



The Journal of Patapsco Friends Meeting

September, 2017 – Dedicated to the Life and Memory of Polly Scott

Editor's Note:

With the recent death of one of our dedicated and faithful members, Polly Scott, we decided to dedicate this issue of the Quaker Heron to her, both with regard to memories about her and with regard to issues that were important to her.

For Polly

by Bethanne Kashkett

The week leading to Polly's memorial service, I re-read the pamphlet she gave us in prayer group, (Friends Let Us Pray by Elsie Landstom PH# 174). But, I found the most comfort listening to Carrie Newcomer songs. (We were both fans!) Song after song, the lyrics spoke straight to my condition. Straight to the grief, sadness and peace I felt. In their quiet way, they brought me comfort and reassurance that all was well.

First, there was the song, Flashlight... "The way is dark up ahead of me. The way is dark and I cannot see. What I need the most is a flashlight beam, lighting up the way when I cannot see. Over trials and troubles I've already come. And the net appeared, when I needed one..."

Raw truth! Some days are dark and the ones closest to us- secure that net. They hold us through.

Where would we be without that Light? The song, You Can Do This Hard Thing

reminded me that we are stronger than we think. Whatever life throws at us: cancer, dementia, addiction, floods, hurricanes or number 45...we can get through it.

"Here we stand breathless and pressed in hard times, hearts hung like laundry on backyard clothes lines, impossible just takes a little more time... You can do this hard thing. It's not easy I know, but I believe that it's so. You can do this hard thing."

In our prayer group and through the twelve steps, I've learned the wisdom of praying for strength and guidance, but not a specific result. The song, One Door Closes speaks about that wisdom. We don't always get what we hope for, not a clean bill of health or more time- but we can still pray for acceptance and surrender. We can still pray for the willingness to find the good in any experience. We can pray to remember to ask for the wisdom to find the spiritual growth hidden in challenges.

"One door closes, another door opens wide... You can't pray for what you want or what you'd have instead. You can only offer up your heart and ask that you be led."

That's what I want to remember.

I want to remember to ask to be led and be willing to embrace the guidance I receive.

When I think of your last week Polly... when you were in so much pain and so much peace, when it was hard for you to breathe- the song, Bare to the Bone comes to the rescue.

“Here I am without a message. Here I stand with empty hands. Just a spirit tired of wandering, like a stranger in this land...Between here and now forever-is such precious little time, what we do in love and kindness, is all we leave behind.”

You were in-between places, Polly. But your karma cup was over-flowing! Because of your Light, your good heart, people gathered round to read prayers to you and sing you home.

That is why I chose to stand and sing a bit of Gathering Spirits at your memorial service, because I believe with all my heart that we will surely meet again.

“Let it go my love, my truest. Let it sail on silver wings. Life’s a twinkling, that’s for certain. But it’s such a fine thing. There’s a gathering of spirits. There’s a festival of friends and we’ll take up where we left off, when we all meet again.”

Thanks Carrie Newcomer, for the comfort and the peace your songs give me.

Memory of Polly

By Linda Pardoe

When Polly first came to meeting several years ago, she was facing lots of difficulties. She told me that she was coming to meeting to experience and share joy, not just pain, and that she hoped Quakers were more than serious people. And that was what Polly did most often – she brought joy and her big smile to our meeting.

Letter to Polly - From Karen Ownbey

Dear Polly,

You blessed my life with your many songs! In thinking about you and singing, I was curious about the therapeutic effects of singing. Turns out there is a lengthy list of physical, emotional and social benefits of singing. You were already aware of these benefits and so encouraged us to make a joyful noise.

Some benefits of singing that I found most appealing:

- strengthens the immune system.
- is a workout for the lungs, diaphragm, and circulation.
- improves posture and helps with sleep.
- is a natural anti-depressant.
- improves mental alertness.

Reading about the benefits of singing is an intellectual exercise; the proof is in the pudding. So, I need to sing and experience some of these benefits for myself.

Since I tend to be a dip-my-toe-in person, humming is my starting point. I learned that humming has some of the same benefits as singing. There are even humming meditations. My exact humming discipline is still unfolding. Then, there is the location issue. In the car or shower or at home by myself seem to be the locations that work best and get fewer strange looks. So far, some of favorites tunes to hum are Carrie Newcomer songs and chants from the Women's Retreat.

Polly, I am grateful to you for so many things. Your passion and joy for singing is just one.

"Those who wish to sing always find a song." ~Swedish Proverb

Love and Light, Karen

Thoughts from Sam Stayton

Polly contributed much to our Meeting. She will certainly not be forgotten. She put out so much effort and produced results, as I noticed when we worked on the nominating committee. Perhaps what I remember most about her was the great warmth she expressed towards others.

Jen Winters writes:

This piece from Whitman has always resonated with me, and I'd like to share it in memory of Friend Polly.

From "Song of Myself" by Walt Whitman

I wish I could translate the hints about the
dead young men and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers,
and the offspring taken soon out of their
laps.
What do you think has become of the young
and old men?
And what do you think has become of the
women and children?
They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no
death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and
does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.
All goes onward and outward, nothing
collapses,
And to die is different from what any one
supposed, and luckier.

Remembering Polly

By Bill Mitchell

I remember late one sunny summer day finding Polly sitting in the dirt. She seemed to be reluctantly pulling weeds from her garden plot at the Howard County Conservancy. Even the weeds received her compassion, I think, as part of her relationship with the universe.

Polly was always trying to improve the soil for her plants and she had big bags of compost and other garden additives at her garden. She had some okra plants that year that were the biggest I have ever seen.

Polly had a tool called a "Gold Garden Claw". It has six prongs to cultivate the earth and a long shaft going up to a perpendicular handle so you can use it without bending over. I admired the "Garden Claw" whereupon she insisted I take it. I use it every year and always think of Polly.

In Memory of Polly

By Ramona Buck

Polly had a joyous spirit. She organized the hymn singing at Patapsco for awhile and she loved the beauty and the communal spirit of the singing times. In spite of the many challenges that she had to deal with, she had a great capacity for experiencing and appreciating the current moment. I will remember that about her and will try to focus on that in my own life, as well.

My friendship with Polly

By Jean Pfefferkorn

Polly started attending Patapsco Meeting about 2006. I soon found out that we were, at the time, neighbors, as she and I were both living in Oella. On that basis alone, we felt that we held something in common. We were both single and so had time to pursue our mutual interests--Quakerism, spirituality, and music.

So began our ten-year weaving of our lives into a (F)friendship. We joyfully attended singing sessions held by Baltimore Folk Music Society. We joined the Columbia Film Society, where a group of us ate together and watched films. We started the

Patapsco Friends sing before meeting, which continued for several years. We each had an aging parent, so Polly started and I participated in a Patapsco Friends Caregivers group, meeting monthly to share stories and ideas. We joined the same Friendly 8's group. We were both NAMI members, sharing a concern about mental illness that was personal and professional. We met each other's friends. Coincidentally, we both joined the same pool, and so we even had opportunities to chat while exercising.

And we kept up with each other, sharing events in our lives as our children experienced ups and downs, we each moved, and our jobs shifted. Polly's life changed when she intentionally decided to bring into her life a man to love, after her many years of the single life. Finding Denny, who added a richness to her life, Polly blossomed. For over a year they enjoyed the warmth of a relationship that was sweet to witness.

Polly's initial lung cancer seemed a scare but she bounced back after surgery. And then the cancer ominously returned. With Linda and Michelle, I became part of her support committee, and we met at her home to keep watch, worship, share insights and snacks. Polly did her best to maintain an upbeat attitude through the months as we watched her slowly slip into growing disability and pain. Unspoken was the thought that she would not recover from this cancer.

Finally, when Polly was in hospice, she and I sang together a final time. Days before she passed away, I gently rubbed her arm at her bedside and spoke to her. To my surprise, her blue eyes flew open and there she was! We "sang" together for over half an hour--I sang while Polly nodded or nixed songs, keeping time with a foot pulled out of the

covers. We celebrated until a frown appeared on her forehead, her signal that she needed to stop. With a kiss on her forehead, I said goodbye.

Polly was complex: funny, insightful, brash, loving, outspoken, energetic, and opinionated. I so enjoyed being with her! And I'll miss her now that she has moved into the next reality. I think that the world is a better place for her having lived among us.

This song is reminiscent of her:

How Can I Keep from Singing

My life flows on in endless song; Above
life's lamentations,
I hear the sweet, though far-off hymn that
hails a new creation.
Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear
the music ringing;
It sounds an echo in my soul. How can I
keep from singing?

Author: Anonymous

A Memory by Leslie Bechis

It's Tuesday night. The dinners are neatly
packed and ready to go – some of my best
recipes – and a prayer that you'll like them.
We pile into the car- June and I, and head
over. We arrive around 7, and June's asleep
from her busy day. I get out, struggle with
the stroller – lower her in, and grab the bags
of food, pushing my way toward your door
looking every bit the bag lady I feel myself
to be most days. I ring the buzzer to your
room – and I hear a familiar voice. That
sweet, comforting drawl – it's Denny.

I push my load onto the elevator, and make
it upstairs. Ding. June is awake and running
toward the door. Denny has it open, and
greet us with a smile and a hug. Quickly we
take our places – I rush to the kitchen and
begin turning on the oven, opening the
cabinets, stuffing the fridge and freezer.

Polly is perched on her swivel chair in the kitchen, asking about my day, telling me where everything is, and apologizing for the mess even though there is nothing to apologize for. June drags Denny over to the piano so he can play music while she bangs on the keys at the far end of the board.

Once the yams are in the oven, Polly starts venting. She is frustrated by her immobility, by hitting the doughnut hole – which happens, I learn, when you’ve reached your Medicare prescription drug coverage limit but haven’t spent enough to meet your annual out-of-pocket limit so that your catastrophic coverage kicks in. She is upset about the slowness of system actors in helping her pay for her medications, and in supporting her in this healthcare battle. She is annoyed at not being able to keep her home to her standards, and about the logistics of having to shuffle herself and Denny to various doctors’ appointments.

After all of that has been said- it’s on to the men. We talk about our partners – their quirks – relating on so many levels in the frustrations and joys that come with integrating two lives. We watch June and Denny interacting – how patient he is, how kind. How excited June is to find someone that is thrilled to watch everything she cares to do and is excited by her theatrics. Polly talks about falling in love for the first time at her age – the butterflies she never thought she’d feel. She talks about the hilarity of two older and semi-disabled folks trying to navigate things like showers and co-sleeping. She laughs deeply, fully- it envelops me like a warm hug.

The food is ready- we move to the table. Poor Denny seems a little frightened of the spread, but good-naturedly takes a wedge of yam. He asks how Chris is, and how I am doing. Polly asks June how she likes the

black cap she is wearing, and asks June if she’d like to fetch her a different one from the basket near the table. June runs back with a pink baseball cap, triumphantly, and Polly gracefully shows her bald head to June before promptly putting the cap on. “Is that better?” she asks, June nods. We eat and talk for an hour. There is laughing and warmth.

When dinner is over, I take the dishes into the kitchen. I pack up the leftovers and load them into the fridge. I pack up all of the empty serving dishes into the bag I brought, and prepare June to leave – one last bathroom trip before we head in the car where she is sure to fall asleep at this hour. I hug Polly and Denny goodbye, promising to return that weekend to take them to the Pow-Wow for Polly’s birthday. I leave.

And now I just think - it’s a Monday night... and maybe if I don’t think about it too hard... Maybe if I ignore it and pretend things are still normal... tomorrow could be that Tuesday again.