

Andrea Cousins, Memorial Minute February 2025

Andrea Cousins moved to Leverett in 1990, and a year later, at age My, somehow found her way alone to the Mount Toby Meeting for reasons she could never recall. She liked the silence. For the next thirty-three years until her death in January 2024, she was a steady and steadying presence, sitting in her customary seat in the south-east corner, and, on occasion, blessing the meeting with succinct, thoughtful messages that expressed her characteristic honesty and humor, and sometimes just the inspiration she found among the wildlife of her garden.

Andrea was the oldest child of Norman Cousins, the eminent writer and international peace advocate. Her mother, Ellen, a force in herself, stayed home, where she grew, and promoted, organic vegetables, while mainly supporting her husband in his important work. This division of labor later gave Andrea mixed feelings about the institution of marriage.

Andrea and her three younger sisters grew up in New Canaan, Connecticut. Her father and mother were both of Russian Jewish heritage. Their household was so completely secular that during most of her childhood Andrea was unaware of any Jewish background. She happily attended a progressive and preppy Connecticut private school until, in her teens, she was reluctantly transplanted to a public school to be more in accordance with her father's political views.

Her younger sisters were important to Andrea throughout her life. Sarah moved to Israel, became an Orthodox Jew, and the mother of six children. Candis lived in California, married and had a son, and is, like Andrea, a psychotherapist, confirming their especially close bond. To Andrea's enduring sadness, Amy developed schizophrenia, and died from its complications at age forty-three.

When Andrea entered Sarah Lawrence College, she was happy to find that many of the most interesting women there also had Jewish backgrounds, and she was able to embrace that part of herself while never accepting any particular theological belief. Later, she would explain her wish to be part of the Quaker community without becoming a formal member of it, as part of her lifelong disinclination to be defined by a faith.

When Andrea was invited by the meeting to describe her "Spiritual Journey," she discovered from the enthusiastic overflow attendance, and to her great happiness, just how much she was loved. She had thought of herself as an outsider. It was entirely characteristic of Andrea's intellectual rigor - "opinionated," according to her own description - that she was unable to fully accept the talk's title. She said she did not know what "spiritual" meant, and that "journey" suggested a spurious coherence. She settled for "Life Story."

Andrea's early adult life coincided with the era's civil rights activism and the African independence movement. She was a member of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, and was close to Tom Hayden, a founder of the SOS. She also traveled to Guinea in West Africa, but did not feel she had found her own place in the world. Partly to overcome a

lasting grief from the break-up with a longstanding boyfriend, Andrea went to Algeria to undertake doctoral research in Social Anthropology for a Harvard degree. But this did not prove to be her vocation, and shortly after moving to Leverett she went into psychoanalysis, first as a patient and then as a practicing therapist, with a clinical doctorate. She discovered that this was what she was always meant to do. She practiced psychotherapy and psychoanalysis with great satisfaction, continuing even after she was diagnosed with lung cancer. Many people benefitted from Andrea's care, and she felt entirely fulfilled in her work. She said that as she gained experience as a therapist she became quieter and quieter.

The qualities that made Andrea a natural psychotherapist also benefited the Mount Toby meeting. Apart from her contributions to the Meeting for Worship, Andrea served on the Hospitality, Nominating and Care and Counsel committees, and was a member of a number of "Friendly B's" groups, smaller gatherings that examined inner life and its relationships with the outer world in intimacy and depth. Andrea's welcoming presence, and the honesty, insight and wit she brought, was a central compelling force in these long-lived groups.

Andrea had a talent for friendship but sometimes expressed regret that a partnership in something like a marriage had not been for her. Love, however, did not elude her, and she found great satisfaction in a long relationship with a like-minded man that she chose to treasure by holding it privately to herself.

When Andrea was diagnosed with lung cancer, she immediately knew that it was serious. She decided to continue working and attending meeting as before. When she finally became house-bound, she still enjoyed the conversation and the poetry she had always loved, even when, in the last months, she was drifting in and out of sleep. Her close friend from Meeting, Ken Hoffman, in particular, did much to ease the way of her final months, and after her death, Pam Tinto did much to mindfully close Andrea's beloved Leverett home and distribute her belongings among her friends. Andrea is buried in the Mount Toby Meeting burial ground.

Andrea leaves behind her younger sisters Candis and Sarah, and many nieces and nephews, and their children. Also, her best friend, Ann Bookman, and many other friends, including, locally, John Bollard and Margaret Lloyd, and Olivia Bernard, and a community of Friends from the Meeting that had been such an important part of her life.

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