

In Memoriam

Mary S. D. Morain

1911-1999

Lloyd Morain's Memorial Address, April 26, 2000, Carmel, California.

Mary's life had consistencies which make the endings and the beginnings a reality more real than virtual reality. In her declining months, when the removal of much of her small intestine was taking its toll, several times she told me how fulfilling life might be after the inevitable. Eight widows, divorcees, or spinsters were thoughtfully spoken of in terms of someone whom she thought might possibly ease my life as a widower. Perhaps, needless to say, one or more may be here with us today. This was in keeping with Mary, a concern for me, for others, and not just how she herself might be.

Mary's mother had given up teaching at Smith College to marry her father. When Mary was born in 1911, the Philosophy-Psychology faculty at Simmons College consisted of her two parents. Her mother, the fifth female Ph.D. from Radcliffe-Harvard, was considered a "bluestocking" by her relatives. Mary's father's family—due to the economic panics of the 1870s, '80s, and '90s—had run boarding houses in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Mary was the eldest of three daughters, and had a very satisfactory childhood. The household was given to much reading, reciting poetry, tales of Emerson, the Alcotts, and many social reformers and friends including William James. In the warmer months they lived in a house in Newton which was built by an ancestor in 1732. It had been sold out of the family and then repurchased in 1923 from another rel-

ative. The house was once occupied by a member of the Boston Tea Party and later by the president of the first anti-slavery group in New England. Mary's parents both had Pilgrim ancestors and even an ancestor in common. Mary shared her parents' interest in humanism, general semantics, and birth control.

In 1926 Mary's father, a Harvard professor, had a sabbatical and took the family for a half year's immersion in the cultures of Egypt, Greece, Italy, Germany, and England. France was largely omitted, for he didn't trust the intentions of Frenchmen. When the family crossed France in a rail car, the blinds were pulled down.

Historically, a number of Mary's relatives had died of tuberculosis, and Mary was thought to be vulnerable and was sent to the South with its milder climate for a couple of years. For a while she attended Rawlins College in Florida.

With the Great Depression deepening, it wasn't surprising that Mary left Radcliffe and enrolled in the Social Work School at Simmons. Before long she was working part-time in the Italian settlement houses in the area which is now in part covered by Logan Airport, and in the Irish enclaves in Boston's South End.

In the middle 1930s Mary received her M.A. degree from the University of Chicago. On the side, she volunteered at the Home for Incurables and the newly forming Institute of General Semantics.

In 1938 she came to Hollywood to work on Donald McLean's staff of therapists as the specialist in how to think clearly, that is, gener-

al semantics. It was here that we met. Those were heady intellectual days, many of which were involved with the General Semantics Society—Robert Heinlein, Irving Wallace, Aldous Huxley, Hans Reichenbach, Bertrand Russell, and Allan Hunter.

To indicate how unorthodox Hollywood was for Mary, she acquired at arms length a somewhat girlish crush on Charles Boyer, that is, until I took her to Warner Brothers Studio to meet him. Yes, his voice was wonderfully appealing, his hand-kissing elegant, but his clever toupee and built-up shoes successfully deflated the crush.

During Mary's early days in Hollywood I discovered that she limited herself to a hamburger for the evening meal so that her salary could take care of others, including three refugees from the Spanish Civil War. Our dates often became adventures in getting more to eat.

Mary never quite adjusted to my Hollywood friends, whom she felt were too given to money, possessions, career drives, and somewhat superficial lives. Although accepting of all people, she was subtly negative toward Dave Wynn, author of *The World, My Oyster*; Lee Frances (Miss Amber), the cross-eyed Madame of Hollywood; and the Wilkie Mahoneys of *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang* fame, who all in various ways valued my supposedly insightful analyses.

The Second World War took both of us east. Mary at first lived in Greenwich Village and was a social worker at Presbyterian Hospital and then became a teacher at Keuka College in Upstate New York. I recall one of her aunts commenting that the college couldn't amount to anything because it was west of the Hudson River.

Upon my return from service with our Air Force in England, we married in 1946. Mary gave up teaching while I went to work for Porter Sargent. Mary worked part-time for the New England Home for Little Wanderers, an institution that provided pregnant and post-

partum women several weeks away from their children. Some of these women considered these two- or three- or four-week periods as their only vacation. They hadn't wanted yet another child. Mary was so concerned with their unhappiness that she gave up working and became a volunteer for Planned Parenthood, later becoming president of the Planned Parenthood Association in Boston, as well as the League of Women Voters.

Mary's interest in Planned Parenthood escalated. She circled the world explaining birth control, often meeting with only two or three midwives. She even helped Dr. Clarence Gamble and Mrs. Olivetti open a birth-control clinic in Rome, Italy. Margaret Sanger, who also shared her humanist philosophical and ethical views, became an intimate and they spent time together in Hawaii, India, and Arizona.

In the mid-1950s, '60s, and '70s, we lived in San Francisco where Mary became president of Planned Parenthood and Altrusa, and was a director of other organizations including the YWCA. One of her special activities was the planting of trees in San Francisco. She cooperated with a friend who headed Trees for the City. The Park Department looked after the trees they planted in at least a dozen locations, all with bronze memorial markers.

She received satisfaction in getting the newly erected Bank of America skyscraper to fly the United Nations flag and the Crocker Bank to have a monthly display of the works of United Nations organizations. She worked on an adult literacy program, and when the Lombard School for children with special needs couldn't find a male scoutmaster, she stepped forward and was the boy's scoutmaster.

These were months of much entertaining, with affairs for the Julian Huxleys, Brock Chisholm, Chester Arthur III, Alan Watts, H. J. Muller, Scott Beach, Abraham Maslow, and S.I. Hayakawa, among others, including some of my friends who could be counted among the

world's disenchanted. Mary had many daring and innovative ideas, and a highlight in those years was our election as Fellows of the World Academy of Art and Science.

Toward the end of the 1970s we felt it was time for quasi-retirement and came down to this area where we had acreage in the Santa Lucia Range. Earlier we had co-produced John Steinbeck's film *Flight* on Stuyve Fish's adjoining property.

Mary didn't exactly retire. She put together and edited four books on general semantics, and revised *Humanism as the Next Step*, which Eleanor Roosevelt had applauded in the 1950s and recently of which Steve Allen wrote, "The best compliment I can pay *Humanism as the Next Step* is to order three additional copies of it, which I have just done."

Mary also served as president of the International Society for General Semantics. To the end Mary maintained an active interest in the psychological well-being and economic welfare and needs of other people. It is hard to adjust to living without her. For 54 years I was blessed and spoiled, a condition from which I haven't quite recovered and may never.



Mary Stone Dewing Morain — A Remembrance by Charlotte Schuchardt Read

We feel deeply saddened to learn of the death of our cherished friend, Mary Morain. She died on June 14, 1999 at the age of 88. Yet our gratitude for knowing and working closely with such an extraordinary person goes far beyond a sense of loss. She enriched the lives of countless people, not only in connection with her interest in general semantics, but also with her active involvement with other global social concerns, such as humanism, education, over-population and healthy family planning, the United Nations, the arts and sciences, etc. She was given the prestigious honor

of being invited to be a Fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science. In 1994, the American Humanist Association named her as their Humanist of the Year. Together with her husband Lloyd, she co-authored the book, *Humanism as the Next Step* (1954), reprinted in 1998.

Mary Morain, whom I have personally known since 1939, was a trustee of the Institute of General Semantics. She was also an important leader in the International Society for General Semantics, serving on their Board of Directors in a number of roles, including that of president, for many, many years. Most recently, she was membership editor for *ETC*.

She attended her first seminar with Alfred Korzybski before the Institute was established. Through her activities in the Los Angeles Society for General Semantics, she met Lloyd, and they both continued their outstanding roles in the work.

In 1992, she was given the J. Talbot Winchell Award by our Institute trustees. The plaque read in part: . . . *in grateful recognition of her over forty years of leadership furthering the understanding and use of General Semantics in our human society. . . . She has been ever helpful and generous in her thoughtful interest and support whenever needed. We honor her with warm appreciation. November 13, 1992.*

Mary was especially concerned with how we apply the principles of general semantics in our living, and how it could best be taught, and she edited numerous books on teaching the work.

Her wise and compassionate generosity has sustained many of us over the years. Her continual encouragement and appreciation of the work of others fostered harmony and cooperation. In the words of a local California friend, Morley Brown, "She was gracious and refined—the personification of the word 'lady'."

Mary grew up in Boston, and attended Radcliffe College and the University of

Chicago. Beginning in 1939, most of her life she lived in California, where she and Lloyd shared an active life-partnership for 53 years. Mary's mother, Frances Dewing, was an important benefactor during the early days of the Institute, and her father, Arthur Stone Dewing, was invited by Korzybski to be an honorary trustee of the Institute.

Words can hardly begin to express the myriad ways in which she constructively contributed to the field of general semantics. We express our deep appreciation, warm admiration, and enduring affection.



Crying—A New Experience by Lloyd Morain from *The Gold Coast*, December 1999.

In a quiet little room opposite Community Hospital's Intensive Care Unit, two doctors told me it would be only a matter of hours. One of them, with his arm around my shoulder, added that only about half of widowers make it for more than a year.

I went behind the curtain and embraced her now-frail body. I told her that I hoped she could hold on but if she can't it's all right. I added that I don't want to live without her and am willing to go.

Days later, a friend said he thought it was time to tell what Mary had been doing shortly before the neurons and cells closed down. She was slowly waving an arm in the air, seemingly in conversation with her father who had passed away decades earlier. She was telling him that she wished she had been more like his wife, her mother, had been to him. "I could have done more for Lloyd, been more helpful, more domestic."

Now, I recall many things about those last months. I had shown Mary a tear in the lining of my worn, everyday coat. She reached for it, saying something like I'll fix it, and I replied that she needn't bother for the tailor at the

cleaners could do it. She took the coat and hunted for the seldom-used sewing box. She sat by a window, patiently trying to thread a needle. The movement of her slim, tapered fingers brought to mind her mother's suggesting some 60 years earlier that I have a cast made of those beautiful hands. Those fingers were now struggling to push the needle through the cloth and back out.

When we sat down for lunch, she handed me the coat with the rip nicely repaired. Without thinking, I said thanks, but it wasn't necessary for her to do it. Then I noticed the glimmer of a smile and a moistening of her eyes. The sewing box is now by my bed.

Now I picture some of her efforts when she knew her days were numbered. She believed that she hadn't done enough of the cooking, cleaning, and domestic arrangements. She had devoted herself to helping others, something that I prized and cherished in her. Year in and out, she did what few are able or willing to do. Now I better understand the doctor's observation. I cry when I think of her imagining that I had been neglected. The past seems more real than the present. Much has ended. The future, must there be a future?



"She [Eleanor Roosevelt] was thinking that maybe something in the book [*Humanism As the Next Step*, co-authored by Mary and Lloyd Morain in 1954, and reprinted in 1998] could help her with her social reform programs," Lloyd said. "She was quite taken with us—so many people were taken by Mary's charm and intelligence." *Monterey County Herald*, M. Cristina Medina, June 16, 1999

In memory of Mary Morain, the American Humanist Association named its new headquarters in Washington D.C. after her (1777 T Street, NW).