

*Old Chatham Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends*

## **Memorial Minute for George Robert “Bob” Elmendorf**

**May 8, 1946 - September 25, 2025**

George Robert “Bob” Elmendorf was a faithful member of Old Chatham Monthly Meeting, and we hold in loving remembrance his warmth, humor, generous spirit, ministry, public witness, and ability to listen deeply and give comfort and insight in unexpected ways.

Raised in Plattsburgh, NY with his twin brother Pete, Bob had a love of the Adirondacks where he found renewal throughout his life at the family camp deep in the woods. Music, including playing jazz piano, also fed his soul.

He began writing poetry while at Union College where he delved into Latin, Greek, philosophy, and English. His passion for these topics continued via a Master’s Degree in Liberal Arts and lifelong voracious reading. He taught Latin to home-schooled students for more than a decade.

A published poet, Bob had a creative life that was a companion to his spiritual life — finding words as one way to dwell in the Light, to honor truth and beauty, and to share that with others. As a storyteller, he wove together artistry and faith with humor, poignancy, humility, and integrity.

Upon moving to Columbia County, Bob was drawn to the Quaker way by a longing for spiritual depth, authenticity, and community. He found a home in Old Chatham Monthly Meeting where his thoughtful, gentle, yet passionate spirit could flourish.

Bob served faithfully in the life of the Meeting: attending worship, participating actively in business, caring for the relational life of our community, and helping us reach outward. His home and heart were open to hospitality, laughter, good conversation, and caring listening.

For many years, Bob was a dedicated member of the board of Powell House, the Quaker retreat and conference center, where he assisted with everything from fundraising to serving on the personnel committee.

Friends recall that he was “a force majeure” for outreach, peace, and justice and faithfully served as clerk for that committee. He built outreach connections throughout the region through press releases and putting up posters as he spread word about the Meeting documentary film series, book sale fundraisers, and other special Meeting public events. For a couple of years, he helped guide the Meeting’s outreach exhibit at the Columbia County Fair to engage the public on the issue of solitary confinement, mass incarceration, and legislative reform.

For years he took part in a weekly peace vigil in Chatham and was quoted in a local press article saying, “I vigil because I am a Quaker and am against war or violence in any form for any reason.”

Known as “Quaker Bob,” he often spoke with strangers (very friendly!) at cafés and stores, and would typically bring up the topic of Quakerism. Then he gave them the Old Chatham Meeting business card and encouraged them to try a “drive by” (i.e., you only have to come once), resulting in bringing many people into our Meeting. That careful blending of witness, public concern, faithful attention, and local engagement stands as a hallmark of his life among us.

Bob’s life was marked by personal simplicity, creative openness, and steadfast devotion to the testimonies we hold dear — of peace, of equality, of integrity, and of care for creation. He embodied a Quaker way of being that persistently demonstrated what matters.

We give thanks for Bob’s life, for the Light that shone through him, and for the ways his presence deepened our Meeting’s worship, tendered our common life, and extended to the wider world.

May we carry forward the gifts he shared — his hospitality, his literary voice, his dedication to justice, his faithfulness — into our lives and our Meeting’s work, so that his witness continues to live among us.

*From one of Bob’s poems:*

The bird flies away,  
yet its song remains —  
a quiet echo  
in the trees of our hearts.

Approved by Old Chatham Monthly Meeting on February 8, 2026.