



News Release

Contact:
Jason Parent
Development and
College Relations Office
33 Edgemont Drive
Presque Isle, ME 04769
Phone: (207) 768-2808
Fax: (207) 760-1101
jparent@nmcc.edu

August 13, 2010
NR10068

NMCC campus mourns the loss of the institution's first and long-serving librarian with passing of Margaret Coffin

Aroostook County - Northern Maine Community College has been home to four libraries in its nearly 50 year existence, three of which were designed and decorated by Margaret Coffin. The woman who was credited with turning the old Presque Isle Air Base "officers mess" into a "real library" and populated the shelves with more than 13,000 books by the time she retired three decades later is being mourned by the campus community.

With Coffin's passing at age 84 on August 9, NMCC is remembering their first and longest-serving librarian, who headed the campus library from 1968 through 1996.

"Through Margaret's efforts, the first library was established at Northern Maine Vocational Technical Institute (a forerunner of NMCC) in 1968. She worked to expand library services and supervised three moves during her tenure. With each move, she created a better library for the students at the college. Margaret made many contributions to the college, the library, and the Maine library community and will be greatly missed," said Gail Roy, NMCC assistant dean of learning resources, who currently oversees the NMCC library.

In 1968, the NMVTI library was operated out of the student center on an honor based system with no real organization. That all changed with the hire of Margaret Coffin in August of 1968. A new library was set up in the old officers mess and she was told the area would be cleaned and redecorated by the fall of that year when she was hired to start as the campus' first librarian.

When she arrived for her first day, however, the walls were dirty, the ceiling was falling in several places, and the tiles were coming off the floor. The surroundings were unpleasant and she had no library supplies to speak of, but she somehow managed to get things going and process and catalogue all the books.

By June 1969, she had a real library to work with thanks to carpentry and electrical students who used the area as "one big class project." The library ran smoothly for the next 12 years under the direction of Coffin.

In 1973, the NMVTI yearbook was dedicated to Coffin in appreciation for all of her hard work. In 1979, she helped to design the new library that was being built in the old gymnasium. The original library was demolished to make way for a new kitchen and dining commons made possible by a bond passed by Maine voters.

The new library was heralded as a huge improvement, and for the first time, Coffin had a real office. She oversaw the installation of an electronic security system in 1982, the first of its kind in northern Maine.

In 1985, voters passed another bond issue, allowing for yet another new library to be built. This time Coffin worked directly with the architects in planning the new facility, which was an extension of the Christie building.

Born and brought up in Augusta, Coffin had a desire to be in radio at an early age. At UMO, she got involved in the Radio Guild Club, writing scripts and performing music. Her love of radio brought her to Presque Isle, where they needed an announcer at WAGM. It was there she met her husband-to-be, Ted Coffin.

Several years later when she worked for WRKD-Radio in Rockland, she and Ted were married. After only 10 years of marriage, Ted passed away leaving her to raise her two girls. Her work in radio and television ended with Ted's passing.

In order to support the family, she briefly taught school, but soon went on to work in the library field. Coffin earned her master's degree in library science while working in the library at Aroostook State Teacher's College (a forerunner of the University of Maine at Presque Isle).

Coffin was active in her local community as a member of the Presque Isle Community Players, the Caribou Choral Society, the Beta Sigma Phi sorority, and a long time member of the Presque Isle Congregational Church and its choir.

She was predeceased by her husband, R. Theodore Coffin, in 1964. She is survived by her two daughters, Nanci Lee (LaMarque) and her husband, Jim, and Lucinda Ann.

#####



Margaret Coffin



Margaret Coffin at her desk during her first year at NMVTI

#####