**A Spiritual Tribute to My Carnu**

*by Harry Osborne*

On Wednesday afternoon, March 6, the truth concerning the brevity and fragility of life were brought home with stark clarity. Though my sister, Carolyn, had health issues for some time, none suggested she was nearing the end of her time on this earth. The nurse from the rehabilitation facility told me she slumped over on the floor and was unresponsive. Despite efforts to revive her, Carolyn had suddenly and unexpectedly passed from this life – I trust into Abraham’s bosom to await the resurrection. I spent much of the night before thinking about how to help with her situation which had grown unbelievably heartbreaking. In an instant, the Lord allowed her to escape all of this life’s tragedies and trials to slip into an eternal realm under the sole control and direction of God. My continued anxiety about the situation did nothing to change it, but God’s providential hand allowed it all to be changed in the twinkling of an eye. Yes, I will miss her, but even more, I appreciate and honor the mercy and care of a loving God who provided for His child, Carolyn.

Carolyn was born on January 25, 1948. She was the first child and only daughter of John and Dean Osborne who will always love her as their treasured “Baby Girl.” To my brother, Ken, and me, she was our chief defender and the feared adversary of anyone who would do us harm. She often got in trouble with Mom and Dad herself by trying to defend us from deserved discipline, but still opposed by a big sister who thought her brothers could do no wrong. As the youngest child where the oldest was both smarter and more talented than me, I often heard from people who knew her, “Aren’t you Carolyn’s little brother?” [Often said with disappointment in the voice] She set high standards for a brother to meet, but I could never have asked for a better sister, hero, friend or confidant than my “Carnu.”

Her nickname, “Carnu,” came from my attempts in early childhood to say a name I could not quite master. Instead of being exasperated with my inability to get her name right, she adopted my contorted effort as the pet name for a big sister who was larger than life to me. After all, she could do everything – she made all-state in band on a different instrument each year, made honor roll every time, graduated with honors wherever she attended, sang all the words and melodies to every Elvis song ever recorded, but far more important, she showed this little boy an example of Christianity taking precedence over popularity. Young people, some child is looking at you like I looked at my Carnu. What are you teaching that little child? Here are some things my sister taught me:

**(1) The Lord comes first (Matthew 6:33).** From my earliest memory, Carnu evidenced the fact that the Lord had the top place of priority for her. Missing services for school, band, sports, friends or any other reason was not even contemplated. If they had a function on Wednesday night, they all knew Carolyn would not be there. The school dances and sock hops were the rage of the day, but my sister never went nor did she ask to go. I remember overhearing a conversation between her and her two best friends when I was five or six. They were trying to get Carolyn to stay the night with them and go to a sock hop so that our parents would not know. I will never forget her answer: “God would know and the Bible says it’s wrong.” End of discussion! By the time I had to face the issue of dancing, my mind was already influenced for godliness and opposed to lasciviousness due in large part to the impact of my big sister.

**(2) Modesty can be practiced in an age of immodest styles (1 Timothy 2:9-10).** Carnu went to college in the middle of the miniskirt fad. On top of that, we lived in Corpus Christi where the miniskirts were nothing compared to the swimsuits so prevalent in a beach town. The peer pressure to wear skimpy clothing to fit in was very strong. Besides that, the short dresses were so common that it was impossible to find a dress of a decent length in the young women’s section. But Carolyn took none of those excuses to justify immodest dress. Whether it meant wearing less fashionable clothes, letting out the hem or adding material to make it acceptable, my sister did what was necessary to be modest in her dress. That decision was not a result of coercion by our parents, but the effect of that sense of shame rooted fast to her character (see the definition for the Bible word “shamefastness” or “modesty”). Her college roommates were anything but modest in dress and conduct. They could not understand why she dressed as she did and refused to go drinking with them since she was away from her parents. Before long, they came to see what I knew all of my life – Carnu did not just call herself a Christian, she was one!

**(3) Humility and repentance are more important than always being seen as right (2 Chronicles 7:14).** Lest anyone get the thought that I am saying my sister never did wrong, let me make it clear that she had her faults and was guilty of sin just like all of us (Romans 3:23). At an early age (10 or 11), she repented, confessed her faith and was baptized into Christ because she understood the need for the cleansing blood of Christ to take away her sins. When she saw wrong in her life, she was humble enough to admit it and seek forgiveness – with God and man. It was not a humility borne of weakness. Carnu was one of the most strong-willed individuals I ever knew. Yet, when she saw her actions or attitudes were in conflict with God’s word, she corrected them openly and fully. Indeed, she humbled herself in the sight of the Lord, that He might lift her up (James 4:10). Though I am not the judge, I trust that the Lord has lifted her up to a place under His care awaiting the resurrection of the last day.

**(4) Loyalty to friends and family is a part of honorable character (Proverbs 13:22).** “A friend loves at all times” was a defining characteristic of my sister. In fact, the tougher times got, the more her love was manifest. If you needed correction, she acted as a true friend and gave that constructive criticism – but you never doubted whether or not she loved you. She both said it and showed it. The second part of that verse adds the application to family – “and a brother is born for adversity.” In Carnu’s case, it was a sister who was born for adversity. In the darkest days I ever spent, I always knew my sister was with me. Every member of our family knew of her loyalty to the family and her willingness to help at any time. Forsaking the family, for whatever cause, was never an option for my sister. The wise man also expressed it this way: “*Do not forsake your own friend or your father’s friend, and do not go to your brother’s house in the day of your calamity; better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away*” (Proverbs 27:10). Carnu was never far away from her family, nor was she a “fair weather” part of the family unit. That kind of loyalty is in short supply today among the “me generation” seeking entertainment and ease over honor. There is a great need for godly loyalty to be both exemplified and imitated.

There have been tears of sorrow and tears of happy memories since I got that call on Wednesday. I never thought I would be left without my big sister at this point in life, but the uncertainty of life I have believed and taught in theory has now been impressed as fact (James 4:14). I will miss my Carnu, but I would not want to bring her back to the life of pain and trials she had in her last days. Instead, I will treasure my memories, learn from her example and look forward to the day we are reunited before God’s throne to praise Him forevermore. Goodbye Carnu, and thank you for being the best big sister and example this little brother could ever have.