



Florence Miller

October 17, 1922 - January 20, 2020

Florence Miller, poet, educator, activist, and friend to everyone she met, died at home at the age of 97. She will be deeply missed by her son David Miller, her loving partner James M. LeCuyer, David's partner Yu-Hwa Rozelle, and many friends. Florence was born in Newark, New Jersey. She loved the natural world and the freedom she experienced as a child, climbing every tree in every park. Florence thanked her father Julius Shank for giving her his botany sketchpad and teaching her the names of flowers. For her love of poetry, she credited her mother Jeannette Shank, who would recite Milton to her and her brothers Herbert and William (both deceased) when they were small children. Her joy in nature and language is reflected in poetry that is noted for exquisite imagery and profound beauty. Her work is found in many journals and anthologies; and she has two full-length collections, *Upriver* (Shakespeare's Sisters Press 2012), and *After Rain a Little Girl Straightening Worms* (Raven & Wren Press 2019), which Florence called "the culmination of a lifetime of work."

Florence married Donald Miller, a sociology teacher. After the birth of their son, they moved to Berkeley "just in time for the sixties"— she liked to say. Florence taught English and creative writing at McClymonds High School in Oakland, where she infused her students with the same love of language she possessed. Miller's students are the subject of the Emmy Award winning 1972 film by Allen Willis, *Can you Hear Me? Young Black Poets from the Ghetto*.

After Donald died in 1985, Florence wrote extensively about her grief (her last book is dedicated to him). She eventually married the east coast writer Edward Wahl, and they enjoyed six years of marriage before his death in 2006.

Florence's life was rich and full, and she lived it on her own terms. No one loved as joyously as she, or saw the natural world so deeply. An outdoor memorial will be held in the spring. Instead of flowers, donations to Doctors Without Borders or a charity of your choice are preferred.

Tribute Wall

JL

“ I lived with Florence for the last 13 years of her life. I was fearful of love, but I saw she was my soul mate, the person who soon taught me how deep love could be. I was in shock after she died, perhaps insane. That loss is what I always feared. I can still see her brave smile, the determined and hopeful one she held right to the last breath. I still talk to her. There was never anyone quite like her, as all who knew her can agree. She gave so much to so many. I can still see her in that last week as she bravely tried to do the exercises given her at rehab, bouncing a balloon, pumping a stationary bicycle, where she was forced to wear a painful back brace. Her courage. She had the most giving heart and the most beautiful soul I have ever experienced. We were adult children together. We deeply loved so many things together, the walk around Lake Elizabeth, the great tree at Shinn Park, sitting side by side at Bean Hollow admiring the ocean, whale watching while the great creatures spouted and surfaced twenty or thirty feet from our small boat, so close we could smell their fishy breath, the many poetry readings we attended together, her friends who loved her and who brought her much joy, Elena, Denny, Barbara, Vera, May, Robin, Ming, Yelda, Renee, Ronnie, Eric, Ingrid, Elaine, Judy, Lucy, Wulf, Dave, Sylvia, Eddie, her Shakespeare Sisters, Jan, Gail, Joan, to name just the few last ones I knew. All who came in contact with her who loved her, those who kept house for her, who took care of her at the last. One does not recover from such a loss. I have not been able to write of her until now. I apologize to all who wanted more of me. I miss you all. I more than miss Flo, my dearest Flo, my little gun moll.

Jim LeCuyer - December 11, 2020 at 09:00 PM

MF

“ Florence was a dear friend of my mother, Marty Fromm (née Doros) from the time they taught high school together in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The two kept in touch for almost seventy years, and during my childhood and beyond, my mother would often wax rhapsodic in nostalgia for the good times they had shared.

I last met Florence in the late Spring of 2009. My mother was suffering from mild dementia, and moved out here to be near me, my wife, and her grandchild. She invited Florence to visit with her in her Los Angeles apartment. Florence stayed for a week, and lifted my mother's spirits. It was good to hear her laugh again.

I said to Florence, "It was good of you to come. Marty's attention goes in and out; she doesn't always follow conversations; I know it can be frustrating."

Florence replied, "Marty is my bud. That's what bud's do. We take care of each other."

When Marty died four years later, Florence wrote me a sensitive and memorable letter expressing her condolences and her love for Marty.

I did not know Florence well, but what little I knew was wonderful. My wife and I think of her with warmth and affection. She was a true poet.

Mallory Fromm

Woodland Hills, CA

March 26, 2020

Mallory Fromm - March 26, 2020 at 05:17 PM