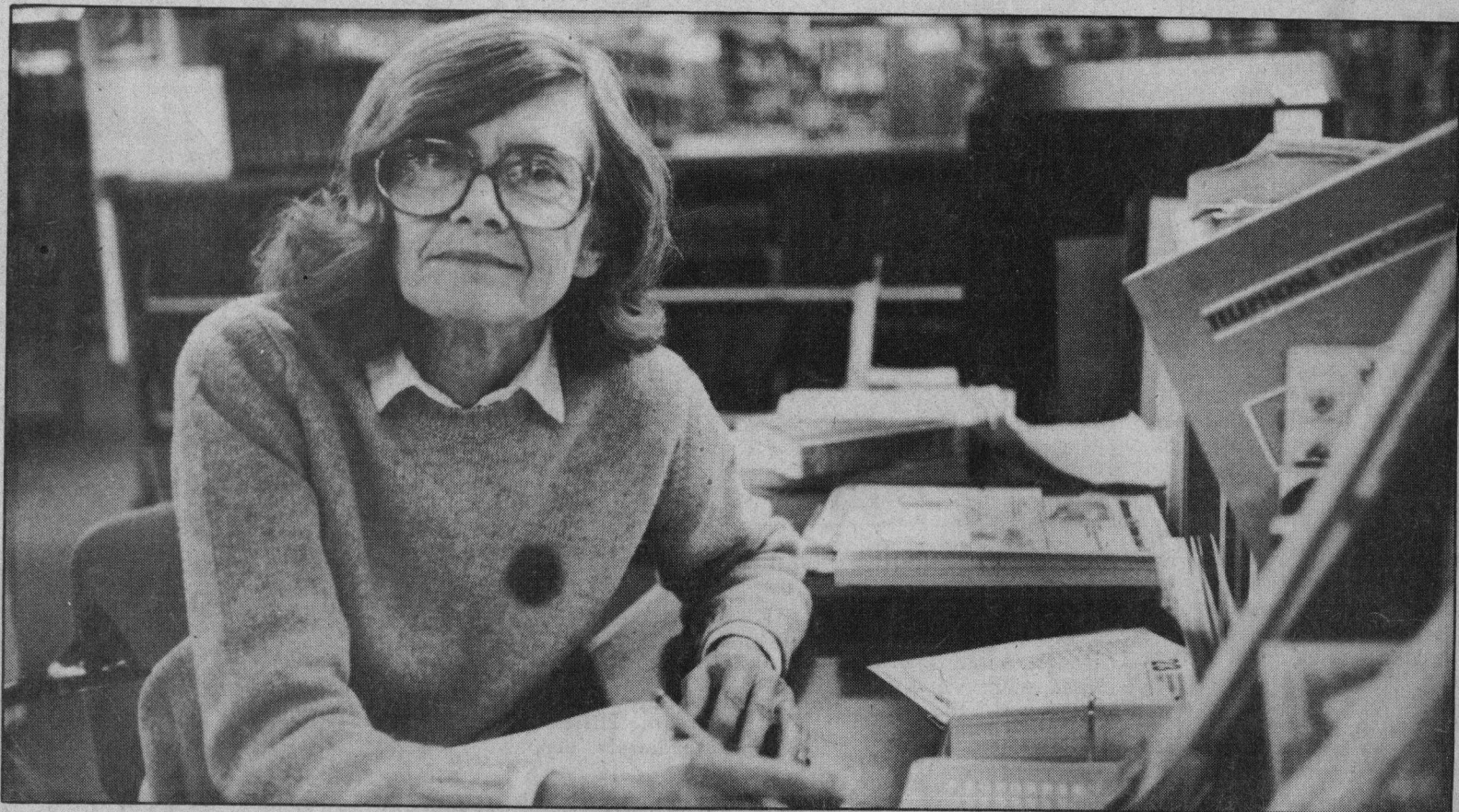


Living

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New Year's resolution: Retire!



Diane Varni

Seely Sumpf ran a smooth operation with good-natured humor, say those who worked with her.

By CANDACE ATKINS
STAFF WRITER

AS USUAL, Seely Sumpf has to work the day after New Year's. But when she shuts the door of Watsonville Public Library that evening, it will be the last time she does it. She's retiring after 20 years of service to the readers of Watsonville.

Sumpf was hired as children's reference librarian Nov. 13, 1967.

When head librarian Marie Delmas retired in 1972, Sumpf was appointed to take her place. Sumpf's background in public, medical and military library work went a long way toward her being promoted, but her natural leadership and good nature were also big factors.

"The library hired you based on your background and how well they liked you," Sumpf said. "There was no screening. Life isn't like that anymore."

Sumpf saw her new position as the last in a career that included jobs with the Atlanta Public Library, the Western Reserve Library in Cleveland, Florida State University in Tallahassee and the naval aviation library in Pensacola.

While she was working in Pensacola, she met and married her husband, Ed, who was an ensign. He was from Mountain View and had vacationed every year in Santa Cruz.

The couple moved to Mountain View, then to Santa Clara, before settling in Santa Cruz County, where her husband opened his own business.

Sumpf heard about an opening at Watsonville library, housed at the time in the old building on the present site.

"I wasn't going around looking for jobs," she said.

She added that library jobs were plentiful in the '60s, and qualified candidates usually received "tons of offers."

THE YEAR AFTER Sumpf was hired, an architectural study was made of the old library building to see if it could be preserved and possibly enlarged. The city ran out of money, she said, and nothing came of the study.

Later, when there were

the best of it, which is her *modus operandi*, say those who have worked with her.

Betty Lewis, local writer of history and library employee for 25 years, said Sumpf was a joy to work with. She has a wonderful sense of humor and has fun with her staff, but maintains her leadership, Lewis said.

Lewis added Sumpf was efficient and well-organized and never put tasks off. The library always ran smoothly

what in recent years, but is again on the way up.

Sumpf said two-income families have contributed to a drop in the number of materials checked out.

"Most of our patrons don't have the free time they once did," Sumpf said. "They don't seem to take out the quantities they once did."

Children's literature is now competing with high-tech toys, videos and television, she added. Reading is just one of many options for a young person's free time, she said.

She hopes Watsonville Library will continue to offer reading instruction, as well as reading materials, to its patrons through the state-funded Reading for Life literacy project, which enables illiterate adults to learn to read.

Sumpf also looks forward to the continued upgrading of the library computer system. She said she wished it had progressed further during her tenure.

She'll think about the library, she said, while she travels to her native Pennsylvania and other eastern locations, and to visit friends in the South — her favorite part of the country.

At home with her husband in their Santa Cruz Victorian, Sumpf will enlarge her garden and spend time at UC-Santa Cruz, in her words, "roaming around."

Fisher is confident the library will continue on the solid footing Sumpf and those before her established, but something will be missing when the library opens on Jan. 4 and Sumpf isn't there.

"What are we going to do without her?" asked Fisher. "We can't imagine the library without her."

...Sumpf made literature and other library services attractive to those who might not otherwise be inclined to read.

funds, other studies were conducted and it was concluded that the structure, picturesque to some, had to be demolished. It was damp and dark, and it was impossible for many handicapped people to get up the steps.

"They did the practical thing," Sumpf said.

Sumpf didn't wince once when the building was razed. Some objected to the demolition because the library was a historical site, but Sumpf said on behalf of the handicapped, "How in the world did you get into the building?"

She is quick to say she deserves little credit for the new library, which has an annual circulation of 270,000.

"I didn't say, 'I want a new library, build it for me.' I just happened to be there," she said.

Sumpf was also there when Prop. 13 forced libraries to make staff cuts and shorten operating hours. Sumpf made

under Sumpf's leadership, Lewis said.

Esther Fisher agrees. Fisher has been a library board trustee for eight years and was the Watsonville School District, then Pajaro Valley Unified School District librarian. She worked professionally with Sumpf for many years as district librarian, then as a board member.

"She's a very, very capable, very personable person," Fisher said. "She's been good for our local library."

Fisher said Sumpf recognized and served the needs of Watsonville's library users. By working with local schools, Sumpf made literature and other library services attractive to those who might not otherwise be inclined to read.

WATSONVILLE'S circulation a few years ago was the highest in the state for libraries of comparable size, budget and staff. Circulation fell some-