

Laura Bruton Coelen

September 5, 2008

Laura Bruton Clausen Coelen lost her battle with melanoma in September of 2008. Perhaps you remember that, on the Saturday of our 45th reunion, Laura was being honored by Holyoke Community College for distinguished service during her 14 year tenure as Director of Institutional Research, Resource Development and Academic Planning at HCC? Among her many professional accomplishments, perhaps most impressive was her appointment as Chancellor of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education – the first female appointed to this august position. In her career she championed many public issues: urban planning and model cities, adequate housing, responsible town finances and the public higher education system.

Jody Teel Smith writes: “Laura was an extremely talented, versatile and engaging woman who played a significant role in public education in MA – and a wonderful friend.” Nony Moore Barr and Alice McGovern Doering visited Laura in June after learning of the cancer’s return. Nony writes: “In spite of her illness, Laura still had her delightful sense of humor, and ...we especially enjoyed walking through the beautiful gardens Laura had created around her home in Leverett, MA. Laura and Steve were looking forward to spending several weeks on Martha’s Vineyard in July with visiting children and grandchildren.”

Judy Ashworth , the emissary of the Safford HP group which included Laura, attended the memorial service in Leverett, MA, at the Mount Toby Meeting of Friends and tells us it was “a window onto an incredible life of service and caring for others... a celebration of her productive life, her love for her family (husband Stephen, three sons and a daughter) and especially of her courage at the end. “

And a lighter p.s. to this sad goodbye: Freya Olafson, who was with our class as a freshman in Mead, remembers “Laura returning to the dorm after her debutante party and distributing flowers from the many bouquets she brought back to college.”