

Caroline Townsend Dowell Duax (1945 – 2020)



Caroline Townsend Dowell Duax died on Wednesday April 29, 2020 after a lengthy battle with cancer. She was the beloved wife of William L., mother of Julia Skop (Francis) (child William Frances), William C. T. (Angela) (children Kelcey, Corryn, William Peter, Matthew) and Stephen (children Kaby, Kaleb, Xavier, Desmond), sister of Barbara Kellogg (David). Her second daughter Sarah Jane, a dancer and teacher preceded her in death Nov 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Caroline was born in Berwyn, Illinois, the daughter of Richard Carter and Alberta (Townsend) Dowell on January 23, 1945 and grew up in Westfield, New Jersey. She attended Parsons College in Fairfield, Iowa and the University of Iowa in Iowa City where she met her future husband.

In 1979, Caroline graduated Cum Laude with a BA from Daemen College, where she majored in performance piano while raising her four young children. She formed the Concord Trio with Cheryl Hudson (soprano) and Victor Chiodo (woodwinds). Local performances included fund raising events and memorial services (1982-84). She taught piano. Her favorite student was her grandson William Francis Skop who began playing duets with her at the age of four. Caroline took accordion lessons from Henry Chimes and persuaded him to augment his polka repertoire with the Tangos of Piazzolla. She taught herself how to play the bandoneon and played the accordion for several years in the annual Saturn Club Chairing Show.

Caroline was a skilled photographer of nature, landscapes and her family and also was hired to photograph weddings. She matted and framed dozens of photos as gifts for family and friends. Her photos taken in Kruger National Park in South Africa appeared on the cover of the fall 2003 issue of the Newsletter of the International Union of Crystallography. Caroline taught herself upholstery and reupholstered most of the household furniture. Also a self taught seamstress and tailor, all the coats, dresses, evening gowns, shawls and capes that she designed and fabricated were extraordinary and unique. She made quilts for all her children and grandchildren and grand nieces and nephews. One of her most remarkable gifts for a friend was a life size mermaid that she created.

Caroline received a Master's degree from the School of Social Work of SUNY Buffalo (1989) and was a Graduate Research Assistant volunteer at the Research Center for Children and Youth and worked for Catholic Charities from 1989 to 1995. To better serve her clients, she took a refresher course in Spanish for three weeks in Venezuela. She served on the Family Selection Committee for Habitat for Humanity from 2000 to 2010. Caroline helped applicants manage their finances and rejoiced with them when they acquired a Habitat home.

In 2002 Caroline organized a petition and collected 700 signatures to preserve the Historic Gate house of the Hedstrom Mansion in Amherst. She extensively researched the history of the gatehouse and in 2006 she purchased the property to preserve the gatehouse, barn and stable, half an acre of woods at the corner of Getzville and Main as well as the stonewall surrounding the property. She served as the general contractor designing and supervising the entire renovation project on a daily basis over a period of two years. She planned all details of the repurposing of the interior of the West house and participated daily in the reconstruction. She personally installed some of the insulation of the walls of the second floor of the house. In 2012 the gatehouse was designated as a landmark by the Historic Preservation Commission and the same year, Caroline was awarded the Rehabilitation /Adaptive Reuse Award from the Preservation Buffalo Niagara Society. The west house was featured in Buffalo Spree (Fall 2012). Caroline served on the Amherst Historic Preservation Commission from 2010 to 2017 and drafted the proposal to secure the preservation of street furniture along Main Street in Amherst.

Caroline took up weaving in 2012 eventually acquiring 7 looms and constructing her own Navajo loom. She joined the Buffalo Weavers Guild offered a course in Navajo weavings and exhibited some of her work at the Guild's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration show. Weaving was another outlet for her creativity, and desire to make beautiful gifts for others.

Caroline's husband was president of the International Union of Crystallography (2002-2005) and traveled to over 40 countries. Caroline often accompanied him and made lasting friendships at international meetings. She corresponded with friends she made in Spain, Russia, India, China, Venezuela, England and Australia and other

countries she visited. She opened her home to visiting scientists from throughout Europe, Asia, South America and South Africa. Graduate students from China and Poland lived with the Duax family for as long as 10 months while pursuing graduate study at the Hauptman Woodward Medical Research Institute.

She planned family vacations – dog sled riding in Algonquin National Park, horseback riding in the Canadian Rockies, flat water canoeing on Lake Erie, snorkeling in British Virgin Gorda, bird watching on Pelle Island, and camping in Sequoia National Park and Camp O-Kwa-Ri-Ga on Seventh Lake in the Adirondacks.

She was an artist, musician, photographer, seamstress, upholsterer, social worker, architect, builder, weaver, gardener, an auburn haired beauty, a caring mother, sister, grandmother, and friend who will be long remembered by all who knew and loved her.

Caroline started Hospice care at home on March 27<sup>th</sup>. On April the 23<sup>rd</sup> she moved to Hospice Buffalo, where with her husband of 53 years by her side, spent the last four days of her life. Just as her daughter Sarah had done before her, Caroline donated her body for medical research, one last gift to others.

There will be a celebration at the gatehouse in April of 2021 when the 3,000 daffodils Caroline's husband planted bloom again dancing joyously in the breeze to honor Caroline and her daughter Sarah. All will be welcome to join in the celebration of two remarkable women.