

Memorial: Eileen M. Murphy (1923–1999)



¶1 In the 1960s during the riots in Detroit, the National Guard had been called out and there were tanks on the expressways. Harry Bitner was worried about Eileen and called her several times, but to no avail. He finally called Fred Rothman to express his concerns about Eileen. Fred said, “Harry, don’t worry about Eileen. She’s probably leading the troops.”

¶2 When Eileen became a member of the Association, she was a loyal and devoted participant. In the early 1950s she was awarded a Bender Scholarship. Even before that, she and Matt Bender were friends. Matt used her letters to the company in the training classes for Bender salespersons.

¶3 Jack Ellenberger’s letter to me at the time of Eileen’s death summed up much about her “AALL life.”

The memories come flooding back. I think that I first met Eileen at the 1959 AALL Annual Meeting in New York City, possibly while she was still at St. John’s Law School.¹ I recognized at once a kindred spirit—smart, skeptical, opinionated and, most of all, knowing the important from the trivial, a real accomplishment among librarians! But even then, Eileen attracted people of similar mind, notably Bill Murphy, Tom Reynolds, Joyce Malden, Marie Pimsleur, and Iris Wildman. I suspect that you got to know most of them over the years. Happily, many of them remain with us, though, of course, all of us miss Bill a lot.

1. *Editor’s Note:* Holding both undergraduate and law degrees from St. John’s University School of Law, Eileen Murphy served as assistant librarian at St. John’s from 1952 to 1955. She also was librarian and assistant professor at Connecticut School of Law, 1955–56; and librarian at the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Division, 1956–59. She went to General Motors Corporation in 1959 as its first female attorney. She served as librarian of the General Motors legal staff from 1959 until her retirement in 1970. She served as program chair for the Sixty-First Annual Meeting, held in Philadelphia, July 1–3, 1968.

After that event, Eileen was a fixture in my AALL life as I began to be more active, especially in 1964 when she and Bill raised the initial money needed for establishing AALL headquarters.² This was a project of massive and historic proportions at the time, now long since forgotten by most of the new members. I think that none of us still active should underestimate this major effort, made possible only by the love that Bill and Eileen both had for the Association, and by the fortunate fact that each held jobs that permitted them to take the time out to travel around the country soliciting pledges from members.³ I can remember easily that in 1964, a \$50 pledge seemed like a LOT of money!⁴

Meanwhile Eileen was also active—indeed, vocally and some might say notoriously active—for GM in the frantic Chevrolet “Corvair” proceedings in which Nadar got her front and center as “Poor Old Miss Murphy.” Little did he know, but we certainly did, didn’t we? Then, in 1968 while Bill [Murphy] was AALL president, he and I went to Detroit (Detraaah as EMM would say) for an AALS meeting (mid-winter in Detroit!!) where Eileen provided wonderful hospitality in her glamorous digs in Lafayette Plaisance—an astonishingly pretentious name for a high-rise apartment house in what, I guess, was an urban renewal area. She made Detraaah truly livable, if not loveable, that year.

Finally, I shall long remember Eileen’s wonderful appearance at the final banquet of the 1969 Annual Meeting in Houston, Texas. Eileen wore a dress that was strikingly “her”: a black and white chiffon that dazzled us all. It was quite an evening and then, alas, col-

2. *Editor’s Note:* Eileen Murphy served as co-chair with William Murphy (no relation) of the historically crucial AALL Headquarters Fund Drive from 1964 to 1968. In the charming remembrance of the other “Murph” that she graciously wrote for this journal several years ago, she described with humor how she got Bill Murphy involved in the effort because she “needed ‘class’ added to the act.” *Remembrances of William D. Murphy*, 88 L. LIBR. J. 148, 157 (1996) (remembrance of Eileen Murphy). See also *Proceedings of the Fifty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries Held at Saint Louis, Missouri, June 28–July 2, 1964*, 57 L. LIBR. J. 309, 326 (1964) [hereinafter *Proceedings*] (describing how the campaign team was formed, Eileen Murphy stated: “Miss Murphy volunteered by opening her fat Irish mouth once again. . . . I inveigled the other Murphy by stomping on his left ankle when [the Executive Board was] . . . asking for another volunteer. I thought it would be a good idea to have the financial artist on the committee. My other reason was that, if you had a noisy, wild, imaginative, idealistic Murphy, she ought to be paired with a rather noble, level-headed Murphy, and the combination ought to be able to do something.”).
3. *Editor’s Note:* In expressing thanks to key individuals as the headquarters fund campaign commenced, Eileen Murphy herself acknowledged the importance of the support she received from General Motors: “Number three [thanks] goes to a Detroit executive who happens to be the Vice President of the Nuts and Bolts factory where I am employed. I thank him for the free time to travel, and for his excellent sense of humor, and for being a librarian’s dream of a boss, Ed Powers, General Counsel, General Motors Corporation.” *Proceedings, supra* note 2, at 329.
4. *Editor’s Note:* The Headquarters Fund Campaign Drive opened at the St. Louis Annual Meeting on June 29, 1964, with a goal of raising \$222,000 by 1967. Based on a May 1963 membership survey which had revealed a salary range of 0 to \$30,000 among the 966 members, the Headquarters Fund Committee developed a formula for donations. See Eileen Murphy, *Firm Facts*, 57 L. LIBR. J. 260, 260–61 (1964) (“[T]he percentage of contribution suggested will average 2% of one year’s gross salary to be paid over a three-year period. That is less than two-thirds of 1% per year.”).

Four years later, the committee proudly affirmed the successful establishment of an AALL headquarters in Chicago’s Monadnock Building (where it exists to this day): “As a result of the generous contributions of law librarians and their friends throughout the last four years, the image and status of law librarianship has been fixed permanently and elevated as a landmark for all the world to admire. . . . In December, 1965, the mid-winter meeting of the Executive Board . . . was conducted in its national office for the first time. Headquarters Fund Comm., Am. Ass’n L. Libr., *A Letter from Home*, 61 L. LIBR. J. 57, 57 (1968).

lectively, we never saw her again. Eileen was a wonder, and those of us who knew her well shall never forget her!⁵

¶14 After her retirement in 1970,⁶ she attended the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts for two years. In 1973 she decided to build a house in Mashpee. She had always wanted to live and be buried in Mashpee. She achieved both her wishes.

¶15 After the pivotal role she played in establishing AALL headquarters, Eileen considered her second greatest achievement to be that of founding trustee of the Cape Cod Academy, an independent K–12 coeducational day school in Osterville, Massachusetts. She served on the academy’s executive committee and as secretary of the board from 1976 to 1986. While there she established the Murphy-Wells Library Endowment Fund for the purchase of books at the academy.⁷

¶16 Eileen continued to enjoy the arts. Weekends at Tanglewood, special shows and exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts, the Modern and the Metropolitan. She maintained a wide correspondence and at home enjoyed her music and books. She was assisted by members of the Hospice staff for the last seven years of her life.

¶17 At the time of her death, a member of the Cape Code Academy, Bob Smith, wrote, “We shall always love you as you have always loved us. Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . Godspeed.”—*Sheila F. Murphy*⁸

5. Letter from Jack Ellenberger, former AALL president (1976–77) and recipient of Marian Gould Gallagher Distinguished Service Award (1994), to Sheila F. Murphy (Mar. 1999) (on file with author).

6. *Editor’s Note*: In the no-nonsense words of Brooklyn-born Eileen Murphy: “I retired from the General Motors Corporation legal staff in 1970 because of a poor pump.” *Remembrances of William D. Murphy*, *supra* note 2, at 157.

7. “Eileen loved books and libraries and was an avid reader. She always had a book . . . no . . . I mean plural . . . books . . . at hand. She had such wide interests and especially loved reading biography and history, about politics, sports and the arts, and mystery fiction. She introduced me, for example, to the work of the acclaimed mystery writer, Tony Hillerman, and did so by giving me her personal copy of one of his books, of course. It’s no surprise, then, that she and Sheila established the Murphy-Wells Library Endowment Fund, . . . by their example beginning what has become a strong tradition at the school of families establishing memorial library funds.” Donald Emery, Eulogy for Eileen Murphy 5 (Mar. 26, 1999) (transcript on file with *Law Library Journal*).

8. The author is Eileen M. Murphy’s sister. She lives in Osterville, Massachusetts.