

CAXTONIAN

JOURNAL OF THE CAXTON CLUB OF CHICAGO

VOLUME XIII, NO. 7

JULY 2005

Jay Marshall

A legacy of magic and laughter

Robert Cotner

“Lefty” is silent—and he’ll never talk again. You see, his progenitor and master has died.

Born from the creative spirit of Jay Marshall in the South Pacific during World War II—out of a khaki Army glove—Jay and Lefty have traveled the world, entertaining people in London, New York, Las Vegas, Chicago, and all points between. All

that ended on May 10, 2005, when Jay Marshall died at Swedish Covenant Hospital, Chicago.

The *Chicago Tribune* (May 13, 2005, Sec. 2, p. 13), in an illustrated obituary, remembered Jay as “Ventriloquist, magic-shop owner” and celebrated his professional career on stage and on television, particularly on the “Ed Sullivan” show, where he and Lefty “gained fame as the opening act for performers ranging from Milton Berle

to Liberace.” Jay appeared on the Sullivan show 14 times and opened, as well, for Frank Sinatra at the Desert Inn in Las Vegas.

The standard routine between Jay and Lefty included Jay’s question, “Shall we sing?”

Lefty would respond, “What do you want to sing?”

Jay would reply, “If I Had My Way.”

See MARSHALL, page 2

Jay in 1980 at the Hild branch of the Chicago Public Library, after a Punch and Judy show. Caxtonian Peggy Sullivan discovered this photo in the Special Collections and Preservation division of the library.





CAXTONIAN

The Caxton Club, Founded 1895

Michael Thompson, President
George E. Leonard III, Vice-President
Susan R. Hanes, Secretary
Gerald Bauman, Treasurer
Dan Crawford, General Manager
James S. Tomes, Past President

Council

Class of 2005

John P. Chalmers
Wendy C. Husser
Susan Keig
Evelyn Lampe
Thomas E. Swanstrom

Class of 2006

Kathryn DeGraff
Adele Hast
Paul T. Ruxin
Junie Sinson
Robert Williams

Class of 2007

Bruce H. Boyer
Jane F. Carpenter
William Drendel
Caryl Seidenberg
C. Steven Tomashefsky

Committees

Hayward R. Blake, FABS
John P. Chalmers, Membership
Kim Coventry, Exhibitions
Dan Crawford, Secretary-Bookkeeper
Paul F. Gehl, Archives
Eugene Hotchkiss III, Development
Frank J. Piehl, Historian
Susan F. Rossen, Publications
J. William Locke, Ed Quattrocchi,
Dorothy Sinson, Co-Chairs,
Friday Luncheon Programs
Wendy Husser, Web Site

Caxtonian Staff

Robert McCamant, Editor
Wendy Husser, Copy Editor
Carolyn Quattrocchi, Copy Editor
Robert Cotner, Founder

Contributing Editors

Kathryn DeGraff, Libraries/Exhibits
Matthew J. Doherty, Design, Graphics
and Typography
Wendy Husser, Literature
Paul Ruxin, Book Collecting
Florence Shay, Bookstores and the
Selling of Rare Books
Junie Sinson, International Scene

The *Caxtonian* is published monthly by The Caxton Club whose office is in The Newberry Library. Permission to reprint material from the *Caxtonian* is not necessary if copy of reprint is mailed to The Caxton Club office and the *Caxtonian* is given credit. Printing: River Street Press, Aurora, IL

MARSHALL, from page 1

And Lefty would counter, "If I had my way, I wouldn't sing!" Lefty was, indeed, as the *Tribune* reported, a "wiseacre rabbit."

The article quotes Marc DeSouza, a member of the Society of American Magicians, "Jay is one of the most influential magicians of our age."

Jay came to Chicago in the mid-1950s to marry Frances Ireland, who was also a magician. Frances was the owner of a magic shop which had been in business since the 1930s. She had married the founder in 1931. The founder died in the early 50s, and sometime after his death, Frances and Jay were married. In 1962, the shop moved to North Lincoln Avenue, where Jay's high-profile role in the circle of American magicians made his shop an institution unrivaled anywhere.

The *Tribune* commented, the "shop in Lincoln Square was a magnet for kids. Once in a while, a boy would declare that when he grew up, he would be a professional magician."

"Son," Jay would tell him, "you can't be both."

Magic Inc. is now run by Jay's grandson, Chris Marshall, until another professional magician can be located to operate it. The *Tribune* reported that there is a wood replica of "Lefty watching over the patrons. There's a fresh tear pasted under his eye."

The *New York Times*, in an illustrated obituary (May 13, p. C13) announced, "Jay Marshall, 85, the Dean of Magic Is Dead." The article recalled Jay's playing the "Ed Sullivan" show, the New York Palace, and London's Palladium. It reminded us that, since 1992, Jay was the dean of the "Society of American Magicians." He was, the *Times* reported, "A writer, editor, and collector of all things magic, as well as owner of one of the nation's leading stores in the business, Magic Inc."

Calling Jay an "indefatigable performer," the *Times* cited his important role in the closing days of vaudeville, his roles with Paul Robeson, Sid Caesar, and Walter Cronkite, and his origination of a magic trick known as the "Jaspernese Thumb Tie," which "is still the staple of prestidigitators."

The article quotes Siegfried Fischbacher of Siegfried & Roy, "Jay Marshall was a name synonymous with magic. He was one of magic's most beloved figures."

An interviewer from *Genii* reported that Jay, when being interviewed for the deanship of the Society of American Magicians, asked, "What do the dean do?"

The answer given him was, "As far as I know the dean don't do nothin'."

"That's the job for me!" Jay replied.

Jay's Caxton friends remember him differently. David Meyer, perhaps his most intimate friend, has spoken by phone weekly with Jay for the past 25 years and daily for the past three. "He had a great sense of humor," David recalls. One of his non-verbal jokes, David recalled, was to perform with a rubber dove perched on his shoulder. When he turned to walk away from the audience, they saw a ribbon of white bird droppings down the back of his tuxedo jacket. "It broke the audience up!"

Once at dinner, David remembers, someone asked Jay what he thought of English scholar Trevor Hall, who wrote scholarly books on magic, Sherlock Holmes, and Dorothy Sayers, with a notorious stuffiness. Jay, who loved the role of the quick-change artist, leaped to his feet, rushed out of the room, and came back shortly wearing a black academic gown. He took his seat at the table with a dour mien of stiff, haughty formality. "This is Trevor Hall!" Jay announced solemnly to the delighted guests.

The *Times* reported that Jay "could move from mismatched plaids to well-cut evening clothes." David remembers Jay as being up-to-date in dress on stage. "When blue jeans came into fashion," David recalled, "Jay had a tuxedo made of denim."

John McKinvin, now living in Ohio, is a long-time personal friend of Jay and a fellow magician. "Jay was addicted to books," John said. "He would attend every book sale he could, and I used to go with him regularly to these sales." John recalled that Jay was indiscriminate in his buying—and he had so many, many interests, from magic to show business. "He never left a book sale—he especially liked the Lake Forest sales—without at least two shopping bags full of books. I would help him carry the books to his car, and, when he got home, Frances would have a fit!" John remembered. The books are still there, John said. "Jay had to buy some extra buildings just to keep them."

Grandson Chris confirms this: He reported, "There are two two-storey buildings full of books and magazines, plus a small house that is partly full of books on the North Lincoln Street property. The family expects that it will take at least six months to sort the collection, and they will determine what to do with it."

John Railing, long-time friend of Jay's and another fellow magician said, "I personally believe that his greatest happiness was from acquiring

books—not from magic. He was a bibliomaniac in the finest tradition.”

John loves telling this “book anecdote” about Jay, related to him by one of his mentors in magic, Harry Riser. John tells the story this way: “I confirmed the details of this story with Jay only last year: When Jay performed on Broadway (probably as the bagpipe-playing ghost of a butler in the 1951 play, ‘Great to Be Alive’), he was assigned a dressing room in which the wallpaper was of books on a wall-to-wall bookcase. But the spines of the books were blank. So Jay, with his unique, playful mind, occupied his time by filling in the titles and authors of the books on the wallpaper. A very thin book, for example, would be titled,

‘History of the World,’ while the thickest spine might be ‘Origin of the Safety Pin.’ Once he vacated the dressing room, subsequent actors and actresses followed his lead and continued filling in more of the titles. Unfortunately, sometime later, a ‘diva’ was appalled by the decor of this dressing room and asked for new wallpaper, and we lost what was undoubtedly a very interesting ‘library.’”

My own recollection of Jay is probably unique. I remember Jay as the philanthropist. When I was an executive with the Salvation Army in Chicago, he would stop by my office on North Pulaski Road each year and bring a check up to me. If I wasn’t in my office, he would leave it at the front desk in an envelope addressed to me.

He was what we called a “major donor,”



Publicity photo showing Jay performing handshows, probably taken in the late 1940s. Photograph provided by the Marshall family.

and he loved the work that the Army was doing for less fortunate people.

In 1998, I think it was, the Women’s Auxiliary planned a charity auction at a club downtown, and they scheduled Ted Amberg, a young magician and the son of Tom Amberg, the Chair of our Board, as entertainment. I called Ted’s father and asked if it would make Ted nervous if I brought Jay Marshall with me to meet Ted and watch him perform. “Not at all!” Tom said.

So Jay was my guest for the evening. I picked him up at the shop, and drove to the club for a delightful evening. Jay loved associating with Salvation Army people, both officers and volunteers. Tom recalled the evening recently. “Ted was delighted to meet Jay Marshall. He was an icon in the

world of magic, and Ted considered it a high honor to meet him.” Ted runs a small entertainment business himself these days, in Springfield, MO, where his company was named one of the top five small businesses in Springfield.

John McKinven said that Jay rarely went to men’s clothing stores as he got older. “He bought his clothing—at least in his later years—at Salvation Army Thrift Shops. Maybe he didn’t want to spend much money—I just don’t know,” John mused. The answer, I think, is that his buying at Thrift Shops was an extension of his philanthropic spirit: he knew, in buying at Salvation Army shops, he was helping people he cared a great deal about. This was a sure, simple way of making a difference in their lives.

One of the final meetings I had with Jay occurred during the

cocktail hour of a Caxton dinner meeting. Jay came up to me and said, “Well, I just came from the Army headquarters.” He referred to the Divisional office on Pulaski, where my office used to be. “I asked for the Big Man,” he continued. He referred to Lt. Colonel David Grindle, Divisional Commander. “I went into his office, handed him my check, and told him the gift was in honor of Bob Corner,” he concluded.

What a honor to be so honored by Jay Marshall! Norma and I sat with Jay at dinner that evening, and we laughed our way through the evening, as was Jay’s custom. You always had fun when Jay Marshall was around. That may be his greatest legacy to us, his friends, who miss him very much.

§§

Conversations with Jay

David Meyer

“Jay Marshall,” he would say when answering the telephone.

“Herr Marshall,” I would say.

“Herr Meyer,” he would answer. How and when these greetings came about, I can no longer remember. But he knew about my German background and my father’s art studies in Munich in the 1930s and my travels with my parents to Germany in the 1980s. Jay was always interested in other people’s lives.

Our telephone conversations began in the 1960s. I met his wife, Frances, while frequenting her magic shop in downtown Chicago. She suggested that I meet Jay, because he, a professional magician, and I, a boy in grade school, were both interested in the history of magic. He was traveling a lot in those years, appearing in theatres and on television; but when he was at home in Oak Park, I might catch him by phoning and he was never too busy to talk to me—and, no doubt, anyone else who called, and there certainly had to be many others.

When I was a teenager and acquired one of Houdini’s own scrapbooks, Jay wanted to see it. I invited him to my family’s house in Hammond and a day was arranged when he would stop by on his way to Detroit. I set out the scrapbook that morning and waited in excited anticipation for Jay to call from the highway to get directions. The hours passed, then the morning and, not having heard from him by mid-afternoon, I gave up in disappointment and left with my father to run errands. When we returned



Jay and his famous puppet “Lefty” in 1951. The puppet now resides in the Smithsonian’s Museum of American History.

for supper I learned that Jay had called. He had left the magic shop later than expected: instead of ten o’clock he had left at four. We did not meet that day, and I was to learn that leaving late—for engagements and destinations—was routine for Jay.

Sometime in the 1980s, after his life in Chicago superseded life on the road, we talked on the phone more often. I was working in a family business and Jay would call me nearly every afternoon from the magic shop. By then he and Frances had relocated their home and shop to North Lincoln Avenue. Jay was busy appearing on local TV shows, publishing magic books and spending time with magicians and

comedians who worked the Midwest circuits and came to Chicago to see him. In those years he complained about getting old (he was in his sixties) and we talked about our investments in the stock market.

During phone calls in the 1990s he began reminiscing about times and friends from earlier days. After each conversation I would rush to my little Tandy computer and attempt to record the stories as he told them. And when we spent time together, I often noted what had happened and what Jay had said. Jay, a wit and raconteur, was more of a Dr. Johnson than I could hope to be a James Boswell, but

following are a few examples of what I saved:

26 September 1992. Jay phoned. Last night friends of puppeteer John Shirley gave him a seventy-fifth birthday party. John was told the occasion was a performance he was booked to do, so he was completely taken by surprise.

John’s second (of three?) wives, Bonnie, was there and Jay told the story of driving down to Miami for a magic convention with the Shirleys years before. John, Bonnie and Jay made the fifteen-hundred-mile trip in twenty-four hours, each driving an hour at a time. On the trip Jay learned that

Bonnie could neither read nor write due to dyslexia.

"I later bought some flash cards," he said, "and taught her how to read. As soon as she could spell 'divorce,' she got one."

Jay said that John Shirley remarked at the party that if he had one more wife and lived two more years, he could celebrate his golden wedding anniversary.

19 October 1992. Jay recalled how he once gave a show in a West Virginia town when he was seventeen. He brought a hillbilly on stage who was twenty-four. "I put a sponge rabbit in the palm of my hand and put another in the palm of his hand. I closed my hand and [made] the rabbit disappear. I had the fellow open his hand and he held the two rabbits—and he punched me in the face. That's the last time I did that trick with a hillbilly."

10 May 1993. Jay told me that he showed up at the hospital to see Bob Parrish—two days after Bob had checked out and returned home.

15 August 1993. I had lunch with Jay and Fran. She ordered a cup of onion soup and kept lifting a spoonful to Jay's mouth for him to take. He went along with this several times, then told her he had had enough—no more. A few minutes later she pushed another spoonful at him, which he even more reluctantly accepted. Finally, he cursed. Yet she still persisted until he snapped, "Please stop doing that!" I said to him, "I think that's the first time in all the years I've known you that you've used the word 'please.'"

"I used it for emphasis," he said.

[?] October 1993. On a foray into Chicago to trade books with Jay he advised me that Fran was hosting a gathering of church counselors in the little theatre behind the magic shop. Bob Brown, a magician and reformed alcoholic, was making a pot of sloppy joes and beans for the group. Jay and I were invited to join them after our book dealing but I told Jay I wasn't interested in this kind of food and he said we needed to stop in to say hello anyway, and tell Fran where we were going. We entered

the room just as the group finished singing together. Among them, Jay said, were priests, nuns and reformed drunks. When he had their attention, Jay said that we were declining their invitation because we were going out for a drink.

30 June 1994. Mary Parrish told me that she had dinner with Jay and Fran the night before last and during the meal Fran said, "Oh, Jay, there's something about you which I just can't live without!"

18 July 1994. Jay was describing, over the phone, the last night's show of the Society of American Magician's convention held in Chicago, which my wife Anita and I missed. He told me he had added a few lines to his Lefty act because the audience had seen him perform it so many times before. "You don't know how hard it is to put in a new line in an act you've been doing for forty years!" Apparently one of the changes was the addition of two words to the end of the first line Lefty sang: "If I had my way, dear, you'd never grow old—*Too late!*" "They gave me a standing ovation," Jay said, "and Tony Hacina took a photo of it. He's going to send me a print and I'll see who didn't stand."

6 September 1994. Jay has always teased Anita about cooking chicken for dinner. He calls her "the chicken lady." When he phoned today I mentioned that Anita was making catfish for dinner. Jay assumed a deep southern drawl and said, "Catfish! Why that's *southern* chicken!"

20 September 1994. At the Caxton Club meeting Jay was dressed in a blue blazer,

starched white shirt, tie, and trousers. I told him he looked spiffy, better than I had seen him dress in a long time. He told me he was wearing his late friend Tommy Edwards' blazer from The Jockey Club. "I fit into all my friend's clothes," he said, almost sheepishly, and mentioned Tommy and John Shirley, both longtime friends who had recently died. After Bob Parrish died, Jay wore Bob's hat and scarf.

10 October 1994. Jay phoned to tell a



In 1950, Jay appeared in "Great to Be Alive" on Broadway.

joke, but I did not understand the punch line. "Tell your wife," he said. "She'll understand it. I should have told her in the first place."

He went on to say that he had enjoyed an excellent talk on the poetry of Robert Frost at a recent luncheon meeting of The Caxton Club. He explained that his knowledge of poetry did not extend beyond the line "There once was a man from Nantucket..."

14 November 1994. Jay phoned Anita to ask her if she had ever seen a kitchen gadget
See CONVERSATIONS, page 6

CONVERSATIONS, from page 5

that spun lettuce within a bowl to throw the water off after washing. He had found one in the Swedish Covenant Hospital thrift shop for \$1.50 and had bought it. Anita told him that she had one and used it often. Jay's reaction: "Why does everyone else know about this except me?" He was not in a good mood. When Anita asked him if he wanted to talk to me, Jay said, "Is that really necessary?"

5 December 1994. Jay flew to the Showman's League convention in Las Vegas on a 4:30 A.M. flight because the person he was flying with weighed nearly 400 pounds and the man wanted to be assured of having an empty seat between the two of them.

10 December 1994. Jay tells me, "If air conditioning had been invented in stagecoach days, I would have preferred living then."

31 December 1994. Jay phoned and told Anita that he had come full circle. He was doing a show that night in exchange for dinner for himself and Fran. That was how he had started in show business.

18 January 1995. After telling Jay that I was fed up with a mutual friend's negativity toward me, Jay said, "Write him off. I'm thinking of writing you off myself."

16 March 1995. Jay is a member of The Society of the Fifth Line, a club whose members write limericks. He called and left on our answering machine his latest composition:

A young man with passions quite gingery
Tore a hole in his sister's best lingery
He pinched her behind
As he made up his mind
To add incest to insult to injury.

23 November 1995. Jay tells me that after a Thanksgiving party, as he was taking



Jay in a publicity photo, probably from the 1970s.

Fran back to her nursing home, she said, "What are you doing this for? You're going to end up in divorce court."

Early December 1995. Jay is in the hospital with a blood clot. I tell him that a friend of ours advises him to go to Mayo Clinic in Rochester if he needs surgery. The next day Jay tells me he's exhausted from phone calls and friends visiting him. "I should be in Rochester," he says. "No one knows me there."

4 January 1996. While driving from the magic shop to a restaurant for dinner, Jay told Anita and me of a woman he knew named Gloria. He couldn't recall her last name. She became pregnant, married the man, had two children, got a divorce, lived with her mother and played a piano in a cocktail lounge. One day, a Monday, she arrived late for work because she became ill on the bus. Jay quipped: "Sick in transit on Gloria's Monday."

21 May 1997. Jay called; he was frustrated because he could not find any tenor

banjo strings. He had gone to the Carl Fischer Music Store in the Loop and wrangled with a young clerk, trying to explain what he needed, but without luck. He next asked for banjo picks, which they also did not have. He said he used to make them out of celluloid collar stays. "Do you have a pitch pipe for a banjo?" he asked the girl. "Not for a tenor banjo," she said. He complained to me about being obsolete.

In the last few years, starting about 2003, Jay phoned me every weekday to give me a stock market report on several companies we had both invested in. He did not want to talk about other subjects; he gave me the Dow Jones Industrial average for the day, the closing price on

six or seven stocks and the conversation, as far as he was concerned, was over. When Anita and I were not home to receive a call, he left a message. Anita's recorded voice on our answering machine instructed a caller to "press star five one if you want to leave a FAX." Jay took this information as his identity and when he called he would begin his report by saying, "This is Star Five One."

One of the last times he called I made the mistake of telling him that Anita was baking oatmeal chocolate chip cookies. Jay liked them but I had to tell him that I wasn't coming up that week to have lunch with him so he wouldn't be getting any.

A few days later, just before Easter, Anita answered the phone and received Jay's stock report, as she often did when I was not available.

"Happy Easter," she told him.

"Happy oatmeal cookies," he replied.

In all the decades I knew Jay Marshall, his signature sign-off at the end of a phone conversation was "Keep in touch."

I wish I could.

§§

Photographs provided by the author.

Caxtonians Collect: David Mann

Eighth in a series of interviews with members.

Interviewed by Paul T. Ruxin

Attorney David Mann has been a member of the Caxton Club since 1987; he was sponsored by two distinguished Caxtonians, Bruce Beck and Hayward Blake. It might be said that his collecting instinct, like that of so many Caxtonians, stems from the very best of sources: an insatiable intellectual curiosity. He was a collector long before he knew it.

David Mann: As an undergraduate at Notre Dame my major was the General Program in Liberal Studies, a “Great Books” program. We had to buy the texts and were responsible at the end of the program for knowing what was in them...so that the idea of buying and accumulating texts was really pretty well set.

Caxtonian: When did you first think of yourself as a collector?

Mann: When my son came along I started buying him first editions of American authors.... We’ve kept it up. He’s thirty-nine...he’s now hooked.... I was looking for a book for my son, and I found a book on Chicago that referenced my grandfather. My quest then was to find other books that might reference my grandfather and I found several. I then started collecting books on Chicago.

Caxtonian: What was that first book, and what followed?

Mann: The first was a book of caricatures of Chicago businessmen from 1905, and there’s a caricature of my grandfather in it. Then I went so far as to buy an old Chicago directory, from 1908. I branched out, found a book on the Colombian Exposition, and opened it up and found a flag; printed on it was “IRWA,” the International Rail Workers who were then picketing the Exposition. Somebody had gone to the Exposition, been a union sympathizer, picked up the flag, and put it in the book, so of course I had to have it. After that I continued collecting Chicago books and others about subjects that interested me.

Caxtonian: Where do you look for books,



and do you always keep them?

Mann: Everywhere; when I was in Evanston I used to haunt all the bookstores there... I don’t buy on the internet. I still have all my books from when I started my “great books” collection at Notre Dame. I have a wonderful Random House issue of Joyce’s *Ulysses* from then that I annotated to the nines. Buying books started in college, but in a different way. They were functional books that I was using, but keeping the books was normal for me, and adding to them as you went along was normal, and that’s how “collecting” started.

Caxtonian: Is it fair to say that as a collector you’re still a reader?

Mann: Yes, I read everything that I buy. The reason I don’t read on the computer is that a book is a tactile thing. If you can’t touch a book, turn it upside down, do anything you want with it, I don’t want it. I use them a lot for reference. I read to learn. The books are all functional in that regard; unlike a collector who’s focused, I’m a reader who’s topical. I am looking for something different...it’s a different kind of collecting. I’d rather have a book that’s been handled, used, the design is interesting.... I look at a lot of different things.

Caxtonian: It sounds like you have a very personal collection.

Mann: Yes, it’s totally personal to me.... My books are who I am.

Caxtonian: What do you enjoy about Caxton?

Mann: I find Caxton to be a great experience. I learn something every time I go. I might not have an interest in the subject matter before I go, but I can’t say I’ve been bored or uninterested in any of the sessions, because I always learn something I didn’t know before. There’s such a diversity of people, with such diverse tastes, and such a diversity of expertise,

that when you get a chance to hear them you just say, “Wow! I never even knew that existed.”

Caxtonian: When did you come to realize that you were driven by this intellectual curiosity?

Mann: I guess in college. Education is either a glass that gets filled up or it’s a fire that needs to be continuously fed. For me it’s a fire you need to feed. Books do that.

Caxtonian: If you had to pick a book that’s made a difference in your life, that you go back to time and again, what would it be?

Mann: Three. Not necessarily in order, *The Bible*, old and new testaments, *The Dialogues of Plato*, and Pascal’s *Pensees*. I might also throw in Aristotle. My early interest in philosophy has stayed with me all my life. You are either a Platonist or an Aristotelian. They are epistemologically inconsistent, you have to be one or the other.

Caxtonian: Which are you?

Mann: I’ve always been a Platonist, but every so often you need Aristotle to get your feet on the ground. Plato had no throw-away lines; Aristotle had no throw-away words.

Doing Research at the Ransom Center

Suzanne Smith Pruchnicki

In January 2005, my husband, Paul, and I had the pleasure of again doing research at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas in Austin. (Several years earlier, we had done research using the Center's collection of manuscripts and letters connected to the Brontës of Haworth, Yorkshire.)

We arrived in January to find a splendid large Reading Room decorated with sculptures and bronze busts of famous writers. The modern Center is eight stories tall, the first level used for current exhibits. A fascinating exhibit of manuscripts, books, and artifacts connected to Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene awaited us. All of Waugh's manuscripts except one are in the Ransom collection. The exhibit included his enormous square writing desk, his pens, an excellent bust, his first book made as a child and a piece of illuminated calligraphy he had done as a teenager, to name a few.

The Center's Gutenberg Bible is on display inside a cylinder of filigreed bronze where it is kept from strong light. Ransom researchers must have a project in mind. I was interested in the Thomas Jefferson letters and his biographies. Paul researched Ransom materials on the recusant priests of the lengthy period of persecution of Catholic priests in England. He was delighted to be able to read three handwritten letters by Mary, Queen of Scots.

After my Jefferson studies, I found myself in a world of research delight: Brontë letters, from Charlotte to her friend, Ellen

Nussey; stern letters from mutual friend, Mary Taylor, to the mild and meek Ellen as well as Ellen's difficulty with those who asked to see some of Charlotte's letters but did not return them. There were also Dickens letters, written rapidly though harder to read as he grew older. I read a long, 4-page letter from John Keats to his sister-in-law who, with Keats's brother, had

phone bills from his last days before his death in Paris in 1960.

In addition there were Thomas Rowlandson's slightly satiric watercolor drawings; Ronald Searle's sketch books [The Ransom Center has 80 of these] and his caricatures illustrating the casts of London plays in the 1930's created for "Punch" magazine. My favorite Searle illustrations are those he did for

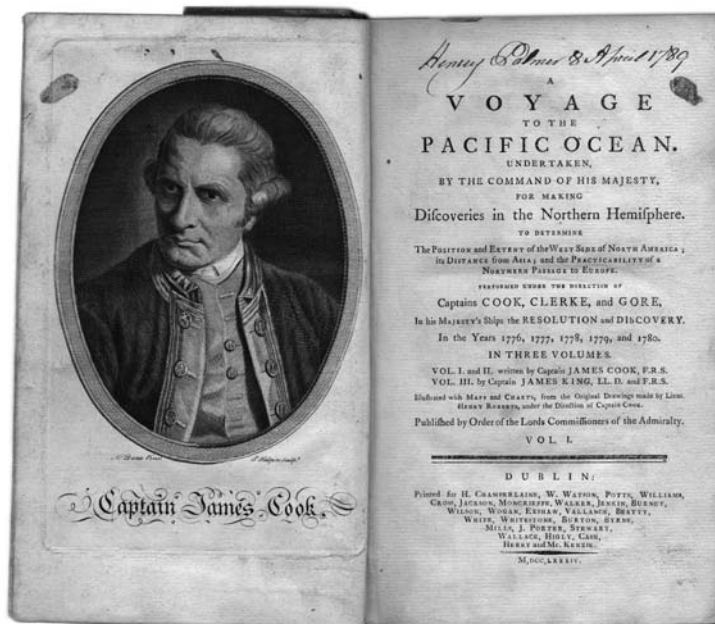
Dickens' Christmas Carol.

I was also entranced by a collection of special programs from Diaghilev's Ballets Russes [1911 - 1929]. The early programs were masterpieces of color printing and design. They revealed much that is not conveyed in books about The Ballets Russes dancers, sets, etc.

At The Ransom Center, as well as at the University of Virginia's rare book library, researchers must leave their pens, purses, etc. at a locker. Yellow paper and #2 lead pencils are provided. An identity card is left with the librarians inside the Reading Room and is turned over to the desk clerk in the foyer when one leaves for lunch or

at the end of the day.

Velvet pillow-like supports are provided for books being used and are to be arranged so that a book may be opened fairly widely but the spine is protected. Lighting at the long tables was excellent. We particularly enjoyed the helpfulness of the staff who sat at computers while we had the pleasure of enjoying some of The Ransom Center's treasures.



Frontispiece of James Cook's "A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean...," 1784. Part of "The Muse in Motion: Travel Literature through the Centuries" at Ransom Center Galleries through July 17. Photo courtesy the Ransom Center.

settled in Louisville, Kentucky. She did not like America or the Audubons, especially Audubon's haughty wife. An intriguing letter as Keats tried to cheer his brother's wife with witty, amusing anecdotes about his male friends.

Then, too, I enjoyed set and costume designs for the Ballets Russes, done by Leon Bakst and Alexandre Benois, even coming on the Benois gas, electric, and tele-

AND THIS FALL...

The September dinner speaker will be Gail Kern Paster, director of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington. She will speak on "Finding the History of the Body in Elizabethan Almanacs." The meeting will be held September 21.

On September 9, Caxtonian Dan Crawford will start the Friday luncheon series with a rousing speech, tentatively entitled "Famous Caxtonians You Never Heard Of."