CAXTONIAN

JOURNAL OF THE CAXTON CLUB VOLUME XVI, NO. 2 FEBRUARY 2008

It Was Al All the Time

Philip Liebson

My first significant memory of baseball was the World Series of 1945. The Cubs were playing the Detroit Tigers. I was in the fifth grade in Forest Hills, NY, and because of the World Series, the boys spent afternoons listening on the radio while the girls spent the afternoon—sewing.

Over the crackling of the radio we heard the Tigers beat the Cubs in 7 games. It was arguably the worst World Series ever played—this was just after the war and many of the veterans had not yet returned. Nonetheless, because the Tigers won, I became a Tigers fan. This was the equivalent of getting into the stock market the day before Black Tuesday.

For the next five years I was an avid sports fan and devotee of many sportswriters. But since 1950 my interest in sports has flagged—although I am still devoted to sports writing and especially the techniques of injecting excitement into narratives of frequently dull sports events. Sportswriters' backgrounds, interests, and styles are many and varied.

For example, Heywood Broun, describing John McGraw's loss to the Babe Ruth Yankees, in the *New York World*, October 12, 1923: "His fame deserves to be recorded along with the men who said: 'Lay on Macduff,' 'Sink me the ship, Master Gunner. Split her in twain,' and 'I'll fight it out on the line if it takes all summer.' For John McGraw also went down with eyes front and thumb on his nose."

Grantland Rice reported on a Notre Dame victory in that same year in the *New York Tribune*: "Outlined against the blue-gray October sky, the four Horsemen rode again. In dramatic lore they are known as Famine, Pestilence, Destruction and Death. These are only aliases. Their real names are Stuhldreher, Miller, Crowley and Laydon.

Ring Lardner in 1913 [WEB ONLY IMAGE FROM VIEWIMAGES.COM]

They formed the crest of the South Bend Cyclone…."

But it is not these styles I am interested in here, but that of another. In his time, he was lauded by critics and peers. Edmund Wilson: "[He] seems to have imitated nobody, and nobody else could produce his essence." Virginia Woolf: "…he writes the best prose that comes our way. Hence we feel at last freely admitted to the society of our fellows."

An example of his dialogue? In "Alibi Ike" a teammate is talking to a busher who just joined the White Sox:

"'What did you hit last year?' Carey ast him.

"'I had malaria most o' the season,' says Ike. 'I wound up with .356.'

"'Where do I have to go to get malaria?' says Carey, but Ike didn't wise up."

I talk of Ringgold Wilmer Lardner, of

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course, whom some remember vaguely as a Chicago sportswriter who went through the White Sox World Series train from Cincinnati singing "I'm forever blowing ball games" when he suspected that the 1919 Series was being thrown. Although Ring is associated by many with Chicago, he spent most of his years after 1919 in New York, out on Long Island.

Ring was a sportswriter, a columnist, a short story writer, playwright, humorist, satirist, parodist, composer, and critic of what H.L. Mencken called the "booboisie." Mencken himself was an admirer of Lardner's accurate rendering of the vernacular idiom. Mencken sent a copy of his second edition of *The American Language* to Lardner, inscribed "To my esteemed colleague the eminent philologist Ring W. Lardner, Esq." Mencken wrote in the preface "His writings are a mine of authentic American; his service to etymology is incomparable."

Lardner was not a professional philologist. Though he had a good ear for Americanisms, he did not attempt to become a linguistic scholar. But he couldn't allow a mistake in observation. In a review of a book of idiomatic poetry, he wrote: "[He indicates that] we say everythin' and nothin.' We don't. We say somethin' and nothin' but we say anything and everything… It's a real effort to drop the g off this little word [thing], and, as a rule our language is not looking for trouble. His ear has gone wrong on the American for fellow, kind of and sort of. Only on stage or in 'comic strips' do we use feller, kinder and sorter. Kinda and sorta are what us common fellas say."

Once asked to provide the 10 most beautiful words in the English language, Ring listed: gangrene, flit, scram, mange, wretch, smoot, guzzle, McNaboe, blute, crene. Blute is a smoker who doesn't inhale. Crene is a man who inhales but doesn't smoke.

According to Ring's nonsensical and hyperbolic autobiography, *The Story of a Wonder Man*, which spoofed the popular success stories of its era, he was born in Niles, Michigan in 1885. He became a squirrel tender in San Francisco as a young adolescent, later scoring 3 touchdowns for Yale to beat Harvard. Still later he organized a party for Jane Austen to visit Texas Guinan's cabaret. The autobiography also included encounters with Dolly Madison, Lily Langtry and Horace Greeley, among others. At various times he was at Yale, Princeton, and the University of Illinois College of Medicine. (Where he got 100 on the final examination: "Q: What would you do if somebody had a stroke? A: Count it.") He even recounted his declining years and provided a post-mortem message that his death occurred while fishing when he was "hit in the stomach by a hake. Autopsy note: Death by stomach hake."

At least the beginning was true. He *was* born in Niles in 1885, of wealthy parents, his father tracing his American ancestry back to 1740 when Lynford Lardner emigrated from England to Philadelphia. His mother was an Episcopal rector's daughter. The family fortune had been made in land. Ring had a comfortable childhood and adolescence in the elite section of Niles, with indulgent parents, nursemaids, and tutors. He was the youngest of six surviving sisters and brothers (of nine). He was not a scholar, however, as he admitted about his high school days: "Most of we boys done our studying at a 10 x 5 table with side pockets in it." Ring became an expert at idiom by listening carefully to the conversations around him. His father wanted him to be a mechanical engineer, however. Ring's formal education ended after a year at the Armour Institute (which was later merged into IIT), where he did his studying at theaters and bars, failing in most courses but passing in rhetoric.

In 1905 he became a reporter for the *South Bend Times* by convincing an editor trying to offer the job to Ring's older brother Rex, who was on a competing newspaper, that Rex was unavailable. Ring found out that the *Times* was paying 33-1/3% more than he was receiving from his previous job at the gas company and convinced the editor to hire him instead. The 33-1/3% increase was from $8 to $12/week. Here Ring was a jack-of-all-trades including society reporter, dramatic critic, sports editor, and court-house reporter. As a sportswriter, he would concentrate his focus on a single personality or a single play rather than a narrative inning-by-inning account, as was usual then. He remained a reporter in South Bend for two years, during which he met his future wife Ellis Abbott of Goshen, Indiana, who was attending Smith College when they met. Ellis was also from a prominent family in her town.

By the time he left South Bend, Ring and Ellis were engaged. Their courtship had consisted mostly of hundreds of letters between Northampton and wherever Ring was traveling. Ring's letters to Ellis were in standard English with controlled passion. These were post-Victorians, not Roaring Twenties hedonists. It took a long time for Ring to convince Ellis' father, who had made his fortune in lumber, that a sports writer was not necessarily a member of the lower echelons of society; Ring had to further convince him that his intended bride would not be

exposed to any baseball personnel lower than a manager. They were married after four long years of courtship. They subsequently had four sons: John, James, Ring, Jr. and David. The eventful lives of his sons would encompass another essay. Like Ring, most died young.

Ring's big break came in 1907, at age 22, when he was considering leaving South Bend for Chicago. An acquaintance knew Hugh Fullerton, then the outstanding baseball reporter of the Chicago *Examiner*. The baseball reporters in Chicago, as in New York, had a flair for the dramatic. Charles Van Loan, describing a Cub victory of that era, wrote "Schulte came home with the winning run like Balaam entering Jerusalem." Big Ed Walsh, a star pitcher for the White Sox—he won 40 games once—was described as "the only man who could strut while sitting down."

After getting acquainted with Fullerton at a local saloon, and demonstrating to Fullerton's satisfaction his knowledge of baseball, Ring was directed to the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*. This newspaper was on the brink of insolvency and needed any reporter it could get. Ring served as Mr. Inside, working the desks and mostly reporting local Chicago sports stories.

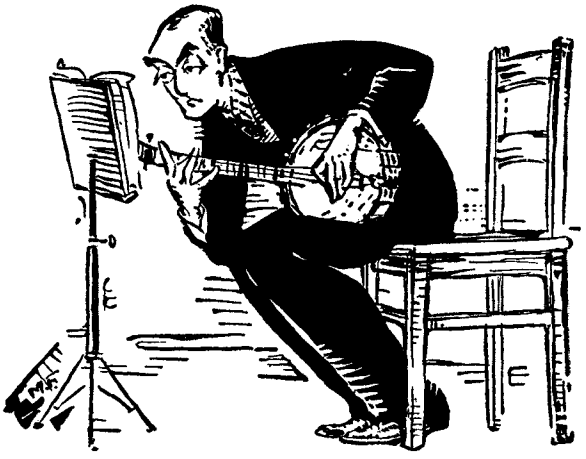
At the time, one of the great pitchers of the Cubs was Mordecai Centennial "Three Finger" Brown. His middle name was Centennial because he was born in 1876. His three-finger nickname resulted from a threshing injury to his right hand as a child, leaving him with an almost missing finger and part of another finger, but allowing him to develop a devastating curve ball. Ring later recounted a tale about an untalented Cubs pitcher who spent most of the year in the bull pen, watching "Three Finger" serve up his masterful pitches. The unfortunate soul started complaining to his bull-pen teammate that Mordecai was a lucky stiff. The teammate suggested to him that he cut off his whole right hand and "cultivate a wrist ball."

Ring left the *Inter-Ocean* and joined the *Examiner*, and traveled with the White Sox. At the time, the Sox were called the "Hitless Wonders," an epithet that would plague them for years to come. Once a new reporter asked the manager to let him meet some ballplayers. "Try the other bench" was the response.

His sojourn with the White Sox was marked by taking on the role of secretary for an illiterate ballplayer, reading menus aloud to him, and writing to his wife. This became the basis for his magazine story series composed of letters from an imaginary rookie Sox pitcher named Jack Keefe to a friend named Al from his hometown in Indiana. Keefe was talented but egotistical and finally spent some time in France during WWI as a corporal, where he attempted to learn French so that he could become a Colonel and win the war single-handedly. Most of Ring's early protagonists radiated such optimism. The first series of letters was published in the Saturday Evening Post and collected under the title *You Know Me Al* in 1914.

A squirrel-tender's job was to keep the squirrels out of the trees so the people would have some place to sit.

These and subsequent cartoons are from The Story of a Wonder Man: Being the Autobiography of Ring Lardner. *They were drawn by Margaret Freeman.*



I played E string on one of the banjos in the mandolin club.

You Know Me Al exemplifies the cadence of words that typified Lardner's style—overcoming the shoals of bad grammar, misspellings, and misuse of words that reflected accurately the man portrayed. In all, a total of 26 Jack Keefe stories were published between 1914-1919, all in letters from Jack to Al. Never a sample return letter from Al at all—but the replies were indicated in Jack's further responses. The series describes Jack Keefe's contact with real players on the White Sox and other teams and his misadventures with various young ladies that hung around ballparks.

You Know Me Al was widely read but the critics' response was mixed. A *New York Times* book reviewer huffed that "...the author was for some time sporting writer on a Chicago newspaper and so may be supposed to know his subject thoroughly, but for the honor of the 'national game' we trust that his 'busher' is not typical of the majority of his players..." and thought there was only the thinnest possible thread of a plot. But Ring's son John, who became a well known sports writer himself, defended his father's accuracy for baseball in the introduction to a 1960 edition of the book: "....each detail is correct in relation to place, weather, time of year, and the hitting, pitching, or fielding idiosyncrasies of a hundred players...."

Writing in 1925 in the *Dial*, Virginia Woolf (though perhaps injecting a patronizing attitude toward the subject) was amazed by her discovery: "...Mr. Lardner...is unaware that [English readers] exist...[he] does not waste a moment when he writes in thinking whether he is using American slang or Shakespeare's English...; all his mind is on

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the story…Hence, incidentally, he writes the best prose that comes our way.… With extraordinary ease and aptitude…the sharpest insight, he lets Jack Keefe the baseball figure cut out his own outline, fill his own depths, until the figure of the foolish, boastful, innocent athlete lives before us. …Games give him what society gives his English brother."

Jack Keefe has been confused at times with another Lardner character, Frank X (for excuse me) Farrell, another busher, in the short story "Alibi Ike." Both had genuine talent, Keefe as a pitcher, Farrell as a good hitting outfielder ("I only hit .356. I had malaria"). Although Keefe used excuses for his errors (Jack: When Ty Cobb bunts in his direction "I would of threw him out a block but I stubbed my toe in a rough place and fell down"). Alibi Ike apologizes for everything, taking a cigar, eating, going to sleep, and writing a letter. As one of his teammates says, "He'll be a good man, unless rheumatism keeps his batting average down to .400." ("Rheumatism" and "malaria" were codes for venereal disease at the time.)

By the time Ring had begun to write magazine stories, he was thoroughly acquainted with the vernacular of ballplayers and more widely, many of the idioms used by people of that era. He also had had considerable experience not only as a sports writer but editor. After a brief turn at the *Chicago Tribune* as a sports reporter in 1910, he was hired by Charles Spink, publisher of the *Sporting News* in St. Louis, known as the "Bible of Baseball," then a weekly exclusively reporting baseball from the majors to Class D, to be the sports editor. This stint only lasted three months. Spink was close with his money and there was at least one instance when Spink fired one of Ring's office boys for being home one day because of illness. Ring finally had enough and words were exchanged including an opinion by Ring that he "would just as soon work for Jesse James." Ironically, in 1963, when the Baseball Writers Association made their first selection for a meritorious service award for baseball writing, named after the Spink family, Ring Lardner was the first one honored; he had been dead for 30 years.

After St. Louis, Ring was hired as sports editor of the *Boston American*. This allowed him to hire his brother Rex to assist him. This position lasted one year, during which Ring and Ellis were married. The Boston job ended when the management fired Ring's brother while Ring was in Florida following the Boston Rustlers (as the Braves were then known) in spring training. Ring quit.

After a brief reprise as a sports reporter for the *Chicago Examiner* in 1912, he took over the *Chicago Tribune*'s prestigious column "In the Wake of the News." Ring and his family settled in Riverside, Illinois. Some of these columns were in the form of novelettes attributed to the copy boy, or "unassisted" accounts of ball games by "a athlete." Then, as now, star athletes used ghost writers to refine their prose and possibly their trains of thought in elucidating for the public their unique reflections on sport. Ring did parodies of this practice frequently using the names of several prominent Cubs players, with their approval, of course.

From the beginning, the column was filled with idiomatic collections of sports information and observations, humorous verse, and stories. During this period also, he began to publish a series in *Redbook* magazine about a stupid, near-illiterate, supremely-confident assistant chief of detectives in the Chicago police department, whose main aims in life were to own his own home, and once obtained, harass his next door neighbor whom he believed was damaging his property. (He wasn't. It was his other next door neighbor.)

Although Ring remained a columnist for the *Tribune* through 1919, he regularly covered the World Series, the last being the fateful Black Sox Series. For non-baseball fans, 1920 was a season bracketed by two calamities affecting the Sox, the Red Sox and White Sox. In January 1920, Babe Ruth was sold by Harry Frazee, Red Sox owner, to the New York Yankees for hundreds of thousands of dollars so that Frazee, a Broadway producer, could keep his Broadway shows solvent. In Boston, it was stated that this was paralleled only by the exploits of Benedict Arnold. For the other Sox, the White Sox, the blow came just before the end of the pennant race in September when it was announced that eight players had been in on a fix to throw the 1919 World Series to the Cincinnati Reds.

It had been clear to Lardner and other astute sports writers that something was amiss during the Series, especially when Eddie Cicotte and Lefty Williams, two Sox pitchers who had won between them 51 games that season, appeared to be floating the ball.

Before the matter became public, Ring let his feelings be known to the Sox players. After one loss in Cincinnati, the Sox were returning by train to Chicago and Lardner was drinking with some of his sportswriter colleagues in the club car. Appropriately lubricated, Ring sauntered into the Sox Pullman. He started singing—to the tune of "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles":

> I'm forever blowing ball games
> Pretty ball games in the air
> I come from Chi
> I hardly try
> I go to bat and fade and die…

No one attempted to stop him.

There was a third calamity in 1920, for Ring and a few other people: prohibition. Ring was ordinarily a law-abiding drinker until 1920. While Ring was covering the Dempsey-Willard fight in Toledo in 1919, Ohio jumped the gun and declared prohibition 6 months before it became nationalized. He composed a song, the Prohibition Blues, which achieved some success as sheet music.

> I've had news that's bad news about my best pal
> His name is Old Man Alcohol but I call him Al
> ….
> Goodbye forever to my old friend 'Booze'
> Doggone, I've got the Prohibition Blues

Ring wrote the lyrics and music but the music was attributed to Nora Bayes, a popular musical comedy singer of the time, for the publicity. Throughout his career, from childhood on, for that matter, Ring wrote lyrics, music and plays or brief parody plays. Earlier, he had teamed up with one Guy Harris "Doc" White, a talented White Sox pitcher, who had graduated from Georgetown as dental surgeon, and together they produced several popular songs. Ring wrote the lyrics of one entitled "Gee! It's a Wonderful Game." It sold well, had two choruses, and included comments about the two Christys, Columbus and Mathewson, and both Napoleons, Bonaparte and Lajoie, but unfortunately, something called "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" was written two years earlier.

A weekly column for the national Bell syndicate freed him from Chicago. Ring by

that time had become friendly with several top New York sportswriters, especially Grantland Rice, John Wheeler and Damon Runyon. Wheeler had originally formed the syndicate and Ring was asked to participate at the comfortable salary of $30,000. The column appeared in 150 newspapers and reached eight million readers. Grantland Rice became Ring's best friend. Ring and his family moved temporarily to Greenwich, Connecticut. It was a memorable trip in a touring car with his wife and one of his four young sons. In *The Young Immigrunts*, he narrated the trip in the supposed words of his son, a parody of a widely publicized narrative presumably written by a nine year old girl. When Ring lost direction, his son, as he described it, asked "Are you lost daddy…?" Ring's response: "'Shut up,' he explained." This was probably Ring Lardner's most famous quip and became the title of a book of his short stories.

The move from Chicago broadened his horizons—his short stories and articles dealt less with sports and more with characterizations that some critics felt were cold satire, savage satire at that. These were all short stories—Lardner could never bring himself to write a full-length novel—he did not feel that he had the capacity, the staying power to do so.

Ring was even reticent in releasing his newly collected short stories and did so only after being pressured by Scott Fitzgerald. The title of the collection was *How to Write Short Stories*, published in 1924. The 10 stories in the collection were prefaced by a 6 page introduction, ostensibly with advice related to the title. There was information on short-story writing correspondence courses, the backgrounds of successful authors, how to write a title, dialogue, plot development, submissions. Sounds serious, doesn't it? Not for Ring. Advice and reflections under these categories included such helpful comments as: "…Most of the successful authors of the short fiction of to-day never went to no kind of college, or if they did, they studied piano tuning or the barber trade." An example of a catchy title was "Fun at the Incineration Plant." For beginning a story: "Blasco Ibañez usually starts his stories with a Spanish word, Jack Dempsey with 'I.'"

The short stories in the collection were each prefaced by similar Lardner jocularity; "This story was written on the top of a Fifth Avenue bus, and some of the sheets blew away…" Introducing the story "Champion," containing one of his most vicious characterizations, he wrote: "An example of a mystery story. The mystery is how it came to be printed."

She expressed a desire to see the night life of New York and I organized a party to visit Texas Guinan's.

It was really surprising to note the number of citizens who refused to undress before handing their seat checks to the ushers.

The collection was praised widely. Lardner had arrived as a writer—beyond sports subjects. Edmund Wilson, while praising the collection, scoffed at the self-mockery of the prefaces, wondering whether Lardner was timid about being considered a serious writer. Wilson thought Lardner almost "equal in importance" in studies of American types to Sherwood Anderson or Sinclair Lewis. He felt that Ring developed a study of his characters rather than "drawing up an indictment," as did Sinclair Lewis. Wilson challenged Lardner: "If Ring Lardner has anything more to give us, the time has now come to deliver it…What bell might not Lardner ring if he set out to give us the works?"

By 1924 Lardner and his family had been living in Great Neck on the North Shore of Long Island for three years—in the Mange. This was one of Lardner's 10 most beautiful English words. Its definition is any one of several chronic skin diseases of mammals caused by mites. The Mange was a three story rambling house on top of a two acre plot with a three car garage. There were also vegetable and flower gardens, a tennis court, baseball diamond, and an outdoor gymnasium.

The house may be the model for Gatsby's house. The Fitzgeralds lived in Great Neck. So did George M. Cohan, Ed Wynn, and Groucho Marx. The Herbert Bayard Swopes, he the prominent editor of the *New York World*, were next door neighbors. Some distance away lived Vincent Astor, Walter P. Chrysler, the Sloans, the Belmonts and the Sinclairs, to name a few. According to Ben Hecht, Ring Lardner played no small part in the social life of Western Long Island.

Ring's acquaintance also included the Algonquin Round table, the wits that met in the Oak Room of the hotel. These included Robert E. Sherwood, George S. Kaufmann, Dorothy Parker and Franklin P. Adams. Lardner family activities were frequently mentioned in Adams' pretentious column "The Conning Tower" in the *New York World*.

According to Edmund Wilson, the Algonquin Round Table held Ring in high regard. But he could only stand them one or two at a time, keeping his distance and rarely appearing at the Algonquin. Dorothy Parker, perhaps the most acerbic critic in the group, reviewing one of his newly published collections of his short stories, com-

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RING LARDNER, *from page 5*
mented "It is difficult to review these spare and beautiful stories; it would be difficult to review the Gettysburg address."

During this period Lardner faced some financial pressure—his house was costly, and his social life needed refueling consistently. The Lardners, previously post-Victorians, were now high livers, and Ring's liver was expanding. But, in addition to his short stories, his weekly syndicated column provided him with enough keep him afloat.

Some excerpts from the column:

§ On New York society and visiting royalty, he wrote: "Some hostesses has forgot their social standing to such an extent that they have included Indiana and Wisconsin born folks in their invitations."

§ On Prohibition: "…it should be under the auspices of the War Department instead of the Secretary of the Treasury… Electrically charged wire should guard the Canadian border from ocean to ocean and the Mexican border from the Pacific to the Gulf…Capt. Gertrude Ederle… would stand at the bottom of Niagara Falls and splash water back as fast as it came over."

§ When he reported on Harding's inauguration in 1921, he commented about the foreign diplomats at the inauguration: "one of them had 10 medals on his chest to show that he broke [all] the commandments at one time or the other…." On the appearance of the Supreme Court justices: "You can't keep the kiddies home on circus day."

By this time, many of the short stories were biting satire. Clifton Fadiman, writing in the *Nation* in 1929, commented that "Lardner is the deadliest because the coldest of American writers. He really hates his characters, hates them so much that he has ceased to be indignant at them…. There is almost no emotion. His satire is negative; that is why it has never caused a revolution in American manners, as *Main Street* did…" Mencken, reviewing another volume, said that readers would find in it "satire of the most acid and appalling sort—satire wholly removed, like Swift's before it, from the least weakness of amiability, or even pity." On the other hand, Lardner's biographer, Donald Elder, indicated that Lardner's close acquaintances regarded him as "an exceptionally magnanimous and loving man" who did not hate the human race "but only meanness, falseness, and pretentiousness."

One of his well-known stories, "The Champion," is about a boxer, Midge Kelly, "who scored his first knockout when he was seventeen. The knockee was his brother, Connie, three years his junior and a cripple." Midge is Lardner's most savage characterization. His exploits include knocking his mother down, applying a crushing blow to his bride's cheek, walking out on his wife and baby and not providing any money for them, walking out on his manager after reneging on his cut from a fight, stealing his new manager's wife and walking out on him also. Finally, he becomes champion.

Ernest Hemingway was arguably the writer most influenced by Ring. After Hemingway's short story collection *In Our Time* was published, Hemingway commented: "Some bright guy said that *In Our Time* was a series of thumbnail sketches showing a great deal of talent but obviously under the influence of Ring Lardner…. That kind of stuff is fine. It doesn't bother [me]." Ring was an admirer of Hemingway's early work except for the obscenities and sexual activity.

They met only once, in 1928. Fitzgerald wrote Hemingway, "Ring thought you were fine. He was uncharacteristically enthusiastic." However, in a 1933 letter to an *Esquire* editor, Hemingway indicated that Ring had taught him nothing, that he was an ignorant man, and all he had except for a certain amount of experience in the world was a "good false ear for illiterate speech." To be fair, by that time Hemingway sought to discredit the influence of all those who assisted him on his journey to success, once even slugging Max Perkins, his editor.

The mid-1920s were a time of transition for Ring. He had achieved fame and was considered by many on a par with the newer American writers, Hemingway and Fitzgerald, at least in regard to short stories. From there on it was mostly downhill. He had always been a binge drinker and his health was declining. In 1926 tuberculosis was diagnosed and over the next few years he spent increasing time in sanatoriums and hospitals. He was getting tired of his syndicated column. He continued to write short stories for magazines but now more for the money. He tried writing for theater.

A 1927 short story, "Hurry Cane," resulted in an unsuccessful play. His only success on Broadway came in 1929 with *June Moon*, an adaptation with George S. Kaufmann of Ring's story "Some Like It Cold." The play lasted for 273 performances, quite good in those days, and Ring supplied the lyrics as well as collaborating in the dialogue. It was his last such venture. His only involvement in film was a scenario he wrote for the movie *The New Klondike* in 1925, for which he was paid for four days of effort on a plot involving baseball players and Florida real-estate swindlers. Fortunately, at the same time, Ring declined to invest in Florida real estate although the Lardners wintered there—the hurricane of 1926 wiped out not only trees.

Meanwhile the bills were piling up. His sons were at Andover, Princeton, and Harvard and that cost money, or as Ring put it:

> …I am a fourfather, i.e. a patriarch of a male quartet of bambini, and three of them are senile enough to go away to school, so each year I have to
> Hand over
> Four grand over
> To Andover."

Ellis was redecorating the Mange in Great Neck, and the high life style that they pursued continued to eat up income. Ring's source of income from the syndicated column was replaced by pieces for *Collier's* magazine, among which was "Pluck and Luck," a biography of Babe Ruth. Apparently Babe Ruth and Henry L. Mencken were boyhood pals in Baltimore. "I would repeat some of their conversations, but Mencken's words can't be spelled and the Babe's can't be printed." However, some of their conversation was provided:

While walking in the forest the Babe picked up a tree and slung it over his shoulder.

> Babe: You perhaps wonder…what I intend to do with it.
>
> Mencken: No…But I do wonder whether you noticed that [George Jean] Nathan has taken a fancy to the word 'presently', using it to signify 'at the present time,' now, a definition called obsolete by Webster.
>
> Babe: I thought you would. Well, I purpose biting off the roots, the branches and the bark and employing it as a bat."

With Ring's increasing physical decline, Ellis and Ring decided to leave Great Neck, and move to a more salubrious climate, East Hampton, further out on Long Island.

Grantland Rice joined him there as a neighbor.

Ring enjoyed golfing and Rice liked fishing off Montauk, so there was every opportunity for relaxation. The money issues continued to press, however, and so when Ring got an offer to write a four-day weekly column in the *New York Telegraph* for $50,000 a year, a very large salary in those years, he took it. The *Telegraph* had been primarily a racing newspaper but its new proprietor was interested in expanding it into a journal of the arts, politics, as well as sports. Walter Winchell was hired to write about gossip under a pseudonym and Westbrook Pegler (the pre-political Pegler) as a sports writer.

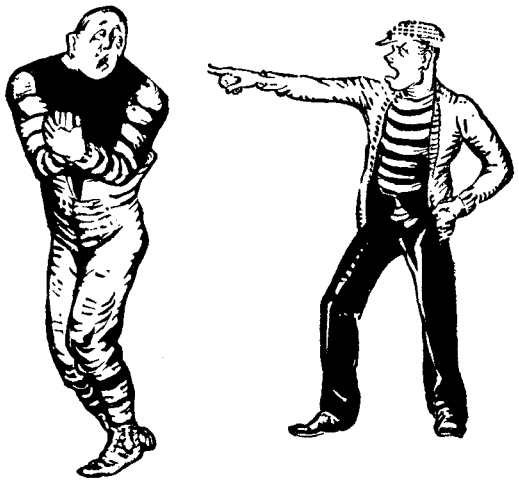
Lardner's column was called "Ring's Side" and was introduced by Pegler himself: "We can imagine only one general topic more entertaining than Ring Lardner on ANYTHING; that is, Ring Lardner on NOTHING."

Unfortunately, the work was too difficult for Ring and the salary was too difficult for the newspaper. The column lasted only from December 1928 through early February 1929. Several new ventures eased the separation—the planning of a definitive collection of his short stories by Scribner's and the collaboration with George Kaufmann on *June Moon*.

Another venture that got underway was contributions to the *New Yorker* magazine. Ring and Harold Ross, the editor, had known each other for years, and the magazine became an outlet for his final non-fiction writing. These included pieces on Ring's encounter with the New Jersey police while covering the Dempsey-Carpentier fight and a marathon drinking spree at the Friars Club, a New York club of actors and sportsmen. Ring consumed many a strong drink at the Friars Club and the Lambs Club, also populated by actors. Once, an actor appeared in a rather flamboyant outfit, his hair a mass of flowing locks. Ring managed to hobble over and inquired: "How do you look when I'm sober?"

Finances became still more strained. Ellis and Ring, while keeping up their home in East Hampton, took an apartment on the upper East Side of Manhattan close to Doctors Hospital, a posh private facility where the wealthy and well-known were admitted to take the cure. For Ring, it was very serious since he was suffering from malnutrition (his appetite decreased except possibly for alcohol), tuberculosis, and severe liver disease.

Ring's articles in the *New Yorker* continued in 1932 and 1933 but he now turned to radio reviews. This was practically the only thing he could do because he was frequently confined to bed.



"Heffelfinger . . . you didn't clean your nails this morning."

When someone informed him that Cal Coolidge was dead in January of 1933, he responded: "How d' they know?"

While most of his friends and acquaintances had welcomed or at least acquiesced to the changing morals of the 1920s, Ring remained a Puritan in Babylon. He heard much profanity but almost never used it.

He railed against song titles and lyrics that suggested lascivious activity. Some examples included "I'll Never Have to Dream Again," "I'm Yours Tonight," "Please," "Here Lies Love," and so on.

Even Cole Porter was a target. He took the couplet "Night and Day under the hide of me, there's an Oh, such a hungry yearning, burning inside of me," and attempted to "improve" the lyrics. A couple of lines:

> Night and day under my dermis dear
> There's a spot just as hot as coffee kept in a thermos, dear.

On the evening of September 24, 1933, Ring was wan and tired. He played bridge with Ellis and the Grantland Rices and retired to bed. He was found dead in bed the following morning, apparently from a heart attack.

Perhaps Ring Lardner's time had passed with the passing of the 1920s—his extra four years a long coda of reflection on the characteristics of the era he portrayed—an era of narcissistic revelry, bloviation, the big money, rotarianism, and eternal optimism. In many ways, Ring portrayed the era not only in the scorching light of his characterizations, but in his own life style—he may have been the real Jay Gatsby.

Now he was dead and over the airwaves could be heard a song of the remains of that optimistic era personified, perhaps by Jack Keefe's old friend:

Its refrain went:

> Say, don't you remember, you called me "Al"
> It was "Al" all the time.
> Say don't you remember, I was your pal
> Brother can you spare a dime?

§§

Adapted from a presentation to the Chicago Literary Club on April 5, 2004.

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Last Days at the Mid-Day Club

Remarks at the final Mid-Day Club dinner meeting, held December 19, 2007.

John Notz

I have been asked to talk of the relationship between our Club and the Mid-Day Club of Chicago. Bob Karrow sent me some information; I used it. I was much involved as editor of the centennial history of the Mid-Day Club that was published after its 2003 year. That nice book has attained the status of a rare book.

I have been a third generation member of the Mid-Day Club—my father and his father having been among its members. My younger brother has been one of its members for almost the 47 years that I have been a member. We, two, are not the only third-generation members who must find another luncheon club. I was a Trustee of this Club for a good many years, and I was its House Committee Chair and a Vice President for many of those years. I was asked to be its President, but I ducked. When I stopped practicing law in 1996, I dropped out of those roles.

For many years, the sponsoring member of our Club on whose signature the Club relied was Abel Berland; since Abel became inactive, I have been the sponsoring member. The sponsoring member in theory guarantees the account here at the Mid-Day Club. While the Caxton Club's account has occasionally been mixed with my personal account, I have never been called upon to belly up to that guarantee. Thank you, all of you, for paying for your dinner this evening; I have not expected, personally, to be your host.

In what I will say, I have relied, much, on my memory of what I learned during the writing of the Mid-Day Club's centennial history. Using Frank Piehl as our source, here is what we had to say of:

> THE CAXTON CLUB:
>
> On January 26, 1895, fifteen Chicago businessmen founded the Caxton Club. Named after William Caxton, a famous early English printer, the objective of its members—lawyers, bankers and civic activists—has been "the literary study and promotion of the arts pertaining to the production of books." From 1899 to 1918, the Caxton Club maintained rooms in the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue, where it had a library and exhibits, and luncheons and discussions about books took place. In 1918, the Caxton Club had to give up its rooms and library. In 1936, Secretary Gaylord Donnelley arranged that its meetings would be held at our Club:
>
> *It is expected that the Mid-Day Club will be the place of meetings during the present season, and it is expected that, because of the greater flexibility of service there, and because of the more central location of the Mid-Day Club, the comfort and enjoyment of the members will be greater. These arrangements were made possible through the courtesy of our fellow member, Paul W. Cleveland.*
>
> These expectations were realized. Except for 1956 to 1964, and occasional meetings, elsewhere, during its own centennial year, the Caxton Club has met at the Mid-Day Club for its Wednesday dinners and Friday luncheons, for speakers on a variety of book-related topics. The Caxton Club remains dedicated to a publication program, having produced 61 books, a complete listing of which is available from the Caxton Club's Secretary.

What I have just read to you was a part of a much longer chapter in the Mid-Day Club's centennial book—a chapter on the many smaller clubs that have had their regular meetings within the Mid-Day Club. However, in the 1960s, the Caxton Club went a giant step further: its then book collection was placed on the lobby book shelves. It remains there, today. Do we have plans for those books? If not, I suggest that they be given to the Newberry Library's book sale.

The paintings on the walls around us are, just as much, the property of the Traffic Club. I have not heard what the plans of the Traffic Club are for them; certainly, they are not to be a part of the auction of the Mid-Day Club's furnishings that will take

Final dinner meeting speakers, clockwise from upper left: Robert Karrow, Dan Crawford, Donald Krummel, Junie Sinson, Karen Skubish, Hayward Blake, John Notz, Harry Stern.

Scenes from the final Mid-Day Club luncheon meeting, held December 14, 2007. Note view behind table at top.

place in January.

The last day of the Mid-Day Club's operations will be Friday, December 21. My scheduled luncheon company that day is Jill Card, whom some of you will recall as the attractive Assistant Manager who dealt with all of us. Jill wrote the text of the Mid-Day Club's Centennial book; she tolerated my heavy hand, as her editor. (As a former lawyer, I, still have a heavy editor's hand.) When Jill started a family, she found it necessary to suspend her employment her at the Mid-Day Club. I enjoyed my dealings with Jill, and I expect that we will raise our glasses to each other, over lunch, to many good memories.

The Mid-Day Club was founded under the auspices of the First National Bank of Chicago in 1903—well after the seminal World's Columbia Exposition—but not long after the final effects of the Great Depression that accompanied and followed the Exposition. The First National Bank of Chicago was, then, perhaps, the largest and most influential bank in Chicago not connected with the Board of Trade. All of the then "shakers and movers" of Chicago wished to be members of multiple downtown clubs, and the Mid-Day Club had no difficulty obtaining both its first roster of members and a long waiting list for membership. In those days, the First National Bank had no Officers' Dining Room of its own, and all of the then top officers of that Bank lunched in the Mid-Day Club—to "see and be seen." Those of you who are fans of Edna Ferber may already be aware that "The Noon Club" in her Pulitzer-prize-winning novel, *So Big*, published in the early 1920s, was the Mid-day Club. Its identification is certain, by the recital of the corned beef hash on the menu. How Edna Ferber could have had personal knowledge of that is an unsolved minor mystery, as, in the 1920s, women could not even be guests within the Mid-Day Club. Ms. Ferber did not dwell on that point.

In the 1960s and 1970s, when the Attic Club, then atop the Field Building, with furnishings designed by David Adler and his sister, was the place for the Chicago investment bankers to "see and be seen." With the moving of investment bankers to Manhattan, the days of the Attic Club were numbered, and its landlord—the LaSalle Bank—elected not to renew its lease, much as JP Morgan/Chase has elected not to renew the lease of the premises in which we now are.

In the Great War—later to become known as "World War I," the active membership of the Mid-Day Club was diminished by those serving overseas, but the long waiting lists for membership to which the Mid-Day Club had become accustomed resumed in the 1920s. My grandfather was a member in the 1920s, but when the Great Depression of the 1930s put him out of business, he dropped his membership.

In the 1930s, great efforts were made to recruit membership. After my father's law practice took hold, he was recruited, both into the Mid-Day Club and into a "club within the Club"—"The Round Table"—of which he was a "Knight," until, upon his retirement in the 1960s, he dropped his membership. By then, both my brother and I were members, and he knew that he could, when in Chicago, hit up one or the other of us for a lunch (and a martini). (Those were the days of the "two-martini-lunches.")

Frank Piehl told us that the Caxton Club had its first meetings in the old Mid-Day Club in the 1930s. I do not know whether the "two-martini" practice extended into the evening; those were the days of evenings of scotch or bourbon, or even rye, "on the rocks." Now, there seems to be little but wine served, from the sale of which the margins are far less than the margins on gin and whisky.

During World War II, the membership of the Mid-Day Club again dwindled, but the Mid-Day Club was, then, still, the "Officers' Dining Room" of the First National

See ***FINAL DAYS****, page 10*

The voluntary-contribution drinks table: will we see it again?

FINAL DAYS, *from page 9*

Bank of Chicago.

Bob Karrow has told me that the meetings "traveled" in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s, to the likes of the Chicago Club, the Congress Hotel, the Tavern Club, the Saddle & Cycle Club and the Cliff Dwellers. As we all know, our Club is about to "travel" again. The Chicago Club is still available; the Congress Hotel is still available, under a similar name.

(How many of you recall that the Congress Hotel started its life as the Auditorium Annex? How many of you are aware that the Auditorium Annex replaced some of the most fashionable row houses in the City of Chicago?)

The Tavern Club is about to close.

(How many of you are aware that the Tavern Club spun itself into existence, out of the Cliff Dwellers, over the issue of the fact that one could not get a drink at the Cliff Dwellers?)

The Saddle & Cycle Club seems a bit far afield, even today, for a lunch or dinner. The Cliff Dwellers exists, but it is in newer quarters, not above the Symphony Center, where it was almost from its inception, into recent years, but atop the Borg-Warner Building.

In about 1970, the Mid-Day Club moved from its old quarters, atop the First National Bank Building, into its new quarters, almost atop the then the First National Bank's new building, in which we are now. Little did we realize that a small piece of the move's arrangements would, in time, cause the Mid-Day Club to vanish. The meal arrangements in the old First National Bank Building were dramatically changed by the new First National Bank Building—the old First National Bank had operated a restaurant only for its employees below the level of bank officer. All high-ranking bank officers were members of the Mid-Day Club; all low-ranking officers were expected to maintain memberships at other luncheon clubs in Chicago—such as the Traffic Club—mentioned by me, earlier—which was on the Mezzanine level of the Palmer House.

The old lunch policies of the First National Bank had brought to the Mid-Day Club a guaranteed membership. All the lawyers in big and small firms located in the Loop wished to "see or be seen" with the highest level of bank officer with whom they could secure a lunch date. In the new First National Bank Building, the Bank Officers' Dining Room immediately became stiff competition for the Mid-Day Club, and few new bank officers joined the Mid-Day Club.

I worked for the First National Bank during the summers of 1954 and 1956. During those summers, most days, I would eat lunch with my fellow bank employees—at an assigned table. On others, I would join my father for lunch at the Mid-Day Club, usually at "The Round Table," joining the then top officers of the Bank and some of the best-known corporate lawyers having offices in the Loop. Among my contemporaries, whose fathers did the same for them, were Bill Lawlor, Homer Livingston, John Snyder and Roger Eklund. Those of the five of us who are still living had our final lunch at the Round Table, together, today.

After my second summer of Law Department employment, I left for military service, and I returned in 1960. My father immediately put me up for Mid-Day Club membership. Thereby, I became one of the Mid-Day Club's first "Junior Members"—a then new membership category—a first effort by the Old Guard of the Mid-Day Club to recognize the need for a much younger membership than that Club—let alone the Round Table—then had. While I took advantage of joining my much more senior Knights of the Round Table, I prayed for the days when any of Bill, Homer, John or Roger was there, as they had come into the Mid-Day Club as Junior Members at the same time as I.

I soon recognized that most of our seniors were more interested in counting the days towards their retirement in warmer places than conversing with the "new boys in town." However, some who sat in at the Round Table were bright stars of the then Chicago business community, such as Tom Ayers of Commonwealth Edison, who worked hard, but unsuccessfully, to get another World's Fair for Chicago, and Bill Hartmann of the Skidmore architectural firm, who persuaded Picasso to design his sculpture that is below us.

The numbers coming in to the Round Table dwindled, over the years, until the Round Table became "The Club Table," at which any member coming in, alone, would be welcomed. Then, the Club's decision to

See ***FINAL DAYS****, page 13*

Council members and committee chairs attending Council meeting December 19. Standing, l to r: Don Chatham, Junie Sinson, Dan Landt, John Blew, Edward Bronson, David Mann, Philip Liebson, Susan Hanes, Dorothy Sinson, J. William Locke, Dorothy Anderson, Ed Hirschland, Hayward Blake, Dan Crawford. Seated, l to r: Anthony Mourek, Jill Gage, Mary Ann Johnson, C. Steven Tomashefsky, Adele Hast, Wendy Husser, Robert McCamant.

CAXTONIAN FOOTNOTES

Wynken de Worde

All Caxtonians are librarians, but some Librarians are Caxtonians. Methinks there is a syllogism in there somewhere, but that may be sillygism.

I am confident that there was some silliness to **Robert B. Downs** ('59), Dean of Library Administration at the University of Illinois in Urbana, but there was no lack of seriousness in his laudable books, *Books That Changed the World*, *Famous Books: Ancient and Medieval*, and *Books That Changed America*. The Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award is given by the faculty of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the U of I. In January, 2008, **Barbara Jones** ('05) was the recipient of The Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award. Barbara, who was recently the Special Collections Librarian at U of I-UC, is now the University Librarian at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT. In addition to writing *Libraries, Access, and Intellectual Freedom* (1999), Jones has authored the forthcoming *Intellectual Freedom: Academic Libraries and Intellectual Freedom*. The prestigious Downs Award recognizes also Barbara's work with the Committee on Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression, for which she has presented workshops on topics such as access to HIV/AIDS information, internet access, and libraries in the fight against government corruption. Congratulations, Barbara!

Barbara's successor as Rare Books Librarian at Urbana is **Valerie Hotchkiss** ('06), who was interviewed with a profile in the September/October 2007 issue of *Fine Books & Collections* magazine. In it Valerie discussed the U of I's Midwest Book & Manuscript Studies Program. This new program is the midwest's answer to **Terry Belanger**'s ('04) venerable Rare Book School (begun in 1972) at the University of Virginia, and the young upstart California Rare Book School at UCLA, begun in 2006 under sparking plug **Beverly Lynch** ('77).

The Midwest Book & Mss. Studies Program will appeal those ecologically-minded types who will not want to fly to either coast, using up scarce natural resources, while having access to some of the amazing collections in Urbana. Also, on completion, students will receive a certificate in special collections librarianship from the nation's no. 1 ranked school for library science, a recognition not offered by those other schools.

I have at my desk the 2007 version of Terry Belanger's holiday "card." It features multiple caricatures of Terry. It also mentions that Prof. Beverly Lynch is chairing the search committee to find a new Director for Virginia's Rare Book School. Is that a conflict of interest? Will Beverly pull a "Dick Cheney" and nominate herself? Inquiring minds want to know. No caricature of Beverly in Terry's card. Perhaps there will be, late this year. Perhaps it will depend upon how the selection process goes.

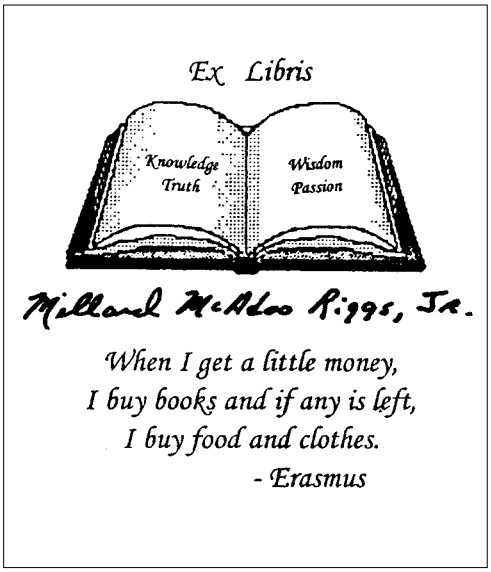
When Beverly was Director of the UIC Libraries, she served as President of the American Library Association. **Peggy Sullivan** ('95), Caxtonian VP (2001-02), has also been President of the American Library Association. Like Barbara Jones, Peggy, too, has recently received a librarians award. Last October the Illinois Library Association gave her the Hugh Atkinson Award—essentially for lifetime achievement—but with it came a $500 check. At that convention, **Mary Dempsey** ('94), Commissioner of the Chicago Public Library, was honored as the ILA's Librarian of the Year, but I do not know that it came with any money attached.

John Chalmers ('93) also has no money attached since he retired from librarian work [note to John: send Beverly your curriculum vita. Virginia could be nice]. John has something better than money. He has a beautiful personal bookplate. His description: "The design and calligraphy are by Hubert Leckie. The subject is a factotum used by the printers William Bowyer, father and son, from 1723-1753. The size of the Bowyer original is 30 x 30 mm, but the bookplate is 50 x 50 mm." In Oxford, where John studied, that is 5 cm by 5 cm. In the Midwest, it is about 2 in. by 2 in.

That same issue of *Fine Books And Collections* reminds me that Chicago's John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation awarded Terry Belanger one of its so-called genius grants in 2005, for raising "the profile of the book as one of humankind's greatest inventions and as an integral part of the history of technology and human communication." Perhaps we should invite the genius back to thank the MacArthurs, and tell us what he did with all that money. No wonder he can afford to retire.

With a name like Wynken de Worde you would think I could get into a Rare

Contributions to Wynken's Caxton-member bookplate collection: John P. Chalmers (left) and Millard Riggs, Jr.



Book School class on early printing. About twenty years ago, when the RBS was still at Columbia University, I was shut out of the course, which had already met its quota. Even a direct appeal to Director Belanger availed me nought. Even he could not squeeze me in. For me it was a one-time window of opportunity. I sulked. Later, in my genius moment, I figured it out. The course began immediately after the July 4th weekend. The American Library Association met in New York City the week before. It was the 200th Anniversary of the U. S. Constitution, featuring a big celebration involving dozens of the "tall ships" in New York's harbor. Leave it to those canny, knowledgeable librarians to figure out that, having gotten to the Big Apple for the ALA convention, if they could get into the Rare Book School for any course the week after, then they would get an unencumbered, all-expenses paid, blowout weekend out of it.

If the MacArthurs give me a genius grant, I promise to apply to take one of the courses at the Midwest Book & Mss. Studies Program. In addition to librarianship classes, there will also be workshops in the book arts, fine press, papermaking, and related lectures -which should be of interest to any and all Caxtonians. [See http://www.lis.uiuc.edu/programs/mbms/ for more information.]

Again, I invite you to send a sample of your bookplate to Wynken de Worde, c/o The Caxtonian, 60 W. Walton St., Chicago, IL 60610. You can also send comments or an image to wynkendeworde@comcast.net.

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FINAL DAYS, *from page 11*

offer a light lunch in its bar area led those members who were alone into going there, congregating with other singles, or eating alone, as they wished.

As the years went on, the waiting lists for membership of the Mid-Day Club vanished, and all that it took to become a member was a nomination from one member, a second from another and an introduction to a Club Trustee. Then, initiation fees were waived. You can see what the membership trend of recent years has been. The bright lights of the Club's operations were the steady (and, sometimes quite large) business from the likes of our Caxton Club.

Tonight is the last of our Caxton Club's many dinners here. This past Friday was the last of our Caxton Club's many luncheon meetings here. Friday, two days from now, will be the last of the many meals that I have had here. The Club will close, forever, Friday evening. For me, notwithstanding the fact that I have long seen the handwriting on the wall, this is a bittersweet moment.

For the Caxton Club, however, nothing is coming to an end. In fact, the first Caxton Club meeting of calendar 2008 will be a new beginning. To me, these changes are an opportunity for our Club to reach out and locate more members, both from our Club's traditional sources, and from men and women introduced to our Club as a result of the new venues that our Club will be sampling.

To close, I ask that you raise your glasses—still filled, I pray—to many more years of our Club's fellowship. Only the venues will change. Perhaps, those venues will be much for the better.

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Photographs by Robert McCamant.

Club Notes

Membership Report, December 2007

1. I am pleased to announce the election of Steven Levitin to residential membership in the Caxton Club. He learned of the Club through Caxtonian Scott K. Keller, from whom he commissioned a custom archival box. Steven is a major collector of Oziana (materials associated with the Oz stories). His collection includes both works by L. Frank Baum and other well-known authors and illustrators such as W. W. Denslow and Ruth Plumly Thompson. He has been a collector for over 20 years and has a houseful of artifacts ranging from Baum's first edition books, inscribed letters, and hand drawn maps, to rare ephemera. Nominated by Skip Landt, seconded by Margaret Oellrich.

2. Book lovers are sometimes mis-characterized as happiest in familiar surroundings, letting our imaginations travel for us. In fact, we are adventurous by nature, led by our imaginations to discover and explore new vistas. With the closure of the Mid-Day Club, during the months ahead the Caxton Club will be "on the road," visiting and evaluating possible meeting venues. What better time to invite a guest as together we seek "fresh woods and pastures new"? (But remember that reservations are more important than ever during this transition).

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

We sadly note the passing of
Ray Epstein '63
and
Grant Talbot Dean '62
Remembrances will appear in a future issue.

Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by John Blew

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

"Book of Origins: A Survey of American Fine Bindings" (features 20 contemporary bindings by 10 American binders, including established masters as well as gifted emerging artists; each binder presents his or her response to a supplied text block of *Book of Origins* and another example of his or her works) at the Columbia College Chicago Center for Book and Paper Arts, 1104 South Wabash, 2nd floor, Chicago (312) 344-6684 (closes 23 February 2008)

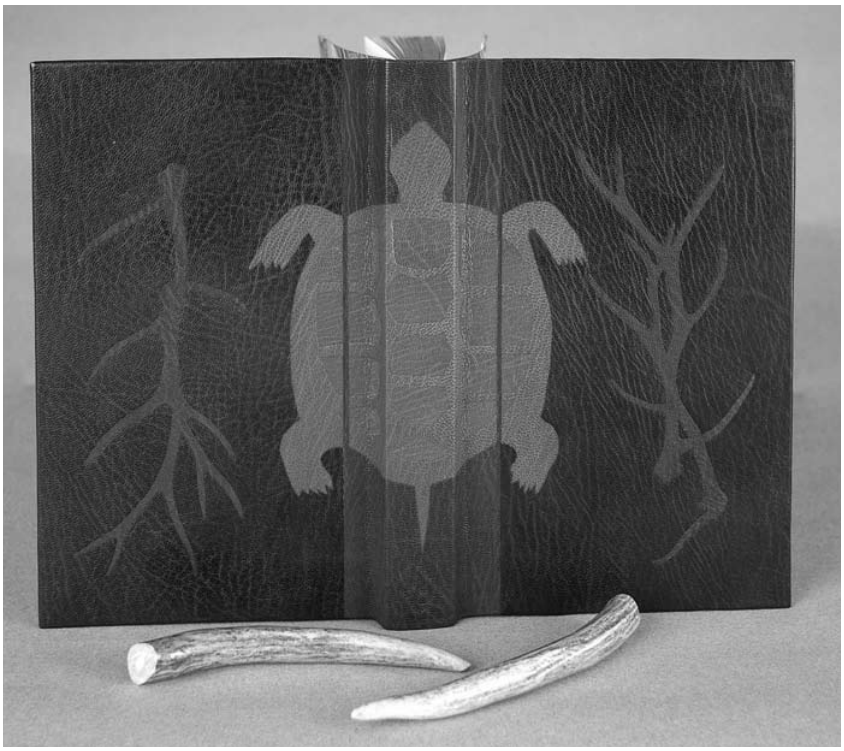
"Fun For All! Chicago's Amusement Parks" (this exhibit, drawing on materials from the Library's collections, explores the development of the amusement park in Chicago, from the late 19th century to the present) in the Special Collections Exhibit Hall, 9th Floor, Harold Washington Library Center of the Chicago Public Library, 400 South State Street, Chicago (312) 747-4300 (closes 14 September 2008)

"Mapping Manifest Destiny: Chicago and the American West" (features more than 65 maps and views from the 16th through the 20th centuries, drawn from the Library's collections, which collectively examine the role of maps in envisioning the American West) at the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago (312) 255-3700 (closes 16 February 2008)

"Under Study: Maps and Photographs of Chicago's Near West Side" (drawing on the Library's holdings, this exhibit follows the Near West Side as it changes from a 19th century port of entry neighborhood for waves of immigrants served by Jane Addams' Hull House settlement up to its present-day growth and development as a revitalized 21st century community) at the Richard J. Daley Library of the University of Illinois at Chicago, 801 South Morgan, Chicago (312) 996-2742 (closes 31 March 2008)

"The Irene Balzekas Memorial Map Collection" (antiquarian and modern maps of Lithuania and its Eastern European neighbors, as well as maps which document the multifaceted Lithuanian immigration experience throughout much of the 20th century) at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, 6500 South Pulaski Road, Chicago (773) 582-6500 (a permanent exhibit)

"Ptolemy's *Geography* and Renaissance Mapmakers" (Claudius Ptolemy, the 2nd century CE Greek astronomer, is known as the father of modern geography; this exhibition features 37 original historic maps and texts drawn from the Library's internationally renowned collection of printed editions of Ptolemy's *Geography* which highlight Renaissance map printing techniques and illustrate both ancient and Renaissance world views and cartographic practices) at the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago (312) 255-3700 (closes 16 February 2008)



Book of Origins at Columbia College
Book of Origins as interpreted by Karen Hanmer, Glenview, Illinois

"European Cartographers and the Ottoman World, 1500-1750: Maps From the Collection of O.J. Sopranos" (an important collection of early printed maps, atlases and sea charts that trace the changing view of the Ottoman world from the Age of Discovery to the 18th century) in the Oriental Institute Museum at the University of Chicago, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago (773) 702-9514 (closes 2 March 2008)

"Highlights from the Mary W. Runnells Rare Book Room" (over 30 stunning works, many never before seen by the public, have been chosen from The Field Museum Library's spectacular rare book collections to inaugurate the Museum's new T. Kimball and Nancy N. Brooker Gallery) in the Brooker Gallery, second floor at the north end of The Field Museum, 1400 South Lake Shore Drive (the Museum Campus), Chicago (312) 665-7892 (closes 2 March 2008)

"Mapping the Universe" (site of the January Caxton luncheon meeting, this exhibit displays cosmological maps, celestial charts, atlases and other objects from the Adler's collections) at the Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, 1300 South Lake Shore Drive (the Museum Campus), Chicago 312-322-0300 (extended to 2 March 2008)

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

Caxtonians Collect: Martha Jameson

Thirty-eighth in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Martha Jameson is a very new member, elected at the June, 2007 council meeting. She discovered the Club by attending the Seminar last March. "It was a very interesting program, and I figured any group that could put it on would be an interesting one." She was nominated by Skip Landt and seconded by Bill Mulliken.

She is a native Ohioan, who did her BA in English at the College of Wooster. She came to Chicago to attend the University of Chicago's library school, now departed. Her specialty was rare books, and her masters' thesis on dictionaries of Americanisms. But there were very few jobs in rare book librarianship, so she took another job where her research skills could be applied: she has worked for 22 years at Accenture, doing competitor and market analysis.

photograph by Robert McCamant

For most of those same 22 years she has been a member of the Jane Austen Society, which is currently taking up a fair amount of her time; she is the local chapter's Membership Secretary. And in 2008, the Chicago chapter will host the national Annual General Meeting, an event expected to attract 550 people. For that she has volunteered to be the registrar.

"It's odd that there aren't more people who belong to both the Jane Austen Society and the Caxton Club," she observes. "I'm sure there must be some people besides me, but I haven't discovered any so far. Interestingly, there's quite a bit of overlap with the University of Chicago's library society." The Austen Society holds 5 or 6 meetings per year, frequently with an academic speaker on Jane Austen or the Regency period. The most recent event, in early December, was a birthday tea, featuring Emily Auerbach, Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin, talking on the legacy of Jane Austen as reflected in popular culture.

Jameson does not claim to be a serious collector. "I have a few Lakeside Press books, but basically I buy books because I'm interested in reading them." That means history and literature, basically. "In a way, it's revisiting my college education. You have so much more perspective when you're grown up, and even when you work full time it feels as if you have more time to devote to reading than you do when you're taking several courses at once." She also has a small group of Indiana history books, many of them acquired by ancestors. Her family was among the original settlers of Indiana, and one family member was instrumental in the move of the state Capitol from Corydon to Indianapolis.

In recent years she has found time to take a variety of courses at the Newberry Library, including summary history courses on Germany, Britain, and France, plus one on Milton. The Milton course was the inspiration for her answer to Caxtonians Collect's desert island question: she'd take *Paradise Lost*. "It provides so much to think about! It's beautifully written, so it would be a pleasure to read over and over."

She admits to being a moderate film buff. Her big indulgence of that propensity is the fact that she attends the Telluride festival, meeting friends there, every Labor Day. "It's three days of films. You arrive Friday night and finish on Monday afternoon. It's a chance to see many films that will never even find a distributor and reach the American public." When asked what her favorite film was this year, she answered without hesitation that it was *People on Sunday*, a 1929 German silent film, which was shown with an orchestra. "It was co-written by Billie Wilder before he moved to the States. Not much happens. Basically young people flirt and go on an outing. But its naturalistic style was very influential, and it is a rich experience to watch."

Jameson admits to not having made it to any meetings since her election, but suspects it will be easier to remember now that she has started getting meeting announcements.

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Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program
Friday, February 8, 2008, Union League Club
Paul T. Ruxin
James Boswell: Spin Doctor Extraordinaire

Caxtonian Paul Ruxin returns with a fascinating story about James Boswell, an attorney and author known mostly for his brilliant biography of Samuel Johnson. Fresh out of law school Boswell appointed himself as counsel in a lawsuit that came to be considered the most famous litigation in all of 18th century Britain. The case included forgeries, possible kidnappings, a fractured father/son relationship, a duel and inflamed rock-throwing mobs. Boswell promoted his side of the case with an outpouring of anonymous words, including 25 news articles, songs, poems and 3 books (including a novel that went into 4 printings).

Paul is well qualified to speak on this subject as an attorney and the possessor of the most complete collection of James Boswell items in private hands. He is also the Chair of the Board of Governors of the Folger Shakespeare Museum. Memo from Paul: Previously presented at the Chicago Literary Club.

A captivating story.

Dinner Program
Wednesday, February 20, 2008, Union League Club
David Spadafora
"Tradition and Innovation:
Strategies for the Newberry Library"

Like other research and special collection libraries, the Newberry enters the new century facing exciting opportunities and demanding challenges, conditioned in part by ongoing information technology change. In recent months, the Newberry has engaged in a vigorous process of strategic planning, to help it set a course into the future. The Library's President, David Spadafora, will offer us a glimpse into today's Newberry, with its unique and more generic characteristics, as well as a sketch of how it is charting its way forward. He will also offer some reflections on his experience, as a scholar and teacher, with the Newberry.

Dress code alert: for luncheon **and** dinner meetings, the Union League Club requires men to wear ties and jackets.

The February luncheon and dinner will both take place at the Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Blvd. Luncheon buffet opens at 11:30; program 12:30-1:30. Dinner timing: spirits at 5 pm, dinner at 6 pm, lecture at 7:30 pm. Prices at the Union League will be $27 (lunch) and $48 (dinner). For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org; ***reservations are needed by noon Wednesday for the Friday Luncheon, and by noon Monday for the Wednesday dinner.*** *See www.caxtonclub.org for parking and transit information.*

Beyond February...

MARCH LUNCHEON
On March 14, we will lunch at the Women's Athletic Club to hear Diane Dillon of the Newberry speak about Ellen Gates Starr, including her establishment of the Hull-House Bookbindery and her relationship with Jane Addams.

MARCH DINNER
March 19 brings the postponed annual book auction, with entertainment, to be held this year at the Newberry Library. Get your donations for the auction to Dan Crawford at the Newberry.

APRIL LUNCHEON
On April 11, we will lunch at the Women's Athletic Club to hear Valerie Hochkiss, Head of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), talk on "Caxton's Club: Early English Printers."

APRIL DINNER
Our April 16 dinner will be held at the Women's Athletic Club. The speaker will be Charles Middleton, President of Roosevelt University, on "Six Books that Changed History."

Calling All Collectors! Save the Date: Saturday, April 12...

Rare Books and the Common Good: American Perspectives

This year's Caxton Club / Newberry Library Symposium on the Book will take as its theme the future of the rare book. Dan Meyer of the University of Chicago will start the morning with an account of Chicago collecting history. He will be followed by Edward Tenner (Princeton) on the state of rare book research, and Francis Wahlgren (Christie's) on the state of the book auction market today. Alice Schreyer will lead an afternoon panel of librarians from across the country in responding to the provocative morning talks, and will invite your participation. A registration form is now available on the Club's web site, www.caxtonclub.org.