

Memorial Resolution on the Death of Renee Becker, Assistant Law Librarian and Head Cataloger, Law Library

Renee Salome Becker, age 90, formerly of Middleton, died on September 24, 2012 at the Waunakee Manor. Renee was born on December 20, 1921 in Madison, the youngest daughter of Otto William Schantz and Sylva Meyers Schantz. Renee was the granddaughter of Henry Meyers, the respected Madison Alderman of the 9th Ward (Democrat). Renee grew up on Center Avenue, attending Lapham Elementary and Madison East High School. As a student, Renee worked in the school library and the Madison Public Library. Renee attended the University of Wisconsin, Madison, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Education in 1942 and a Bachelor of Library Science degree in 1948.

Renee followed her future husband, LaVergne Becker, to Washington, D.C. in 1942, where she worked as a librarian at the Library of Congress, a highly respected and coveted job, especially for someone at the beginning of her career. While at the Library of Congress, she was responsible for purchasing, documenting, and filing rare books and documents. In 1943, Renee married LaVergne Addison Becker of Middleton at Pohick Church in Lorton, Virginia.

Upon returning to Madison in 1944, Renee worked part time at the Memorial (University) Library and then full time at the UW Law Library. During her many years at the Law Library, Renee developed considerable expertise in cataloging and classification of law materials, which she generously shared with other law librarians from across the country who wrote requesting her advice. She presented a paper at the 1955 Wisconsin Library Association meeting on law library cataloging. During the 1960s, Renee wrote to the Library of Congress several times, requesting information about the projected completion date of its new classification system for American law. When the new system became available in 1968, she addressed a memorandum to the Law School Library Committee cogently explaining its many advantages and recommending its adoption, which the committee promptly approved. Renee continued to correspond with colleagues and attend national meetings to facilitate the re-classification of the collection. Upon the retirement of Law Librarian Verna Baertschy in 1960, Renee became Assistant Law Librarian as well as Head Cataloger.

Renee particularly excelled as a mentor to her colleagues throughout her career. She was happy to share her knowledge of cataloging, library policies and practices with other librarians. She loved to tell stories of wartime Washington, D.C. and work at the Library of Congress. Renee was always available to give help or advice to her younger colleagues. She retired after 29 years of service to the Law School Library.

Renee was a lifelong advocate of protecting and enjoying nature. An avid outdoors person, Renee particularly loved fishing with her husband, Vern, at their lake house on Lake Mendota's north shore. She also delighted in picnicking, hiking and fishing with family and friends at Wisconsin State and County parks and especially loved taking the Merrimac Ferry to Devil's Lake State Park.

While her professional endeavors are impressive, her greatest gift and legacy was her kind, gentle, demeanor. Renee was the world's best listener. Regardless of the topic, Renee demonstrated how to participate in dialogue in a peaceful and engaging manner. In conversation she gave completely of herself – her undivided attention, tender manner, sparkle in her eyes and soft smile ensured her listeners that they felt special and valued. It was a treat to receive a letter or a card in the mail from Renee. The care and consideration in her clean artistic penmanship and calligraphy enhanced her lyrical, loving message. Renee will be greatly missed, but her love, energetic spirit, and template for kindheartedness will be with us forever.

Renee was preceded in death by her parents, Otto and Sylva Schantz, her sister Jane, her husband LaVergne (Vern); stepsister, Laverne and Marie "Mickey" (Schantz); and stepbrother, Orville Schantz. She was a loyal friend and loving aunt to many nephews and nieces of the extended Becker, Emden, Roller, and Thomas families.

Cindy May
Nancy Paul
Stephanie Kirchner
Becky Soderholm
Tom and Jeanne Thomas