

To those who don't know me, I am Jill, Carole's youngest sister. There were five girls in my family, and Carole and I were the two youngest. When we were kids, we were mistaken as twins, people couldn't tell us apart. We were so close that we finished each others' sentences. Up until the age of around 5, we were known as Tootie and Babe. Carole was Tootie, I was Babe Doo. Carole has taken care of me since I was born, took me under her wing, guided me back to safety when I strayed. We even have family movies of her feeding me a bottle as a baby when she wasn't yet 2 years old; she was already taking care of me! We were 16 months apart, not quite Irish twins, but close enough, and she was a year ahead of me in school. She was studious, attentive, a very good student, and I would inherit her same teachers a year later, and they always expected the same good behaviors from me that they got from her. She set a good example to follow.

As children, I considered us two parts of one whole, so if Carole did something well, I didn't have to. She **loved to cook and bake**, so I didn't have to learn to do either. When we were kids she loved to make Snicker Doodles and Cowboy Cookies, and she made excellent lefsa, a Norwegian flat bread. Her specialty dish, and the most unusual, was African Stew. It was a chicken curry topped with whatever fun garnish a guest could bring: shredded coconut, M&Ms, gummy bears...you name it! And we'd EAT this stuff! We had some really fun filled African Stew parties as teenagers.

For the first ten years of life, we shared a bedroom with our sister Karen, and Carole and I sometimes slept in the same twin bed. We slept together, ate together, played together, and walked to school together. And yes, it was a mile each way and sometimes we walked in the snow. We were never apart.

Carole led an **amazing life**, overcoming multiple obstacles that should have tripped her up. But she never lost her stride, she overcame every one. In the process she became what I would teasingly call her, a witch doctor, Carole the Witch Doctor, well versed in everything medical. She would have made a fantastic doctor of medicine, with her vast wealth of knowledge.

Carole was a **Healer**. This started when she was young with her **nurturing** personality. She grew up to earn a living using this talent by becoming a Rosen Method Body Worker. Healing others came naturally to her, and it wasn't just her healing touch that did the trick. When I'd complain to her about a health issue, she'd always have a suggestion for me. Either herbs, stretching, homeopathy, or just plain old counseling, it always worked! She touched many, many lives this way, maybe even more than she would have touched being a medical doctor.

The best word I can think of to describe my sister Carole is the word **Beloved**. She was loved by everyone. This started way back when we were kids. Friends would come over to play, and sometimes my friends ended up wanting to play with her instead of me. And I really didn't mind, because I could claim this special person as my sister. She was their friend but MY sister. She was **warm hearted, good natured, kind**, and **non-judgemental**, and people were attracted to that.

Carole always **defended the underdog** at school, the ones who were constantly teased. She stood up for them, just like me, defiant in the face of the more popular kids who were often the ones doing the teasing. She didn't care, she just wanted to do what

was right, and protect those weaker than her. Carole took care of people, and they loved her for it. I watched her over the years make special efforts to give our brain damaged sister Karen undivided attention, something that Karen badly needed and loved. I remember once she said that Karen had just told her that she loved her. Karen never would say something like that, our family was very stoic about expressing love. So this was a real milestone! Not to be outdone, I started paying special attention to Karen and lo and behold, eventually heard her say, "I like you, Jill, I love you!" That was the only time Karen said those words to me, and she passed only a few years later. This special experience meant so much, and it was all due to Carole and her demonstrations of kindness.

Carole was **funny**, and if you didn't know this, you didn't know her. Her humor could be really subtle. As a youth she made up pet names for people, like No Prob Bob for a guy named Bob who repeatedly said, "No problem!", or Running Bear for a high school friend who ran like a clumsy bear, or Ange for my friend Andy Hedden, because this is how Barney Fife said Andy's name on the Andy Griffith Show. Barney was a favorite of hers. She kept a photo of him on her fridge and would blow kisses to him as a joke from time to time. Jim Carrey was another favorite, as was the star of Elf, Will Ferrell. Carole and I also exchanged funny postcards, back in the day. We'd find the stupidest postcard in the rack and mail it to the other. We sent Jackalope cards, a picture of a jack rabbit with antlers glued to its head, or a Missing You in Beautiful Hawaii card with a picture taken at night when you couldn't see anything but black sky. The best card sent out of all of them was a blank Reorder card, which was the last card in the rack, reminding the store that it was time to reorder more. I discovered years later that my grandfather Otilia Harpster did the same thing, sent funny postcards to my Grandma, and I shared that with Carole last year. So we apparently took after Grandpa!

Other than humorous, Carole was **generous** and **giving**. When I visited her, she always had me stay with her, cooked nice dinners, and would never take a thing in exchange. I'd try to compensate her for the trouble, but she would never accept. This was a "thing" between us, resisting gifts. So, instead I hid money around her house, sometimes inserting extra bills into her wallet, hoping she wouldn't notice. But sure enough, 90% of the time she found the money and would mail it right back to me with a "Yew dirty dawg" note. That was one of her phrases, and it got to be a running game between the two of us. We'd call each other Dirty Dog d-a-w-g when one would try to do nice things for the other. It was a joke where only we two understood the punch line.

Carole lived **authentically**. Carole was Carole, there was nothing else to it! She was **funny**, she could be **quiet**, she was **sweet**, but she was always **true to herself**. Over the years she had the **courage** to process her own personal childhood traumas and work through them. She was always **striving to be a better person**. Carole was very **grounded**, and I would definitely call her a **warrior woman**. Throughout her cancer journey she **courageously** greeted each day with **gratitude**, never complained, and enjoyed life for what it had to offer. It truly defined who she was as a human being.

Carole was **helpful** and **selfless**. Two years ago she gave me the ultimate gift, by saving my life! Due to her diligent cancer research, by the time I was told there was no hope for me, she turned me on to the best oncologist in my area. Carole was immediately there counseling me through the trauma, keeping my spirits high, listening

to my complaints and telling me to only take one day at a time. That was her best advice, one day at a time. I was not alone, and neither was she, with me on board. Through all it she dealt with her own difficulties, which she set aside to help me. If not for Carole, I would not have survived my diagnosis.

Carole believed that the **most important thing in life was love**. She said to me before she left, she said “Jill, that’s all there is, you know, is love. Love is everywhere and everything.” All things in the universe boil down to pure love, and that’s what we’ll encounter when we die. I think she was right. I’ve heard the same from three people I’ve known that died and came back to life. They all took the same journey, and felt the most incredible sense of peace and love on the other side. Carole intuitively knew this, and lovingly guided others on their **spiritual journey**, and would try to help them to reach their full potential. She knew all of life boiled down to love and loving others.

After giving me her final, bad news, Carole said to me, “Jill, it was always going to happen this way. No matter what I did in life, this was always how it was going to end.” And I agreed with her and said, “I believe that, Carole. Our fates are laid out before us and there is very little we can do to change that.” She faced her end with unbelievable courage, grace, and dignity, and strove to look at leaving this earth as her starting an exciting, adventurous journey. Although Carole agonized about leaving her loved ones behind, she strove to see leaving as a gain. She was going back home again, back to her true home.

It was never my intention to outlive my sister, because I never wanted to be here on this Earth without her. But here we are, and I can hardly believe she has left us. Don’t get me wrong, she didn’t want to leave, but accepted her fate with incredible **courage and grace, never complaining**, not once.

I recently attended a funeral where a story was told that stuck with me. In this story, all of us are standing on the shores of the ocean, as our loved one sails out to sea on a boat. And while we wave goodbye, the boat gets smaller and smaller as it recedes into the distance. Pretty soon the boat is only a spec on the ocean. Carole is still there, but we can barely see her. And then suddenly the boat disappears over the horizon. It looks like Carole and the boat are gone. But as she recedes from our sight, folks on the opposite shore are just catching a glimpse of her appearing in the distance. A whole slew of loved ones, eagerly waiting to welcome her home. And as they watch, Carole and the boat come closer and get bigger and bigger. Our loss is their gain. She is not alone, but instead has sailed into the arms of many folks who love her, and who have been patiently waiting for her return.

Like F. Scott Fitzgerald said, “**She was beautiful. She was beautiful for the way she thought. She was beautiful for the sparkle in her eyes when speaking of something she loved, she was beautiful for her ability to make other people smile. She was beautiful, deep down to her soul.**”

God bless you, my dear sissie Carole! I am so grateful to have been able to spend my life with you in it! I wouldn’t trade that for the world. May you find peace everlasting, cradled in the gentle embrace of the universe. I will miss you always, and look forward to seeing you again.