

Obituary



Jean Tener, 1931–2016



Jean Frances Tener arrived in Canada from England in 1952, intending to stay only six months. The Canadian archival community is most fortunate that her original plan to return home did not materialize. Instead, we were the beneficiaries of several decades of Jean's archival talents, her commitment to professional associations, her incisive intellect, and her wry sense of humour. Jean passed away on 5 May 2016 after a brief battle with cancer.

Jean was born in 1931 in London, England, to Ethel and James Baker. She was, however, raised from the age of four by her aunt and uncle, Emma and Bay Jacot, because her mother suffered from tuberculosis; she would die when Jean was eight. As a child, Jean lived through the London Blitz of the Second World War. She was eventually evacuated to Somerset, on the coast, where she stayed with the Meader family and experienced a house filled with children. At 16, she graduated from Pittman's Secretarial College in London, supported financially by her brother and her father. Jean emigrated to Canada at 21 to become a babysitter to her brother's children in Vancouver, where she eventually went to work for William Mercer.

She intended only a brief stay, but it was during this time that she met and fell in love with Robert Tener, a University of British Columbia literature student. Her brother (who had trained in the Commonwealth Air Training Plan and returned to Canada after the war) felt that his friend, a "nice, domesticated Canadian," would be good for his sister. Jean and Robert began a happy marriage on 21 May 1955, and Jean took courses at the University of British Columbia. In 1962 the Teners and their two children moved to Calgary when

Robert accepted a full-time teaching position in the English department at the University of Calgary. Jean went on to graduate with a BA and an MA in History from the University of Calgary.

Jean joined the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections of the University of Calgary Library in 1973, where she became involved in the growing archival collections, particularly the papers of Canadian literary figures. Many of the finding aids she prepared are still consulted. She received her archival training in 1976–77 through the Public Archives of Canada course held in conjunction with the University of Ottawa, followed by a course in advanced archival arrangement and description offered by the University of Washington in 1979. In 1984, she was appointed the first university archivist at the University of Calgary, a position she held until her retirement in 1991.

Jean was very involved in the archival profession at a time of transformation when archivists began to see themselves as information professionals rather than historians. She served as the third treasurer (1979–81) of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) and successfully managed the financial arrangements in 1980 when, for the first time, the ACA took the bold step of meeting in a hotel instead of on a university campus.

In the early days of the development of the so-called Canadian Archival System, she served in various professional associations at the provincial and national level, including the Directors of Alberta's Archives, the Alberta Archives Council (1988–90), and as a member of the executive of the Alberta Society of Archivists (1986–88). At the national level, in addition to being the provincial representative to the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) General Assembly (1988–90), Jean also was a member of the CCA's board of directors (1988–90) and a member of its Planning and Priorities Committee (1992–93). She was recognized for her contributions to the profession by being named an honorary member of the Association of Canadian Archivists and the Alberta Society of Archives.

This recounting of Jean's many achievements does not begin to capture her vibrant personality and spirit. Her wry sense of humour, curiosity, and quick wit made her a joy to be with. She never took herself too seriously. Many will remember her delight in pointing out to friends and colleagues that she was wearing two different shoes, one navy and one black, at the opening reception of an ACA conference. Other colleagues have special memories of another shoe incident at the ICA Congress in Paris in 1988. Jean and a friend walked so much on the first day after arriving in the city that she had to wear slippers for much of the conference, even when sitting at the information table welcoming members to the next ICA Congress, to be hosted in Montreal in 1992. She was, however, able to wear proper (matching) shoes to the elegant reception at Versailles.

In retirement, she was busy with friends and family, particularly her granddaughter, of whom she was very proud. She enjoyed travelling to visit family

in England, to explore new places in the world and, as a member of the archival community, to attend local, national, and international conferences.

Jean and Robert were wonderful hosts to colleagues in both the archival and University of Calgary communities. The welcome parties they held are legendary and are still spoken of with great affection. Jean and Robert continued to support the University of Calgary after retirement. They donated much of their book collection to the institution's Archives and Special Collections. As well, on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary, their children created the Robert and Jean Tener Anniversary Bursaries for undergraduate English and history majors at the University of Calgary.

That Jean Tener not only stayed in Canada but also became an archivist was by no means predictable. However, the Canadian archival community can be grateful that things worked out that way. Jean's legacy lives on through the finding aids she wrote, in the establishment of the Canadian Archival System, and in the memories of those who knew her. We're glad you stayed, Jean.

**Jean Dryden
Apollonia Steele**