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Women's Studies Newsletter May 1988 Nancy Nowik Memorial Issue

Women's Studies

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IN CELEBRATION OF NAN NOWIK
1941-1988:
A SPECIAL EDITION OF
THE WOMEN'S STUDIES NEWSLETTER
A tree is a set of transformations, its roots drinking water from the earth and its leaves drinking fire from the air. Is there any relation between such a system of systems and Nan?

Even if we should not witness it, we knew that Nan was drinking fire from air, her consciousness phototropic and photosynthetic, and she brilliant.

Her full brilliance irradiated her, countering her dying with living fully. She gathered the most meaningful parts of her past to her. Otherwise she concentrated on the present and what she could create now.

As often as possible, including the last time by air-ambulance, Nan came to her house and garden in Granville to reground herself in sisterhood and siblinghood and live fully. It was her home. It was water from the earth as well as fire from the air.

Our action in planting a tree in her honor is an appropriate one. We do it in and for remembrance of her.

-- from remarks made by Tony Stoneburner at the dedication ceremony for the tree planted in Nan’s honor by the English Department at Denison. A photograph of this tree is reproduced on the front cover of this Newsletter.
It is fitting that Nan be memorialized in the Denison Women’s Studies Newsletter, for during her years as Women’s Coordinator she ably edited this publication. Contributions for this special edition were made by friends, colleagues, and former students. Some of the pieces were written for the Newsletter, some were written and spoken at the Memorial/Celebration event held in Nan’s honor at Denison on February 14, 1988, some were drawn from letters written to Nan, and some were written for other purposes but submitted later to the Newsletter. Collectively they demonstrate her influence and significance to so many of us.

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INTRODUCTION:
Lisa Ransdell, Denison Women’s Coordinator

It strikes me as a particular irony that my first comments as Women’s Coordinator and thus editor of the Denison Women’s Studies Newsletter should reflect on the life and death of Nan Nowik, who was Women’s Coordinator from 1977 to 1980. During Nan’s tenure as Coordinator, a position she held in addition to her faculty status in the English Department, she significantly shaped many of what are today the institutions of Women’s Programs and Women’s Studies at Denison, among them the Women’s Resource Center, the fall Women’s Week celebration, Women’s Voices, and the Women’s Studies Newsletter. Nan’s stature was such that had she lived, I am certain I would have sought her advice and approval for my performance as did my immediate predecessor, Mary Schilling.

I am pleased that I got to know Nan, although neither as well nor for as long as I would have liked. I came to Denison in late August as a visiting lecturer and Nan was then already ill. We first met during a quietly momentous event, the occasion of her first potluck/Committee W gathering since her surgery. Only later did I learn of Nan’s great love of potlucks, although her love of social gatherings was immediately apparent. Nan was enormously gracious to me that evening. Even though she was walking with a halting gait and speaking with some difficulty, she made it a point to cross the room and welcome me. She said, “You must be Lisa. Julie said I should meet you.” I welcomed her back and we exchanged what were for me some awkward pleasantries, given the ponderousness of first meetings and her surprising forthrightness about her terminal illness.

I saw Nan often after that first meeting; at parties, at campus events, and at her home as I joined in the community effort to do small things in order to make her daily life a bit easier. Nan’s attendance at my birthday party in Columbus with Julie in November will be a treasured memory always. I talked with her and heard her talk about her illness, her wishes, her plans. She made it easy for those around her to deal with her illness, since she was so matter-of-fact about it herself. So much so, in fact, that for me it was moving and instructive, and yet sometimes uncomfortable. This woman, whose reputation as a teacher was already legendary, was teaching us right up until the end about life and death, about individual rights, about the intolerance of our society for alternative family forms, and about friendship.

The way in which Nan was loved and cared for within the community made me want to be a part of it. However romantically as a relative newcomer I may have viewed this, I am grateful to Nan for renewing my faith in the possibility of real sisterhood as a part of feminism and women’s and men’s friendships. In my discipline of sociology such non-familial relationships are referred to as “fictive kinship,” and yet in my book there is nothing fictive about them. Nan was loved and cared for by her close friends in Granville right up until the moment that she stopped breathing. I know that she would want the deep commitment to friendship and the love of her dear friend Juliana Mulroy to be documented. It was Julie who cared for Nan on a daily basis for many months and who coordinated the care provided by others. It was Julie and her dogged determination that Nan’s wishes be honored that made it possible for Nan to die at home, where she most wanted to be. And it was Julie who could always make Nan smile.

As I became involved in the planning for Nan’s memorial celebration in February, and in the compilation of pieces for this newsletter, I was most struck by two things about her. One was her interest in and caring for others, even when she knew she was dying. In my case it took the form of earnest discussions she initiated with me about the position of Women’s Coordinator, and the impact of my accepting the job on the
completion of my dissertation and on my long range career goals. But mine wasn't the only case: the other thing was the sheer number of people she was deeply and variously connected to. It was her wish that those who attended her memorial celebration would learn more about her. Following that warm and wonderful event in February even many of those who knew her well remarked that they had discovered some new facet of her life, or had an impression of her confirmed through someone else's anecdote. In that same spirit of remembering this very special and influential member of our community, this Newsletter is lovingly dedicated to the memory of Nan Nowik.

REMEMBERING NAN NOWIK
by
Kim Cromwell, DU '81

As part of coping with the pain of Nan's death I have in recent weeks gone through old letters, papers and notes that she sent me since I moved to Massachusetts in 1982. Before I comment on the evolution of my friendship with Nan and the impact that she has had on my life, I know she'd appreciate our shared amusement at some of the qualities that made her a unique friend.

For instance, one of her letters, dated September, 1982, begins with "Dear Kim, My first and best news is that after twenty years I think I have a sport! It's racquetball...In fourteen days I've played twelve times!" So "Nan-ish," I thought, to dive in like that, with such pleasure. "I get exhausted easily," she writes, "I lie on the floor and gasp and pant--but I can feel my stamina begin to increase and I love it--love the pushing myself to exhaustion and complete relaxation and total sweat."

Another letter from the summer of that same year went into great detail about the camping trip that she took with a friend. "I became downright unfastidious," she wrote--a significant accomplishment for Nan--"And I knew I'd become a camper when I began to get dippy about the cooking and eating utensils--little Boy Scout kits that were marvels of efficiency--I loved the tidyness and economy of movement and utensils," she added. Most of my friends, when writing about a camping experience, would go into great detail about the forest, the hiking, the natural beauty of the environment. Nan, too, would discuss those things--but, in true Nan fashion, would also delight in her own idiosyncrasies. I loved to tease Nan about her obsession with detail.

It was Nan's fascination with detail that first drew me to her. I met her in 1978 when as a sophomore at Denison I took an American Literature class that she taught. Towards the end of the semester I stopped in to talk with Nan about a paper I wrote on the theme of death in Emily Dickinson's poetry. Nan had been disappointed in the paper because I had written more personal reaction than literary analysis, and so we were meeting to discuss what had gone wrong. Over the course of the next two hours, Nan asked me direct, probing questions about my life and about the pain that had surfaced in the paper. Rather than writing about Dickinson, we discovered, I was really writing about the numbing pain that I carried within me over my father's sudden death ten years earlier.
I had never spoken about that pain before Nan made it safe to talk with her about it. I had never explored how devastating it had been to not have the chance to say goodbye to him. Nan's fascination with the detail of my experience allowed me to share feelings that I'd never shared before. Her questions at times seemed intimidating—but my feeling with Nan was always that she would treat the details of my life with a great deal of gentleness and concern. There was something about the way she paused between questions, always steadily looking me in the eye, that told me she took me seriously. That conversation in her office in 1978 marked the beginning of our friendship—and the beginning of many years of shared introspection as we explored the similarities and differences in our lives.

There are many Nan Nowik memories that I'll carry with me: Her wonderful classroom style of quoting those people whom she admired—particularly Tommy Burkett. The ease with which she welcomed a senior citizen from the Granville community into her classroom and made him a part of our academic life. Her devotion to her students, and how I always hoped that she would describe me as her "beloved student," as she described a select few who had shared her classroom before me. Her homemade cold cucumber soup. Her soft voice. The way she tossed her head back and clasped her hands together when she laughed. The beauty of her hands, her long fingers and the grace with which she carried her body. Her celebration of women.

I will also remember Nan's support last year when my mother died suddenly of a heart attack. Again, I had not had the chance to say goodbye—but this time, with friends like Nan, I was able to experience my feelings of grief and loss in the company of people who cared. I felt less afraid. Nan asked me "What does it feel like? What do you wish you had said to her?" And we exchanged letters about the powerful, complicated ties that bind mother and daughter.

Only a few months later, Nan discovered her cancer. Once again we were looking at death—but this time it was her own. "How can you change the pattern and say goodbye so that you will be more prepared, more at peace when I die?" she asked. It felt so ironic to me that Nan had only months to live and yet here she was asking me to explore what I needed. But when I really think about our relationship I realize that this should have been no surprise. The thoughtful reflection that we did together as friends had somehow prepared us to face her death.

And so when I returned to Granville in November to see Nan for the last time I felt some sense of completion, some calm in knowing that for the first time I had, with Nan's help, shaped the best goodbye I could. Throughout our relationship I learned many things from Nan, but this was my greatest learning—that I can, in fact, be at peace with the death of someone I love. I will always owe that understanding to Nan—and will remember her as one of my finest teachers and friends.
NAN'S TEACHING
by
Dennis M. Read, Denison Department of English/Director, Learning Resources Center

Nan Nowik was formidable in the classroom. Sometimes students were intimidated by her demeanor. In time they saw her gentler side. Still, she always regarded the work of the classroom very seriously.

Nan considered being a professor a special privilege carrying a special responsibility. In professional matters she did nothing by half. I remember asking her to substitute for me in an American literature class, and her turning me down. Even though I was giving her more than a week's notice, she said that she wouldn't have enough time to prepare adequately for the class. I remember wondering what the big deal was; she had taught Hawthorne many times in her own American Lit classes. But I came to realize that Nan regarded each time she walked into a classroom a new event, one which required thorough preparation—not just looking over notes and reviewing readings, but, more fundamentally, considering freshly the perennial questions. Trying to do all of this at the drop of a hat would be reducing the questions to simplicities and demeaning the forum she thought the classroom should be.

Nan observed my teaching several times when I came up for departmental review, and her reports helped me enormously. She gave me specific suggestions to help me improve, at the same time encouraging me—perhaps beyond reason to do so. I remember my trying a new approach—new to me, anyhow—to teaching Pope's Rape of the Lock and her saying forcefully, "You were brave to do that." I took it as high praise.

Nan was loyal to her students beyond measure. In her final months she introduced me to a student who was visiting her and described a project the student had worked on in her class. This student, she said, writes beautifully, but she hasn't considered how important research is to her project or how to go about it. She was anxious to have us discuss the project together. "This is my last chance to teach her something," Nan said, laughing.

The urgency was nothing new, however. Nan was forever pushing her students to move beyond where they were. Learning and growing— inseparable activities to Nan. A Denison graduate drove seven hours to attend the Memorial Event for Nan in February. She said she had to. Nan's class in four contemporary women poets had been the best she had taken at Denison. Her accolade took me back to the semester Nan taught the course, and I remembered Nan's excitement each week as the students in that seminar came closer to perceiving the imaginative transformations the poetry accomplished. The course was difficult and challenging for both her and her students, and together they achieved powerful, new understandings.

Most teachers who take their work seriously consider their efforts, at best, only partially successful. Nan was no exception to this. But I know she touched the thousands of students she encountered in the classroom as few teachers do. Nan's example will always be before me as I teach. How lucky we all are to have worked with her. How much richer are we all because of it.
To Speak of Grief In A Flat Voice
Paul A. Lacey

Because someone I love must
"contemplate a foreshortened life,"
I am fumbling for what to say.

Mute or stupid,
shamed by my silence
but even more by my words
I kill time at the rack
of cards for every occasion.

Not a birthday or anniversary
nothing to congratulate
not Christmas or Easter.

In Regrets they have apologies
for forgetting--
a furry animal on the front
and inside "I can't bear to make you cry"
or "will ewe ever forgive me?"

Stark white lily-embossed cards
say Sympathy
to acknowledge the facts of death.

I choose a color photograph:
heavy white-capped waves
beat blue weathered rocks
upthrust from the sea.

There is no message.
Only one picture's-worth of words.

Horizon abide comfort eternity persevere

Can I leave it that way?

Doesn't anyone make a card
to say "sorry you are dying"?

--- Department of English
Earlham College
NAN AS WOMEN'S COORDINATOR
by
Mary Schilling, Director, Denison Career Development Center, formerly Women's Coordinator

What some of you may not know is that in the fall semester of 1977, when Nan was chosen to be the first released-time Women's Coordinator, I had also applied for the position. When the appointment was announced, she did what only a feminist would do: she invited all of the unsuccessful applicants to her Stone Hall apartment for an evening of discussion. She, in fact, wanted to pick the rest of our brains about programs and issues—ideas we had about what we would have done had we been appointed Women's Coordinator.

While it was clear to me at the time that Nan had good ideas for the position, it later became clear to me that I had not met two important criteria within the women's community: first, I was not a former Roman Catholic and second, I simply wasn't tall enough. In fact, as I looked around me, most of the leaders in the women's community were taller by far than I. And Nan, head and shoulders above me, symbolized them all.

In her role as Women's Coordinator, Nan reached out to students, faculty, staff, and community scholars. She strategized in a variety of ways to improve the status of women within the community. Gynecological and counseling services for women were on her agenda. Institutional response to issues of sexual harassment and sexual coercion were other priorities. Advising Women's Emphasis, founding and editing the Women's Studies Newsletter, supervising the Women's Resource Center, encouraging reticent students—all of these demanded her expertise and her attention.

Immediately following Nan's stint as Women's Coordinator, Beverly Purrington assumed the released-time faculty position for three years, and in 1982, five years after that meeting in Nan's apartment, the college lowered its standards to 5'1" and appointed me as the Women's Coordinator.

From the beginning, I had a very clear sense that Nan's expectations of me were as high as she was tall. And it seemed to me—both consciously and unconsciously—very important to meet those expectations. I wanted—and needed—her approval.

Nan had, as an English professor, ably edited the Women's Studies Newsletter, always—you will remember—printed on cambric blue paper. When I became coordinator, I decided to use the newsletter to showcase the writing of students taking Women's Studies courses. Naturally, I wanted my first issue to be perfect. When the issue was returned to me from Office Services, I delivered to Nan one of the first copies—knowing that whether or not anyone else would even notice it, she would read it cover to cover. When she saw me the next day, she went out of her way to compliment me on the new format and its contents. And then she added, 'I found a typographical error on page 12, paragraph 3, line 2.' I knew then that Nan would be one of my toughest critics! But she would also prove to be one of my staunchest supporters. When I took the risk of printing an anonymous autobiographical essay of a woman student who had been raped by her date, Nan affirmed my judgment. Together we decided to publish another autobiographical essay—this one written by one of her students—on breast reduction surgery, uncertain what the reaction of the community would be. Together, we had made the right decision.

An important program area which brought Nan and me together as the former and current Women's Coordinator was the annual Women's Week. Nan was incredibly supportive and could be counted on to attend nearly every event on the calendar. More often
that not she, sometimes with the help of John Schilb, coordinated Women's Voices. It was an event she loved, one which reinforced her historical role in the women's community. While the event seemed destined to come together only at the very last minute, I could always count on a printed program being on the desk of the Women's Resource Center by 4:00 p.m. on that Sunday afternoon. Women's Week memories abound. Nan and I struggled through the Marge Piercy visit together—I can still see Piercy's face when Nan gave her a stack of books for her to autograph for the Women's Resource Center. It was at a Women's Week convocation that Nan tried to block and unmask the Wingless Angels. And just this fall Nan was with us at one more Women's Voices in the Bandersnatch and at dinner and the convo with Gloria Steinem.

During my second or third year as Women's Coordinator, I finally felt I had measured up to Nan's standards. Arriving at my office the morning after the last event in Women's Week, I found a note from Nan under my door. "Have I ever told you," she wrote, "that I think you are an excellent Women's Coordinator?" I treasure that note.

Added to the newsletter and Women's Week, another annual responsibility Nan and I shared was reading submissions for the Women's Studies Prize. It always amazed me that after having read students' papers in her classes for eight long months, Nan would still gladly volunteer to spend time in May reading reams of senior research projects and other prize submissions. What amazed me even more was how insightful and perceptive she was and how objective she tried to be when we were judging submissions of students whom she knew well and had worked with closely. It is fitting that we will rename that prize in her memory.

As Women's Coordinator, Nan set the precedent. She is one of those giants against whom all future Women's Coordinators will be measured. She believed in the position—in many ways, she created it. While Beverly and I each transformed it to our own skills and personalities as well as to the needs of the community, our intentions remained true to Nan's goals. I passed on the role of Women's Coordinator to my own successor, Lisa Ransdell, with a deep sense of appreciation for Nan's legacy. And it is in her words on her last note to me that I will remember her—"With Much Affection."

In trying to recall Nan's special gift of friendship, the scenes I recreate are in one apartment or another in Stone Hall -- and always involve the preparation or consumption of yet another great feast.

I hear Nan laugh, deep in her belly, tossing her head back, chin in the air--eyes closed. Some say we laughed too much that year in Camelot. We laughed through the mad, happy feet of disco--from the rousing dance party after the President's opening reception to the Rudely Elegant discotheque in Columbus. We laughed as we created our Broadway show "Fat and Happy" with its show stopping number "Don't Rain on My Buffet" while clinging to our tent dresses and muumuus. We laughed and shared secrets while rolling stuffed cabbages for that yearly dinner I've dearly missed these last few years. Love and laughter abound. Memories are rich and vital.

Juliana Panchura, DU '76
We grow accustomed to the Dark:
When Light is put away:
As when the Neighbor holds the Lamp
To witness her Goodbye--

Either the Darkness alters--
Or something in the sight
Adjusts itself to Midnight--
And Life steps almost straight.

--Emily Dickinson (#419)

It seems a painful, jarring anachronism that everything Nan Nowik taught us lives on but she does not. Nan introduced her students to the centrality of gender and sexuality in our culture, through the texts that culture produces. She suggested to us that what we had learned to call "literary" was "political" as well, and demonstrated that we could question the criteria which had established a predominantly male literary canon--and ultimately the canon itself. She challenged us to write clearly and concisely about ideas which were in many cases startlingly new to us, and to defend our ideas articulately in the classroom. We also benefitted from Nan's own research interests; it is a loss not merely to Denison that Nan was diagnosed just as her work on Louise Erdrich and other contemporary women writers was gaining wider circulation in journals like Belles Lettres.

Knowing Nan--learning from her, learning with her, becoming her friend--was a formative experience for me. After that first course with her, "Women in Literature," she convinced me to try teaching, and we taught a section of FS 101 together. Always a vigorous, no-nonsense critic of my written work, she assisted as I struggled to apply ideas of canonicity and sexual politics in a senior research project. At the same time, she encouraged me to attend graduate school and to persevere once I got there. Our friendship had begun, strangely enough, with a nasty argument (about Anita Bryant and gay male misogyny) but eventually became one of the most important parts of my life at and after Denison.

Having said this, I nevertheless return to the anachronism--the feeling that I am somehow stranded in time with all that Nan has given me, unable now to return anything to her. Nan, of course, was invariably prepared well in advance, and I suppose I should not be surprised that she has in a way anticipated my dilemma. This summer she wrote me of "a moment of real happiness at the circularity of it all": her realization that she (once a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Stanford) had passed along, through a recommendation sent to the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, a similar fellowship to one of her students.

That "passing along," it seems to me, is what Nan would want us to do. The most fitting memorial we can make to her--whether we have remained in the academy or moved on--is to transmit to our colleagues, our students, our lovers, our children, our friends, what she gave generously to us: a fervent belief in the equality of all people, a respect for the power--the political power--of the written word, and the skill and compassion with which to impart those ideas. If we can make a difference in the lives of others as she made the crucial difference for us, we will have been very successful indeed.

Jeff Masten, DU '86
The first time I met Nan, I drove us to Granville so we could look for an apartment together. In the midst of a particularly bleak stretch of Route 37, I—in a characteristic move—ran out of gas. As the car shuddered to a stop, Nan looked at me and said—with her characteristic candor and firmness—"I would never run out of gas."

Several months later, sitting in our Granville apartment, we were interviewed by an eager young reporter from The Denisonian. There weren't a lot of women faculty in those early days of 1972—maybe seven or eight—so we were somewhat of a novelty. During the interview, we chattered on, growing increasingly pleased with ourselves. Nan's remarks were serious, scholarly and most of all—literary. So you can imagine the horror in her eyes when she came into my office a week later bearing a copy of The Denisonian from which blazed the headline "The Bobsey Twins Come to Granville." Nan would periodically find that article and send me a copy. I, of course, kept losing it, but she always managed to save it.

Gas, the article, friends, photographs, letters - Nan was of the saving kind. Nan truly took care. This was my first impression of her. And it's a theme that deepened in the years to follow. I saw it in her teaching. I saw it in her writing. I saw it in her passion for food. I saw it in her feminism. I saw it in the effect she had on my life as I tried slowly to become more that way myself.

Ann Fitzgerald, former Director of Women's Studies at Denison

Nan Nowik was my mail-and-phone friend. I never actually met her, and to this day I have no idea if she was short or tall, black or white, thin or plump, gay or straight, Democrat or Republican. But, as all academics well know, sometimes it is the people with whom you have an intellectual bond, and a body of shared interests, that evoke your affection and respect, and whom you will very much miss.

I "met" Nan through a full-page interview that she wrote on Louise Erdrich for Belles Lettres. I was then in the midst of doing a book on women writing fiction in America for the University Press of Kentucky. Her writing and her insights impressed me so much that I wrote to ask her if she would do the critical essay on Erdrich for this collection. It was then that I learned of her serious illness, but as was obviously characteristic of her, she also took the time to explain how I could connect with Belles Lettres and to tell me about reviews she had done of novels by Susan Fromberg Schaeffer and others. Ironically, it was Schaeffer about whom I was writing for this same collection, and Nan Nowik's article proved to be the inspiration for much of my later analysis. She wrote to tell me of The Elizabeth Stories and it was through Nan that I learned of the women's history conference in Boston and of Joan Chase's second novel.

I probably would have heard of Chase and Erdrich and Schaeffer eventually without the help of Nan Nowik. But what she taught me, and which I will never forget, is to keep going—with vigor, and hope, and courage, and friendship—in spite of the odds.

And I want to thank her for this. Rest in peace, Nan. I will miss you.

Mickey Pearlman
Cliffside Park, New Jersey
NAN AS NOVELIST
by
Julie Jeffrey, Department of History, Goucher College

I first met Nan at the GLCA workshop on course design and teaching in the summer of 1977. After a nine hour drive from Baltimore, I arrived at Kenyon tired and frankly apprehensive about what a faculty development workshop entailed. Would I measure up to the challenges the staff would surely have planned? Would I like the other people at this workshop? Had I done the right thing in coming?

In this uncertain mood, I carried my luggage to the apartment where I would be living for that week. And then Nan floated towards me—I'll never forget how she looked—tall, dressed in a light green flowing kind of dress, an interesting face, and a wonderful, warm, sweet smile. While I can't say that her greeting dispelled all my anxieties, I already felt better about the next few days.

It was not long before I realized that faculty development was intriguing, but even more important was my realization that Nan was a very special person whom, if it was possible, I wanted as one of my close friends. Of course, I was foolhardy; I knew that. Workshop friendships rarely survive the reality of distance and infrequent meetings. But I was determined to try, and Nan seemed willing. So that was how our friendship began. There was a kind of symbolic affirmation of the friendship not long after I returned to Baltimore. In the mail I discovered a brown Guatamalan skirt, similar to the green one that many of you know was a favorite of Nan's. She had picked up both in a garage sale and sent one to me. Over the years I have never worn it without thinking of Nan.

My friendship with Nan was nourished during the following years not only by our annual get-together at the GLCA workshop but also by the brief meetings that we were able to arrange here in Granville, and in Baltimore, in Cincinnati, in Boston, wherever our paths could be arranged to cross. In between the visits, we often talked on the telephone. And this is where my sense of Nan as novelist was born. Even before I came for the first time to Stone Hall, Nan had described this place and its people. While I had perhaps imagined that Granville was a sleepy little university town, she quickly persuaded me that here was life, drama, and a rich cast of characters. I couldn't wait to see it all for myself—and so powerful was her narrative technique that if Granville and all its inhabitants were not so fascinating as she suggested, I have never known it.

In short, Nan, for me, was a novelist of life—her own and the lives of those around her. She was an astute observer and an excellent analyst of human motivation and character. She created a vivid picture of the context and of the dramatic circumstances of the lives of countless of her friends and acquaintances, in elegant, carefully chosen language. I always looked forward to the latest installment of the unfolding novel. I don't mean to suggest by my comments that Nan was making up anything, but rather that she let her imagination roam over the stuff of daily life to create a piece of art with its own kind of reality and life. Perhaps my view of Nan as novelist comes from my knowledge that her scholarly life started out with a study of Henry James—but I think it was more than that. I believe that she had novelistic skills that she used to give pleasure to her friends and especially to me.

For sharing her perception and sense of the world I am grateful. I will miss her.
Essential Oils--are wrung--
The Attar from the Rose
Be not expressed by Suns--alone--
It is the gift of Screws--

The General Rose--decay--
But this--in Lady's Drawer
Make Summer--When the Lady lie
In Ceaseless Rosemary--

-- Emily Dickinson (#675)

When Nan was a graduate student at Stanford she shared living quarters with Sheryl Eaton. Both of them agreed to learn ten poems by heart and say them daily as they did the dishes. One poem, by Emily Dickinson, was Nan's poem. It expressed how Nan felt about her life. When Sheryl Eaton visited Nan in Granville this last fall she brought a copy of the selection. It moved Nan to tears. Later, having returned home from the trip, Sheryl wrote that re-reading once again "Essential Oils" by Emily Dickinson, she herself started crying because, as she later wrote to Nan, "It fits you so. You have worked so hard at everything and endured so much pain to wring out your essential oils--your teaching, your words, your writing, your friendship, your loves. Those will endure and make summer for a long long time."

From remarks made by Tony Stoneburner at Nan's Memorial/Celebration, for Sheryl Eaton, Whiteriver, Arizona

From The Vagabond by Colette
(One of Nan's Favorite Authors)

In each place where my desires have strayed, I leave thousands and thousands of shadows in my own shape, shed from me: one lies on the warm blue rocks of the ledges in my own country, another in the damp hollow of a sunless valley, and a third follows a bird, a sail, the wind and the wave. You keep the most enduring of them: a naked, undulating shadow, trembling with pleasure like a plant in the stream. But time will dissolve it like the others, and you will no longer know anything of me until the day when my steps finally halt and there will fly away from me a last small shadow.
Listening on Sunday to people who loved her tell their memories, all the years since I'd seen her dropped away and I felt Nan's presence, as of old, through her warmth, strength, caring, and beauty. I had been her teacher in a six-months seminar in Henry James, and then became her dissertation adviser for Melodrama in the Late Novels of Henry James. She had babysat Rachel and now came to see us, when Rachel lived with me, with a dissertation chapter in one hand and in the other some frivolous child's gift. Our discussions of her chapters were academically thorough and intense yet also richly personal (she after all being Nan--actually, Nancy back then) in the consistently productive way they crisscrossed the boundary between James and life. We had truly a dialogue--with James, with each other, with the world--and out of that grew our friendship that was so nourishing to me.

In her academic work as in her life and character, Nan actualized for me a human ideal central to Henry James in all his writing: to be "one on whom nothing is lost," to be "a consciousness...subject to fine intensification and wide enlargement," to be "finely aware and richly responsible"--and through such qualities to "Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what have you had?"

That last quotation, spoken by Lambert Strether to Little Bilham in The Ambassadors, is probably the most famous in all of James, and later in the novel is thrown back at Strether slightly altered when Bilham reminds him how he had urged him to see all he can. The Jamesian correlation of living with seeing (a "seeing" that is simultaneously visual, psychological, and moral) was also part of Nan, part of what made her way of having her life so rich and complete, and also part of her style. Her style was beyond anything a professor has a right to expect or could possibly teach, precisely in being such a powerful, witty, accomplished instrument of perception and analysis combined. Like her conversation, Nan's writing is not a static inscription but the active medium of her thought, and it has given us some rare inimitable scholarship, beginning with her dissertation. In its thoroughness, subtlety, and grace hers is one of the three or four really exceptional dissertations I have directed in thirty years, and Nan is also the Ph.D. student I return to in memory most deeply and most gratefully.

Julian Markels
Department of English
Ohio State University

I think back on spirited talks with Nan during her sabbatical in the Boston area, and I remember her letters that followed. "Beginnings are wonderful, aren't they?" she wrote soon after her return to Denison. Nan approached everything as a curious, wide-eyed detective, delighting in each new adventure, relishing every new clue. She was the most private of private eyes, solving women's mysteries in her own way, in her own time.

Bonnie Woods, Artist
Boston, Massachusetts
Both inside and outside of the classroom, Nan Nowik was a teacher. And she was a
good one. Although she was never my teacher within a formal classroom setting, I could
see from my 4th floor Fellows vantage point just how much of herself she gave to her
students, whether they were struggling or soaring. As I've thought about what I wanted to
say here about Nan-as-Teacher, several things have come to mind. It was clear to me that
Nan's very high standards earned her the respect and the admiration of many students,
and her evaluation of their work was important to them. I remember, for instance, one of
our brightest English majors saying about her just-completed senior honors project: "I just
want Nan Nowik to think it's good." I remember as well the many hours Nan spent
talking with a particularly special community scholar, and Nan's delight--and his--
when, largely through her efforts, the department made him an honorary English major.
Nan's commitment to teaching and to learning was still evident late last fall when she
was visited by a student she had met at the Newberry Library, a woman with whom Nan
had connected in her usual supportive way. Caught up as Nan was then in her own great
struggle, she was still the teacher, still interested in the outcome of this woman's ambitious
research project. Nan asked questions, she offered suggestions and encouragement, and
she made a rare trip to her office to find resource materials that she knew would be of help to
her former student.

It was beyond the classroom setting that Nan became my teacher, and I learned
from her in ways that are too subtle, or too personal, or too new and tender to articulate fully
here. I do want to say, though, that in the thirteen years that I knew her, Nan's feminist
sensibility and her example informed me over and over again. As far as I could see
during my visits with her last fall, that sensibility never once wavered.

Nan Nowik was a serious woman, but that didn't mean she wasn't fun to be with.
Some of my fondest memories of Nan center around the sharing of good food. On occasion,
with a former student of hers, who also happened to be a favorite former classmate of mine,
we would cook Chinese food in Nan's kitchen, the menu always planned around our
favorite Princess Shrimp. The joint preparation of our meal was half the fun, and I still
smile when I remember the time we tossed hot red peppers into a wok that contained
overheated oil. The peppers sizzled and crackled, then blackened and filled Nan's
kitchen with eye-burning smoke. The tears that gathered in our eyes came as much from
our laughter as it did from the smoke.

We had good talks after those dinners, sitting around the table and drinking coffee
or tea out of Nan's glass mugs. Full and relaxed, we talked of the past and of the future, of
our thoughts and of our dreams. I talked of such things with Nan in ways that were
uncharacteristic for me, and I think now that I did so because I trusted her without question.
But it's also true that she seemed to know just the right questions to ask and when to ask
them. She knew, too, when to sit back in her chair and simply listen and smile and nod her
head.

I'll remember Nan in many ways, but there's one picture of her that keeps
returning to my mind's eye. From my glassed-in cage of an office, I could see the traffic
flowing in and out of the 4th floor Fellows elevator. Most of the time, I would tune out those
comings and goings, but there was something about the way Nan stepped off the elevator in
the morning that made me look up: perhaps it was her rapid, long-legged stride. Whatever
the reason, I was glad for the distraction because I was always rewarded with that fine
Nowik smile and her "'morning, Kath."
Hard-working and caring teacher, strong and courageous woman of principle, supportive friend, with a quick smile and an easy laugh, Nan Nowik touched me, and she taught me in ways that I can only suggest here. I loved her, I miss her, and I'll never forget her.

*Kathy Hickman, DU '88
formerly English Department Secretary at Denison*

Although I did not have as extensive contact with Nan as many of her colleagues at Denison and in the GLCA, I felt a special closeness to her because of our work together at the 1981 GLCA Summer Institute in Women's Studies, and especially because she came to my aid that summer when I was emotionally drained and in great need of support. Although we had only recently met, she was right there, giving me the affirmation and understanding I needed to regain some balance.

I was able to visit Nan in Chicago in early June, and then again in December after she was hospitalized, and I am very grateful for that time with her. I think Nan enjoyed the company and the support of my visits—which I had hesitated at first to make, not wanting to impose on Nan, but feeling very drawn to her. There is no doubt of the enormity of the gifts that I received from her during those few hours. Nan faced death by embracing friendship and life. She carried out with directness and efficiency the practical tasks necessary to prepare for death while at the same time working to further life. To witness this and be a small part of it was a gift. By December Nan could do few of the practical tasks herself, yet she still had the concern—and just enough energy—to discover the personal issues in my life that were a matter of current concern and to offer a few simple words that enabled me to see a problem in an entirely new light.

Nan had an extraordinary capacity to extend herself to others without being intrusive and while maintaining her own integrity. There is a term in Judaism for the highest virtue: gemilut hasadim, acts of loving kindness. My understanding of this term has been enriched by Nan’s example. I am deeply grateful that my life intersected with hers. The mark of her heart—of her concern and respect for others, carried out with humor and deep seriousness—will be with me always.

*Penny Gold
Department of History
Knox College*
After many frustrating attempts at writing this article, I realized I was experiencing a familiar block—the same feeling I had when writing for Nan. For a teacher as special as Nan Nowik was, even a one-page reaction paper required one's utmost care. She read student writing with profound commitment and respect. She entered your ideas, worked through them with you.

Her interest in the ideas of individuals, and her direct approach to those ideas, made the importance of studying literature clearer to me. Books not only had a certain life of their own, their own world, but they could also influence fuller, more meaningful living. Other teachers had made this evident to me, but never in such a profoundly personal way; Nan taught me a lot about the value of being committed to ideas. I remember her speaking of her former love of Mailer, an enjoyment significantly tempered finally by his sexism. Personal disclosures as in that instance showed me how difficult—and important—living a thoughtful life can be.

Perhaps more significant, though, were the ways she showed us the pleasures of thinking and reading. Her enjoyment of our class discussions was evident, and I have never been in a class where participation was more broad; that January term, even timid students spoke, knowing Nan would listen carefully, take them seriously. In each class we worked at linking the novels in the course to our lives. Nan's teaching made the concept of "hidden curriculum" more clear; I left class feeling as though the hour had been mystically organized to apply to situations in my life. That was Nan's teaching; every moment was engaging, important. I remember a conversation I had with Anne Shaver after the class was over. One comment still echoes as a reminder of Nan's vitality; I said that she "never wasted a minute."

When Nan discussed the friendships in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye and Sula, I learned about my friendships. I will always associate Morrison with Nan, for more than anyone else she made the life in Morrison's work abundantly clear. I liked the novels at the gut level, and in our conversations she not only enhanced their emotive content but also revealed their careful structure, giving me tools with which I could more fully enjoy them.

In a relatively short time, Nan taught me a great deal—about books, honesty, feminism, teaching. I would be dishonest if I said that these gifts have completely assuaged my grief. I still have questions about Erdrich's Love Medicine, and I am about to read Morrison's Beloved: I would like to discuss these books with Nan, and that loss won't change. Yet because of her presence, I will better understand these and other books; because of her impact, I will continue to grow.
When I think about Nan as a colleague, particularly in an English Department, three characteristics come to mind. One is that through precept and example and just constant being with Nan I learned that teachers here and teachers everywhere need not be alone. That might sound like a revolutionary idea, because there is still that persisting (and I think patriarchal) metaphor of the lone scholar burrowing in the archives and not taking the risk of interacting with people, of being vulnerable. But Nan showed, in a number of different ways, how teaching and scholarship should be collaborative endeavors. Many of you know, for example, that she participated regularly as a staff member in the GLCA workshop on course design and teaching. And indeed she was my group leader during the time I was there. Also, Nan did a lot of team teaching. Working in the consortium's office and being involved with the Newberry Library Program in the Humanities, I have repeatedly found that for many people such collaboration is an alien act. Denison, however, has a far healthier tradition of team teaching than many colleges in the ACM or GLCA. Nan freely engaged in it and got a lot of stimulation out of it. She and I team taught a course in the James family which we enjoyed a great deal. Even though she sometimes found me hopelessly wedded to abstract literary theory and I sometimes found her too much of a stick-to-the-text person, we enjoyed thrashing those differences out. We both marked every single paper: she insisted on that. I thought about how much time it would take; but Nan thought real team teaching involves both teachers reading every single paper. She also broke down boundaries by insisting that for every other session we meet in someone's home, not in the classroom, so that students would come to feel that academic learning could become a part of their every day lives.

This morning, Dennis Read pointed out something else to me. He reminded me that more than many teachers I know here, Nan frequently had guest faculty in her classes. She thought that an important thing to do. She saw, particularly as she moved more into the Women's Studies area, that learning and teaching are necessarily interdisciplinary endeavors and often mutually stimulating ones as well.

And then in Chicago, Nan enjoyed participating with me and others in the once-a-month Newberry Library Feminist Criticism Seminar. I think she showed much openness to risk in many areas but particularly in this one when after going to just a few sessions, Nan asked the group to talk about her paper on mother blame in contemporary novels. And when they did so, she was very open to the comments that group had to raise.

Nan and I gave many papers together, and I was at many conferences where Nan gave papers of her own. Nan's style on those occasions was distinctive but characteristic. She always gave a paper as if she were trying to share something exciting with the audience. She was certainly not one of the classic droners that we find so often at the Modern Language Association and other places. She would lean forward, intent on something passionate that she wanted to tell you about, as if she wanted to join with you in a kind of teaching and learning experience right there and then. As I said at the beginning, with Nan you learned that teachers and scholars weren't alone.

The second characteristic of a colleague I can think of that Nan avowed was that she herself constantly sought advice and criticism and was more than willing to give it to others. Our friendship had personal, private, and professional overtones that constantly involved a going back and forth. For instance, Nan always felt uncomfortable with writing, even though she wrote a great
deal. Many people don’t know perhaps that one of her most treasured pieces of advice was given by Richard Altick at Ohio State, a literary big gun if there ever was one, who wrote at the end of one of her graduate papers, “God, how you write; you have a future if you want one.” That comment remained in her memory.

However, even though she did have problems accepting herself as a writer, Nan constantly asked people’s advice. She didn’t retreat into a cocoon and try to ward it off or fear it. At the same time she was very free in giving advice. I remember one instance where she asked me to write a letter supporting her application for tenure and I wrote a long draft of three or four pages that day and brought it to her at a party that night. She sat down and read it and tears came into her eyes, and she said "This is wonderful, this is beautiful, you’ve said so much, you’ve put it so well, it’s just wonderful—I’m wondering could you change this sentence here, and this paragraph...." Very Nan-like.

The third aspect, I think, is one that I recently have learned, a term that probably a lot of social scientists among you know already. It comes from the anthropologist Victor Turner: the concept of a liminal space, a space between boundaries. For me Nan was someone who occupied that space. For me Nan was a sterling and rewarding colleague, because she stepped into spaces between boundaries that many people fear to occupy.

One example was her stepping into the boundary between generations of Denison faculty. Even though there really has, and I say this in all sincerity, been a great deal of respect on both sides of the junior faculty/senior faculty divide, there have been times in the history of this institution where at least the junior faculty felt that perhaps their morale was not as strong as it could be and that there were some problems in communication. Many of you might know about the Howard report which came out at that time, though it seems that’s gone the way of the Kissinger report on Central America. That was a difficult time in the life of junior faculty here. We were hard on Nan. She was very sympathetic and would listen very sympathetically to what junior faculty had to say. For us she sometimes became the unwitting surrogate of senior faculty and we would lash out at her when she was merely trying to help us. But Nan graciously consented to play that ombudsperson role.

Nan also occupied a boundary for me and I think I occupied one for her between work and personal life. It is so appropriate for me that this celebration is taking place on a Sunday afternoon. I think of the many Sunday afternoons I spent with Nan in our offices - discovering M & M’s or whatever. Doing work, sharing work, talking about what we were up to, repairing to Slayter for a highly nutritious meal and then going back to work. It seems to me Sunday afternoon is a liminal space in itself since it comes between work weeks, and we occupied that together. We often said, and it was a running joke between us, that our greatest ambition was to have a private life. I would call her up sometimes on a Saturday and say, "I was wondering whether to call you but then I thought, you know, do you have a private life tonight or not?" She would do the same for me and we enjoyed that fusion of realms.

Finally, I can’t help thinking that for me Nan occupies a boundary position between the worlds of life and death. Since her death I’ve often had moments where I’m overcome with grief that she’s gone. But I’ve had many more moments when I
realize I've internalized her as no doubt all of you have, that she is a living presence in my
life. It's all I can do to quell the impulse after speaking here to go and look for her in the
audience and say "Did you think it was all right?" Another way of putting that is that she's
part of my past but she's part of my present and she will be a colleague for me in my future
as well.

John Schilb, Vice President, Associated Colleges of the Midwest, Chicago
formerly a member of the English Department at Denison

This letter was written for the Newsletter by Nan's former student, Deneise Deter Rankin, DU
'78:

February 28, 1988

Dear Nan,

Your tall elegance walks through my mind. It has, often, in the six or seven years
since I last saw you. I always thought I'd get back to Granville someday—to show you who I
have become, as one might show a proud parent, but I never have. Suddenly it's too late.
It's too late to "show you," to tell you about your part in who I have become. And to say
"thank you, Nan."

From you I took my first example of what it is to be a person who is a woman. I took
from you a model of independence and vulnerability, of brilliance and sensitivity, of
honesty, determination, and gentleness. I accepted these things as gifts from you—which I
believe they were. And I made them my own. Your statuesque height and carriage taught
me that mine might be lovely too. Your ability to respond to literature with mind, heart,
and soul brought out the most in me. Your gift for teaching inspired me to teach. Your
candor about personal and family conflict freed me to confront some of my own as well. I
saw, mirrored in you, my own fear of loneliness, and yet my need to be alone. I found in
you anger and impatience that I did not understand. But now I do.

Sometimes I wake in the middle of the night and lie there wondering why I'm
doing what I'm doing. How, in a profession still largely dominated by men, with all the
heartache and conflict that seems to be the nature of the beast, can I persevere and carry on?
All your tall elegance, again, walks through my mind. Not so much that you were
responsible for my entering the ministry—but that you have been an inspiration to me to
seek, to question, and to push forward.

It's hard to believe that now I cannot show you who I have become: so different I
think than when we first met. But more important, much more, is my fear that I did not
thank you—enough—for all that you were to me, to many of us, and for all that you are.
Thanks Nan. And, from the bottom of my heart, I give thanks—for you.

With love,

Deneise
When Nan and I became good friends I never imagined the path we would follow together. I feel very grateful to have been a part of Nan's living and dying. Her willingness and ability to keep me and others close to her during these last months of her life was an incredibly wonderful gift to me. I experienced getting much closer to her, knowing her better and loving her more. There was such strength and dignity in her as she fought to live, and such peace in her as she died.

I was out here to visit Nan the morning she died and I am very grateful that I was able to be here with her. Going through Nan's dying with her has made death a more acceptable part of life for me, and much less frightening than it was before. I don't feel the outrage about death that I used to, because I saw so much growth in Nan as she was dying and saw how much it can help us to clarify what is really important in life--knowing and respecting one's self, and acknowledging friendship and love for one another through feeling, telling and showing each other.

Of course I miss Nan and have had many moments of grief and sadness and tears, but that's ok. I've learned from Nan that death is something to fight and embrace.

*Sue Blanshan, Executive Officer for Human Relations
The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio*

It's taken me a month, and not a few rewrites to even attempt to convey how much I miss Nan. This probably won't do it either, but it's important to me to say something.

Our friendship was based on the attraction of opposites, overcoming age, lifestyle, and personality disparities. I was mouthy and arrogant, and Nan was dignified and reserved. We couldn't share much professionally--neither of us fantasized for a moment about trading places--but each of us had a sort of layman's regard for what the other was doing. We hardly ever saw each other--we thought, of course, that we had the rest of our lives for that. I didn't worry about the reticent, and she didn't worry about the law.

Still, we never lacked for things to talk about. Nan had a fine, raunchy appreciation for gossip and scandal, a built-in crap detector, and the total inability to suffer fools gladly. I was always at my best with her, and happy to be so. I wish I could say that we ever, even once, discussed something important, but we didn't. I don't know what place I filled in Nan's heart, but in mine she was the caring friend who offered kind words, encouragement, and solace, while simultaneously taking me down a peg when necessary. Everyone needs such a person, and now I have lost mine.

Nancy was my friend, I loved her, and I will miss her always.

*Kim M. Halliburton, D'U '79*
I met Nan a year ago when I attended an ACM course at the Newberry Library in Chicago. I know I speak for everyone in that class when I say that we were immediately struck by the intensity of her good will toward us. She made each of us feel as though we were the most important person she had ever met.

I should mention that I am a fifty-seven year old senior at Colorado College. The median age at that school is nineteen and my classmates in this course were approximately that age. It made no difference to Nan, however; she accepted all of us with enthusiasm and love. She was never too busy to stop and help us with our individual projects, and even though she was working on some research of her own, every day we would find little notes from her telling us about some new bit of information she had uncovered. Her carrel was as filled with our work as it was with hers. Yet, amazingly, Nan was very strict. She demanded daily class attendance, promptness with papers, proof of sufficient research, and whatever else she felt was essential to fulfilling the requirements of the course. But, her sincere concern was so evident in everything she asked for, no one ever objected. We knew she expected us to be the very best we could and none of us wanted to let her down. She possessed that remarkable, almost magical, talent of being able to inspire her students to learn more than they had to.

But I owe much more to Nan than a single course. During the time I was in Chicago I received an announcement from my college that applications were being accepted for the English department's annual Literary Awards. Nan insisted I had a project worthwhile enough to be seriously considered (the autobiography of a Paiute Indian princess named Sarah Winnemucca) and offered to help me with it. So, as soon as I returned to Colorado I began working on my proposal. I asked everyone I thought would know, just how to go about it. They all told me the school wasn't fussy and to do whatever I felt was suitable. I called Nan to get her opinion and it was then that I discovered she had been hospitalized. At that point, with her being so seriously ill, I expected nothing further. What I received was the exact opposite. From her hospital bed she phoned in a recommendation for me and then somehow managed to make a copy of her own research proposal which she sent to me to use as a guide. Shortly after that, she put me in touch with a Native American professor who had written her doctoral dissertation on Indian autobiographies. Nan then sent me her own most recent copy of Belles Lettres which contained reviews of current biographies and autobiographies by Native American women. As if that weren't enough, she went a step further and gave me a subscription to Belles Lettres. Needless to say, I was chosen as one of the four recipients of the awards and was highly commended for the care I had taken with my presentation. As I told the review board and Nan, none of it would have been possible without her help.

In November of 1987, I received the funding from my award and traveled east to begin my research. A large portion of the material I needed was collected in the Olive Kettering Library of Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Its proximity to Granville made it possible for me to visit Nan during my stay. Of course, it was Nan's (and Julie's) hospitality that made my visit so enjoyable and worthwhile. Not only that, I had barely walked in the door of Nan's home when she presented me with a book called Extraordinary Lives, The Art and Craft of American Biography. Another illustration of the fact that, if you were Nan's friend, she never stopped thinking of you.

I was extremely nervous about talking to Nan face to face because I wasn't sure how she felt about her condition. Her hope of being among the small percentage that survive brain tumors was gone and even though she realized it, I had avoided asking her on the telephone just what that meant to her. I was afraid of not being able to handle her answer. But I needn't have worried. True to her nature and with the help of her wonderful friend, Julie, she not only understood and accepted the inevitability of her death, she was able to
discuss it freely. She told me she never felt any fear of dying and only wanted to live as well as she could in the time that was left to her. She showed me the way a generous and gracious lady dies with dignity.

Nan had that rare ability to sense what people were all about and seemed to anticipate the needs of others without being told. She was truthful and genuine in her relationships and sincerely believed in each individual's right to her/his own "pursuit of happiness." It's difficult to find the words to describe how much knowing Nan meant to me. I can only tell you that she changed my life and I loved her very much. I wish I had met her sooner and known her longer.

Donna McDaniel
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Nan Nowik: Notes on an Autobiographical Narrative from a trip to hear Marsha Norman in Lexington Friday, 30 March 1984 (a journal entry)

Nan drove second leg, I third leg (Cincinnati--the Ohio River--Coventry--a Kentucky rest stop), Nan told about her girlhood, high school (a period of association with the "wrong group," black-leather-jacket jaunty, many of its members hubcappers, dropouts, and marriers because of pregnancy,--her mother on her knees to pray for her daughter), college, graduate school (her parents not understanding college and the rest of higher education; she studying late at the kitchen table and commuting hours daily); nuns and other teachers (a college one, a Chaucer scholar, who looked like Pat, and with whom Nan had a relatively recent exchange of leave-taking letters, died during the last year) recognizing her abilities and urging her entrance into competitions, and Nan winning them, including a Woodrow Wilson, and she switching from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to Stanford in response to remarks of the academic spouse of a teacher, who said post WWII UNC was second rate and Nan ought to go to Stanford,--which proved difficult and frustrating, in part because it offered sharp contrast--no or little faculty encouragement or other expression of concern (parents proud but baffled and assuming her unhappy and insecure--till her successful-seeming sister suffered divorce and caused a revaluation).

Tony Stoneburner, Denison Department of English
During the last 10 months, many of us had the chance to spend meaningful, satisfying time with Nan, who always made sure we felt comfortable and helped us get through the visits as much as we hoped we were helping her. Many friends visited her here and in Chicago, coming from Granville, California, New York, Baltimore, Boston, even one from an Indian reservation in Arizona, and not just one trip but sometimes many. There were those who brought food--sometimes fabulous feasts of gourmet pizza, her beloved escargot, homemade pastas, marinated red peppers, cakes, breads, desserts--those who cleaned her house and kept the yard in order, those who planted her garden, painted her porch, balanced her checkbook, ran errands for her, read to her, spent countless hours visiting her, wrote postcards--some arriving every single day--those who wrote letters to and for her.

All these wonderful people made each day easier for Nan. They were her eyes, ears, hands, and feet.

These gestures meant a great deal to her.

_Marty Pollock, DU '78_

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_Bob Wilson (DU '81) wrote this letter to Nan the day before she died. It was returned unopened, stamped "Deceased," several days later._

January 12, 1988

Dear Nan,

I have only just found out from Tony Stoneburner how very ill you are. I had to write, not to express the sorrow that all who know you must feel, but instead to thank you and say than I shall always remember with the deepest gratitude all that you did for me at Denison. While my previous teachers and professors might have wondered at your attempts to transform this reticent student, the success of both your encouragement and your criticisms meant and mean more to me than I can say. I recall with fondness your justifiably indignant reaction to my arrogant dismissal of "The Yellow Wallpaper" in your Women in Literature class as--in my present capacity as an editor of literary criticism for Gale Research--I edit and write about criticism of recently rediscovered women authors. Be my scholarship ever so humble, without you it would never have been at all. I say thank you again, therefore, now and for always. It is a privilege to have been one of your students and to count you as a friend.

My thoughts are with you,

Bob Wilson
A Role Model Is A Role Model
Is a Blessing

Gertrude died in Paris with Alice far from her fatherland, America. Comforted by her paintings and her painters, her books, her servants, her friends, Gertrude died in Paris with Alice in the country she had adopted with the woman whom she loved. Gertrude died with Alice, and I want you to die with me. I want you to die here with me in the home we have made. I am yours, and you are mine, and Gertrude was Alice’s, and Alice Gertrude’s, and I want you to die here, with me. I will share you, and love you, and hold you into the next world. I will think only of you and me and us, and I think you should die here with me, not anywhere else, with anyone else but here with me. I want to hear you say you want to die here with me for you are a genius and I am a saint and I need your final days, final moments, final smiles. I want you to die here with me so that I can record your final words for you are a genius and I will tell them. I will tell them you wanted to die here with me, which is what I wanted also, which is what was best, which is not really so strange after all for it has been done before by Gertrude who died with Alice and by others who died but were not geniuses and did not die with saints and so we have not heard of them. But Gertrude died with Alice in Paris and Alice told the world, and you will die with me here and I will follow Alice’s good example knowing that a good example is truly a blessing.

Karen J. Hall is a 1987 Denison graduate and an advisee of Nan’s. She has chosen these poems from among Nan’s favorites. Another of Nan’s favorites was published in Common Lives/Lesbian Lives 25 and was dedicated to her.

Isn’t it queer

how you never ask which person belongs to which name when a heterosexual couple is introduced to you. And, isn’t it strange how you never mix up their names, or how you always know which one has answered your phone call. Isn’t it odd to think they can’t pack one bag to go to the gym, can’t share a bar of soap after playing tennis together, can’t even spot for each other in a single sex weight room. And when they go out should one feel ill in the bathroom, the other cannot go in to care for the one who is sick, but must sit at the table alone and wonder what is taking so long. It all seems so horribly inconvenient, it’s a wonder such couples exist.
Food was one of Nan's great passions and it was what initially brought us together. When I came here in 1973 she had already been here for a year. We decided to share the rent on an apartment with great fear and trepidation, but we were very poor. She was a recently converted feminist and I was a recently divorced flirt and we had a bit of a hard time. But the thing that brought us together first and paved the way for much deeper and more lasting connections afterward was food - food and the Burketts who adopted us both and approved of us both even when we didn't quite approve of each other.

Let me name some of the original things, before calories really counted. Woodchuck, garlic cheese grits, scalloped oysters and her famous stuffed cabbages....This is more Marty Pollock's story than mine but he said I could tell it. Nan's yearly stuffed cabbage dinner became famous and people lobbied for invitations to it. For what was probably the biggest stuffed cabbage party ever Marty and Gif (Peggy Gifford) rolled dozens, nay hundreds of stuffed cabbages and piled them in the giant pot that was kept for that special event. When they were done Nan looked at the recipe again and discovered they had left out the rice. Well, you already know her attention to detail....Every one of those had to be unrolled, remixed and re-rolled.

Once when we were still temporary people here, still having to job hunt other places, we went to the Modern Language Association meetings in New York together. It was the year that Equus played. One night, after grueling interviews or grueling lack of interviews we went to see Equus. Afterwards we went to one of those basement French restaurants and we had some kind of wine that we couldn't afford that was wonderful and I had the privilege of initiating Nan to escargot. We sat there drinking the wine and eating the snails and moaning. All of a sudden she got up and went to the back to the ladies' room. When after a long while she didn't come back I began to worry. Finally she came back and I said "Are you all right?" She said "Oh yes, oh yes." It was only later that I found out that she went back in the ladies' room and sat down in her clothes on the toilet and shut the door and cried for joy.

It's a very fine thing that the love of food never deserted her. Just for a week or two, Julie tells me, when her medicine was out of balance and her stomach got upset she couldn't quite eat. But one of the happiest parts of the last ten months was her continuing to love food. She was in fact fed by some of the greatest gourmets in Granville and some of us who pretend to it. She knew the difference between good and bad. When at her request I made her the much remembered garlic cheese grits and they didn't turn out like they ought to, the next day she called me up and summoned me to come and get them. She handed them to me at the door and said "Hey, life is too short to eat boring food," and she was right.
NAN AS A SCHOLAR
by
Margot I. Duley, Director of Women's Studies at Denison

One grey, Fall morning I helped Nan write her sabbatical report.

On her living room wall hangs a picture of a woman in black--Mrs. Armistead on the beach in Santa Cruz a century ago. She stares unflinchingly at a limitless horizon.

"Sit down," says Nan, pointing to the left, and I move left. "No here"--she points left again. I'm puzzled at her frustration. I sense I'm in the wrong spot. She sees I'm confused, and then laughs: "I can't tell left from right anymore. It's absurd." Not a trace of self-pity. We proceed.

Only once in a long morning as we survey her finished and half-finished work, scholarship in which she had invested such time, and care, and crafting, is there a break in control.

I address a letter to a feminist scholar and friend of Nan's. She seals the envelope, and says quietly: "She has been so, so..." She gropes for words to complete the sentence. "So-kind", I supply. She shakes her head. "So-helpful." No, that's not right. "So-honest", Nan says, and cries.

Honesty. That is one hallmark of Nan's scholarship. A rigorous disciplined analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each written page, and of her output. She is her own most meticulous critic. She accomplished a great deal in her sabbatical year. But even now she is pushing herself to say she could have done more. Most of us would be highly satisfied with what has flowed from her pen during sabbatical:

There are three entries ("Olympia Brown," "Alice James," and "American Women Speakers") in An Encyclopedic Handbook of American Women's History. Each short essay is a model of succinctness, with telling phrases that capture the complexity of a life or movement. These are no quick and superficial pieces dashed off to pad a resume. She had read deeply in primary sources: the Schlesinger Library and the Massachusetts Historical Society.

There's an extended, marvellous draft article on the 19th Century orator Olympia Brown: "A girl," as Nan put it, "enthralled with speaking with talk and the power talk can give." The discovery and rediscovery of women's voices--another mark of Nan's scholarship. One senses Nan identified with Olympia Brown. Not perhaps with Olympia's desire to become a Universalist minister, but certainly with her struggle for suffrage and self-improvement. Not a naturally gifted speaker, Brown took elocution, acting and even gymnastics, and by a combination of nerve and self-discipline became a highly effective orator.

Self-discipline. Self-improvement. There's a lengthy paper on "Mother Blame" in novels of psychotherapy. Nan has already had it critiqued by others. Then there are her own margin notes--it's a terrific draft, I should add--but on the first five pages, there are 21 substantive notes of where to alter or strengthen. I particularly love two of Nan's entries--"Why, Why?" cries the anguished scholar next to one sentence. Nan also decides she has "willfully misread" a book by Adrienne Rich.
Then there's a revision of a long-term project—a paper on Henry James, Sr. and Caroline Dall; and three book reviews, all published in *Belles Lettres*.

One book review—of Louise Erdrich's *Beet Queen*—is particularly important; and it was supposed to form the future direction of Nan's scholarly work. The review is again a model of hard-won compactness and deep reading. In four columns she skillfully interweaves an interview with Erdrich with reflections on Erdrich's earlier work and how it relates to the *Beet Queen*, and she draws parallels with Toni Morrison. So impressed was Erdrich with Nan's insights that the author was to send Nan her next manuscript before publication. Nan had been elated.

"Nan," I said, "these are wonderful pieces." I am impressed with the interdisciplinary range—the reaching out into history and psychology, as well as the feminist literary criticism, and the careful crafting.

"Are they?" She replies. "I could have done more in my sabbatical year if I had only concentrated on one project at a time." I am stunned at her response.

We have come to the final question on the sabbatical report form—"Relationship of work you've described to future research plans." Simply say: "On March 14th, 1987, serious illness struck, at first slowing but eventually halting my work."

"Can't I at least mention Erdrich's pleasure, and your scholarly big break?" "No, that wouldn't be an accurate reflection of what I've accomplished, or will accomplish. Not quite honest."

I leave Nan standing in her living room. Behind her shoulder I see Mrs. Armistead on the beach staring unflinchingly at a vast horizon.

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From *The Vagabond* by Colette
(One of Nan's Favorite Authors)

It is true that departures sadden and exhilarate me, and whatever I pass through—new countries, skies pure or cloudy, seas under rain the colour of a grey pearl—something of myself catches on it and clings so passionately that I feel as though I were leaving behind me a thousand little phantoms in my image, rocked on the waves, cradled in the leaves, scattered among the clouds. But does not a last little phantom, more like me than any of the others, remain sitting in my chimney corner, lost in a dream and as good as gold as it bends over a book which it forgets to open?
Whenever I meet a class for the first time, I employ one of the gifts Nan Nowik gave to me. I used to hate the first day of class because, for some crazy reason, I always spent that day going over all the rules and regulations printed in my syllabus, a task which bored me as much as my long-suffering students. In a workshop on teaching Freshman Studies courses, Nan questioned this practice, asking why teachers should bore students on one of the days that they are most open to learning. I was stunned by my own intransigence. Why was I carrying on a tradition which I hated as both a student and a teacher? Now I spend the first day of classes trying to elicit and develop interest in what we will study. Although students now have to read all the rules and regulations themselves, I suspect they enjoy Nan's gift as much as I do. The first day of class can now be fun!

This specific case illustrates one of Nan's special traits: she was always on the move, questioning that which had been unquestioned and growing as she acquired new knowledge and skills. This questioning and growing embodied a distinctively feminist style. Not only was Nan willing to help others in everything from teaching (making suggestions over coffee and in GLCA workshops) to home buying (discussing the unexpected problems she had encountered with those about to sign on the dotted line), but she was also seeking the advice of these same people whenever she felt they had knowledge or experiences which could help her.

Supported by such mutuality, Nan set an example for the rest of us. Of course, she suffered defeats, but they provided her with opportunities for growth, and she was able to utilize most of these opportunities constructively. Thus, she climbed mountains, wrote articles, revised her courses and became comfortable with her new computer. And, as she conquered new goals, she grew in wisdom and stature, becoming a model for those of us who fear stagnation. I thank Nan for these gifts and mourn the loss of someone special who died too early in her life.

Joan Novak, Denison Department of Religion

Our trip to the Northern Cascades on the Canadian border started off like so many other adventures have started off here at Denison—a group of people sitting around a table in Slayter Pit throwing out ideas. This time we were discussing the National Women's Studies Conference that several of us were going to attend in Seattle, and the possibility of getting together a group of women for a backpacking trip afterwards. Audrey Glenn's and Marci McCaulay's eyes lit up; both are experienced backpackers. I thought it was a great idea, remembering our last trip two years ago to the Trinity Alps in Northern California.

Then, out of the blue, Nan said: "I would like to go."

We looked at each other wondering if she was serious and secretly thinking, "Is she crazy?"
We tried to be polite and inquired if she had ever done anything athletic before.

Nan answered, "No, not really."

So, we began laying out a training program for the trip, one that we felt would surely discourage Nan.

Two weeks later Nan's new boots arrived and she began walking around town with 20 pounds of books on her back. Every day we went down to the weightroom and did exercises to improve either upper or lower body strength. Days when I felt like skipping our routine, she religiously insisted that we go down to the gym. In the back of my mind I kept thinking, "Is she crazy?"

After NWSA, nine of us from around the country got into a van and started the 3-hour drive to Ross Lake which would be followed by a 45-minute speedboat ride across the lake to our first campsite. After our final lunch stop before entering the wilderness, the two guides asked each one of us what we wanted to accomplish on the trip. Those of us who had been out in the wilderness before tried to set reasonable goals, and not set our expectations too high, because we knew full well all the things that could go wrong. Some of us just wanted to breathe fresh air, some of us wanted to be challenged physically, and some of us just wanted to share an adventure. But no, not Nan. She said, "I want to make it to the TOP of Desolation Peak."

Once again we all looked at her and thought, "Is she crazy?" The weather could turn bad before we got to the top and we would have to turn around. Someone could get blisters on their feet and that would slow us down. Knees could get weak or someone could get sick. Just too many unanticipated things could happen that would keep us from her goal.

Nan just replied, "I think we can make it."

As predicted, Audrey got blisters on the second day, despite the fact that her boots had been worn many times before. My sister, who had never slept out before, got diarrhea from eating a whole pound of M & M's. And Nan's legs got tired. But after three days and nights of circling Desolation Peak, we decided that if some of us could carry heavier loads, all of us could make it to the top and no one would have to stay behind.

We made it to the top of Desolation Peak late the next afternoon. The nine of us spent a beautiful night on the mountain looking at the stars.

Nan wanted to die in Granville. She wasn't about to die anywhere else. Some people said: "She's crazy. She can't do it. She not strong enough."

But Nan made it back to Granville. She prepared us well for her death by carrying a much heavier load than any one of us who stayed behind, so we could all make it to this moment. If there is one thing I have learned from Nan's life and death, it is that if you want to do something, don't let anyone stop you by telling you "You're crazy."

Robin Bartlett, Denison Department of Economics
WE CLIMBED MOUNTAINS WITH YOU, NAN
by
Marci McCaulay

I remember when you decided to go on the backpacking trip to the Cascades. You were a little worried about being the oldest on the trip at 44, but, nonetheless, you were willing and eager to try something new.

I remember when you walked the bikepath with BOOKS filling your backpack in preparation for the trip. I remember your search for boots for the trip. I remember our warm-up trip, with Audrey, down to Hocking Hills, the trip that helped all of us realize what we could do. You wanted to be prepared.

I remember when we were in Seattle, at Kathy's house, loading our packs with our individual gear. All of the group gear was spread around the room. The guides told us to divide it up. You just kept putting more and more into your pack, as the rest of us slowly added things. You were always eager to do your part.

I remember you gleefully declaring that you still had more room in your pack, only to find that none of us could lift it. We all laughed. You were able to laugh at yourself.

I remember when we stopped for lunch on the way to the mountains and discussed our goals and expectations for the trip. You said you wanted to make it to the top. You weren't afraid to say what you wanted. You weren't afraid to set your goals high.

I remember going up Desolation Peak, I felt so tired and hot, I was nearly in tears when you offered to carry my pack for a while. I was afraid to let you, because I was worried that it would wear you out too much, and you wouldn't be able to make it to the top.

I remember you said to me, "Marci, don't be a martyr." You took my pack and proceeded to walk, very slowly, methodically. I watched you make your way step by step, up the switchbacks, until I had caught my breath and was able to take back my pack. We all made it to the top. We climbed mountains with you, Nan.

I remember shopping with you, looking for the right pair of pants for you to wear to the President's house for the Gloria Steinem dinner. I remember helping you prepare your guest room for the visitors who came in October and November. I remember sharing special food with you that friends had brought by. I remember talking with you in the hospital room in Chicago, reminding you to breathe slowly, as we had when we climbed the mountain.
I remember the smile on your face when you came through the door when you arrived home from Chicago.
I remember talking with you, early Wednesday morning, talking about our trip up the mountain, as you struggled to climb a different mountain.
We climbed mountains with you, Nan.

You weren't afraid to say what you wanted,
You weren't afraid to ask for help,
You weren't afraid to try something new.
You helped us prepare for and deal with your death,
We climbed mountains with you, Nan.

We shared food,
We shared laughs,
We shared tears,
We shared pain,
We navigated new routes,
We learned new skills,
We climbed mountains with you, Nan.

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Marci McCaulay is currently a psychologist in private practice in Gahanna and Granville, and was formerly a faculty member in the Denison Department of Psychology.
THE DAY NAN DIED
by
Judith Thomas, Denison Department of Sociology/Anthropology

When Nan came back to Granville the last time we already knew that she had at most a few days left. The doctor had said that she might not even survive the trip. Julie came back with her and there were friends waiting when they got back to Nan's house who remained there during the evening. From that point on, for most of the time, not only was Julie there and a Hospice worker but various friends of Nan's moved in and out. There wasn't a schedule, or any kind of set thing but there was a kind of rhythm to it. People came and sat with Nan and talked with her and talked with one another. As they moved out other friends would come in. We knew she was dying. Most of the time she was in and out of sleep or coma, particularly in the last day. So much of what we celebrate here today about her life and the way she was wasn't visible as she lay there so quietly in that bed. But what was so very real to the people who came to sit with her and talk with her was the connection which had been there before and was still there even as we felt her slipping away from us.

The night before the day Nan died some people had spent the night. That day I came to sit and spend time with her. Julie was there as was Sue Blanshan and the Hospice worker. Throughout that morning we moved in and out of Nan's room as the Hospice worker did things to make her comfortable. She was for the most part at that point in a light coma. Her breathing was somewhat ragged but otherwise she was very peaceful. We sat in the room and talked with her, sometimes one by one and sometimes all together. We talked about what was going on and shared memories of earlier times together right up to just about noon time. At that point both Sue and I had other commitments and needed to leave. We went in and each of us said goodbye to Nan in the manner of "I'll check back by later today and I'll see you later, but I just want to say goodbye now." Each of us in saying goodbye said "I love you" to her and Nan responded with a movement that made us feel that she heard us and was there with us in the room.

We left the room to go out and join Julie to say goodbye, to leave, and at that moment the Hospice worker came out and told us that Nan was dead. Immediately we began to call people to let them know and also went back into the room and sat with her and held her hands and touched her and continued to talk to her. Nan stayed in her bed for several hours while people sat in the living room and talked with each other. Until her body was taken away friends moved in and out of her room once again, and several stayed into the night talking with one another.

I think what struck me the most about the experience of being there during that period of Nan's dying is that when someone dies as Nan did--gradually moving into a coma, gradually moving into death, it's very difficult to conceive of a line between life and death. The reference made by John Schilb to Victor Turner's liminal space is a good image, because it alludes to the space between all the vibrancy Nan was while alive and the finality of her death. I could see no clear line between the two that day. I think most people had a sense of Nan as still very present in that day.
A STUDENT'S REFLECTIONS ON A TEACHER

by
Debra Benko, DU '88

"And in breaking those silences, naming ourselves, uncovering the hidden, making ourselves present, we begin to define a reality which resonates to us, which affirms our being, which allows the woman teacher and the woman student alike to take ourselves, and each other, seriously: meaning, to begin taking charge of our lives."


I am certainly not as well qualified to speak about Nan as other students who have taken one of her courses, since I never had that wonderful privilege, but I knew Nan last spring, summer, and fall as a wonderful human being, woman, teacher, and friend who was enduring and triumphing over a terminal illness at the same time I was attempting to endure a traumatic period in my own life. Consequently, Nan, through the capacity several people noted at the Memorial/Celebration event, her ability to reach out to others and speak to their crises and struggles while she was in the midst of her own, spoke to me, and I listened.

Of course, I listened to what little yet how very much she said to me while she was alive and to what others told me of her, while she was living, dying, and being remembered, both in personal conversations and at the Memorial/Celebration event. But I continually find that Nan Nowik still speaks to me today at various times and in various places, expected and unexpected.

For the month of February, the bulletin board of one of Nan's friends and colleagues was to me a collage representing much that was important to Nan. In the center was the program from Nan's Memorial/Celebration event, partially covering an announcement of available fellowships in the Humanities at the Newberry Library in Chicago, a place so important to Nan's scholarship and life. Also on the bulletin board was the pamphlet stating the University's sexual harassment policy, and Nan as Women's Coordinator and as an Advocate Counselor was one of the first officially to be and continued to be a professor and friend to whom women students who suffered harassment and/or discrimination could turn. As Sandy Runzo suggested in her talk at the Memorial/Celebration event, Nan's presence may still be sensed in her office and on the fourth floor of Fellows.

Many of the happenings of this my senior year have sent me back to the small yet significant number of Nan Nowik's statements and actions that I know. In preparing for the Common Hour in which student writers read from their work, I remembered that at the first Common Hour in which I participated two years ago, Nan was the professor who
gently urged a student who was reading softly to speak up so that she could be heard in the back where Nan and others were sitting. My professors and friends know that I am, either for good or for ill, the same perfectionist Nan was, as Dr. John Schilb described her, crying for joy over the beauty and wonder of what he had written for her and then pausing to ask if he would mind changing just one little sentence. Speaking to David Baker at one frustrating point in my own life’s writing, I said that my one wish is that a graduate professor will someday write on something I have written what a graduate professor wrote on one of Nan’s papers: "God, how you write. You have a future if you want one."

Nan indeed did have a future, and she made that future a rich one which she shared with everyone she touched in her words and actions: in person, on paper, and through the lives of others. I would leave you with my belief that Nan continues to have a future today as long as we remember her and what she valued and live according to those same values if we cherish them as well. If we as individuals do not choose to live according to all of her values as we know them, I believe we remember and celebrate Nan simply in acknowledging, confronting, reconciling, and treasuring our differences as well as our similarities.

One refrain which echoed through the recitation of Nan Nowik’s last days at her Memorial/Celebration event was "And Julie was there." Just as Dr. Julie Mulroy was ever present for and with her best friend Nan, I believe that Nan Nowik is present for us and with us if we want her thoughts and life to guide us, to help us continue to work to fulfill, as I believe Nan worked to fulfill, Adrienne Rich’s hope for women teachers and students, and we would add, for men teachers and students as well, that we would break silences, name ourselves, affirm our being, take each other seriously, and begin taking charge of our lives.

And Nan is here.

NAN’S LEGACY TO MY DAUGHTERS
by
Valerie Lee, Denison Department of English

My two daughters, six year old Erica and four year old Jessica, adored Nan. To hear Erica tell it, Nan taught them how to "write letters and draw ducks." By writing letters and drawing pictures for Nan during her illness, my daughters returned to Nan the gift that she had given to them. In fact, during the past year whenever it was time for them to clean their rooms, go to bed, or play with their baby brothers, they responded that they had to "write Nan." Writing Nan had become more than a literal act for them.

When I was pregnant with Erica, Nan assured me that she loved babies and if I decided to bring the baby to my office, she would help out. To maintain my own sanity, I decided against the latter. However, Nan kept her promise. Whenever she heard that Erica was in day care "downhill," she immediately would go and pick her up. I made it
clear to Nan that the baby had to go to her office. So, throughout the years and several subsequent pregnancies, I could count on Nan to take charge of my children. And take charge she did. Once while at her house, Erica and Jessica were a bit too frisky for me. When the parental "I-am-going-to-kill-you-when-we-get-home" look failed, I told them that I was going to tell their daddy on them. Why did I say that? Rather, why did Nan have to overhear my remark? Wearing a long printed skirt, she strolled across her lawn and asked me if she had just overheard "an appeal to patriarchy?" An appeal to patriarchy? It sounded ominous. Already I was having visions of the women's community dropping me from Committee W, the Women's Studies Committee, important caucuses, all because the girls had been brats in public, and Nan had overheard my "appeal to patriarchy." I looked and felt guilty. I resolved never to appeal to patriarchy in Nan's presence again.

Throughout the years, Nan gave me other good tips on the rearing of children, especially daughters. When I was pregnant with my twin sons, Nan remarked, "It's good you had your daughters first. That way, they'll be independent, and James will engage in all kinds of activities with them." I recalled that prior to Erica's birth, James had wanted a son so he could teach him "to spit in the wind." Having Erica and Jessica first did indeed insure them many fishing lessons, car mechanic sessions, and whatever other things men mean by "spitting in the wind."

As Nan lay dying, I can only imagine that she liked Erica's drawings because Erica drew her women taller than houses and trees. Although only in kindergarten, she is as tall as a third grader. Nan always assured me that Erica's height was a plus, even if she grows as tall as her 6' 2" dad.

My girls are too young to understand what a brain tumor is. Nightly, during the past year before going to bed, they would ask me to re-explain Nan's condition. When Erica felt she had it "down pat," she in turn explained it to her kindergarten class during sharing hour. That Nan was wearing long head scarves most intrigued Jessica. Jessica associates scarf wearing with the African experience. Interestingly, she thinks that Denison is in Africa because I tend to bring her out here for summer South African activities and Black Studies activities. Given Jessica's distorted perception, I was not surprised when she asked me if Nan had become "an African woman." I did chuckle, however, for I was remembering a student conversation that I heard in Slayter. One English major was trying to describe the woman in the department for whose class she had just registered. I overheard her say, "You know, the one who looks like Cleopatra." Although Nan was clearly wearing her hair in a Cleopatra-style then, my knowledge of history (I do hope it was my knowledge of history and not my vanity) made me think that they were talking about me. The rest of the conversation made it clear that the student was seeing Nan's resemblance, not mine, to the African queen.

My girls are too young to understand feminism. They understand only that Nan was a great person. One day when they are older and reading Adrienne Rich, Virginia Woolf, Louise Erdrich, and Toni Morrison, they will understand that Nan's legacy to them is a whole world of feminist and "womanist" authors, and they will understand, too, that what Nan taught me had more to do with sisterhood than motherhood.
Before her death, Nan graciously willed her collection of women's books to the Women's Resource Center at Denison. The bookplate design printed below was created by Nan's advisee, Marty Pollock (DU '78) for inclusion in those books. The design itself is very special, as it depicts Mrs. Sarah Armistead, the great grandmother of one of Nan's early students at the University of Santa Clara, Jim Armistead. Nan had been so taken with the photograph that Jim presented it to her as a gift, and for years it hung in a place of honor on her wall. The photograph also served as the subject of the last writing Nan was able to do. Marty incorporated part of that text into the bookplate design.

"...if, after we die, we enter for a time a half-life, I want to be there parading that photograph of Mrs. Armistead on the beach at Santa Cruz circa 1880... a parade in which I celebrate her and me and all women who tried at least to be stalwart."

Excerpt from Nan's last early morning writing, the twenty-fourth of November nineteen eighty-seven.