

## Half Staff – Beverly Ann Williams

May 17, 2000

Special-needs teacher Beverly Ann Williams, 49, of West Wharf, Rockport, died on Wednesday, May 17, at her home overlooking Sandy Bay. She had been diagnosed with liver cancer seven weeks before. Ms. Williams, “Bev” to all but her students, taught grade school children for 25 years, the last 16 years at the Fuller and the Beeman elementary schools in Gloucester and before that in Newington, Conn. Except for this current school year, when she moved to a conventional classroom in the fourth grade, Ms. Williams taught special-needs children.

Ms. Williams took courses every summer to enhance her teaching skills. When she died, she was enrolled in two courses, one about computers and the other, a two-year New England-based program titled “The Courage to Teach,” for which she was awarded a scholarship.

Unknown to her, Ms. Williams had received credits for the computer course, thereby attaining MA+60, the highest education level (equivalent to a Ph.D.) recognized by Massachusetts schools.

Ms. Williams’ efforts in teaching children and mentoring dozens of student teachers were recognized by her peers; she was a past president of the Massachusetts Association of Teacher Education.

Ms. Williams moved from Connecticut to Rockport in early 1980. In addition to being a teacher, for five years in the mid-1980s, she was the proprietor of The Kitchen Store in Rockport.

Along with her husband, Paul Sylva, Ms. Williams was a regular supporter of the annual Rockport Chamber Music Festival in June, typically opening her home for the musicians to stay during their rehearsals and performances.

Her love for travel and sailing took her to Europe, the Far East, and the Caribbean. She brought these trips back to the classroom, using piles of foreign currency to teach math or taking her students on an imaginary trip to Italy and helping them love Puccini’s opera “La Boheme.” Her last foreign trip, three weeks before she died, was to Scotland.

Ms. Williams was born in Bristol, Conn., on Aug. 19, 1950, to Jean (Stevens) Williams and the late Morgan Williams. She graduated with a bachelor of arts from Boston University in 1972 and a masters of education from Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Conn.

She is survived by her husband of 18 years, Paul Sylva of Rockport; her mother, Jean Williams of Rockport; her sister Jean Williams Hurst of St. Pete Beach, Fla.; and a large, loving, extended family of relatives and friends.

A memorial service will be held on Wednesday, May 24, at 10 a.m., in the First Congregational Church on Main Street, Rockport.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts should be made toward cancer research.