

Memorial minute Peter Stebbins Craig, September 30, 1928 to November 26, 2009

Peter Stebbins Craig was born September 30, 1928, in Brooklyn, NY, and grew up in Oberlin, Ohio. As a teenager, Peter had a part-time job delivering telegrams to families who had lost a soldier in World War II. That experience turned him into a lifelong pacifist and Quaker. Peter graduated from Oberlin College, and his honors thesis, "Baseball as a Monopoly," got him a summer job with the House Judiciary Committee when it investigated the sport. He earned a JD from Yale Law School in 1953, where he was a member of the Yale Law Review. Peter moved to Washington after college to work at Covington and Burling, then left in 1960 for Southern Railway. In 1967, he became Assistant General Counsel for litigation at the US Department of Transportation. He returned to Southern Railway in 1969 and worked there until he retired in 1989.

Peter met Sally Banks Craig on New Years Day 1970, and they were married six weeks later, on Valentine's Day. A year later their daughter Katherine Love was born. Peter was a member of the Friends Meeting of Washington and starting in the mid-1980s Peter and Sally attended meeting for worship held at Sidwell Friends School, which was close to their home on Macomb Street.

Peter took an early retirement to pursue a passionate interest in genealogy and history, and became the leading authority on 17th-century Swedish settlements in the Delaware Valley. Peter published scores of articles and books on the topic. The king of Sweden honored him in 2003, and in October, the Swedish Colonial Society gave him a lifetime achievement award. He was a fellow of the American Society of Genealogists.

Peter's legal and public service to the community is well known. It was done largely outside the realm of membership on committees of the Friends Meeting of Washington. Less well known service was done during the thirty-nine years of their marriage: Peter and Sally extended tender hospitality to many, many friends and grown children of friends who were experiencing turbulence and needed a safe place to be in discernment. Several recipients of Peter and Sally's supportive generosity spoke at Peter's memorial meeting about the kindnesses they'd experienced as temporary residents of "the third floor at 3406 Macomb," where the Craigs lived. Some were sure that for much of their thirty-nine years together, their third floor had always been occupied by someone in transition.

Friends also remember Peter for his pro bono service to the Washington, DC community. For example, Peter was one of the leaders in the crucial but little-remembered battle that prevented interstate highways from bisecting Washington, DC.

One of Peter's most noteworthy achievements was serving in the vanguard of a broad, inter-racial citywide coalition to keep superhighways outside DC city limits. Leading the coalition, "The Committee of 100 on the Federal City," Peter's first efforts involved a lawsuit, declaring that an 1880s law mandated that no road in the city be wider than Pennsylvania Avenue. As noted in The Washington Post obituary written by Patricia Sullivan, "Meticulously prepared, tenacious in the face of bureaucratic obfuscation and a stalwart supporter of the subway system, Mr. Craig maneuvered between presidential-level politics and public protests. Feelings about the freeways ran so high that a 1969 D.C. Council meeting devolved into either a riot or a melee, depending on which local newspaper you read.

"All sides agreed that fistfights broke out, chairs were thrown and an ashtray whizzed past the ear of council Chairman Gilbert Hahn Jr. Fourteen people were arrested. Some protesters chained themselves to trees, and others canoed to the Three Sisters, a trio of midriver boulders, and hung a banner on the rocks that read: "Stop the Bridge." In 1970, John Sirica, then the chief judge of the U.S. District Court, ordered work on the bridge halted. Still, Mr. Craig said in a [HYPERLINK 'http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/metro/endofroads.pdf'](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/metro/endofroads.pdf) Washington Post Magazine story on the fight in 2000, 'I was not satisfied that the war was won until Teddy Kennedy got the Highway Trust Fund opened up. That plus home rule tipped the scales here.' "For more than two decades, Peter battled business interests, developers and members of Congress who wanted to build a bridge over the Potomac River to carry Interstate 66 into Georgetown and seven multilane highways, which would have destroyed more than 200,000 housing units, many in historically black sections of the city.

"Peter also prevented an effort in 1973 to replace McLean Gardens with high-rise condos, a hospital, hotel and offices. In 1996 he forced the city to throw out 9,700 flawed property assessments. During his later years and recently fought unsuccessfully to overturn the District's method of assessing property taxes."

Survivors include his wife of 39 years, Sally Banks Craig of Washington; three children from his first marriage, Stephen Tucker Craig of Chicago, Carolyn Alden Craig of Davis, Calif., and Jennifer Stebbins Craig of Woodland, Calif.; a daughter from his second marriage, Katherine Craig Bocoock of Takoma Park; a brother, John Craig of Washington; and five grandchildren.