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Bleed, Peter, "DOROTHY M. MCEWEN: AN APPRECIATION" (1996). *Nebraska Anthropologist.* Paper 81.
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DOROTHY M. MCEWEN: AN APPRECIATION

Peter Bleed

Over the past 18 years, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Anthropology has seen many changes. We have moved, changed leadership, become computerized, added and lost faculty, and recruited, registered and graduated hundreds of students. Through all of those changes, the department has been blessed with a very steady hand at the helm of our office. Dorothy McEwen has been a dependable rock in a sea of change.

Dorothy came to the department as a temporary worker in the "Division of Archeological Research." In 1978 Dale Henning needed some help producing reports and brought Dorothy in to crank out pages of cleanly typed reports on the Cannon Project. Clearly, anybody who could do that kind of work with sanity and good humor in the basement of Benton Hall was too good to loose. Thus, when the departmental secretary's job came open, Dorothy was hired and we all heaved a sigh of relief

Dorothy quickly learned her job and soon became a favorite with both the staff and students. She made the administrative tasks of her job seem almost easy and, what is more, learned how to manage the complex human relationships that invariably play themselves out in a departmental office. She figured out how research budgets have to be tracked and how the people involved in such projects need to be supported, encouraged, and occasionally defended against the paper-pushers in the Administration building. Dorothy also became expert in things like "blue forms" and she learned how to solve all of the other "paper" problems graduates and undergraduates face. She also learned what a thesis should look like and more than once helped despairing graduate students turn odds and ends of paper into defensible drafts. Her help to students was recognized with a special Service to Students' Award in 1995 and it is not surprising that Dorothy is thanked more often than anyone else in the acknowledgments section of the theses produced over the past decade.

It seems hard to realize now, but typewriters were the state of the art when Dorothy took over the Anthropology office. During her second year on the job, she unpacked our first computer, a huge TRS 80, and taught herself how to use it. As a bright, self-reliant person, Dorothy explored the new technology and helped the department join the computer generation.

Peter Bleed, Anthropology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln 68588

Dorothy has done far more than simply doing her job well. She has helped to make the Anthropology department a nice place to be. She is a cheerful upbeat person who has consistently set a positive tone in our office. She has been a friend to virtually everyone and has been the social spark plug of any number of social events. In fact, Dorothy established many of the department's great traditions. You have to wonder if we will be able to keep the Christmas luncheon going.

Through all the changes and with all the problems and diversity a human community can present, Dorothy has been a pleasant colleague. She has gotten along with everybody. Helped even those who complicated her life and sailed steadily through uproars and downers. The students and staff of the Anthropology department have been uncommonly lucky to have Dorothy managing their affairs for all these years and we can only hope we will be able to survive without her wisdom and guidance.