

Memories of a friend of Odile

The world felt strange without Francis. Now it feels really empty without Odile. I am left with precious memories of her, her kindness, her understated sophistication and intelligence and her deep understanding of people.

My fondest memories of Odile go back to about the time – in '76 – when Francis and Odile moved from Cambridge, England to the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California.

I visited Francis and Odile staying with them at their condo in Solana Beach and I visited them during the summers in their house on Portugal Place in Cambridge, England. I went with them in trips to the desert, and I spent time with both of them in their wonderful house in La Jolla. I visited with Odile every few months. We spoke on the phone a few hours before she died, both knowing that it was the last time.

If Francis was a gentleman of science, Odile was the best companion for him. Francis knew how to speak, Odile was very good at listening; she told my wife Barbara and me that she was always happy to have interesting people at her home. I remember the many working conversations at breakfast in Odile's and Francis' kitchen overlooking the pool. It was a uniquely civilized style of life and work, and Odile was key in making it possible and so enjoyable.

If Francis was the left brain – rational to the extreme – Odile was the right brain – not only artistic but also very smart in understanding people and saying a few words to make them comfortable. It is enough to look at some of her portraits to understand what I mean.

Most of all I will remember forever their joy for life and for science – a wonderful gift of Francis and Odile to their friends. I said that visiting them, in the last few years in their house in La Jolla, was for me – two decades their junior – a unique way to refresh my mind, recharge my batteries, and regain a sense of adventure and fun in research and in life. Odile was an essential part of this attitude and of sharing it with others.

Odile taught me many things. She is for me a great example of how to be happy and relaxed and how to communicate with the people around you. I admired her quiet joy for life, for beauty, for friends. Now, without her, there is a void. An era is over and the wealth of her memories and warmth is gone. We are lucky to have precious glimpses of her and of her love for life in the paintings of this memorial exhibition.

Tomaso Poggio.