

Krystyna Jaworowska

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Krystyna Jaworowska joined the Smith College community in 1967 shortly after coming to the United States from Poland. Affectionately known as “Mrs. J”, her initial years at Smith were as Head of House in Talbot House. She moved on to become a departmental assistant first in physics and then in astronomy, and later an instructor and teaching associate in the Astronomy Department. Mrs. J was beloved by many generations of students, sharing with them her warmth, infectious energy, and a mischievous humor.

We know few details of her experiences prior to coming to the United States. Growing up in an affluent family in Poland, she received her education at the University of Warsaw. She concentrated in meteorology, working for many years in research and management at the Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology in Warsaw. One of her passions was sailing. She frequented the waters of the Baltic and North Seas, sometimes for months at a time. This was unusual during the peak of the Stalinist period, and occasionally her far-flung adventures led to encounters with Soviet border patrols and even brief periods of incarceration! Her lifelong love of sailing was renewed in 1985 when she participated in a cruise sponsored by the Five College Coastal and Marine Sciences Program on the research ship *Rambler*.

Coming to the United States in 1964, Mrs. J learned English at Cornell and Indiana University where her then-husband, Jan Jaworoski, was a visiting faculty in mathematics. Arriving at Smith in 1967 Krystna became Head of Talbot House. From here, she contacted *Catalyst*, an organization devoted to securing appropriate employment for well-educated individuals newly arrived in the United States. Her search came to the attention of Smith’s president Thomas Mendenhall in 1968, and Mrs. J received a summons to College Hall, followed by an appointment as an assistant in the department of physics.

Mrs. J began her long association with the Department of Astronomy as an assistant in 1971. Between 1976 and 1983, the course she taught was *Astronomy Through Photography*, guiding some 200 students through the discovery of celestial wonders and the potential of the camera for capturing them. Many students related tales of cold hours at the McConnell Roof Observatory followed by an impromptu visit to Friendly’s with Mrs. J for hot chocolate, and then even longer hours in the darkroom, ending in the satisfaction of a completed photographic portfolio. One former student in a

memoir recalled Mrs. J's "old world, big-bosomed warmth" and her "ready sense of celebration."

Her favorite astronomical subject was eclipses of the sun. She traveled to no fewer than nine total solar eclipses, to sites as distant as Kenya, Indonesia, and Siberia. Some of you may recall the delightful illustrated lecture she gave following her Siberian expedition, talking both about her eclipse photos and the marvels encountered on her journey through China, Mongolia, and the Soviet Union. Mrs. J. gave astronomical talks to school and community groups on eclipses, all spiced with wit and enthusiasm. She regularly contributed to exhibits that graced the foyer of McConnell Hall, beginning in 1974 with "Scientists in Exile," prepared in collaboration with former professor of astronomy Waltraut Seitter. To this day, an exhibit of old scientific instruments that she helped curate is in the McConnell Hall foyer.

Throughout her 20 years at Smith she maintained close contact with student life, continuing as Head of Talbot House until 1974, then as a faculty resident in Cushing House, and subsequently as a House Fellow in Lawrence House.

Following retirement in 1987, her presence in the Science Center slowly diminished. For years longer, however, she continued as a member of the Appalachian Mountain Club, Zonta International, and the League of Women Voters. She served as a Board member of the Commonwealth Opera and as an aide to refugees from her native Poland. Krystyna died on November 15, 2009, shortly after her 92nd birthday

Mrs J was a keen observer of people and a real life force. Many of us remember her delicious meals and what a gracious hostess she was. As a young assistant professor rushing from one thing to the next, she would sometimes stop me in the hallway, looking me in the eye and urging me to slow down and take time to appreciate life. However, I think she had more success with the astronomy students- there were always one or two in her office at all times of the day or night, talking about her latest eclipse trip, her newest camera, or something very funny, sending peals of laughter into the hallway. One colleague recalls her as "most comfortable in her love and joy for life". It was our good fortune to have known Mrs. J. She made our lives better by sharing hers and will be remembered fondly by astronomy alumnae for years to come.