

**RICHARD MANNING RICKS**  
**March 10, 1953 to October 13, 1993**

Richard Manning Ricks was a classic example of the concept that people are born, not made into, Quakers. His ancestors came to America as Friends in the 1700's, but became Mormons in the American West. Rick was raised more or less a Unitarian. Yet starting in college during the Vietnam War, he answered the religion question: "Quaker" --even though he did not attend a Friends Meeting until many years later and became a member of Friends Meeting of Washington subsequent to our marriage and the birth of our son, Russell.

But Rick did not only take the Quaker name. After a troubled adolescence, Rick lived his conscience. He mailed his draft card to Vice-President Agnew (Rick was always partly proud and partly scornful that Agnew sent him a draft registration form in reply); he worked at a rape crisis center; as a lawyer he sued D.C. hospitals and won free care for the poor; he represented the National Organization for the Legalization of Marijuana; he litigated a number of Freedom of Information Act cases.

In fact, it was as a criminal trial attorney that Rick really flowered. He worked hard and long hours for little pay and even less respect ("You represent THOSE people!?!"), but to Rick it was a small price to pay. To say that Rick enjoyed his work is to say that Beverly Sills enjoyed singing. Rick thrived on his work. When he wasn't able to do trial work because of his hearing he would work but there was no joy. It was work. When he could go back to court, Rick would light up. All the hackneyed phrases about glowing do not do justice to the personality change that was wrought by Rick going to the court house. A lift to his step. A song in his voice. A twinkle in his eye. All of those phrases and more barely describe Rick at court. His love for his clients was mirrored by their love for him --many of them wept upon hearing of his death --even though he had been randomly assigned to represent them by the court. Several of them spent months in jail waiting for him to be well enough to try their cases rather than take another lawyer.

Rick's law practice was in the face of terrible illness, deafness and harassment by the government. Although his first symptom was a brain tumor removed while he was in college, diagnosis of Von Hippel-Lindau, a rare hereditary systemic cancer, was not made until twenty years later after two more brain tumors and kidney cancer, too late to keep it from spreading. Rick's deafness, also probably Von Hippel-Lindau related, became one of his defining characteristics. Hard as the deafness was, Rick used it as a tool to open doors. From it came a sign interpreter for the Friends Meeting of Washington's Meetings for Worship. He eased the way for other deaf trial attorneys. He brought computerized simultaneous transcription for the deaf to the local and federal courts in the District of Columbia. His deafness often slowed the process in small groups by forcing people to listen (especially the couple support group of which we were members for over three years) as people had to speak slowly, distinctly and one at a time as the microphone to his hearing aids was passed around. His deafness even helped to strengthen our marriage, forcing us to consciously communicate.

But the essence of Rick was his dignity, love, and humor. Judge Burgess of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia wrote:

I was impressed, quite simply, with the quiet dignity with which he carried on his professional life. He would come into the courtroom and respond to the call of his case as if there was really nothing wrong with him worth commenting on . . . I admired so much the way he seemed, by his conduct, to insist that his handicap really should not be allowed to make any difference in the way he should be treated as a lawyer and a person . . . And from my vantage point on the bench he was a model of professionalism.

Rick's love of people made everyone feel welcome and unjudged. His affinity with children was also easily seen. His love as a father to Russell and a husband to me was self-evident. His love of life permeated everything and was infectious.

His humor was more childlike than dignified. It, too, was infectious. Even when I told him that he had brain cancer and maybe two weeks to live his response was a classic double-take and a Grouchoesque: "Well, you could have sugar-coated it for a little bit." That humor, along with his dignity and love of people and life carried him through his last two nights of life when he hosted what he described to me as his "Awake," surrounded by his family and friends, showering us with love and concern and still bringing out the best in us. We can only pray that he always will.