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Remembrances of William D. Murphy

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Margaret A. Leary*

In mid-1988, as the time for me to assume the presidency of AALL at the end of the Atlanta meeting approached, the association's first executive director, William Jepson, announced that he would resign soon after the meeting. The presence of adequate staffing at headquarters had been a key element in my decision to run for president, so I was particularly appalled at the idea of the position being empty almost exactly as I took office.

Then someone—I like to think it was Babe Russo¹ but I can't remember definitely—suggested that Bill Murphy might be willing to serve as acting executive director while we conducted a search for a new person. I will never forget being overwhelmed by two simultaneous feelings. First, only at that moment did I fully realize how awful my life would be without an acting director. Thoughts remarkably like those described as near-death experiences flew through my head. But second, I felt an immense relief at being rescued—similar to the relief I feel when my migraine medication kicks in! I suspended both sets of emotions while I talked to Bill, and when he said yes, I focused only on the second, positive feelings of relief.

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1. *Editor's note:* Antonette (Babe) Russo served as administrative secretary of AALL from 1969 until her retirement in 1989. It is fitting that Ms. Leary mentions her in a remembrance of William Murphy, since, by all accounts, he was instrumental in bringing her to the association. According to Jack Ellenberger: "Bill placed his imprint more durably on the future administration of AALL when he learned that Antonette 'Babe' Russo was leaving local law publishing employment and could probably find the executive secretaryship of the Association attractive. They met, Babe was employed, and the rest is history—twenty years of it, from 1970 to 1990." Letter from Jack Ellenberger to Frank Houdek, Editor, *Law Library Journal* 1 (July 20, 1996) (on file with the *Law Library Journal*). See RETURN TO THE BAR: MORE EAVESDROPPING ON AALL HISTORY, audiotape of program presented at AALL Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, June 18, 1990 (Valencia, Calif.: Mobiltape, 1990) (remarks of Antonette Russo).

I've looked up the *AALL Newsletter* announcement that Bill would serve as interim executive director, and it's worth repeating in part:

Bill have [sic—but then he was doing more than one person's work, so maybe that's right] served the Association in many more ways: he has been a moving force in AALL even when not visibly so. For example, he had a key role in raising money for the establishment of headquarters, and has been available to advise presidents, treasurers, and headquarters staff on a nearly continuous basis.²

Working with Bill in 1988–89³ was truly a joy. He was effective, gracious, and modest, and had the ability to inspire others to acquire those qualities.

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2. *William D. Murphy To Serve As Interim Executive Director*, 20 AM. ASS'N L. LIBR. NEWSL. 41 (1988).
 3. *Editor's note*: William Murphy served as interim executive director of AALL from September 1, 1988, until February 1, 1989, when Judith Genesen began service as the association's second executive director.