



IN MEMORIAM

Cathleen Keller
Associate Professor of Egyptology
UC Berkeley
1945 – 2008

Cathleen (“Candy”) Keller, an associate professor of Egyptology in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, died of pancreatic cancer on April 18, 2008, at John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek. She was 62.

Born in San Francisco on November 7, 1945, and raised in Atherton, Keller graduated from the former Crystal Springs School for Girls in Hillsborough in 1963. All of her postsecondary degrees were from Berkeley: B.A. from the Department of Near Eastern Studies in 1967, and 1971 M.A. and 1978 Ph.D. degrees from the Graduate Group in Ancient History and Mediterranean Archaeology.

Keller joined the Department of Near Eastern Studies in 1983 as an assistant professor specializing in Egyptian art and language. She served as chair of the department in the mid-1990s, and as acting chair for the academic year 2006-07. She undertook pioneering work in identifying artists and craftsmen who decorated tombs for New Kingdom (ca. 1550-1170 BCE) pharaohs such as Rameses the Great, Tutankhamen, and Hatshepsut in the Valley of the Kings. The tomb paintings were unsigned, but by close examination of the individual styles or “hands” in the royal tombs and study of the same artisans’ tombs and homes in texts and archaeology of the nearby ancient village of Deir el- Medinah where the craftsmen artists lived, Keller was able to distinguish and identify artists as individuals. Her research extended to the craftsmen’s work, their village, and their relationships.

Keller was a talented and creative scholar with a lifelong love and fascination for ancient Egypt and an appreciation of modern Egypt. She offered new and groundbreaking insights into her chosen field. She was a warmhearted, generous and supportive colleague with a wry sense of humor and a gift for storytelling. Keller was loved and universally respected for her unshakable integrity and generosity, intellectual and personal; for her inspiring devotion to her field and to her students; and for her dedication to the department and to Cal. Her colleagues, at Berkeley and elsewhere, offered the following tributes after her death. “I got to know Candy’s self- deprecation and humble honesty and humor when she was Acting Chair, a job she obviously performed with dedication and fairness and lack of self- interest.” “She presented a knockout brilliant paper on artists’ hands at Deir el Medina. And Candy was a knockout. . . . She proved that she could be beautiful and brilliant. Go Candy.” “She was a very special person and scholar, as well as as fine a lady as I have ever met . . . she was, above all, a worthy and decent person.” “Candy was one of a kind, smart, feisty, funny but with a very soft heart . . . “

Keller’s teaching at Berkeley focused on her two areas of primary expertise: ancient Egyptian language and ancient Egyptian art. She was an expert in and regularly taught all levels and all stages and scripts of the ancient Egyptian language. Her passion, however, was Egyptian art, and she was one of a small group of internationally recognized experts in the field who was regularly invited to national and international

conferences on the subject. She taught a variety of upper division and graduate seminar courses on aspects of Egyptian art. Keller was a gifted, inspiring and demanding teacher and mentor to her students. From two of her former students came these tributes: "I'm really saddened by Candy's passing. Of all the professors I had for the Egyptian language, she was definitely the best . . . she understood that teaching the language wasn't just studying the grammar and palaeography, but a way to gain insight into ancient Egyptian society. . . . It's a real loss for Berkeley." "She was beautiful, brilliant, kind, willing to listen, attentive, talented, knowledgeable, interested, elegant, and decent. . . . She was both tough- minded and fair- minded. A formidable lady and a radiant human being."

Keller's passion for Egyptian art led her to professional museum work. She first curated the Suto Egyptian Collection at San Francisco State University from 1975 to 1977, while serving as an assistant professor of classical archaeology at that university. From 1977 to 1983 she worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, serving first as assistant and then as associate curator of Egyptian art. Subsequently she returned to Berkeley to teach but continued her lifelong association with museums and museum exhibitions. She served as curator of Egyptian art and epigraphy at the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology on the Berkeley campus since 1987. In 1990, Keller guest curated "From Palace and Province," an exhibit at the Berkeley Art Museum that highlighted objects from the Hearst Museum's Egyptian collection. At the Hearst Museum itself Keller co- curated the 1999-2001 exhibit "Sites Along the Nile: Rescuing Ancient Egypt," for which both undergraduate and graduate students played key roles under Keller's supervision. On a national level, Keller developed the concept for and was co- curator of a popular exhibit on Hatshepsut that had its debut with the reopening of the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park in 2005. The exhibit, displayed later at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Kimball Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, revived attention to what was an enigmatic figure of female power in the ancient world. Keller was one of three editors of the exhibition catalogue entitled *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh*. Published in 2005 in association with The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the book was written to the highest scholarly standards and broke new ground while offering an in- depth treatment of the controversial Hatshepsut, a female pharaoh sometimes depicted as male.

In recent years, with the help of students in the Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program, Keller launched a major project to digitally document the Hearst Museum's Egyptian collection. The students took digital photos of the objects and converted them into data files for the museum's online catalog and website. In addition they transferred the photos into the museum's photo archive and helped to create the first corpus of digital images ever made of the museum's objects. Keller also enjoyed fieldwork in Egypt and participated as a staff member in UC Berkeley's excavations at the urban site of Tell Muqdam in the Egyptian delta.

Diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in November 2007, Keller underwent chemotherapy and other treatments before her final hospitalization in April 2008. Before her death Keller established two university funds and contributed to another to benefit Egyptology and Egyptology students at Berkeley. She also donated her professional library to the Near Eastern studies department's Klaus Baer Library of Egyptology, currently in the process of being renamed the Baer- Keller Library of Egyptology.

Candy Keller will be greatly missed by all those who knew her, but her legacy will live on in her endowments, in the work of her students, and in the work of the students who will study Egyptology at Berkeley after her passing. She is survived by a younger sister, Susan Keller, of Redwood City.

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