

In Memory of Phyllis Rubenfeld

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In addition to her many other important contributions to the disability rights movement and to the growth of disability studies as an academic discipline [as presented by Sigi], Phyllis Rubenfeld played an important and long-term role in the Society for Disability Studies. In fact, she was the Society's third member. I know this because I was SDS's first secretary - at that time, the keeper of the membership rolls. Phyllis, always efficient, sent in her dues as soon as SDS was formed. (I, never quite as efficient as my friend, was member #4.)

Phyllis participated actively in SDS from its inception - presenting papers, offering valuable suggestions, and encouraging others - but she only served one three-year term on the SDS Board, from 1997-2000. Phyllis' term ended on June 29th, the day that she died.

One of Phyllis' greatest dreams was that SDS's combined goal of disability studies and disability activism would continue and would flourish beyond us, the original members of SDS. With this in mind, Phyllis advocated tirelessly for an SDS mentoring program and became the first Chair of the Mentoring Subcommittee.

So now, in memory of our friend and colleague, I ask each and every one of you to keep Phyllis' dream alive. Look around you today, tomorrow, and in years to come, and, regardless of where you are in your own career - a recognized authority in disability studies, an up-and-coming activist/educator, or a brand-new recruit to our academic advocacy community - in Phyllis' honor, find someone a few steps behind you, and commit yourself to becoming that person's mentor.