

November 29, 2016

Barbara [Altmann] and I said good-bye to Oregon together a year and a half ago. Indeed we have reasons to return, but Sandi – you brought us back as a unit. From you, we understand the meaning of relationships, especially those that grow with of similar roots but distant branches.

You and I met at a Promotion and Tenure celebration at McMorrان. Somehow we landed at the same table; maybe it was the ridiculously full platters of food we both couldn't balance without sitting down.

I remember you counting the women who were rising stars and I thought I met my kindred spirit – we reveled in our common background of Montreal days, and I said to you – would you be my new best friend. You didn't laugh. Nor did I.

That summer we went to the Vets club to dance. I couldn't believe it – someone who would do this with me. The first time and the last time I went with one friend to one place to actually dance. So much fun. We went to learn salsa, danced there, and you were willing to go downstairs and dance all over again with the house band that night.

We met again more regularly for a few months when you came representing graduate education to the deans' meetings. Our voices resonated with similar goals – in times of scarce resources, how could we leverage best and cutting edge practice for graduate education. Years would go by where we had infrequent one on one meetings (I remember trudging across campus to Susan Campbell) usually around Graduate Education and what my school was messing up about – but you always offered a positive solution – yup we can do this. My heads loved you – you directed them proactively and gave them tools for success. Not sure they always used them, but the encounter was great.

When we finally started walking, you showed me how you loved Eugene, the landscape, the light, the woods, its fundamental sensory resilience. And on those journeys from the streets and the trails, through the firs, grasses and wildflowers of the Masonic cemetery, you taught me about family, your family, Seth and Sarah, taxes, and activism and a world I barely knew – American militant social justice and the people who populated our movements. When stuff was blowing up at Oregon, you told me that was the job – of our students, our faculty – their critique moved us forward. Our walks had a rhythm, we started with you going through the minutia of the cancer evolution and moved to huge political discussions, you wanted to be Sandi, and talk about the hires at UO ('what the hell was happening?') You wanted to stop the "bullying and the environment of emotional parsimony" – and build a platform of generosity and tolerance. You wrote letters to leaders, brave letters - condemning "what you saw as uncivil behavior on campus; ...and allowing this to be seen as legitimate." You challenged us to "develop systems that

removed climates of fear among many.” You called on all of us to “disassociate from adversarial, personalized attacks.” You called for creating a collegial, inclusive environment. How else were women, or anyone else for that matter, going to be interested in working here?

Then you asked the administration to “make sure the senior women that were leaving UO would be replaced with larger numbers so the academy would be diverse.” You never let this go; your battle with cancer was growing – but it never quelled your calls to action. And I quote again: your “frustration when the results of 4 of the 5 dean searches (before LCB) and the VPR search brought 100% male senior academic leadership was high – seeing the President, Provost, the office of Research, CAS, SOJC, AAA, and have continuing male deans of Education, Music, and the Grad School caused (you) shock– given how much work (you) had done to alert everyone when we left how important it was to have more women leading our academic units. GRRRRRR – “

Our walks became more frequent, you laughed at how I “squeezed” you in. It was never like that. I would draw out the time as long as I could have you. You called our “friendship a safe harbor as you struggled with this unwelcome cancer,” but I am the one who is deeply grateful because you prepared me for so much. You stated constantly that we need to remember the “confidence, faith and encouragement that are available from the abundant will of friendship.”

And boy do we need you in this challenging time. Although weeks have gone by – I think about how you would have addressed this election –

First with disbelief
Then disdain, maybe anger
But a few moments would pass
And your activist heart and brain would engage
And you would remind us of our journey
And what we have to do – a call to act
And a legion of us would join together
We all long for your words of wisdom and generosity carefully constructed
We have learned it is through considering others’ good intentions
And encouraging their/our worthy actions

You inspired us all
With your confidence in us
We learned so much from you
You understood the breadth of
Our complex lives
And how uneven contexts affect shifting
Positions

Don't judge but indeed, imagine more

Partner well

Build coalitions

Love those around you

and find those who are not obvious collaborators

Respect multiple modes of engagement

Be there

When these are in play

We all rush to our best selves

Indeed we live extraordinary lives

How grateful I am that yours has intersected mine

I wanted to end with a quote from someone with gravitas and mission

And began with this from Harriet Tubman -

"Be firm in your goals, make little noise, avoid enemy contact, take the long way round, build strength quietly, strike swiftly, keep secrets, and demand a new level of discipline and live fearlessly."

Oh Sandi, you were firm, made noise, worked with enemies, took all the ways round, built strength quietly and noisily, struck swiftly (but with some consideration), kept secrets and always demanded rigor and discipline. Indeed you lived boldly and bravely.

Tonight we dance fearlessly with you.

— Frances Bronet, Provost and Senior Vice President, Academic Affairs, Illinois Institute of Technology