

Testimony to the Grace of God as Shown in the Life of our Friend, Susan Bax, 1937-2002

PRISCILLA SUSAN BAX was born on the 15th day of the 8th month 1937 in Hampstead, London, England to Gwendoline Edith Hammond (of Banff, Alberta) and Peter Bax (of London England). Susan had two siblings, Judy Bax, and a half-sister Elizabeth Bax.

Susan's early religious affiliation was with the Church of England, and she attended school in London, England, and Banff, Alberta. At 16, she entered a special student programme at Hatfield Technical College (now University of Hertfordshire) where she studied English Literature, Languages and Economics. Beginning in 1956, Susan read Sociology at University College in London for two years and completed her degree at the London School of Economics. She then moved to New York City where she undertook graduate studies in journalism and educational media, receiving a Masters degree in Educational Television from New York University.

Susan applied her skills to journalism, working in the United States in the 1960s, including two years for the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia. Moving to Toronto in 1969, she worked for TV Ontario's Educational Division as a producer, and also worked with Ryerson's "Open College". It was in New York that Susan began her

illustrious life amongst Friends. She attended 15th Street Preparative Meeting, and in 1968, joined New York Monthly Meeting of New York Yearly Meeting. She transferred her membership to Toronto Monthly Meeting in 1973, after her move to Canada.

Starting in the late 1960s, Susan was drawn to advocating for the rights of women. She helped find funding for local projects, such as Women in the Arts. Through the feminist organisation, Women for Political Action, she was involved in preparing and presenting submissions during negotiations for the inclusion of equal rights for women in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which were entrenched in the Canadian Constitution in 1982.

The Meeting for Worship was at the centre of Susan's devotional life. She was a faithful presence in the Meeting and sought out opportunities for worship with Friends both near and far. Susan had a deep appreciation for knowledge of the Bible and Quaker writings. It informed her vocal ministry, which often related personal experiences of Susan's learning. Susan recognised that the Truth these sacred writings had to offer must be sought through spiritual discipline and genuine enquiry. She devoted a great deal of time to wrestling out meaning from

these texts, bringing her feminism to bear on it. She studied Greek and Hebrew so that she could better enter the scriptures.

Susan sought to encourage knowledge of God's will for the individual and the community through study of the Bible and Quakerism. She shared her love of the Bible with others in her personal relationships, and courses she taught at Friends General Conference and Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM). Conversations with Susan about scripture were frequently revelatory and powerful.

Susan was tough but also tender. She was known among Friends for her expectations of self and others with regard to the lived witness of our Discipline. She came to Meeting-for-Worship-for-Business well prepared, and her knowledge of Friends' ways was valued and earned her much respect. Her clear opinions did not stand in the way of her being teachable; indeed, learned as she was, Susan deeply understood that revelation



Photo by Harvey Pinder

was a gift that could come forth through anyone.

Susan served Friends extensively. She served on a range of Toronto Monthly Meeting committees, notably the Meeting for Ministry and Counsel (1978-1980) and the Religious Education Committee (2001-2002) which she encouraged the Meeting to establish. She played an ongoing and valiant role in Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting, including serving as Clerk in 1997 and 1998. Within CYM, she served as Clerk of Discipline Committee from 1973-1975, and served on Programme Committee in 1978, Nominating Committee 1981-1983, Canadian Friends Foreign Missionary Board 1982-1985, Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas 1982-1984, Home Mission and Advancement Committee 2001-2002, and the Ad-Hoc Committee on Governance 2001-2002. She was also a CYM delegate to the FWCC Triennial in Kenya, in 1985.

Susan was well known beyond

CYM and her interests were wide-ranging. She was an avid skier and hiker and member of a theatrical play-reading group. She was very responsive to opportunities to visit. It was said of her that she had a "Visitation Ministry" as well as a "Ministry of Transportation", gladly driving people to meetings or visits whenever she could. Over the years she attended many Quaker events in North America, including meetings of FWCC, Friends United Meeting Triennials, other Yearly Meetings (particularly of the Conservative tradition), retreats and conferences.

Susan often referred to the Testimonies, ministry, and faith of Early Friends, and she was a keen participant in the New Foundation Fellowship Seminars held at Camp NeeKauNis from 1979 through 1986. She had an enduring appreciation of Quakerism's distinct Christian spiritual heritage and challenged Friends to love it also, through knowledge, faith, and practice.

Susan loved to laugh. Difficult

and, at times, unrestrained as she could be, it was hard not to respect and love her in Spirit and in truth. That love was reciprocated by Susan and its mutuality became most apparent in the days following her surgery in July.

Complications arose, and she was in intensive care for many days. She was deeply affected by the outpouring of love and prayer that people spontaneously offered to her. Visitors and care givers sensed a powerful spirit of tenderness and grace surrounding Susan during her final days. Experiencing the love of God through the care of others was transformative for Susan, and her emphatic final message to Toronto Friends was the imperative of, "More compassion!"

Susan Bax died on the 16th day, 8th month, 2002, a day after her 65th birthday. She was a faithful Friend of Jesus and valued member of our community. Friends were not yet ready to say goodbye or to be free of the many gifts, both difficult and beautiful, she had yet to share. □

Memorial Service for Kay Bedell, 1915–2002

KAY BEDELL died on 9 October 2002. Kay, along with Jim Bedell, was a beloved attender of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting since its beginning in 1981. Family, neighbors, and friends--a flavorful mix of people from diverse aspects of her life--honored her from the stage of Bellisle High School, NB, in a simple country service. Kay's devotion to Jim was recalled, from their marriage in 1942 until his death in January 1999,

after which she seemed to have turned increasingly frail.

Kay was memorialized in gospel songs and prayers, adding a quaint but sincere religious touch. When Janice Harvey honored Kay's work for the Conservation Council of New Brunswick and sang "Tis a Gift to be Simple", our contingent of eight Quakers sang along. In an intimate tribute, Kay's son produced the very shoes worn by Kay and Jim in 1982 on their walk

from New Brunswick to New York to the disarmament conference at the UN. He told me of sailing with his parents from Barbados to NB.

Her role as a grandmother and revered elder was noted when gkisedtanamoogk sang an honor song to her. Quaker memorials were presented by Loesje van der Linden Gates, who recalled Kay's neighborly help with her children, and by Hendrien Kippers, who read a letter from Doris and John Calder, Resident Friends at Pendle Hill this year:

"Dear Friends,

"We are with you in spirit and are joining with you in the silence as you gather to give thanks for the gift of God's spirit in the life of Kay Bedell. It is a tender time in which we hold in the Light all those who loved Kay and are feeling her loss, especially Brian and Peter and her beloved grandchildren.

"Kay was a great gift not only to her family and friends, but to the wider community, and the ripples from her life reached, and still reach, far beyond the borders of New Brunswick.

"We remember Kay for her courage after Jim's

death, and for still maintaining concern and commitment to peace, to the environment, to justice, and to the wellbeing of family and friends.

"Kay and Jim lived their lives with great integrity. Knowing them was an inspiration and a challenge to the rest of us to take a stand and work hard for the things that really matter, and to keep up the effort even when it seems hopeless.

"Because they were such a devoted couple and worked so closely and well together, it's hard to think of Kay without also thinking of Jim. They shared their interests, concerns, humour, and their love with all of us. It was always humbling how grateful they were for small acts of kindness shown to them, especially after they had done so much for us. They were always delighted to see their friends, and we always felt the sincerity of their pleasure in a call or visit.

"We know that Kay and Jim will be remembered with deep affection and respect; that they have a home in the hearts of those who love them. With what greater assurance can we know that they have a home in the heart of love, which is God." —In friendship, Doris and John Calder □

Memorial Services for Gordon Husk, 23 February 1949 — 5 February 2003

A Meeting for Remembrance was held in Friends House at 2 PM on Saturday, 8 March 2003 for Gordon Stephen Patrick Husk of Kitchener Area Monthly Meeting. Gordon died from the severe injuries he sustained in a car accident on 28 December 2002, from which he never regained consciousness. He will be deeply missed by his children, Liam and Jesse; his ex-wife, Rebecca Filyer; and his family, friends and Alternative to Violence people. Jesse selected this photo to share with Canadian Friends, saying, "He seems overall to be deeply content, with a glimmer of his good-natured sense-of-humour glinting in his eyes...and, as happy as he seems, and as lively as his eyes are, his smile is still a quiet, thoughtful one, providing a glimpse of his reflective and centred side."

Two more gatherings to say goodbye to Gordon are planned, as we go to press: a "rollicking wake" in his memory for 17 April, and a final memorial in Newfoundland in July. His family will be bringing him back to Clarendville, Newfoundland, which is a small community where he spent a lot of time, and where he used to sail his boat. There, they plan to scatter his ashes on the water, and to return him to the Rock he never really left in spirit. □

