

## **Keyes, Roger Alfred 27 January 1938 - 27 August 2022**

Roger Alfred Keyes was born in Wayville South Australia on 27th of January 1938, the first child of William ("Bill") Keyes and Mary Keyes. He had two younger siblings, Christopher and Helen. Mary was an accomplished musician who passed on her love of music to all her children. Roger had a particular love of the music of J.S. Bach, but was a lover of jazz as well. He was also influenced by Mary's social and political views, and her parenting. From his father he learnt patience, an incredible ability to fix almost anything, and a keen interest in gardening. They were frugal and careful with resources, and this deeply influenced Roger throughout his life.

Roger attended Adelaide Technical High School in North Terrace and in the early 1950s, at the age of fifteen, he won a scholarship to commence officer training at the Royal Australian Naval College in Flinders, Victoria. He also spent a year at the Royal Naval College in Dartmouth, U.K.. His experiences in the Navy led to his love of sailing and crystallised his deep commitment to pacifism and anti-Imperialism. One night in 1958, when at sea on the HMAS Tobruk as officer of the watch, he had a sudden moment of clarity about his military involvement, and the next morning applied to resign his commission.

He maintained friendship with his naval friends throughout his life, although they agreed to differ on matters such as pacifism.

In about 1959 he entered the novitiate of the Society of the Sacred Mission and began training for the Anglican Priesthood at St. Michael's House near Crafers, in the Adelaide Hills. He graduated as a member of The Sacred Mission of St. Michael (SSM), and was ordained to the priesthood in Rockhampton on the 23rd of July.

Roger married Lynette in 1964 and they had three children, Antony, Mary, and Helen. They moved from Rockhampton to Papua New Guinea in 1973, when Roger was appointed to the new Anglican mission district of Bougainville. He became very interested in liberation theology and became involved in Bougainvillian independence groups. In mid-1975 his contract ended, and he was appointed rector at St. Christopher's, Kilburn, in Adelaide.

In October 1977, Roger decided to leave his marriage and the church. He took a job as a gardener at the Highways Department, and from there moved on to become a road design draftsman. He was a very active member of the Transport Workers' Union. He was also a member, at different times, of the Communist Party of Australia and its successors, the New Left Party and the SEARCH Foundation, as well as the Australian Democrats and, when the Democrats disbanded, the Greens Party.

Roger married Penny Roberts in 1979 and became a stepfather to four children. Penny and Roger had two more children, Catherine (Katie) and William (Will). At that time, they were living in the Barossa Valley. Roger took early retirement from the Highways Department, one reason being that he could devote more time to his political and social activism. Retirement also gave Roger time to build his beloved boat, Paloma Blanca, a wooden boat just under five metres in length and with no motor. Over the next sixteen years, he made extended sailing voyages in the waters of South Australia. Such trips were not for the faint-hearted!

In 1994, Roger, Penny, Katie and Will moved to Goolwa, where Roger became very involved with members of the Ngarrindjeri community, and supported them in their fight to prevent the construction of the Kumarangk (Hindmarsh Island) bridge. It was during this time that Roger became a Quaker and found his spiritual home in the Adelaide Meeting, where he met Ann Rees. Roger made a point of attending, every year, the Proclamation Day Ceremony on Kurna land at Glenelg, and would stand with First Nations people in protest at the continued non-acceptance by SA Government bodies of the Letters Patent signed by George IV. For many years Roger very

proudly wore his necktie of red, yellow, and black plaited woollen yarn, given to him in Adelaide by a First Nations Elder as a symbol of acceptance and respect.

Roger's final home was with Ann, in her family's house in Kensington Gardens. They were avid musicians, listening to and playing music together on a regular basis.

In his association with both the South Australia and Northern Territory Regional Meeting and Adelaide Local Meeting of the Quakers, he held, at various times, the positions of Clerk, Treasurer, and as a member of Ministry and Oversight committees. Roger was a regular minister in Meetings for Worship, and his quiet wisdom and love for others were a shining light amongst Friends. He was an avid reader of and advocate for the Quaker Advices and Queries, and followed those precepts closely in his own life.

Guided by what he called "The Divine Spirit", he continued his commitment to social activism, including his concerns for climate change, peace, equality, the environment, the sufferings of others, and social justice, into the final weeks of his life. He was a man of compassion and generosity of spirit. He "let his life speak" by treating others with care, love, and respect.

We give thanks to The Divine Spirit for the life of Roger Keyes.

### **Minute of Record**

We accept the Testimony to the Grace of God in the life of Roger Keyes prepared by Julie and Peter Webb and read by Ann Rees. We are grateful for Roger's many gifts to this meeting including his integrity and his deep connection with First Nations peoples. We ask the Clerk to forward this testimony to the AYM Secretary for inclusion in the Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography and attach a copy to the minutes.

South Australia and Northern Territory Regional Meeting, Meeting for Worship for Business, 2 April 2023, Minute 1.

### **Minute of Record**

We record with sadness the death of Roger Keyes on 28th August. Ever since he was accepted into membership in 1996 he has been a well-loved Friend by a wide range of people. He was instrumental in establishing the Fleurieu Meeting. There is to be a memorial meeting in the Latvian Hall (corner Clark and Rose streets, Wayville) on Saturday 8th October at 2pm.

We ask Peter and Julie Webb (subject to consent) to prepare a testimony to the life of Roger Keyes.

South Australia and Northern Territory Regional Meeting, Meeting for Worship for Business, 2 October 2022, Minute 3.1.

### **Notice**

I am very sad to bring you the news that Roger Keyes died peacefully on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> August from

pneumonia with complications. He knew he was dying, and asked for his love to be given to everyone.

We will miss his enthusiasm and dedication to Friends as well as his encouragement in peace and human rights issues. His support of First Nations People was inspirational. He was also very actively supportive of Palestine, of Cuba and of Julian Assange.

He will be greatly missed by many.

Adelaide Local Meeting e-Notices, (South Australia Northern Territory Regional Meeting), 29 August 2022.