

## Eulogy for SYLVIA DRISCOLL

By Martha Smith

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Sylvia Driscoll was a woman who had her priorities straight. Her faith and her family came first. She loved the Lord, she was proud of her large family, she loved her brothers and sisters, and she especially loved Vic and Elizabeth and Diane. Friends, neighbors, and the community in which she lived were important to her, too. It is as her friend that I speak today, because she asked me to, and because I loved her. I am here to speak for many friends from the three-and-half years she spent in Washington—those prime, carefree years we now realize were so precious. We in Northern Virginia want those gathered here in Houston to know how much we all loved Sylvia and what an indelible impression she left on all who knew her.

Thinking of Sylvia brings to my mind Handel's setting of the 34<sup>th</sup> Psalm:

“O taste and see, the Lord is good.  
In Him is lasting hope, in Him is joy.  
My heart shall sing His praise.  
I sought the Lord; He heard my prayer:  
Let all exalt His name.”

Sylvia tasted and saw. She experienced life to the fullest, and she found it good. She had the kind of life every little girl dreams of having—she had a teaching career, she fell in love and got married, she had two fine daughters and a lovely home, she had a host of friends and the high regard of two communities. And she did it all with style and grace.

Sylvia was an original. You could tell by the way she dressed—not with ostentation, but with flair. She loved beauty, whether in clothes, art, music, or nature. In Washington, she took full advantage of all the area had to offer.

One of her friends remembers an outing to the National Gallery of Art, where Sylvia got all the kids involved by getting them to imitate the poses they saw in the paintings. She not only went on all the school field trips, she constantly organized her own. She had the knack of nurturing a love for the finer things without being pompous. She just enjoyed beautiful music so much that everyone else did, too. She was where the fun was; wherever she was, there was laughter.

Sylvia was honest. By calling a spade a spade, she could change people's lives. One of our friends asked her how to ensure that her learning-disabled son got a fair chance in school. Sylvia looked her straight in the eye and said, “Get involved yourself—that's the way to make teachers notice your child.” Our friend accepted that challenge six years ago and claims that taking Sylvia's advice has made all the difference for her son.

“Get involved!” Sylvia took her own advice. When Diane was in the first grade, her soccer team needed a coach. Admitting that she knew very little about soccer, Sylvia threw herself into the task. She would stay up all night planning strategy and have the jitters before each game, but she led the team to a winning season and seven years later, the team is still together.

Sylvia was involved as a “Picture Lady” at her daughters’ school in Arlington, sharing her love of art with the children and inspiring them to think for themselves about beauty. She and I joined the Junior League together the year our younger daughters were in Kindergarten. Her specialty was community projects. Without realizing it, she became a role model for many other women in Virginia.

While Vic worked on Capitol Hill, Sylvia brought spontaneous informality to Washington entertaining. Without appearing to do much advance planning, she somehow put together people, food, and fun to make memorable parties. At her house, hardworking civil servants could relax and have a good time.

Any well-rounded person has faults. Sylvia could complain; she could be stubborn. Those traits, however, were by-products of her drive to achieve the high ideals she had so firmly in mind.

Sylvia sought the Lord. As she grew up in Abilene and attended Hardin-Simmons College, her life was shaped by Biblical values. She went to church; she said her prayers. She witnessed her faith her whole life, not just when she became ill. As she faced death—with characteristic openness and exemplary courage—her faith deepened and she spoke of feeling God’s presence. She didn’t want to leave those she loved so soon, but her soul was bound for glory.

My dear Sylvia, you met the challenge issued by the Psalmist so long ago: “O taste and see, the Lord is good.” You tasted, you saw, you lived. You found love, beauty, joy, and truth. You sought the Lord, He heard your prayer. Let all of us exalt His name.