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Tales of AALL History (Stories of "My First Annual Meeting")

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Sarah K. Wiant*

Tales of AALL History

The story must begin not with my first AALL Annual Meeting but with my first SWALL meeting in St. Louis in 1970, two months after beginning my first professional position as junior cataloger at Texas Tech. There I met and made many good friends, chief among them my mentor, former AALL President Al Coco. (In truth, he was mentor to many of us in AALL.) He suggested that I consider sharing a room with his cataloger that summer at the AALL rotating institute¹ on Basic Cataloging. Coco said I'd like his cataloger. As was usually the case, I followed his recommendation.

Arriving in Washington, D.C., on my first trip east of the Mississippi River, I was a wide-eyed innocent. Within fifteen minutes of checking into the dorm room at American University I met Lolly Gasaway. She was to become my colleague, my collaborator, my coauthor, and most important, my good friend. At the opening reception we consumed great quantities of spiked punch, leaving us both incapacitated and slightly embarrassed. Unable to go to dinner, we talked and laughed and soon found out we had much in common.

Both of us were relatively recent graduates from library school (we graduated one year apart from different universities located in the same small Texas town but we had not crossed paths until then). We were, compared to most of our classmates, well versed in the recently introduced Library of Congress KF classification scheme for American law. Because we were able quickly to complete our assignments, we turned our attention during class to more entertaining matters, such as writing a skit for the final banquet. This was great fun, as we set new words to our favorite show tunes, describing events of the week and making "observations" about our faculty. We eventually cajoled many of our new friends into performing in our theatrical venture. The evening was a great success.

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1. *Editor's Note*: AALL's rotating institutes were designed to provide training in basic techniques applicable to law librarianship. Topics covered were legal bibliography, acquisitions, cataloging, and administration—one per year until the cycle was completed. The rotating cycle of topics was completed three times between 1964 and 1975. For further information about this program, see Laura N. Gasaway & Steve Margeton, *Continuing Education for Law Librarianship*, 70 *LAW LIBR. J.* 39, 47–48 (1977); Anita L. Morse, *New Directions in Education for Law Librarianship*, 70 *LAW LIBR. J.* 329, 331–33 (1977).

Among the pleasures of the Annual Meeting was attending the first CONELL.² Later, arriving at the Shoreham Hotel for the meeting of approximately six hundred law librarians (the largest Annual Meeting then on record), Lolly and I encountered my director at Texas Tech, Mr. U.V. Jones, who made note of our infamous behavior at the institute. He observed that it was unnecessary to introduce the two of us to the Association because we were already so "well known."

As important as what I learned from the formal sessions—which numbered two in the morning and two in the afternoon—I learned the value of good conversation at the pool, the bar, or wherever the opportunity avails itself. One afternoon Lolly and I were kidnapped by Al Coco to visit Mt. Vernon, an educational experience which he thought would be far more valuable than the afternoon session. (We did too!)

Days of meetings and evenings (that lasted into the wee small hours of the next morning) of publisher-sponsored sing-alongs, dancing, and socializing left me both energized and physically exhausted. I had entered a profession which these many years later continues to offer challenges for which the returns are significant. The Annual Meetings have led to numerous professional relationships and to many friendships which have lasted years.

2. *Editor's Note:* The Conference of Newer Law Librarians (CONELL) was established by the AALL Education Committee in 1970 as a way of welcoming newer members into the organization, introducing them to the Association's leaders, and facilitating acculturation into the group. A report on the first CONELL, held on the campus of American University in Washington, D.C., on June 27, 1970, was presented by its director, Peyton R. Neal, at a 1970 Business Meeting. *Proceedings of the 63d Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries: Second Business Session*, July 1, 1970, 63 LAW LIBR. J. 441 (1970).