

Marian Gould Gallagher Award Speech
Upon Acceptance of the Award
at the American Association of Law Libraries Annual Meeting
San Antonio, Texas, July 18, 2005

by Charles R. Dyer

Thank you, Tory [President of the American Association of Law Libraries]. I would also like to thank Shirley David, the Chair of the Awards Committee, and her committee. Receiving the award from my friend and collaborator is especially nice. I would also like to thank publicly my dear friend Carmen Brigandi Jahns, who put together the application for this award on my behalf, and the many kind friends who wrote letters in its support. Carmen had kept my candidacy secret from me to protect me from disappointment if I did not get it. In truth, I would not have been so disappointed, for I know that there are many very good law librarians who have provided excellent life-long service who have not won. Instead, I am greatly surprised and humbled by this award.

Along my way to this point, I have been mentored and advised by many, including members of my own staff and colleagues my own age and younger. But three mentors from the previous generation of law librarians really gave me a great start. Two, Eileen Searls and Edgar Bellefontaine, won the Gallagher Award together six years ago. The other, Roy Mersky, although not retiring, has won this year. I am overwhelmed to be in their company.

Several associations have seen fit to bestow previous awards on me. The AALL gave me an Appreciation Award when I retired as editor of the Law Library Journal. The San Diego County Bar Association gave me an award for legislative work for California county law libraries. The Southern California Association of Law Libraries gave me the Rohan Service Award. And the State, Court and County Law Libraries SIS gave me the Connie Bolden Award for the publication of the *Sourcebook for Law Library Governing Boards and Committees*. With all of these awards, I always felt that I was just doing my job. And with all of them, I felt that I was singled out from a group of collaborators, all fine librarians to whom I owed a part of those awards.

Last year, the San Diego County Bar Association gave the San Diego County Public Law Library its Distinguished Organization Award. Yet one more award that shows the value of great collaboration. My staff has accomplished so much, and we've come so far.

So it is with the Gallagher Award. It is a lifetime achievement award, but I owe so much to my many collaborators, way too many to name. But I will name three. For the early part of my career, I owe a tremendous debt to Carol Boast, whose standards of excellence are forever imprinted on me. For the last seventeen years or so, I have been fortunate to work on so very many projects with Shirley David, whose graciousness and ability to spur others to great heights has transformed me and many of my other collaborators. And last, but first to me, my dear wife Bert Monroe, whose support and wise counsel has sustained and inspired me.

And now I want to talk about this great association. As many of you know, my wife is a great storyteller, whom others always remember. So once I reflected on the fact that it seemed all our friends in the neighborhood were people I had met through her. I lamented that I was incapable of developing friends myself. But she told me that that was untrue. I have had many friends for many years, scattered across the country. I had met them at the annual meetings, and continue to meet them here. I have a vast network of friends, one that a politician would be jealous of. Yet, among the many people here at this luncheon, nearly all of you have or soon will have, the same large network of friends. Librarians are nurturing, caring people, who make great friends. As we go about our business this week, let's remember that. We are an association.

Of all the recognition moments I have had, one small one stands out in my mind. I was at a town meeting on the new Strategic Plan at the Annual Meeting back in 1990 or '91. When I stood up to say something, Kay Todd took a second to introduce me as the only AALL member who accepted the Long Range Planning Committee's invitation and wrote a letter commenting on the first draft of the Strategic Plan. She went on to say that my letter affected the committee so greatly they felt the necessity to redraft the plan from the beginning.

What I said, but in gentler words, was that the AALL is the American Association of Law Libraries, *not* librarians. Our first mission should be free and open access to legal information, not job security or status for law librarians. I had gained that viewpoint from two things: First was my rather new job just then, working in a public law library. Second was my attendance at a Conference on the Global Responsibility of Law Librarians. A theme of that conference, put on by Roy Mersky at the University of Texas, was that law libraries are essential to democracies and nearly unheard of in totalitarian regimes.

While I am proud of that moment, I am prouder of the fact that AALL and many librarians here today have taken up the cause of free and open access to legal information. AALL's legislative advocacy has made me not only proud to be a law librarian, but proud to be an American. One lone voice does not and will not change things. It takes a chorus, a large chorus, to take up the cause and remain vigilant. I implore all of you to get active and remain active in legislative advocacy. We public law librarians may be on the front lines, so to speak, but you academics and law firm librarians actually have a greater ability to speak out, as you are not tied to job-related silence or required to get board approval before advocacy. Some of you even have academic freedom. There are several among you who have been very active, such as Bob Oakley, Elizabeth Le Doux, David McFadden, and Marta de Paula Cea, and I admire you greatly.

In that same vein, I would also like to congratulate the several California county law librarians who have stepped forward as Shirley David, Richard Iamele and I have been backing out of our work there. I also congratulate the several law librarians in other states who have made truly effective change for the better, including my fellow recipient Mike Miller, who has left Maryland public law libraries in wonderful condition. I also implore those who face severe funding problems and possible closure to keep fighting, as it is truly worth it.

I may have written a letter, but so many people picked up the ball, and that's the point.

So, with considerable humility and a great hope for the future of law librarianship, I respectfully accept this award.