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A Tribute to Doreen Orciari

by George Veronis¹

With her retirement this year Doreen Orciari will end her 36th year at Yale, 32 of them as editorial assistant at the *Journal of Marine Research*. She came to work for me as my secretary in December, 1976, when I was chairman of the Department of Geology and Geophysics. It turns out that she was the best Christmas present that I have ever had.

Doreen was born and raised as an Irish Catholic in New Haven and spent her youth in somewhat of a dysfunctional family. She spent 12 years amid Catholic nuns who served to add structure to her upbringing, but if asked, Doreen would say that their influence on her life was not a happy one.

Doreen attended Quinnipiac College (now University) where she met her husband, Bob, and the two married immediately after graduation. Her marriage to Bob has provided Doreen with a warmth and stability that she had not known as a child. They moved to Athens, Ohio, where Bob earned a master's degree in aquatic ecology from Ohio University. After Ohio University, they moved to Saunderstown, Rhode Island where Bob began working toward a Ph.D. in oceanography at the University of Rhode Island. After a year at URI, he was offered a position with the State of Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection as a fisheries biologist and they moved back to Connecticut.

While Bob was a graduate student, Doreen worked in the School of Education at Ohio University, and then while at the University of Rhode Island, she worked for Bob McMaster and Norman Watkins in the School of Oceanography. When they returned to Connecticut, Conoco Oil Company was opening an oil exploration division in Woodbridge CT and Doreen worked there until Conoco moved that office to Houston. That's when Doreen applied for a position at Yale.

Doreen was the quintessential personal secretary. Within a short time she was able to anticipate what was needed when someone phoned or left a message and I rarely had to tell her what to do. When I asked her for a specific item, she often would already have it in her hand. She obviously enjoyed her work and we got along well together.

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Doreen Orciari in a photograph taken spring, 2012, in front of a map of the world, copies of JMR on the lower bookshelf and on the upper shelf the collected works of Henry Stommel, who was one of her correspondents. (Photo courtesy of Bob Orciari)

I had decided when asked to become chair that I would serve one term only, so in the fall of 1979 I moved out of the chairman's office and Doreen became the secretary of my successor. Not long after that, Nancy Hoskins, my editorial assistant at JMR, had informed me that she was quitting because she had been taking night courses to become a lawyer and had just been admitted to the bar. Nancy had a degree in English and was very well suited for the position of editorial assistant and I felt that it would be difficult to replace her. But Doreen heard about Nancy's decision and asked if she could apply for that job. I wasn't sure about Doreen's qualifications for the position but I knew how remarkable she had been as a secretary so I was quite happy to give her a try. She quickly understood what was needed and also was really attracted to the idea of creating a position that depended almost solely on her determination. She told me at the time that she would become the best editorial assistant ever.

It wasn't long before Doreen was put to the test – in spades. Val Worthington had retired from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and we were preparing a special issue to celebrate his retirement. It turned out that that single issue of JMR was to contain 41 articles. It was a supplement to the volume so the normal schedule still had a regular issue that was due. This was just after Doreen had taken on her new job. To complicate matters further she and Bob had decided to start a family and Doreen was pregnant. Furthermore, I had been appointed Senior Queen's Fellow of Marine Sciences in Australia for the first half of 1981. JMR continued to be published, so the reviewers for each submission had to be chosen and the reviews had to be sent to me to make a final judgment. And Doreen had to proofread all of those articles before they went to press. Keep in mind that there was no internet at the time. Everything had to be done by mail. Yet Doreen told me that she did not want anyone

else to substitute for her during that period. She intended to handle the special issue, the normal issue, her pregnancy and my absence without any help. Even to this day I don't know how she managed it all but she did.

After her introduction to the job, Doreen settled down to what she became famous for with our authors and reviewers. For her, the job was not an impersonal exchange about the handling of a manuscript or a review. I wonder if there is a single author or reviewer in oceanography who has not had a communication with Doreen about that person's personal life. She made friendly overtures to everyone and most people responded in kind. She has tons of photographs of authors' wives and children, sent to her during her exchanges about an article or its reviews. I think that there is no one as familiar with the members of the oceanographic community and their families as she is. No oceanographer who had published in *JMR* came through Yale without wanting to meet her in person.

The two of us continued to produce the *Journal of Marine Research*, working well together, until my retirement from both the department and the Journal in 2009. When I look back over the years in which we have cooperated and enjoyed each other's company, I am ever grateful for having met and worked with Doreen. In addition to working with me on *JMR*, she has been like a daughter to me. Her dedication to, and love for, her work and her sense of responsibility have not been matched by anyone else in my experience. I am convinced that many of the oceanographers who have published in *JMR* did so because of the pleasant experience that they had in dealing with Doreen. And members of our Editorial Board have also expressed thanks for having her to work through in making recommendations for reviewers. Although I have retired as editor, she and I have met regularly, mostly socially, though I have maintained an occasional contact with her professionally, as well. Her retirement leaves a huge void, one that no one will be able to fill completely.

I have focused on Doreen's work at *JMR*, but, of course, she was active in other areas as well. She kept an open jar of chocolates on her desk near the entrance to her office and quite often people who knew her would stop by for a piece of chocolate and a chat. She took long walks at lunchtime with secretaries and other female employees in the department. She is an avid Yale hockey fan and has attended all of the home games and often games at some distance from New Haven. The coach gave her a signed copy of the Yale hockey brochure on hearing of her retirement. Becky Pocock, the chairman's secretary, and Sharon Rodriguez, executive assistant to the director of Peabody Museum, organized a fantastic party for her with a variety of gifts during the last month of her employment.

Before Doreen decided to retire, several of our authors contacted me to keep them informed about her plans. They wanted to contribute to a gift for her when she retired and also to take part in any ceremony scheduled for her retirement. With so much interest by so many people in Doreen and her plans I decided that it would be appropriate if I asked many of those with whom she has been corresponding over the years, some of whom have not met her in person, if they wished to add a few words to a tribute to her. That offer has been greeted with eagerness by quite a few of her corresponding friends. I append their messages to her in the Appendix that follows.

I speak for all of her acquaintances and colleagues in wishing her a rewarding retirement and a happy future. We will miss her upbeat, friendly nature and her extraordinary ability to make us all feel part of her family of friends.

Acknowledgments. I would like to acknowledge the help of Bob and Megan Orciari, who made valuable suggestions and corrections about Doreen's early life. Ken Brink helped to keep the tribute hidden from Doreen before publication.

APPENDIX

Listed below are the individuals who express in their own words their experiences with Doreen over the past 32 years.

Robert Aller, Stony Brook University

I have known Doreen since my graduate student days at Yale in the mid-1970's. Mysteriously, despite being stuck in a windowless office adjacent to a stairwell, she was somehow always in remarkably good cheer and positive in outlook. Over the years, first as a student, then as an author and reviewer for JMR, I came to increasingly appreciate her unique mix of a fine sense of humor, class, competence, and professionalism. She has been a significant part of what has made JMR special, and it is hard to imagine the journal without her. Although her retirement represents a tremendous loss to JMR and takes some of the human warmth out of our community, I can only wish her the very best as she emerges into the sunlight and begins her new adventures. Thanks Doreen.

Bernard Boudreau, Dalhousie University

I passed by her JMR office almost every working day for six years, and I would almost always stop for a chat, short or long. I can truthfully say that I have never met a more encouraging, kind and friendly person! We shared a less-than-secret love of Doritos, long since banned from my diet, and if I remember correctly, hers. We also shared more than a laugh or two, but never at anyone else's expense. In the uncertain, and sometimes chaotic, flow of graduate student life, Doreen was an anchor of stability and common sense. My fondest wishes in her retirement.

Kenneth H. Brink, WHOI

Sometimes wonderful things happen that lift our spirits and restore our faith in humanity. In that category, I include my dealings with you, Doreen. Usually, it's the Journal that brings us in contact, and I have come to take it completely for granted that all of those daily chores will be done extremely well and so pass unobserved. That alone is grounds for gratitude. But, there is much more. You make yourself a good, genuinely close, friend to each of us. Your personal concern and engagement always make me feel like I am contacting you more

because of the pleasure of your conversation than because of the actual business at hand. That business gets done efficiently, but the positive glow that goes with it lasts for the day. What a fine world this would be if we were all Doreens.

Roland deSzoeki, Oregon State University

What a pleasure it has been for me, while publishing and reviewing for JMR for many years, that its anonymous “editorial assistant” has morphed gradually, through all the myriad correspondence concerning reviewers’ opinions, one’s own and others’, editorial judgments, revisions, etc. into the warm and friendly, engaging personality, Doreen. For me she is the invisible face of the journal whom I will miss. Best wishes on your retirement, Doreen.

Peter Franks, University of California. San Diego

I have published in dozens of different journals. Most of the editorial assistants are faceless, soulless, humorless people who shepherd your manuscript through, or ask you for reviews. A singular, shining exception to this is Doreen Orciari. From the first time I interacted with her upon submitting a paper to JMR back in the 1990’s Doreen has been a brilliant ray of sunshine and joy in the often grey and dull world of academic publishing. Her warmth and generosity have imbued JMR with a personality unlike any other journal. Everyone she interacts with becomes a friend; her humor, intelligence, sincerity and sensitivity have made her legendary among editorial assistants. Though I have never met Doreen, I envision her as a sort-of Italian mama – there’s always a pot of spaghetti sauce simmering on the stove, coffee and fresh biscotti to nibble while she sympathizes with your problems. If Doreen adopts stray cats the way she adopts scientists, her house must be full! Thank you, Doreen. You will be sorely missed.

Chris Garrett, University of Victoria

Corresponding with Doreen, whether as author, referee, or associate editor, has always been delightful. Her helpful, upbeat, and interesting emails have often brightened my day, bringing a warm personal touch to our scientific enterprise. Thank you Doreen, and enjoy your well-earned retirement. I hope that you’ll keep in touch with your huge international oceanographic “family”.

Eileen Hofmann, Old Dominion University

My relationship with Doreen began in the late 1980s when I submitted three papers to JMR. Subsequent communications about manuscripts led to a more personal correspondence about families, children, and events that were reported in our newsletter. These messages from Doreen were entertaining, insightful and always brightened my day. In particular, I have appreciated Doreen’s humorous outlook and advice on raising children. She has been wonderfully competent at handling the daily chores for JMR and much of the success of

the journal is due to her efforts. Her personal touch has made JMR a “community” effort. However, Doreen has also been a marvelous pen pal and someone who just makes things better. I am hoping that our correspondence will continue after her retirement because I look forward to Doreen’s messages. Good luck and happiness in your retirement!

Roger L. Hughes, University of Melbourne

After just over thirty years of having known Doreen (including during my very brief period as acting editor while George was away), I can confidently say that Doreen has been the true professional - the best editorial assistant possible. She has been extremely helpful to me as an author and reviewer and I know that my experiences have been commonly shared amongst the JMR community. Sis, you will be missed at the office but I am sure that we all wish you a long and happy retirement. Now what about that slow sea trip?

Vladimir Kamenkovich, University of Southern Mississippi

Doreen, in time I have dealt with a great many journals but I never met such benevolence combined with a high level of professionalism as in JMR. I admire George and esteem him highly as Chief Editor but I think that without you he will not be able to create such a professional, collegial atmosphere. Thank you very much for all you have done. I wish you a peaceful, fulfilling retirement after all your strenuous labors. All the best to you. We all will miss you.

Dan Kelley, Dalhousie University

Editorial assistant par excellence? Valued advisor to author and reviewer alike? Amusing guide to the culture of marine science and, well, life? Keel? Axis? Factotum? No list suffices. Doreen Orciari defies description. But there is a way to indicate her importance to so many oceanographers: her emails always get the first click. I wonder if she knows how many feel this way? JMR will be diminished without Doreen Orciari. Doreen – be strange, but don’t be a stranger.

Denny Kirwan, University of Delaware

Doreen. Over the years there has been a steady flux of editors and assistants in all the journals oceanographers deal with. Consequently we all grew accustomed to your steady presence, wry humor, and basic humanity. In this day of impersonal electronic dialogue it was always a pleasure and relief to deal with a real human. I suppose it had to happen one day, nevertheless it is hard to accept that you will no longer be the “voice” of the Journal. I remember very well when George first took over as editor. He built JMR into the quality journal in oceanography. But he had a secret weapon, you. I wish you nothing but the best in the next phase of your life. You did something remarkable in this phase along with improving the lives of Journal contributors and reviewers. I would like to add a posthumous

note from Rich Garvine. If he were alive he certainly would join in saluting you for your service to oceanography and in wishing you all the best.

Joseph Henry LaCasce, University of Oslo

In these days of “rendering” manuscripts and submitting figures to an unsympathetic webserver, how delightful it is to get an email like this, “George is in Australia picking dates. He says your email is fine.” Doreen and I have been exchanging emails for years now, be it about Acadia National Park (which she loves) or Norwegian moose attacks. She’s become a very good friend, and one whom I’ve never met! I wish her the best of luck – I will definitely miss her.

John Loder, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Bedford Institute of Oceanography

Doreen. Wow! You and George have made such a great contribution to the oceanographic community over an extended period. Many thanks and appreciation. All the best with your retirement.

Susan Lozier, Duke University

Somewhere along the way, I fell into the bad habit of returning reviews late, but, because I had no interest in disappointing Doreen, JMR reviews were an exception. However, in February of 2009, in the middle of a busy semester and in the face of an impending proposal deadline, I realized that I would not be able to send my JMR review by the promised date. So, late on a Thursday afternoon, I sent Doreen a note, promising to send the review on the following Monday. Wanting to impress on her the seriousness of my promise, and being fully aware of the recent heavy snowfall in New Haven since our son was then a Yale sophomore, I made a bargain: I told Doreen that if I did not send my review by Monday, I would travel to New Haven and shovel every inch of her driveway. I sent the email. The next morning I received Doreen’s response: a photo of her very, very long and incredibly steep driveway stuffed with what appears to be 3 feet of snow, plus a note that tells me her husband is gleefully rooting for my continued belatedness. My review was handed in early Monday morning. Doreen, as we all know, has her ways.

Roberta Marinelli, University of Southern California

Thanks for your guidance and wonderful humor over the years. You are my all-time favorite editorial person to interact with! It will be impossible to fill your shoes. Best of luck in retirement!

Chris Mooers, Portland State University

Doreen, thanks for the supreme pleasure of interacting with someone who has as much verve, dedication, and broad competence (and total memory) as you have displayed.

Trevor McDougall, University of New South Wales

Doreen is "once met, never forgotten". Doreen treats all the JMR reviewers as her friends and it's hard not to think of her as your mother. So publishing and reviewing for JMR is like taking part in a family business. Doreen wants to know what your children are up to, how many times you've run a half-marathon in the past year, and she wants the inside scoop on any of your colleagues that she knows. The contrast between reviewing and publishing in JMR compared with doing so in other journals could not be more stark. In one case it involves sending an email (and an attachment) to your mother, and in the other cases it's like talking to a machine. And the reason for this difference is Doreen! Happy retirement Doreen!

Kieran O'Driscoll, Universität Hamburg

Doreen, congratulations on your retirement, I wish you continued success and happiness! I would like to thank you for all your help with our articles in JMR and the lovely chats we had on the phone. Now that you have a little more time, maybe you will get a chance to visit Ireland, and I look forward to meeting you there! Best wishes and lots of love.

Peter Rhines, University of Washington

Salutations to Doreen on the occasion of her retirement extravaganza. Doreen was so unusual in copy editing the JMR that it reminds of two other formidable women in similar roles: Mary Sears in Woods Hole and Mary Swallow in England, who made Deep-Sea Research such a successful journal, with patient, flattering and sometimes very firm attention to referees and authors. Mary Sears helped to found the journals DSR and Progress in Oceanography, in part because as a woman she was not encouraged to go to sea as an oceanographer. One of our leading oceanographers, Roger Revelle, said of Mary, "...she maintained an uncompromising standard of excellence" with her journal, and this is what Doreen has done with JMR. I hope Doreen realizes how important her work has been, with so much great oceanography finally coming to fruition in the JMR. Now that JMR has been dragged kicking and screaming into the 20th Century (with an e-presence) what can we expect for the 21st? Best wishes to her, for her golden years.

Donald Rice, National Science Foundation

As Associate Editor, I worked with Doreen for twenty-five years, three-quarters of my career. Although we communicated most of the time by email between New Haven and Washington, I still recall how those exchanges - sometimes brief, oftentimes extended - five, six, seven times a week were so often the pick-me-up that turned a so-so day into

a sunny day. A lot of talented, dedicated folks have served the Journal over the decades. But for me and many others who love JMR, no one embodies its spirit more than Doreen Orciari.

Barry Ruddick, Dalhousie University

I have known Doreen for so long that Lorraine and I think of her as family. Each email contact and occasional phone call results in a nice chat about something enjoyable to both of us. She has put a great personal face on JMR that will be missed. We wish her well in retirement and are hoping she will visit Nova Scotia.

Rick Salmon, University of California, San Diego

Although I only actually met Doreen once or twice, I count her as a personal friend. Her friendliness, her warm personality - her humanity - colored every interaction I had with her over journal matters. Yes, it was mainly business, but in the process we exchanged advice about teenage daughters, winter driving, retirement and much else. Doreen was an island of charm in the vast internet ocean.

William Young, University of California, San Diego

JMR won't be JMR without Doreen. Finding reviewers has been a whole lot more interesting thanks to Doreen's emails. I don't know how Ken is going to manage this, but it looks like an emergency...

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