

My very dear Vina,

This is to say what I didn't say before because I am a reserved person. I'm sorry I can't be in Yreka today to say it for myself.

Our relationship was a professional one, but I want to call it a friendship too. When I first met you six years ago I remember being impressed, of course, by how much you knew about the Karuk language and culture, but then we settled into a working style. I would drive up from Berkeley, spend a couple of days in Yreka and visit you to ask about the language and write down your words. You could have thought I was really weird: Why would somebody who wasn't from the community and learning to speak Karuk bother you with so many questions about how to say this and that? But you never showed any doubt or tiredness or uncertainty. When I came you were welcoming — not just welcoming but happy to see me, sorry to see me go, and interested to know when I'd come back. I think we flirted a bit, like two white-haired people. We talked about your life with the language, and if other linguists in the past had gotten it right or were maybe sometimes off.

That was an uncertain time for me, with language work whose goal I didn't yet know. I was doing it out of pleasure, because of the beauty of the language and the pleasure of your kindness. I knew there was energy, passion, and talent among younger people in the community who wanted to learn Karuk, and I knew you and others were deeply knowledgeable and interested in passing on your knowledge. But I didn't know what my purpose was, or where the work was going. In that uncertain time you gave me not just hospitality, but a generosity and openness I'll never forget. And most importantly, you gave me a gift of faith in the moment.

Here's what I mean. We both knew the work was important in the long run, that it would somehow benefit learners and teachers of the Karuk language. But there may be a thousand hard steps between now and any future we dream of, and if we can't see the path we might not want to set out. Not for one minute did this bother you. You had faith that if we took our work seriously and had fun at the same time, the path would open. And you were right — look at everything you've done for the language! So your greatest gift was to show me that if I have faith in the moment, as long as I can laugh while working hard, even if I may not know where I'm going, I'll get there. When times are hard, like now, your gift is a treasure.

Later, when I visited with Line and our students, you decided to call me *Yaas'áaraar*, the boss, because I had the white hair and the car. This was a joke, since by then the others spoke Karuk better than me, and it was partly your affectionate way of getting me to work harder. The harder we worked, you knew, the more we'd learn and the more the generations of your children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren would learn. So you used to make fun of me and even though it was terrible when I was young and other kids made fun of me, when you did it I was very happy, Vina. I wish I was in Yreka today to see everybody who's learned from you and will keep learning from you, to see the *axítichas* make fun of a white-haired *apxantínihich* speaking their language.

Here's how I've been mourning you, Vina. I've been listening to your voice, listening to our conversations, trying to understand your words and sentences and spell them as well as I can, so we can include them with the treasures of the Karuk language for your people to enjoy and learn from and remember you by. Every time somebody says a Karuk word you taught them, or a Karuk sentence they heard you say, or listens to your voice on a recording or in their memory, you continue to teach and in that way among many others you live on in our hearts.

I will miss you always, *Éeyuvanaa. Vúra vaa tániyôotva iim pananífyiiv.*