

## TRIBUTE TO EDWARD P. THATCHER

COMMENTS DELIVERED AT WAML DINNER, SAN FRANCISCO, MARCH 26, 1981

by

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The previous speaker referred to Ed Thatcher as the Founding Father of WAML, and he spoke truly. A triumvirate of librarians, Ed, Carlos Hagen, and I, signed the letter that convened the first meeting of a group which became the Western Association of Map Libraries; but the energy, the persistence, the unwavering conviction that western map librarians needed to meet, the force and motive behind the letter came from Ed.

When I was offered this opportunity to voice my gratitude to Ed for his contributions, I went down to the WAML archives in the Berkeley Map Room and started rummaging in the early files. That letter calling the first meeting was dated August 1966. But the first letter I found in the files expounding the need for such a group, and exploring possibilities, was dated 1959, and was written by Ed to the then-Executive Secretary of the Special Libraries Association. The SLA chapter structure proved inviolable, and the response less than satisfactory; but Ed bided his time. Some years later the file reveals letters written by him on the same topic to Carlos and me. Our responses, I regret to say, were cordial, encouraging, and passive. We thought it was a fine idea, and we hoped someone would organize such a group. Ed went on exploring, conferring, writing to organizations and individuals. Finally, after attending the SLA conference in Minneapolis in 1966, he reached the conclusion that an ad-hoc group of map librarians should be convened, and left to determine its own future structure; and at that point he began applying the gentle but unrelenting pressure that led to the November 1966 organizational meeting at Berkeley.

A few of us here tonight were among the sixteen people present at that meeting. If we remember that gathering, and look at this one, we have a measure of the significance of WAML's accomplishments, and of Ed's. At that time the three of us, putting our heads together for our mailing list, could identify only 45 libraries that might have map collections. We knew few map librarians even by name, and had met, each of us, only three or four of our colleagues in the region. One of the first products of the infant organization was a directory of western map libraries; and one of its most important continuing effects is the creation of a forum where all map librarians in the west can exchange ideas, discuss problems, learn from each other, and compare and improve their services. WAML found map librarians on the West Coast generally loners, isolated in their own institutions by the peculiarities of their collections and their problems, and unacquainted with their peers at other institutions. It has metamorphosed them into a professional group. The benefits of the change are evident to anyone who uses the collections and services of the contemporary western map library.

What hath Ed wrought? Or, to borrow another line, if you would seek his monument, look about you.

Tonight we thank him; we wish him much joy in his retirement; and we are confident that he will remain our colleague in his interest in maps and in WAML.

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