



Porter Woods

January 21, 1931 - July 22, 2011

Porter Stevens Woods died July 22, 2011 in Fort Collins, Colorado, after a full life of 80 years. He was born January 21, 1931 in Portland, Oregon to Mabel Electra Porter and John Burton Woods. Music, an early and lifelong passion, was as important as bread and water to his life. He was a teacher, playwright, director and musician. His father was a forester and lobbyist for the lumber industry with the family frequently moving between the Pacific Northwest and Washington, D.C. Porter attended 15 different grade schools. He was a member of the National Cathedral Choir and graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in Washington D.C in 1948. In 1952, he received his Bachelor of Arts from Brown University, where he was a member and soloist with the University Glee Club and a founding member of the Jabberwocks. While at Brown, he also met his future wife, Gail Erickson of Edgewood, Rhode Island. While Gail completed college, he taught at the Cambridge School in Weston, Massachusetts. They married on June 12th, 1954. The summer of their wedding, he and Gail moved cross-country to Salem, Oregon, where Porter explored careers and worked on his Master of Arts in English Literature at the University of Oregon. During these years and subsequently he continued to sing, often joining in with choirs of various faiths. After qualifying as a public school teacher, Porter was hired as an English Teacher at Grant High School (Portland, OR), where he directed the high school's musical, *The Desert Song*. Theatre gave him a way to engage all his students, not only the college bound. There, he wrote his first play, *The Dowry Contest*. To his and everyone's delight, this play and its actors took "best of show" at the local competition, although they had all gone home and so missed the awards ceremony. Porter continued his involvement in theatre at the University of Portland, writing an original masque, *Fire in Middle Earth*, based on the Sappho and Phaon legend. He was bitten by the theatre bug. On a friend's advice he applied to Yale University (School of Drama) which accepted him to work on a Doctorate in Fine Arts, playwriting and directing. In 1961 the couple left for Yale, with son Timothy and daughter Katherine in the back of a VW bug. (It was tight.) Having no car radio, they sang the entire way to the east coast. This family tradition, which Porter and Gail began on their honeymoon, continued throughout the years. Yale proved a marvelous four years. While in New Haven their third child, Constance, was born. During Porter's time there, he was the baritone in the professional

quartet at the New Haven Chapel on the Green. Porter completed his dissertation in rapid time. It was titled: "The Negro on Broadway, The Transition Years, 1920-1930." His training opened doors—first at Middlebury College, where he taught English and directed plays, and next at Grinnell College in Iowa, where he headed the theatre department. In 1970, Porter began his work in the theatre department at Colorado State University. He remained in Fort Collins for the rest of his career, until he retired in 1998. During his tenure, Porter directed many of the great works of the theatre including Macbeth, West Side Story and Equus. He worked with the CSU Opera and directed The Ballad of Baby Doe, an award-winning La Traviata, and had several of his own plays produced including Blodgett and Night Nurse. He also guided many students enabling them to achieve their hopes. Academe was his fulfillment, and the 28 years of work and collaboration at CSU with Robert Braddy and Morris Burns were extremely rewarding. Together, they nurtured and enriched theatre in Ft. Collins for keeps. Besides teaching and directing at CSU, Porter did research, and wrote two books - Experiencing Theatre and The Teacher as Actor which was coauthored with Morris Burns - taught on the Semester at Sea, and was awarded a Fulbright Grant to teach English and Theatre at Taiwan National University (Taida) for a year. He returned to teach in Taiwan for several additional semesters. Throughout his life in Fort Collins, Porter was active with the Fort Collins International Center, the International Student Program (CSU), church, local schools and art groups. He loved family discussions over dinner, long walks on bike paths with the Labradors, sailing, and travel with Gail. Porter is survived by his wife of 57 years, Gail Erickson Woods, and three children: Timothy (Amy (Lukens) Woods) of Aberdeen, SD; Katherine (Christopher Koziol) of Ft. Collins, and Constance (Wakin Chau) of Taipei, Taiwan, two granddaughters and four grandsons. He has left many dear friends the world over. He was preceded in death by his parents and his siblings: John, Esther Perry and Willis. A memorial service will be at Plymouth Congregational Church, Fort Collins at 2 p.m. August 17th. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Porter S. Woods Theatre Scholarship Fund, and sent to the College of Liberal Arts, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523-1701 or to a charity of your choice.

Comments



“ Porter Woods was a talented teacher, director, and a delightful person. I enjoyed discussing philosophy, theatre, teaching, and planning for growth of the Theatre Arts Program at CSU with him. I enjoyed working with him from 1979 through to his retirement. I stayed in touch with him and his family after he retired. I will always remember him as a man who cared about teaching, learning and the pleasures of a good life. I will miss him.

Shela Jennings - July 22, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ To the Woods family -
Our condolences to you all; our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Ruth Rowedder - July 22, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Porter was a great guy and a fine gentleman. He will be missed by all.

I have known the Woods since 1994, when I joined Colorado State University as Ph.D. student. Soon after I joined in Fall 94, they became my host family. Over the years, they became my American Family. In our first get-together, Porter came to pick me up from the Lorry Apartments where I used to live. It was his grey Volvo Station Wagon, if I remember right! That day, I joined family and friends over Thanksgiving dinner. This was a tradition throughout my Fort Collins years. In my mind, Thanksgiving has been related to the Dinners I had at the Woods.

We have stayed in touch after I left Fort Collins in 1998. The memories I and my wife Shahira share with Porter and Gail are beautiful Our discussions in politics and social life, Friday afternoon club, our walks with the dogs around the lake, my graduation, the birth of our daughter Nadine, our visits to Fort Collins after we moved out, and our regular telephone calls to check on each other...

Porter was an intellectual with a great deal of compassion, intelligence, and love of humanity. He had a special ability to appreciate other cultures and communicate with people of various backgrounds. He was unique in many ways. I'll miss him!

Tarek S. El-Bawab - July 22, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ The Porter Woods I knew best was the young man on the East Coast: In 1945, we covered the floor of the Connecticut Ave. apt with Porter's collection of small metal models of the US Fleet. In 1947, he stayed with us for Christmas in Baltimore, and in 1952, he climbed into the back seat with us kids (just 3 then) for a long drive from Atlanta to Miami. He made the trip fun! For those who have a hard time placing Porter, his parents descend from "Old Settlers", the original settlers of the Connecticut River Valley, who in turn descended from the original settlers of New England. We should not be surprised that at least a dozen ancestors came over on the Mayflower, but that as a direct descendant of the Rev. John Robinson, pastor to the "pilgrims" of Leyden, Holland, Porter completes the voyage of Rev. Robinson back to Plymouth in N.America, in this case the Congregational Church in Ft. Collins. The circle remains unbroken.

Nathaniel E. Perry - July 22, 2011 at 12:00 AM