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John T. Looney, left business to concentrate on peace work  
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Plain Dealer Reporter

Wadsworth-John T. Looney, who was called the "Johnny Appleseed of peace" because of the many anti-war groups he organized across the state, died Tuesday at Altercare nursing home in Wadsworth.

The 88-year-old was a lawyer and engineer whose concern for issues of nonviolence and social justice was so great that he sold his stake in a manufacturing business to work full time for the American Friends Service Committee.

The international group was founded by Quakers in Philadelphia to help conscientious objectors perform humanitarian services during World War I. It received the Nobel Peace Prize for its promotion of nonviolence in the 1950s.

Looney organized the group's northern Ohio office in 1970. During the next 16 years he started or participated in projects to end production of the B-1 bomber, to oppose the Vietnam War and to urge an end to the nuclear arms race. He set up Guns or Butter conferences to explore disarmament.

As president of the Ohio Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign, he traveled the state to deliver pamphlets and start more than 50 local peace groups in both urban and rural areas.

Looney, born in Cleveland, grew up in Cleveland Heights. He received a degree in mechanical engineering from Case School of Applied Science in 1938. He earned a law degree at DePaul University. An Episcopalian, he attended a Friends meeting in Chicago out of curiosity. That led to meeting Adele Schieble, whom he married 62 years ago.

Looney worked in defense jobs during World War II. He worked for Cleveland Pneumatic Tool Co. and was a plant engineer for Ohio Injector Co. before he became a co-owner of Wadsworth Manufacturing, a small company in Wadsworth.

By the 1960s he was playing host to speakers and peace caravans while also advocating for racial justice and support for public education. After attending an anti-war demonstration in Washington and being inspired by the activities of his son, Mark, Looney sold his interest in the business and began working full time for the Service Committee.

After he retired 19 years ago, Looney launched Peace Grows, a nonprofit organization that distributes literature on peace and justice issues. He wrote articles and lectured at colleges.

He drew on his training as a lawyer and his experience in business to develop Alternatives to Violence, a course on conflict resolution that was distributed in schools and churches in more than a dozen countries. He started Peace Grows to handle the course's dissemination. In 1998, Gov. George V. Voinovich presented Looney with an award for serving young people through Peace Grows. The Catholic Commission in Akron also awarded him the Bishop Cosgrove Award.

Besides his wife, he is survived by a son, Mark of Albany, N.Y.; a daughter, Marcia Hartman of New Concord; and two grandchildren.

A Quaker service will be at 3 p.m. today at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron, 3300 Morewood Road.

Memorial donations may be made to the John T. Looney Internship Program, c/o American Friends Service Committee of Akron, or to the American Friends Service Committee, 513 W. Exchange St., Akron 44302.

Hilliard & Mullaney Funeral Home in Wadsworth handled arrangements.

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