

## **“An American original” Nina Duryee Boal**

Ellis Boal – November 25, 2020

Friends, family,

As many of you know by now, our sister Nina died on October 30 while in transit to a hospice facility near Baltimore where she lived. Medical records we have seen do not implicate Covid. She was hypoxic from infections. She was 74.

The end was surprising. A week prior, in recommending her to a nursing home, a doctor told me he expected she had quality time ahead.

Last month, on learning she was in a hospital, I drove from Michigan to her apartment, and sorted and organized her voluminous papers, stories, books, dolls, bears, photos, and art. She signed a power of attorney and I managed to sell her van and farm out her two cats.

She was a packrat: the papers include her baptism certificate, passport, detailed reports by counselors and teachers from age 3 to high school, and stories and papers she wrote through the same period as well as in later life.

I saw her briefly at the nursing home, through glass because she was in 14-day quarantine. She seemed ok and smiled for a photo. But she was losing oxygen. She transferred to another hospital. I consented to hospice care.

Driving home with a carful of memorabilia, including 16 dolls and 26 bears (three of which she made), the call came saying she was gone.

The following appreciation is for people who knew her. A more general public obit is being written. The family will have a memorial service for her sometime this spring in Winnetka next to Mom and Dad, and another in summer in Charlevoix.

I attach photos in *.pdf* format. One is of her and a friend at a Chicago anti-war demonstration in 1968. One is of her (in the wheelchair) and family at our Mom's Winnetka memorial service in 2012.

Other photos are on her Facebook page: <https://m.facebook.com/public/Nina-Boal>

Also attached is an insightful remembrance of Nina to Stu and me from a friend David Wallenstein whom she met while in Chicago. They stayed in touch after she moved to Baltimore in the 1980s, and he to Los Angeles where he is a doctor.

We did not previously know of David, and learned of him only through a Facebook post. He consents to his email being shared. The above title is taken from it.

In a lengthy 1965 interview at age 19 in Quitman MS she spoke of her conceptions of freedom and non-violence, and her training and experience as a white woman doing this kind of work in the south. Listen here: <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/stanford-stories/catalog/xh534hg6953> . A transcript is here: <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/project-south/catalog/ft245gm9673> .

In January 2011 at age 65 she gave another interview, titled “Mississippi Civil Rights Movement.” Student Mona Kattan recorded and transcribed it to 37 pages, and wrote her own analysis of it. Nina and Mona released it to the library of St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac Maryland for use by future students, educators, and researchers. Many of the details below about Nina's early life and work in Mississippi are in it. I was surprised when I got home and it appeared among her papers. Contact me for a copy.

## **Early life**

Nina was born February 6, 1946, 4 years after Stu and 1½ years after me.

Before elementary school she was diagnosed as autistic. She cried a lot. A psychiatrist predicted she would never talk. Marigold Taylor – for whom Nina held a lifetime appreciation – helped her, and she started talking at age 4 or 5.

Through life she had trouble reading social situations. Her relation to Dad was always quite difficult. He had been brought up that children were to be seen and not heard. He could be cruel.

In elementary and middle school she was bullied.

Her initial interest was piano. She attended the Interlochen Music Camp one summer, and in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade played Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" for a high school talent show.

Math was difficult for her. I remember endless sessions of Mom trying to help with homework.

As a child she kept a growing collection of toy horses. In Charlevoix we all had horses. Most were nags, but Nina's was Sparkle, the handsomest. Sometimes she kept him

through the winter at a stable near Winnetka, and as I recall rode him occasionally in shows.

## **Mississippi, activism**

In high school (a private school) she volunteered for civil rights work and was arrested once at a sit-in in Evanston. Her classmates were astonished.

In 1965 after a year of college she went to Mississippi for a year for civil rights. (Our cousin Phil Moore had worked there in the previous summer.) Public drinking fountains were still labeled for “white” and “colored.” Most of the Blacks with whom she worked were rural and lacked indoor plumbing.

She canvassed for CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. A Black person who registered to vote could be fired from a job.

Actually she did not do much canvassing herself, but rather lent support to local Black “pioneers,” as she called them, who did one-on-one canvassing.

Later she transferred to Philadelphia MS and was arrested there. The jail was managed by Neshoba County deputy Cecil Price, later convicted of conspiracy in the famed 1964 murder of three civil rights workers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. According to a witness they faced death resolutely, and for that they were Nina's heroes.

Alongside other volunteers she faced gun fire with whites, twice. Her comrades returned fire. But she never thought of quitting.

Mom and Dad did not oppose her work there. They supported it. In one of her busts Mom wired the bail money.

Her work ended in June 1966 when she walked in the James Meredith march from Memphis to Jackson MS. She sensed the Mississippi movement was starting to emphasize Black power, a positive development in her view. She returned to Chicago.

Back in Meridian MS in the fall of 1966 she was arrested again. In jail a fellow prisoner beat her with a coke bottle and put her in a hospital. It gave her shoulder pain to the end of her life. She wrote a poem about it, the only one of her life:

*<https://www.crmvet.org/poetry/pnina.htm> .*

It did not surprise her in 1968 when Martin Luther King was shot and killed.

Her time in Mississippi was the happiest period of her life, in my opinion. She had no romantic relations, but formed lasting friendships.

### **Chicago, activism**

In Chicago, she taught middle school math. Interesting that she came to math late in life, in her 20s. Interesting that Bob Moses – a civil rights pioneer turned algebraist – was another of her heroes.

She studied kendo, a Japanese martial art utilizing bamboo swords and armor, and rose to the rank of first-dan. In 1978 she competed in the US championship tournament in Los Angeles.

She did some painting. Attached is an oil she gave me in the late 1960s.

In 1966 when King came to Chicago to fight housing discrimination she joined a march through the city's Gage Park neighborhood. Racists attacked. A rock hit King. The car of our Aunt Henny (Phil's Mom) was burned.

In April 1968 at a peaceful anti-war demonstration downtown, she was struck, arrested, and put in a paddy wagon with a dozen others, into which a cop sprayed mace. According to *Dissent and Disorder*, the report of a citizens commission that summer, available at the University of Chicago Library, she testified:

“A: Right before the door was closed, a policeman put his arm in, and he was holding a can of spray, and it was black or dark in color, and he sprayed spray into the wagon for about five seconds, maybe not any longer than five seconds, and right after he did that they closed the door, and the vent on the paddy wagon door closed so there was no ventilation in the wagon.

“Q: Did you experience any sensation of any kind?

“A: Yes, I had difficulty breathing. I was coughing. My face was burning. My eyes were starting to run. The inside of my nose was burning, and the inside of my windpipe and all into my lungs. I had a burning sensation and I had difficulty breathing....”

She joined 69 other individuals, the Chicago Peace Council, and ACLU suing in federal

court. Seventeen of her co-plaintiffs sustained similar assaults including beatings with nightsticks, breaking of bone, macings in the face, false arrests, and fracturing the skull of one of them. The suit demanded injunctions, \$100G for Nina individually, similar damages for the 17, and another \$100G to be split among the 17. I have not been able to track down the final ruling or settlement in the case, *Andich v Daley*. The ACLU papers and transcripts are collected in a dozen folders at the University of Chicago library.

Four months later, in August 1968, she was active in the week of antiwar demonstrations at the Chicago Democratic convention. I posted her 18-page write-up of it here: [http://ellisboal.org/pages/68-08\\_chicagoDemocraticConvention.pdf](http://ellisboal.org/pages/68-08_chicagoDemocraticConvention.pdf). The Chicago History Museum credits several of her convention photos here (including one of her pictures of Alan Ginsberg which it didn't credit): <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/wRHhmq8J>. One of the credited photos shows a kid atop the military statute of John Logan on Monday of convention week in Chicago's Grant Park near the Loop. Of this her write-up says:

“Everyone climbed down off of the statue except one young boy from Alabama. He climbed to the top of the statue, as the cops surrounded it, and gave the V-sign. Then the cops climbed up the statue and grabbed the boy. They beat him and twisted his arm, breaking it. I took several pictures. An assistant corporation counsel tried to push me out of the way, but I pushed him back and continued shooting.”

I attach a night photo (not in the museum collection) she took of the police clearing Lincoln Park on the north side with tear gas, Tuesday of convention week. Clearing the park was part of the “police riot” described in the December 1968 Walker Report, *Rights In Conflict*, available in stores or online.

A few years ago she summarized her life of civil activism:  
<https://www.crmvet.org/vet/boaln.htm>.

## **Baltimore, writing**

She moved to Baltimore in 1989. She taught math for a few years and quit. She drove taxi for a while. In 1993 she applied for Social Security benefits. She was seeing doctors who testified she was disabled and expected to remain so. In 1994 a psychologist reported her IQ as “superior,” in the low 120s and noted she didn't drink. (Realizing she was alcoholic she quit in 1982.) Even so, in 1996 after a hearing and review of medical records, an administrative judge agreed with the doctors, writing the evidence left “no doubt” she was disabled indefinitely.

But she recovered. She studied programming and started a new career, writing COBOL for an air tariff company and then the Social Security Administration for nearly 20 years. She retired with a pension.

She sold her bears at shows. She visited Japan three times. Several times she attended reunions of the Mississippi volunteers. She became an Orioles fan and then a Ravens fan.

Marion Zimmer Bradley included several of Nina's fantasy stories in anthologies:

*Flight* (translated to German “*Flucht*” by Rosemarie Hundertmarck)

*Mirror Image*

*Shards* (translated to French “*Éclats de verre*” by Simone Hilling and to German “*Scherbengericht*” by Ronald Böhme)

*Shelter*

*The Meeting* (translated to German “*Zusammentreffen*” by Rosemarie Hundertmarck)

She self-published a book, *Snow Tiger*, available in stores or online. She edited the zines *Moon Phases* and *Other Times and Places*.

Her stories (sometimes under the pen name Susan Douglass):

*Along the Valeron*

*Breda's Oath, Darkover -- An Introduction*

*Bredini*

*Demon Eyes*

*Fire and Midnight*

*Flame Over Palan* (with Linna Reusmann)

*Journey* (with Lynne Holdom)

*La Revolution*, a Play in Three Acts

*Light Traveller*

*Music of the Night*

*Night Journey*

*Raiment of the Earth*

*Rhezellah's Song*

*Speaking in Tongues*

*Spirit's Flight*

*The Captive*

*The Healing Sword*

*The Lily and the Rose*

*The Reckoning*  
*The Silent Lily - Part II*  
*The Silken Cord*  
*The Street Sweeper* ( <https://www.samurai-archives.com/sfic08d.html> )  
*Wolves of Mercy.*

Descriptions of Nina's fantasy writing are here  
[https://fanlore.org/wiki/Nina\\_Boal](https://fanlore.org/wiki/Nina_Boal) ,  
and here  
<https://isfdb.stoecker.eu/cgi-bin/ea.cgi?14724> .

## Problems

Nina repeated the following in public writing several times concerning relations, according to the 2011 St. Andrew's transcript, “with a neighbor and with a teacher and not with my father.” I heard the story from her in the 1990s.

She wrote this in 1988. At the time, periodically she typed and circulated what today we would call a blog, *The Silken Cord* for *APA-Lambda*, a gay-themed zine of which Bradley was an alumna. (Nina was Lesbian, and feminist.) Responding to one zine member, a male, who was in NAMBLA, a pedophile advocacy group, she wrote:

“I was once sexually abused by a school teacher for an extended period of time (between the ages of 12 and 14). There were no child abuse or social service agencies around then, so I just had to put up with it. I can't fantasize about schoolboy or schoolgirl rape, it's too real to me. ... As an incest survivor I go to a support group for incest survivors. In our group, 'incest' is defined as violent or 'non-violent' child sexual abuse with a trusted adult, whether the adult is related by blood or not. My relationship with the teacher was incestuous, as I trusted him, almost as I would a father or other relative. I had other abusers as well. ... Many of us in the group have to get over the messages that both the abusers and society gave us -- that we 'consented' that we 'really wanted it.' If I 'really wanted it,' why am I still haunted with nightmares and 'flashbacks'?”

She was incompetent with money. She worried that Dad would cut her off, though in 1954 he had set it up to make that impossible. Later she admitted to manipulating our parents for money. Toward the end she purchased large quantities of jewelry from Kay Jewelers, a nationwide chain. Eventually the family retrieved and sold most of it for her in a professional auction at a huge loss. She ended up on food stamps with an application for Medicaid pending.

Her health declined in the last years, to the point where she could not care for herself. Never married and without children, she hired caregivers to come in for meals and cleaning.

## **Good-bye**

Reviewing her materials, family realize she had an important effect on people around her, more than we knew. And she carried on without complaint and without regret.

As Gershwin's Porgy said of Robbins:

“Raise this poor sinner up out of the grave. and set [her] in the shining seat of the righteous. ”

Or, as Shakespeare wrote of Hamlet:

“Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet [Nina]; and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!”

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## **PDF Attachments:**

Email, David Wallenstein to Ellis and Stu, 11-9-20

Photo, Nina and friend, April 1968

Photo, Nina (in wheelchair) and family, December 2012

Photo, Lincoln Park, Chicago, convention week, August 1968

Painting, Flute Player, 1960s



**Subject:** Re: Nina  
**From:** David wallenstein <dwallenstein@hotmail.com>  
**Date:** 11/9/2020, 2:14 AM  
**To:** Ellis Boal <ellisboal@voyager.net>  
**CC:** LuAnne Kozma <luannekozma@gmail.com>, Stewart Boal <sb@pistontech.com>

Hi Ellis and Stu,

First, let me express my most sincere condolences at Nina's passing. As I wrote to LuAnne on Facebook, I first met Nina in 1979 when I was in college at U of Chicago and attended several LGBTQ groups on The North Side. I knew her during my college and grad school years and during my first career in social work but she had moved to Baltimore by the time I went to medical school, however, I did see her during my residency in Baltimore.

Nina was, for lack of a better term, an American original. As I got to know her better, I became aware of some of the challenges she faced virtually from birth and of her courageousness during The Civil Rights Era.

I last saw Nina about 4 years ago when I visited friends and family in Maryland. While her health had declined she said that she was able to get around adequately (I believe she was still driving the specially equipped mini van at that time). During the intervening time between that visit and her passing, we were in contact fairly frequently on Facebook. Interestingly, she never mentioned any problems with her health or with caring for herself.

While I was not surprised to hear of Nina's passing, given her health issues, the news was still hard to receive and I feel a profound sadness and loss knowing that she is no longer part of this world.

I will definitely call to introduce myself and hope to be able to attend the service in Winnetka, if COVID has died down a bit. Nina spoke fondly of your family, the school she attended and Christ Church.

Should you wish to call me, my cell phone is 424 273 9672.

Best,

David



Support  
Our GI's  
BRING THEM  
HOME NOW

STOP  
THE WAR

STOP  
THE WAR  
POVERTY  
RACISM







