

An Appreciation

of

RUTH PORTER

written by George Packard

and read at a gathering

of friends at the home of

Mr. and Mrs. Morris L. Greeley

Sunday, June 7, 1942

RUTH FURNESS PORTER

There never has entered into my life a more compelling personality than Ruth Porter. Ever since I came to Chicago this then young school-girl, burying her golden head with its silver fillet in her Greek and Latin when I called at her rare parents' home, fascinated my attention. And when she developed into womanhood, her intense sense of justice made her a brave leader in many quite advanced reforms, and she became prominent in every movement that was designed to aid those whom she thought oppressed, or whom traditional social prejudice robbed of fair opportunity. Her intense sympathy for the Jew when discriminated against, for the Negro, as well as the proletarian under-dog of every race whom she saw unfairly treated, are too well known to require comment. Her zeal for education, for enlightened politics and reform, for Civil Rights, for planned parenthood, brought her into prominence in those Clubs and circles that espoused independence of thought and action along such lines. Many of you know well the force of her literary appreciation in the gatherings for reading that came so often to her home.

But it is of Ruth as an individual - a vibrant presence in a complex world - I particularly want to speak. She was always active in tests of physical endurance to a marked degree. Though somewhat slight of form, she always projected her incomparable mental agility into everything she undertook. I can see her now leaping along difficult and dangerous trails in the Canadian Rockies, rushing up a two hundred feet high orange-hued sand-dune in the Sahara after an exhausting day of travel, racing up hills in the Virgin Islands, plunging into the blue waters of Honolulu - always eager, never flagging, keeping pace with her ever active and unusually gifted husband, and giving rein to her

keenly perceptive mind. She was quick to speak - but equally quick to acknowledge it when she found she had been wrong. She was an intellectual, valiant and unusual woman - and always a loyal friend. She was outspoken in the New England way from which she sprang, and her enthusiasms never shook off the prejudices from whose roots they grew, but really contributed mightily to her steadfastness of purpose and her resolute strength of character.

You all know with what frequent and unfailing welcome she threw her beautiful home open to her friends - and her special desire to gratify any personal pride of her guests about which she happened to know.

Her parents and herself, and James, have done more for me personally in unexampled hospitality than any other people in the world. It was at the so uniquely welcoming Furness home that I met my wife, and it was Ruth's and James' incomparable generosity that has later led us into parts of the earth we would otherwise not have known. So more than any of you, even you, who were her friends, we shall miss her. Ruth was always as warm and impulsive in her friendly attachments as she was steadfast in her principles, and as devoted to both as anyone could be.

I want to pay tribute to her fine clear-thinking husband, and to her uncommonly talented children, who know, as none of us can, her worth as an ever cherishing mother.

The memory of our long and loving companionship will keep the name of Ruth Porter undimmed in the hearts and affections of all of us whom she regarded as her friends - until the end of time!

June 7, 1942.

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