

Dear Dorothy,

Here it is -- a bit of a catharsis really but I thought it would be fun to try to put down all I could remember of that time. It's much too long but you can use of it as you will.

The idea of the Book Fair was born one summer day in 1961 -- one of those sudden inspirations that came while lounging in the bath tub pondering how the AAFSW might raise some money to help with the Scholarship Fund of the AFSA. It seemed such a natural -- what group buys more books, reads more books and gets rid of more books than our State Department types. Our president, June Byrne, thought it a great idea but the Board was skeptical. We knew the only place we could successfully hold a "Book Fair" would be at the Department itself and then it would have to be outside, hopefully in the courtyard. Therefore the beginning of October would be as late as we dared wait to insure decent weather. That gave us exactly two months to do the whole thing.

Peggy Martin (Mrs. Edwin M.) agreed to co-chairman the Fair giving to it her indomitable spirit and enthusiasm which got us through. The powers-that-be in Administration were badgered, cajoled, charmed and at last succumbed -- yes, we could have the Courtyard -- one day -- Monday, March 9 with the previous day, Sunday, allowed to collect the books in the Exhibit Hall.

Coordinators were chosen for all the D.C., Maryland and Virginia areas. These women then organized the State Department women who lived in their vicinity, telephones rang constantly, pleas for books went out, and wonder of wonders the books began pouring in, collected in garages, priced there and boxed in grocery boxes by categories. Over 7,500 books were collected. One volunteer got a call from a Foreign Service widow to take what she wanted from an attic that hadn't been entered in years. A large amount of records were discovered (many original Carusos)--hence the "record corner" was established. Another caller offered her son's neglected stamp collection and we were plunged into a stamp drive. A book dealer offered us a percentage on new children's books and that was the start of our "new book" section. Barbara Fendrick was just getting started with what is now the Fendrick Gallery and she suggested the same percentage idea with her prints and to add further distinction and "class" Sheila Isham agreed to exhibit her paintings and lithographs.

What we needed desperately was someone to figure out how the books et al c could be displayed and Mary Stutesman and Andrea Schmertz agreed to try. On the day of the Fair not only had they conceived of the idea of tables, booths, etc., in sensible progression but the entire Courtyard resembled Camelot with all the book and booth signs like high-flying medieval heraldic flags.

As we neared the deadline, praying always for the weather to be decent, the work went on until it was almost round-the-clock. All during this frantic time giving us her constant help and encouragement was Mrs. Dean Rusk. Every day, it seemed, the Secretary was persuaded by this supportive lady to donate yet a few more of his valuable books--many of them signed copies from the noteworthy of the world. Probably the greatest problem we had was apprehension--would it all ever work out, what if it rained, what if on one came, would we make any money.

On Sunday, October 8th, began our moment of truth. Peggy Martin and I had arraigned at dawn with our loyal husbands not only to give us the moral support we might need but to lend their strong backs as well. Thankfully we needed only the latter for with the early hours and lasting all day came caravans of cars all weighted down with their burden of books. The long library tables had been

assembled to receive them and the women, husbands and children who weren't driving, unloading, carting, were busy carefully arranging the books in proper categories on the tables. By noon that day we felt that if only the weather held and our publicity had found receptive eyes and ears we very well might have a success.

Monday morning dawned warm and sunny and hours before the State Department would open for the working day we were there again with husbands in tow to set up the Courtyard. In our excitement, however, we had neglected a detail which almost proved fatal. We couldn't lift the tables! We were frantic and so laden were those tables that no matter how many men and boys we recruited nothing but hernias were forthcoming. Somehow, in utter chaos, the books came off, the tables moved, the books rearranged, the stanchions placed, the booths set up, the cashiers readied and at nine sharp, looking anything but cool and collected we strung the ribbon for the official opening of the first AAFSW Book Fair.

The ribbon was cut by Mrs. Rusk and Isabel Thomasson, a George Washington University student and recipient the previous year of an AFSA scholarship. The Courtyard began to fill with curious and eager buyers and it stayed that way until 6 p.m. when even the late buyers had to be reluctantly turned away. During that day there was only one unfortunate incident--someone had the poor taste to stage a fire drill which temporarily emptied the Court of customers.

After closing tired workers boxed up the few remaining books and collapsed on top of them as we counted our money--\$2,781.53 net--more than enough for five scholarships which at that time at \$500 each seemed ample. It had been a joyous day and as we thank all those wonderful women who had worked so hard to make it all possible we wondered if perhaps the idea might catch on and there would be future Book Fairs. If anyone then had described the week-long, organized, successful event that is our Book Fair now, I doubt very much if we would have believed them.

Pat  
Armitage  
(Mrs John)