

## Remembering Tony Batko

Caxtonian Tony Batko, aged 81, died on January 11.

John Blew

If there is such a thing as a natural born leader, Tony was it. He seemed to rise to the top of nearly every organization he chose to join. He had an uncanny ability to seek out and successfully recruit good people, to quietly but effectively motivate and drive them, and to get them to work together with him to make the organization better and stronger. There are several examples of this, but none better than his history with the venerable Union League Club of Chicago, which he joined in 1968 and was a member of for 45 years until his death. Tony once accurately described the Union League Club as his “home away from home.” Unlike most private clubs which exist solely for business and social purposes, the Union League Club has a long tradition of engagement in important public issues and, both directly and through its affiliated foundations, of providing substantial support and programming for the Chicago arts community and boys and girls in the inner city. It was this unique commitment to public service which drew Tony to the Union League Club and which he wholeheartedly embraced.

The Union League Club is big. Its resident membership hovers around 2,100 and its clubhouse is a 22-story purpose-built building in the heart of downtown Chicago with dining and meeting rooms, lounges, a library and business center, three floors of athletic facilities, eight floors of modern hotel accommodations, and many other amenities for its members and their guests. It has a large staff and a multimillion-dollar annual budget. And yet the management and operation of this complex organization is to a great extent in the hands of its board of directors, its officers and the chairs and members of its many standing committees, all of

whom are members of the Club who volunteer their time and expertise. The most demanding of these positions is that of the president, who is elected by the members and who serves a one-year term. Being president of the Union League Club is essentially a full-time job. The path to the presidency is a long one – most occupants of that office will have previously served as a member of the board, as a chair of several of its important standing committees and as the holder of one or more other offices.

When Tony was elected as the 105th president of the Union League Club in June 1994, he hit the ground running. This was at a time, you may recall, when private clubs across the city and the country were struggling and in several cases failing. The Union League Club was no exception. In his inaugural address (that’s actually what it is called), Tony stated in outlining his goals that “First and foremost I want the Club, through the energies of its individual members, to be even more involved than it is now in community issues.” He then



ABOVE: Batko earlier this year. BELOW: The Harold Washington Library is a physical legacy of Batko’s efforts.



Photograph/Wikimedia Commons

single out “a declining membership base” as the Club’s most pressing problem, and he – rashly some might say who did not know him – set a goal of attracting “at least 400 new Resident

members – double the number budgeted.” This would be an increase in membership of over 20% in one year! He then worked tirelessly with many other members to execute a multi-faceted plan designed to achieve that goal. The result? In his annual report to the members a year later, Tony stated that “As of April 30, the end of our fiscal year, we had attracted 563 new Resident members, thereby exceeding our target by 163” (and, I might add, though Tony was too polite to mention it,

bringing down the median age of the membership to 40). Tony also presided during his presidency over the continuation and ramping up of an extensive multi-year program of capital improvements to the clubhouse, significantly strengthened the administrative staff and, by his skillful appointments, breathed new life into the many permanent committees of the Club and its two major affiliated foundations. While this turnaround in the Club’s fortunes continued after Tony’s term as president, most agree that it had its crucial beginning under his leadership. It was a signal achievement. Today, the Union League Club is thriving, and by any measure it is one of the leading private clubs in the country.

When Tony sounded the call for more members to get involved in “community issues” he could offer his own commitment to civic improvement as a sterling example. Tony believed fervently in the worth and importance of libraries. He served for six years as an elected member of the public library board in the Chicago suburb of Riverside, where he lived for many years with his first wife, Susan. See TONY BATKO, page 2

except as otherwise noted, all photos are courtesy of the Batko family



## CAXTONIAN

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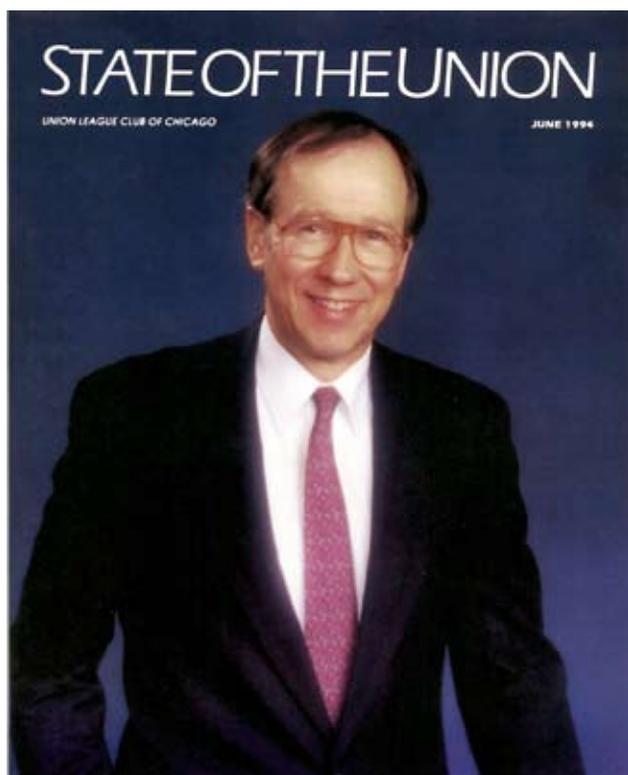
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TONY BATKO, from page 1

who died of cancer in 1987, and raised their two daughters, Ann and Ellen. During his term as president of the Union League Club, he oversaw the installation of air conditioning in its beautiful library and the growth of its collections. But surely his most important contribution in this area was the leadership role he played in the reform of the Chicago Public Library system.

For many years, the beautiful 1897 building at the southwest corner of Michigan and Randolph (now the Chicago Cultural Center) which housed the Chicago Public Library was woefully inadequate for that purpose. In the 1970s the Library moved out and was housed "temporarily" in a dingy warehouse building (since razed) behind the Tribune Tower while the city decided what to do about a permanent new home for it. This sorry state of affairs continued for years. In 1982, the Library Board voted to authorize the city to acquire the former Goldblatt's Department Store building and adapt it for use as the new home of the central library. This handsome eight-story 1912 building, at the northeast corner of State and Van Buren (now occupied by DePaul University as part of its downtown campus) appeared to some at first blush (including me) to be an elegant way to preserve a key Chicago-style building and to finally find a suitable home for the central library.

During this period, Tony and one of his Union League Club friends and Riverside neighbors, Paul Stack, a lawyer, often discussed the deplorable state of the Chicago Public Library system, both the central library and the underfunded and deteriorating branch libraries in the neighborhoods. Eventually, they decided to try to do something about it. In March 1985, they organized and served as co-chairs of the Chicago Public Library Group, a coalition of concerned private citizens, all of whom were fellow Union League Club members, for the purpose of seeking to rectify the situation. Early on they concluded that the most urgent issue to be addressed was the decision to use the Goldblatt's building for the central library. Even though by then Mayor Washington and the City Council were solidly behind the Library Board's decision to adapt the Goldblatt's building for use as the central library, the city had already purchased the building, there was widespread public support for it (including endorsements by the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*) and both planning and funding arrangements for it had reached an advanced stage, the



In 1994, Batko became president of the Union League Club.

Group opposed it, feeling that it had the potential to undermine the city's entire public library system.

Relying on the expertise of architects and librarians who volunteered their time, the Group argued that the Goldblatt's building was not physically suited to be a modern central library facility, that its ability to accommodate the inevitable growth of the library's collections over the next 20 years was in doubt, that the city's estimate for rehabbing Goldblatt's was significantly lowballed ("even by Chicago standards," as Tony said at the time) and that the operating costs for Goldblatt's would be far greater than for a new structure of the same size. It would be more cost effective, the Group contended, to erect a new purpose-built structure for the central library which would also be much better suited to the requirements of a modern library and which would be a more fitting civic monument matching the grandeur of the Art Institute, Orchestra Hall, and other distinguished Chicago civic and cultural buildings. The Group also made the case that such a structure was important to the ability of Chicago to compete with other cities for high technology business and jobs.

In August 1985, the Group went public with its concerns. By dogged persistence and against all odds, by early in 1986 the Group was able to enlist the support of the editorial board and investigative reporters of the *Sun-Times*, which made the issue a *cause célèbre* and a way for it to take on the *Tribune*, which continued until nearly the end to strongly support Goldblatt's. After that, the battle played

out over a number of months, often making front-page news. To give you a flavor, on March 11, 1986, the *Sun-Times* ran a rare front-page editorial entitled "Library Lunacy"; it began with the sentence "Chicago is teetering on the brink of a colossal blunder." Shortly thereafter, the Civic Federation and later the Better Government Association entered the fray in opposition to Goldblatt's. To rally further support, the Group, which early on became a subcommittee of the Union League Club's Committee on Public Affairs (and received funding from the Club), commissioned the schools of architecture at IIT and UIC to design a new central library building. On March 3, 1986, their designs were unveiled at a press conference in the Main Lounge of the Union League Club. The press conference was attended by an array of media representatives and received prominent play in the newspapers and on local television stations. The public became aroused, especially when detailed cost estimates to construct the designs showed that they could be built for millions of dollars less than the cost of rehabbing the Goldblatt's building.

This and a number of other developments over the next seven months of intense activity quite remarkably turned the tide. In December 1986, the city announced that it was abandoning the Goldblatt's building and that it had selected the square block immediately southwest of Goldblatt's for a new central library. The Library Board approved the site, followed



*Batko grew up in Bridgeport.*

shortly thereafter by approval of the Chicago City Council and its finance committee. The site was the largest of all of those considered for a new building, was well-served by public transportation and would allow room for creativity in design. A new central library would also enhance the area from an urban planning standpoint.

Thereafter, the coalition continued its involvement in the project. Tony and Paul Stack represented the Union League Club on the Mayor's Ad Hoc Library Committee which met every two or three weeks for a year and a half. In July 1987, Mayor Washington and the City Council announced that, for the first time in its history, the city, following the Committee's recommendation, would hold a design/build competition for a new central library on the site. In January 1988, then acting Mayor Eugene Sawyer announced the five semi-finalists of the competition (out of more than 70 proposals submitted by prominent architectural firms that allied with major developers and contractors to form design/build teams). Three months later, the designs of the five semi-finalists were displayed at the Cultural Center in May and June 1988. Paul Gapp, architecture critic of the *Chicago Tribune*, wrote that "Only in an era of

pluralistic design philosophy like that of the 1980's could five architectural firms [Arthur Erickson Architects; Murphy-Jahn; Skidmore, Owings and Merrill; Lohan Associates; and Hammond, Beeby and Babka] come up with such dissimilar solutions to the problems of storing and dispensing more than 2 million books and documents." In the end, the Library Board selected as the winner the classically inspired postmodern design of Tom Beeby, which sought in part to respond to nearby 19th- and early-20th-century buildings. Finally, after nearly three years of construction, on October 4, 1991, the new \$144 million Harold Washington Library Center opened to the public as the new main library facility of the Chicago Public Library system. At the time, it was the world's largest municipal public library.

The highly publicized fight over the central library, which went on for more than a year, focused widespread public attention on the entire Chicago Public Library system and led not only to a splendid new central library facility but also to a better funded and rejuvenated library system across the city. Mayor Richard M. Daley, first elected in 1989,

championed the cause of reading and of the Chicago Public Library. During his 22 years as Mayor, 18 of them with the strong leadership of Caxtonian Mary Dempsey as Commissioner, some 44 branch libraries were built or renovated in neighborhoods throughout the city. It is no exaggeration in my opinion to say that Tony Batko and his colleagues on the Chicago Public Library Group can take a significant share of the credit for all of this. Of course, typical of Tony, in all the time we subsequently spent together, I can't recall him ever mentioning his role in this very important chapter in the city's history. Nor to my knowledge did he ever hold against me my support for the Goldblatt's building site.

Another organization dear to Tony's heart was the 140-year-old Chicago Literary Club, which Tony joined in 1981. The Literary Club is made up of approximately 200 men and women who meet weekly during the season for dinner and to hear a paper delivered by one of its members. Tony served as its president in 1987-88, chaired its Committee on Arrangements and Exercises (twice) and its Committee on Officers and Members and was a member of its board of directors for many years. He was passionate about ensuring  
See TONY BATKO, page 4

CAXTONIAN, MAY 2013

### **Nominations for Caxton Club Officer and Council Positions**

The Club's Annual Meeting will take place at the May dinner. The following nominations have been proposed by the Nominating Committee, which consisted of Bill Locke, Dorothy Sinson, and Tom Swanstrom:

FOR PRESIDENT: Susan Hanes

FOR VICE PRESIDENT: Michael Gorman

FOR SECRETARY: Jackie Vossler

FOR TREASURER: Don Chatham

FOR COUNCIL CLASS OF 2016:

Douglas Fitzgerald, William Locke, Robert McCamant, Donna Tuke, Robert Wedgeworth. FOR COUNCIL CLASS OF 2014: John Railing, Catharine Uecker.

TONY BATKO, from page 3

ing the Literary Club's future and introduced many new members to it over the years. He also delivered no less than fourteen papers, one of which was published (a signal honor accorded only one or two papers each year) and one of which was re-read by Tony at the Club's request. These papers, many of which are autobiographical in nature, range from the poignant ("Tavern Tales," describing Tony's parents' tavern on the edge of Bridgeport, then adjacent to the giant Armour rendering plants near the stockyards, where Tony was raised in a small apartment at the rear of the building, and some of the colorful characters he encountered there) to the hilarious ("Your Tax Dollars at Work – Parts I and II", which tell the story of Tony's three years as a carefree bachelor and jet pilot in the Air Force, stationed for much of that time at an air base within the Las Vegas city limits), to the charming ("Mayberry, IL 60546," describing life in the idyllic Chicago suburb of Riverside, to the weird ("The 22", in which Tony brought to life some of the funny and sometimes bizarre fellow riders he encountered on the No. 22 Clark Street CTA bus during his daily commute). Tony was hard at work on a fifteenth paper at the time of his death.



*In the Air Force.*

Tony was a 1954 graduate of Northwestern University and a lifelong Chicagoan. He loved the city and understood how it worked better than most. He relished every detail of Chicago politics, which he followed minutely and spent countless hours explaining to Alice Schreyer, Tony's second wife and a former New Yorker eager to learn about her adopted home. Tony enjoyed seeing New York through Alice's eyes, which meant always on foot, and they enjoyed sparring about the merits of their respective native cities.

In 1958, just after he was discharged from the Air Force, Tony founded Vocab Incorporated, a developer and publisher of pioneering audio and print educational materials,

specializing in those devoted to improving vocabulary; he remained active as Vocab's president until his death. Tony was convinced that vocabulary proficiency is a prime generator of academic achievement and drew on research demonstrating that learning a core group of difficult but essential conceptual or abstract words was the key to reducing the performance gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. To that end, Vocab used stories and narrative themes to teach vocabulary by engaging interest, inviting repetition, and building retention.

Vocab's first important publication was the highly successful Bergen Evans Vocabulary Program, intended for use by high school students and adults. It was named for the author, scholar, wit, TV personality and legendary professor of English at Northwestern University, who was persuaded by Tony to write the program. This was followed by the publication, beginning in the mid-1960s, of two nearly equally successful series of vocabulary development story books for elementary school children, one entitled Wordcraft and

the other Wordplay, each written and illustrated by Susan Batko. Susan had been a science textbook editor at Scott Foresman in Chicago prior to her marriage to Tony in 1961; she was working on the later books in the Wordplay series at the time of her untimely death. All of Vocab's vocabulary programs had a strong audio component. These included records, cassette tapes, and even film strips for the Bergen Evans Program (which was initially marketed as "the original audio lexicon"), cassettes for Wordcraft and cassettes and VHS tapes for Wordplay. Tony's concept was that the lessons would be more successful if the student was hearing as well as reading them. Vocab's programs were marketed to a variety of audiences – school systems, the military, foreign governments and individuals, among others – and through a variety of distribution channels, principally utilizing agents. Tony cherished the letters Vocab often received from teachers and parents that told of their success with Vocab's programs.

Perhaps reflecting his own modest early circumstances,

Tony was especially committed to improving the lives of and providing opportunities for boys and girls in Chicago's inner city. He served on the boards and as president (of course!) of the Louis L. Valentine Boys & Girls Club and the Union League Boys & Girls Clubs. The latter, an affiliated foundation of the Union League Club, operates five fully equipped inner city clubs for boys and girls and a 247-acre residential summer camp in southern Wisconsin for the members of its clubs. Tony was a life trustee of the Union League Boys & Girls Clubs and one of its most successful fundraisers and ardent supporters. As I am sure many of you know first-hand, it was hard – very hard – to say no to Tony (or at least to make it stick) when he was recruiting or fundraising for a cause or an organization in which he believed.

At squash, a game which Tony loved and played regularly until close to the end of his life, he was a fierce, but fair, competitor. Off the court, as all who knew him would agree, he was a quiet, genial, and self-effacing person who never felt the need to dominate any con-

versation or to engage in self-promotion. Tony was a good listener, genuinely interested in what the other person had to say. He was smart, well informed and wise, and he had a wry sense of humor. In any crowd, people gravitated to him. He was also a voracious reader. For many years he started each day by reading both Chicago papers and the *New York Times*. He was a subscriber to the weekly *Economist* and had at least two books going at any given time, mostly nonfiction. Having read the previous three volumes, he completed the fourth volume of Robert Caro's celebrated but daunting biography of Lyndon Johnson just before his death. While moderately conservative politically, he always kept an open mind and welcomed (and occasionally even embraced) other points of view. Last but not least, Tony was socially inclusive – he always sought to include, rather than exclude, people, no matter the setting.

Tony was an ardent fan and close follower of all of the professional Chicago sports teams. If he had any failing, it was that he was a die-hard Cubs fan, even while growing up on the South Side, within a few miles of Comiskey Park. Fortunately for Tony, he was also relentlessly optimistic. Like so many hapless Cubs fans before him (and undoubtedly many who will follow after him), he hoped in vain for a winner. But he never wavered in his commitment to the North Side team. Alice told me that the only times she ever heard Tony swear or raise his voice was while he was watching the Bears or the Cubs on television. It was a blessing that a few weeks before his death he was able to watch his beloved Northwestern Wildcats finally win a major bowl game, which I know brought him great pleasure.

Tony joined the Caxton Club in 1989, perhaps at the suggestion of long-time member and former president (1988-89) Ned Rosenheim, with whom Tony enjoyed a warm business relationship. As a publisher



Tony is lower right in this photo from the Club's Other People's Books gala in March of 2011. Also pictured, top row: Nancy Lynn, Tony's wife Alice Schreyer, Don Chatham, and Morrell Shoemaker; seated, Susan Levy.

and a champion of libraries, Tony welcomed the chance to meet and talk with others who shared his interests. He served for a year on the Council as a member of the Class of 2006, having been elected to fill a vacancy. Tony was the speaker at the Club's dinner meeting in January 2006. His topic that evening was the campaign for a new central library building. In March and April 2012, Tony delivered two delightful papers to luncheon meetings of the Club on the life and work of Bergen Evans. Tony and Alice supported the Club in other ways as well. They were generous contributors to the Revels auctions, year after year, of many desirable books and posters. And following the closure of the Mid-Day Club, our home for many years, Tony played a key behind-the-scenes role in facilitating the move on generous terms of the Club's luncheon and dinner meetings to the Union League Club, a decision of critical importance to the Club's future.

One can rightfully say that the Caxton Club played Cupid in bringing Tony and Alice together. Alice moved to Chicago in October 1991 to become head of Special Collections at the University of Chicago Library; later that year, she became a member of the Club.

Alice lived in an apartment building near the campus where Ned Rosenheim and his wife also lived. In February 1992, Tony and Ned were having lunch at the Quadrangle Club (Tony was seeking to engage Ned in a publishing project). By chance, Alice was also having lunch that same day at the Quad Club. While both parties were waiting to be seated, Ned took the opportunity to introduce Alice to Tony and later to mention to Tony that Alice had recently joined the Caxton Club. Although Tony did not attend every Caxton meeting, he later told Alice that he had marked his calendar so as to be sure to attend the next meeting of the Club, in March 1992. He sought out Alice at that meeting and you know the rest. Alice and Tony were married at the Union League Club in June 1993.

Tony was devoted to Alice and deeply committed to and supportive of the rest of his family. He loved gathering them all together for holiday and birthday celebrations, and he doted on his four grandchildren.

Tony's was a life well lived. Every person and institution he touched he made better. That, I believe, will be his enduring legacy.

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## Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Lisa Pevtzow

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

Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: "They Seek a City: Chicago and the Art of Migration, 1910–1950" (more than 80 works, primarily by southern- and foreign-born artists, portray Chicago's transformation to the polyglot, cosmopolitan place that it is today), Galleries 182–184, opens March 3. "The Artist and the Poet" (a collection of works on paper that surveys the ways visual artists have been inspired by poets in the 20th century), Galleries 124–127, through June 2. "Picturing Poetry" (dynamic interpretations of verse by children's picture book artists), Ryan Education Center, through May 12.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, 847-835-8202: "Historic Landscapes: Architectural Design in Print" (rare books with engravings of landscape design from the past four centuries in Europe and America), through May 19. "Butterflies in Print: Lepidoptera Defined" (hand-colored plates and scientific engravings of butterflies and moths), opens May 25.

Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077: "Vivian Maier's Chicago" (Maier spent her adult life as a nanny but devoted her free time and money to photography), through summer 2013.

Columbia College Center for Book and Paper Arts, 1104 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, 312-369-6684: "Structures for Reading: Text (Infra)Structure & The Reading Body in Contemporary Art" (features artworks that house, modulate or mediate books or texts), through April 6. "MFA Thesis Exhibition" (final projects by thesis students in Interdisciplinary Arts Department), through May 19.

Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: "Illustrated Press: *Chicago Home in One Place: A South Side Story* and *Kathy Has a Question*" (founded by Chicago journalist Darryl Holliday and graphic artist Erik Nelson Rodriguez, the Illustrated Press produces journalism as comics), through July

28. "Horizon" (juried exhibit of the work of 53 book artists on the subject of "horizon" by the Guild of Bookworkers), through June 30. DuSable Museum of African American History, 740 East 56th Place, Chicago, 773-947-0600: "Geoffrey & Carmen: A Memoir in Four Movements" (more than 90 paintings, sculptures, photographs, costumes, books and designs by Tony Award winning artist Geoffrey Holder and his wife, Carmen DeLavallade), through May 30. "Red, White, Blue & Black: A History of Blacks in the Armed Services" (featuring more than 100 artifacts, objects, images and documents from the Revolutionary War through the Vietnam War), continuing. Loyola University Museum of Art, 820 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-915-7600: "Graven Images: Marc Chagall's Bible Illustrations" (Chagall's illustrations for the Hebrew Bible commissioned by French publisher Ambroise Vollard), through June 16. "Truth is in the Telling" (Passover Haggadot from the collection of Chicagoan Stephen P. Durschlag), through June 16. Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: "Treasures of Faith: New Acquisitions," through July 6. Northwestern University's Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, 40 Arts Circle, Evanston, 847-491-4000: "Drawing the Future: Chicago Archi-



Loyola University Michigan Avenue: *Graven Images: Marc Chagall's Bible*  
 MARC CHAGALL, THE PASSOVER FEAST (DETAIL), 1957, GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. PATRICK HAGGERTY TO MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY  
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ture on the World Stage" (architecture and urban planning in the United States, Europe, and Australia through drawings, large-scale architectural renderings, sketches and rare books), through August 11.

Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, 773-702-9514: "Between Heaven & Earth: Birds In Ancient Egypt" (explores the impact that birds had on ancient Egyptian religion, design, and the conception of the state), through July 28.

Smart Museum of Art, 5550 S. Greenwood Avenue, Chicago, 773-702-0200:

"The Sahmat Collective: Art and Activism in India since 1989" (works in a variety of media from over sixty artists), through June 9.

University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery, 1100 East 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: "The Seminary Co-op Bookstore Documentary Project" (Exhibition documents the history of the Seminary Co-op and the experiences of its patrons and staff through photographs, interviews, artifacts, and memorabilia), through July 13. "Recipes for Domesticity: Cookery, Household Management, and the Notion of Expertise" (the relationships among food, class, and gender, as well as the ways in which domestic expertise became formulated through these books), through July 13.

Send your listings to [lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net)

# Caxtonians Collect: Sheila von Wiese-Mack

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Sheila von Wiese-Mack has lived many places and done many things, but right now—as her daughter finishes high school—she’s about to settle down to an apartment on Lake Shore Drive and enjoy the many opportunities of city life. I visited with her in a beautiful house on a beautiful street in Oak Park where she has lived since the 1990s, but she’s tired of needing a car and having to think twice about whether it’s worth the trouble to attend an event.

She was born in Minneapolis, but moved to Grosse Point, Michigan at age 2. She went east to Simmons College in Boston, where she majored in political science. “It proved to be an excellent place for me,” she says, “even though it hadn’t been my first choice.” She managed to parlay her degree into a job working for Senator Ted Kennedy, which she did both in Boston and in Washington. “He had me doing research for him, and lots of miscellaneous jobs the political life requires. I even poured tea for Rose Kennedy a time or two.”

She speaks highly of Kennedy. “He was a very concerned employer. One time when I was the victim of a crime, he came to the courtroom to generate a bit of publicity to be sure it was being taken seriously.” And in the years since, he always kept in touch, seeing to it that she (and in time, her husband and eventually her daughter) were invited when he had Chicago events.

Eventually, however, she decided to get an MBA and work in business. She got the degree from Washington University in St. Louis, and ended up working on account management in advertising agencies. That wasn’t exactly right, either, so she transferred her developed skills to the marketing department of Doubleday, the publisher. “I met many interesting people there, too,” she says. Among them was Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who

was working there as an editor. “We cooperated on a couple of projects, and I was really impressed. She was a serious person, not just a public figure.”

But it still didn’t feel like exactly the right thing, so she moved to Chicago to work on a masters in social work. She ended up becoming an editor for Studs Terkel, as well. “Of course he had his radio show at WFMT, and

met and married the musician James Mack. “He had a big house in Oak Park where he’d lived with his previous wife, so it just seemed sensible to move there.” Among a variety of musical activities, Mack was director of music at Rockefeller Chapel at the U of C. At age 43, she had her daughter.

The family was on a cruise in 2001 when Mack caught his foot on something sharp



he had an assistant there, Sydney Lewis. But he had me editing his published interviews, and he’d often invite me along when he was going to see someone interesting.”

One day, Terkel off-handedly said that he thought she should consider the unusual University of Chicago PhD program that goes by the name “Committee on Social Thought.” In particular, Terkel said she should study with Saul Bellow. She demurred, saying that it sounded intimidating. “Just go talk to him,” Terkel said. Dutifully, she went. When Bellow appeared, he asked her why she was there. She said it was because Terkel had sent her. “Well, then,” Bellow said, “if he sent you, I guess we should take you on.”

Thus began ten years of study with Bellow. “It was an extraordinary time. We studied the books Bellow wanted to study, which included authors Joyce, Fitzgerald, Dickens, and Balzac. Of course I also read all of his own books, but we never discussed them.” In Hyde Park she

in the swimming pool. It was duly stitched up by the boat’s physician, and he was able to walk off the boat the next day. But sepsis struck, putting him near death and permanently ending the use of that foot. “We never managed to get a significant settlement out of the boat company,” she says. “Partly it was that he died not too long thereafter of an unrelated problem.”

These days, one of the biggest pleasures of von Wiese-Mack’s life is taking courses at the Graham School. She recently did one on the Ring Cycle, and right now is working on a series about classic Asian literatures. (This term, the subject is Indian literature.)

With a teen-ager, she tries to be at home for most evenings. For that reason, she has attended only luncheons so far. Von Wiese-Mack joined the Club in 2012, nominated by Susan Hanes. They had become acquainted through International Women Associates, in which they both participate.

Photograph by Robert McCamant



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## Bookmarks...

Luncheon: May 10, 2013, Union League Club  
Susan Allen  
"Getting Started on the Pacific Rim: California  
Rare Book School and Other Adventures"

California Rare Book School, a program for those interested in rare books, manuscripts, and archives, has had a Caxton Club connection since the beginning. Nine years ago, Susan Allen, a non-resident Caxton Club member then at the Getty, and other Los Angeles special collections librarians, booksellers, and collectors determined that LA needed a rare book school. Dr. Beverly P. Lynch, also a Caxton Club non-resident member, stepped forward and accepted the call to found CalRBS. After a year of planning, the first courses were offered in 2006 at UCLA where Dr. Lynch is on the faculty. In 2011 with five successful seasons behind her, Lynch passed the director's baton to Allen who was close to the program as faculty and an Advisory Committee member.

Susan Allen's appointment as director caps her extremely interesting career as a librarian that took her from the Claremont Colleges to the Getty Trust. There were also years spent at Kalamazoo College and time at UCLA to earn a doctorate and head up the library's special collections. Arriving at the Getty in 1999, she experienced firsthand many of its tumultuous years. This was after Nicholas Basbanes reported in his *A Gentle Madness* on another interesting part of her life: her testimony in the trial of book thief Stephen Blumberg. While at Kalamazoo she braved many a winter blizzard to drive to Chicago for stimulating Caxton Club dinners. In August she will teach "History of the Book, 200 to 1820" for CalRBS.

May luncheon: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Luncheon buffet (main dining room on six) opens at 11:30 am; program (in a different room, to be announced) 12:30-1:30. Luncheon is \$30. May dinner: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Timing: spirits at 5:00, dinner at

## Beyond May...

### JUNE LUNCHEON

On June 14, Dr. Piermaria Oddone, Director of Fermilab in Batavia, and known to be exuberant when talking about the mysteries of the universe, will speak. His title: "Have We Found the Higgs?" referring to the Higgs Boson particle, of which it has been asked, "...is this a footprint of God?"

Dinner: Wed., May 15, 2013, Union League  
James Caudle  
"In the Midst of the Jovial Crowd:  
Boswell in London 1762-1763"

In autumn 1762, the ambitious, clever, jovial, and bumptious twenty-two-year-old Scotsman James Boswell traveled south from Edinburgh to London to seek his fortune in the capital. In his lively journal, he recorded his extraordinarily action-packed eight months there and his efforts to become a permanent Londoner.

London in the Sixties (the 1760s) was a thrilling place, full of pleasures and dangers, wisdom and folly, high life and low life. James Caudle will discuss the 'jovial crowd' in which young James Boswell felt so alive and happy. His talk will bring to life the current events, everyday social life, and personalities celebrated in Boswell's *London Journal*, unpublished until 1950, but now one of the best-loved works of eighteenth-century life-writing. James Caudle is Associate Editor of the Boswell Editions at Yale.

6:00, program at 7:30. \$48. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email [caxtonclub@newberry.org](mailto:caxtonclub@newberry.org); **reservations are needed by noon Friday for the Wednesday dinner.**

### JUNE DINNER

We will meet at the Union League Club on June 19. Paul Durica, PhD candidate at the University of Chicago, will speak. Topic to be announced.