

A SADDER AND A WISER WOMAN

Last February was a hard month for *Asimov's* and for me. We lost two women, Janet Jeppson Asimov and Carol Emshwiller, who had long been associated with the magazine. Both women were in their nineties. The years when they were most actively engaged with the magazine didn't overlap, but my friendships with each of them did.

Janet Opal Jeppson was born on August 6, 1926, and died on February 25. She was a writer as well as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. Janet was married to Isaac Asimov from 1973 until his death in 1992. Janet was both a short story writer and a novelist. She was best known for her series of children's books about Norby the Robot.

Janet published ten stories in *Asimov's*. Most, if not all, incorporated her knowledge of psychiatry and psychoanalysis. A lot of her fiction was light hearted as well. Janet's first story for the magazine was "A Pestilence of Psychoanalysts." She published six more stories in *Asimov's* before I joined the staff in June 1982. The Mid-December 1982 issue, which was the third issue of the magazine that I worked on, featured her eighth tale, "The Mysterious Cure." We published two stories more in 1983—"The Ultimate Biofeedback Device" and "The Horn of Elfland." After that, Janet turned her attention to the Norby books. Although these books were written in collaboration with her husband, she was the primary author. She published ten books between 1983 and 1991 and an eleventh book in 1997.

We also published three essays by Janet. The first two were editorials that incorporated her husband's unpublished writing—"Isaac Himself" (April 1993) and "More Isaac Asimov" (November 1993)—and in April 1995 we published her essay admonishing, "Hey, Writers—Make Us Feel Better."

I had always enjoyed Janet's company at functions, and we stayed in touch after Isaac died. We shared several meals, she once gave my husband and I tickets to the Philharmonic, and she even attended my first daughter's baby shower. Over the past several years, though, we mostly communicated by notes in holiday cards.

About a year before she died, author Alvaro Zinos-Amaro wrote to tell me that growing up he had loved the Norby books. I encouraged him to write directly to Janet. A short time later, he received a letter from Janet's cousin. She'd let him know that Janet wasn't well enough to write herself, but that she was delighted by his communication. The last two paragraphs of the letter were actually from Janet, dictated to her cousin. Janet told him that his correspondence had truly cheered her up during a difficult time.

I was a high-school student when I first encountered Carol Emshwiller's fiction in the pages of *Dangerous Visions*. I had to reread "Sex and/or Mr. Morrison" a couple of times before I had the slightest idea of what was going on. I became friends with Carol after I moved to New York City, and in 1991 she convinced my husband and I to accompany her on a walking tour of England's Lake District. This trip was way beyond our budget, but David and I decided we could make it work. We were in our thirties, and Carol would have been about seventy. Visiting Tintern Abby and Wordsworth's home with Carol; staying at a farmhouse once owned by Beatrix Potter as well as Coleridge's Greta Hall; looking for Swallows and Amazons; and hearing Carol's thoughts about *Ledyt*—a novel taking shape in her mind—were all sublime experiences. Yet the hike itself wasn't really vigorous enough for David or Carol. One morning he, Carol, and two guys from Arizona decided that before breakfast they'd take a couple of hours and hike straight up a steep, desolate fell. When they arrived

back around eight A.M. Carol said in her self-deprecating way that the men had kindly slowed their pace for her, but David assured me this was in no way true.

Coincidentally, we were all traveling in the same direction after the walking tour. Carol was a very private person. She insisted that she wouldn't tag along with us. We were able to get her a good deal at the hotel we were staying at in Glasgow, but as soon as she checked in she announced that we shouldn't expect to see her again. Twenty minutes later our hotel room phone rang. It was Carol yelling excitedly, "Look at the Moon! Look at the Moon! It's so beautiful." Naturally, we proceeded to meet for breakfast each morning thereafter. The weekend was followed by a train ride together up the gorgeous west coast of Scotland. We finally parted when she left to join Lisa Tuttle, who lives near Loch Tarbert, and we went up to Skye.

Years later, returning home from a lunch with Carol, I said to David, "Can you believe that at eighty-six she still climbs eleven flights of stairs every day to get to her apartment?" He answered, "Well that's probably why she's in great shape at eighty-six."

Carol was bemused to "break in" to *Asimov's* in January 2006. Her first story for us was "World of No Return." Over the next seven years we published twelve of her inventive and often disturbing tales. One short story, "The Lovely Ugly" (August 2010), tied for first place in our annual Readers' Award Poll. The last tale, "Riding Red Ted and Breathing Fire," appeared in our April/May 2012 issue. Some of my other favorites included "Master of the Road to Nowhere" (March 2008) and "The Bird Painter in Time of War" (February 2009). I was sorry that she stopped writing, because I would love to have published a dozen more. Carol was born on April 12, 1921, and died on February 2.

To paraphrase Coleridge, I'm a sadder and a wiser woman for having known Janet and Carol. I love welcoming new voices into the magazine, but I know that I will always miss hearing theirs.