



by

Kathy Rankin

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Sheila Dowd was the “Mother of WAML”. She was born on September 6, 1925, and passed away peacefully at the age of 89 in Mill Valley on March 2, 2015, of complications of Alzheimer’s disease. Sheila was also the Assistant University Librarian for Collection Development at University of California, Berkeley for fifteen years. She received a degree as an English major, cum laude, from the College of Holy Names in 1947. According to an article on March 9, 2015, in the CU News, which is the newsletter of the UC Berkeley Library Staff, “Her library career began in 1948 in Germany [with the U.S. Army], shortly after she had earned her library degree at Berkeley. A stint in Marseille followed [with the U.S. Information Service], sparking an enduring love for France. In 1953 she launched her 35-year Berkeley career, beginning with social science reference, and moving on to the map collection and government documents.” It was as map librarian that she hosted a meeting of map librarians in 1966 to explore founding an organization “devoted to the interests of those map librarians in the western states”, which is from an article in the IB upon her retirement from Berkeley in 1989. Stan Stevens says, “Although nearly 50 years ago, it is like yesterday in my memory. I arrived at the UC Berkeley Map Room to be greeted by Sheila and Ed Thatcher (U. of Oregon) for the exploratory gathering of map librarians to consider founding an organization that became WAML.



Sheila was charming and gracious. I was a bit intimidated by these librarians who, to me, seemed older and more experienced in map librarianship. And the UCB Map Room was so massive, compared to what we had at Santa Cruz (which had been established only two years before).

There were only a handful of us, but we decided that the West Coast needed an organization to provide the kind of interaction between us, both professional and social. Sheila led the discussion, and at the end of the day, after a lunch at the Faculty Club, we urged her to continue as our organizer. She declined and we were truly disappointed. I volunteered to draft a constitution and by-laws and poll everyone to agree on the next meeting (held at San Francisco State University).

Some years later we met at the University of Oregon, with Ed Thatcher as host. At the banquet, Sheila toasted Ed as the “Father of WAML” — to which we agreed — but we insisted that she was the “Mother of WAML” — Sheila was reluctant, but agreed to our logic.

So, we have lost both now, but we can cherish those memories — Sheila Dowd is remembered, forever the ‘Mother of WAML’.”

Frances Woodward said that Sheila was very good to her and to her colleague Maureen Wilson when they joined years ago and at various conferences they attended.

From the CU News, “Sheila’s intelligence, dedication, and humor made her a gifted leader, and in 1974 she was named head of collections. She embraced the chance to serve the world’s best researchers by building a collection that met their needs. Her national reputation encompassed roles in ALA, ARL, and the Research Libraries Groups. Upon her retirement in 1988 Sheila was awarded the University’s highest honor, the Berkeley Citation.

All who knew Sheila remember her wit, erudition, and love of good conversation. Her impeccable prose graced all she wrote, and she could amuse herself in dull meetings by taking notes in verse. She was generous and loyal to family and a legion of friends. Until declining health limited her last years, she continued to live a life filled with culture, travel and friends. She touched many, and will be missed terribly.”

According to her obituary in the San Francisco Chronicle:



“A funeral mass will be held at 10 a.m. on Thurs., April 9, at Our Lady Of Mount Carmel Church, 3 Oakdale Ave., Mill Valley. A memorial will be held from 5-7 p.m. on Fri., April 10, at the Morrison Reading Room, Doe Library, on the U.C. Berkeley campus. Contributions in her memory may be made to the Sheila T. Dowd Endowment for the Western European Collections, sent to the Library Development Office, 131 Doe Library, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720-6000. “

– See more at:

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/sfgate/obituary.aspx?n=sheila-dowd&pid=174459122#sthash.H1FFVnPT.dpuf>

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