



The Networker
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IN MEMORIAM: FRANCES RICHARDSON KELLER

The following memorial was delivered by WAWH Past President, Nupur Chaudhuri, on September 29, 2007, at the memorial service for Frances Richardson Keller.

In her autobiographical essay "A Graduate Student's Odyssey," published in *Voices of Women Historians: The Personal, The Political, The Professional*, Frances Richardson Keller wrote that when she started in the 1960s as a Ph.D. student, "women's history, black history and ethnic history were realms in the future." By the time she died, all of these fields had been strongly established in academia. Frances' scholarship, her activities, and her teaching contributed to this establishment. In that collection of essays, Eileen Boris and I claimed Frances and her cohort as "makers of history, both as individual subjects and as a professional generation." One thing we failed to mention that many of these women, especially Frances, were also institution builders. Today, I am going to talk about Frances Richardson Keller, a maker of history and an institution builder.

In the 1960's and early 1970's, like many of her generation, Frances experienced political activism of the student, civil rights, and women's movements. Her experiences inside and outside the classroom impacted her entire professional life. Two main themes emerged in all of her writings: gender and race. Perhaps her experiences as a student in the University of Chicago as well as the outside world motivated her to write her dissertation on Charles Waddell Chesnutt. Chesnutt was an African American novelist and politician who insisted on his African American heritage even though he could have passed for white—a person who, like herself, tried to build a new course for marginalized people.

Frances published extensively. Her books include: *An American Crusade: The Life of Charles Waddell Chestnut* (Brigham Young University, 1978), *Women in Western Tradition: Viewing Our Heritage* (Edwin Mellen, 1989), *Fictions of U.S. History: A Theory and Four Illustrations* (Indiana University Press, 2002). Last year her translation

of Anna Julia Cooper's *Slavery and the French Revolution* was republished by Rowman and Little. In all of her works Frances tried to recover "truth" and bring the marginalized to the center.

Analysis of her professional life and actions shed further light about the professional life of female historians from 1960's to the late 1980's. Women historians hardly had any cohorts in their own institutions, and rarely had any female faculty teaching them as students. They were isolated and without any mentors. Because of budget cuts in the 1970's, many women historians worked as adjunct faculty. Frances met the same fate. She taught as an adjunct faculty member throughout her life. In the early 1970s, she joined the West Coast Association of Women Historians, which was the forerunner of the current Western Association of Women Historians (WAWH). Here she found other women historians like Barbara "Penny" Kanner, with whom she established a life-long friendship. Frances understood the potential of an organization of women historians to promote the interests of women historians. Among all the organizations she was involved with, WAWH was her first love.

Frances was one of the founders of the Sierra Prize, a WAWH-sponsored prize for the best book written by a WAWH member. She believed that the organization needed to promote women historians' work, and awarding a prize was the way to do it. Since 1982, the organization has awarded a prize to thirty-three books. From 1982 to 2006, the prize was \$250. In 2006, Frances and her husband, Bill Rhetta, generously contributed enough money to endow the Sierra Prize. As a result of their generosity, the WAWH board voted to rename the award the Frances Richardson Keller-Sierra Prize, and raise the amount of the award to \$500.00. With this announcement, more donations came in. Many of these additional contributions were made in Bill's memory. At the 2006 WAWH awards banquet, with Frances in attendance, we were able to announce that the award had been

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Carol Gold

This semester I'm teaching a sophomore level historiography course. We are discussing different approaches to history. This week we discussed women's history and read selections from Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Joan Scott. The students' response was ho-hum – "this is old hat. We know all this. We learned it in high school. Of course we understand using gender as a category of analysis. Who doesn't?" I was alternately delighted with their claim to have internalized a feminist approach to history and dismayed that they seem to have missed the extent of the truly radical nature of the feminist challenge to traditional history.

Coincidentally, this week there was a full page ad in the local Fairbanks newspaper congratulating faculty who were tenured and promoted last year. As I always do when I see a page of pictures, I counted the number of women and men. Out of forty-four total promotions last year, eight were women. One woman (out of twenty-two faculty) was promoted to full professor, and the remaining seven were tenured and promoted to associate. Our administration claims it is hiring an equal number of male and female faculty. But a look at these numbers means that we are losing women before they even make it to tenure.

There is nothing new about this picture. It has been going on for decades. But I am trying to figure out how to mesh these two realities – that students believe women are a full part of society, with the reality that they are not. Does the first picture represent an improvement over the days in which we struggled to include women, or does it reflect a complacency in which we have stopped fighting because the battles seem to have been "won"?

Realistically, of course, the answer is that both pictures are accurate. So where do we go from here? I have an on-going discussion with a colleague who keeps reminding me that we need "systemic change." "Yes," I agree, "but how do we get there?" After having tried for forty years to change *the system*, I'm back to helping individuals, students and colleagues, one at a time – mentoring. I firmly believe we need both. We need to send our students out to change the world, *and* we need to help our colleagues with change at a local level. And we need to continue to support organizations like WAWH.

Don't forget to get your passports and come help us change the world in Vancouver!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the members who have joined between June 2 and October 1, 2007!

Margaret Atherton Bonney
Jacqueline Brown
Marie Francois

Fang Yu Hu
Susan Kinkella
Rebecca A. Kosary
Rita Liberti

Kate Liske
Sally Mennill
Jean P. Smith

THANK YOU DONORS

Thank you to the people who have made donations to WAWH between June 2 and October 1, 2007.

Jane Slaughter
Donna T. Thune

Estelle Freedman

Lois Nettleship
Mary and Gregg Ramshaw

The WAWH is a 501(c) (3) tax-exempt organization. Your donations are tax-deductible. Donations of any size are welcome. Donations can be directed to a specific fund or award. Thank you for your continuing support.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

By Amy Essington

Since the last newsletter, we have had a few changes to the WAWH executive board. Thank you to Francesca Miller for her seven years of service on the Founders' Dissertation Fellowship Committee. The new chair is Kimberly Jensen of Western Oregon University. Joining Kimberly on this committee are Sharon Wall (University of Northern British Columbia) and Lois Huneycutt (University of Missouri, Columbia). We also welcome Hend Gilli-Elewy (Cal Poly Pomona) to the Frances Richardson Keller-Sierra Prize committee, who joins chair Eileen Boris (University of California, Santa Barbara) and Patricia Schechter (Portland State University).

Susan Kullman has continued to manage our great new website. She added a slideshow of pictures she took of the 2007 conference. It includes pictures from the whole weekend as well as pictures of Frances Richardson Keller. Check it out at <http://www.wawh.org>. It is well worth a look.

Another recent addition to the web site is a copy of every WAWH newsletter: 119 total issues dating from Summer 1970 to Summer 2007. This project has been five years in the making, starting with locating a copy of each newsletter, then determining if I had them all. Over the years, there have been different naming and numbering systems that required a bit of detective work to sort out. I believe I now have copies of all of the issues. I scanned each one and created a PDF. Now, in addition to the paper copies in our archives at Sacramento State University, our history is also preserved electronically. Some of the early issues did not scan well. If you have copies of old newsletters or conference programs, I am still accepting them regardless of date.

Over the summer, the board voted to accept a policy on sponsoring sessions. You can read this policy on page XX. The board also approved a one-year trial relationship with *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*. WAWH members will receive a 20% discount on subscriptions. Look for this information in the conference packet mailed to members in February. We hope to develop relationships with other journals as well.

As the summer issue went to press, we learned of the death of former Frances Richardson Keller. A tribute to Frances from friends and colleagues appears on pages 7-9. On Saturday, September 29, 2007, Nupur Chaudhuri, Eileen Boris, and I attended Frances' memorial service at Dunsmuir House in Oakland, California. It was a bright sunny day in the east bay. Frances' family, friends, and colleagues gathered to remember her life and her indomitable spirit. In to her family, her professional work was remembered by several colleagues. Nupur spoke of her work with the WAWH and the CCWH. You can read what Nupur said on page 1. Jules Becker, president of the Institute for Historical Study, spoke of her participation in IHS events. Judith Strong Albert recalled her twenty-year tradition of exchanging earring with Frances. Judith's husband, Frantz, recalled frequently being sent into sessions at history conference will Bill Rhetta, Frances' husband, as the audience. Joan Todd recited a lovely poem she had written.

As I wrote in the summer newsletter shortly after learning of Frances' death, our organization has lost a great asset, visionary thinker, historian, and friend. She will be greatly missed. WAWH is now accepting donations in Frances' memory. We hope to bring in enough in donations to raise the prize now named for her from \$800 to \$1000 to honor Frances' memory as its founder.

Planning for the 2008 conference in Vancouver is well underway. Shirley Yee (University of Washington) and Cheryl Warsh (Malaspina University College, Nanaimo, British Columbia) have been attending to the many details of local arrangements. If you are planning to attend the conference in Vancouver, do not forget that U.S. citizens now require passports to travel to Canada and the wait for applications has been long, so apply early if you need a passport. If you have one, check the expiration date!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WAWH Policy on Sponsoring Sessions at Other Conferences (Approved September 2007)

1. The Western Association of Women Historians will sponsor or co-sponsor papers or sessions at academic and professional conferences and meetings as directed by the President.
2. WAWH will sponsor and/or co-sponsor papers or sessions which support the interests of women historians and/or the members of the organization. Sessions will include at least one WAWH member as a named session participant. Special exception may be made to WAWH member participation in this procedure at any time by the President, in consultation with, and approval by, at least two additional WAWH officers.
3. WAWH will offer to sponsor both papers and sessions already accepted as well as sessions under consideration.
4. The President will contact the appropriate committee member or officer of a conference or meeting to request sponsorship.
5. WAWH will work to support diversity in panel content and presenters.

2007-2008 schedule of the Long 18th-Century Seminar at the Huntington Library announced

This is an interdisciplinary seminar, held at the Huntington Library, that features work and speakers from all aspects of the period. Funded by the Early Modern Studies Institute, it is a collaborative effort among the Huntington, UCLA, and USC.

Friday, January 11, 2008:

Daniela Bleichmar, Assistant Professor, Departments of Art History and
Spanish and Portuguese, University of Southern California
"Learning to Look: Art, Science, and Visual Expertise in the 18th Century,"
1-3pm, Overseers' Room, The Huntington Library

Thursday, March 13th, 2008:

Jenny Davidson, Associate Professor, Department of English and Comparative
Literature, Columbia University
"The Hows and Whys of Shakespearean Adaptation in the Eighteenth Century,"
2:30-4:30pm, Overseers' Room, The Huntington Library

Friday, May 2nd, 2008:

Marta Vicente, Assistant Professor, Departments of History and Women's
Studies, University of Kansas
"The Sex of Children: Family, Nature, and Culture in Early Modern Thought"
1-3pm, Overseers' Room, The Huntington Library

These talks are free and open to the public, and refreshments will be provided.

MEMBER NEWS

Tisa M. Anders was appointed Education and Outreach Coordinator for the Greater Denver Interfaith Alliance in June 2007, as well as founded Writing the World, LLC. She presented two papers this summer on the 19th century African American farmer/businessman Junius G. Groves: "Junius G. Groves and the Science of Agricultural," at the Agricultural History Society, Ames, Iowa, in June, and "Agricultural Associations and Kansan Junius G. Groves," in September at the Mid-America Conference on History, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Marilyn Boxer recently presented two papers. "Women's Studies and the Democratization of Higher Education in the United States," was delivered at an international seminar on "Women's Participation in Democracies," at the Casa de Mateus in Vila Real, Portugal in September. The second paper, "Comparative History as Tool: Testing Hypotheses in Women's History," was presented at the University of Lisbon, also in September.

Juana Briones of 19th Century California: A Biography, by **Jeanne Farr McDonnell**, will be published by the University of Arizona Press in Fall of 2008.

Amy Essington made presentations of her research on the integration of the Pacific Coast League, the minor baseball league in the West, at the North American Society for Sport History Annual Conference (May 2007) and the annual meeting of the Pacific Coast Branch of the AHA (July 2007). At California State University, Long Beach, she is serving as the lecturer representative on the General Education Governing Committee as well as the Faculty Center for Professional Development Advisory Board.

Together with Australian historian Victoria Haskins, **Margaret Jacobs** has guest-edited a special issue of *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 28, nos. 1 and 2 (2007), on "Domestic Frontiers: The Home and Colonization."

Sandra Mathews' first book came out late last year, *Between Breaths: A Teacher In The Alaskan Bush* (University of New Mexico Press). Her next book, *American Indians In The Early West*, part of the Cultures in the American West Series edited by Scott Zeman, is scheduled for publication by ABC-CLIO in March, 2008.

Kathleen Peck will present a lecture on the life and work of Grace Nicholson at the Pacific Asia Museum in Pasadena, California. The 1920s Chinese temple building that now houses the museum was once owned by Nicholson. The lecture is scheduled for Sunday, December 2 at 2:00 p.m. Because space is limited, reservations are requested (626-449-2742, ext. 31). Further information is available at www.pacificasiamuseum.org.

The University of California Press has published *Making Music in Los Angeles: Transforming the Popular* by **Catherine Parsons Smith**, Professor Emerita at the University of Nevada, Reno. Full information about the book, including the table of contents, is available online: <http://go.ucpress.edu/Smith>

Jessica Weiss organized the panel "Pedal Pushers, Wings, and Apron Strings: Representations of Teenage Girls, Homemakers, and Stewardesses in the Cold War" and presented the paper "An Answer to the Feminine Mystique: The Housewife and Domesticity in Phyllis McGinley's *A Sixpence in her Shoe*" at the Pacific Coast Branch American Historical Association 100th Annual Meeting, Honolulu, HI, July 2007. The panel was sponsored by WAWH.

Shirley Yee published "Dependency and Opportunity: Socioeconomic Relations between Chinese and Non-Chinese in New York City, 1870-1943" in *Journal of Urban History*, v. 33.

Share your accomplishments. Include your professional news in the next newsletter.

Send submissions for Member News to Annie Russell at networker@wawh.org.

Your information will be included in the next *Networker*.

A reminder e-mail is sent to the organizational e-mail list before the submission due date.

Due dates are listed on the Calendar section of the newsletter.

FRANCES RICHARDSON KELLER CONTINUED

(Continued from page 1)

raised to \$800. As additional donations have arrived in memory of Frances, we hope to raise the award to \$1,000 to honor her vision of creating this book prize. This is an example of her work in institution building.

Frances also worked with Dr. Martin Ridge to establish the Ridge Article Prize for WAWH. She always wanted to publish the achievements of the WAWH, especially the annual meetings. Once she invited a male speaker, a well-known Japanese historian, to address the Saturday luncheon during the annual conference. His speech offended most of us in attendance because of the non-feminist topic. I told Frances that most of the feminists, including me, were extremely offended. Her response to my complaint was, "feminists including you, will forgive me when we get Natalie Zemon Davis elected as the President of the American Historical Association." I did not understand what she meant. Then she clarified her statement. She had invited this historian with the understanding that he would second the motion when she nominated Natalie for the AHA presidency. And Natalie was elected president of the AHA. Frances taught me how to negotiate to get things done.

But more importantly, Frances wanted to help and mentor a younger generation of women historians by spearheading dissertation prize for the WAWH. She knew that women historians hardly received any mentoring. She believed that women historians both as individuals and as members of organizations should nurture and mentor their junior colleagues and graduate students. Hence she took upon herself to mentor her junior colleagues. Her home was open to women historians, whether they were living in the Bay Area or coming to conferences like AHA or WAWH. In 2009, WAWH will be 40 years old. A large part of its success is due to Frances Richardson Keller.

It would be quite difficult to talk about Frances as an institution builder without mentioning Bill Rhetta. He contributed money to the Keller-Sierra Prize. He drove Frances and a number of women historians to the WAWH conferences. He regularly attended the conference. Because of his loyalty to the WAWH, the board decided to make him an honorary member.

Frances' second professional love was the Coordinating Committee of Women Historians in the Profession and Conference Group of Women Historians (CCWHP-CGWH). She served a three-year term as the co-president of this organization. In this organization also, she was one of the initiators for the fundraising for the dissertation prize. As the co-president of CCWHP/CGWH, she wrote numerous letters to various Congressmen and -women to restore the funds for the NEH and or NHPRC. She lobbied to increase funds for the NHPRC because many of her junior colleagues worked in various archives and museums. During Robert Bork's confirmation hearing, Frances and her co-president composed and sent a letter to eight hundred members urging them to call their senators against confirming Bork. Frances saw CCWHP-CGWH "as an organization...representing) the very center of a national and now an international, effort to nurture and to explore a broader comprehension of our origins as they contribute to the development of our future."

Frances also understood the importance of being visible in the professional meetings to establish professional networks, which is important for the survival of women historians. She regularly presented papers at the AHA and the WAWH. Often she set up a panel to help her younger colleagues to present papers at conferences. In her own way, Frances has inspired those of us who worked with her to have enough courage, determination, and generosity to help our junior colleagues the way she did help us. My culture taught me to imagine people as sailing ships. They come on this earth and cast their anchors. When they finish their work, they go away. In that sense Frances' work was done. At our conference in May, she met her lifelong friend "Penny" Kanner, after a ten-year absence. Frances found out that all of the WAWH awards are financially secure. She saw that a new generation of feminist historians is moving into the leadership role of WAWH. She was extremely pleased to find out that this new generation, especially Amy Essington, is committed to the growth of WAWH. Her friend and partner had already gone. Her job was done and so Frances decided it was time to go.

MEMORIES OF FRANCES

When I first met Frances Richardson Keller way back in the late days of the 1970's, I realized I had just met a person who personified to me everything wonderful about women's history. She was engaged in breathing life into history by looking at issues of race and gender, she loved this scholarly work, spoke and wrote about it eloquently, and was firmly committed to supporting women historians who were also trying to bring issues of race and gender to our discipline. Personally, she was warm and encouraging—a remarkable antidote to so much that seemed forbidding about the profession of history that I was just beginning. As she became president of WAWH, I saw firsthand how she could work with other people to bring about some positive changes in history. Her founding a book prize for the WAWH clearly demonstrated that she was a can-do person with admirable dreams who had the moxie to move them into reality. As one of the first recipients of this prize, I knew firsthand how important that moxie would be to so many of us. When she invited me to contribute an essay to the volume she was publishing on *Women in the Western Tradition*, I was so thrilled. Her generosity to us women historians and her energy to support us deeply impressed me. One of the high points of so many conferences that I attended was to reconnect with Frances and with her very devoted and dapper husband, Bill Rhetta. Their gift to endow the Sierra Prize is a lasting legacy for this remarkable woman who gave her heart to history and to women historians.

-Mary Elizabeth Perry

I remember her mostly for the cheerful expression and warmth with which she always greeted me—and especially for having continued to treat me as a friend and colleague during my years as academic vice-president at SFSU, when all-too-many faculty could see in me only the administrator. WAWH will never be the same without her welcoming presence.

-Marilyn Boxer

Frances served on the board of directors of the Women's Heritage Museum, now the International Museum of Women, for years, and memories of her contribution abound with me, the organization's founder and Executive Director, and I am sure with many others. One particular event she planned and brought to fruition stands out for me: She invited Blanche Wiesen Cook to speak shortly after volume one of her biography of Eleanor Roosevelt was published. Frances knew how to choose timely subjects, but she also appreciated the importance of venues that connected with the subject. She arranged for Blanche to speak at the Delancey Street Foundation, a low income housing project that was beautiful and beautifully located on the Embarcadero in San Francisco, and that had a well-thought-out program of assistance for residents to learn to earn. Blanche was quite pleased to be featured in a place that Eleanor Roosevelt would have been proud to be connected with.

-Jeanne Farr McDonnell

In the 1980s, annual meeting of the AHA was held in New York City. The main convention hotel was going through a major renovation. During those days, CCWHP board members used to arrive on Thursdays. They would meet for dinner and they would attend the evening sessions. Frances came with her husband Bill Rhetta. I shared room with Mollie Davis.

In the evening, Mollie Davis, Frances Richardson Keller, Penny Kanner, few others, and I went to dinner and then attended the evening session. After that, we met in the bar. We all went to our room around midnight. About 12:30 or 12:45am Frances called me and told me she had misplaced Bill. I asked her what she meant by misplacing Bill. Well, she opened the door of her room, there was another guy sleeping on the bed, and he woke up extremely surprised to find Frances in the room. Frances told him that she has made a mistake and he should go back to sleep. It took the hotel another 30 minutes to find Bill. What happened in their original room, the television was not working so the hotel gave a different room to Bill. Since Frances did not check with main desk, she did not know. When she went back to the hotel desk, the shift changed and the staff did not know anything about it.

-Nupur Chaudhuri

MEMORIES OF FRANCES

Frances Richardson Keller, Ph.D., was a noted historian, a feminist, an activist, and a woman admired and respected by a national and international community of scholars. She was well published and always actively working—researching, writing, learning, and sharing. And it may be the last attribute for which she will be most remembered. In just the last few days I heard several of her friends use the same phrase, “She took me under her wing,” and gave freely of her time and talent to “help me at a time when I was new to [the field] and struggling.” After attending a conference with her in May, I came to the conclusion she wanted to mentor everyone within earshot. She seemed completely ego-less. She was encouraging, nurturing, supportive, and incredibly generous to other scholars. I was another she had taken “under her wing.” She encouraged me at every turn, introduced me to influential colleagues, and was so inspiring that, as much as I fought it, she had convinced me to return to my work—my scholarship, and my art.

In the last months of her life, I had become Frances’s designated “helper”—a position I considered a privilege and an honor. Being in her company seven days a week was a great pleasure. I jumped out of bed with a smile knowing I would be greeted with a lovely, “Good Morning, Joanna,” that always made me feel special. Though my time was punctuated with housekeeping, I so respected her and wanted her to have the comfortable and clean environment she deserved that it was an honor to be the person who could make her life easier and more pleasant. And because we were preparing for her move into a beautiful new apartment, I was the lucky companion who was there to hear the stories she remembered when we discovered treasures long forgotten tucked away in drawers or packed away in boxes. Pictures of her mother always evoked stories that inevitably ended with, “you’ll have to read about it in my book.” I hope we will all get the chance to read *that* book, tentatively titled, *An Adirondack Story: How a Village Girl Became an Historian*, a memoir she was just finishing.

Frances was born into wealth and privilege in Lowville, New York, the Adirondack village of her memoir. The family had servants to do everything for them. As most children assume their environment is exactly the same as all other children’s, Frances also took her situation for granted. She was confused when she felt isolated from other children. But her strongest memory connected with her background of privilege was seeing how lost her mother was after her father’s death. Clearly she was affected by the loss of her father. Frances was only in her teens, but it seemed like it was her mother’s response that had stayed with her. She returned to this story time and again. I could see it in her eyes, she was visualizing her mother, and the look on Frances’s face was one of confusion, sadness, and even pity. Her mother had no idea how to take care of herself. She had married young, gone directly from her father’s house to her husband’s and had always been cared for by others. Frances saw her unable to make decisions, unable to stand on her own without the support of a man. Perhaps this mark on Frances’s psyche contributed to the direction of her life, her activism and her feminism.

Frances had a bumpy beginning in academia. She and Wellesley were ill suited for each other, but when she transferred to Sarah Lawrence College, she had found her home. Independent thinking was encouraged. She felt supported and stimulated. She began to feel intelligent and successful. She graduated in 1935, and shortly thereafter she met Chauncey Keller, who she would eventually marry. She was ambivalent about the match and tried to break it off, but before she knew it, she had been convinced to go against her instincts, the engagement was announced and an elaborate wedding followed. However, a honeymoon in Europe, crossing on the Queen Mary, and a new life in New York City were not altogether unpleasant. She and Chauncey had an active social life, but soon Frances began to feel out of touch with the world around her. From their home at 86th and Fifth Avenue she did not see the tenements or bread lines she began reading about. She wondered how much her privileged education had really taught her and began to educate herself by reading everything she could. She was taking courses that would lead to a master’s degree when she found she was pregnant. This prompted more research, this time in infant and child care with which she had no practical experience. But all was fine, her first son, whom she “loved more than life,” was healthy and happy. She had three more children who continued to be the lights of her life. After the children and several moves, however, Frances and Chauncey had grown farther apart. They were in Ohio when Frances finally decided to divorce, at a time when divorce was not common and had been taboo in her own family. She was nearly 50 and still in Ohio the year her divorce was final, the same year she received her master’s degree. It was time for the doctorate she longed for.

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MEMORIES OF FRANCES

(Continued from page 8)

In large part it was brazen naiveté that got her admitted to graduate school at the University of Chicago. She had already been turned down at other institutions for 1), being a woman, and 2), being over 35. With nothing to lose, she went on the offensive when she walked into the offices of the history department. She came with samples of her work and told them that she was a single parent with children at home, but within a week she received her answer and a new adventure began. It was a lot of work made more difficult for the above reasons. She was constantly reminded of the prejudice against women at the University; women of child bearing age, women with children, women with husbands who were probably just indulging a hobby, unmarried women who were probably were just looking for husbands. Her feminism and activism began there.

She had just passed her qualifying exams when a friend convinced her that this was an occasion that had to be celebrated. She did not really want to go, but changed her mind at the last minute, taking her children Bill and Julie with her. It was at that party that she met Bill Rhetta, an attorney well known and respected as a political activist in Chicago. The late 1960s were turbulent years. We were living in “interesting times” and it was during these times that Frances Richardson Keller, the burgeoning scholar beginning her dissertation and Bill Rhetta, a street smart, politically active lawyer were becoming closer friends. They may have seemed mismatched, but they had much in common and their differences complemented each other. Most of Frances’s intellect had come from books and formal education. Bill Rhetta was also intelligent, but much of his development had come through experience. Frances said he had “street smarts” of which she knew nothing. Both of them were smart, passionate, interesting and interested in everything around them. They married in 1969, and lived in Chicago until they decided to make a change. All of Frances’s children were now at college and she was completing her work on Chesnutt, so naturally, they decided to go to France and live in Paris for a year.

When they returned to the United States, they decided to settle in the San Francisco Bay Area—to our good fortune. Frances continued to be an active scholar and an active feminist. She and Bill were also engaged in many political causes, most involved the unresolved core issues of race and class in this country. Bill Rhetta was always supportive of Frances’s work. She retained and was known by what she called “her professional name,” Frances Richardson Keller. I only heard their doorman call her Mrs. Rhetta. Bill was happy to take a back seat to Frances and her scholarship. They enjoyed an uncommon mutual respect and love that took them through 37 years of marriage. Frances lost Bill just last winter. Although she was approaching her 93rd birthday, she was still an active, admired, and well respected scholar. Within the last decade alone she had written *Fictions of U.S. History: A Theory and Four Illustrations*, and *Anna Cooper and International Repercussions of “Slavery and the French and Haitian Revolutionists,”* as well as the memoir, yet unpublished, *An Adirondack Story*.

In the time I was with her she was active and happy, visiting friends and planning for the future. We had a great time the day before she left for Cleveland. We even stopped at Fenton’s for ice cream. She was looking forward to her beautiful new apartment. She was to move July 2, and I had already assembled a container garden for her expansive balcony complete with climbing roses, night blooming jasmine, dwarf citrus trees, a strawberry patch, herbs, and flowers that would bloom in every season. She was so excited every time we talked about it. She did not know that it was ready to install. I was going to surprise her with it when she returned. But she did not return. She slipped away. She did miss Bill; for so many years he had been there beside her. Ironically, she was on her way to inter his ashes at the grave site she would eventually share with him. Perhaps down deep she just decided she would rather stay with him and save herself the extra trip.

She was an amazing woman. I actually knew her for less than ten years, a relatively short time considering the friendships she cultivated and kept close for decades, but I feel a great hole in my life. I will miss her, but I will never forget her. I am incredibly grateful that I was able to spend so much time with her the last months of her life. I was honored that she asked me and privileged to have been that close to her. She was such a vital force it is hard to believe she is actually gone. After all, she just went to Cleveland.

For those of us who loved Frances Richardson Keller-Rhetta, she will always occupy a place in our hearts. And her legacy will continue as she will continue to inspire us to emulate her generosity of spirit.

-Joanna Maria Franco de Menezes

MEMORIES OF FRANCES



Frances and Bill Rhetta

MEMORIES OF FRANCES



Frances Richardson Keller Rhetta
1914 – 2007

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

WAWH 2008 Conference

May 16-17, 2008
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Join us for our first venture
outside of the United States.
Bring your passports!

WAWH 2009 Conference

Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, CA
April 30-May 3, 2009

WAWH 2010 Conference

Southern California
TBA

VOLUNTEER FOR THE WAWH

There are many ways individuals can help support the WAWH.
Contact Amy Essington at amyessington@wawh.org if you are interested or have ideas to share.

Award Committees

As stated by the newly approved Constitution (2006), beginning next year, award committee members will serve staggered three year terms. This will mean that each year each committee will require a new committee member.

Conference Assistance

Maybe you attend the conference, but are not able to commit to the hours of participating on a program committee or local arrangements committee. There are many smaller jobs that occur at the time of the conference, and volunteers are always needed.

We would like to reach out to members who have never held a board position, If there are board positions for which you would like to be considered, in the future, please contact Amy Essington and submit your name.

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WAWH Membership Renewal Form

The date on the mailing label of your *Networker* is the year your membership expires. Membership runs conference to conference. A printable form is also available online at www.wawh.org. Thank you for keeping your membership current.

Become a Member of WAWH Today or Renew Your Membership

This is a 1) _____ new 2) _____ renewal 3) _____ gift membership.

Name _____

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This is a HOME or WORK address (Circle one) For renewals: this is an updated address YES or NO

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Publish my info in the directory YES or NO

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Send me an email *Networker* YES or NO

Include me on the organizational email list (only info, reminders, announcements) YES or NO

Membership Level	Fees
Full Time Employed	\$25
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Lifetime Membership	\$500

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I have enclosed a check for _____

Make checks payable to WAWH. Membership runs conference to conference.

Please clip form and send with check to:

WAWH, 3242 Petaluma Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90808-4249, amyessington@wawh.org

MEMBER NEWS

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Notice of publication or other member news _____

Use additional sheet if necessary. Send to Amy Essington, 3242 Petaluma Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90808-4249, or email it to networker@wawh.org.

Your information will be included in the next *Networker*.

WAWH CALENDAR

- Deadline 2008 Conference Proposals - November 1, 2007
- Deadline for all 2008 WAWH awards and prizes - January 15, 2008
- Mailing of 2008 conference program to current members, post online - early February
- Deadline for submissions for Spring 2008 *Networker* - February 1, 2008
- Mailing of Spring 2008 *Networker* - March 1, 2008
- 2008 Conference Pre-registration deadline - April 1, 2008
- 40th Annual Conference, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada - May 15-18, 2008

The Networker

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