

In the spring of 2019, Sally enrolled in my English 283 class, Life Writing. Although the crowded class was full of smart, eager, talkative, and aspiring writers, there was still no way to miss Sally. Of all the students, she had the widest smile, the brightest eyes; she simply radiated energy and enthusiasm.

Of course it was a memoir-writing class, a difficult genre for undergraduates (some say), yet Sally took to it easily. She wrote, over the course of the semester, including drafts and jettisoned tangents, hundreds of pages. That Sally! She was always writing (and talking) about her height, her sisters, her neighborhood, her parents, her schools, and her adventures. Even as a young child, Sally portrayed herself in her stories as an adventurer, maybe a bit wary of all the things she thought of doing or wanted to do, but always excited and cheerful when she did do something, and, most of all, proud to be the eldest and wisest of her sisters, Patsy and Lulu. She wrote about her roommates, her addiction to tidiness and order, her prowess on the track, and her first visit to New York as a college student.

There's one moment, one memory of Sally that really stands out.

It was getting on to mid-semester and we were reading the memoir, *Just Kids*, by Patti Smith, the musician and writer. The memoir is about Smith's relationship and friendship with the photographer and artist, Robert Mapplethorpe, in NYC during the 60's and 70's.

Sally had gone off to NYC for spring break, toting her school books and an extra novel or two, including *Just Kids*, a book she loved because of her interest in art, NYC, and cool people in general.

Back in Chapel Hill, Sally bustled into class one afternoon, bursting at the seams, laughing and talking, breathless: "I was in NYC—I went to the Guggenheim, just wandered in, and there was a Robert Mapplethorpe show." Pause. "My book—*Just Kids*—was in my backpack," she explained. "It was so amazing—to see the photos of Patti Smith or other ones she had described Robert taking in the book—right on the walls." Sally carried on, "But even better was just sitting there and watching other people encounter Mapplethorpe's work and their reactions to it." She laughed, "I already knew what he was up to." "So I sat there in the gallery and watched people looking at Mapplethorpe's photos for a long time. Later, I took out the book and read more of the memoir. I was just so happy, so excited to be there." Sally sighed and laughed. We all envied her. She had been there that day with Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe. Art had met life or perhaps life had met art. Sally's pleasure carried the day.

A few months later, I travelled to NYC, to go to the Guggenheim and see the show that Sally had so vividly described. I thought of her on that trip and I think of her now, remembering her dark eyes gleaming, her story captivating me and her classmates, as we all listened and relived her experience, and marveled at the wonderful coincidence. This ability—to be in the moment and also to be aware of the intensity of any given moment—is what I will remember and treasure of Sally Sasz, whose life was thoroughly lived and loved and shared with others.