

Mary Richardson Schmidt died early in the morning of January 11, 2013 of pneumonia. She was born in York, PA, July 21, 1929, to Samuel Small Schmidt and Helen Townsend. She attended York Collegiate Institute – York County Academy and Chatham Hall in Virginia before earning a BA in History at Smith College in 1951. She worked briefly in the Department of Adult Education and Social Relations at the American Unitarian Association in Boston, and then earned an MA in Sociology and Anthropology at Boston University in 1954. The next four years were spent in Philadelphia, where she worked for the Citizens Council on City Planning while earning a Masters in City and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania in 1957. She also designed the first study approved by the FDIC to justify insuring a new commercial bank. After a year at the Delaware County Planning Commission, in 1958 she married William A. Doebele, an associate professor at the Graduate School of Design (GSD) at Harvard University. They spent 1959 in Indonesia, starting a school for planning at the Bandung Institute of Technology. Mary did research on the social impact of the first Indonesian public housing project, Krekot Dalam, and also traveled into the heart of Borneo to visit the Dyaks, a tribe that at the time actively practiced headhunting. In the next four years after their return, the couple had three sons, Justin, Samuel, and William Latimer, and acquired three rental properties, which Mary managed. She also organized two Urban Design Conferences at the GSD. She resumed professional work in 1964, on various short-term part time projects in various agencies, such as studies for the Metropolitan Area Planning Association of the needs for transportation and water and sewage treatment. At the Boston Redevelopment Agency she edited a proposal for a new city in Boston Harbor for the U.S. Bicentennial. She ran a conference at MIT on computer aided manufacturing and design (CAD-CAM). In 1966 she visited six cities in central Africa to study the housing problems of the urban poor. Then she worked on urban renewal and other programs in local cities for a local consulting firm. The marriage ended after ten years, in 1968. That year she bought an old mill house in Harvard, MA where she and her sons spent many summers. In Harvard, she started a commune with a group of hippies from Ecology Action, which continued until the 1990s. She became an active member of the Massachusetts Land League. After dealing with the terminal illness of her father in 1971, she joined the Planning Office at MIT, working on community relations and programs for the elderly housing. This led to a consulting contract with Cambridge Community Service and the City of Cambridge, which resulted in the incorporation of the Somerville-Cambridge Home Care, now Elder, Services; she briefly served on its Board of Directors. In 1972, she took a job for the Governor's Office to design a plan for the State Bicentennial; her "Plan for Action" was approved by the administrative and legislative leadership but thrown out by an obscure legislative committee. She was awarded an NSF Fellowship to serve on a team to develop and test an urban land use model at Harvard's GSD. Mary then worked on state land use and air quality control programs in the State Executive Office of Administration and Finance. With the change of governors, Schmidt was elected President of the Massachusetts Section of the American Planning Association. In that role she became involved with AISLE (An InterSociety Liaison Committee) a group formed to provide state legislators with objective scientific and technical information. Working with staff from the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the National Science Foundation, Mary organized an AISLE conference in Massachusetts and assisted in others in Maryland, Virginia and Illinois. She served as the vice president of AISLE for several years and was also active in the Massachusetts Engineers Council. A new interest in science and technology led Mary into the doctoral program at MIT in 1978, with Donald A. Schon as her mentor, and to serve as his teaching assistant. She received a research grant to study urban energy problems. Ten years later, in 1988, she earned her PhD for her dissertation, "Planning for the Management of Technological Risk." Case studies of the failure of an earthen dam, on earthquake prediction and seismic engineering and on nuclear waste disposal policy led her to argue that scientific and technical knowledge alone is insufficient to build safe structures; the hands-on knowledge of workmen and others at the bottom is essential. During that decade she was involved in many real estate transactions; including selling her interest in a shopping center in York and acquired an historic house and seaside cottage in Westport, MA. She consulted briefly in Washington, DC, and she had a reunion in Ireland with her traveling companion to

Borneo, 25 years earlier. After graduation, she sold her first Westport house for a large profit, and went into semi-retirement. For the next four years, she became involved with women in science at the Bunting Institute and with a group of theorists in public administration, PAT-Net, to whom she presented her first scholarly paper in 1991; it was published in Public Administration Review (PAR) in 1992 and was awarded the Louis Brownlow Award for the best paper by a practitioner in the Public Administration Review by the American Society of Public Administration (ASPA). By that time, she was involved in a final large real estate project, the conversion of a rundown bar, known as the "bikers' bar" next to her Westport cottage. She turned it into a seafood restaurant, the Beachcomber, as well renovating two other cottages on the property and creating a gift shop and an environmental exhibit on the site as well. Unexpected problems with restaurant forced her to sell the property to the state in 1998. Shortly thereafter she developed lung cancer and underwent successful surgery to remove it, although the procedure left her with shortness of breath. In 1999, she visited the island of Anegada in the British Virgin Islands. Over the last decade she participated in a number of PAT-Net and ASPA conferences. She also visited her eldest son in Singapore and traveled to Alaska and the South Pacific. As emphysema slowed her activities, she began to rely on supplemental oxygen, but continued to write, including an article for PAR in memory of Don Schon. She was invited to join the Saturday Morning Club, a women's writing group started in 1860 by Louise Ward Howe; and served as its recording secretary until illness forced her to move into an assisted living facility. She had been working to develop a social support group known as the SOBs for people with "Shortness Of Breath." After nine months, she returned to her condo in Cambridge and began developing a social support system of her own of young intellectuals. She continued to be enthusiastic about life and learning until her death.