

## In Memoriam: Linda H. Peterson (1948–2015)

Linda Peterson's exuberant intelligence, gracious generosity, warmth, and openness to ideas, experiences, people, and the natural world infuse the recollections of all who have been deeply fortunate to have known her as a WPA colleague, scholar, teacher, inspiration, friend.

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ELAINE MAIMON

Linda Peterson is an inspiration—to scholars of literature and composition, to women (partly through her role as English department chair at Yale), to everyone who wants to make the world better. Linda understood the importance of teaching students to become writers and critical thinkers. She had a graceful, no-nonsense way of refusing to separate teaching and research. Linda was committed to CWPA's values—to its integration of scholarship, teaching, and administration in a scholarly context. I remember CWPA Board meetings but, even more vividly, fun-filled dinners with Linda as president. Her exuberant intelligence helped to create the organization's *ethos*, which continues to define CWPA as it has expanded in size and influence. WPA was originally established to build a bridge between MLA and CCCCs. Linda Peterson was an exemplar of that early connection.

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LYNN Z. BLOOM

CWPA's founding movers and shapers were to a person creative, imaginative, visionary, energetic, collegial; their collective DNA gave CWPA a jump start as a vital and respected professional organization. As CWPA vice president (1984–1986) then president (1986–1988), Linda Peterson collaborated in keeping CWPA on track and on target even as its mission and modus operandi were evolving. Linda oversaw the evolution of the Summer Workshop into a manageable length (in 1985, reduced from ten days to five), in initiating the first Summer Conference (1986 at Miami

University of Ohio which became WPA's institutional home for the next two decades), and in transforming the *WPA: Writing Program Administration* from a newsletter to a print quarterly. If people don't know these facts, it's because Linda, ever courteous, thoughtful, low key, and good humored, didn't brag—she just did the work, with devotion, graciousness, and delight.

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LOUISE Z. SMITH

Generosity underlay Linda's scholarship. *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography* and *Becoming a Woman Writer* generously acknowledged the roles of gender while foregrounding other affiliations such as religious, political, economic, and social. Her books explored how rhetorical traditions open to accommodate an individual's experiences: One domestic memoir focused on a conversion narrative while another traced professional development at odds with family life; writer-as-hero trajectories appear alongside artistic collaboration within families. Theory wars were not for her; rather, she pragmatically worked within and across theories and disciplines, trenchantly employing what illumines her subject. Invested as she was in autobiography, Linda nevertheless warned of pedagogical dilemmas entailed in that RhetComp staple, the autobiographical writing assignment. Her legacy includes a voice of wit, warmth, "profound civility" as *Yale News* observed, and openness to scholarly possibilities.

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DONALD MCQUADE

I remember Linda, always, as Elegant, with a capital E. She wrote with a distinctive presence of mind and a poised touch, her subtle inquiry conveyed through a graceful style that made her sentences dance. Her thinking in writing, both nimble and rigorous, reflected her generous, perceptive, and smiling openness to engaging a colleague or an idea. A wide audience has experienced the rich pleasures of her intellectual company and the enormous pleasures of reading her prose. We honor her dual legacy, building the CWPA into a robust and durable professional organization and unraveling the intricacies of Victorian autobiography. She will always remain in my mind's eye.

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JOHN TRIMBUR

During a consultant-evaluator visit I made with Linda many years ago, we were both impressed—awestruck really—by the long-standing vitality of the institution’s WAC program. When Linda asked what sustained its high momentum, our hosts said it was “because we all voted for it.” I remember Linda’s delight at this answer and how its heartfelt sense of accountability made evident the deep bonds of trust and shared purpose that sustained the faculty’s common work. Linda was delighted to find such unmitigated good will in others, reassured by the presence of fellow humans who worked so conscientiously together and behaved so well over such a long period of time, just as she always did, without guile or self-aggrandizement, but simply a natural part of living.

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BARBARA CAMBRIDGE

As an intelligent and centered colleague, Linda Peterson stimulated thinking in a gracious way. Linda’s reasoning and modeling led me early on in my career into insights about evaluating writing programs and, over time, into making intentional career choices. Her radiant smile characterized a personality that was never haughty and always collegial. Linda once described to me tubing on a river before a CCCC meeting. She enjoyed the beauty of the surrounding nature, the elation she felt on the water, and the camaraderie of her co-adventurers. The stimulation of a fine university, the satisfaction of scholarly research, and the commitment to her colleagues as department chair paralleled that personal adventure. Linda balanced her personal and professional pleasures with design and delight.

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BILL SMITH

I see Linda in deep conversation with Win Horner, leaning into each other, gliding through a CCCC’s crowd. Twice I worked with Linda, who became my role model. As a CWPA consultant evaluator team, we evaluated Texas Tech in the ’80s. For three days, I watched her interact with the university community from students and faculty to college and university administrators. From her, I learned how to listen, value space, and encourage people to speak to us and to one another. Later, Linda taught an advanced writing workshop for us at Utah State. She amazed our students, who felt privileged, challenged, and in the presence of an exceptional thinker. Each evening, she evaluated the day; then she smiled and talked quietly, almost

reverently, about Fred [her husband] and his latest essay or journalism trip. I hear her voice, her laugh, and am thankful she taught me. I admired Linda. I envied Fred.

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