

Ric has invited us to share memories of Carolyn, focusing on details of our shared histories. But we shared so many events over so many years, that they all blend together and details go misplaced.

I've known Ric and Carolyn since before they were wed. In fact, I first met Ric when he was a teenager at a bachelor's party for another mutual friend. Carolyn I met later, when she was sharing a house with other young women and preparing to wed. And that's where I first appreciated her playfulness and dedication to games. Life there seemed like a bubbling celebration, punctuated by square dancing in the living room and croquet games on the lawn, the croquet always following British rules.



In fact, we all played croquet everywhere. Was there any Castro Valley lawn where we hadn't? And croquet was at the heart of every celebration. I even remember croquet at a baby shower held outside at our local community center. And, of course, I even remember it played at Ric and Carolyn's wedding reception, where myself and Randy Meyers played the parts of photographers.

In the years to come, every sort of word game, every sort of board game, every sort of puzzle was part of most Smith gatherings, Carolyn occasionally apologizing for being so fiercely competitive.

When the kids came along, Carolyn dropped out of public school, but lessons continued, often costumed, at home and at various "kids' camp" summer Bible studies. Thus, celebrations for Easter or for Christmas, often with a dozen guests or more, were full of games reflecting various degrees of education. And they often featured the tastiest broccoli salad imaginable.

Those early years were not easy ones for me, and I stopped celebrating my birthdays. However, my mother insisted on it, though that didn't really make it a party, not really. But then Carolyn heard about the situation, and for many years she attended my birthdays, so they really were parties. And as I look back, such favors made a much bigger difference than I thought they would at the time.

Another big deal was our mutual enjoyment of bird watching, which we practiced together several times at the Hayward Shoreline. Though we haven't birded together lately, we do still have our field guides close to hand for when needed.



A real big deal occurred when I had to have eye surgery for a detached retina. Carolyn and Ric not only took me to the hospital, but she also invited me to stay at their place for a few days, where she could keep an eye on my recovery. It was great to feel so loved and cared for. And then, the next year, we did the same for a follow-up surgery. What would I have done otherwise?

I remember driving to Portland with the Smiths a couple times, as Carolyn's sisters live in Oregon. It was then that I discovered that they got up early – really early – really really early – to set out at 4 a.m. With habits like that, no wonder Carolyn always tended to fade around 9 pm.

When I began living in China, Carolyn monitored my incoming mail for at least a couple of years. What I remember most (and do remember constantly) was how she tossed out the multitudinous pieces of junk mail that accumulated, sparing me having to go through so many hundreds of pieces upon my annual returns to this country.



In recent years, with the kids leaving the nest, Carolyn became a leader in Community Bible Study. What a great opportunity to use her not inconsiderable teaching talents as an expression of her not inconsiderable faith, and for the rest of us to see her once again teaching outside the home.

Since decades ago, I was spending summer after summer traveling through other countries. Naturally, Carolyn and Ric often picked me up at the airport, including a confetti-filled “welcome home” free for all.

In those days, I traveled with pictures of all my friends and relatives, so that the people whom I met could understand the sorts of people that I had back home, despite common languages that were primitive to non-existent.



Of course I included photos of Ric and Carolyn, taken in their then-backyard. I recently was able to share these photos back to them, and also to a more recent friend, who remarked upon the life expressed in Carolyn's smile.

Indeed, the moment of that picture, reviewed so many times over the years and shown around the world with various new friends, has always been one of my favorite memories of Carolyn.

