

In Memory of Carol Brooks

Tribute by Georgia Snodgrass

IRWA is extremely saddened to have learned of the passing of IRWA instructor, course author, magazine columnist and mentor Carol Brooks, SR/WA. Carol has made a tremendous amount of contributions to the IRWA's education and instructor development programs over the years, and her passing will leave a deep void in our hearts.

Carol served as vice chair of IRWA's Partnership for Infrastructure Professional Education (2015-2018), and was a talented author and instructor within the Association. As readers, you may be most familiar with her columns over the last decade, including "Back to the Basics" and "Teambuilding," which focused on effective communication skills, communication etiquette, teambuilding management and the art of negotiations. She was a recipient of the Louise L. & Y. T. Lum Award for distinguished contribution to education for the right of way professional. She also earned the Mark A. Green Award for Journalistic Excellence and Outstanding Contribution to Right of Way Magazine.

She once said, "Right of way professionals exemplify the public good and I want them to have all the communication tools to become the best they can be, and serve our citizens in an exemplary manner."

Carol will be deeply missed and remembered for all the lives she's touched within IRWA and beyond. We've asked Georgia Snodgrass, a close colleague and friend of Carol's, to say a few words in her memory.



Carol and I met over 30 years ago when we were both part of San Diego IRWA Chapter 11. It was on an airplane going to some IRWA event when we discovered we were both born in Hawaii and were both of Japanese heritage — that initiated a bond between us that was strong to the end. We became even closer when I left California and moved to Texas. It was not uncommon for us to have telephone conversations that lasted for four hours! Our talks were not always about IRWA but our families and life. She was like the sister I never had.

Whenever I was able to convince her to come to San Antonio and teach a class for us, she stayed at our home. My mom and I would spend hours laughing with her over things of "local color" related to being from The Islands. We shared a love of the same kinds of food, humor and customs that only those of us from The Islands can appreciate. Whenever I was invited back to San Diego to teach a class, I would always add a few extra days at the end to stay with Carol and her husband, Al. Her home was one of two places I could go to truly unwind and relax from whatever craziness was going on. It was comforting and healing to watch "the dance" of two people so in love as Carol and Al.

Carol was my rock (as she was for many people whose lives she touched), especially as I struggled to work through The CLIMB Instructor Development Program. She inspired me to look at things with a different perspective. She taught me

to take what she called "my style" and use it to enhance these new concepts that I was struggling with. We always laughed about the "spatula time" it took to scrape me off the ceiling, but she always knew how to do it. There could not have been two people who were more different but so close.

I will always cherish the memories of the many IRWA Education Conferences that we attended together and shared a room. Nursing Carol back to health with hot soup at the conferences was almost routine. We took a girls' road trip after the Hartford conference and toured the New England states. Thoughtful person that she was, she made sure I got my acquired lobster roll every day. That was Carol!

You could not have taken a class, sat through her workshop sessions or be present when she was a guest speaker at a luncheon and not have been touched in some way by her grace, calmness, spirituality and zest for life. She was a special lady with many special gifts and our lives will be fuller because she was a part of them.

A light has gone out in our lives with Carol's passing. However, there's a really bright star in heaven that I just know is from Carol smiling back on us all. The last few months took a toll on her physically and mentally — as she would say, she's in a better place. But I wish, for all of us, that she was still here. She will be missed more than anyone can ever know. ✨