

Dr. Marshall D. Abrams Dies at 79

Dr. Marshall David Abrams died at 79 of heart failure. He was a graybeard in the field of computer security (now known as cyber security), a founder of the Annual Computer Security Application Conference, and an avid model railroader. Dr. Abrams was a husband, a father of two daughters, and a friend to many. He was a lover of folk music, sing-a-longs, and jokes – the good, the bad and the pun-y. His many friends and colleagues describe him as the glue – the one who organized lunch, lent a hand, or jumped in to help solve a problem. He was a force pushing others to go further and do better. Marshall freely shared his knowledge and was an egoless collaborator. He delighted in reciting the perfect line or quote to characterize the moment.

Marshall holds two patents and has authored many publications; he is coeditor of *Information Security: An Integrated Collection of Essays*, which has been widely acclaimed as necessary for every security practitioner's library. He has taught information security courses on six continents.

Marshall was a contributor to "the Red Book," an essential text in developing computer security networks. The "Red Book" was part of the "Rainbow Series" published by the U.S. Department of Defense Computer Security Center in the 1980s and 1990s.

Dr. Abrams began his career as an Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering at the University of Maryland. Always the teacher, he liked to say that he gave two midterms: the first to teach humility and the second to build confidence.

Dr. Abrams was a principal participant at the National Bureau of Standards (NBS), now known as NIST. He specialized in network performance measurement. As part of this effort, he wrote Federal Information Processing Guidelines. While at NBS, he received the Department of Commerce Silver Medal Award.

Dr. Abrams joined the MITRE Corporation in McLean, Virginia in 1981 and retired in 2018 as a Principal Scientist. He specialized in creating standards and frameworks for secure computer networks. Most recently, he concentrated on information technology security at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), who honored him for developing the National Airspace System (NAS) Protection Profile Template. He led MITRE's team developing Information Technology, computer network security, and database security for the National Security Agency (NSA).

The Annual Computer Security Application Conference was Marshall's third child. It is one of the first conferences in the field of cyber security research. Marshall was instrumental in supporting conference scholarships for students and helped to create a special academic scholarship, the Scholarship for Women Studying Information Security. Just before his passing, he was involved in bringing the conference into the virtual world so that it would continue unstopped by COVID. Marshall insisted on wearing the nametag "curmudgeon" at every

conference, but just beneath the curmudgeonly surface was a generous soul who did whatever was needed. [More information on the conference may be found at www.acsac.org; information on SWSIS is at www.swsis.org -- both will be a continuing legacy of Marshall Abrams].

Marshall and his wife Rochelle lived in the Forest Glen Park area of Silver Spring for fifty-one years in a home that he designed and specified.

Marshall was an avid model-railroader. His model railroad layout, the Abrams Railroad Empire (<https://abrams-railroad.potomac-nmra.org/>) was a labor of love built over 50 years, which grew to encompass 300 square feet. He was an active member of the Potomac Division of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA), and he served the Division in many capacities -- as a Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Potomac Flyer Publisher, and Division web page developer. He loved nothing more than to help others and was working, up until his death, to help other members develop an online presence for their layouts.

Marshall grew up in Jersey City, NJ where he was a Boy Scout and an Eagle Scout. He received a BSEE from Carnegie Institute of Technology and an MSEE and Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh.