

Memorial: Bethany J. Ochal (1917–2007)*

¶1 Bethany J. Ochal passed away in Newport Beach, California, on June 3, 2007, after a series of illnesses. Her career in law librarianship was long and distinguished. At the Detroit Bar Association, she was Reference Librarian from 1952 to 1960 and Librarian from 1960 to 1961. She began at Wayne State University as Associate Law Librarian in 1961 and was the Law Librarian there from 1962 to 1972. She then served as the Director of the Orange County Law Library from 1972 until her retirement in 1988.

¶2 Bethany was born December 2, 1917, to L.L. and Idah Ziegler in Flint, Michigan. She received her A.B. and J.D. degrees from Wayne State University, where she was one of three women in her law school class. She had married a classmate, Edward L. Ochal, in her senior year, and her daughter Myrna was born the day after Bethany's law school graduation. She passed the Michigan bar examination six weeks later (she wrote it while Myrna was just outside the exam area in the care of a relative, so that Bethany could care for her during exam breaks) and was admitted to practice in 1945. She then entered a law partnership with her husband. She later had a son, Edward.

¶3 Once Bethany became a law librarian, she also became a dedicated member of AALL. She chaired several committees (Audio-Visuals, Chapters, Membership, and a 1972 special Interim Committee to study the feasibility of an Executive Director for AALL) and Special Interest Sections (Micrographics & Audio/Visuals in 1983–84 and State, Court, & County Law Libraries in 1976–77), and served on numerous other committees. In recognition of her service, the SCCLL-SIS named its award for Distinguished Service to the Profession in her honor. She was President of ORALL in 1969–1970, and an active member of SCALL after moving to California. She published six articles in *Law Library Journal*, on microforms, public law library standards, and an annotated bibliography of California Practice Materials.

¶4 Bethany was an enthusiastic advocate of microforms as a component of law library collections, and served on the faculty of the 1979 Institute on Micrographics for Law Librarians. She strongly supported the Law Library Microform Consortium, serving two terms on the Board of Directors and six terms on its Advisory Council.

¶5 In 1988, Bethany attended her twenty-eighth consecutive Annual Meeting and received AALL's Distinguished Service Award on June 27, just a few days before her retirement on June 30. After retirement, she continued her interest in AALL and frequently contributed to the Scholarship Fund. In the late 1990s, I

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remember a telephone call from her, asking detailed questions about the potential for leadership of the two candidates that year for AALL Vice-President/President-Elect, gathering information so she could cast her ballot in the best interests of AALL.

¶6 Bethany was well known for her sense of fashion; when she received the Distinguished Service Award, then-President Albert Brecht referred to her as “the woman who was born in Saks Fifth Avenue.” Bethany loved to travel and made a number of trips overseas, sometimes combining attendance at an International Association of Law Libraries meeting with travel in the surrounding countryside. At home in Santa Ana, she loved her rose garden and brought her secretary a rose nearly every day. She was active in the local chapters of Soroptimist International and the American Association of University Women. Tennis was also a favorite activity.

¶7 Her husband predeceased her, and her survivors include three grandsons and four great-granddaughters in addition to her son and daughter.

¶8 At her memorial service, her daughter reported that Bethany’s final words were, “I’ve had a wonderful life. I have no regrets. I’ve been blessed.” Those of us who knew her recognize in these words her straightforward, outspoken approach to everything she tackled. We will miss her, and that bold spirit.—*Maryruth Storer*¹

1. Law Library Director, Orange County Public Law Library.