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## Peacemaker Maas dies at 69: Elmer worked tirelessly to end all war making and bring about total disarmament.

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Elmer Maas, 69, a musician, teacher, philosopher, civil rights worker and prophetic peacemaker, died of heart failure May 7 in Voluntown, Conn., during the Atlantic Life Community Retreat. On May 14 more than 200 friends and some of his relatives gathered at the Maryhouse Catholic Worker in New York City, his longtime home, for a memorial procession and unforgettable funeral Mass and celebration of his life. I will deeply miss Elmer, a close friend and guiding light to me and so many.

A native of Kansas City, Mo., Maas was a philosophy professor at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa., from 1962 to 1968. Deeply influenced by Martin Luther King Jr., he organized students to participate in the 1965 Selma-Montgomery voter registration drive, which involved some of the worst beatings and the most persons jailed in the civil rights movement. A photo taken during this drive, prominently featured in The New York Times and Life magazine, showed Elmer cradling a close friend who had been badly beaten.

Maas helped formed SCORE, the Student Committee on Racial Equality, which worked on antipoverty issues in central Pennsylvania. In addition, he was a leading campus organizer in protesting the Vietnam War. In 1968 his teaching contract was not renewed, despite student protests.

Compelled by a biblical faith and commitment to nonviolence, Elmer worked tirelessly to end all war making and bring about total disarmament. Well known throughout the peace community, he was a member of the War Resisters League, the Isaiah Peace Ministry, the Atlantic Life Community and Kairos/plowshares New York.

In 1980, he took part in the Plowshares Eight action at a General Electric weapons plant in King of Prussia, Pa. He and seven other peacemakers hammered on the nose cone of a Mark 12A nuclear warhead and poured blood on documents, to enact the biblical prophecy to "beat swords into plowshares."

For this action he spent 18 months in prison. He was part of Plowshares disarmament actions in southeast Connecticut involving the Trident submarine in 1982 and 1989. In 1988, he and other activists were jailed for three days in Honduras for a protest at a U.S. military base calling for an end to U.S. intervention in Central America.

Throughout his life, Maas supported Plowshares actions, helped prisoners of conscience and organized and participated in acts of nonviolent resistance.

An extraordinary musician, he co-wrote a musical comedy, "The Insurance Company," and composed "Dusk Leaves," which he began in jail. He was an early member of the Peoples' Voice Care and part of the People's Music Network. Maas was the choir director for the Valley Lodge retirement community for the poor in New York City. His intellectual prowess and love of learning enabled him to master numerous disciplines. He spent his adult life developing an interdisciplinary curriculum focusing on three areas: understanding the dynamics of the U.S. empire and its roots in previous historical periods; unmasking the web of unrestrained power, violence and secrecy of the national/nuclear security state; and tracing the movements of liberation and acts of conscience and nonviolent resistance that represent the hope of freeing ourselves from the bondage of empire.

Maas' heart was as big as the ocean and his infectious smile and acts of kindness lifted the spirits of all he met. His hospitality was all-embracing. I last saw Maas May 7 at my mom's funeral in West Hartford, Conn. Little did I know that later that day, Elmer would go home to God in the presence of his beloved community.

Elmer embodied Gospel love and was an inspiring beacon of hope and truth for our world. Deo gratias for Elmer Maas!

[Art Laffin is a member of the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker in Washington.]

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Author: [Laffin, Art](#)

Publication: [National Catholic Reporter](#)

Article Type: Obituary

Date: [May 27, 2005](#)

Words: 622

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