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## A Tribute to Carolyn M. Glass, VMD, 1961-1992

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## A Tribute to Carolyn M. Glass, VMD 1961-1992

We flew "the trench" on May 24, 1987. Carolyn had decided to try her hand flying the airplane and was seated on the left. I sat in the copilot's seat. Tom and Phil were cramped in the rear of our aluminum capsule, known affectionately at the time as Team Mooney. We may have been the only human beings on earth that Sunday to see the most beautiful part of the Canadian Rockies, from their northernmost point near Watson Lake south to Calgary. I am sure of the date because of an entry in my log book.

The adventure started when Carolyn asked to see me in my office at the University of Pennsylvania, while she was studying veterinary medicine. She told me she and a classmate, Philip Kauffman, were going to Barrow, Alaska for 8 weeks to participate in the annual survey of bowhead whales, as they migrate along the lead edge of ice in the Chukchi Sea. Carolyn said they would be flying to Barrow, 350 miles north of the arctic circle, by commercial airlines and if she returned the same way she would miss the opportunity to see much of this beautiful land. She knew I flew and asked if I would fly to Barrow to pick them up, so she could see Alaska, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and British Columbia at an altitude where the beauty of this vast region could be seen and appreciated. I had flown to Alaska before but not 13,000 miles in May and I had never dared to venture north of the arctic circle. I suspect one must be a pilot to completely understand the challenge of flying to Alaska in a small airplane. I accepted, in part, because of the challenge, but also to have an opportunity to fish the spring run of King salmon and see Alaska again.

I asked a friend and skilled pilot, Tom DiCecco, to accompany me. Our intention was to camp along the way, although the closest Tom had ever come to camping was spending several nights at a Holiday Inn. Camping required taking a tent, sleeping bags, cook stove, food, survival gear, an axe, a rifle with plenty of

ammunition, a mountain of flight charts, cameras, and a myriad of lenses and film, all in addition to personal needs and warm clothing.

Tom and I left Pennsylvania on May 12, 1987 and arrived in Barrow on May 19th. We stopped along the way to dig for razorback clams and fish for Steelhead and King salmon. Nearly all of the inland lakes were frozen-in and the Brooks Range north of Fairbanks was still completely engulfed in ice and snow. Carolyn and Phil were at Wiley Post, Will Rogers Memorial airport in Barrow to greet us, but they didn't see us land. The weather was so bad at Barrow we could not see the sides of the runway because of ice fog, and a truck had to be dispatched to find and lead us to the terminal, such as it was.

Carolyn had an exciting time in Barrow, but I could also tell she was anxious to get away from the ice, snow, unrelenting cold, and the monotony of continuous daylight. She had seen, counted and tracked the movement of more than one hundred bowhead whales, become skilled in counting the thousands of greater and lesser eider ducks that winter in that remote area, had sighted polar bears at close range, and witnessed the ritual of Eskimos harpooning a whale by traditional methods from a seal skin boat. Carolyn wanted to show us everything that had become special to her. She stood with me in a small building located on the absolute northern-most tip of land in the United States. From there we watched the sun dip toward the horizon, only to rise again without setting.

Neither Tom nor I knew whether our reliable, single-engine, Mooney aircraft would actually fly with the load we had. We agreed to use maximum power and, if we were not airborne by the midpoint of the 6,500 foot runway, we would abort the takeoff and off-load some of our precious cargo. We thought it best not to tell Carolyn and Phil of our concern. On Thursday morning, when we left Barrow, it was clear and very cold, weather fea-

tures that would provide safety factors of increased lift and the ability to return to the airport if all was not well. Team Mooney landed in Fairbanks, 535 miles, and 3 hours and 45 minutes later. We now knew our trusted Mooney would carry us home safely. We taxied directly to our campsite at the campground, which is a part of Fairbanks International Airport. We were the only ones there, except for the mosquitoes, which I conservatively estimated were the size of eagles.

We visited Anchorage, but while enroute in clouds, missed a clear view of Mount McKinley. We stayed in Ninilchik, a village founded at the turn of the 19th century by Russian explorers. We fished for King Salmon as the guests of Al and Cookie Stuefloten. We went on down the Kenai Peninsula to Homer where we saw hundreds of bald eagles fishing along the shores of Cook Inlet and huge halibut hanging at the docks of the fishing fleet. We had a beer, or maybe it was two, in the Salty Dawg Saloon, on the Spit. It was truly an exciting time. The friendship and camaraderie were of a level I had never experienced before, or since.

We camped on the shore of Watson Lake, in the Yukon Territory before entering the trench. The ice on the lake was gone, the sky was clear, and the temperature was in the sixties. The surrounding low rolling mountains were free of snow and were covered with evergreens. Carolyn and I walked along the shore, most of the time without saying a word, but she did share with me some of her deepest feelings. The only thing to break the silence of the moment was the gentle lapping of waves along the shoreline and an occasional small bush plane arriving or departing this wilderness outpost.

I make much of the trip through the trench because, located in this remote area are some of the most beautiful mountains on earth and, it was, without doubt, the high point of our adventure. Picture, if you can, the feeling on that day in 1987.

It is 450 miles to Prince George and then another 400 miles along the Frazer River valley to Calgary. The mountains reach to more than 10,000 feet. We cannot hope to fly over these mountains with our load, but instead must snake our way southeast in the valley which forms the trench and separates the Muskwa and Finlay Ranges of the Canadian Rockies. There are only three airstrips along the entire expanse and two of them would be unusable to us because of the accumulation of winter snow. There would be no one to talk to by radio, no place to land, and no one to help if disaster should strike. Once committed, the weather had to hold, for there was no turning back. There could be no instrument flying this day.

Balance our apprehension against the beauty and the grandeur of the day. The sun was shining, the sky was a brilliant blue, without hint of smog or pollution, and overhead there were only high cirrus clouds. Think of having the ability to soar like a bird among the peaks, for Carolyn to bank ever so gently and put a wing tip within a few hundred yards of a shear granite cliff, two miles above the valley floor, next to a mountain peak that had been successfully scaled by man just the year before. Visualize our frantic attempts, in the tiny cabin, to change lenses and position a camera to capture on film the most breathtaking views, knowing full well the resulting pictures would never save the three dimensional images our eyes could see and our minds comprehend, and, in an instant, save for a lifetime. As we flew over the glaciers and now green valleys near Lake Louise to the south, we saw a rainbow ahead, reaching to valley floor. It was a perfect ending to a perfect day; one of those truly perfect days in anyone's life.

Carolyn saw all of this on Sunday, May 24, 1987, and probably much more. I can only describe to you what I saw. I was always convinced she had uncanny insight, uncommon intelligence, and could see, perceive and understand much more about our world than I could ever hope to. Many times, during and after our trip, Carolyn told me how much she enjoyed our trip, how much she had learned about nature and, more importantly, about herself. I have learned more recently that she shared her joy and excitement with her sister, Julie.

I'm pleased to have been a small part of Carolyn's life and to have enabled her to see her world, in a way most never have a chance to see it. Every time we got together afterwards she would ask when we were going back. I wish we had. I haven't been back. I still fly the Mooney. When I do go back, most certainly, I will miss her company.

If you should get there before me, please pause long enough to witness the true unspoiled beauty of nature that Carolyn treasured, and say to yourself, "Dr. Carolyn Glass passed by here in Team Mooney in the spring of '87".

*William J. Donawick, DVM  
Mark Whittier and Lila Griswold Allam  
Professor of Surgery*

Dr. Carolyn M. Glass was a 1988 graduate of the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. She dedicated her life and training as a veterinarian to wildlife conservation and the welfare of nature, first in the efforts to save the dolphins, struck by disease along our Atlantic Coast, then as part of the study of the bowhead whales in the Pacific northwest, and finally trying to save the critically endangered Florida panther. In spite of her efforts, and those of many other dedicated workers, the Florida panther is losing its battle for survival and the species is nearing extinction. Carolyn died just after Christmas in 1992. Her last written words to Dr. Donawick were in the form of a reminder that, "in wilderness is the preservation of the world" (H. D. Thoreau).

Dr. Donawick is the Mark Whittier and Lila Griswold Allam Professor of Surgery, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania. He has been flying for 25 years, has accumulated more than 2000 hours in Mooney aircraft, and holds a commercial license, with instrument, land and sea ratings.

The Carolyn McKerrow Glass Travel Research Fund at the NOAA Center has been established in memory of Dr. Carolyn M. Glass, V'88. This travel fund will make possible worldwide research and training expeditions to aid endangered animals. Scientists associated with the NOAA Center are leaders in their research fields: veterinary medicine, genetics, and reproductive physiology,

and the demand for their applications of medical technologies to the plight of endangered species, worldwide, is growing rapidly.

Contributions to the fund should be sent to:

NOAA Center,  
National Zoological Park  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, DC 20008



*Congressman Robert Walker toured New Bolton Center in March. He is shown here with Dr. Ray Sweeney (left) in the Graham French Neonatal Section of the Connelly Intensive Care Unit.*