

SUSAN MARGIOTTA HARRIS
1933 TO 1993

When [God] calls a man, [God] calls him to come and die.

Suffering means being cut off from God. Therefore those who live in communion with [God] cannot really suffer . . . We can of course shake off the burden which is laid on us [by God], but only find that we have a still heavier burden to carry--a yoke of our own choosing, the yoke of our self.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Susan Margiotta Harris, a long-time member of the Society of Friends, died on January 2, 1993, the day before her sixtieth birthday. She died as she had lived, both perfect and flawed. She died in communion with God and her loved ones in a manner which can only be envied by those of us who have seen too many deaths.

Susan Harris was a complete Quaker. She was caring, dependable, intelligent, efficient. Her sense of humor was infectious. Who could not laugh at her upside down smile, tugging at the corners of her mouth? She was also outspoken; she lost temper; she was divorced; she went through several careers --mother, nurse, lobbyist, attorney, real estate manager and then nurse again --never quite finding her niche. And yet there was nothing not to admire and love about her. For Susan was always deeply searching for God's will both in her own life and in her community.

It is amazing to realize just how much she was entwined with the Meeting community. She was "owned" by the Ten o'clock and the Eleven o'clock Meetings for Worship, she was Recording Clerk, she was a Trustee, on the AIDS Committee, on Social Concerns Committee, on Records and Handbook Committee and at almost every meeting for learning and Meeting for Business. She was loved by young Friends for whom she would babysit and by the older Friends whom she would counsel about health and death and dying. Truly, Susan Harris was a Renaissance woman.

But Susan's search for God's will was the real wonder to behold. She was right in the forefront of the search for God's will in the Meeting when it was torn by dispute and in small groups with which she would meet. Sometimes after meetings she would consult to determine if her forthrightness had been seen as rude or too harsh. But the reality was, that even when she spoke bluntly, it was so clearly from the Center that we could only listen.

Even after her illness was diagnosed, even as she lay dying at the hospice, Susan Harris searched for God's will. A day before her death she was still learning --and she shared what she learned with those around her. Susan Harris died with her dignity intact, surrounded by love, and still giving it back to the Meeting even as she will for the rest of the lives of those who knew her.

Thank you, Susan, for your remarkable life and for your last gift to us all.