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4-30-2021

### Eulogy given by Wendy Smiley at the Service for Madeline Davis

Wendy Smiley

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I came to Buffalo in 1974 at the tender age of 20. I was happily growing into my lesbianism and when I heard that there was a lesbian singer at a coffee house, I hurried down to listen. She was beautiful. She sang directly to my heart and I fell in love. I asked Madeline on a date. We walked around Delaware Park. We talked about our lives and our interests. We were perfectly suited. She was a musician with a lovely voice, a nice Jewish girl; we had similar ways of looking at the world so I asked her to marry me. She patted me on the head, let out a laugh, and told me I was way too young.

Twenty years later we sat together at a community Seder and I asked her on a second date. I was now much older and someone had mentioned that I had my five minute window of opportunity. Madeline was single. We had our second date. After dinner I asked her if we could go in the parking lot and neck. She said "I don't do that on a second date." We continued to see each other. I did whatever she requested. She was falling. I could tell. I asked her if we could go steady. She said no, but we can date. A month later I bought a house across the street from her. I asked her to marry me. She said no but we can go steady. I continued to ask until I stopped. Then she got nervous and asked me.

We got married at Temple Beth Zion in 1995. It was a terrific wedding. Not legal, but certainly spiritual. The temple both lost and gained members but we opened a door. We had the first same sex listing in the wedding section in the Buffalo News. Wedding number 2 was a hand fasting in the woods to honor Madeline's Wiccan beliefs. Third was a Vermont Civil Union. Fourth in Niagara Falls Ontario, which was then recognized by

NY State. The fifth was entirely my fault. I wanted to have a marriage in my own country that was recognized by my country. We returned to Temple Beth Zion for this wedding. And then we agreed enough was enough.

Twenty six years of marriage to the woman of my dreams. Madeline and I were perfect for each other. Let me tell you about the woman who filled my life with joy and sometimes torture. Madeline was a poet, a beatnik and before she came out, she sang in many coffee houses. Her first band was New Chicago Lunch with Steven Halpern among others. She continued to sing in various venues and known by some as Queen of the lesbians.

Madeline became involved in the Mattachine Society of the Niagara Frontier. She was nominated to run for delegate to the 1972 McGovern convention. She was the first open lesbian to speak from the convention floor to promote the acceptance and rights for gays and lesbians.

Madeline wrote and recorded the first gay rights anthem in the US, "Stonewall Nation". She later recorded "Daughter of All Women," a tape of original lesbian music.

She taught the first lesbian course in the country. With Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, she wrote the groundbreaking "Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community."

Madeline's career was as a librarian for the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library. After she retired, she became an archivist. She founded the Dr. Madeline D Davis LGBTQ Archive of Western NY. It first existed in our house but later

moved to SUNY Buffalo State. If anyone wants to make a donation in her name, send it to the Archives.

Madeline starred in a documentary by Dave Marshal called “Swimming with Lesbians” which introduced the Archives through stories about some of our favorite people from the Archive.

In 2016 Madeline received an honorary Doctorate from the State University of NY for her lifetime of work towards making the lives of the GLBTQ community better for us all.

Madeline loved many things. Among them are performing, adoration, and her friends. Her biggest love was for her sister Sheila, her brother Mark, and her niece Jody who gave her so much love in return.

The last month of Madeline’s life was truly a blessing for us both. With the help of so many people who contributed to the GO Fund Me for Madeline’s care, I was able to be right at her side. I want to thank the aids and Odie who worked round the clock to take such loving care of both of us. And of course Beth who has been our rock for so many years. Mad’s words of thanks to her were “Stop being so sloppy.” After so many weeks of being apart while she was in the hospital following a stroke, we really cherished our time together. Madeline was still as demanding as ever. Most often it was “get me a bedpan” or “you can’t leave the room” but one memory I cherish was when she ordered “kiss my neck.” I will forever be grateful for the joy she brought into my life.

If anyone would like to come back to the house this afternoon for a short visit, to share some memories, have a little nosh, I would be grateful to have you.

After a few years with Madeline the songwriter, I started nudging her. All her other lovers had a song dedicated to them. Where is mine? After a few years of whining, I finally got my song and I thought I would share it with you. Just one of the many wonderful things she gave me.

*-Eulogy given by Wendy Smiley at the service for her wife, Madeline Davis on 04/30/2021 at Amherst Memorial Chapel (281 Dodge Road, Getzville, NY)*