

Minutes of the Literary Club for April 2017

History carried the month. The first paper focused on military history, the second and third on family histories. In each of the three, world leaders played central roles, around whom personal narratives were created while cataclysmic events rattled the globe. The authors all did their subjects proud.

Evenings at 500 E. Fourth Street are sometimes called “literary exercises.” Reflecting on that, I realized it was somewhat dodgy that the secretary skirted the wordsmithing calisthenics while simply recapping the highlights. Therefore, I’ve appended each one-paragraph synopsis with an adapted poem from the literary canon, in an effort to achieve the twin goals of shorter exposition and higher ideals.

Jim Wesner’s “Trouble in the Happy Land”; subtitled “The Great West Florida Rebellion” sounded like a mashup of David McCullough’s historical scholarship and Jimmy Buffett’s “Great Filling Station Hold-up” while entertaining 49 club members and 4 guests on April 3, 2017.

The history of America’s southern shores just after the Revolutionary War, hewed shifting allegiance of the colonists to the unholy trinity of England, Spain and France. It was a difficult, untamable landscape of swamp and silt, with pests that slithered and stung...and that was just the political backdrop. Over a period of just 74 days, the European carpetbaggers tried to take advantage of a financial opportunity to recoup land lost over the previous century. As the fledging republic of America shifted into manifest destiny mode, the uncharted interior struggled to define itself as part of the Louisiana Purchase. With neither Alabama nor Mississippi appearing yet on maps, Florida connected directly to Louisiana along the Gulf shoreline. The not-so-great grandfathers of today’s rednecks and rascallions huffed and puffed and threatened to play each other’s houses down. Puppet governors were installed as treaties were re-written and ignored. Finally, conflagration flared as battle lines were drawn, but the wily general Philomen Thomas used a surprise raid on the fort in St. Francisville to oust the Spaniard in charge, DeLassus. These names and others would garner the history student extra credit points on the final exam – thanks to Jim for raising our marks.

So with apologies to Lord Tennyson, here’s **The Charge of the French Brigade, Louisiana style:**

Half a state, half a state,

Half British then Spanish,
All in St. Francisville,
Rode Philomen Thomas.
“Forward, the French Brigade!
Charge for the guns!” he said.
Into West Florida,
Rode Philomen Thomas.

“Forward, the French Brigade!”
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldiers knew
De Lassus had blundered too.
Theirs not to make reply,
Napoleon knew the reason why,
Thankfully no one had to die.
Into West Florida,
Rode Philomen Thomas.

After the paper, Robert Diapolo, John Grate and Scott Kravetz were inducted into the Literary Club.

On April 10, 52 members and 3 guests heard that Stewart Maxwell’s father was a Renaissance man in every sense of the word, and words he knew well. A rising star in the advertising field, he gathered notoriety when inserting himself into ads he created for Enro Shirt company of Louisville. Witty, worldly and widely accomplished, the elder Stewart Maxwell led by example. Through a series of teachable moments (as they’re called nowadays) he showed Junior how to be gracious and generous even under the trying circumstances of losing a reservation at the Plaza Hotel in NYC during the World’s Fair or losing a house in Indian Hill to divorce. Over time, his counsel was sought by LBJ during his last years in the White House.

Here’s Mr. M. in William Blake’s **The Tiger**

Stewart, Stewart, writing bright,
At the podium on Monday night;
Dad’s monumental legacy,
Writ a remarkable dynasty.

In clever ads about shirts and ties,
Mr. M, all did recognize.

On airplane wings, he flew higher
In mansion rooms, he did aspire.

And what honor, and what art,
Marilyn captured his father's heart.
Then the president began to call,
Artwork transferred to museums all.

Stewart, Stewart, memory bright,
Pianos playing into the night:
Rubenstein's merged melody,
With Maxwell's family history.

On April 17th, Lew Gatch presented to 53 members and 5 guests "See Something, Do Something." The first half of the paper followed the immigration of the Gatches from Germany, it is presumed, to Annapolis, Maryland, it is known. There was a similar emigration of sorts from Anglican to Methodist. Neither was an easy journey, but as the founding of the American spirit carried those seeking freedom to a new country, once upon these shores, the seekers of religious freedom slipped to new faiths as well. Passing from Godfrey to Conduce to Philip, Lewis' paper picked up another family connection, Oliver Gatch and his witness to tragedy at Ford's Theater on the evening of April 14th, 1865. Oliver and his older brother Charles (who served as a doctor at Fort Dennison during the Civil War), were standing behind the president's box and observed a rough-looking young man, who was oddly dressed for a night of theater. Virtually every American knows the sequence of events the evening was Lincoln was assassinated; virtually no one else in America except for L4 has a familial connection to the small group of witnesses who stood by the president during his final hours. To adapt Walt Whitman's words:

O Father! my Captain! our biography is done,
The club members in attendance, the prize we all sought,
The paper I bring, the members listening and exulting,
While follows story of the darkest evil, Booth's act grim and daring;
 It's Gatch, Gatch, Gatch,
 O the generations of names,
 Beneath the plains in Milford lie,
 Family and country's history side by side.

O Father! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;

See something—the flag is flung—do something, the bugle sounds
Taps,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the crowds' a-
crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Oliver! And Charles!
Whose arm cradles Lincoln's head!
Tries to cushion, then carries, our commander in chief
Abraham fallen cold and dead.

T. S. Eliot quipped that April is the cruelest of months. Not so for sports fans. While March may claim the madness, truth be told, the Tarheels from North Carolina won college basketball's championship on the first Monday in April. Baseball returned to Great American Ball Park the following Monday as Opening Day mucked up parking for the literary club members. Finally, at month's end, the NFL Draft stole the spotlight and returned Tom Brady's jersey. So with pennants of all colors fluttering in the wind, Bob Watkins and Mike Kremzar posited whether baseball or football was America's pastime.

The budget was spot-on for sport, no doubt:
The score was to be settled, one debate to play out.
Watkins spoke first, and baseball, he claimed,
Was our nation's favorite, the pre-eminent game.

Bob let drive a homer, the fans' wonderment of all,
Reds history over centuries tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, members saw what had occurred,
There was Bob sitting pretty as baseball gave football the bird.

Then from thirsty throats, there rose a polite query;
It rumbled up the Ohio valley, it whispered baseball was dreary;
The sport was a bygone, as exciting as a bunt,
As Kremzar, mighty Mikey, was advancing to the front.

There was ease in Kremzar's manner as he stepped to the podium;
There was pride in football's bearing, claiming baseball was just tedium.
So in responding to Bob's paper, he kindly said chop-chop,
In terms of speed, no doubt 'twas football at the top.

A hundred eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;

Fifty tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt.
Then while the budget's master hit the baseball a country mile,
Defiance gleamed in Kremzar's eye, a sneer curled into a smile.

The snarl is gone from football's roar, teeth are clenched and tight;
Players fall with cruel violence, while fans clamor for a fight.
The Super Bowl claimed top rung, but a fumble let it go,
And now a helmet is shattered by the force of a mighty blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,
The speakers compliment each other, the members clap and shout;
There is joy tonight in Clubville – the monthly budget has won out.

Minutes of the Literary Club March 2017

As secretary, it's been a gathering appreciation to review the Club papers numerous times in the preparation of the minutes. It's abundantly clear that the presenters diligently crafted their papers to entertain as well as enlighten. One revelation that has risen up is the fortifying, fascinating ways in which the authors render the details of their respective subjects; and then, within that narrative, how the subject of the paper reflects the character of the authors. The papers in March all seemed to revolve around conflict, be it man v. nature or man v. man. I offer this as an umbrella assessment for the month – not only was each an admirable work on its own, but when considered as multiple POVs on a central theme, the papers complemented our understanding of the world at large while complimenting the members as authors.

On March 6th, 58 members and 8 guests heard Terry Horan's "Water Works." Thankfully, the group's thirst had been slaked by Nikko's skilled service or we would have all felt parched by the end of the night. Terry started along the path of water with the main source of life in ancient history: the Nile. This section of his paper shows the natural power of a consistent, abundant water source, as irrigation for food, to ward off pestilence, and to protect against drought. Viewed through Jesephite, a Greek slave in Egypt who became a careful observer of how this north-flowing river (an oddity in the world) was the staff of life and precursor to amplified power as man learned to harness natural forces for society's benefit. Initially tracking the annual flooding that carried rich silt to support plant life in an arid country, Jesephite's awareness rose beyond the fertile topsoil on the riverbanks to understanding the power of the current to move goods and erect buildings.

The next aquatic achievement took place in Rome, illustrating how the Romans had to find a solution when water wasn't abundant or consistent. The engineering marvel of the aqueduct – utilizing a siphon, the arch, and concrete – in time created nine surrounding aqueducts that delivered over 280 million gallons of water daily to Rome. Without this supply, Rome as the foundation of Western culture would have vanished as the local supply was polluted and undrinkable. This also led to, very thankfully, both regularly bathing and, as they say, on the backside, the construction of the first metropolitan sewer system.

Fast forward almost a millennium and a half, the Industrial Revolution exploded the power of water when converted to steam. Nature always remains in balance, so while the gently flowing waters over aqueducts were replaced

with steam engines capable of moving mountains, industrial waste is the dark side of progress. We now, as a global society must learn how to preserve our water supply before the power of our rivers is reduced to a trickle. Available groundwater, the primary source of potable water, is at risk. We must learn to conserve, replace incessantly thirsty farming methods, and count the drops as they do in Middle East, back where Terry's paper began.

On the evening of March 13th, in this corner of the clubhouse, the Louisville Kid, Tony Covatta, stepped into the ring with "And Still Heavyweight Champion of the World." In all the other corners, 58 club members and 5 guests listened as he went toe to toe with Cassius Clay, as the boxer was known at the time Tony first became aware of him as a hometown hero. Louisville up through the 50s was a one-trick pony – Churchill Downs – until Cassius burst upon the national scene by winning an Olympic gold medal in boxing. Thereafter, the Louisville Sponsoring Group, comprised of 11 white wealthy men, supported the fighter financially in his rise through the professional ranks. But it was not an easy time, for the fighter or for America, during the turbulent 60s.

Some of the names, and their sporting legends, are familiar to pugilist fans: Angelo Dundee, trainer; Howard Cosell, commentator, Drew Bundini Brown, corner man; and the trio of Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier, and George Foreman as opponents. Through speed, cunning, and power he shocked the world by beating Liston twice, defeating Frazier two out of three times, and remarkably outwitting Foreman to win back the belt. Each match is etched in the sport's history – the three with Frazier form the greatest series of championship bouts in boxing history.

Yet even with all the boxing glory, Cassius Clay cast an equally large shadow outside the ring. By refusing to serve in the military during the Vietnam War, he was stripped of the title and shut out of the sport from the age of 25 almost until 29, the prime years for an athlete. It was also during this time that he changed his name to Muhammed Ali when he converted his faith to Islam. Black power in the ring, Black Power in society. Ali never went quietly anywhere – if not the first trash talker in sports, he certainly polished that skill with pre-bout histrionics as he verbally and psychologically challenged his opponents right up to the first-round bell. While most Americans would have ceded his ability as the best boxer of the time, they were divided on his role in society. The hero appellation was one not sought by Ali, and when others tried to hang it on him, he pushed back. It was fitting that this paper came just two days before the Ides of March, for as Tony revealed in the

second half of his paper, when invoking Charles Martel, Don John of Austria, and George Bush, the barrister Covatta changed to professorial robes when pulling back history's curtain to view world conflict surrounding Muslims through time. Quickly recounting the upheavals between countries along lines of religion, we saw that fighting between men over philosophic differences has a longer, bloodier heritage than the sweet science of fisticuffs. Through that lens, as Tony observed, and I quote: "When Ali died he was a figure almost universally revered; a black man and a Muslim, an American who refused to fight for America against a Communist, Asiatic, though not Muslim enemy, and yet a revered hero. I believe that a look at this iconic figure of the sports world and even of modern American life gives us some answers to the dilemmas facing us today. While Ali was a Muslim, he learned how not to be a hater. From the very beginning, he understood the true meaning of civil disobedience as espoused by Mahatma Gandhi and later picked up by Martin Luther King, Jr." End quote. What a remarkable legacy for an individual who used the violence of sport to epitomize peace between people.

On March 20th, Dave Edmundsen brought "Is Civil War Ever Civil" to an audience of 55 members and 6 guests. Dave's a paper and presentation was a model of eloquence and enunciation, smartly written and smoothly spoken. A literary exercise describing conflict between countrymen, Dave's paper was set not in America during the 1860s but in England during the 1640s, aka known as War of the Three Kingdoms, the Parliamentary War, or the English Civil War. Most history books follow Charles 1 into this skirmish, showing how his foibles rent England apart. The Literary Club was treated to a second, although lesser known character, William Edmundson, apostle of the Quakers to Ireland and North America, notable ancestor of the speaker.

Almost from his ascension to the throne, Charles fought Parliament. He believed in divine right of the crown, they didn't believe him. Taxes were extracted by Parliament, Charles was maligned in the process. Political bickering roiled the waters of religion and royalty, there was no calm in the kingdom. Heads literally rolled. As Dave detailed, and I quote, "The tales of Charles' escapes and captures, his confinements, trial, and beheading have filled the bookshelves of Britain for centuries. These stories usually reveal the sympathies of the tellers more than shed much light on what was essentially the English revolution against the arbitrary power of the king."

What is little known is thus again in Dave's words: "And while the war played out in Parliament's favor, the Baptists, Quakers, Levelers, and Diggers,

among many other religious seekers, emerged on the British stage to claim their places in the vacuum left in the wake of reformation and civil war.”

In American history, the Quakers are seen as a polite, quiet sect that invented cylindrical containers of oatmeal, back in Merry Olde, they were seen as a particularly offensive and deranged sort, and by the end of the English Civil War, they represented chaos and anarchy. Because they refused to conform, refusing to doff their hats, they were beaten and imprisoned, a tough outcome for a non-violent order. They believed that women had as much humanity and therefore access to divinity as men. When much attention was paid to dressing in accordance with one’s social and occupational status, women would strip naked in church to show that there was nothing between them and God. I might actually show up regularly for Sunday services if only this element of the Quaker faith survived to modern times; clearly we know why they were known as quivering ecstasies.

William Edmunson was swept into the war as part of Cromwell’s forces against the king, this time Charles II. His experiences during wartime led to his adherence to the Quaker principles of honesty, literacy and regularity as defined by George Fox. He became a leader in carrying the faith across the Atlantic – what is truly remarkable is how far he traveled in this pursuit of Protestant peace – he visited ten of the original thirteen American states, as well as Antigua and Barbados in the Caribbean. A remarkable career – the Quakers have many reasons to thank William; we in turn thank him for the family line that led to Dave. Here though is the ringing conclusion to carry forth: “Heroes provide examples to which we may aspire but not expect to reach. We rarely celebrate those whose resistance to violence entails bravery in the face of personal danger and adherence to principles of civility.”

On March 27th, Tom Cuni organized a budget for a full company of 56 men and eight guests. The papers highlighted three personal experiences during the Vietnam War. Considering the carnage of modern warfare, what was remarkable in all three is that there was human concern and even a limn of humor in all these recollections. Strong stuff, absolutely; stronger soldiers, yes indeed.

Rich Lauf led off with his story about the rather grim, grisly return to the U.S. as damaged goods, i.e., after being wounded in action. It’s fair to say his journey was not an updated TV version of MASH – no heat, very little food, no buxom starlets dressed as nurses in cut-off camo. It’s not that the many stops on the way home lacked creature comforts, rather, the word comfort was

stripped out of the vocabulary. Strapped into his bunk as tightly as a blood pressure cuff, sardines had more room in their tins than did Rich and his comrades. Like the title, many things were described in euphemism, including seemingly concrete terms like hospital, mattress and blanket. There were moments of kindness en route, perhaps best embodied by the officers wives Red Cross chapter of hot chocolate and cookies in Anchorage, Alaska. After that brisk and relatively brief sojourn, it was chop, chop, back in the belly of the plane, homeward bound. So much for “Thank you for your service, soldier.”

Jack McDonough’s “Connie and Me” related his experience with Vietnam’s “Doctor Draft” wherein fourth year medical students were graciously invited to join the service of their choice. His initial request was the only one actually granted, which was to join the Navy. When mustering out of basic, he requested to be on the Eastern seaboard and to definitely not be on an aircraft carrier: soon thereafter, he received his assignment to USS Constellation, a carrier in dry dock out in Bremerton WA. The ship had a notorious history, with a deadly fire during construction in the Brooklyn Naval Yard in the 1950s. Later that conflagration was emblematic to the oxymoronically described peace activists’ sabotage, which erupted as physical attacks on the ships, racial discord and mutiny in the ranks, all leading to the discharge of 3000 seamen.

Jack was lucky in that he was sent to Connie, as the Constellation was affectionately called, in September of 1975 and the Vietnam War had officially ended in April of the same year. But the highly unlikely chance of seeing action did not assure an equally highly unlikely chance of injury or death on board for the inattentive sailor. Two daily fire drills reminded everyone that the volatile mix of fuel of all sorts, sparks, missiles, 50,000 pound aircraft landing and taking off were a slightly larger Molotov cocktail. Unfortunately, Jack had one more lesson to learn...the hard way. One involved his brand new gold firebird getting a painted gunship gray...all because he had followed Navy orders instead of the advice of his Chief Petty Officer. Stand down, sailor.

Tom Cuni cleaned up with “A Few Comments Regarding the Plants and Animals of Southeast Asia” a Victorian-era title depicting the joys and ravages of living in a jungle. There were a lot more of the latter than the former. The cute little animals, reptiles and birds that chirp and scamper in a Disney film carry nasty habits in real life. Plants that appear harmless are noxious, and painful periods of recovery follow even a quick brush in the bush. Ants and other sordid insects can not only lift 100 times their weight, as we learned in

elementary school, they can also turn a company of 150 pound soldiers into a choir of cursing compatriots, mired in the mud and swarms that never allow true rest.

Tom's caps it off with this episode: "It was just another miserable night in the jungle until some time after midnight. We were awakened by a scream that conveyed a full measure of fear and terror. I am sure that every soldier in every war has compiled a personal hierarchy of dreadful things that might happen to him. Near the top of my list was the idea of having a battalion of the NVA walk over our position in the dark with fixed bayonets and killing or capturing my young ass. When I heard the scream, my first thought was that the devils were on top of us. A flare popped and lit up the position for a moment before travelling above the canopy." 'Twas just a little monkey. Easy to say stateside.

What this trio of stories conveyed is the resilience of the human spirit, even in the midst of the most inhuman conditions. We are assuredly grateful, as are their families and friends, that they made it home safely. Only then can channel our inner Edward Gorey, enjoying their misery in the bosom of Uncle Sam.

Minutes of the Literary Club, February 2017.

On the evening of February 6th, Nick Ragland brought a poignant piece of fiction drawn from a time all Literarians gathered that evening lived through, yet thankfully few personally endured. His story began with 1st Lieutenant Mike Riley, U.S.M.C, preparing to return stateside after his tour of duty in Vietnam. On the flight back across the Pacific, Mike muses on the inhumanness of war. Strangers shooting at strangers half a world away. A military conflict which escalated dramatically while Lt. Riley was in country, nonetheless neither he nor his fellow soldiers truly knew, nor moreso felt certain of, why they were there. All they knew for sure was that the number of body bags had increased significantly. Also, they understood that the real war was with time, as almost everyone had a thirteen-month clock, and if you heard the alarm ring at the end, you got out alive.

Lt. Riley was one of the lucky ones, even though he was jeered by anti-war protestors at the San Francisco airport upon arrival. His last eight weeks were to be spent far away from enemy fire, working at the Marines supply division in Philadelphia. It was a Catch 22 for Riley to spend his last two months trying to fix one of the biggest gaffes his company suffered while in Vietnam: getting supplies to front-line soldiers. Then, out of the blue, came the most unenviable assignment a soldier can receive: accompanying home the remains of a fellow Marine.

Nick's narration follows Lt. Mike Riley as he delivers 1st Lt. Tom Donovan's casket to his family in Salem, MA. It's as if he's two different people: first, he's Lt. Riley who conveys the corpse and acknowledgement of governmental debt to Lt. Donovan's mother and father, who receives him with respect, sadness and thanks; second, he's Mike to Tom Donovan's boyhood friends who receive him with deference and as much of a welcome to their inner circle and shared youth as they could muster. The assignment tears at Lt. Mike Riley emotionally – he realizes in aftermath that this tour might have been a more taxing than his time in Vietnam.

Nick brought the episode full circle, following Riley back to Philadelphia where he reflects on the psychic toll of his task. There are no answers to be found in these circumstances, only more questions. Nick described perfectly the loneliness surrounding what generals call the ultimate sacrifice, the solemn journey for fallen soldiers and their families, plus he captured the saga of countless servicemen and women who made that last painful trip to insure every soldier gets home.

The 13th of February found Jack Liebold at the podium with his paper of “Putin: Who IS This Man?” an examination of Vladimir Putin’s rise to Absolute Ruler of the Universe. Oops, a Freudian slip there - Putin is just the Russian President. Well, at least for now.

Like a Schwarzenegger film, Putin’s story feels as if it were written by John LeCarre and laced with details from any Micheal Lewis book about business malfeasance. If directed by Marty Scorecese, Putin’s Russia would be a mix of “GoodFellas” “The Wolf on Wall Street” and “Three Days of the Condor.”

As Jack adroitly pointed out, it’s not just power that Putin has seized with an iron grip, moreso, it’s money. There are so many fingers in the pie, it’s no surprise that a few of them were severed off to serve notice to the others to da, keep quiet. Sweeney Todd has nothing on Putin, aka Vlad the ImJailer.

Dating back to Khrushchev and Brezhnev for historic framework, Jack chronicled Putin’s rise through the KGB and his subsequent chum buddy status with oligarchs and henchmen alike, experiences that prepared him well for the political stage.

In the final analysis, Jack vividly showed that a modern world leader, especially this one, is an amalgamation of Hollywood Bruce Lee storytelling, fierce commitment to an ideal (although perhaps not the same one to which most of the governed populace aligns), a network of yes men businessmen and crooked bureaucrats, plus a wheelbarrow full of braggadocio. It’s always seemed a dubious means of ascension to the most important economic executive office in the land that one needs to win a popularity contest. Jack showed us why it’s hard to hold affection or sympathy for politicians of any stripes, well, unless they’re in prison stripes. Much like trying to find a soft spot in your heart for the squalling toddler in the airplane row behind you whose been kicking the back of your seat the entire four-hour flight home. But this is not fake news to any of us, so we trundle on in our own small, charitable and honorable ways, doing our duty for family, friends, and country.

Here’s the best line that sums up the Rise of the House of Putin: “For the U.S. to be like Russia is today, it would be necessary to have massive corruption by the majority of the members of Congress as well as by the Departments of Justice and Treasury, and the agents of the FBI, CIA . . . IRS, Marshal Service, Border Patrol, State and local police officers, the Federal Reserve Bank, Supreme Court Justices, U.S. District Court Justices, support of the varied

organized crime families, the leadership of the Fortune 500 companies, at least half of the banks in the U.S. and the New York Stock Exchange.”

As is often said after real-life tales of plunder, “you can’t make this stuff up.” It’s a nightmare come to life, playing out on the main stage at Moscow Theater and the reviews have shaken up all of Eastern Europe. Only time will tell if this morphs into a Tale of Two Cities Redux, that is, if, how and when DC becomes Moscow’s sister city on the Potomac. The secretary believes that HUGE restraint was used to keep from uttering the name of the other world leader whose last name also has five letters, also including a T and a U and a P...but suffice it to say, some of the similarities are startling. With eight sources cited in endnotes, Jack’s paper, in addition to cloak and dagger-chilling, is certainly one of the most academically-correct papers in recent memory. As they say in Russia, you get a gold star, comrade.

The evening concluded with Jim Adams and Ken Patel signing the Roll of Members.

On February 20th, James Nordlund brought “Hujambo” to 51 members and six guests. Hujambo translates to “Good evening,” in Kiswahili and it was a most appropriate way to also start Jim’s recollection of his year in Tanzania. Moshi, the town where Jim and his wife, Mary, lived for their year abroad, is located 3000 feet up Mt. Kilimanjaro, a vantage point that gave him great geographic and metaphoric perspective. As Moshi is located 700 miles south of the equator, the town doesn’t have discernible seasons, but definitely had wet and dry periods. Dry – red dust. Wet - red mud.

Jim and Mary ventured halfway around the world to volunteer at the country’s dermatology facility in Moshi. As many U.S-trained health professionals relate, seeing medical centers in the Third World can be frightful: certainly, sanitary and basic equipment issues are substandard. But as Jim related, the quality of dedicated workers, sincere in their aspiration to help was sterling, while surprisingly for some procedures, like x-rays and CAT scans, there were bargains in Tanzania where costs are not quadrupled by HMOs and third-party lenders. Did I say lenders, yet another slip of the mind, I meant licensed medical vendors.

The Nordlund’s time in Tanzania was perhaps most unique outside the clinic, specifically on the roadways, at the market, and waiting in line for the

telephone. Jim distinguished himself many times behind the steering wheel – even if it was situated on the wrong end of the dashboard – like when he taught his houseboy how to drive. The African landscape was both inviting and daunting, foreign although at times familiar, and ultimately, a place and an experience the Nordlunds came to treasure.

Mark Twain said “travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.” Certainly, Jim’s experiences, both professionally and personally, attest to the veracity of that line. From spending time with the Maasi at a circumcision ceremony, to visiting villages in the bush to provide medical treatment, to witnessing the mortal consequences of African bees, a new world was opened to the Nordlunds.

The very heart of Jim’s stay in Tanzania was to take part in the local medical procedures, and through that interaction, to assist in raising current standards by sharing practices and knowledge from the US. HIV, scabies and myiasis still plague and decimate the populace so the global medical community does indeed do a world of good by cooperating across borders. Doctors can be both ambassadors and healers – thanks to Jim and his colleagues for their efforts and him for sharing his tale with our club.

It was a packed house on the 27th, with every chair from the library brought into the upper hall for a budget on the Bard. The evening captured the zenith of what multiple perspectives on a single subject can reveal. There probably wasn’t anyone in the house last week who didn’t have some academic or theatrical connection with Shakespeare and his plays. But the trio of Bill Pratt, Tom Shuck, Joe Toman sparked our imaginations and memories by positing that the greatest playwright in history aged nobly, was a legal scholar, and perhaps most surprising, might have been a woman.

Each of the presenters were stellar in their research, writing and delivery. Bill led off by taking the audience through an analysis of Shakespeare’s first and then final play. Within that review, illumination was given to how the omniscient tenor and overall mood of the respective plays moved from youthful to weary, from light to dark. With different characters filling similar roles in each play, Bill’s paper revealed their nuanced change in speech and general outlook. Shakespeare was incredibly productive over a twenty-year span, but as artists grow and change through their work and accumulated world view, he was not the same playwright from first to last, subject to, and captured in Bill’s words as: “The gradual unfolding of his mind.”

Oberon and Prospero stand as the yin and yang of main characters; *Romeo and Juliet* could be the matching bookend for *Antony and Cleopatra*. The other truly remarkable element of “Youth and Age in Shakespeare’s Plays” as Bill titled his budget, was how brilliantly the Bard evoked cities and countries he’d never visited. As he could almost be described as a homebody, dividing his time between Stratford-Upon-Avon while a boy, London while actively immersed in the theater, and then back to Stratford, roughly twenty-five years in each at final count, Shakespeare never wandered, yet magnificently captured the action and emotions of the known world, drama across the spectrum of a universal man set upon an international stage.

To sum up, in Bill’s words: “His poetic gift is unsurpassed; he created more living characters than any other writer ever has, and his ability to write both tragedies and comedies sets him apart from all other playwrights, including the Greeks. Shakespeare’s life is embedded in his works; he never wrote an autobiography. But to study Shakespeare is the best way to know him, and reading his plays in chronological order offers us further knowledge of how he matured in his judgment of mankind.”

Tom Schuck followed with “A Rose by Any Other Name” which tickled club members with its deliberation on who actually wrote all the plays credited to Shakespeare. As Bill tallied the remarkable output – 154 sonnets, 37 plays – and reminded us that not only did he write them, but in many if not most cases, produced them as well, Tom then raised the veil on the world’s greatest literary mystery: who exactly wrote all those plays, as well as perhaps a sonnet or two?

Fifty some years ago, it was posited that perhaps seven different authors had written Shakespeare: Sir Frances Bacon; Edward de Vere; Sir Walter Raleigh; William Stanley; Christopher Marlowe; Mary Sidney Herbert; and Roger Manners. Tom then zeroed in on Mary Sidney Herbert as perhaps the most likely Shakespeare stand-in, as revealed by education, proximity, coincidental timing of life events, and most of all, word choice and a decidedly feminine point of view in many of the plays.

Although she married into nobility, Mary Sidney’s life was marred by tragedy. The emotional aftermath of many of these life-altering events later appeared in work credited to Shakespeare. The coincidences and influences continue through the passing years, especially when contrasted against Shakespeare’s reported life. In the end, even the most staunch Shakespeare scholar has to admit that, as Tom pointed out, and I quote “many of Shakespeare’s plays demonstrate a sensitivity to the feminine (both its strengths

and the constraints to which it was subject during the times) that supports the argument that a woman wrote or contributed to the writing of the plays.” And let’s face it, we all assumed that a woman would get the last word. PS – Tom has five endnote sources.

Not true, proved the final budget paper by Joe Tomain, proving therein that lawyers always get the final cross-examination and greatest advantage to temper the verdict. In some ways, this was the most light-hearted of the budget papers as the premise seemed most novel, nonetheless Joe admirably presented evidence to spotlight the depth of Shakespeare’s understanding of the legal trade.

Starting with *The Merchant of Venice* then moving to *Measure for Measure* and *The Winter’s Tale*, Joe revealed how deeply ingrained the calibrations of law were in these plays. I for one never knew quite how visceral the saying “a pound of flesh” was back in those days. Frankly, up until last week, I would have gladly given away a pound or two or twenty of my flesh, but now that I was shown it had life-ending effect, I think I’ll go back to the South Beach Diet.

Even if perhaps Shakespeare didn’t truly raise up lawyers as beacons of moral rectitude nor the profession of highest ideals, it’s absolutely true that the notion of justice is enmeshed in his canon; certainly, he was a flag-bearer to the idea that lawyers and judicial principles deserved a spot on stage. You get to decide whether their appearance in the footlights determined it to be a comedy or a tragedy.

No one, or no one in his right mind, would argue against this line of Joe’s: “Shakespearean humanism repositions classical virtue. Instead of Platonic and Christian moralisms that seek confirmation somewhere outside of this world; Shakespeare locates his virtues and vices in our very human characters, behaviors, and lives.” Last, Joe too had eight endnote sources – February was a standout month for the Chicago Manual of Style.

I believe that everyone in attendance would agree that last week’s budget reflects the best of the Literary Club’s ideals: to be given the chance to listen to, and learn more about, a cultural and literary touchstone in our lives. When insight is divined from well-thought-out papers of fellow members, this is, without hyperbole, a priceless gift and the epitome of collegial achievement. To find the space and indulgence of time to reflect back on our

schooling and forward to the central role that Shakespeare continues to dominate theater, literature and contemporary society, I'd say to you, there is nowhere else in this city and perhaps this country where you will find such lofty and redeeming discourse. Aside from those members still lucky enough to spend time in classrooms, for the rest of us, our gratitude for this trio of voices re-examining and relishing the greatest literary influence of all time – regardless of who he or she may or may not have been – is a treat. Likewise, to stand between the steely gazes of Samuel Johnson and Edmund Burke, the two great literary figures, and humbly offer these words of thanks to the Bard, the budget team, and the club at large, is an honor. If we are indeed judged by the company we keep, thank William Shakespeare for Monday nights.

Minutes of the Literary Club January 2017

To begin a new year, on January 9, 2017, Richard Wendell brought a paper entitled “On Full Legalization of Addicting Drugs: A New Direction for the ‘War on Drugs’ ” to 51 members and 4 guests. Dick’s paper detailed the depth of addiction in America and despair and death that follows rampant drug use. The numbers are overwhelming, especially so when the ripple effect of a single life lost is felt within a community, then multiply that loss by thousands. America taxpayers have footed a bill for over a trillion dollars during the last four decades...yet the problem grows worse every year.

Dick’s paper posited the idea of legalizing drugs, an almost contrary notion, but as he laid out, this move would drive out the criminal elements that currently control the flow of drugs from manufacture, transportation, and on down to street-level distribution.

Deadly serious in terms of lives lost -- including murders carried out by drug cartels in foreign countries or the urban and rural gangs here in the states, or victims extinguished by overdose, Dick’s smart paper left us wondering whether this worldwide epidemic can ever be eradicated. The medical community has valiantly tried to combat the human toll while politicians launch campaigns more likely to gain votes than save lives. We all hope that one day an answer will be found.

Mike Kremzar shared “Cut Your Own Switch” on January 16th with 54 members and 6 guests. As he began, he warned the audience that his paper featured “distrust, anger, death, class conflict, bravery, loyalty, and love. In short, it is a family story.” Although Mike referred to his grandmother primarily as Clara, her last name of “Hardy” aptly describes her grit and no-nonsense view of life.

From wringing the neck of chickens – a delightful story that obviously ended badly for the chicken and left young Mike bloodied as well – to drowning kittens to being forced to personally gather the grim tool of child rearing per the paper’s title, Clara would never be mistaken for Mary Poppins with her spoon full of sugar. Instead, she guided her grandson along the homespun adage of “spare the rod and spoil the child.” But ultimately Mike knew that however brusque she might be, at the heart of her corporal punishment was an underlying belief that dealing with life head-on was the only

and best path she knew. Married at the very start of the 1900s, she bore a set of twins before that marriage ended. Soon thereafter she wed again, this time to Mike's grandfather, and this family soon numbered five. But for reasons still not entirely clear, Clara moved the kids, Mike's mom among them, from Michigan to Rockford Illinois, leaving husband #2 behind. To choose single parent status was rare in those days. Clara was hard as nails, ultimately establishing a new home, career and life.

The second half of Mike's paper led the audience along the road not taken by Clara as he picked up the stories of the twins from Clara's first marriage. Serving their country briefly during the tail end WWI, the elder died stateside from a Cheney-like hunting accident while the younger returned to the service where he served with distinction during WWII. Years later while at Princeton, Mike did a little genealogy and realized that the latter's son was also a classmate – hence he had a cousin on campus. But that grandson had no knowledge of Grandma Clara and no familial connection was acknowledged when Mike respectfully approached him.

January 23, 2017. Unless one is Proust, the journal is not a form often employed for literary masterpieces. A journal measures time like a metronome, rendering the narrative arc more chronological than emotional, more episodic than illuminative. Simply put, Jack's *Twelve Months; A Diary of a Year to Live* touched every one of us like exquisite verse that evening.

This journal, chronicling the year from diagnosis to his foretold demise to come, began with "Writing about dying is never easy. Writing about your own dying is even harder." Two lines in and you could have heard the clichéd pin drop, and considering the whole building is carpeted, that says a lot.

But it's impossible to say what was more impressive – the humor he displayed in the face of death (comparing the process of selecting burial plots to picking out the right campsite) or the stop-you-in-your-tracks lines like "What are the moments preceding death going to feel like? and what happens at the moment life goes out of me?"

Jack's guests that evening all had cameos in his paper – his son, two doctors, and his rabbi who told him "Death frees our soul. Our spirit goes where it has always gone, to the people whom we have touched in the course of our life."

More humor: Joanne, Jack's wife, remarked after the rabbi left, "I've never seen two people so excited about dying as the two of you."

Jack's insights reminded us that life is a puzzle we assemble from small pieces. Almost like a to-do list composed while staring into the abyss, he told himself and us: Don't rush. Sleep any way you can whenever you can. Get back to people. Say Thank you. When writing these minutes, Jack's words were counsel and I abided them gratefully. We were stunned to learn that Jack learned of his fatal illness two years ago tomorrow...and then read a budget that evening here at the Literary Club. None of us knew, and looking back, none of us can describe his sharing of this struggle to be anything less than courageous, luminous, and remarkable.

As Jack observed: "But it turned out to have been a very special twelve months to live, full of connections, adventure, humor, joy, sadness and gratitude. And as you can see, twelve months became twenty-four." I wish his doctors were here again tonight so we could thank them for keeping Jack amongst us. But re: the rabbi, well, it's good that he's in no hurry. Reminiscent of Bill Friedlander's paper on his battle with pancreatic cancer, not one of us lucky enough to be in the audience on those nights will never forget their bravery.

I initially thought it best to end with the W.H.Auden quote that Jack used: "Let your last thinks all be thanks." Then I realized that as profound as that short line is, it lacks Jack's personality, which is unthwarted and cheeky: "It appears I have lapsed into extra innings."

On January 30th, a budget organized by Gordon Christenson came to the club. Gordon, Dick Hague and Tom Murphy respectively reached back into their boyhoods to share the relatively innocent, but character building, acts of bravery, braggadocio and bone-headed adventures that all youth suffer...and burnish bright thereafter.

Gordon opened with a couple scary stories, the first involving his cousin Benny who was spooked by a Halloween costume that hung from a hook in the attic. Gordon's Uncle Harald, a prankster at heart hidden by the khaki uniform of a scoutmaster, never lost his relish for getting young boys to scream and take flight down alleys in the night. A few of the classic pre-teen campfire tale-like horror stories: the monkey costume that comes alive, a devil who floats through walls, a witch and last, also Gordon's favorite as he brought it to life, a

golden-hearted, garish hunchback who lived in tunnels under barns...ah, good times.

Dick Hague offered a reflection on how the landscape of his boyhood – Steubenville and West Virginia -- was prosaically and poetically tied to the cliffs and sea of his Irish heritage. Dick waxed as how generations become measures of time and influence, how personal strata separate along the fault lines of wars and floods and famine, revealing the foundation of different colored stone that delineates the past, and perhaps future.

Dick wove a larger history through his budget at well, showing how a tide of immigration did indeed lift us all, although that help of many hands wasn't always recognized in the moment. Hard labor, either as a profession or a pastime, cleared land and created families.

Tom Murphy opened his paper with a tongue-in-cheek appreciation for his son being a well-mannered young man. This set Tom into motion on a recollection to his own youth, which was not so much wayward as it was wide ranging, therefore very different from his son's. Young Tom's many moves around the country made him want an older brother. It's hard to be an only child during the nervous-making times at new homes and new schools, a total for which Tom needs both hands to count them all. Having a Southern accent and red hair made certain he didn't slide into the new desk unnoticed. He was certain that an older brother would be the fix, not only a built-in buddy but a trailblazer and guardian angel who'd clear and protect the way for young Tom. This fantasy persisted up until Tom had a few sleepovers at new friends' who did have older brothers...and they had the bruises to prove it. Tom's paper closes by pridefully assuring us that the serene soul of his previously well-mannered son had just been invaded by a moody teenager's psyche and Tom couldn't be happier.

January's budget made us realize all the harmless, completely politically-incorrect hijinks boys always engage in to pass the time. We are borne forward upon the stories of our parents and cousins and friends, fashioned upon and fastened to the strife and struggle of a dozen boyhoods before. Oh, flatulence, dirt, wooden matches, barns and sheds, open fields, shovels and sticks also appeared so consistently in these tales that they could have been returning characters or background settings for all three.

Preface to the December 2016 Minutes of the Literary Club: The Secretary ruefully reports that his work/life locomotive (emphasis on the loco) ran off the rails last month; every Monday evening in December was taken over by work. So the minutes are missing the nuance of personality as I had only the mute written work to draw from. But since December is a month filled with all sorts of holidays, good cheer and kindness, I am assuming that each member who stood behind this podium charmed the club members in attendance with a droll, delightful delivery of a powerful and poetic paper. It's a new year and as we'll learn in a couple weeks, 2017 is going to be a barrel full of monkeys. And now on to the minutes.

Minutes of the Literary Club December 2016

On December 5th, Bernie Foster brought a tale of quixotic discovery to 51 members and 5 guests. It all started with his notice of and subsequent investigation into the province of the house located next to the entrance of the Christ Hospital on Auburn Ave., a query that led him to a little-known story of William Howard Doane (hence the WHD initials on one of the pillars alongside the driveway). A fair question might be whether residing on that street required the first/middle name combo of William Howard since former club member William Howard Taft at one time lived down the same lane.

Upon completion of his schooling, Doane joined his father's woodworking company as an accountant and rather quickly rose to the presidency. Many poets and artistic types keep a day job in order to support their more closely held passions and pursuits, which in Doane's case was music. Trained on many musical instruments in childhood, the metaphoric mark Doane left on the world was in the shape of an interwoven treble and bass clef. The preeminent religious music composer of his day, WHD was generous and charitable to the extreme, donating all the royalties for his music to the church (another advantage of that day job), not a token gesture as this annual offering was ~\$400,000 in today's dollars.

Like with many prodigious achievements, there was a team effort behind this phenomenal creative musical outpouring. As Bernie uncovered, Doane had Miss Frances Jane Crosby. Fannie was severely vision impaired, and for 23 years, lived in an Institute for the Blind. Thereafter, she married and cohabitated for a year, then the couple separated, lived apart, yet never divorced. Keeping her maiden name allowed Fannie to develop her reputation as a songwriter and poet for the ages. It's staggering to examine her oeuvre – over 8000 songs, plus another thousand or so written under a pseudonym; that's essentially a new song every day for over 20 years. Initially she was

worked with Phillip Phillips, a Cincinnati preacher. Soon thereafter she found William Doane. Many music critics extol the Great American Songbook – certainly Crosby and Doane comprise the bulk of the Great American Hymnal. Their best known works, including “To God Be the Glory,” “Rescue the Pershing,” and “Safe in the Arms of Jesus” float up to the rafters in countless churches around the country still today.

On the evening of December 16, Polk Laffoon shared his recollection of three childhood heroes to an audience of 54 members and 7 guests in “Childhood Heroes.” He shared an interesting triptych of familial, friends and famous: by name, Richard Deupree - Polk’s step-grandfather and P&G chairman; Art Hailand – a Northern Michigan bon vivant, and Walt Disney, enough said.

Deupree was better known to Polk as Pappy, and his lifelong mentorship instilled the truisms of hard work, honesty and fairness. P&G back in Pappy’s day didn’t have the sexy vibe of Mad Men, but the company triumphed by the application of tireless data collection and elbow grease, which Pappy exemplified in spades. Even better, he shared the wisdom of his approach with Polk and peers, which underscored his maxim to empower others because you can’t do it yourself. As the first link from the namesakes running Procter and/or Gamble to the modern consumer products giant, even though his formal education ended at grammar school, he worked just as diligently to round out his classroom learning via night school tutorials as he later did to sell a better soap product to scruffy Chicago laundries. Running a business like a family, and managing a family ingrained with a tough business mindset, Deupree succeeded on all counts.

Polk also revealed how wide a circle of influence can reach. Art Hailand, #2 in Polk’s lineup, also worked at P&G, but he was memorialized more as the leader of Polk’s personal Mickey Mouse club. Full of energy and dedicated to fun, Art was summer vacation personified, where every day could and should be an adventure. He talked, to some degree, like a cartoon character, full of gee-whiz’isms and surprising clucks that punctuated his expressions of joy. He was, beyond measure, the life of the party and luxuriated in that role. But what he showed Polk by example, was that it wasn’t always comfortable being so much larger than life. Polk also peeked at the private side to Art’s public largesse and that view made him realize that there is a more somber side to every exuberance.

Last but definitely not least in Polk's pantheon came Walt, the epitome for worldwide creative genius. Even though his reputation was sterling, Disney's path to glory had potholes and detours...although it seemed every stumble granted him a new perspective which he capitalized upon to make groundbreaking movies, TV shows and amusement parks. Like P&G, his name too adorns one of our country most dominant companies, defining modern entertainment, and is still synonymous with excellence.

Ultimately, Polk was initially self-depreciating by doubting how his life measures up to others. Creating a Disney-like legacy would be a tall order, but as Polk pointed out, in his later years Walt became somewhat tyrannical so perhaps those oversized Mickey shoes aren't something to aspire to fill. Disney is the magic of Hollywood, and as we know, most magic is just sleight of hand and misdirection, while Hollywood just ain't real. I suspect that there is a quiet but appreciative legion of family, friends and former colleagues who will cite him as a positive influence the same way he credits Pappy or Art.

As part of the holiday celebration, the trustees brought papers that added a few more stars to the Literary Club tree. In Jerry Kathman's case, it was a six-pointed star. Jerry's paper found a way to merge Jewish history and Cincinnati boosterism as he illuminated how the current Hanukkah celebration was updated and enhanced by Rabbis Wise and Lilienthal.

Sketching history with a few deft brushstrokes, Jerry noted how Christmas was greatly gussied up from a quiet religious observation courtesy of Teutonic influence from Prince Albert during the Victorian Age. Suddenly there was singing, decorating, candles and gifts. Jewish leaders soon thereafter became afraid that their flocks would be too bedazzled by these Christian Christmas festivities, so they in turn added some sparkle to the Hanukkah celebration, while also polishing the legend and contributions of the Maccabees.

Isaac M Wise, founder of the Hebrew Union College and Max Lilienthal (an august, late fellow Literarian) are the rabbis who deserve the credit for the modern menorachic traditions. It seems that Patrick Henry, one of the heroes of the American Revolution, licensed his catchphrase from the Maccabees by picking up their battle cry: "Give me liberty or give me death."

The final interesting and important note is that not only did Rabbis Wise and Lilienthal burnish the customs and pageantry of Hanukkah; they also then

shared news of these changes through their respective magazines which disseminated the news as the Facebook of their day.

Steve Strauss offered a stirring story of the four chaplains serving aboard the *Dorchester*, one of the 2700 Allied boats sunk by U-Boats in the Atlantic. By coincidence, the four Army Chaplains met at Harvard University and were reunited on the *Dorchester*. The four ministered to their specific flock but in the short time after being torpedoed, their selflessness served all. As the troopship sunk, they handed out life vests, and when the supply ran out, they removed their own preservers and saved another four young lives. Alexander Goode, Clark Poling, George Fox and John Washington were heroes like Polk's, leading by example, inspiring with action, and fitting for remembrance during the holidays when families grow near and forebears are recollected in story and deed.

Steve offered this final glimpse, and I quote, "As the ship sank, the Chaplains linked arms and were last seen and heard singing hymns and reciting prayers." End quote. Tonight we might wonder if one of the hymns was penned by Crosby and Doane.

Over the past couple decades, the pop culture has convinced millions of viewers that angels exist; Ted Silberstein's holiday paper assures us that historians, real historians that is, and Literarians can be counted among believers as well; the canon suggests verification and inclusion. But after the yea or nay vote, consensus as to who, when, how and where goes out the stained glass window.

I had always assumed that mortals and angels were like the minor and major leagues in baseball. As noted by Clarence in "It's a Wonderful Life" – when a bell rings, another angel gets his or her wings. Ted proved himself to be the Jewish scholar nonpareil as he provided the group a full briefing of the heavenly hierarchy. Ted detailed full chapter and verse (Biblical, Old Testament) and footnote (Chicago Manual of Style, 16th Edition) for this magnitude. His numbers make Fannie's 8000 songs look decidedly human: the Egyptian Book of the Dead names 500 gods and demi-gods of which a sect was angels; The *Dictionary of Angels* lists almost five thousand; and 14th Century Jewish mystics designate over 301 million angels...and they pulled off that manifest without a calculator, computer or abacus.

Regardless of which number might be right, the majority of earthbound humans believe that a winged guardian is always watching over us, which in

puberty is a fearsome, looming presence peering into hormonal fireworks. This visage softens and comforts us as we age, to the point where during the December holidays, angels are featured players in school plays and Christmas carols as we're oft reminded of their benevolence and vigilance on our behalf.

A secular Literary Club way to wrap our arms, hearts and minds around the idea of angels among us is to consider the photographs located in the foyer and front hallways to be our angels: the fine fellows who came before, have shown us a way, and continue to add their lights to our journey.

Happy New Year one and all.

Minutes of Literary Club November 2016

On the eve of the 2016 election, Steve Strauss delivered a timely paper on the supposedly scandalous presidency of Warren G. Harding. Invoking Marley and his rattling jewelry at this time of year is probably acceptable, so considering the chain of events that now shackle us, let's simply note that perhaps Dicken's foreshadowing will re-define what scandalous truly means in the next few years.

One thing that can be unequivocally stated is that when viewed through the filter of modern time and especially the most recent campaign, President Harding's charades might have been unseemly, but he's far from evil incarnate. Labeling Harding as beyond the pale is akin to watching any current TV show -- aside from Downton Abbey -- and wondering how and why the Smothers Brothers were ever censored.

History is always rich in providing context, and Steve filled in some sumptuous details. Certainly the cornfields of the Buckeye State yielded a bumper crop of U.S. presidents, so a paper on a local prez will always find a welcome audience here in Cincinnati. As Steve noted, Ohio was once seen as the source for chief executives, but let's face it, the odds were better when there were only two dozen states in the Union. Warren had a curious boyhood, moved a bit with his family, then finally settled in Marion and set out to be a 'marrying type of fellow.

If Warren was labeled as a ladies man, Mrs. Florence Harding certainly was a bookend to his "sociability." Helping her care for a child born out of wedlock, was Amos Kling, her father, Harding's father-in-law-to-be and his future nemesis. Amos would lock Florence out of the house if she returned after curfew. Perhaps I'm naïve, but isn't that like rewarding gluttony with an extra dessert? But it gets better -- if she found the door bolted, she'd climb in the upstairs window, that is, until Mr. Kling nailed it shut. Well, let's just say sooner or later she found Warren's window open and the two were wed in 1891.

Harding climbed a traditional ladder in politics, including posts as Ohio Senator and Ohio Lieutenant Governor. I quote Steve here: "Due to Florence's serious health problems, Harding decided not to seek reelection as Lieutenant Governor, to withdraw from politics, return to Marion and operate his newspaper." To preface his next quote, politics is the only thing

that Warren withdrew from. Quote: “Back in Marion, Warren began an affair with Carrie Phillips, the wife of a friend. The affair continued for 15 years and was not publicly known until after Harding’s death.” Ok, so that’s scandalous. And it might go without saying, but I will: some friendship.

Fast-forward to 1920, Warren has returned to politics and with some backroom deal-making, landed himself in the Oval Office. There his second eye was blackened as his administration was populated with scurrilous fellows who were filling their pockets at the taxpayers’ expense. Political opponents will always cry foul and point at the top when something goes amiss; that’s why baseball owners fire managers, not players. Pundits and the press likewise hollered, hullabalooed and called for his head; in this case, let’s simply say, “let he who has no sin cast the first stone.”

As Steve noted, many good things were done during Harding’s tenure. Almost invoking Jim Friedman’s paper in October, in 1921 Harding travelled to Birmingham, Alabama and delivered perhaps the most daring speech of his political life to a large, although racially segregated, audience of blacks and whites. He spoke in favor of political equality “I would say let the black man vote when he is fit to vote; prohibit the white man from voting when he is unfit to vote”. Harding unambiguously proclaimed “Whether you like it or not, unless our democracy is a lie, you must stand for equality.”

So we’ll pause the debate as to who’s worse and instead raise our eyes to the horizon. Because the final verdict as to whether Warren Harding will always be the worst president is most definitely “a work in progress.”

Peter Stern brought “In Search of the Sand Hill Crane” to a clubby gathering of 54 members and six guests on October 14th.

Peter’s braided together a few threads, weaving family vacations, a penchant for collecting, and a biography of James Audubon for the members’ pleasure and edification.

As his paper opened, the majestic beauty of the rugged West welcomed the Stern family, starting in the early 50s and continuing through present day. For anyone who has reveled in the stunning environs of Jackson Hole, with the Tetons towering nearby, it’s a breathtaking place to set his reminiscence. The memories of those trips, the glimpses of nature

not seen in Cincinnati, and a zest for collecting that started with soap wrappers, cigar bands and match papers fills Peter's paper.

Peter then leavened in an appreciation for the sandhill crane, a magnificent bird. Half a million of these hardy birds gather in Nebraska in March and April as prelude to their annual northern flight for doing what birds and bees do best.

Peter happened upon the sandhill crane not on wing or even in life, but as a print hanging over the fireplace at the Teton Valley Lodge in Jackson Hole. It was at this point that Peter offered a glimpse into Audubon's life. Attested by the statue of John James overlooking the confluence of the Licking and Ohio Rivers on the Covington riverbank, Audubon was indeed a favorite/adopted son in the Cincinnati region as he spent years here working on his craft, hence his story is well-known in the region.

The paper segues into a final personal chapter, a quest by Peter to add an original Audubon print to his collection, which alas, after months of chasing leads and arranging for shipping and certification, proves to be an unauthorized print. But as Peter has proved to us over the years, he is wise and kind, so he views this chase to an unhappy conclusion as a learning experience and he's no worse for the wear. To show his fine fettle, he ends his paper with this quote which "I've come to enjoy; even more, Audubon the man, his talent and limitless energy, and of course his wonderful paintings."

On November 21, in front of 51 members and five guests, Tyler Winslow stepped on the gas with another lap around the racetrack and his story of Ferrari 0348. This isn't a story that would play well at the Queen City Society Ladies Tea Club, but the rich mix of money, gas, ego, speed, international intrigue and tomfoolery is just right for our bunch.

Those of us bent over the oars on the lower deck are perhaps a bit incredulous that there'd be this much bickering, posturing and legal hubbub over a previously rusty, albeit rare, race car. Then again, it's easy to be dismissive when we acknowledge that none of us will be driving this restored beauty. Through it all, though, one can hear a voice (surely female) admonishing that all of the characters obviously have more money than sense.

Tyler lays out the chessboard adroitly: a couple rows of legal pawns, certainly a knight or three, a couple kings (Joe Ford and Christopher Gardener), and even two queens, a Kristine Lawson, heir to Karl Kleve (the original owner who bought the car for \$2500 in 1958) and Florence Swaters. There's more misfiled paperwork and errant titles herein that not one of us should any longer feel abashed about the unkempt condition of our respective offices. This avalanche of documents escalates in accord to rising blood pressure and tightened sphincters. Brokered agreements and broken promises litter the landscape; making this auto conflagration more resemble a demolition derby than a grand prix.

Consider this: Leslie Wexner, an Ohioan (the month was thick with Buckeyes), founder of the Limited brands, and in this case, most importantly, a billionaire and Ferrari collector, burst on the scene somewhere in the second act. So let's call him a knucklehead, not because he's a buffoon in the business world because he's not...but as the head of Victoria's Secret, this means he's surrounded daily by buxom, beautiful and barely clad young ladies and yet he'd rather dicker about a car that's been 90% rebuilt instead of busting out his best Warren Harding moves. Remarkable in so many troubling ways.

The clocks tick, the brows sweat, an auction house totters on the edge, and some folks are going to lose large amounts of money. Oh, what fun. This would make such a good movie one can almost hear the soundtrack rise in the background. I lost track a few times as to who was in front and who was dropped, hence I worried about now knowing who would win, but the best thing about race cars is that they circle, so sooner or later all the names came roaring back for one more trip around the oval that eventually took two years to complete and cost millions of dollars in legal fees. A fine tale, then again, I wouldn't bet against Jerry Kathman behind the wheel of that Maserati parked out front...

...which leads us directly to the budget on November 28th where and when Dave Edmundson revealed why you should never bet against the house; Tony Covatta shared the travails of working one's way through college while working one's way out of love; and Paul Shortt shared family tales of growing up in Detroit all tethered to the Thanksgiving holiday. 52 members and 8 guests were entertained by these homespun and heartfelt reminiscences.

Though Tony never said so directly, the spires of Louisville churches poked up through his landscape, rich with the music of the 60s counterpoint to the eternal yearnings of youth, all winding along the banks of the Ohio. Some might say chasing skirts, some might say wanting to break free of the shackles of higher learning. But regardless of your POV, it's a tasty sweet that layers Mozart music, buddies on bikes, and being tossed over for some new lunk by the girl who might not have been forever, but certainly was a sacher torte that summer.

What sustains Tony's protagonist is twofold: a peek into a grand, glorious potential future that might await over garden walls and the exam he must pass to propel his way out of this town and down, hopefully, the sumptuous path leading to another Gardencourt with Night Music lilting in the air.

Dave batted second with a rollicking story about the illogic of trying to hustle a hustler back in the day when a quarter was big money. As Dave tells it, it was his brother and father who were gifted card players, in fact, his father saved up enough winnings when in WWII for a down payment for the family home upon return. But most of all, they were smart card sharks and relied on one tried-and-true pearl of wisdom: "Never gamble with money you can't afford to lose."

Which is the line that keeps repeating in his head when he spies his dad playing blackjack with Carl, manager of Atta Boy, the local gas station, as the hours go by while Dave caddies one memorable day. Turns out that a couple young bucks strolled into the shop that morning...well at least they thought they were big shots. Instead, they were fish just waiting to be reeled in by the elder Edmundson and the local proprietor. The two experienced hands were patient and slowly letting the pot come to a boil. The boys lost their first \$50 over four hours time; the next \$100 – aka the money they were going to win back – was gone in an hour.

There were two takeaways from this initially friendly game of cards. The first, don't be rude – it was only when the two toughs got surly that Carl and Dave's father turned up the heat. And the second line, which perhaps we all ought to share with our juniors at some point in time: "It's probably better if we don't tell your mother about this."

Paul, the budget's organizer, finished up with a bright and shiny pastiche of Thanksgiving feasts and family freak-outs. It seems like Turkey Day at the Shortt household was closely linked to Jean's Shepherd's "A Christmas Story" which most folks believe was set in Cleveland where the house and the leg lamp are still on display today, but truth be told, it was Indiana that conjured up sticking one's tongue to a frozen flagpole and the magic BB-gun. Nonetheless, it is possible to see it all as a Midwest thang.

Paul had it lucky – his birthday was sandwiched midway between Thanksgiving and Christmas so he had a month's worth of presents, family, friends and frivolity. As he got older, the debauchery meter climbed while the innocent fun index dropped. But he never forget the excitement of holing up in the basement with Dad, brothers and step-brothers to see if the Thanksgiving turkey could actually fly. Or the woozy, boozy reunions of high school pals returning home from college.

The one theme that ran through all the budget papers is that these were times fondly remembered; yet times were tough back then. We all got bumps and bruises but we laughed about the knocks afterwards. Money was tight while "senses" of humor were loose. Although there were barely two nickels to rub together, those memories are gilded in gold and will never be forgotten. Thank you, Tony, Dave and Paul for replaying a few highlights from the family scrapbook.

Minutes of the Literary Club for October, 2106

Mirroring the harvest moon that hung big and bright in the sky during the month, there was an accompanying bounty of smart, good papers plus a club history reminiscence and presidential address at the Anniversary meeting. Therefore, the secretary is imposing a stricter synopsis length rule per speaker for this recap, but would encourage members who may have missed any gathering in October to read the full papers on the website, as we were fortunate in the range, strength and polish of the members, including two first papers, starting right out of the gate.

On October 3, 2016 Andy Scott's debut paper, entitled "Loving the Unlovable" provided us with a peer review of Black Mountain College, a fledgling post-secondary educational experiment nestled in the hills adjoining the Pisgah National Forest. From this perch due east of Asheville, NC, the college's setting was idyllic as its stated intentions as a center of higher learning. To add a measure of foreshadowing, we can invoke the Chinese curse: may you live in interesting times. Certainly, from origin to execution (the latter term carrying dual meaning herein), Black Mountain College was a very interesting place.

John Andrews Rice, founder of Black Mountain College, was as much a visionary whose dreams ignited a passion for a fuller approach to learning as he was vitriolic in his assessment of the entrenched educational establishment. To wit, when describing some of his former colleagues at the University of Nebraska, he was quoted as calling them "incompetents, misfits, the intellectually lazy, and trash." Clearly he was setting himself up for a career in politics after he "graduated" from the ivory tower.

Black Mountain College, was conceived with high ideals and low funding (the traditional start-up mix for a business and seemingly coed campus alike) and designed to be an education in democracy. Utopian and egalitarian, professors participated as mentors and role models in numerous ways, plus participating with housekeeping duties when not sharing their knowledge from a lectern. The list of professors at Black Mountain is indeed an honor roll, especially in terms of modern arts and letters: Joseph Albers, William de Kooning, Merce Cunningham, John Cage, Buckminster Fuller, Charles Olson and many more. As students, Robert Rauschenberg, Arthur Penn, Kenneth Noland, and Cy Twombly and more, a group that later too shined bright like stars in the Appalachian firmament.

Jann Wenner, founder of Rolling Stone magazine, has often said that you can't have a counter culture without a little sex, drugs and rock-n-roll. Black Mountain College preceded the hallucinatory 60's by a decade or two, but didn't miss out as a counter culture college, as it too was fueled by freedom of speech and free love. Nonetheless, during its final year when there were only five students remaining, its not hard to imagine one of the five turning to a professor whose hands were also deep in the suds and saying, "Look, I'll do the dishes tonight, go out and find us some more students."

There are two questions which can fairly be asked: how long will the Black Mountain College legacy burn bright, that is, as current art exhibits attest, will it be seen more like a sun than the meteor? Second question, did Andy's paper, which we loved and learned much about the subject, perhaps last longer than the university itself? Nonetheless, 53 members and four guests benefitted from this comprehensive account of a creative steam engine that ran off its mountaintop rails.

Fifty-eight members and six guests gathered on October 10, 2016 to listen to James Friedman's first paper to the club, entitled "All Men are Created Equal." Timely, insightful and relevant are the first three words that come to mind in re-reading and reviewing his work.

The paper opened by intoning Thomas Jefferson's most famous line: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But as we soon learned, voting was not a right, it was a privilege bestowed only to white, male landowners for a variety of reasons, all linked to power.

As they say, here's the rub: the denial of the inalienable right to vote, commonly referred to as suffrage. Here I quote Jim "suffrage is indeed a curious term as the lack of its universal application has caused perhaps more suffering in this country than any other cause in our history. Universal suffrage did not become a reality in the United States for almost 200 years. Until the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, most African Americans in the South could not vote. Women were barred in most jurisdictions from voting for their representatives and President until 1920. Asian immigrants were denied citizenship and Native Americans and paupers were not allowed

to vote well into the 20th century. How did this happen in light of the premise that all men are created equal? End quote.

Laying out the history behind the 14th and 15 Amendments, the paper zoomed in its focus from national debates to a telling exchange that took place between the walls of the our Club on the advent of women's suffrage, with the voice provided by the late Literarian Judge Hiram Peck, when he elucidated on his personal views regarding women having the right to vote, quote: "I think that American political life has long suffered for the want of many things women would bring to it. We need the quickness of perception and the moral force of women in the political life of this country...Men need the women in politics just as much as women need to vote. We want them. We need their assistance. I know that women have suffered a good deal of wrong for the want of voting power. I have seen year after year in Hamilton county women teachers doing the same work that men do for exactly half of the compensation. Do you think that would have stood long if the women had the right to vote?" End quote

Our club, as a sub-set of our country, has suffered through a Bataan's death march of the most bitter, divided and debased presidential campaign ever and on the eve of what could be modern time's most momentous election, the question of voting rights, privilege, power and inherent wisdom have come clear again from some very muddy waters. So I end the minutes from this meeting with one last quote from Jim because, frankly, even after many attempts, there is no better way to underline the prescience of the material he presented and the question he ended upon:

Quote: Unfortunately, Mr. Jefferson's words from the Declaration were either completely forgotten or at best ignored by those in power. All men (much less women) were certainly not created equal according to this thinking. Voting was not a self-evident truth much less a "right". It was, and perhaps still is, a privilege. Sadly, for much of our nation's history, without the opportunity to cast a vote for those that made their laws, millions of disenfranchised American citizens, knew no such thing as unalienable rights that would include Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. So, I ask you, now that it is almost 100 years since the last legal barriers to universal suffrage were eliminated, are we ready to proclaim that Thomas Jefferson's lofty ideals are fully embedded in the daily lives of all who call themselves citizens of our great nation? End quote.

Mark Schlacter brought his second paper on October 17 to a room filled with 52 members and four guests. The best way to introduce “And the Saga Drags On” is thus: unlike Elvis, Garrison Keilor has not left the building, but instead appears occasionally at 500 E. 4th St disguised as Mark Schlacter. Certainly Mark’s fictional town of Ersatz, Indiana just prior to the turn of the last century carries as much charm and quirky characters as did Lakewobegon, Minnesota. Chance to amplify the human foibles of characters modeled on people we talk with on the street, Mark spotlights a returning cast during much the same period of time that Jim Friedman and Bob Vitz would examine in their respective papers also delivered this month (if we were taking tests, these three boys might have suspected as copying each other’s tests, although they were in vastly different subjects). In Mark’s case, WWI poses the same threat that Bob would later unveil, but the larger threat, in true Literary Club form, comes with the advent of the Volstead Act when Prohibition gripped the parched throat of America. Because there are few things finer than spending time listening to Mark spin his yarns of this quixotic and quirky town in Indiana with a glass of some brown liquid in hand that warms the head and the chest, to raise the specter of an alcohol-free existence in this hallowed hall made the floor shake..ever so gently though as to not spill a drop. But shake nonetheless.

Mark’s story is a lark, a hugely enjoyable traipse across the Hoosier state. Much of it revolves around the railroad, as virtually everything did back then. Mark also provided the best pun of the month when describing the arrival of company’s Christmas gift to employees the year it changed from live turkeys to sheep: “the four lamb-packed stock cars waiting for the holiday distribution.” When the sheep later take over the town, chaos ensues much like the Running of the Goats earlier this summer in Covington.

So beware Chris Thile, the new host of a Prairie Home Companion. To paraphrase Satchel Paige, don’t look back, Mark Schlacter might be gaining on you. But as Mark is as much gentle soul as a good yarnsmith, and perhaps even a wool-gatherer per Paul’s later reference, and probably for sure no match for Chris on the mandolin, perhaps they can co-host

October 24, 2016 saw Tom Shuck bring forth “Stand Firm,” a tight and terrific re-casting of the Battle of Shiloh centered first on Col Edward Ellis, and ultimately, Ulysses S. Grant. As Tom noted, the Battle of Shiloh was the largest and bloodiest of the Civil War as the combined casualties

exceeded those in **all** of America's previous wars – the Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War – combined. They were twice those in all of the earlier battles of the Civil War. Only Gettysburg would result in more carnage.

The 55 members and four guests that evening were treated to an American historical reverence for Civil War history. Col. Ellis had grown up in Felicity, east of Cincinnati along the Ohio River. Times being what they were, it was a hard-wrought life, Ellis was a widower early, remarried a student of his, they had three children in three years yet none lived to childhood. Life on the frontier could be so rugged that it was sometimes easier to move on in hopes of opportunity a state or two away. Ellis found just that in Illinois, and when the Civil War flared up, as ardent abolitionist, he found himself in command of the 15th Illinois Volunteer Infantry.

The Union and Confederate forces fought fiercely at Shiloh, and their losses rolled up quickly. Ellis and his fellow officers led the troops into battle...and then fell to Confederate bullets. Although ultimately seen as a tactical draw, three things during the battle benefitted the Yankees from that day forward: first, Grant proved to be a resolute and ruthless leader; second, his troops were reinforced by two other regiments while the South had no fresh troops, which lead to third, Col Beauregard from the South chose to pull back from the battle at a time which he might have prevailed. All in all, it was seen as a turning point, in favor of the North that ultimately stretched forward to Appamatox. While Mark's "lamb-packed" was the best turn of phrase, the best honorary title comes from Tom: Worshipful Master, a Masonic designation; oh, these heady days of mirth and moxie. Tom also proved that two little letters can carry significant weight, and wait: the difference between exhaustive and exhausting research is profound.

October 31, 2016 – The 167th Anniversary was rung in by 58 members and two guests, both of whom will be mentioned by name here as they are friends and former club members who served the club well: Albert Pyle and Jim Myers. The meeting date was also Halloween this year. Although strictly speaking not part of the pseudo-holiday, as the members were coincidentally in black tie; hence while those gathered dressed in similar costumes, the formal wear did manage to hide our true selves and we appeared, at least for this evening, civilized, refined, worldly and wise. But we know the truth, and as Kurt Vonnegut would have said, Ha!

Historian Bob Vitz shared “The Literary Club Goes to War, Again” which was a deft and illuminating centennial review of the 1916 election as lead-in to the First World War. Considering the German heritage of Cincinnati, therefore the heritage of many club members, it’s no surprise that viewpoints on the European theater were fervent and even feverish. But just for a moment to skip ahead to President Paul Franz’s address, for within his second paragraph he reiterated the precepts of the club are to (a) maintain a Liberty Hall where all papers are listened to with respect, and (b) take no position, official or unofficial, on any question, its clear that as the shadow of war loomed large and dark, our stated rules and best intentions fell asunder to nationalism, isolationism, defense, democracy and the role our country would choose. Flipping back to Historian Vitz, as back then there was a lot of flipping back, and forth, and off, club members definitely took a position and the room certainly became heated as tempers flared when foreign governments’ policies manifest as police force...and more.

A few notable members were frequent spark plugs of the combustion engine: Charles Wilby, Bryant Venable, George Kinsey, Henry Fick and Robert Hochstetter. It is safe to assume that many others traded opinions, questions and occasional curses before and after the papers. It’s no surprise that the guidelines for gentility were forgotten – America was being pulled into war, damn it, battle lines were being drawn and people were going to die while flags were being burned. It is perhaps reassuring that club members were stirred into debate and rancor – it would have been an embarrassing remembrance to find the club unmoved and/or mute.

What is somewhat surprising is how often, seemingly, those mentioned above delivered a paper during this period: it almost seems that Wilby was batting clean-up every other month. But ultimately, and thankfully, and this is often the way it goes in victory, Bob concluded, as did the war, with “harmony reigned among this band of brothers.”

President Paul Franz concluded the evening with his examination of the constitution of the club, not as a written document, but the all-important ideals and aspirations of our weekly coming-together. While he posits it along the line of his opening question – why are we here? – it is resoundingly answered by the first line of the fourth paragraph – We are more.

As Isaac Newton famously said, “If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants,” the good news for all of us is that after 167 years, there are a lot of shoulders to stand upon over the history of this club. Paul generously reflects on the contributions and clarity of many past presidents, notably Tony Covatta to Gibby Carey, then moves on to comments, papers and letters from Bob Faaborg and Bob Norrish. Paul capped the evening with the call to write honestly, humbly and well.

The month, and the start to this year, has been remarkable in being *relevant*, a term which isn’t, one might presume, often applied to the Literary Club. A paper on voting rights, education, valor, war (and the reasons for and against, as well as unsung heroes), a debt of gratitude to teachers and friends; all in all, a rabble rousing amongst readers and hail to fine fellows well met. As mentioned before, this is the eve of an election. Hyperbole aside, it could even be said to be an important one. Through our papers, we aim to share the voice in our head with others. If nothing else, in the quiet of the polling booth, away from the noise and the headlines, please vote and let that voice be your North Star. Good night.

Minutes of the Literary Club September, 2016

The 2017-2017 season of the Cincinnati Literary Club opened on September 19th, with 55 members and 9 guests in attendance. Before being called to order by incoming President Paul Franz, the group was treated to a re-arrangement of artwork throughout the clubhouse. The culmination of a summer's worth of review, planning and installation, spearheaded by Ted Silberstein and Stuart Maxwell, the groupings are cohesive in terms of subject and style. To a man, the reorganization was given high marks for presentation and thoughtfulness.

Thereafter, once the membership was seated and guests introduced, Alfonso Lopez's presented his paper entitled "Compadre." Al had also prepared a short introduction for his debut paper, a smart, heartfelt six lines which I quote in full as testament to Al's aspiration and acknowledgement of the history of the Club:

I humbly stand before this body
Whose works have all graced this cherished space
Gratefully I offer my future efforts
That here I might find a sense of place
Your kindness I pray to be reciprocated
In words crafted and presented to you today.

On to "Compadre." Social scientists remind us that history is less a chronicle of shifting Teutonic plates or ruling dynasties than it is the gathering of personal narratives which en toto illuminate the pathways of society. Al's very personal account of his friend Poncho's immigration to America from Mexico contained numerous vistas, reflection points where his yearning for a new life in a new country was overlaid on shifting government policy and international relations. Poncho's life and struggle to legally establish his citizenship in this country serves as a microcosm for legions of immigrants from our neighbor to the south over the last 150 years.

Poncho's journey could be measured many ways: by miles; by days, months, and years; or by governmental bureaucracies endured. The effects of America's flourishing agribusiness needed strong arms, or braceros, to harvest the yield which led to a flood of illegals across the border. Poncho's story alternated between flashbacks to generations of Mexican presidency to present tense of finding a new home in Cincinnati and his career in

medicine. The promise of a new life in a new land is a storyline often told, yet the resilience of Poncho's character was matched only by his relish of re-telling the journey to his new colleagues and friends. Sadly, every human story also ends the same way, so with Poncho's passing, we can gather and keep close the example of his contribution to America's melting pot culture as have millions before and since – thank you, Al, for bringing your friend to life for us.

The first order of business on September 26 was the installation of Mark Schlacter's handsome sculpture next to the southwest corner of the clubhouse. Once the doors opened, Ted Jaroszewicz, Nick Telka and Samuel Greengrass brought a budget to an audience of 41 members and four guests. It was one of the most cohesive budgets in recent memory in that the papers centered on the same period of time, and more remarkably, the principal characters appeared in various roles from one paper to the next, which made it sometimes seem as if it was one oracle, three authors, and a revisiting of many facets of the Revolutionary War.

Ted led off with "Brigadier General of the Horse" which captured the life of Casimir Pulaski, a Polish cavalry officer who ably assisted George Washington and the Continental Army in battles at Brandywine, Haddonfield, Charleston and Savannah. Pulaski had been born into wealth in Warsaw in 1745, but due to the Russian military hijinks into Poland, foreshadow Putin, he became an expatriate in 1772. In Paris, Pulaski met with Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane, the US commissioners to France, who provided the skilled horseman a letter of recommendation to General Washington.

As we learned from all three papers, the Continental Congress was besieged by requests for funding, commissions, and firearms, and like modern day Congress, seemed unable to escape the gravitational torpor of elected and/or appointed officials. Eventually Pulaski's daring attacks on the British earned him military commission and leadership of the Pulaski Legion. Two critical factors predicated Pulaski's downfall: his foreign tongue as he never learned to speak English and insufficient funding for a full cavalry. Ultimately selected as one of only 8 Honorary Citizens of the US, a designation he shares with Winston Churchill, Mother Teresa and the Marquis de LaFayette, one week from tomorrow, October 11, Pulaski Day in America will be celebrated once again across the country.

Nick followed with “Regulation en Regalia.” As his subject also came from a European heritage -- Prussian in this case -- and significant military training, he possessed too rich a name to pass up repeating in full one last time: Friedrich Wilhelm Ludolf Gerhard Augustin von Steuben. Like Pulaski, von Steuben also entered the US seeking battlefield commission with letters of support from Franklin and Dean. Likewise, his request was lost in the anal’s (sic) of the Continental Congress. But whereas Pulaski’s language barrier kept him at a remove from Washington’s inner circle, Baron von Steuben was eagerly welcomed as the embodiment of discipline that the original GW felt his army desperately needed. The Baron was full of swagger, bombastic bonhomie and a hit with the ladies. He eventually rose to the rank of Inspector General and retired to the NYC social circuit after becoming a US citizen, fittingly, on July 4, 1786. An interesting footnote, he and Henry Knox founded the Society of Cincinnati, which is connected mainly by name to our fair city while carrying forward the ideals of the Roman general in Washington D.C. Nine states honor his name in cities and counties, notably Steubenville upriver, although if it really wanted to appropriately put on the Ritz as the Baron would have liked, might rechristen itself as Ludolf Gerhard Augustin von Steubenville.

The Baron’s legacy is summed up in Nick’s final paragraph, and I quote: “Von Steuben left Europe destitute. He arrived as a foreigner to the shores of America in revolt, in need of a job and with questionable documentation. He became an American who organized this new country’s military through assiduous application, and achieved the utmost respect from its Founding Father.”

Sam brought the story of Haym Salomon, also from Poland, also central to the Revolutionary War but from the financial flank of the conflict. Although neither Pulaski’s nor von Steuben’s religion played a central role to their journey to America, Salomon’s Jewish background did figure prominently, both in the family seeking refuge in Poland from Western Europe post-Inquisition, and then out of Poland when the Russians, Prussians and Austrians invaded. During Haym’s travels he learned German, Dutch, French and English and this fluency aided his career and his new country. In 1773, Salomon became a member of the “Association of the Sons of Liberty” and from that day forward, played an invaluable role in bankrolling the colonial version of Brexit. As both Ted and Nick pointed out, Washington’s Army was perpetually in need of capital and Haym repeatedly came to the rescue with specie and credit, even as the Continental currency

depreciated time and again, falling to a low of 1/40 of its face value. Robert Morris came to the fore as “Superintendent of the Finance of the United States” and thankfully also had Salomon to turn to for loans. Between 1782-1785, Haym personally advanced Morris over \$200K, equaling \$4.6M in today’s dollars, as well as an additional \$93K which would equal \$2M today, to Michael Hillegas, the Continental Treasurer. A post-War reckoning happened as the new country sought to create a financial foundation, sadly Salomon did not live to see the outcome of his investments in the establishment of new currency. But in 1941, statues of George Washington, flanked by Robert Morris and Haym Salomon, were dedicated in Chicago to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Bill of Rights. And so the budget came full circle.

It’s worth noting that attendance on the 26th might have been affected by the first 2016 Presidential Debates. Without choosing sides, it’s extraordinary how the subjects of the papers from first two meetings of the Literary Club spotlighted the heroic role of newcomers to our country. Perhaps we can politely ask both candidates to read and reference these stirring works so they can remind themselves whence we came. Nick introduced the word “Truthiness” in his paper, so as that Pandora’s box has been opened, I suspect that we’ll collectively endure a wagon load of truthiness until the next time our minutes are read on the evening before the presidential election.