

CAPITAL LETTER

His memory transcended

MICHEL Corbold, a teacher of transcendental meditation, just back from attending a three-month study course at the Maharishi Yogi's Rishikesh headquarters, India, became interested in the movement when he was working as a newspaper proof reader.

Before that he was in advertising until, as he says, "I blew a blood vessel". And way back before that he was a Church of England minister. Wearing an Indian lawyer's coat, prayer beads and a medallion of the Maharishi and his master, Guru Dev, he paid a brief visit to Canberra to see the local transcendental headquarters.

A cheerful character, looking much younger, despite his beard, than his 39 years, Corbold said he had been "drunk on happiness for the past three months". His job will be to travel around Australia giving "the sound" (everyone has a different one) to meditate on to those wishing to be initiated into the movement. The process of joining the movement is virtually completed after seven lectures are given in three days.

When I suggested that he had now the sole authority over the movement in Australia, Corbold said, "Authority is too grand a word. What I have learned in three months in India is how to select the proper sound for each individual. The 'sound' has no meaning. You have to make it mental".

After you have donated your week's salary and become initiated into the movement your experience and technique of meditation are checked. This may occur over several months until the checker is sure that the principles of meditation have been grasped.

Corbold was at Rishikesh along with the Beatles, Donovan (of the Beach Boys), Mia Farrow and her sister and in all about 70 Europeans.



Mr Michel Corbold

"There was never any thought of the Beatles becoming teachers of transcendental meditation. They went there for spiritual development", said Corbold.

When I mentioned some of the wild stories written about the Rishikesh centre Corbold said that some were whipped up by anti-European newspapers which alleged that spy rings and orgies were being conducted at the Rishikesh centre. All were reports based on imagination.

Corbold admitted that the Maharishi was a good businessman but sometimes a bit unworldly. He once asked an aide to buy "that building for a headquarters". Actually it was a multi-million dollar luxury hotel. Donations to the movement are tax free in America but not in Australia.

After the genial Michel Corbold left me, I discovered he had left behind his walking stick and airline ticket. Waving them at him in the street I realised one of the limitations of the movement: It is no substitute for a memory training course.