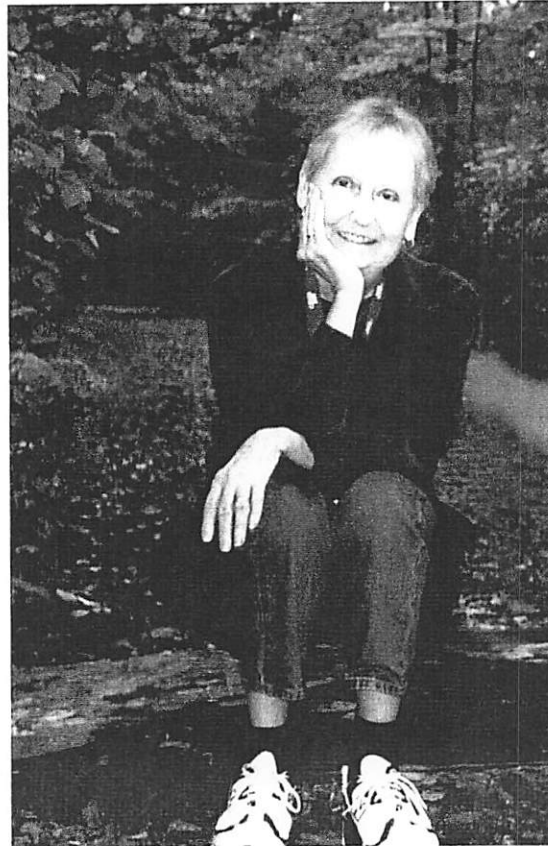


Mary Elizabeth Avery Work
27 September 1942 – 18 July 2003



Obituary, Eulogy and Words from
Family and Friends

*We are not human beings
in search of a spiritual experience.*

*We are spiritual beings
immersed in a human experience.*

- Teilhard de Chardin -

Obituary for Mary Elizabeth Avery Work

At the age of 60 after an eight-year journey with cancer, Mary Elizabeth Avery Work passed over on Friday 18 July 2003 surrounded by her loving family at her home in Garrison. A Requiem Mass will be celebrated for the repose of her soul at St. Mary-in-the-Highlands in Cold Spring on Tuesday 22 July at 11 am.

Mary was born to Ben and Donda Avery in Phoenix, Arizona, on 27 September 1942, and attended public schools there including the first integrated high school in Phoenix. She graduated Summa Cum Laude with a B.A. in History from Arizona State University, Tempe, with her Honors Thesis on the minority peoples of China. Mary then joined the Peace Corps and served for two years in East Malaysia in a Chinese village as the English teacher.

Upon her return to the US, Mary attended Graduate School at the University of Chicago in Chinese studies. She then transferred to Chicago Theological Seminary where she met a fellow student, Moorman Robertson (Rob) Work, Jr. Mary and Rob were married in 1968 and were on the faculty of the Ecumenical Institute/Institute of Cultural Affairs in Chicago.

In 1970 they were assigned to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to direct the Institute's programmes of theological and leadership training. In 1972 they were assigned to Seoul, Korea, where they helped establish the Institute and conducted theological and leadership training and initiated human development projects in poor, rural villages on Cheju Island and north of Seoul near the DMZ. Mary and Rob gained two sons in Korea, one by adoption, Benjamin, and one by birth, Christopher. In 1978 they were reassigned back to the US where Mary was co-director of the Institute in Dallas and then in Indianahoma, Oklahoma, where they conducted a human development project.

In 1980 Mary and Rob were reassigned to Jamaica, where they helped established and were co-directors of the Institute and initiated several human development projects in rural villages in the Blue Mountains and conducted leadership training with many organizations. In 1984 the Works were assigned to Caracas, Venezuela, where they again established the Institute as co-directors and conducted human development projects in Barlovento and Zona Zuata as well as organizational development projects.

In 1990, Mary and Rob returned to the US coming to New York City and soon moved to Larchmont and then to Peekskill. In 1995 Mary had a successful operation for ovarian cancer. Mary then received her M.S. in Family Counseling from Iona College and worked in mental health empowerment, family counseling and the Processor for the Spiritual Guild of the Wainwright House in Rye. Mary and her family moved to Garrison over three years ago and Mary led part of the US Census in the area.

Mary was a member of St. Mary-in-the-Highlands in Cold Spring and attended Dr. Jean Houston's Mystery School regularly. Mary was predeceased by her parents Ben and Donda and her older sister Nancy. She is survived by her husband Rob, two sons

Benjamin (Mt. Vernon) and Christopher and Jennifer (Garrison), her sister Marjorie Bachert (Whidby Island, Washington), mother-in-law, brother and sister-in-laws, and many cousins, Aunts, nieces and nephews.

Mary was a saintly person full of life, love and light and will be greatly missed. She was grateful for her life and gave herself to her many loves of family, friends, youth, children, the poor and all those who are not cherished. Her family and friends both near and far feel her warm presence with them daily since her passing and are confident that she is with her God in rest and celebration and will receive many new assignments bringing love and light to others.

Eulogy for Mary Elizabeth Avery Work

From her husband

22 July 2003

I am so very grateful for the life and love of Mary Work, my wife and life partner over these 35 years. She is truly an angel of light and love who in her humility and humanity cared for and brought people together in amazing ways. Time and time again, she challenged me and many others to go out into the world in care, service and confidence.

Mary died her death the way she lived her life – in humility, gratitude and compassion. When she made the decision last Sunday to stop her cancer treatment and to prepare to let go, even though she said it was the most difficult thing she had ever done, she did it with grace and simplicity. She literally lay down before God and gave up her life in complete trust and gratitude.

Her room was filled with flowers and plants that friends and family had brought to express their love. She received phone calls and emails from around the country and the world from people whose lives she had touched. After battling cancer for eight years she had decided it was time to go home for renewal, celebration and another assignment.

Our two sons, Benjamin and Christopher, and I are so very grateful for her life and for our lives with her and each other. We have lived and served as a missional family in villages, slums and with organizations in Chicago, Malaysia, South Korea, Oklahoma, Jamaica, Venezuela and New York.

Mary had tremendous energy and intelligence that she used to exercise her care for others. She led village meetings, wrote poetry and theological reflections, initiated human development projects, created beautiful, intriguing art, advised and supported her husband at the United Nations, led leadership training sessions, helped establish financial systems for village cooperatives, was a prior in a secular-religious Third Order, taught school, ministered to the mentally ill, counseled families, was the Processor for a spiritual guild and helped locally to conduct the US census. She did all of this with humility and energy in such a way as to transform people, relationships and social structures.

But the work she loved best and thought most important was the creation and care for her family - her two sons and husband - and her parents and parents-in-law as well as many other families. She believed passionately that the family was the daily place, time and relationship where humanness was born and nurtured and she acted out her support of this out with abandon and selflessness. She loved young people and wanted to create a world that cherished every child.

Just four months ago she came to understand her cancer not as an enemy but as part of her spiritual journey. She writes in her journal that her cancer may have come about "because of a need to be kicked into/onto a higher level – an evolutionary leap." She "could not claim it or story it but only be open to the journey".

She began to see the matrix of nodules in her lungs as a fractal pattern that had been manifesting itself since she was a little girl and that she named Indra's Net – the cosmic net of jewels or points of light of interconnectivity. As I “keep going deeper into the stars, I don't exist. Stars are patterns of light. . . . in the midst of return, the message through light, a reflection of the I AM, not a light generated by me inside me – me is me – but this me is captured in the light and has become a reflection – light in every cell. Light resurrecting, live in now, if caught in this light/life. Cancer – true darkness. Primordial light. Penetrate to higher fertility/creativity.

True darkness

Light resurrects me

Eternal now.”

Four months ago she wrote this declaration about her life purpose based on the energy model she had been working on for years:

Helping people articulate their angle on creation

Their sense of foreground/background

Their life questions

By focusing their energy of

Current reality

Releasing their energy of

Psychic tensions

Harnessing their energy of mythic,

Archetypal, interior images and stories

Integrating their energy of

Deep connections

Thank you my beloved for living among us full of grace and love. Thank you for remaining with us in our hearts and minds and spirits and in this wide world to guide and inspire. May you continue to realize perfect peace, happiness, wisdom and compassion forever. Amen.

**Words from Friends and Family of
Mary Elizabeth Avery Work
21 July 2003, Garrison, New York**

My dear Mary,

You are in my heart and thoughts through out the day and in the middle of the night.

I continue, as Robbie and I did, to thank God for leading our son to find such a wonderful girl for his life partner. And again, thank you for marrying him. You are such a good team, and always will be.

And, my dear Mary, you have always been such a wonderful daughter to Robbie and me. You and Rob have brought us great joy in raising two such fine sons. One of my favorite snap shots is of you with Ben and Chris walking on a hill in Jamaica (I think) with your walking sticks.

And all of the many times you came to help Robbie and me even before we asked. You were the main one to help us decide and to move us here where we would be cared for. --

How do I love you? I can't count the ways. I think you must be an angel.

You are ever in my heart and prayers.

My love, Mother

(Paraphrased from a phone call):

Dear Rob,

Mary has always been Angelic – a liminal being – living between both worlds. These people don't stay a long time on Earth. She is needed back to input grace. She came to Earth to acquire human experience. Now she returns to the Angelic Realm to give transforming grace. She will continue in a profound sense. Now she is in both realms. She is merely moving her essence from this to the other world. Your work will be charged by her presence. This is a sacred moment. She is a sainted being. Each moment is an eternal happening in the Mind of God. Love continues forever. Love is contained in the Body and Mind of God.

Love,

Jean Houston

(Paraphrased from a phone call)

Dear Rob,

Mary is a divine woman – an Angel. We must surrender to God. We understand that life is eternal but still we grieve. I will continue working with Mary from my home this week. On Monday I went into a swoon and spoke with Mary. We should sing hymns of the Mother of God to Mary such as “O Mary we crown thee with blossoms today. Mary has been in charge of her life. It is our ego that thinks that we have caused any of this. Express your love to her. This is a crowning moment. Live in the moment. Stay with her. Be alert to her. After her passing make crosses over her energy centers (charkas) with love, life and soul. What ever happens is a miracle. Mary is the miracle.

Love,

Angel Gail

Ah, Rob, I'm so sad and so happy at the same time; sad that she's gone from our presence which makes a hungry space in my life, and so happy that her life and work and beingness and goodness made this world richer, kinder, smarter and better -- and that her great power has returned to The Power with news about the earth, and I hope some suggestions for us all; and that her great loving core, in addition to blessing us now and forevermore with her essence has returned to The Love and made it stronger and wiser because of what she adds to it. I send tender caring to all your families and much love to you. Peg Rubin

Rob and family. Please accept my most sincere thoughts, condolences and prayers. It was a tremendous honor to care for such a beautiful human being. My thoughts are with you.

Amy Tiersten, MD

Dear Rob and family

Our deepest sympathies from Ben Yvonne and Sandy
Jason and Gaea.

We are thinking of you and keeping you and your family in our prayers. We enjoyed the times we have shared with Mary. She was a beautiful woman. We were not aware of the suffering she was experiencing over for the past few years. We pray for God's comfort to your family at the funeral tomorrow and onwards. We are with you in Spirit.

Friends and family of ours have recently passed away and we found some really comforting and encouraging

texts in the Bible. I would like to share them with you hoping that they will also bring you comfort.

According to the Bible, Deuteronomy 31:16 calls death "a sleep". It reads; "And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers".

And the Gospel of John 11:11 reads; "These things said he: and after that saith unto them, our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep".

And 1 Thessalonians 4: 13 -18 reads;
Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Jesus promises He will be with us always, even until the end of the age. So He will be with you to give you strength to carry on as you look to the future.

God's blessings of peace to you Rob and lots of love from us all.

Sandy

My dear dear brother Rob,
What can I say to such a wonderful man- profound and deep- and to a woman who is your companion. I pray that her journey through the universe continues in peace and love- I pray for strength for you. When Ramakrishna's mother died...he wept...and his devotees asked him why..when he knew about the passages of the soul. Ramakrishna said he knew, but he was human, and this was his mom. So I hug you as you grieve, Rob. I care for you and admire you and love you. Take care , Rob. I return to New York on the 30th , and will attend the events in spirit with love and prayers,
Monica

Dearest Rob and family.... I send hugs to you all and to Mary as her spirit moves on.... may these words be an embrace.....In Loving Spirit... Gylan

Dear Rob:

I will always remember the calmness and serenity of Mary when I last saw her. She looked so content- life lived to its fullest. I was perhaps in the plane when Mary started her timeless journey and I am now writing to you from my Philippines office - but I am there with you and your family and Mary's friends in mind and spirit. May god rest her soul in peace.

With my deepest regards and good wishes
Pratibha

Dear Rob and family,
May the Almighty Spirit bless you all and Mary and grant her good rest.

Warmest regards,
Rajesh and family.

Dearest Rob:

I am just seeing this now here in Kuala Lumpur as I rush off to a conference and I send you and your children my heart and all my love.

I am with you in spirit and I am celebrating Mary's life from where I am now. I only wish I could be with you now.

Much, much love until we see each other again soon.

Blessings to you and family,

Charles

Dearest Rob, Benjamin, Christopher and Jennifer,
Thank you for sharing and for allowing us (Rob's colleagues and friends), to be part of the last journey on earth of your beloved Mary, that extraordinary woman of courage and unbelievable resilience. We will be with you in whichever way we can, humbled by your show of strength and extraordinary love for Mary.
Our thoughts and prayers are with you!

In solidarity,
Gita Welch

Dear Rob,

The word has just come from Jean that our beloved Mary has passed on to the next stage of her journey, and I want you to know that you - and Benjamin, Christopher and Jennifer - are in my thoughts and prayers in these coming days and weeks.

It has been a privilege to know Mary through the years, both early on and now these last months when her luminous presence in Mystery School has served as an inspiration to me and all of us and a reminder of the bright flame of spirit and a life beautifully lived.

Thank you for including the schedule of the celebration of Mary's life, starting today as you all are doing things that Mary loved to do. As I write you are perhaps having lunch at Cafe Maya and are about to go to the Chuang Yen Monastery. I will follow the progression of remembrances with you through the week.

Again, please know that you are all in my thoughts and prayers. I look forward to telling you that in person at the September Mystery School.

With my love in the Dance, Betty

Dear Rob,

I'm sorry for the loss of your beautiful wife. Although I only met her a couple of times, she impressed me as being a very bright, positive, humorous and warm person--someone I would have liked to have known better. I'm glad she was such an important part of your life. I'll be thinking of you and your family during this time.

Love,

Susan

Dear Rob and Mary

Dear Rob and Mary and Ben and Chris and Jennifer

I love you all forever.

I love you Mary. Thank you. I miss you, and I can never really miss you. You have inspired me for a very long time. (I'm not good at counting.) Many times I have thought, how would Mary react to this, think about this? And always the answer was vividly clear, because Mary is always very clear. Impossible to miss.

Dear Rob and Ben and Chris and Jennifer, and all of us who are still "here". I love you all forever.

When someone as great as Mary crosses, expands so much that our ordinary senses no longer can "see" her... whenever someone with as much love, and loved by so many people, goes from "here" to "there", from the sensory to the celestial (or however we can possibly think of it), there is a tremendous flow of love "back and forth" between us. It seems like a huge wave, a huge amplification of the flow of love. But it is just a taste of the love that is always there, all around us. A taste to help us experience it more. And to realize that there is much more than what we can see hear touch feel and taste. Our beloved Earth. Our womb. Our Mother. We all keep getting born into something new.

I want to see you all soon, and will.

Love,

Duncan

Dear Mary,

First of all, congratulations on your marriage! You and Rob are a great couple and I can only hope that my marriage proves to be half as successful as yours.

Secondly, I am sorry I can't be with you now. If money permitted, I would definitely hop on a plane and shoot straight to Garrison to help in any way I can - whether it be to repaint your house, plant Christmas trees in your front yard, or train Bootsie to box so he can beat away the skunks that are stealing his food. Unfortunately, I have a wife to support and we are getting ready to move to New York City - a costly endeavor, as you know.

Chris told me he showed you pictures from my marriage; I hope you enjoyed them. It was really a great time. There was polka dancing, potato-peeling, cross-dressing and diaper changing. (Not in that order.) Traditional Lithuanian weddings are quite zany, let me tell you. The best part about it was no one would tell me what was going to happen beforehand. It's much

more fun to laugh at the unsuspecting foreigner as events unfold, I guess.

Mary, I have never told you how grateful I am to you and your family. Since I first arrived in New York, the Work residence has always been a base for me - both materially and emotionally. I always knew that no matter where I was coming from I could always count on you and your family to take me in, feed me, clothe me and give me used furniture.

I know a lot of people feel the same way I do. Your warmth and generosity has touched us all. I don't claim to be a religious person, although I hope your faith brings you solace at a time like this. But I do know one thing - love doesn't die. It spreads, from person to person, family to family, country to country. The memory of your love and kindness will be passed on to others, who in turn will pass it on to others, who will pass it on to others and others, until that love spreads all over the world. You have made the world a more loving place by being in it and the world will never forget that.

Again, I'm sorry I can't be with you now. Give my best to everyone,

Love, Andrew

Dear Rob,

I have known that this was coming for some time. You are right in understanding that this is her wish. A wish that was born before Mary herself. A wish to be living her Godliness that is so encumbered by her humanness. Please understand also that Mary could not leave to go home until she knew that all of you were able to walk firmly with purpose in the home she is leaving. Mary gives such honor to her namesake "The Blessed Mother" for this she has truly been and will always continue to be in all of our memories that live so eternally in such an alive way within our every cell. Yes Rob, you are correct when you say that Mary will continue to study with me through all time just as I will continue to be inspired by her through all time for all time lives within each moment of time.

When Mary passes her Soul will be around her body for about one hour so during this time continue to make a cross over all of the chakras or energy areas of her body. Do not be concerned if you do not know exactly where those are just follow your sense of them. The cross I am speaking of is . . . the cross of "as above so below, as within so without". Continue to say "We love you Mary, follow the Light". This way her passing will be more peaceful and complete. I will continue to assist her from here. Please stay in touch.

Love,
Angel

Dear Rob,

I got the news about Mary this morning, and all I can say is that you and your family are in my thoughts and prayers.

Cos

Dearest Rob,

My prayers and deep heartfelt sympathy go out to you. I truly know what it is like to lose the love of your life.

Be comforted by the fact that Mary is now another angel to help guide us

She was an extraordinary, kind and beautiful lady and I will miss her.

Many blessings and may God give you strength,
Fonda

Dear Rob,

Just a note to say how sad and sorry I am to hear about Mary's death. May Tara and all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas send you peace and blessings in your sorrow.

Love, Brenda

Dearest Rob,

Mary has passed us and is now out of our "sight" yet while she was passing us she gave us all of herself. Continually she would check to make sure that all of our treasure chests were kept full and would always take the time to teach us how to fill them on our own. She always knew that she could not stop in her journey yet she negotiated with God to have the most time with all of us. We all watched to see what direction she took on her journey home so that we too could "set our sails" in the same direction. Mary's expression of love to each of us has inspired us to "set our sails" in the direction she modeled. A life of dedication, understanding, commitment, and expression of love. A life filled with God and the "works of God". Rob, I see Mary, she's with God!

Love, Angel

Dear Rob,

I am grateful that our paths have crossed at different point. I remember the five or six of us riding the 51 bus to 'SONG SHIM KUK JE HAKIO', Sacred Heart International School in Seoul, with 500 of our very close (physically) colleagues and walking up the hill every morning to the school. Mary taught my 6th grade class for two weeks while i went on a teaching trip toward the end of the year after Ben joined the team and Chris made his entrance. I couldn't believe the change in the students when I came back.

Rob, Ben, Chris, and Jen, I remember you in my thoughts at this time. Mary was, at a minimum, a great person.....I'm welling up.....it should be a sorrowful, joyful, full series of services.

peace, Richard Sims

Dear Rob, Mary, Ben, Chris and Jen,

It is hard being so far away at this time. However, I know this is where Mary wanted me to be—working with Teresita in doing the social artisty work in Latin America. Mary, you have kept our work on whole systems alive.

You are all in my prayers.

In the dance, Jan

My Dear Rob, Benjamin, Christopher and Jennifer,

We are saddened by the news about the passing of Mary, a very dear friend from way, way back. Please accept our condolences and deepest sympathy. We will certainly keep her in our prayers.

A loss in the family is always difficult especially for those who are left behind. We will also pray that your family will have the strength to cope during these trying times. Mary has been called, and your consolation is that she is now safely home with God.

May she rest in peace,

Libby

Dear Rob, Benjamin, Christopher and Jennifer

Sherry and I learned this morning the sad news about Mary. May God/Allah bless her soul.

Mary was a wonderful person - kind, warm and deeply committed to the issues of justice and harmony among people. Sherry and I pray for your strength and patience to cope with this. We will be with you tomorrow and the subsequent events to celebrate Mary's life.

Sherry and Shabbir Cheema

Dear Rob, Benjamin, and Christopher,

Words cannot express the sadness we feel to learn of Mary's death. Since Jan called this morning, we have been recalling so many glorious memories of Mary, especially of our shared time in Seoul. She was such a gentle, kind and caring soul. Everywhere she went she sowed peace, love and hope. She was quick to console, understand and pardon. I can see her tall form in the halls of the International School of the Sacred Heart where we taught, spreading the seeds of possibility to all the students. She also held out possibility to me every time we climbed on an overcrowded Seoul bus; and she would graciously exit with me when my claustrophobia took over!

Who could ever forget experiencing Mary's inordinate joy when Benjamin and then Christopher came into your lives? She fully embraced and loved being a Mother, and she was so good at it. Her love of Korea, its people and culture, was of great inspiration to all who entered the country as strangers.

We would like to share one of our favorite Earth Prayers by Wendell Berry.

Within the circles of our lives
we dance the circles of the years,
the circles of the seasons
within the circles of the years
the cycles of the moon
within the circles of the seasons,
the circles of our reasons
within the cycles of the moon.

Again, again we come and go,
changed, changing. Hands
join, unjoin in love and fear,
grief and joy. The circles turn,
each giving into each, into all.
Only the music keeps us here,

each by all the other held.
In the hold of hands and eyes
we turn in pairs, that joining
joining each to all again.

And then we turn aside, alone,
out of the sunlight gone

into the darker circles of return.

We will be with you in thought and prayer tomorrow morning as you celebrate Mary's completed life. We are blessed to have walked some of Mary's journey with her. Remembering Mary will long be our joy and delight. Grace and peace to all, Mary Ann and Harry