

February 24, 2001

Judith Harrington

Judith Harrington died on 4 December 2000. She had a B.A. in 1967 and an M.A. in 1969 from the University of Western Ontario, and a Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1971. She was a member of the 1970 Fieldwork Team of the Niger Fertility Survey. From 1971 to 1978 she was with the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan. From 1978 to 1981 Judy Harrington was in the Republique Populaire du Congo for UNDP, then in 1981-83 she was a Research Analyst with the Demography Division at Statistics Canada, going on to the Health and Population Sector at CIDA for 1983 to 1986, then Country Director for Nigeria in 1986-88 with the UNFPA, and back to be Deputy Director of Policy and Programming at the Professional Services Branch of CIDA for 1988 to 1990, moving to the post of Specialist in Women's Health and Family Planning until 1994 when she was a Senior Population Specialist with the World Bank. She had come back to CIDA in 1998 where she was eventually at the Asia Desk.

Judy was a leading member of the community of Canadian demographers. She was a long-time member of the Canadian Population Society and had close relationships with many members of the Association des démographes du Québec. Her untimely death of a brain aneurism at such a young age and at the peak of her professional work shocked and saddened us. She is remembered as a warm and vibrant personality whose personal attributes and strong professional skills combined to make her one of the forefront people in the population and development field. Her seemingly boundless energy and passionate commitment to improved programs and policies had a major impact on the agencies where she worked, particularly at UNFPA, CIDA and the World Bank, and on the international community more generally. She is particularly well known for her research contributions to and support of programs for improved maternal and child health in Africa and other developing regions.

Judy was a bright light in the population field, being one of the first demographers educated in Canada, with numerous relationships across the country and beyond. Many people have sent messages; Alan Simmons talks about Judy's dynamism, originality and good humour, Evelyne Lapierre-Adamcyk speaks of "telle vitalité," Michael Shenstone says she was "one of my very first and best teachers about population," George Brown speaks of her as colleague who will be sorely missed. Katherine MacDonald writes that Judy "wore her heart on her sleeve and was always prepared to make an impassioned plea for the causes in which she believed." Danièle Laliberté speaks of having heard much of Judy Harrington's work in Africa while doing her own research.

Anatole Romaniuc remembers Judy from their association in the Demography Division, adding that the "discussions with her were a delight, particularly when reminiscing over Africa with which we both were in love." Mary Jane Norris remembers the same time at Statistics Canada, especially her warm and bubbly personality and wonderful sense of humour which made for a friendly and fun work environment. She also remembers "some of the excellent dinners we enjoyed at Judy's where she introduced us to African cuisine and her descriptions of how the African women had prepared their meals." John Samuel remembers their time together as Canadian delegates to the 1984 Mexico City World Population Conference, especially "her

ready enthusiasm for participation in the deliberations,” observing that “her enthusiasm was no less for participating in sightseeing and shopping,” and that “her bubbly spirit and cheerful smile are fresh in my consciousness despite the passage of almost 17 years.” Karol J. Krotki asked for a count the countries noted on her c.v.; they are Canada, United States, Niger, Upper Volta, Nigeria, Congo, Zimbabwe, Egypt and Mexico.

P. Krishnan and Susan McDaniel reflect on their student days together at Cornell. Krishnan observes that she was there to cheer others in spite of her own personal problems, and in particular encouraged him to apply for a position in Canada. Victor Piché also reflects on days at Cornell when they both wrote dissertations on Niger based on surveys carried out by their professor Ian Pool. Piché writes, “since those wonderful years of student life and fieldwork in the villages of Niger and the former Upper Volta, we have been in close contact not only for professional reasons but because we shared the same vision of what population and development should mean. She was so energetic, original, stimulating, and had a tremendous sense of humour.” Ian Pool writes that both of his children, now in their 30s, also had very fond memories of Judy, especially in Africa.

Judy Harrington was an energetic and courageous person, willing to question assumptions and always working toward improving the welfare of the most disadvantaged. She cared deeply about the big issues and about the lives of individuals. She will be cherished for many things – her intellect, her humour and her tremendous devotion to improving connections for people in the world around her. She was a source of love, support and inspiration for many people – her friends, her family and her colleagues. She opened her heart and her home to people of many ages and from many walks of life. She will be sadly missed but fondly remembered by a network of people that spans the globe. We send our condolences in particular to her three sons, Tobias Harrington, André Harrington and Chris Powell.

Roderic Beaujot
with the help of Alan Simmons, the Ottawa Citizen, and various others.