

## Recent Death

ELIZABETH HAMER KEGAN, 1912–1979. The archival profession and the Society of American Archivists lost one of their pioneers when Elizabeth Hamer Kegan died on 9 March. Although not the venerable elder one might expect a pioneer to be, she had in a little more than forty years compiled an enviable record of achievement and service to the profession, which honored her with election to the presidency of the Society, 1975–76.



*Elizabeth Hamer Kegan*  
*President, Society of American Archivists, 1975–76*

Elizabeth Edwards was born in Copperhill, Tennessee, and attended the University of Tennessee, where she received her B.A. in 1933 and where she did a year of graduate work in history. In 1936 she joined the National Archives as part of the staff of the Survey of Federal Archives in the States, a training ground for hundreds of future archivists. Her talents as an editor were honed on the *Inventory of Federal Archives in the States*, on which she served first as compiler and then as editor in chief. In 1940, having chosen a profession, she chose a husband, Philip M. Hamer, and began a partnership that lasted until his death in 1971.

She went on to other editorial and public relations activities in the National Archives, becoming exhibits and information officer in 1947 and chief of the Exhibits and Publications Section in 1950. In this period the Archives staff was still comparatively small, although it was coping with an ever increasing number of federal records, and the public was just beginning to find out what was going on in that building at Eighth and Pennsylvania. Betty, with an office staffed by a few devoted young women—characteristically, throughout her career she was able to inspire an office with loyalty and zeal—mounted exhibits to explain archives and began a comprehensive publishing program. In both activities, devising intelligible captions for exhibit items and preparing publications, she made use of her editorial talents, of all her talents perhaps the most remarkable. It is no exaggeration to say that she improved any text that passed through her hands. Like many great editors, unfortunately she did not leave a large body of published works behind. Her legacy is a mountain of anonymous government documents, works by others who sought her help, and the skills of those she trained to her exacting standards.

In 1951 she was appointed information and publications officer of the Library of Congress, where she remained for the next twenty-seven years. She became Assistant Librarian of Congress for Public Affairs in 1960 and Assistant Librarian of Congress in 1963, sharing with the Librarian of Congress and the Deputy Librarian in the overall administration of the Library, directing its information, exhibits, publications, and international visitors' programs, and coordinating the Library's relations with the Congress and the White House. Perhaps her most enduring monument is the Library's American Revolution Bicentennial Program, a program of symposia, exhibits, and scholarly publications which are still appearing. The distinguished historians who made up the Advisory Committee on the Library of Congress American Revolution Bicentennial Program adopted in May 1976 a resolution paying tribute to "her foresight, her imagination, and her administrative skill" which made possible "Bicentennial achievements of enduring significance, unmatched elsewhere in the nation." The American Revolution Bicentennial Administration awarded her a Freedom Bell in 1977, calling the Library's symposia series "an intellectual component of inestimable value."

Many of her activities on behalf of the Library of Congress brought her together with her former colleagues at the Archives, never far from her personally in any case. She represented the Library on the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, an attachment she shared with its first director, Philip Hamer; the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission; the Federal Agency Bicentennial Task Force; the White House Conference on International Cooperation; and, as the Librarian's alternate, on the Federal Council for the Arts and the Humanities and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Her last major contribution was to the National Study Commission on Records and Documents of Federal Officials (the Public Documents Commission), in whose deliberations she played a strong and influential role. She served as a member of the committee that drafted the commission's majority report.

No matter how busy her public life became, Betty remained an active and interested member of the Society that she helped to found in 1936. She was elected a Fellow in 1960 and served on the Council from 1969 to 1973, at the same time chairing the Committee on Archives-Library Relations. She was elected vice pres-

ident, 1974-75, and president, 1975-76. Active in the American Library Association as well, she was a member of the Joint Committee on Library-Archives Relationships. Both worlds have lost a voice that will be missed in their councils; no one else has that unique experience that bridges the archives and library communities.

Philip Hamer died in 1971, and in 1973 Betty married Lawrence R. Kegan, who survives her.

MARY C. LETHBRIDGE, *Library of Congress*

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