, he studied Yiddish. He also studied Irish, Latin, and Russian. Even in retirement, Stephen kept busy with work to advance justice and peace. Intent upon preserving the history of those movements, he was a collector of books, articles, and ideas.



ON MAY 25, 2022, Stephen was on the way home from a special Frameline presentation when he fell on the stairs at the Muni Metro, hitting his head. He was expertly cared for, first at San Francisco General Hospital, which specializes in trauma, and later at Kaiser San Francisco, even after it became clear that his condition could not be improved.

At the time of his accident, Stephen was enrolled at the University of Maryland Global Campus, where he had plans to pursue a graduate degree in history, and to finalize a book he was writing about Quaker efforts to assist Japanese-Americans who were subject to removal and internment during World War II. He was also taking Yiddish conversation and Japanese conversation classes.

For the West Region of the AFSC, Stephen was our walking archivist. He had a deep understanding of virtually all AFSC's issues, from peace, to police, to healing justice and immigration. His bottomless curiosity and constant willingness to be helpful to friends in need, and to a world in need will be remembered and greatly missed.



(Stephen's)
bottomless curiosity
and constant willingness
to be helpful to friends
and a world in need
will be remembered
and greatly missed

