

GLIMPSES

A Patchwork of Friends' and Relatives' Memories of Saralee's Life



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Compiled by Avis Lang

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A Patchwork of Friends' and Relatives'
Memories of Saralee's Life

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Prepared in connection with
the exhibition

SARALEE JAMES
revolutions and revelations

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Nomi Kaplan writes: "We shared tumultuous times in the early '70s. We both parted from our husbands, became single parents, and lost our upper middle-class status. We discovered Gestalt, feminism and the human potential movement.

"In 1971, after I acquired a camera, we set up a darkroom together in the wine cellar of her house at 1461 Connaught. Our first lessons were from Al Shmuck. We took the Tim Porter course in documentary photography in North Vancouver at the Gallery of Photography, 1972. That's when she did her *Pool Hall* series. . . . Saralee, Doris Rogoway, and I went to improv theatre at the Free University (1973). It was a great way to let off steam."

According to Saralee's 1987 resumé, 1973 marked her emergence as an artist: the black and white documentary *Pool Hall* series was included in a traveling exhibition of Canadian women photographers, and her photographs of Leon Bibb were published in *Vancouver Magazine*.

Jerry Growe writes: "May 1971, a New School camping trip: Demonstration of advanced skills by taking a hot rock from the fire into her sleeping bag to warm her feet and then setting bag and tent on fire. June 1973: Arranging for Nomi and me to be at her house at the same time to meet. Sept. 1973: Accompanying Nomi and I on our first date with all of her and Nomi's children (7 of them)."

Mid-1970s: ReelFeelings, Real Feelings

Daryl Sturdy writes: "In early '74 she declared that she wanted a committed relationship with me. In May/June 1976 she declared the relationship over Saralee was a very important person in my life. I learned a lot from her, and grew a lot with her. She gave me a great deal. And our relationship was far from smooth."

Nomi Kaplan writes: "When Saralee joined ReelFeelings, around 1974, a lot of the meetings were held in her dining room on Angus. We never came away hungry."

ReelFeelings, the Vancouver-based women's media collective, which included Renee Baert, Merrill Fearon, Saralee, Nomi Kaplan, Ardele Lister, Barbara Steinman, Dorothy Baert, Judith Berlin, Bonnie Dukati, Robeyn Gould and Svetlana Zylín, was a major element in Saralee's creative life through 1977. Her resumé lists her as camera person and sound editor for ReelFeelings' twenty-minute 16mm color film *So Where's My Prince Already?*

(1975), which was supported by The Canada Council; co-director and camera person for ReelFeelings' *Her Handicapped* (1976-77), a thirty-minute, LIP- grant-funded documentary of a Down's syndrome group home; and also project coordinator for ReelFeelings (1976-77).

During this period she also took the Film Workshop at SFU with Guy Bergeron and Robert Nichols, and, as well, worked as a scriptwriter, photographer, and sound editor for educational filmstrips on prejudice for use in secondary schools, a project done through UBC's Education Department and the federal Human Rights Department.

Nomi Kaplan writes: "We shared adventures. She, Natalie Freeman, Doris Rogoway and I talked, argued, laughed and probably occasionally cried. We taped many of our conversations. By then, Natalie had bought Saralee's Connaught house, and we met upstairs in the den.

"I think Saralee, Natalie and I did the Strathcona Park white-water canoe course in 1974. [Saralee apparently did it again in 1975 and/or 1976.] We barely survived, bruised but satisfied. In those years we seemed to want big, physically challenging adventures. . . . Saralee, Natalie and I did the Chilkoot Trail in August 1975. To get there, Saralee and I traveled to Alaska on the ferry, sleeping on the deck with all the other hippies. Natalie met us in Whitehorse and helped us negotiate our packing and traveling. After a lot of discussion, it was decided that Saralee could take her camera and I would leave mine behind. She took a lot of wonderful pictures."

Late 1970s: Endings and Beginnings

Nomi Kaplan writes: "Our relationship almost ended during the mid-seventies, and finally did end after a work collaboration. We did not see one another for almost ten years. At one time (at the crest of our times together), we were so close that some people confused us for one another. When our friendship ruptured in about 1977, I was desolate. It was an abrupt ending for a part of myself that I couldn't replace."

John Bingham writes: "In the summer of 1976 I met Saralee and Susy in Dawson City, Yukon, while doing freelance photo work. The next summer travelled in the Yukon with Saralee; kayaked together to Old Crow, Yukon; photographed on Dempster

Early Years: Calgary and Vancouver

Saralee was born in Calgary on December 17, 1932 to Sam and Rose Belkin. The family moved to Vancouver and, in the mid-1940s, to Burnaby. Saralee was sent back to Calgary during her adolescence to live with a widowed, childless aunt in order to help improve a sinus condition. The Belkin family was associated with the Peretz school, a progressive Jewish educational centre in Vancouver. Saralee's father died in approximately 1950. Her brother Arnold resettled in Mexico to live and work as a painter.

1950s: Marriage and Motherhood

In the early 1950s Saralee married Mickey James. Goldie Steele, who had known her in Calgary, writes: "We met again in 1954 in Vancouver when we were both first married. A friendship developed between the couples and between Saralee and me. We had our babies, shared maternity clothes, recipes, ideas -- shared, shared -- At one point I recall her saying something to the effect of 'Some people walk through life and exist. Some people really live -- that's what I want to do.'"

The births of Saralee and Mickey's children occurred as follows: Mark, 1955; David, 1957; Jonathan, 1959; and Susy, 1964. Nomi Kaplan writes: "In June 1959, we gave birth during the same week (her Jonathan, my Eric), and she helped me overcome some problems I had with breast feeding." Clearly, Saralee's energies during these years would have been focused on her children, home, and marriage.

Living the Sixties

Ellen Tallman writes: "From 1962-65 we worked together on The New School -- 'progressive education for our children.' Saralee and I were one of the interviewing teams. I was fascinated with her kosher household, and as she told me later, I was the first guy to enter her house. In 1968 we had our first encounter group marathon weekend; Saralee and Mickey attended. At the end of the weekend, Saralee said, 'Gee, I think I'm a different person already.'"

Anna Banana writes: "During 1966-69 I taught Saralee's kids, Mark, then David, at The New School. As a result of this contact,

we developed a personal friendship, doing dinners at one another's homes, getting involved with David Berg's Gestalt group through Saralee. We had our first marijuana experience together, with several couples, including one who got the MJ in South Africa and sent it back to Vancouver in their kid's snowsuit pocket! Saralee went off to Esalen Institute sometime in 1968 or early 1969 and came back raving about the massage. (None of us had ever had a massage prior to that!)"

Sylvia Spring writes: "Met Saralee in 1968-9(?) because we were hustling her husband to invest in my feature film, *Madeleine Is . . .*. He invested on the condition (I think) that we provide work for his wife. She turned out to be the real contribution to the film -- we remained friends thereafter. I can't remember what kind of work she did -- research or some kind of gofer role?"

Early 1970s: New School, New Life

Daryl Sturdy writes: "In September '69, for the 1969/70 school year, Saralee came to work with me on a volunteer basis with the older kids (9-13) at The New School. In June 1970 she came with me and an older group on a week-long cycling/camping trip to Long Beach, Vancouver Island -- probably one of her first camping experiences. In September '70 she became a paid staff member and attended, with the rest of the New School staff, a communications/encounter-type workshop at Cold Mountain Institute, Cortes Island, with Richard Weaver. June 1971 - spent 7-10 days with me and our group from The New School camping on the Olympic Peninsula, Washington, and south to the Grand Coulee Dam. (We became lovers here.)

"In late '71/early '72 she bought and moved into the house on Angus Drive, just after her divorce probably. June '72 - camping with our school group on a 7-10 day trip into the interior of B.C. Summer '72 - a 2-3 week camping trip with me and her 3 younger kids (David, Jonathan, Susy) through the interior of B.C., gold panning, ghost towns, canoeing part of the Bowron Lakes.

"In June '73 she quit her job at The New School (with Dan Wood and I quitting also). July/August '73 - trip to Mexico along west coast to Mexican border, Guadalajara to Mexico City to Oaxaca, Puerto Escondido, north along coast up through Taxco, Mexico City, north through Durango, Chihuahua, Ciudad Juarez -- with me, new Volvo station wagon, David, Jonathan, Susy."

Highway to Arctic Circle. During the winter of 1977 I lived with Saralee in Vancouver and we developed a project to photograph in the Arctic. Summer 1978 - flew across Arctic with Saralee, photographing High Arctic settlements. Worked on presentation to the Dempster Highway Inquiry on environmental consequences of an all-weather highway in the far North... Saralee and I had some great times together inside this scanty outline. She was 14 years older than me and half my height but you'd never know it. There was a woman who felt she'd submerged herself for the early part of her life and was determined to come up for air in a big way. She was enthusiastic and 100% honest and I loved her."

Paula Levine writes: "In 1978 and 1979, she traveled to rural areas of B.C., giving workshops on media issues and feminism. She videotaped the *Writers of Our Time* poetry series for channel 10."

Saralee's resumé also lists her as having been in charge of film cataloguing for a federal project in Dawson City from August through October 1978 and taking a photography workshop with Jack Fulton in summer 1979 at the Vancouver School of Art.

Early 1980s: Art School, Activism, Grief

Saralee was a photography student at Emily Carr College of Art & Design (ECCAD), beginning in 1980 and graduating with honours in 1984. During this period she did a great deal of work and was also active in Greenpeace.

Paula Levine writes: "Between 1980 and 1981 she worked with the performers of B.J.'s, Canada's oldest drag club, and produced a series of photographs and two half-hour radio documentary sound specials for CBC's Hornby Collection: *The Empress's Ball* (1980) and *Sandy St. Peters* (1981), which Saralee listed as radio soundscapes. Between 1981 and 1983 she produced the photographic series called *Objects of Desire*, an inquiry into the rituals of marriage as spectacle.

"Saralee's work with Paul Watson and his crew on the Sea Shepherd in the early '80s led to her arrest, prosecution, and the production of *L'Actualité*, a videotape which questions the objectivity of truth. She used her actual court testimony from the trial where she and a number of others from the crew were being prosecuted for attempting to stop the seal hunt."

Other projects and activities dating from this time, mostly

according to Saralee's resumé, include a 1982 summer workshop in color photography at ECCAD with John Divola; photographing in Mexico, Cuba and Nicaragua from July to September 1980, including documenting a literacy conference in Nicaragua; photographing in rural coastal communities in northern Japan in August 1981; working on a group of photographs of men "at play," which included wrestling, rugby, volleyball at Wreck Beach, and Mr. Nude Vancouver; and exhibiting her *Objects of Desire* color prints at the landmark *October Show* in 1983. Ellen Tallman notes that Saralee took a drama class at Kitsilano High School in 1982 and talked about 'filming herself in ongoing monologue to get to know herself.'"

Saralee's son David died tragically in 1981. **Elena Feder**, who had known Saralee's brother Arnold in Mexico City and met Saralee upon moving to Vancouver in 1978, writes: "David's death was a great blow to her. When I once commented how beautiful he was upon looking at a picture of him which she kept in her darkroom, she told me, 'When he was born, he was so beautiful that I thought he was an angel. I wondered then how long he would stay on this earth.'"

Mid-1980s: Counselling, Travelling, Exhibiting

For three years (1983-86) Saralee worked as a child care counsellor, first at the Sunflower Crisis Intervention Shelter for Teenagers and then at Alma House, a group home. Regarding her life as an artist, her resumé includes the following: In 1984, HMS Press in Toronto published her *Pool Hall* photographs, and her video *L'Actualité* was included in the November *Warehouse Show* in Vancouver. In 1985 some of her photographs were included in the juried show *Women in This Decade*, sponsored by the Provincial Government's women's program. During the 1984/85 school year she took a computer graphics course with Dennis Vance at ECCAD. She videotaped Anna Banana's ex-husband David's wedding and, a year or so later, Anna's daughter's wedding. In Mexico she photographed the devastating earthquake of 1985 and Guatemalan refugees; she also photographed in Grenada and at the Panama Canal. Sculptor Marcia Pitch and Saralee co-curated *Against Oblivion*, a show for Amnesty International that was held at U.B.C.'s SUB Gallery in September, 1986; they also collaborated on sculpture for the show.

cheesecake. 1989 - Introduced me to the worst Polish food in NY. May 1991 - Explained to me how she got double the bang for her buck by shopping and returning everything."

Barbara Hammer: "Fall of 1987 - Saralee introduces me to video artist Paula Levine, with whom I go on to collaborate on a videotape, *Two Bad Daughters*. Spring of 1988 - Paula Levine, Saralee and I sit on the floor in front of Millennium's closed door on East Third Street waiting for it to open so I can show them my work. I tape record our conversation. Spring of 1990 - Saralee has a brunch and invites Theodora Skipitares and myself as she feels we should know each other and would find one another's work provocative and exciting. Fall of 1990 - Saralee waits in line for tickets to the Public Theater for half price. I promise next time I will do the waiting. Spring of 1991 - Saralee, Avis, Elliot, and Elliot's sister hear a concert at Circle in the Square. Saralee is the first to hear I have been awarded an NEA and shares her excitement with me."

Elliot Podwill: "Saralee was the first friend of Avis's whom I met. In late October 1990 she and Avis attended a performance together, and I met them afterwards. We walked to the Second Avenue Deli on the Lower East Side and ate matzo ball soup, corned beef sandwiches, and pickles while discussing Nicaraguan politics. Something in Saralee made me feel more than usually self-conscious about my words: she paid such close attention to what I said that I knew I had to speak as honestly and as intelligently as I could; and her comments and questions revealed a genuine desire to get to know me and to learn my opinions. I was eager to gain Saralee's approval, because Avis and I had been together for only a short while and it was clear that my new girlfriend valued her dear friend's opinion."

"As Avis and I walked home I expressed concern that I had been too opinionated, too forceful, too inflexible. I was enormously relieved several days later to learn from Avis that Saralee liked the fact that I felt strongly about my beliefs, that whether or not we agreed on every point was less important to her than that I expressed my opinions firmly and was willing to defend them. I realized that to maintain Saralee's respect I would have to say what I felt, not what might expediently coincide with her point of view. I sensed that she was the rare person who possessed what Ernest Hemingway called a built-in 'bullshit detector.'"

Avis Lang: "This past January [1991] Saralee photographed our wedding, which took place during the first (and almost only)

snowstorm of the winter. Twenty people came to City Hall to join us for the regulation two-minute ceremony, followed by our highly non regulation embrace and then cappuccino in nearby Little Italy. Several weeks later Saralee presented us with an album, apologizing for not having finished it weeks earlier (she'd been searching high and low for a particular kind of plastic sleeve for a key vertical photograph)."

Ellen Tallman: "On an hour long cab ride from Saralee's street to Ardele's house in Brooklyn - Saralee telling the story of the man who lived above her, who died in his walled-in apt. Cab driver said that in his lifetime of hearing and telling stories, Saralee's was the best."

Elena Feder: "Once, while on the phone between New York and Stanford, someone knocked on her door. She came back to the phone to tell me that she had been told to evacuate the building. The building next door was about to collapse and they didn't know how it would fall. As I insisted she leave immediately, she was trying to figure out what to take with her. After much deliberation, and my agony at how long she was taking, she decided to take her camera, her tape recorder and her address book. She was never too far from those friends listed in it."

In the fall of 1990 Saralee showed the rough cut of the videotape on homelessness that the Canada Council had funded two years earlier. It had become a portrait of a man named Solomon, habitué of Tompkins Square Park, which had by then become a synonym for the rights of squatters and the grievances of the young, radical homeless, where "Eat the Rich" was the byword and police violence was the norm. Solomon, by contrast, was a white-haired, old-time Jewish socialist with a bushy white beard who, if life had been ordered differently, might have been 'Mr. Right' for Saralee, as she herself had said. Shortly before she died, she completed the nearly final version of the tape, now called simply *Solomon*. **Paula Levine** describes it as "the story of an eighty-five year old resident of Tompkins Square Park whose Central European Jewish origins, love of opera and commitment to progressive politics and philosophy as a way of life resonated with her own."

Each summer from 1987 to her last one, Saralee returned to Vancouver to be with her children; to baby-sit her grandchildren; to see numerous friends; to live, when she had no tenants, in her a-place-to-grow-old-happily house near the UBC gates. But New York was starting to feel more and more like her real home. She'd

That same year Saralee worked as programmer and coordinator of an editors' workshop held in Vancouver during National Film Week.

Late 1980s/Earliest 1990s: Moving to New York (Part-time)

Saralee's son Jonathan moved to New York to study dance and choreography in the late '80s and was lucky enough, in Manhattan terms, to find a tiny apartment in the East Village, on 12th Street between Avenues A and B. In 1987 Saralee started spending her winters in New York, first as her son Jonathan's "roommate" and then, when he returned to Vancouver, as sole occupant, living modestly on the rental income from her house in Vancouver. Ardele Lister, a dear friend since the days of ReelFeelings, had moved to New York years earlier; they now shared more things than ever, including cooking huge Passover dinners together at Ardele's now-kosher house.

Moving to Manhattan immediately affected Saralee's work. In a 1987 Canada Council Explorations Grant application for support "to film and record sound for images of homelessness in New York", Saralee wrote the following: "I have spent the last ten months living in New York's Lower East Side/East Village where daily confrontation with this issue is impossible to avoid. A walk to the corner grocery store is met with outstretched hands and several versions of requests such as: 'Can you spare a dime ma'am? Well, have a good day anyway.' 'Could you give me a token so I can get to a shelter?' Or, from those with some sense of humour left, 'Could you give a donation for wine research?'"

"As time went by, Manhattan began to remind me of Third World countries I had visited in the past . . . It is no longer a Latin American phenomenon to see elegantly dressed people walk out of a limousine while their chauffeur pushes drunk beggars out of their way.

"I have been collecting audio tapes of street sounds, street music, and of conversations I have had with several homeless people. I have also shot some visuals in Super 8 film of images of their lives in the streets . . . I want to further explore the possibilities offered by street scenes I have shot of a group of people lying together sleeping, sprawled on the sidewalk on a busy Saturday afternoon . . . I plan to use excerpts from conversations that I have recorded with an American-born black youth, living at

the Salvation Army" Canada Council awarded Saralee the grant.

Soon after arriving in New York, Saralee joined Millennium, a nonprofit film and video production house and exhibition space, and the Shirley Clarke Workshop, a women's film and video group. Saralee never stopped putting herself into learning situations, studying scriptwriting with Robert Freedman at Film/Video Arts in 1987; taking a basic Spanish course again and again at Cooper Union; taking a voice development course with Nomi; and other courses besides.

Saralee seems never to have said no when friends asked for her assistance, whether on projects or in getting through life. She did the sound recording of a three-person videotaped roundtable on cancer politics, *CANCER SCANDAL: The Policies and Politics of Failure* (1988), produced and directed by Ardele Lister for the Patient Rights Legal Action Fund, whose coordinator was Avis Lang. She took charge of equipment for a benefit Avis organized for *FUNNY LADIES*, a film about women cartoonists.

Anna Banana writes about another of the times she helped out a friend: "I was invited to do a performance at the Women's Studio Workshop in Rosendale, NY. . . . I asked her to accompany me there and help with the show -- and to my delight, she accepted. We bussed up to Rosendale a few days before the performance, to allow time to set up the space and rehearse. She was a tremendous help in all of this, and even agreed to a tiny walk-on part in which she was to throw a lightning bolt at me. That, however, made her extremely nervous, and she swore after that she'd NEVER do any 'performing' again!"

Year after year Saralee explored with undiminished enthusiasm and curiosity the film, performance, video, new music, bargain shopping, low-priced downtown food, and streets of Manhattan. Following are several friends' memories that suggest the nature of her new life -- a life she had vowed, for David's sake, would be lived fully every day of its duration:

Nomi Kaplan (whose friendship with Saralee was renewed a decade after their break): "We fast-walked from one end of Manhattan to the other (at our age, fast-walking helps to slow down the bone-aging process). . . . We conversed in Yiddish. . . . We hunted for the perfect beets for the perfect borscht. She cooked, I watched, ate and kvelled. . . . We sat in Tompkins Square Park and talked and watched and listened."

Jerry Growe: "Nov. 1988 - Introduced me to NY Italian

even begun to think seriously about not spending the entire summer every year back in Vancouver.

During the summer of 1989 she lived at **Anna Banana's** house: "Saralee stayed in my guest room for the 2 plus months of her summer visit because the tenants in her house had moved in in January of that year on the condition that they wouldn't have to move in six months.

"Neither of us knew how it would go, she being volatile and me fairly reclusive. We acknowledged at the beginning that it might get difficult -- and if so, she'd stay elsewhere. It turned out to be an amazingly harmonious arrangement. We were both very busy, and went our own ways most of the time -- with her going off each morning to Mark's office to do her phoning. (This was the summer of the battle with the cemetery board over what they were charging to have buried her mother).

"Often I wouldn't see her until 10 PM -- at which time we'd sit down together with a pot of tea and review the events of our days. There were always lots of laughs due to her sharp insights and wit."

Saralee had only one more full Vancouver summer after that; less than a week after her 1991 summer there had begun, she was dead from a car crash and a dislodged car seat. It is so hard to restrain one's bitterness at this so cruel and pain-ridden death, but **Cari Green**, who was with Saralee in the accident, has written with appreciation and calm about what ended up becoming the last ten days of Saralee's life:

"I have lots of wonderful memories of Saralee, but I am choosing to write about our last time together when I stayed in New York at her apartment.

"June 23-27, 1991: . . . Saralee's apartment was like an oasis. All around it was heat and the stench of garbage. Her place was immaculate, comfortable, practical, functional and mostly free of cockroaches -- no mean feat in that apartment building.

"Instead of the Empire State Building we did Tompkins Square Park. She had shot tons of video on the demonstrations there. A week ago there were hundreds of cops, now only dozens. But even so, lots for a city that had just announced budget cuts that would not allow many swimming pools to open that summer! She told me in that excited way of hers about all the incidents..... we walked around and talked to homeless people who were relocating in empty lots, building shelters, those of them who hadn't been scattered to other parts of the city or New Jersey. She was

outraged at their treatment by a city that cared more about the gentrified few.

"Actually I did take Saralee up to the top of the Empire State Building. She said she was afraid of heights. I needed to resurrect some of my trip of '84 to reassure myself that the world that had been there then was still here now. It hadn't all been politics with Saralee. There was shopping at Century 21! If you've never been there there's nothing quite like it. You can buy upscale or lower price items very cheaply but you can't try anything on. So you make two trips. One to buy and one to return. And there was an early John Cassavetes film at the Bleecker Street Cinema. And she wanted to go to a lecture -- something on mind expansion -- I can't remember the details. Instead we went to her favorite Italian restaurant in the Village. And then we saw Manhattan up high at night. Saralee did those things for her friends."

"The next morning I schlepped her bag down two flights of stairs and put my back out. She took a flight back to Vancouver. I stayed on for two more days in her apartment but it wasn't the same. I didn't feel safe there and it wasn't much fun.

"July 1, 1991, Vancouver: Bill and I were the last friends of Saralee to see her alive. She came back every summer to see family and friends and sometimes to live in her wonderful house. And yet she missed New York terribly. We spent a rather ordinary evening listening to jazz that was quite uninteresting. It was still a beautiful night and we decided to head for a nice vantage point to watch the fireworks..... If she were still alive she would have made a wry joke about trying to save the evening."

Five Evocations of a Woman So Many People Miss

Goldie Steele: "I can't divide Saralee into dates and events. She is too much of a whole to me -- intense; loyal; wonderful friend in the true sense of the word; bright; high principled; great sense of humor; troubled; introspective; open and honest."

Sylvia Spring: I heard about Saralee's various projects but never worked with her on them. I just loved her as a dear friend. She taught me a lot about loyalty, honour, respect, humour, compassion and perseverance. I'm not sure what I gave her in return."

Barbara Steinman: "When I think of my own rather abstract sense of dates and events, I marvel again at Saralee's incredible attention to detail and heightened curiosity which made her acute understanding of people and unique way of telling a story so special."

Elena Feder: "Saralee changed my life irreversibly. She opened doors and windows to a world I had only imagined existed. She taught me the safety of trust and the value of integrity as well as the courage to look fear in the eyes. Together we explored the hidden corners of our hearts and minds, and cried or laughed at our mistakes in total safety."

Anna Banana: "The things I loved the most about Saralee were:

- * She was always GAME to do something new -- or even old -- i.e., cycling, swimming, food.
- * Her enthusiasm for life was inspiring and catching.
- * Her sense of humor was tremendous, and truly got her through rough spots with friends who sometimes found her relentless questioning of everything disturbing.
- * Always curious -- a great inquiring mind."

Epilogue (Taken from the Eulogy by Paula Levine)

Saralee lived with an intensity that few of us who loved her could match. In breadth and depth, her politics were reflected in her work, her work reflected her life and her life reflected her politics. Her absence feels like one of the moment -- a temporary time away on a project or a journey. Once, several years ago, Saralee was struggling to write a resumé for a show or a grant. Many of the things she did, the roles she carried out and places she had been wouldn't fit into the traditional format of a resumé. As an exercise, she wrote two lists -- one of her roles over the years, the other of the places she had been. She wrote:

mother, daughter, teacher, photographer, artist, wife, lover, criminal, traveller, adventurer, seaman, cook, musician, child care counsellor, stenographer, landlord, friend, sister, aunt, cousin, kayaker, backpacker, camper, cabin dweller, tent dweller

Saralee's life did not fit into a form. As she lived she forged her own.

Japan, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Alaska, Grenada, Panama Canal, Paris, London, Rome, Haifa, Tel Aviv, Golan Heights, High Arctic Islands, Pelle Bay

Saralee touched and changed many. She was astute, insightful and brutally honest with her friends, family and herself. She used challenge as an opportunity to clarify and question what was known and unknown by probing beneath the surface, beneath the obvious.

Her death -- untimely and unfair -- is a tragedy. It has disrupted and ended her living which had very recently become a truly passionate affair of the heart.

We love you and miss you, Saralee.

To everyone who so feelingly and fully answered my form letter/questionnaire, and to Paula Levine and Karen Love, thank you. Without you this piece could never have been produced.

- Avis Lang