

Memorial Minute Guidelines

Permanent Board publishes these guidelines for preparation of memorial minutes, hoping that a description of the process of forwarding a memorial minute (Nuts and Bolts – pg. 1) and some thoughts on what a memorial minute may contain (Writing a Memorial Minute – pg 2) may be useful, since writing memorial minutes is not something most meetings do often.

NUTS AND BOLTS – The process a memorial minute goes through

Timing – the DEADLINES for any memorial minute that is forwarded:

Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.		
-----			From meeting to quarter			-----			Do you need to allow time for QM M&C?				
-----				From quarter to Permanent Bd.				-----				Check calendars for QM and PB!	
-----					From Permanent Board to the editing committee					-----		Editing	YM

Your **monthly meeting** needs time to season a memorial minute. Circulate it widely. You may want to read it at two consecutive meetings for business before you consider whether to forward it to your quarterly meeting (remember Quarterly Meeting M&C).

Minutes to be forwarded to **Permanent Board by its May or June meeting** need to be heard by the **quarterly meeting first**. Consult your quarter's calendar. If there is a **quarterly meeting Ministry & Counsel committee**, it should review the memorial minute. Quarterly meeting M&C may meet up to a month before quarterly meeting. Include this in your planning.

Minutes which are forwarded to **Yearly Meeting Sessions** need to be approved by Permanent Board so they can be forwarded to the editing committee at or before the Permanent Board meeting in May or June. Permanent Board can consider memorial minutes at its earlier meetings: October or November, January, March.

Should this minute be forwarded?

Two queries should be answered truthfully at each level, before a memorial minute is forwarded:

- Did this Friend add to the light beyond our meeting? (Some minutes need to go to the Quarter. Some of those should go on to Permanent Board.)
- Is this the rare memorial minute that adds to our understanding of living in the light even though this Friend's sphere did not extend beyond the meeting?

Also it's helpful to be reminded that some Friends, worthy as they may have been, had no connection to NEYM, but a primary connection with larger Quaker organizations. In that case it might be appropriate to send an obit to Friends Journal and the Quaker organization, instead.

Why Quarterly Meeting M&C?

Well, somebody does have to say whether a particular minute should be forwarded. Having members from all the M&C committees in the quarter hear the minute should be a good test. And while Friends' longevity is a blessing, it can mean that a meeting may memorialize the last 20 years of a long and spirit filled life. QM M&C may want to suggest adding an endorsement that reflects more of the whole. Of course your meeting has consulted with any other meetings this Friend held earlier membership in.

What editing committee?

Memorial minutes read at sessions are usually cut and sometimes expanded to to emphasize YM work. This is part of the process of review by Permanent Board. Permanent Board chooses several Friends to do this work. They complete it in late July so that the YM office can have the memorial minutes ready for sessions.

Writing a Memorial Minute

Where to start:

The process of writing a memorial minute starts in your meeting's Ministry & Counsel committee. The committee may choose other members of the meeting to do the writing, but M&C should read the minute before it is presented to meeting for business.

Purposes of the Memorial Minute:

- To let Friends know the person memorialized, to help Friends benefit from the spiritual lessons of the life memorialized.
- To comfort the bereaved family and the Meeting by honoring their beloved Friend.
- To give thanks to God for Grace as expressed in the Friend's life.

Some Do's and Don't's for Memorial Minute authors:

Don't:

- Polish the life and hold up the person as a shining example.
("Saint, n.: A dead sinner, revised and edited." -Ambrose Bierce)
- Include information just because it's factual. "Served on Permanent Board, the Yearly Meeting Finance Committee and as Reading Clerk" needs context to inform us.

Do:

- Remember that memorial minutes require a tender sensitivity as well as a disciplined focus.
- Give clearly and succinctly the flavor of the life as well as illustration of how the person's qualities and achievements were demonstrated in his/her life among Friends. Go far: failings, weaknesses, needs, are part of Friends gifts to us. Remember "the general killeth, the particular giveth life"; that's where dates and places can help. "*She used her skills as a lifeguard to serve Young Friends*" is very weak, compared to "*for the opening sessions of the newly united New England Yearly Meeting at Andover Academy in Massachusetts in 1945, Ginny was the Senior Red Cross lifeguard for the Young Friends at their swimming beach*".
- Consider the following **queries**:
 - How does the inclusion of this information in the memorial minute reflect the movement of the spirit in this Friend's life?
 - What gifts of the spirit did this Friend bring to the meeting?
 - How did this Friend's service in the Yearly Meeting reveal the light within and/or the light in others? When we consider our spiritual journeys what part did this Friend play in them?
 - Are there meetings, institutions or individuals in the Yearly Meeting who might be able to share with us ways in which this Friend exemplified testimonies which may not have been foremost in interactions at our meeting?

Before you write a memorial minute:

Line up your resources:

Talk to people in your meeting.

Call the Yearly Meeting office and ask how this Friend served the Yearly Meeting

If this Friend is a transfer, ask prior meetings.

Talk to family.

Work as led. Spirit will move you in the right direction – to know what to include or omit – to know how to present facts so that truth is served.

Allow time for your meeting's Ministry & Counsel to season the work.

Expect changes. Your monthly meeting is likely to ask for changes. Try to be grateful for their interest.