

# Carolyn Linstroth Kuckein: In memoriam



## Robert J. Glaser, M.D., Editor Emeritus

I first met Carolyn Linstroth in the mid-1950s at Washington University School of Medicine when I interviewed her for a position as my secretary. At the time, as associate dean, I was chairman of the Admissions Committee. In addition, as a member of the Department of Medicine, I had responsibility for evaluating applicants for internships and residencies for the medical house staff. Each of these positions involved considerable correspondence with applicants and their sponsors. In those days before computers became standard office equipment and dictating machines left a good bit to be desired, I preferred to dictate letters directly to my secretary. When I described the workload, Carolyn, who had just completed secretarial school, was admirably candid, indicating that she did not think she had enough experience to handle the job. I thanked her for her forthright response, and expressed the view that with more experience, I was confident that she would do well.

A few years later, I became dean of the University of Colorado Medical School where I “inherited” a secretary who was of limited competence; fortunately, she decided to seek another post. When I called the personnel office to find a replacement, I was advised that there was a promising candidate who had just moved to Denver from St. Louis. Lo and behold, it was Carolyn Linstroth, who by then had acquired significant experience in major St. Louis firms. Little did either of us realize that this was the beginning of a close association and friendship that would span more than 50 years.

From day one, Carolyn was an enormous asset to our overall operation. In addition to her secretarial and interpersonal skills, her unruffled disposition in the turmoil of a rapidly expanding medical school operation was a soothing bonus. As my professional responsibilities grew and I became active in the Association of American Medical Colleges and in NIH

programs, Carolyn inevitably handled matters related to these expanded activities with dexterity and effectiveness.

In 1962, I was invited to become editor of *The Pharos*, which was struggling to maintain viability. Again, Carolyn's ability to bring order out of chaos was demonstrated. From that time on, except for a 15-year hiatus during which she married and raised her son, until her retirement in 2002, Carolyn was closely identified with *The Pharos* and Alpha Omega Alpha.

Over the next several years, Carolyn accompanied me first when I moved first to Boston as president of a consortium of Harvard teaching hospitals, and subsequently to Stanford University where I was vice president for Medical Affairs and dean of the medical school. At Stanford, Carolyn presided over the dean's office staff with sensitivity and aplomb while maintaining her major role in AOA affairs.

In 1970, Carolyn's life changed significantly. Following a several year friendship with Paul Kuckein, a Stanford-educated engineer affiliated with IBM, and just three weeks before her next impending career move—this time to New York—she and Paul decided to marry. My wife, Helen, and I hosted the wedding reception in our garden while movers were packing our furniture.

Over the next 15 years, Carolyn and Paul raised their son, Kurt; she completed her college degree; and they pursued their shared passion for opera and the arts. They also lived in Germany on two occasions and traveled worldwide.

Meanwhile, Helen and I had returned to California, and the AOA operation, now based in Palo Alto, had grown in terms of programs and membership. Helen subsequently became managing editor of *The Pharos*, which by now was thriving and had become a much larger part of the overall operation. We recognized the need for a strong administrator to oversee the day-to-day operations of the society. I was delighted when Carolyn agreed to accept the new position. She and Helen worked closely to assure that *The Pharos* met high journalistic standards. In addition, Carolyn worked extremely well with the AOA officers and other staff, and provided valuable support for my successor, Dr. Edward D. Harris, Jr. On the occasion of her retirement in 2002, and in recognition of her outstanding contributions, Carolyn was elected an honorary member of AOA, a unique accolade for one not holding an earned doctoral degree.

Sadly, Carolyn was stricken with two major progressive diseases, and although she received the best treatment available in a leading academic medical center, the course of each was unrelenting. In her final months, Carolyn exhibited rare courage, a selfless concern for others, and a will to live each day to the fullest. She was sustained by her faith and the devoted support of Paul and Kurt and her many friends and colleagues. She died peacefully at home on January 2, 2004.

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