

## Pam Carswell Honorary Life Member of ANZTLA

*Short speech by Philip Harvey proposing Pam for this honour, given at the ANZTLA Conference in Sydney, July 1998*

The first time I met Pam Carswell was upstairs in the old Catholic Library Bookshop when Lawrence McIntosh and I visited to prepare a proposal on possible directions for that library. Sitting in her partitioned office was a determined and intelligent woman who gave quizzical looks to our pondered utterances. It was only later I saw that the quizzical looks were directed not at our questions but at us. In an effort to escape the quizzical expression I pondered certain objects in the room. A battered copy of Dewey, always a good signal for a visiting cataloguer. A most impressive ancient typewriter. The latest work of erudite Catholic theology, with a laminated bookmark at page 190. And a curious four-sided tube that had to be a leftover from the Pope's visit to Australia: a cardboard periscope for looking over the heads of the crowd. It was only upon further acquaintance that I learnt Pam used this periscope to peer over the partition at visitors coming up the stairs. She would then know whether today's workload was particularly onerous. You see, Pam was of the old school of librarian, probably the medieval one. For her the library was primarily the precinct of the librarian. In her ideal library borrowers and users would be banned, leaving the place free for the librarian to get on with the job. When at Lawrence's invitation, she came to the Joint Theological Library to describe the rare books, she would often be heard in the morning when the first people appeared through the door, "Oh! here they come again!". in an aggravated voice. As it happens the bishops thought it best to close the Bookshop Library, the premises now the home (appropriate for Elizabeth Street) of Harley Heaven. But the Bookshop's loss was JTL's gain.

She took to rare books like a duck to water. The sight of Pam carrying 17th century tomes half her height about the place will always remain with me. Massive mornings were spent by Pam checking authorities in that Jesuit treasure trove, *Sommervogel*, or else going down to the Baillieu to cull vital facts from the National Union Catalog in book form. Gradually Pam took up a fortress-like position in the main office, surrounded by battlements of books and all the time glaring from the drawbridge at any intruder on her time and peace. Heaters in strategic positions helped make the whole arrangement cosy.

Having disposed of the rare book cataloguing, Pam became my assistant as catalogue typist-adviser. Batches of new cards went to Pam, who would fill in the headings and return them to me, often with a terse word about a misplaced semi-colon or, even worse, an unplaced semi-colon. She became invaluable, and it must be said that no computer can ever point out the discrepancies and oddities that creep into one's work. As Lawrence would say, "Pam, could you be a second pair of eyes?" One day I might write up the idiosyncratic correspondence on cards that flowed between Pam and me as we bantered about the capitalization of Mortality or conjectured on how many Jacob Neusners there are in the world. (We think there are 17 at last count, all born in 1932.)

Don't take too much notice of the aggravated tone toward the users I mentioned before. Like Jonathan Swift, she liked the individual and disliked the group. On a one-to-one basis or, as we say nowadays, the interface, Pam has always had winning ways and her presence in the library was valued by many.

It was her work as an ARI editor where she truly came to the fore. Her eagle-eyed analysis of the data sheets, and the rosella-like, speed of her corrections, were vital. She had a complete grasp of the guidelines, many of which she had had a hand in. And she had the sensibility of the old style Catholic who had lived through Vatican II which turned out to be a crucial factor in the satisfactory editing of ARI. There is not time now to talk at length about Pam's work on ARI or all the other things that she did to improve the work and the working life of JTL and, by extension, ANZTIA itself.

I will list a few achievements before she went to the Catholic Library Bookshop which have had an influence, directly or indirectly, on ANZTLA. She worked in the fifties and sixties at that stamping ground of Catholic intellectuals, Sheed & Ward's at the top of Bourke Street, Melbourne. She wrote and translated books for that famous publisher, and would appear to have been an adviser, though no doubt she would deny it all now. She has spent a lifetime writing letters to The Tablet and other papers, to paraphrase Don Chipp, "keeping the bishops honest". She worked as one of Dietrich Borchardt's original group of original cataloguers, building up the La Trobe University Library and its religion collection. Probably the only library in the known world named after its librarian, I might add, though the professionalism of Borchardt was observable in very much that Pam did.

For this and a number of other reasons that I have no doubt overlooked it seems only right that ANZTLA consider Pam Carswell as a worthy person to be given Honorary Life membership of the Association. I urge you all to support me in this expression and am sure there will not be a dissenter in the house.

*Philip Harvey*

*"This is a pretty tough library:*

