

Yarrow (Anne at MHC) Cleaves was a poet, song writer, and musician, also an artist, healer, and a peace activist, a loving mother and grandmother. She passed away in her Cambridge home on November 15, surrounded by friends and family.

Fellow Porter freshman Barbara Holtz describes Anne as “memorably articulate” but “low-key to the point of self-effacement... extraordinary, to those of us who paid attention. ”

In Porter Barbara recalls Anne “strumming folk songs on her guitar, composing a few new ones, taking notes for poems, and creating artistic sketches – of many of us—which she would share.

“Unlike my decidedly ordinary, prosaic musings early-on at MHC, Anne had the profound awareness that everything is connected... that we are stewards of the earth and that one could arrive at inner peace, a sense of calm through the study of Buddhist and Hindu writings and practice.”

Fellow Porter freshman Susan Throckmorton remembers Anne as “gentle and soft spoken”. She appreciated “her apparent uniqueness”, and “loved her musical talent.” To Margaret Abrikian (Zaffroni), recently arrived from Jamaica, Sue likened Anne to “MHC’s own version of Joan Baez”.

In her senior year Anne was a runner-up for Mount Holyoke’s prestigious Glascock Poetry Prize . Finalists are limited to six students from colleges and universities throughout the country (past winners include Sylvia Plath and Stanley Kunitz). She went on to serve for many years as personal assistant and a close friend to poet Denise Levertov, working with Levertov on poems as well as the logistics of daily life. It was during this period that Anne became “Yarrow.”

Kathy Swan notes that yarrow is the name of a resilient, flowering perennial that can be used as an antibiotic and an astringent to heal wounds and make tea. Kathy adds: “The latter reminded us of how very much our Yarrow enjoyed tea, hospitality, and long sympathetic conversations with friends”.

“Yarrow treasured friends, deep contemplations and language. Talking with her was always an experience of measured and thoughtful exploration of ideas and territory” recalls Catherine (Cathy) Hoffman, Yarrow’s roommate off-and-on throughout the ‘80s and ‘90s..

“There were currents of suffering in Yarrow...which she sought to ease through meditation, the healing arts and natural remedies” Cathy notes, adding: “She was a much sought-after physical therapist.”

Yarrow was a dedicated peace activist, the first staff person at the Cambridge (MA) Commission On Nuclear Disarmament and Peace Education and, while living in England for several years, supported the anti-nuclear Greenham Common Women’s Peace effort.

In our 35<sup>th</sup> Reunion Book Yarrow wrote : “I did large-scale organic gardening in Sweden for three growing seasons and would like to live again with my hands in the soil. I studied Swedish in Stockholm. This immersion in a second language was thrilling. And I found I loved translating! This is a practice in which what is lost in translation is always asking to be honored. “

On her return home Yarrow worked with the Cambridge Academic Editors Network (CAEN), both as an editor and an English translator for Swedish language academic and psychological papers.

Throughout her life Yarrow continued to write poetry. In our 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion Book her entry was her poem,

*White Clover*

The flowers do not touch to love.

They draw the golden-footed bees  
into the arc of their desire  
to taste the wine, to spark the seed.

But we, who wander in this world  
we of our selves create the ways  
to dance the spirals in, around  
the blossoming of all we love.

Many New England-based classmates came to know Yarrow through our annual regional lunches. Margaret (Monnie) Bell was struck by her gentle, distinctive presence, her “inner glow.”

In February, 2020 Yarrow was diagnosed with ALS and frontal temporal dementia. She was discharged from the hospital with a prognosis of 1-2 months of lucidity and 3-6 months of life. She returned to her apartment near her son and his family. With the help of Selease Reid, an exceptionally caring 24-7 caretaker, she lived 10 more months, receiving friends and family with grace and humor.

For Selease Reed, Yarrow became a mentor “brave, strong, genuine, a beautiful woman of wisdom...while battling ALS Yarrow never showed any sign of weakness...her endurance was contagious...she was funny, intelligent, creative, a soul that is rare.”

In her poem, *Waking at Midnight*, Yarrow writes:  
“This is my dream, that we  
waken,  
    even before  
The birds, even before the sea  
turns blue, even  
before the trees remember light.  
This is my dream, that we sing,  
    name every thing  
that is and was and  
is to be,  
This is my dream, that we spin  
    each  
moment’s thread  
    upon the wheel  
and weave the earth back  
into the net of stars  
*Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Vol. 25, No.4, 1985

Condolences can be sent to Yarrow’s son Samuel Harp, 622 Huron Avenue, Cambridge 02138. Contributions in her memory should go to the Woodshole Oceanographic Institution ([whoi.edu](http://whoi.edu)).

