

The Fagan Reading Room



Welcome to The Fagan Reading Room! Our Reading Room was named after our greatest benefactor, Marilyn Jo Fagan. Please read on to learn more about Marilyn Jo Fagan.

The Pullman car "Meath" formerly housed our collection of Museum's railroad memorabilia from 1981 to 2004. When the new Museum building was built, the Pullman car was emptied and readied for moving across the street next to the other railroad cars.

The Reading Room is housed in the depot style Museum, located at 211 South Seminary Street right next to the Amtrak Depot.

*Stay tuned for a listing of Reference Section. Studies and time with the Reference Section, will be determined at a later date, but will most likely be by appointment only.



MARILYN JO FAGAN

As you enter the Marilyn Jo Fagan Reading Room, you may be asking: Who is Marilyn Jo Fagan and why the Galesburg Railroad Museum's Reading Room is named in her honor. To tell the story of Marilyn, we have to go back to the time when we did not know her.

In the fall of 2000, a local attorney had advised the President of the Board of Directors that he had a client looking for a place to put some funds, as the party had a terminal illness. The attorney was contacting other non-profit organizations as well.

Our President wrote a letter stating how much a new building for the Museum would mean, not only to the Museum, but to the people of Galesburg, as railroading is so much a part of the city's past, present and future.

We didn't hear anything for almost 3 years when the 'godfather' we were thinking of actually turned out to be a 'godmother', and her name was Marilyn Jo Fagan. The Pullman Car - Meath (across the street) was no longer big enough to display all the donated railroad memorabilia the Board desired visitors to see.

In May of 2000, the Board began selling granite engraved bricks to be placed in a Commemorative Walk in order to raise funds to build a new Museum building. After three and a half years of selling bricks, \$90,000 was raised; however, this was far short of the money needed to build a new museum building. This is where Marilyn Jo Fagan came into place.

Marilyn Jo Fagan was born and raised in Galesburg, Illinois. She was the only child of a C.B. & Q conductor, Joseph L. Fagan, and had other relatives who also worked for the C.B. & Q. here in Galesburg. She graduated with the Class of '49 and moved to the Eastern part of the United States. Marilyn did, however, return to Galesburg to assist her ailing mother at the Fagan Family home. Marilyn worked her adult life in hotel management for the Conrad Hilton hotel chain and the last 2 years of work was with the Palmer House Hotel in downtown Chicago.

Marilyn always knew the importance of railroading to her family, as well as to the city of Galesburg. She wanted the importance of this history to be expanded, so in her will she left \$150,000 toward the building of a new museum. In addition to the money, Marilyn designated one half of the selling

price of the Fagan Family home to be set up as an endowment for the Galesburg Railroad museum. The funds from the endowment would help pay for the expense and maintenance in running a non-profit organization.

Marilyn had a special friend, John Gee, from Pittsburgh, PA, and in her honor was here for the groundbreaking for the construction of the new building and then again when the Museum was dedicated on December 7, 2004. He was excited to attend and said that Marilyn Jo would have been very pleased with the results.

Marilyn Jo Fagan was a most generous woman and in addition to our bequest; she had left money for a local church and a day care center. We know she was a beautiful woman from the picture in our Reading Room, but she was beautiful inside, too, and the Galesburg Railroad Museum, as well as the city of Galesburg, will be forever grateful for what she has done.

These words can only start to say how much we, The Board of Directors of the Galesburg Railroad Museum, are deeply appreciative of the generosity of such a wonderful woman. Thank you Marilyn Jo.