

Patricia Robinson

July 18, 1960 – December 3, 2021

Funeral Service
Minister: Curtis Evarts

December 18, 2021

Minister Curtis Evart's Introduction:

Welcome friends. And a particular welcome to Patricia's mother, Nancy, her brother Shawn and his wife Simona, her sisters Laurel, Lizzie, Thyra, and Janette and her husband Gary, and her cousin Erica, who are all here with us today. And welcome also to those who are viewing remotely.

We have come together today to honor the life of our beloved friend, Patricia Robinson. We are here to hold Patricia in our hearts for this brief period, and then release her, together transforming our sorrow into presence.

At the death of a friend, we can see their play as a whole. And we can see it—as we cannot yet fully see our own—as a perfect, complete, and realized destiny. Now we more clearly understand the payment and contribution that Patricia made, and we are grateful for her focus and determination in developing the talents of her essence, and using them to support her teacher, her friends, her family, and the Apollo community.

The Bhagavad Gita declares, “Brahman is present in every act of service.” Patricia loved to read and study deeply the subjects that interested her, but she aimed to *apply* her knowledge in action and service rather than in words. She seemed like Athena in her strength, vitality, and practical wisdom.

Let us stand and remember Patricia in silent presence.

(Silence)

Thank you.

The physical body is designed to produce presence and being, and then to be laid aside. Walt Whitman said, “The best of me then, when no longer visible, for toward that I have been incessantly striving.” Patricia takes with her the presence that she has gained in this lifetime, *and* her connection with Influence C. Our teacher has said, “That is *all* we can take with us, but it is *more than enough*.”

[Reading: from Rumi]
(Reader: Thyra Busch)

From Rumi

HOW SHOULD THE SOUL not take wings
when from the Glory of God

It hears a sweet, kindly call:
“Why are you here, soul? Arise!”

How should a fish not leap fast
into the sea from dry land

When from the ocean so cool
the sound of the waves reaches it?

How should the falcon not fly
back to his king from the hunt

When from the falconer’s drum
it hears the call: “Oh, come back”?

What graciousness and what beauty!
What life-bestowing! What grace!

Oh fly, oh fly, O my soul-bird,
fly to your primordial home!

You have escaped from the cage now--
your wings are spread in the air.

Oh travel from brackish water
now to the fountain of life!

Return from the place of the sandals
now to the high seat of souls!

Go on! Go on! we are going,
and we are coming, O soul,

From this world of separation
to union, a world beyond worlds!

[Music: Bach, “Siciliana”]

(Musicians: Rustam Baibikov, flute; Claire Walker, piano)

[Eulogy: Rowena Taylor]

Robert said after Patricia’s death: “She made a payment for all of us, to make us more serious to be present.”

Until her last visit to the Stanford hospital, Patricia maintained her determination to get better. When she understood that nothing more could be done, she accepted what was happening. She came home by ambulance on the day of her death, met by friends and family. She was saying, “Hurry, hurry” – it became clear what she meant—when she came home, she had an hour left to live.

One friend said: The mist surrounding Apollo these days showed that Patricia came through, through the mist—her life’s meaning in that moment was to return—to be here this final hour.

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Patricia Robinson was born July 18, 1960, the daughter of Nancy Carlson Robinson and Frank Robinson. She was the second child in a family of five sisters and one brother Shawn, who join us here. Patricia grew up in Atlanta, Georgia.

When Patricia and Laurel were little, they walked everywhere wearing shorts, because they wanted to be boys, do everything a boy could do. Patricia spotted a squirrel in a sandbox one day when she was four, snuck around the tree and grabbed that squirrel. Another sister recalled that Patricia was wise, even when quite young. She was an old soul. As a little girl, on her birthday she would give her parents presents, as if to thank them for giving her life.

She was always strong-willed and independent. Her first year of high school she asked to change schools, saying “I don’t fit at this place.” Her parents found another school for her and she was happy there. When the Robinson family moved from Atlanta, Patricia was 17, but she asked to stay behind, to remain in the house and finish high school there, and she convinced the family to let her do it. She knew she was on her own path already.

She found the Fourth Way books when she was 19, and joined the school after turning 22, in San Francisco. She was remarkably ready to undertake this work when I gave her prospective student meetings in San Francisco. She lived in San Francisco, then moved to Greece where she was a center director. Later she lived in Paris, then returned in 1989 to Apollo to stay.

Patricia was a woman of many parts. She was interested in Greek dancing and culture, from her days in Athens, a powerful experience for her. She frequently visited the Acropolis and especially liked the Athena Nike near the Parthenon and the Erechthion with the six caryatids. She loved to read, to deepen her understanding of art, history, and nature. She studied the art of ancient Rome and was interested in the Roman tradition of having personal household gods. She enjoyed developing her own home and remodeled it several times, new entrances, walls: major changes to make it just right. She wanted the house to reflect her state.

She was kind, sensitive, generous, and loving, yet could also be stern and outspoken about her convictions. She maintained warm relationships with her family and closest friends, but was a very private person, too. Nevertheless, she made her interests important to others. On her return from Greece to Apollo she would organize Greek dancing evenings, Greek dinners; the roasting of lamb for the Orthodox Easter Sunday, with ouzo and Greek dancing in the court of the caravans.

She loved the long, hot, hardworking days of the grape harvest at Apollo. A friend recalls harvesting with her for a couple of hours; as they worked they created a sonnet together, composing alternate lines in their heads, memorizing it as it came.

She was an Apollonian, attuned to the earth as well as to beauty, growing plants, vegetables, and a significant number of medicinals; valuable, deep plants, including elderberry, that will return each year. She grew botanicals for her own unique hand-made skin care products. Patricia focused also on body care, body work, both at Apollo and in Napa—massage and facials. When one of her friends was too ill to move, Patricia came and bathed her with her own hands. The stability of owning land was important to her; she developed an estate on a wild piece of land with a tiny trailer. With patience, hard work and small means, she slowly but surely improved what she had. With the help of Robert and friends, she planted hundreds of trees, and added greenhouses with the aim of providing seeds for the community.

She loved beauty and created it in the friendships she nurtured and the land she worked. Her friends remarked on her strong love and understanding of plants and animals. A friend whom she took to the Apollo Farm marveled at how she could name the plants. Then Patricia showed him the sheep, and as she knew each one, named them for him. “Who can remember a sheep?” he wondered. The sheep were very good, the best sheep for milk, meat, and fiber; she had this community in mind. Sheep provide manure, nourishment for vegetables, a mature ecosystem. But it was still an idea, not yet ripe. The day Patricia died, two young men, children of students, came to the Farm and asked if they could raise livestock and grow crops on the property. Her gifts to us will continue to be harvested; we can build on her efforts.

She was in love with love, but as for relationships, this area of her life never seemed to be resolved. She regretted that she was childless, and felt motherly affection for the lambs and puppies at the Farm.

Patricia worked to develop consistency, asking help from Girard at one point, “How to work with tramp?” His advice in reply led her to keep her home, not let it go, and she continued to work on it until her death. She also continued her education, earning a master’s degree in 2010.

Although she rarely spoke explicitly about the work, her commitment to presence was unwavering. A friend living with her remembers that once he had a strong ‘I’ to be present and Patricia, who was in another room, called out, “Are you trying to be present?” She valued Robert and Robert’s teaching; she was a very strong student throughout her life. She held the banner high and worked to her capacity to ensure that the school flourished; what she did well was clear for her, and what she could not do was also clear.

A friend remembered her always on time for plating and serving at Galleria dinners; he noted her selflessness, though she was very much an active type. She worked with me for years at law firms in San Francisco and on State of California projects in Sacramento, but her essence lay elsewhere. She was given to self-reflection, always trying to understand why things were the way they were. In connection with clothes and other things, she wanted the best, but not too much. There was economy in her movements, in her words; even when she had more money she aimed for the best, but not quantity. She preferred books where she could learn something—architecture, landscaping—more than poetry. She wanted to spend her time understanding things.

Patricia married Egidio in 2003, and he devoted himself to her in the last months of her life. Egidio said, “It was an amazing effort to be with somebody like this: she was only interested in what was highest, without compromise.” He said that over the years, her valuation for her friends grew more clearly to be her first priority. She became less private, more open. On her last birthday, she was touched by how many friends she had. On that day, also, she received the shock that her closest friend died, James Morris. When her illness intensified this year, she didn’t want to take a certain medication because it made her feel disconnected from higher centers. She had a lot of friction, a lot of pain, these last eight months yet at one point, said something that really changed the octave, took it to another level: “Everything’s good.”

She didn’t complain about the pain. To visitors she would only say, “I had a very bad day today.” But she didn’t lose her sense of humor.

A friend said Patricia told her, “This illness has allowed me to receive love.”

Another friend recalls an evening where Patricia stayed late, speaking of life and death; she didn’t want to go home. The theme of how to live and how to die was important to her. Visiting Patricia after her death, he understood that she brought beauty by bringing presence to herself. He said, “She always struck us as beautiful, but after her death, it was clear.”

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Her cancer retreated, then returned. She understood finally, at the hospital, that nothing more could be done, and she wanted to come home. As in everything she did, she brought it back home, to Apollo. And sent her love to Robert and all of us in this message before she died:

*Dear Robert, I love you very much, and I probably won’t be able to control this last segment of my life, although I wish I could and there is so much I would like to say, but I’m about over and I don’t have a lot that I can give at this moment. Only that I love you; I love the school; I love my friends; I love the angels and I appreciate everything that I have been given, all these many years. I didn’t expect it to go so fast but it did, it is, and I love everybody. Please accept my gratitude.
Bye.*

Patricia’s last words were:

“Hurry—hurry—hurry.”

Then: “Open—open—open.”

We love you, Patricia.

[Music: Bach, “Air on the G String”]

(Musicians: Rustam Baibikov, flute; Veronique Englebert, piano)

[Reading: from Lao Tzu]
(Reader: Jo Anna Mortensen)

Colors blind the eye.
Sounds deafen the ear.
Flavors numb the taste.
Thoughts weaken the mind.
Desires wither the heart.

The Master observes the world
But trusts his inner vision.
He allows things to come and go.
His heart is open as the sky.

Minister's Conclusion:

The death of a friend reminds us that we each inhabit a fragile and temporary vessel, through which presence emerges and connects us.

May Patricia's deep study and love of the natural world increase our own appreciation of the living things that surround us;
May her uncompromising search for beauty and excellence remind us to strive for the highest standards; and
May her consistent love and support of her teacher, her family, and her friends inspire us to greater efforts.

Dear Patricia, we thank thee.

Candle Ceremony

Minister:

The task of this lifetime has been fulfilled. The role of Patricia is complete. The shell of the body falls away, and the soul that inhabited that body is released to continue its divine journey.

Minister signals urn bearer.

Minister: Please stand.

Funeral party leaves.

At the Cemetery

Announcement (Bonnie):

After the interment, you are all invited to gather and raise a glass to Patricia.

Minister's Introduction:

Here in this sacred place, we gather to release Patricia to her, and our, true home.

[Reading: "Venus" by Rilke] (Reader: Geoffrey Rowland)

To Venus

O strong star, you have no need of the helping hand
That night may grant the other stars;
It must first grow dark, for them to shine bright.
Star, quite fulfilled now, your setting time was planned
Long before the constellations embarked
To cross the slow-unfolding night.
Grand star of love's lady-priests,
Kindled to flame by your own feeling, yet
Radiant and pure until your release
When you sink where the sun itself set:
With your pure demise
Outshining the thousands that rise

Minister:

We return Patricia's ashes to the ground: from earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Words fade in the face of a great reality. We, too, arrive at this simplest of moments—our friend, Patricia, showing us how.

Urn is placed in the grave.

Minister:

Rumi wrote, “Uncover in silence your soul’s own rose garden.” Let these rose petals remind us of the sweetness of our departed friend, and of the rose garden of her soul.

Minister and participants scatter rose petals into the grave.

Minister’s Conclusion:

The earth returns to the earth, and a divine spark returns to its divine source. The circle of life is complete. Let us join in raising a glass to Patricia, and then depart, with a renewed and vivid appreciation for the gift of life allotted to each of us.

Minister leads attendees toward the toast.

Toast: Salvatore Capuano