

Anna Marguerite McCann, 1933–2017

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On 12 February 2017, Anna Marguerite McCann Taggart, recipient in 1998 of the Gold Medal of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), passed away peacefully at the age of 83 in Sleepy Hollow, New York. Anna Marguerite McCann, as she was known professionally, was one of the early pioneers in underwater archaeology and was the first American woman in this field. In addition, she had a passion for Roman art and archaeology and published numerous books, articles, and reviews in this area of study, particularly sculpture, and she lectured widely. As a special tribute for her distinguished achievements and contributions in these two fields, she was honored with both a Gold Medal Colloquium at the December 1998 meeting of the AIA and a Festschrift titled *Terra Marique: Studies in Art History and Marine Archaeology in Honor of Anna Marguerite McCann on the Receipt of the Gold Medal of the Archaeological Institute of America*, which included a full list of her many publications.¹

Born on 11 May 1933, in Mamaroneck, New York, to Richard and Dorothy McCann, Anna grew up in Rye, New York, where she attended the Rye Country Day School. After receiving a B.A. (Phi Beta Kappa) in art history with a minor in classical Greek at Wellesley College in 1954, she attended the American School of Classical Studies at Athens on a Fulbright Fellowship. After her year in Greece, she went on to receive her M.A. from the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University in 1957. Her master's thesis, "Greek Statuary Types in Roman Historical Reliefs," directed by the late Karl Lehmann, reflects an early interest in Roman imperial sculpture that she followed up in the research for her Ph.D. in art history and classics at Indiana University, awarded in 1965. During her tenure as a Rome Prize Fellow at the American Academy in Rome from 1964 to 1966, she transformed her thesis into *The Portraits of Septimius Severus, A.D. 193–211*, which appeared as a volume in the *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*.² It remains today the major scholarly work on the portraiture of that emperor. In 1973, she married her childhood sweetheart, Robert D. Taggart, who passed away in 2016. They were happily married for 43 years and divided their time between an apartment in New York City and their farm in Pawlet, Vermont, where they enjoyed gardening, hiking, skiing, and swimming. They were both noted for their great generosity to a wide range of educational and charitable causes. Reflecting their philanthropic interest in archaeology, they established in 1985 the Anna Marguerite McCann and Robert D. Taggart Lectureship in Underwater Archaeology.

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¹ Pollini 2005, xix–xxi.

² McCann 1968.



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When McCann entered the profession of underwater archaeology in the early 1960s, this field was still in its infancy and largely dominated by men. Her first professional diving experiences were with Jacques-Yves Cousteau and his team, exploring two ancient Roman shipwrecks by the Grand Congloué, a rocky island off Marseilles harbor. In 1961–1962, she was a diver with the National Geographic Society and University of Pennsylvania excavation of the Yassi Ada shipwreck, a seventh-century C.E. wreck off the island of Yassi Ada in Turkey. In 1963, she worked in the port of Kenchreai with a project sponsored by the University of Chicago and Indiana University. During her tenure at the American Academy in Rome, McCann worked as a photographer for land excavations at the hilltop ruins of Cosa on the coast of Tuscany, directed by Frank E. Brown. At one point, she discovered an ancient, half-buried underwater pier in the sea below the hilltop and became interested in the harbor. She later raised funds

to undertake the mapping and underwater excavation of the port area of Cosa, which was an important trading center during the Late Republic. She went on to direct underwater and land excavations of the port and fishery of Cosa in several campaigns between 1965 and 1987. This research eventually resulted in a monumental work (with the contributions of several dozen collaborators) entitled *The Roman Port and Fishery of Cosa: A Center of Ancient Trade*.³ This pioneering accomplishment was awarded both the Association of American University Presses' Outstanding Book Award (1987) and the AIA's James R. Wiseman Book Award (1989).

In 1973, McCann and her team of diving archaeologists, under the aegis of the American Academy in Rome, formed a collaboration with the Istituto Inter-

³McCann and Bourgeois 1987.

nazionale di Studi Liguri, directed by Nino Lamboglia, another pioneer in the field of underwater archaeology, to map and explore the ancient harbors at Populonia and Pyrgi, along the Tuscan coast. At both sites her team uncovered and studied for the first time the remains of Etruscan harbor facilities that fostered this culture's domination of the Tyrrhenian Sea and its trade with the rest of the Mediterranean.

McCann taught art history and archaeology at the University of Missouri (1966–1971) and at the University of California, Berkeley (1971–1974), as well as at Boston University (1997–2001), and she was a visiting scholar in the Program in Science, Technology, and Society at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2001–2007). Students still remember her for her passion and love of the subject, the enthusiasm she brought to her teaching, her genuine personal interest in them, and her inspiration as a mentor. In 1974, she joined the curatorial staff at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City to catalogue its Roman sculptures, and she went on to direct their lecture program “Archaeology Around the World” in 1975. She published some of her research on sculpture in her book *Roman Sarcophagi in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*,⁴ which received the Association of American University Presses' Outstanding Book Award (1978) and was recognized as an Outstanding Art Book by the Thomas J. Watson Library (1978). McCann also published seminal articles on Greek and Roman sculpture and took part in international conferences on ancient bronze sculpture.

Another significant archeological project was McCann's collaboration with Robert Ballard of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts. In 1989, she became the archeological director of the JASON Project, which was established to help educate children and others in technology and the sciences. She and Ballard utilized the same ROV technology that he had used to discover the Titanic to explore the deep Mediterranean seabed along an ancient trade route between Carthage and Rome. The team discovered and surveyed several previously unknown ancient shipwrecks in deep water near Skerki Bank, northwest of Palermo, using real-time technology to broadcast the images of the survey and excavation live to students in the United States. This project resulted in her multidisciplinary book *Deep Water Archaeology: A Late-Roman Ship from Carthage and an Ancient Trade Route near*

Skerki Bank off Northwest Sicily, coedited with J. Freed.⁵ McCann returned to the area with Ballard and a larger team in 1997, discovering several more shipwrecks and recovering diagnostic artifacts, ultimately publishing the project in yet another book, coedited with J.P. Oleson, *Deep-Water Shipwrecks off Skerki Bank: The 1997 Survey*.⁶ In these ventures with Ballard, McCann initially endured much ungenerous and ill-founded criticism from some members of the scholarly community. True to her character, she chose the route of scholarly publication and intelligent, polite discourse to win over her critics. The first JASON Project won the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Award for Public Engagement with Science (1989) and the *Computerworld* Smithsonian Award (1990).

Other archaeologists are now following in her pioneering footsteps. It is typical of McCann's interest in the broad dissemination of archaeological information that she also presented the results of her research in numerous public lectures and television programs, in the popular press, and in a coauthored book for children, *The Lost Wreck of the Isis*,⁷ which the National Science Teachers Association and the Children's Book Council included in their list of Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children in 1990. Also for the general audience was *The Roman Port and Fishery of Cosa: A Short Guide*, which she published under the aegis of the American Academy in Rome.⁸

Largely as a result of her devotion to her family, McCann chose not to pursue long-term academic positions, but she nevertheless taught with great success at distinguished institutions across the United States. She worked generously with both undergraduate and graduate students, inspiring them with her enthusiastic teaching, providing excavation opportunities, and establishing scholarships for their support. She gave herself generously as well to the important task of lecturing to the public, in part through the AIA's lecture program and its Norton Lectureship in 1994–1995. McCann was a pillar of support for the AIA for decades, with long service on the Board of Trustees and as founder of their Committee for Underwater Archaeology in 1985.

Throughout all this, McCann concentrated with selfless generosity on another goal, inspiring young people

⁴McCann 1978.

⁵McCann and Freed 1994.

⁶McCann and Oleson 2004.

⁷Ballard et al. 1990.

⁸McCann 2002.

and laypeople in general with her own enthusiasm for the study of ancient art and culture. Her firm belief in the dignity and importance of every individual endeared her to literally thousands of people in the course of her professional career—from day laborers at Cosa, Italy, and Kenchreai to ambassadors in New York and Rome—and she helped many students, colleagues, and fellow administrators simply to see more clearly and to think more humanely. McCann's most abiding and endearing qualities in the eyes of her many friends, however, were her absolute integrity, her loyalty to her colleagues and students, and her heartfelt devotion to archaeology. In every kind of situation she exuded a warmth and humanity that inspired all who came in contact with her to reach beyond themselves. She is without doubt one of the great American archaeologists. McCann was never afraid to display her religious beliefs, and her life was an example of the biblical adage (Matthew 6:21), “ὅπου γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ θησαυρός σου, ἐκεῖ ἔσται καὶ ἡ καρδία σου.”

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