

REMEMBERING APRIL FRITZ: A BORN TEACHER WITH THE RIGHT TOUCH OF GOOFINESS

KAREN PHILLIPS, BS, CTR; GAYLE CLUTTER, RT, CTR; and ANNETTE HURLBUT, RHIT, CTR

We have all known and admired April's professional skills and her contributions to registrars, but we thought you might enjoy some personal reminders of the friend we so admired.

The first time Karen met April, April and Bob had just moved to the St. Louis area, and April had somehow learned the time and location of the next Bi-State Tumor Registrars Association (BiSTRA) meeting. This was the '80s, when dot matrix printers were the latest and greatest. True to her technophile tendencies, April acquired one along with the software to generate a banner proclaiming "Welcome to BiSTRA!" She was an immediate local sensation. And for the next 30+ years, she continued to impress her friends and colleagues.

The very best treat was to be a guest in the home April shared with Bob and always a pair of rescued golden retrievers. They had a soft spot for their sweet "Golden Oldies." Besides immediately putting every guest at ease, April always cooked something special. "Which do you like best, Albanian, Ethiopian, or Cantonese?" she'd ask, and, of course, she would have a great recipe on hand! She made us sushi before it was trendy. We had a deal: She cooked, and we cleaned the kitchen. Perfect! She had a huge collection of cookbooks of all varieties, but her favorite recipes were for Cajun and Creole dishes. Many of her students fondly remember homemade lunches of jambalaya and gumbo and "all the fixins."

Gayle recalls a weekend visit to "Chez Fritz" when a monster snowstorm was predicted. As a Florida native, Gayle wasn't about to miss a snowstorm, and certainly wasn't giving up a weekend with Bob and April. An immediate supply run was required for the necessities: bread, milk, adult beverages, and movies. Later April made margaritas from fresh snow off the patio that they enjoyed in front of the fireplace to build adequate strength to shovel out the cars.



If you knew April's parents, you'd be reminded that "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree." Her father was an orthopedist she assisted with office management. That sparked her first interest in the medical field. Her dad was a big guy with a white handlebar mustache, a penchant for invention, and a laugh that could rattle the rafters. Her mom was small and quiet and sunny, with a barely contained wicked sense of humor.

Her sister Robin was her lifelong friend—the kind who, when chemo had taken all of April's hair, happily took her to a crazy hat party with a 19th-century Phrenology Chart of the Faculties drawn on her scalp with liquid eyeliner. Later, a more sophisticated version of her brain hat became a favorite teaching tool.

To April, everything was a potential teaching tool. When she was in the hospital for breast cancer surgery, she took copious notes for use in a presentation eventually titled, "On the Other Side of the Abstract." And she thanked her pathologist for an exceptionally detailed report (>40 lymph nodes!) by sending a huge tin of homemade cookies of "mixed histology." Who else would think to be grateful for a terrific pathologist?

April was incurably curious. When anything new appeared on the registry horizon, she dove in headfirst. Fearless, she made herself our expert for her very next presentation opportunity. She did admit to certain OCD qualities, sometimes happily blaming having been "toilet trained at gunpoint." Registrars were grateful.

She was a born teacher with just the right touch of goofiness to keep it all fun. She was the only presenter we ever knew who got a standing ovation for a handout, before having said a word. She was speaking at NCRA following a recent mandate for more specific head and neck staging. Tumors were to be classified as either supra- or infratentorial, but standard setters had sadly neglected to define the precise boundaries of the tentorium.

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April had spent hours researching anatomy at the National Library of Medicine to prepare her desperately needed handout.

April's walls were lined with books. One group, of course, was about etymology, the study of words and their derivation (she improved everyone's vocabulary). She also collected Swarovski crystals and

Waterford crystal snowflakes and anything with cardinals on it.

Did you know April was an expert marksman? A longtime Army buddy of Bob's shared this story. Of the many, many talents April had, she was a former Match shooter. Her dad had bought her one of those fancy-schmancy custom-stock Match rifles. With it, during college, April could outshoot everyone on the ROTC rifle team!

April also loved traveling. She traveled all over the world conducting trainings and consulting. She and Bob always spent some extra time wherever she went. They visited China, France, Germany, Japan, Scandinavia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and other wonderful places. Her favorite place was Australia. April and Bob spent five weeks seeing everything there was to see with stops along the way to train various organizations.

April never missed a chance to acknowledge the smallest contribution from others. Colleagues were frequently surprised to find themselves named as authors of one of her valued references. It was part and parcel of her boundless generosity. Despite being a world authority, April was never pompous and responded to compliments by doubling down on sharing.

Her last efforts were directed toward completing her Volume III CASEbook. She never gave up the fight against cancer. Characteristically, she left it to all of us to define her legacy. We are so very grateful for the privilege of calling ourselves her friend.

Memorial donations can be made to the NCRA Education Foundation. The family is working with NCRA to create a scholarship or educational program in April's name with details to be announced at the NCRA Annual Educational Conference in May. Checks with "April Fritz Memorial" in the memo line may be sent to the NCRA Educational Fund, 1330 Braddock Place, Suite 520, Alexandria, VA 22314, or you may electronically donate in April's memory at <https://tinyurl.com/April-Fritz-Memorial>. Be sure to type April's name in the "in memory of" block.

April's life and contributions will be celebrated at NCRA's upcoming Annual Education Conference in New Orleans. More details will be posted when confirmed.

