

Gail Darlene Allen Ostensen

November 18, 1944 – January 29, 2015

Gail ~~ mother, friend, monk, “sister” ~~ shared her wisdom and quiet presence with those of the Order and her many friends. This page is their tribute to her.

Born an only child in New England in 1944, she struggled with skeletal issues from birth, spending part of her childhood confined to bed with only the trees and birds outside her window as friends and companions.

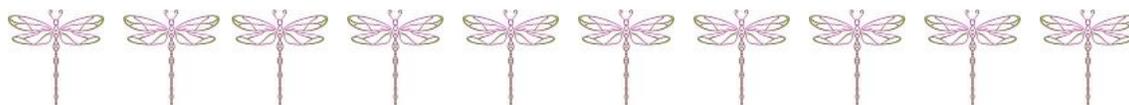
Her Yankee up-bringing and her (dis)abilities gave her resilience; patience and an implacable independent stubbornness which were woven into who she was in the world-as-we-know-it. She was a caring mom and best friend to her son, Rob, as well as caregiver and companion to dogs, cats, birds, and other creatures. Gail deeply loved nature – the sun that rises at dawn, Emily (the “dead” tree who continues to grace the back yard of the Cabin on the Lake), the birds she fed daily outside her kitchen window, the flowers she planted and the wild ones she tenderly protected, the damsel and dragon flies that fluttered in the yard. For Gail, Love was always speaking, always communicating, through the Wisdom of the Mother, through the language of the first Bible (I Corinthians 15:46).

Gail gifted those who were her friends with her ability to allow them to be themselves, withholding judgement or advice (well, OK for the most part unless she REALLY felt you needed to hear something... and then... well...”Katy bar the door”). Regardless, at her essence, her wisdom, her deep listening, her “eldering” and her gift of hospitality clearly spoke of Love’s love for each and every person.

Gail had many loves – her son, Rob; the natural world, her soul-friends, Spicewood Cabernet, cooked carrots, chocolate, curtains, Christmas, cooking and the color pink. Most of all she loved Wisdom.

The Cosmos was made better by her presence within it and with us. For that we are deeply grateful and yet also thankful knowing that she is now “free at last” from the struggles of this earthly body.

These contributions are by those she loved...and who loved her. They celebrate her life in this “horizontal plane”. Shortly before her transition to Love, she emphatically reminded one of us that “Love is stronger than death”. Each of these offerings reminds us of the wisdom of that truth.



WHEN DEATH COMES

*When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;*

*when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse
to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;*

*when death comes
like the measles-pox,*

*when death comes
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,*

***I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?***

*And therefore I look upon everything
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,
and I consider eternity as another possibility,*

*and I think of each life as a flower, as common
as a field daisy, and as singular,*

*and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,
tending, as all music does, toward silence,*

*and each body a lion of courage, and something
precious to the earth.*

*When it's over, I want to say: all my life
I was a bride married to amazement,
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.*

*When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.*

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

~~ Mary Oliver, emailed by Gail to her contemplative group on November 18, 2013, emphasis hers



Jesus said, "This heaven will pass away, and the one above it will pass away. The dead are not alive, and the living will not die. During the days when you ate what is dead, you made it come alive. When you are in the light, what will you do? On the day when you were one, you became two. But when you become two, what will you do?" ~~ Gospel of Thomas, L11

~~ Offered by Blake Burleson (Abbot)



Silent Witness

It was a fork in the road and me a silent witness
 as she received her invite to meet her Beloved
 Doubts, fear and shock gripped the ones that loved
 In her reined clarity and no truth was amiss!

She prepared for her date with the maker
 No fuss, no mess, no guess and no distress
 I witnessed with awe, peace and calm caress
 By and by as she took a step closer...

It was a test, she made a testimony
 to face the end with such joy and harmony.
 ~ ~ Amutha Selva (Friend)

My life came and went
 like the wind, between the opening
 and closing of an eye.
 As Truth is my witness
 the soul is the body's guest.
 A day is going to come when
 like a bird; it flies out of the cage.
 ~ ~ Yunus Emre (51)

~ ~ Offered by Ed Clifford (Monk)

The opposite of life is not death.
 The opposite of death is birth.
 Life has no opposite.
 Life is Eternal..
 ~ ~ Eckhart Tolle

~ ~ Offered by Donnie Hungerford (Monk)

A Vibrant, Gracious and Wise Monk

Over several years, I was blessed with an insightful and loving interaction with Gail --- two Gatherings of the Order, 11 days focusing on Christophany, a Psalms retreat here in Western NC with Lynn, and years of hour-long conversations by phone just with Gail (and other times with Ed Clifford, Gail, myself, and sometimes, Wendy Johnston). The phone sessions began with centering prayer followed by spacious sharing that always became mutual spiritual direction. Through it all, we sacramentally tasted the Holy One and Yeshua.

I know for certain that Gail continues with us, not only in love, but also with wisdom deeper than words or concepts. What a beautiful, unique and extraordinary unfolding of the Divine she has been and is!
 Gail, keep being Gail!

Love always,
 Fred Macon (Friend)

Kahlil Gibran, Syriac Christian Mystic, 1883 - 1931



**When you are sorrowful look again in your heart,
and you shall see that in truth
you are weeping for that which has been your delight.**

I will miss her presence... My first introduction to Lynn's "Wisdom weekends" was at Gail's "Cabin on the Lake" where I stayed as her guest. She opened her home and heart to me, and I knew I *was* home. Gibran's quote above captures my feelings so well.

~~ Offered by Lisa Bonner (Monk)

We hold you in prayer today
and envision you as vibrant, whole, peaceful,
joyful, and fulfilled. Our minds are at peace for we know
in our hearts that the light of God surrounds you, the love that
God is enfolds you, and the power and presence of God are with you
always. Whether we are near or far, our thoughts, prayers, and love are
with you. Our oneness of spirit connects us, just as we are one with
our Creator. With praise and thanksgiving for the activity of
Spirit within you, we entrust you to the care of the Divine.

We pray for your highest good in all ways and
see you freely expressing the
beautiful soul
you are!

~~ Marilyn Yeager (Monk)

"What is with you must vanish; what is with God will endure." Al Qur'an 16:96

"Whoever... has faith, verily, to him will God give a new life..." Al Qur'an 16:97

"God has revealed guidance and mercy and good news for those who submit (to His will)... and patiently persevere." Al Qur'an 16:89

~~ Offered by Gail Wiggin (Monk)

Gail is

Shaman
Inspiring
Accepting
Humorous
Earthy
Kind
Generous
Loving
Spiritual
Light and peace
Convivial
WISE



When someone dies, people often say “she's in a better place.” I believe Gail is where she always has been. It's that place with which we have a point of contact deep in our souls. Many of us are ever only dimly aware of this place, but I think Gail lived there.

This place reveals itself through music that makes the heart ache and yearn for something unknown. Through clouds scuttling past an autumn moon as an owl intones. Through a wolf howling atop a lonely hill. It's where the shaman incants as disciples dance amidst the bonfire's haze.

When we KNOW something without knowing how or why, or even quite what that something is, it comes from that place. It is the source of all love, goodness and kindness. It's where we find ultimate truth and whence epiphanies burst. And yet, it's a confusing place filled with contradictions. The spirit is omnipresent there, but organized religion is absent. It's where people live and let live and listen to each other non-judgmentally. Still, people are not perfect there. They live earthy lives with gusto and have foibles and infirmities.

I know that Gail is in this special place, just as she always has been. And now her visage is my icon for that place. ~~ Jeff Hart (Friend)



I haven't come here to settle down.
I've come here to depart.
I'm only here to love.
A Heart makes a good home for the Friend.
I've come to build some hearts.
I'm a little drunk from this Friendship-
Any lover would know the shape I'm in.
I've come to exchange my twoness,
to disappear in One.
He is my teacher. I am His servant.
I am a nightingale in His garden.
I've come to the Teacher's garden,
to be happy and die singing.
They say "Souls which know each other here,
know each other there."
I've come to know a Teacher
and to show myself as I am. ~~ Yunus 10

~~ Offered by Marilyn Yeager (Monk)

A Farewell



Only in my deep heart I love you, sweetest heart.
Many another vesture hath the soul, I pray
Call me not forth from this. If from the light I part
Only with clay I cling unto the clay.

And ah! my bright companion, you and I must go
Our ways, unfolding lonely glories, not our own,
Nor from each other gathered, but an inward glow
Breathed by the Lone One on the seeker lone.

If for the heart's own sake we break the heart, we may
When the last ruby drop dissolves in diamond light
Meet in a deeper vesture in another day.
Until that dawn, dear heart, good-night, good-night.
~~ George William (A.E.) Russell

~~Offered by Alice Despard (Monk)

On a brilliant summer day,
It shelters me from the hot sun.
It's leaves and branches
fan me with gentle breezes,
And I learn the beauty of diversity.
In its changes from season to season,
the cycle of life plays out.
In this transformation
Birth, living, dying and then birth again,
I know my place in the Universe.

~~ Emily O'Connor (Monk)



Goodbyes are only for those who love with their eyes,
Because for those who love with heart and soul there is no such thing as separation.
~~ Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rumi

~~ Offered by Linda Diehnelt (Monk)

The Morning Gift

We move through the brushy edges of San Antonio at the threshold of night.
Sshhh . . . the birds still nestle soundlessly in their feathery coats.
This is the best time to travel, in the still-quiet-dark.

Coffee in a warm cup, the click of the van door closing, the turn of the ignition.
Soft roll of tires as we slide silently and smoothly onto the asphalt river home.
So many souls already traveling this river.
Working their way into a new day and the endless march of
Things-to-do that must-be-done.
Ever on the search for daily manna.

My daughter yawns and pulls the red fuzzy blanket closely about her shoulders,
Presses her forehead against the cool window.
And drifts off into her own soft travels.

The river flow of souls doesn't cease through these dark hours.
And somehow this feels right.
Our travel route is well planned, so I take little notice of exits
and entry ramps
and rest stops along the way.
These can always be taken, but we are on a schedule, and schedules and plans are best kept.
(Right?)

There begins a softening brightness at the edge of the world.

The river road eases us into an easterly curve,
And there, there, straight ahead
Is the dark, bright-shining-radiance of daybreak,
Radiance deadly serious in a way beyond comprehending,
Unfurling a spiraling orange light,
And penetrating the dark star heavens
With far-reaching laughter.
Because, after all, light is not either-or.

And there, there, straight ahead,
Oh, happy surprise,
Is Gail! There she is.

Not the sunrise itself,
But, rather, somehow, there she is within the rays,
Within the light.

Something in me shifts.
A slight shift upon which everything depends.
The very pit of the stomach, the marrow of the bones, the base of the spine
Groans and responds and knows
That It is good.
It is very good.

~~ Juli Christian Rosenbaum (Monk)





Your Smile,
Your quiet determination,
your deep acceptance
Of true pain
Enhanced a glow
Within your soul.

A willing hand
Extended to others,
You met this world
With open heart
And gentle words.

Inspiring presence
filled your aura
Drew,
And held us
In your love.

Your often heavy,
Human journey
Your life purpose
Now fulfilled,
Released to wonder
Light and joy.

Our hearts
Deeply miss you,
But vibrate
With your essence
And always will.

~~ Jerry Kimmel (Monk)

Thine own Intellect
Shining, void, and inseparable
From the Ground of Radiance;
Hath no birth,
Hath no death,
And is Immutable Light
~~ Padmasambhava

~~ Offered by Rosemary Shirley (Monk)





Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on the ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn's rain.

When you awaken in the morning hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry:
I am not there, I did not die. ~~ Hopi Prayer

~~ Offered by Diana Beardsley (Monk)