

Collecting John le Carré

Aka David Cornwell, the spy novelist who...

R. Eden Martin

It is somehow fitting that our greatest spy novelist used a pseudonym. John le Carré was – and is – David Cornwell. (I started to write this piece using his first name, “David,” but there are times when it seems more appropriate to refer to him by his last name, and calling him “Cornwell” seems awkward – so I’ll use both “David” and “le Carré.”) Now in his mid-80’s, David lives mostly in southwestern England – in a house he calls Tregiffian, on the coast of Cornwall.

Although not all critics agree, many acclaim him as not just a great writer of spy novels but one of the greatest novelists writing in English since the Second World War. Critics get tangled in arguments about whether a “genre” novelist can be regarded as in the pantheon of “greatest” novelists – locked in arms with Tolstoy or Dickens or Joyce, or perhaps Hemingway. My own view is that whatever one may think constitutes greatness in a novelist, it can be found in any kind of novel – war novels, psychological studies (think Dostoevsky), detective novels, science fiction, and also spy novels. In any event, the subjects of le Carré’s novels range far beyond the genre of the “spy novel.”

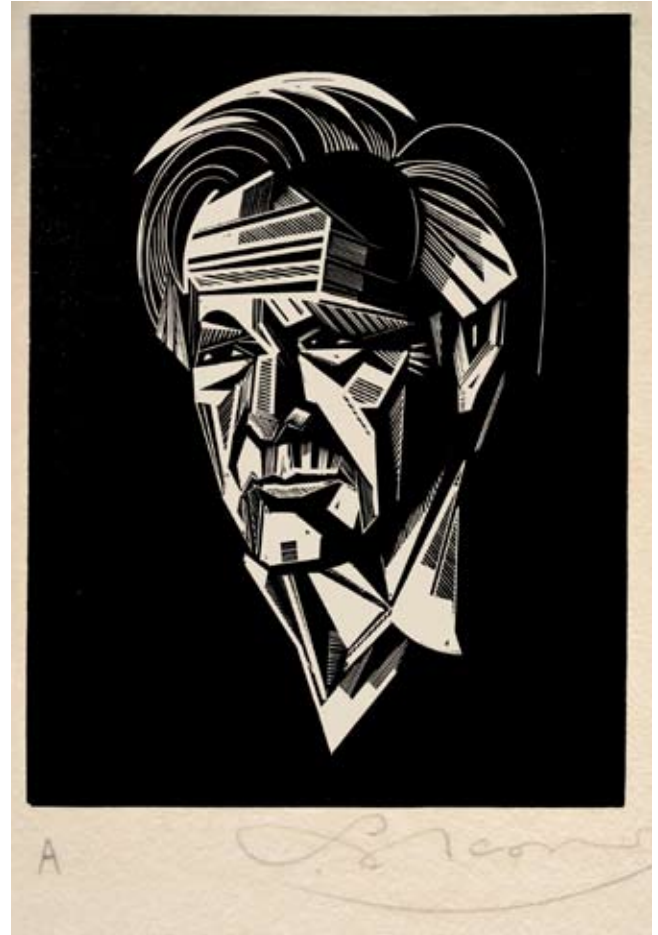
Le Carré’s books have captivated many millions of readers, making him a successful and wealthy man; and the movies and TV films based on his books have entertained – and sometimes mystified – countless others.

In the fall of 2015, le Carré finally became the subject of an excellent biography, written by Adam Sisman. Entitled simply *John le Carré* (New York: Harper, 2015), the book tells the remarkable story of a writer raised in a radically-dysfunctional family. His father was a convicted con man and frequent bankrupt – a well-dressed, crooked businessman with personality and flair, who defrauded his friends and anyone else who trusted him to handle their money. On David’s personal website, he

describes his father as “a confidence trickster and a gaol bird.” He was also a sexual predator and pathological liar. David later remembered a time from boyhood, “standing in the road outside Exeter Prison, clutching his mother’s hand and waving up at his father behind a barred window, yelling ‘Daddy, Daddy!’”¹ Imprisonment and bankruptcy led to very hard times for the family. Le Carré’s mother finally felt compelled by his philandering and struggles over money to leave home, abandoning David, who was five at the time, and his slightly older brother.

Le Carré’s distressed family background has been known, at least in general, for years. He’s been the subject of countless interviews, critical reviews and TV and radio shows. He has also written an extraordinary autobiographical essay about his early life and school years. Le Carré, “Personal History. In Ronnie’s Court. A son’s criminal pursuit.”² Also, like many authors he made use of his own experience and family in several of his books – most prominently, *A Perfect Spy* (1986), in which the spy’s father is modeled on David’s father, Ronnie. It’s an acutely drawn portrait of a charismatic, crooked, and carelessly evil man, who left his stain on David and everyone else who came into significant contact with him.

It would be difficult to imagine a “home” environment less congenial to the development of literary talent. There was no family library – no books as far as one can tell. David’s main talent as a child was drawing pic-



Portrait of John le Carré by Stephen Alcorn. It appeared in a special edition of the first chapter from *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, published by Oak Tree Press in 2008. The book, signed by the author, was dedicated to children living with HIV/Aids.

tures – not writing stories or poems.

At an early age David was sent away to what Americans call “private” schools – first St. Andrew’s, a prep school in Berkshire. Though bright, David seems not to have been an exceptional student. One of his teachers at St. Andrew’s introduced him to books for boys, including the stories of Sherlock Holmes. David remembered hating the place. He was particularly angry at the regime of corporal punishment: “I see myself, sprawled inelastically over the arm of the headmaster’s chair, waiting for the pain which was acute. I smell pipe smoke and leather, like the smell of a limousine.... After the beating, we showed off our

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marks. When our bottoms bled, Matron dabbed iodine on them." David later attributed his deafness in one ear to a beating from one of his teachers.³

A great mystery, not entirely solved by Sisman, is how David Cornwell became the superbly imaginative literary craftsman John le Carré. We read in the biographies of other great writers how they grew up surrounded by books in the homes of their grandparents or parents, or how they began reciting poems at the age of five, or scribbling their own verse at the age of seven or eight, or writing for prep school and college newspapers and literary magazines in their teens. David's literary beginnings are shrouded in uncertainty. His biographer reports that with the encouragement of his St. Andrew's literature teacher, David "began filling exercise books with lurid short stories" when he was perhaps 12 or 13. About the same time he was elected to the school "Literary Society," whose activities included readings of poetry, stories, and plays. His contemporaries remember that he acquired a sophisticated vocabulary during these sessions. But other boys also participated in these activities – and they did not become John le Carré. When David left St. Andrew's in 1945 at the age of 14 for Sherborne, his lit teacher assessed his work as "very steady – without brilliance."⁴

At Sherborne David was enmeshed again in a culture of prayers and beatings. Boys could be whipped for anything – including untidiness, or failing to put the Bible on top of a pile of books. David was flogged once while at Sherborne, and he remembered it vividly in adulthood. His English master did not value originality highly. He reported that David's work "is largely experimental," adding, "I can never be sure of results."⁵ Yet David's poems appeared regularly in the school journal. A younger master was more appreciative, reporting, "He has a sensitive and original mind – a real artist with words." In 1948, age 16, he won a school prize for a long free-verse poem.⁶ He also developed some proficiency in the German language and interest in German culture and literature. But he hated the school. He later described his three years at Sherborne as the worst in his life, and referred to "the indelible scars that a neo-fascist regime of corporal punishment and single-sex confinement inflicts upon its wards." Further: "In my mind, it was one long act of sadism, broken very rarely by spontaneous acts of kindness. Most of the time I cried alone."⁷

Unhappy at Sherborne and torn between loyalty to his father and the values pressed on him by his schoolmasters, David decided not to return to Sherborne for his final year, but instead to go to Switzerland and enroll at the University of Bern.

He arrived there in October 1948, a few days before his 17th birthday. His schoolboy German was inadequate, and initially he could not understand the lectures. But he soon "embraced German literature and letters with the zeal of a convert."⁸ Perhaps it was Holderlin, Heine, and Goethe whose writings watered the roots of David's literary talents. He also worked for the local British consular staff gathering information on left-wing student groups at the university.

It was not long before his family fiscal problems trumped David's literary ambitions. One of his father's checks bounced, and David was compelled to move into a tiny attic room in a house occupied by the unemployed. His father called and sent him on a business errand to St. Moritz. He fulfilled his mission, then hitchhiked back to Bern as he had no money for the train. Later, back in England, he helped his father in a failed run for a parliamentary seat. When that proved unsuccessful, he enlisted in the Royal Artillery and was assigned to the intelligence corps. During training he began dating Ann, who would become his first wife. In October 1950, barely 19, he completed his training with a rank of 2nd lieutenant. Within a few months he was posted to Graz, the second-largest city in Austria. There he was recruited by an air intelligence officer, which led to a further contact by an agent representing the secret service.⁹

In 1952, following his military service, David applied for admission to Lincoln College, Oxford, to study modern languages. His qualifications were borderline, but when another candidate dropped out, he was admitted. Again, his literary talent seemed well disguised. He was better known for putting on plays and for contributing cartoons to the undergraduate journal than for any writing. Not long into first year at Oxford, David was recruited by a representative of MI5, the British intelligence service, and asked to adopt left-wing positions and provide information – spy on – left-wing students and groups. As a result, he joined both the Oxford communist club and the socialist club. In 1953 he contributed what may have been his first story – to a journal called *Oxford Left*. It was "a whimsical tale of a socially self-satisfied mouse who inhabited the Oxford Union."¹⁰

By his second year at Oxford, David's father Ronnie was in legal and financial trouble again. A petition for bankruptcy was served on him in March 1954, making it unlikely David could continue his Oxford studies. He dropped out before his third year commenced, finding a job that fall teaching at a prep school, Edgarley Hall in Somerset. His subjects were Latin, French, and German. He married his girlfriend Ann in November 1954.¹¹

By the spring of 1955 – the end of his first year of teaching – David was ready to return to Oxford to

complete his degree, which required one more year. He decided to drop French and concentrate on German. A modest stipend from the Buckinghamshire County Council and a few commissions for drawing and painting were his only financial resources. MI5 did not reactivate him for this final year. He seemed headed toward a career in commercial art rather than spying or writing.

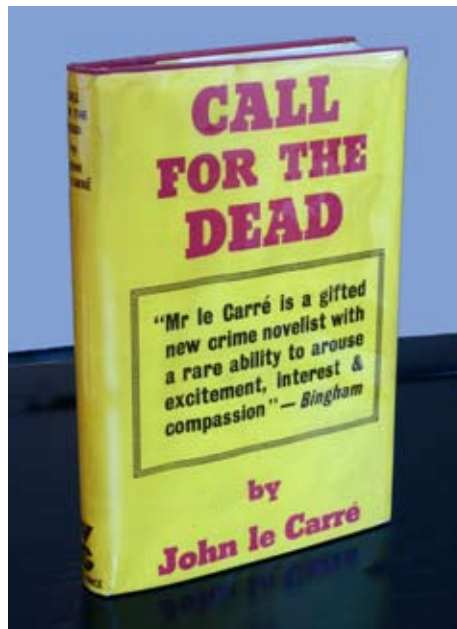
Then in the spring of 1956, his last term at Oxford, a position opened up – an assistant master's teaching job at Eton. He took it. In his final exams at Oxford, known as "Schools" (30 essays and commentaries in a week), he did well. Following an oral exam, he received a first-class degree. The examiners' judgment was: "intelligent...well-balanced...he has obviously read with care and discrimination."¹² But nothing to indicate unusual writing talent. He was 24.

His next two years teaching at Eton, 1956-58, passed without any apparent literary flowering, though the experience provided the setting for his second novel, a mystery tale entitled *A Murder of Quality*. David's biographer reports that he began working on the text in January 1958 while still at Eton. But the only evidence of literary twitchings at that time is a short story about "a pavement artist who one afternoon produced a masterpiece in pastels on the paving stones in Trafalgar Square." He submitted it to Bodley Head, which declined to publish it.¹³

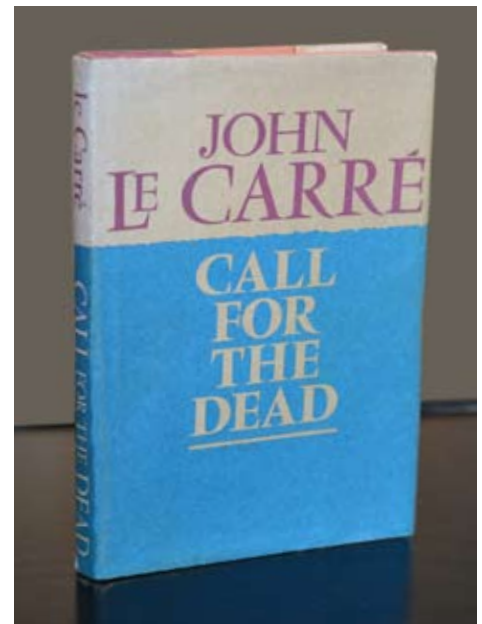
In the spring of 1958, bored with teaching, David made contact with his old friends at MI5. It was perhaps the key moment of his life – the shift from academia to the world of intelligence and spies. He was 26 when he joined the MI5 organization – the British "security service," which operated on home territory, in contrast to its sister organization, MI6, which collected intelligence and mounted covert operations outside Britain.¹⁴

The position suited him only a little better than Eton. David worked with a man named John Bingham, later one of his models for his character George Smiley. Bingham wrote thrillers on the side, and encouraged David to start writing. David's wife Ann was also an aspiring writer. His biographer, Sisman, speculates: "Perhaps too the experience of correcting Ann's work stimulated [David] into thinking he could do better himself."

David provided a different explanation: "I began writing because I was going mad with boredom," he would declare later: "not the apathetic, listless kind of boredom that doesn't want to get out of bed in the morning, but the screaming, frenetic sort that races round in



The British and American "firsts" of le Carré's first novel.



circles looking for real work and finding none." He wrote in penny notebooks, whenever he could find a spare moment: on the train to and from Great Missenden, in lunch hours, in the grey morning hours before going off to work, or when stuck for the night in London on some operational wild-goose chase.¹⁵

These notebooks were shaped into the manuscript for his first novel – *Call for the Dead* – which was typed by his secretary at MI5. In it he introduced George Smiley, the central character in several later books, as well as other secondary figures who would also reappear. He was following a strategy he later described to his accountant: "At an early stage I formed the notion of writing two novels, perhaps more, which would form a saga in which minor characters in the one would reappear in the second and assume greater importance."¹⁶

The boredom which led David to write may also have contributed to his decision to apply for a transfer to the sister organization, MI6. He passed his Foreign Office exams and began work for MI6 in June 1960. His first posting was to Bonn.

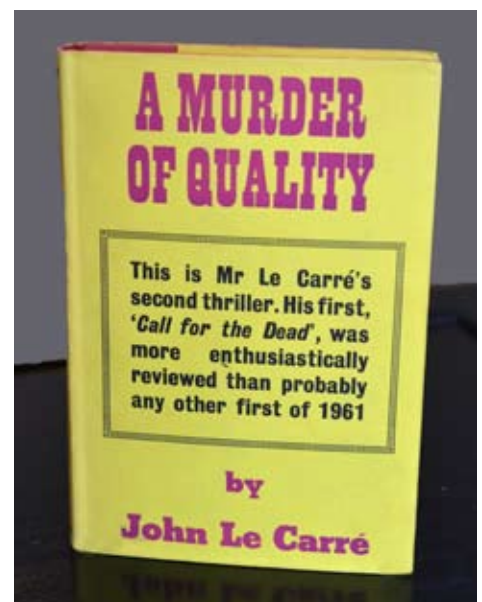
After *Call for the Dead* was rejected by one publisher, David's agent submitted it to Victor Gollancz, a publisher committed to progressive causes and distinctive yellow jackets with bold black type. It was at that point that David adopted his pseudonym, John le Carré. He later claimed that he saw the name on a London shop front as he rode past on a bus, though later still he suggested it was a fabrication.¹⁷ Gollancz liked the book and offered an

advance of £100 against royalties – in effect a guarantee – with an option to publish his next two novels. *Call for the Dead* appeared in August 1961 and was well received. The first impression of 2,500 copies was soon sold out. Reviewers called it "outstanding" and "highly intelligent, realistic." It was listed as second on "Best Crime Books of 1961." A small American house, Walker & Co., published the U.S. edition.

As *Call for the Dead* was being prepared for publication, David resumed work on the novel that he had begun when he was teaching at Eton – a murder mystery set in a private school resembling Sherborne. He sent

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The British "first" of le Carré's second novel.



A Murder of Quality to Gollancz in January 1962. Gollancz liked it and increased David's advance to £150. It appeared in July 1962, and again the reviews were favorable. "Vastly entertaining" and "a phenomenon" were typical raves. The first impression of 3,000 copies sold out quickly.¹⁸

It is noteworthy that this second success was not a "genre" spy novel.

But his third book – and one of his best – certainly was. It involved a complex plot in which Mundt, a senior officer in the East German service, was secretly working for the British. An East German counterintelligence officer suspected that Mundt was a traitor to the communist side. The British needed to prop him up. Their plan was to plant evidence ostensibly showing that Mundt was indeed a traitor to the East, but to make that evidence so weak that the case against Mundt would collapse – and faith in Mundt would be restored. The planted evidence was Leamas, a burned-out former spy for London.

David wrote *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* during 1962, shortly after the building of the Berlin Wall. He had to clear it with both MI5 and the Foreign Office. David's timing was perfect. In June 1962 President Kennedy made his famous trip to Berlin, speaking before the new wall: "Ich bin ein Berliner." A few days after that, Kim Philby

– the former British agent and traitor – turned up in Moscow. Gollancz – breaking precedent – departed from his usual reliance on yellow dust wrappers when he published *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold* in September 1963. It was a smash hit. The book was reprinted three times before publication: "brilliant," "a masterpiece," "the spy story to end all spy stories."¹⁹

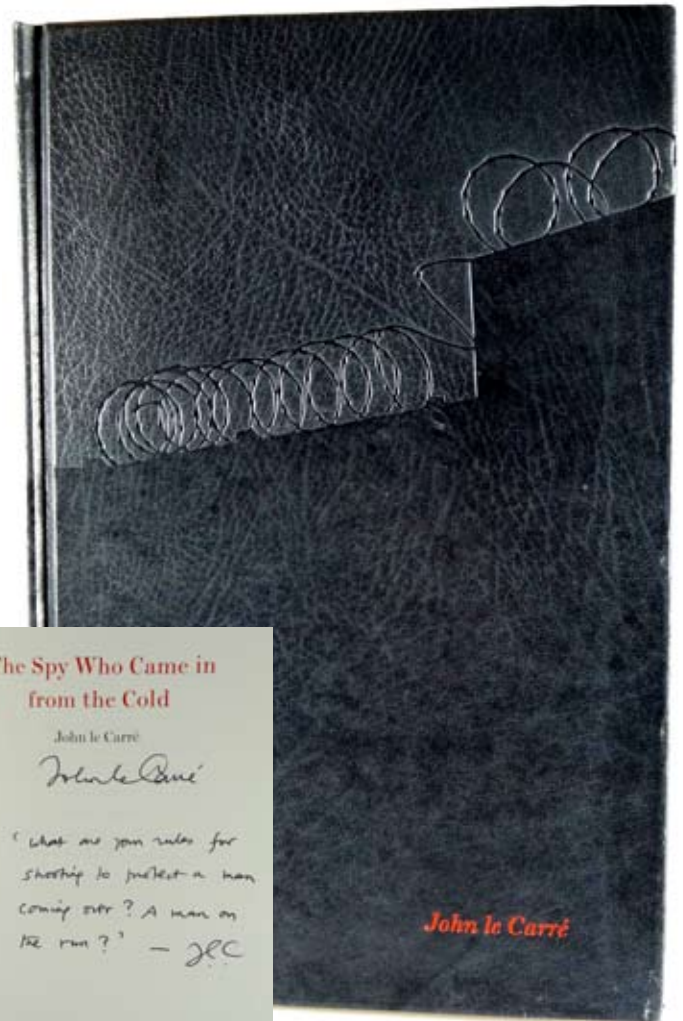
David contracted with Paramount for film rights, and they arranged for Richard Burton to play Leamas, the British agent who unknowingly supplied the false evidence against the traitor Mundt. The American publisher arranged for Book of the Month Club to sponsor the novel, and *Reader's Digest* included it in one of its "condensed" book formats. Within four weeks, *Spy* had become number one on the American bestseller list.

The

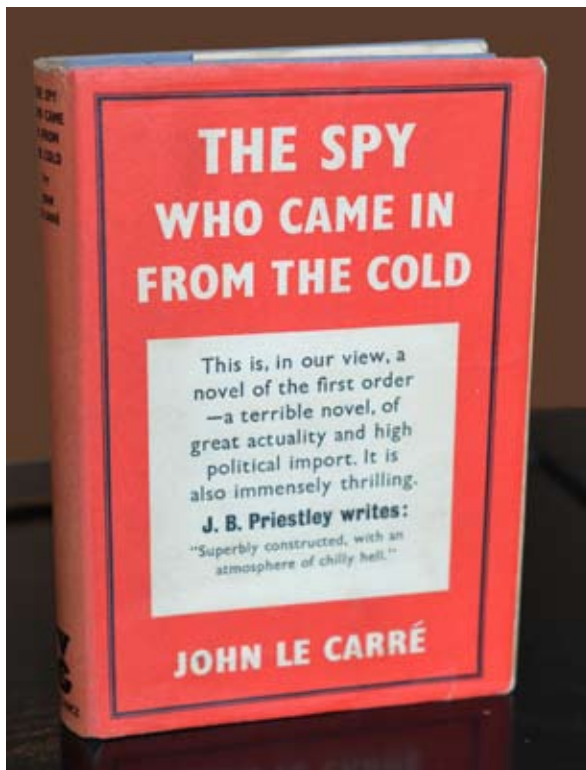
success was stunning – both critically and financially. There was perhaps only one sour note – and it was very sour. David's father Ronnie ambushed him one evening at dinner in London:

Proudly patting David's arm, with tears in his eyes, Ronnie told him that he hadn't been a bad father, had he, son?

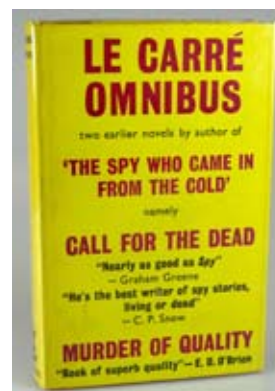
...Ronnie made repeated and unsettling references to "our book." His line seemed to be that, having paid for David's education (or at least some of it), he



Limited edition of the "Checkpoint" chapter from *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. Oak Tree Press, 2008.



The first edition of *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, 1963.



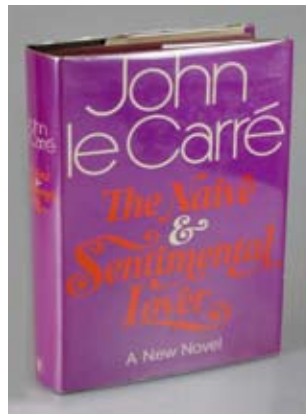
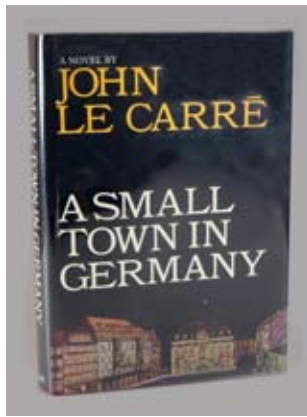
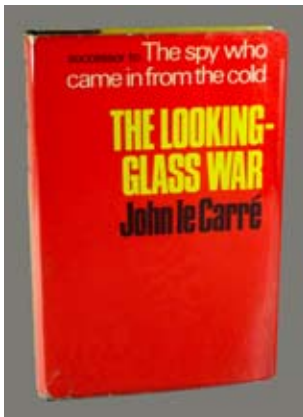
The 1964 "omnibus" edition of *Call for the Dead* and *Murder of Quality*.

was now entitled to share in the rewards.... Out on the sidewalk afterwards Ronnie gave David one of his bear-hugs.²⁰

In the wake of the commercial success of *Spy*, Gollancz came forth in 1964 with a new "omnibus" edition of le Carré's first two novels, both of which were by then out of print.

Twenty-five years after the first edition of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, Oak Tree Press in 2008 published a special, limited edition of the first chapter to raise money for children living with HIV/Aids; 124 copies were quarter-bound in cloth and numbered, and 26 were bound in full leather

and lettered A-Z. A picture of the A copy of the full leather-bound version with a special



1965, 1968, 1971.

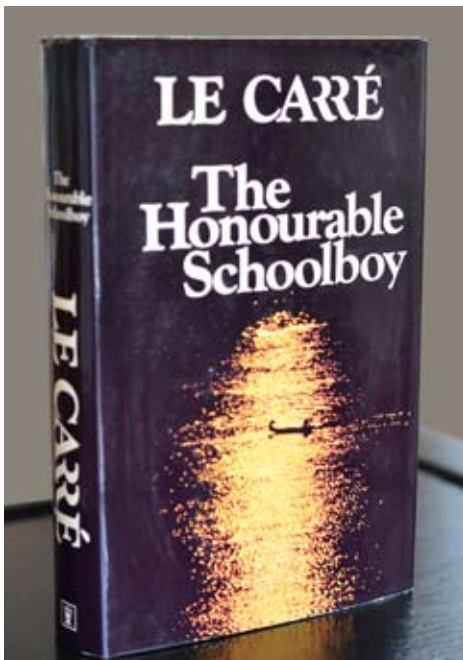
inscription by the author appears on page 4.

The industry that became John le Carré was now well launched. This is not the place for a summary of all his subsequent books. The curious reader may refer to Sisman's fine biography. I pass quickly through *The Looking-Glass War* (1965), *A Small Town in Germany* (1968), and *The Naïve and Sentimental Lover* (1971), the latter two not being spy novels at all. Indeed, the 1971 book was an autobiographical comedy – “about the hopes and dreams of a middle-class, inhibited, senior management, public-school Englishman caught in a mid-life crisis,” as le Carré would later describe it.²¹

In 1971, David and Ann Cornwell were divorced. He married his present wife, Jane, in 1972.

The books that made le Carré iconic were the three “Karla” novels. They tell the

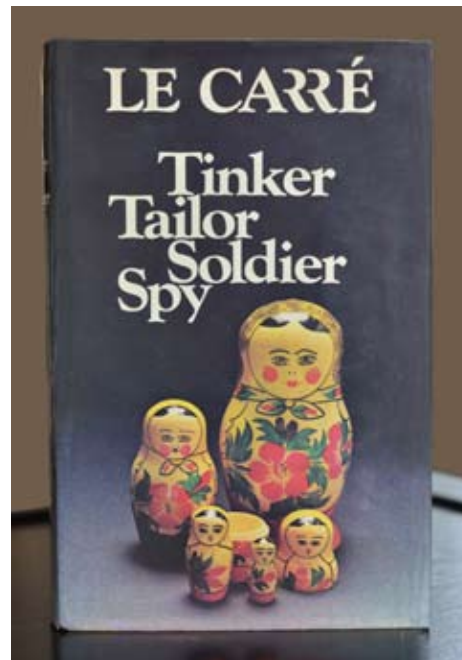
Le Carré's “Karla” trilogy.



story of the struggle between Smiley and Karla, the head of the Russian secret service operations based in what le Carré called “Moscow Centre.” More broadly, they may be viewed as a personification of the power struggle between the USSR and Britain/America – or, even more broadly, the contest between totalitarianism and Western values. Or, perhaps, the decline of British influence in the post-World War II world. Never far below the surface is the old question of ends and means.

Le Carré began planning the first of the trilogy – *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* – in 1971. The premise was that there was a Soviet “mole” – codenamed “Gerald” – embedded in the British service. “David wanted to explore the inside-out logic’ of a double agent operation”:

For while on one side the secret traitor will be doing his damndest to frustrate the efforts of his own service, on the other he will be building a successful career with it.... The art of the



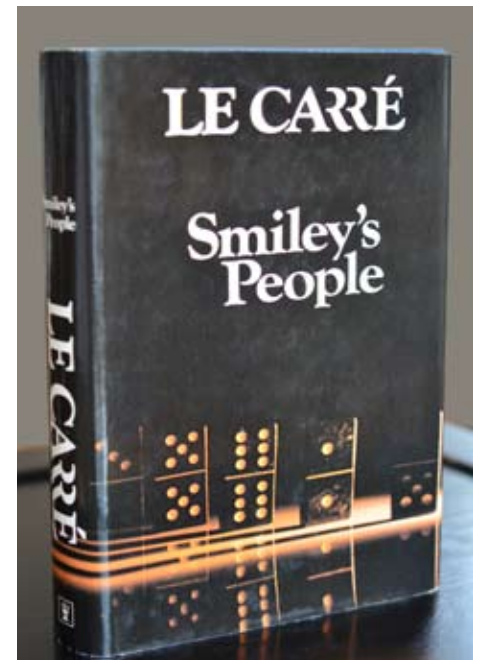
game...is therefore a balancing act between what is good for the double agent in his role as loyal member of his service, and what is good for your own side in its unrelenting efforts to pervert that service.²²

David finished the draft in mid-1973; it was published a year later, appearing in the United States a few weeks before the British version. The reviews were good, but the public response was far better. The book became the number one bestseller in both the U.K. and the U.S.²³

The second and third volumes of the trilogy appeared a few years after: *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977) and *Smiley's People* (1980), the latter in some ways the best of the three. The British edition of *Schoolboy* was published in September 1977, a few weeks before the American edition; nevertheless, the self-proclaimed “true” first edition of *Schoolboy* was a limited but unsigned release in full leather by the Franklin Library in the United States. *Smiley's People* appeared in the U.S. before the British edition; it became the bestselling novel of the year.

The BBC made a brilliant version of *Tinker, Tailor* for TV. The seven episodes starred Alec Guinness as Smiley and were shown in both Britain and America via public television. The BBC later made an equally successful TV version of *Smiley's People*, also starring Guinness as Smiley. I recognize that in matters of taste there can be no argument but these may be the best TV shows I've ever seen. I've watched them several times. Many viewers

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found the plots too complex, but it helps to have read the books first. A recent (2011) shortened movie version of *Tinker, Tailor* starring Gary Oldman as Smiley, though a fine film, was so condensed as to be virtually incomprehensible, at least for those who had not read the book.

Le Carré's successes continued, though perhaps with slightly less critical acclaim than the "Karla" trilogy.

Fans of le Carré can easily go to websites featuring out-of-print books and find fine copies of his later novels in excellent jackets. However, in a few cases he has made the hunt by collectors a bit more interesting. *A Perfect Spy* (1986) is generally viewed as one of his best novels as well as the most autobiographical. The main character – the spy – seems modeled in part upon David's own life, and the spy's father is clearly based on Ronnie Cornwell. David arranged for a special first edition of this book to be published simultaneously with the first commercial edition. It was handsomely bound, boxed, numbered, and signed.

David apparently liked this special edition so well that he had prepared a similarly bound and limited version of *The Russia House* at the time of its commercial release.

Both *The Perfect Spy* and *The Russia House* were made into fine films – the first a BBC TV special, the second a movie starring Sean

Connery as the British publisher "Barley" Blair. *The Russia House* ends on an uncertainty: whether the Soviets will allow Barley's girlfriend Katya and her family to join him in the West. The movie version resolved this by allowing them to come to the West, though neither book nor movie answered the question why the British authorities did not prosecute Blair/Connery for choosing his girlfriend and her family over his country.

Le Carré has continued his successful publishing march into the new century, accompanied by critical praise and commercial success – including several movies.

For his most recent books, le Carré and his publishers have continued the practice of issuing special limited firsts. Two of these were done for the bookshop Hatchards. Both the limited *Mission Song* and *A Most Wanted Man* appeared in slipcases in special issues of 500 copies, numbered and signed.

Next was the special edition of *Our Kind of Traitor*, using sheets from the third impression of the first edition, in slipcase and black quarter leather, numbered (75 copies) and signed, with 25 including the text of le Carré's address at Oxford in March 2010.

Le Carré's most recent book, about a counterterror operation in Gibraltar against jihadist arms dealers, is entitled *A Delicate Truth*. Its publishing variations are chaotic. As usual, separate commercial firsts appeared in both Britain and the United States.

Additionally, a British version of the first



U.S. trade edition of *A Perfect Spy*.

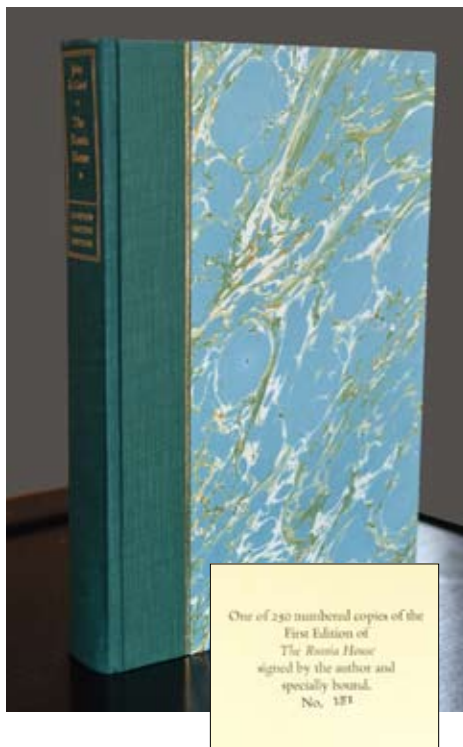
commercial edition bore a sticker on the upper left corner of the jacket saying "As heard on BBC Radio 4," while another version of the jacket has a sticker on the lower right corner said "signed by the author."

The sticker wasn't the only difference. The book itself has an *extra first page* not appearing in the regular commercial edition that announces "Exclusive signed edition," and contains a signature of the author, as well as the printed words "John Le Carré," along with the month and year, "May 2013."

Then there is the so-called "Waterstones Edition," sold by the Waterstones bookshop in London. My copy has no stickers on the jacket. But it includes a *special picture* of the author (opposite the title page) as well as a special five-page author's introduction which does not appear in the regular edition. My copy is not signed by the author. I have seen advertisements for (a) a copy of this "Waterstones Edition" that has a special sticker on the jacket, upper left, saying, "Includes John Le Carré on his inspiration. Exclusive to Waterstones," and (b) another with two stickers, the first as already described, and a second in the lower right corner saying, "Signed by the author." So – there are at least three different versions of the "Waterstones Edition."

In addition to these special issues or editions, Easton Press in Norwalk, Connecticut, published in 2014 a special leather-bound

Limited editions of *The Russia House* and *A Perfect Spy*.





British, limited, and American editions of le Carré's recent novels.

edition of the book.

This proliferation seems to me – as the Brits might say – rather overdoing it.

Though most of le Carré's novels can be found in fine condition on commercial web sites, a few of his other works are a little harder to track down, and therefore offer a bit more fun for the collector. These include "The Clandestine Muse," his Poudet memorial lecture at Johns Hopkins University on May 20, 1986 (limited to 250 copies, signed, plus 10 hors commerce); "Nervous Times," his address at the dinner of the Anglo-Israel Association, November 10, 1997, published in 1998 (250 copies, signed); and *Sarratt and the Draper of Watford*, "unlikely stories about Sarratt" from le Carré and other writers: privately printed, but apparently not limited, by Friends of the Holy Cross Church & the Sarratt Village Hall Trust, 1999. There is also le Carré's acceptance speech, entitled "Morrab," that he delivered upon becoming president of the Morab library in Cornwall (1997). Mine is one of an unknown ("reportedly only 50") number of copies signed by le Carré.

Le Carré's works have sometimes been criticized as being anti-American or anti-big business, "big pharma" in particular (see *Sisman*, p. 473). And indeed one can find these themes in several of his works. In *The Russia House*, for example, the American spymasters

are portrayed as doltish and domineering. In one of the editions of *The Tailor of Panama*, David "inveighed against 'the long dishonourable history of United States colonialism'" in Central America.²⁴ He was outraged by the American attack on Iraq and joined in an anti-war rally in London in September 2002.²⁵ He published an article in January 2003, entitled "The United States of America Has Gone Mad."²⁶

These criticisms of le Carré strike me as misguided. For one thing, the *Sisman* biography makes it clear that le Carré has been critical of many countries, establishments, and institutions all his life – including his own

British government and the secret service of which he was a part. An early article for the *Sunday Times Magazine* in London was "an attack on the complacency and stupidity of 'the Establishment'" – reflecting his theme that the secret services were "a microcosm of the British condition, of our social attitudes and our vanities."²⁷ He criticized the Israeli government for its attack on Lebanon – "a monstrosity, launched on speciously assembled grounds, against a people who ... constitute no serious military threat."²⁸ One of his most sympathetic characters – Axel, in *A Perfect Spy* – says to Magnus (the imperfect spy): "All the junk that made you what you are: the privileges, the snobbery, the hypocrisy, the churches, the schools, theatres, the class systems, the historical lies, the little lords of the countryside, the little lords of big business, and all the greedy wars that result from them, we are sweeping that away for ever. For your sake."²⁹

Le Carré has been at least as hard on the Brits as on the Americans. "Around 1990 he took out Swiss residency, because, as he would later tell a friend, 'I really didn't think that I could stand being English for another day, or in England.'"³⁰ His outrage against the Bush administration for its attack on Iraq was no greater than his outrage against his own government for supporting the attack.³¹

It is also worth noting that le Carré's criti-

cisms of American policy have been no more severe – perhaps far less severe – than criticisms by many thoughtful people in America, including many opponents in both political parties of our war on Iraq.

In the end, novelists are citizens too. They're entitled to the same political passions and anti-establishment instincts as the rest of us. You want to talk about an anti-establishment novelist? Think Leo Tolstoy – perhaps the greatest of all novelists. He outraged his government, his fellow aristocrats, and his church – all at a time when Russians who published unpopular views could be excommunicated, sent to cold places, or imprisoned. His readers revered him not only for his creative genius but also for his willingness to speak out in an impassioned way about the evils he saw in the world.

I feel the same way about David Cornwell, aka John le Carré.

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Photographs are of books in the author's collection, taken by Robert McCamant and the author.

NOTES

¹ *Sisman*, p. 17.

² *The New Yorker*, February 2002, 132. See also, "The Real Le Carré," *The New Yorker*, March 15, 1990, p. 36; and "In England Now," *New York Times Magazine*, October 23, 1977.

³ *Sisman*, p. 34.

⁴ *Id.*, p. 44.

⁵ *Id.*, p. 52.

⁶ *Id.*, p. 53.

⁷ *Id.*, p. 69.

⁸ *Id.*, p. 73.

⁹ *Id.*, p. 104.

¹⁰ *Id.*, p. 132.

¹¹ *Id.*, pp. 150-153.

¹² *Id.*, p. 168.

¹³ *Id.*, pp. 183-84.

¹⁴ *Id.*, p. 194.

¹⁵ *Id.*, pp. 200-201.

¹⁶ *Id.*, p. 208.

¹⁷ *Id.*, p. 213.

¹⁸ *Id.*, p. 229.

¹⁹ *Id.*, p. 248.

²⁰ *Id.*, 261.

²¹ *Id.*, pp. 334-35.

²² *Id.*, p. 354.

²³ *Id.*, p. 374.

²⁴ *Id.*, at 541.

²⁵ *Id.*, p. 551.

²⁶ *Id.*, p. 553.

²⁷ *Id.*, pp. 312-313.

²⁸ *Id.*, p. 430.

²⁹ Quoted in *Sisman*, p. 443.

³⁰ *Sisman*, p. 479.

³¹ *Id.*, p. 551.

Lydia G. Cochrane, 1926-2016, a Remembrance

Paul F. Gehl and Rob Carlson

Our dear friend Lydia Cochrane died on January 5th, 2016, age 87. If you ever met Lydia, you will remember her. If you never met her, you should have. She was a lively and wise and gentle person (unless you are a fool, in which case she might have told you so). She was a member of the Caxton Club from 1997 to 2006.

Born Lydia Goodwin Steinway in 1928, she was a granddaughter of one of the fabled company's "Sons," William, and the youngest of six children of Theodore Steinway and Ruth Davis. Her father ran the company from 1927 to 1955, through most of Lydia's youth. After graduating from Smith College, she worked in the book review department of the New York Herald Tribune. She married Eric Cochrane, who would become a professor of Italian history at the University of Chicago, in 1953; they moved to Chicago in 1957 and together were a major presence in the University community until his death in 1985. Lydia earned a Master's Degree in French Language and Literature from the University of Chicago, and taught French at the University of Chicago Lab School. Lydia was most noted for precise and astute translations of many dozens of French and Italian books and articles that brought scholarship of the highest order to Anglophone audiences. Almost alone among translators, she checked authors' references and corrected them, and she reworked primary source quotations with citations of the standard English language editions. She set this standard for herself and consistently claimed it was only possible for her to do it because she had the resources of Regenstein Library at her doorstep.

Though she lived most of her life in Hyde Park, Lydia drove everywhere. She could almost always be counted on for a ride to or from a musical performance or play or lecture – even after one of her own splendid dinners. Giving rides was part of her sense of hospitality. It is rumored that she joined the Caxton Club in 1997 in part so she could drive her friend Jane Rosenthal to dinners. Certainly it was Jane who nominated her. Her attendance dropped off after Jane's death in 2004, but in the meantime she nominated Rob Carlson for membership, allegedly for the sake of his



company at dinners. He could almost always make her laugh, and vice versa. She and Eric were also devoted to the Newberry Library. Eric was a trustee and a book fund was named in his memory. Lydia remained an active supporter of Newberry and Regenstein acquisitions for the rest of her life.

As a Mayflower descendant, member of the renowned Steinway family, and contributor to the Hyde Park community, Lydia had a large and distinguished "family," not just of children, grandchildren, and cousins, but also friends, professional colleagues, and personal acquaintances. As a mutual friend recently said, "Lydia wore her patrician bona fides lightly." She was irreverent about her roots, and loved to tell stories upon returning from reunions of her families in Plymouth and New York. We will miss Lydia greatly, but for now we'll each share a favorite memory, with the hope of sparking some of your own.

Rob: One of my favorite memories (there are so many!) of Lydia was a dinner we had, just Lydia, Paul and me, at her sprawling apartment at the Cloisters in Hyde Park. We had had a first course of soup, I think, and then Lydia put the fish in the oven. Not wanting to sit around an empty table, she invited us back to the living room to continue

our conversation. We got caught up in solving the world's problems, and some minutes later the smoke alarm in the kitchen started squealing. Unperturbed, Lydia stood up and said, "That's how I know the fish is done – a tavola!" (And after dinner – of course! – she drove us home.)

Paul: One year I was set to spend a solitary Thanksgiving in Florence, but Lydia, knowing I was on my own, invited me to share a meal with her son Nick and his family at a restaurant in Siena. She guided us through the menu so that we all ordered guinea hen; and with our plates there arrived a large silver sauceboat of cranberry sauce. I had never seen our native American berries in Italy and remarked this fact with astonishment, at which Lydia allowed that she had made the sauce in Chicago and carried it to Siena on her lap!

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Lydia is survived by two sons, John and Nicholas, their wives Elizabeth Fama and Ginger Gregory, and six grandchildren. There will be a memorial service on April 2nd, from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. at the Quadrangle Club on the University of Chicago campus, 1155 East 57th Street.

Photo © Sandra Goldin Steinbrecher 2016

Caxton on the Move: Brunch plus Rockwell Kent at the Breakers with the Art Deco Society



Rockwell Kent: A Documentary, by Frederick Lewis, is a detailed, visually rich portrait of the artist as a complex, compelling, and contradictory force of nature. Kent was a charismatic reflection of his era and a vital part of the world of books, art, and politics. This film was shot on location in Alaska, Newfoundland, Ireland, Denmark, Russia, and Greenland.

Enjoy brunch followed by Frederick Lewis introductions and the film.

March 20, 11:00 am to 3:30 pm. The Breakers, Garden Terrace, 5333 N. Sheridan Road, Chicago

Cost: \$20 Free Parking

RSVP to Jackie Vossler 312-266-8825 or jv.everydaydesign@rcn.com

Brunch sponsored by *The Breakers*. Cohosted by the *Chicago Art Deco Society*



Scenes from the Caxton Shakespeare Folio tour
February 7 in Wauconda, including talk
by Jill Gage.

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: **“The City as Image: The 1909 Plan of Chicago”** (Jules Guérin’s monumental watercolors), Gallery 24, through March 27.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: **“Orchidology: Orchidaceous Investigations”** (rare book exhibition featuring volumes of orchid illustrations), through May 8.

Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., Chicago, (312) 744-6630: **“Librería Donceles”** (traveling Spanish language bookstore conceived by artist and educator Pablo Helguera that points out the lack of access to books in Spanish), through April 24.

Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077: **“Access for All: Tom Olin’s Photographs of the Disability Rights Movement”** (nineteen photographs shed light on the disability community’s struggle), through April 10, 2016. **“Chicago Authored”** (works by writers that define the character of Chicago), ongoing.

DePaul Art Museum, 935 W. Fullerton Avenue, 773-325-7506: **“Dianna Frid and Richard Rezac: Split Complementary”** (recent works by both artists are displayed alongside rare books from the Special Collections of DePaul Library), through April 24.

Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: **“Called to the Challenge: The Legacy of Harold Washington,”** (An overview of Washington’s life and projects as mayor) Harold Washington Exhibit Hall, 9th floor, ongoing.

Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Avenue, Chicago, 312-280-2660: **“Pop Art Design”** (pairs iconic design objects with artworks from the era), through March 27.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: **“Civil War to Civil Rights: African American Chicago in the Newberry Collection”** (presents stories of African Americans in Chicago as they reconciled the promise of life in a Northern city with discrimination and prejudice), through April 2.

Northwestern University Block Museum, 40 Arts Circle Drive, Evanston, 847-491-4000: **“Don’t Throw Anything Out: Charlotte Moorman’s Archive”** (papers of performance art pioneer and avant-garde impresario Charlotte Moorman), through July 17.

Northwestern University Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: **“Making Faces: Cartoons and Cartoonists from Northwestern Library Collections”** (history of cartooning and illustration). **“Deconstructing Stereotypes: Top Ten Truths”** (art, images and testimonials about stereotypes that impact the lives of Native American people), University Library’s 1 South Study Area, through March 2016.

Pritzker Military Museum and Library, 104 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, 312-374-9333: **“SEAL The Unspoken Sacrifice”** (features photographs from Stephanie Freid-Perenchio’s and Jennifer Walton’s 2009 book



Chicago Botanic Garden / Orchidology



Chicago History Museum / Disability Photographs
TOM OLIN PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

and artifacts on loan from the Navy SEAL Museum), ongoing. **University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery**, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: **“Envisioning South Asia: Texts, Scholarship, Legacies”** (exploring the influential role of University of Chicago scholars in shaping South Asian studies), through March 18. **“Integrity of the Page: The Creative Process of Daniel Clowes”** (notes, outlines, narrative drafts, character sketches, draft layouts, and more for the noted cartoonist, graphic artist and scriptwriter), March 28 to June 17.

Send your listings to Lisa Pevtzow at lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net



University of Chicago Library / Envisioning South Asia
NANAMIRTA TATAKAM, 1858. RARE BOOK COLLECTION, U OF CHICAGO LIBRARY. A BOOK OF CATHOLIC CATECHISM TRANSLATED INTO TAMIL.

Caxtonians Collect: Mary Ann Bamberger

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Mary Ann Bamberger joined the Caxton Club in 1989, in the midst of a period I would call its “book arts heyday.” Legendary names in the Club came together from all the related professions and crafts to share opinions and “talk shop.”

Bamberger herself came from the libraries of what was officially the University of Illinois at Chicago (but which we often called “circle campus” at the time). There she worked with Caxton names like Bob Adelsperger ‘66, and Gretchen Lagana ‘83 (who nominated her). Others came from Evanston and Northwestern: Bruce Beck ‘77, Hayward Blake ‘60, Russell Maylone ‘76, and Dick Seidel ‘64. The Newberry was represented by both Jim Wells ‘51 and Paul Gehl ‘88. Scott Kellar ‘92, the book binder, had not yet joined, but he and Bill Minter, another legendary binder, could be counted on to appear if the topic was bindings.

Norma Rubovitz ‘94, also hadn’t yet joined, but everybody knew that if you wanted to know about paper marbling, she was the one to see.

Each of these fields was interesting to Bamberger, but what really made it heady was the cross-fertilization. She became interested in bookbinding, so she got tutoring from Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler (then at UIC, now head of the document conservation laboratory at the National Archives), Minter, and Kellar. She joined Chicago Hand Binders. Sometimes a bit of calligraphy was appropriate: you could find practitioners by visiting the events of the Chicago Calligraphy Collective (which had held its first annual show in 1986) and make friends with someone whose work you admired.

She was raised on the south side of Chicago. Her bachelor’s degree came from Loyola in 1963, after which she started her working days as a teacher of history at Mother McAuley high school (still going strong on 99th Street in Chicago). While teaching she pursued a masters in history at DePaul, which was awarded in 1966. She switched to the world of archives that year, joining the UIC library, where she stayed for the remainder of her working life. In 1971, she moved to LaGrange, in whose environs she has lived (in various locations) since.



She contributed the “University of Illinois at Chicago” chapter to *A Guide to the History of Illinois*, published by Greenwood Press in 1991. In it, she describes the many relevant collections held there, including (of special interest to Caxtonians) the R. Hunter Middleton Design Collection and (for other Caxtonians, with some overlap) the Jane Adams Memorial Collection. The latter is part of the Midwest Women’s Historical Collection, which Bamberger was the processor of.

In fact, women’s history has been a continuing interest throughout her career. She was a founder of the Chicago Area Women’s History Conference (which subsequently changed its name to Chicago Area Women’s History Council, to reflect activities beyond

conferences) and served as its treasurer and on its steering committee.

And then there was the Midwest Archives Conference, of which she was a charter member in 1972; not only was she its President in 1977 through 1979, at one time or another she was chair of the Local Arrangements, Nominating, Emeritus Membership, and Archives committees, and worked on task forces covering governing structures and “Archives and Society.”

But the most satisfying part of her work life was always helping students and other

scholars. She fondly recalls one young woman who came in looking for some archival information for a master’s thesis, who ended up becoming fascinated with her subject and the *A Century of Progress*. Bamberger was able to assist her in projects right through her PhD.

Since her retirement, church-related activities have filled much of her time. (Even while employed, she had worked with Brother Michael Grace ‘81 on the hiring committee for an

archivist for the Archdiocese.) She is an affiliate of the Augustinian order, and has assisted with educational programs for them. Not to mention knitting! She enjoys the sociability of the St. Cletus church “mission ladies,” who knit scarves, hats, and mittens to be given away. Since 2000 she has volunteered at the Community Nurse Health Association in their resale shops.

She and her brother had started living together during the decline of their father, who required intensive care for five years due to Lou Gehrig’s disease. After his death, they decided to stay together, and live in greater LaGrange with a dog.

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photograph by Robert McCamant



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Bookmarks...

Luncheon: Friday, March 11, Union League Club
The Real March Madness: Creative Caxtonians
on Inside Stories of Limited Editions

Don't fill out your March brackets until you've seen this quintet of Caxtonians take the floor with a lineup of generously illustrated presentations. Five talented individuals will regale and entertain you in one luncheon program. Starting at one guard is **William Hesterberg**, who will tell the tale of a 2,000-year-old fable discovered at the bottom of a box. It's as fresh as today, now that it's a beautiful letterpress limited edition. Another guard is **Caryl Seidenberg**, with a stunningly designed and printed ode to the challenges and joys of raising children: *Late Summer: Circa 1970*. At center, **John Roberts** will feature *Western Journeys*, a beautifully executed compilation of stories drawn from his own research and travels that took him to places such as Monument Valley, home to John Ford's classic western films. At one forward is **Craig Jobson**, with an epic publication of transgression, retribution, reconciliation and dominos. It's a story as big as the state of Texas! And rounding out the lineup at another forward is **John Blew** and his tale of researching and producing one of the great stories of book collecting. All this, and for many lucky attendees, a free page of letterpress printing, suitable for framing!

March 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 \$32. **Reservations or cancellations by noon Wednesday for Friday lunch.** Please call 312-255-3710 or e-mail caxtonclub@newberry.org

Beyond March...

APRIL LUNCHEON

As is our custom, there will be no luncheon in April.

APRIL DINNER

April 20 at the Union League Club, Marvin Taylor, Director of the New York University Fales Library & Special Collections, will speak on "Art as an Archive, Archive as Art, or Why Is the Art World Suddenly Interested?"

MAY LUNCHEON

Dangerous Years is an exciting illustrated tale of vanished buildings. Author Richard Cahan will tell the story of Richard Nickel's quest to gather pictures and architectural elements of beautiful buildings about to feel the wrecker's ball. May 13.

MAY DINNER

May 18 at the Union League Club, Michael Thompson, lawyer, Past President of the Caxton Club, noted book collector, and owner of Boreas Fine Art, will speak on "The Book as Contemporary American Art."

Dinner: Wednesday, March 16, Union League Club
Susan Jaffe Tane on "Auction Experiences"
This Event Is for Caxton Club Members
and Their Spouses/Partners Only

Susan Jaffe Tane has been listed in *Who's Who in America* and *Who's Who of American Women* for almost three decades. A philanthropist and longtime bibliophile, she is on boards at Boston University and Cornell University, on the Morgan Library & Museum's Visitors Committee and Director's Roundtable, and the Grolier Club Council. Additionally, she holds the foremost collection of Edgar Allan Poe books, manuscripts and artifacts in the world. Tane sits on the Board of Directors of the Edgar Allan Poe Museum Foundation in Richmond, on the Advisory Committee of the Edgar Allan Poe Foundation of Boston, and is a major benefactor for the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage in New York City. She most recently provided support to the upcoming PBS documentary *Edgar Allan Poe: Buried Alive*. Her "auction experiences" will be as captivating as Poe.

Dinner: Union League Club, 65 West Jackson Boulevard. The evening will follow this order: Social gathering: 5:00-6:00 pm. Program: 6:00 pm. Three-course dinner following the program. Please note the program is free to members but NOT open to the public. Drinks are \$5-\$9. Dinner is \$60. RESERVATIONS are required to attend the program only or the program/dinner combination. **Reservations MUST be received no later than NOON Monday, March 14, 2016.** Dinner CANCELLATIONS or no-shows made after this time will require payment. To reserve call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org.