

MINUTES OF LITERARY CLUB  
SEPTEMBER 20, 2010

On September 20, 2010, President Gibby Carey gaveled the 161<sup>st</sup> season of our Club into existence in the presence of 63 members and 3 guests. President Carey made a number of announcements, chief of them that the Board of Management has chosen Allen Winkler as Trustee to fill the vacancy created by the ascendancy of Vice President Frederick McGavran to that exalted position. In a quickly recurring pattern, the President announced that Trustee Winkler would assume his current post upon his return from a sabbatical excursion to Kenya. He then announced that both the President and Secretary would be absent over the next two weeks with the Vice President, the aforesaid Mr. McGavran, and this writer filling in during their absences.

In a break with tradition, President Carey announced that the annual business meeting was postponed, to be rescheduled for a later date. As he generously stated, "I owe you a business meeting and you shall have one." After a quick opening and closing of the Haberdasher's Booth, the President turned the floor over to Randolph ("Ducky") Wadsworth who presented his paper, "Peep Show."

"Peep Show" was largely concerned with learned analysis of the Diary of Samuel Pepys which Pepys kept from 1660-1669. Initially a reluctant reader, Ducky gradually became an enthusiastic devotee of Pepys and his Diary when his wife Sally surprised him with a gift of the II Volume Standard Edition of the Diary at the start of their summer vacation some years ago. Ducky treated us to commentary on the life and character of Pepys; on the free and easy social and political currents of the early days of the Restoration of the English monarchy after Cromwell; and the matters discussed in the Diary. These focused on personalities and events emanating from Pepys's post as Clerk of the Acts to the Navy Board. The Navy Board supervised naval dockyards and the purchase of naval stores; provided for the building and maintenance of ships; for the payment of officers and crews; and the victualling of the fleet. Pepys was a splendid bureaucrat. He was also very well placed, having been in the flotilla that brought Charles II back from exile in Holland in 1660.

In addition to detailing Pepys's dyspeptic complaints about his colleagues on the Navy Board, the Diary touched on other matters in the London of the 1660s including the Great Fire of 1666, the Dutch War of the mid-1660s, and the Plague of 1665.

After a successful defense of criticized actions of the Navy Board in a three-hour speech to Parliament in 1668, Pepys matched that high point in his public life with what some might call a low one in private when his wife discovered him in flagrante delicto with Deb Willett, a 17 year-old girl who was one of her servants.

"Peep Show" was a classic Ducky Wadsworth performance, combining meticulous research with a tantalizing glimpse into the private world of the Wadsworths. It was interesting to hear not only about Samuel Pepys but also about Ducky's initiation into Restoration literature in his college days as well as the habits of the Wadsworth family in transporting itself and their beloved Pulik, Hungarian sheep dogs, faithful retainers of the Wadsworth family for many years, to and from their summer residence someplace in the wilds of Canada above New York State. Editor's Note: The current

writer was himself a former owner of a Puli, and a recent resident of London's Nell Gwynn House (Nell Gwynn being one of Charles II's favorite mistresses). Hence personal elements may well influence the writer's gratification at the paper's scholarly erudition as well as its personal touches.

After the paper, President Carey continued what well may be a year-long Krisstalnacht, as he smashes Literary Club traditions. Summarily transferring the official induction of new members into the Club embodied in the ceremonial signing of the Constitution from beginning of meeting to end, the President summoned T. Stephen Phillips to endorse that worthy document. After a short but thorough search, the Constitution was found secreted in full view on top of the Secretary's desk. In keeping with the evening's iconoclasm, Mr. Phillips in unprecedented remarks, caustically but quite justly accused the Secretary Pro Tem of hazing him by creating a patently false picture of the process of signing the Constitution.

As these winds of change blew through the hallowed chamber, the members cheerfully assented to President Carey's timely call for adjournment.

Respectfully submitted,

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Anthony G. Covatta, Secretary Pro Tem

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#### MINUTES OF LITERARY CLUB SEPTEMBER 27, 2010

On September 27, 2010, Vice President Fred McGavran convened the second session of the Literary Club for the year before 57 members and one guest. After announcing the publication of Robert Vitz's new book At the Center, a history of the Mercantile Library, he turned the floor over to Tuck Asbury, who brought the budget for the month.

Tuck gave the group the long and short of it, himself the author of both papers presented. The first, "Andrew Jackson, His Friends and Foes," was an extended analysis of Andrew Jackson's ascension to the White House, personal and political relationships during his two terms, and summary treatment of the years after Jackson left the Presidency in 1836 up to Lincoln's election in 1860.

Jackson was a combination of great strengths and significant weaknesses. It is generally recognized that Jackson extended the powers and outlook of the Presidency considerably beyond those employed by the first six presidents. Tuck noted that Jackson's election in 1828, saw an expansion of the franchise, with popular voting rather than legislative selection of electors in all but two of the states. Jackson capitalized on his distinguished war record, notably his defeat of the British at New Orleans at the close of the War of 1812 to defeat John Quincy Adams.

This capped his remarkable rise from birth in the backwoods of North Carolina, loss of his father at the age of one and of his mother at 14. Through dint of hard work the orphaned Jackson became a practicing lawyer, then U.S. Attorney, Congressman, Major General in the Tennessee Militia, and finally a General in the U. S. Army. Prior to assuming the Presidency, Jackson led a tempestuous life including duels to the death and his marriage to his beloved wife, Rachel, a union marred by his probably having married her before she divorced her prior husband. Nevertheless, the union was a very happy one.

While Jackson's Presidency was singularly successful, it was marked by considerable strife, including dissension within his own Cabinet involving his friend, John Henry Eaton, his Secretary of War, and Eaton's wife, Margaret, a beauty with a past not unlike that of Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, the current First Lady of France. Margaret was not received in Washington with the acceptance enjoyed by the well-traveled Ms. Bruni-Sarkozy.

Beyond domestic controversies, the strong-willed Jackson flouted the authority of the Supreme Court and had a tenuous relationship with Chief Justice John Marshall. Jackson also upset both political parties by vetoing the proposed paved road from Maysville, Kentucky, to Lexington, which would have been the first paved road west of the Alleghenies. Tuck noted that the road now known as the Maysville-Lexington Pike was eventually built with private funds and runs by a farm owned by his family. Jackson would have been amazed and let's hope not perturbed to see the interstate system that is the lifeline of commerce in our country today.

The low point of Jackson's administration was the forced removal of the Seminoles from Florida to the West. Jackson's lifelong hostility to the American Indians was an unforgivable blot on his character. He was also an unapologetic slaveholder. Another controversy in which Jackson played a strong and perhaps wrong-headed role was his opposition to renewal of the charter of the National Bank.

Perhaps his finest hour was his work in preserving the Union, fighting hard against the nullification movement led by John Calhoun, Senator from South Carolina and erstwhile Vice President during Jackson's first term. The nullification doctrine held that states' rights were paramount and if adopted would have effectively eviscerated the Union. While Daniel Webster and Henry Clay led the fight against nullification in Congress, Jackson worked with them behind the scenes. His efforts along with those of Webster and Clay staved off the cataclysm that was the Civil War for another 30 years.

Turning to the years after Jackson left the White House, Tuck remarked that only one strong president ruled during the period of 1840-1860, James K. Polk. Tuck gave Henry Clay, his and this writer's fellow native Kentuckian, high marks for his frequent use of compromise to attain goals that were good for the country. Tuck feels that Jackson, the Democrat, and Clay, the Whig, were the great men of their day, even though they were implacable enemies.

In the second paper of the evening, "Our Club: Then and Now," Tuck made cursory but trenchant observations, comparing the Club today with the Club of 50 years ago, when he first joined. Hoping to keep a few areas sacrosanct for each sex, including the Literary Club, Tuck observed that there are more lawyers and fewer physicians than 50 years ago and that the Club is decidedly more liberal politically,

although not without some dedicated (if deluded, Editor's note) conservatives. The Club has taken at least a stab at diversity, and Tuck hopes that this will continue.

After some perhaps personal remarks about the periodic noisy descent of his colleague, Dr. Ralph Carothers, into the arms of Morpheus, Tuck approvingly remarked that group congratulation of the evening's essayist has supplanted a time when few, if any, approached the reader upon completion of the paper. Today most of the audience files by with a friendly word or compliment and as Tuck observes, regardless of the quality of the paper. Tuck believes that the papers of today are significantly better than those of the past. Finally, Tuck opined that the Club owes its longevity and quality to its adherence to tradition and the policy of making few changes, those only after careful consideration. Closing on a positive note, he feels that the Club is more vigorous than ever and it is for him, as for all of us, a privilege to be a member.

The Secretary Pro Tem cannot help observing that after Vice President McGavran adjourned the meeting, the members demonstrated that they had listened carefully to Mr. Asbury's presentation, evidenced in their filing en masse to the front of the room to congratulate Tuck on his successful presentation of the budget.

Respectfully submitted,

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Anthony G. Covatta, Secretary Pro Tem

Minutes of the Literary Club  
October 4, 2010

On October 4, 2010, Vice President Fred McGavran presided over a meeting of 59 members and 4 guests. He began with several announcements, including David Black's recent placement in hospice care. Said Fred, whoever seeks someone "who faces death with courage and equanimity need look no further than David Black."

He announced that Jerry Kaufman, who (not unreasonably) believes alcohol consumption to be one of the pleasures of the Literary Club, was graciously putting forth some samples of Maker's46 in packaging resplendently created by his firm, LPK. The brand is the first variation on the distiller's staple, Maker's Mark, in 50 years.

Vice President McGavran then yielded the lectern to Britton Harwood, whose paper, "His Leaving of It," was an evaluation of the word "tragedy" in regard to Richard Nixon's resignation from office. Brit said that he would make his assessment by examining Nixon's farewell address to his staff on the morning of his departure from the White House.

Distinguishing between a devalued use of the word "tragedy" in contemporary culture and a more classic, literary, definition, Brit argued that Nixon's self-justification and denial throughout the Watergate agonies were his tragic unraveling. While he conceded mistakes, the President stressed that they were never for personal gain; he

denied ever taking a bribe. But as Brit pointed out, it was the first article of impeachment that “nailed him” for giving them.

Brit referenced the President’s formal resignation, on network television, as stiff and bloodless. By contrast, his address the next morning to the White House Staff was memorable for both its grace and humanity. In his farewell to his staff, Nixon quoted Teddy Roosevelt about the importance of remaining ever “in the arena.” “Always give your best, never get discouraged, never be petty; always remember others may hate you, but those who hate you don’t win unless you hate them, and then you destroy yourself.”

Where did that come from? Brit asked. He concluded, “As Malcolm famously said of the first thane of Cawdor, ‘Nothing in his life /became him like the leaving of it.’”

Minutes of the Literary Club  
October 11, 2010

Before 47 members and 6 guests, President Carey announced that Sam Trufant, a member since 1955, is relocating to New Jersey to be closer to his family. Gibby said that Sam is the club’s most senior regular member, and he will be greatly missed.

Other announcements included news that two members’ spouses, Val Sena and Charlin Briggs, had experienced difficult falls in recent days – “knocked up” by misfortune, Mr. Carey said with perhaps more compassion than precision. He said that Jim Fitzgerald has received the Hammer Award from the Architectural Foundation of Cincinnati. The Award is given annually to someone who contributes greatly to the betterment of the city’s environment.

Jack Lindy then delivered his sad, moving and complexly crafted story of Maggie Lee, a woman long on talent but unlucky in life. The tale opened with Maggie’s seemingly inexplicable death at the base of a steep cliff; it ended with the painful recognition that suicide was her solution to her unhappiness. The narratives between, reflecting viewpoints from several who knew her, took her from early childhood to her tormented later years, all knit together by the gossamer presence of Jack’s ethereal “dream catcher” – a subtle voice shaping and interpreting the events throughout. By the time it was over, the word “Pacts,” as Jack called his story, had become a metaphor for the contracts and deals by which all of us learn to survive (or not), and Jack’s sensitive presentation echoed in these chambers. Long applause followed.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
October 18, 2010

Before 63 members and 10 guests, President Carey offered brief news and views, then noted the re-posting of a constitutional amendment, with modifications, relating to the Club’s financial re-organization. He said that because papers were often hard to hear in the middle of the floor, the night’s speaker had agreed to try a body mike in hopes of improvement.

Polk Laffoon then delivered “Lyrically Inclined,” a look at the life, times and lyrics of composer Cole Porter. Starting with a broad-brush evaluation, Polk noted that Porter was wealthy enough to avoid work completely, yet frequently worked freakishly hard to

achieve his success; that acceptance did not come early, nor was it consistent when it did; that while Porter was married to one of the great beauties of his age, his homosexuality consigned them to a sexless union; that in mid-career, at the height of his fame, he was crippled by a riding accident that left him in pain and immobile for the rest of his life; that in 2006, the American Poets Project published a small volume of his lyrics, catapulting him into the exalted company of Walt Whitman and Amy Lowell.

Laffoon leavened his prose with Porter's lyrics, ranging from the happily licentious "Let's Do It," to the unjustifiably obscure, "But In the Morning, No." He traced the derivation of two of the most famous songs, the context of the putatively biographical film, "Night and Day," Porter's triumph with "Kiss Me Kate" and the fast, sad unraveling of his final years. Finally, he asked: Will Porter's songs endure over the long haul? Polk's conclusion, supported by observations from a CCM professional, is that they will.

Immediately following Polk's paper, Bill Sena offered an interim financial report. The Club, he said, is in good financial shape, with three investment funds totaling some \$660,000 – which he characterized as a substantial amount. The largest of the funds, the endowment fund, contains between \$500,000 and \$550,000. Ninety percent of it is more or less divided between equities and fixed income; ten percent is in cash. A second fund, the Herb Curry fund, contains about \$100,000 in fixed income; its purpose is to aid with the spring picnic.

The final fund, about \$6,600, given by Eslie Asbury, is for exterior maintenance. Bill noted that we are between six and 24 months from needing to update the heating and air-conditioning, and that while it's not imminent, the roof will need work down the road. Bill said that to properly fund such projects, we would either need to undertake a capital campaign or the membership would have to approve invading the endowment fund.

He said the Club takes in about \$40,000 annually from dues and initiation fees; it realizes another \$20,000 from the endowment. With expenses amounting to about \$51,000 annually, the Club has an annual surplus of nearly \$10,000. The building has a book value of \$865,000; Bill thinks it's worth more. It has assets in its collection of about \$150,000, which are carried for \$100,000. The Club has no liabilities.

Ed Burdell said that the Club's three furnaces and four air-conditioners do not meet today's standards; the security of its flat roof – Ed slyly likened this to NPR's view of campaign finance reform -- is probably a lesson in futility. He asked that the membership keep eyes peeled for moisture bubbles. Nevertheless, he said, major work on the brickwork and chimneys was completed this past summer, and that, on balance, the Club's physical plant is in good shape.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
October 25, 2010

Seventy-eight members and one guest attended the Literary Club's 161<sup>st</sup> anniversary dinner. President Carey recognized the presence of notable associate members, Ken Blackwell and Nick Clooney. He encouraged those gathered to enjoy food and wine generously subsidized by a bequest of former member George

Rieveschl. Enthusiastic applause honored both George's memory and the diners' intentions.

The evening's paper, "One Mystery Member," was number 24 in John Diehl's annual – and remarkable – series of sketches from the Literary Club's history. This one had a goal: to clarify the record on the legitimate membership in the Club of General George Brinton McClellan. Although his induction is recorded in the minutes of Nov. 17, 1860, McClellan does not appear in the list of all past and active members first published in 1890, nor in several issues of the roster published many years later.

What happened?

In a spare but fascinating chronicling of the soldier's rise to fame as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Potomac, John demonstrated how several character flaws – perfectionism, egotism, a stubborn inferiority complex and a propensity for delay – soon soured that career. They also leaked into a memoir published posthumously, in 1886, laying bare the general's ill will toward one John Pope – a very popular member of the Literary Club, and one who, John surmises, could even have nominated McClellan for membership.

John's conclusion, supported by unflattering references to the general that he found in two subsequent Literary Club reminiscences, is that the general was "knowingly and purposely excluded from the list." With the passage of time, however, the resentments subsided, and in 1974, John notes that Club historian Eslie Asbury restored McClellan's legitimacy. A bravura addition to our roster, John concluded, much as his paper was another bravura performance.

The anniversary evening concluded with the traditional President's address. President Carey began by professing his great love for the Literary Club, his feeling of privilege to belong for these past 23 years, his respect and commitment to fellow members.

But more than all that, he said, it is the papers that he hears each week that are so special to him – papers bringing, "something I did not know, something important, something interesting, something moving or beautiful or funny, and something memorable that will open up a niche in my mind and stick with me."

Gibby extolled the rich variety of topics heard in a "typical" ninety-day interval just last year. He reveled in the many different styles brought to the lectern. And he concluded by recalling his own three favorites, all with the flair and brio of the master elocutionist that we are now pleased to call our President.

Respectfully submitted,

Polk Laffoon IV

Minutes of the Literary Club  
November 1, 2010

Sixty-one members and two guests joined in a birthday salute to President Gibby Carey, singing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" and "Happy Birthday" in rousing chorus.

The somewhat abashed object of these revelries then advised those gathered that membership stands at 97, and that there is room for others. He asked us to "be on

the lookout for worthy additions” and to read David Edmundson’s memo on the membership process.

The evening’s paper, “Like a Stone that Fell from the Moon,” delivered by Tom Lorman, focused on composer Anton Bruckner. Reverently, and with great feeling for the music he described, Tom traced the arc of Bruckner’s life (1824-1896) – his Catholic upbringing as the son of an organist, his miserable early adulthood as a schoolmaster, his decision to study music when he could not contain the compositions pouring from his soul, the adversity of critics, his posthumous adoption by the Nazis and, more recently, the renaissance restoring him to his rightful place within the canon of great men of music.

Who among us hearing Tom’s narrative will forget the young Bruckner rising at 4 a.m. to master the full repertoire for the liturgical year, his foregoing composing for a full 14 years while studying music theory, his three versions of so many of his symphonies (one his, one to satisfy associates, a third to respond to critics)? Bruckner was an oddball, in his dress, in his parochialism, in his unrequited love life. But he was also, as Tom put it, the author of “music devoted to exploring the turmoil of man’s relationship with his Creator, the depths of his forsakenness, the raptures of his redemption . . . It is his faith that is reflected, made real, in his music.”

Tom, currently a visiting scholar in London, flew in for his paper, and the membership was very glad he did.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
November 8, 2010

President Carey called the meeting to order before 55 members and six guests. He reminded the membership that the University Club makes available its services to members for dinner prior to our Monday meetings. He also cited Lenhardt’s as a gathering place for Literary Club members for Friday luncheons.

Harry Santen’s debut paper, “Luigi,” quickly petitioned the interest of all assembled with the description of his protagonist’s breasts, “more pointed than round,” and of her love of life and interest in men, causing those same appendages “to firm and her nipples to show.” Harry went on, however, to prove himself something of a tease with a sober piece of fiction focused on inconstancy, criminality and revenge.

The story broke down into two distinct parts, the first centering on a charming but unreliable rogue named Luigi. Luigi courted the aforementioned protagonist, got her in a family way, then vanished, leaving his hapless lover to raise the child alone. The second part of the tale focused on that child – a second Luigi – who wound up being raised by his grandmother (his mother didn’t stick around for him either) and, who, as soon as he was able, struck out on his own.

This second Luigi, obsessed at an early age with Roman antiquities, was soon illegally spiriting them from off-limit spaces and finding ways to make saleable fakes through a black market dealer. Since I am not in the business here of giving away crucial plot twists, suffice to say that the two Luigis do not remain strangers to one another forever, and that their eventual re-connection is as unexpected as it is fraught.

While Harry brought it all to a tidy closure, he also satisfied with this lasting aftertaste: the two Luigis, each unsavory in his own way, deserve nothing so much as one another.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
November 15, 2010

Before 73 members and five guests, President Carey noted that Cincinnati Art Museum attendance, under director Aaron Betsky, is up 33 percent over year ago, and that Rich Lauf, chairman of the local Metropolitan Opera auditions, is sending two winners to New York.

The evening's paper, "Where the Past is Always Present" by Robert Smith, focused on Irish poet, playwright and novelist Oliver Goldsmith. Robert talked feelingly of Goldsmith's childhood and education in the Emerald Isle, his drift to England and discovery of his ability to write, his adoption into the literary circles of Dr. Johnson and others. The paper examined Goldsmith's two greatest poems, "The Traveller" and "The Deserted Village," in some depth, then fanned out into various connections between Goldsmith and our own Literary Club, including papers about him more than 100 years ago and the naming of Mt. Auburn from a line in "The Deserted Village."

Lacing his text with verses from many sources, Robert was spellbinding with one in particular: an old Irish galloping ballad about the Irish folk hero "Gallopog Hogan." Questioning his own ability to sing anything, Robert promptly launched into an impassioned chant: "Ho Gallopog Hogan! Gallopog Hogan, Gallopog all along!/On his saddle is a saber, on his lips there is a song." You could have heard a pin drop.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
November 22, 2010

President Carey opened the meeting by noting that there is only one new member candidate in the pipeline and that the board would welcome additional nominations. He added a plea that any candidates be "literate people."

Referencing former president Bob Dorsey's careful chronicling of Literary Clubbers beyond these precincts, he said (1) that Bob Vitz has been named #2 in competitive walking by a local periodical (2) that Rich Newrock achieved unwanted attention in a Sunday Enquirer article on UC faculty salaries, (3) that Robert Smith achieved unwanted attention by responding to a doctor-in-the-house call for someone experiencing a seizure at the College Conservatory of Music's opening of "Evita". For his trouble, Robert was kicked in the forehead – but still enjoyed the rest of the performance.

Then, before 58 members and two guests, Dusty Andersen introduced us to Major-General Charles Gordon, one of Victorian England's most brilliant military strategists, fearless in combat, striving into battle armed only with a walking stick and a huge cigar. He was a charismatic leader of men, a lifelong lover of the company of young boys (he never married) and a devout Christian who believed literally in the Bible's every word. His career-long wish was to die in battle, looking forward, as Dusty told us, "to a wonderful life in the hereafter."

With impressive enthusiasm for detail, Dusty took us through Gordon's role in China suppressing the Taiping Rebellion of 1850 to 1864, and later, in trying to rout the slave trade of Equatorial Africa. For the first of these, the general received one of history's great nicknames: "Chinese" Gordon; for the second, he was awarded the post of governor-general of Sudan by the Khedive of Egypt. But he didn't like it, said Dusty: "The huge palace was too pretentious; the formal wining and dining were alien to his nature. He was appalled at the number of servants who were supposed to attend him, even to assist him in mounting and dismounting his camel. But most of all he was bored. He wanted action."

It took several years, and more restless interludes, in India and Palestine among others, to snare it, but in late 1884, he found himself in the Sudan once more, intent on rebuffing a Sufi uprising under the leadership of a Muslim Sufi who had taken the title of "the Mahdi." Alas, this time the magic failed. Gordon miscalculated in several important respects, and before reinforcements could arrive, he was cut down in the thick of the Mahdi's onslaught. Khartoum was left to the insurgents and Gordon, ironically, to the end he had so long sought.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
November 29, 2010

With 58 members and three guests gathered, President Carey announced that Club Vice President Fred McGavran had received another prize for his fiction, this one in England; he asked Chris Miller to give details on his 18th anniversary Christmas concert at Mother of God Church in Covington. Gibby described this concert as one of the great treats of the holiday season. Chris encouraged members to become involved with his holiday chorale at the club, already in rehearsal. Gibby said that the following week members would vote on a constitutional amendment allowing for an increase in the number of honorary members.

It was a budget night, with the first of two papers, by John Steiner, a smorgasbord of factoids concerning medical members of the Literary Club in the middle of the nineteenth century. One example: Dr. John Shaw Billings, whose thesis on the treatment of epilepsy had enough literary value to gain him admittance to the club and whose veiled critique of a powerful but negligent surgeon named Blackman may have created lasting reverberations in the handling of the dread condition. John concluded that Literarians then and now form an "invisible college" of shared interest in good and well-researched papers, regardless of their age.

Rollin Workman's story, "So Let it Be With Caesar," read with great expression by Dale Flick, told of Bill, a pillar of his small community, and his half-brother Larry, who lived on society's fringes. Larry had businesses in high interest loans, check cashing, and procuring for drug dealers. For the inevitable clashing of the two, Rollin shaped a resolution worthy of O'Henry, neatly offsetting a chicanery in Bill with a nobility in Larry that none of us could have anticipated. Add to that the narration of the story by a cat, or a woman named Kitty – we can't be totally sure which -- and we went then, as we do now, purring to our refreshments.

Respectfully submitted,

Polk Laffoon IV

Minutes of the Literary Club  
December 7, 2010

Before 56 members and one guest, President Carey announced that three members are pooling dollars to have the John Weiss painting in the front room cleaned, and they would welcome contributions. He said that Chris Miller's Christmas concert in Covington the previous night was first-rate, as always. He noted that Joe Moran has an article in a trade magazine on powder horns in the French and Indian War. A different magazine, this one local, named Cincy, has listed Jack McDonough and Ted Silberstein as two of the best doctors in the city.

On the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day, Peter Lowry recalled World War II as the juggernaut of a generation, the ineluctable dividing line between events that happened "before the war" or, as Peter came to know them, "after the war." He drew a vivid portrait of life in America at that time – getting the news by radio, watching grandparents read of battles in the newspapers as they recognized the sons of friends at risk, seeing silver stars in apartment windows – signifying someone from within away at war.

Peter talked about the day he learned the war had stopped – how abrupt it was, and how incomprehensible to him that this *thing* that had always been with them was suddenly . . . over. He recalled his father's homecoming, a stranger in a blue navy uniform, prompting Peter to take cues from his mother as to how to act. He told us of ration stamps, of the point system within the military that dictated when someone in the service could come home and what some Cincinnatians experienced overseas.

The paper's second half focused with freeze-frame immediacy on several unnamed individuals on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941 – what they were doing, and how news of the Japanese attack stopped them in time. Again we observed an America now vanished: the comics people were reading, the baseball icons – Babe Ruth and Dom DiMaggio – they worshipped, the improbable notion that Cincinnati could have more cars registered than Boston. We felt the nation's fright as it came to grips with the inevitability of war.

Yet for all its sober discourse, Peter's paper offered enough wry observations to be personal as well as historical. His mother, he said, dealt with the stress in part by learning to drink martinis – but only two on any given day. Said Peter, "In college, when I began to experiment with alcohol stronger than beer, I learned to appreciate the wisdom of her limit. I find that martinis are like women's breasts. One is not enough, but three is too many." Thank you, Peter, for that.

At the conclusion of the paper, the members ratified a proposal to expand the number of honorary members from ten to twelve.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
December 14, 2010

President Carey launched this meeting of 56 members and six guests with the unhappy news that treasurer Bill Sena had suffered a bad fall, but was on the mend,

and then with the very happy news that Jerry Kathman had seen to the replenishment of the Club's supply of the new Maker's 46. Cheers erupted.

Gibby noted that neurosurgeon John Tew, who has seen 12,000 patients in 45 years, has been named a Great Living Cincinnatian by the regional chamber of commerce. He then reviewed the order of proceedings for the holiday party the next week.

Albert Pyle's paper, "Milan," was on one level a recollection of Colonel Milan Anjelkovic, the displaced person, or DP, who came to live with the Pyle household when Albert was not yet six years old. It was an inquiry as to why his parents would have taken in this stranger, and why they allowed him to stay, as Albert phrased it, "for at least two childbirths." They were questions for which Albert's now 95-year-old father has only vague answers today.

On a deeper level, though, the paper was a meditation on Albert's early upbringing in a stark exurb of Chicago: the kinds of people his parents were, the modest six-room house in which he and his three brothers bunked in two rooms, everyone sharing a single bathroom; the primitive bindery where his father worked; the bicycle lessons through which, against all odds, Albert learned to ride; the dinner hour when his mother "trashed the kitchen as badly as a busload of hippies on an all-day acid trip."

The Pyle ancestral homestead was situated near the church and monastery of St. Sava, a locus of Serbian émigrés for decades and the lure to Northeast Illinois for Milan Anjelkovic. He came there as a result of the post-World War II Balkan upheavals that created Yugoslavia but uprooted countless thousands. Albert embroidered his narrative with a careful blend of this history, the ensuing politics and the colonel's shadowy, anti-communist maneuverings; he also gave it a nice, surprise ending.

Nor should I omit the Orthodox priest, "gotten up like a Byzantine ceiling," the paper cutter "capable of cutting a human thorax in two," and a childhood in the "dark days long ago before parents felt obliged to get their children ready for Princeton minutes after conception." For those of us who count on Albert to be droll, he did not disappoint.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
December 21, 2010

At the annual holiday party, President Carey called some already merry proceedings to order slightly earlier than planned, observing paternalistically, "if we waited until it was time, you'd all be sloshed." Chris Miller then delighted 72 members and two guests with the professionalism of his Yuletide chorus. Considerable home-grown talent and nine guest musicians took us through more than a dozen seasonal selections, including four sing-alongs that rang these ancient rafters. A sumptuous Christmas dinner followed.

The first of three trustee papers, delivered by Hal Porter, focused on Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Hal shaped his remarks after reading the book last summer and finding himself "overcome" by the quality of its writing, by how sophisticated it is, how fresh its message still.

He told us how Stowe came to write it, moved by contemporary laws that, in effect, endorsed slavery, and by her own revulsion at how the "evil institution" tore

families apart. Married to a biblical scholar, and mother of seven, she was near poverty when she began her project. In 1852, the year the book was published, it sold a breathtaking 300,000 copies. It became the single best-selling novel in the world, translated into 58 languages in Harriet's lifetime.

The book, of course, radically altered Harriet Beecher Stowe's circumstances, making her world famous and the toast of the literati of her day. As admirable, in Porter's view, was her personal growth; throwing over the harsh Puritan orthodoxy of her renowned father, Lyman Beecher, she embraced something she had never grown up with: the loving possibilities of Christianity. Hal ended his paper, appropriately, with something else Harriet never knew as a child – gathering her children around a tree on Christmas Eve.

Jack McDonough's paper explored the long-standing McDonough family tradition of celebrating Brownies at Christmas time. Brownies, in Jack's carefully limned description, are "small, hard-working elf-like creatures that live in houses and barns," and are "said to come out at night and finish the housework that has been left undone." Jack then reported how these charming fantasy creatures had come to be associated with Christmas in his parents' house – a holiday radio program was the catalyst – and the lengths to which his sainted mother went to arrange Brownie "sightings" outside the wintry windows of her children and great grandchildren for many, many years.

For those listening closely, two additional memories stood out. The first was Jack's 1951 recall of his childhood self so frightened by the tale of a Banshee, delivered at his grandfather's wake, that he almost "peed in his pants." The second was hearing his name on a radio broadcast, at the age of eight, after his mother had arranged with the program host to say on air what her children were requesting for Christmas. That time, Jack "almost passed out." From the composed adult we know well, this glimpse of the child was both charming and disarming.

Allan Winkler's paper, about leading a just-concluded foreign study program in East Africa, was a chronicling of stress gracefully endured.

Allan's wife, Sara, who has Parkinson's Disease, had been the one to promote the trip, but once arrived, her illness flared, and she was forced to return to the States. Allan, left alone with both his students from Miami University, and hers from Earlham College, was suddenly in charge of everything.

We heard about hunkering in compounds with neither water, nor electricity, nor pit latrines. Allan lived out of a suitcase and was, as he put it, relentlessly lonely. For three months he was "coordinator, director, teacher, father figure, disciplinarian, all rolled into one" – some of them roles for which he felt singularly unsuited. Worse, the Earlham students resented him throughout because their institution had not compensated for Sara's loss. "They viewed me as an imposter," he said, "complicit in the decision to send no replacement."

Despite it all, the trip was surprisingly successful, leaving Allan to feel "pride in a job well done and irritation at the little bastards for their total inability to recognize how well things had gone."

Now that he has that one under his belt, maybe Allan would like to lead a group of us somewhere. I think he's up to the challenge!

Minutes of the Literary Club

January 3, 2010

The New Year began with President Carey announcing the removal of the Club's John Weiss painting for restoration and offering miscellaneous news updates before 59 members and three guests.

On the cards listing January's offerings, Richard Wendel coyly entitled his paper "Then and Now." Once at the lectern, however, he informed us that its more appropriate name would be "Healthcare: Then & Now." And indeed, that proved to be the case.

Dick's paper, coming only nine nights after the Yule, was a veritable Christmas goose so stuffed with facts about the medical profession – today, yesterday and even (speculatively) tomorrow – that anyone seeking insight as to how the nation's health delivery system turned into the unholy mess it is could do a lot worse than to start with Dick's magnum opus.

Leading with a sentence that set the literary tone for the whole piece -- "The burdensome high cost of healthcare is the basic driving force behind healthcare reform" – Dick told us first of the major role healthcare plays in the economy. He offered five ways to improve the system quickly, assuming politics and special interests could be ignored.

He then flashed back almost a half century to what medicine was like in Cincinnati when he was entering the field: the primitive doctors' offices, procedures and tools in use, the UC Medical School, the then powerful department heads, the General Hospital and the Cincinnati Academy of Medicine. It was a trip down Memory Lane larded with detail and, for some, certainly, nostalgia.

The paper concluded with an overview of how things are done today, from the growth of malpractice to the transformation of the Medical Center. Dick ruminated on the doctor/patient relationship, took a cut at evaluating the new health care bill and even made a few cautious predictions about where it's all going.

But his greatest emotional response – and it was pretty great -- had already come and gone. That was when Dick told us how, in bygone days, erectile dysfunction was "unmentionable, not to mention untreatable, and my father, a urologist, would counsel patients that 'there are only so many shots in the gun; go home and live with it.'"

A coda to the evening was the annual financial report, presented by Bill Sena. The bottom line: We are in good fiscal order, with income marginally exceeding expenses and with the endowment fund up 11 percent for the year. Bill advised us that in 2011 it may be difficult to get the returns on bonds that we got in 2010. He reported that the Club's physical plant is in good shape, although one major capital expenditure looms. Said Gibby, "We look nervously toward the roof at all times."

Minutes of the Literary Club  
January 10, 2010

A good-sized assembly – 61 members and 10 guests – heard first the sad news of David Black's death, and a moment of silence was observed.

President Carey next reported that Librarian Dale Flick had placed on the Club's Web site the journals of Murat Halstead, one of 19<sup>th</sup> century Cincinnati's distinguished men of letters; the pages identified record Halstead's travels with Samuel Clemons.

Gibby next pointed out the impressive work of Jim Myers, who is battling to save for posterity the Club's 19<sup>th</sup> century papers, many of them, by Gibby's description, "illegible, written in fading ink on crumbling paper." While there are no simple technological solutions for Jim's task, he is finding that reading the papers into a voice recognition program has salvaged some 50 of the documents so far – and Jim continues at the task. A big round of applause for Jim followed.

Gibby congratulated Jim Fitzgerald, whose design firm, FRCH, was singled out for excellence on two counts in a recent trade magazine.

Tony Covatta's paper, "Return to Xanadu," was in equal parts about his recent rediscovery of three Beat Generation poets – Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Allen Ginsberg and Gregory Corso -- and a somewhat uncomfortable journey into the self occasioned by that discovery.

Finding Gregory Corso's Italian grave in on a recent trip to Rome, Tony had begun re-reading the Beats – who had been absent from his bedside table for many years. Some of it he found wonderful: Ferlinghetti's "A Coney Island of the Mind" was "a delight." Ginsberg's "Howl," that "long barbaric yawp," is something he has truly come to like. He read from both.

But what really struck Tony about these works was their impassioned protest of the commercialism and conformity of mid-century America, set against the free spirits, exuberance and promise of the country at its beginnings. The conflict, he recognized, was within himself as well: "This endeavor has gotten me back in touch with the youthful spirit with which I descended upon New York City (for graduate school) in 1961. Full of hope in a world that was turning to destruction and despair, I felt the virtue in a rebirth of wonder and spirit in a world become and becoming all too venal."

Tony's paper touched upon the Beat novelists Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs. It examined Corso's poetry, which Tony had scarcely read before. In it, in addition to the same themes set forth by Ferlinghetti and Ginsberg, he found reference to Percy Bysshe Shelley, who was Corso's idol. The paper evaluated, although not conclusively, the enduring worth of the Beats' contributions.

In the end, Tony left us with the recognition that Corso and the others had strived for ecstasy, "the pure delight of achievement, both artistic and otherwise." They may not have realized it fully, but they made the effort. Tony gives them much credit for that. We can only hope he is as gentle with himself.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
January 17, 2011

Before 53 members and three guests, President Carey reported that David Black's funeral was a special and stately occasion, with an overflow crowd and military honors. He said that Fred McGavran is heading a committee to develop a Club memorial for David, and he solicited help from anyone wanting to participate.

Gibby said that the board of management has created a position of archivist – the Club's 4<sup>th</sup> appointed position, and that this person will be responsible for preparation

of the Web site and of the bound volumes. Jim Myers has graciously agreed to be the archivist, and Jim was roundly applauded for his many contributions.

On Feb. 7, Gibby said, there will be a tour of the Club's works of art and valuable memorabilia for any members interested. It will take place prior to the meeting. L

He reminded the assembled, once again, that membership stands at 95, and that the Club seeks new members. He urged current members to see Dave Edmundson's memo on the Web site.

Jim Bridgeland's paper, "Spots of Time", took its title from Wordsworth – moments the poet saw as flashes of paradisiacal vision, or memories that remain with "distinct preeminence" in our minds. Such moments for Jim occurred during a summer spent with his grandparents in Bellville, Ohio, then a tiny town along a two-lane road. Jim recalled for us his grandfather's pool hall and hunting dog, their times together berry-picking, bird watching, killing a chicken for dinner and listening to ballgames on the radio, and nine-year-old Jim's times alone: jumping in an abandoned saw mill's sawdust pile, smashing a penny beneath a locomotive's wheels, exploring the Clear Fork River.

Jim's larger concern, however, was the bond he built with his grandfather, a man of formidable presence who clearly loved his grandson but refused to indulge him. Jim explored their relationship in ways both charming and plain-spoken (although he did use the word "numinous" twice!), finally concluding that what makes such memories so emotionally resonant may never be truly knowable. Or, as he put it, "perhaps feeling is a way of knowing, and may, in the end, be the truer way."

Minutes of the Literary Club  
January 24, 2010

Before a whopping 71 members and eight guests, President Carey reported that the John Weiss painting is restored and re-hung, with thanks to Bob Dorsey, Paul Franz, Jerry Kathman and Rick Lauf for underwriting the cost. He noted a letter in the Enquirer by Peter Briggs and the acceptance of a Fred McGavran short story in the Shadowplay anthology, published by Post Mortem press, here in Cincinnati.

Jack McDonough's paper, wryly titled "Pardon Me", was an exploration of the phenomenon of Presidential pardons from the beginning of the Republic to the present. In words both witty and well chosen, Jack outlined for us the context in which the framers of the Constitution established pardons, the five kinds of pardons available and a history of their implementation over the years.

We learned, for example, that Thomas Jefferson pardoned everyone convicted by John Adams' Alien and Sedition Acts, that Harry Truman commuted the death sentence of his attempted assailant Oscar Collazo, and that Ronald Reagan pardoned W. Mark Felt, a.k.a. Watergate's "Deep Throat" (but not for leaking to the press – the paper doesn't tell us why Felt was convicted).

Jack's larger agenda, however, was to note the evolution of pardons over time, chiefly the drop in their numbers post-Watergate. The explanations, he said, are the political risk in granting an unpopular pardon and a greatly changed criminal justice system, now with a more inherent bias to leniency. He said that while Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon ignited a firestorm, its wisdom is today well recognized. He told

us which Presidents had granted the most pardons – Franklin Roosevelt is well out in front with 3,687 – and which the least. Clinton’s first term was among the latter, but “unbelievably” so, Jack said, in light of the many – and many outrageous – pardons he granted, purely as political paybacks, in his second term.

Jack ended a consummately graceful delivery with predictions of two pardons that Obama may make, prefacing them with this disclaimer: “My wife loves it when I predict things, especially when there is money involved, since I’m usually wrong.”

Time will tell.

## MINUTES OF LITERARY CLUB JANUARY 31, 2011

On January 31, 2011, President Gibby Carey presided over a Budget organized by Leonard Meranus and attended by 57 members and four guests. In the now traditional News and Views Section, President Carey presented further evidence that the membership is in the process of complete disintegration recounting the current back, heart and leg ailments of members Hal Porter, John Brackett, and Polk Laffoon, respectively. We wish them all well.

David Reichert presented “Recycled Recollections,” his contribution to the Budget. David has served for some 45 years as counsel to a national trade association in the scrap metal industry. He shared his recollections of a number of striking characters encountered over the years.

Perhaps the most colorful was “poor Charlie” Levine, the owner of a scrap iron processor in West Virginia, aptly named Raleigh Junk. Poor Charlie, a well-connected Harvard graduate attired in a bowler hat and good suits, tried to hide his Ivy education from the West Virginia rail executives and Utilities Commission members with whom he dealt.

Poor Charlie loved Cuban cigars. If he could not smoke them in certain venues, he chewed them. Charlie induced stomach-churning revulsion in the members of the Public Utilities Commission on one striking occasion when he removed the stogie from his mouth at the behest of the commissioners during a hearing. They took one look at the slimy article and asked him to put it back in his mouth, and quickly.

Years earlier, David had been retained by Wisconsin scrap processors to litigate a tax issue. He retained a member of the Wisconsin Bar, a lady named Shirley S. Abrahamson. Some 30 years later, David and Marilyn Reichert had dinner with a woman named Rosalind Sarlin during a trip to Costa Rica. There, David learned to his surprise that Rosalind’s sister was his former sister at the Bar, Shirley Abrahamson. Shirley had gone on to have a distinguished career, eventually becoming Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court. She narrowly missed being picked for the U.S. Supreme Court when President Clinton gave the nod instead to Ruth Bader Ginsberg.

David had an interesting case in the city that never sleeps, New Orleans. Forty years ago moving documents quickly from one part of the world to another required different methods. The day before an important closing in New Orleans, David discovered that one of the sellers’ stock certificates was still in the company safe back

in Chicago. The resourceful client called Chicago, got his brother-in-law to remove the stock from the safe, take it to the airport, lasso a stewardess flying to New Orleans and give her \$50 to transport the certificates. In those more innocent times of frequent flights, lax security and no Federal Express, this worked, and the closing went off without a hitch.

As too often happens, while the deal closed, strife continued. The buyer developed a severe case of remorse and filed a huge suit in multiple parts against the sellers, David's clients. After one attorney threw in the towel, David retained the redoubtable Cicero C. Sessions, who bulked large both physically and legally in the Big Easy. Somehow, after a flurry of activity, Sessions settled the case by inducing the plaintiffs to pay the defendants, standing the normal course of events on its head. Sessions was not only a brilliant lawyer but also an accomplished gourmet. He frequented Brennan's where he maintained his own serving cart. There, Cicero Sessions, Marilyn and David enjoyed the fruits of their famous victory.

*[Editor's Note: We observe timorously in this stronghold of male exclusivity and superiority that the most accomplished of the characters remembered by Mr. Reichert is a woman. The males' oral fixations indicate their difficulty in detaching themselves from their mothers' breasts.]*

Len Meranus then presented two Budget papers devoted to life in his home village, Newark, New Jersey's Third Ward. The first of those, "Roots and Uproots or Why Are We Here?" dealt with demographics of the Weequahic section of Newark, The Third Ward. The area is memorialized by Philip Roth in many of his novels. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Weequahic section, an 81-block area, was populated almost entirely by Jewish immigrants and their descendants and was more or less surrounded by similar neighborhoods of Irish, Italians and Germans.

Leonard gave a thumbnail sketch of how the various ethnic groups arrived in Newark. The Irish came first, forced out by the potato blights of 1845 and 1846, settling not only in Newark but also in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. A bit later came the Germans, between 1848 and 1860, settling in New York but also pushing on to Baltimore, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Milwaukee. Even later, on both sides of the turn of the century, four million Italians arrived, including the progenitors of the Secretary Pro Tem, most of them peasant farmers from Sicily and Southern Italy. They settled in Lower Manhattan, the Fordham Section of the Bronx, and Boston's North End. A few enterprising members of this wave made their way to Louisville, Kentucky.

Unlike the other groups, the Jews had been on the move for lots longer and Leonard recounted how the Sephardic Jews of the Hispanic Peninsula survived and even thrived there for 800 years, until King Ferdinand kicked them out in 1492. Many of them made their way to the Central European countries just to the West of what is now the Russian Federation. It was from there that Leonard's grandmother fled to New York's Lower East Side in 1888, with Leonard's two uncles and his soon-to-be-born father.

Leonard's second contribution to the Budget, "Abner, or He Was So Good to His Mother," recounted the history of "Der Langer," Yiddish for the Big Guy, one Abner ("Longie") Zwillman, a denizen of the Third Ward. When only in the eighth grade, Longie began to peddle produce by horse-drawn cart. He prospered, and by the 1950s was a multi-millionaire involved in many ventures. Abner or Longie shunned the

limelight and never forgot his roots, always generously contributing to local churches, synagogues, and social service agencies with a special eye for underprivileged children. He was also supportive of the classics, music and fine arts, and so was it was a surprise when after midnight on February 26, 1959, Abner hung himself in the basement of his mansion in West Orange.

Recently, Leonard came upon a heavily redacted FBI file which revealed Abner Zwillman's criminal past. He started his career when he was 14 running numbers and soon had his own numbers bank. He eventually moved into bootlegging and later split fields of operation with New York's notorious Five Families. Longie also orchestrated the murder of Dutch Schultz.

His world began to fall apart in 1951, when he came under the baleful gaze of Estes Kefauver's Senate Committee investigating organized crime. He was able to fend off the Feds for a number of years. However, by 1959 the FBI was closing in on him, and that was when he took his own life.

Nevertheless, Leonard's own mother, commenting on Longie's demise, opined that it was "such a shame, he was so good to his mother."

*[Editor's Note: Mr. Meranus's offerings begin and end with the actions and words of his mother, complementing Mr. Reichert's portrait of the redoubtable Ms. Abrahamson, Esquire. Even here at the Literary Club, "The Eternal Feminine draws us on." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust, Act 5.]*

Respectfully submitted,

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Anthony G. Covatta, Secretary Pro Tem

Minutes of the Literary Club  
February 7, 2011

Before 63 members and five guests, President Carey reported that a first-ever tour of the Club's artifacts, earlier in the evening, was well led by Bob Dorsey and well attended by many members. Conservator Ed Burdell has reported that the roof is leaking in an "unexpectedly porous" fashion, making real the possibility of a new roof soon. Happily, Gibby noted, the Club has "several" valuable Duvenecks and more than 20 Farneys. He said that Messrs. Laffoon and Porter are out of the hospital and that Nancy Black, widow of David, is doing well.

For those of us who may have been wondering about activity off the coast of North Carolina in the early 1700s, Frank Mayfield provided chapter, verse and then some as the rambling raconteur of "Bounty, Bunk and Bisque."

From the Treaty of Utrecht to the Halifax Resolves, he gave us pirates, privateers and buried treasure, a contemporary storyteller with an encyclopedic knowledge of the

past named Tedder Jones, the establishment of maritime trade by Josiah Jones, and the distinguished place of the surname Jones in naval lore. We learned the derivation of the wild Shackleford Island horses, abandoned by Spanish sailors some 500 years ago and protected by act of President William Clinton in 1998.

Frank even found occasion to speculate on the provenance of one of history's most useful words: A certain Captain Benjamin Hornegold, one of the era's true swashbucklers, was a favorite of the ladies in his "thigh length, deep purple cotton jacket with gold buttons." Often these ladies competed for his attention, and he would end the evening making off with one of them, giving rise to a plaintive lament from his fellow sailors: "that old Horny bastard bags another one!"

The centerpiece of Frank's paper, however, was the rise and fall of the pirate Blackbeard: how, at a young age he helped Benjamin Hornegold subdue a French merchant ship, then took it over and launched a career of barbarism and terror. With his waist-length beard, he wiped grease when eating and blood when fighting. He co-opted Carolina's governor and acting chief justice by cutting them in on his loot, even persuading them to grant him a pardon under Parliament's Act of Grace. But that, it turned out, was too much for the rest of the Carolina citizenry, who appealed to Virginia's Governor Alexander Spotswood for help. In yet another bloody battle, Blackbeard was captured, then brought to trial and hung in Williamsburg. It was, Frank said, "the beginning of the end of the golden age of piracy."

Minutes of the Literary Club  
February 14, 2011

President Carey told 57 members and four guests that Hal Porter is sufficiently recovered from his back surgery to be here among us and that John Tew had successfully performed complicated surgery on a woman from Nebraska who had picked him from a roster of surgeons nationwide. Kudos to John.

He advised members that Ethan Stanley has been scammed online and to ignore any electronic pleas for money to bring Ethan home from the Philippines where he is said to be stranded.

On Valentine's Day, that ole romantic Bill Sena chose to explore the causes of the Great Recession of 2008. And lest that sound inappropriate, let us remember that Bill brings passion to finance, and like any good lover, makes the object of his affection shine by his treatment.

Noting that the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, chaired by Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson, and the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, chaired by Phil Angelides, have just handed in their reports, Bill said both offer insights to the causes of the meltdown and what the nation might do now.

He said the roots of the problem trace to changes in the financial landscape occurring from the '50s on: the emergence of "growth stocks," the dividend discount model, Efficient Market Theory, the introduction of money market funds, the corporatization of brokerage firms and financial partnerships, the emergence of the

“shadow banking system” from the dark and, ultimately, the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act, which, since the 1930s, had separated commercial banking from investment banks.

The upshot of it all, said Bill, reflected in the two commissions’ reports, was that over the past 20 years, Wall Street had taken control of the United States. He described this new environment of front and center finance: venture capital funds, hedge funds, securitization and structured finance departments and Too Big to Fail. He talked about the emergence of prominent economists – many, many of them – in the corporations and in the government, and how all of this came together in bubble after bubble from the ‘80s on.

Bill then noted the tremendous influence, and fallibility, of the three chairmen of the Federal Reserve, Paul Volker, Alan Greenspan and Ben Bernanke. He tied it all together with a look at the conclusions of the two reports, noting the politicization of even the release of the Angelides effort. Bill’s take-away – no candy hearts here – was that both reports make good sense with the Deficit Reduction Committee offering wise and timely recommendations for change. That Congress and the Administration have chosen to ignore them is bad news for us all.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
February, 21, 2010

It was a big house: 64 members and 12 guests. President Carey noted that the Phelps is soon to open for business and that Western & Southern will give interested Literary Clubbers a tour on Mar. 14. He urged those interested to let our hosts know in advance.

Bob Dorsey, inspired by his love of Paris – a city, he noted, with three times as many chefs as lawyers – and of Notre Dame Cathedral gave us a three-part disquisition on the formation of early France, the construction of Gothic cathedrals and the culturally ubiquitous nomenclature of Notre Dame, or Mary, and the many permutations thereof.

The country we know as France emerged first from the defeat of the Moslems pushing from Spain into Gaul in 732, then, over centuries, from the consolidation of the tribal Franks into a distinct country. Names such as Clovis, Charlemagne and the Carolingian dynasty figured prominently in the many wars during this period. Finally, with the establishment of the Capetian dynasty in 987, the French kings as we learned them in school were up and running.

Wryly noting that “mature buildings, like mature men’s bodies, need maintenance,” Bob reported the evolution of Gothic architecture from the bulkier Romanesque, its flowering throughout France and its more florid incarnations as it spread across Europe.

Turning his attention to the name “Mary,” Bob marveled at its application to everything from Ave Maria to a Hail Mary pass. He acknowledged that we know very little about the original Mary, but ruminated on the topic nevertheless, even finding some comparisons with Anne Frank. His purpose, he said, was to “discuss the lasting phenomenon of Mary,” and that he did thoroughly.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
February 28, 2011

President Carey reminded 56 members and three guests of the upcoming Phelps tour, acknowledged John Tew's recent ordination as a "Great Living Cincinnati," and noted that the Freestore's recent annual report pictures two Literary Clubbers – Mike Kremsar and President Carey himself – as past presidents.

Joe Moran then took us on a ride up the Jericho Turnpike, that is, the six and a half mile stretch of highway from New York City to the privileged enclaves of Western Long Island that, at the turn of the twentieth century, domiciled some of the nation's wealthiest families. Joe's interest was twofold: their lifestyles and their athletic prowess. The lifestyles featured horseshows, fox hunts (and hunt breakfasts and hunt balls), polo matches, yachting, "coaching," auto racing, golf, tennis and . . . you can imagine. The clubs, Meadow Brook, Rockaway Hunt, Cedarhurst, are among the most storied in our plutocratic history. Joe's anecdotes, like the property of the Long Island Aviation Country Club eventually going to Levittown, or James Keene's standing wager of \$100,000 to back his son against any man of the world in ten sports of his choice, were many and compelling.

The athletes Joe chronicled, with names like Tommy Hitchcock, Foxhall Keene and Devereaux Milburn were phenomena of their time; Hitchcock's celebrity rivaled Babe Ruth's. The patrons of sport that Joe wove into his text – August Belmont, William K. Vanderbilt and John Hay Whitney among them – bespoke a lasting imprint on American culture.

By the time he had finished, Joe had given us just about everything Long Island ever claimed, except, perhaps Fitzgerald's memorial to "the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes – a fresh, green breast of the new world" . . . but no matter. Fitzgerald was there too, just in other quotes.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
March 7, 2011

Before 59 members and one guest, President Gibby Carey offered brief news and views, then yielded the podium to Rick Kesterman. In "Eat, Drink and Be Merry," Rick provided a detailed survey of the public houses – ordinaries, inns, taverns and otherwise defined hostelries – of 18<sup>th</sup> century Virginia. No Zagat's this, Rick's was a scholarly and comprehensive inquiry into the rooms, regulations, meals, utensils, libations, entertainments and even conversational topics of those unfortunate souls forced to travel before Howard Johnson and Conrad Hilton had their way with us.

Rick reminded listeners that travelers of the time, who could do about 40 miles a day at best, sometimes shared beds with one another, ate mostly meat, bread and various sweets, and sat among the "acrid smoke" of clay pipes smoldering with tobacco, which "helped to mask the less favorable smells of humanity present."

Nor did he shy away from specificity. In this typical passage, one of many, many drinks dissected gets its due: "Locally made ciders included apple, crab apple, peach

and pear (otherwise known as perry). Fresh cider was served as a beverage with meals, while fermented cider was consumed much the same as wine.”

Ultimately, concluded Rick, the quality of the amenities, the disposition of the proprietor and the nature of the crowd determined how well any guest was going to like his public house. That’s a lot of variables, and they may help explain why, today, when we see a Bob Evans or a Cracker Barrel looming, we can take comfort in the prospect.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
March 14, 2011

Following brief news and views, Paul Franz delighted 54 members and seven guests with his paper, “The Store”, chronicling the life and times of the Franz Brothers Café, at Bates and Colerain in Camp Washington. The Store, as it was known within the family for 43 years, got its start in 1932, and Paul evoked masterfully those middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when he was a youth and Camp Washington was a “cauldron of smoke, guts and the odd smells that came from the combination of metal casting and meat packing.”

Besides a strong sense of place – the tavern itself and the grimy neighborhood embracing it – he gave us characters and incidents to make it all come boisterously to life. “Puss,” the plumber, liked to show his insider status by drinking beer from behind the bar and declaiming about the plumbing trade: “To be a plumber, you only need to know two things: Friday’s payday, and shit don’t flow uphill.”

Tightly focused, but carefully paced, the paper said much about what Franz Brothers looked like inside, and what the clientele were like. . . but not all at once. We heard about the family moving out to Mt. Airy, about Paul’s father being robbed and shot, about the murderess Anna Marie Hahn who had lived in the building before the Franz’s, about Powell Valves and Kahn’s Meatpacking . . . yet we didn’t hear too much about any of it.

Paul’s descriptions were elegant: “He was an arresting figure – below middle height, but powerful. With an aquiline nose and thick brush-cut hair, he looked like the more romantic portraits of Nietzsche. His eyes, especially when looking out from behind the foundry’s soot, were a mix of Charles Manson and the Afghan girl in the National Geographic cover shot.”

And the whole thing was larded with learned allusions to Sophocles, La Rochefoucault, the Venus of Willendorf – and with the writer’s own dry wit. To a boss who didn’t want him drinking on lunch hour, Paul’s grandfather once announced “No beer, no work.” Said Paul, “If there would ever be a Franz coat of arms, it would carry that motto: “Nulla cervesia, nulla labor.”

Minutes of the Literary Club  
March 21, 2011

President Carey announced to 54 members and seven guests that a second new bourbon of the year, Nob Creek Single Barrel Reserve, is available to Club members, again courtesy of Jerry Kathman. Jerry’s firm, LPK, handles the labeling of the bottles. Gibby then noted an article in the previous day’s Enquirer citing Bill Friedlander as one

of those who have made possible the CSO's new Steinway grand. Members applauded Bill for his great generosity.

Bruce Petrie's paper, LCL Chong Xie, was a thoughtful rumination on contemporary China, served up in three parts, although Bruce didn't break it out that way.

Part I recalled Bruce's recent near abduction by Chinese authorities for alleged trafficking in obscene literature. Bruce recalled his arguments concerning free speech, made to two plainclothesmen who harassed him after finding allusions to "Lady Chatterley's Lover" in his computer files. Managing to talk his way out of trouble, Bruce went on to dinner with his friend, Julie, and, through their conversation, gave us some intriguing perspectives on the nature of free speech and freedom generally in the two societies. Example (from Julie): "We Chinese are SO grateful, to such a wonderful exemplar as the U.S., for advice on how to avoid civil rights abuses, racial discrimination, air, water and soil pollution, governmental corruption and overbearing trade policies."

Part II traced China's evolution from its colonial past to Mao Tse-Tung via the device of some student papers on an "historical subject and its influence on China's current form of government." We learned of China's infamous "century of humiliation," the Opium Wars, the Boxer Rebellion, the not-so-impressive impact of the Christian missionaries and, ultimately, the roots of communism in the feudalistic past and noxious foreign intrusions. In short, a great thumbnail history.

Bruce's final section offered insights concerning the ideological and economic underpinnings of contemporary Chinese society. This time, his messenger was Dr. Liu Shao-chi, a scholar who accosts Bruce at the airport and engages him in a lengthy discussion of everything from a classless society to the role of sex in selling – relating much of it to D.H. Lawrence's various messages in "Lady Chatterley's Lover." All of it was interesting, and in the end, all about Bruce's fascination with China.

#### Minutes of the Literary Club March 28, 2011

Before 54 members and ten guests, President Carey apprised us of Bill Pratt's upcoming address to the Cincinnati Women's Club on William Faulkner, the imminent publication of a book about Ezra Pound edited by Bill Pratt, and Rick Kesterman's knowledgeable recollection of the Lytle family before a group somewhat less knowledgeable than he.

It was a budget night, and first up was Bob Dorsey to talk about his experiences as an architectural co-op student at the construction site of the old Robert A. Taft High School in 1954. Chief among them was the near-sandbagging of then Vice President Richard Nixon, who had come to Cincinnati for the inaugural celebration of the new school, and who, on a windy day, was required to sit outdoors under a canopy adorned by wildly blowing bunting. When a veteran construction worker showed Bob how to jerry-rig some sandbags so as calm the billowing fabrics, he did so immediately, but to no avail. The strong winds pushed sandbags onto the stage and then into Mayor Donald Clancy's lap; only by Divine interference was Mr. Nixon spared. Bob interspersed his narrative with no fewer than five references to the Literary Club – past members, current

members, its architecture – leaving little doubt that if these chambers could speak for themselves, their solipsistic voice would be Bob's.

Joe Moran then told us about the South Fork Fishing Club, established near Pittsburgh in 1879. It was one of several such exclusive retreats of the day, created by wealthy men seeking privacy for their piscatorial pursuits. Among its members were Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick and Henry Phipps, Jr.; among its appointments were a makeshift dam and reservoir, left over from their early purpose as a way to provide water for the section of the Pennsylvania Canal between central Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh. One day in the spring of 1889, this never-very-sturdy dam burst, sending 20 million gallons of water down to the town of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, killing 2,209 people and causing \$17 million in damages. It was the worst flood in American history, and it was – this cannot come as a surprise – the end of the South Fork Fishing Club. The budget theme of the evening was “the one that got away.” Instead of a fish, said Joe, this was the fishing club that got away.

For Dale Flick, the budget's convener, the one that got away was the quote sometimes attributed to Mark Twain: “When the world comes to an end, I want to be in Cincinnati – because it's always 20 years behind the times.” As Dale ruefully pointed out, there is no record of Twain ever saying that. More likely, it came from Will Rogers. But Dale's paper was charmingly devoted to Twain, notably his 1884 tour through the nation's mid-section with fellow writer George Washington Cable, and that included a stop in Cincinnati and the Literary Club. Through determined research and some luck, Dale was able to tell us what Twain actually did say at the Club that night – nothing for the ages – and it certainly did not incorporate the snarky aphorism that successive generations have so loved to cite. If I may take a contrarian viewpoint, perhaps it is a mercy that it did get away!

Respectfully submitted,

Polk Laffoon IV

Minutes of the Literary Club  
April 4, 2011

Sixty-five members and seven guests crowded in to hear Fred McGavran's latest short story, “No Death, No Taxes,” and Fred did not disappoint. Weaving a devilish tale of death, greed and God, he prompted considerable laughter and, in the end, sober reflection on the meanness of the human spirit when money is at stake.

Charles Spears, an Episcopal priest, is summoned to the bedside of multi-millionaire Baldwin Bennett, now dying of cancer. The year is 2010 when, for one year only, no estate taxes are to be levied on anyone. Bennett's son, Lawrence, can barely contain his glee that his father may pass before the year is out. The family lawyer and the family financial advisor, each smarmy in his own way and both in close attendance, bring similar self-interest to the proceedings. Only Cheryl Snyder, Bennett's longtime nurse, has any real feeling for the dying man. Spears, the priest, sees them all for what they are and tries to wring civility from them despite it. But when Bennett decides to leave a hunk of money to the nurse, everything goes from bad to worse.

In the ensuing melee, Fred skewers everything from rivalries between lawyers to the hypocrisy of people in church physically but far away spiritually. Here's an excerpt that captures his essence:

"What the hell's this?" Lawrence Bennett said, pointing at the pall covering his father's coffin. "That coffin cost \$50,000. I want people to see that we care."

(The cleric responds:) "We cover the coffin to show that we are all equal in death."

"That's class warfare," Lawrence snapped.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
April 11, 2011

A reverent memorial to recently deceased member David Black opened the meeting; Fred McGavran read words that he and several others crafted. Then, speaking before 53 members and seven guests, President Carey said that Western & Southern will install a light on the Club's southwest corner, where, over the years and under cover of darkness, three members have been injured and vagrants have sought obscurity in the recesses of our landscaping.

Richard Gass, the evening's presenter, next reported the Alaskan adventure that he and his wife, Claudia, experienced three years ago. An arduous and uncomfortable journey, it took the Gasses – and by extension, us – deep into the bush in early September. Rain, cold, snow, poor flying conditions and bears in the path of a glacial hike, were some of the obstacles encountered.

Intentionally seeking the backcountry of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, accessed only by long dirt roads and bush pilots, Richard and Claudia saw spectacular sights, but at a price of extreme personal discomfort and considerable tension. How to keep a tent dry, and secure, in a 40-degree downpour with high winds? In pea soup, would the plane be able to retrieve them? A Carnival Cruise – which is the way 99 percent of Alaska's visitors get there – never sounded so good.

Richard's prose was clear and vivid. And if it was a bit detailed for those looking to the arrival of refreshments, it was also leavened by a wonderful dry wit. Consider: "The people in McCarthy and Kennecott seem very tight knit and friendly. But it takes a special kind of person to live here year round. The winters are long, dark and cold, and you are totally isolated. This may explain why McCarthy has had two mass murders in the last 30 years."

Minutes of the Literary Club  
April 18, 2011

On this evening, Morley Thompson flew in from California for his bi-annual visit to the Club and delivery of a paper. Before 48 members and four guests, he chronicled the conclusion of the American Revolution with the defeat of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown.

In the course of it, Morley sought to make several points: that the Americans were in very bad shape – with soldiers failing to re-enlist for lack of pay, with munitions in short supply and with George Washington resisted by some of his closest officers;

that Washington alone understood that the war would be won or lost at sea; and that the French reinforcements secured by Benjamin Franklin made that victory at sea possible.

Except . . . and here the title of Morley's paper, "The Battle that Never Was," becomes key . . . it really wasn't a battle that determined the outcome. It was miscalculations and missed opportunities on the part of British senior admiral Thomas Graves that allowed the French fleet to prevail. With negligible casualties on either side, the British effectively fled, leaving the French to box in Cornwallis on the Yorktown peninsula, and Cornwallis with no practical choice but to surrender.

Morley ended his paper – which, alas, was not easy to follow – with brief discussions of what later happened to each of his dramatis personae, as in:

"Washington offered (Robert) Morris, (Jr.) the post of Secretary of Treasury in America's first government. Morris declined and suggested Alexander Hamilton. Morris cautioned Hamilton to borrow if necessary, but don't raise taxes. It seems that nothing has changed."

That got a good laugh.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
April 25, 2011

Nico was not present this evening. Our stalwart steward, whose day job is with the Food and Drug Administration, was off teaching agents how to use a technology that he has developed for distinguishing between real and fake drugs. It is a significant accomplishment, and Nico has applied for a patent to protect it. Members applauded enthusiastically in recognition.

Before 53 members and six guests, Richard Newrock presented a budget themed to Bozo Sapiens – the foolishness of the human animal. The first paper, which he wrote, dealt with the startling propensity of people – even, or maybe especially, very smart people – to fall for hoaxes of many descriptions: trees that produce spaghetti, Neanderthal musical instruments including masatodon-tusk tubas and rhinoceros-bladder bagpipes, and temporary reductions in gravity occasioned by Pluto transiting behind Jupiter.

All of these and more appeared in the serious scientific magazine Discovery. All were April Fools stories, well understood as such by the editors. Nonetheless, all evoked serious response, much of it from scientists. The reason, Richard concluded, is the authority of the source. If the source carries enough gravitas, the tale will entice a following, no matter how far-fetched. As back-up, he cited "The Annals of Gullibility," or "Why we get duped and how to avoid it," noting wryly that even author Steven Greenspan had invested \$40,000 with Bernie Madoff!

The second paper, by attorney James Wesner, made the case that lawyers – who are entrusted with protecting the rest of us from the world's ambient nuttiness – sometimes give good evidence of Bozo Sapiens disease themselves. He told several lawyer jokes – all guaranteed crowd pleasers – then launched a serious dissection of a legal rule that has, over the years, come in for a good deal of criticism: The Rule Against Perpetuities. Sometimes, Jim speculated, the only way to protect against the inanities of lawyers may be to change the law itself. Or not. Because, he concluded, for better or for worse, lawyers are necessary – and most of them do a fine job!

Albert Pyle wrote the third paper, "Homer Sapiens," which took its name from television icon Homer Simpson. Albert's interest was Krusty, star of a long running TV show much beloved by 10-year-old Bart Simpson. At the end of the day, Albert showed us, Krusty really isn't very funny. Nor, in fact, are virtually any of the high-profile clowns that populate, or used to populate, our consciousness: Bozo, Uncle Al (on local television), Red Skelton, Ronald McDonald, Carol Burnett, Jerry Lewis, Charlie Chaplin, Marcel Marceau, managers who act like clowns and, most recently, Donald Trump.

Providing reason enough why each of these was (or is) genuinely not funny, Albert's short essay was, in the end, an indictment of the crassness of the clown figure in American culture -- and by implication, of us, for being such saps for it.

Respectfully submitted,

Polk Laffoon IV

Minutes of the Literary Club  
May 2, 2011

This evening, the Club elected two new members, Randy Bailey and Howard Lodge. In attendance for the meeting were 55 members and one guest.

Ernie Eynon's paper, "Choice," chronicled the daunting achievement of Princeton undergraduate Wendy Kopp, who, in 1990, founded "Teach for America," -- a non-profit organization with the goal of eliminating inequality in U.S. education by sending top-flight college graduates to teach for two or more years in low income communities.

The idea germinated when Wendy observed the differing capabilities of her Princeton classmates, attributing those differences primarily to the kinds of preparation they had received in secondary school. The more she thought about it, the more Wendy came to believe that teacher quality was the key to classroom effectiveness. And as she and interested peers studied the issue, they learned that rural and inner-city school districts pretty much struck out when it came to attracting well qualified instructors.

Thus her concept -- a national teacher corps, composed of top graduates from first-rate colleges who would commit time to teaching in problem areas -- emerged. Enshrined in a senior thesis, her roadmap was drawn. She needed to gather teachers, find districts willing to take them, develop training programs, attract grant money and create the systems to oversee the project. How all that came to be consumed much of the subsequent discussion, with this postscript:

For the current year, 8,200 Teach for America corpsmen, chosen from an applicant pool of many thousands more, operate in 39 locations. Ohio, come lately to the party, will see some of them next fall thanks to a bill signed late last month by Governor John Kasich. Teach for America claims some 20,000 alumni, comes before some 500,000 students annually, and has benefitted more than three million students since Wendy turned her theory into fact.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
May 9, 2011

We – 57 members and four guests – should have known something was up when Archie Christopherson confided, early on, that he is “somewhat regretful that he never had the occasion to teach Homer in Greek.” Anyone feeling that kind of remorse is a pretty good bet to lay something weighty upon us, and Archie took the wager. His paper, “Heroism, a Question of Epic Proportions,” explored the nature of heroism as exhibited by Achilles and Odysseus. A master class in the classics, as it were.

The Trojan War, the Trojan Horse, the Achilles heel, Helen and Paris, the hated Agamemnon – all were there. As were the great concerns: war, honor, revenge and the power of a woman’s beauty. Using two contemporary novels to tee up his examination, Archie argued that Achilles was a warrior distinguished by his wrath (toward Agamemnon), while Odysseus was a warrior characterized by cleverness, versatility and adaptability.

And as such, he concluded, they were models for storytelling throughout the ages: Achilles, with his “destiny of magnificent human imperfection” became the prototype of the tragic hero; Odysseus, free from tragic flaw and gifted in overcoming all obstacles, paved the way for “Hollywood’s romantic hero, riding off into the sunset.”

There was more to this ambitious paper, and I would like to share it with you – but like Archie, I believe it would be richer in Greek. And since I can’t do that, I’m going to move on.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
May 16, 2011

Before nine guests and 59 members, Paul Sittenfeld spoke enthusiastically, eloquently, humorously and comprehensively about Prince Edward Island, his sometime summer retreat of the past 15 years.

Lured to PEI, as it is called, by his daughter Josephine’s childhood love of the classic “Anne of Green Gables,” Paul purchased a house and acreage there on his very first visit. Describing for us the history, topography, recreational pursuits, foods, crafts, entertainments, local artisans, characters and kindnesses proffered to him and wife Betsy, Paul made a strong case for any of us wanting to go to PEI – despite the 30-hour drive or ransom-like air fares required to get there.

And indeed, to see the ancient house he tells of resurrecting, with its architectural integrity still intact and contemporary island crafts filling the interior, and to sample the oysters and mussels that he assures us are among the world’s best, and to experience the local fiddling, singing storytelling and clogging that he so admires, may well be worth the trip. Happily, one other thing Paul told us he loves is houseguests, leaving us to hope that should we want to visit, he may have a bed ready.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
May 23, 2011

The Club elected for the coming season Fred McGavran, president, Albert Pyle, vice president, Mike Kremsar, clerk, and Allen Winkler, trustee, for a three-year term. The secretary and treasurer were both reelected. Trustee Hal Porter announced his

resignation with one year remaining in his term; the Board appointed Bill Friedlander to fill out Hal's unexpired term.

Before 57 members and eight guests, Ted Silberstein told us the story of Moe Berg: "the smartest man ever to play baseball, a Princeton star athlete, a Columbia trained lawyer, a Jewish outsider and the man assigned to assassinate German physicist Werner Heisenberg while spying during World War II."

But it was better than that. Born, in 1902, with a magnetic personality and a photographic memory, Berg learned to speak six languages. He studied Sanskrit, math, philosophy and history in college, graduated Magna Cum Laude and taught his second baseman signals in Latin.

Ted chronicled Moe's baseball career with seven teams, his simultaneous pursuit of a law degree from Columbia and his subsequent work as an attorney in New York. In 1940, he was hired as a sports ambassador to Latin America by the Office of Inter-American Affairs, and from there it was a short hop to the Office of Strategic Services (forerunner to the CIA), which hired him for espionage in 1944. He remained a spy for a decade.

Throughout it all, he grew increasingly eccentric, dressing mostly in black and gray, fasting once weekly, bathing three times daily and becoming a peripatetic walker. He rejected an offer of the Medal of Freedom from Truman, probably, Ted speculated, because he was so secretive about his personal life. He never married, never took a vacation and never learned to drive. His last years were spent living with siblings and going to endless baseball games. When he died, at 70, his last words to the nurse were, "How are the Mets doing today?"

Minutes of the Literary Club  
June 6, 2011

Sixty members and three guests attended. Joe Dehner was elected a member. During discussion of Joe Dehner's candidacy, Bob Dorsey noted that very little helpful information was actually included on Joe's application form; he asked that in the future, members nominating people try to include as much relevant data as possible. It is useful in the discussions, he said, and President Carey asked that these comments be included in the minutes.

The membership approved borrowing \$25,000 from the Rieveschl fund to fix the roof. It agreed to the Board's recommendation that a capital campaign be undertaken with a goal of raising \$50,000 – and from that, repaying the money borrowed for roof repair.

John Bracken's paper, "The Extraction of Liberty," was a harsh morality tale of black and white in the Old South. Acknowledging a debt to "The Merchant of Venice," John gave us Venture Jones, a black slaveholder in central Mississippi, who is approached by a white man he despises, Reed Jackson, for a loan of \$500. Jones agrees to lend the money in return for the extraction of a pound of flesh immediately adjacent to Jones' heart.

As the plot unfolds, Jones proves to be as inhumane as the system that spawned him: he buys away a mulatto woman from her husband and children and keeps her for his sexual release; he holds many slaves of his own and, in Bracken's telling, beats one

with a brine-soaked whip, causing the man's death. When, in the end, Venture Jones is denied his pound of flesh, we can't be sorry – no matter how bad Reed Jackson is.

Nor we can we overlook the overseer for Jackson's slaves, whose name is George Washington Menafee, then refers to as GW throughout the narrative. Now there's a nuanced agenda!

Minutes of the Literary Club  
June 13, 2011

Seventy-four members attended the annual spring outing, at Peterloon, the handsome estate of the late John J. Emery. Paul Sittenfeld, who, along with son P.G., hosted the evening, began the official proceedings with a brief history of the house and grounds.

The evening's paper, delivered by Ed Burdell, was launched with an apology for not being light summer fare – "something short, snappy and with many laughs" to complement the "good food, good drink and good companions" in a delightful setting. So we were warned.

Ed's focus was the problems in Ireland leading to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which for the most part, settled the violence and unrest that had plagued Northern Ireland for nearly 40 years. To capsule:

In the middle centuries of the second Millenium, Protestants from England poured into Catholic Ireland, setting the stage for enduring unrest. In 1690, at the Battle of Boyne, William the Orange forced Catholic James II to leave Ireland. Subsequent turmoil led to Prime Minister David Lloyd George's passage of the Government of Ireland Act in December 1920. The act divided the island into 26 overwhelmingly Catholic counties in the South and six in the North that were about two-thirds Protestant. Until the middle '60s, the violence was sporadic but contained. Then began the so-called *Troubles*.

Northern Ireland had become a land of two communities, the dominant Protestants and the repressed Catholics. The former ran the government, controlled the job market and dictated where their unwanted neighbors could live. Out of this imbalance emerged the infamous IRA, or Irish Republican Army (and its political arm, Sinn Fein), a paramilitary group unofficially at war with any individual or organization that opposed reuniting the six northern counties with rest of Ireland.

With a staging area in the South, the IRA pitted itself against the Protestant establishment in the North and the inevitable vigilante units loyal to the Protestant cause that sprang up there. England, presided over by Margaret Thatcher during the early period of the Troubles, sided with Northern Ireland and lent support to the Protestants who professed desire to join with Great Britain. The British army and became involved as well, ostensibly to crack down on the violence against the Catholics, but in reality harassing Catholics as well as Protestants.

Only after many years, after MI-5, Britain's internal intelligence organization and other law enforcement agencies substantially weakened the IRA, after the violence exhausted both sides, after Margaret Thatcher gave way to Tony Blair and John Hume came into power in Ireland, and after political leaders in the U.S. with Irish antecedents, like Ted Kennedy and Tip O'Neill became involved, did peace become possible. In

1998, under George Mitchell, on assignment by President Clinton, it became reality.  
Praises to Ed for making all this comprehensible!

The evening closed with a gracious farewell and thanks from outgoing President  
G. Gibson Carey IV and a brief salutation from incoming President Fred McGavran.