

## **Drexler, Harro 9 March 1945 – 30 September 2021**

### **A Testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of Harro Drexler**

Harro Drexler was born in Reitendorf on 9 March 1945. This is a small town in the Czech Republic but was then under German occupation. His family was Austrian in origin and were descendants of the Austro-Hungarian Empire who had moved into what was called Sudetenland. His father had not fought in WWII but was captured by the advancing Russians and sent to a concentration camp. His mother, baby Harro and sister were put in cattle trucks and sent as refugees into what became West Germany. Another older sister was lost in the turmoil. So Harro was a war refugee for the first few years of his life.

The Red Cross managed to reunite the family after the war. His father had no desire to remain in Europe. He was a highly experienced wood sawmiller and through contacts, obtained a job in South Africa. The family moved in 1952 and Harro grew up in a small town in a beautiful part of north-eastern South Africa. Harro excelled at school and loved hiking in the mountainous countryside with friends. He went to university in Johannesburg and obtained a degree in mathematics and chemistry. Throughout university he maintained his love of hiking and being out in the open. This love remained throughout his life and drove his deep concern for the environment and the damages caused by humans.

On leaving university he joined ICI, the International chemical company and for the next 30 years worked for large chemical companies. He developed an expertise of working with scientists to bring new products onto the market. He loved the world of development and new ideas.

Harro and Jane met and married in South Africa. They both shared a love of hiking and the outdoors. They moved to the UK in 1978 and began going to Quaker meetings in Manchester in 1980. Having lived through the violence of South Africa, both were drawn to the commitment to peace by Quakers. In 1984 Harro and Jane moved to Sydney and immediately began attending meetings at Wahroonga, where they remained for the next 35 years. Harro first worked for a chemical company and then the CSIRO. He loved the development of new ideas and seeing how they could be of benefit. He was involved with battery storage for solar generation and ways to decontaminate toxic soils. In 2008 he was presented with the CSIRO Medal for Research Achievement.

Unfortunately, Harro's neurological auto-immune disease began to affect his life and he had to retire from the CSIRO. But he remained intellectually active by writing books and papers and being a part of a discussion group of CSIRO colleagues. He never lost his love of new ideas and sharing those with others. A side effect of his disease was that Harro could no longer manage the heat in Sydney and so, in 2020, he and Jane moved to Launceston, Tasmania. This was a happy move. Jane and Harro were able to travel around Tasmania and enjoy the beautiful landscape. Their house has views down the Tamar River and across to the mountains. Harro loved this view.

Harro became part of the Launceston Worshiping Group. By now he was in a wheelchair, and his medical condition was taking a clear toll on his once strong body. The ancient Greeks claimed courage to be the first virtue, the foundation for all the others. Harro's courage made a deep and lasting impression on others: "Every time I saw him at meeting, he had a smile and was so cheerful that being in his presence was uplifting. I could tell then, without being fully aware of his exceptional educational achievements, that he still had a first-rate mind and a thirst for knowledge. His life spoke to a deep contented faith that was truly imperishable."

Harro died at home on 30 September 2021. Jane and 2 friends were with him as he gently moved from this life to the next.

## **Minute of Record.**

We thank Jane Drexler for making the journey down from the north to be in the Meeting House today and extend a loving welcome to her. We have heard a testimony to the grace of God in the life of Harro Drexler, read by Julie Walpole. May Harro's commitment to Quaker testimonies, his love of new ideas and of the natural environment, and his courage be a comfort and inspiration to Jane and all those who knew and loved him.

Tasmania Regional Meeting for Worship for Business Minutes, 7 August 2022, Minute 4.2.