From Seeking to Finding
A Friends' Personality

When asked to prepare a “personality profile” of Mary Ann Bowman for Gatherings, I was delighted since I knew her to be witty, articulate, bright, a woman with a ready smile and infectious laugh. All of this was reconfirmed in an interview that lasted over two hours and never quite came to closure since her life and work reflect Sophocles’ quotation, “Who seeks shall find.”

Mary Ann Bowman was born and grew up in Crawfordsville, a small college town in west-central Indiana. From this classic rural setting, Mary Ann grew and, when of age, chose a fine liberal arts school, The College of Wooster, in Ohio, where she graduated with a degree in German, worked first in a library, and met her future husband, Joel Bowman. Without a specific job available, she followed in the footsteps of many of her contemporaries and migrated west to California and Berkeley where she took a library position at the University of California. She also continued her relationship with Joel and, within a short time, they were married. Her library work motivated her to attend the graduate library school and obtain a master’s degree at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The early sixties were wonderful years to be a librarian in search of a position, since the demand far exceeded the supply. Mary Ann was hired by mail as Assistant Head of the Engineering Library at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign campus. Not only was the transaction done without an interview, Mary Ann had little or no background in science, mathematics, or engineering. She was, however, an exceptional librarian with a dedicated following.

While Mary Ann was successfully providing library service to engineering students, Joel was working on a master’s degree in English literature. But the mid-sixties were traumatic years in our history and, in 1966, Joel was called to serve in the U.S. Army and sent to Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, for basic training. Mary Ann followed him, and a library position as a cataloger was created for her at nearby Austin Peay University, in Clarksville, Tennessee.

Joel, however, had strong convictions about the war in Vietnam, and he refused to sign the military oath or to carry weapons. The Army, not accustomed to such resistance, did not know how to handle his adamant beliefs. After only ten months in Kentucky, Joel was transferred to Ft. Sam Houston in San Antonio, and Mary Ann again moved and was fortunate enough to have Trinity University, San Antonio, also provide her with a position. Another ten months passed, and this time Joel was sent to Viet Nam as a non-combatant. There, Mary Ann could not follow, and she decided to return to the Champaign/Urbana area where she found an acquisitions position in the University’s main library.

When Joel returned from overseas, in 1969, he began work on a Doctor of Philosophy in English literature at the U. of I. In January 1971, Mary Ann gave birth to their son, Joel. Joel David is a handsome scholar of Japanese, who spent thirteen years in the Communication and Information Science Journals and Serials: An Analytical Guide (Greenwood Press, 1985). He continues his active career of research and publication with special interests in instructional technology, mentoring of women in engineering, and leadership.

While Joel progressed through the faculty tenure and promotion system from Assistant Professor to Professor and Chair of the Business Information Systems department in the Haworth College of Business, Mary Ann followed different interests. After first teaching in the library school, she took time to earn a Master of Arts in communication, and then taught thirteen years in the Communication Department. She was heavily involved in research, writing, and editing with the Center for Contemplative Studies where she prepared the 1978 volume entitled Western Mysticism: A Guide to the Basic Works (American Library Association), and, in an area of her own interest, Library and Information Science Journals and Serials: An Analytical Guide (Greenwood Press, 1985). She continues her active career of research and publication with special interests in instructional technology, mentoring of women in engineering, and leadership.

During the later years of her teaching career in the communications area, Mary Ann also completed a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership. In the same year that she completed that degree, she was employed by the University to direct its Faculty Development Services office. This unit offers numerous opportunities for the faculty and graduate teaching assistants to enhance their teaching skills or disciplinary expertise, and provides assistance with professional advancement issues. In any given semester, the Office is responsible for more than two dozen workshops, seminars, and teleconferences that Mary Ann either organizes or presents. Topics range from the practical (obtaining tenure) to the sophisticated (effective use of instructional media in teaching).

Both Bowmans have several community interests. One of Mary Ann’s is the Humane Society, where she served as president and on the board of the local chapter. Joel and Mary Ann are pioneers in the use of computer technology as an aid to teaching, and are active in professional organizations at the regional and national level. Mary Ann has been a member of the Friends of the University Libraries since its inception, and, having completed a year as vice president, was elected president for the coming year.

An interview of two hours did not disclose “all” about Mary Ann Bowman who, obviously, has been a seeker throughout her life. From a time of immature misgivings, she has “almost” reached a point of certitude on some matters, although she is quick to admit that there is far more to pursue, to find, and to know. She awaits the next quest and a new adventure.