Caxtonian
Journal of The Caxton Club of Chicago
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Henry Miller Remembered by His 'Everlasting Friend and Savior'

I am challenged to write some things about Henry Miller, American novelist, essayist, and critic, that I have not said previously. This is a big order, as I have written more about Miller than about any man I have known, other than myself.

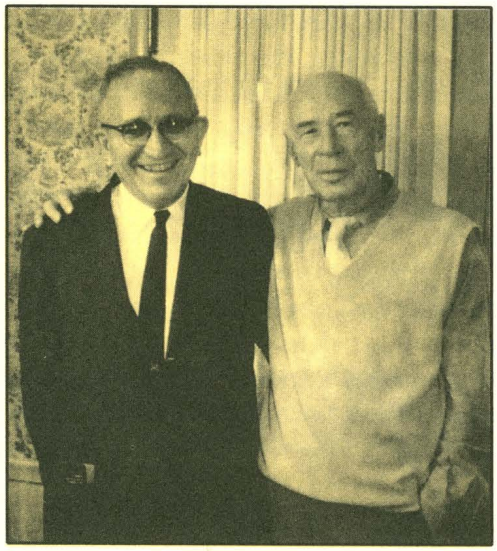
There are two chapters in my book, *A Handful of Clients*, about him, largely dealing with the litigation centering around his *Tropic of Cancer*. There is an essay on Miller and the law in my book, *Henry Miller and the Critics*. Some pages of *To Life*, my memoirs, deal with him, including what I still regard as a moving account of my last visit with him, notable for me because he inscribed a copy of the book containing our correspondence with these ever-memorable words: "To my everlasting friend and savior, Elmer Gertz, than whom I know no better nor greater!"

There are three pamphlets published by that intrepid Miller enthusiast, Roger Jackson. There are articles in the *Chicago Lawyer*, the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*, and much else that escapes me for the moment. Most of these essays will be reprinted later this year in the second book of Miller tributes, to be published by Craig Peter Standish, another Miller devotee. I had contributed to his first volume of tributes.

So what's new? I think it is that my own growing knowledge of Miller and my interest in him are typical of the regard in which he is being held increasingly. Many books and articles about him have appeared and more are projected. There are huge bibliographies of materials by and about him. There are Miller journals in such diverse countries as Japan, France, Germany, and the United States. The two writers most closely associated with him, Anais Nin and Laurence Durrell, are likewise the subjects of books and periodicals that center on him.

Until I became his attorney in 1962, I had read nothing by Miller. Immediately he captured my complete attention, not only because I wanted to be prepared for the litigation, but even more because of the qualities his writings displayed. My interest was enhanced by my several meetings with Miller in Chicago, Minneapolis, the Pacific Palisades, and Los Angeles. I have met many renowned persons -- I have a sort of propensity for collecting people -- but there was something special about being with Miller, just as there is something special in his writings.

Of course what has captured most attention is Miller's dwelling upon sex and human appetites generally. These were the subjects in his books that created the controversy and the obscenity prosecutions. But I must insist that there is a side to Miller above and beyond his sexuality. Of this I want to write now.



Lawyer Gertz and client Miller in 1963 — good friends in books and beyond. (General Photo Collection, Special Collections/Morris Library, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Used with permission.)

It is exemplified by his passion for painting water colors. He must have done thousands of them. Some regard him as the best water colorist of his day. His paintings have been exhibited in various parts of the world and are the subject of several books. One of his little masterpieces is his book entitled *To Paint Is to Love Again*. There is the seriographic book *Into the Night Life* that he did with his artist brother-in-law Bezalel Schatz.

What Miller wrote about Greece, especially in *The Colossus of Marrousi*, is probably the best distillation of that great land ever published. Reading it is an intellectual and spiritual adventure.

In another vein is Miller's masterly account of a clown, *The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder*. Miller regarded himself as a clown — Joey the Clown — and the book epitomizes the great qualities that he found in all clowns. It was the basis of an opera in Germany — unfortunately not produced elsewhere.

Miller's thoughts on other writers and their books are always fascinating. They are best illustrated in *The Books in My Life*. His thinking, often negative, about his native land is exemplified in *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*.

I can single out little essays by him that I love, none of them concerning the libido. I think that his essay on bread deserves to endure, as does a story in a different genre, "An Astrological Fricasee."

(Continued Inside)

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Musings...

Nel mezzo...del cammin...de nostra vita...mi retrovai... per un oscure selva.
-Dante Alighieri

"In the middle...of the road...of my life...I awoke...in a dark wood." The experience happened to Dante when he was in his mid 30s. It happened to me in my late 40s. It happens sometime to all who are thoughtful about the human circumstance.

We know Robert Frost most certainly faced the "dark wood" when we read his biographies, letters, and poetry:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars-on stars where no human race is.
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

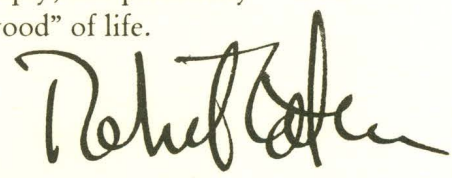
It was, perhaps, the conclusion of such an experience that Emerson had in mind when he wrote, "There is a time in every [person's] education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion;..."

These thoughts came to mind recently when I read in a newspaper article that 70 percent of the country's best colleges no longer require English majors to read Shakespeare, who has been the keystone in the intellectual architecture of Western Civilization for centuries. The question leaped forth: what do you do when you come to that "dark wood" in life, and you have no great literature, no compelling mythology, to inform, counsel, guide, or inspire? The forfeiture of Shakespeare is, it seems to me, the result of the professionalization of learning: we read what we need and that determined by the economics of the workplace. But we pay dearly as a society by replacing courses in literature and humanities with courses in methodology and technology.

The English classroom, as well as books and the library, has stood as an early bulwark against ignorance and the despair that ignorance always breeds. It was not so much what we were *required* to read by others as what we were *driven* to read from the inner searchings of our own souls that empowered us to wrestle with the foreboding emptiness that appeared one day at the edge of our own very personal "dark wood."

Provincialism, the eldest child of ignorance, has risen to great power in our time because so many are trained and so few are truly educated. Provincialism, whose motto is, "My way, *best!* — My way, *only!*" informs too much of life these days, and we have a whole taxonomy of provincialisms with which we must deal: national, class, racial, gender, religious, intellectual, and a host of others that divide us into conflicting groups.

I am reminded in our day of Emerson's words in "Shakespeare; or, the Poet": "There is somewhat touching in the madness with which the passing age mischooses the object on which all candles shine, and all eyes are turned;..." What we have mischosen are symbols rather than essences, segments rather than entities. The result is that we have failed miserably to understand and explore intelligently the vast and expanding wilderness of the human heart. Reading — broadly, deeply, and personally — is an important buttress for when we must face the "dark wood" of life.



Robert Cotner
Editor

A Reminisence: On First Listening in on Henry Miller

...Books, art, religion, time, the visible and solid earth, and what was expected of heaven or fear'd of hell, are now consumed,
Mad filaments, ungovernable shoots play out of it, the response likewise ungovernable...
From "I Sing the Body Electric"
-Walt Whitman

My high school sophomore English teacher, Mrs. Smith, loved books, and read, she claimed, everything. The weekly assignments were quite simple: find a book, any book, almost; read it; write a two- to three-page "report" on it. Only, it could not be "juvenile" fiction. This ruled out most of the collection in the high school library. Some students went to the Hilton (NY) Public Library, a musty, wedge-shaped room in one corner of the fire station; those of us with college-educated parents usually relied on what we could find around the house.

I think Mrs. Smith had not counted on what I would find on the shelves of my father's library and in the east bedroom, where my oldest brother, just out of college, had parked his library for the duration of his hitch in the Navy. She exercised remarkable restraint when I reviewed Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*. Jack Conroy's *A World to Win* only elicited some recollections about her father, a Philadelphia lawyer who had taken on some courageously unpopular cases back in the 30s. Henry Miller's *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* was not exactly the last straw, but I think it did help her triangulate what I was up to.

During my senior year Mrs. Smith had me again, and we picked up where he had left off. I had finally got out of Hilton, spending the summer of 1961 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, coming back with two newly (in the U.S. anyway) published books: *The New English Bible (New Testament)* and Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*. As always, Mrs. Smith's response was measured, more concerned with her student than the book. I am sure she would have agreed with the comment of the late Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein observed about the publication of *Tropic of Cancer*: "Why should we worry whether young people are reading 'dirty books' — at least they would be reading *something*!"

Much of the something I read for three of my teen years was Henry Miller: *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare*, *The Colossus of Maroussi*, *Sunday After the War*, *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymous Bosch*, *The Cosmological Eye*, *Tropic of Cancer*. Then during my college years, *Tropic of Capricorn*, *Sexus*, *Nexus*, *Plexus*, *Black Spring*, *Wisdom of the Heart*, and *Books in My Life*. Then like an old shoe, old friend, Henry Miller slid into the background, for esthetic understanding, like education and so much else, is only revealed by what is left after the details, the examples, have faded. I read no Miller, that I can recollect, for two decades, I do recall a glimpse of him walking arm-in-arm on the Big Sur beach with Erica Jong, did wonder at the bloodlessness of the portrayal in *Henry and June*, but all the time, prose was no more unthinkable for me minus Miller's voice, than was poetry minus Whitman's.

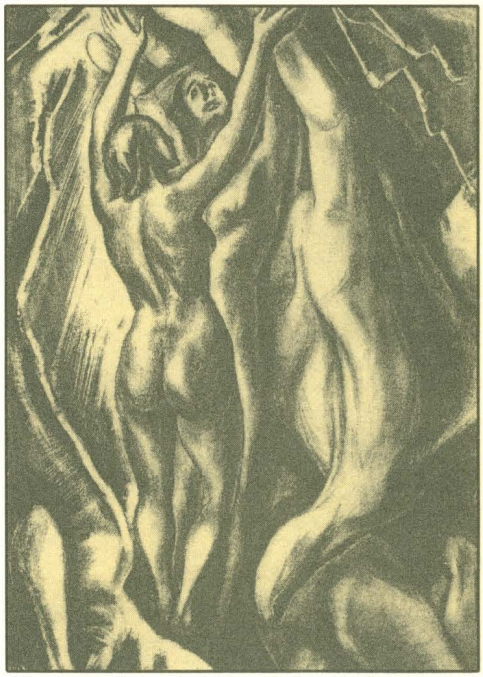


Illustration by Lewis C. Daniel, from Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass, *selected and edited by [Caxtonian] Christopher Morley, Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1940.*

So what was left after the details? The voice, of course: eternal proof that one can be a great writer without being a good one (loose, baggy sentences? how about those loose, baggy trilogies?) As with Whitman, constant courage to try and try again at what Beckett termed "pestling the unalterable whey of words," with warmth, daring, connection, and brash striving to "make it new" — by fits and starts: the *Fragmente* genre and style of German Romanticism writ very large, and read out with a Brooklyn accent, at all hours of night. And he didn't start until he was *40*. As I grow older and snatch my writing moments from more and greedier hands, is there hope? At least there is Henry Miller — seated, or otherwise posed, at the left hand of Laura Ingalls Wilder.

And most endearing of all, Miller had the fine sense never to know when to give up. His is perhaps the "inexhaustible voice" that Faulkner derided; more likely, it is the voice of the immigrant, the timeless "man of words," (the "Heinrich Lieberrecht Mueller" that Miller shouts into being amid one of his narratives) who survives in the new world by telling stories of the old — or of another world entirely — who understands that life continues so long as the story goes on. I had thought, before I began to write this, that I had read much of Henry Miller's opus; looks like it from my list, doesn't it? A quick visit to the card catalog, however, reveals that I have probably read less than half of it. There is hope yet. Miller's voice, it seems, will last at least as long as I do — and what more could a mortal reader ask?

Michael R. Sawdey

Editor's Note: Caxtonian Dr. Sawdey, a self-described fugitive English professor, is Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of New College, Aurora University.

John Knox and Henry Miller, Two Reformers in Their Own Times

The history books give the death of John Knox, the great Scottish religious reformer as 1572. His house at 45 High Street, Edinburgh, still stands grim and grey-stoned, although Knox's residency there is disputed by some historians. Scotland in the 1500s was fertile soil for the preaching of Knox. Witches and warlocks still contested ground and souls with Christianity. At the age of 34, Knox was called to the ministry after being filled with the reformist zeal of Martin Luther. He led an adventurous life, at one time being captured and used as a galley slave, bending his back and his pride on a French ship's oars. He preached reform in England and on the Continent as well as Scotland and gained enough power, respect, and fear to take on the pleasure-loving court of Mary, Queen of Scots. Hell fire, brimstone, and guilt were staple ingredients of his sermons.

At the time of Knox and for centuries after, Scotland had a good dose of guilt injected into day-to-day living. Guilt found a niche in the Scottish psyche and hung on for grim life. What the Romans could not conquer with the sword, Knox did with his Old-Testament voice from the pulpit. At the age of 59, his second marriage to 17-year-old Margaret Stewart did not seem to get in the way of his preaching to his congregation on morality and frivolity.

Why Scotland with its Calvinistic repression up until the present century didn't become a happy hunting ground for psychologists I'll never know. Maybe the old barbaric blood proved stronger than the dour, sallow-skinned, black-garbed practitioner of guilt from Edinburgh. Most sailors I've known have been quite friendly and rowdy folks. Possibly John Knox's time as a galley slave did not qualify him as a sailor.

The first time I flew into San Francisco and drove down Highway 1 to visit a friend, Brett Weston the photographer, in Carmel, I realized that the old ghost of John Knox was still hanging around me. The California hills were a golden brown in the late afternoon sun, the sky was a wonderful blue, and the Pacific was beyond magnificent. The air was warm and smelled of salt water, eucalyptus, and wild flowers. I felt that I didn't deserve all this wonder. I talked this over with Brett sitting out on the veranda of his home high up in the Carmel Valley. Being part Scot, he was sympathetic; but also being part French, he had a remedy. He suggested I read Henry Miller and meet him on my next visit to the coast. Thanks to the concern of the law in Great Britain up until the 1950s, we were sheltered from the likes of Henry Miller, D.H. Lawrence, Frank Harris, and James Joyce, among others, whom the Lord Chancellor thought might corrupt us. As innocents, we were however allowed to participate in World Wars I and II closely followed by the Korean Police Action, events that in the collective wisdom of government were not deemed pornographic, noble as their pursuit was. Well, I read Henry Miller in my early days in America and felt as if a great cleansing wind had blown through my soul.

He had visited Edinburgh in 1962 to attend a writers' conference with his old friend Lawrence Durell, and I wondered how Auld Reekie, as the town was affectionately known, had taken to him. Shortly after Miller's visit to Edinburgh, America's leading evangelist visited Scotland and England and bewailed the fact that men and women were seen hugging and kissing in public, but he was too late: I was free.

To read Miller in a more open age does not dull the elation experienced on reading him during the constrictive, more orderly age of the '50s. The shock is now missing but that was never his purpose. A Greek friend, whose roots go back to the isle of Crete, told me recently he thinks Miller's book, *The Colossus of Marousi*, is one of the great books on Greece.

I never met Miller despite many guilt-free visits to California, and he died in 1981. I've read him again with much enjoyment, awe, and respect. He said at one time "the thing is to become a master and in your old age to acquire the courage to do what children did when they knew nothing." Even Knox might have agreed that living with an open-eyed, childlike innocence at the end might possibly enhance the pursuit of heaven.

Kenneth Houston Paterson

***Editor's Note:** A native of Scotland, Caxtonian Paterson is Publisher at Motorola University Press and a frequent contributor to the* Caxtonian.

Chicago Jazz Exhibition at University of Chicago

The long history of Chicago jazz — from its ragtime/blues/ spiritual roots to its modern innovations — is celebrated in the exhibition "From Dreamland to Showcase: Jazz in Chicago, 1912 to 1996," at the Department of Special Collections, Regenstein Library, the University of Chicago.

The exhibition contains such items as *Ma Rainey's Mystery Record*, for which listeners were instructed to "name that tune," and a *Chicago Defender* newspaper article that contains one of the earliest references to this type of music as "jass" — later, jazz.

Materials for the exhibition were culled from the Regenstein's Chicago Jazz Archives, one of but three jazz archives in the country. The archives, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, specializes in jazz documentation with a Chicago connection. It houses recordings dating to the 1920s, CDs, photos, oral histories, and more than 3,000 sheet-music imprints.

The exhibition runs through February. For information, telephone 312/702-8705.

Books by Henry Miller
1891-1981

Tropic of Cancer - France 1934; U.S. 1961
Aller Retour New York - 1935
The Booster - 1937
Max and the White Phagocytes 1938
Tropic of Capricorn - France 1939; U.S. 1962
Black Spring - France 1939; U.S. 1963
The Cosmological Eye - 1939
Hamlet (2 vols.) - 1939, 1941
The Wisdom of the Heart - 1941
The Colossus of Maroussi - 1941
The Amazing and Invariable Beauford Delaney - 1941
Sunday After the War - 1944
The Angel is My Watermark - 1944
The Air-Conditioned Nightmare - 1945
Remember to Remember - 1947
The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder - 1948
The Books in My Life - 1952
The Time of the Assassins -1956
Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymous Bosch - 1958
Books Tangent to a Circle - 1960
The Rosy Crucifixion trilogy:
Sexus - 1949
Plexus - 1953
Nexus - 1960
The Best of Henry Miller - 1960
Stand Still Like a Hummingbird - 1962
The Durell-Miller Letters, 1935-80 - 1962
Letters to Anais Nin - 1965
Collector's Quest - 1968
To Paint Is to Love Again - 1968
Insomnia - 1970
First Impressions of Greece - 1973
Book of Friends - 1976

Books by Elmer Gertz
b. 1906 -

Frank Harris: A Study in Black and White - 1931
Henry Miller and the Critics - 1963
A Handful of Clients - 1965
Moment of Madness: The People vs Jack Ruby - 1968
For the First Hours of Tomorrow - 1972
To Life - 1974
The Short Stories of Frank Harris (ed.) - 1975
Odyssey of a Barbarian:
The Biography of George Sylvester - 1978
Henry Miller: Years of Trial and Triumph - 1978
Charter for a New Age -1980
Quest for a Constitution: A Man Who Wouldn't Quit - 1984
Gertz v. Robert Welch, Inc. - 1992

Gertz Recalls Henry Miller: 'Friend and Savior'

(Continued From Page One)

Many writers seem wedded to a kind of gentility, as if they were writing merely for conventional people. Not so Henry Miller. His great joy is kicking respectability in the shins as often as he can. If some prate of obscenity, he declares that war and capital punishment are the only obscenities. Like Montaigne, he seems to say that he is not reluctant to write about what God was not ashamed to create. He has the constant laugh of Rabelais.

Miller was not always wise, but he was seldom dull. He had views on everything, even of those things of which he was really ignorant.

If I were to sum up Miller in one name, one literary character, it would be Walt Whitman, Miller's favorite poet, whom he resembled. Miller's writings represent an almost feverish prose version of Whitman's Leaves of Grass. It is not alone that Miller believed with Whitman that "all were lacking if sex were lacking." As Whitman said, he sang the song of himself, just as Miller did. Whitman found nothing about himself dull. He extolled everything about himself, just as Miller does. There was an insatiable curiosity in both men and it centered about their own lives, their thoughts, the people they met, the events they lived through, how they looked upon the world and all of its components.

All of the great writers, not excluding Shakespeare, the greatest of them all, are essentially self-centered. As Whitman phrased it, there is no sweeter fat than that which clings to their flesh. Some of the greatest writers profess to be objective, like gods surveying all creatures great and small. But the one they really are observing is themselves. Perhaps the most original commentator on Shakespeare was Frank Harris, another of my favorites. He professed to find Shakespeare revealing himself in every one of this best characters; the Bard's love life between the lines of his plays and poems.

Whitman in his day was the frankest in his self-appraisal and self-love. In our day it is Henry Miller. He is a writer for today and tomorrow.

Elmer Gertz

Editor's note: *Caxtonian Elmer Gertz has participated in some of the most celebrated cases of modern times: the freeing of Nathan Leopold, the setting aside of the death sentence of Jack Ruby, various important censorship cases, including those involving* The Tropic of Cancer.

Caxton Archives Placed in the Newberry Library

Caxtonian Archivist, Brother Michael Grace, presented to Charles Cullen, president of the Newberry Library, Box #1 of The Caxton Club archives at the December dinner meeting. The presentation symbolized the gift by the club to the library of the entire 102-year history for preservation and use.

"This is a fitting gift," Cullen said, "for The Caxton Club is one of those important organizations that reveals so much about our city and its intellectual life."

Caxton President Thomas Joyce presented on behalf of the club and the Council to Cullen a check for $500, which will be used to assist in the cost of integrating the Caxton archives into Newberry holdings.

"The donation of our archives began with a report by Gretchen Legana and its processing spans three administrations," Joyce said.

Book Marks

Luncheon Programs

All luncheon meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of the First National Bank of Chicago, Madison & Clark, Chicago. Luncheon and discussion, 12:30 p.m.

January 10.

Peter and Donna Thomas, visiting crafts people at Columbia College — printers, papermakers, and bookbinders — will talk on "The Word According to Peter."

February 14.

Caxtonian John Notz will speak on "Jens Jensen and His Prairie School Contemporaries." Notz will focus on Jensen, the Danish landscape architect who came to Chicago in 1884, and his early private clients.

Ed Quattrocchi
Leonard Freedman

Important Note: Members planning to attend luncheons must make advance reservations by phoning either the Caxton number, 312/255-3710, or Quattrocchi at 708/475-4653. Luncheon for members and guests, $20.

Quattrocchi to Explore *Utopia*

Using the extensive rare books and incunabula of the Special Collections of the Newberry Library, Caxtonian Ed Quattrocchi will teach a course on Thomas More's *Utopia*, beginning in February. For information regarding participation in this course, telephone 312/255-3666.

New Caxton Members

A warm welcome to the following new Caxtonians.

Janine Barchas
Nominated by Edward W. Rosenheim
Seconded by Gwin Kolb

Sherman Beverly, Jr.
Nominated by Tom Drewes
Seconded by Leonard Freedman

Stuart B. Campbell
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Richard Carreno
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Seconded by Tom Joyce

Peter Gleich
Nominated by Frank Piehl
Seconded by Tom Joyce

James C. Hagy
Nominated by Susan Levy
Seconded by Shawn Donnelley and James Donnelley

Herman Lackner
Nominated by Anthony Batko
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Seconded by Tom Joyce

Arthur P. Young
Nominated by Samuel T. Huang
Seconded by Tom Joyce

Mary Wyly
Nominated by Celia Hilliard
Seconded by William McKittrick

Herman Zapf
Nominated by Bruce Beck
Seconded by Hayward Blake

Dinner Programs

All dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th Floor of the First National Bank, Madison & Clark streets, Chicago. Spirits, 5 p.m., dinner, 6 p.m., lecture, 7 p.m.

January 15.

Anthony Hoskins, reference librarian of the Smith Family Geneaology Center at the Newberry Library, will speak on "Anthony Wydville, Earl Rivers: Caxton's Patron and Translator of the First Book Printed in English, 1477." Hoskins is a "16 greats grandson" of Lord Rivers, a 19th generational descendant.

February 19.

The Caxton Club observes Black History Month with Caxtonian Sherman Beverly, professor of English Emeritus, Northeastern Illinois University, speaking on "The Harlem Renaissance: U.S. History through Black Literary Eyes."

Karen Skubish

Advance reservations, which are absolutely necessary, may be made by phoning the Caxton office at 312/255-3710. Any special meal requirements (such as vegetarian) need to be made in advance. Members and guests, $35.

The First National Bank of Chicago's parking garage, 40 S. Clark Street, offers a special parking rate after 5 p.m. to guests of the Mid-Day Club. When you leave, please tell the parking attendant you were at the Mid-Day Club, and your parking fee will be $5.25

The Caxton Club
60 West Walton Street
Chicago, IL 60610

The Caxton Club ... Acclaiming the book arts and literature in society