

sad news

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This picture...so typical, the laughter...is of Carol Otis Hurst, author, critic, scholar, story-teller, teacher, and extraordinary friend.

Carol died this past weekend, quite suddenly.

Funny, I had always hoped that Carol would speak at my memorial service someday. She would have been wise and funny and irreverent and people would have gone away chuckling and sniffling and smiling, the same way they always left a gathering where she had spoken.

Last summer when she was at the farm in Maine with me, and there were other guests, one evening we sat on the screened porch with wine...outside it was getting dark, and you could hear the evening sounds, tree frogs, loons on the lake...and Carol told a story. It was one she told often but of course I've forgotten the essential details..the name of the girl...but it was about a girl who skipped rope better than anyone. It has a poignant ending, in which the girl drifts away into the sky, skipping and skipping and skipping.. I remember we all sat there smiling and dabbing at our eyes.

And now I'm remembering something else. Over the years, Carol came frequently to Maine in

the summer. She and I discovered that in the little town there, we could get a good haircut for much less than it cost in Massachusetts. So when she was visiting, from time to time we would both go to Connie to have our hair cut.

One time, though, I didn't NEED a haircut and so Carol went down to Connie's by herself. She told me later that, while snipping, Connie said, "Ah, how long have you and Lois been together?"

We laughed and laughed at that. We'd become a sort of ITEM in that tiny town, without knowing or intending it. But in truth we HAD been together..not as "partners", or (this being Massachusetts!) as a married couple!...but as friends, for a long time. We met years ago at a convention in Toronto, and talked the whole weekend; then shared a cab to the airport and talked all the way there; were still talking as we went to our separate departure gates; then resumed talking by mail and eventually email and had never stopped since.

Her death is an enormous loss to her two daughters, two grandsons, and to many, many people in the children's book world.

Tags: Untagged