

Memorial Minute for Barbara Graves

Barbara Graves, beloved member of Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting in Berkeley, died at her home at the Redwoods in Mill Valley, CA on December 22, 2017 at age 104, after a long life serving humanity in direct, humble, often remarkable ways.

She was born in Geneva, New York in 1913, the youngest of seven. Following college in North Carolina, she worked in New York City for the 1939 World's Fair, then with the British War Relief Society, from which she learned about the involvement of the American Red Cross. In 1942 she was hired by the Red Cross and sent to England.

She was appointed Director of Red Cross Rest and Convalescent Homes Division in Britain, providing recovery furloughs for Allied airmen from 1943-45. For this group's service she was awarded a military Bronze Star, unusual for a civilian. After returning to the U.S., she began to explore pacifism and Quakers. She was hired by the American Friends Service Committee in 1948 as administrator for AFSC relief work in Occupied Germany, working and living with local Germans for five years, establishing neighborhood centers to address severe conditions of inadequate food, shelter, and social community.

In 1953 she obtained her Master of Science degree in Social Work at Columbia Univ. and became a psychiatric social worker in Philadelphia, until in 1962 she was recruited by AFSC as director of the VISA program (Voluntary International Service Assignment) in Tanzania, Haiti, Guatemala and India for six years.

During 1969 Barbara consulted and taught at Atlanta University's School of Social Work, a time when the black social work environment was developing strength and influence despite the background of segregation. In 1971 she was appointed Associate Professor of Social Work at Temple University in Philadelphia, where she could continue professional connections with Atlanta. She moved to U.C. Berkeley in 1972 as Director of Field Studies in Social Work.

She retired officially from U.C. in 1978 but continued both staff and volunteer work for U.C. as well as for Alameda County and the City of Berkeley. Barbara served as a leader in the Northern California AFSC, often as a consultant to solve organizational problems. She volunteered weekly in San Francisco's Tenderloin with residents on the margins of society.

She deeply opposed U.S. military activities in Nicaragua and traveled with a delegation of religious activists to learn conditions and to protest. She risked arrest many times in opposition to U.S. wars in Central America and the Middle East. In 1986 she returned her Bronze Star in a ceremony at the Vietnam Memorial to protest the U.S. role in the conflict in Nicaragua.

Barbara was appointed Brinton Visitor for Pacific and North Pacific Yearly Meetings of Friends in 1989. She was able to visit widely and contribute her energetic, inquiring spirit and experience.

In 1993 Barbara and her close friend and housemate, Glendora Patterson, decided together to co-parent infant Nia, who later became Glendora's adopted daughter and Barbara's goddaughter. Nia Marie Patterson brought great love and joy into their lives. Together they attended Nia's college graduation when Barbara was 100.

Barbara made her home at The Redwoods Retirement Community during her last years, as did three other women who had remained steadfast friends since their Red Cross service in England.

One of Barbara's personal notes quoted Abraham Lincoln: "I have an *irrepressible* desire to live till I can be assured that the world is a little better for my having lived in it."

Barbara's irrepressible wit and joy of life was expressed not only through serious work, but through singing, dancing, generosity and exuberant appreciation of people of all sorts and conditions.

A memorial service will be held at Berkeley Friends Church, 1600 Sacramento Street, Berkeley, CA on February 24, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.