

## In Memoriam: Marie Sheppard

*[Editor's Note: The Journal Board is deeply saddened to note the passing of Marie Sheppard, Editor-in-Chief of the IALL Journal, 1992-1995. Robin McClanahan, colleague and friend of Marie's, shares her remembrances of Marie.]*

The first time I met Marie was when I came to her office for a job interview. I wasn't too sure about working in the Language Lab because having used the facilities as a student I was not at all impressed. However, Marie assured me that the old lab was currently undergoing a metamorphosis and would soon emerge as the Anderson Language Technology Center. Trepidatiously I accepted her offer of employment and thus our collaboration was born.

As a boss/supervisor/manager, Marie was superlative. She led by example and influence—always expecting everyone's best but never perfection. She had this uncanny knack of knowing people's skills and capabilities and encouraged these individuals to do new things, to push the boundaries of their comfort zones—not to try to do it, but to actually accomplish the feat. Marie was my mentor in the truest sense of the word. I learned from her gentle manner how to be a better supervisor and manager, how to be a better team player, but most of all to have more confidence in my abilities.

Marie's belief in people led her to be uncommonly fair and just. When confronted with personnel difficulties, other people-oriented administration woes, and even personal entanglements, she persistently worked toward consensus or compromise with such an optimistic outlook and patience that the situations invariably ended amicably. This is one of the reasons her work as a mediator for the city and county of Boulder was in such demand.

However, Marie was exceedingly disorganized. I recall numerous occasions walking into her office to request some piece of information and she could rarely find it. I'm happy to say that our relationship wasn't all one-sided. She learned from

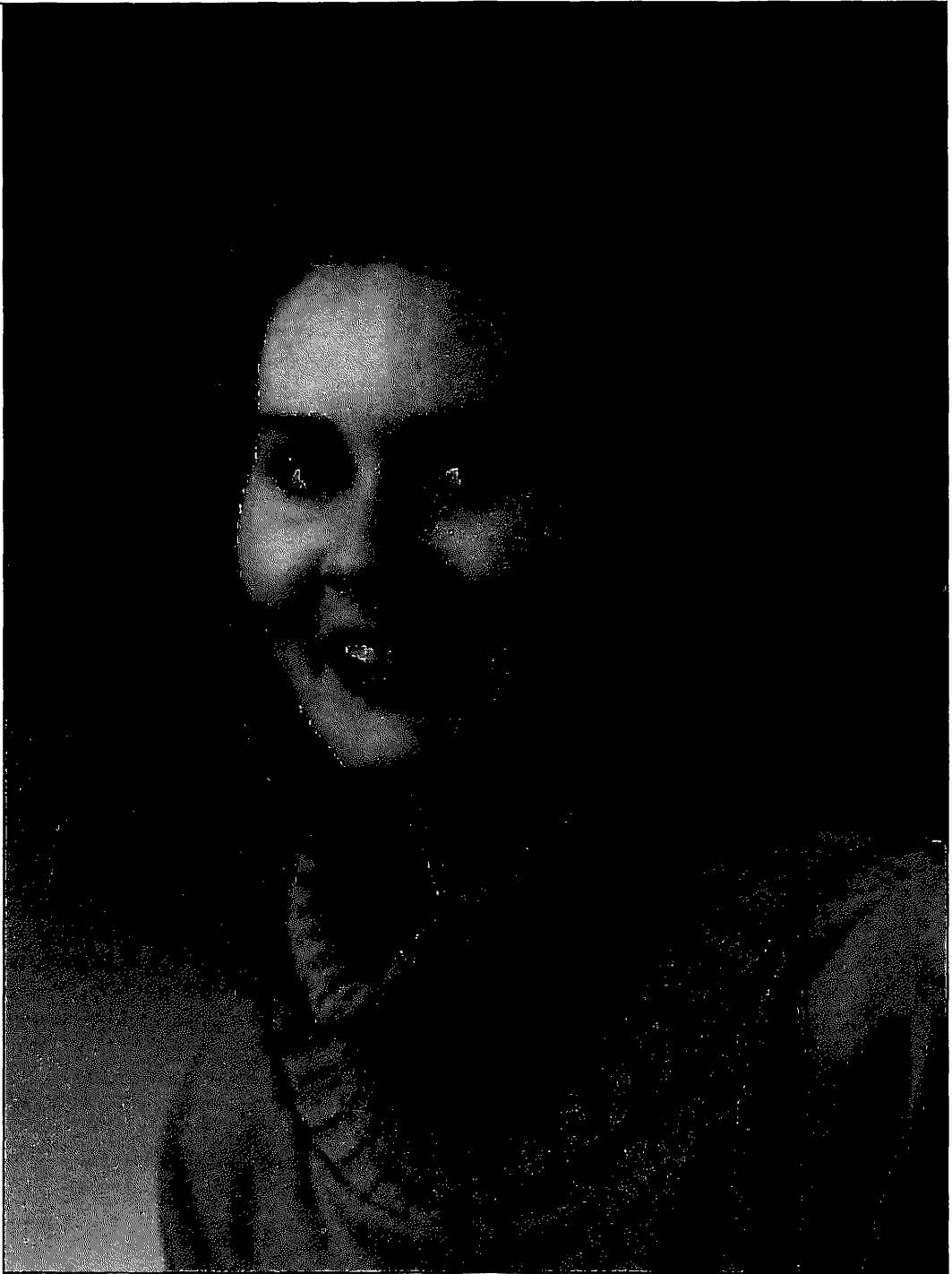
me the usefulness of a day timer, color coding, quick reference sheets and the “only touch a piece of paper once” principle. I balanced her “lighten up, don’t take things so seriously, you don’t have to be perfect” with “pay a little more attention to detail, and write things down.”

The beginning of the school year is a very busy time for the staff—hiring new employees, making work schedules, getting new materials into the labs for student use, etc. Two years after starting work at ALTEC, I was planning my wedding. The best time for the wedding was in August, so I approached Marie with a request to take three weeks off at the beginning of the semester! She knew what a momentous event it would be because she had listened to me plan every phase of my wedding for the entire previous year. She didn’t even hesitate but gave an enthusiastic “Yes!” even when she knew that all my work would be dumped in her lap. I returned from my honeymoon to a frazzled but happy Marie who didn’t want to talk about work but wanted all the wedding/honeymoon details.

Marie enthusiastically embraced IALL. She cared about the organization and its members and wanted to bring well-deserved recognition to lab directors and their efforts. One way she thought she could help was by becoming Editor-in-Chief of the *IALL Journal*. She worked tirelessly on the transformation of the *Journal*—to make it even more informative, scholarly and easy to read. Marie enjoyed the contacts she made with various IALL members who contributed articles, columns, and other information to the *Journal*. Her philosophy was that you could never talk to too many people or learn enough from other people’s experiences. She encouraged many people to join IALL and handed out copies of the *Journal* freely. She once described IALL members to me as a great group of very knowledgeable people who are down-to-earth and really love to have a good time!

When Marie was diagnosed with breast cancer, she met the crisis head-on with a determination, knowledge, and self-possession I have rarely witnessed. She went through chemotherapy, radiation and surgery after surgery with a positive, optimistic attitude and never called attention to her situation. As the cancer continued to return and progress, she never gave up but continued consultation with her “team” of oncologists, surgeons, nutritionists, therapists and exercise physiologists. And yet, at the same time, she carefully prepared her family, especially her son, Gabe, for what the doctors called the inevitable. Her courage and indomitable spirit were truly inspiring.

I believe that Marie died happy. Not because she was leaving this world, but because she lived a full, rich life, doing things that she loved and cared about: having a son and watching him grow up into a loving, compassionate young man; doing pioneering work in language proficiency; getting to know and work with others in her career field; mediating conflicts to peaceful resolutions; painting, gardening and caring for animals; encouraging others to excel and celebrating with them in their success. That is the Marie that I knew and will invariably remember with love and admiration. A part of my heart will always will feel empty without Marie's presence. However, my life has been greatly enriched for having known her. ■



**Marie Sheppard**

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*[Editor's Note: Bill Wyman, Journal columnist, colleague, and friend of Marie's, also shares his remembrances of her.]*

In 1989, I was working in the Academic Affairs Office at the University of Colorado when I was introduced to the newly appointed Director of the Language Lab, Marie Sheppard. Marie was a newcomer to the Boulder campus; I was a 15-year veteran and had racked up 20 years of teaching college-level German. I knew very little about new foreign language teaching technology; Marie was both a veteran Spanish teacher and a seasoned lab professional. Marie must have met dozens of people in her first few weeks on campus; nevertheless, for some reason, she picked me out of that crowd and asked me to join the advisory board which would oversee the remodeling of our creaky campus lab.

Marie, gently determined and cheerful, went right ahead and took me up on any offer I made to help with the Anderson Language Technology Center (ALTEC) project. My first assignment was to audition German instruction software, and there followed a string of others: learn about videodiscs, then about multimedia, later computer platforms. Get up-to-date on oreign language pedagogy. Why aren't the faculty more interested. Sweat the details on the new cubicles. What about the color of the carpet? Where should the Director's office be? How do we get more faculty involved? What—that tiny budget for operating expenses? What—not enough money for a computer and technology specialist? Only *two* weeks until opening?

After ALTEC opened—and on schedule—the tasks kept coming. Could I help with a grant application? Let's have lunch and brainstorm about the budget! What to do when that right person for a staff job turns out to be the wrong person after the hire? Could I teach Internet classes for foreign language faculty? How about an article (or two) for IALL?! What—still that tiny budget for operating expenses? His

unsponsored research grant was not renewed?

These I recall now as moments and vignettes, some blurry, some distinct, and in the center of each frame is the figure of Marie, untiring and unafraid, judicious and generous, professional and adept, leader and friend. It was in the middle of one of those lunches that Marie told me about the cancer, clearly and calmly. She took it much better than I. It took time and more than one pass for me to accept that Marie's physical integrity had been so compromised. She treated my melancholy reactions sympathetically—for a while.

One day, after a medical reversal, she found a subtle and diplomatic way to tell me that from here on, she would keep as her close friends those who could handle what she would have to go through. I got the message. That was the end of the premature mourning for my loss, and the beginning of a new alliance between us. Marie, still gently determined and cheerful, went on caring for her son and for herself with love, grace and courage, never leaving the helm unattended. I went on enjoying the privilege and joy of her friendship, and now the beneficence of her spirit of which I have not—and will not—let go. ■