

Celebrating the life of Wilbur Irvin Hoff

March 27, 1927 - January 1, 2025



Friends Memorial Meeting
Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting
June 29, 2025

Wilbur was born to parents Amos H. Hoff and Fern Irvin Hoff near Chicago, Illinois. He was the oldest of 4 children: sisters Lucy and Carol and brother Edward. He outlived all of them.

When Wilbur was two years old, the Hoff family, which then included baby sister Lucy, moved to North Carolina where Amos taught at a rural boarding school in the Smokey Mountains. Wilbur's father Amos, relayed that taking a job which paid little, but provided the family food and lodging was a good deal at the time, this being the great depression. Wilbur had fond memories of roaming around the rural area and swimming in the creek.



Amos and Fern with their children, Lucy, Edward, Carol and Wilbur

After five years, the family, which now included Carol and Edward, moved again, driving their Continental sedan across the country, through the desert, to Tucson, Arizona. Here, Amos taught at the Tucson Indian School, and Wilbur and Lucy were the only white children in the school.

Wilbur had many stories of playing with the school's farm animals, riding a burro, and playing monopoly on a raft in the swimming pool. He also enjoyed reading comic books and listening to radio programs such

as The Lone Ranger. The family spent most summers on the Irvin Family farm in Wooster, Ohio, driving three days cross country to get there.

In 1937, the Hoffs moved to Phoenix where Amos worked at Phoenix College as head of the Engineering and Astronomy Department. Wilbur graduated from high school in Phoenix and spent his first two years of College at Phoenix College.

In 1947, at age twenty, Wilbur worked with Otomi Indian villagers in Taxhay village (Hildago, Mexico) through the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Returning home, he transferred to Northwestern University in Chicago, intending to study electrical engineering. However, largely due to the positive impact of his summer work camp in Mexico, he decided to change focus and study public health. This led him to Whittier College in Southern California. While at Whittier, he joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation which is where he met our Mom, B'Anne Barnes. Wilbur and B'Anne married in 1951, and headed to Berkeley where Wilbur attended UC Berkeley School of Public Health.

Wilbur and B'Anne, with three year old Christy and 6 month old Becca in tow, travelled to India and served for two years as volunteers with World Neighbors. Returning to the Bay Area, the family settled in a house in the Oakland Hills (much of it built by Wilbur) while he completed a PhD program in public health at UC Berkeley. The family grew to include Mark and Jennifer. Wilbur worked for the California State Department of Public Health for a number of years, and later as a consultant in public health for various projects.

Some of the kid's memories include Wilbur patiently teaching them to drive in a big, empty parking lot (on a stick shift!), his love of slapstick comedy (Three Stooges, Mister Bean), making and fixing things at his workbench and his fondness for pretzels and any candy bar containing nuts. Wilbur used his building skills to surprise them with various play structures (a Teeter- totter & swing set) as well as a special A-frame doll house, and wooden toy truck for his grandson Gabe.



Jennifer, Gerri, Wilbur, Christy, Mark, front: Becca & Gabe

In the 1970s, B'Anne and Wilbur divorced, and Wilbur embraced much of the freewheeling spirit of the 1960s and 70s in the Bay Area. He married Shirley Lewis, lived in an adult communal home and later married Gerri Shapiro. Wilbur re-engaged with international work at this time and he and Gerri lived in the Gilbert Islands and Swaziland among other locations. Gerri was an accomplished pianist and the two of them hosted musical gatherings at their home in Berkeley.

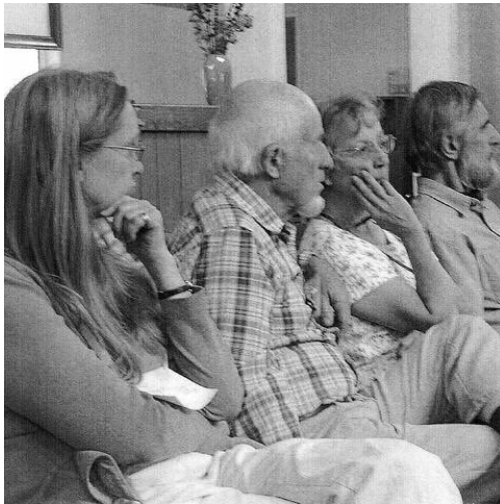


Wilbur, Christy and Gabe in Swaziland

Wilbur had found Quakers through his early experiences with the AFSC. He joined Berkeley Friends Meeting in 1952, and was active in the Meeting in the 50's and 60's, serving on the Property Committee and the Peace and Social Concerns Committee. Later he volunteered on projects at Ben Lomond Quaker Center

In 1991, Wilbur met Kris Muller. They were married in 1993 and were together until Kris's death.

Kris had been raised a Unitarian, although she had attended Quaker Meetings in Ann Arbor and Berkeley, and had known



Quakers from vigils against the war in Vietnam. Seeking a common faith community, they visited the Unitarian Church where Wilbur commented that they talked too much. They ended up at Strawberry Creek Meeting, Wilbur transferred his membership from Berkeley Friends Meeting in 2001 and

Kris became a member in 2018.

Wilbur at Strawberry Creek Meeting

In 2002, Kris and Wilbur spent two years living in the Santa Cruz mountains and in a cabin that Wilbur had built. They enjoyed gardening and hiking together and did volunteer work, removing invasive plants and monitoring streams for pollution. During their time in Santa Cruz, they attended Santa Cruz Meeting.



Wilbur was good with tools and worked as a handyman doing remodeling jobs. He worked on their house and built a deck onto the back of their house on Stuart Street in Berkeley. He also played mandolin and violin and played with Kris's sister Gretchen and other friends. Wilbur played violin in a trio with daughter Becca on flute and a friend on cello.

Wilbur continued to work out of the country for long stretches, consulting on basic health care and potable water systems. On one trip in 1999 on a trip to Aravind Eye Hospital (Madurai, India), Kris accompanied him, observing and then writing about the hospital's program to enable young village women to work directly with illiterate prospective cataract patients in post-surgery care.

Wilbur developed progressive MCI (mental cognitive impairment), probably around 2000. When he realized he was losing mental aptitude, to slow the decline, Wilbur took classes, read books, practiced brain exercises, used vocabulary calendars, and learned to



play new songs on his mandolin. He focused on “what *can* I do”. Wilbur's nature was not to bring up his problems or to complain but he appreciated Kris asking him to share how he was doing. They talked about changes as they occurred.
Kris & Wilbur

Wilbur was diagnosed with Glaucoma in 2012, and became fully blind in 2017, after unsuccessful cataract surgery. In 2019, after Kris was hospitalized for cancer and was told she could no longer care for him at home, Wilbur moved to an assisted living memory care facility in Castro Valley, near his daughter Christy.

Wilbur passed away peacefully in his care home on January 1, 2025.

He is survived by his children Christy Castillo (Art), Rebecca Hoff (Richard), Mark Hoff and Jennifer Socoloski; grandchildren Gabe Castillo (Andrea), Ana Hoff, Ilana Hoff, Michael Castillo, Isabel Hoff, Spencer Socoloski, Andrew Hoff; great-grandchild Benji Castillo; ex-spouse Gerri Shapiro.



Wilbur with Siblings, Lucy, Carol and Edward

Pre-deceased by ex-spouses B'Anne Hoff, Shirley Lewis, Kris Muller and siblings Lucy Scott, Carol Tice, and Edward Hoff

A Quaker Celebration of Life follows the same form as a Meeting for Worship, which is the core of Quaker Practice.

As a community who knew Wilbur today we gather in silence to remember and celebrate his life. We come in both sadness and celebration to share our memories, thoughts and feelings. Friends believe that there is that of God in everyone. We seek to mark that of God that lived in Wilbur, remembering and rejoicing in his spirit that we now carry with us.

The responsibility for the spiritual depth of the meeting rests with each attender. Those who keep silence as well as those who give a vocal message, do their part when they yield their minds and hearts to the guidance of Spirit.

As we sit in expectant quiet, we may be moved to share a message. Please do so without undue length, being mindful that others may also be moved to share. Everyone participates equally and all are welcome to speak. You may be moved to share prayers, poems, anecdotes or song. We ask that you use a microphone so people joining on Zoom can hear your message. Please allow a few moments to hear and reflect on each message before offering yours.