

Southern Cross by A. Leigh Phillips

She has to follow her own light
No matter that it blinds her
No matter that it brings tears to her eyes at night because
Nobody knows her.
Nobody holds her in the dark.
She blesses strangers with her presence and moves on

Alone. She fears her destination sometimes.

She knows many cities
They shimmer like mirages in the heat of her past
They quiver on the horizon like large animals dreaming of the
night
They whisper her name like spirits calling a loved one home.

Love would have been better, she thinks
If she knew how. She could have been happy once
But she dreamed it away. She buried it in the foundation of some
shimmering city.

Its cornerstone holds the music of the ocean,
Bits of sea glass, the smell of paint, and a little time.
She loved him with her life and moved on

Alone. She fears her destination sometimes.

Family too would have been good, she thinks
Something to belong to. Something to build routines and
rituals on.
Someone to kiss her goodnight.

As a child she went to Sunday school at the mission church,
Picked roses on the way home and went to Grandmama's for
Sunday dinner.
The roses are pressed in her Bible packed in a box
somewhere.

God help the Southern child with her toes in the dirt
And mind on the highway
A dark moon guides her and she must move on

Alone. She fears her destination sometimes.

The Woman

Anne Leigh Phillips was born on December 6, 1942 in Santa Ana, California. Leigh grew up in Virginia.

She was a talented dancer and majorette. At age 16, Leigh contracted all four strains of polio after having taken the polio vaccine. She had recently auditioned to be a dancer in a Broadway musical.

Leigh earned her B.A. in English from Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia. Her M.A. in English was from the University of Connecticut. From 1981-1988, Leigh was employed by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights in Washington, D.C. In 1988, she was hired by the Maine Department of Education as an Education Specialist II for Exceptional Children in the Program Review office.

Leigh's life was dedicated to serving people with disabilities. Her influence and advocacy on the part of persons with disabilities was felt across the State of Maine. She enjoyed and loved her home on Islesboro.

Leigh succumbed to cancer on October 10, 1998.

The Scholarship Fund

The Maine Council of School Board Attorneys contributed the initial fund. It is maintained through the cooperative efforts of the Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC), the Department of Education (DOE), and the Maine Council of School Board Attorneys (MCSBA) as a tribute to Ms. Phillips and her many contributions to children with disabilities throughout Maine.

Each year a minimum of \$700 is given to a graduating high school senior with a disability identified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Maine Special Education Regulations Chapter 101, going on to post-secondary education. Special consideration is given to applicants with exceptional achievement in one or more of the following: extra-curricular, core-curricular, volunteerism, academics, leadership.

To obtain information about applying for the A. Leigh Phillips Scholarship or to make a donation, contact Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC), 675 Western Ave, Suite 2, Manchester, ME 04351.

A. Leigh Phillips Scholarship



Leigh Phillips Remembered by Her Friends

I have several remembrances of Leigh, especially her love of children. Leigh invited my children to her home on the island and also her Farmingdale home on several occasions. The last visit was most enjoyable. She had what she called an M & M party. I videotaped the party and every now and again my children and I sit down and watch it.

—remembrance by Brenda Beaulieu

I remember Leigh well in her role as 504 expert, champion of children, and friend— as someone who was gentle, generous and gregarious, a great Southern hostess whether at her home in Islesboro or a restaurant in New Orleans, and as one who loved life and lived it to its fullest. Leigh presented herself as independent and strong, never letting her paralysis become a limiting definition of her life. Her spirit was always focused and purposeful in holding fast to her dreams. As a friend, she will never be replaced. I love my friend!

—remembrance by Jeannie Hamrin

Leigh and I got together one Saturday to work on our poems, with plans to submit them to a Maine publication. The closer we got to actually mailing them, the more nervous we became. Finally, Leigh said something to the effect of, "Pardon the expression, but I am feeling paralyzed with fear over actually submitting my poems for publication." It was a great giggle for us and off the poems went. Sad to say, none were accepted. Leigh taught me a lot about strength and courage— tempered with high good humor.

—remembrance by Gaylord Weston

When Leigh and I would make the trips back and forth to Islesboro, we'd sing along with the 'oldies' on the car radio. Leigh loved music and dancing. If we were at a dance, she'd go out on the dance floor and whirl her chair around and dance with everybody.

—remembrance by Faith Brann

Leigh Phillips spoke in a soft voice but when she set her mind to a task she was not to be deterred. My first contact with Leigh was a phone call on a Friday afternoon. She was at her summer home on the island and had just seen an ad for a program review opening in the Division of Special Education.

She told me about her disability and of her work with the office of Civil Rights. Also that she was wheelchair bound. I told her she could obtain an application form at any state office, the closest being in Rockland. I told her the bad news was the deadline for applications to be into Augusta was five p.m. on the following Monday. I was impressed with her credentials and I wished her luck. I figured there was little chance she could make it to the mainland, obtain and complete an application and get it to Personnel in Augusta by Monday.

When the list of persons to be interviewed came from Personnel, A. Leigh Phillips' name was on it.

—remembrance by Dick Duncan

Leigh Phillips taught me so much about how a person lives a full life & has gusto for life. She also taught me a lot about the importance of a complete understanding of handicapped accessibility in our society and how that accessibility can truly open up opportunities for persons with disabilities.

—remembrance by Susan Parks

One of our fondest memories of Leigh goes back to the mid-1990's when Leigh hosted a due process training meeting for staff and providers at her home on Islesboro. The meeting was held out in her back yard near the beautiful raised flowerbeds she so lovingly tended. Then we were treated to some of Leigh's Southern hospitality. She had prepared a delicious steamed lobster lunch with an array of side dishes, including her famous guacamole. As was Leigh's way, there was a feeling of being nurtured mixed with a heavy dose of laughter.

Special Education Law Conference, New Orleans, 1996: one evening we dined in a fancy Cajun restaurant while outside the rains came down like a plague. But instead of beasties raining down on us, they rained up— from the overflowing drains. Only Leigh could keep on joking and encouraging as the flood waters rose over her wheels and we waded knee deep through sewage back to our hotel!

—remembrance by Kate Neale, Carol Lenna & Toni Rees

Her *joie de vivre* was Leigh's greatest gift to the world. Having faced countless challenges in her life, Leigh learned from every situation, always knew what was important and how to maximize opportunities. She was a creative problem solver, gifted writer, talented dancer and a loving and devoted friend.

—remembrance by Mona Baker