

# And then, there was Ferne! Continued from page 5

practically had to only say your name once, no matter how complicated, and she would learn it and remember it. She would had made a perfect executive assistant just with that skill!

Things that would look or sound bad coming from anyone else, were just bundles of joy when they came from her. I remember (and I am both crying and laughing as I write) her having an animated conversation with one of her advertising prospects (she always talked to them, she never tried to "sell" from a script). She was talking and laughing at whatever this other person was saying and suddenly, she said, "Oh, stop your noise!" I almost fell off my chair at the thought of a rep talking to a potential advertiser like that and before I could go into full fledged damage control, she was closing the sale of an ad with that prospect! I shut up and minded my own business for the rest of the day...

Every day, there were two personal calls she would make, one, to her mother, with a great deal of difficulty as Mrs. Riley is hard of hearing, and the second, to her beloved Sister Smith, the wife of the pastor at her church. They were like battery recharges for her and I never thought she felt forced to making the phone calls.

Ferne left us to find a full time paying job, with a wage attached. She found it. But she never left us, as she would come back to use computers when we were a C@P site and to participate in special events whenever we invited her. Her love for the poor and passion to combat poverty were incessant. She went to public forums, attended meetings, joined us for the 2006 North American Street Newspapers Association gathering here in Halifax.

Ferne Riley was a decent woman, a child of God, a credit to the human race. I never heard her talk ill of someone else, never ever did she use foul language or even showed disrespect. When she got angry, she would get up and go or she would become very silent. Ferne was a good follower of her religion, she truly practiced what she preached, and her invitations to visit her church were a must with anyone she just met! (During her funeral service, I commented to Heather Maxwell how lively the service had been. She said she already knew, as she had been invited to attend by Ferne in the past). She had an innate goodness that has transcended her own life span. The presenters at her service, this issue of Street Feat and the comments that our readers will make of their encounters with Ferne, all attest to her impeccable nature, to her higher standards.

When Ferne asked for something, it was in earnest, because she needed it or because she wanted it, and to see a grown up woman demonstrate happiness at the simplest things in life was a real treat to those who witnessed it.

An example of something I'd never think of doing myself, or have never seen done by others. When we went to the cemetery in Sackville to bury our eldest vendor, the Warrior Dominique (Vivian Martin Ash), Ferne was part of the group. After the burial was concluded and everyone started to go their own way, Ferne and others were kindly offered a ride back to Halifax by the Cruickshank's Funeral Home driver. Ferne asked if it would be OK to get a drive to Lucasville instead, which is close to Sackville, so that she could visit her mother! If nothing else had done it, that simple act of remembrance of her mother and ingenuity of finding a way to go visit her won my respect and my heart!

Ferne did not get intimidated by people's stance in life, nor did she feel better than those less fortunate than her. She treated people on a same level basis. This is why people like Maureen MacDonald, the MLA for Halifax Needham, who was also a tenant at Bloomfield, on the same floor as our office, showed up at her service. Once you met Ferne, you got to know her, and to like her. Thank you Maureen for comforting us.

I will never again meet another Ferne Riley, as we are all unique in our own ways and looks, but the Ferne Riley I met will never leave my memory, my affection. She won people over by simply being a simple, caring, truthful, honest, obedient, humble person. And to remember her by, I have photos and a newly found video of her, singing Amazing Grace, that would make you cry into prayer, even if you are a non-believer!

Go on, Ferne Riley, I don't think of you as an angel, or a saint; I see you as the person that was supposed to learn from me who, instead, ended up teaching me

higher practices of life with your God-given excellent nature. May your misdeeds be forgiven and your many superdeeds rewarded plentifully, as only He can reward them. Thanks for being you, among us. Adios.

## Happy Birthday!

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A Man's a Man For A' That  
*Is there for honest Poverty  
That kings his head, an' a' that;  
The coward slave - we pass him by,  
We dare be poor for a' that!  
For a' that, an' a' that.  
Our toils obscure an' a' that,  
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The Man's the gowd for a' that.*

Robert Burns (1795)

*Wishing you and your family a healthy,  
happy and more prosperous New Year*



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