Research conducted by Lucy Marous

Agnes E. Law

Born	March 3, 1892 New York
Died	January 14, 1986 (aged 93) Los Angeles, California
Cause of death	Heart attack and stroke
Education	Syracuse University (Bachelors), Columbia University (Masters)
Occupation	Librarian
Employer	CBS
Parents	Cornelius M. Law (father) Katherine Law (née Edwards) (mother)
Family	Charles Law (brother), Hollice Law (sister)

Agnes E. Law was an employee of CBS from 1927-1956, primarily serving as the Chief Librarian. She is the basis for the character Bunny Watson in the play *The Desk Set*, and the film of the same name.

Early life and education

Agnes Elizabeth Law was born on March 3, 1892 in New York[1][*non-primary source needed*] to Cornelius M. Law, a barber, and Katherine Law (née Edwards), a housewife. Law grew up in Ellicottville, Cattaraugus, New York, alongside two younger siblings, Charles and Hollice.[2][*non-primary source needed*] In 1915, she graduated from Syracuse University where she earned a degree in music[3], and was a member of the Tri Delta fraternity.[4] After graduation, Law taught music at a high school in Richfield Springs from about 1916 and 1917. She then went on to get her Masters in Library Science at Columbia University's Library School.[3]

Career at CBS

Law is best known for her work at the Columbia Broadcasting System, where she served as the Chief Librarian. She first joined CBS in 1927 as one of the eighteen original staff members of the network. Law's first position at CBS was as a secretary in the music department.[3] In addition to traditional secretarial duties, in these early days, Law also helped choose music for the radio programs, and even played piano for broadcast rehearsals.[4]

Eventually, Law became a librarian for the company, and it is here where she effected big change. The CBS library was made up of a network of smaller libraries: a music library, an engineering research and development library, a law library, and a reference library.[5] Law's two biggest contributions were starting CBS's first transcription library in 1936, and then their reference library in 1940. The latter was particularly influential, as it served multiple populations. During the years of World War II, the reference library served the staff of CBS in New York in the daytime, and in the evening they would research, and provide reference to Edward R. Murrow, a war correspondent for CBS and his staff who were based in London.[4] During this time, Law also served as a member of the New York media's War Emergency Unit. This group of twenty seven women were employees of various media corporations, and in 1942 learned morse code in secret meetings with engineers, in order to prepare themselves to send messages back and forth.[6] Law left CBS around 1956.[3]

Professional contributions and legacy

During her career, Law was a powerful voice in her field, and this can be seen in her various accolades. For her contributions to her profession, specifically "excellence in radio and television," Law was presented with the George Arents Award in 1957.[6] Law left CBS around 1956.[3] She was also thanked in many publications about television and radio, including Kingdon S. Tyler's *Modern Radio*[7] and *Telecasting and Color*.[8]

Law also made her mark as a founder and member of many professional organizations. She was a member of the National Association of Broadcasters, and in 1949 was on the committee in charge of the convention for their first district meeting, which took place in Boston.[9] A few years later, the head of the National Association of Broadcasters, Harold Fellowes, selected a group of women, including Law, to create their own organization for women in the world of broadcasting. As a member of this committee, Law and Geraldine Zorbaugh, who was a lawyer and the vice president of ABC, wrote the organization's constitution and bylaws. In April 1951 the first convention of this association, the American Women in Radio & Television, was held, and Law was the chairman of their Steering Committee.[10] [11] In 1966, Law and a group of forty four members of the AWRT went on a European Study Tour. This trip was in cooperation with the United States Department of State, and the AWRT's Educational Foundation. Law served as Organizing Chairman, and the tour went through London, Berlin, Milan, Florence, Rome, and Paris to study international broadcasting[12]

At some point after leaving CBS, Law relocated to Los Angeles, California where she stayed for the rest of her life. She died of a heart attack and stroke on January 14, 1986, at the age of 93.[13]

Desk Set

Today, Agnes Law's legacy lives on through her fictional counterpart- Bunny Watson. Law's life as a librarian for CBS was dramatized in the 1955 play *The Desk Set* by William Marchant. The show opened on October 24, 1955 at the Broadhurst Theatre, and ran 297 performances, closing July 7, 1956. Shirley Booth starred as Bunny Watson, the role based on Law, and Audrey Christie took over the role for the end of the run. One of the producers of the show was Robert Fryer, who was also the casting director at CBS.[14]

In 1957, the play was adapted into a film of the same name. It was directed by Walter Lang, and had a screenplay written by Phoebe Ephron and Henry Ephron. The film starred Katharine Hepburn as Bunny Watson, and Spencer Tracy, as Richard Sumner, a smaller role from the play that was expanded to give Hepburn's character a love interest.[15]

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