

Peter Ward Nichols

1931 - 2018

Memorial Minute for Peter Ward Nichols
Beloved Member of Friends Meeting of Austin

Peter Ward Nichols was born on March 31, 1931, in Wichita Falls, Texas to Alice Thayer Welty Ward and William Byron Ward. His last name, Nichols, came from one of his stepfathers, as his mother was married several times. During his childhood, while his mother pursued academic studies that led her to become head of the Art Education department at Ball State University, Peter spent quite a lot of time with his grandparents, in Austin and on the Gulf Coast. They had many years of back issues of National Geographic, which he pored over, and to which he attributed his career as an anthropologist and archeologist.

During his childhood, in a small-town version of Austin, his grandparents had peach trees and a pony. He could ride the pony from their home on Bluebonnet to swim at Barton Springs or to sell peaches on Congress Avenue!

Peter attended schools from Austin to New York City, Canyon, Texas and Denver, Colorado, and graduated from Burriss High School in Muncie, Indiana. He attended college in Colorado, Texas and Arizona, earning his B.A. and M.A. from UT Austin and PhD from the University of Colorado.

His teaching career included St. Stephens' Episcopal School in Austin, Central Missouri State University, Missouri State University, Southwest Baptist College in Bolivar, Missouri, Drury University and Austin Community College. A member of the Texas Archeological Society, the Missouri Native Plant Society, the Missouri Archeological Society and Missouri Mycological Society as well as other organizations, he was past president of the Missouri Folklore Society. Along with a former attender of Austin Meeting, he co-owned the Bluebonnet Compost. Co. Peter loved Nature, and his knowledge of plants, animals and geology was encyclopedic. One thing he loved about archeology was imagining how the native people lived, whose artifacts were discovered during archeological digs. He applied this creative imagination to his collection of old, unnamed photos which he bought at antique stores in Missouri, where had had a farm. He created an imaginary an imaginary county in Missouri populated by the people in the photos, giving them names, lives and relationships and then wrote a book of poetry called "Let the Faces Speak", in which the people in these old photos speak of their lives.

He loved and is survived by his wife, Belia, whom he married on September 6, 1985; his children, Jeb Nichols, Thayer Nichols, Tad Nichols and his step children, John Greek, Laura Greek, and William Greek; and his grandchildren Will and Eli Nichols and Evan Greek, as well as many cousins and friends. He loved Sacred Harp singing, farming, books and libraries, bluegrass and folk music, writing, teaching, amateur wrestling, traveling, Texas, Prince Valiant, and people.

One Friend recalls Peter's friendly voice and wonderful face and smile, with many wrinkles from so much time spent outdoors. Another Friend recalls how helpful Peter was, in practical ways, and how humble he was despite all his education. She said, "I just thought he was a farmer from Missouri who showed up in Austin from time to time. I always hoped he would speak in meeting, because his messages were so special." One Friend who was also a neighbor, shared pleasant memories of going for walks in nature, with Peter. A somewhat younger Friend gratefully acknowledged Peter's kindness and hugs, which were important to him as a child.

Peter had been an attender at the Friends Meeting of Austin, throughout the 1980s. He applied for membership in September of 1990, and was joyfully welcomed into membership on June 26, 1991. He was an active member, serving on at least one clearness committee for Marriage, attending meetings for worship and also SCYM gatherings.

Peter lived a long, creative and productive life, until his recent death on February 10, 2018, in Austin, Texas. During recent years, after a fall, he was not able to walk on his own and moved from the home he shared with his wife, Belia, to the Retirement and Nursing Center on Burnet Road in Austin. Unable to attend worship at Friends Meeting for the last several years, he appreciated visits. A memorial meeting for worship was held on what would have been his 87th birthday, March 31, 2018.

Submitted to South Central Yearly Meeting, April 1, 2018, Joanna R. Vaughn, Friends Meeting of Austin

Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
It will be in the garden of love and delight.

Chorus:

When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we will not be ashamed.
To turn, turn, will be our delight
'Til by turning, turning, we come 'round right.

'Tis the gift to be gentle, 'tis the gift to be fair,
Tis the gift to wake and breathe the morning air,
To walk every day in the path we choose,
'Tis the gift that we pray we never, never lose.

(chorus)

'Tis the gift to be knowing, 'tis the gift to be kind,
'Tis the gift to wait to hear another's mind,
That when we speak our feelings we might come out true,
'Tis the gift for me and the gift for you.

FRIENDS MEETING OF AUSTIN

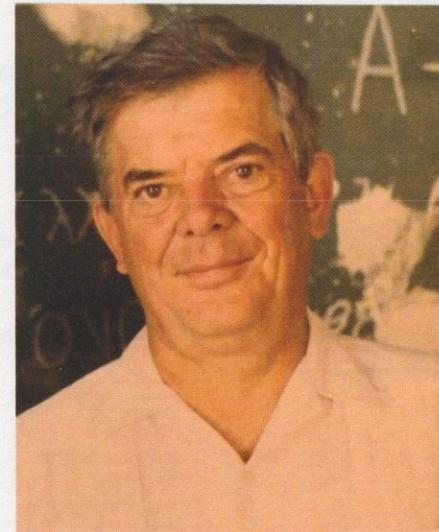
MEMORIAL MEETING

for

PETER NICHOLS

MARCH 31, 2018

2 pm



For those of you who are not familiar with memorial meetings held in the manner of Friends, it is best understood as worship with the purpose of giving thanks for the loved one who has died. Quaker worship is a process which emphasizes silent waiting. This involves setting the intention to connect with the highest, deepest part of one's being, which is best done by opening one's heart and mind so that one can be led to the truth. When one experiences the need to share what has been received in worship, Quaker custom involves standing and speaking the truth relevant to the life of the person we have gathered to remember and celebrate. It is important to allow time for the vocal ministry to be honored and appreciated by those in attendance before another message is offered. Meeting for worship ends with the traditional handshake in which Friends greet each other.

When you rise to speak, wait for the microphone to be brought to you. Hold it close to your mouth as you speak.

Members of the Austin Threshold Choir will sing "Now I walk in Beauty", "Remember Me" and "Simple Gifts". All present are invited to sing Simple Gifts, which Peter loved. The words are on the back page of the program.

Peter Ward Nichols PhD

Born: March 31, 1931 in Wichita Falls, Texas to Alice Thayer Welty Ward and William Byron Ward
Died: February 10, 2018 in Austin, Texas

He received a BA and Master of Arts from the University of Texas at Austin, and a PhD from the University of Colorado. He taught at many colleges and schools in Texas and Missouri and worked for various environment businesses and organizations.

He was a member of the Texas Archeology Society, Missouri Native Plant Society, past president of the Missouri Folklore Society, member of the Missouri Mycological Society, Missouri Archeological Society, and other organizations. He was a member of Friends Meeting of Austin.

He was an anthropologist/archeologist. A writer, poet, father, stepfather, grandfather, teacher, friend, husband. He was a lover of plants, animals, dogs, Sacred Harp Singing, libraries, parks, Peace, bluegrass, folk music, amateur wrestling, traveling, rocks, Texas, people, Prince Valiant, and his Missouri farm.

He is survived by his wife, Belia Nichols, his children, Jeb Loy Nichols (wife Lorraine) of Wales, Thayer Nichols (husband Bill Huffines) of Mt. Vernon, Missouri, Tad Nichols (wife Shirley) of Austin, Texas. Stepchildren: John Charles Greek of New York City, Laura Greek-Clark (husband Chuck) of San Marcos, Texas, William Greek (wife Marteen) of Tampa, Florida. Grandchildren Will and Eli Nichols of Austin, Texas and Evan Greek of Tampa, Florida and many cousins and friends.