

Carolyn

*by Hap Hansen*

I've had a lot of inspiration from my children, parents and friends, but much of my inspiration came from my late wife, Carolyn. That inspiration began when she agreed to marry me when I left the University of Nebraska. She was a Junior at the University. After we had three children, we were living in Casper, Wyoming. She took classes at Casper College, then decided to attend the University of Wyoming at Laramie. She commuted the 180 miles weekly and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. She was gone five days a week and my kids found out just how bad a cook I was! Besides me, she inspired our three children to advance their education. Our oldest son has Bachelor's and Master's Degrees, our second son has Bachelor's and DDS Degrees and our daughter has Bachelor's and Master's Degrees.

Carolyn continued her art and when I was transferred to our office in Lakewood, Colorado, she was accepted and had her oil paintings displayed at art galleries in Vail, Aspen and Phoenix. In her final years, her art was intensified by her words. As examples, on a piece of art she called 'Hidden' she wrote:

*Beneath layers of facade, beneath layers of restraint,  
and buried in years of conformity, of trying to please,  
of wanting acceptance,  
there lies a voice of purity and love,  
seeking only freedom to be unique and true.*

On an assemblage she called 'Soul Dance' she wrote:

*If our heart doesn't dance with our soul, how can we find our way home?*

I think that's profound and I read it nearly every day.

Years later, she was diagnosed with Mild Cognitive Impairment. This condition inevitably leads to Alzheimer's Disease. She died on Valentine's Day, 2014, two days short of our 57th Anniversary. I do not write this for sympathy, but for how much Carolyn inspired my family, friends and me.

Friends ask me if I miss female companionship. The answer is yes. Fortunately, an occasional lunch or dinner with female friends seems to be sufficient. And I am fortunate to have family nearby. They also ask if I am interested in a longer term relationship. My answer is no. Because here, in my heart, I am still dancing with Carolyn.