

Memorial: Mary Glennon (1949–2005)

¶1 On December 21, 2005, Mary Glennon passed away after a short but intense battle with stomach cancer; she was fifty-six-years old. Mary began her career at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law in 1974 as a library assistant in acquisitions. She earned the M.L.S. degree from the University of California, Berkeley in 1979. Over her more than thirty-one years at Hastings, Mary developed considerable expertise in all aspects of technical services, as well as government documents and archives. She was the cataloger from 1980 to 1984, cataloging supervisor/California documents librarian from 1984 to 1987, and became head of technical services in 1987. Mary had a strong interest in and knowledge of California history that complemented her work at Hastings. She took on the additional responsibility for archival management, including the Roger B. Traynor Archives, 65 Club Archives, and rare books in 2000.

¶2 Mary was a librarian's librarian. Anyone who might not have realized this previously could not fail to understand it after listening to Janice Kelly, once a Hastings librarian, now with Phillips & Cohen and Boalt Hall, at Mary's memorial mass, on January 21, 2006:

I was trying to find a way to link up my thoughts and feelings and memories of Mary, and I thought of the phrase from Forster's *Howard's End*: "to see life steadily and see it whole." I think that's what Mary did. She paid attention to the moment, to the detail, but she never lost sight of the context.

During Mary's thirty years at Hastings, she created a catalog that stands as a symbol of her life. A good catalog requires attention to detail. All the little things have to be right. But it also requires the ability to let go of the details and see the totality.

The Hastings catalog is better than any other I've used—and I've used a lot. Mary would be the first to say that it was a collaborative effort and to give her colleagues credit. And she would be right. But Mary's vision and her example are also a big part of it. Mary put herself in the place of the library patrons and imagined what they needed. She embraced the suggestions of her coworkers. She pursued perfection without obsessing about it. And she imposed a consistency that's a thing of beauty.

Mary saw how all the parts worked together and she never let her concern with a detail detract from the whole.

I think Mary approached her death with the same balance and generosity and pragmatism. She thought of the rest of us and allowed us to care for her the way she'd always cared for us. She wanted Don's place in her life acknowledged, and she wanted us to commemorate that with them. Right to the end, she empathized with us. Mary saw the moments and the details we saw, but she also saw the context. And she gave us the chance to celebrate her life with her before she left us.

¶3 Mary Glennon was born in San Francisco on August 15, 1949, one of four children, daughter of an Irish Catholic immigrant father who had bought a ticket on the Titanic but delayed his departure at the last minute to stay in Ireland to help with one more harvest. All these factors affected who Mary became. Her

Irish-American heritage, her Catholic religion, and the fatalistic calm that come with both were always important to her, and she was as tolerant of the foibles of a multicultural society as any San Franciscan who reached young adulthood in the heyday of Haight-Ashbury.

¶4 Mary embraced librarianship as much as any of us who have decided to do our part to impose order on a chaotic information world. But librarianship did not define her. Mary studied ballet and had the posture right to the end to prove it. Mary was serious about writing and earned a master's degree in creative writing in 1991 at San Francisco State University. She read Dickens and Hardy and Trollope. She painted watercolors. She made dolls and dressed them as literary figures. Mary was one of the first people any of us knew who owned an iPod. She was a great storyteller, and never lacked for comic material with all the dogs, cats, birds, rabbits, and ducks who lived in this very urban setting with Mary's extended family. One consequence of her love of animals was that the Hastings Library has a very fine animal law collection.

¶5 Mary took piano lessons and practiced to the accompaniment of her brother's dog, Dinkum, who howled while she played. Mary was once hit twice by the same car in her neighborhood—it broke her shoulder blade (scapula) and ruined her best coat—but amazingly she bore no grudge against the driver. She served jury duty on an asbestos case and was out sixty days. Every time another jury summons came, she always said that the good news was that she would never again have to serve on another asbestos case. Mary enjoyed history of all kinds, but particularly English history. She could name all the kings of England and their wives in order, and for added measure tell you about their lineage as well! She was quite doubtful that Richard III really was the villainous uncle who killed his nephews as depicted by William Shakespeare.

¶6 Her love of history was also more localized, and she found joy in discovering information about yet another professor who had taught at Hastings to add to her growing database. A trip into the stacks became a treasure hunt as she searched for the signatures and notes of the distinguished members of the 65 Club in books donated over time to the library. Using new technology never caused Mary hesitation, and she scanned all the signatures and photographs that she could find to preserve Hastings' history.

¶7 Whenever difficulties emerged in her personal or professional lives, Mary had a trademark way of considering the situation carefully and then looking you right in the eye and saying calmly but firmly, "we can do this." You knew that when she made that pronouncement, things were going to turn out all right. She brought that grit to bear in dealing with the final challenge, her cancer diagnosis and death five and a half months later.

¶8 Mary spent as much time at work in those final months as she could manage with the pain medication. Hastings is undertaking a huge renovation of its main building. What was supposed to be a two-phase process with the library floors not renovated until 2006–07, turned into a one-phase operation with a hasty library

move during the summer of 2005. Mary received her diagnosis during this time, but was determined to do everything she possibly could to help with the move. There simply was no more dedicated a librarian than Mary Glennon.

¶9 Mary leaves behind her longtime beloved friend and husband of eleven days, Donald Bullick. Don wrote a wonderful obituary for Mary which was published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in late December 2005. She is also survived by her sister Ellen Gaghan, and her brothers, John and Frank Glennon. Mary was a loving and proud aunt to seven nieces and nephews.

¶10 Possibly the best epitaph for Mary, the professional, comes from her colleague, Grace Takatani: “Mary’s presence will always be felt by those of us in the Hastings library, as well as those who use the collection. The knowledge she brought to shaping the collection and the high standards she set in place as a commitment to making it useful and accessible, are contributions of a lifetime of dedication and love.”—*Hastings Law Library Staff, Past and Present*