



CAROLYN WARNER

(1930 – 2018)

With an unforgettable voice, formidable personality, and commitment to public service and education, Carolyn Warner has left a lasting mark on our state and everyone who encountered this truly remarkable woman. She was a trailblazer who broke glass ceilings for women in all walks of life, championing those who had no voice. One of the country's educational, public policy and political leaders, Carolyn Warner treasured, and never lost touch with, her legion of friends across Arizona, the nation, and the world. Surrounded by family, Carolyn died peacefully at home in Paradise Valley, on October 9th.

Warner was born in Ardmore, Oklahoma to pioneer Oklahoma newspaperman and state senator U.T. Rexroat and educator Mary Tullis. Carolyn's leadership skills were apparent at an early age. As a national champion debater and extemporaneous speaker, she became involved in politics as a youth coordinator and "stump speaker" for some of Oklahoma's leading politicians and was youth representative at the inauguration of President Harry S. Truman (yes - she even danced with the President at his Inaugural Ball). Before leaving high school, she produced and hosted the first celebrity talk show on WKY-TV in Oklahoma City called "Coffee with Carolyn". She went on to attend the University of Oklahoma, received a B.A. from Stephens College and later received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Northern Arizona University.

Carolyn and the late Ron Warner moved to Arizona in 1953 with their two small daughters, Cathy and Caron, and turned a used furniture store into one of the Southwest's preeminent interior design firms. While building their successful business Carolyn and Ron had four more children - Steven, Connie, Christopher and Christi Mary. Not content with building a successful business and raising six children, in 1968 Carolyn was elected to the Governing Board of the Phoenix Union High School District – later serving as president of the board. In 1974 she was elected Arizona's State Superintendent of Public Instruction - the first non-educator ever elected to this position. She served in this office for 12 years.

As State Superintendent she also served as a member and executive officer of the State Board of Education, Career and Technical Education and served on the Arizona Board of Regents and the State Community College Board. She was a champion and advocate for increased services to schools, greater involvement of employers and the community in education policy, directed first-in-the nation Basic Skills and Employability Skills initiatives, and led the creation of the Arizona Educational Foundation.

Many Arizonans will remember her unprecedented run for Governor in 1986 as the Democratic nominee, graciously losing in a three-way general election. Undaunted, she remained active in politics and served as the National Democratic Committeewoman from Arizona on the Democratic

National Committee and was a “super delegate” to Democratic National Conventions for the past 8 years.

Proving that there was “life after politics,” Carolyn and her long-time associate, David Bolger, co-founded Corporate// Education Consulting Inc., a national-scope consulting firm with clients ranging from Renaissance Learning to Met Life and the Coca-Cola Foundation. Known and respected for her national perspective on educational leadership, she received multiple Congressional and Presidential appointments - ranging from President Jimmy Carter to George H. W. Bush – to major national policy initiatives, including the National Commission on the Public Service (the “Volcker Commission”), the National Skill Standards Board, and the White House Conference on Small Business. Carolyn also led U.S. delegations to international education conferences in Japan, Australia, Germany, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Spain and China, and conducted on-site studies of European Union vocational and technical training programs.

At the time of her death she was still devoted to public service at both state and national levels, serving as National Treasurer of Jobs for America’s Graduates – the nation’s most successful school-to-work transition program – as Co-Chair of the Arizona Career and Technical Education Quality Skills Commission, and as a board member of the Children’s Action Alliance, the Arizona Education Association Foundation, Global Pathways Initiative, and the Arizona Business and Education Coalition.

Despite her dedicated and wide-ranging commitment to education and public policy, Carolyn took great joy in her time and travels, literally around the world, with her children. She took pride in making photo memory books to commemorate these adventures. In addition to her commitment to family, she never ceased being an advocate for women and children from all walks of life. Many people looked at Carolyn as an “adopted mother” who helped them fulfill their own dreams. This multi-faceted woman loved to laugh, to be with friends, and was an avid gardener, restorer of classic Packard automobiles, and reader of Agatha Christie mysteries. Her memorable hug and infectious charm will live on in the memories of all who knew and loved her.

She is survived by her daughters Caron Lieber (Bob), Steven Warner (Pam) Connie Pepple (Rick), and Christi Warner Beyer (Paul), 18 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her former husband, Ron Warner, daughter Cathy Weatherford, and son, Christopher Warner.

A memorial service for Carolyn Warner will be celebrated at the First United Methodist Church (at Central and Missouri in Phoenix) at 1:30 PM on Thursday, October 25.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a contribution to:

The Arizona Educational Foundation (Attn. Executive Director)
6155 E. Indian School Rd., #106 Scottsdale, AZ 85251

(Or link to <http://azedfoundation.org/donate/carolyn-warner-memorial-fund/>)

(Please indicate “Carolyn Warner Memorial” on your check or on-line contribution.)

Funds will be used for scholarships for Career and Technical Education students and other worthy student recipients.

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