

Memorial Minute for Kathryn Lee Scott Willard

May 5, 1951 – September 16, 2025

Today we remember with deep gratitude, the life and spirit of Kathryn Lee Scott Willard, whose presence radiated creativity, compassion, and joy.

Born in Marysville, Washington, to Grace Ruane McCallister Scott and Howard Beaman Scott, Kathryn was the youngest of four to join the Scott family as they were fine tuning their years on a dairy farm. From an early age, she embraced the world with an artist's heart—singing, playing instruments, painting, and storytelling were her lifelong companions. Whether recounting tales of a white horse under her bed or harmonizing in a band with her family, Kathryn infused every day with imaginative expression and wonder.

Kathryn spent her early childhood on a farm in Marysville with siblings Karen, Kenneth and Kayleen and then the quaint village of Indianola before her family settled in Tacoma, WA. Tacoma was definitely home for Kathryn, however she spent her senior year of high school in Ellensburg when her father took a teaching job at Central Washington University. Her family attended the Tacoma Friends meeting among other regional Quaker gatherings. At age eight, she met her future life partner, Chris Willard, whose family was also involved in the Northwest region of Quakers. Kathryn often shared the sweet memory of a Quaker summer camp where she, at thirteen, admired the older Junior counselor who would one day become her husband. Chris and Kathryn's paths converged again in Portland, and they married in 1977, building a life rooted in love, shared values, and service. Together Kathryn and Chris brought into the world first daughter Meghann and then son Colin. Kathryn often reflected on the pride and joy she felt through her children and later her grandchildren Lilyana and Aurora. Kathryn's last few years included a number of full holidays including not just her children and grandchildren but their life partners Brian Wolvert and Theresa Gage.

Kathryn's commitment to Quaker principles, while woven though her childhood, was strengthened throughout her life and was evident in her tireless support of youth within the North Pacific Yearly Meeting. As a Junior Friend's advisor and Friendly Adult Presence, she offered guidance, laughter, and unwavering care. Her nurturing spirit and youthful energy made her a beloved mentor and friend to many young Friends, who found in her a safe harbor and a source of inspiration.

Her professional journey was as varied and vibrant as her personality. Kathryn waited tables on the beaches of Oregon, ran a daycare center before she turned 30, curated art at a Bronze Works museum, and taught art to children. Her college career might have started right after high school, but she knew she had life to live before getting her degree. She managed to finish her BA while working and parenting a teenager. She later devoted herself to education—working in speech pathology, language preschool, and special education classrooms. In every role, she uplifted young minds, encouraging them to embrace their uniqueness and grow into their fullest selves.

Kathryn's ministry extended far beyond formal roles. She was a fierce and tender presence in her neighborhood, her Meeting, and her family. She listened with an open heart, counseled with gentle wisdom, and protected with the strength of a mama bear. To her children she wasn't just a mom, but a friend to talk to and bounce ideas off of. Her childhood stories sparked experiences for her children that created a type of legacy that will be passed along to the next generation. She encouraged each of her children to find their passions and make a living off of it, as a career should never be about earning money but doing something you love that supports your adventures. Her legacy lives on in the countless lives she touched—with her stories, her songs, and her love.

Kathryn fought hard for life. After being diagnosed with a degenerative kidney disease in 2009 she spent more than a year on dialysis and then was the recipient of a kidney transplant in 2011. She fought again through chemo after a pancreatic cancer diagnosis in 2024, but in the end complications from the Whipple surgery were too much for her body to take. She passed with her partner and daughter in the room, and her son and daughter-in-law on the phone.

Whether you knew her as Kathryn, Kath, Kathy, Kat, mom or Nana, we hold her memory in the Light, grateful for the beauty she brought into the world and the spirit she shared so freely.