

Jane Sewell Gibson

November 26, 1998

This tribute came from Bonnie Barrett Stretch, following Jane's death in Bridgeport, CT: "Life with Jane was always an adventure. She was funny, creative, caring, and brave. She was an original. In college, she discovered the power of art and switched majors. After college, she painted as if her life depended on it, which in some measure it did. The beauty of life confronted her with such intensity that she needed to express it and never stopped trying to get everyone else to see it. She became an artist and eventually a teacher.

"She loved kids, in part because she too, was always a kid at heart. In the 70's she developed an art curriculum for the elementary schools of Canton, Connecticut, teaching at three or four schools daily for nearly a decade. Kids who might never have known the freedom of thinking and feeling and expressing themselves creatively found it in her classes. They thought she was wild. But they loved and respected her, perhaps because she never patronized them. Instead, she challenged them as she did everyone she knew. While Jane was doing all this, she was also battling mental illness. But somewhere along each pathway, she would figure out where to find help and right herself one more time – because for her, life was too rich and exciting to miss.

"I hadn't seen or talked with Jane for over a year when I heard of her death. I was afraid she died lonely and afraid. I should have known better. Even in Bridgeport Mental Health Center, where she spent the last couple of years, she was surrounded by friends. 'People here loved her,' Sarah Quadir, a social worker – told me. Although she'd been seriously ill for some years, people at the Center were shocked by her death. It just seemed improbable, because her spirit was so alive. 'At her memorial service, people read her poetry and talked about all the things she did,' said Sarah. 'She told great stories. She made us laugh. I miss her'... And so do I."