“Gina Smith” Memorial Service

Note: Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the family.

Gretchen E. Weis

February 2, 2013

**Prelude**

Ave Maria

**Words of Welcome**

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist

Church of Arlington.

My name is Gretchen Weis,

Minister Intern here,

And I am honored to

Be officiating today’s services.

We are gathered together

This afternoon

to remember and honor

the life of Gina Marie Smith,

beloved sister, aunt, life companion and friend.

Gina is survived by

Her brother George and sister-in-law Nancy,

Her brother Dean and sister-in-law Shelly,

And a younger sister Melanie, who lives in London.

She is also survived by her five treasured

nieces and nephews

Lisa, William, Daniel, Matthew and Laurie

And their families.

Her cousins

Don and Nancy

Are also with us here

This afternoon.

We extend a special welcome to

Gina’s many neighbors and friends,

Including those here

From her music groups,

Her Tai Chi group

And the Arlington Seniors

Dining-Out group,

As well as her friends here at church.

Let us begin our service

With the lighting of our chalice.

NOD TO NIECES AND NEPHEWS TO COME FORWARD

AND LIGHT CHALICE

**Lighting the Chalice**

We meet here

In the presence of death

To do homage

To the spirit of life.

**Affirmation**

A human life is sacred.

It is sacred in its being born.

It is sacred in its living.

And it is sacred in its dying.

**Intention**

We come together to say farewell,

To reflect on meaning,

To seek comfort,

And to say, “yes” to life.

**Sorrow and Gratitude**

We rejoice and give thanks that Gina was a part of our lives.

**Readings**

Our readings this morning

Were selected by Gina herself

To be shared

at her memorial service.

They reflect her

Early Episcopalian influences.

The first reading is Psalm 121,

Read by Gina’s sister-in-law Nancy.

The second reading

is St. Francis’s prayer

read by her niece Laurie.

Nancy?

**Musical Interlude**

Members of the recorder group

Gina loved playing with

will now come forward

to play Aaron Copeland’s Simple Gifts

in honor of Gina’s memory.

**Honoring a Life Well-Lived**

Gina Marie Smith entered this world

On the 28th of July, 1935.

She was born in Wilmington, DE,

the first child

Of Marie Coxe

And George Sheldon Smith.

Gina’s early years were lived

In a variety of cities,

As the family followed

her father’s career as a chemist.

The family moved from Wilmington

To Radford, Virginia,

Then on to Madison, Wisconsin,

Ending back up in Virginia,

And eventually settling in Charlottesville.

Along the way,

Gina gained two brothers,

George and Dean,

As well as a baby sister, Melanie.

Gina was a free spirit from the get-go.

She attended both public

And private high school in Charlottesville,

Before graduating from

A boarding school –

The Antwerp Academy

In Rochester, Pennsylvania --

in 1952.

Following high school,
Gina began

What would become

a life-long love affair

With higher learning,

All over the world!

She attended

Wellesley College for two years,

Then packed her bags

For overseas academic adventures.

She focused on language studies

Beginning at the University of Grenoble

In Switzerland.

Then she headed to the

University of Paris for a year.

Can’t you just see her in Paris?

A young woman

Just barely 20 years old,

Filled with enthusiasm

And a love of life,

Art and culture?

What a time she must have had!

She spent another year

At the Germersheim Institute in Germany,

And attended the University of Freiburg

In Breisgau, Germany

For summer classes.

Next, she was off

To the University of Geneva

In Switzerland.

By this time,

She was proficient in several languages,

But especially in Russian.

She returned to the U.S.

To attend summer school

At Middlebury College

In Vermont

And finally landed

In Berkley, California,

Where she completed her

Bachelor of Arts degree

In June 1960.

Gina was a free spirit,

a flower child.

She drove a blue VW Beetle

That she bought for $200.

Her nickname for the car

Was the “flying cloud,”

And the upholstery was so ripped up,

She threw a faded blue

Indian print bedspread

Over the seats.

After college, she headed

To Moscow and Leningrad to travel

And soak up the sights and sounds

of Russia and the Russian people and culture

she loved so much.

She began working

At the Library of Congress,

But returned to

Middlebury College

In the summers of 1961 and 1962

To earn her masters degree

While also working

as a Russian language instructor

At Howard University

In Washington, DC

During those years.

Her language skills in French,

German and especially Russian, paid off.

In December 1962,

She began working for the

U.S. Information Agency.

Her duties included touring

The USSR as a cultural ambassador,

Guide and interpreter.

Gina had a life-long

Love affair with world travel as well.

During these years,

she took several breaks from working

To travel through Poland, Yugoslavia

France and Portugal.

Gina returned to Washington

To work as a Russian translator

For Quaker Press,

And moved to Ann Arbor,

Michigan, in 1968

To work as a lecturer

In Russian at

The University of Michigan.

Gina took a full time job

With Informatics

As a foreign science analyst,

Translating Russian technical

And scientific papers on climate,

Meteorology and oceanography.

Gina lived a life bigger

Than all outdoors,

AND, in her free time,

she especially loved

Being out-of-doors.

She was a skier,

A hiker,

And loved to camp

With her friends

In the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club.

And, oh, how she loved to dance –

That might be difficult to imagine

For those of you who met Gina later in life,

But she was an avid square dancer

In her younger adult years.

In 1979, Gina’s life changed forever.

She was struck down

by GEEYAN BARRAY syndrome,

A virus that initially paralyzed her.

She couldn’t walk.

This fiercely proud,

Independent woman

Could no longer care for herself.

She went to live with her brother George.

But she was determined

To walk again.

It took six long months

Of physical therapy and rehabilitation,

But she regained a limited ability to walk

With a walker or with canes

For the rest of her life.

GEEYAN BARRAY

Might have impacted her mobility

But she did not let it get her down,

or count her out of life.

With quiet, determined courage

And grace, Gina lived

The remaining 34 years of her life

With limited mobility,

But UNlimited gusto and enthusiasm.

Gina’s life, as always,

Was lived to the fullest,

Even if her ability to walk

Was slowed down.

She had her car outfitted

With special hand controls

So she could remain independent

And on the go.

Her brother Dean

remembers how much

She loved her little house,

And didn’t want to move

Despite the fact

She had to get up and down stairs

To get in and out of the house,

And to do laundry in the basement.

She settled into a long-time job,

Working with child nutrition programs

At the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Until her retirement in 2000.

How she loved her gardening!

One of her neighbors of 17 years,

Jason Hale,

Remembers how beautiful

Her yard was, filled with roses

And many other colorful flowers.

She was always outside

Caring for her flowers.

How she loved her classical music!

She played piano, flute and recorder,

and ended up staying

With the recorder all her life.

She even collected them.

She played flute and recorder

With several music groups

In town,

Including a group from

The Levine School of Music.

How she loved her Tai Chi practice!

She was a faithful member

Of the Tai Chi group,

Studying under Master Taki-San.

How she loved sharing good food

And good wine with good friends!

She loved exotic food and was always up

On some of the DC area’s

Most interesting restaurants.

She especially loved fine dining

With her many friends

In the Arlington Seniors

Dining-Out Group.

And how she loved gourmet dining

When combined with traveling!

Imagine floating slowly

Down a canal in rural France,

The pace of lazy, sunlit days

As breathtaking scenery rolls by.

Mealtimes mean stopping

To find culinary adventures

In some small French village,

sharing wonderful meals

with cherished fellow traveler/adventurers.

Her brother Bill

Likes to think of her

Living life to the fullest

In moments and memories like these!

Gina never married,

But she knew great love.

She shared her life

With wonderful partners.

Gina lived with Edward Kastner

For 15 years in the 1980s and 1990s.

And in the later years of her life,

She met Don Schultz,

Who shared life and journeyed with her

to the very end.

A brain tumor finally took her away

On January 14th, 2013

From the life she lived

With grace, with humor,

With fierce intelligence,

quiet dignity,

gentle kindness,

an appreciation for the finer things in life,

and with great love

for family and for friends.

May the life she lived,

Continue to inspire

And to comfort us

All the days of our lives.

Amen.

**Words of Remembrance**

A number of those

Closest to Gina

Would like to come forward

To share tributes,

Poetry and memories

In her honor.

We begin with Don Schultz,

Gina’s devoted life companion

In the final years of her life.

Don?

**Open Sharing**

This is a time

Where we open up our service

To any who wish to come forward

To share a story,

memory

Or tribute.

**Prayer/Meditation**

I invite you to join me now in prayer,

Followed by a time of shared silence,

And then a musical meditation

Gina chose for today’s service.

(PAUSE)

Spirit of Love and Life,

Source of all wonder and mystery,

Bless all who have gathered here

And give us the strength

To hold the sorrow we bear

as we grieve together.

Be with us here, now

As we go about our sacred work

In honoring a life well lived.

To this holy work,

We bring our open hearts

And our sacred memories.

Let us enter into a time

Of shared silence

As we remember

And give thanks

For the life of Gina Marie Smith,

Beloved sister, aunt, cousin,

Loving life companion,

And friend.

PAUSE FOR SILENCE

NOD TO MICHAEL TO BEGIN PLAYING SANCTUS

**Extinguishing the Chalice**

In invite Gina’s brothers

George and Dean to come forward at this time.

We will extinguish our chalice

following these comforting words

By Dorothy Monroe

Death is not too high a price to pay

For having lived.

Mountains never die,

Nor do the seas,

Or rocks or endless sky.

Through countless centuries of time,

They stay eternal, deathless.

Yet they never live!

If choice there were,

I would not hesitate

To choose mortality.

Whatever Fate demanded

In return for life, I’d give,

For, never to have seen

The fertile plains

Nor heard the winds

Nor felt the warm sun

On sands beside the salty sea,

Nor touched the hands

Of those I love –

Without these,

All gains of timelessness

Would not be worth

One day of living

And of loving;

Come what may.

Amen.

**Benediction**

I now ask that those who are comfortable doing so,

Please rise and take the hand of someone nearby.

The world-renowned poet

Maya Angelou

Once said,

“People may not always remember

the things you said,

but they will always

remember the way

you made them feel.”

May we always remember

And be warmed

By our memories of Gina,

How she inspired us,

And how she made us feel.

Blessed be and amen.

(PAUSE)

This concludes today’s service.

The family would like to invite you

To attend a reception

Immediately following

The service

In the Fellowship Hall

Directly behind the sanctuary.