



Lydia Ashmead Strother

February 12, 1932 - October 5, 2003

Are data detailing markers in a person's life clues to the person? Depends on the markers. Does a supportive letter to a nephew appear on any curricula vitae?

How about titles? Beloved Aunt Lydia, Dear Mom, Grandma! Old Friend, Adored Wife, Support Group Poster Girl, Valiant "Cancer Survivor" hardly do justice in describing the wonderful gift God gave us in Lydia Ashmead Strother, who was finally dragged down by cancer at dawn on the Lord's Day, Sunday, October 5, 2003. She was 71.

She grew up in Windsor, CT, site of Loomis-Chaffee School, which then gave all-tuition scholarships to talented townies. She was one of those. A marker? No, but Chaffee's "Produce or Perish" standards of excellence were Lydia's to the core. And to the end.

A Phi Theta Kappa honoree, head of her class at Colby Junior College ('52), she was hired by President Eisenhower's Boston cardiologist Paul Dudley White to work for him and his associates. "Medical Secretary" then was an honored title for a demanding technical specialty.

Excellence, integrity (her yes meant yes, and no one doubted her no), high standards, brains, good looks, a love for choral singing, for nature and gardening, for adventure, and for countless others of life's wonders were some of her attractive attributes. But her greatest gift, so well described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, was love.

Most mothers love their children. It's a truism. Lydia's love came naturally, but a glimpse at the whiz described above should clue one that hers was active, purposeful, directed. And Paul's observation in verse 8, "love never ends," applies not only temporally, but spatially. At least with Lydia.

Hers expanded beyond her children to her Cubs (she was a Den Mother for years), to her kids' friends, to neighborhood children who gravitated to her sun, to nephews and nieces and cousins and in-laws. She stalwartly loved her friends and associates. In her last job, her title "office manager" might better have been "den mother to grown-ups."

When diagnosed with breast cancer more than twenty years ago, she mourned the probability that she would never see or know her grandchildren. She was determined, though, to do her best to give that probability the lie, and using the same true grit that made her excel in anything she tackled, she fought back.

She charted and kept track of her never-ending train of chemicals that sometimes worked for a while, sometimes didn't. She partnered with her doctors, made suggestions, asked questions, and toughed out each of the accumulating miseries that went with her "treatments." She tried diets and exercise.

When others might have chosen bed, she led as "normal" a life as she possibly could. She bicycled in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, went to church, served several years as Vestry Clerk, was for three years Secretary to the Bethel Public Library Board, went on Elderhostel trips, became a Notary Public and a legal secretary, was for years, until her death, editor of Trinity Church's Prayer Fellowship newsletter.

AND. She lived to see, love, and delight in the development of her three enormously loved grandchildren: Kaitlyn, Melanie, and Daniel Fay. Those are the markers that count.

So much has been omitted, but Paul was right: such love never ends. Her beloved and loving close survivors were her sister, Mildred Schlesinger, North Haven, CT; her husband, Gordon Strother, Bethel, CT; her sons Aengus, Oakland, CA; Nicholas, Bethel, CT; Michael, Norwalk, CT; and daughter Sarah Fay, New Milford, CT. How we miss her.

Memorial service 11 a.m. Saturday, October 11, Trinity Church, Newtown, CT. In lieu of flowers donations are suggested to [Ann's Place, Home of I Can](#), 103 Newtown Road, Suite 1B, Danbury, CT 06810.