

**MY CAREER
at the
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA
1972 – 1993
Elizabeth (Betty) Deavy**



**Library & Archives Canada
(formerly National Library of Canada and Public Archives)**

I began to work at the National Library of Canada on November 27, 1972, as an LS 1 with an annual gross salary of \$8,000. After I had signed all the necessary papers and sworn an oath of allegiance to the Queen, Fran Rose, my new boss, took me to our office on the fifth floor to meet the rest of the Canadian Official Publications Staff or COPS as they were known to the rest of the library. The two main elevators in the lobby only went as far as the 5th floor directly to the large cafeteria. From there a hall led to the COPS office.

On my library school tour of the National Library I had seen the huge bright high-ceilinged room where the cataloguing staff worked. This was the other extreme – small, low ceilinged with one tiny dungeon like window. Six wooden desks and chairs and several oak card catalogues were fitted very democratically into the office. The card catalogues contained the Union Catalogue of Canadian Official Publications – location cards for publications in other Canadian libraries. These catalogues followed our section wherever we moved (and we moved many times during my career).

Fran's status as Section Head was recognized by the placement of her desk farthest from the door. Phyllis, the CR5 head of the clerical staff, sat across the aisle from Fran and my desk was in front of Fran's beside the tiny grimy window. The three clerks, Rosemary, Jane and Pierre, had their desks closer to the door. The one phone in the room was on Fran's desk. It was an amazing event about 10 years later when we each got our own phone. Each desk had a large desk blotter in a leather holder, a wood and brass name plate and a large amber coloured glass ash tray. (I brought mine home with me as a souvenir when I retired.)

The people in the office were friendly, pleasant and agreeable to work with if sometimes frustrating as I would later find. Phyllis Mahoney, the oldest, was in her fifties, a sweet-faced plumpish woman with curly dark hair who loved her cinnamon bun in the cafeteria in the

morning. She was more motherly than intimidating to her staff of 3 clerks and the 2 GS's (General Service) Mike Kenny and Jim Maloney who retrieved official publications for the public. Rosemary and Jane were young women, not long out of high school. After a couple of years Rosemary got married and left work when she had a baby. Jane was not only a pleasant, intelligent young woman but also quite beautiful, being compared by many to Margaret Trudeau, also young at the time. Jane was married between Christmas and New Years that year and as Jane Glynn she continued to work with Official Publications as long as I knew her. Pierre Raymond, our third clerk, was completely bilingual, blond and very young. He had begun working in the public service when he was 16 or 17. He was our only staff member who lived in Quebec. Other than Fran, he was our only member fluent in French, a fact which would become increasingly important for government employees.

Next Fran introduced me to Ann Lipson, who was our SI which meant she had more specialized knowledge than a clerk and received as much salary as a CR 5. Ann's very large responsibility was organizing the collection so that incoming items could be shelved in such a way that they could be easily retrieved. A tall blonde outspoken person, Anne was a large personality who could not have fitted in our small office. She had found a special place for her desk, her book cases and card catalogues in a corner of the book stacks on the 5th floor between our office and the cafeteria. Even Dr. Sylvestre, our National Librarian had noted her unusual presence there.

The large COP collection was shelved mostly in the 3rd basement. Since the National Library was a full depository for 2 copies of everything the federal government published and at least one copy of provincial publications that meant thousands of new items added each year. This also included the parliamentary papers which came in daily – the debates of the House of Commons, the Senate and committees, the bills, statutes, journals, etc. Only a very small percentage was catalogued and classified. The total COP collection had more than a million items.

There were three elevators at the rear of the building which went from the top – the 8th floor, to the 3rd basement. There were also three sets of stairs at the back and two at the front of the building which went from the top to the bottom of the building and which you could take if you wanted exercise. Two members of our COP staff worked in the stacks in the 3rd basement or 3B as we called it. Jim Maloney and Michael Kenny, the two stack men had been with the collection ever since it had moved into the new building in 1968. Under Fran, Phyllis and Ann's supervision they had unpacked the publications and arranged them on shelves by parliamentary and departmental jurisdiction. No easy feat as each department had to be arranged by its divisions. Divisions and names could change with each new government. Jim and Michael shelved new incoming publications and retrieved those needed by researchers in the library or sent on interlibrary loan and reshelved them when they were returned. Fortunately, they were both good workers for shelving backlogs piled upon book trucks were one of the problems of the whole library.

The three basements of the library were a fascinating world for me. I don't know how many square feet they covered but the distance in width and from end to end was huge. Beside the

COP collection, there was a FIOP collection (Foreign and International Official Publications), a newspaper collection, part of the Public Archives records and manuscripts and the catalogued book collection. There was also a locked cage housing the Rare Books collection. Whichever floor or elevator you got off at, there was something interesting – huge oversize books, lying on their sides, literature, biographies, local histories or old school textbooks. Periodicals or magazines were kept in pamphlet boxes on the 6th floor. Kathryn, who started as a locations librarian, was Head of the Periodicals Section for several years. Her “office” was in the locked cage where the “restricted” periodicals were stored – from pornography to politically sensitive materials.

In the first basement half of the area was taken up by the Conservation Section, managed by the Public Archives. There, skilled conservators, mostly British, restored and preserved old or damaged books, maps, records and manuscripts. They worked on both archival and library material. The 2nd basement where the catalogued books were, was the busiest and had the most stack men, who worked under the supervision of an ex-army sergeant, Bill Ellerton, quite different from Phyllis. He had a motorized cart in which he could speed from one end of the basement to the other, sometimes loaded with boxes of books. His staff had fun with it occasionally in his absence.

When Fran Rose left in January 1973 for a job in the library at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, the COP Section was left without a head for more than a year and a half. We had a Division Chief, Mr. Jean-Paul Bourque. He was in his sixties and at this stage in his career, sat in his office, the walls of which were covered with postcards; went to weekly Division Chief meetings and didn't interfere with his FIOP or COP sections. Christmas was his most active time when he loved to visit all the parts of the library, shaking hands with the men and kissing the women. We, his staff, each year gave him a bottle of Chateau Neuf du Pape, his favourite wine.

I very much enjoyed starting my library career with no supervisor and no one telling me what to do. Phyllis looked after the staff attendance and she and Ann saw that the collection was retrieved and shelved. I looked after the reference and location requests with assistance from Jane and Pierre. I also catalogued some of the rare Canadian official publications, those published before Confederation in 1867. Most of these had come from the Library of Parliament and were kept in our own small Rare Books Room. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn all about our Official Publications collections and how to find items in our own collection or in other government libraries in Ottawa and across the country. No one else in the National Library was interested in official publications and most of the librarians were afraid of getting a question about government documents when they were sitting at the Reference Desk.

When Jules Larivière was hired as Section Head late in 1974 or 1975, he suited me very well as a boss. He was interested in managing staff and collections, going to meetings, writing reports and drawing up plans to improve service but he had no interest in doing reference, travelling away from home or going to conferences. I had soon discovered that conferences were good for making useful contacts, gathering information and having fun. But more about those later.

I enjoyed my work at the National Library but even more, I enjoyed the people I met at the library or because of my job there. Many of these librarians are still friends today. At my 90th birthday party in 2018 I was able to count 19 librarians including Kathryn, whom I met on my first day at the National Library, Callista Kelly on my first day of Library School, Judith Rubin whom I met when Judy Deavy worked in the same building (External Affairs) as Judith, Hope Clement who wasn't a friend at the National Library but was the Associate National Librarian and who became a dear friend after we both retired. And I can't forget my dear friends Maria Calderisi and Leonard Bonavero. I met Fay Turner when she came from Montreal to work in Foreign and International Official Publications while I worked next door in Canadian Official Publications.

So many librarians were helpful to me in my work. The archivists who shared the same building were, with their specialized subject knowledge, especially valuable. Tom Hillman knew about railroads, post office names and the censuses. Jim Whalen was helpful on Royal Commission reports and research papers. And Jerry O'Brien was good for hard-to-find information about the Privy Council Office. Barbara Wilson was the person to call for any information about Canadians in the "Great War" or British military activity in Canada's early years. She answered her phone brusquely and sometimes swore at me for bothering her. Then she would provide me with the information that I needed. There is an excellent obituary for Barbara Wilson published in *Archivaria*.¹

The librarians I met were always willing to help each other. Ciuneas Boyle, at the Department of Fisheries Library willingly searched for obscure papers needed by my National Library clients as did Jean McNiven at the Forestry Library. Her library had gathered collections for years from small government libraries which had been closed. In turn, I enjoyed hunting for a book or report they needed. During my time at the National Library there were problems and some people I worked with that I really didn't like but I am choosing not to make them a part of my remembering the National Library. The good staff and interesting clients far outweighed the bad.

Ciuneas Boyle wrote in my retirement book:

Betty, all us poor lost federal librarians will miss you! Thank you for all your help with those crazy questions over the years. It was fun!

¹ Blais, Gabrielle, Paul Marsden. Barbara Mary Wilson 1931 – 2014. *Archivaria, the journal of the Association of Canadian Archivists* 78 Fall, 2014. pp227 – 230. Also available online.

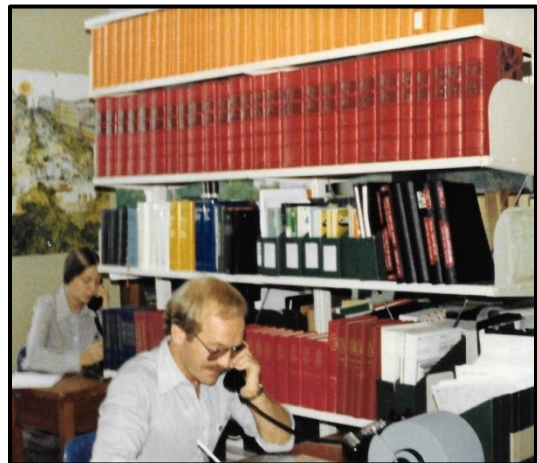


Betty in her office



The "stacks" – official publications collection

right: Pierre Raymond



left:
Reference
Room

View from my window



My climbing geranium

In the Reference Room right: Yves Ranger



Reference Room circa 1972

Pleasant lunches
Jules Larivière & Marilyn Moore



Reviewing the day's work
Kathryn & Betty

Library Conferences

Library conferences were a highlight to look forward to each year. I welcomed them for a number of reasons – the chance to meet new people right across the country, working in the same field I was – official publications and later on law; the opportunity to visit a new area of Canada or at least institutions or buildings in the city chosen. There were interesting speakers and courses on topics useful to my work. In the early days we usually stayed in university residences and had breakfast in their cafeteria to save money and allow more people to attend.

My first conference was a CLA (Canadian Library Association) conference at Mount Allison University in Sackville, N. B. in my first year of working as a librarian. I was eager to see what the conference was all about and paid my own way. Apparently this was taken as a good sign by my library and they paid my way to all my future conferences. The highlight of that conference was discovering how librarians enjoyed partying and dancing. University Chief Librarians and Library School Directors whom I had only seen from afar seemed quite different and more human, enjoying hors d'oeuvres and lively dances. It was a great place to make friends, find out people's expertise and remember them for future reference purposes. But I didn't feel at ease dancing so I offered to stay at a table in the corner with people's purses while they danced. However, a friendly Indian librarian found me there and insisted that I should be dancing too. So, abandoning my responsibilities I also enjoyed the dance.

Another early conference, and my only international conference was in 1976 and was on the future of microforms. Both Kathryn and I were chosen to go, she because she worked with serials and me, because of official publications, both good candidates for micropublishing because of the space they required. The conference was in Atlanta, Georgia. I know I wrote a report on the virtues of microforms for Flora Patterson (our Branch Director) but what stayed in my mind is the city of Atlanta. I remember the southern accent of our taxi driver. We took a tour of old plantation houses that could have stepped out of *Gone with the Wind*.

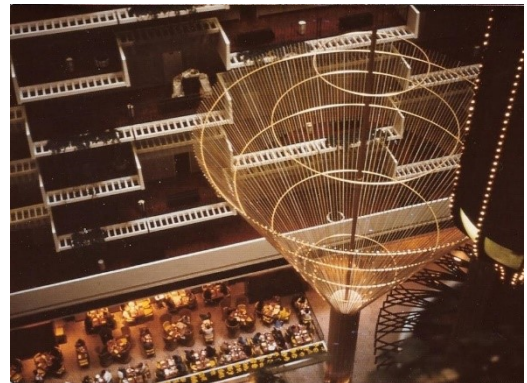


We had fried chicken at Pittypat's Porch. We had a chance to stay in two different hotels, the Peach Tree Plaza where a round glass building with the elevator running up the outside of the building made Kathryn very nervous; the other hotel claimed to have a ½ acre lake in the lobby.



Peachtree Plaza

½ acre lake in the lobby



We visited a museum that informed us that Atlanta was the birthplace of Coca Cola.



Betty at the Peachtree Plaza

But we also saw another side of Atlanta when we tried to buy a local sports Jersey that Andrew had requested. We took a bus to a big department store. When we left the store in the late afternoon, we couldn't find the bus to take us back to the hotel. We had to walk blocks through a very poor business section with many boarded-up stores. The few people we met were black and we felt we were some place we didn't belong.

When we left Atlanta, we flew to Washington, DC, my first and only visit there. We were going to visit Kathryn's friend from Library School – Louise Lusignan and her husband Michael. [Louise had been the Chief Librarian at the Canadian Embassy in Washington DC.] We brought them a floor mat in the shape of a peanut from Georgia because it was election year and Jimmy Carter (from Georgia and a peanut farmer) was running for President. Fortunately, Louise and Michael were Democrats and liked our present.



Louise & Michael Lusignan

Louise already had family members visiting her so the house, which was in Chevy Chase, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, was pretty crowded. We decided to go for an early morning walk while waiting for breakfast arrangements to sort themselves out. We discovered that almost every lawn in the neighbourhood had large amounts of chives growing wild.

Back at the Lusignan's, people were getting seated around the breakfast table. Somehow, I got the special decaf coffee intended for one of the in-laws but didn't realize it. At that time, I had somewhat of an addiction to coffee and was miserable without it. After breakfast, Louise drove us on an extensive tour of Washington. We began at the Smithsonian Institute in the aviation section, watching films on the history of flight. At hang-gliding, I left Kathryn and Louise and spent the rest of the time in the washroom. I also visited the washroom of the National Gallery and not much else. I spent the rest of the tour lying in the back seat of Louise's car, raising my head to see the White House and the Lincoln Memorial. I gradually began to recover when we were in the airport washroom, about to board the plane for Ottawa.

I especially enjoyed CALL (Canadian Association of Law Libraries) conferences in nearly every province across Canada from Victoria Law Library in British Columbia to Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland. I had begun to develop the use of the legal areas of our official publications collection so I wanted to gain all the expertise in using legal documents that I could. Each year there were a couple of useful courses given at the conference as well as exhibits and displays of legal publications by Canadian and International publishers. I remember a CALL conference in Calgary for non library reasons. This particular conference was sponsored by the Law School of the University of Calgary and took place in May, 1979. Kathryn's parents, Tom and Marion Mikoski, who lived in Calgary, picked me up at the airport and drove me to the University. They helped me get my luggage to my room and get settled. Fortunately they were still there when I tried to open my new suitcase. I couldn't get the key to turn in the lock. Tom tried to open the lock, but he couldn't either. Finally he managed to break the lock off and I was able to unpack. As a result I have never locked my suitcase since and so far have lost nothing.

The conference was busy and full of events including a moot court acted out for us. The events were in various impressive buildings in the widespread campus. One evening near the end of the conference we were invited to supper in a large downtown sports bar. After supper everyone's eyes were drawn to the large TV screens on the wall where election results were starting to come in from Ontario, Quebec and the Maritime provinces. To my horror it looked as though the Conservatives under Joe Clark were gaining seats and could possibly defeat Pierre Trudeau and the Liberals. As the trend in the results continued and increased, the mostly western customers in the restaurant got happier and began frequent cheering. I finally couldn't stand it and phoned Kathryn's parents. Tom and Marion picked me up at the restaurant and took me to their home where we sat sadly in their living room watching the unhappy results as the Conservative votes piled up.

The CLA conference in Halifax in June 1988 was a happier event although it too had its down times. Kathryn was going to the conference too, so we decided to take holidays ahead of the conference and drive down with two National Library friends, Joyce Banks, the Rare Books Librarian and Claude LeMoine, Literary Manuscripts Librarian, in Kathryn's much loved 8-year-old Audi. The first day went well and we spent the night at a small hotel near Quebec City where we enjoyed delicious meals and comfortable rooms.



**Left: Kathryn,
Claude, Joyce**



Above: Claude, Betty, Joyce

The next day we were to drive through the Charlevoix region where Claude had grown up, crossing the St. Lawrence by ferry to Rivière du Loup. Claude suggested we would go faster if he drove because he knew the area. When we neared Les Éboulements, so called because of the large earthquake that changed the land in the 17th century, Claude suggested we take a winding steep road down into a small town where his uncle had been a Monseigneur and where we could see two large very **old outdoor bake ovens**.



We did get to the picturesque town and saw the interesting ovens although the car had required the use of the brake pedal often on the descent. We were about halfway up the hill when smoke (or steam) began pouring from the engine. We stopped the car, leapt out quickly grabbing our purses while Claude lifted the hood. We concluded that it was not safe to continue.



Claude waved down a passing car and got a ride to a garage we had noticed at the top of the hill. We were very grateful for Claude's fluency in French. The mechanic came down and towed the car to his garage but determined that he didn't have the parts needed to fix the car. It would have to go to the Audi dealer in Baie St. Paul. But it was Saturday and they wouldn't be able to do anything until Monday. We decided we would leave the Audi there and rent a car to continue our holiday and get to the conference. Claude's brother kindly picked us up, took us to his nearby cottage and helped us get a car.

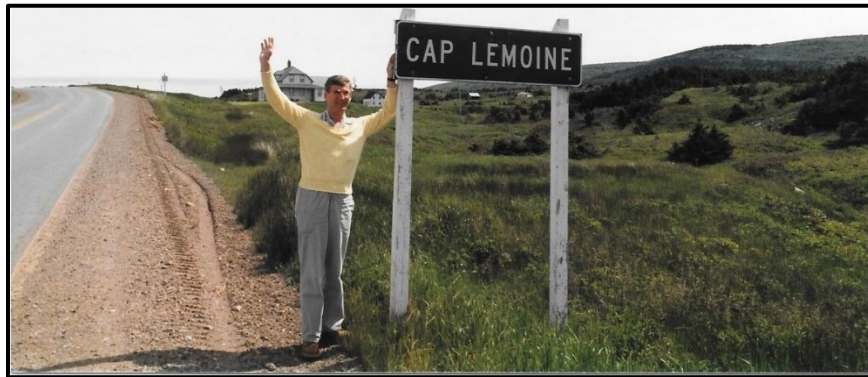


After a relaxing ferry ride across the St. Lawrence, watching Beluga whales from the deck we went to a very old-fashioned hotel and cabins right on the bank of the river where Claude had reserved accommodation for us. The hotel had not yet officially opened for the season but Claude had persuaded the elderly owner to open especially for us. His wife had not yet returned from Florida where she spent the winter. He spent his winter in the closed hotel knitting sweaters. We each had a separate comfortable room; the breakfast was delicious and the price was reasonable. The only drawback was that the walls were very thin, and we all discovered that Claude snored very loudly.



Claude LeMoine, Betty Deavy, Joyce Banks St. Lawrence South Shore

We then headed through New Brunswick on our way to Cape Breton, Claude still driving. In the middle of the afternoon, we were stopped by the police for speeding. The policeman insisted that we follow him to a police station and pay the fine immediately. Claude blamed our Quebec licence plates for the fine, but he began sharing the driving with Kathryn after that. Our Cape Breton holiday was very happy: Baddeck, the scenic Cabot Trail, a wonderful B & B in North Sydney where each room was individually decorated, and we enjoyed comparing each room.



Joyce in her room

The two men who ran it were also antique dealers and excellent cooks and the owners of two eccentric looking cats. I enjoyed visiting Sydney again where I had lived in 1942, trying to see what I could still identify. We visited Glace Bay and the fortress at Louisbourg. Claude, being French persuaded the French soldiers that we were English spies and had us arrested. When we were released, we hurried on to Halifax to begin the conference.



Among the displays at the conference was a booth belonging to Micromedia, a Canadian microform publisher which was busy microforming large portions of the National Library's official publication collections: The Parliamentary papers – Debates, Sessional Papers and Statutes - and selling them to libraries across the country. Kathryn noticed that Micromedia was offering a contest – a questionnaire on official publications – with a personal computer as the prize. She brought me a form and suggested I enter the contest. I filled out the form and dropped it in the box. That evening, when we arrived at the party at the Nova Scotian hotel people started to congratulate me. I learned that Georgia Ellis, the librarian at Statistics Canada, had drawn my entry. We were thrilled to receive an Amstrad computer. (When we were back in Ottawa Gary, one of the two Gibson brothers who owned Micromedia, delivered and set up our new British made computer. It was only 1988 and we felt way ahead of our friends with our own computer.)



Amstrad circa 1988

On the downside, we picked up the Audi in Baie St. Paul on the way home, but the car was never the same and within the year Kathryn was forced to replace it with a Toyota Tercel, a bit of a come down.

Festivities at the Library

Kathryn and I volunteered to look after several events at the National Library during our years there. The most fun was when we organized a Christmas party for the Public Services Branch. This involved food, drinks, entertainment and decorating with the help of friends. We decided on a Mexican theme for the party. We made empañadas and bean dip to add to the refreshments and a colourful piñata filled with candies for decoration and fun. Commercially made piñatas were not available in stores in Ottawa in the 1970's so we decided, with the help of Carolyn Walker Patterson and Fay Turner to make one of papier-maché. We gathered in Carolyn's apartment for supper and work. We fashioned a large egg-shaped ball of strips of newspaper soaked in a flour & water paste around an inflated balloon. We kept adding layers of paper until we decided it was strong enough. After it dried, we painted the piñata and filled it with candies.

The party was held on an afternoon before Christmas in the foyer in front of the theatre at 395 Wellington Street. A wine bar was set up off the adjoining kitchen where we prepared the food for buffet tables.



Carolyn Walker Patterson & Betty Deavy

Dr. Helmut Kallmann, Chief of the Music Division was at the piano playing Christmas Carols for a large groups of singers.



Kathryn tries and hits Claude on the head!

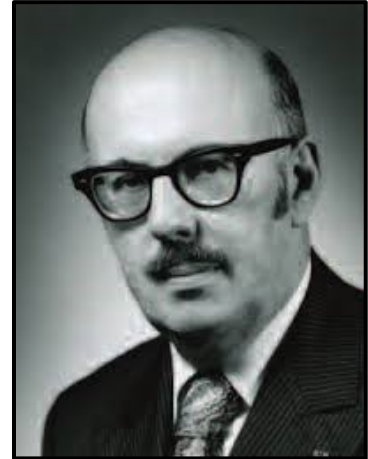


**FINALLY, with a mighty whack
Gwynneth Evans hits the piñata
And claims the prize**



Our most prestigious event was the retirement party for Dr. Sylvestre in 1983. We were asked by Missy Hillman, his Special Assistant, to organize the food and drink for the staff party and we agreed though the budget was miserly - \$400 for about 400 staff members expected to attend. Our friend Fay was shocked that such an important event should be trusted to Kathryn and me. We decided on wine & cheese with a few grapes for decoration as the best we could do for the budget allowed.

Dr. Guy Sylvestre



We bought several kinds of cheese and crackers and got our wine from the Société d'alcool du Québec (the Quebec liquor board) because their better wines were cheaper than those in Ontario. The tables looked attractive at the beginning of the party, but the wine ran out before the end. The cheese held out with some left over. I don't think Fay was impressed or maybe she was. She just thought he deserved a "professional" caterer.

The final party I remember was my retirement party in March 1993. It started with a lunch at The Mill with the Reference Division.



Barbara Camfield, Nancy Brodie, Alice McClymont

Betty with Paul McCormick→





Alice McClymont, Roxanne, ?, Sandra Burrows, Norma Gauld

At the party the next day, it was great to see so many of the people I had met and worked with during my 21 years, 4 months, and two days at the National Library.



Betty with ?, Bill Murphy, Jean-Marie Brière, Mary Bond, Patricia Madaire



Barbara Camfield pinning the corsage



Kathryn & Betty



Betty, Dr. Helmut Kallmann, Rudy Penner, Patricia Madaire, Beryl Anderson



Ursula Schulz, ?, Wendy Scott, Leonard Bonavero



Isabel Bradley with Betty



Lois Burrell, Ursula Schultz, Myra Clowes,
Missy Hillman(back),Gwynneth Evans, Tom
Hillman -----→



Nancy Brodie,Trent Reid, Charlotte Luoma,
Carol Smale

Francine Gaudet & Liana Van Der Bellen →





Tom Hillman, Derek Robertson, Tom Tytor, Michael Hood

Rolande Blair & Claude LeMoine -->



Gilles Marleau & Marilyn Rennick



Sandra Burrows, Fay Turner, Alice McClymont, Joan Waiser, ?, Ursula Schultz

Still later we had a party for our special friends and colleagues at our house. We concocted a game consisting of clues related to birds which we had positioned all over the house. Andrew and Claude were a team! It is even possible that they won but I can't remember what the prize was.



Joyce Banks

Claude LeMoine & Claire Bourassa



Linda Hoad



Epilogue

After a marvelous 3 ½ months spent in Wales and Italy from mid-August until the end of November 1993, I returned to the National Library part-time for two 4 – 6-month contracts to prepare a couple of guides for using official publications. I developed guides to U.S. and Great Britain official publications. I also worked on one for Pre-confederation Canadian official publications, but it was never published.

United States Official Publications: collection guide. 1993

Great Britain Official Publications: collection guide. 1996

Also, after my retirement a presentation I had developed to help researchers in the use of the three parts of the *Canada Gazette* was updated and published in The Canadian Parliamentary Review, Vol 17 No. 2, 1994. I was very proud of the work I had done on this topic and it has been used and cited numerous times over the years. So, I suppose it was a worthwhile endeavour.

Then in 1996 I had a call from the Library of Parliament. They asked me to replace their Foreign and International Government Publications librarian, who was going on a 6-month exchange to Australia. I could work a 4-day week and a 6-hour day and would be given training in searching the Internet, something I had not learned at the National Library. Most of all, I would get to work in the Centre Block on Parliament Hill in the beautiful, historic Library, the only part of the original Parliament Buildings to survive the fire of 1916, saved by the closing of a fire door at the last minute. It was such a pleasure being in that building, having an office under one of the gables, and being able to wander through the Parliamentary Halls by myself, not part of a tour, I probably would have worked without pay. Searching the Internet proved both interesting and rewarding. I was amazed at its possibilities. When my six months were over, I was sorry to say goodbye to the Library and the dedicated people I met there, especially Gilles Marleau, their Canadian Government Publications librarian.



The Library of Parliament as seen from the Ottawa River



The interior of the Library of Parliament with the statue of Queen Victoria in the centre

My last connection with the National Library is as a “Friend of Library and Archives Canada”. I volunteered on several occasions at their giant book sale.



Left: Betty

Below: Ralph Smith, Kathryn, Beryl Anderson & Betty

