

PHYLLIS T. DIRCKS: AN APPRECIATION

Some years ago the late Thomas F. Marshall III, a former president of ASTR, said that he wished his term to be remembered for the establishment of the *ASTR Newsletter*, and praised with warm admiration the contribution of Phyllis Dircks to its professionalization. Without doubt the *Newsletter* is the heart of the Society, but how many of us think about its editor? Do we ever stop to ask where ASTR would be without the dedicated service of Phyllis Dircks for the past twenty, almost unsung, years?

Selfless service has been characteristic of Phyllis's contributions to the Society. She has nurtured the *Newsletter* from its days as typewritten/duplicated 8x11 sheets to its present sleek professionalism. The job has not been an easy one, because she performs every task: gathering the material, chasing after recalcitrant contributors -- and making last-minute changes for them -- editing, proofreading, negotiating with printers, haggling with her own institution, and then looking after the mailing of the finished product. No matter what the disaster anticipated by a dilatory contributor or concerned officer, Phyllis remains unflappable and unfailingly supportive. In short, she, like the *Newsletter*, is indispensable.

Phyllis has also been receptive to changes, as anyone possessing back files of the *Newsletter* can attest. No matter how much extra work a new feature would mean for her, Phyllis has always been agreeable. Thanks to her flexibility, we now have a fine conduit of information, as well as organizational data concerning the Society: the budget, minutes of the business meeting, etc. The feature articles are always well chosen and worth rereading because of their varied topical range, appealing equally to the disparate interests of the membership.

In addition to all this, Phyllis is the archivist of the Society. Officers and members now routinely deposit with her their papers, diskettes, and correspondence for sifting and indexing. She has a true sense of history and institutional memory. In this way she works for the future as well as past and present.

Even more astonishing is the fact that Phyllis has quietly and efficiently continued her own scholarship, publishing numerous articles and two books: a critical study of David Garrick (Twayne, 1985), and an edition of two librettos of Kane O'Hara (Garland, 1987), during her tenure as Editor. She is also an exemplar for many women scholars as one who has achieved it all: a notable career and a family (five children), together with the warm emotional support of her husband, fellow scholar Richard Dircks. ASTR is most fortunate to have such a loyal member: learned, efficient, kind, and dedicated. She deserves our gratitude and respect for all that she has done and continues to do for ASTR.

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