

SYLVIA DURRIE SHAFROTH

June 1, 1929 - Jan. 13, 1988

Sylvia Shafroth was born in Denver, Colorado but lived in Washington, D.C. since she was ten years old. After graduating from American University with a major in art (specializing in painting), she spent time in Denver, Colorado and Wilmington, Delaware, where she worked at the Delaware Arts Center. Sylvia also received a master's degree in art from the Tyler School in Philadelphia. Originally a member of Mountain View Friends Meeting in Denver, she transferred her membership to Friends Meeting of Washington when she returned to Washington in 1968.

While in Washington, D.C., Sylvia served as a strong presence in the community. In addition to providing private art lessons in her home, she gave one-person art shows, gave slide shows on art history and taught art at the National Institutes of Health, taught at the Corcoran, worked as a tour guide at the National Gallery, and was an active and highly skilled tennis player. In her free time Sylvia enjoyed playing the piano, flowers, and reading.

Sylvia's special dedication to a rich and peace-filled life deeply affected her presence in the Friends Meeting community. She was a member of the Peace Committee for many years, and avidly participated in various Friendly witnesses and vigils on peace and social justice issues. She also played a very active role in the life of the Meeting's Senior center, where she taught art classes and gave slide lectures and talks on various aspects of art history. Many Friends involved with the Senior Center during Sylvia's time there remember the constancy of her warm and caring presence. She also enjoyed arranging special tours for Meeting members and attenders of exhibits at the National Gallery, and brought her skills in interpersonal relationships to her work in the First Day School programs. Even in the last few years, as she was increasingly troubled by the cancer she waged a long battle against, she continued on a regular basis to bring her special skills and talents to enrich the lives of others. One Friend in Washington remembers an occasion a few years ago when Sylvia had gone through a difficult period with her chemotherapy treatments. Just a few days after Sylvia had been in the hospital, this Friend ran into Sylvia working with a children's tour group at the National Gallery. In response to this Friend's sense of surprise at not seeing her at home resting, Sylvia responded with words in the vein of: "Well, of course, I'm here, they needed me. It is very important for children to be introduced to the beauty and magic of art at a young age. And anyway, it cheers me up to work with children like this!"

Sylvia's spiritual life was founded both in the Friends Meeting of Washington and in the Washington Cathedral. Her oral ministry in meetings for worship especially bridged these two faith traditions with great clarity and impact. Many people will long remember the great sense of joy she shared with us in Jesus as a caring, healing and forgiving Christ. In addition, it was a great honor for the members of the Peace Committee of the Friends Meeting of Washington to work with Sylvia on various peace and social justice projects over the last few years. She was always cheerful, optimistic, warm and loving. Sylvia brought a special faith in the good in all people and the value of patience and dedication to a cause over the long period to her peace work. Although we have lost her physical presence, Sylvia's spiritual impact on all those around her will continue, and it is known that many are grateful for Sylvia's lifelong example of a Friendly witness.