

# MEMORIAL FOR SHARON MEINHOLZ

SHARON MEINHOLZ, Department Student Records Secretary, passed away from a heart attack on November 8, 2004. She was 53.

Sharon started work with the University in 1978 and came to the Department in 1983, after working in the Agricultural College and Medical School. She initially worked as a receptionist and in 1990 took over the job of Graduate and Undergraduate Secretary when Ruth Dresser retired. The first sentence in her job description says it all:

“This position functions as the primary contact person in the Department of Geology and Geophysics for undergraduate and graduate students”.

That is quite a task! Her personnel file is filled with letters with comments such as, “Her care and dedication as to what is best for the students never ceases,” and, “Sharon manages to keep track of a million details.” In the 14 years she was Graduate and Undergraduate Secretary, she helped over 1,500 students from all over the world who have applied for admission to the Department. She got to know many of these applicants well through an enormous quantity of correspondence. She was personally disappointed when students were admitted to our program but did not come.

Each year, Sharon helped our approximately 50

undergraduate and 70 graduate students who are in the Department at any one time. She knew all of them and watched over each student, reminded them of what they needed to do next to get through the program, and worried about how they were doing. She was like a second mother to many of them, from the time of application until after graduation.

She excelled at keeping student applications on track. And she helped new students in all sorts of ways, after they accepted an offer but before they arrived.

Important parts in a student’s life include coursework, TA responsibilities, office location, and getting paid. Sharon kept track of these details for each one.

A critical time in the life of all graduate students is defending and turning in their thesis. Sharon kept a very close eye on people at this stage, where a mix-up in even the simplest requirement can cause chaos.

Students depended on her for assistance with follow-up details after they left Madison. Grateful for her help, many kept in touch with news or came back to visit.

Sharon was a native of Cross Plains, Wisconsin. She is survived by her mother (her father passed away in 1980), two sisters, three brothers, and nine nieces and nephews.

*Clark Johnson, Department Chair*



*Sharon Meinholz*

## HONORING SHARON:

### THE SHARON MEINHOLZ GRADUATE STUDENT FUND

In recognition of Sharon’s deep involvement with students, particularly graduate students, we have set up the *Sharon Meinholz Graduate Student Fund* through the University of Wisconsin Foundation. Sharon always enjoyed hearing of students’ travels, which are a natural part of geological research, and the successes they had in giving talks at professional meetings. She understood that these were important opportunities for students to share their work with geologists from all over the world and make connections that will start them on their careers. We therefore will use the fund to help students attend scientific meetings to present their work and learn from the broader geological community. These awards will be announced at the Annual Spring Banquet and in *The Outcrop*, and will provide a means to continually remember Sharon and her contributions to the Department. Donations to the fund may be made through the *University of Wisconsin Foundation*.