

A Notable Passing

Robert (Bob) Latta Barrus died peacefully, holding his wife's hand, October 19th 2016. Bob was born in Manchester, New Hampshire, January 19, 1918, and grew up in Rochester and Brooklyn, New York. His parents, George Latta Barrus and Gertrude Emily Schneider Barrus, lived apart from each other when Bob was young, but they were always dedicated to him. He also had an important family connection to his Aunt Ruby and his Searle cousins in Haddonfield, New Jersey.

As a boy, Bob traveled with his father to forestry jobs around the United States and in Europe. Because of his travels, he attended many different schools during his teen years. This included two years at the Fellowship School in Switzerland, where he was introduced to pacifist values and alternative education methods. Bob received a bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester. He started out studying chemical engineering but changed his interest to sociology before graduating.

During WWII, Bob registered as a conscientious objector because of his deeply held beliefs about the value of all human life. He served in the civilian public service on a forestry project in New Hampshire and at a school for troubled boys in Cheltenham, Maryland. On furlough from service, he met Dorothy (Dot) Somers, when she joined a hiking trip with him and their fathers. After the war, Bob felt a calling to serve in the reconstruction of Europe. He joined the American Friends Service Committee and was assigned to rebuilding houses in Italian villages. Dot joined AFSC as well, and they were married in Rome, November 9, 1946.

Upon their return to the U.S., they lived for a few years in Chapel Hill, where Bob was director of the UNC campus YMCA. In 1951, they moved to Yancey County and joined Celo Community, seeking a more supportive community to raise their children, especially their mentally handicapped daughter. After a childhood in many places, it was important to Bob to put down roots in a place that would be home for the rest of his life. When his parents retired, they both joined him to live in Celo.

When the family first arrived in Celo, Bob worked at a number of jobs, but his calling was to be a teacher. He soon got a position teaching at Harris High School

in Mitchell County. He later taught at South Toe Elementary, and Asheville Country Day. In 1963, Bob joined Elizabeth Morgan to help found Arthur Morgan School, where he remained the principle teacher until his retirement.

In 1955, Bob and Dot took over management of Camp Celo, a farm-home summer camp for children. They were encouraged and joined in this effort by Ernest and Elizabeth Morgan. They dedicated their lives to helping children experience the joy of physical work while living on a farm in a diverse community. They made sure this experience was available to children of all races, religions and economic means.

When Bob and Dot moved to Celo, they joined a small group of Quakers who were worshipping together. They helped establish Celo Friends Meeting. Bob and Dot were trained through Friends General Conference to lead couples' groups in marriage enrichment retreats. This work contributed to the depth of their own marriage of 70 years. The Friends spiritual community continues as a central focus of their lives until today.

Bob is survived by his loving wife of 69 years, Dot Barrus; two sons, Gib Barrus and wife Annie of Celo and Greg Barrus and wife Elizabeth of Burnsville; two daughters, Rommie Barrus of Celo and Barb Perrin and husband Tom of Celo; four granddaughters, Gracie Barrus of Celo, Lucia Parker and husband, Clay of Celo, Sadie Perrin of Celo, and Kayla Barrus of Tennessee; three grandsons, Kyle Barrus of Burnsville, Drew Perrin and wife Carly Todd of New York, and Kristian Barrus of Tennessee; and four great-grandchildren, Hayden Parker, Lauren Barrus, Niko Perrin, and Arlo Fields.

A memorial service was held at 4 p.m. on Saturday, October 22nd at the Celo Friends Meeting. The family received friends from 2 until 4 p.m. prior to the service at the Celo Friends Meeting.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Friends of Camp Celo Campership Fund, P.O. Box 2392 Asheville, NC 28802 or <http://friendsofcampcelo.org/donate>.