

2014

Mary Dora Rogick 1906-1964

Martha Counihan O.S.U.

Gill Library, The College of New Rochelle, mcounihan@cnr.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.cnr.edu/counihan-works>

Recommended Citation

Counihan, M. (2014). *Mary Dora Rogick 1906-1964*. Unpublished typescript, The College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, NY.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Works of CNR Ursulines at Digital Commons @ CNR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Works of Sister Martha Counihan by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CNR. For more information, please contact lfazzino@cnr.edu.

Mary Dora Rogick 1906-1964

Born in Pennsylvania, the only daughter of immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, Mary Dora Rogick graduated from high school in Iowa and enrolled at the University of Nebraska, graduating in 1929. She then began masters and doctoral studies in Biology at Ohio State University, graduating in 1934. Her dissertation was on freshwater bryozoa (a phylum). This would be an interest that she pursued for the rest of her life and for which she became an international expert.

A shy, witty, and intelligent student, Mary Rogick had applied to over 200 colleges for a teaching position. In the depths of the Depression, college and university teaching positions were highly competitive and few colleges were interested in hiring a female scientist. Fortunately, a Catholic women's college in New York, the College of New Rochelle was seeking a biologist to enhance its science programs. A new and well-equipped science building had been recently erected. The Registrar, Mother Xavier Fitzgerald, spotted the excellent applicant and hired her.

Dr. Mary Rogick came very well recommended: a Phi Beta Kappa, and already she had several publications completed while she studied for her MA. Additionally, she had developed a great talent for detailed and extremely accurate drawings which would distinguish and enhance her many scientific publications, long before molecular photography was developed. In a letter to a colleague, she describes writing a bryozoans paper which included ten plates of seventy one figures; it took her a month just to ink the plates. This talent was also seen in her private correspondence with many whimsical signatures and drawings.

In January, 1935, Dr. Mary Rogick arrived at the College of New Rochelle and began teaching zoology, biology, morphology, supervising labs, methods of teaching biology—a vast array of subjects. At one point she mentions having a class of 90 freshmen in several sections of botany. Her small faculty office had no space for her bryozoa specimens which she kept in her small apartment refrigerator. In the midst of her heavy teaching and advising load, she continued her research and publishing work, frequently attending professional conferences. Dr. Rogick kept a long and detailed correspondence with fellow (and they were mostly males) bryozoan scholars. . By 1940, she was one of very few women listed in the prestigious publication, *Men of Science*. Additionally, she was a member of many learned societies. From 1954 to 1961, she did research on Antarctic bryozoa under a grant from the National Science - Foundation. In a letter to a woman scientist friend, she lamented the fact that her male colleagues at big universities had secretaries, graduate assistants, and, often, wives who could help with their voluminous correspondence and other tasks; she had to do all on her own—in her kitchen. In another letter she wryly remarked that a colleague had named a fossil for her and, she was sure, it was meant as a compliment! During some summer vacations, she taught at the Marine Biological Laboratories at Woods Hole, MA and at the University of Rhode Island. In the summer of 1963, she spent a happy summer at Woods Hold and then was invited to take part in a scientific research project aboard a University of Rhode Island vessel to the Sargasso Sea, “the most wonderful summer of my life.”

The following year, Mary Rogick was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Among her papers, she writes of her gratitude for all the attention she was receiving from her CNR faculty friends and numerous phone

calls from the cloistered Ursulines who could not visit her in New Rochelle Hospital. Aware of her prognosis, and with no relatives, she summoned her lawyer to make her will leaving her estate to the College of New Rochelle and to Ohio State University. She died on October 26, 1964

In memory and in tribute to her, the Mary Dora Rogick Life Sciences building at the College of New Rochelle was dedicated in 1969. At the dedication, several of her most accomplished former biology students praised their modest, mild-mannered professor, citing how her example had inspired them to a field that was still largely composed of men. .

The then President of the College of New Rochelle, Mother Mary Robert Falls saw to it that Dr. Rogick's papers were preserved and sent to a colleague at the University of Ohio. Eventually, some of her papers were donated to the Smithsonian Institute. Eventually, her correspondence and publications found their way to the Virginia Museum of Natural History. The retiring curator of Marine Biology, Dr. Judith Winston, knowing their value, offered them to The College of New Rochelle Archives.

Martha Counihan, osu

Archivist/Special Collections Librarian

Gill Library

The College of New Rochelle

2014