OBITUARIES

Donald Washburn, D.D.S., B.L.S.

Born in Brimley, Michigan, a town of 500 permanent residents and 1,500 summer tourists, Donald Washburn was privileged to enjoy an early way of life that taught a certain sanity, an appreciation of nature and people, a quiet morality, a capacity for hard work, and the ability to evaluate judiciously and kindly the acts of others. He received a B.A. from Albion College in Albion, Michigan, and his D.D.S. from Northwestern University Dental School. He practiced dentistry for a time but realized that it was not for him. Having a curious mind of scholarly bent and a love and aptitude for languages, he entered the University of Chicago’s Graduate Library Science School, from which he was graduated.

From 1946 to 1948, he was bibliographer with the quartermaster of the U.S. Army in Chicago, and, before moving on to the American Dental Association (ADA), he spent a year as a research consultant and assistant research librarian at the John Crerar Library. In 1949, he was appointed librarian and director of the ADA’s Bureau of Library and Indexing Services.

Under his direction, accomplishments were many, and the bureau advanced significantly in all departments. In 1949, the staff numbered five and one-half; eventually, it numbered twenty-three. The growth in library holdings was fivefold. He revised the classification system, properly housed the archives, and organized the historical and gift collections. Dentists in every part of the country were grateful for the package library, which includes 3,500 packages covering 2,200 subjects. The most extraordinary contribution to dentistry and librarianship was the greatly expanded scope of coverage of dental literature in the Index to Dental Literature.

From the early 1950s and until his retirement, Don was the single most constructive figure on the dental library scene. Under his able leadership, the ADA sponsored several conferences on the dental subject headings used in the Index to Dental Literature and expanded the Black Classification for Dental Literature for use in libraries. The Dental School Library Criteria devised was submitted to the Council on Dental Education for use in school accreditation visits. Later, he gave his cooperation, support, and influence to the Guidelines for Dental School Libraries project sponsored by the American Association of Dental Schools. June Glaser and Frank Mason have updated and revised the Guidelines, which were accepted by the MLA Board.

Librarians with dental collections all over the world will attest to his generous guidance and gifts of duplicate titles. For two terms he was vice chair of the Subcommittee on Documentation of the Federation Dentaire Internationale’s Commission on Dental Research. He was responsible for the ADA workshop conferences on dental nomenclature for many years. As editor of the Bulletin of the History of Dentistry from 1963 to 1969, he elevated the Bulletin from a mimeographed news sheet to a printed scholarly publication. He was president of the American Academy of the History of Dentistry and was the recipient of their Hayden-Harris Award. Singly and with coauthors, he participated in many ADA conferences on dental journalism and American Association of Dental Editors meetings. He had numerous dental and library publications to his credit, and he belonged to eleven dental and library organizations. The dental profession, recognizing his many contributions as editor, author, officer, committee worker, and efficient director of the bureau, honored him by electing him to the American College of Dentists. He was secretary/treasurer of its Illinois Section.

Don became an MLA member in 1949, and served the association as program and entertainment chair of the Milwaukee Convention Committee, member of the Subcommittee of Curriculum and Standards for Medical Librarianship Committee, assistant manager and business manager of the Bulletin from 1953 to 1956, MLA Board member for one year in 1958, chair of the Standards for Medical Librarianship Committee in 1959, convention chair for the Sixty-first Annual Meeting in Chicago in 1962, treasurer of MLA from 1967 to 1969, and conductor of the dental literature course in MLA’s continuing education program.

In 1970, he was further distinguished with the honor of the MLA presidency. Among the myriad issues of concern were reorganizing the records at headquarters, the resolution to expand the Medical Library Education Program, and the appointment of a director of medical education. “I can think of nothing more practical for the Association members to do than to sort out all of our activities that belong in the Central Office, put them there and pay for them . . .” He wore the MLA presidency mantle well.

Before his retirement from the ADA, Dr. Washburn acquired an eighty-acre farm in Alger County in southwestern Michigan with his family, where they grew alfalfa and trees and were happily trying to contribute to wildlife conservation. A busy father, he also found
time for nondental, nonlibrary activities. He served a term on the Board of Education of Bremen Community High School, and aided and abetted Little League baseball. He was a former member of the vestry of the Episcopal Church in New Lenox, Illinois, and of the vestry of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Allegan, Michigan.

Delighting in happenings, Don lent his light and airy touch to allow them to come about on alternate Thursdays. Librarians of Chicago's Near North Side and any from afar who wished to come—and many did—found a noon hour interlude of good talk, food, and laughs with him at the ADA buffet.

This uncommon man of great humility had a real gusto for the intellectual life, but seemingly had no dogmatism or irreversible preconceptions. His tolerance and breadth of ideas and facts were well known to his staff, colleagues, and friends. He was a wholesome character whose personality sparkled with cool urbanity, a ready chuckle, and a light-hearted preference for the sunny side, through the grueling labors and anxieties that beset anyone in an administrative position.

Donald Washburn died on September 10, 1992, at his home. His survivors are his wife, Ruth; daughters Mary Suphan of New Windsor, New York, and Melissa Washburn of Wayland, Michigan; sons Donald Jonathan Washburn of Mt. Druitt, New South Wales, Australia, and Andrew Washburn of East Grand Rapids, Michigan; a sister, Isabel Sheppard, of Worthington, Ohio; a brother, George Washburn, of Jackson, Michigan; and grandchildren Alan, Beth, Judith, Annie, Jane, and Susan. An exchange-student son, Dr. Ben Al- dan of Saipan, also survives.

A memorial service was held Saturday, September 18, officiated by the Reverend Terry Haughn at the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Allegan. Interment was in the family plot, Hudsons Corners Cemetery, Allegan. One hundred sixty-two people attended the memorial service, coming from as far away as New Hampshire and California, including many classmates and bureau heads of the ADA.

We shall miss his wisdom and his gentle strength.

Minnie Orfano
Chicago, Illinois