

## MARILYN KAY (AUGBURN) SHARP

Marilyn Kay (Augburn) Sharp, daughter of Leslie and Mary Augburn, was born September 5, 1941, in Muncie, Indiana. She graduated from Burris school in 1959. She received a degree in English and political science from DePauw University and a Masters at Ball State University.

Her first job was in New York City on the editorial staff of "The New Yorker" magazine. Later she was Senior editor of "Sponsor" magazine and worked for public relations legend Lee Solters as a theatrical publicist for clients such as Carol Channing, Bob Hope, Barbara Streisand and the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, but after one year working for the public relations legend, she quit her job and announced to her friends that she was going to write a novel.

She traveled in Europe for a year, and in 1972, return to Muncie for a visit. There she met a man by the name of Phillip Sharp who is running for Congress. One month later they were married.



Sharp lost the 1972 election, but in 1974 he was elected Congress with her help. During the 1974 campaign Marilyn, (better known as KK) began work on her first novel. KK struggled with the first five chapters of her book, rewriting them several times, but *Sunflower* was finally completed in 1979. She went on to complete two more novels, *Masterstroke*, (1981) and *Falseface* (1984).

In interviews, she talked about her frustration as a Washington wife. She was once quoted as saying "I'm interested in my husband's work, but it's not the only thing I'm interested in". She explained people would ask about her husband but never about herself. She said she could never be content to live through another person no matter to whom she was married. In one interview she talked in-depth about her dismay at being in Phil Sharp's shadow. KK's story boiled down the fact that feminism, Washington style, is no longer a conflict of careers between a husband and wife but a conflict of how Washington expects a political wife to behave and how she perceives herself.

She was an ardent advocate for individuality and social justice, particularly railing against those in society who sought to force others to conform to narrow definitions of self and identity. As a part of this, she was a strong supporter of women's rights and was ever grateful for her education at Burris School, where thinking for one's self was greatly encouraged, no matter one's gender. During her commencement address upon receiving her honorary doctorate from DePauw University in 1986, she said the following, "To you women I want to say, don't ever let anyone make you less than what you want to be, whatever that is."

In Washington, she was never cowed by authority, willing to challenge the views of those in power. She championed citizen involvement. In a Capitol Hill elevator, she overheard a woman express to her husband her anxiety that she was not properly dressed to meet her Congressman. KK quickly told the stranger that she looked fine: "Remember they work for you, and never let them forget it."

A person of many interests, KK was an amateur painter, a lover of opera, an unrivaled genealogical researcher, an avid reader, and a poet. In her final weeks, she spent many hours writing poetry about her life, her impending death, and her family and friends. Despite her professional success, KK always felt her greatest accomplishments and creations were her two sons, Jeremy, and Justin, born in 1975 and 1981.

Marilyn (KK) Augburn Sharp, died on May 11, 2012, at her home in New York City at the age of 70.