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Memorial: Veronica Maclay (1948–2000)

¶1 Veronica Maclay, who passed away October 6, 2000, worked at the University of California Hastings College of the Law as a librarian for twenty-seven years. While work was just one facet of her life, such job longevity is remarkable for a relatively young person. Although her work life occurred at this one location for all those years, it was anything but stagnant. She began her career here as the documents and serials librarian, held on to the federal documents responsibility while migrating to the position of archivist for the Roger J. Traynor Center at Hastings in 1992, and during the 1990s began to develop expertise in international legal research, becoming a favorite of the foreign and international law faculty at Hastings.

¶2 She was born Veronica McCrave on November 10, 1948, and grew up in an Irish-American Catholic family on Staten Island. She received a B.S. degree from Cornell in 1970. She worked for a year at the Federal Trade Commission in Chicago as a consumer protection specialist, and as a teacher for a year in the Boston public schools. Then she went to the Graduate School of Librarianship at the University of Denver, receiving an M.A. degree in August 1973. She immediately moved to San Francisco, starting her first, and only, job as a law librarian at Hastings in the same month. (However, she never lost her New York accent!)

¶3 When Veronica arrived at Hastings in August 1973, she learned that she was to be serials librarian as well as documents librarian. She built the federal documents collection at Hastings from scratch. A hint of Veronica's work ethic can be seen in the amazing depository inspection of December 1976. Veronica presided over the inspection until it was completed. She then went home, and before the depository inspector was on the plane back to Washington, D.C., Veronica gave birth to Billy, her first son. Veronica would continue for nearly twenty-four years balancing work and family.

¶4 Veronica would glow whenever she mentioned Dick, the man she married in 1974, or her two sons, Billy (now twenty-four) or Robby (now twenty). It certainly seemed that her greatest joy was in being a wife and mother. After Billy's birth, Veronica, who had been employed full-time, went to half-time hours, job-sharing with Jane Evans who took charge of the California documents part of the job. This experiment was very successful and encouraged others to job-share at Hastings.

¶5 She was the consummate librarian and she loved coming to work every day. In her final illness, she tried to figure out how to get a computer hooked up in her hospital room so that she could do Westlaw searches from her bed. When asked why she would want to do this, she replied that she got a kick out of working on interesting reference questions.

¶16 Veronica was very petite physically but full of energy. Stefan Riesenfeld, one of “her” professors at Hastings, would often ask for the “little one,” although he was scarcely taller than she. Dan Henke called her “Mighty Mite.”

¶17 She was one of the first librarians on the staff at Hastings to make classroom presentations and was also the first librarian to prepare the library guides (e.g., “How to Do a U.S. Legislative History” and “Guide to Federal Agency Decisions”) which preceded the library’s current guidepost series.

¶18 Veronica was the co-author (with Laura Peritore) of *California Government Publications and Legal Resources*¹ and was chairperson of the AALL Government Documents Special Interest Section in 1993–94. She was always active in local documents groups as well. During the 1980s, she was instrumental in organizing an informal brown-bag group which would meet at different law libraries in the Bay Area to exchange documents information. She was always a strong advocate for the wide dissemination of government information through the Federal Depository Library Program. And on a more microcosmic level, she always gave the Hastings Law Library’s administrative assistant a bottle of wine on her birthday each year to express appreciation for her efforts to keep the GPO deposit account well funded!

¶19 Veronica was a very caring person with a great sense of humor and sense of the absurd. She had a very distinctive laugh and she laughed often. In season, she would bring in absolutely stunning roses from her garden for the staff lounge. She loved chocolate (a chocolate donut every morning!) and abhorred mayonnaise and found herself in quite a quandary when one of the librarians baked a mayonnaise chocolate cake for an office party. (The mayonnaise aversion won out that day!) At another point she reported on the ever-strong tendency of Catholic school children to make up impressive sins for the confessional. At her first confession (probably age seven) she reported that she had committed adultery! No one in the conversation could top that one.

¶10 Veronica was a lifelong auction-goer and loved to find a bargain. In more recent times, she had taken up bidding for bargains on E-Bay. She was mom not only to two sons but to a cat and a turtle as well. Her older son, Billy, was married in November 2000. She was so looking forward to being a mother-in-law. And she would have been a wonderful one.

¶11 Veronica was a brave person throughout her life. Her mother died of cancer when she was very young. She moved to San Francisco by herself, not knowing anyone here, and stayed initially at the Y near Hastings (*not* luxury accommodations). Soon after becoming a mother, she was held up at gunpoint at a BART station and had her car stolen, but remained far calmer about the incident than most of us would have.

1. VERONICA MACLAY & LAURA PERITORE, CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES (Am. Ass’n of Law Libraries, Occasional Papers Series No. 3–46, 1991).

¶12 One of the remarkable aspects of Veronica's final illness, noted by many people at Hastings, was that she never talked about being in pain, or even being uncomfortable. Liver cancer is not a pain-free illness. She displayed a very positive and forward-thinking attitude even when nothing seemed to be going right. She tried experimental treatments when standard therapies did not work. She knew the odds were not in her favor and she accepted that fact with courage and dignity. She taught us all something, by example, about the way one negotiates with death. As one librarian here put it, "For me her voice will be forever sweet as she would always turn the conversation away from her to some happy or funny question or incident. I will never forget Veronica."—*Hastings Law Library Staff, Past and Present*

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Law Library Journal

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