

Hi. I'm Crissy Atkinson, and I was a friend and colleague of Connie for more than forty years. It's wonderful to "see" so many old friends. I wish we could be together in person as we remember Connie, but this is 2020. I'm so glad you're here, wherever you are.

It's not possible to say very much about a 40-year friendship in a couple of minutes, so I'll tell you what I remember about two phone encounters with Connie – one at the very beginning, and one near the end. To begin at the beginning, it was almost exactly 41 years ago that I met Connie, not in person, but over the phone. She called me at my desk at my one-year, fill-in position at BU, introduced herself, and urged me to apply for an opening at Harvard Divinity School. I was interested, of course, and we soon met in person and started to become friends. All went well as Connie steered me through the application process, regularly reminding me that I was Just the right person for it, and doing brilliantly. The first problem came when we got to the job talk and she told me I had to get Martin Luther into it somewhere. "But Connie!" I said – "I'm talking about medieval women and virginity." "That's fine," she said, "just stick him in somewhere." I told her it couldn't be done, but then somehow I did it --and that was Connie. She made you find connections in your work that you had not seen and would never have imagined. . .

The upshot was that I got the job, as Connie intended – a mixed blessing in some ways, but one unmixed blessing was Connie's friendship. We were close colleagues for a couple of decades, and what a lot of fun we had, along with the tears and struggles. We howled with laughter while we plotted and planned, and all along, I watched her encourage other women as she had encouraged me, telling us of course we could, and so we did. When Connie went off to shine in a new orbit at the Ford Foundation, how I missed her! But of course we stayed friends. . .

In the last few years our visits took place in her apartment in New York, and more frequently over the phone. As her strength dwindled, her spirit never did. Since the beginning of the pandemic last March, I was always slightly afraid to call – worried about her vulnerability, afraid I would find something new to worry

about at the other end of the phone. But Connie was always the same; when I asked, anxiously, “how are you?” she’d respond – “hanging in, how are you?” I last spoke to her early in September: as always, she said she was OK and went on to castigate Donald Trump. We didn’t talk long because her voice got tired, but that call, like the others, taught me lessons about courage, about patience, about endurance, qualities we need so badly right now. I so wish there could be more such calls . . . thank you. . .