Karen Louise Waldo, MS, FAMI passed away on February 20, 2016 in Athens, GA, after a long illness.

Karen Waldo was born in Lincoln, Nebraska on December 18, 1943, and raised in Southern California (Palos Verdes Estates near L.A.). She graduated from UCLA with a baccalaureate degree in scientific illustration. She was a member of the Class of 1970 in the Medical Illustration Graduate Program at the Medical College of Georgia (MCG) in Augusta. Her classmates were Don Biggerstaff, Bill Westwood, and Steve Harrison. To the benefit of her classmates, who were somewhat competitive, Karen was always willing to share her techniques and approaches to problem-solving. She was a magnificent artist, a skilled researcher (whose work was spot-on accurate), and an exceptional teacher and mentor to students and professional colleagues.

After graduation from MCG, Karen joined the faculty of the Biomedical Communications program at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in Dallas. In 1973, she accepted a position at Dartmouth Medical School in Hanover, New Hampshire. It was here that she met and married Bill Watkins. Their son, John Watkins, is a talented and successful musician/composer in the Athens, Georgia area. Karen returned to Augusta in 1976 as Chief of Medical Illustration & Design in the Division of Health Communication at MCG. At the same time, her teaching talents were utilized as an assistant, and then an associate adjunct professor in Georgia’s Medical Illustration Graduate Program. She became active in heart development research at MCG, and followed her mentor, Dr. Margaret Kirby, to Duke University in 2001, where she finished her medical illustration career.

Karen joined the AMI in 1972, and was an active member in every sense of the word. She was a member of the AMI Board of Governors and also served as Recording Secretary and Treasurer for the AMI. She was one of a small group who developed the criteria, logistics and points system for the first judged AMI Salon in 1979 (Kansas City). She also developed questions for Part I (written) of the Certification (CMI) examination for medical illustrators.

Looking back, Karen Waldo was the glue that held our class together, and helped us get off on the right foot as professionals (even though half the class was left-handed). She was so much more than just a friend and colleague. She will be greatly missed, but never forgotten.

Steve Harrison, Bill Westwood, & Don Biggerstaff
Karen Waldo (1943-2016)

Illustrations by Karen Waldo

Karen with her husband, Bill Watkins, Oriental, NC
Karen with her son John Watkins
Karen with her niece Rebecca
Karen with John’s stepdaughter Bella
Karen with her stepson, Bill Watkins
Karen with her stepdaughter Rose Pearson, Karen, Ian Pearson, Liz Watkins