

An educational legacy of love, learning & peace

By WILLIAM C. KASHATUS

YOU DON'T have to do great things," sociologist Ruth Jacobs tells us, "but the little things you are doing in your sphere of influence can be done with great conviction, great wisdom, great beauty, and great love."

For those of us who attended Frankford Friends School during the last 35 years, Terry and Carol Farley did so many "little things" with such "great conviction, great wisdom, great beauty, and great love" that it will be difficult to imagine the small Quaker school without them.

The couple, who will be retiring this month, taught a generation of students that "what" you learn in elementary school is not as important as "how" you learn it and how you "let your life speak for others."

Frankford Friends, established in 1833, is the only Quaker school in Northeast Philadelphia. Located in the shadow of the El at Penn and Orthodox, the K-8 school never had an enrollment much above 170 and still has the lowest tuition of any Friends school in the area.

Terry Farley arrived there as a reading and music teacher in



Kim Sokoloff Photography

1967. Two years later, he became principal. His wife, Carol, became the sixth-grade teacher in 1971. Ever since, the couple have been the bedrock of the school.

Although the Farleys aren't members of the Religious Society of Friends, they quickly em-

braced the Quaker mission of the school, adding their own strong commitment to civil rights, youngsters and music.

Since the couple have no children of their own, the students and teachers quickly became their family. They made Frank-

ford Friends a vibrant and safe place for youngsters by teaching them how to resolve their differences peaceably and respecting each other for their uniqueness. Their passionate love of music made the small school "sing."

Special programs, assemblies and graduations were only the final products. Children learned another means of communication by disciplined rehearsal, self-expression by singing, playing the recorder or hand bells, and service to the community by performing at nursing homes and other schools.

Of course, there were hard times, too. Broken windows, graffiti, thefts. Concerns about relocating the school to a more affluent part of the city.

And hard budget decisions involving the retention of gifted, economically-disadvantaged students and talented young teachers.

Through it all, the Farleys, with the support of a dedicated faculty and school committee, a firm but gentle approach, and a compassionate understanding, taught us that we each can make a difference in this world as long as we are true to ourselves and our beliefs.

At a time when there are tremendous market pressures on Friends schools to compete with other private schools for students and greater prestige, the Farleys' example reminds us that the true value of an education does not rest with the most up-to-date facilities, the number of Ivy League degrees on the faculty or even the acceptance rates to prestigious schools.

What really matters are meaningful relationships between students and their teachers, learning from personal experience and the self-esteem that is cultivated by both.

"Love," "learning" and "peace" — three "little things" that the Farleys taught so many, and what we wish for them in their retirement. ★

William Kashatus, a regular contributor, graduated from Frankford Friends in 1971.