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Remembering Charles Beard

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The Southeastern Librarian

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Remembering Charles Beard 1940 – 2004

Charles Beard, beloved member of SELA and a pillar of leadership in the association for decades, passed away on June 2, 2004. Several days before his passing, a retirement party was held for Charles at the State University of West Georgia. The tributes on the following pages were written by close colleagues both for this occasion and upon the news of his death. The Southeastern Library Association dedicates this issue to the memory of Charles E. Beard. A full obituary can be found later in this issue.

Charles E. Beard

1940 - 2004

Director of Libraries

State University of West Georgia

Carrollton, Georgia

Charles E. Beard died at the Emory University Hospital in Atlanta on June 2, 2004. He had been in poor health for a number of months and was scheduled to retire on June 30th after 26 years as the Director of Libraries at the State University of West Georgia in Carrollton. A retirement celebration was held for him on the 28th of May, put on by the library staff and the university. Charles was unable to attend, but the program and speakers were video taped for him, which he enjoyed hearing about later in the hospital.

The contribution which Charles Beard made over the years for all types of libraries is unique and outstanding, from running an exemplary library at SUWG to being one of the founders and continuing 'godfathers' of GALILEO to practicing what he preached in the arena of intellectual freedom to supporting actively library needs, both academic and public, in the halls of Congress and the halls of the state legislature to heading up ACRL conferences to terms as president of SELA and GLA (two terms) to countless other acts of supporting library associations and librariesand supporting his many friends, in and out of libraries. He was truly a giant among us, we are grateful for his presence and his friendship, and truly he will be missed.

Funeral services were held in the First Baptist Church of Scottsboro, Alabama on June 5, 2004. It was this beautiful Alabama country side from which Charles Beard came and which nurtured his life and values, and it was to there he was returned. Memorials may be made to The Charles E. Beard Endowment for the Ingram Library, State University of West Georgia, 1601 Maple Street, Carrollton, Georgia, 30918.

--Dr. Leland M. Park, Library Director
Davidson College, Davidson, NC

A sample of remarks made by colleagues on the occasion of
Charles Beard's Retirement Party
The Alumni House, State University of West Georgia
Friday, May 28, 2004

It is difficult to summarize the career of someone in just two or three minutes. Charles certainly makes that very difficult. Since I am the first library speaker, I felt a little pressure about setting the tone. Should I make you laugh or make you cry or make you think? While I was considering my approach, I consulted a book of quotations. That's always a good way to start. I started paging through the volume with "A." I saw a quote by Aristotle. No, that was not Charles. I paged faster and paused in the "Cs." Churchill said a lot of clever and interesting things. I drew the analogy that Charles was an articulate leader like Winston Churchill, and looked more closely for a quote. But, then I thought, "No, the accents are not right!" But then it struck me: Churchill was a great statesman and Charles is a statesman. Others will say Charles is a leader. He is. Others will tell you humorous incidents in his life. There were probably many. Others will comment on his wit and his charm. But, I want you to consider one thing: Charles is a statesman. This is his unique quality that made him so effective to the Georgia Library Association and all the other organizations that he served. Thank you, Charles, for all you have done. May you have a happy and well-deserved retirement.

--Dr. George R. Gaumond, University Librarian, Valdosta State University
President, Georgia Library Association



I've known Charles since he had red hair. We first met when we were serving on a SELA conference committee together more than twenty years ago when I was working in Alabama. Charles has contributed to the Southeastern Library Association at extraordinary levels during his many years of active service -- including a biennium as president. Many of us owe him a personal debt of gratitude. For example, from the time we worked together on the SELA committee Charles served as one of my mentors and was the person who helped me get my first assignment to a LAMA committee. I doubt that I would be representing Georgia on ALA Council without Charles' help and inspiration. Many other SELA members can tell similar stories of how he helped them in their careers. He did a great deal to make the Southeastern Library Association what it is today.

There isn't time to share the many messages I received from ALA when I shared the fact that Charles is retiring. One was particularly exciting. Susan DiMattia, editor of *Library Hotline*, wrote: "Charles is one of my all-time favorite ALAers, so I'll certainly send a personal note, but I'd like to put something in *Library Hotline* as well." After I sent her the information she requested about Charles, she sent a note saying she hoped she could do him credit. That issue of *Library Hotline* is something to which we can all look forward with anticipation.

We offer all best wishes to our legendary friend and colleague upon his retirement! Thanks, Charles!

--Ann Hamilton,
President, The Southeastern Library Association
Georgia Library Association councilor to ALA



I am very happy to be here to celebrate Charles Beard's career in and for libraries. Ann mentioned that Charles had red hair when she first knew him. When I met Charles his hair was already gray. I thought he was born that way. I was lucky enough to meet Charles early in my career and later in his so that I was able to have Charles as an advisor and mentor. That is what I will talk to you about today, "What I learned from Charles Beard." Although I think everyone who is here today would tell you that they learned from him too. One of the very first things that I learned from Charles, as a brand new library director, was the difference between whining and advocating. I have to give Ralph Russell partial credit for this because I learned from Ralph that I was whining in the first place. But the difference, Charles taught me,

is preparation, persistence and taking action. Charles' passion for libraries, his clear focus, and his sense of purpose have been felt throughout the library world. As the years have gone on, I have developed a way to "channel Charles" in the tough times. His words will come to me when I cannot find the words to say myself to advocate for a library. I can hear his voice so clearly in those times in the back of my head.

On the other hand, when I am asked to run for an office or pick up a responsibility, Charles' voice is there too to encourage me to be a good representative of libraries. Sometimes those are the times that I wish Charles had not had such a clear focus, sense of purpose and dedication to service. Sometimes I wish I could not hear his voice so clearly in those times. It is not easy to attempt to follow in his footsteps. Charles' passion was very strong. Charles' passion for libraries, the people who work in libraries and the people that use libraries will be remembered. He has planted seeds of advocacy across the nation in person after person. Each of us will remember Charles in our own special way but I know that I will be just one more librarian who will be very grateful to Charles Beard for that passion.

--Debbie Holmes, Director, Floyd College Library
Rome, Georgia



Charles has been such a good colleague and friend that it is hard to know where to begin these remarks. Of the many things that come to mind...

First, Charles is a great and good advocate for libraries, and for building the advocacy skills and effectiveness of librarians. Long after we all are gone, his legacy of effective advocacy programs will continue to build strong library support and therefore strong libraries. How many of us can look at our contributions to our professions and see the same long-term impact on the future of libraries?

Second, Charles always uses his charm and powers of persuasion to great effect. You may have seen Charles hovering around the raffle tables for the Hubbard Scholarship, waiting to charm one and all into buying raffle tickets for this worthy cause. I would meet him there every year. Without even realizing it, I found myself buying just a few more tickets, and then a few more. Under the influence of Charles' enthusiasm and sweet talk I would start buying a dozen raffle tickets, then a dozen more, then more. After being in Georgia I am up to an annual purchase of about 100 tickets, all because Charles admires the prizes, talks about the value of the scholarship program, and looks into my eyes to assure me that THIS is my year.... Of course, I have never won a single thing, but Charles' optimism makes victory seem possible.

Third, Charles did good work on the SOLINET Board of Directors. In addition to his Board work in service to library cooperation, he also took responsibility for ordering the wine at the SOLINET Board dinners. Charles knows his wine. He became known for ordering a wine from France, "Fat Bastard". We were fascinated that he ordered this wine because he was neither fat nor a....well. Evidently the name means something else in France.

These three things sum up my view of Charles: permanent contributions to the library profession, charm in aid of a good cause, and gracious entertaining. Thank you, Charles.

--Kate Nevins
Executive Director, SOLINET



I am really sorry that Charles and I are missing this party, but I am happy to have the opportunity to share in this experience. The first time I met Charles Beard was at a RACL (Regents' Advisory Committee on Libraries) meeting in the Spring of 1987. He had on shorts over a swimsuit and was talking about getting a bridge game together. I was told by another library director that he was someone I should get to know. I thought "I don't know about this". Here we are at a professional meeting and he's got on shorts and

talking about bridge games! I didn't see directors in shorts when I was in Virginia. Then at the next meeting (as well as subsequent meetings), Charles brought the party!!! He invited everyone to his room (or suite if he could talk the hotel staff into providing it at the same rate!!). He would bring after-dinner drinks and little cordial glasses! Other times he was dressed in a **VERY** spiffy manner. What I learned was that Charles wasn't just a party animal, he was about relationship building. This relationship building has meant so much to the successes that we have had as a library community in Georgia. So I decided that I had to learn from Charles.

I don't recall ever being in a meeting where we were discussing providing services that he didn't say "Now y'all we have to look out for everyone". Depending on the discussion, that meant look out for the smaller libraries that may not have as many resources or look out for the public libraries or the technical college libraries that may have different needs. He also set the tone for resource sharing by letting everyone know that West Georgia's Library served the community and about his own experiences on the Reference Desk. He wanted access to information for all of Georgia's citizens and wasn't afraid to tell anyone who would listen about that. It earned both recognition and respect from legislators on the state and national level. One congressman said to me "oh yeah that's what the guy from Carrollton told us". Another said to me "the librarian from West GA came to see me." And I recently saw library supporter and former Congressman Newt Gingrich in the Norfolk airport and asked if he knew that Charles was retiring. He said "Charlie Beard is such a good guy". On *that* we agree!

Charles played so many roles and served on thousands of committees, but he helped write the original proposal that became GALILEO and is currently serving on the GALILEO Steering Committee. It truly wasn't about him, but how we serve students, how can we serve faculty, how can we serve our communities and improve the educational level of people in the state. And he wasn't afraid to brag on his staff or to admit they drove him crazy, but in a good way. His openness and support just contributed to everyone's comfort levels. But he also wasn't afraid to speak about problems or issues that needed resolving. He also wasn't opposed to tracking you down to solve a problem or get a question answered.

Charles likes to tease too. He would introduce me as the Queen of GALILEO. Well one day, I made the mistake of saying – "no not Queen. Queens are always getting their heads chopped off. I want to be Empress!!!" So not only does he call me Empress – he has told everyone else that too. Someone even delivered a tiara and scepter on his behalf!!! Charles is such a Southern gentleman he always kids me and tells me that I'm from that Southern school too and he always wants to know if I am setting the table with my grandmother's china. We both are from Alabama. But the big secret that isn't so secret is that we always seemed to meet up at the Marshall Field's in Chicago – getting Frango Mints!!

When I went to Paris for the first time I saw a lot of things, but I didn't really feel like I was in Paris until I saw the Eiffel Tower. That is what ALA meetings or other meetings were like. I would be there, but until I heard Charles Beard's special laugh in the convention center or in the exhibit hall as he talked with a colleague I never felt I was really there. He may have been at a distance and we didn't get to speak – we may have just waved, but it was ok, I was now at ALA or GLA. I guess it is because Charles embodies the best of our profession. Librarians interested in providing access to all, supporting colleagues of all types, tackling problems, advocating for resources to provide access or problem solutions, being a total gentleman and having a good time while doing it.

Even though *I'll* never be in a swimsuit at a professional meeting and I haven't yet learned to play bridge, I know that in our midst we will be constantly evoking his name with "now y'all know, if Charles was here, he would say 'we have to think about everyone'". We've learned so much from him. I guess I should say that first time I met Charles was at Sapelo Island (Georgia). Charles we love you. Take care. Hope to see you soon.

Merrill S. Penson
Executive Director for Library Services
Board of Regents
University System of Georgia



It is easier to describe someone in a five page essay than it is in a few words. Since there are many tributes today and none of us planned ahead to avoid overlap, I will try to distill the essence of Charles in a few words, an almost impossible task. I took for a guideline his name, Charles. So what is Charles? The **C** is for caring. Each and every one of us gathered today knows how much he has cared for all of us over the years. **H** is for helpful. He never knew the meaning of the word no and is always ready to help with what needs to be done. **A** stands for accepting of all. **R** is for reliable but also I have to add roguish. **L** is for loving and also his laugh. **E** stands for energetic; who else starts the day with so many stomach crunches and is still playing bridge waaaay past midnight? **S** is for his special smile. These words for me describe the essence of Charles.

--Kathleen Imhoff, Executive Director
Lexington Public Library
Lexington, KY

Photos from the retirement party for Charles Beard are available at
<http://www.westga.edu/~library/charles/>