

traditional Conservative Quakers. It could be argued that the portrayal of Friends in this novel is idealized and perpetuates the stereotype of plain dress and plain speech. There are few Friends of this ilk alive today, and certainly not here in Sonoma County. Nevertheless, the archetype works in that it shows that we still are a "peculiar people" in many ways. The setting is the Quaker community and most of the characters are Friends, yet the appeal is more universal.

Family Values, while it concentrates on the life of two teenage boys, spans three generations. Karen Naylor, the paternal Bible-quoting grandmother, is straight from the Iowa Conservative tradition; she is no prude, but rather conservative for well-thought out reasons, not just heritage. Her daughter-in-law, Esther Naylor, is like her biblical counterpart—a woman of courage fighting for her family. The pairing of a naïve Patrick Naylor and a street smart Robert Torrie was no accident. Both boys are drawn to each other as inevitable halves of one whole. The sexuality and violence may be disturbing to some Friends, but the author makes no apologies, preferring to tell the story in all its raw truth.

How does the Naylor family deal with an act of senseless violence? In dealing with it, Karen serves as mother to both Patrick and Robert as the family moves through various reactions. They, and we, come to see that in the end it is only through forgiveness that peace can be found. It is a story about what the power of love can do.

In reading *Family Values* I was reminded of Jessamyn West's *The Friendly Persuasion*, except that this story could never have been told in the 1950s. Both novels could be criticized as simplistic in their portrayal of Friends, yet the plots work equally well in both. *Family Values* will draw you in. When I started reading I couldn't help but continue, and when the story was over I longed for more.

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Wobbling Home: A Spiritual Walk with Parkinson's

By Jim Atwell. Square Circle Press, 2010. 192 pages. \$17.95/paperback.

Reviewed by Judith Favor

Quakerism is a way of life for Jim Atwell, as illustrated in the award-winning weekly columns he has published in *The Cooperstown Crier*

since 1993. I'm glad that he gathered 54 insightful stories on faith, friendship and illness into *Wobbling Home: A Spiritual Walk with Parkinson's*. Jim is a very engaging writer. A former Christian Brothers monk, his spiritual development over the past forty years led him to become a practicing Friend and a recorded minister.

Should New York Yearly Meeting ever recruit Jim to help revise its *Faith and Practice*, I want a copy. *Faith and Practice* tells the testimonies; *Wobbling Home* shows them. Integrity, for example: in "Parkinson's Progress" he says it's "a brain breakdown, the failure of my original, factory-installed equipment, with really nobody and nothing outside me to blame." Take simplicity: "Yep, that's what spatters the soup on the tablecloth, splashes coffee and causes the stumbling walk." Take equality: "I try to report to you every time I make a fool of myself," he writes in "Put in My Place." Unity is touchingly told in "Yoked as One," as he describes life with "my Anne." Testimonies of community undergird many of Jim's stories. In "Quiet Celebration" he describes the Friends of Clinton (N.Y.) Meeting celebrating their 300 years as "undramatic, matter-of-fact mystics who work for peace, the poor, the imprisoned, and those savaged by war."

For those like me, whose circle includes a few "Parkies," Jim's reflections are both informative and assuring. He sees the disease as emanating from the same loving Source that gives us life, a Source that also manipulates his brain in mysterious ways and moves his body at random times. But don't let Parkinson's in the title deter you from buying a copy for yourself, one for your meeting or church library, and another for someone who's aging or undergoing bodily changes. His writing is personal and universal, interspersing tender examples of human frailty and spiritual strength with poignant tales of everyday personal relationships. Atwell's literary

grace reminds me of Phillip Simmons, progressively disabled with Lou Gehrig's disease, whom I once heard at Sandwich (N.H.) Meeting (in 2000 Simmons published *Learning to Fall: The Blessings of an Imperfect Life*).

Amidst increasing tremors and stumbles, Jim

Atwell reports that he continues to write, reflecting on God, Christ, and prayer from the perspective of a person whose soul journey has taken him beyond traditional religion. Parkinson's is taking its toll on Jim's creative writing. Sometimes "my mind seizes up. Then I just have to sit back in my chair and wait for my brain to reboot itself." But he hasn't given up. "I see that drive as a leading; an urge by the Spirit that a particular job is one's to do. This one's mine, and I've got to get cracking." I pray that the author is granted strength and focus to finish his next book because I want more Atwell stories to re-read, savor, and quote to Friends.

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Friends for a Lifetime: The Saga of a Sixty-Three Year Quaker Love Affair

By Don and Lois Laughlin. Springdale Press, 2011. 221 pages. \$10.80/paperback, \$6.95/Kindle.

Reviewed by William Shetter

It is not often that we get a chance to hear so insightfully the joys, sorrows, and steady growth of such a long marriage, some years of it spent with their six children managing the farm at Scattergood School in Iowa. The two voices of Lois Wood and Don Laughlin alternate throughout the book, each in its own clearly distinct font. While this may imply a dialog, in fact the book consists of extensive excerpts from Lois's private journal interspersed with historical notes and personal comments by Don.

Lois' journal forms the core of the book. During her entire adult life up to her death in 2008, Lois recorded here her inmost thoughts: her lifelong struggle to understand herself and come to terms with her frustrating insecurity and depression, her attitudes—not evading the exasperated ones—toward husband and family, and how the loss of two daughters impacted their family life. Her questioning of the roots of her insecurity and what Don once called her "insatiable bent for order," in daily conflict with the disorder of ordinary family life, is a repeated theme in her journal.

Lois was a private person and thought of her journal that way too. The reader quickly becomes aware of an ongoing conflict with her dream of becoming a published writer. She wondered to herself in her writing whether her journal was a mere private outlet for thoughts and

