

In Memorium - Carol A. Daisy



“There aren’t any characters anymore,” a retired professor once declared, and the recent passing of retired Assistant Professor Carol Daisy would seem to confirm that observation. Her friends, family, and colleagues gathered for a memorial Mass of Resurrection at St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Chapel on the UConn Storrs campus and later at a catered brunch in the School of Nursing on Saturday, October 1, 2016.

While reminiscences by those in attendance brought smiles and tears, the eulogy delivered by her colleague Janice Thibodeau at the funeral and remarks presented by her former student Jennifer Casavant Telford at the brunch especially deserve presentation here.

Eulogy Presented by Janice Thibodeau

How do you express what it was like to have known Carol for over 50 years -- especially someone kind of quirky like Carol? Carol loved cats, especially yellow-orange ones. I often told Carol that she had 9 lives, like the cats. She had several health crises over the years -- yet she rallied and survived each one, without complaint. I remember, in particular, a call from Emily one morning who said that Carol was in Hartford Hospital and the doctors said things were very bad. I walked into her room that afternoon and Carol was sitting up in bed holding court with some student nurses.

She just looked at me in her sometimes imperious way and said, “Why, Janice, what are you doing here?” I always thought that there would be one more rally left for Carol -- so it is especially sad when there wasn’t.

I met Carol at camp when I was 18. I was the arts and crafts counselor, kind of a neat freak and very organized: Carol was in charge of the wilderness excursions and anything but neat and organized, but we began a friendship that lasted all of her life.

Carol graduated from Simmons College and became an instructor at Yale-New Haven Hospital School of Nursing for 2 years. We both got our master’s degrees at BU at the same time. After graduation Carol became an instructor at BU and I came to UConn. During my first year here, Dean Eleanor Gill asked me if I knew of a young instructor who had innovative ideas and whose specialty was pediatrics. I said I knew exactly the right person and Carol came to UConn’s School of Nursing the following year, 1969, and remained here throughout her long career. It became her home -- literally. Her office was piled high with food and drinks and often she was at school from dawn to well into the night. She never admitted it, but I think she sometimes slept overnight in her office.

Carol was the best friend anyone could possibly have had and sometimes the most exasperating person I ever met. Carol was kind, generous to a fault, funny, bright, clever, a wonderful cook and never said no to any favor asked of her. For example, I could call her at any time with a computer problem and she would come right over to fix it. Of course, that might make her late for something else.

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Carol was never on time. Carol's mother told me the story of Carol's first day in first grade. Carol grew up on the Cape, in Truro. It was a very short walk from her house to the school bus stop. The principal called Tess that afternoon and said that she had to get Carol to the corner on time, that the bus couldn't be waiting 10 minutes for her. Tess said Carol had left the house at 7:30 and the bus wasn't due until 7:45. She asked Carol why she was late; said Carol, "I stopped to play with some ants."

That behavior didn't change. Carol was always late to department meetings, so I decided to go to her office and walk with her to a meeting. I waited while Carol fiddled with her computer and fixed herself a large drink. I walked down the hall with Carol right behind me. I turned around when I got to the room and Carol wasn't there, nor was she in the hall. I found her in her office talking to a student: she said I'll be there later, this student needs to talk. The rest of us, unless it was an emergency, probably would have said, "I'll talk to you later," but not Carol.

She reminded all of us that the students came first. She was always available to help and listen to all students, or anyone who needed to talk or needed help. Perhaps, the most frustrating thing about Carol was, that while she cared greatly for others, and took great care of others, she did not take care of herself and her health issues. Carol was Carol--nothing you could say or do could change her, but that's what also made her so lovable. She was truly one of a kind. We will miss her very much. Carol throughout her life retained a childlike delight of the world: I hope she is now romping in a field of daisies with the angels.

Remembrance by Jennifer Casavant Telford

Carol Daisy was born in Boston, and with every word she spoke, she sounded like she never left. Phrases like 'myocardial infarction' and 'corrugated cardboard' would bring a snicker to many in her class.

Raised in the sleepy and tiny town of Truro at the tip of Cape Cod, where 'down Cape' is actually up, Highland Light shone every night in her bedroom window as the smell of the ocean and the sound of the waves marked the passing of time. The apple of her daddy's eye, when at age 5, she broke glass to see what would happen. "It bends, Daddy"; she said her dad Aaatha smiled; all the while Tess, her mom, described her as 'incurable.' Both of these parental influences shaped her world.

In her Triumph Spitfire, she drove across the nation to Alaska to see her brother David; only to stay just one night and drive back home---I imagine they are reunited now, their stay this time both for eternity.

Writing term papers in the bathtub of her dorm, began her trajectory of encouraging her students to be clear, concise, and cogent in their writing—and to avoid the "fluff" that she often described as something holding the profession of nursing back. Why use the word "utilize" when instead you can just say "use"?

She was deeply influenced by her time in Texas, often displaying the Hook'em Horns hand signal deeply engrained in her from her time pursuing her PhD at the University of Texas at Austin, where she and Connie in the pre-cellphone era, had walkie-talkies in their cars to get from here to there and back again.

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Along the way they learned to discern the difference between tire carcasses and armadillos, and where they horrified the locals with their annual lobster fest. Carol in Texas is a self-described existential crisis...

Carol taught me to love the Trapp Family Lodge, Stah-bucks drunk with a straw, and the history of nursing—leading me on a trail to Virginia, where I met the man whom she affectionately nicknamed my “Prince.”

Over a few Hoegaarden beers in Charlottesville, we talked about how her cats became her companions, but that she was thankful for the family of mine that she came to call her own. After her second or third Rusty Nail during a fine dining experience with my parents, she shared her love for and described the appetizer of mussels as resembling female genitalia. I think my dad literally fell on the floor.

Our travels together were often accompanied by Asphalta, the parking goddess, who would often find us the “prime spot,” in front of whatever building we would enter—whether a school of nursing or a kitchen store—the latter where she often prided herself on her collection of kitchen gadgets, including a hotdog rake, thanks to Janis.

Over the years, she saw every episode of Law & Order, ordered many items from the home shopping network she described to me by saying, “Genevieve, it’s about want and not need,” and she played countless games of Snood; all while her brain was busy doing things and thinking of ways to help her students: “Be nice to your students because you never know when they will be your nurse.” Her legacy lives on in each of her students and with every patient interaction they have.

Naturally an introvert, she considered herself quite shy, but she thrived in front of

a classroom. Starbucks in hand, she would saunter up to the front of the class, make a desk her seat, and begin to talk about the topic of the day—speaking about the history of nursing—admittedly, much of which she lived first hand. She was actually in the room when Dame Cicely Saunders, an invitee of Florence Wald, spoke at Yale about a new social movement called hospice—a philosophy of care whose focus includes helping to control pain and symptoms and allow those who are dying to live as well as they can until they die. A benefactor of the hospice service she witnessed start in this country, she passed peacefully. For that, we are grateful.

In 2003, she encouraged me to take a leap of faith and to leave everything that I call home to the University of Virginia to pursue my PhD, Carol gave me this book, *The Road Less Traveled*, and to me, and to so very many, it has made all the difference! Robert Frost’s poem of that title reads:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
 And sorry I could not travel both
 And be one traveler, long I stood
 And looked down one as far as I could
 To where it bent in the undergrowth;
 Then took the other, as just as fair
 And having perhaps the better claim,
 Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
 Though as for that the passing there
 Had worn them really about the same,
 And both that morning equally lay
 In leaves no step had trodden black.
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
 I doubted if I should ever come back.
 I shall be telling this with a sigh
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
 I took the road less traveled by,
 And it has made all the difference.

The inscription, in Carol’s own hand, reads: “Take the road less traveled—always! Love C—you won’t be alone.” I have trusted in that notion, and to me, she has made all the difference.

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