

Letters

Spider Robinson remembers Ginny

Today a total stranger on the other side of the continent phoned while I was out to tell me that he'd been camped out at the hospital for the last few weeks, and wanted me to know that Ginny had mentioned my wife and me several times with great fondness. Probably as well the machine got it. My response was to burst into tears.

She was the toughest, smartest, fiercest, KINDEST woman I've ever known. I only met her face to face twice in my life, never set foot inside any of her homes (although my wife was luckier; Ginny once brought her home to the Carmel place, and showed her Robert's word processor, and the famous cannon); we knew each

other by mail, phone and e-mail. But I'll never forget her, and I miss her already. I can't decide whether I prefer to picture her and Robert ice-skating together again, like they used to — or at the rail of another cruise ship, about to "Sail Beyond the Sunset" — or reunited and crowned at the head of the Grand Parade, about to resume *Traveling in Elephants*.

One of those.

Spider Robinson

Editor's note: *Science fiction author and long-time friend of Robert and Virginia Heinlein was asked to comment on the loss of Ginny for the Heinlein Society Newsletter.*

Students pray for Ginny

For what it's worth, 600 Catholic boys prayed for the repose of the soul of Virginia Heinlein today at Cathedral High School in Los Angeles, CA, where I teach. I'm not Catholic, but I've been teaching Heinlein novels there for eight years, so it was a moment many of the boys felt meaningful.

Robert James

Heaven

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Masters" and "Stranger in a Strange Land."

Throughout her life, she loved reading, cooking, gardening, music, and politics. In recent years, declining eyesight and physical health curtailed some of her favorite activities, but she began and maintained an active presence on Internet venues devoted to study of her husband's works, pursuing this new hobby with much energy. She endowed the Robert Anson Heinlein Chair in Aerospace Engineering, established on Aug. 28, 2001, at Annapolis, by a gift of over \$2.6 million, in honor of her late husband, a graduate of the Naval Academy's Class of 1929. She also helped to found The Heinlein Society, an educational charity dedicated to paying forward to generations to come the many

Heinlein legacies. She also endowed the public library in Robert Heinlein's birthplace of Butler, Missouri.

Readers have often remarked on the strength, intelligence, and power of his female characters; his fictional women were often based on Virginia Heinlein. As science fiction writer Spider Robinson said, "several of Heinlein's women bear a striking resemblance to his wife Virginia." Many of Heinlein's books were dedicated to her. Virginia, or "Ginny" as she preferred to be called, was his sounding board and source of ideas; she originated the idea that became "Stranger in a Strange Land." She was his first reader and trusted critic. Robert Heinlein once said she was "smarter, better, and more sensible than I am."

In a 1961 letter, he said "She is what I feel to be a good person in the word's simplest and plainest meaning. Which includes lashing

out with her claws on some occasions when others may consider it improper. I don't give a damn whether Ginny is 'proper' or not; I like her. I like her values." At the end of one of his later books, "Job," the final sentence has been read by many as Robert Heinlein's own tribute to his beloved wife: "Heaven is where Margrethe is."

There will be no funeral. Her ashes will be scattered at sea in the Pacific, as were her husband's. Mourners are asked to make blood donations in her memory, and may make charitable donations to The Heinlein Society at www.heinleinsociety.org, or P.O. Box 1254, Venice, Calif., 90294-1254.