



## Milton T. Fisk

February 15, 1932 - September 8, 2022

Milton T. Fisk, of Bloomington died peacefully on 9/8/22 at the age of 90 after a long and full life. He was born February 15, 1932 in Lexington Kentucky, to Edward F. Fisk, an artist on the faculty of the university of Kentucky, and Lucy Young Fisk, a literature professor at Transylvania University. Milton gained his love of literature from his mother and wherever he lived he decorated his walls with his father's paintings and prints. He attended St. Catherine's Academy and the Latin School in Lexington and graduated high school from Georgetown Prep in Washington, D.C. In 1953 he graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a B.S. in Chemistry. He received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Yale University in 1958. He served on the faculties of the University of Notre Dame and Yale University prior to joining the Department of Philosophy at Indiana University in 1966 from which he retired in 1997. In 2007 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Debrecen in Hungary.

Milton began writing for his college literary magazine and continued to write throughout his life. He is the author of seven books, the editor of several more, and published over 100 articles on logic, metaphysics, philosophy of science, political philosophy, and ethics. His work in ethics included a book on health care reform, *Toward a Healthy Society*, and his final book was *Ethics and Social Survival* in which social survival becomes the test of all norms. Milton was known to many people in Bloomington for his activism. In the late 1960s he began participating in anti-war protests. He contributed to leftist

publications and visited countries undergoing or having undergone, deep changes. Considering union activity important he joined others to form a local chapter of the American Federation of Teachers at Indiana University and became a delegate to the local AFL-CIO labor council. In the early 1990s Milton became a member of the local chapter of Jobs with Justice and was active in the campaign for a living wage. He also focused on health care reform and he pursued this interest during the 2000s through Hoosiers for a Common Sense Health Plan. Many Saturday mornings he could be found at a table at the Bloomington Farmer's Market soliciting signatures on petitions for these causes.

Milton loved the outdoors, trees and especially treasured visiting his forested acreage in Greene County, Indiana. For over 50 years he nurtured and watched the trees on this property mature. His children got early carpentry experience while building a cabin on the property. Another interest was hiking and backpacking in the mountains of the Colorado Rockies, Canadian Rockies and the Swiss Alps.

Milton's partner, Doris Jean Burton, with whom he has lived since 2005, survives him. They both enjoyed art and Milton learned to appreciate nonpolitical travel, art museums and good scenery. Their home was a welcoming place to grandchildren studying at Indiana University and to a wide range of their acquaintances.

Milton is also survived by his children; Barth Fisk (Peggy Lepp), and their children Jacob (Sarah Hamang), Adam (Kate Wargel), Rachel, and Kaden; Graham Fisk (Nancy Ash), and their children Ezra and Thea; and Melany Fisk (Rick Ingersoll) and their children Edward and Camille; and his stepdaughter, Maurenis Ibarra Sosa. He is also survived by his first wife Ruth (Carroll) Fisk, the mother of his three children, his sister Allie Hendricks of Lexington, Kentucky and her children Chuck and Teresa Hendricks as well as several nieces and nephews.

There will be no public services. Those who wish may contribute to The Nature Conservancy, Sycamore Land Trust, Doctors Without Borders, or an

environmental charity of their choice.

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory, 4155 South Old State Road 37, in  
Bloomington have been entrusted with arrangements. Online condolences,  
photos and memories may be shared at [www.allencares.com](http://www.allencares.com)

# Tribute Wall

AH

“ *Mis condolencias a más de un año de su fallecimiento. Fue mi profesor y amigo. Me hospedó en su casa cuando regresé a Bloomington a defender mi tesis de doctorado. Me visitó en México. Fue un profesor ejemplar. Solía decirle que era el único profesor marxista que también era ecologista. Lo recuerdo llegando al Philosophy Department en su bicicleta en lugar de en automóvil. Alguna vez fui con otros estudiantes a visitar la que llamaba "Milton's Forest". Cuando visitó México, concerté en un café un encuentro de él con el reconocido filósofo marxista español nacionalizado mexicano, Dr. Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez. Solíamos enviarnos saludos cada Navidad. Descanse en paz, mi querido profesor Milton Fisk.*

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**Alejandro Herrera** - December 31, 2023 at 05:39 AM

WH

“ News of Milton's passing thwarted my effort today to check his assisted living address. Still in shock since he was always more fit than I (and younger), our condolences to Doris, sister Allie, children, and grandchildren, and sorry that we were nowhere near to grieve his passing with them.

*I first met Milton shortly after my graduation from Notre Dame through his mother, Lucy, a fellow Elizabeth Madox Roberts aficionado who had done a monograph that I found the best commentary on her work to date, alas, since lost. Milton came in from horse farm summer work while I was there. That fall we met again at ND, I going for an MA, he a freshman. We joined for a Smokies hike one summer, our hike aborted by rain and, stuck in a shelter, consumption of two or three days' provisions in an evening. I visited him at Yale en route to Germany on an Army tour; we met in Munich when he was doing a post-doctoral year at Freiburg, and saw Ruth and Milton frequently when, in 1955, I was back at ND, married and using the GI Bill for doctoral studies. Milton was on the ND faculty so we saw much of Milton and Ruth.. The ND Philosophy Department was overloaded with philosophy of science specialists so Milton was let go--some days after receiving an offer to return to Yale on its faculty. He left Yale after protests of denial of tenure to a Jewish colleague. We have stayed in touch since despite only a couple or three meetings in a long interim. Fortunately, some time in the last year I acknowledged that he was more likely more right than I that it was not through the legendary Frank O'Malley that I developed a social justice commitment (but Francis Joseph Brown in Economics courses and Tom Gorman, an ND classmate and friend), as I had argued at the 1990 ND conference in celebration of Frank. We will miss him. Bill Slavick, whslavick@gmail.com*

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**William H.Slavick** - December 18, 2022 at 03:05 PM

BM

“ I write belatedly to express my condolences to Allie, Doris and other members of Milton's family. My first memories of Milton go back to 1938 in Hampton Court in Lexington KY, and my last exchange by mail occurred over the Christmas holidays last year. I especially cherish memories of our friendship when we were growing up together in Lexington, and these extended into our college years, he at Notre Dame and me at MIT. Rather than try to get all this down in writing, I would prefer to share my reflections with Allie, Doris or any other member of Milton's family. Warm regards, Bob Van Meter 518-587-1545

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**Bob Van Meter** - November 25, 2022 at 02:39 PM

UM

“ I worked with Milton as an activist between 2002 and 2008 in Bloomington. I have so many memories of Milton as a kind, beautiful, intelligent person. He welcomed young scholars and activists into his home, listened to us as equals, and worked tirelessly on causes that he believed in. I will always remember Milton and appreciate his commitment to leaving this world better than he found it. Milton Fisk, presente.

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**Ursula McTaggart** - October 01, 2022 at 03:09 PM

NH

“Milton was a dear friend, colleague and comrade. We used to meet at radical philosophy conferences and often would have coffee together. Another radical philosopher Anatole Anton proposed doing a book around Milt's idea of health care as a public good. I made some suggestions and they invited me to join them. I did and they were a pleasure to work with. I discovered by coincidence that both their fathers were artists. Years later at a radical philosophy conference at the U of Kentucky he invited me to join him and his sister Allie for a tour of the area, especially the horse farms. I saw some of his father's work and asked how much they would cost because I liked them a lot and thought I might buy one. He (and his sister) generously gave one to me.

We were both involved with the International Socialists which meant a common perspective on the world, which was gratifying, since even within the left there are many, often conflicting views. He was a fine philosopher, combining work on metaphysics and ethics. I particularly appreciated his framework model of Marxism.

Milt always stood up for his point of view but was never hostile, always comradely. He was tireless in his political work, but at the same time never one-dimensional.

I hadn't seen him in a couple of years, but I've missed him.

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Nancy Holmstrom - September 12, 2022 at 03:06 PM

RS

“ I met Milton in Graduate School when he, and our friend Roger Hancock, who died last year, and I lived in the same house and, being all philosophers, became friends for, as it turned out, our entire lives.

*In these Graduate School days Milton was a devout Catholic who would not, for anything, miss going to Mass on Sunday. After graduation we lost touch because we got jobs in different parts of the country. When I next met Milton he had become a serious Marxist. Since I had undergone similar changes, we reestablished a close comradeship that lasted until very recent years.*

*Milton was an important person in my life and I will miss him even more than I have already missed him.*

*He was also a first rate philosopher who, due to his profound modesty, never received the recognition he deserved. It also needs to be said that philosophers as a group are a politically timid lot. Milton's political radicalism frightened many. They wanted nothing to do with an avowed Marxist. His work was, as a consequence, ignored.*

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**Richard Schmitt** - September 11, 2022 at 03:54 PM

AR

“ Milton Fisk was an incredible and wonderful human being. He was the best kind of activist - informed, thoughtful, and tireless. Never self-righteous...open-minded and always learning while still always doing the hard work both on the ground in the field and also on paper. He was a constant source of inspiration and a model of how to approach the harshness and injustices in the world by doing good, hard work for progressive change, keeping the faith and at the same time keeping an eye on the beauty in the world and the joy in life and in people. His legacy and memory will continue to motivate, inspire and guide. Thank you Milton.

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**Andy Ruff** - September 11, 2022 at 11:15 AM

AW

“Milton Fisk was a clear-minded and far-seeing socialist thinker and activist. He had mastered vast amounts of knowledge and had wide horizons. Never out for personal aggrandizement, he set a new gold standard for collegiality and comradeship Without Milton the Left will be a duller place. Alan Wald

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**Alan Wald** - September 10, 2022 at 02:06 PM

MS

“ My beautiful stepdad, lovingly referred to as Meltoncito by me in my younger years, will never be forgotten. He was an exceptional man with a heart of gold who was incredibly down to earth, humble and always thought of others. He was the best role model one could ever ask for. As a child, I remember freaking out when I'd see a gross bug or spider. Milton would grab a piece of paper and gently transfer the critter back outside into nature unscathed. After years of protest and pet denials he finally allowed me to get a puppy. In the end our dog Lena, who was incredibly unaffectionate with all, would only cuddle up to Milton. He was her favorite person, dogs just know! I remember the first time I ever did math, I knew I would struggle with this subject for the rest of my life. Milty would sit with me every single school night, correcting all my missed questions and teaching me how to work out each math problem. If it weren't for his loving help I'd still be sitting on a desk somewhere trying to pass math. When we went to NYC one year I asked to go to some of the more touristy spots. Milton said we are going to Harlem. I think he wanted me to see not just the pretty parts of the city, but to also become aware of peoples struggles and impoverishment. He also passed on to me an appreciation for art and I owe my love for classical music to him. I want to apologize to him and my mom all these years later for hiding under the bed that one time that I did not want to go to piano recitals. Meltoncito you changed my life for the better in more ways that I can express. I will love you and miss you always. Thank you for being the best stepdad any daughter could ever ask for.

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**Maurenis Ibarra Sosa** - September 09, 2022 at 05:46 PM

MB

*Dear Maurenis, I only knew you slightly, and I'm sure you wouldn't remember me, but I just wanted to say how moved I was by your entry, and how well it captured what an incredible person Milton was. I hope you are well.*

*Best,  
Marcia Baron, a friend and colleague of your dad's.*

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**Marcia Baron** - October 13, 2022 at 11:57 PM

JT

*Dear Maurenis, what a beautiful tribute to a stepfather. The best I have ever seen. Milton Fisk was an extremely honorable man. I had the honor of working with him once on a committee many years ago. I was employed as support staff at the campus main library and I was never treated by him as anything other than his equal. I was so appreciative!*

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**Jane Torres** - October 19, 2022 at 04:00 PM

CD

*Milton was a philosopher I greatly admired. His book Justice is among my top 10. He went to Cuba with me several times and that was when he met Maritza. I will miss him.*

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**Cliff DuRand** - October 20, 2022 at 03:21 PM

BW

*Dear Fisk family - meaning everyone who knew and worked with this generous thoughtful and very smart activist. I worked with Milton in the socialist movement in the 1970's and learned a great deal from him. I still use his writings for my work. My most endearing memory will be of a visit to his home in Bloomington on warm February day. He opened his garage to let his bees out and they proceeded to 'dity' Milt's garage door. I learned a lot about bees that day. His memory will be our blessing.*

*Barbara Winslow*

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**Barbara J Winslow** - November 14, 2022 at 09:23 AM

RP

*Having just learned of Milton's death, it is with a sharp and sad sense of what we have lost with his passing. I suppose that I did not know him well, since we spoke mainly at philosophy conferences, usually of the Radical Philosophy Association. All the same, I felt a real bond of mutual understanding. He was a stalwart member of the RPA, one whose participation was always at the highest level of intellectual rigor and informed by consistently progressive ideas. He was a kind of model to me when I first encountered him decades ago, I a graduate student wondering what "radical philosophy" could be and he an established (though still quite young, I now realize) radical thinker. We had many interesting conversations over the years -- he was always receptive, thoughtful, and good humored. It was always a pleasure to see him. I feel so fortunate to have known him.*

*Richard Peterson*

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**Richard Peterson** - November 20, 2022 at 12:36 PM