

## IN MEMORIAM



**Henry Barnes** crossed the threshold September 18, 2008, at 10:15 p.m. For the past several years, he was a resident at the Fellowship Community in Chestnut Ridge, New York. Those of us who were fortunate enough to know and work with him were always touched by Henry's generous warmth and endless optimism in life. His significant impact on Waldorf Education on this continent and around the world is powerful enough to make his departure the mark of the ending of an epoch.

Henry Barnes was born in New York City, attended Lincoln School of Teachers' College, and obtained his B.S. degree from Harvard College in 1933. He went on to Waldorf teacher training in Stuttgart until 1934. From 1935 until 1939, he was a class teacher at New School, Michael Hall, England. Mr. Barnes and Christy MacKaye were married on September 5, 1939, in Dornach, Switzerland, after which he returned with her to New York City. There, he was a class teacher at Rudolf Steiner School from 1940 until 1943, when he entered the U.S. Army until after the war in 1946. Mr. Barnes returned to the Rudolf Steiner School as a class teacher and high school history teacher, which he continued until 1977. During that time, he was also a faculty chairperson. From 1974 until 1991, Mr. Barnes was the general secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in America.

Patrice Maynard remembers, "When I first came to work at the Hawthorne Valley School, I met Henry Barnes on his knees pulling weeds in the walk up to the front door of the school. He assured me with a twinkle that one need not wait to deepen one's anthroposophy to take on the meditative task of weed pulling and that I could help at any point in my career. So, I did, and understood the balance and friendly humility in Henry Barnes.

He'll be as mighty a friend from the other side as he was here - perhaps more."

Henry's unwavering dedication to anthroposophy and Waldorf Education stands as one of the most noble tributes of the effect of his biography.

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In his introduction to *A Life for the Spirit*, Henry Barnes writes,

“I met the work of Rudolf Steiner in the summer of 1933, just before my twenty-first birthday. The occasion was the first conference to be held in North America to present anthroposophy and some of the practical initiatives arising from it.

"Just a year and a half before, in January 1932, the suicide of my roommate and dearest friend had struck like lightning into the protected and unquestioning confidence of my young life. Peter and I had been schoolmates for many years at the Lincoln School of Teachers College in New York City, and we had gone on together to Harvard College. The Lincoln School pioneered what came to be known as "progressive education" in the United States. The school had been established in 1917, and we entered the first grade the following year. It was a privilege to attend this truly outstanding school, yet Peter's death raised deeply troubling questions. Had our education in some way failed us? I was roused to begin a search for an education that could go beyond the intellect and reach deeper than self-expression. Destiny intervened.

"Peter's mother, in her effort to understand a death that had so little apparent outer cause, remembered a book she had read before Peter was born. It was by Rudolf Steiner and was entitled \*Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment\*. After Peter's death, she returned to the book and discovered that Rudolf Steiner had written other books, and that there was even a small group of people in New York City who knew of his work. She also learned that a school based on his work had been started there a few years before. It was Peter's mother who invited me to the conference in Spring Valley, New York, in July 1933.

"Two of the three guest speakers at that conference were teachers at the school in Stuttgart, Germany, which Rudolf Steiner had founded in 1919. What they said about the school, and about the view of the human being on which it was based, stirred me deeply. I determined to go to Stuttgart - one way or another - but I had already committed myself to a teaching job for the fall, a position I considered myself fortunate to have obtained during those Depression years. My even greater good fortune, however, was that when I told the school's headmaster that I wanted to leave at the end of the first year to study this new "Waldorf" education, he smiled wisely and said, "Why don't you go now and get it out of your system? Then come back to Choate."

"As a result, I arrived in Stuttgart eight months after Hitler had been elected chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933. As a student in the Waldorf Teacher Training Course, I came to realize that the Nazi government was gradually tightening a noose in the hope that the school would sooner or later close on its own. The Jewish teachers had to leave, and there was to be no new first grade. Every lesson had to begin with a "Heil Hitler" salute, and parents got into trouble if their children were not enrolled in a Hitler Youth Group. The school, however, did not give in. Finally, in March, 1938, the school was forced to close by government order. It was publicly stated that the function of education was to prepare the coming generation to be citizens of the state. There was no room in Germany for a school whose goal was to educate children to think for themselves as adults.

It is significant also that the Anthroposophical Society and the Christian Community - an independent movement for religious renewal, inaugurated with Rudolf Steiner's help - had been banned earlier by the Nazi government in 1935. Hitler knew that a free spiritual life is by far the greater danger to totalitarian state control.

"By 1938 I was a class teacher in the first Waldorf, or "Rudolf Steiner," school in England, the New School, later called Michael Hall. That September I witnessed the British public's almost hysterical relief when Neville Chamberlain stepped out of the plane from Munich and announced "Peace in our time!" Staid, self-contained Londoners danced in the streets. Twelve months later, World War Two began.

"These external world events and their consequences affected human beings worldwide and wrought unimaginable suffering to millions. My own life continued to unfold in dramatic interplay with the larger circumstances of world affairs.

"Two days after the war began, Christy MacKaye and I were married in Dornach, Switzerland, and we spent the first year of the war in that country. On June 1, 1940, Christy and I - with her father Percy MacKaye (her mother had died in St. Germain-en-Laye near Paris, June 1, 1939), her sister Arvia, brother Robin, and my younger brother Alfred - sailed from Genoa with the last American ship to leave the Mediterranean. We landed in New York on June 10, the day Italy declared war."

For more personal glimpses of Henry Barnes and his early experiences with anthroposophy, read "The First Summer School and a Personal Interlude." An excerpt from his book, *[Into the Heart's Land](#)* can be found by going to <http://steinerbooks.org/n.php?id=272>.