

WWLD: What Would Lois Do?

By Patty Guerrero

I can't express the sadness that I and so many others feel over the death by violence of our dear, dear friend, Lois Swenson.

Lois spent a major part of her life trying to save our fragile planet by not consuming goods that weren't absolutely necessary and also befriending whoever needed help.

I became a friend of Lois's through WAMM. I was privileged, as were many others, to travel to Mexico with her a number of times. We didn't go to spend time on the beaches (although I spent my share of time on them), or to stay in fancy hotels, (although I would sneak into their pools). Lois always had a mission---to help build libraries in poor pueblos or to try and convince North American tourists to go back home and conserve, conserve, conserve and to educate others about the disastrous effects that NAFTA was having on Mexico. Her mantra was Reduce, Recycle, Reuse. And, "Live Simply So Others Can Simply Live." She learned these things through her travels to third world countries, but I would guess that she also learned them from her parents. ("Teach your children well" — Crosby, Stills and Nash)

She never bought the "stuff" to take home like I did. I remember once while in Mazatlan that I said I wouldn't buy anything except small items like earrings. When we were ready to leave, I had so much stuff that it was she who had to help me carry my bags across the border. We both had a big laugh. But, true to her word, no one wanted any of the things after I got home. Another time, here in St Paul, we were in a coffee shop and I took a napkin when I bought coffee and bagel and she said, "Now, Patty, why do you need that napkin?" I couldn't believe it and said, "Lois, I need it." But, again, when we finished, I hadn't touched my napkin. She was always right in these matters---often irritatingly so. But, she knew we appreciated her "saving the world."

Next time when you think you "need" something, or are letting the water run while brushing your teeth, just think: WWLD (What Would Lois Do?). In that way we will be remembering her and we will be doing our part. I will miss her forever. She was my rock, my foundation.

I end this with what the woman from the Star Tribune, who wrote an article on Lois, said to me when I thanked her, "I only got to know Lois from the few people we interviewed. But I'm left feeling she was one helluva woman who made a huge difference in the lives of many people."

Patty Guerrero is a long-time WAMM member who is active in Tackling Torture at the Top and serves on the Newsletter Committee. She holds the Madhatter's Tea Salon on Tuesdays nights in St. Paul.