

## HARTMAN TRIBUTE – UNIVERSITY of MAINE

Raymie McKerrow

I am pleased and honored to be here this evening to participate in the University of Maine's Maryann Hartman Award for Maine women of achievement ceremony .

My role this evening is to honor the person for whom this award is named. Although my association with Maryann was briefer than for some in this room, her influence on my and Gayle McKerrow's life goes far beyond the four years we spent together as colleagues in the then speech communication department.

To this day, we are reminded of Maryann's presence through our continuing relationship with her youngest daughter Christine and our surrogate grandparent status in the eyes of Chris and Joe's daughters, Glenn Marie and McKenzie Jo.

While I was well aware of Maryann's courage in fighting cancer in the last eight years of her life, I did not see as clearly as I do now what a truly remarkable woman she was. That her name is connected to an award for women of achievement is the most fitting tribute I can envision in remembering her.

Born in 1927, Maryann graduated with a bachelor's degree from Westminster College in 1949. After spending a year teaching elementary school, she spent the next fifteen years as a wife and mother to her four children. Following the death of her husband, Maryann returned to school, earning a Master's degree from Kent State University in 1965 and a doctorate from Bowling Green State University in 1969, when she was 42 years of age. Were she enrolled today, her achievement would be considered far more normal—in that time, a single mother with four children, embarking on an uncertain future through advanced education took exceptional courage. She came to Maine in the fall of 1969 as a new Assistant Professor and Director of Forensics. Five years later, in 1974, she was promoted and tenured as an Associate Professor. In addition to being a teacher-scholar, Maryann was an advocate for social change within the university – serving as a member of the Council of Colleges, as a member and Chair of the Equal Opportunity Advisory Board, and as Chair of the Arts and Sciences Committee on Women's Studies. She was honored as an “Outstanding Educator in America ” in 1971 and listed in “Who's Who and Where in Women's Studies in 1975.” She may well have been most proud, though, of her honorary membership in the Maine Chapter of Alpha Lambda Delta, the Freshman Women's National Honorary. When she passed away in the fall of 1980, just after her youngest daughter had left for college, she had spent less than a dozen years as a teacher-scholar and public servant on this campus. That she is memorialized through this award is evidence of the enormity of her impact on the lives of those in her presence.

Beyond this brief biography, there is more to the story of Maryann's influence. There is a present movement within higher education that talks in terms of “active learning” and

“engaging students in their own education.” Service learning, problem-based learning and other approaches are key elements of this perspective. In addition, there is renewed interest in interdisciplinary education. Maryann, with assistance from Sandy Ives and David Smith, was well ahead of the game—as she had students in an interdisciplinary undergraduate course learning how to interview, and then going out into the community to talk with men and women. David Smith provided the historical context in which these people lived, Sandy Ives offered instruction in interviewing techniques, and Maryann focused attention on language use. The intent was to provide an oral history of language use among different ages of Maine men and women. In working with college students today, I've been struck by how “normal” they see contemporary language use, and by how surprised they are that things were not always this way. Maryann's students were introduced to these themes first-hand. In a series of papers presented at conferences between 1975-1978, Maryann summarized the on-going studies. The following excerpt from one of Maryann's essays may help remind us of the times. In summarizing student interviews conducted in the mid-seventies with men aged 73-90: “Words used to describe wives were: a good woman, a motherly soul, homemaker, willing to do for the family, . . . a natural born mother, women's place was in the home. Never once did the men refer to their wives by name. . . . The wife of one man interviewed was a registered Republican and he was a registered Democrat. The wife did not vote because the two votes would cancel each other; the man voted. . . . One man ventured, ‘Women doctors didn't do that well because they were ladies and weren't supposed to be doctors.’” The conclusion with respect to the interviews with women illustrates the opposite positioning of women: “The women were soft spoken. Everything about the verbal and nonverbal language of most of the women was an acceptance of a second-class status and the accomplishing of their special contributions was because their husbands tolerated it so long as they were home to get dinner or because some male had hired them or married them. . . . Language reflects women's place in society. This was manifest not so much in word choice as calls for validation, the use of qualifiers, the attitude that women's work outside the home is less important than men's.” I've quoted from Maryann's work to provide a context for the kind of educational experience her students were given—and to remind us of her reputation as a scholar whose work focused on language and sex roles. She was also instrumental in the performance arena – as she pioneered the use of stories told by contemporary people, that were then scripted into oral performances. Using the stories to give voice to those without voice was a central theme—and one for which Maryann is under-recognized today. In looking back, it becomes clear that Maryann and others were practicing in the 70s what is now being advocated as the appropriate pedagogical approach in the 21 st century.

Challenging students to learn on their own was a central feature of Maryann's style. A passionate and committed teacher, I was not surprised to learn that just weeks before she passed away, she had called then Dept. chair, Dwayne Van Rheenen on a Saturday morning from her hospital bed asking that he write a letter to one of her students who was working on an independent study project over the summer. She outlined what the letter should contain and asked that Dwayne encourage the student to continue moving forward. And, during that same summer, I retain a vivid memory of how her eyes would light up, and her energy return when the conversation turned to her students and their projects.

In “Women of Maine, Circa 1900”—one of her last papers— Maryann chronicles the lives of 12 Maine women. Lest the earlier commentary suggest that women were submissive or non-achievers in their own time, Maryann's summary gives every evidence that women, however left silent through language, nonetheless succeeded in “doing the right thing.” As she observed: “The idea of standing up for what was right was mentioned by the woman legislator who was President of Maine WCTU for twenty years and a women volunteer who ran a halfway house for refugees from German concentration camps following World War II.”

Maryann's life gave full expression to that same sense of independence. A final story is one that she would be proud to hear—as “doing the right thing” is being carried forward by one of her grand-daughters. Earlier this fall, as Glenn Marie began the 6<sup>th</sup> grade in Ely , Minnesota , recess came along – and the boys began playing football. Several of the girls (Glenny is a hockey player on a girls/boys team) decided they wanted to join in. You may guess the boys reaction—they refused. The girls then went to the playground supervisor to ask that he intervene. He refused, with the argument that he didn't have a parent's permission to let them play. Glenn's response was that this wasn't right—it was the law that you can't have separate rules for boys and for girls. So, the girls did the next best thing—the next time the ball came their way, they took it and then played keep-away for a while-till the boys relented and let them in the game.

Later that day, the Principal came by to see what had happened. After learning the story, he asked who the girls were who had taken the ball—Glenn admitted her role. When he asked why: she repeated her claim: it just wasn't right that boys had different rights than girls—it wasn't the law. The principal had to agree with her, but also noted that she and others had not listened to the playground supervisor and thus would receive demerits. When Glenny relayed this story to us, we asked if she would do it again, knowing the punishment. Her answer was quick and certain: “Yes, because it was the right thing to do.” This from an

11 year old who also this summer had 10 inches of her hair cut to send to a “hair for kid's cancer victims” service—Maryann's legacy lives on, both in her grandchildren, and in the accomplishments of the women we are here tonight to recognize.