

IN SEARCH OF MEANING

David Henderson (1939-2018)



David Henderson was born February 23, 1939, in Walla Walla, WA. His parents Rev. William H. Henderson (1910-1991) and Kathleen Wilson Henderson (1913-2007) had met in New Haven, CT in 1935, where William studied in Yale Divinity School, and Kathleen was a graduate student at Yale Nursing School.

William Henderson came from a family of steel workers and was the first in the family to receive higher education. He had a long and varied career serving as United Service Organization (USO) director and as a pastor to students at Presbyterian university centers. Kathleen came from a long line of academics dating back to 1600's. Her maternal grandfather John Paterson-Smyth (1852-1932) left a professorship at Trinity College, Dublin because the university did not support his writings to common people. Her father H. A. Wilson (1874-1964) was the first Chair of the Physics Department at Rice University where he worked for 40 years. [1] After completing her undergraduate studies at Rice University as a physics major with high honors, Kathleen pursued her wish to become a nurse so that she could be more helpful to people than being a scientist.

When David was growing up the Henderson family moved frequently due to their father's career. For the first three years of David's life they lived in Milton-Freewater, OR, where William and Kathleen Henderson had three sons David, Bill, and Stephen, in quick succession, then moved to Blacksburg, VA. David's sister Marjorie was born in 1945. David started first grade in Key West, FL, where the family was living on an Army and Navy base at the end of World War II. With parents both busy at work, David, being the oldest, was responsible for taking care of his siblings. An encounter with soldiers at the base left David with a deep childhood trauma that affected him throughout his life. After the war the family moved to Morgantown, WV, where one of David's regular chores was to every Saturday clean the front porch from a thick layer of coal dust. The family next moved to Ann Arbor, MI where William Henderson was a pastor to Presbyterian students at the University of Michigan. David's mother continued her nursing career in various hospitals and schools, but her real passions were Civil Rights and the Peace Movement.