

In Memory of Dori Alsop Paden

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Remembering Dori, I start by apologizing in advance to her in my mind in case I become too sentimental in the stories I am about to tell. Dori could not abide pretense or mushiness about herself and, I imagine, still can't. I, on the other hand, regularly wander into the territory of emotionality, especially about good friends. Dori was definitely a good friend.

I think Dori's practical and down-to-earth nature was reflected in her choice of geology as a college major. Dori felt her connection to earth quite strongly - and literally - so she was interested in everything earthy - rocks, trees and animals. Actually her earth connection was reciprocal. As a result she had a challenge working as a geologist because she would routinely talk to the stones and mountains she encountered. She could also hear their responses to her so she was able to converse with them at length. Other geologists no doubt found this quite disconcerting.

Dori moved to Minnesota from Connecticut and I from California and New York. We often talked about both being outsiders in Minnesota, even after decades of living there. Having grown up in coastal cultures, she and I both marveled at the phenomenon of "Minnesota Nice," the way the norms

of Minnesota culture include avoiding conflict, direct disagreement, and intense emotional expression. This “niceness” drove both of us crazy since we never knew what was really going on. Dori once wrote a letter to the editor of the *Star Tribune* in which she referred to Minnesota as “the land of 10,000 *hints*.”

I travelled with Dori to the Middle East and to Venezuela, among other places. I have hundreds of memories of those trips, but two stand out. Among some ruins near the Sphinx in Egypt, as our travel group was leaving and only a few of us were left, Dori said she could feel the sound of the place and felt compelled to share it. She sang in full-throated tones, and her clear melodic sounds resonated deeply among the rocks and rubble. I had never heard her do that before, though I heard her many times after that. Her voice gave me chills with its beauty. The sounds she sang really did belong to that place. That’s how I became sure she could hear things others could not.

In Venezuela, she and I were in the same big wooden dugout canoe traveling upriver toward Angel Falls. Going through a maze of large rocks in the river, the canoe partially capsized. Our guides ordered us all to jump into the river but Dori and I were among the few who refused to do so. I wanted no part of the snakes in that water. I’m not sure what Dori’s reasons were, but I can still see her next to me, holding on to the one side of the vertical canoe with our feet braced against the other side. We encouraged each other as the guides became increasingly agitated that we

weren't obeying. The canoe eventually was righted, with us still in it, and we got to our destination. The ones who jumped into the river were okay too, though quite a bit wetter. I always admired that characteristic of Dori's, her refusal to submit to any authority if it did not align with her own sense of what was right for her.

When Dori's mother was very ill, my father was equally ill. Again we gave each other mutual support in the practical and emotional challenge of dealing with the end of a parent's life. Dori found all kinds of resources to help manage the affairs of her mother from a distance and I benefitted from her research, using many of the same resources myself.

Dori and I were both single during most of our friendship, and we both wanted to find good partners. We spent a few holidays together when neither one of us was dating anyone. She was more determined than I and ventured into internet dating first. After the usual false starts that dating always seems to entail, she found Don Paden in 2002. Seeing what a wonderful match he and Dori were, I was inspired and took the risk of going online myself in 2003. It was a good risk. Dori and Don were married in 2004 (more on that in a moment) and I met my own husband online in 2006. Again I was the beneficiary of Dori's adventuresome nature and practical, action-oriented approach to life.

As an intuitive and a psychic, and as an astrologer, Dori was the real thing. She did not lapse into fantasy nor did she allow her ego to become inflated

by her natural abilities. Instead she stayed well-grounded even amidst the most esoteric of experiences. If she ever sensed grandiosity around her or in herself, she would pop its balloon with an mischievous pun and a sly grin. That is why I trusted her information. She would not put up with nonsense from anyone, human or spirit. With her characteristic humor she called herself “one pretty darned good psychic.” Her astrological advice just a year ago helped me sell my home with perfect timing. I assume that even now, she is continuing her journey with clarity, courage and humility, and I wish I could still hear her words in my own language.

I was ordained as a Gnostic priest in 2002 and was honored in 2004 to officiate Dori’s wedding to Don. They chose the readings they wanted in their ceremony, and a blessing they chose to have read ended with these words. “... we wish [for you] that at the end of your days you will be able to say these two things to each other, “Because you have loved me, you have given me faith in myself;” and “Because I have seen and loved all that is in you, I have received from you a faith in humanity.” Don, I am certain that you are able to say those things now at the end of Dori’s days in this realm and that her spirit has already said them to you.

I can surely say that my life was richer, fuller, and more fun for having had Dori in it. I join the rest of her friends and family in offering blessings and celebrating the life of this extraordinary woman.