

# Not in Kansas Anymore: Jack & Martha Carter

Gene Jercinovic

The western half of the state of Kansas was as deeply devastated as any part of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. The eastern half of the state certainly had its share of suffering. Jack Lee Carter was born there, in Kansas City, on January 23, 1929. A few years later the drought and winds began.

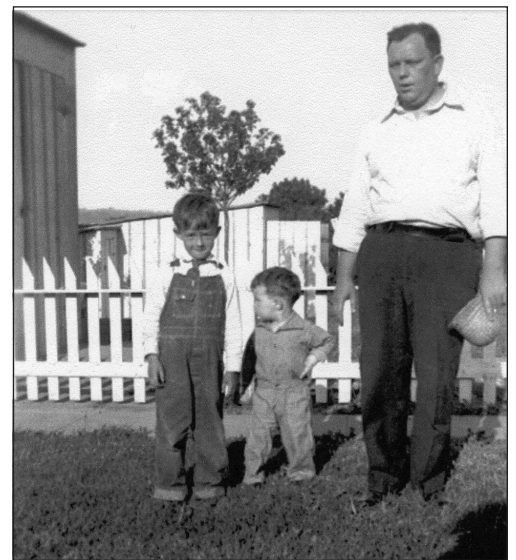
*I used to go stay with my dad's parents, the Carters. Grandpa Carter was a section boss on the Santa Fe Railroad. They had a section house provided for them to live in. She had a giant tub and a washboard. She'd take all these sheets and she'd stick them in there and flush them up and down. Then, while they were still damp, she would hang them over the windows and the doors and we'd stay inside. And the dust would blow and by evening or the next morning they'd be all muddy. She'd take them down and wash them all out again.*

Estel Lee and Mary Elizabeth (Zimmer) Carter had two sons, Jack and his brother Bob, four years younger. The family lived on twelve acres in Turner, Kansas, on the outskirts of Kansas City. Water came from a spring on the property. And dust wasn't the only problem.

*The sky would just get dark, just almost black, and it was blacker than it was from the dust. And it was just millions and millions of great big lubber grasshoppers. And they would just come down. They'd be up there way high and they'd just come down. They'd land on a cornfield. They would go into the cornfield and eat everything. Only the stalks would be standing.*

The thirties were not easy times for the Carters. Jack's father worked for the railroad when he had the chance, but the work was irregular. He supplemented the family income by operating a second chair at the Turner barbershop. Their acreage sustained cows and chickens. A garden struggled. Like many in the Midwest during this era, the Carters' days were framed by perseverance and determination. The house had cost \$1100. The toilet was outside. Monthly payments were \$10.51.

*Grandma Zimmer was giving money to Mom to help with the rent. We didn't have much. We never*



Kansas 1934

*had a bank account. We didn't have any need for those things because we didn't have enough money coming in ever. Whatever money we had went into a brown Santa Fe Railroad envelope in the folks' room, Mom and Dad's room. It was on the right-hand side of the dresser. Dad would go down and pay the bills on payday. Whatever was left would go into the envelope and that was it for the month.*

Yet hard times can provide strength and confidence to character. No one in that family felt deprived. Dreams grew.

Because he was born in January, Jack entered kindergarten four months short of his fifth birthday.

*I stumbled along. I was always at the bottom of the class.*

In addition to being very young, Jack had two other impediments to his early education. First, he was dyslexic. Second, he was left-handed.

For the most part, Jack enjoyed school. He was in every play. He loved music. He got along with the teachers, generally. Math was not a problem for him. Every Thursday night Jack and his mother went over the spelling words in preparation for the spelling test each Friday.

*I could make an A on that, or a high grade.*

His problem was reading.

*It was easy for me to read from right to left. My eyes would go down to this side [right] and I would read every word backwards.*

He tried to use his finger to guide his eyes, but his second-grade teacher, Miss Bye, was sure that no one could be a competent reader using a finger and wouldn't allow it. That year did not go well. His third-grade teacher, Miss Akin, told him to put his finger anywhere he had to in order to read. He made some progress, but at the year's end Miss Akin told Jack's parents that she wished he could repeat third grade. "For my folks that was no problem." He did repeat third grade.

*So finally I didn't need my finger. I just changed my eyes so that they went to the left side of the page. I went from the bottom of the class to doing great.*

Jack's fourth-grade year went well for him, but not so well for his teacher, as will be discussed later. Then came fifth grade. The place of left-handedness in public education has been somewhat equivocal. In the early decades of the twentieth century it was not infrequently considered to be an abnormality. Some teachers made an issue of it. So it was with Jack's fifth-grade teacher, Miss Bell.

*She got on this left-handed kick and no one was going to write with their left hand in her room. She said you can't be in the fifth grade and be left-*

*handed. The rooms were designed so that if you write with the right hand; the windows were over there to the left. She said when you write with your left hand, you've got a shadow on your paper. It didn't bother me that much, but she made me turn my desk around and sit backwards in the room so my desk faced the cloak closet. I was the only kid in the room looking at the back.*

Jack did not want his mother to find out about this since she would undoubtedly raise a considerable ruckus. However, Jack's playmate and next-door neighbor, Mary Ann Moore (yes, with red hair and freckles), told Mrs. Carter.

*The very next day my mom came right down to the school and got Wallace Smith, the principal, and they went right into that room. And my mom was like crazy in that room. And they turned my desk around and the next year Miss Bell wasn't even there.*

The next three years sailed quickly by. Jack adored his sixth-grade teacher, Alma Wynn, even though she made him diagram sentences.

*Because she was a music teacher I just loved her and I even worked on those damn sentences.*

In the seventh grade there was Mr. McMahon.

*Mr. Mac was very stern, but he was wonderful.*

And, as always in rural Kansas schools, the principal taught eighth grade. At the end of the eighth-grade year, students were required to pass a state test in order to proceed to high school. With his shaky beginnings in the educational process, Jack was quite uncertain of his progress.

*There was no other way and you had to get 70 on a number of these tests. I was scared. They put the fear of God in you so I thought, I'll never make it, I'm going to have to repeat the eighth grade. I did well, 85 or 90 on everything.*

Jack's mother was actively involved with his schooling, very much so at home, but also with occasional trips to the school. Jack's father was also involved with the schools in Turner. Although he never actually ran for a position, he often served as an interim school board member when an elected member left the board. He felt that it was his duty to contribute as much as he could to the school system. He was not afraid of controversy. At that time only men and unmarried women were allowed to teach. Jack's fourth-grade teacher, Miss Daisy Carlin, became pregnant. The pregnancy of an unmarried woman was an extreme scandal. Without question, Miss Carlin's teaching career would have been at an end, but Jack's father "went to bat for her." He felt that she was an important asset to the school. She married and had the baby. As a result of his effort and commitment, she was actually

permitted to return and resume her career. “It overthrew the old history of Kansas rural education.” Of course, not all of the elder Carter’s viewpoints were well received. He fought vehemently against both school lunch programs and school busing, two battles he would ultimately lose. Yet his dedication to what he believed about the educational process left a lasting impression on Jack.

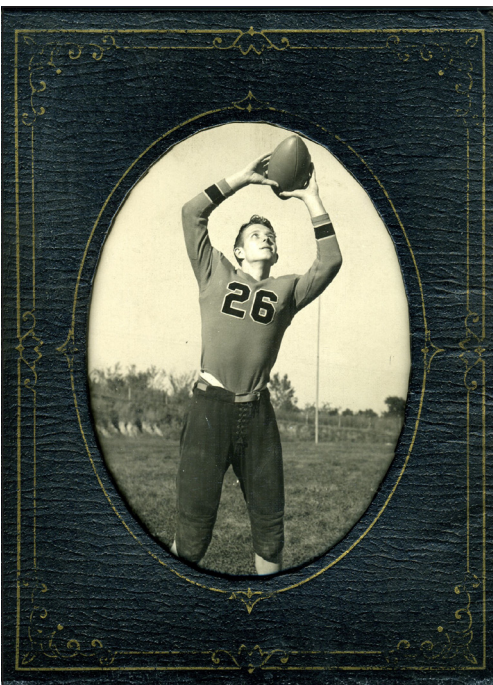
In the fall of 1943, high school happened. Jack entered without any particular concern about his potential success. He had overcome earlier obstacles. He dutifully attended his classes and generally paid attention. He liked to be involved in class discussions and could ask provocative questions, but to say that he was consistent in completing assignments would be going too far. His classroom behavior was not always exemplary and he was definitely not a stranger in the principal’s office. Miss Marshall, the math teacher, actually nicknamed Jack and brother Bob “Double Trouble.”

Despite his moniker, Jack did well in math, but he didn’t really have special interest in any one curricular area. However, he had “one hell of a science teacher.” The teacher lived down the street from the Carters. Jack’s parents knew him and liked him. He told the gently

rebellious Jack that he had a book that might be of interest. It was Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*. The book had a powerful and persistent effect on Jack. As was quite typical in the forties and fifties, particularly in rural settings, church membership was very much a part of the cultural mores. In Turner there were only Catholic and Baptist churches. Jack went to Sunday school at the Baptist church. The arrival of Darwin in Jack’s awareness did not bode well in that environment. Barriers were formed in his mind to numerous fundamental Christian beliefs, barriers that permeated Jack’s attitudes for the rest of his life. He could not stop himself from bringing up Darwin in Sunday school. He was never formally expelled from the class, but he was a constant problem.

For Jack, one of the most important aspects of Turner High was the athletics program. For a large fraction of students in rural Kansas, high school was the end of formal education. As a result, school activities often took on larger-than-life proportions. So it was with sports.

Jack’s greatest high school triumph was being a member of the Golden Bears football team. He was also on the basketball team and he ran track in spring and played summer league baseball—a sport for each season. He loved the thrill of competition and the mysterious dimension of a team beyond the simple sum of its members and, like any athlete, the interplay of defeat and victory. Excellence was essential. Unlike some other areas, in the physical domain the utmost effort and concentration were imperatives.



**Golden Bear**



*I was a jock.*

Though far from attaining valedictory status, Jack acquired his diploma in the spring of 1946. His parents, neither of whom had graduated from high school, really wanted him to go to college. His teachers, seeing beyond his adolescence, also encouraged him to do so. Jack was not excited. Nevertheless, he convinced himself to attend Baker University in Baldwin City, Kansas, a college affiliated with the Methodist Church.

*When I went to college, I didn't know what I was going to do. I thought I was going to play ball. That was a biggie.*

He did well in his math classes. He made better grades in chemistry than in biology, which he thought was “kind of a bore.” Through some sort of divine miracle, he even took some Bible courses. He sang in the school choir. Going on tour with the choir around rural Kansas, staying with local families en route, was among his warmest experiences at Baker. He joined the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity and became a member of the football and basketball teams.

*I was a freshman and a sophomore and sitting on the bench a lot for varsity basketball... playing fourth downs in football.*

In his sophomore year he took organic chemistry. The professor was a sports enthusiast and went to the games. He informed Jack that he was a lot better in organic chemistry than he was in football and that if he were spending the time in chemistry that he was spending in football he wouldn't be making Cs.

*That was a shocker!*

Jack began to question his future as an athlete.

At Baker, those involved with biology and chemistry were considered to be pre-med students. Jack had no desire to go into medicine. He thought coaching might be a possibility. Baker just didn't seem like the right place for him, so at the end of the spring semester of 1948, he decided to drop out and go to work. That summer he hired on as a brakeman on the Santa Fe Railroad run between Kansas City and Emporia in Kansas. He intended to return to college at some point when he had refined his direction and had saved some money. The job of brakeman was less than challenging, but the pay was steady. He continued working for the railroad all summer and into the fall. In his off hours Jack played AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) basketball on a team near Turner. One of his teammates was a student at the College of Emporia. His father was “higher up in the Santa Fe Railroad.” He asked Jack why he was not in school and suggested that he should consider going to the College of Emporia. He offered to meet Jack in Emporia to help make arrangements. There he introduced Jack to the college football coach. The coach said he could get Jack a job and a place to stay. In January of 1949 Jack became a student at C of E.

His job was at a funeral home. So was his place to stay. There he shared quarters with



Overland Park 1950

another C of E student named John. By a remarkable quirk of fate, John had been on the football team at Baker with Jack. The two shared the work at the funeral home. Jack started as a driver, rushing flowers from the church to the gravesite. The funeral home also provided ambulance service. John didn't like going on death calls or being on call on weekends, so Jack did both and John took care of the many chores around the funeral home. Since weekend calls were few, Jack could use the on-call time to devote to his studies.

Jack's direction was now clear. He began to apply some of his athletic intensity to his academics. That year he transferred to Emporia State University and by the end of the spring semester of 1950 he had, with the exception of a single course, completed the requirements for a BS, majoring in biological science and minoring in physical science and physical education. The state of Kansas, desperate for teachers, allowed willing individuals to teach, even short of a degree, with the option of completing the degree in ensuing summers. That fall Jack accepted a job teaching sixth- and seventh-grade math, science, and PE in Overland Park, not far from home. He also coached football and track there. Frequently he visited Turner. Now a coach himself, he often took the time to visit the high school to observe the progress of the Golden Bears.

## Martha

Martha Shelton was born on August 20, 1933, in Overland Park, Kansas. She was the first child of Richard and Gladys (McGrew) Shelton. Brother Richard, sister Barbara, and brother William followed in rapid succession. The family lived in Stony Point, a loosely knit rural area outside of Kansas City, on acreage that had once been a dairy farm. Martha's younger sister was allergic to cow's milk. As a result, the Sheltons kept a small herd of goats housed in a rock chicken house. One of Martha's first chores was to help care for the animals.

*I didn't like them because I was supposed to cut grass and throw it in there. I later discovered they'll eat anything.*

By the time Martha was old enough to remember, the wind and dust of the "dirty thirties" were gone. Life was not unpleasant for a young girl living in the country. There was a lot of room "to play and fool around and roam." Like other houses in the area, the Shelton house did not have city water and the toilet was outside. Water was piped into the house from a spring on the property.

*So every summer we'd get this flood of boils. All our family would get these boils.*

The Sheltons were not the only family to suffer from this malady. The Carters in Turner, not far away, also dealt with this seasonal problem. Years later, city water reached the area and the boils disappeared. Livestock had contaminated the springs that so many families depended on.

In the fall of 1939, Martha began school. Stony Point had its own school for grades one through eight. It was a single building with a room for each grade. There were no indoor restrooms. Martha's family lived next door to the school. She could go home for lunch. From her parents she understood the importance of school. She would be a good student.

*The minute I'd hit the back door Mother would say, "How'd you do today?"*

Martha enjoyed learning. She liked her teachers and was happy to follow school and class rules. She was a good reader. Her elementary years were warm and sailed quickly by. In the eighth grade her teacher, as always, was the principal. One day she was up at his desk and looked over his shoulder. Her gaze fell on the grade book.

*I saw that I was going to get a D in reading and I thought, "Oh my gosh, that's going to kill my mother."*

To Martha's surprise and great relief, her mother did not depart the planet, nor did she have any particularly powerful reaction to the situation. Gladys trusted her daughter.

In the spring of 1947 Martha completed eighth grade and was ready to enter high school. There was no high school in Stony Point. Students from Stony Point went to the high school in Turner. At that time, there was no school bus service.

*My mother wrung her hands for eight years about how I was going to get to high school in Turner. She had it all worked out. There was a man who went to work every day and he took kids to high school, let them off at the bottom of the hill and you'd walk up the hill and go to high school. So she had it all worked out.*

This arrangement only lasted about a week. Then, despite the best efforts of Jack's father, school busing began in the county.

For Martha, high school was the place to be. She was rich with friends. Her time was full. She made sure that she would never be surprised by another D. With the exception of math, she enjoyed her classes. Not many students were motivated by the math teacher. Martha was certainly comfortable in English and history. She diligently did her biology labs. She took chemistry. In home economics she learned sewing and other domestic "practical arts." She liked secretarial training, learned shorthand, and passed the typing test. She sang in the choir.

In the fall of 1950, Martha began her senior year. By then she was thoroughly immersed in all aspects of the milieu of Turner High. That fall she went so far as to throw her hat into the ring to vie for one of the most coveted positions in any high school, Homecoming Queen. She won. She sat quietly beneath that crown, warm and fulfilled, wondering for the moment how life could get any better.



Homecoming 1950

Like many others at Turner High School, she had pride in the Golden Bears football team and would even watch them practice. One afternoon later that fall she and her girlfriend Marlene were at the football field. Marlene was a fellow Stony Pointer who was dating a guy named Bob Carter. Martha stared down at the sideline and noticed an interesting young man beside the field.

*Marlene, who's that guy?*

Marlene said that it was Bob's brother, Jack.

*Why don't you fix something up there?*

So arrangements were made. A tradition at Turner High was a December presentation of Handel's *Messiah* before school was out for the holidays. Since Martha was a member of the choir, she would be participating. Bob was going to pick up Marlene. Jack was to pick up Martha for their first date and drive her to the performance. That day a Kansas blizzard blew in. Bob called from his job at Safeway to cancel his trip. Jack thought he should cancel his trip, but his mother and brother intervened.

*Jack just came shoveling up to the door.*

And Jack met Martha for the first time and delivered her to the school. Over the next several weeks they got to know each other. They realized they had much in common and just enough difference. Jack continued teaching in Overland Park. Martha still had to finish her senior year. She was having a grand time. One day her history teacher discovered that Martha was involved with Jack. The teacher advised Martha that dating Jack probably wasn't a good idea. She told Martha that when Jack left Turner High, the staff thought they were going to have to erect a statue of him in front of the principal's office since he had spent so much time there. Despite the warning, Martha thought that dating Jack was a very good idea.

## **Jack & Martha**

On the 23rd of January, 1951, Jack received notice of his induction into the U.S. Army. After all that had happened with Martha in the few weeks preceding, this was quite a blow.

*It was really terrible. I cried when I went to get on that bus. I loved those kids and teaching. But I did it. I didn't know how to be a conscientious objector in those days. And I felt like I was leaving for prison for two years.*

He was first stationed at Fort Sill in Oklahoma for basic training. Then he was off to Fort Lee in Virginia. Life in the military turned out not to be as bad as he had expected. Since he was college educated, he would not be instant cannon fodder in Korea, as would be the



case for an eighteen-year-old. The army tried to channel well-educated soldiers into OCS, Officer Candidate School. To soldiers, however, OCS meant “over choppy seas.” Everyone knew that the army was desperate for lieutenants to lead combat units in Korea. At Fort Lee, Jack’s duty assignment was teaching classes in ABC—Atomic, Biological, and Chemical warfare. He was also assigned to a leadership course to prepare for being a second lieutenant. In the room across the hall from his classroom at the ABC facility there was a captain—a West Pointer and a fellow “Sig Ep”—teaching the same material. They became fast friends. On one weekend, they drove to Richmond to attend a party. There, Jack met a man who indicated that he had Jack’s papers on his desk and asked Jack why he was going to OCS. He said that Jack was S & P (Scientific and Professional) and couldn’t be sent overseas and that he could request to be assigned to his MOS (Military Occupational Specialty). All Jack had to do was sign papers to that effect, which he did the following Monday. He was assigned to Fort Lee for the duration of his service.

During the first several months of 1951, Jack kept in regular communication with Martha by writing letters. In 2011, Martha watched a television show about people losing their treasured memories in floods or fires. She decided to go through the attic and locate the things that needed keeping.

*So there were the letters. (Not mine.) So I sorted them out and I still have that stuff in three boxes. So here’s the “I miss you” stack and this stack said “I love you” and this stack said “Let’s get married.”*

Jack’s first furlough came in June of 1951. He had more reason than ever to head home to the Midwest. He and Martha decided that month that they were engaged. Jack discussed the matter with his parents. Jack’s father just thought he was crazy. After all, Jack had brought other girls home, girls with college educations. His father just didn’t think it made sense.

*My folks were generally right, but sometimes they were wrong. They weren’t always right. But I always said, “Okay, Mom, okay, Dad,” and then I’d do what I wanted to.*

For Jack, affection overwhelmed practicality.

PFC Carter returned to Virginia with a new sense of purpose. Shortly thereafter he decided that he needed to get Martha a ring.

*I didn’t buy many things on time, but you could buy a wedding ring and an engagement ring in a package. And I went up to Richmond, which wasn’t far—about 25 miles from Fort Lee. I just got on a bus. And I bought the package. And I paid like \$20. I didn’t have much money. You paid \$20 down and \$20 a month.*

Despite the fact that Martha’s parents thought that she was “pretty darn young,” Martha and her mother, Gladys, took a trip to Virginia in September. Jack’s next furlough was in

early November. They decided it would be the perfect time for Jack to make another trip back to Kansas, this time to be married. Wearing the new ring on her hand, Martha left Virginia with a quiet certainty of direction and patient excitement.

Once Martha and her mother were back in Stony Point, wedding plans were formed. Martha, together with her mother, made her wedding dress. The big day was the 10th of November. At the Stony Point Christian Church, with Jack's brother Bob as Best Man and Martha's sister Barbara as Maid of Honor, Martha became Mrs. Carter.



Wedding 1951

*We were married and had a little honeymoon and then everything was packed up and Jack and I were on our way back to Fort Lee by train. As we got closer he said, "What do you think we will have as our first meal?"*

Her heart sank. Her mother had always done the cooking at home, and practical arts in home economics hadn't taught cooking. But now she knew she would find a way.

Before Jack left for the wedding, he had looked into off-post housing. He had found what he considered to be quite a nice place. The rent was almost \$80 per month. Marriage would raise his monthly army salary from \$75 to \$96, but not much would be left after the rent. Nonetheless, the newlyweds moved in. Martha went out looking and quickly found another apartment for \$55 in a less upscale neighborhood.

*We had to go down the hall to get to the kitchen. What's wrong with that?*

She landed a job as a secretary at Firestone for \$33 a week. Their life together had begun its history.

The rest of Jack's military career was graciously uneventful. Early in 1952, Martha realized that she was pregnant. On November 1, Lizbeth Diane Carter was born at Fort Lee. By this time Jack had decided that after he got out of the army he would go back to college at Emporia State. His tour of duty was rapidly coming to an end. The army was willing to grant his release to enable him to start the spring semester, but he had one final duty. He had to march in the inaugural parade for the newly elected president, Dwight Eisenhower. One military chore that Jack had always enjoyed was close-order drill. He was assigned to a "Jody company." These were precision drill squads which, prior to the Truman presidency, had been composed of only African-American soldiers. Jack was one of a small group to be integrated into the units. Jack Carter marched in that parade—white hat, white gloves, glistening boots, the perfect soldier.

Jack's final furlough had been at Christmastime in 1952. During his holiday visit to Kansas, he had made arrangements for an apartment in Emporia. With Jack's army days safely

ensconced in the past, the three Carters took up residence in Emporia and Jack began his studies in the biology department. Quite possibly the two best things about his service in the army were its completion and the GI bill. With the guarantee of 36 months of financial assistance, coupled with a graduate assistantship, the door to an advanced degree was open. That spring, in addition to several graduate courses, he completed the one course remaining from his undergraduate days and officially received his BS degree. Martha also discovered that their daughter would not be an only child.

At ESU, the graduate program in biology was designed to qualify students to teach biology in high school or junior college or to prepare them for transition to a PhD program at another university. It fit Jack's needs perfectly. He knew that he wanted to teach, but now he had a new seriousness about biological science.

*I ran into a botanist there, Merle Brooks.*

Jack had endured a botany course at Baker. The instructor had just read from the book. Dr. Brooks made the study of plants captivating. He introduced Jack to bacteriology. Jack also took courses in zoology, mammalogy, and limnology. Physical chemistry was a real challenge. His thesis advisor, Ted Andrews, got him involved with freshwater ecology and invertebrate zoology. As the fall semester of 1953 drew to a close, Jack was comfortably immersed in advanced biology. In the meantime, the family had grown to four with the birth of John David on November 14.

During the following spring and summer, Jack worked extensively on his field research and his thesis. He was studying the impact of the use of the pesticide and piscicide rotenone on lakes and ponds. He was also considering his options after he completed his master's. The faculty members he had come to know felt strongly that he should continue his education and pursue his doctorate. Dr. Andrews thought he ought to study mammalogy at the University of Michigan. Jack himself felt the greatest attraction to botany. He applied to Iowa State University, the University of Iowa, the University of Michigan, and the University of Minnesota. Ultimately he decided on the University of Iowa in order to study botany with the noted systematist and evolutionary botanist Robert Thorne. At the end of the summer Jack received his MS in biology. And Martha was carrying another child.



**Master's Research 1954**

Jack did not attend graduation in Emporia. The Carters headed to Iowa City. Martha set up housekeeping in student housing.

*They were barracks. Some people lived in Quonsets. We wouldn't have liked that. These were barracks—duplex barracks.*

Jack started taking classes. He still had some GI money available and received a graduate assistantship from the university. It was enough for him to make it through the first academic year, but the prospect of several more years of graduate school was daunting, especially with a third child on the way. Laura Lee was born on April 9, 1955, at the University of Iowa hospital. It had become apparent that a major change in income was imperative.

That fall Jack accepted a job at Northwestern College in Orange City, in the northwestern corner of Iowa. The family relocated. Jack remained in the PhD program at the University of Iowa. Northwestern was a private Christian liberal arts junior college under the auspices of the Reformed Church in America (distinct from the Christian Reformed Church in America). He taught general botany, zoology, human anatomy and physiology, field botany. Northwestern was far from nonsectarian.

*When I went there the first year, they had chapel in Orange City and every day they had chapel for 20 minutes, but started dropping that, while I was there, to three days a week. I didn't like leading prayer. I didn't feel good about that.*

In addition, he was required to give “chapel talks.” Jack is rarely averse to talking, and was able to find things to talk about. His religious views were quite at odds with the environment, but he was careful not to make an issue of it. The Carters went to church every Sunday.

*I did it out of respect for the people. I fit in with the faculty, but they knew I wasn't very religious.*

He very much enjoyed his students and demanded that they study. The school administration wanted quality science instruction for the students. Topics like evolution and human reproduction were part of good science and were not restricted.

He kept the job for three years. He also coached basketball and track. On weekends he officiated basketball for extra income. Luckily, his summers were unencumbered, allowing him to do fieldwork for his dissertation on the flora of northwestern Iowa. He traveled widely in ten counties in that portion of Iowa. The Carter family transportation was a 1942 Dodge. It doubled as Jack's mobile field station.

*I could sleep in the back of it. Collect plants all day. Get a six-pack of beer. Go to a state park. Drink beer and press those plants. Then get up in the morning and put the plants where I'd been sleeping.*

One of his counties was Dickinson, which was home to Iowa's Great Lakes region. There were eight natural lakes in the area. The Lakeside Laboratory of the University of Iowa was located there. It was a center for research but also a place for summer courses. Jack researched the lakeshores and taught field botany there a couple of summers. Martha and the children even came up one summer and the whole family stayed in student housing. Dr. Thorne was also busy there in the summers. He and Jack got to know each other quite well. Thorne became Jack's most important mentor.

In the summer of 1958 the family left Orange City and returned to Iowa City. Jack had basically completed the fieldwork for his dissertation and he needed to begin the lengthy process of putting it into final form. To make ends meet, Jack had an assistantship and even taught extra courses for extra money. There were classes that he liked to teach and that no one else wanted to teach. Martha had been doing her part to help out.

*I was supplementing by working at the university hospital at night, 11 to 7. Our neighbor was the full-time ward clerk at the hospital. I worked a few days a week at the clerk's job.*

That fall, Jack and the other graduate students had to take the Graduate Record Examination in biology. Those around him were studying like crazy. Jack saw no reason for alarm. He had just been teaching general biology, as well as botany and zoology. He had familiarity with invertebrate zoology from his master's thesis. When the dust settled after the exam, it came to light that Jack had received the highest score in the department. As a result, he received a \$2400 award from the National Science Foundation, an absolute godsend for the nearly empty Carter coffers.

Also that fall, Jack received a call from his thesis adviser, Ted Andrews, who had always maintained interest in Jack's progress. He wanted to know if Jack might be able to break away from his studies to attend a meeting of biologists who were working to improve the quality of curriculum materials in the science. After the launch of Sputnik in 1957 by the Soviet Union, the National Science Foundation established funding to revitalize instruction in science and mathematics. The School Mathematics Study Group (SMSG), the Physical Science Study Committee (PSSC), and the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study group (BSCS) were formed. Jack attended the BSCS meeting in Washington, D.C. There he saw some familiar faces from Emporia State and met the leaders of the group. He was very excited about what he saw. Ted Andrews indicated that he would put Jack's name "in the hopper" to run workshops in Iowa.

With his dissertation moving along and finances a continuing problem, in January of 1959 Jack accepted a position at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, about 120 miles from Iowa City. The five Carters set up shop in a third Iowa community. Simpson was another private Christian college, this time associated with the Methodist Church. Jack was hired as an associate professor of biology and settled comfortably into teaching there. Meanwhile, the University of Iowa had received an NSF grant to provide courses for high school teachers on weekends. Professors there did not want to deal with teachers (or weekends) and Jack was offered the job. He spent Monday through Friday at Simpson and traveled to Iowa City for Saturday morning classes.

*I could stay with Thorne, my adviser, and make \$50, and then I'd have Saturday afternoon and Sunday to work on my research, then drive back on Sunday and teach at Simpson on Monday.*

During that first semester Jack went back to Washington to attend another meeting of



the BSCS group. There, BSCS advocates helped him learn the ins and outs of writing grant proposals. Back at Simpson, Jack wrote and submitted a proposal to present BSCS materials to high school teachers in Iowa and landed a grant to hold workshops during the following two summers. Subsequently, he received a grant to use BSCS curricula with high school students and submitted another proposal to the NSF, which secured several hundred thousand dollars for the purchase of new equipment for the science department. Jack had learned his lessons well.

In the spring of 1960, Jack received his PhD from the University of Iowa. His work at Simpson, as well as that at Iowa, and his involvement with BSCS had filled almost more hours than days could hold. The doctorate was a fitting and satisfying final parenthesis to his own educational experience. At this point he had become quite engaged with examining the role that teaching must play in the learning processes of students. By 1961, the three youngest Carters were in school and Martha had decided to begin her own pursuit of a degree, enrolling there at Simpson in her first college course. She did well. Her professor remembered:

*She slept with the professor. You sleep with the professor and you do well.*

At other NSF meetings during his time at Simpson, Jack saw his professors from Emporia State. His successes had not gone unnoticed. The head of the chemistry department at ESU was retiring. He also headed the office in charge of research and institute grants. The university needed a qualified person who could raise money. Jack accepted the job in 1962. He was hired as an associate professor of biology. His official position was Coordinator of Institutes, but he also served as Director of Research and Institutional Grants, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, and Assistant to the President. His responsibilities were mostly administrative. He did manage to teach one course per semester. He acted as liaison for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the NSF. He garnered grants to operate weekend teacher institutes all over eastern Kansas for all the NSF initiatives—BSCS, PSSC, SMSG. He was raising millions for ESU.

For Martha, the years back in Emporia were wonderful. The kids were growing up rapidly. She continued taking courses at the university. The teacher's college there even held night classes.

*We were there four years. I was taking courses all along. I really liked it.*

In those days in the Midwest there was no such thing as a major in education. Prospective teachers had to get a degree in a subject area. Martha was majoring in English.

In 1965 Jack received a phone call from the director of BSCS, Bill Mayer. Mayer said that he had to be in Chicago and wondered if Jack could fly in from Kansas and have dinner with him. He had some things he wanted to discuss. Jack had heard him speak at meetings and his impression of Mayer had not been the best, but he agreed to go. The BSCS group needed an associate director and Ted Andrews and others had suggested to Mayer that Jack might be the best choice. In Chicago, Jack found Mayer to be quite a reasonable fellow.

Jack believed in what BSCS was trying to accomplish and felt that he could help. He would accept the position. Also that year, Jack was selected to be part of an international team, sponsored by the NSF and the University Grants Commission of India, that was to present a series of science institutes at a number of universities around that country. In his twelve weeks abroad, Jack was invigorated in ways he could never have suspected. The time was invaluable.

In 1966 Jack moved into an office in the headquarters of BSCS, a beautiful, modern building on the campus of the University of Colorado in Boulder. He was hired as an associate professor of biology at CU. However, as was the case at ESU, he was a professor in name only, managing to teach only one course per semester. BSCS dominated his time. As associate director, he found himself dealing with management decisions and even personnel issues. He was no longer meeting with teachers or high school students. Even his botany class at CU was uncomfortable. It was held in the darkened Flatirons Theatre, which had 250 seats. Jack could imagine students sitting in the dimness “having a cigarette and reading the school paper.” He began to feel that he was at an immeasurable distance from his real place in education.

*Always I wanted to be in the classroom working with students and teachers,  
and I had to make a decision.*

While Jack was plying his administrative skills and sometimes wondering about his direction, Martha was continuing her education and was the perfect hostess for evening gatherings of his colleagues. But she knew Jack was not completely satisfied with his position there and told him that she couldn't really envision herself as the wife of a university president. It was time for a change.

Jack wanted to move to a small liberal arts college and to work directly with students. Colorado College offered him a position. He visited the school and discovered separate zoology and botany departments. The two chairmen did not get along. Jack told the school that he would consider working there only if the two departments were coalesced into a single biology department. He was also looking at Evergreen State College, which was just being founded in the state of Washington. To his surprise, Colorado College eventually acceded to his request, and in the fall of 1968 Jack joined the faculty. The three Carter teenagers were relieved. They had become dedicated skiers.

Colorado College is located in Colorado Springs, which would be home for Jack and Martha for the next couple of decades. Martha completed her degree there in the spring of 1970. Teachers were in great demand, and that fall she went to work at an elementary school in Widefield, a suburb just south of Colorado Springs, where she would spend her entire career. In her first year she was hired to teach sixth grade. She found herself thrust into an experimental “open classroom” situation in which three classes were coalesced into one that was to be taught by a teacher “team” composed of Martha and two others. At the end of the semester both of her teammates resigned. Martha and two brand-new teachers

had to muddle through their mutual first year. Luckily, that first year would be her last with the “open” and “team” concepts.

During Jack’s first two years, Colorado College operated on a semester schedule typical of most colleges and universities, but considerable debate was occurring regarding the adoption of a “curricular block” structure. During his third year the block plan was adopted. Class sizes were limited to 24 students. The days of three one-hour lectures per week for a semester were gone. Instead, students met together with the professor all day, every day, for three and a half weeks. Both students and faculty had significant adjustments to make. Jack readily made the change. The new structure was beautiful for field courses. Jack could load up books, equipment, and students and go to Big Bend in Texas, or Bodega Bay in California, or the Chiricahua Mountains in southeastern Arizona. He loved it.

Reunited with actual teaching and out from under the unceasing pressures of administration, Jack allowed himself to branch out a bit. From 1970 to 1974, he served as editor of the journal *The American Biology Teacher*. Though tired of executive decision making, he had never lost faith in the missions of BSCS and NSF and had continued his involvement with the groups. In 1974 he took a sabbatical leave from Colorado College to be part of an NSF project in curriculum development in Thailand. By then the Carter children were out of high school. Martha took a year’s leave of absence from her job to accompany Jack on the trip. They left for Thailand in August of 1974. With war and unrest in nearby Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia, Thailand wasn’t the safest place to be, and with Thai educators reluctant to change, Jack and Martha decided to leave in March of 1975. Even so, the trip was a great adventure and there remained for them an ease and delight in foreign travel together.

In the fall of 1975, Jack became chairman of the biology department at Colorado College. He held the position for four years. In 1977 he spent a year as president of the National Association of Biology Teachers. From 1979 to 1981, he served as consultant and writer for BSCS. In 1981 he began another sabbatical year. The All India Science Teachers Association selected Jack, as one of nine consultants from all over the world, to give a series of lectures at Indian universities. Martha took another leave of absence. Their first stop was England. Then they visited Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Once in India, Jack was able to arrange his schedule any way he chose. Rather than fly from stop to stop, he and Martha opted for a train pass that allowed them to experience the country. It was the trip of a lifetime. On the way home, they met daughter Laura in Hong Kong. She held a master’s degree in library science and was in graduate school in Asian studies. She was on her way to China, where she had been hired to assist Chinese librarians in making use of documents newly acquired from an exchange program with the U.S. She was fluent in Chinese. Jack and Martha spent several weeks traveling around China with



Martha in India

her and a sequence of “assigned aides.” Jack knew a few professors in China from BSCS and one who had graduated from Colorado College. There were some warm reunions and tales shared of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Three Carters tasted China.

Back in Colorado in 1982, Jack began receiving calls from BSCS. Bill Mayer, who had been the director for twenty years, wanted to leave. He contacted Jack and said that he was ready for a change and wanted Jack to become director.

*I didn't want to be director. I'd left there. I liked being at CC. Several board members, who were dear friends, kept calling and saying, "We need you to come," and finally three of them came to Colorado Springs. They really put the pressure on. While they were there they even contacted the president of CC.*

Jack categorically refused to return to Boulder. The board countered by agreeing to sell the BSCS building in Boulder if Jack would take the money (which turned out to be 2.5 million dollars) and establish BSCS in Colorado Springs. It was an offer he couldn't refuse. Jack agreed to work half-time for BSCS and half-time at Colorado College. It was a tough go, but he served for three years.

During the second half of the eighties, CC funded a series of faculty research grants for Jack's studies of speciation in the genus *Salix*. Beginning in 1986, he began work on a book about the woody plants of Colorado.

*I just put it together as I taught. I would write the keys in a three-ring notebook and bring them out with the kids and we'd test them, make changes. It was just a way of teaching.*

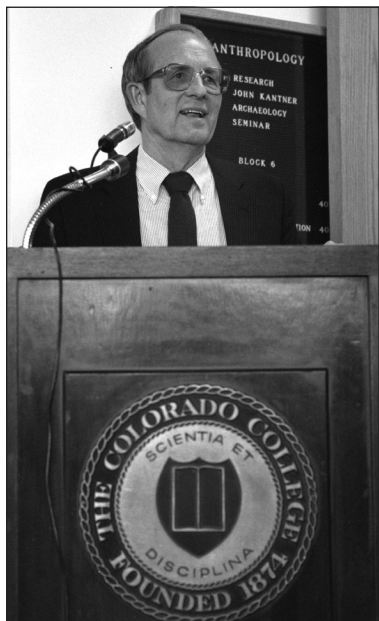
One of his students in his beginning botany class accidentally became a major contributor to the project. She told Jack that she was interested in drawing and wondered if she could submit botanical drawings as her required five-page research paper. She showed him some examples and he readily agreed. So began a long-term connection between the two. Marjorie Leggitt produced illustrations for every species in the book, entitled *Trees and Shrubs of Colorado*, which appeared in 1988.

As the decade drew to a close, Jack began to contemplate retirement. On his numerous excursions with his students to southern Arizona, he had become familiar with the Gila Wilderness in New Mexico and the community of Silver City. He and Martha had determined that they did not want to remain in Colorado Springs and decided that Silver City would be a perfect spot for retirement. They purchased some property there.

Both retired in 1990. Martha's school district had developed an early-out program that allowed her to receive full retirement credit of 20 years despite her two leaves of absence. At CC, Jack also took advantage of an early-out program and shifted to senior status for five years at half pay (with full benefits), teaching one or two blocks per year. Jack and Martha moved into their new home in New Mexico. That year Jack received two significant honors. He was elected a Distinguished Alumnus by Emporia State University. Also, in what he

considered to be his most touching recognition, the herbarium he had worked so hard to establish at CC was officially dedicated as the Jack L. Carter Herbarium.

Jack's energy and intensity have always been phenomenal. He has been involved with the American Association for the Advancement of Science since he received a grant from the organization in 1963. He became a Fellow. He served on Section G Committee (Biological Sciences) from 1976 to 1983. He was chairman of Section Q (Education) from 1975 to 1990. His involvement on various boards and advisory groups was extensive over several decades. He was an external evaluator of biology departments at a number of colleges and



Herbarium Dedication 1990

universities. In his career Jack has produced more than 70 publications. After retiring, he reduced his nationwide presence but by no means turned to idleness. From 1991 to 1993, he and Martha used a research grant from CC to study woody plants in New Mexico. Work continued for several years, culminating in the publication of *Trees and Shrubs of New Mexico* in 1997. The U.S. Forest Service provided funds for a number of years during the nineties and into the new millennium for field studies and herbarium materials for a database of the vascular plant flora of the Gila National Forest. His contributions to the Native Plant Society of New Mexico have been immeasurable. He has served as statewide vice president, president, and treasurer of the organization. In 2007, the Society established the Jack and Martha Carter Conservation Fund in their honor.

Jack estimates that over the years he has collected more than 50,000 specimens and that Martha has typed some 40,000 labels. Sheets are distributed among a number of herbaria, from Chicago and St. Louis across the Midwest to Colorado, New Mexico, and

Arizona. In his Silver City years, Jack has served as mentor to a series of people interested in plants and has carried them through field and microscope into the science of botany. Jack and Martha, through their own efforts and with the help of others, produced a revised and expanded edition of *Trees and Shrubs of Colorado* in 2006. That, of course, precipitated a few more years of work to achieve a new *Trees and Shrubs of New Mexico* in 2012. There was still time for a bit of travel—a Siberian journey to Lake Baikal with Russian naturalists, the tracing of some of Darwin's footsteps on the coast of Argentina, birds and plants in Costa Rica, the Panama Canal.

Martha likes to share a quaint aspect of Jack's character:

*I learned that whenever Jack Carter says to me, "Do you think that you could learn to use a computer? Do you think you could learn to do to design programs? Do you think you could . . ."—watch out. You're gonna do it. The first time he ever did this was "Do you think you could learn to cook?"*

Little did she know that what happened on that train going back to Virginia in 1951 would permeate her next six decades. But Jack also asked that question of himself as often as he



did Martha. For both, the answer was always the same. Martha learned how to type labels, learned how to use software to format books, learned how to create the database for the Gila National Forest, learned how to cook. Jack has always fully understood Martha's critical role.

*Well, Martha made me what I am today. If there was anything good or bad, Martha was always willing to jump in.*

Jack, too, in his own inimitable way, was always ready to just “jump in” and get a job done.

In their own lives, learning was a comfortable pleasure. The unraveling of mysteries and resolution of enigmas were exhilarating. Yet, for both, it was the touching of young minds that lingered in importance. The simplicity of their own beginnings brought them to the belief that the greatest responsibility of erudition is education. Both spent two decades seeking ways to reach their students. More than most, Jack and Martha have mastered that art. Jack retains a special pride in the fact that twenty-one of his students have acquired PhD's in botany.

To this day, Jack and Martha remain involved in teaching. Among other things, they assist the Gila Conservation Education Center in efforts to get school-age children in southwestern New Mexico involved in resource and environmental conservation. In 2012, they were meeting with a group of fifth graders. Martha was presenting some material to them and Jack noticed two boys in the back just talking and not paying attention.

*So while she was doing her thing I got behind these two little boys and I just listened. And they were into each other. They were just talking but they were quiet, and they had a handout we had given them, leaf illustrations right out of my book. And they were saying, “I don't think that's a Goodding's willow. I think it's more like this.” They weren't paying any attention because they were so into learning, and they had the best discussion going there. They had it going and I didn't want to interrupt.*

Some dreams never quit growing.



Tierra del Fuego