

Testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of (James) Anthony Butler
July 5th, 1931 – March 28th, 2020
Hamilton Monthly Meeting

Many in our present Meeting will not have known Tony Butler, as he attended rarely in recent years. Older Friends will remember his Friendly presence, and he was constant in his support of Hamilton Meeting. He remembered that, when he was a boy, the Quaker Meeting was held at the home of his parents, Fred and Joey Butler. This would have been very early in the history of our Meeting (in the 1940s), when Albert Martin, the founder, and his wife May, Frank King, Gertrude Haller, and the Butlers constituted most of the group. As an adult, Tony attended Meeting for Worship occasionally with his sister Judy.

His son says that, although he was not a man of faith, he had a deeply held connection to the Quaker world view and Quaker ways of living in the world. These things really shaped who he was as a person. His family was, in turn, deeply influenced by Quaker thought and beliefs. It has been said of Tony that he had the relatively rare combination of talent, expertise, and communication skills – without ego. He was both confident and humble – quiet, thoughtful and a considerate listener.

His talent led to a very successful career as an architect. He was a designer of the Hamilton Central Library Building and farmers' market, Mohawk College, the central police station, the General Hospital, many schools, and much more. He advocated strongly and campaigned actively for architectural conservancy, an enduring commitment which benefitted both Hamilton's spirit and the environment. He was also a mentor both to young architects and to foreign architects trying to get established in Canada. His wide interests and his persistent wish to improve things led to a prodigious volunteerism which included such areas as mental health, schools, and the arts.

His wife, Peggy, considered him a "wonderful father" and a family man. He maintained closeness to their three children, Catherine, Martha, and Tim, who were all supportive in his last illness and have reached out to connect with the faith community he counted as his.

Our Meeting House, designed by Tony, was completed in 1971, and, in a way, we celebrate him by our continuing pleasure in its light, open ambiance. People from outside our Meeting entering the meeting room for the first time often comment on its sense of peace and worship. It is based on a classic Ontario Meeting House plan but is uniquely Tony's as well. When we converted the upper level, essentially an attic, into a finished and welcoming space, he provided the drawings and came often while the work was being done. He attended our celebration of the 40th year of our Meeting House and, always pleasant and interested, he spoke of his connection to the Meeting House and to Quakers. Some Friends can visualize his presence still.



Hamilton Meeting House designed by Tony Butler