



Joseph Stern

July 18, 1918 - November 9, 2010

Born July 18, 1918 in Brooklyn New York to Rose and Frank Stern, joining a sister, Miriam, two years his senior, Joseph Stern came into the world. He shared the day and year of birth with a man would one day be his hero—South African President, Nelson Mandela. His parents, Austrian immigrants, owned and operated a kosher restaurant in which they both worked, as did Joe in later years. Schooled in the Bronx, Joe took violin lessons as a youngster which translated into a love of classical music in later life. During his four years at James Madison High School, Joe's passion was science. He also was involved in gymnastics for several years. In New York's City College after his high school graduation, and later at the University of Arkansas his major was in biochemistry; it was from the University of Wisconsin that he received his Bachelor of Science degree. On July 10, 1941 he was drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to boot camp in rural Massachusetts. Because of his irregular schedule as camp cook at the beginning, he was never assigned a rifle and never fired a shot during his entire military career. After boot camp he went to school as a navigator and flew assignments between a base in Delaware to England, India (over the "Hump"—the Himalayas), China, Cameroon, Africa, Brazil, Iceland and Greenland. When the war was over, he returned to New York and became an editorial assistant at a science books publishing company for 4 1/2 years. He returned to college under the GI Bill for law school at New York University, His study habits were such that there was scarcely a word in the dictionary he could not define and spell. He met

and married Katherine (Kay) Werner, an ardent activist/pacifist and psychologist who had worked for the Dept. of War Information (which became the CIA). Two children were born in the ensuing years: Franklin and Elinor. They attended Community Church, pastored by Rev. John Haynes Holmes, a very vocal and influential co-founder of the NAACP, War Resister's League, and ACLU. Activism all along the eastern seaboard was the result, and both remained active, especially during the Vietnam War. The civil rights unrest gave them even more cause for protest. Joe was a peace marshal during some of Martin Luther King's speeches, they joined the throng in Washington for his "I Have a Dream" speech, rode on busses to Atlanta and other southern cities for demonstrations, attended MLK's funeral and marched with Bobby and Ethel Kennedy. During this time, Joe and family had moved to Montclair, New Jersey, commuting to NYC daily. After 20 years of employment for NYC's law department as a real estate trial lawyer, he retired and moved his family to Fort Collins, Colorado in the summer of 1975. His wife, Kay, had attended conferences in Estes Park and had been impressed by the Fort Collins community. He purchased a family home on Laporte Ave. and other real estate and was hired by the City of Fort Collins in real estate acquisition. He worked there several months until his employment was terminated because he questioned some of the activities and judgments of his supervisor. He continued doing finance and real estate along with his activist activities full-time, distributing cartoons and peace literature at CSU several times a week, as well as "papering" the community and surrounding area with letters to the editor and hand-outs wherever he went, as well as letters and calls, and later, emails, to his congressmen and others who might be persuaded in places of power. He wrote a column for one year for a local newspaper. He participated in marches for peace and protest; he was chairman of a peace study committee at the Senior Center, guest speaker at various classes at CSU, a member of the Fort Collins Human Relations Commission, appointed to the Interfaith Council; was a member of the Unitarian Church, and a member of the Larimer County Planning Commission. When His wife, Kay,

was diagnosed with cancer from which she subsequently died, and his children dispersed to college and their careers, he eventually remarried, briefly, to Laura Drury. Upon his divorce, he moved to Boulder to be near his son and young family. Again, he was involved in activism. The need for heart surgery and the accompanying rehab moved him to Eden Valley Institute, west of Loveland, where he soon met Holly Roessner, who was on staff there, and 2 years later became his wife. They moved back to Fort Collins and he immersed himself, once again, in the activities he loved. He, by varying experiences and study, had become a Christian and sealed his commitment with his first baptism at the tender age of 85. A newly organized Center for Justice, Peace and Environment (CJPE) involvement was added to a weekly vigil organized to protest the impending war in Iraq. Other interests included the Symphony, many activities and literature distribution at CSU, monthly opera/ballet films at the Senior Center and the Winslow, the International Center at CSU where he and his wife hosted a Sri Lankan graduate studies couple, United Nations of Northern Colorado, membership at Plymouth Congregational Church and member of the Peace with Justice committee, Great Decisions program and many others at the local library. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003 at the Hour of Peace on December 31 for his dedication to peace. He viewed himself as an activist Johnny Appleseed—distributing “seeds” wherever he went—on every vacation, his honeymoon, weddings, family reunions, and even funerals if he thought he could get by with it. A special joy was attending classes at the University of Peace in Costa Rica and conversing in Spanish on the streets/busses of central and coastal Mexico—spreading “the word” and eliciting comments from the locals. In 2007, beginning with low interest auto loans, and extending to a wide variety of other aid to the disadvantaged and struggling, Joe and Holly opened a bank account for The Renewal Foundation, with help to struggling locals to be dispersed through the organization of a Self-Supporting Ministry that reflected their values and commitment to the community. His

ardor and passion for stimulating thinking and promoting peace never wavered. Never shy about creating attention for a cause, he was a colorful, one-of-a-kind character, acknowledged by the Coloradoan as a “mover and shaker”. Fort Collins was his home. He loved it here; Fort Collins was changed because of his passion and commitment to equal rights and opportunities for every socio-economic level, peace and justice. Apathy was the most deadly of all diseases, in his opinion; he lived what he believed. He endured substantial abuse and criticism with stoicism and dignity. Privately calling some misguided soul a “knucklehead” was the worst of his epithets. War and injustice, the death penalty, human rights, anti-nuclear proliferation, poverty, affordable housing, environmental stewardship were his particular concerns. His traditional goodbye was “I wish you well”. Joe is survived by his wife, Holly, his son Frank, and wife, Caroline and two grandchildren, Eric and Kate of Boulder; and his daughter, Elinor, and husband, Abe, of Portland, Oregon, and Abe’s children, Russell, Sophie, and Simon; nephews, Frank, Bob, and Coleman of Berkley area, CA and a niece, Helen Boggs, and husband Daryl of Fort Collins, as well as other nieces and nephew throughout the Midwest and southern U.S. In lieu of funeral services, a peace vigil will be held at noon on Saturday, November 20th, at the corner of College and Mulberry. Memorial contributions may be made in his name to: The Renewal Foundation P.O. Box L, Fort Collins, CO 80522 or online at www.TheRenewalFoundation.com.

Tribute Wall

GL

“ *Glenda lit a candle in memory of Joseph Stern*



Glenda - September 23, 2023 at 03:49 PM



“ *Joseph Stern*

October 25, 2022 at 06:14 PM

BC

“ *Joe although I didn't get to know you all that long, you sure were a bright light in the lives of so many and I loved the articles that you would have in the paper.*

Holly, I remember when I went to your reception at City Park the summer after the two of you were married. Joe was a delight to finally meet. I only wish that I could have known this remarkable man longer. He will be missed by many.

God bless you, my friend.

Betty

Betty A. Callahan - November 09, 2010 at 12:00 AM

LP

“ *Whenever Joe came in to see me for his banking needs he always had a wonderful smile and words of wisdom for me. I really feel lucky to have gotten to know him and Holly. Ill never forget the way he would depart, saying "Thank you dear" in that wonderful New York accent. He will be missed.*

Lindsey Power - November 09, 2010 at 12:00 AM

BM

“ When we first met Joe, we didn't know what to think. Here was a peace/justice guy, handing out these weird letters to the editor and cartoons, who kept asking us what we thought. Many a "pigeon" (Joe's word) would take what he had to say at face value, when often the information was exactly the opposite of what Joe really thought--all timed to spark conversation and deeper thought about the issue at hand. That's the Joe that many people knew. When many did not know was that behind the scenes, Joe was the one giving money to people in trouble. Of course he never talked about that, but it was an important part of his activism. I will never forget the summer when a group of evangelical Christians surrounded Joe at the student center, keeping him from handing out his material, which they had judged to be "dangerous." Joe was fine with this--he was actually delighted, I think, to have a audience in a circle around him that he could engage! We'll miss you Joe...you doggedness, your dry sense of humor, and your crotchety kindness. One of a kind...truly. Barry and Lisa McCann

Barry and Lisa McCann - November 09, 2010 at 12:00 AM

PR

“ Our deepest sympathies to the family of Joseph Stern. Mr. Stern's long-standing commitment to our organization and the cause of peace and the environment is an inspiration to us all and puts wind in our sails for the continued journey for a green and peaceful future.

On behalf of the Greenpeace Family,

*Phil Radford
Executive Director, Greenpeace*

Phil Radford - November 09, 2010 at 12:00 AM