

Memorial Service for Gertrude

Franklin Merrell-Wolff

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This discourse will be the memorial service dedicated to our blessed sister, Gertrude A. Wolff, who departed this realm on May 28, on or about noon, though officially given the date of May 30, her birthday. I shall divide this statement into two parts: the first part will consist of the statement usually given in connection with the passing of any individual, a brief biographical statement concerning the life of the individual; and there shall be a second part called "The Gertrude Whom I Knew."

Gertrude was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on May 30, 1911. Her father was a physician and he bore the name Adams, and Gertrude told me that there is some evidence that they were related to the Adamses of Massachusetts. Her mother was a Maus, an M A U S, and of Germanic stock. She thus combines an Anglo-Saxon and Germanic background, and thus has the genetic elements that are very similar to my own.

The name of Adams is embedded in American history. It has even been called the great American name, for John Adams was the spark plug of the American Revolution—the man who chose Thomas Jefferson to write the Declaration of Independence and the man who first picked out George Washington as the leader of the American forces. The Adams family is famous in our history: the only family in which father and son were both presidents of the United States. And the third in line was an ambassador to England at the time of the Civil War and was a powerful force for preventing England from intervening on the Southern side. The great-grandson was a professor of history at Harvard University. Thus, no name in American history has more honor due to it than the name of Adams.

Gertrude's family at some time moved to Lima, Ohio, and the years of her childhood, with which she had knowledge, were mostly lived there. She had two brothers. One, Archibald, was also a doctor, and said to be a very successful diagnostician, but he passed away in 1962. Her remaining brother, Harry Adams, is still living in Lima. Gertrude's father died at the age of fifty-eight; I understand, from kidney disease. Gertrude and her mother, thereafter, took a trip to California—Gertrude driving—going up to Oregon and returning to the East. Gertrude's mother died from cancer at the age of sixty-one.

Not long thereafter Gertrude went to Chicago. She had been trained from childhood in the playing of the piano. Her mother had been a piano player before her. In Chicago she was connected with a musical institute in which she became a teacher. In later years, she performed in many jobs. In the war years she was an inspector for certain of the products that were manufactured for the war purposes. She had a sense for mechanics that was remarkable in a woman. In the making of a certain test, her manufactured bolt was used to demonstrate. In subsequent years, she occupied a number of different job positions.

She was not satisfied with the thinking of orthodox Christian leaders, and on her own developed the conception of a possible reincarnation. At a time when she was taking voice culture for singing by a teacher who was a member of The Assembly of Man, she learned of this Assembly from her teacher, and was astonished when she attended it to find that here were people who took for granted thoughts which she imagined she alone had thought; and she was thrilled, as she told me. Sometime around 1957, she and another associate came to Santa Barbara where we were located, and Sherifa was passing through her final illness.

During Gertrude's final days of formal employment, she worked in the Park District of Chicago. She worked in a building that was just a few feet from the famous Chicago museum. Her employment was in the field of map making, and the result has been she is one of those rare women who can read a map correctly. In subsequent years, when I traveled extensively with her, I could always trust her determination from the map, and if we disagreed, she was usually, if not always, right. I know of no other woman of which such could be said.

Gertrude had a deep interest in architecture and was the one who drew the plans of the house which we built and occupied in 1963. She was what in astrology is called a Gemini, and that is one who has a finger in every pie; and that was true of her. As I would analyze her psychologically, she was a thinking introvert; but I cannot say that intuition was strongly developed as the auxiliary function. And as a Gemini she, in a degree, tended to scatter her forces. This classification as of a thinking introvert is atypical in the case of women. Women are typically feeling types, extraverted or introverted; or in terms of the irrational function, they tend to be intuitive types. The thinking type is more typical of men, and the introverted thinking type would be typical of the philosopher and the mathematician. She got along with men almost as though she were a man herself. It was camaraderie on an uncomplicated level. She did not engage in those acts that were cattish. She was lacking in many features that are typical of feminine psychology. She tended to be direct, rather than indirect, although there is a limitation to this. If, for instance, there was a matter of securing salt at a meal, she might ask, "Can you reach the salt?" And I would usually demonstrate that I could and say, "Yes." She, therefore, had to go further and become more precise and say that she wanted me to pass it. In this way she was rather feminine; and in fact she looked very feminine indeed.

Robert Johnson, in his psychological writings, has said that men tend to develop the power of focus, that is, concentration of energy in a limited domain; whereas, women tend toward a spreading of consciousness over a wide range. If this is correct, then in this respect, Gertrude was typically feminine. We might imagine that an individual is born with something like a cube representing his total energy. That energy can be employed in two diverse ways: one is to spread it wide over a large region, at the price of being shallow; or he may develop it by focused concentration, at the price of being narrow. She was here oriented to spread rather than to focus. I never tried to enter into a store with her, for even though she wanted to make a minor purchase, she would know most everything that was in that store before she made that purchase, and to me that was sheer boredom. I went in and got what I wanted and got out as quick as I could. Ultimately, I found it more comfortable to sit in the car while she shopped.

I am finding it necessary to bring something of my own background and work into the picture to complete the portrait of Gertrude. I had been, in former years, associated with one who was known to most of you as Sherifa. It seems that we were brought together for the purpose of a work, and we were diametric opposites in type and this was the desired condition. She was seven years older than I was.¹ She was dynamic and queenly—a person in whom power rested easily. I have always been the philosopher. We did a work in which we went across the country and gave lectures, and she gave her private instructions; and we, ultimately, built an *ashram* in the Sierra Nevada, which is well known to most of you. This work had essential difficulties for both of us. When two diametrically opposite types work together, there are difficulties of adjustment. She was preeminently an intuitive type, supplemented by the auxiliary function of feeling; whereas, I was a thinking type, supplemented by the auxiliary function of intuition mostly. She was an ambivert and I was an introvert. The working together was difficult but not impossible. She was eleven years older than I was; and the psychologists tell me this also is difficult, but I found it was not impossible. After many years of work, she began to decline, and in the last years we were at Santa Barbara because of her wish. Then, while there, there once was a visit by Gertrude, but I did not think that there was any importance attached to this.

In the last years, she had to live on oxygen all the time. I supported her in such ways as I could. I was told that I was keeping her alive by vital force. I was trying to do that, not sure that I was succeeding. She deteriorated despite all we could do, and one day the nurse found on her body the evidences of gangrene, confirmed later by the doctor. And I accompanied him when he left and at the outer door remarked, “This is impossible, isn’t it?” Well, he answered, “We’ve had many impossibilities in this case.” I realized that this would be an impossible situation. I deliberately withdrew my support, and she passed away in twenty-four hours. Since then, I have learned that it was, indeed, true that one can produce a transfusion of *prana* directly and support the life of another. But when she passed away, I felt a bleeding which I could not control—not a bleeding of blood, but a subtle bleeding. I thought it was a *pranic* bleeding and it seems that it is, indeed, just that. I could not control it. I intuited that if I came near to the right feminine individual, the bleeding would stop; and it did so happen.

I thought this means death, shall I let it happen or shall I try to continue. I decided to try; that meant I should seek someone, a feminine entity, who had the capacity to staunch that bleeding and who was willing and available, that is without other commitment, to do so. At last, I found Gertrude, who was willing, and available, and had the power to staunch the bleeding, not by any knowledge, but by what she was. And if there’s any value which you attach to the tapes that have been produced since then, know that without Gertrude they could not have been produced; and I would not be here. Therefore, whatever value you give to them, give credit to her. This was not anything she did, let me repeat, but it was something that she was.

The result was that we came back to California; we were married by two services. One I composed myself as the spiritual service, and gave her the name *Lakshmi Devi*, one of the four aspects of the Divine Mother as represented by Sri Aurobindo. We also had a

¹ Wolff meant to say, “. . . eleven and a half years older than I was.”

civil wedding to satisfy the demands of Caesar. And from that we started forth and had 19 years that were rich and productive.

Now, I shall come to the second part, which is called “The Gertrude Whom I Knew.” And this will be short. There may be the moments when what is said will hurt.

On Sunday, May 28th, Gertrude prepared breakfast; little did I know then, that it would be the last breakfast. She did not eat. She was having digestive trouble and some other trouble which was not clear. We went on, however, to the usual preparation for a Sunday tape service; but she began to feel worse, and finally said, “Come with me and let Eugene have the service and we will go to the emergency room of the hospital.” And so we were driven down by a friend. We entered the emergency and they placed her on a bed, and I stood beside her and she was moaning. And she said to me, “This is the worst pain I have ever known.” I asked her, “Does the moaning help?” She said, “Yes.” And those were the last words uttered to me. They presently gave her Demerol, and in a little while she was asleep. I then went to eat with the friend a meal, and then we returned. The doctor said she had had a stroke and had stopped breathing—meaning that the stroke had come at the deepest portion of the brain. She had been placed upon artificial breathing, and instruments were there to maintain witness to her bodily functions, such as the beating of the heart, and she was in total unconsciousness. She was there the next day—no improvement. I knew of another doctor of unusual skill. I had word sent to him asking him to come and judge her situation as a consultant. This was on Tuesday. He came; and with her attending physician made a determination. The signs were deteriorating. The two doctors decided that she could not recover.

Now, I sensed that if the body of a human being is held alive by artificial means such as we have today, it might very well hinder the progress of the inner, real being. I checked this with two who were qualified and they said that is so. I had decided that I would make the decision, if it became necessary to do so, to withdraw the support as the last act I could perform for her. I made the decision to withdraw the support though the heart was bleeding white and the life in me ebbed low. The support was withdrawn. She did not attempt to breath on her own. She crossed to the other side, and I held that, though the life ebb low and the heart bleed white, there should be no moaning at the bar when she went out to sea; for, if there is grief when one passes, that holds the individual, that injures him on his way. The kindest thing that can be done is to liberate such a one freely. And though it is inevitable that those who love one who is passing shall themselves feel the hurt, this should be sealed away so that it does not touch the departing one.

I had the agreement of the doctor and of the mortician to give her twenty-four hours lying in state at her home. They agreed to this. She was brought up here, and for twenty-four hours lay on that couch. A candle was lighted. A rose was there. We played the German *Requiem* and Wagner’s *Parsifal*. The lights burned all night. And from time to time I came to her and spoke to her, for I had been told by one who knew that such speech is communicated to the departed one, and I told her of my affection for her as I had never completely told her before, and that I would abide with her eternally in the days yet to come. I returned again and again. The last minutes when they came to take her body to be cremated, I asked the mortician to treat that body with respect, and he said

he would; and I believed him. So, she left, the body to go to cremation, for that also frees the departing one, and I felt the deep pain of parting.

Later, checking through two who could witness the event within, I learned that she found happiness, even great happiness, in a wondrous realm and she knew not of any pain or suffering left here behind. So, there truly was for her no moaning at the bar when she went out to sea.

For nineteen years, Gertrude and I were happy companions. In all those years there was not one quarrel or one cross word that passed between us. I did not believe that it was possible for any two human beings to live together in such supreme harmony and happiness. To the best of my knowledge and belief and her word, she lived a virgin and died a virgin. In her relationship to me she was like a nun: dedicated and devoted. She felt she could not do enough for me, but I told her she made possible the work that I had done, and otherwise could not have done, and my debt was to her. But I never could quite convince her.

On one occasion, she placed a bell upon my desk for me to use to call her if I needed her. And I did use it, and she came on the run and dropped to her knees. At first I thought it was playacting, but then I knew, for I felt that inner consciousness far above the vital which is the very essence of beauty, sweetness, and delight; and I realized it was an act of adoration, and I saw the beauty of this soul.