

## Deaths

ROBERT F. METZDORF, manuscripts and literary properties appraiser, consultant, scholar, and long-term member of this Society, died in March. He was associated with the University of Rochester for most of his life, having obtained his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from that institution on whose board of trustees he served at the time of his death. He was on the library staff at Rochester in various capacities from 1933 to 1949 when he moved to Harvard as cataloger of rare books at the Houghton Library. Service at Yale as curator of manuscripts (1952-58) and as university archivist (1958-61) followed, and then he joined Parke-Bernet Galleries. He resigned in 1964 to become an independent appraiser. Bob published a number of catalogs of collections which are still regarded as models of their type; in recent years, he had devoted his publishing efforts to the Yale edition of the works of Samuel Johnson, of which he had been secretary since 1958.

This recitation of facts alone does an injustice to the Bob Metzdorf whose friends around the country anticipated his flying visits with great relish while deploring the incredible schedule of recent years that made his stays all too brief. Bob was a challenging conversationalist who had definite opinions in many areas. He was delightful company and was always ready for a serious conversation on any aspect of the professional life he knew so well.

Herman Liebert, a friend for more than thirty years, delivered an eloquent and graceful tribute at a memorial service held at Rochester, and one of his remarks about Bob seems particularly apt: ". . . he *was* something of a monk, not as ascetic, but as one who recognized a kind of divinity in books and manuscripts, and dedicated his life, with almost ferocious intensity, to their study, description, and greater understanding.

*Ave atque vale!*

EDMUND BERKELEY, JR.  
*University of Virginia Library*

HERMAN KAHN died June 5, 1975, at the age of 67, in New Haven, Connecticut. For nearly forty years he had been closely associated with the archival profession in the United States, most of that time with the National Archives. Since 1968 he had served as associate librarian for manuscripts and archives at Yale University, a position he held at the time of his death and from which he planned to retire in December 1975.

At the Toronto meeting of the Society of American Archivists, in 1974, Herman Kahn was one of the featured speakers in the opening plenary session. He was chosen because he was one of the most articulate and brilliant archivists of his generation. From his remarks, which were published in the April 1975 issue of the *American Archivist*, one learns much about Herman Kahn, the archival profession, and his

generation of innovative archival leaders. He gave a thoughtful analysis of the challenges which he and his colleagues faced, and included his evaluation of the contributions which they made to archives in the United States.

Herman Kahn was born in Rochester, New York, on August 13, 1907. He received his undergraduate training in history at the University of Minnesota from which he graduated *summa cum laude* in 1928. The University of Minnesota awarded him the M.A. degree in history in 1931. He taught history at the University of Minnesota from 1929-31; the Nebraska State Teachers' College, 1931-33; and was elected a fellow in history at Harvard University, 1933-34. In 1934, along with many of his classmates and colleagues from the University of Minnesota, and other historians, he went to work for the federal government. Kahn was historian for the National Park Service from 1934-36, before joining the staff of the newly created National Archives. It was in this institution that he won his distinguished reputation as an archivist.

From 1942-46 he served as chief of the Division of Interior Department Archives; from 1946-48 as director of the Natural Resources Records Office; and in 1948 he was appointed director of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park. It was during his directorship that the presidential library became accepted and institutionalized. During the remainder of his life Kahn was a vocal supporter of the presidential library and argued persuasively in academic circles that such an institution gave researchers much quicker and more complete access to important historical records than any other system.

In 1962 Kahn returned to Washington to serve as assistant archivist for civil archives until 1964, when he became assistant archivist for presidential libraries. In 1968 he joined Yale University as head of their manuscript and archives program and as lecturer in history.

Kahn also was active in the Society of American Archivists and other professional associations. He served on the Council of the SAA, 1959-63; as vice-president, 1968-69; and president, 1969-70. In 1958 he was elected a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists. At the time of his death he served as the Society's representative on the Joint Committee of the Historian and Archives of the AHA-OAH-SAA; the National Archives Advisory Council; and the Public Documents Commission.

These accomplishments and the recognition Kahn received in the Society of American Archivists hardly do justice to the real mark he made on the profession, or to the human side of Herman Kahn. He was a gentle man, thoughtful and considerate of others, always open to new ideas and approaches to problems, and modest and humble in his association with others. He took great pride in being a professional archivist and had little tolerance for those who considered archival work as less challenging or important than the teaching of history. This point of view won him the respect of academic historians and made him one of the most highly regarded spokesmen of the archival profession.

I have many pleasant and fond memories of my association with Herman Kahn—as undoubtedly do others of his many close friends. I first met Herman twenty years ago and was closely associated with him since that time. I had the good fortune to work with him in the Society of American Archivists and to witness firsthand some of his contributions to the Society. It was under Herman Kahn's leadership that the Committee of the 70s was conceived and carried out its work. As I write these lines I remember most vividly the two precious days I spent with Herman last November in New Haven. He talked at great length about his career and his plans after he retired from Yale at the end of this year. He planned to continue an active role in the archival profession.

Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote, "I am a part of all that I have met." To many of us, our careers were changed and our lives enriched because we knew Herman Kahn.

PHILIP P. MASON,  
*Detroit, Michigan*

## **SAA's**

### **39TH ANNUAL MEETING**

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