

Sharon Pauline Heiydt Carter

July 3, 1943 – May 14, 2000

Sharon was always a South Dakotan at heart, having roots in Marion, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Her earthly life began in Yankton, South Dakota. Born to parents, the late Fred Heiydt and Eidella Wahl Heiydt of Marion, South Dakota. Her early years were spent in Vallejo, California where her father worked until his death when she was 4 years old. There she met her brothers, the late Erwin P. Heiydt and Lloyd D. Heiydt now residing in Chula Vista, California.



After her father's death, her mother moved them back to Marion and they lived there most of her growing-up years. Stories about Sharon growing up usually include her becoming deaf at the age of 7 and her attempts in bettering life for all. At the beginning of second grade in school, she once told her mother she was going to make her rich. Surprised, she asked Sharon how she would do it, and her reply was, "I planted silver dollars around the house." The silver dollars were stored in a box for chocolate covered cherries, and she thought there was candy in the silver dollars. She had to dig them all back up, never knowing if all were found.

Almost at the end of the second grade, she became Deaf. Immediately after that, a Marion resident angel, Frances Tempel Lundy, advised her mother to enroll her in the South Dakota School for the Deaf at Sioux Falls, forty miles away. Her life has been blessed by this turn of luck, entering a lifelong friendship with Deaf people from the school and then from colleges.

Her professional life began at the Minnesota School for the Deaf as a teacher. Then she served as an educational director at the preschool and day school program at the Central North Carolina School for the Deaf. She has worked as an educator and an administrator at California State University, Northridge, and in Silver Springs, Maryland with the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association. She has been in this field for 34 years. She last resided in Simi Valley, California. Now she returns home to Marion, South Dakota.



She leaves her beloved and loving husband, S. Melvin Carter, Jr. since 1965, and her cherished brother, Lloyd D. Heiydt and his close life partner Jule Fejeran of Chula Vista, California. She also leaves Brice Alden, a close family driend and also many learners of life she met on the way to heaven. She said it is wonderful and last words leaving earthly life for eternal life were "Peace" and "Wow".

She was loved by many. Her motto was " Lead and live with love."

~ Profile of Sharon Heiydt Carter is on the next page. ~

A glimpse of the life of our wonderful Friend, Sharon Heiydt Carter

Sharon Heiydt Carter resided with her husband, Mel Carter, and a good friend, Brice Alden, in Simi Valley, California. She hailed from the great state of the "face on the mountain…Mt. Rushmore" (South Dakota). She graduated from the South Dakota School for the Deaf, Gallaudet and California State University, Northride. And she had done doctoral work at Brigham Young University in Utah; Walden; and Capella Universities. Her area of interest was leadership with a special interest in combing spirituality, theology, education, leadership, and empowerment within the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and signing communities. She lived her life daily as a life-long learner.

She was an educator for over 30 years and her work spans from heading the National Leadership Training Program at California State University, Northridge to teaching and administering programs serving Deaf individuals. She worked at all levels of education, from graduate education to pre-school and parent education. She also served as the Executive Director of an organization called the American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association. This is an organization of professionals which serves Deaf and deaf-Blind individuals.

Her 25+ year interst was in a dream she harbored for several years – the development of an international university for education as well as delivery of services via international Signed Languages and tactile communication. At this university/program, American Sign Language and other Sign Languages would be the languages of instruction. Distance learning via video-conference and computer technology would be utilized as well.

The overall program would be Deaf and deaf-Blind-centered. It would be a Deaf and Deaf-Blind-friendly place for life-long learning. This would be a place where skills of Deaf and Deaf-Blind people could bepassed on and shard in areas ranging from academics to carpentry (and other vocational areas) to the arts and business. Hearing people proficient in Sign Languages (ASL and Sign Languages from other countries) would be welcome to this place where Sign Languages and tactile communication would bethe natural means of intellectual and talent exchange. Attached to this dream is the idea of having a museum and library of collections on Deaf, deaf, hard-of-hearing, and Deaf-Blind people, their work, contributions, history, literature and lives.

Recently, she was involves with Brice Alden and other in a volunteer project called the American Sign Language Preservation Project (ASLPP) which records the autobiographies of deaf people via "video books" for posterity. These autobiographies are gems of gold in preserving and recording Deaf Culture and ASL.

Sharon was not shy to admit her great respect and admiration for Japan and tried to keep a bit of Japan in her home with remembrances of her and her husband's(Mel) visit in 1976. They both returned to Japan not too long ago (February 1999) which she felt was like "coming full circle". She and Mel enjoyed having visitors from Japan (both Deaf people and other members of the general Deaf Culture and community). Sharon found great pleasure in sharing ideas for a better tomorrow and found the most comfort in being around caring people who shared a similar mission, vision and passion for a "better tomorrow". When hosting Deaf visitors from near and far (many from abroad), she tried to engage in futuristic dialogue as it related to Deaf people.

Sharon was the keynote speaker at the recent National Deaf Women United (D.W.U.) Conference in San Diego, California in June 1999. One of her mottoes is, "Lead and Live with Love", which is found in a collection of quotes by Def women. Another is, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." by Margaret Mead.

She was recently nominated as one of the first inductees to the South Dakota School for the Deaf Hall of Fame. She will only be there in spirit to accept, and will accept it on behalf of all who partook in her life.

She was proud to hail from the Midwest and considered Deaf Community in South Dakota her "family". She cherished the friends in the neighboring state, Minnesota, as well. This is where she began her professional career as a teacher. She always fondly remembered her "roots" in South Dakota. She constantly reminded herself and others that "it is our roots that give us wings".