



Straight Talk

by Muriel Sluyter

This Earthly Visit Can Be Short

9 September, 2003

Greetings, Gentle Reader,

Since a friend has just ended her earthly visit and gone back to be with her Lord, her father, mother and grandparents, it seems a good time to discuss mortality.

She has left her faulty, failing body here and gone on to better things in a vastly more pleasant place. Since life does not end with death, I choose to refer to her in the more accurate present tense.

Darilynn Murray's body died Monday evening, Sept. 8th, 2003. She, as all of us, has many strengths. She is a wife, a mother and a friend. Though it is not the most important thing she has done on this earth — that slot must be reserved for her role as wife and mother — she has been a teacher for many long years, and has impacted two generations for good. Some of her students will remain in this area, others have gone or will go out into the world and prove that she is, indeed, a good teacher.

She was head teacher at Lakeview School for many years, before she changed to Manaugh. Her students learned to read, to do arithmetic, to write, but more importantly they learned concrete values, not the wishy-washy "if it feels good, it must be good." She has always been determined to prepare them for the world they would eventually encounter as adults, and because their teacher during their most tender and fragile years was both competent and caring, they go out into that world well prepared.

Having honorably finished her earthly visit, she can move forward without a sense of failure. Her family loves her. They will look upon their separation from her with grief and longing. Her students, most of whom are strong, productive adults, love her. She can hold her head up and take her place among the truly successful teachers of this earth.

What would happen if every child had a teacher such as Darilynn Murray? Would it make a difference? Another good friend of ours thinks he cannot read. He has been told by the important people in his life that he cannot read, so he brings every critical document to us and asks us to read

it.

Since I suspected that he could read, he and I quietly worked together to determine his skill. He can read, but since he has always been told that he cannot, he may never gain enough confidence to do more than read stories to his children.

What would have happened if he had been fortunate enough to have a teacher such as Darilynn Murray? I'll tell you. She would have encouraged him. She would have told him he could read, and she would have kept telling him he could read until it was a fact.

He wouldn't be forced to live with the humiliation of thinking he is illiterate. Do we all realize what a difference that would have made in his life? It made the critical difference in mine.

My first-grade teacher, with her bachelor's degree and many exceptional strengths, couldn't teach some children to read, and I could not read by the end of my first grade. My second-grade teacher, with her humble associate's degree, was a beloved aunt, and she knew how to teach children to read. I cringe to think what could have happened to me, if she had not rescued me from a world of potential semi-illiteracy.

How important are the Darilynn Murrrays of this world? How can a finite value be placed on the infinite? It cannot be done, therefore, their value must be defined by an Infinite Being, rather than by mere humans.