

Judith Sheagren Kreeger, PhD.

November 6, 1943

August 28, 2021

Baltimore, MD



Dr. Judith Sheagren (PhD, National Catholic School of Social Service, The Catholic University of America) completed her life on August 28, 2021. Still here are Christopher Kreeger, her husband and partner of almost 50 years, Steven (Brunilda) Swannell, her son from a previous marriage to Charles Swannell, and nieces, Gwendolyn and Sophie; her sister, Joan Morris and her husband Robert, and her brother, John Newcomb (Victoria) Sheagren and many others of her family, friends, professional colleagues, and musicians.

Dr. Sheagren was born in Rockford, Illinois November 6, 1943, to John Wesley Sheagren, a physician, and Mary Elizabeth Newcomb Sheagren, a preschool teacher. Her brother and sister describe her as someone who, from her earliest years, always wanted to go beyond what was immediately and easily available. Her education

accomplishments reflect this drive. She received a BA from DePauw University in 1966 and then went on to Indiana University to earn an MA in classical languages. At this time she realized she wanted her career to be one of helping others, and she moved to Baltimore to study at the University of Maryland School of Social Work and Community Planning; She received her Master of Social Work degree in 1972. Her experience in clinical practice at Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital led her to seek greater skill in helping her clients. She left psychiatric hospital work in 1983 to engage in private practice exclusively, a move that afforded her time for further study. She attended the National Catholic School of Social Service, the Catholic University of America and received her Ph.D. in 1987. To work more deeply with her clients, she began the arduous but rewarding psychotherapy training at the Washington Psychoanalytic Institute; receiving her psychoanalyst credentials in 1997.

During her 45-year clinical practice, Dr. Sheagren held several faculty positions. From 1975 to 1983, she was a Field Instructor, University of Maryland School of Social Work and Community Planning. From 1986 to 1987, she was a Lecturer, National Catholic School of Social Service, at Catholic University of America. From 1999, she was a Clinical Assistant Professor, University of Maryland School of Medicine and Supervisory Faculty, Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital Residency Training Program. From 2000 to 2003, she was the Practice Chair, Core Faculty, Clinical Social Work Institute of Washington, D.C. From 2003, she served as an Associate Instructor at the Washington Psychoanalytic Institute.

Dr. Sheagren had a long and productive career as a psychotherapist, psychoanalyst, and educator in the field of psychotherapy. There was a spiritual aspect to this work, also, a career spent exploring the nature of mind, what it means to be human, and helping clients and colleagues benefit from their exploration of these issues.

And then there was music, the primordial ground of her spirituality. Judith's spirituality did include conventional religion if it involved singing. She served as Cantor at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church for 15 years. At St. Vincent's she frequently sang solos with professional discipline, notably Panis Angelicus, Ave Maria, He Shall Feed His Flock, O Holy Night, the Easter Exultet. She studied and practiced meditation and Buddhist teachings with Shambhala for a while. But the way she connected to her spiritual heart in an ultimate way was through singing with the Baltimore Choral Arts Society. Throughout her adult life, her relationship with this organization was one of dedication, beginning in her 20's with Theodore Morrison, Choral Arts' first Music Director, resuming in her 30's with Tom Hall as Music Director, and ending only when her own life was ending in her 70's. The Baltimore Choral Arts Society was her church and spiritual home.

The music of sacred texts carried Judith into spiritual experience. When someone sings on a professional level, as the Baltimore Choral Arts Society does, one joins one's whole body, whole voice, and whole mind and heart with the sacred text and its melody. It was singing these sacred compositions -- Handel's Messiah at the Kennedy Center, Brahms' Requiem a month after her mother died, Mozart's Requiem cathedrals throughout France, the Maryland debut of Morten Lauridsen's Lux Aeterna at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, Rachmaninoff's All-Night Vigil, Christmas with Choral Arts at the Basilica of the Assumption, and many more concerts in between united her with the music's spirituality.

One of the Choral Arts performances that moved Judith was their last Brahms' Requiem at Kraushaar Auditorium -- no orchestra, only her old friend Leo Wanenchak's piano - while Judith sang through the burden of her chemotherapy, joyful that their new Music Director, Anthony Blake Clark, had proved to her during this performance that Choral Arts would continue under capable and inspired leadership. Judith continued to sing with Choral Arts until her mind and heart and voice were up to the task, but her body no longer was, having begun its journey of going beyond. Listen for her voice whenever Choral Arts sings this music.

Judith requested for her memorial service that a Buddhist Sukhavati take place on zoom. It is scheduled for Sunday, September 19, at 4:00 PM. You can obtain the zoom link from her husband by emailing kreegerconsulting@gmail.com . Donations can be offered to the Baltimore Choral Arts Society.

References:

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