

**New FQA Publication:**

## *The Best of Friends, Vol. 1*

**New Quaker Writing: Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry**  
**Edited by Chuck Fager**

published 1999 by Kimo Press

in association with The Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts

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More information and complete table of contents on the [Kimo Press](#) web site.

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## **A Word About *The Best of Friends***

**by Chuck Fager, FQA Clerk**

ONE WAY TO GAUGE THE VITALITY of a faith community is to see whether it nurtures the creative gifts of its members.

*The Best of Friends, Vol. 1* was undertaken in the belief that Quakerism today is such a vital faith community, and that creativity is being nourished among Friends. The results of our call for submissions have borne out this conviction. This new collection of Quaker writing and art should be back from the printer by the time this issue of *T&S* reaches you.

The content of the book is what can be called Quaker storytelling. Some of the stories here are fiction, some are not. Some are in prose, others in verse. Even the drawings have stories to tell.

Good storytelling is entertaining and fun, and I believe there is much enjoyable reading in these pages. But storytelling is also important, serious business. I believe this is especially true for a group like the Religious Society of Friends, and for Friends of all ages, not just the kids in First Day School and the adults who teach them.

# Types & Shadows

JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF QUAKERS IN THE ARTS

Issue #10, Summer 1999

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There has been a long tradition of Quaker storytelling, mainly in print. Early Friends used stories of their persecution in efforts to persuade kings and governors to end it, often with much success. And once the Society was accepted and settled into the quietist period, Friends used stories to pass on and reinforce Quaker values and practices to their children. In the nineteenth century, John Greenleaf Whittier retold many early Quaker stories in verse.

The tradition has continued into our own time in the work of Jessamyn West, Jan de Hartog, Daisy Newman, Stanley Ellin and others, some of whom you can read more about elsewhere in *The Best of Friends, Vol. 1*.

But the focus in this book is less with stories that have been told, than of bringing to light stories that, until now, have not. Accounts such as Bonnie Zimmer's, of costly personal witness. Or Dee Birch Cameron's reflections on the larger importance of collecting or not collecting library fines. Or Aliyah Meeena Shanti's discovery about the language of the universe.

Adults need these stories as much as kids, told in adult formats. Today, adults may need them even more, because we're so fully immersed in this mass media culture.

Yet many of our stories, I'm afraid, are at serious risk of being lost. They are not being told, or even collected. And to lose them, I submit, would be a tragedy. It would mean losing part of our Quaker identity.

This should not be a surprise; we live in a culture where mass media shout at us constantly, and draw us remorselessly into their orbits. They are designed to keep us fixated, mesmerized, long enough for the marketplace they serve to sell us more and more goods, opinions, beliefs. They work constantly and effectively to drown out and shut out the still, small voices that have something different to say.

This is a commonplace, even a cliché, but no less true for that. The result is that not only Quaker stories, but the stories and identities of a great many smaller, even somewhat countercultural communities are being eroded, ignored, ground under, lost.

The process is analogous to the way species disappear as the rain forests are cut down to make hamburger wrappings. I believe that those non-mainstream communities which do not act to discover their own stories, to preserve and tell them, will not survive except as museum pieces.

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*The Best of Friends, Vol. 1*, then, is intended not only for entertainment. It is also, in part, a survival tool. When I undertook it, with the support of the Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts, our sense was that there are new Quaker writers with important stories to tell, and visions to share.

We were right. More excellent material came in than could possibly be included here, and the only unpleasant part of the editorial task was choosing among the better work. In the process I believe we have stumbled across more than one Friend with genuine gifts for writing, talents which should, if there is any justice, be brought before a much wider public than this book will reach.

Adding "Vol. 1" to the title of this book was not merely an affectation. It is our hope that this will be the first of a series. We believe that continuing to nurture and showcase the written expressions of Quaker faith and life can be not only entertaining, but also a meaningful contribution to the continuing work of "letting our lives speak," to which Friends, both individually and corporately, are called.

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