

## *A Tribute to Ed Thatcher*

by

*Stanley D. Stevens*

### **In Memorium Edward Thatcher**

#### *Editors Note:*

In late November, several WAML members notified me of the death of Edward Thatcher, a founding member of the Western Association of Map Libraries. A memorial service was held for him on December 1, 2001. He was born Sept. 11, 1916, in Swarthmore, Pa., and was married Monette Hunkins in Ames, Iowa, on June 12, 1943. He received a bachelor's degree in Plant Ecology from Swarthmore College and master's degrees in botany and library science from the University of Minnesota. Edward Thatcher served in the civilian public service in Iowa during World War II, assisting with the research of food production and storage. He moved his family to Eugene in 1952 and worked as a science and map librarian at the University of Oregon until his retirement.

Ed spent several sabbaticals in Nigeria, New Zealand, Europe and the

Eastern United States. His hobbies included the study of rare science books and the research of early publishers. He founded and was an honorary life member of the Western Association of Map Libraries. Thatcher enjoyed book collecting, gardening, fishing and natural history. He was a member of the Friends Meeting. Survivors include his wife; two sons, Carl of Portland and Jay of Corvallis; two daughters, Ellen Burt of Argenta, B.C., and Osa Thatcher of Johnson's Landing, B.C.; a sister, Edith DeBurlo; and nine grandchildren. Stan Stevens submitted the following tribute to Ed for publication.

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Ed was considered the "Father of the Western Association of Map Libraries." He was more instrumental in its initial founding than anyone else, although Shiela Doud at UCB hosted the initial meeting, which I attended. I got the initial green-light from Ed to proceed with formulating the organization; it was his claim that he wasn't suited to it,

nor to writing and producing the original Bulletin (later the Information Bulletin). Nevertheless, he was the inspiration for getting WAML started. I have always respected and admired Ed's guiding principles for WAML: an independence from parent organizations, the personal contact between members through semi-annual meetings, an opportunity to learn from more experienced colleagues, the ability to develop a working relationship with a colleague who could be turned to when solving problems in the map room. Independence was a key to his inspiration. While he was a member of other organizations, and didn't ignore their possible help in developing WAML, he urged that WAML should stand alone and develop its own organization with the ability to decide for itself how best to strengthen map librarianship as a profession.

The Initial meeting of WAML was at the University of California at Berkeley Map Room, November 12, 1966. Sheila Dowd, Carlos Hagen, and Ed Thatcher — were the real founders of WAML — they jointly sent the

invitation for the meeting. Our primary concern was that West Coast map librarians were being "left out" of the professional activities associated with the then only organization in existence: Special Libraries Association's Geography & Map Division. That was not because the G & M Division was excluding us, but because it seemed oriented toward the East Coast, and most of the SLA meetings were being held in the East, South, and Midwest. At that initial meeting we had representatives present who informally advised us on what they thought were the advantages of affiliation with a larger organization. The Geoscience Information Society had just recently been formed. Ed Thatcher was a member and knew of its appeal to those in the earth sciences fields. And, of course, there were some present who had been members of the Special Libraries Association's Geography & Map Division - or who had subscribed to its Bulletin for several years and were familiar with the organizational structure of SLA. A West Coast group could get together more often, so we decided we should try to provide the opportunity for independence and semi-annual meetings.

One of the most important needs that WAML was intended to serve is the social contact between persons with similar professional interests, thus enabling the exchange of ideas, sharing of problems, and learning from each other. Ed Thatcher was the first to stress that human interaction at WAML meeting could be one of our most important assets. For thirty-five years, WAML has provided an opportunity to join with colleagues throughout the West to fulfill mutual objectives: expand and strengthen map librarianship in the WAML region, and exchange information with colleagues by providing continuing

education through meetings. WAML provided the opportunity for socialization with colleagues. Independence was, at least for WAML, thought to offer the best of all worlds. We didn't want to be tied to anyone financially. We wanted the ability to make decisions independently, and we didn't, of course, want to be tied to the meeting location or schedule of some parent organization.

Nor was Ed Thatcher an elitist. Other organizations in librarianship, at the time, required a degree in librarianship as a requirement for membership. Ed, on the other hand, believed that the only requirement should be "working in the field of map librarianship." This openness was characteristic of Ed Thatcher, and it is one of the guiding attributes that gives the Western Association of Map Libraries its strength today. Ed Thatcher will always be remembered for his humanity, his inspiration and his foresight, and the profession of Map Librarianship can justly claim him as one of its Pioneers. He will be missed.