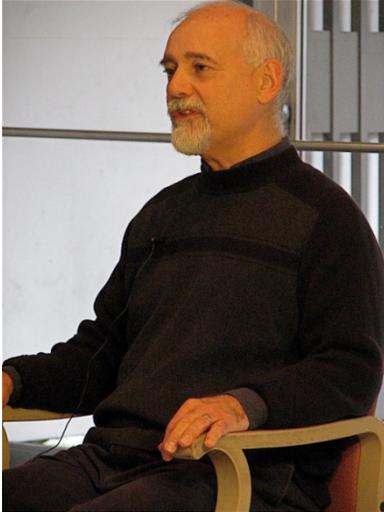




*Regional Directors
Remember
Michael*



Thinking of Michael

Some of the qualities that come to mind when thinking of Michael are his creativity, his vision and his total commitment to justice and peace. He was daring. He'd think up a project that was by all standards impossible to accomplish, and then make it happen. He took things in stride, and was usually able to discover some humor along the way. Michael was both thoughtful and bold; he was also gentle and kind.

I recall a small, insignificant incident that happened when I was a very new RD. It's quite unimportant, but it's stayed with me all these years. We (RCG) had gone out to supper together, probably the first one for me. If my memory is correct, for some reason Madeline hadn't gone with us. However, she was going to pick me up, I think because I was staying with her that night. The meal ended and folks were leaving, but Madeline hadn't arrived yet. I was sure she was coming and didn't mind waiting, but Michael insisted on staying with me till she got there: just a small, insignificant gesture, but typical of his gentle, caring ways.

Eloise Cranke

Michael was a deeply community-loving force. He was committed to building the "beloved community." And he was witty, humorous, and engaging. We are all blessed and better to have known him.

Wilson Riles

Although Michael battled cancer for five years, this is still a shock and a great sadness. I find myself moving the last two days through images and Michael's voice, pieces of which float in and out of consciousness as I try to move through my day. Last night I went to sleep and my last memory before falling asleep was Michael goading me, in the impish way he used to do, saying to me, "Come on, Joe, you gotta say something!" Always he said it with a slight grin and a smile at the impossible thing he seemed to be asking me to do! Michael, do you know how hard this is to do now, to remember and give voice to how important you were to me?

He would often push me to speak out, to participate, to not hang back and let others do it. One of my fondest memories of Michael was when he was training for his first Chicago marathon. The determination to finish was evident in the change in his body while he was training. Lord, how much weight did he lose getting ready for that marathon, and how much fun did we have running in Fairmont Park together in the

early morning? And how we enjoyed eating everything because we both knew we needed the calories for training. He approached training for that marathon with the same laid-back intensity (how could he do that?!) with which he did everything else.

I remember the time we were attending an RCG meeting in Philadelphia and they wound up somehow forgetting to put a bed in our room for me. There was already Michael and one other guy in the room (was it Charlie?) when I got there and so we got a cot put in and the only place to put the cot was in the closet. Only for Michael would I go back into the closet! We laughed a lot about that.

Being with Michael in the RCG meetings was a treat. I loved hearing him talk about how he wished the AFSC would take on one bold project! He understood, at a level few in the AFSC understood, how important building a constituency was in building a movement. He is remembered for his work in *Eyes Wide Open*, but he was also a force behind *Quiet Helpers* and many antiwar demonstrations. One of the keys to Michael's work was that you never felt like he was blaming, but merely remembering what frail vessels we are for the Divine. When I wanted to bring *Quiet Helpers* to the West Coast, and there was reluctance both in my Executive Committee and in the Philadelphia Development Department, Michael was there to encourage me to find a way to do it. When we took on organizing work when the Democratic National Convention was in Los Angeles, I did lots of consulting with Michael and his staff. One of my fondest memories were of sweat-shop workers hanging out of windows yelling and screaming support at the demonstration we had organized, consulting with Michael as we organized. He was an incredible organizer. I often wondered how the AFSC might have been changed had it allowed Michael more room to expand his vision. For me, Michael's vision was based on a deep respect for all people and a belief that everyone deserved a place at the communion table.



Michael did, indeed, have a profound effect on the AFSC in the area of IT. The IT department, in those days, insisted first that everyone use the mainframe in Philadelphia. Then they insisted on staff only being allowed to use PC's. Michael stood his ground on using his MAC and he was instrumental on making sure I was on the hiring team for the new IT director. Eventually, as with most things, the AFSC saw that Michael was right and everyone today who uses a MAC working for the AFSC owes Michael a debt of gratitude.

I remember his laugh and his smile. He reserved the best laughter for the ironies of this world. He was an activist through and through, yet he understood that love was the foundation of the world and laughter was its grace and the surest sign that love was present. He had the deepest spiritual nature of any one I ever met and I often felt that although he was a member of the Church of Christ, we were brothers tied together by the Spirit. I often said that Michael and Keith were my brothers at some deep level I hardly understood. I will always count how blessed I was to work with Michael and Keith. They took me under their wing when I started at AFSC and I have always been the better for it.

I remember when I was attending a Board Meeting and I was suddenly confronted by



Board members because one of my staff had been publically quoted in the LA Times, saying that, "Destruction of property is nonviolent! It's not like people were hurt." I was on the phone immediately to my office to set the record straight and to remind folks that we work on the basis of Quaker principles. Later that evening, Michael and Keith took me out for a drink and they shared stories that made me laugh

and feel a whole lot better. Michael wasn't afraid to talk about his mistakes and he did it in such a way that made your own mistakes seem a whole lot less heavy.

Michael had an abiding commitment to immigrants, to youth, to person of color, to economic justice, and his passing leaves me to recommit myself to the struggle in those areas, determined to carry on his legacy. He was a mentor and a teacher, a confidant and a person I could trust, feeling like I could share anything with him and I would not be judged. Mostly, though, Michael was my friend and I hope to continue to do the work he was passionate about with his passion and his vitality.

I remember the time I stayed with Michael and his family. He loved Maricela and his children and I've thought in the last two days how great this loss must be for them. I remember sitting down to dinner with them, long ago, and feeling the love, and the struggles, that came from two parents trying to make the world a better place for their children, while the kids were trying to grow up and live up to what both Michael and Maricela expected of them, hoping that they, too, might somehow make a difference in

the world as their parents had. It was a wonderful dinner and one I shall always remember for the love that was served up that night. Michael was as much a teacher for me as he was for his children.

Michael was my spiritual brother and I was blessed to have him in my life. He brought with him laughter, love for the world, a deep sense of the Divine, and the ability to not take himself too seriously, though he took his work very seriously. The world is a better place because Michael lived in it. I'm a better person for having known him. I miss him even now, yet I know I carry him with me and that he'll pop into my consciousness at important times and with that same smile and wit remind me that we are all servants to the poor, the oppressed, and the neglected, even when we're doing the really hard things. And that when we're doing the really hard things, there will always be others to laugh with, to cry with, to have a drink with, and to remember what makes life sacred and blessed.

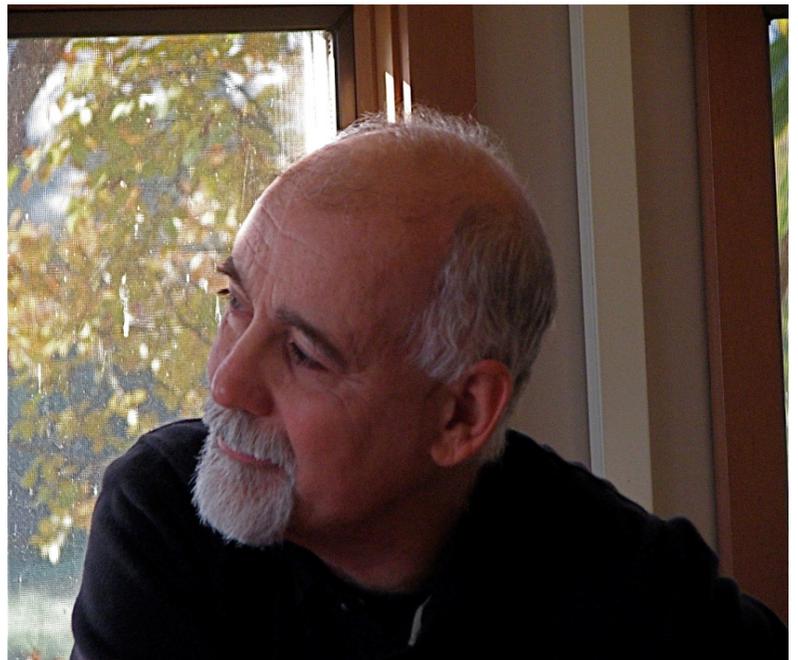
Joe Franko

I got the feeling that Michael's work was grounded in his love of that "spark of the divine" in every human being. I sensed that his very personal faith supported him throughout his journey with this illness. I will remember about Michael's spirituality. Although his voice tended to have a conversational tone, he was tough and persistent, always finding a way to move forward toward his goal. I appreciate Michael's creative and strategic mind that was in service to Love.

Eisha Mason

I am saddened by this news. Michael had such a strong commitment to the work of AFSC, and to advancing peace and social justice; he was an inspiration to me, and to so many others.

I especially remember a retreat outside Kansas City two years ago that Sonia organized, during which we struggled with some of the difficult questions relating to a reduction in the number of US regions. At some point in our struggle, Michael offered a proposal--a rather convoluted and intricate proposal, in fact--that involved a very different way of looking at the situation. I already knew that he



was gifted with an extraordinary imagination, and on this occasion I was simply awed by the depth of his vision and I think that all of us began to stretch our own sense of what might be possible. He had this effect on others: encouraging them to stretch their own imaginations and to share with him in the process of imagining how things might be different, and better.

I appreciate this opportunity to remember Michael and his service to AFSC and the work it does in the world.

In peace,
Howard Cell

Michael McConnell was a visionary. He could articulate the vision and organize to get it accomplished. No small feat for one person!

I knew Michael before he started to work for AFSC. He was one of the most creative thinkers in the Sanctuary Movement for Central American refugees. He was both radical in his thinking and compassionate in his approach. And willing to take risks! He respected the dignity of all.

Even though he would be far ahead in his thinking, he was never intimidating. Michael was never on an ego trip. His humility brought you forward.

His dedication to mentoring young people and supporting staff was impressive. I think he was convinced that we could make a difference. That along with his family must have been what kept him going through thick and thin.

The Chicago community has lost a force for good. AFSC has lost one of its finest. And I mourn a friend and role model.

Shalom Michael!!
Angie Berryman

To me Michael really represented the best of the Service Committee; his gentle manner, his clear eyed vision, his absolute belief in the goodness of everyone. We spent a magical couple of days in Berkeley, taking in the farmer's market especially, at a time when his diet was extremely restricted. He was like a kid in a candy shop, finding item after item that he could eat, and that actually tasted good. The best was a chocolatier that used only



organic ingredients and sweetened their products with natural juices that he could eat. So we came home with a stash and I tried to bring him more whenever we saw each other. But mostly it was the delight that he expressed that stayed with me. To sum it up, I'd say it was Michael's faithfulness that was his greatness contribution. It was a blessing to have had him with us so long. He will be deeply missed.

Laura Magnani

I am also thinking a lot about Michael and feel so sad about the loss to his family, friends, and to AFSC. I remember how kind and friendly Michael was when I first showed up at an RCG meeting. He was encouraging and shared his humor with me right away and I very much appreciated the immediate sense I got of being accepted as an equal, as a colleague. I was impressed by how well Michael could both lead from his vision and creativity and push from behind with his determination and persistence. I smile when I remember the two of us, in good-natured banter, bargaining for various parts of the central U.S. for our regions (of course he did end up "winning" the Twin Cities, always his main objective in the game!) Even after I departed AFSC I would hear about and be inspired by his spirited and spirit-led battle with his cancer, and am holding all of his families - blood, chosen, AFSC - in the Light.

Marielle Oetjen



Michael had it all: brilliant strategist, intellectual powerhouse, eternal optimist, and perhaps most importantly, mensch. The fire Michael had in his belly for social justice and peace seemed to light his every action, and inspired his greatest gift to AFSC and the peace movement: Eyes Wide Open. I often told Michael that Eyes Wide Open was also a gift to me. The opportunity to organize EWO exhibits in the Pacific Northwest renewed my sense of purpose, reignited my energy, deepened my commitment to end war, and moved me to understanding – and tears – again and again. I believe it was the most important work I did in my 20 years at AFSC. The other gift Michael gave to me was one of gentle affirmation. In my last few years at AFSC I experienced crises of confidence, challenges in raising my son, and struggles to

recognize both my strengths and my limitations. Time after time, huddled over a beer at the restaurant across from Club Quarters, or during a brisk walk after dinner,

Michael patiently listened. His responses lifted up my value, reminded me I was loved, and gave me hope. I treasure those, and so many other funny, stimulating, warm and inspiring moments with Michael. A big section of my heart will forever belong to him. And yes, the world is indeed less colorful, now that Michael is gone.

Susan Segall

Though somewhat prepared by Shan's earlier communication, the finality of Michael's death is all together a different matter, and its reality most unreal. I have not sought consolation; my beliefs no longer encompasses that possibility in the death of one much loved. I found myself anxious, wondering how such a loving man spent his remaining hours of consciousness. I do not need to know but I am haunted by this.



I did contemplate where I might have been and what I might have been doing when Michael's spirit have passed into new realms. This image has helped just a bit - Sunday evening I was sitting on a wide porch, disengaged from the conversation around me, drawn to a peculiarly luminous light of a setting sun penetrating Spanish moss on as a yet to blossom pecan tree.

We have been ever so fortunate in the company of this great man.

Love from Elizabeth Enloe

"The twinkle in Michael's eye and his great laugh and his baseball cap are the images and sound that most remain in my memory and heart. That thoughtful little tug at his increasingly grizzled (!) beard when he was considering something on which his thoughts were not yet finished. The special gentleness that would settle in when he was trying to persuade you of something with which you did not agree - yet or ever! The words that come to mind: steadfast, remarkable, delightful, visionary, generous, helpful, thoughtful, often stubborn (and yes, that can be a powerful virtue) without being boring about it. He was a marvelous confidant.

Others can speak to his political and organizing savvy. I will stand up to speak for the part of him that also was playful and silly and trickster. We don't always talk about such qualities, but I believe they also are essential - not only to organizing, but to Life. Taken from us too early, Michael leaves the most wonderful legacy in all of these respects. I hold Michael close, with great warmth and gratitude, in my heart, thoughts, and prayers - and to Michael's beloved family, you are here in my heart, thoughts, and

prayers, too. He never stopped talking about you, with such expansive love in his words, his eyes, his voice, his whole being."

Kay Whitlock

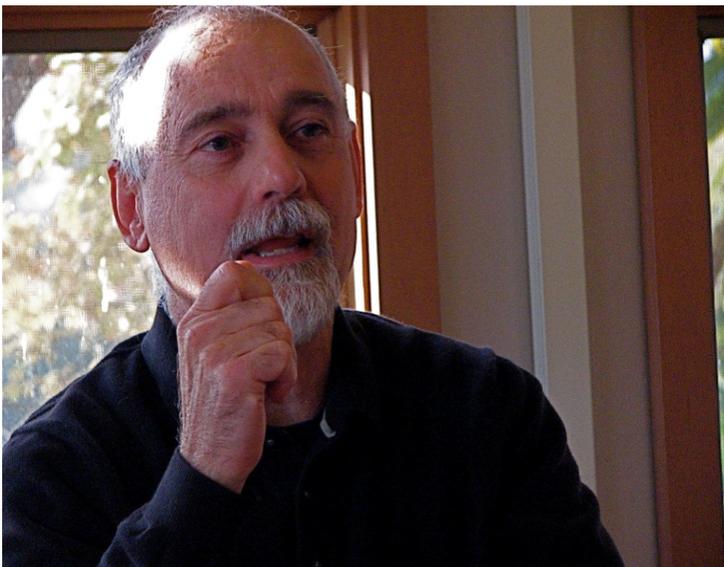
When I think of Michael I think AWESOME. Michael was awe inspiring. He was one of the most creative people I ever met. What made his creativity so awe inspiring was its source - his passion for peace and justice.

Another awe inspiring aspect of Michael was his fearlessness cloaked in a gentle demeanor. Beneath that gentle and seemingly quiet exterior beat the heart of a true superhero. No one with any sense would get in his way. Some tried. They failed.

Like Joe, I was stunned by Michael's techno-knowledge. How did he always get the newest new gadget first? How did he even find out about all those gadgets? Not only did he find out about them and get them, he knew how to use them! Awesome! Michael stayed ahead of the pack.

Finally what drew Michael and I together was our shared nemesis, cancer. After he was diagnosed, Michael and I had many serious conversations about our attitudes towards life and death. We talked about treatment options. We talked about the frightening monolith of the medical industry and how we responded to it. Michael was a fighter. He decided not to give into fear and sought his own solutions. His courage in the face of daunting odds inspired me.

Thank you, Michael.
Betti Knott



I don't think much about building a legacy, and I don't know whether Michael thought consciously of building his, but he built a legacy worthy of deep respect: His life's work developing the skills of young people; of leading with fierce regard for justice; of patience when we needed him to be patient and impatience in the face of complacency; of remarkable creativity and ingenuity; of humor and warmth and his inspirational dedication to people being able to live lives free from violence and oppression. I will miss him deeply,

but I will carry forward what he taught me.

Thinking about Michael and all that he taught me reminds me again how proud I am of my "work family," and how lucky I am to be able to spend most days learning from this group of fellow travelers.

Sonia Tuma

One of the better Angels

Michael was a gift to the peace and justice movement and to the AFSC. From his early days with the AFSC he imagined it as more than just another nonprofit working for peace. He understood intuitively that big hairy political issues could and should be captured in the lives of those who suffered from their impact day to day. He helped the rest of us to see that too. He crafted messages, programs and projects that spoke to the triumph of the human spirit in the face of overwhelming odds. He helped thousands see the impact of war in tangible ways, a pair of soldier's boots, a little girl's ballet slippers. He was never defeated by failure, in the face of it he dug deeper into that vast well of creativity he possessed and found a new way to speak his truth. *A rebel with a cause*. He never felt a need for the spotlight but side stepped it to praise others. With all that he gave to the movement he remained close to his faith, family and friends. He was a great colleague and a good friend. His passing is a tremendous loss that saddens all who knew and loved him.

Madeline Haggans

For my dear friend Michael,

As I sit here at my desk trying to keep busy in an effort to not think about the loss of a special friend. It is hard for me to believe that my friend and colleague is no longer here. When I first learned of his passing Sunday night I got angry. I was pissed off because such a good and brilliant person was taken away, far too soon, because of cancer. I was mad because when you fight as hard as Michael fought to beat this illness the reward should be a nice long life of love and fellowship.

These past two days I have been laden with a deep almost paralyzing sadness. I can't tell you all how much this hurts. Even though I'm feeling sorry for myself right now, I do smile and even laugh a little at the many fond memories I have of, talking, strategizing, debating or just hanging out with Michael.

Michael McConnell was part of a very special group a group called the RCG which stands for the Regional Consultative Group. It was this group where I first met Michael. It was this AFSC peer group where I befriended Michael and grew to love him as a remarkable caring human being. Together in RCG all the US based Regional

Directors came to create a community where we supported and nurtured each other in the work. Michael's wise counsel was most appreciated.

We didn't just talk AFSC business we engaged around family, community, spiritual direction, and of course (if you all know me) sports (smile) OH the years when the professional Basketball team the Chicago Bulls would win championship after championship were special to Michael he would gently rib me as I saw my teams lose year after year. The times we talked about soccer and Johnny's latest accomplishments on the soccer field. I can't write about our conversation around sports without mentioning our love for fantasy football (Big Smile) I think Johnny and Michael won a fantasy league championship recently?

Beyond the sports there was the work, the work we loved to do. In the work there was the community and the joy of working for a more just and peaceful world. Michael's vision, brilliance, and off the charts creativity was unparalleled. His soft gentle demeanor but fiery passion was inspiring and often moving. Yes there was, "Eyes Wide Open", "No More Victims", "The Cost of War" amazing work that came about because of his leadership. At the heart of all his work were the young people and helping create the next generation of peacemakers.

OH when I see Michael holding his grandchild with that special love in his eyes makes me cry.

When I came into work this past Monday I found a plant on my desk (it was given to me by a very sweet staff person who wrote) the name of the plant is called Revolution- it has unusual structure, beautiful color and is just a little bit different from the rest..it has presences. Remember him fondly!) So I'm keeping this plant called revolution on my desk in memory of Michael McConnell, so each day I can always remember the joy, the smiles, and the fellowship we all had.

Keith Harvey

