

IN MEMORIAM

Elizabeth B. Tieken

1916–2002

This past year, the Oriental Institute lost one of its staunchest supporters. Betty Tieken first became a fixture at the Institute in the early 1950s, as a volunteer working with artifacts brought back from Jarmo by the Braidwoods. The lady in the white lab coat, who was a key member of the Oriental Institute Visiting Committee, spent many hours in the basement becoming an expert in mending pottery. Many of the artifacts on display in the Oriental Institute's Museum halls have her fingerprints on them. She had as many fond friends in the basement as in the faculty offices, and her loyalty to her friends was legendary.

Her long-term fondness for visiting foreign places led naturally to her great interest in what we do at the Institute. She soon began to visit our field expeditions. Spending time at Chicago House at Luxor, Egypt, was relatively easy and even luxurious. Going up the Nile to view the sites being flooded by the Aswan Dam was something else entirely. As was visiting Nippur, in Iraq, in the days when the Zia House was the best hotel in Baghdad and there were not many tarred roads in the country. She continued to visit Nippur and the Institute's other digs, creating special relationships with Carl and Irene Haines, George Hughes, and the other folks at Chicago House, and of course the Braidwoods. Her enthusiasm and interest were as valued as the financial support she gave to them all.

Mrs. Tieken's interests were varied and vast, but her dedication to good research was at the forefront. She was as intrigued with plate tectonics as with archaeology, and she was willing to put up with foibles in scholars she believed in. She would give advice, oh yes, but she was also not averse to having her pottery mending critiqued. She loved a good discussion on a range of subjects, and her reading of *Science News* usually had her more "current" on a topic than most academics would be.



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It was characteristic of her that she did not want public applause for the good that she did. She preferred the listing “anonymous” when lists were necessary. Even when she was honored by the Oriental Institute with the Breasted Medal, she insisted that the presentation be done at a low-key event with a small group of friends.

Betty was seriously engaged not only in the Oriental Institute, but also in the Field Museum, the Art Institute, the Chicago Symphony, the Chicago Historical Society, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She was also dedicated to numerous social causes, good music, fly fishing, and prize-winning Arabian horses. She enjoyed genius-level folk art, inspired nonsense, and the “nobler forms” of poetry. An avid poetaster all her life, in the 1950s she found an equally adept fan of limericks and doggerel in John Wilson, the Egyptologist. She carried on in this genre until the week before she died.

I was privileged to come to know her very well in the past ten years, especially by attending the symphony together. Although she had a thing against choral singing, she otherwise loved the classics. She was willing to listen to new compositions, especially if they had lots of percussion involving odd instruments.

I greatly enjoyed her company and I think she enjoyed mine. She was an “original,” and we were all better for having known her.

McGuire Gibson

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