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Reflections on the Life of Ellis Mount

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In Honor of Ellis Mount
SciTech News Editor from 1990 to 1999
Editor Emeritus from 2004 to 2012

Reflections on the Life of Ellis Mount

Bonnie Osif, former *SciTech News* Editor

There is so much that I could write about Ellis Mount's professional life. He was a meteorologist for the Army Air Force. Later he was a librarian at Oak Ridge, the John Crerar Library, and at ITT. He wrote books many of us used in library school and have referenced many times: Special Libraries and Information Centers, Expanding Technologies—Expanding Careers, Milestones in Science and Technology : the Ready Reference Guide to Discoveries, Inventions, and Facts

He edited for SLA and for the Haworth Press. He taught at Columbia University and Drexel. Countless people have entered the profession due to his knowledge and enthusiasm for librarianship and I would hope those people passed that love of librarianship on to others, creating a web of people dedicated and passionate about quality collections and services and a love for science and technology. His skills as an indexer were well known and valued. He even wrote a mystery with a librarian protagonist. He has served SLA in a number of roles and been recognized with Hall of Fame and John Cotton Dana awards.

I could write just on those accomplishments but that would only be part of the story – a very small part. Ellis Mount was so much more than the epitome of the science librarian and professor. He was a decidedly wonderful human being. He was a husband to Kass, father to Paul and Marsha, grandfather to Karen, and Uncle Skip to many nephews and nieces. He was a good friend to many people.

I met Ellis when I was a student at Drexel in Philadelphia. He commuted by rail from New York to teach a class in science librarianship. I never planned to work in any other subject and his thorough, detailed class convinced me it was where I belonged. While I always figured he must have been exhausted from his regular work and the commute, he always had time to talk to us. He was encouraging and committed to us. Some years later I met him again at an SLA meeting and he again changed my life. I began to work with him on Sci-Tech News. We would not only discuss the publication, but trends in librarianship, research ideas, and ways to develop more interest in the Science Tech Division of SLA.

When he asked if I would take over as editor of Sci Tech News, he did everything he could to make the transition easy. I drove to his house in Teaneck for a crash course in library journal 101. I was given detailed notes and folders, discs, and a step by step review of what to do. That is what one would expect from a good editor. However, the real Ellis came through here. I had my daughter with me as we were going into New York to visit NYU and see some plays. Ellis rented a video that he thought she would enjoy (she did) so she wouldn't be bored as he and I spent the morning working. Afterwards, we went to lunch and Mary said how comfortable she was with him as he included her in the conversation and was clearly interested in her career plans and activities. On a later visit to NYC, he, Kass, and I took the tourist boat around Manhattan and he regaled me with fascinating facts about the city, the buildings, and engineering feats. He was better than any tour guide!

Years later members of the Sci-Tech Division entertained Ellis and Kass in Nashville when the Division made him Editor Emeritus of Sci-Tech News. Again, I was reminded that this prolific author and renowned professor was one of the nicest people I have ever met. It was such fun to walk around the Opryland Hotel and admire the plants and discuss where they came from and the science to keep them thriving inside. He truly was a renaissance man in such an unassuming way. It was simply fun and informative to be with him.

Ann Koopman shared "his kindness and gentle manner, his tactful ways of providing answers or assistance when asked, and his modesty. He set such a fine example of intellectual mastery of his field, generosity toward his colleagues, and quiet but firm support for his professional

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association -- truly a model that has been an inspiration to others."

"He was one of the sweetest, kindest individuals I have ever come into contact with at SLA. He always came across to me, initially, as very formal, but after you got to know him, you discovered the gentle wit and humor that was there. He was always willing to chat and share his suggestions with this young pup (not so young anymore, though, <sigh>) of a librarian who was new to Sci-Tech. He was one of the good ones that made me want to be active in the division and who I looked up to as an ideal that I could never meet, but that I might not shame too much. He is one of the bright lights of SLA that we will forever miss," reminisced James Manasco.

Just a few comments about an extraordinary librarian and man. I can only add that my career was enriched by his teaching and mentorship and my personal life by his quiet, caring, supportive personality. I don't think I can come close to describing what a truly great librarian and wonderful person he was. Ellis was special and we will all miss him. ❖