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Joseph P. Fell

October 23, 2017

Joseph P. Fell, 86, of Lewisburg, died at home in the care of his family on Monday, Oct. 23, 2017, after a short struggle with cancer.

He is survived by his wife, Judith M. Sigler Fell, of Lewisburg, and her son, Thomas Sigler, of Brisbane, Australia; by his children with the late Cynthia R. Fell, John, of Brooklyn, N.Y., his wife, Carissa Spatcher and their son, Norman, and Caroline, of Montclair, N.J., and her daughter Lindsey; and by his sister, Betty Anne Granberg of Danbury, Conn.

Dr. Fell graduated in 1949 from Troy (N.Y.) High School, where he was voted "Class Fanatic" for his passionate interests in music, photography, and ancient Greek and Latin. After graduating from Williams College, he attended Union Theological Seminary, but turned his thoughts increasingly toward the study of philosophy and left the ministry in 1954. After serving in the Army for two years at Schofield Barracks in Oahu, Hawaii, he returned to New York City and earned his doctorate at Columbia University. He joined the Bucknell University faculty in 1963, where as the John Howard Harris Professor of Philosophy he published several books on Sartre and Heidegger, and inspired lifelong connections with generations of students. He was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa Society. After retirement in 1993, his chief professional effort was to promote the philosophical legacy of an influential Williams professor, serving as chair of the John William Miller Fellowship Fund, collaborating on publication of his writings, and fostering the growth of a community of scholars carrying on Miller's work. Dr. Fell's own teaching and scholarship were recently celebrated through the publication of a volume of articles called *Commonplace Commitments*, written by former students who "all think better and more deeply because of our association with Joseph Fell."

His love of music was a central theme throughout his life, attending symphonic concerts wherever he could, playing the organ and piano, singing for his children, hosting and supporting the Fitzwilliam String Quartet's

annual residency at Bucknell, exchanging popular music tastes with his students, enjoying Bard Music Festivals with Judith and friends, supporting John's career as a drummer and music store owner, and for many years making house calls as the town "stereo doctor" to share his expertise with hi-fi equipment.

His cultural pursuits were balanced by a love of home and what he called "the ordinary," finding purpose in a simple life well lived. Several years spent at a country home with his parents, sister, and a handful of horses were among the happiest memories from his youth; and after coming to Lewisburg he spent fifty years rooted in a single home and yard that he loved. He lived intentionally and appreciated every day of his long life, always mindful of what was expressed by G.W.F. Hegel, "...we must here banish from our minds the prejudice in favor of duration, as if it had any advantage as compared with transience: the imperishable mountains are not superior to the quickly dismantled rose exhaling its life in fragrance."

A private burial in Lewisburg will be followed at a later date by a memorial service welcoming friends and colleagues to join the family in celebrating his life.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Montgomery, AL; or to The John William Miller Fellowship Fund (made out to "Williams College," with note designating "Miller Fellowship Fund in memory of Dr. Joseph Fell '53", at Williams College Gift Processing, 75 Park Street, Williamstown, MA 01267).

The family is being assisted by Cronrath-Grenoble Funeral Home, Lewisburg.

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