Lucy Stensland Laederich, 1944-2019

Lucy Laederich, our longtime AAWE member and friend, and a leading advocate for the rights of Americans abroad, died peacefully on February 1 at her home in Bordeaux.

She was a former AAWE President (1980-81), FAWCO President (1999-2001), and longtime FAWCO US Liaison. Lucy was instrumental in setting up the Americans Abroad Caucus in Congress, and was the motor behind establishing the annual Overseas Americans Week. She also served two terms (2012-2015) as President of the Association of Americans Resident Overseas (AARO).

Lucy was involved in the drive to include overseas Americans in the US Census and, after 2001, particularly focused on election reform legislation. She participated in Overseas Americans Weeks beginning in 2002 and went twice to Washington to discuss the dangerous unintended effects of FATCA on Americans with foreign spouses and partners. A Vice Chair of the World Federation of Americans Abroad (WFAA) in the early 1990s, she was also Vice Chair of the Alliance for Military and Overseas Voting Rights (AMOVR).

Originally from NYC, Lucy held degrees from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of California at Berkeley, and pursued her studies at the University of Washington where she completed
her Ph.D. in sociology and French – all but dissertation. Lucy moved to France in 1970 with a Fulbright research grant. She was a mother and grandmother of dual-national children, and worked as a freelance translator for many years.

AAWE Member Sallie Chaballier says: “Lucy’s ego was in inverse proportion to her charisma. Lucy was about us; she did what she did for all of us, which only made her even more charismatic.” Member Nan de Labaudère adds: “Lucy was a force of nature. There’s no other way to describe her. She was so smart, so witty, so upbeat. She was an inspiration and a mentor to so many people.”

Compiled by Jane Mobille

AARO-FAWCO “Overseas Americans Week” 2015
In all, 9 people went to Washington in March 2015 representing AARO and FAWCO: AARO President Lucy Laederich, Vice President Ellen Lebelle, former Tax Chair John Fredenberger, Asia Director Ross Feingold and Kathleen Mistry, now living in Washington, were there throughout a week that featured over 50 meetings, essentially with Congressional offices. They also met with reporters from the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times and conducted several conference calls after the week to make up for meetings cancelled due to snow!

From the AARO Archives

Lucy with FAWCO President My-Linh Kunst and Kristina Didouan at AAWE’s 50th anniversary celebration, 2011
There are two decisions I’ve never regretted: one was accepting to run for President of AAWE back in the late 70s, and the other was accepting on the condition that Lucy Laederich be First Vice President. Lucy and I were already good friends, and I had come to admire the many qualities of this dynamic young woman juggling volunteer work with raising two young children while living quite a distance from Paris, and working part time. She was eager to help the American community and worked tirelessly advocating voting and citizenship rights for Americans abroad. She became President of AAWE, and then went on to reap high honors for her work with FAWCO and AARO. She will be sorely missed by the American community of France and of other countries as well, and we at AAWE are indeed fortunate to have known this beautiful, exceptional person and to have been able to share her goals and work alongside her.

Sally Benoist
How lucky we American women abroad were to have Lucy! She could have turned her talents to some other cause, but from the time we met in the ‘70s, before she was President of AAWE, until virtually the end of her life, Lucy committed her free time to pulling together, maintaining, and often leading so many American associations (AAWE, FAWCO, the US Census working group, Democrats Abroad, AARO). Her work with FAWCO and to improve US voting laws went on for decades. Most of us drop in and drop out of volunteer work, but Lucy was simply dedicated to the common good, and she never stopped. Her last words to me before she was hospitalized were "I will fix that" – and she did.

She brought to these causes her talent for inclusion, her warmth, conscientiousness, and unfailing patience and good will. I never saw her lose patience—she could be dismayed by a setback but never angry. Those same talents made her a wonderful friend, and of course she had many. After all-day FAWCO meetings in some capital city, it was in Lucy’s hotel room that we always congregated to laugh and sum up because she was eager to continue, and she had the bottle of Scotch. Later, her door was always open wherever she happened to be, in Paris, Bordeaux, or Washington, DC. She was a caring listener, and she always had time. We owe her, and we will miss her.

Kathleen de Carbuccia

In Lucy's words:

“"I am most proud of achieving two related things:

1. Working (with so many others) to get overseas Americans included in the 2002 Help America Vote Act and making the improvements that led to the 2010 Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act.

2. Being invited to be an official observer for two years as the uniform Law Commission drafted and finally approved the Uniform Military and Overseas Voter Act.""