

Thacher, Carol Louise (July 28, 1939—March 15, 2014)

“Thach” to those who knew her well, Carol Thacher cut a vibrant figure on the Grinnell College campus. Tall and willowy, a blond who was both brainy and vivacious, she embraced with zest her years at Grinnell and, indeed, all seventy-four of her years on this earth. Well-rounded as a Grinnell student -- and that’s an understatement -- Carol was Mortar Board and baffleboard, cheerleader and Women’s Honor ‘G.’ She earned a B.A. in Psychology at Grinnell, and also garnered an Iowa elementary teaching credential during those four college years.



From Grinnell, Carol ventured to the east coast to accept a teaching position in Connecticut, but after a year returned to the Midwest, where she taught 5th grade for eleven years in the Minneapolis area. She also married (George Skluzacek) and gave birth to a daughter, Marta. During those same years, Carol earned a Master’s Degree in Educational Psychology at the University of Minnesota.

At Grinnell, Carol had always taken advantage of the opportunities before her. And as a young adult, that “*can do*” attitude somehow propelled her into the study of law. Receiving her J.D. degree in 1978 from William Mitchell College of Law, Carol began a 30-year career, working with three Minneapolis law firms -- two in which she was a partner. As Carol whimsically remarked at our 50th reunion dinner, “It actually turned out to be an advantage to be a lawyer who knew how to talk to fifth graders.” She finally retired (sort of) in 2011. She continued to be involved in various committees and kept close track of her lawyer friends, but was happy to have “time off” to pursue her many interests. She loved spending time with her grandchildren.

In 1984 Carol remarried, partnering with fellow lawyer Steven Ross. Steve was an avid biker, and in her love and admiration for him, Carol approached a new challenge in her usual manner: “Biking? Never have tried it, but why not?” Thus, she and Steve biked often -- together, with friends, near home, and far away. When Steve died after a valiant battle with melanoma in 2001, Carol faced life with courage and perseverance although she admitted that it was often difficult.



Because of her great sense of humor and ability to express herself well in any situation (indeed, teachers and lawyers alike can spontaneously pour forth on any occasion), our Class of 1961 reunion committee wisely tapped Carol to be the MC for our 50th Reunion Dinner. In an after-dinner talk which was both poignant and funny, Carol recalled life at Grinnell during our era: Saturday classes, the M & St. L railroad, Saga Foods, pinning serenades, typewriters, one-phone-per-floor in the women’s residence halls (on Loose 2nd where Carol

lived for three years, that translated to a 40:1 ratio, girls-to-phone, unimaginable today). She also pinpointed some of her own special memories. She laughed at her own cheerleading *faux pas*, calling out, "First-and-ten, do it again," at a Pioneer football game when, in fact, the other team had possession of the ball. And do you gals (now *that's* a word which Thach would have used!) remember that during our junior year Carol had the responsibility of initiating the singing of grace each evening in the Quad dining room? She recalls one time when the dinner gong threw her off key and she began to sing at much too high a pitch, thus turning the dining hall denizens into "a bunch of giggling, shrieking chipmunks." Did Carol have the ability to laugh at herself? Oh, yes, she did, always . . . always.

The Twin Cities newspapers included this bit in their obituary about our Grinnell classmate: "Carol was a loving mother, daughter, grandmother, wife, sister and dear friend. She was a connoisseur of relationships, which she tended with love, care and attention. Carol was a wise and charming woman, expressive and clever. She was a creative problem-solver throughout her life, but finally faced a challenge she could not overcome. Four months before she died Carol was diagnosed with Stage IV lung cancer which had metastasized to her brain. She fought this disease with her characteristic practical determination until she determined that the usual victory was not to be hers. Her exit from our lives was just the way she would have wanted it -- on her own terms."

Carol Thacher proposed the following toast during the denouement of her delightful presentation at our 50th reunion dinner: "To old friends -- those with us now, those who couldn't make it, and those who are no longer with us. And to our younger selves -- their activities, their plans, their promise. May we always remember with gratitude their part in making us who we are today." Yes, Thach, and those of us fortunate to have been your friend, at Grinnell or in the years that followed, truly know that you were one of a kind.

Nancy Welch Barnby & Judy Mahle Lutter