

Draft Memorial Minute for Richard Dunn, June 2020

Richard “Dick” Dunn brought a bright light into the world – a light composed of compassion, genuine connection, intellectual and literary curiosity, kindly New England erudition, dry humor, and earned wisdom. He shared his light with those he met, those he never met yet benefited from his generosity, and especially those who knew him as son, brother, husband, father, colleague, and friend. His light illuminated many places but none more than his birthplace, Arlington, MA, and his adopted home town, Missoula, MT. According to his son, a former employer once noted a young Richard did not appear engaged with his work. The man asked, “What do you like to do?” “I like books,” Richard responded. “Well, maybe you should become a librarian rather than do this.” Richard followed that advice both in career choice and his approach to life. He engaged life seriously, meaningfully, and most of all with joy.

Richard was born May 12, 1932 in Arlington, MA, and gained his first significant sense of life outside the Boston area while he served in the US Air Force, stationed in the UK during the Korean War. He completed a degree in Sociology at Boston University after his discharge, later followed by a Masters in Library Sciences from Rosary College in River Forest, IL. In 1964 he met a very special woman named Marcia Quirk while they both volunteered at Massachusetts Democratic Party Headquarters. Marcia had recently moved to Boston from Chicago to live with a friend and found Richard to be a kindred spirit, committed to making positive changes in the world. Marcia and Richard married in 1966 and they raised three sons, Matt, Adam, and Chris.

With a new degree in Library Sciences, Richard and the family moved twice in a few years as he accepted academic positions at New England Liberal Arts colleges. However, in the mid 1970s Richard saw a Social Sciences Librarian

posting for the Mansfield Library at the University of Montana. With encouragement from Marcia to “go for it,” he applied, was offered the job at the completion of his phone interview, and with no knowledge of Missoula or Montana (except it is “out West,” noted for natural beauty, and offered a markedly new beginning for the entire family) Richard accepted the offer. The Dunn family arrived at a time when Missoula was transitioning from a rather gritty “lumber town” toward a still gritty “college town” and outdoor recreation hub. Missoula was big and open enough to support many creative possibilities and yet small enough to realize those possibilities through one or two opportune conversations. The Dunn family soon wove themselves into the fabric of life in the Garden City.

In 1979 Marcia accepted a job as host of *The Pea Green Boat* children’s program at KUFM Radio, signal station for Montana Public Radio and broadcast to most of Western and Central Montana. Marcia’s new job opened a new creative outlet for Richard as well. He became a reader for another KUFM program called *The Listener’s Bookstall*. Montana Public Radio listeners heard his voice several times a year reading—page-by-page—novels, novellas, memoirs, essay collections, and poetry; for an hour each day until completion, then another reader started a different work. Some of the material Richard read were classics but as many highlighted new, regional authors. Additionally, he recorded a few young audience readings for Marcia’s program. His reading of “Stubby Pringle’s Christmas” by Jack Schaefer, originally recorded sometime in the 1980s, continues to be requested and played during *The Pea Green Boat* every December.

Richard explored other ways to expand his experience, knowledge, and contributions to the Missoula community. While continuing to work full time for the Mansfield Library, he completed a Master of Arts in Cultural Anthropology under the mentoring of noted Tibetan scholar Frank Bessac. At the same time, in the late 1980s, Richard began attending waiting worship with the Missoula Friends

Meeting and was an active participant in numerous community projects organized by the Friends; including preparing/serving holiday meals at the Poverello housing shelter, contributing to programs for Franklin School (the neighborhood elementary school for the Friends *and* the Dunns), helping to build a bicycle shelter, and joining numerous Meeting celebrations. Richard sought to live out his commitment to simplicity and service well before joining the Missoula Friends Meeting. His son Adam fondly remembers Richard riding his bike to work every day the roads were safe to ride, and walking most of the days it was not safe to bike. This memory remains so clear and treasured because the boys were often allowed to bike with their father to the library during the summer months. Simplicity also deeply informed Richard's relationship with communication technology during this computer age. Often accused of being a Luddite 200 years late (even by members of his family), Richard did not swear off all electronics yet he remained vigilant to his belief technology too often promotes disconnection from loved ones and core values. By limiting his engagement with devices and programs, he sought to nurture direct connections and personal interaction.

Richard engaged spiritual seeking in the same fashion he committed to his other pursuits: seriously, meaningfully, and with joy. Missoula Friends benefited from his dedicated and heart-led service on numerous committees; hosting of gatherings at he and Marcia's lovely home less than a half-mile from the Meeting House; his offerings of Bible Studies (with his emphasis on the *study* of expression and context rather than traditional doctrine); his sincere struggles to fully understand and fully live the Friend's testimonies (which included periods during which he stopped attending meeting in reflection of his struggles); his infrequent-yet-powerful sharing from the silence; his gentle and connecting presence enacted through silently placing his hand on the shoulder of a fellow Friend sharing a difficult message; and also his irreplaceable, joyful laugh. In asking to be

recognized as a member of Missoula Friends Meeting, Richard wrote, "... being a Quaker is not being a member of a passive group and that quite conceivably my thoughts and impressions – built up over the course of a lifetime and sometimes worn comfortably, perhaps too comfortably – will be challenged. I hope that this is the case." Indeed, he frequently shared with Friends the challenges he encountered in his pursuit and stated on several occasions (including shortly before his death) "the silence just doesn't speak to me." It seems Richard never found a fully integrated spiritual home; yet he never stopped seeking and welcomed companionship with fellow seekers. Missoula Friends profoundly miss our sincere, inspiring, loving and lovable, erudite, and joyful brother.

Richard T Dunn died April 29, 2020, at his home in Missoula, MT, surrounded by his family.