

Memorial

Richard Lambert Beer
(1930–2003)

Jean O. Beer
(1924–2004)

Richard L. Beer

¶1 Knowing Richard Beer was a privilege. He was warm, funny, devoted to the law library profession, and endlessly fascinated by the quirks and conundra of legal bibliography. Yet for those of us inclined to complain about the minor inconveniences of daily life, knowing Dick was also profoundly humbling.

¶2 Dick was born on September 14, 1930. Although he was born with cerebral palsy, there were few obstacles that Dick could not handle. Institutional policies and facilities were at times, however, less than helpful, especially in regard to his difficulty in writing. His father being a lawyer and judge, Dick grew up with great interest in the practice of law. After getting a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Michigan in 1957, he enrolled in the Wayne State University Law School. The inflexibility of faculty rules prohibiting the taping of classes ultimately led him to withdraw from law school in his second year.

¶3 Dick's knowledge of law and interest in legal bibliography led to his appointment in 1960 as temporary custodian of the Oakland County Law Library in Pontiac, Michigan. When he took over the library, he found it had many deficiencies. It had been closed the previous year for lack of staff. The space was inadequate for the services needed, and the collection of only 7500 volumes contained serious gaps. The library did not even have a complete set of the Michigan statutes. The condition of the library was so bad that initially Dick dreaded going to work. His wife Jean later said that in the early months of his new job, she had to push him out the door. Nevertheless, Dick got to work immediately. Within six months, he realized that he had found his true vocation. Jean said, "I couldn't get him home then." Plans were developed for filling gaps and expanding the scope of the collection to include law reviews and a wide range of reference works. In 1961, the library was moved to new quarters.

¶4 As soon as he began his new job, Dick joined the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL). For Dick, membership in an organization not only provided benefits but also carried an obligation to participate. In his first ten years in AALL, Dick served on the Cataloging and Classification, Publications, Scholarship, and

Membership committees. In 1962, he and his wife were appointed to the local arrangements committee for the 1963 Annual Meeting, held—incredibly—on Mackinac Island in northern Michigan. Their responsibility was arranging the exhibits for the meeting, the beginning of two decades of work on exhibits that ended in 1983 when the Association, with Dick's strong support, got the services of a professional exhibits manager.

¶5 Dick brought to his job a substantial knowledge of law and a great interest in legal history. AALL provided him with opportunities to expand his knowledge of other aspects of law librarianship. He attended the 1964 AALL institute on legal bibliography, where Morris Cohen, showing more judgment than Dick's law teachers, permitted Dick to take the concluding examination orally.¹ In 1966, he also attended the AALL institute on cataloging and classification at UCLA's Reber Hall, where Dick and Jean occupied the "bridal suite."² Dick quickly developed close relationships with other law librarians, in particular Arthur Charpentier, director of the libraries of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York (1957–67) and the Yale Law School (1967–81), whom Dick came to regard as a mentor.

¶6 Upon his completion of a master's degree in library science at Wayne State University in 1971, Dick was made full director of the Oakland County Law Library. He soon applied his newly acquired expertise in his job. By the mid-1970s, the library's collection contained not only the complete Michigan statutes, but also those of all other states. The library had acquired more than two hundred law reviews and all state *Shepard's* citators. From 1960 to 1975, the library had grown from 7500 to 30,000 volumes, and the staffing was substantially improved with the addition of acquisitions and cataloging librarians and full-time support staff. One of Dick's strengths lay in getting both the county and the Oakland County Bar Association to support his goals, which were often accomplished ahead of schedule. Given the significant growth in the library's collection and services, it seemed appropriate that its new status be recognized, and the Adams-Pratt Oakland County Law Library was dedicated on May 5, 1976, to two former Oakland County Circuit Court judges, Clark J. Adams and Philip Pratt.

¶7 Despite Dick's love of books and his interest in traditional research methods, he readily embraced new technologies, first miniaturization and then automation. He early saw the value of automated legal research and online catalogs. On May 25, 1988, he brought his library into the Detroit Area Library Network (DALNET), a southeast Michigan consortium that provides an integrated library management system including online cataloging.

¶8 In spite of the demands of his job, Dick continued his professional activities

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1. Claire Germain, comp., *Remembrances of Harry Bitner*, 94 LAW LIBR. J. 196, 196, 2002 LAW LIBR. J. 15, ¶ 2 (remembrance of Richard Beer).
 2. *Proceedings of the Fifty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries Held at Los Angeles, California, July 3–7, 1966*, 59 LAW LIBR. J. 378, 403–04 (1966) (statement of Frances Holbrook, reporting on the cataloging and classification institute).

unabated. He was devoted to AALL, perhaps at times a little too devoted. He held strong opinions about the Association and its directions, but for him any disagreements were merely family squabbles, far less important than the success and effectiveness of the Association. He served as AALL treasurer from 1983 to 1986 and was involved in founding AALL's State, Court and County Law Libraries Special Interest Section. His sense of history and dedication to AALL led him to donate his papers related to Association business to the AALL Archives in 1990.

¶9 His devotion to the Ohio Regional Association of Law Libraries (ORALL) and the Michigan Association of Law Libraries (MichALL) was equally strong. He participated in meetings of both associations. He claimed to have been the first Michigan librarian chosen as president of ORALL when he was elected in 1976. In 1984, he received ORALL's Distinguished Law Librarian Award. He served on the MichALL executive board and in 1984 published for MichALL a detailed account of his participation in the Law Library Leaders Goodwill Program's tour of Germany, Sweden, Finland, Norway, and the Soviet Union.³

¶10 For more than two decades, Dick taught legal bibliography in Oakland University's paralegal program, and he also believed in the importance of introducing general librarians to the delights of legal research. His professional commitment and expertise in legal bibliography are reflected in his 1973 book, *An Annotated Guide to the Legal Literature of Michigan*,⁴ which originated in his library school master's thesis. For the revised edition,⁵ Dick sought the assistance of Judith J. Field, a Wayne State library faculty member whose complaint to him about "uncooperative law librarians" had led them to organize a traveling workshop on legal bibliography for public librarians.⁶

¶11 Anyone who knew Dick only from law library associations may not have realized how active he was in other organizations. He was the first chair of the Orion Township Planning Commission and Zoning Board in Michigan and was senior warden at his church. He was very active in United Cerebral Palsy of Metropolitan Detroit, where he gave lectures on employment and educational issues and served as president of the board from 1992 to 1994. He also served on the executive board of the Michigan Library Consortium.

¶12 Dick retired from the Adams-Pratt Oakland County Law Library in 1993. His retirement was followed by many honors, including the Bethany J. Ochal Award from the State, Court and County Law Library SIS and the Liberty Bell Award from the Oakland County Bar Association. He was also the first person made an honorary member of the Oakland County Bar Association. The Michigan

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3. Richard Beer, *Law Library Leaders International Goodwill Program*, MICHALL NEWSL., Sept.-Dec. 1984, at 3.
 4. RICHARD L. BEER, *AN ANNOTATED GUIDE TO THE LEGAL LITERATURE OF MICHIGAN* (1973).
 5. RICHARD L. BEER & JUDITH J. FIELD, *MICHIGAN LEGAL LITERATURE: AN ANNOTATED GUIDE* (2d ed. 1991).
 6. E-mail from Judith J. Field, Senior Lecturer, Library and Information Science, Wayne State University, to Byron D. Cooper (Sept. 8, 2004) (on file with the author).

legislature recognized his achievements in a concurrent resolution.⁷ Perhaps no honor meant more to him, however, than the Marian Gould Gallagher Distinguished Service Award, which AALL with perfect timing bestowed on him in 1998.

¶13 He died on October 20, 2003, of complications from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease. In a very appropriate tribute to him, United Cerebral Palsy of Metropolitan Detroit used memorial contributions to establish the Richard L. Beer Disability Knowledge Center, which is supporting disability awareness programs and providing resource materials, technology, and training for people with disabilities and their families. The center is a fitting tribute to a remarkable man.

Jean O. Beer

¶14 Few spouses of AALL members have contributed as much to the Association as Jean Beer, who died on November 17, 2004. For the 1963 AALL Annual Meeting on Mackinac Island, she and her husband Richard were named to the local arrangements committee and put in charge of the exhibits. For the next twenty years, Jean and Dick, or Rich as she called him, worked on exhibits, and Jean could often be seen in her wheelchair in the registration area of the Annual Meeting, as she resolved problems and took care of exhibitors. She often assisted her husband with his work for AALL.

¶15 Jean was born in Detroit on September 16, 1924. She was born with spina bifida, a condition that required her to spend the last half of her life in a wheelchair. Her marriage to Dick after he earned his undergraduate degree was remarkable. Their talents, skills, and personalities were extraordinarily complementary, as were their physical abilities. Jean told a television reporter, "[H]e does the legs and I do the arms, and so we get along fine . . . we're one entity together."⁸

¶16 Jean supported Dick in his professional career and tried to provide a home environment that was as normal as possible for her husband and their daughter Laurie Ann. When Dick enrolled in law school and was told by the professors that they would not waive their rules prohibiting the use of tape recorders in class, Dick and Jean worked out a method by which each day he would try to recount to her all that had been said in class, and she would get it down on paper. This method worked fairly well the first year, but in the second year, as the material grew more complex and lectures tended to replace case method classes, Dick could no longer keep up and found it necessary to withdraw from law school.

¶17 Like her husband, Jean did not let her physical condition keep her from leading a very full life. She was active in a variety of organizations, including the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and she was an active member with her

7. H. Con. Res. 813, 87th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Mich. 1994).

8. *From the Heart* (WXYZ television broadcast, Detroit, Dec. 2003).

husband for more than forty years in St. Mary's in the Hills Episcopal Church.

¶18 Jean and Dick saw much of the United States while driving to and from AALL Annual Meetings. They decided that a road trip could turn the Annual Meeting into a kind of vacation. To be in a hotel parking lot in Boston or Anaheim as they arrived or departed was to witness the execution of a well-planned operation. Jean thoroughly enjoyed AALL Annual Meetings and came to see AALL members almost as a second family.

¶19 Jean and Dick Beer were a remarkable couple, genuinely warm and gracious, interested in the welfare of others, curious about life. They have left a legacy in a lesson that was defined by their daughter Laurie McCormick in a television interview: "Don't let anything stop you, and to sit back and just let life pass you by because you can't do something one day, there's no excuse."⁹—*Byron D. Cooper*¹⁰

9. *Id.*

10. Law Library Director and Associate Professor of Law, University of Detroit Mercy School of Law Library, Detroit, Michigan. He gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Jean Beer, Patrick E. Kehoe, Dianne Zyskowski, and the staff of St. Mary's in the Hills Episcopal Church, Lake Orion, Michigan.