

For Alita Mitchell,

Admissions Coordinator at the Residential College

A memorial service at St. Andrews Episcopal Church, Ann arbor, Michigan  
17 November 1996

A tribute offered by Cindy Sowers:

Our friend Alita loved food - good food, to be sure; but also simple things for everyday enjoyment: yoghurt; sliced tomatoes; pepper. And she had a kid's taste, too, every now and then for Reese Cups. A reliable source assures me that Alita knew the whereabouts of every Reese cup in the house.

She had a way of savoring these things that sometimes created a whole space of pleasure around her. I remember the house on Olivia Street: the living room walls were painted mango spice: that room was a zone where the kitchen met the desert: it made me think of pumpkin pie, cardamon, and cloves; of silver, carved wood, and parchment.

The stories she told there, as in all her spaces, were something she savoured and bestowed: tea parties in Indiana to prepare young ladies for their first trip to France; Jacqueline Bouvier's black turtle neck sweater and black slacks - the talk of Vassar - where things in those days were "divine;" Cairo at twilight; an Egyptian queen dragging her mink across the floor of the hotel lobby.

Alita loved these things so precisely, that when she began to die, she took the time to mourn the loss of every single one : cooking; gardening; reading a book; taking a trip to Florida; the cows in the pasture; Bobby Short; Frank Sinatra; her shoes; her car; children in the garden; every member of her family, for each of whom she had a special, unique, well-crafted worry; her friend Sheila.

Alita loved being alive. It is my faith that she rests and grows in life now; in the present time that she always understood - it was her gift, her strength, her fulfillment, her satisfaction. But I must admit, for the sake of truth, not the life that (initially at least) she would have preferred.