

Suzanne Ackerson-Addor (1919 – 2013)

Obituary

In this wonderful spring IPH has lost our dear Honourable Member Suzanne Ackerson-Addor. She died 28/05 in Arzier 94 years old. Since 1969 she has participated in IPH congresses and contributed with numerous papers to IPH Yearbooks, to IPH Information and to SPH- Kontakte. In 2009 her article “Paper at the Jesuit Missions of South America” was published in the first number of the restarted periodical IPH Paper History, and in that connection our correspondence started. It continued with her beautiful handwritten letters on decorated handmade papers until the end of May, when I received her book “Life: what an adventure! Roundtrip Switzerland-America”! Her book was accompanied by a small handwritten greeting, dated May 17th 2013 on greyish/green paper, made of recycled U.S. Currency with the printed text “There’s nothing like OLD MONEY”.

I could not stop reading the book, because I was spell-bound by the wonderful and vivid description of her life and her strong dedication to books, paper, paper production and the history of printing in Argentina, America and Switzerland.

Suzanne Ackerson-Addor was borne January 29th 1919 in the Province of Misiones in Argentina. Her parents Ernest François Addor and Helène Addor-Pitton had emigrated in 1909 from Sainte-Croix, Canton de Vaud in Switzerland to Paraguay, and they settled in 1914 with their four children in San Ignacio in the Province of Misiones in North Argentina, where Ernest François Addor worked at new important plantations. The ruins of the nearby early Jesuit Missions in this region fascinated Suzanne Ackerson-Addor. In her book, she describes this place of so much importance for her life:

“In 1926 the sub-tropical forest seemed ready to claim back its territory, invading the collapsed walls. Amidst this wild vegetation you could find bitter orange trees, and cows, let loose everywhere, would climb over the fallen stones to reach for the juicy fruit...In this hot climate, it is a habit to take a rest after lunch “the siesta”. I used to slip out and roam around in the silent ruins. The hot air was filled with the scent of orange blossoms. I discovered so



many little plants, ferns, mosses, insects, alive in the sculptured, half buried, fallen stones – a whole dream world. And I dreamed I lived in my own beautiful dream. Much, much later, when my love for precious books and for the Art of Bookbinding made me look for the earliest books printed in Latin America, I found that History was intimately related to those dreams of my early life. Indeed, I found in the great libraries of the world, the rare copies printed in the Jesuit Missions of Loreto, San Javier, Santa Maria la Mayor, of what is today the Province of Misiones”.

In her paper, published 2009 in the periodical IPH Paper History, Volume 13, Issue 1, she wrote: “I especially wanted to know more about the remarkable books first printed in this remote sub-tropical region. Their Colophon said: “Printed in Santa Maria la Mayor”; “en el pueblo de San Javier”; “Nuestra Señora de Loreto”...I wondered how books could be printed, on pages of white paper which had travelled so many miles under such difficult conditions.”

At the age of twelve she learned to drive a car, her father became her companion and she shared her free time following him and listening to the discussions of working problems of the local people. Getting into these people’s huts, she realized the true problems facing them and decided to study nursing. In those days, the only worthy school of nursing in Argentina was the British Hospital of Buenos Aires, the only accepted language here was English, and Suzanne Ackerson-Addor started her education there in 1937. Three years later she received her diploma, but after her marriage with the young

doctor William W. Dub from Austria she decided to leave the hospital. When their children Alex Dub-Addor and Odette Dub-Addor were 15 and 10 years old, she had more free time and decided to take book-binding lessons. Book-restoration became a new part of her life after a couple of years, and soon paper became the most important part of the book and filled her life with joy.

In her book “Life: what an adventure!” the following beautiful words illustrate, how her childhood and experiences in life made her to the remarkable person, so full of optimism and joy, that we met in IPH and admired:

“I always find that life is to be compared to a book. Every now and then, you turn a page, sometimes a chapter. Then, all of a sudden, you shut a whole volume. Life goes on. So you have to open another volume, which in turn, becomes pages, chapter ...and every time you learn to adapt, find your equilibrium: survive, as best you can”.

1968 became the end of a whole volume for Suzanne Ackerson-Addor, when William Dub died and she decided to leave Argentina and return to Switzerland to the books and archival studies waiting for her. Here she heard about IPH and participated in her first IPH Congress 1969 in Amalfi. In the very same year she did find a new way of life, when she met Garret G. Ackerson from USA that became her second husband. In 1992 she lost her dearest husband after 23 happy years of marriage, but she did not retire. She decided to open a new volume of books and continue with her studies of the history of paper, printing and the art of bookbinding in Switzerland and Argentina and participate in the IPH congresses and publish papers. She presented her last paper “L’Encyclopédie d’Yverdon de F.-B. Felice” in 2010 at the 30. IPH Congress in Angoulême with the celebration of the 50 years anniversary of IPH, and two years later we met again in 2012 at her last IPH Congress in the Upper Rhine Region.

I cannot end this obituary in a better way than by citing the last words of her article paper in the restarted periodical IPH Paper History, Volume 13, 2009:

“My life with paper and books goes on, keeping up with development of conservation, new methods

of investigation, modernisation of methods of information and with internet possibilities. IPH offers great opportunities of communications. As long as I can, I will be part of it.”

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