

Merlyn Anthony

April 5, 1942 – July 29, 2023

Funeral Service
Minister: Curtis

September 9, 2023

[Introductory Music: “Intermezzo” from *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni]
(Musician: Justin M., piano)

Minister’s Introduction:

Welcome friends. And a warm welcome to Merlyn’s daughter Diane Daniels and her husband, Bob, who are with us today.

We have come together to honor the life of our beloved friend, Merlyn Anthony.

We are here to bear witness to the mortal woman who moved through this lifetime, playing the role of her name, and to the immortal soul which has transcended that role.

Merlyn used her love of the art of bonsai to cultivate her own presence, and to bring beauty and intentionality to the school. Today the rows of small but mighty trees, silent and perfected, testify to her dedication, artistry, and quiet service.

Now let us stand and remember Merlyn 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.” Merlyn takes with her the presence that she gained in this lifetime, and also her connection with Influence C. Our teacher has said, “That is all we can take with us, but it is more than enough.”

[Reading: “What Else Is There?”, from *The Divan of Divine Presence* by John C.]
(Reader: John C.)

“What Else Is There?”

Without God, all else is a thin, shallow consolation.
With God, all is a luminous unity of delight.
To be with God, to be in God, to be a part of God,
to come free from all the world’s weight – all worry, all self-will,
to have all inner resistance to God simply dissolve,
to disappear into God’s love so that every action
of mind and body radiates love – what else is there, friend?
Are you tired of holding the door against God’s pure being?

[Music: “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” a spiritual song by Wallace Willis]
(Musician: Sharon S., soprano)

[Eulogy: Patricia S.]

Merlyn was 81 when she passed away on July 29. She had been a member of the Fellowship for 48 years. Merlyn was born in Wisconsin and had two brothers, Roger and Alan. Her family owned and operated the local grocery store, and lived in the same building. She later attended school in Chicago where she completed her internship and became an occupational therapist—a career she continued over 25 years until she retired.

When she met the school in 1974, she was married and had a daughter, Diane. Many years later, when she was asked how she could leave her family to join the Fellowship, she said that she could not do otherwise—she felt that she had to commit herself wholeheartedly to the teaching.

In her first years in the school, she lived with students in the teaching house in Berkeley. One student recalls that when she and her husband moved to California, without jobs and very low on funds, Merlyn gave them bus fare each day so they could look for work, and prepared soup for them when they returned home. She was generous and dedicated to the teaching.

She met and married Clark Anthony, and together they supported centers in San Francisco, Marin, and Kansas City. In 1989 they made Apollo their permanent home.

Merlyn was an excellent pastry chef, and she became famous for the banana rolls and brownies that she baked each week for the Sunday Potager Lunch at the Galleria. She consistently did this for more than a decade. Each year she also prepared the elaborate New Year's ring cake. This took days to make, as there were 18 pastry rings to be baked and then frosted with marzipan. On New Year's Eve the rings were carefully stacked over a magnum of champagne.

Merlyn and Clark lived in the Blake Cottage, which had been the teacher's home before the Galleria was built. The house had been moved from Apollo onto their property, and they transformed house and land by creating an enchanting Japanese-style garden. They designed a koi pond and waterfall with a little stream. Tiled pathways led to areas of orange, lemon and kumquat trees, Japanese maples, a collection of bonsai and a beautiful weeping cherry tree. When my Cavalier King Charles spontaneously jumped into the koi pond, Merlyn laughed and said, "No harm done."

She liked to invite her friends to high tea under the weeping cherry when it bloomed in the spring. She made petit-fours, tarts, and tea sandwiches, and served them to a table of twelve. One memorable afternoon, she hosted the teacher and students for a special afternoon tea that was served by two Japanese students in kimonos.

Merlyn and Clark developed a strong interest in bonsai and began taking care of the Fellowship collection. During the winter the trees were taken inside and worked on one at a time in her house. She would set the bonsai in the middle of the kitchen by the wood stove and spend hours trimming, wiring, and shaping the branches to achieve a harmonious design. Merlyn educated herself and then worked under the direction of a bonsai master, learning to create bonsai, critique them, and refine her practice.

At the teacher's request, she would create bonsai from our own foothill trees. She grew an olive tree next to a rock and over time they fused, so the olive appears to be growing from the rock. In one of her masterpieces, called "Juniper on the Rock," trees seem to be growing out of a mountain side. About her art form, she wrote, "Many hours of my life have been dedicated to developing bonsai for the school. Although this art is emotional for me, it represents only an external form of the work. Pursuing bonsai has taught the value of intentionality and of raising the level of being to become more present to the aims of the work, both externally and internally."

When Clark became ill the teacher asked him to design the Bonsai Pavilion for Apollo. He and Merlyn collaborated on the design and finished it shortly before he passed away. After his death, she focused her work on building and refining the collection, which required meticulous, unremitting care. A friend recalls, "No matter how hot or cold it was, she was outside wanting to work." Merlyn loved to share her knowledge with others, and now a team of 14 does the work she did to maintain the collection.

Merlyn had a strong desire to work sincerely with other students and did not hesitate to give photographs. She offered her perceptions in the spirit of sharing her awareness of the moment. She was fastidious, quiet, and reserved in nature and unflinchingly honest with herself and others. Her maiden name was Sharp, and the name seemed to fit her observations, which were to the point. Her good-hearted sincerity tempered this, as did her kindness and humor. For many years she met students each morning at the back gate, where they read a poem and then walked to the lake, exchanging experiences while taking in the unfolding beauty of the day.

Merlyn was in the hospital for almost three months before she died. She wanted to live, to be made better, to continue work on the bonsai. At the end, however, she became weak and tired, and no longer had energy even to see her friends. She refused additional procedures and entered comfort care, where she slipped away quickly without a word.

“The school works,” she wrote, “and it continues to work. My desire to join the school was based on wishing to live the most meaningful life possible. What circulated internally at that time was, ‘Don’t waste your life.’ What has been most meaningful for me in this work is dropping fears and accepting love.”

By saying yes to the teacher’s requests, she helped support and build Apollo. Her dedication to the internal work and to the daily cultivation of beauty transformed both her spiritual world and the valuation for consciousness at Apollo, and this touches us still.

[Music: Mozart, “Flute Quartet in D Major (2nd movement)”]
(Musicians: Rustam, flute; Justin M., piano)

[Reading: Emily Dickenson, “Because I Would Not Stop for Death”]
(Reader: Kathleen S.)

*Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality.*

*We slowly drove—He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility—*

*We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess—in the Ring—
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain—
We passed the Setting Sun—*

*We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground—
The Roof was scarcely visible—
The Cornice—in the Ground—*

*Since then—'tis Centuries—and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity—*

Minister's Conclusion:

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

May Merlyn's ceaseless labor of love to perfect and share her art inspire us to further effort;
May her sincere desire to share her understanding of the work help us to bring more courage to our interactions, and
May her wholehearted commitment to this work strengthen our own valuation.

Dearest Merlyn, we thank thee.

Minister:

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

Candle Ceremony

Minister signals urn bearer (John C.).

Minister: Please rise.

Funeral party leaves.

At the Cemetery

Announcement:

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

Minister's Introduction:

Dear friends, here in this sacred place, we gather to release Merlyn to her, and our, true home.

[Reading: Shakespeare, Sonnet 47]

(Reader: William N.)

Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took,
And each doth good turns now unto the other:
When that mine eye is famish'd for a look,
Or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother,
With my love's picture then my eye doth feast,
And to the painted banquet bids my heart;
Another time mine eye is my heart's guest,
And in his thoughts of love doth share a part:
So, either by thy picture or my love,
Thy self away, art present still with me;
For thou not farther than my thoughts canst move,
And I am still with them, and they with thee;
Or, if they sleep, thy picture in my sight
Awakes my heart, to heart's and eyes' delight.

Minister:

We return Merlyn'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 Merlyn showing us the way.

Urn is placed in the grave.

Minister:

Let these rose petals remind us of the sweetness of our departed friend.

Minister scatters 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 now complete. We will join in raising a glass to Merlyn, and then depart, with a renewed and vivid appreciation for the gift of life allotted to each of us.

Participants scatter rose petals, and then gather for the toast.

[Toast: Marcia]

Merlyn's determination to strive for the beautiful is in our hearts forever. With gratitude and love, we lift our glass to our dear Merlyn.