A Sharing Life
A Friends' Personality
By Gordon Eriksen

Small towns are the backbone of this nation. One of their special characteristics is that almost everyone knows everyone else, and there is often a sharing among the citizens that builds a caring "helpfulness" throughout their daily lives and their work. Archbold is such a place, a "small town" in the rich, farming country of northwest Ohio. There was found the Schultz family: three girls, Helen, Bettina, and Sue, and two boys, James and Richard. We shall follow the career of one small town person, Bettina, who translated a concern about the needs of others into a lifelong profession. Bettina and her siblings are products of the Archbold public schools. Bettina, the musical one, went on to Capital University in Columbus where she earned a B.M. in vocal and choral music. After graduation, she found a position in the music library at Ohio State University. There, although music was still of great interest, library services sparked a different kind of enthusiasm. The following year she taught vocal and general music for grades 1-12 in a public school in northern Ohio, but then a move to Chicago took her back to the library field working in a multicultural environment in the Acquisitions Department at the University of Chicago, Circle Campus, where she could not help but notice that there were many who did not have access to the wealth of resources that others had available. Still another transition gave her experience at the University of Cincinnati library where she added to her acquisitions and resource sharing background.

Then came a major geographical change to the far west and a new climate—that of Yuma, Arizona. Along with that long distance move, music again came to the forefront of Bettina’s life as she served as manager of seasonal ticket sales for the Southwest Symphony, and sang the lead in Pietro Mascagni’s Cavalleria Rusticana. But libraries were in her blood, and when she had the opportunity, she quickly accepted a position as head of reference at the Yuma City-County Library. In the desert and far from other cities, the Yuma library served both California and Arizona patrons, among them U.S. Marine aviators, army engineers, miners, ranchers, and multitudes of “snowbirds”—the experiences with differing needs are still valued by Bettina.

In the 1970s, the required credential for most professional library positions was the master’s degree from an accredited program. Bettina chose the library school at the University of Arizona where she added to her acquisitions and resource sharing background. Then came a major geographical change to the far west and a new climate—that of Yuma, Arizona. Along with that long distance move, music again came to the forefront of Bettina’s life as she served as manager of seasonal ticket sales for the Southwest Symphony, and sang the lead in Pietro Mascagni’s Cavalleria Rusticana. But libraries were in her blood, and when she had the opportunity, she quickly accepted a position as head of reference at the Yuma City-County Library. In the desert and far from other cities, the Yuma library served both California and Arizona patrons, among them U.S. Marine aviators, army engineers, miners, ranchers, and multitudes of “snowbirds”—the experiences with differing needs are still valued by Bettina.

In the 1970s, the required credential for most professional library positions was the master’s degree from an accredited program. Bettina chose the library school at the University of Arizona, and graduated in December 1977. After graduation, she accepted a temporary position with the University of Arizona Libraries central reference department. This was followed by a position with the University’s Agricultural Extension Service that was funded under a NASA grant to research foods to grow on future planned space stations. A continuing interest in outer space began with that project.

With her degree in hand, she looked back to the Midwest and found the right opportunity at Western Michigan University where she was hired as Head of the interlibrary loan office at WMU; today that unit is known as Resource Sharing. Those who recall her efforts during those years admire her ability to cope with a rapidly expanding service that was located in a crowded, fishbowl-like, oddly-shaped room on the main floor of the “old” Waldo Library. She also supervised the Southwest Michigan Educational Library Project (SWELP) which provided reference services and interlibrary loan to over 175 public,
academic, and special libraries in the 16 counties of southwest Michigan. Her previous library experiences gave her knowledge of the needs and concerns of all types of libraries.

In 1987, Bettina assumed the additional responsibilities of Library Development Officer, a position that required grant preparation and solicitation of support for the University Libraries. In 1990, she was appointed Interim Assistant Dean of Libraries for Research and Regional Access, and in 1991, Assistant Dean for Library Resources, a position that she currently holds. Among her responsibilities are: administering the collection development and management activities relating to library materials including development of the allocation for the library's materials budget; administering the resource sharing, interlibrary loan, and distance education library services; providing leadership in library fund raising, gifts, and grants; and monitoring library publications and public relations activities. Her experience in resource sharing has led to the development of and participation in cooperative regional and statewide programs in collection development and interlibrary loan. She has also served on national committees such as the Center for Research Libraries Advisory Committee and OCLC's Resource Sharing Advisory Committee. Bettina is also active in the American Library Association, and currently serves on committees dealing with collection development and distance learning.

One of her favorite projects is the Friends of the University Libraries. Involved from the beginning in the development of the Friends' organization, Bettina has served as treasurer of the organization, and is its current president. She oversees the successful book sales sponsored by the Friends, and is a major supporter of the lecture series initiated by the Friends in 1997. She enjoys meeting and talking with members of the Friends, and encourages anyone interested in joining the Friends, or who wants to attend an activity sponsored by the Friends, to call or write her personally (616 387-5143 or Waldo Library, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008).

As one might guess, much of Bettina's time is centered in her work at the University Libraries, and activities within the University. Regardless, she is always willing to visit bookstores and public libraries, is a serious member of an investment club, is often found at the symphony and other community musical events, is keenly interested in travel, and, of course, is enthusiastic about "getting together" with friends. But, above all, some people would note her love of cats. Bettina Meyer is a cat person. She is especially fond of calicicos, the three-colored cats that are always female. She can regale you with tales of the several that have owned her, and, particularly, the current grouping of Molly, Muffin, and Murphy. A prominent piece of furniture in her home is a "jungle gym" for her cats—some five feet tall, it occupies a corner of her favorite room, and one or more of the "M" cats is invariably found on one section or another—resource sharing even at home.

Carlson Orates...

By Galen Rike

Guest speaker Lewis Carlson, Professor of History, WMU, entertained and enlightened members at the Friends' meeting held November 4, 1998 in the Edwin and Mary Meader Rare Book Room in Waldo Library. Speaking enthusiastically about "An Oral Historian's Work," Professor Carlson described the role of the oral historian with a special emphasis on the fact that he "tries to encourage [his] students to approach learning with an open mind, but with an awareness that values dictate most of our historical choices."

The Book Man

By David Isaacson

[Mrs. Jones, may I see you for a moment?] Melvil asked, rather sheepishly.

"Yes, Melvil, what can I do for you?" Mrs. Jones replied, as she looked up from a six-inch stack of pages printed from a nearby computer terminal.

"I don't want to bother you, but I have a question I'm not sure I can handle out at the reference desk. I didn't want to turn the client away so I told him to wait while I sought assistance from the director of the information center. Ordinarily, I wouldn't trouble you, but this man's request wasn't covered in our retrievability class last year in information access school."

"Alright, Melvil, calm down and batch your thoughts together. Every new information specialist can expect a few ambiguous queries when he or she is an intern. Perhaps you're having a little spell of down time? Vent your concept confusion—it will clear your system."

"Mrs. Jones, there's a man out there who says he wants a book."

"What did you say, Melvil?" "A client says he wants to see a book." Melvil was beginning to be quite flushed.

"I'm pleased you referred this matter to me, Melvil. You were perfectly within your duty not to dismiss this query. This ought to be a viable learning experience for you. You know, the last time someone made such a request was in 2001. This man must be very outmoded. Actually, I think we can dispense with this by transferring it to archives. I'll just access the interactive intranet and see if Arnold Vobble can help us."

"Hello, A.V., is that you? Have you a few moments to spare on an antiquarian problem? No, I'd rather not discuss it over the intranet—it involves a ticklish issue of intellectual freedom."

Mrs. Jones and Mr. Dewey walked over to the transdepartmental transport portal and pressed the button for archives. Within a few milliseconds they were standing in front of Mr. Vobble. They had not arrived at an optimum moment.

Continued on page 4