

IN MEMORIAM

## Gail Billington: A Magnolia Made of Specialty Steel

by Dennis Small

Sept. 7—There is a common thread running through many of the messages sent in memory of Gail Billington. That she was a seemingly slight and frail person, but that inside she was endowed with steel—you might say specialty steel—that allowed her to move souls and mountains, in her lifelong commitment to economic and political justice for all mankind, through her leading role in the LaRouche movement.

She and Mike did that together, as a team, for their nearly 30 years of married life, during 10 of which Mike was in prison—or rather, multiple prisons—and during the last 10 of which, they jointly battled the disease that first imprisoned, and then finally felled her, one week ago, on Sept. 1, 2012. Their life together was not easy—but it was good. And Gail maintained an indomitable sense of humor and a laughing twinkle in her eye to the very end.

A message to Mike from Robbie and Elisa Barwick, of the LaRouche movement in Australia, captures that Gail:

“I well remember a dramatic intervention Gail made at an ICLC conference while you were in prison, when she challenged people to adopt a mission for their lives. Gail related her devastation at your incarceration, and her realization that it was incumbent upon her to take the lead in your shared mission to spread Lyndon LaRouche’s ideas of peace through economic development throughout the nations of Asia. To me, Gail always had a slight quaver in her voice, but to use that voice to show such strength of leader-



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*Gail, in a press interview in Paris, January 1990. Mike kept this photo on the wall in his prison cell.*

ship was a powerful act of courage I'll never forget.”

I will read from a few other messages about Gail at the end of my remarks.

As for me, I've known Gail for 43 years, ever since we met at Swarthmore College in the Fall of 1969. Inmates of that institution, as Gail was fond of pointing out with scientific precision, and with her invincible smile, were properly known as Swarth-morons.

Gail, who was born on Aug. 30, 1951, in Magnolia, Ark., was a revolutionary, even in her college days. She had a privileged upbringing, not in the sense of earthly riches, but because as a youth, her family had lived in Libya and Venezuela (where she experienced at least one coup d'état), and she grew to know and love other cultures, and to hate the poverty and degradation that the majority of the world's population has been forced to endure. And she knew the unique role that her United States had to play in changing that.

She learned a lot from those countries—including the Libyan National Anthem, which, at a moment's notice, Gail would begin to sing with gusto, livening up many of our recent midday intelligence meetings. In fact, Gail had many expressions of such internationalism. For example, a knowledgeable linguist, and occasional cellist, Jean-Sebastian Tremblay, wrote to Mike: “Nobody I ever met had such pleasure at imitating the French-Canadian accent, as she did.”

When the Alexandria railroad trial began in late 1988, Mike and Gail, and Gretchen and I, shared a rented apartment in Alexandria, Va. Our long-standing friendship was sorely tested by the fact that they chose to bring their cats with them to that apartment; but somehow that friendship survived. Gail teased me about that mercilessly, for decades—as did Mike.

After serving out his Federal sentence, Mike was tried again by the Commonwealth of Virginia, for the same crimes which he had *not* committed in the first place. They are nothing if not consistent: If they are going to hit you with double jeopardy, they at least do it for the same crime that you didn't commit the first time.

After a year out of jail, Mike was re-incarcerated. Later, Gail told Gretchen and me—as she probably did others here—that driving Mike back to jail that day was the hardest thing she had ever done in her life. I'm reminded of what John F. Kennedy said about why we had to go to the Moon.

Gail, in adversity, became one of the best ambassadors that the LaRouche movement has ever had—and for a reason. Like Helga, and others, Gail took up the

banner of her husband's unjust incarceration, not only as a personal cause, but as a universal political battle. And she changed every single person, and nation, that she met in the process. Not because it was easy, but because it was hard.

During this period, Gail not only traveled internationally, especially in Asia, but she also wrote extensively in defense of nations being subjected to the British Empire's economic and political genocide—from the Philippines, to Malaysia, to Cambodia, Myanmar, and more. For many of them, she was their savior angel, as can be seen in her extraordinary *EIR* interviews with Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir—the man who called George Soros a moron—and Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Gail's research, admittedly, benefitted from others' work. As Mike wrote in his book: “When asked to make a brief statement to an NCLC conference in 1998 concerning my work in prison, I explained that my wife had discovered a source of cheap prison labor, such that every time I called her, she loaded me up with new assignments, so that I barely had time to stand for count!”

It is perhaps best to judge Gail's work, and the soul that produced it, by its continuing impact.

## International Messages

Allow me to read excerpts from just a few of the endless messages Mike has received:

“Dear Mike: My condolences on the passing away of Gail. Gail's demise is a loss not only to you, but to all who believe in truth and justice in the perception of the affairs of the world. Gail did much to correct the wrong image of Malaysia created by the controlled Western Press, especially during the financial crisis of East Asia. I pray to God that He will grant Gail rest in peace.

“Signed,

“Dr. Mahatir bin Mohamad,

“Former Prime Minister of Malaysia.”

From Cambodia, Ambassador to the U.S. Hem Heng:

“Gail was a great person who enlightened the hearts of many. She is a fighter, a very patient and perseverant lady. Her entire life is built on her love for justice and her belief for the truth. She is a true believer in the U.S. tradition of scientific supremacy, progress, and development, led by President Franklin Roosevelt during World War II. Her advocacy for Cambodian war refugees, and her fight against the injustice of the Khmer Rouge, is a vivid

legacy of her love for humanity, peace and eternal justice. She is a great lady who gains our heart.”

The Ambassador to the U.S. from Myanmar sent Mike a similar letter.

From the *Philippines*, Butch Valdes, leader of the Philippines LaRouche Society:

“We are eternally grateful to her for re-connecting us to Lyn and the whole LaRouche movement. We certainly miss her, but are consoled by the fact that her good soul indeed smiles, knowing that her life here was spent doing exactly what God had intended for her to do. Godspeed, Gail Billington.”

From France, Jacques Cheminade (former French Presidential candidate, and leader of the LaRouche movement):

“I have particularly in mind those first moments in the 1974 French [intelligence] file, where I met Gail for the first time. And if she was more silent than others, she inspired also a deeper sense of respect. It has been one of the reasons why I joined the organization: She was a person who *meant it*, without pulling any kind of show. Then Odile and I met the dogs and the cats, and we went together to see you in jail.”

From the United States, Debbie Freeman:

“During the fight for exoneration, Gail and I did a number of meetings together. Despite the fact that the horror that the two of you suffered through certainly would have made a compelling story, Gail was always completely focused on the bigger picture, and never played the role of victim. Oh, she certainly didn’t mince words when it came to your case, but it was clear to anyone she met with, and any group she addressed, that she was not coming to them as ‘a wife,’ but as a political leader. She was always articulate, but her effectiveness wasn’t simply because of the clarity of her presentation. It was Gail’s grace and quiet strength in the face of it all, that invariably blew people away.”

From Australia, LaRouche movement leader Gabby Peut:

“On my first trip to the United States for an ICLC conference, I got to stay with Gail. I was introduced to this very quiet, unassuming and tiny person (so I thought; looks can be deceiving), who took me under her wing and introduced me to Verdi. Gail would not only sing, but elaborated each and every part of the story of the opera (*Il Trovatore*), which we would play non-stop when we

were going back and forth to the conference.”

Gabby then referenced Gail’s memorable intervention from the floor at that conference, which so many of us recall:

“It was incredibly powerful when she took center stage at the conference, and called upon each and every one of us to share that mission. It was her unwavering commitment and passion, coming from this seemingly ‘tiny’ person, that moved souls and mountains, that became a crucial foundation for the building of an ICLC organization on the continent of Australia.”

The last message, with which I will close, expresses the heart of the matter. It comes from Dr. Su Jingxiang, a leading Chinese scholar, and frequent author of articles about LaRouche. He wrote:

## Gail Writes About Southeast Asia

*In addition to her travels to many nations around the world, Gail Billington wrote numerous articles for EIR and other LaRouche publications about the nations of Southeast Asia, whose peoples and cultures she loved so much. She also interviewed world leaders, such as former Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen. Here are links and references to a few of those articles.*

- Speech to an ICLC/Schiller Institute Conference, Jan. 18, 1998: “Shattered Assumptions, The New Colonialism in Southeast Asia Under the IMF: LaRouche and Mahathir Were Right.”
- Michael Billington and Gail Billington, “London Sells a Killer ‘Tiger’ Tonic to Southeast Asia,” [EIR](#), Feb. 7, 1997.
- Interview: Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Malaysian Prime Minister: “We Had To Decide Things for Ourselves,” [EIR](#), Feb. 19, 1999.
- Interview: Samdech Hun Sen. “Cambodian Prime Minister Seeks Reconciliation Through Reconstruction,” [EIR](#) Feb. 12, 1999.
- Gail G. Billington, “Indochina 25 Years Later: Leaving Colonialism Behind,” [EIR](#), May 26, 2000.

“An ancient Chinese sage said: ‘Everyone will eventually leave this world. The difference is the value of the life. Some people are heavier than the mountains, and some lighter than feathers. Gail was a courageous advocate of truth and justice, and the value of her life is heavier than the mountains. Her fight is not complete, but her spirit will remain active forever. We love her, and miss her dearly.’”

## LaRouche: On the Death Of Gail Billington

*Lyndon LaRouche made these remarks about the death of Gail Billington, to a meeting of his close associates on Saturday, Sept. 1, 2012.*

I have this sad news to announce: Gail Billington passed away this morning. And naturally, with us, in the circumstances of our organization and its history, it's very difficult to respond to these kinds of events, because of old friends in combat over long years. This is not the kind of matter that lends itself to explanation. It's something that we know, that we have experienced as an organization, and it's very much with us, right now. The loss of a member, of an old member, one who conducted a brave struggle against a very evil kind of disease, is something which is very difficult for us, even for me, to speak about under these circumstances. The fact of it is obvious, and I can state the fact, but the sense of loss, is not something that can be easily explained away....

What we as an organization are doing, is crucial for humanity. It is not something that we're doing in competing for other people for relative importance. What we're doing, and what I'm doing, is of unique importance to the human species at this time, when we're under threat of thermonuclear war. And fortunately, and unfortunately, both, I've been enabled at various points in my lifetime, to intervene on this kind of issue.

We have sometimes succeeded. Sometimes we've almost succeeded, which is the worst of all. Because when you almost succeed in doing something for humanity that humanity needs, it's not you that's suffering. You're feeling a kind of mixture of a sense of shame and failure: Why

couldn't we have done something to prevent this from happening? And it's the same kind of emotion that intersects, for me and for others in this room who knew Gail: There's that sense of loss; why did it have to happen? Why did it have to happen at this time? Why didn't she get a chance to know that we'd accomplished something which we hope we will have accomplished?

It's difficult. You can not really explain these matters. You can come to an understanding of them, and it never comes to an actual explanation. It can't; it's beyond that.

And I find it shaking, not in any other way, except the sense of her loss of life, when we were on the verge of trying to share life with her, as with others, in achievement and hope that she would experience that achievement of our efforts. And she's been denied that, and that's what makes the whole thing so difficult to try to begin to even explain. It's an emotion that you can not begin to explain; it's just one that hits you....

Popular opinion has taken over, and popular opinion is stupidity. It comes in the form of ceasing to be concerned with the discovery of things which are just beyond your reach—insights, which are just beyond your reach—and making them familiar, and usable. Mankind has got to, at this time, change the self-conception of mankind. That's really what we have to do. But this, the shock of having to face this, will force us to recognize that responsibility.

And it's thoughts like that, that become very important to me when something happens, as happened with



Courtesy of Michael Billington

*Gail, at home, and at peace.*

Gail today. You have to think in those terms: that you can not grasp efficiently the fact that she died the way she did—you can not grasp that. You put it aside, you come up with explanations, you do this kind of stuff—it doesn't satisfy you at all! You have to find a deeper

meaning to this whole process, a deeper meaning to the death of someone who was valuable. To encase something from that, as part of your vocabulary.

And then, they're not dead. They're not dead, because they live on, in the effect on you.

## The Angel of Freedom

by Margaret Billington Greenspan

*This letter, written by Mike Billington's sister Margaret to her brother and his wife Gail on the eve of Mike's return to prison in 1992, captures the spirit which Mike and Gail shared with their political associates, and which, as a couple, they represented for many people around the world.*

*Florestan is the hero in Beethoven's opera "Fidelio," which portrays his wife Leonora as she puts her life at risk to try to rescue her husband from an unjust, cruel imprisonment in a brutal dungeon, where he is now near death. In his aria, sung in a dark dungeon, he wrestles with despair, but, with a vision of his wife Leonora before him, then triumphantly asserts his faith that he has served God and justice. Soon afterward, Leonora appears to rescue him.*

Dearest Mike and Gail,

You are so much more than a family to me! What could I say in words that could compare to Florestan's aria! How profound is the faith of Beethoven's Florestan. In the most desperate despair imaginable to man, he cries out from the depth of his soul, "God's

will is just!" Then, as in a prayer, he contemplates his dedication to truth, his humiliation, and his sweet consolation that his duty was done. And then—a sudden leap, a transformation—an angel appears!

What is an angel? An angel is the spirit of God

coming to you in a real form, a physical result of deep spiritual contemplation of love of God, of truth, and of doing one's duty—which I think must include the sacrifice of self and acceptance of earthly humiliation. The angel is the metaphor for the mind's creative spark, born of true love of God and his divine justice.

Is there anything more physically powerful than Florestan's outpouring of joy at the presence of his angel Leonora?

And is not the angel Leonora the physical embodiment of God's perfect love, leading not only Florestan, but subsequently all the people to freedom—the heavenly realm—through her equal devotion to duty and her perfect love for Florestan?

She appears to him, not as he is thinking about her, or despairing of his fate, but in his deepest devotion to God.

So I think that our angels don't come to us unless we truly love God's justice more than our own selves! And your equal sacrifices are a beautiful example of that divine love. So I am very happy that you both are angels for each other!

You are both angels to me.



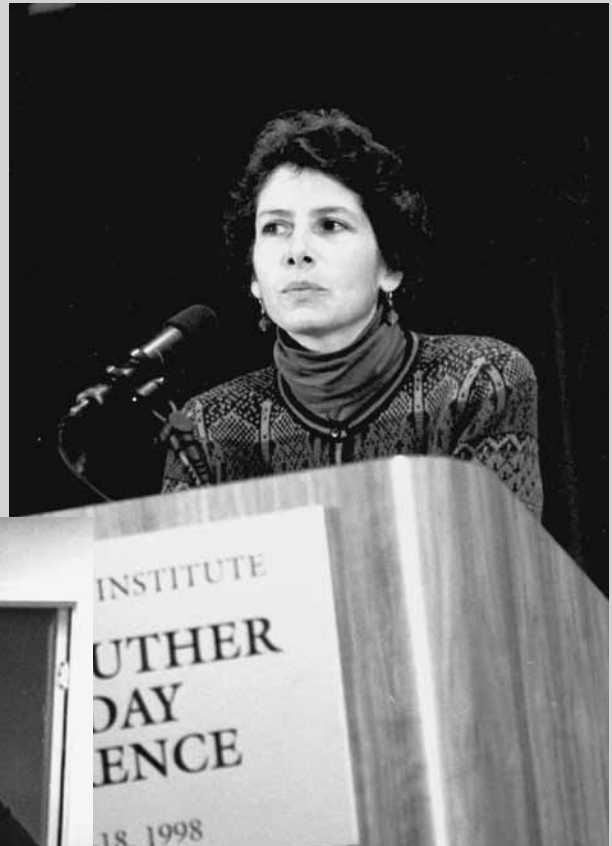
Courtesy of Michael Billington

Mike's sister, Margaret Billington Greenspan, and Gail visit Mike in Nottoway prison, July 1995.



Courtesy of Michael Billington

*The Goerner family in the 1950s. Gail is seated on her father's left.*



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

*Gail addresses the ICLC/Schiller Institute Martin Luther King Day conference on "The New Colonialism: LaRouche and Mahathir Were Right," Jan. 18, 1998.*



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

*Left: Mike is released from the Loudoun County jail, following the Oct. 6, 1986 "panty raid" on the LaRouche offices in Leesburg, Va.*



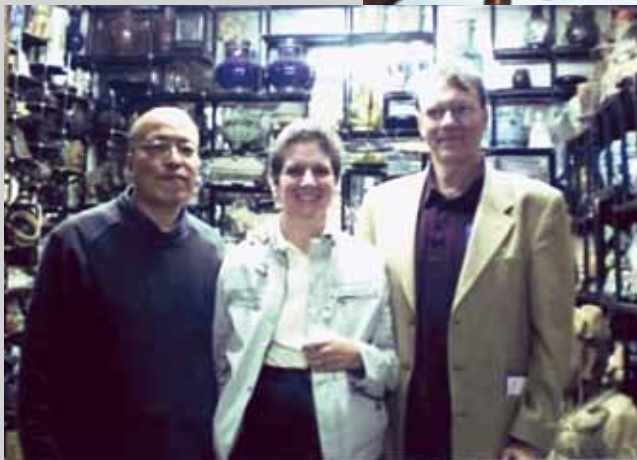
*Gail interviews  
Cambodian Prime  
Minister Hun Sen at the  
PM's residence in  
Phnom Penh, Jan. 18,  
1999.*

Cambodian National TV/Ngin Sophea



*Gail and a colleague meet  
with Dr. Mahathir bin  
Mohamad, Prime Minister  
of Malaysia (left), at his  
residence Kuala Lumpur,  
Jan. 22, 1999.*

Kassim of Bernama



*Gail and Mike with Dr. Su  
Jing Xiang, Director of the  
Center for Globalization  
Studies, China Institutes for  
Contemporary International  
Relations, Beijing in 2007.*

Courtesy of Michael Billington