

Dollarhide, Celia Trumbull Porter (January 4, 1940--December 6, 2012)



Celia Porter from Arlington, Virginia was a history major who was graduated with us in June 1961. She was active in the College's International Relations Club and served as its Vice President (1958-59) and its U.N. Representative (1959-60). She was a member of the Latin American Steering Committee, the Young Republicans, Uncle Sam's Club, which provided social services in the town, and the Pre-Law Club. She lived in James, Loose and Read Halls, and her last two years was a member of Read's governing body (Baffleboard).

Immediately after our graduation she moved to Chicago where for the next five years she was a Correspondent in the Sales Department of Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., a literary and text book publisher.

In 1966 Celia began what turned out to be a 34-year career in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. For the first six years she was a claims examiner at the Chicago Field Office. After moving to Washington, D.C. in 1972, she held various management positions within the Department's Veterans Benefits Administration, including Chief of the Program Administration Division and later Deputy Director of the Education Service. In 1994, she was promoted to the Senior Executive Service and appointed Director of Education Services, a position she held until her retirement in early 2001. (The above photograph of Celia is from her VA retirement ceremony.)

Celia was a strong believer in the power of individual empowerment and a major proponent of enhanced education benefits for veterans, including new legislation to further that goal. Her career was devoted to three different GI Bill programs, affecting hundreds of thousands of veterans. Throughout her career, Celia received numerous awards and professional recognition for her advocacy and leadership on behalf of veterans and their survivors, including the Department of Veterans Affairs Distinguished Career Award and the Department of Labor's Sonny Montgomery Award for significant contributions in support of veterans. She was the first recipient of the Bill Pearson Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award, named for the Veterans Benefits Administration's Deputy Under Secretary.

While the Director of the VA's Education Service, Celia testified on at least three occasions before the Subcommittee on Benefits of the House of Representatives' Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and upon her retirement, Congressman William H. Smith, then Chairman of the Committee, entered a statement about her in the *Congressional Record*. It said her "leadership in setting policy, working with Congress, and ensuring that education benefits are paid has been felt by the hundreds of thousands of veterans and their survivors who received an education under one of the three GI Bills during her tenure." The Congressman concluded by commending her for "her core belief--that veterans could achieve so much more with an education" and for meeting "the highest standards to which civil servants can aspire."

Celia's interest in the issues affecting our veterans may have been triggered by having been born at the U.S. Army's Fort Riley in Kansas as the daughter of Margaret Trumbull Porter and Robert William Porter, Jr., a West Point graduate and Army officer who became a distinguished four-star General. Celia's high school years were spent as an "Army Brat" following her Father's Army postings in Arlington, Virginia, Fort Knox, Kentucky and Frankfurt, Germany. Our classmate Lois Christopherson fondly recalls visiting Celia during a College break and going on a tour of the Pentagon led by General Porter.

In 1980, Celia married Charles Lewis ("Lew") Dollarhide, a 1921 native of Oklahoma, an Army Air Forces fighter pilot in World War II and a practicing lawyer in that state until 1959. That year he joined the U.S.

Veterans Administration as a claims examiner and adjudicator in Oklahoma and later Wisconsin. In 1974 he moved to the Washington, D.C. area to become the Deputy Director of the VA's Education and Rehabilitation Service, where he and Celia met. From 1980 to 1986, he served as the Director of the VA's Education Service. Lew died in 1993.

After her retirement from the VA in early 2001, Celia continued living in Alexandria, Virginia near Mount Vernon and on land once owned by George Washington. She spent a lot of time, however, managing her Father's 140-acre tree farm--the Middle River Farm--100 miles away in Madison County, Virginia and was instrumental in placing the Farm into a conservation easement just prior to her death. (To the right is a photo of Celia superimposed on a photo of the Farm.)



She was a First Vice President of the Veterans Administration Alumni Association, an active member and past president of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, a founding member of the Piedmont Landowners Association, and she received awards from the Virginia Department of Forestry for her activities promoting forestry stewardship and conservation. Her love of Rhododendrons (or "Rhodies" as she called them) may have been acquired from her Father, who was a cultivator of the flowers and who has one variety ("Porter") named after him.

Celia also was an active member of Soroptimist International, a worldwide service organization committed to a world where women and girls together achieve their individual and collective potential, realize aspirations and have an equal voice in creating strong, peaceful communities. In 1980 the Soroptimists gave her the Making a Difference Award.

She served on the board of Mount Carmel House in Washington, D.C., which provides housing and intensive case management and support to homeless women and where Celia's financial contributions funded the creation and maintenance of a garden.

In addition, Celia was active in the Piedmont Episcopal Church in Madison, Virginia, which was near the Farm and was her parents' church. There she helped maintain its gardens and invited church members and others for an annual mid-May picnic at the Farm when the Rhododendrons were in full bloom.

After a long struggle with cancer, Celia died on December 6, 2012. Eulogies emphasized her personal qualities within the family.

For her sister, Susan Porter Walker, Celia was a sister and friend who "always focused on the other person, their comfort, well-being, successes and what she could do to contribute to that. She nurtured people." Susan also said Celia had a "sense of adventure and interest in the world around her" and was "the glue that held this family so closely together. She was our emotional heart."

Wallace Earl Walker, Celia's brother-in-law, called her "a lady . . . for all the seasons of her remarkable life," who played the following roles "with selflessness, grace and distinction:"

- As a daughter, she was "loving, attentive and considerate" to her parents. "She was with them when as they grew ill and was a nurse and administrator of their affairs."

- As a wife, she exhibited "selflessness, kindness, and consideration" for her spouse and his four children and grandchildren.
- As a sister, she was "attentive and always supportive."
- As an aunt, she was "loving" and like a grandmother. When she agreed with you, she said, "Sounds like a winner." When she was teased or joked with, she said, "Give me a break." When saying goodbye, she said, "Hang in there."
- As a friend, she was "remarkable and faithful."
- As a public servant, land conservationist, benefactor and humanitarian, she was "the model of a servant leader."

Her survivors include her four step-children, who adored her (Charles L. Dollarhide II, David W. Dollarhide, Michael S. Dollarhide and Patricia C. Dollarhide Bovay); two brothers (Henrik P. Porter MD, of Camas, Washington and Robert W. Porter III and Debra of Burke, Virginia); sister (Susan P. Walker and Earl of Charleston, South Carolina); niece (Kathryn M. Walker of Chicago, Illinois); and nephews (Lieutenant Colonel Allen D. Walker and Diane of Arlington, Virginia, Jacob D. Porter and Molly of Fairfax, Virginia, and Jeffrey R. Porter of Burke, Virginia).

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Sources: Grinnell College Alumni Office file, [Celia Porter Dollarhide](#); Obituary, [Celia P. Dollarhide](#), Wash. Post (Dec. 31, 2012), <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary-print.aspx?n=celia-p-dollarhide&pid=162059421>; Obituary, [Celia Porter Dollarhide](#), <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/greenenews/obituary.aspx?n=celia-porter-dollarhide&pid=161678294#fbLoggedOut>; Susan Porter Walker, [Eulogy for Celia](#) (Dec. 15, 2012); Wallace Earl Walker, [Eulogy for Celia](#) (Dec. 15, 2012); Congressman Christopher H. Smith, [The Retirement of Celia P. Dollarhide](#), <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CREC-2001-05-15/html/CREC-2001-05-15-pt1-PgE795-3.htm>; [VA Testimony of Celia P. Dollarhide](#), http://www.index.va.gov/search/va/va_search.jsp?QT=dollarhide&PS=www.gibill.va.gov&RC=1; Vance, [Remembering Celia: Honoring one of Madison County's 2012 easement donors](#) (April 9, 2013), <http://www.pecva.org/maps-and-resources/publications/piedmont-view/177-spring-2013-piedmont-view/836-remembering-celia-january-1940-december-2012>; Obituary: [Robert William Porter](#) (4/23/2000), <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=tyrilla&id=I4603>; Obituary, [Charles Lewis Dollarhide](#) (Jan. 28, 1993), <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=tyrilla&id=I25156>; Obituary, [Charles Lewis Dollarhide](#), (Jan. 29, 1993), <http://newsok.com/charles-lewis-dollarhide/article/2420227>; [Sorooptimist International](#) <http://www.sorooptimistinternational.org>; [Mount Carmel House Mt. Carmel House](#), <http://www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/page.aspx?pid=365>.