Harold Carson was born November 25, 1913 on a farm in Westfield, Indiana where his family had homesteaded in 1840. He came from a long line of Quakers going back 300 years with names such as Gause, Owens, and Walton. The Quakers in central Indiana were strong in faith and action; Westfield was an important link on the Underground Railroad in years leading up the Civil War. At two weeks old he received a blessing from an ex-slave.

Harold’s education began in a one-room schoolhouse. He graduated from Westfield High School in 1932 where he was an avid athlete, especially enjoying football and track. He worked his way through Butler University in Indianapolis, majoring in math and science, and graduated in 1936. He then began a teaching career at Fortville High School, 18 miles northeast of Indianapolis, where he taught for four years, until the war began.

Harold was drafted in 1940 and reported to his draft board as a conscientious objector (CO) in 1941. After an eight month appeal process he was granted CO status and was assigned to work in the Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps, alongside more than 10,000 others who performed alternative service during the war (about 3000 in Quaker camps). He was first assigned to a camp at Coshocton, Ohio, and later to the camp at Elkton, Oregon where he served as assistant director for four years. Those serving in the CPS Elkton camp fought forest fires, built roads and planted trees.

It was at this camp that Harold met his beloved wife, Faith Nelson. She was accompanying her sister, Enid, who was visiting her fiancé, another CO in the camp. Harold and Faith corresponded throughout the war, though Harold’s first letter to Faith asking if he could see her again was lost behind a desk in the post office for six months! Harold and Faith were married in Indiana on June 3, 1946. They had three sons, John, Robert and Edward between 1948 and 1953. Edward died at age 54 in 2007, and Faith died at age 93 in September 2008. John and his wife Margaret, and Bob and his wife Kate, live and work in the Seattle area. Harold has two grandchildren and one great-grandchild.
Following WWII, Harold worked for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), managing a food and clothing collection and packaging center in Philadelphia. In 1948, he toured relief distribution centers throughout Europe where he was deeply moved by the suffering and deprivation left in the wake of the war. As a representative of the AFSC, he was greatly respected for the generous and even-handed relief of food and clothing in Europe. In one village in Hungary he saw that the gypsies (Romani People) were not allowed in line to receive clothing. He stopped distribution. The next day the gypsies were at the head of the line.

Harold and Faith moved to Kirkland, Washington in 1949. From ‘49 to ‘54, Harold was Executive Secretary of the AFSC in Seattle. The accomplishment of which he spoke most often from this time was organizing an inter-racial children’s camp on Orcas Island. This was very controversial as the Boy Scouts, YWCA, and YMCA summer camps did not allow all races in their summer camp programs at that time. Four years later these programs began to accept all kids.

For over 50 years, the Carsons regularly attended the annual sessions – of Pacific Yearly Meeting for over 20 years, followed by North Pacific Yearly Meeting for more than 30. From 1965 to 1972, Harold clerked the reorganization committee which explored the formation of North Pacific Yearly Meeting. Their annual session first gathered in 1972, and North Pacific Yearly Meeting was officially established in 1973. Harold clerked Pacific Yearly Meeting in both 1960 and 1961, and he clerked the second annual session of North Pacific Yearly Meeting in Port Townsend in 1974.

When they moved to Kirkland in 1949, Harold and Faith transferred membership to University Monthly Meeting in Seattle where they were active members for over 10 years. In the early 60’s, the Carsons and seven other families established the Eastside Meeting in Bellevue, where their 3 boys were children in a Meeting packed with kids.

In 1954, Harold returned to teaching to be able to spend more time with his family. He taught junior high science at Sharples Junior High School in South Seattle (now known as
Aki Kurose Middle School Academy). In 1968 he left Sharples to lead the science program at Rose Hill Junior High School in Redmond, WA which focused on hands-on teaching. Throughout his teaching career he was known for being willing to reach out and listen to all students and to counsel those who were in difficulty or were involved in drugs. According to Harold, “a teacher is one who is invited to be a helper, if you aren’t invited, you might as well go home.” He retired from teaching in 1976.

Harold and Faith enjoyed retirement in the Seattle area: gardening, and traveling around the West in their motor home. In 1983 Harold travelled to China “not to see the monuments but to get to know the people.” Two years later he put that experience to use in a six month stint as a volunteer at the Pacific Science Center China Exhibit. In 1988 Harold and Faith moved to Panorama, a retirement community in Lacey, Washington where he stayed active in gardening, managing the RV park, participating on committees, and pursuing his woodworking hobby.

He provided devoted care to Faith, who developed Alzheimer’s disease. In 1993, he founded an Alzheimer’s support group in Lacey, WA and two years later a group for male caregivers both of which he facilitated until 2006. In 2008, he received the Excellence in Support Group Facilitation from the Western and Central State Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association.

In his later years he took to writing poetry. He self-published four collections of poems which chronicled his life and spiritual journey.

TO THOSE I LOVE

Don’t look in front or to your back.
I’m not there. Look beside you and you will feel my presence.
How do I know? Those I love so dearly, their presence is so close.
They are not on call, but are here so clearly with their greeting.
Strange? No. These thoughts are from both of us. Most will think that our messages are not for real and continue to live in their own world of disbelief. Friend, our center of understanding is near the Source, so be open.

Throughout his life, to the very end on August 19, 2013, Harold could not be silent or stand aside in the face of need or injustice. To use his own words, Harold strove to live life “in a house beside the road, helping those who pass by.” Another phrase he quoted often, (and from which he had a rubber stamp made with his beloved dog, Tasha, depicted next to it) was, “Be kind to one another.” Those of us who knew him can attest that his life was a testament of kindness and service.