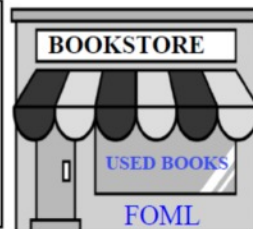




BOOKNOTES



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Remembering Carol Carson

Carol Joyce Carson was born in Kansas City, Missouri on February 2, 1929 and spent her early years there. She remembers it as a lovely city with big, beautiful shade trees and fountains everywhere.



One of her fondest memories of Kansas City was the wind rustling through the trees. She continued to dearly love a nice breeze throughout her life. Another memory from her Kansas City years was the sound of screen doors closing. Since there was no air conditioning in those days, everyone had screen doors so the air could get in. When it was very hot, everyone would sleep outside on their porches. Carol, like most people during that time, used public transportation to get wherever she wanted to go and remembered going to Swope Park on the streetcar for picnics. In the winter, she made snow angels and would have to come in and dry her clothes and then go back out and get all snowy and wet again. Another fond memory was entering and winning a celebrity look-alike contest at five years old, put on by Metro Goldwyn Mayer



searching for child stars. Carol dressed up as Mae West, “Why don’t you come up and see me some time!”

Carol remembered visiting her Mama and Papa Simmeth’s house – sitting on the swing while her Mama sat on the front porch snapping green beans. During the winter the city was blanketed in snow and that marked the time for Christmas Eve at Mama and Papa’s house with all the cousins, aunts and uncles. The Christmas tree was considered a gift in itself. It didn’t just sit around all December. No, all the kids would be sent upstairs and the adults would decorate the tree on Christmas Eve and put out the presents and then the kids would come down for the big reveal. They opened the big parlor doors and it was a sight to behold! Years later, Carol would carry on this tradition of a big, grand Christmas tree reveal when she had her own children.

Carol’s immediate family was pretty poor, but the other family members were a little better off and so there were always lots of beautifully wrapped gifts. Whenever the family all got together, the children slept on pallets on the floor, scattered all over. It was a joyful time. Her Grandparent’s home was the center for the family to gather and Carol could picture every room in that house perfectly. As kids, they took turns taking baths – in the same bath water. That was just the way it was. Her Grandmother, Mama Simmeth, ordered groceries over the phone and they were delivered. Businesses closed down on Sundays, but drugstores were open. Her Aunt Ethel, who also lived with Mama and Papa Simmeth, smoked and she would send Carol to the drugstore for cigarettes and pay her to go. Evidently no age limit then! Mama Simmeth loved movies and they would go on the night they gave away dishes. You could acquire a whole set of dishes by going to the movies regularly!

Carol attended Scarritt Elementary School in Kansas City and lived in various rented apartments. Her parents separated at an early age. Her father was not a presence in her growing up years with the exception of one year after moving to California. Her mother worked full time after their separation and Beverly, her sister, and Carol would be considered “latch key kids” today, but in those days, it was not a worry. At one point,

You can view a full color copy of
this issue of Booknotes online by going to
<https://www.murrietalibraryfriends.org/booknotes/bn11-21.pdf>

Remembering Carol Carson

they lived in a house that was divided in half and the landlady lived in the other half and sort of kept an eye on the sisters while their mom was away working. Beverly was three years older but they went to the same school. Carol recalls that Beverly didn't really want her hanging around. She would make her walk on the other side of the street on the way to school. One time, however, during summer vacation, Carol and Beverly were at the school yard and a girl accused Carol of getting her sheet music wet and the girl was really mad at Carol. It wasn't Carol's fault at all and her sister stood up for her. So, after that, Carol always knew that deep down Beverly really loved her!

Carol's mother, Thelma Flynn, was a devoted mother and, even though times were tough, they didn't really do without the necessities. Carol always wondered how her mother had managed. Her mother worked 5 and 1/2 days a week, washed and ironed their dresses on the weekends and did all the cooking. She was always cheerful and happy. She remembers one time, though, when a jar of mayonnaise dropped and broke, and her mother cried. Carol also remembers going to the shopping center at Manchester and Broadway in Los Angeles and finding a quarter and that was what bought their Christmas tree.

Carol had a large family – her grandparents, Mama (Nancy Belle Simmeth) was from Kentucky and Papa (Charles) Simmeth - came over from Laam Bavaria, Germany when he was 8 or 9 and settled in New York, eventually moving to Missouri. Carol's mother was born in Carrollton, Missouri and her father was born in Lee's Summit, Missouri. They met through mutual friends when her mother would go to Lee's Summit on outings. Carol considers her summers in Lee's Summit as some of the happiest times of her life.

Every summer vacation, she went to Lee's Summit to stay with her Grandma Flinn and, also, with her Aunt Dorothy (her Dad's sister) and her husband, Uncle Ted. They didn't have children and Carol was the apple of their eyes. Her Great-Grandma and Grandpa – Eliza and Calvin DePuy, lived in a sweet little house next door to her Grandma Flinn. No electricity, no running water. They had a pump outside to pump water and here is a picture of Carol by that pump when she was maybe 3 or 4. Her Grandma DePuy ironed with a sad iron that was heated on the wood stove and when it cooled off she put it on the stove and got the one that was being heated. Her Grandmother was a tiny, little person and those irons were very heavy! They had a pump organ in their living room that Carol loved to sit and play. How she would have loved to have that organ. It was very special. Carol also said, she could picture Grandma and Grandpa DePuy's kitchen table. She remembers especially eating cantaloupe at their house and it was so sweet and delicious. They had an ice cream maker and she took turns turning the handle to make homemade ice cream. She always said, nothing compares to it! Her Grandma had electricity but no indoor plumbing until the last few years before Carol and her family left Missouri. They used an outhouse and they had some type of basins if they needed to use something at night. Grandma DePuy would fill a big iron tub with water and let it warm up in the sun and Carol would play in that tub. Her Grandparents lived across the street from the two-story brick schoolhouse and Carol would go over and swing for hours. It made her little Great-Grandma nervous to see her swing so high, but recalls having so much fun.



Carol's Kansas City memories are a bit of a blur, but her time in Lee's Summit was crystal clear. They would sit out on the lawn at night and watch the fire flies and greet the people walking by going into town. Lee's Summit had 2500 people but lots of surrounding farms and Saturday nights, all the farm folks would come into town. Her Aunt Dorothy was in charge of the telephone company office and would take Carol into work with her once in a while. What a treat that was! Calls went through the operators and they all had mouthpieces to speak into to ask "number please?" They had a switchboard in front of them with cords used to answer an incoming call and to connect to the party being called. There was an old-fashioned drug store across the street that had ice cream tables and chairs and a soda fountain – such a dear, sweet place. They would order cokes – Carol's favorite was a lemon coke – and deliver the cokes to the operators. Also, whenever Carol had a nickel, it was a tremendously difficult decision as to whether to spend her nickel on a coke or an ice cream. There was a dry goods store – like a general store – they used the vacuum type tubes to send the money upstairs to pay for their purchase and the change would come back down that same way. There was one signal in town

Remembering Carol Carson

and everyone knew everyone. Carol always spoke about her childhood and summers in Lee's Summit with utter joy and contentment for the people and the surroundings.

Her Great-Grandpa DePuy was a shoe cobbler. He had his little shop right by the railroad tracks. That is another wonderful sound memory for Carol, the sound of the train whistle! Her Grandfather was also the minister for the Latter Day Saints Reformed Church. She went to Sunday School there and was in some of the children's programs. Her Grandma Flinn played the piano and would play and sing hymns. She was the sweetest, kindest person ever. She never said a bad word about anyone. It must have broken their hearts to have Carol, her mom and sister move to California.

Carol's Mother was the first of her family to come to California. Carol's Dad had a job with Santa Fe Trailways and sent for them even though her parents had been separated for many years. Carol was 11 and her sister Beverly was 14 when they moved to Los Angeles. They found an apartment in a house that had been divided up into rentals in a nice neighborhood close to USC. When Carol was ready to start her neighborhood high school, some of her friends from Junior High called and said she needed to transfer to Fremont where they were all going. So, from then on, she had to take the yellow PCC (Presidents' Conference Committee) streetcar and transfer to the 7 Line and then walk a few blocks to get to school. She did that her whole high school years, but felt it was very worth it. Fremont was a wonderful school. She had a terrific group of friends and she met her first boyfriend there. She was a Junior and he was a Senior and on the gym team. She was so surprised when he asked her out. They went ice skating on that first date and when they got out of the ice rink, the fog was so thick they had a hard time finding their way out of the parking lot let alone all the way home. When they would park outside the house after dates and Carol didn't go right in, her mother would flash the porch light off and on until she came reluctantly in.



Carol had so much fun being on her high school drill team. Their coach was very strict but so nice; They all really loved her. Another special teacher was Mrs. Lord, her shorthand teacher and she, too, was lots of fun and a terrific teacher. And Mr. Betts, Carol's physics teacher was a tall, thin, sweet guy who gave her a D even though she probably should have failed the class. Carol found Physics pretty abstract and difficult to grasp. Another one of her best teachers was her Spanish Conversation teacher. She had lived in Mexico, loved the country, the people and the language and made it come alive for Carol. Carol's love of Spanish continued throughout her entire life.

There was no television in those days, but they listened to the radio a lot and there were many great programs like Lux Radio Theatre, Fibber McGee and Molly, Amos and Andy, Jack Benny, The Green Hornet, and The Shadow. All programs that Carol would describe as excellent and wholesome. School dances were a big thing in high school and big band, swing and jitterbugging were all the rage. Carol worked as an usherette during high school at a theatre in downtown Los Angeles. There was a fire at the theatre and she rescued people and got her picture in the LA Times!

Carol was in high school during World War II. The continental U.S. was in danger of being bombed and invaded. There were shortages of food and rations. They had air raid wardens for every block and they had to pull down their shades so no lights could show from outside. Everyone was very patriotic and buying war bonds was a big way to support the war effort. Carol and friends knitted socks and went to the Hollywood Canteen to dance with the servicemen. They had regular paper drives in school to help the war effort. At the movies, they always showed the American flag and everyone stood and clapped. They were extremely patriotic and proud Americans.

The war was over in 1945 and Carol graduated in 1946. They had the first hard cover year book since the beginning of the war. Carol got her first full time job right after graduation because her mother was unable to afford college, much to Carol's disappointment, but she managed. She purchased her first car, a 1937 Pontiac, and boy did Carol and her friends have many good times in that car.

After Carol graduated, that first job was at Lambert Auto Parts in Los Angeles. She was hired in the office to do billing and substituted for the switchboard operator on occasion. That was as Carol would often recall, "a peck of fun" because it was an old-fashioned type switchboard similar to the ones they used in her Aunt Dorothy's telephone company in Lee's Summit. Her first day on the switchboard, one of the owners of the company was calling in from Bakersfield and she cut him off three times before she got it right. Fortunately, they liked her and did not fire her on the spot. She worked there until she went to work for A.O. Smith who made fractional motors in a facility. Her sister had returned from back east and was working at A.O. Smith and wanted Carol to come work for Jim Stahlman, the man Beverly was dating and had

Remembering Carol Carson

fallen in love with. Jim needed an assistant and Beverly did not want any sweet young thing to get the job. So, as Carol always said, “Silly me, I quit Lambert and went to work at A.O. Smith”.

As it turned out, because of her shorthand in high school that was in her employment record, she was offered the job of secretary to the general manager of the factory. Carol told him her shorthand was pretty rusty, but if he would put up with her, she would go to night school and do a refresher course. He said OK. But one of the very first days on the job, he called her into his office to take notes on a meeting with 3 other businessmen. When she got out of the meeting, knowing he might call her back in to go over her notes, she left for lunch. He did want her back in the meeting and when she wasn't there, he was not happy about it. They got past that and had an excellent working relationship. He was great to work for and he appreciated her. It was a pretty important job for someone fairly new out of high school. She had her own office right outside his.

At this time, Carol's Mother and Dad had started seeing each other again. One night Dave Carson brought Carol's Dad to her house because he worked for Cross Town Lines owned by Dave's father. Her Mom had rented, for the first time in Carol's life a little house in the back of another house near Florence and Vermont in Los Angeles – and as Carol was coming home from a date, she was introduced to Dave. He was pretty cute in his driver's uniform and she guessed he liked what he saw, because he called her and asked her out. They dated a few times, but Dave finally told her that his dad expected him to work 7 days a week and it was just too far to come into LA and too hard to get away from work, so that was that. They didn't see each other again for a couple of years.

Carol's Mother and Dad got remarried and they moved to Lynwood so her Dad could be close to his work at Cross Town Lines. Her mother was working for the Van Ronkel Co. in Los Angeles and she took the Red Car into work every morning. Being in Lynwood, Dave asked her out again, and they dated, fell in love, got engaged and got married in a little Lutheran Church in Lynwood. She was 22 and Dave was 24. She always said, “God had a plan for me and knew I needed Dave.”

They lived in a little house behind the bus garage and Dave was still “on call” around the clock. They had a contract with the government, called The Bracero Program. They would pick up busloads of Mexican Nationals at the border, drive them to areas in California that needed farm workers and make a stop in Lynwood for gas and sometimes to feed the workers. So, in the middle of the night, Dave would have to get up and go service the bus and sometimes even cook for them. His Mother would come knocking on the door for “David.” Carol recalls having very little privacy.

Carol's wonderful job at A.O. Smith lasted until she had to quit at Dave's request that she come to work for his family's business. Big mistake! Cross Town Lines had just been appointed a stop for Greyhound and needed someone to learn how to sell tickets. So, Carol quit her great job and went to work for Cross Town Lines. After 6 months, Dave got unhappy with his Dad and quit Cross Town Lines so Carol quit, too. Dave wanted her to stay, but she said, “No, I only came for you and you are leaving.” So, she always said, that she gave up being private secretary to the general manager for nothing.

After Dave quit, he went to work for Crown Coach and Carol went to work for Pike Trailer Co. They bought their first little tract house in Downey, put in a pool, had three wonderful boys, but quickly outgrew their house. They then bought their lovely home on Quinn Street in Downey, where they lived for another 25 years and added a darling daughter. Carol loved being a mom. When their first son, Dean, was born and people would ask her “How's Dean?”, she would say “wonderful – no, wonderful doesn't describe it.” And that is how she felt about being a mom. When she would put them down for their naps, she said it was always so fun to have them wake up!

Carol and Dave started their bus business together in 1961, which took them all over the world selling buses. Carol was Vice President of American International Bus Exchange and an active partner in all aspects of their business. It was a real partnership in the truest sense of the word. Being a devoted wife and savvy business partner was a big part of Carol's life. She always said that she respected and admired Dave more than anyone she had ever met. They had a special bond and they appreciated how rare and wonderful it was that their skills complimented each other and they were able to share in building a successful company together. Carol was always so impressed with how incredibly smart Dave was and, although he dropped out of high school to join the Navy during World War II and never attended college, he



Remembering Carol Carson

was just born with tremendous intellectual gifts and business acumen. Carol believed Dave's most admirable quality was that he was such a morally honest man with high standards. Carol credited her husband with helping her come out of her shell and feel comfortable in her own skin. She feels she learned a lot of her positive attributes from Dave.

Carol and Dave together worked hard but always made time to enjoy raising their very active family. She always said her greatest accomplishment in life was motherhood. She described motherhood in one word, "fabulous"! She was so proud of her four children. She often referred to them as her stairstep kids. Dean was born in '55, Dwight in '57, Dale in '58 and Dawn in '60. Family trips in their converted bus/motorhome produced many wonderful memories. Carol was also a devoted volunteer at her kids' schools, with particularly fond memories of helping in their elementary school library. Her love of reading and passion for libraries was with her from the time she was a little girl. It was always a thrill when her mother, also a book lover, would take her to the library to get a fresh stack of books.



Carol and Dave sold their bus business in 1978, and in 1984 moved to "the country" when Murrieta had a population of 2500 people. They devoted themselves as a couple to supporting their new community and sharing their homestead with friends, new and old, and their growing family.

Carol loved being a grandmother, enjoying thirteen grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren. She often said that the happiest moment in her life was the day her first grandchild was born. She would say that marriage and motherhood were wonderful, but there was just something about your children having children of their own. She remembered being thrilled when her son and daughter-in-law brought over a highchair for her to have before the birth of her first grandchild. It was always absolutely heartwarming and inspiring to hear the way Carol spoke about her family.

Carol kept tabs on all her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She would text, Facebook, Instagram, facetime and call (how old fashioned of her!) She sent everyone a birthday card, without fail. She gathered the family all together at Thanksgiving and every December 23rd for their annual Christmas celebration. She was still hosting Christmas at her home when she was 91 and it had grown to over 40 between her children, their spouses, grandchildren and their spouses and great-grandchildren. She loved to decorate for every holiday. Her family brought her endless joy and she brought them great joy. Amidst all the joy, hard work, and good fortune, Carol was no stranger to heartache and personal tragedy. She lost her son Dwight when he was just 24 and her oldest son Dean at 52.

"Carson's 6 C's Ranch" was a new business venture of raising, breeding and racing quarter horses. In addition, they also started a big equipment rental company off the 215 freeway after purchasing some equipment while building their ranch. The ranch was a beloved place for her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to visit, with not only horses, but goats, cows and chickens and a lake to fish in. All the children adored coming to visit Grandma and Grandpa and that continued after Grandpa Dave passed in 2001. Carol had a knack for making every person feel they were extra special and she would run out to greet you with complete glee and delight followed by a big, Carol hug.



Carol was also well-respected and loved by the citizens of Murrieta. She personified a servant whose heart was full of grace and whose soul was guided by love. She and Dave were active advocates for the Murrieta Citizens for Cityhood and on the board

Remembering Carol Carson

for cityhood which was formed to help Murrieta become an incorporated city. They held fundraisers at their ranch and both played an invaluable part of the group who made cityhood happen in July of 1991.

As a devoted, selfless and caring community volunteer, Carol was also instrumental in bringing the library to the city in 1999. She was a Founding Member of the Friends of the Murrieta Library, formed in 1996, was a founding board member of the Murrieta Public Library Foundation in 2008 and served on the Board up until her time of passing. She



contributed her time, talent and resources to support the library through her tireless commitment as Treasurer for the Friends of the Murrieta Library which included being the Treasurer for both the Corner Store and the Town Square Bookstores. Doing the accounting for the Friends of the Murrieta Library was like being the Controller for a sizable company and she did it with skill and dedication up until two weeks before she passed at 92½, making deposit pick-ups twice a week from both bookstores. She also bought bookcases for the Corner Store, a couch, recarpeted, paid to keep the books bags stocked and so much more. She launched and edited [this](#) bi-monthly Booknotes right up until a few weeks before she passed. She published over 140 issues starting back in 1997! She also designed the Friends of the Murrieta Library logo and hosted the annual Christmas party. One of the many things her generous donations made

possible was the hardscape for the Library's Garden of Verses and the beautiful mural that adorns the library's main wall. One librarian said about Carol, she was the Betty White of Murrieta, driving around in her Tesla.

She also was part of the Murrieta "Street Walkers" as Dave liked to joke, where she and a group of devoted friends would meet at 7:00 AM, six days a week for over 25 years, and walk along Washington Avenue the length of Historic Downtown and pick-up trash. The Press Enterprise newspaper did several articles over the years about their daily effort to keep their beloved Historic Downtown trash free and the City Council publicly honored them several times as well. After their "trash walk", they would join a larger group of dear friends at Terry's Coffee Trader near Washington and Kalmia. Carol supported the annual Christmas parade where the Friends of the Murrieta Library always had a float, was the oldest person ever to attend the Murrieta Citizen's Police Academy, and was nominated as Citizen of the Year in 2009.

Carol also had a special passion for "Cheyenne's Corner", the children's area at the Corner Store. With help from her dear friend Joanne, they purchased decorations suitable for each month and she kept all those decorations, about 24 big plastic containers, stored on shelves in her garage. Carol faithfully changed out the decorations in Cheyenne's Corner, each and every month, right up until her passing. Once, by then in her late 80's, when Nancy Dixon, who runs the Corner Store, noticed Carol up on a ladder changing the decorations on top of the bookcases, she convinced her to find a helper. She had several helpers over the past few years who would do the heavy lifting with her giving directions from solid ground. Her most recent helper, Kurt, has graciously agreed to carry on this monthly tradition, which gave Carol great comfort in her final days. Dan, her co-treasurer, will continue as treasurer but has also volunteered to carry on as the editor of the Booknotes. When Dan told Carol, just a few days before she passed, that he would take over as editor of the newsletter, she lit up like a Christmas tree with sheer joy. She wanted to make sure the baton was passed and it really did give her great comfort knowing these volunteer duties were being left in capable and enthusiastic hands!



Carol once wrote about a dear friend who had passed, "A light has gone out on earth, but it is twinkling up there with all her loved ones and friends that have gone ahead." That is for sure true of Carol as well, but Carol's light has not gone out, it lives on in each of us that she touched, loved and inspired and she will remain forever a guiding light in the lives of so many.

Carol passed peacefully at her home on September 25, 2021 with her family by her side. She was 92½ years young and a loving presence to the very end!

Dawn Carson O'Keeffe

Thank you for viewing this special edition of Booknotes, dedicated to our beloved Carol Carson.

If you would like to view tributes to Carol from some of our members, click on this link below.

<https://www.murrietalibraryfriends.org/misc/carol.pdf>

If you would like to view the Murrieta Public Library Update for Nov/Dec, click on the link below.

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

As the Friends of the Murrieta Library, our mission is to support the Murrieta Public Library through fundraising, advocacy and volunteerism, and to promote awareness of and support for the Library as it serves the informational, educational cultural and recreational needs of our Community.

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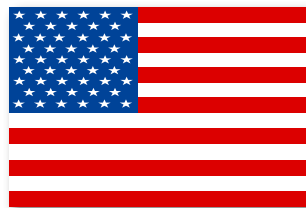
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Normally, this is the spot where
Carol Carson signed as
Editor of Booknotes.
She did 6 issues a year and last
September's issue was #149
in her nearly 25 years of doing this.



Edited by: **W. Dan Rexwinkel**

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