William Lewis Hanson

Bill’s father and mother married in Iowa and took a steamship to China in 1907. They were Baptist missionaries, sent to help found the University of Shanghai. While in China Bill’s father, Victor, taught Political Science and History. His mother, Lucia, ran the house with the help of servants, hosted afternoon teas, and studied Chinese art and culture. Lucia bore four children at home, of whom Bill was the youngest, born on October 1, 1924.

Bill grew up on the university campus. The faculty families lived in adjacent brick houses and formed a tight community. The kids all had adventures, rode bikes everywhere, and played sports. They were driven into Shanghai every day in a Model T Ford to attend Shanghai American School.

The older Hanson siblings grew up and went back to America to attend college. In 1937 the Japanese invaded Shanghai. Bill saw the evils of war first hand and this influenced him in his lifelong quest for peace. The Japanese burned the contents of his family home, but he didn’t mind so much later on because they bought new rosewood furniture which he liked a lot. Unfortunately, an unexploded bomb he was playing with blew up and severely injured his left hand. Bill and his mom left China as refugees and moved to Redlands, California. His father and sister spent the war in prisoner-of-war camps.

Bill's earliest contact with Quakers was through Friends work in Shanghai. He became a Quaker while in college, but there was always a big Buddhist and Taoist influence in his philosophy. Bill graduated Magna Cum Laude from Redlands University. During WWII he did alternative service as a conscientious objector, where he had additional contact with Quakers. This led him to membership in the Wider Quaker Fellowship and to his eventual work for the American Friends Service Committee.

After the war Bill attended Harvard Law School, graduating in the Class of 1950. While at Harvard he led a summer bike trip to Europe and met Elen Stella. He loved her big Sicilian family, and they married in 1949. They honeymooned in Mexico, taking five family members with them. Bill initially wanted to join the diplomatic corps but didn’t like the US cold war policies toward other nations.

In 1950, after law school, they moved to Los Angeles and Bill started work with the American Friends Service Committee. Raina and Vicki were born during this time and Bill settled in to life in the US, but he always had one foot in Chinese culture and one in American culture.

AFSC transferred him to Seattle in 1954 and the family moved there. A third daughter, Emily, was born in 1955. Bill was the Peace Education Secretary for the American Friends Service Committee. He helped organize the first peace march in Seattle and traveled to the USSR in 1956 with a delegation under the auspices of the Baptist Pacifist Fellowship. He coordinated work camps and was particularly proud of rebuilding the Alaskan village named Beaver. Through his work for AFSC he met many people who became lifelong friends. During this time Bill and his family were active in the UFM community; Bill formally joined the Meeting in 1957.

In 1959 Bill started practicing law in Seattle. His bread and butter work involved incorporation of nonprofits and family law. The work he found most satisfying involved social issues. During the Vietnam War he worked extensively with conscientious objectors, including a case challenging the constitutional legality of the draft. In 1966 he was the ACLU attorney
representing the Muckleshoot tribe in their fight for fishing rights on the Green river. He also served as an Arbitrator for the Arbitration Panel of Superior Court of King County and was President of the World Peace Through Law Section of the Washington State Bar Association.

Bill loved and helped organize co-ops; he was an early member of Group Health, REI, and People's Memorial. He helped found KRAB radio in 1962, and did the incorporation work for PCC and Third Place Books. Bill also wrote the by-laws for University Friends Meeting.

He served on the board of directors of World Without War Council, AFSC, Jack Straw Memorial Foundation, and the ACLU.

Bill was a member of two AFSC study groups that authored the books *A New China Policy* (1965) and *Uncommon Controversy, Indian Fishing Rights in the Northwest* (1970).

His activities and interests extended far beyond his career. Bill and Elen traveled extensively; they rafted the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, followed the Silk Road across Asia, and drove across the Australian desert. Between them they visited every continent. He was a great photographer. Bill particularly loved hiking on the Pacific Wilderness beaches. He also summited Mt. Rainier and Mt. St. Helens. He wrote poetry, created collages, and designed and built bicycles. He had a great singing voice and he loved music.

Bill loved going to garage sales and this led to another of his many talents; a genius for bestowing perfect small gifts on friends and family. At Bill's memorial service one person after another spoke of cherished small treasures that Bill had given them.

In 2003 sadness came into his life when Emily passed away. Then in 2007, Elen also passed away. They had been married for 58 years.

Bill moved into the Norse Home in 2008, where he participated in all the activities. Friends Meeting created a Care Committee. These friends and many others went to the Norse Home and read aloud to Bill. Happily many readers continued this relationship even after the care committee was officially disbanded.

Bill died peacefully on October 14, 2012. A memorial meeting for worship was held at University Friends Meeting on October 27, 2012. Bill is survived by his daughters Raina Ballard and Vicki Berman, grandchildren David Kraljevich, Robin Ballard, Lucia Ballard, Travis Berman, and Madeline Berman.