

## MICHAEL MARSH 1918-1993

Michael Marsh, a member of Friends Meeting of Washington for forty years, died on April 7, 1993, of complications following surgery for lung cancer. He was 75.

Although born in New York City, on February 2, 1918, he soon moved with his parents, Benjamin C. Marsh and Eleanor Taylor Marsh, to Washington, D.C. He graduated from Central High School in Washington, and thereafter from Swarthmore College. He then worked as an economist for the Federal Reserve Board in Washington. With the advent of World War II, Michael registered as a conscientious objector to military service. He was not at that time a member of any church, but had taken part in a Quaker work camp and was influenced by Quaker testimonies. He was drafted in March 1942 and sent to one of the first Civilian Public Service Camps operated by the American Friends Service Committee, in Petersham, Massachusetts, to do Forest Service work. He was in the CPS system for almost four years. During these years he was in the Big Flats, New York camp of the AFSC for a time, doing Soil Conservation Service work. He then volunteered to be an attendant working with mental patients in the Philadelphia State Hospital. Thereafter he again volunteered to be a guinea pig in medical experiments on jaundice under the Office of Scientific Research and Development. Early in his CPS career, on September 3, 1942, Michael Marsh and Caryl Amsterdam were married. They had met at the Quaker work camp.

After discharge from CPS on January 28, 1946, Michael went to Paris as a correspondent for McGraw-Hill, until 1949, and then returned to Washington to a research position with the Democratic National Committee, until 1952. He then began his long career as writer and editor of *Labor*, the official periodical publication of the railroad unions. He retired from the position in 1980.

Michael Marsh's interest in philosophy propelled him to further study in that field at Catholic University, where in 1974 he received the M.A. degree after completing a thesis entitled *The Inmost Self: A Philosophical Study*. Continuing his academic pursuits, he earned a Ph. D. in philosophy, also at Catholic University, in 1982. His doctoral dissertation, an outgrowth of the Master's thesis, was entitled *Survival After Death: A Philosophical Inquiry into its Plausibility, Based on the Nature of Being Human in Temporality*. That dissertation, with some changes was published as a book in 1985 by the Theosophical Press under a title, *A Matter of Personal Survival: Life After Death*. Michael's investigation, presenting evidence and arguments for and against after-death life, concluded that there is a strong possibility of continuing individual life.

Michael Marsh published one novel, an amusing satire set in the Cold War period, *The Rudelstein Affair*, in 1981. He also published two pamphlets in the Pendle Hill series, combining his philosophical inquiries with Quaker insights, *The Philosophy of the Inner Light* and *Reaching Toward God*. He was a leader in a Writers Seminar in Bethesda and in the Writers Mentor Group of Washington, and was also active in a philosophical group.

Michael became a member of Friends Meeting Washington on April 21, 1952. In later years he described the first two decades of his membership in the Meeting as "quiescent." But the

Meeting became central to his life, next to his family. In the copy of his dissertation that he gave to the Meeting Library he characterized the Meeting as "My true Alma mater." He served on many of the Meeting's committees, including Ministry and Worship, Overseers, Peace, Marriage and Family Relations, and Library. He was a Trustee of the Meeting, and served as Secretary of the Trustees. He helped on occasion with SOME (So Others May Eat) in its meal servings, and in his last three years was also a volunteer with the Friends Club that met every Friday to provide a social life for men suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. He led courses at the Meeting in various aspects of religion and philosophy, including one on "Poets and Sages in the Quest for God." He also taught in the same fields in the adult education program at Sidwell Friends School.

As the Meeting was central to Michael Marsh's life -- "I love this Meeting" he said in a business meeting during some of the tense days when discussion of ceremonies of commitment for homosexuals divided the membership -- so Michael Marsh became central to the Meeting. When he was moved to speak in Meeting for Worship he seemed to take the worship to a deeper level. His speaking combined a practicality and philosophical wisdom with mystic insight. His loving concern for others was revealed in the speaking, and in the manner in which, as Head of Meeting, he was able to help a long-winded speaker to sit down without feeling offended. Michael was sometimes impatient with stupidity, but never with those who, like the Alzheimer's patients, were in need of support.

Michael Marsh's disappearance from the earthly version of the Meeting leaves a great void. The Meeting feels also great sympathy for his wife of fifty years, Caryl, their two daughters, Susan Eleanor Marsh Mauer and Anna Louise Marsh Scarpelli, and his sister, Ursula Marsh Scott.