

Memorial: Susan A. Roach (1942–2002)

¶1 I first met Sue Roach in August of 1973. I had just moved to Washington, D.C., to start my first professional job at the Georgetown Law Center. It was hot and humid in the way that only Washington and points south can get in the summer, and I knew no one in D.C. Sue had a cubical next to mine, and she was the first person who actually had conversations with me, and who told me all about Washington beyond Georgetown. At that time Sue was a Saturday docent at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, and she always got a good laugh out of the fact that what she really needed to know was where the bathrooms were. Someplace past the tail of the whale, as I recall.

¶2 By 1976 Sue had left Georgetown to work at the Navy JAG library, where she worked until she retired in March 2002. At first she was the assistant librarian. Later she became the director.¹ I, for one, however, don't really remember Sue for any work or service that she did for JAG, but for her presence at AALL Annual Meetings, for the innumerable phone calls about everything from AALL gossip to her cats or her favorite charities, and for her endless travel adventures (some of which I shared with her)—the long train rides, the luggage lost, the tiny hotel rooms, drying dresses with hair dryers, etc. If something could go wrong, it would for Sue; but always, after just a few screams, she would face her travel adversity with great humor, realizing that whatever happened, it would eventually make yet another hilarious story.

¶3 Sue was involved in AALL from before I knew her. Mostly, she was active in the Technical Services and Online Bibliographic Services² special interest sections where she was always chairing or just working for some committee. And, in fact, at conventions it was often hard to find her to do something social, because she was almost always at meetings. She did manage, however, to make time for a museum in every city where AALL had an Annual Meeting. Her knowledge of gift shops and places to sit down was a running source of humor.

¶4 It was not always easy to be Sue's friend. She could be difficult and opinionated, sometimes easily offended, and often honest to a fault. Through the years there were several times when one of those many phone calls ended with someone's receiver being slammed down. However, her prickly side didn't surface out of selfishness. She would usually be angry because something wasn't being done correctly, or someone wasn't behaving the way they should, or someone wasn't treating someone else properly.

1. *Editor's Note:* Susan Roach was documents librarian, Georgetown University Law Center Library, 1972–76; reference and catalog librarian, Navy Judge Advocate General Library, Alexandria, Virginia, 1976–90; Head, Navy Judge Advocate General Library, 1991–2002.

2. *Editor's Note:* Susan Roach served as chair of the Online Bibliographic Services Special Interest Section in 1990–91.

¶5 For all her faults, Sue was a truly unforgettable character. She may usually have looked like a good portion of her most recent meal had ended up on top of what she laughingly referred to as her ample bosom, but that didn't matter to her. Fashion or correct personal self-presentation were just not important enough to her to allow them to take up her time. What really mattered to her were her friends and her causes.

¶6 When I posted a message to law-lib last August about Sue's death,³ I got several replies. One in particular stands out. A person asked me whether Sue was the woman from the JAG library with the great personality. I answered that, indeed, she was, but it wasn't until I went to a memorial service for Sue several weeks later that I understood how big an impact she had had in her life outside AALL. I had known for years that Sue was very involved with her church and a variety of charities. In fact, I was one of several people who over the years helped her make deliveries to one or another charity. What I hadn't known was the extent to which she was engaged in these efforts and the extent to which she was able to engage, prod, and cajole others. Apparently when she wasn't on the phone to someone about AALL or about something awful a vendor had done, she was on the phone organizing and directing committees to help people with AIDS, to get clothes to the homeless, etc., etc.

¶7 There is something quite fitting about having this piece for Sue appear in the *Law Library Journal*. She would have been very pleased to know that her friends in the law library community cared enough about her to print it. I am sure there are many law librarians across the country who missed Sue at the Annual Meeting in Orlando last summer, and there are many of us who still miss those phone calls.—*Cynthia R. Arkin*⁴

3. Posting of Cynthia Arkin, carkin@law.upenn.edu, Sue Roach, to law-lib@ucdavis.edu (Aug. 12, 2002) (copy on file with author).

4. Associate Director for Collection Development and Special Collections, University of Pennsylvania Law School, Biddle Law Library, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.