

Robert Frost Visits the University of Detroit

November 13-14, 1962

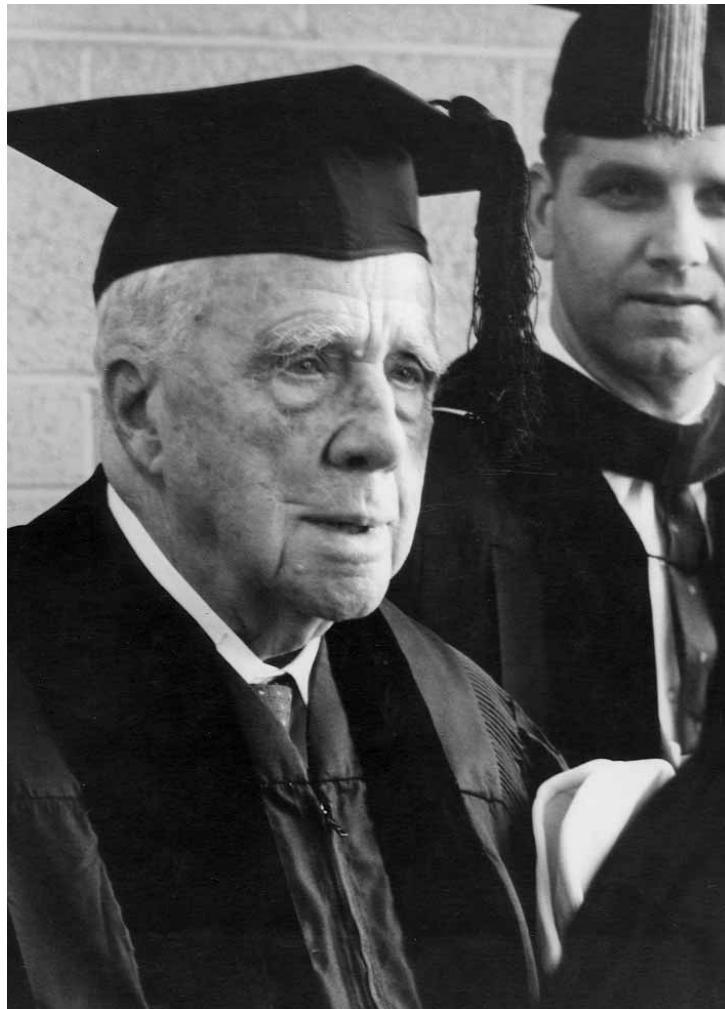
Peter Stanlis

To truly understand the significance of Robert Frost's visit to the University of Detroit to give a poetry reading and to receive an honorary degree, a brief history of my reasons for inviting him is revealing.

As an undergraduate at Middlebury College from 1938-1942, I attended the Bread Loaf Graduate School of English, a branch of Middlebury College. Robert Frost's farm and summer residence in Ripton, Vermont was close to the Bread Loaf campus, and I first met the poet late in June 1939 and we had several long talks during that summer. In spring 1940, Frost awarded me the Elinor Frost Scholarship that enabled me to return to Bread Loaf the following summer. For the next four summers I attended Bread Loaf and received the MA in English in August 1944.

Frost secured a graduate fellowship for me to the University of Michigan, where he had been poet-in-residence during the 1920s; I received the PhD in English at Michigan in 1951. Reginald L. Cook, my American literature teacher at Middlebury, was the Dean of the Bread Loaf School of English, and he invited me back to Bread Loaf to teach for the summers of 1961 and 1962. That enabled me to extend my 23-year friendship with Frost.

When I left Bread Loaf in 1944, I promised Frost that some day I would write the best book about his art and philosophy that I had it in me to write. A more immediate and direct way for me to show my appreciation and gratitude for all that Frost had



Robert Frost with the author

done to advance my academic career was to invite him to the University of Detroit, where I was teaching, for an honorary degree and a poetry reading. In July 1961 I met Frost in his cabin and issued my invitation.

It was as much to honor him for his achievements as the foremost American poet of the 20th century as it was for his favors to me. Frost was delighted to accept my invitation. He said, "See Kay and

arrange the schedule and details." Kay Morrison was Frost's secretary and controlled his life and public appearances. The poet was 87 years old, and his physical strength was limited, so she paced his activities to prevent him from wearing himself out. Aside from screening public demands on Frost, sometimes she even prevented his friends from seeing him. Kay vehemently refused my invitation, saying that Frost lacked the strength to engage in such events, intimating that my proposal would endanger his health. Naturally, I accepted Kay's veto and left Bread Loaf disappointed.

During the academic year of 1961-62 I kept reading about Frost's many public appearances around the United States, and I realized that Kay Morrison had cleverly finessed me out of my

invitation. I was close to Frost, but I was not part of the inner circle of the Morrises. From experience I knew how Frost resented having his physical manhood questioned, so when I returned to Bread Loaf in July 1962, I again issued my invitation to Frost and stressed that in sabotaging my invitation, Kay had said that he was not up to performing a large poetry reading. Frost bristled at this and said that he had

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ways of managing his manager. He asked me to write a personal letter and place it in his rural mailbox. In it I should review our long friendship and say how pleased I was that he had agreed to come to Detroit. He would take it from there. Accordingly, I wrote such a letter as directed by Frost.

A few days later I returned to Frost's farm and found Kay Morrison bubbling with enthusiasm about Frost's future visit to the University of Detroit, as though she had originated the invitation herself. But then, more quietly, she took me firmly by the arm and warned me not to allow anyone to exploit Frost's visit for a selfish purpose. Without giving her warning much thought, I assured her that I wouldn't allow that to happen. We concluded by scheduling the date, November 13-14, 1962, and other matters. Kay insisted that I should secure a private room for Frost at the Detroit Country Club near the University.

During the month before Frost's arrival, I published several articles together with photographs I had taken of Frost at Bread Loaf in the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press*. These announcements of his visit elicited some enthusiastic responses that assured me Frost would have a large audience for his poetry reading.

On the morning of the poet's arrival, Bill Rabe, the University's public information officer, and I drove to the railroad station to meet him. We were somewhat surprised to see that Charles Feinberg was already there with his limousine and uniformed chauffeur. Feinberg was a member of the board of The Friends of the University of Detroit Library, the organization that I had secured to cover the expenses of publicity, travel, room, and stipend for Frost's visit. He was well known as a collector of manuscripts and books by and about Walt Whitman. As his chauffeur placed Frost's luggage in the trunk of his car, Feinberg invited all of us to have breakfast at his home on Boston Boulevard, near the University campus.

After we had a leisurely and pleasant breakfast, I said that I would like to take Frost to his reserved private room at the country club, so that he could rest before the scheduled honorary degree program that afternoon. At this point Feinberg calmly informed us that he had cancelled the reservation I'd made because Frost would be more comfortable as a guest in his home.

At Feinberg's remark, I glanced at Frost and

saw his jaw drop, his eyes flash anger, and anguish cross his face. Suddenly I recalled Kay Morrison's warning not to allow anyone to exploit Frost's visit. When Feinberg left to respond to a domestic matter, Frost told me that two years ago, during a meeting of the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, he had rejected Feinberg's request to give a poetry reading in Detroit because he sensed that the man was "a ruthless pusher" who would bulldoze anyone who stood in the way of his ambitions. Frost said that he wanted to go to the country club room. I phoned there and was told that no rooms were available anywhere because of a big golf tournament. Frost then suggested that he should go with me and stay at my home. But I lived in Trenton, a suburb of Detroit 26 miles from the University campus. Feinberg had hijacked the scheduled plans made for Frost's private room and left us no feasible options. Frost remarked that Feinberg was like the character Campbell in his closet drama "In an Art Factory." Campbell is an art dealer who cares nothing about art, except how he can "take it over," commercialize it, and turn it into something alien from itself. One line in Frost's play, "Campbell knows what he wants all right, and gets it," summarized the trap into which Feinberg had placed us. Frost had experienced this kind of abuse before, and he clearly despised it. We had no choice, however, but to submit to the usurpation, and to work around it to minimize any bad developments.

That afternoon, the pleasant and smooth events before and during the ceremony for Frost's 46th and final honorary degree made us believe that we had made the right decision in yielding to Feinberg's manipulations regarding where Frost would stay. Among the 300 or more people who attended the degree ceremony in the University of Detroit Student Union Ballroom, Feinberg was noticeably absent. The occasion was rightly centered in honoring Frost's achievements as one of America's foremost poets and in exalting poetry as an art form, not corrupted into a means to serve anyone's ego or vanity.

Before the ceremony, while we were putting on our academic robes in the dressing room, I answered a knock on the door. A woman identified herself as Mrs. Marjory Angst, the daughter of Dean Joseph Bursley, who was Frost's best friend at the University of Michigan during the 1920s. She and Frost had not seen each other



in over 30 years. When I told him who she was, Frost put his arms around her and they hugged each other in silence for a long time. It was the most dramatic scene with Frost that I ever witnessed. Mrs. Angst stayed over to witness Frost's honorary degree ceremony. This unexpected meeting put Frost in a very happy mood.

After we were seated on the stage, I read the convocation essay, "Poetry in the Modern World." Frost told me afterwards that he agreed completely with my theme that poetry was a unique form of revelation, quite comparable to, yet distinct from, the revelations of religion, science, and history. I was not surprised that Frost endorsed my theme, because as a student at Bread Loaf 20 years earlier I had learned it from conversations with Frost himself. Lawrence Britt, the President of the University of Detroit, read the citation, and as we both placed the doctor's hood over Frost's head, he smiled and could not refrain from making a pun, uttering under his breath, "All my life I've been getting educated by degrees." Frost never earned a college degree, and he more than half believed that it was better to be given a degree than to have to earn one. Both in substance and in spirit, Frost's good humor and relaxed mood during the honorary degree ceremony showed that he was in his glory, that the whole occasion was what he called "a perfect day, a day of prowess." For my part, I was pleased that in arranging for his final honorary degree I had partly repaid him for



all of his favors to me. I still had in mind to write the book about Frost's art and philosophy that in 1944 I had assured him I would write, but this tribute to him was not completed until January 2007. The enjoyable events of the honorary degree were in sharp contrast to those of the next day with the press interviews and the poetry reading.

The next morning Frost's press conference with Detroit newspaper reporters and television and radio commentators was held in Feinberg's home, rather than as originally scheduled on the University of Detroit campus. As the host, Feinberg became almost as much the center of attention as Frost. With good humor, patience, and serious reflection, the poet answered a great range of questions about himself, his

poetry, and his views on political and other subjects. The press interviews left Frost emotionally drained, so he had to rest for several hours before his poetry reading.

That evening, as we drove up to the University of Detroit Memorial Building, Frost observed about a dozen yellow school buses in the parking lot, and he was very pleased to learn that high school students were included in his audience. They had come from cities in about a sixty-mile radius around Detroit: from Toledo, Ohio to the south; from Ann Arbor and Lansing, Michigan to the west and north; and from Windsor, Canada to the east. In all, about 10,000 people came to hear Frost: 9,000 in the Memorial Building, and 1,000 in classrooms through cable television. It was the

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largest live audience that Frost faced during his lifetime of poetry readings.

Because Frost never prepared beforehand what he would say during a poetry reading, and never spoke from a written text, he asked for about ten minutes in privacy to decide on a subject and theme for his poetry reading. Actually, he preferred to "say" his poems from memory, not to read them, and to intersperse

between poems improvised comments on various subjects as he went along. This evening he chose for his subject what certain cities had meant to him, from his birth and early youth in San Francisco, to Lawrence and Boston, Massachusetts, then London, New York, Ann Arbor, and now finally Detroit. His informal method was to present variations on his theme through recurrent images, metaphors, anecdotes, and reflective thoughts.

When I escorted Frost to the speaker's platform, I noticed that there were three chairs on the stage; two were occupied by the president of the university and Feinberg, and one was for Frost. I took my seat in the first row with the audience. Lawrence Britt introduced Frost by noting that he had "outdrawn the best sports teams in the country," and then the president had the good sense and courtesy to leave the speaker's stage, but Feinberg remained. Frost's first words upon seeing the enormous crowd were: "Just look at you! You're an avalanche!"

To understand all that followed during his poetry reading, you have to know how Frost regarded public poetry readings. In a half-joking yet wholly serious manner he had composed a couplet on how he responded to invitations for readings:

I only go
When I'm the show.

Letter
from
Stanlis to
Frost,
July,
1962

UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT
4001 WEST MICHIGAN ROAD
DETROIT 21, MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
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on Saturday-Sunday, July 28-29. Although you did not know him at Michigan as well as you did Cowden and Thorpe, I know that he has long admired your poetry and would like to see you again. In his letter to me he refers to you as "the best loved man in our country." Do you think that you might be able to find a free hour or so to see Bredvold on July 28 or 29?
I shall drop over for a few minutes some evening soon and get the name of the man at Holt and settle the date of your visit to our Detroit campus.

Yours cordially,
Peter Hanlin

UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

July 14, 1962

Dear Frost:

This is just to say how much I enjoyed talking with you last Thursday evening. It was much like the old days I know and loved so much at Bread Loaf, when I was a student here from 1939-1944, and used to see you four or five times each summer to enjoy a talk feast on poetry and every kind of subject.

Our latest talk made me realize more than ever how far in time your kindnesses to me extend, and how much of my subsequent academic success I really owe to you. Had you and Harry Owen not given me the Robert Frost scholarship in 1940, I would probably not have returned to Bread Loaf that summer. That scholarship gave me the push I needed to get my M.A. here, and my Bread Loaf education became the foundation for my University of Michigan degree. Your suggestion that the Hopwood prizes would enable me to combine my interest in writing with academic studies was what decided me to go to Michigan, and my work with Roy Cowden enabled me to win a Hopwood while my work with Clarence Thorpe and Louis Bredvold gave me the academic basis for college teaching. In a sense you helped me to forge the original links in this chain of events. My returning to Bread Loaf to teach these last two summers has brought the chain full circle; Doc Cook completed the circle that you and Harry Owen began.

For all these reasons, and also simply out of my long-standing affection for you as a man, and my high regard for your poetry, I wish in justice to write the best book I have it in me to write on your poetry. My long pursuit of you has been casual and indirect, but this is the most natural and best way of making what I write of you original and thorough.

Thank you for letting me quote from your poems in my book. I shall see Kay in a day or two and get the name and address of the man at Holt who can give me the official copyright permission. Also, I hope we can decide then what will be the best date for you early in November for giving a reading at the University of Detroit, so that it can be scheduled into the events for the fall semester. I am delighted that you can come. Your many admirers in Detroit will also be pleased, I know. While you are with us we shall not overburden you with any request but will treat you as our honored guest. The \$1,000. fee is just right. I neglected to ask you whether you have any preference as to the kind of honorary degree you would like. Since you have many such degrees in arts and letters, I thought that your deep interest in science might be better recognized with an honorary degree in science. Would that be appropriate? You can let me know your choice.

I hope to see you again a few times before the summer session is over. Yesterday I received a letter from Professor Louis Bredvold, who is retired now and living in Arizona. He will visit me at Bread Loaf

This formula, consistent with the aphorism "There's only room for one at the top of a steeple," meant that he would not take part in a poetry reading of several poets performing as a group at the same time. His couplet needs to be understood in terms of Frost's whole conception of poetry as an art form. It would be a serious mistake to regard his couplet as evidence that Frost was an anti-social or egotistical poet. Just as the composition of a poem was an individual achievement, so too the delivery of a poem during a public reading was to Frost a personal matter, to be shared

between him and his audience.

A poetry reading was a dramatic performance, like that of a

skilled actor on the stage. This required complete concentration, with no distractions, in order to capture the tones of actual colloquial speech in the meter and rhythm of a monologue or dialogue. Lines needed to be presented dramatically, by changes in voice

inflection, stressing or softening words and even syllables, being ironic or serious as the dramatic circumstances demanded. A successful poetry reading, like a successful poem, was necessarily an individual thing because it incorporated a whole range of human experience within comedy and tragedy.

To Frost, a poetry reading was itself an art form in which the poet had to not merely communicate with his audience, but also had to engage his listeners in a mutual correspondence. Frost expected his audience to take an active part in his poetry reading, and this required concentrated attention. Only then could a listener leap

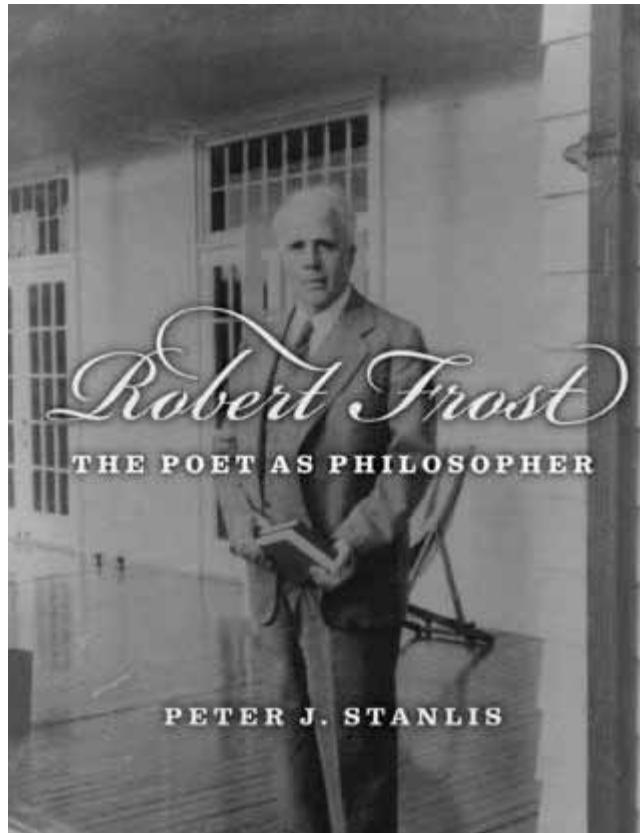
from sight to insight, from sense to essence, from the physical to the metaphysical dimensions of his meaning. A poetry reading was a meditative dialogue between the active living voice of the poet in his interplay with the conscious listening ear of the audience, without any distractions through sight. That Frost did his part in his Detroit reading was confirmed for me afterward when a member of the English department told me that although he sat fifty yards from Frost, he had the uncanny sense that the poet was speaking directly to him.

At Bread Loaf and in Ann Arbor, I had heard many of Frost's poetry readings, and I was aware of two earlier incidents that intensified my understanding of how he insisted on undivided attention during a reading. The daughter of a good friend once asked Frost whether he would mind if she knitted during his reading. Most emphatically he replied that he certainly did mind, and if she wished to knit, she should not attend his poetry reading. She put away her knitting and listened intently to Frost's reading.

At another poetry reading during a Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, Truman Capote seated himself in the second row, and after Frost had spoken two sentences, he suddenly leaped up and made a noisy exit from the auditorium. Capote despised Frost, and this action was a deliberate insult to the poet.

To Frost, Feinberg's close presence on the stage with him was far worse than a violation of good manners. It was a constant, serious visual distraction for both the poet and his audience, as bad as if a member of the audience during a play was on the stage with an actor while he spoke his lines. It was also an insult against both the poet as a creative artist and the art form of poetry. Delivering a poem was a spontaneous voyage of discovery that required complete freedom and concentration without external distractions.

Frost believed creative dramatic poetry both in a reading and in composition was an aesthetic experience of the moral imagi-



The author's forthcoming book on Frost

nation that swayed perilously close to the summit of human experience of comedy and tragedy, as in an ancient Classical Greek drama and its audience. This required rapport between the performer and the audience. Even in conversations with friends, I had discovered that Frost much preferred a one-to-one give and take in talk, rather than a group session.

With Feinberg breathing down his back Frost felt harassed and out of harmony with himself and his listeners. I had attended about twenty poetry readings by Frost, but his University of Detroit poetry reading was by far the most disjointed performance I ever saw him give. His usual wit, humor, and whimsical spirit of comedy, which provided balance with his serious discourse, were sadly lacking. Afterward, Frost told me that it was with great difficulty that he overcame an almost irresistible urge to take Feinberg by the scruff of his neck and throw him off the speaker's platform. But by an act of disciplined will, and by concentrating on his audience and what he had to say, good manners and basic civility prevailed.

Indeed, good manners required him to acknowledge Feinberg's presence in a positive way. At the very beginning of his talk,

he attempted to thank Feinberg as "our general benefactor," but he couldn't remember his name. After stumbling around several possibilities, he finally said to his audience, "You don't know his story," and hinted that some day his story would be told. I took his words as being directed to me, and afterward Frost confirmed my supposition, saying that he wished that I would "set the record straight" about Feinberg's behavior regarding his poetry reading. Toward the end of his remarks Frost referred to Feinberg by name and wondered aloud if "maybe he stole my show." Despite all of these difficulties, the audience applauded with a standing ovation when Frost said "good-night." It is ironic that my final meeting and words with Frost occurred in the driveway of Feinberg's home in Detroit. He was about to leave by train for Chicago,

to give a poetry reading benefit for *Poetry* magazine. After his return to Boston in December, he entered a hospital, and after two operations, he died on January 29, 1963.

Because Frost had stayed in Feinberg's home, his host was able to advance the plausible fiction that he was the moving force that arranged the poet's visit to Detroit. The public was blissfully unaware of the intense internal dramatic struggle that Feinberg caused that so enraged Frost during his performance. To this day there are people in Michigan, and a few Frost scholars, who still believe Feinberg's account.

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Photographs and documents are from the author's collection.

DEATH

We are sorry to report the death of Carolyn Quattrocchi ('95) on April 2. A remembrance will appear in a future issue.

Selling Books and Loving It

Florence Shay

Finally, after 30 years in the business, I realize what a good time I am having.

People come in to the store, look around, and sometimes even buy a book. But when you walk into my store, you are fair game. We discuss your haircut, your shoes, your health, your occupation. Sometimes this leads to more serious stuff, like problems with the children, a father with Alzheimer's, or losing a job. It's not hands off here. I tell everyone who looks needy how to live his life. I think I should add another line in gold to my store window: THERAPY INSIDE.

A mother says, "Oh I feel so good here. I am so proud of myself. My daughter won't let me out of her sight, and today I said, 'This is my day, and I am going out alone.' And I did it!" I told her I was falling back on the old school of raising children. You don't squat down to their eye level and try to explain what needs to be done. You tell them, and when they start whining, you say "Because I said so!" The woman looked astonished. I said, "You're entitled to whatever time off you want. Don't ask. Do it."

She didn't buy a book, but went off feeling invigorated. I may have messed up her kid's life, but the kid can get even when she has children.

I get the military in here, little fellows around 21 who look 14. I always tell them I'm proud of them, I even love them, but I hate the war. We talk about where they are from, what books they are reading, and soon they'll be revealing how they feel. One young sailor said he was getting a disability release, and I asked why. He said he was bipolar. "How did you get in if you're bipolar?" He said, "I come from Florida where it's sunny all the time; I only found out I have fits of depression when I hit your Chicago dark winters." I never saw anybody so happy about being bipolar. His buddy was on crutches. I asked solicitously how that happened. He said, "I tripped on a rock!" We laughed about turning it into I slipped in Iraq. He had injured his knee, but he had to run two miles which caused excessive damage, and now he had to stay stateside for another four weeks; another

happy disabled sailor. Then he said timidly, "I didn't vote for this president." I said cheerfully, "I don't know anybody who did!" The bipolar sailor bought two early science books, and we all parted in good spirits.

Being fair game also means I use you if I need you. We were hanging pictures, a committee of three. One to use the hammer, one to hold up the pictures, and me, to stand back and say, "A tiny bit to the right." The hammer lady had to leave. We still had two more to hang. I called to the man daydreaming at the bookshelves, "Can you hang pictures?" "Sure," he answered. The lady passed him the hammer as she left. "A bit more to the right," I told him, and he obediently hit the nail exactly right.

It's harder when the computer gets nasty and I need help. Then I have to wait until a very young man walks in. A 13-year-old would be ideal, but they are in school. "Are you computer savvy?" I will ask. I hustle them into the office, where they easily fix the problem which was problematic for me.

I get "celebrities," but some prefer to remain anonymous. When Jim Edgar came into the shop, I asked whether I could get a picture of the two of us. "Sure," he said, "and try to show it around. People don't believe I can read." As I waited for my son, the photographer, to come quickly with his camera, I gushed to the governor, "You're the only Republican I ever voted for." OK, start thinking, reader. How would you have answered if you were governor? You are thinking gracious, right? Here's the answer, "The sky didn't fall, did it?"

A young boy, maybe 13, came in with his mother. He showed me a book. I'm very kind to young people (the rest of you can fend for yourselves), and I asked whether he had the other volumes of the set, this being Vol. 3. He said this was it. I explained that a single book of a set has no value. He argued it did because it is an antique. I explained, "If you have an antique table with only one leg, it has no value." "You can have three other legs made," he said snidely, keeping up with me. Holding my temper, I suggested the value would be diminished. Before he offered a response, I continued with the fact that the content of

this set was not important, so even if complete the set would have little value. He said, "I showed it to some other dealer, and she said it was very valuable—so you don't know anything." Gritting my teeth, I asked, "So why didn't she buy it?" This rotten kid says, "Because I'm not selling it. I just want to know what it's worth."

I flung out my arm in a wide sweeping gesture, and hollered, "OUT!" I'm still pointing to the door, and the mother is dragging the kid, who is hollering back, "My father will sue you for this." I am standing in this silent movie posture, although screaming, "OUT" till the door closed, and I rather liked the melodrama, until I thought: Can he do that?

I quickly called my friend/customer/lawyer to ask whether the father can really sue me. And I learned, no, this is a private store and my own domain, and I can admit or not as I choose. If I were a government building I would have to take the kid's abuse. My friend has since passed on, and I just realized that I do not have another lawyer/customer I can call when I need a pat on the head.

Well, yes, I do have a customer who practices law, but the terms are reversed. He comes to me for help. He needed the identity of a garage owner, whose worker forgot to screw down the motor to this client's car, and the dang thing dropped out while she was driving. I called City Hall and the Chamber of Commerce, and by golly, they did not know who owned the garage. But, I found out. I'll never tell how. OK, I'll tell. I asked the service manager of the gas station I go to. He asked another service manager, and this chain led to a despicable character who was hiding his identity because he was the inept worker who had done damage to more than just this automobile. This lawyer thinks I'm a genius, and asked me to find another elusive person. This person was known Mafia, so I said, "Foggeddaboutit."

A favorite customer is a former hot-shot basketball player. When he retired as a player, he was hired in management. He left after a short time. "All they want to do is

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Ely M. Liebow: Sherlockian, Scholar, and Caxtonian

Thomas J. Joyce

Professor Ely M. Liebow (1924-2007) lived as a gentle man who valued his family, his faith, his fiction, and his fun. He spoke softly, but carried a big schtick.

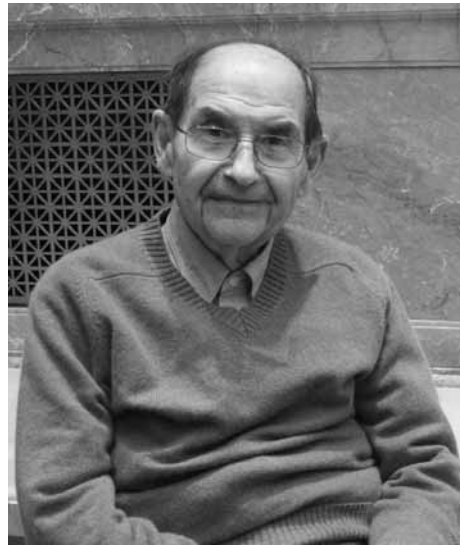
Like many Caxtonians, Ely loved to read stories, he loved to tell stories and, I believe, he had a mystery novel in progress. His jokes tended to be stories, not quips, and he seemed to have one for any occasion. The jokes dealt in puns and human foibles, never in personal attacks, and he had an inexhaustible supply of them. During the thirty years that I called him my friend, I never heard him say a bad thing about anyone. In fact, I suspect that he had trouble flunking deserving students.

Before he chaired the English Department at Northeastern Illinois University, Ely journeyed to the United Kingdom to research the life of Dr. Joseph Bell, the Edinburgh surgeon whose legendary diagnostic abilities were the model for Sherlock Holmes. The result, *Dr. Joe Bell-Model for Sherlock Holmes*, first published in 1982, and just republished in 2007, was the first book-length biography of Dr. Bell.

Dr. Bell used to attend at The Royal Edinburgh Hospital for Sick Children. After visiting the place, Ely observed wryly, "I expected to look up and see across the street the Royal Edinburgh Hospital for Well Children."

There was constant demand for Prof. Liebow to address meetings—academic, medical, and Sherlockian. In between he managed to publish quite a bit, including a textbook on aging. Also he completed for publication a compilation of all the appearances in *The Chicago Tribune* of its columnist, Sherlockian and Caxtonian, Vincent Starrett.

Ely was an active member of the Chicago-area Sherlockian societies, and was anointed into the parent club, The Baker Street Irregulars, where his official title was "Inspector Gregory." With Conan Doyle, Liebow's Bell book was listed among the top 100 items for a Sherlockian library. Inspector Gregory regularly attended the annual meeting of the BSI in January in New York City, often with a side visit to



The Oyster Bar. Having grown up in Hyattsville, Maryland, near the Chesapeake Bay, he had a fondness for oysters.

Ely left Hyattsville for an extended stay in the South Pacific with "Uncle Sam" as a medical corpsman. The experience cured him of any medical ambitions. He left that to Phoebe, his beloved wife of nearly sixty years, who is a registered nurse. Together they were founding members of Congregation Solel in Highland Park, where the tireless professor taught weekend classes in Jewish studies, a different facet of his passion for the Book.

Two of their three daughters spoke at his memorial service. The teacher/actress, Franette, recited two of Ely's favorite poems. One was Dylan Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night." I know Ely Liebow went gently, but still raging against the dying of the light, because you cannot read in the dark.

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Dr. Joe Bell-Model for Sherlock Holmes

by Ely M. Liebow. Popular Press, 2007.

Reviewed by Dan Crawford

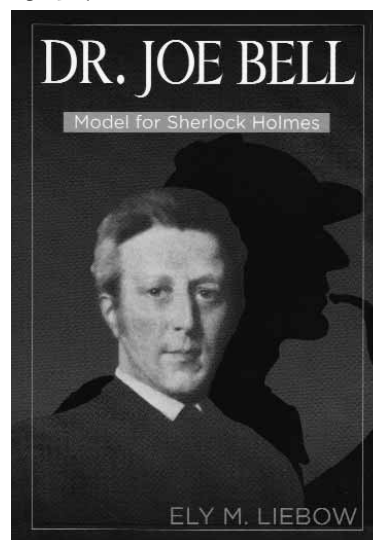
A woeful thing, really, to receive the new edition of this classic so soon after the passing of its author. This biography of Edinburgh physician and instructor of medical student A. Conan Doyle is a landmark in its field and one of Ely Liebow's monuments in print.

In his life of the doctor, instructor, and editor, the author was at pains to track down every document or remembered story about the reserved Joseph Bell, and thus was able to present more than just the familiar anecdotes of Dr. Bell diagnosing a patient by observation, which was the inspiration for so many immortal scenes with Sherlock Holmes. Especially intriguing is the account of Bell's testimony in a murder case during which, of course, the

newspapers noted his identity as the inspiration for Holmes. (Another medical witness in the case was his old friend and colleague Dr. Patrick Heron Watson.) Bell himself read fiction in his spare time, enjoying not just the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, but Doyle's historical novels as well. (He suggested plots from time to time.)

But Bell's work at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh is also fraught with adventure of an academic sort. The Victorian age was an exciting and innovative era in medicine because any number of new ideas vied for acceptance. (Dr. Bell was one of the early instructors to urge his students to expect sanitary conditions in the operating room.)

This naturally led to a good deal of infighting, which Ely Liebow, a student of See *DR. JOE BELL*, page 9



Club Notes

Membership Report, February 2007

I am pleased to report the election to membership of the following:

John Bukacek is the founding and current president of the Chicago Area Translators and Interpreters Association, a sponsor of our 2007 Symposium on the Book. While his forte is Japanese-English translation in chemistry and biotechnology, Bukacek has also translated Japanese literature. He once translated a collection of Japanese poems from the 17th century for an exhibition of ceramics at the Art Institute of Chicago. Nominated by Adele Hast, seconded by Steve Tomashefsky.

Barbara Palmer learned about the Caxton Club through the Newberry Library, then discovered our website. She has met and talked with members at a subsequent luncheon and a dinner who have encouraged and supported her interest in becoming a Caxtonian. For most of her professional career, she has been a school librarian, serving both in Lubbock, Texas, and Naperville, Illinois. She and her husband are now booksellers on the Internet. Her collecting interests include architecture (Frank Lloyd Wright), children's Christmas picture books, pop-up books, George Barr McCutcheon [*Brewster's Millions*], and books about books. Nominated by Joanne Silver, seconded by JoAnn Baumgartner.

Sarah Pritchard is University Librarian at Northwestern University. Her distinguished career has led her through distinguished service at the Library of Congress, Smith College, and the University of California at Santa Barbara. Her collecting interests include history of the book, history of classifications and schema, women's history, and the history of science. Nominated by Russell Maylone and seconded by R. Eden Martin.

Once again, my thanks to those of you who are identifying prospective members. Last month I was asked if it would be presumptuous to submit a nomination in one's first year of membership. Not at all! Nominations are welcome at any time; please encourage any friend who shares an interest

in books and the book arts. We've all heard Mark Twain's remark to the effect that the "Good books, good friends, and sleepy conscience are the secrets of an ideal life"; Caxtonian membership is a fine way to bring together the first two. (One hopes that the combination can obviate a need for the third.)

Dan "Skip" Landt
773-604-4115, skiplandt@sbcglobal.net

Membership Report, March 2007

I am pleased to report the election to membership of the following individuals:

Ann C. Weller is Professor and Head, Special Collections Department, University Library, University of Illinois at Chicago, a position held earlier by another Caxtonian, the late Bob Adelsperger. She is active in the library world's rare books and manuscripts societies and an advocate for education about special book collections, fine printing, and the book arts. Her personal interests are rare medical texts and historic botanical texts. Nominated by Peggy Sullivan, seconded by Linda Naru.

David Karrow's nomination letter by Ed Quattrocchi notes that David Karrow is the son of Bob Karrow, one of our most loyal and distinguished members, adding that Dave has inherited his father's love of books and his conviviality. Karrow describes his interests as eclectic and still developing, but notes that he is fascinated by beautiful bindings. As indicated, he has been nominated by Ed, and he is seconded—with great enthusiasm—by his father. (Note: Karrow is our fourth member this year under age 30!)

Receiving the *Caxtonian* each month is one of the special pleasures of membership in the Club. If you know someone who might be interested in membership, I'll be happy to send them a copy of a recent issue with your compliments and invite them to attend a forthcoming meeting. My note indicates that they are obligated only for the cost of their meal. If you have someone in mind, give me a call or send me an email:

Dan "Skip" Landt
773-604-4115, skiplandt@sbcglobal.net

Nominating Committee Report

A nominating committee, consisting of

Alice Schreyer, Ed Quattrocchi, Tom Joyce, and me, met several times in February and March to plan a slate of officers and Council members for the Club year that starts in September 2007. (Officers serve for two Club years. Council members are appointed in classes whose terms expire in August of the year named.) The slate was presented to the Council at the April 18 meeting; the Council voted to recommend the slate to the full membership. The slate will be proposed to the membership at the May dinner meeting on Wednesday the 16th for election. Per Article III, Section 5 of the bylaws, other nominations from the floor may be made by any member.

This is the slate proposed and recommended:

PRESIDENT: C. Steven Tomashefsky
VICE-PRESIDENT: Adele Hast
SECRETARY: Susan Hanes
TREASURER: John C. Roberts
COUNCIL CLASS OF 2010:

J. William Locke
Don Chatham
Dorothy J. Anderson
Mary Ann Johnson
Philip R. Liebson

COUNCIL CLASS OF 2008:

Jill Gage
Respectfully submitted,

Robert E. McCamant
Chairman

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BOOKSELLING, from page 3

talk about sports. I hate talking about sports". He buys philosophy books. He reads them. Then I have to listen to philosophical ideas. I argue strenuously with him (although I usually don't have a clue what he's talking about). I was furious when he said there is no such thing as love—it is all lust. I didn't suggest that his recent divorce might have colored his philosophic judgment, but I insisted there was Love. Every argument I offered—what about a parent to child?—he had a substitute word for Love. Finally, he got up to leave. I stretched up on my toes to hug and kiss him. I said, "I don't care what you say. I love you." He said, "I love you too." And we both laughed.

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CAXTONIAN FOOTNOTES

Wynken de Worde

HEADLINERS

Inquiring minds want to know. In response to uncounted requests to wynkendeworde@comcast.net, I remind readers that **William Caxton's** successor was an Alsatian, born in Worth as Jan van Wynkyn, before he got promoted to the heights of "de Worde." Wynken more than proved his worth by continuing Caxton's printing work from 1491 until de death of de Worde in 1535. In that time he printed more than 700 books, introduced new typefaces, and printed many now-rare books, notably Higden's *Polichronicum* (1495), England's first sample of publishing music from moveable type.

Flash forward 500 years later to Sunday January 21, 2007 when **Brad Jonas** ('89) was profiled with two photos and a five-column-wide more-than full-page "valentine" in the *Sun-Times'* book section. Under the headlines, "'The used car lot of the book world' Chicago expo, the biggest of its kind for book dealers seeking bargain-basement gems," was book editor Cheryl L. Reed's *exposé* of the annual Chicago International Remainder & Overstock Book Exposition, which was co-founded by Brad Jonas sixteen years ago. It is the largest event of its kind on the planet.

In the interview, Brad described his experience with the newly nearly-rare first book by little-known local politician, Barack Obama. State Senator Obama's first book, *Dreams From My Father*, was

discontinued by its publisher—it was remaindered. Jonas bought 4000 copies. Some years later, Hyde Parker Obama purchased a thousand copies of his book from Powell's in Hyde Park. "I was too embarrassed to tell Obama that I'd only paid 22 cents apiece for his books, so I told him I'd bought them for \$1 apiece, and that's what I charged him," said Jonas.

Another headline from that same issue of the *Sunday Sun-Times* caught Wynken's eyes. It screamed in inch-and-a-half bold sans-serif font, "BOOK SLUTS." How could it not catch mine eyen? The article was in the "Fluff" section, which needs to be perused by persons wanting to keep *au courant* in the arena of pop culture. In God's truth, it was a book article. It was not about our local internet phenomenon and book reviewer, Jessa Crispin, yclept www.bookslut.com. It was about a group of groupies who have individually composed tell-all memoirs about their adventurous sexual congresses with musicians and other celebrities. Who knows? That could be a new collector's niche. Not that Wynken de Worde would have ever published anything so salacious five hundred years ago.

Yet another headline drew my attention in Halpin's Seventh Annual Chicago City Directory 1864-5.

The entry reads as follows: "YE OLDE BOOK STANDE. Sherlock's is at 112 Dearborn. It is the oldest institution of the kind in the Northwest. Second-hand books bought and sold. Rare old books, law books, medical books, military books, school books, new and old; books of every

kind, in all languages, both ancient and modern, bought or exchanged." The proprietor is P. T. Sherlock.

Holmesians like **Don Terras** ('02) and **Fred Kittle** ('85) know that Sherlock Holmes disguised himself as an antiquarian bookseller in "The Adventure of the Empty House." They also know that Sherlock Holmes visited Chicago—probably even lived here while perfecting his acting "chops." But, is it possible that he was mentored by or boarded with his relative, P. T. Sherlock? A P. T. Sherlock was a member of the 23rd Illinois Volunteers in the American Civil War, and active with the Fenian Movement. Sherlock Holmes passed himself off as an Anglophobic Irishman to trick the Germans at the outbreak of the World War I in "His Last Bow."

Eric Zorn's column from the *Chicago Tribune* of January 21 bore a headline, "Too cool for 'cool'? Better make it 'book'." It had special relevance mostly to younger Caxtonians who text message with their cell phones. In Zorn's words, "Cutting-edge kids are now using 'book' as a synonym for 'cool'."

"When you tap out cell-phone messages using predictive text—the feature that guesses what word you're trying to spell as you use the alphanumeric phone grid—the program first suggests the word B-O-O-K when you enter 2-6-6-5, the numbers that correspond to C-O-O-L. Odd pairs like this are sometimes called textonyms." Watch for that neologism to appear in a crossword puzzle. It's book!

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DR. JOE BELL, *from page 3*

medical history as well as literary history, is able to render suspenseful as well.

Finally, Dr. Bell is interesting for his own sake. His diagnoses can be entertaining even when not instructive in the methods of Holmes. (A patient who was suffering from delusions of blindness was cured, if not made happy, when Bell suddenly turned and thumbed his nose at her.) Liebow, citing Mark twain's admonition that we live so that when we die even the

undertaker is unhappy, notes that one of the gravedigger's assistants was weeping copiously into the grave as Dr. Bell was laid to rest.

A final chapter discusses attacks on Bell's identity as the inspiration for Holmes (primarily from Adrian Conan Doyle, who held to it hammer and tong that the Great Detective was his father's self-portrait) and myths that grew around him (no, he was NOT related to Alexander Graham Bell, who did NOT give him one of the first

telephones). Here Ely has tracked down every clue, and presents them with characteristic verve.

The portrait of Joe Bell he draws, however, leaves the reader with one troubling question: the doctor possessed a sense of humor, great learning, an ability to teach, and a knack for soothing the troubled visitor. So was Joe Bell the person who inspired the character of Ely Liebow, too?

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Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by John Blew

(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit.)

“The Meaning of Dictionaries” (featuring historical dictionaries from the Research Center’s holdings, as well as archival materials from the University of Chicago Press, this exhibit explores the ways English language dictionaries have defined meaning from the Enlightenment to the digital age, as well as what dictionaries mean within their cultural contexts) at the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago 773-702-8705 (closes 6 July 2007)

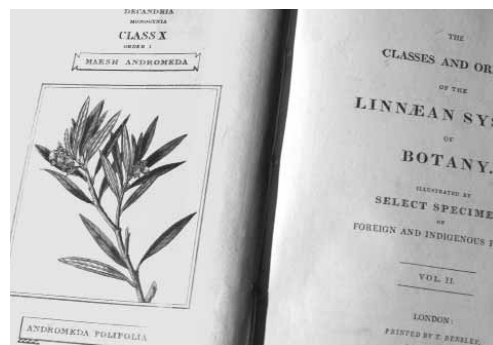
“Black Jewel of the Midwest: Celebrating 75 years of the George Cleveland Hall Branch Library and the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection,” spotlighting their roles in the cultural flowering of the Chicago Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement (includes books, manuscripts, photographs and ephemera, many of which have never before been exhibited, from the Harsh Collection, one of the finest institutional collections anywhere of African-American history and literature) at the Woodson Regional Library of the Chicago Public Library, 9525 South Halsted Street, Chicago 312-747-6900 (closes 31 December 2007)

“John James Audubon: The Birds of America, Prints from the Collection of the Illinois State Museum” (includes more than 30 Audubon prints, mostly from the Bien edition, together with a number of landmark 18th and 19th century ornithological plate books), Illinois State Museum Gallery, 2nd floor, Thompson Center, 100 West Randolph Street, Chicago 312-814-5322 (closes 24 August 2007)

METZ, from page 11

at Columbia College, run by Suzanne Cohan-Lange, was interested, and it was not long before the Columbia College Chicago Center for Book and Paper Arts was a reality. “We donated all our book-making, letterpress and papermaking equipment, Marilyn became Director and I was Summer Director. I used to say, ‘My baby grew up and went to college.’”

The affiliation meant was that they could offer a master’s degree in the book arts. “It has turned out to be one of the best book-making degree programs in the country,” Metz says. “Each year many more people apply than can be accepted.”



Happy Birthday Linnaeus, Chicago Botanic
LINNAEAN SYSTEM, 1816, RICHARD DUPPA

“George Bernard Shaw: Master of All Trades” (an exhibition of books, pamphlets and other items from the Library’s collection, including examples of Shaw’s plays, novels, his critiques of art, music and drama, and his writings on socialism, celebrating the sesquicentennial of Shaw’s birth in 1856) at the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago 312-255-3700 (5 May 2007 to 2 June 2007)

“Happy 300th Birthday Linnaeus” (rare books from the Library’s collections showing Linnaeus’ contributions to plant classification) in the Lenhardt Library at the Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe 847-835-8202 (closes 22 July 2007)

“Inspired by Nature: the Picturesque Landscape Garden” (rarely displayed antiquarian books and art from the Library’s collection, featuring the work of four important landscape architects: Lancelot “Capability” Brown, Humphry Repton, Frederick Law Olmsted and Jens Jensen) at the Sterling Morton Library, The Morton Arboretum, 4100 Illinois Route 53, Lisle, IL 630-968-0074 (closes 1 August 2007)

“Building the Future City: Past Visions” (a small exhibit featuring maps, plans, manuscript materials, publications and photographs from the collections of UIC Special Collections and the UIC Archives Department which document past visions of improvements and grand plans for Chicago) at the Richard J. Daley Library (first floor lobby case) of the University of

Illinois at Chicago, 801 South Morgan, Chicago 312-996-2742 (closes 17 August 2007)

“Imposters” (an exhibition of materials from the Adler’s collections which have been determined to be forgeries) at the Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, 1300 South Lake Shore Drive, Chicago 312-322-0300 (closes 3 June 2007)

Members who have information about current or forthcoming exhibitions that might be of interest to Caxtonians, please call or e-mail John Blew (312-807-4317, e-mail: jblew@bellboyd.com).

As the Center moved into its present quarters on South Wabash, Metz and Sward stepped down. Both became free to travel and create their own artwork and teach occasional workshops. (Although Metz did take on the exhibition chairmanship of the Guild of Book Workers for four years, developing and traveling two major exhibits with accompanying catalogues.)

And collecting books became a larger activity. One of the first book types Metz collected was Asian palm-leaf books. “I stumbled into my first one in Hong Kong in 1978,” she explained. Then came artists’ books. “I needed to have examples for my classes.” Soon she discovered pop-up books.

And graphic novels (Lynd Ward is a favorite artist). Of course she needed how-to books about bookmaking subjects.

All these books fill many shelves in her apartment above the former Artist Book Works. “When I bought the building, it was a bit of a stretch,” she says. But it has proved to be an excellent investment, as property values in the neighborhood soared. She now has the luxury of spreading out her own projects in her studio that was Artists Book Works. She pointed out a table with a dozen stacks. “Each one of the stacks is material for a book waiting to be made,” she explained.

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Caxtonians Collect: Barbara Lazarus Metz

Thirtieth in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Barbara Lazarus Metz has been an artist as long as she can remember. Book-making came along more recently, bringing book collecting in tow. She joined the Club in 1992, nominated by Bruce Beck.

Her first career was as an interior designer, working for architects in Chicago. Ray Epstein ('63) hired her to start his

company's interior design department. Then in the 1960s she moved to California and returned to school to study printmaking. Her husband was transferred back to Chicago, so she finished her BFA degree at Mundelein College, then went for an MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. It was at SAIC that the book bug bit. She was the teaching assistant for a printmaker who also

made books and she loved making them. Soon she was taking bookbinding classes with Gary Frost and Joan Flasch. Making books involved multiples, just like printmaking, but "Books are more interesting."

While visiting galleries in New York in 1978, she went to the Center for Book Arts and saw the possibilities for a similar facility in Chicago. But she knew she couldn't make it happen by herself, so she put it temporarily on the back burner. She applied for and was hired by CETA [Changing Education Through the Arts] to do bookmaking workshops in the public schools. "I did bookmaking workshops in elementary and high schools throughout Chicagoland." In the process she discovered the excitement people feel when they make their first book, when a fourth grader exclaimed "Wow, it's a real book!" Teaching people to make books would be about the best job she could imagine.

CETA was run by the Chicago Council on Fine Arts and Metz proposed and curated some exhibits for them. One exhibit was on the fabrication of the new Miro sculpture across from the Picasso. Another one was an overview at the Cultural Center of the CETA project in the arts to show how the program had an impact on music, dance, theater and the visual arts in Chicago. She was sent to a



grantmaking workshop and discovered institutions willing to make grants to non-profit arts organizations that could make the impossible happen. So when she started working in the admissions office at SAIC in 1980 and met faculty printmaker Bob Sennhauser, she was ready to suggest that they start a place where people could learn to make books. The result was Artists Book Works; it opened on Irving Park in 1983. Soon Sennhauser moved on to other cities, and Metz found herself in charge, hiring faculty, scheduling visiting artists, teaching courses, regularly applying for and receiving grants, planning and staging exhibits—in fact being an arts administrator.

These were exciting years. "We had a wide variety of students. A number went on to be bookmaking professionals, teachers and book artists. Others enjoyed one or two classes, and still others found a life-long interest. Many were graphic designers.

They'd been working with 'type' but had never felt a piece of metal type in their hands. For them it was a revelation."

While education was their main mission, Artists Book Works did more than teach classes. To promote book artists, they staged frequent exhibits in their own space and others. A 1993 10th anniversary exhibition catalogue listed 13 major exhibits in the period between 1985 and 1993.

They also became well-known for the window exhibits they staged in the window area of their storefront on Irving Park Road. "People would be driving along Irving Park at night and see a lighted window with art work. They'd stop, look and sometimes leave notes, or call the next day. It was great fun. We received proposals from all over the country, and the artist would get a \$100 honorarium. One of the most provocative consisted of multi-colored plastic hoses of various sizes, like vacuum cleaner hoses with colored lights inside, coming out of the walls and

going into the floor or ceiling. People loved it." The annual "Winter in Chicago" mail art exhibit was always a success.

When grants permitted, they'd host juried artist-in-residences to publish a limited-edition artist book. They also produced a series of broadsides, each with a poet, printer, and visual artist.

In the 1990s, grants became harder to find. "And I was tired. All this time I was working at SAIC, directing ABW and teaching artist book classes and workshops at schools, colleges, and art conferences all over the country. Marilyn Sward, a friend from ARC gallery days [who was running a similar hand papermaking facility] and I occasionally talked about joining together. In 1994 the book arts community thought the time was right to merge and find a larger institution to work within."

The Interdisciplinary Masters program

See METZ, page 10
CAXTONIAN, MAY 2007

Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program

May 11, 2007

Lesa Dowd

“Biblioartistry Examined”

To celebrate the fifth anniversary of Mayor Daley’s program *One Book, One Chicago*, Lesa Dowd, Conservator of Special Collections at the Chicago Public Library, conceived of an exhibition and consequently challenged book artists worldwide to create books based on the 10 Chicago selections. Entries were juried by Paul Gehl, Audrey Niffenegger and Norma Rubovits, with their 47 choices becoming the recent Chicago Public Library show: *One Book, Many Interpretations*. Six Caxtonians made the final cut: Bill Drendel, Sam Ellenport, Scott Keller, Barbara Metz, Sara Otto and Marilyn Sward. Come and see their works and then go behind the scenes as Lesa relates exhibition anecdotes, including the challenges and problems of curating a show with such unconventional entries.

You won’t be disappointed!

Beyond May...

JUNE LUNCHEON

On June 8th the Friday Luncheon welcomes Kay Michael Kramer, proprietor of a private press (the Printery), editor of the FABS newsletter and a member of the Caxton and Bixby Clubs. His anecdotal power-point presentation will celebrate Benjamin Franklin, as author, publisher and printer.

Meal pricing: at its March meeting, the Council voted to increase the price of dinners from \$45 to \$48 effective with the April meeting, and of luncheons from \$25 to \$27 effective in September, due to increases imposed by the Mid-Day Club. A budget committee, chaired by Rob Carlson, will continue to study pricing options and report back to the council.

All luncheon and dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of Chase Tower, Madison and Clark, Chicago. Luncheon: buffet opens at 11:30; program 12:30-1:30. Dinner meetings: spirits at 5 pm, dinner at 6 pm, lecture at 7:30 pm. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email

Dinner Program

May 16, 2007

Robert H. Jackson

“Pursuing Rockwell Kent”

Robert H. Jackson is known to many Caxtonians as a noted bibliophile and founder of FABS. He is also an author, contributing to many bibliophilic publications, and the editor of the recently published *Book Talk: Essays on Books and Collecting, Booksellers, and Special Collections*. Although he collects across many disciplines, including Southeast Asian manuscripts, Victorian literature, Oceanic and African tribal art, early color plate collections and books first issued in parts, one of his great loves is the work of Rockwell Kent. His published works on this glorious American artist have appeared in *Fine Books and Collections, The Kent Collector*, and the *Gazette of the Grolier Club*. But, unlike the rest of us, content with trying to build a comprehensive collection, Bob Jackson’s commitment to understanding Kent the man and Kent the artist, combined with his sense of adventure and love of travel, led him to pursue Kent’s footprints all the way to Greenland. In its vast wonderland of snow and ice, peopled even now by dogs and their sleds, and given six months of darkness each winter, Bob Jackson pursued Kent. He will share his passion for the man, and what he has learned about him, at a sure-to-be memorable program.

Note: the May meeting will be the Club’s Annual Meeting. See the nominating committee report, page 8, for additional information.

JUNE DINNER

On June 20, Gary Johnson, President of the Chicago History Museum, has been rescheduled to talk about the Museum’s 22 million objects and the view they provide of Chicago history. He will also touch on his efforts to open a window to the on-going work of authors.

caxtonclub@newberry.org. Members and guests: Lunch \$25, Dinner \$48. Discount parking available for evening meetings, with a stamped ticket, at Standard Self-Park, 172 W. Madison. Call Steve Masello at 847-905-2247 if you need a ride or can offer one.