

Newsmaker – Carol Jean Smith – By One of Her Friends

October 12, 1947 ~ March 20, 2011



All who knew Carol Jean will smile as they remember her – because we all have stories to tell. You probably read the wonderful obituary written collectively by Rosa Davis, Bill Garrett and Claudette Smith. It tells of her many accomplishments – professional and charitable, and the website has a link to that document.

This will chronicle Carol Jean's Zonta History and what it led to between us. Carol Jean was a member when I joined in 1984. Being in Zonta broadens our friendship bases, enriches our lives, and presents new opportunities. It is the only way I would have ever known her.

She served as President of our club during the period of 1991-93. Her leadership characteristics were of the type of delegation and follow-up. She kept copious lists and checked them faithfully. She had a very keen sense of people and their abilities, so before her first term began she had all of her committees in place and was communicating with them regularly. She called me one day to meet with the finance committee and asked all of us what we thought of a Mystery Party. When we had no thoughts, she enlightened us. This led to several very successful fundraisers and a lot of fun. She enlisted Bill Garrett to rewrite the first one, and then he authored all the rest. Local actors played the lead roles. When people would buy tickets to the event, they received their "Party Name and Role." Everyone enjoyed dressing in the period and role of their character. We adopted GED on APT for our main service project, so we were on TV a lot. We also worked with a literacy group. District and International were honed in on literacy that year and education has always and continues to be a major goal of Zontians. All of this resulted in the Montgomery Club receiving the coveted GOVERNOR'S TROPHY.

She missed the District Conference when we won. I was serving the District as Treasurer, and could hardly contain myself when the Governor started reading our accomplishments. You may not know, but no one (except the Lt. Governor) knows who the winner is until the closing banquet of the conference. The winner is picked by ballot of the District Board from those Clubs nominated by the Area Directors. Those of you who know Carol Jean might guess why she missed that fall meeting. She had great seats for all of the Alabama home football games.

Carol Jean loved the traveling aspect of Zonta and she attended several International Conventions – Hong Kong (where I had to order her iced tea because they couldn't understand her), Paris, New York, and Australia (Diane Brunson went with her to this one). I'm not sure I listed all of them. I am sure that she made good friends around the globe.

Following her term as President, she was elected to the position of District 11 Area 1 Director, then she accepted the appointment to District Secretary and Parliamentarian which I asked her to do when I became the Governor. She had to go to all of my meetings, so I owed her!

So now it was my turn to do something for Carol Jean. She decided to run for the office of Treasurer of the State of Alabama for 2002. She asked me to handle the record keeping

and file all the required financial reports with the Secretary of State. The job turned into Campaign Manager. It was also a plus that I knew a lot of bankers in the State. We were bi-partisan – she was a Democrat and I am a Republican. She was a Baptist and I'm Catholic. We were friends **first** AND both of us were rookies. We raised and spent over \$100,000 and won the Primary but not by over 50%. We lost in the run-off. Our consolation – Providence does have the best plan – within a year after our loss Carol Jean was diagnosed with the disease that just took her life. The bottom line – WE'RE BOTH GLAD WE DID IT!

Marietta circulated an email from Past District Governor Lollie Harper, Charleston SC, expressing her sorrow for our loss and acknowledging Carol Jean's wonderful outlook, friendship and influence.

Past District Governor Regina Vetto, Boca Raton FL, wrote, "I am so sorry to hear of Carol Jean's passing. She was a wonderful friend and I will always remember her smile and bubbly laughter. Our times together were special."

Past District Governor Bev Duff, Ft. Myers FL, wrote, "I have thought about Carol Jean many times over the years and the terrible disease that took her from us many years ago before her body gave out. Alzheimer's is the long-living death. Hope her family knows how much she was loved and admired. My prayers for them and you, a dear friend, as you deal with the final passing."