

# Recent Deaths

Peter Puccio, Ahrne Thorne, Marcus Graham, Pete Kwant

Fifth Estate Collective

1986

## Peter Puccio, 21 July 1902–7 January 1986

This issue of the FE is dedicated to our friend and comrade Peter Puccio, who recently succumbed to time and illness. For us, Pete represented not only a direct contact with the anarchist movement at a time in the 1970s when we were arriving independently at similar conclusions, but also a direct link to older radical libertarians and their traditions. We'll miss him sorely.

Pete Puccio was born early in the century in Sicily and came to the U.S. with his family in 1909. A barber by trade, he was won over to anarchism by his father-in-law, Vito Capizzo, an anarchist militant and orator in the New York City area. He was also strongly influenced by Luigi Galleani (author of *The End of Anarchism?* and other works), the poet Pietro Gorri, and the exiled anti-fascist activist Armando Borghi (author of *Mussolini: Black and Red*.)

Puccio took an active part in the anti-fascist, anti-militarist struggles among the Italian exile/immigrant community and other radical circles during the 1920s, saw the Palmer raids and deportations, and the battle to defend Sacco and Vanzetti. During the Spanish Revolution, he helped organize support and the sending of supplies to the Spanish anarchists.

He continued to be active in the New York area anarchist community until his move to Detroit in 1967, where he participated in the gatherings, meetings and picnics of the anarchist community in the Detroit area. Many picnics were organized to maintain community contact and to raise funds to support prisoners and the libertarian press for several years.

Pete also participated in the movement against the war in Vietnam and in demonstrations for civil rights during that period.

Eventually old age and death scattered the Detroit anarchists and the gatherings ceased. But Pete remained an active correspondent with the anarchist press in the U.S. and Italy, read avidly and wrote poetry which revealed a raw, energetic, sensitive talent. He was also an accomplished Sunday painter, making gifts of his many paintings to his children and grandchildren.

We met Pete in the late 1970s, when he—along with other anarchists from his generation—realized that our radical underground paper was coming to anarchist conclusions. At that time, we began meeting with Pete to discuss anarchist history and the present situation. Later, Pete also helped to revive the tradition of libertarian picnics here in the city.

In the last year or so, illness and failing eyesight had been a source of frustration for him, interfering as they did with his painting, reading and correspondence.

Yet Pete never became disillusioned with the ideals of freedom and peace. Not long before his death, in a letter to his granddaughter, he spoke of the deferred dreams of the 1960s of peace and equality, asking, "Was all our fighting in vain?" After all, he reasoned, people still went hungry, the world was probably in worse shape than before. "Well,

my answer to all these questions that come to mind is: No!” he replied. “It was not we, those who fought and gave money and everything else who failed. It was greed and the power to dominate this country, and yes, the whole world, who failed mankind. Am I sorry that I gave 60 years of my life, my efforts, my hopes, and yes, even to the point of sacrificing my family sometimes, when my own children were without bread or milk (in 1936). No. It was not in vain. If I had to do it all over again, I would not change a moment of my past life. Now that I have reached the ripe old age (of) almost 82 years old, the age when my body is slowly bending with the weight of my years, I still hold my head high, with defiance to the society that has tried to bend me to their stinking hate, greed and murder...As long as I live, I shall keep on doing what I have done in the past. To give what I can to my dream of a society of Freedom, a society without rulers and tyrants, without hate and yes even compassion for those who have tortured my mind.”

Only those who have no dreams, or who have sullenly turned their backs on their dreams, could fail to be moved by the words of this youthful rebel, whose thirst for freedom and solidarity with humanity outlasted the flesh. He is an example to us all.

Pete is survived by his wife, Rose, two daughters, four grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, and many friends and comrades who loved and respected him.

## **Ahrne Thorne, Marcus Graham**

Two other anarchist comrades have recently died. First, Ahrne Thorne in New York, the last editor of the Yiddish language anarchist paper *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (The Free Voice of Labor), died in December at his home in the Bronx. He was 80 years old. He wrote for that paper for 45 years until it shut down in 1977. Born in Poland, he went to France where he joined the anarchist movement, later participating in anarchist activities in Toronto and New York.

We have also been notified of the recent death of Marcus Graham in December at the age of 92 years. Because of a government legal repressive threat Graham had been living in anonymity during the last few years. A comrade who was a personal friend sends us the following note:

“Graham lived a long and active life within the anarchist movement, often punctuated by controversial involvements within it. He published pamphlets, contributed articles to numerous publications and compiled and edited *An Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry*.

“With a few unavoidable interruptions, Graham was the editor of the anarchist journal *Man!* Most of the persecution which he later suffered was, in fact, due to his editing of *Man!* The journal published from January 1933 until April 1940.”

We hope to reprint some material from *Man!* in the future. Both Ahrne Thorne and Marcus Graham had a long commitment to libertarian publishing and activism, and like Puccio, never turned their backs on freedom.

## **Pete Kwant 1948–1986**

Finally, we note the untimely death of our friend, co-worker and neighbor Pete Kwant (25 February 1948–19 November 1985). The tragic circumstances of his death will render hollow anything we might say here. Pete was an anti-war GI who was involved in FTA (Fuck The Army) and the GI coffeehouses down in Texas. His refusal to act in conformist fashion and his visceral hatred of authority (he was known to roll down the window of his car and shout insults at cops without worrying about their response) got him into trouble with the state of Texas, and he eventually found his way to Detroit. He was once a staff member and later a distributor of the FE, remaining a friend though he was not in agreement with many of our ideas. More recently he fell on hard times and desperation; Michael K. said he wrestled with his demons, winning some and losing some. We loved him, but love fares poorly these days; it doesn’t show itself, gets undermined by daily life, by violence, by madness. This world, this world we must learn to leave behind “like some smoke-filled room,” did him in. He took our pain like a lightning rod. Yet he wanted us to remember the good times. There were good times—and we will remember. In that grey, grey

November, the day we buried him the sun came out of the clouds for the first time in weeks and we saw a rainbow. This isn't metaphor, but a literal fact. We'll remember the good times.

# fifth Estate

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/322-winter-spring-1986/recent-deaths>  
Fifth Estate #322, Winter-Spring, 1986

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