

## **Memorial Minute: Boyce Benge**

**March 12, 1929 – January 17, 2016**

Friend Boyce Benge was born in the small town of Statesville, NC on March 12, 1929 to Oleta Plyer Benge and Thurman Franklin Benge. He died on January 17, 2016. He is survived by two sisters, Janet Turner and Phyllis Brown and by numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. His artistic talent, which he said he inherited from his father, was evident at an early age. His gifts and devotion to art were very evident in High School where he contributed so generously to the newsletter and other school activities that his community gave him a scholarship to attend the Traphagan School of Design in NYC the summer he graduated. After the summer in New York, he returned to his home state to finish his education, earning a BFA from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Throughout his lifetime, Boyce remained devoted to painting. For many years, he worked as an art frame designer to an upscale clientele to “pay the bills” while simultaneously continuing to paint. During the last third of his life, painting was his primary occupation.

He was a familiar sight around the Brooklyn Meetinghouse, and is especially remembered for his private meditation time before Meeting for Worship. It was often remarked that he “warmed the meeting room up for us.” In the 1980s, Boyce found Brooklyn Monthly Meeting following what he has described as a “twisted story,” when talking about his spiritual quest. He was completely “out of the closet” about being gay, as well as being in recovery from alcoholism. When he first began attending, controversy around homosexuality was very heated not only in society at large, but in Quaker Meetings as well. Boyce frequently stood up during meetings to state that he was gay, offering himself as an example for discussion, for acceptance or rejection.

He was well known and loved both in Quaker Meetings and in Alcoholics Anonymous for his openness and humility about himself and his human conditions as well as his generous and loving service. Over the years in Quaker Meeting, he served on too many committees and projects to enumerate and covered the range from monthly to yearly meetings. His committee work at Monthly Meeting included Ministry and Counsel, Property, State of the Meeting, among others. During the last ten years, he volunteered at the Yearly Meeting Office, working on a multitude of tasks and projects, humbly and modestly doing whatever he saw that needed to be done.

Fondly remembered and held in high esteem by many recovering alcoholics in AA, his contributions over the last forty four years covered the full range of service at both local and regional levels. Here, again, he humbly did whatever he saw that needed to be done. Over the years, he sponsored countless recovering alcoholics, giving freely and generously of his time and understanding. Widely recognized for the depth of his experience, strength and hope in the program, his compassion and advice were instrumental in helping beginners and old timers alike. Similarly, his openness about alcoholism in our meeting was instrumental in helping some individuals recognize the disease and seek help for themselves—help which he always gave freely and ably. He was a powerful example to so many Quakers and Recovering Alcoholics. His absence will be felt for a long time to come.