

## Eulogy for Dr. Marilyn M. Levine

June 2010 by Shauna Singh Baldwin

Lenny, thank you for inviting me to speak in celebration of my dear friend Marilyn. She was a woman who inspired me and my husband David Baldwin to be more, do more, and seek more.

David met Marilyn and Len Levine when they visited the Safe House in the 70s, and became a client of Dr. Levine's Information Machine. Sometime in the early nineties, David asked Marilyn if she could find out whether Viktor Frankl, author of *Man in Search of Meaning* was still alive. In that book, Frankl had suggested a statue of Responsibility on the West Coast, to balance the Statue of Liberty in NY, and David was designing a coin depicting Freedom on one side, Responsibility on the other. To his surprise, Marilyn tracked down Dr. Frankl in Vienna the same day, called him and introduced David. A few months later, when Viktor Frankl visited California, David and artist Carl Ruppert flew to California to meet Viktor Frankl and present him with their Responsible/Liberty coin. Marilyn was the catalyst for David's project and the projects of many other clients in those pre-internet days.

David introduced me to Marilyn and from the very beginning we found much to talk about and even a few things we agreed on. I learned from Marilyn. She introduced me to subjects I would never have sought out. For instance, when I invited her to speak at the Business and Professional Women's club, she gave a talk on Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *Women's Bible*. When I asked her questions about gender and linguistics, she introduced me to the communication theories of Claude Shannon, using Arthur Miller's play *A View from the Bridge* to illustrate her points.

It was to Marilyn Levine that I revealed my secret ambition to write a book before I was thirty. She didn't laugh. She just asked, on what subject? I hesitantly mentioned that I hadn't found a contemporary book for newcomers adjusting to American culture in the library, when I needed it, and that a book on the subject had not been written since 1937. She said she had wanted to write just such a book in the sixties, for newcomers moving from US farms to the cities. And there the matter stood, till David and I met spy novelist Elleston Trevor, author of *Flight of the Phoenix*. Elleston invited us to BookExpo in NY -- we had no idea there was a BookExpo!

Marilyn and I wrote up a book proposal just in case I met any publishers who might be interested in *A Foreign Visitor's Survival Guide to America*. A few weeks after our trip to BookExpo, we had five. We had no idea how lucky we were. We selected John Muir Publications and began to write. Marilyn, human Google that she was, provided statistics behind the words "some, a few, many, several Americans" and I interviewed living skills experts and newcomers to the USA on my radio show.

From the beginning, Marilyn and I were 50/50 and never had a co-author contract. Unusual for our time, we didn't print out our text till the whole book was almost done. Our husbands traded jokes as we happily and sometimes not so happily argued our way to agreement on every word. Marilyn never shrank from intellectual conflict -- neither did I! But along the way she also taught me how to search for information, how to decide if an information source was authoritative, how to differentiate fact from opinion, and most importantly: how to index. I used many of her research methods in my technical writing career, and while writing each of my subsequent four books of fiction.

When *A Foreign Visitor's Survival Guide to America* was published, we proudly collaborated on a flyer and created an announcement that I posted to newsgroups using the monochrome green VI editor. I remember crying because I received flame-mails from academics as far away as Australia for using the net for advertising! Even so, we sold all 10,000 copies of *A Foreign Visitor's Survival Guide to America*, and the book has been translated into Chinese.

As some of you know, Marilyn could always be persuaded to attend a play or a show. The last we saw was *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Marilyn was unusually absorbed by it -- now I know why. On a long stay in Japan she learned to shout NO! extremely loud to convey true, rather than polite refusal. I like to think of her refusing treatment for her cancer like one of her extremely loud NOs, and hope when I get to her age I will have such courage.

Lenny and David Levine, please accept our deepest sympathy.

Goodbye, Marilyn, from David and from me.