

Gloria Kaufman (1929-2004)

A Life of Love and Joy

By Samuel Shapiro

A Memorial meeting, October 13, 2004

4:30-6:00 p.m.

*Cafeteria of the Administration Building,
In South Bend, 1700 Mishawaka Avenue*

Gloria Kaufman was born in 1929 in Danbury, Connecticut, the child of first generation immigrants from Eastern Europe. Her father died of pneumonia when she was ten years old, and her heroic mother, PHILMA KAUFMAN raised three daughters during the great Depression. Gloria was educated in the public schools of Danbury, and Brooklyn, New York. She attended Russel Sage College, where she made lifelong friends with several of her teachers. In 1954, anxious to begin a reconciliation with postwar Germany, she got a Fulbright Scholarship, and spent a year as a student in Munich. Returning to the United States, she enrolled in a Ph.D. program in English at Cornell University in 1955. She had money enough for only a year's tuition, but she completed her course work and passed her Doctor's Orals with a grade of EXCELLENT in 1956. But, because she was a woman, she was not awarded a Fellowship.

Undaunted, Gloria enrolled for another Doctorate at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts in 1957. Coming out of class on the first day, she met her future husband, SAMUEL SHAPIRO. "Dead Shepherd, now I find thy saw of might/ Whoever loved that loved not at first sight." When Sam called her that night to ask for a date, she told him that he would have to buy a tennis racket and a pair of skis. He did so. They later skied in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the Andes, Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and Aspen, Colorado. They played more than two thousand sets of tennis, and Sam won - six. It was on a skiing trip to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where they visited the house in which Herman Melville wrote Moby Dick, that Sam proposed, and was accepted. They were married in Washington, DC on 1959, by Judge John Sirica, "Maximum John," who later forced President Richard Nixon to resign. They promised to cherish each other "until death do us part," and they did. The newlyweds had a six-month honeymoon in Tucuman, in Northern Argentina, where Sam had a Fulbright Professorship in American Literature. In this unlikely place, Gloria completed her Doctoral dissertation, *Death in the Shakespeare Comedies*. After the Fulbright, the couple traveled to Bolivia, Chile, Peru, and Brazil, while Sam wrote articles for the London Economist. After returning to Cuzco, Peru from a trip to Macchu Picchu, "the Lost City of the Inca," Sam got a telegram offering him a post at Oberlin College.

In 1960, Sam and Gloria taught History and English at the new Oakland University, North of Detroit; as "Old Oaks," they were members of the first faculty. Their daughter, who later took the name of Miriam Viktora, was born on a farm there in 1962; her first word was "horse." In 1963, Sam was given a position at the University of Notre Dame, where he taught for twenty-eight years. Their son, David Shapiro, was born in South Bend's Memorial Hospital in 1964. With a daughter and a son, a complete set, Gloria decided not to have any more children; "I don't want them to outnumber us," she said. In 1965, Gloria and Sam bought a large house on the corner of Wakewa and Lafayette, in the North Shore Triangle, where they lived for the next thirty nine years. Standing in the back yard when they first saw the house, Gloria whispered "Sam! It has a slate roof, and a fireplace!" In this tranquil neighborhood, across the street from Nokomis Park, Sam and Gloria raised their children, and grew old together.

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In 1967, Gloria was appointed at Indiana University in South Bend, then beginning its expansion from a single building to a campus. Here she taught classes in Chaucer, Shakespeare, the Bible as Literature, The Iliad and the Odyssey, and was the first director of what became the Women's Studies Program, one of the first in the United States. She had thousands of students in this very popular course, and brought many distinguished visiting lecturers (Phyllis Chessler, Dale Spender, Margaret Atwood) to lecture. She encouraged her students to go on to professional careers, and many of them did, as lawyers, newspaper reporters, and teachers. The course dealt with women in literature (Harriet Beecher Stowe, Emily Dickenson, Virginia Woolf, Toni Morison), politics (the Women's Suffrage Movement) and science (Eve Curie, Maria Mayer, Irene Joliot-Curie, Dorothy Hodgkin). She was a mentor to many students, and taught not only by lecturing, but by her own luminous example. In recognition of her merits, she rose rapidly to the post of Full Professor.

Gloria published research articles on women in literature and history, and two collections of Women's Humor: In Stitches, and Pulling Our own Strings. Gloria and Sam traveled extensively, during their summer vacations, and after retirement: Munich, Paris, the Loire Valley, Innsbruck, Athens, Lesbos, Istanbul, Stratford (Ontario), Smyrna, Ephesus, Florence, Madrid, Granada, and the Caribbean. Even in failing health, she took trips to Barcelona, and a sailing voyage from Thailand to Singapore (where she climbed a hundred foot mast). After retirement, Gloria mastered the art of film-making, and produced fifty videotapes on her travels, her family, nature, politics, and video poems. Gloria and Sam did a great deal of reading aloud: Elinor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings, Goethe's Faust (in German), Shakespeare, Byron, Keats, Auden, Frost. They were voracious readers, and owned fifteen thousand books. In Lima, Peru, she began her art collection with six Mochica huacos (ancient pots), and came to own Greek pottery, Tibetan tankas, Indian bronzes, and a Roman copy of the Aphrodite of Knidos.

"Gloria was the most remarkable person I ever met. There were times when I thought she was the most remarkable person I ever heard of. Throughout her life, she brought love and joy into the world. The thousands of people who knew her benefited from the luminous track of her presence." (Samuel Shapiro)

For information about donating to the *Gloria Kaufman Memorial Fund* at Indiana University South Bend, contact

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