

Carla Donkin Jenkins, beloved mother, grandmother, and friend as well as a keenly intelligent, endlessly curious reader, traveler and naturalist, passed away March 9, 2020 after a long struggle with cancer. In her passing as well as throughout her life, she was surrounded by the family to whom she had devoted herself with boundless love, enthusiasm, and good humor.

Born in Houston in 1940, Carla and her parents, McKay and Agnes McLean Donkin, and her sister, Deborah, later moved to Washington, D.C., where Carla graduated from Sidwell Friends School. She went on to earn a bachelor's degree in art history from Smith College, where she met her husband Donald, a graduate of nearby Amherst College, and the couple soon moved to Hartford, Connecticut, where Carla earned a master's degree in teaching from Wesleyan University. After a brief teaching career, Carla and Don moved to Yonkers and then Bronxville, New York where they raised their three sons McKay, Brian, and Denny.

After devoting her energies to raising her sons and seeing them off to college, Carla restarted her career, this time writing and producing television programs for (among others) the celebrity hosts Joan Lunden and Maury Povich. Among the highlights of her career was covering the dramatic 1993 standoff between the FBI and the Branch Davidian sect in Waco, Texas.

In the mid-1980s, Carla – a lifelong gardener -- built a second home in Ghent, New York, in the Hudson River Valley, where she became passionately involved in land preservation and field ecology. Along with a devoted and inter-generational community of friends, she explored the Hudson River by kayak and committed herself to learning the plant communities native to her adopted landscape. Throughout the year, she could be found exploring the farms and forests of Columbia County, magnifiers and field guides in hand, identifying ferns, mosses and trees. Her enthusiasm was infectious, and poured into her children and grandchildren who grew to share her love of adventure and exploration.

Indeed, it was traveling with her family and friends that provided Mrs. Jenkins with her greatest joy. Often accompanied by the families of her three sons or her niece Heather Wells Johnson, Carla explored the cultures and wild places on five continents. Among many other adventures, she rafted rivers in northern British Columbia in her 40s; explored New Zealand fjords in her 50s; rode a bicycle around Italy in her 60s; and flew in an ultralight airplane over Zimbabwe's Victoria Falls and hiked to the top of Machu Picchu in her 70s.

Carla is survived by her sons McKay, a professor of Environmental Humanities at the University of Delaware; Brian, a technology businessman in Chapel Hill, N.C.; and Denny, a general surgeon in Virginia Beach, VA; beloved daughters-in-laws Katherine Hinckley Jenkins; Monica Frei Jenkins; and Leanelle Goldstein; niece Heather Johnson and nephew Christopher Wells; and nine grandchildren: Steedman, Annalisa, Spencer, Pierce, Fiona, Jack, Ethan, Hope and Hunter.

A memorial service will be held once the coronavirus pandemic has passed. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Hawthorne Valley Conservancy at <https://hvfarmscape.org>.