

OLIVER ELLIS STONE
1917 - 1992

Oliver Ellis Stone, a member of the Friends Meeting of Washington from 1955, died on October 26, 1992.

He was born in 1917 in Burlington, Vermont, went to Preparatory schools in New England, and remained a thorough New Englander all his life, in accent and economy of expression. He was a graduate of Wesleyan College in Middletown, Connecticut and of the Harvard Law School.

After the military draft was instituted early in World War II, Oliver Stone, at that time a Unitarian, was jailed because he refused any classification other than Conscientious Objector (IV-E) which his draft board did not give him.

In his statement to the United States District Court on October 28, 1942, Oliver explained:

War is demanding great sacrifices of the men in the armed services, so must we who believe that the war method is totally wrong be prepared to sacrifice, for war won't be abolished tomorrow unless we oppose it today. . . However merely not participating in war is not enough, for loyalties to the teachings of Jesus and to the ideal of the brotherhood of man has its positive side. Not only must we refuse to participate in the destructiveness that is war, but even more important, we must act constructively to bring peace and good will among men.

In later years Oliver claimed that General Hershey, the head of Selective Service during the Vietnam era, had been a principal cause of Oliver's jail term and, according to Oliver, felt guilty about it. This guilt Oliver used to his advantage on particularly difficult Vietnam draft cases.

Oliver was paroled in 1943 to Civilian Public Service camp after a year or more in prison, and under CPS he did labor in a camp in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, was a volunteer guinea pig for medical experiments under the office of Scientific Research and Development, served as an attendant in a mental hospital in Middletown, Connecticut, and then used his legal talents when assigned to the National Service Board for Religious Objectors, at the central office in Washington, that represented the Friends, Mennonites, and Brethren in dealing with Selective Service and with all kinds of difficult draft cases.

After his discharge from CPS in June, 1946, Oliver was disbarred for a time from practice of the law because of his record of conviction and prison. Oliver eventually won reinstatement, in part through the efforts of one of his Harvard professors, Zechariah Chaffee, a leader in the cause of civil rights. Before he could practice law, he used his training again as assistant to Martha Beihle, director of the United States Office of the International Refugee Organization, headquartered in Washington.

In 1952, Oliver Stone set up his own law practice in Washington, D.C. Among his clients were Friends Committee on National Legislation and Rights of Conscience Committee of the American Friends Service Committee. He also worked with his good friends and members of

Friends Meeting of Washington, Opal Gooden and Mary Cannon, to protect the rights of those who were viciously attacked during the McCarthy Era. As noted above, he continued to work to end war through his work counseling conscience objectors from World War II until the end of the Vietnam War.

During all of this Oliver Stone was an active member of the Friends Meeting of Washington, particularly its Peace Committee, and a War Tax resister.

But there was a dark side to Oliver Stone's life. His marriage to Anna Faye Blackburn ended in divorce after several years floundering on Oliver Stone's drinking problem. His drinking caused his relation to his children to be rocky over the years. He was never reconciled to his son, Gregory Freeman Stone, who died in 1990. He did finally reconcile with his daughter, Jennifer Stone.

He was also able to mature enough to remarry, marrying Barbara P. Haskins, a British writer, 1970. But their life together was short. Barbara died in 1979 within a few months of Oliver Stone's mother and his best friend, Opal Gooden.

In spite of the hardships, Oliver Stone had an enormous zest for life. It is hard to remember him without a twinkle in his eye and a growl on his lips. He was known among a wide circle of friends for his pungent and often acerbic wit, and for frequent blunt outspokenness. Many a young Quaker lawyer benefited from Oliver Stone's example of humor and directness. To those still "Quaking before the bar" Oliver Stone will remain a beacon of light to help them find their way.