

HONOR BESTOWED ON EDWARD THATCHER

First Honorary Life Member

Ed Thatcher was the surprised recipient of the first Honorary Life Membership of WAML, conferred at the WAML Dinner held at the New Pisa Restaurant during the Spring Meeting in San Francisco on Thursday evening, March 26, 1981.

Harold Otness (WAML President 1977/78) began the award ceremony with a personal reminiscence of Ed's generosity in sharing his wealth of experience with a beginning map librarian and commended him for his "humane map librarianship". He congratulated the assembled membership on having made a "good choice when we picked Ed as our founding father".

Sheila Dowd, one of the founders of WAML, along with Ed and Carlos Haegen, spoke of the beginnings of the organization which had, in her words, "a gestation period much slower than an elephant". She cited Ed Thatcher as the directing force of the movement to establish a professional organization for western-states map librarians and thanked him for all he has done for map libraries and map users.

Dave Lundquist, WAML President, acting on behalf of the Membership, honored Ed as the first Honorary Life Member of WAML, and presented him with a globe so that "wherever he is, he can look at the globe and think of us". Ed will, indeed, be far from us for a while. He is retiring at the end of the academic year and will be off to New Zealand for one to one-and-a-half years.

In accepting the award, Ed recalled the first meeting of WAML at Berkeley and recounted the names of some of those present on that occasion. He also made mention of some of his former students at the University of Oregon who are now involved in map librarianship and thanked the membership for "helping to make WAML what it is".

Rosanna Miller
WAML Secretary

EDWARD THATCHER

In 1970 when Southern Oregon State College decided that it needed a map collection, I was picked as the one to put it together. Not knowing anything about map librarianship, I made some inquiries around the Oregon State System of Higher Education, and everyone mentioned Ed Thatcher at the University of Oregon as being the one to talk with. I called him to introduce myself and to explain my needs. He was extraordinarily receptive, encouraging, and helpful, and he has continued to be so to this day.

I visited him in Eugene a couple months later. Down in the basement of Condon Hall, I threaded my way over a huge sleeping dog stretched out across the doorway, past a student with his boot-encrusted feet lodged on a tabletop, his yoghurt and taco chips strewn across the table as he ground his way through his lunch, past piles of maps in every conceivable stage of disorder, to find Ed somewhere under one of the larger piles of maps.

Ed was as congenial in person as I had found him to be on the phone. He loaded me down with lots of advise and all kinds of maps that were surplus to his needs, but of potential value to SOSOC. I was amazed by his generosity, and to this day SOSOC has continued to be the beneficiary of it. I believe that if Ed had two copies of a rare 17th century Dutch atlas, he would give us one. And he would probably insist that we take the better copy.

The best advice that Ed gave me was the name of the Western Association of Map Libraries, an organization that still relatively new and little known in the mainstream of librarianship. My first meeting was in Oakland, which I attended with Ed, and soon after, with Ed's help, I hosted a meeting of WAML in Ashland - its first meeting outside of California.

Ed was a charter member of WAML, although I don't think that term was used at that time, and he has continued to be one of its most loyal supporters. I can't speak of those early days of WAML, but some of you here can, and you know perhaps best of all Ed's influence on it. He wanted us to be not only professional colleagues, but friends as well. He knew that individual friendships among map librarians would bring about more cooperation between map libraries than any formal agreements signed by competing and jealous institutional executives. Ed, and WAML, have made it possible for any of us to call each other for map help on a person to person basis, and we would get wat we need. I think that is one of Ed's greatest contributions to the field. Another has been his patient and conscientious teaching of map librarianship at the University of Oregon. I know that some of you here this evening started your careers with Ed's course. A third major accomplishment, which is at the very heart of our professional commitment, has been getting needed maps into the hands of literally thousands of students, faculty, and community people, and showing those people maps that they didn't know even existed, and helping them learn to use, and especially to appreciate, those maps.

Ed will be retiring at the end of this academic year, and soon he will be off to New Zealand for a year. We will not be seeing him at WAML meetings for awhile, and the loss is ours.

I just want to say that I have never really been bothered by the fact that Ed writes all of his correspondence on the back of used P slips (usually of NCR paper), and in an illegible hand. I can usually figure out what he means. And I have never really cared if Ed's map library has been messy - there is always a helpful person there with the remarkable talent of being able to uncover whatever it is that I need. Nor have the dogs interfered with my business - in fact they have been, without exception, friendly, or at least indifferent. And I have never cared if people eat Granola bars and drink slurpys around maps. It is the atmosphere of the library, the spirit, and the helpful attitude of the staff that count most with me. You can get anything you want in Ed's map library, and you can get it in a friendly manner, and that is a remarkable feat in the twentieth century world of librarianship.

I know that I owe much to Ed, and WAML owes much to Ed. I think we made an excellent choice when we picked him as our founding father.

Harold Otness
Southern Oregon State College