

# Maribel Cadmus (1924–)

By Janice Dilg

Maribel Cadmus was secretary of the Oregon Senate from 1976 to 1988, acting as the Senate's administrator and parliamentarian and keeping it functioning, both during legislative sessions and between sessions. During her tenure, she oversaw the modernization of the position through the introduction of computers and the standardization of office practices.

Maribel McDonnal was born in Mancos, Colorado, on December 14, 1924, the eldest of four children born to William and Flora Humiston McDonnal. William's work as a civil engineer with the Social Conservation Service (today's Natural Resources Conservation Service) brought the family to The Dalles in 1937. Maribel attended Oregon State College (now Oregon State University) while working for the Extension Service to pay tuition. At Homecoming 1945, she met Walter George Cadmus, a World War II veteran and former Japanese prisoner of war; they married in March 1946. The couple owned and operated a feed store in Philomath and bought a farm near Turner, where they raised sheep and a variety of crops; they had four children. When crop prices fell sharply in 1955, Maribel took a job as legislative staff at the Capitol.

Cadmus's first job at the Oregon legislature was as secretary to the Chief Clerk of the Senate, Zylpha-Zell Burns, and she credits Burns with teaching her "protocol" and the "fundamentals in how to keep records." From 1959 to 1961, Cadmus worked in the House as secretary to Representative Robert Elfstrom. Beginning in 1961, she was secretary to Chief Clerk Cecil L. Edwards, and it was during his tenure that the title was changed to Secretary of the Senate. When Edwards retired in 1976, the senators elected Cadmus to the position.

The nonpartisan Secretary of the Senate, which has a two-year term, ensures that Senate rules are followed, compiles the *Senate Journal*, creates the daily calendar and agenda, and circulates current versions of bills from House and Senate committees as well as Senate committee reports. During legislative sessions, the secretary and staff are on "the desk" at the front of the Senate chambers. The pace of work during sessions can be grueling, as the secretary keeps senators up to date with the most current bill status and committee reports and ensures that a quorum is present when the senate is in session. The secretary also selects honorary pages, students who assist the senate during long sessions. During the interim, the secretary assists the senate with processing executive appointments and administrative tasks.

The Senate and House office wings were added in 1977, which altered the physical size and orientation of the secretary's office to the office of the Senate president, eliminating the physical proximity of the two. Cadmus credits former Senate President Jason Boe with modernizing and professionalizing the institution and many legislative staff positions, truly making the legislature an equal third branch of Oregon state government.

At her retirement in December 1988, Cadmus described the Senate as "the voice of the people, which I feel is the most important" part of government, and she remembered her eleven years as secretary of the senate as "a big wonderful part of my life."

George Cadmus died on January 16, 1999. Maribel Cadmus currently lives in Portland.

## Sources

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