

MY LAST SERMONOctober 18, 1999Robert W. Hilton, Jr.

On November 4, 1968, when I read my first paper to this Club, I started with a note of genuine humility:

'Tis far better to remain silent
And be thought a fool,
Than to open one's mouth
And remove all doubt.

I was extremely nervous as I stood on this podium for the first time, knowing full well that my audience knew more about my subject than I.

In subsequent years I became more bold, but I tended to preach. My knees still knocked, and I was still anxious. However, noting the kindness, politeness and forgiving nature of Literary Club audiences, bordering on the masochistic, I decided that it was appropriate for me to preach at least occasionally but that I should add the following to my morning prayers:

FATHER: Thou knowest I am becoming old. Keep me from becoming talkative and possessed with the idea that I must express myself on every subject. Release me from the craving to straighten out everyone's affairs. Keep my mind free from the recital of endless detail. Give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips when I am inclined to tell of my aches and pains. They are increasing with the years, and my love to tell of them grows sweeter as time goes by. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong. Make me thoughtful but not nosey, helpful but not bossy. With my great store of wisdom and experience, it does seem a pity not to share it all. But Thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end. AMEN

Of course, as the years passed, I found excuses for ignoring that prayer. Club protocol required that

I, as a Trustee for five years, give a short sermon as part of our "Holiday Literary Exercises" at our last December meeting just before our ever-tolerant Robert Kalthoff led us all in singing Christmas carols. My theology was shaky, but my advice to my audiences was - even if I do say so myself - quite sound. My message was - and remains:

"Mankind's capacity for self-deception is infinite;"

("Mankind" includes me, of course.)

"The more ego-centric one's paper is, the more it deserves filing in 'the round file' as soporific if not sophomoric."

During the 33 ensuing years, I wrote and read to The Club three fairly long highly autobiographical pieces, which I considered amusing. At least three were "secular sermons." One of these was a Presidential Address wherein I told the membership exactly how the club should conduct itself in the foreseeable future. In two of the sermons, I told prospective authors of Literary Club papers what subjects might be of interest and which ones certainly would not. In the latter category I listed travelogues and war stories. Many of you, certainly including Lou Prince, Morse Johnson, Hans Zimmer, Jack Rue, and Lee Davis, subsequently proved me wrong about the war stories.

One of the best (and, of course, the longest) of my secular sermons was titled "Four Forbidden Topics." The topics were religion, economics, politics, and sex. All four are subjects generally not discussed in polite society, especially among strangers, after two or three cocktails, or during a pleasant dinner. These topics are sometimes called "the eternal verities." Unfortunately for you, your "verities" are not always mine, but I justified discussing them on the ground that a "sense of audience" required that these seminal issues be discussed by me. The person who discusses them may be a boor, but, it is fairly certain that the person who does not deal with them will be considered a bore. "Sex" is usually of interest even to an aged audience such as members of THE Literary Club. The fact that the median age of our members is 71 makes no

difference. Most of us have pleasant memories or have access to viagra.

Relying on your unfailing courtesy and politeness, I would like to revisit those topics tonight with two changes: I would like to broaden the segments originally titled "religion" and "sex" and rename them, respectively, "The Big Dream" and "Sex and Gender." I believe that there are secular as well as religious belief systems. Also at my age I feel more comfortable discussing gender rather than sex.

I do not want to win any arguments with any of you. I consider 99-44/100% of you friends - but I would like to ask a special favor of you: Do withhold judgment. Please do not utter loud dissents tonight, but sleep on the matters discussed - preferably not here but after your return home. Ponder what changes have beset the world over the years since the time when we were innocent and happy, the days of Warren Harding, Cal Coolidge and Herbert Hoover. Those were the days when an ice cream cone (one scoop) cost 10c and a "Coke" was regarded as a new, possibly dangerous, drink.

THE BIG DREAM

It seems to me that a "big dream" is the necessary core of happiness, but it can also be a nightmare. There is no doubt in my mind that Napoleon, Mussolini, Franco, Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein, Milosevic and myriads of tinhorn dictators and thugs had big dreams. The egomania of these leaders bordered on the psychotic in being out of touch with reality. Late Club member Bob Norrish, in his uniquely fine paper, "Unfinished Business - Dear Mom" quotes M. Scott Peck as saying, in The Road Less Traveled: "This process of actively clinging to an outmoded view of reality is the basis for much mental illness." What is important for all of us is that those dreams, skillfully articulated made small people feel big. The small people each received "empowerment," the chief ingredient of a happy youth. The slogan "One people, one nation, one Fuhrer" inspired all Germans and some Austrians and Sudetenland

Czechoslovakians and gave them a vision of a greater future of which they were an integral part. That was exhilarating. From the Nazi point of view, the trouble was that the "Thousand Year Reich" lasted only eleven years, turned into a nightmare, and ended in total disaster.

In 1951 Eric Hoffer described in his extremely short book The True Believer the phenomenon of a small individual abdicating personal responsibility for his government and enjoying euphoria as part of a mass movement. The True Believer is a slim jewel of wisdom in which Hoffer proves beyond a doubt that the author was the world's most sophisticated longshoreman.

On the positive side, in The Painted Veil, one of the books Somerset Maugham wrote where the story line or narrative is as important as the study of character, Maugham describes a cholera epidemic in a province of China. His chief character, a well-educated, sophisticated, hard-drinking British customs official, observing a small group of Catholic nuns caring for the sick and burying the dead, says:

"Suppose there is no life everlasting? Think what it means if death is really the end of all things. They've given up all for nothing. They've been cheated. They're dupes. . . I wonder. I wonder if what they've aimed at is illusion. Their lives are in themselves beautiful. I have an idea that the only thing which makes it possible to regard this world we live in without disgust is the beauty which now and then men create out of the chaos. The pictures they paint, the music they compose, the books they write, and the lives they lead. Of all these, the richest in beauty is the beautiful life. There is the perfect work of art."

Central, I believe, to all religions is the belief that a divine creator made this world and not we ourselves. He does not bend the rules for anyone. Atheist Mark Twain noted in his superb "War Prayer" that thousands of people, including wives and children on both sides of a conflict, pray for opposite results: victory for their country's just cause and glorious

troops and death and destruction to the enemy. In mark Twain's vignette, shortly after the start of a war, flags are flying, bands are playing and everyone is swept up in a furor of enthusiasm. The minister in a crowded church gives an impassioned prayer for victory "four our glorious country and brave soldiers." A very old man, garbed in the robes of an ancient prophet, interrupts the preacher in mid-prayer and asks if the latter knows what he is praying for. "No matter what the outcome, war will result in the maiming and death of thousands of young men, the making of thousands of young widows, and depriving their innocent children of food and shelter. Is this what you are praying for?" the old man asks. Ushers then threw him out of the church because (and I quote Mark Twain verbatim) "obviously he was insane."

I know that when I come into a room or anywhere else and observe everything there neatly arranged in order, someone must have been there before me. In this orderly world, it is easy to conclude that it was created by a first cause, a God. It is infinitely more difficult to prove that God cares for each of us. It is my belief, however, that living as if He does care for each of us can and does inspire and change all who do believe. The BIG DREAM does transform the person who prays or, if you prefer, dreams. The big dream includes, of course, countless individual dreams, each embodying hope and optimism.

ECONOMICS

Economics is the machinery which determines who produces what and who consumes what. In an ideal world, everyone would produce what products he or she can and everyone would consume those products according to need. However, "The devil is always in the details." Who is to determine ability and need? Most of us feel that a free economy wherein an "invisible hand" makes decisions is preferable to an all-powerful government which micro-manages the affairs of everyone. Who makes the big decisions? Club member Steve Starr discussed alternatives in his January 8, 1973 paper "The Rich Through A Glass Darkly." Chaos results when

government attempts the impossible, such as assigning values to objects and labor without regard to reality. In my opinion the Communist system collapsed when it was discovered that no one knew the true cost or value of anything. Government-assigned values simply did not work. The government itself did not know the real cost of a tank or anything else, the purchasing power of money saved, etc. All figures were assigned by government fiat. It was a bit like the legendary King Canute trying to beat back the tides with a chain.

The major defect in the notion that dictators' big dream of the best for everyone has always been that anyone questioning the values of the leader had to be coerced into accepting the details of the dream. This transformed the dream of a citizens' paradise into a landscape covered with concentration camps. Everyone should produce according to ability and consume according to need. Late Club member Robert Norrish pointed out that the word "should" is one of the most neurotic words in the English language. It connotes an unreal dream which rarely works.

Haljmar Schacht, Hitler's economics genius, made a pipe dream work for a while, but the "Thousand Year Reich" collapsed in eleven years, and the cost to Germany and to all of humanity was incalculable. After the war, when Russian was running East Germany, the contrast between Communist East Germany and free West Germany was dramatic. Life under the free economy of West Germany was obviously so much more attractive than life in the "workers' paradise of East Germany that the two Germanies had to be separated by barbed wire and the infamous Berlin wall. It was next to impossible to keep the workers in the Communist paradise.

Rather than rely exclusively on Literary Club financial geniuses Ed Merkel, Steve Starr and Guido Gores, several decades ago I decided to wade into the writings of M.I.T. economist Paul Samuelson. My younger brother, who worked for I.B.M. and was interested in money, told me that Samuelson's text on Readings in Economics, both macro- and micro-, had six or more editions, had sold millions of copies, and had made Samuelson a millionaire. I therefore decided that Samuelson must know what he was writing about. Reading

his works almost made me think that the sobriquet of the "gloomy" or the "melancholy science" was not quite correct. In any event, I concluded that every voting citizen should know something about the subject, especially when Congress is in session and revising the Internal Revenue Code. The Lord giveth, but IRS certainly takes away as do the Taxation Departments of the State of Ohio, the County of Hamilton, and the City of Cincinnati. In old fashioned terms, it is nice to know something about internal combustion engines before setting out on a long trip.

Someone does the planning. Someone - individual, joint enterprise, partnership, corporation or government - calls the tune. Who is in charge and at what levels are matters of politics - my next subject. If, for example, you want to change the economic system because the best job you can get after graduating with honors from Harvard Law School is an extremely low paying job because your skin is black, you may want to change the system. Doing so peacefully requires involvement in politics.

"POLITICS"

There has to be compromise, of course, as, for example, in public planning, layout of streets, the establishing of the boundaries of governmental entities, physical and functional. Who makes the decisions, private enterprise or a group representing the public interest? In this, "label thinking" is particularly unhelpful. John Kenneth Galbraith illustrated label or "conventional thinking" in these matters by saying that many think that all private spending is good, all public spending bad. The result was that America has millions of vacuum sweepers and the cleanest houses in the world and very few street-cleaning machines and very dirty streets. In the early 1920's two million cars rolled off assembly lines. Car purchasers were in shock when they discovered that there weren't enough decent roads to accommodate the cars. Distasteful as the prospect was, the government, local, state or national or all three, had to step in and take charge.

In the 1920's Will Rogers is reputed to have said, "We have the best Congress that money can buy." If that was true then, it must be ten times as true today, now that television advertising is so essential to success and so unbelievably expensive. About three decades ago, a new product called "Glasswax" was introduced on the consumer market. It was said that the advertising budget for this new household item was ONE MILLION DOLLARS. An envious P. & G. executive told me, "With that money, I could can mud (my word, not his) and sell it for one dollar a can." In my view, that is what has happened in politics.

When I told the Glasswax story to esteemed Club member and friend Gibbey Carey, his response was, "Yes, but you can do that only once." Thanks to the fact that there are now 535 members in Congress, I consider friend Carey's argument unworthy of his high intellect. Name-recognition being vital, the importance of advertising, both by the individual candidate and the party backing him, is increased. Subservience to party doctrine is also increased.

Kentuckian Mitch McConnell, not noted for deep or philosophical thinking but Chairman of the Republican Congressional Election Campaign Committee, allocates Republican advertising funds to those Congressional candidates whose election he deems most important and consonant with his personal values. Kentucky friends tell me that few pro-choice candidates receive significant money from him. They also tell me that even that statement about Mitch is not fair - because he is so opportunistic and unpredictable, so wobbly on all issues.

Mitch equates freedom to spend any amount of money, "soft" (for party principles) and "hard" (for specific candidates) with freedom of speech. I doubt that he remembers Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes' famous dictum, "Freedom of speech does not include a right to shout 'fire' in a crowded theater." It seems to me that the public has a transcendent right to have major policy issues debated on an even field. In a perfect world, most people think that those persons able and willing to spend large sums on political advertising should not have ten or twenty times more clout than

their impecunious opponents. Also as things now stand, legislators tend to favor their financial backers, and political donations are made to incumbents (even Democrats) more often than to unknown newcomers.

The Cincinnati Enquirer of July 31, 1999 (p. A-1) indicated in an article that practical political donors may not always be totally dedicated to party philosophy. The article said that Carl Lindner gave \$350,000 to the Republican Party in 1998 and \$270,000 to the Democratic National Committee.

When famed Cincinnati Charles Keating was accused of buying off investigators in the savings-and-loan scandal about ten years ago, he was asked if he thought that his large political donations bought influence. His reply was memorable: "I hope so."

I do not mean to imply that Democrats are guilt-free in the matter of raising money. Republicans point out, quite correctly, that a significant portion of union dues is often passed on to Democratic fund raisers without regard to the wishes of many members.

The admitted evils of campaign fund raising of both parties could and should have been examined in a bi-partisan way by a recent Congressional committee, but the committee investigated only fund-raising wrongs of the Democrats. "Big Tobacco" gave about four times as much to Republican candidates as the unions gave to the Democrats.

Local politics seem to me to be a replication of national politics in campaign financing. In our most recent local election, three Cincinnati councilmen admitted to having spent significantly more than \$300,000 each to be elected to a \$43,000 a year part-time job. Do you think that each was "his own man" in making important decisions affecting the economy of our city and its citizens? If you do, please tell me what you have been smoking.

In a general way, I dislike label thinking. I believe that announcing to the world that you intend to vote for one party or the other from dog-catcher to president from the time you become eligible to vote

until the grave is an abdication of your responsibility as an educated citizen. This "find out what the boys in the back room are having and make mine the same" mentality is excused by several huge assumptions including:

- (1) That is "the American system;"
- (2) One party or the other is "conservative" and the other "liberal," and you intend to be one or the other on all matters forever;
- (3) The definitions of those labels will never change;
- (4) Our present system, although far from ideal, is the best in the world and therefore never needs to be improved;
- (5) Republicans believe in a balanced budget; Democrats like to be Santa Claus, using taxpayers' money;
- (6) The biggest U.S. deficit in history, because generated by expenditures for armaments in a victorious cold war, need never be repaid because the "overtaxed" taxpayer should be allowed to keep his own money, and so on and on. Can you imagine buying a huge amount of merchandise in a local store and then denying your liability to pay for it on the ground that you are overburdened with debt?

In politics there is a maximum of name-calling and ad-hominem arguments, and a minimum of real thinking. A few of us laugh and parrot "Mo," one of "The Three Stooges:" "I try and try to think, but nothing happens!"

Having denounced "label thinking," I must confess that I am not immune to it. I have a major psychiatric problem. In the realm of economics, I consider myself a Republican, but I like Democrats better than Republicans. Republican sins are those of old age - lust for power and money. Democrats find playing Santa Claus with taxpayers' money seductively attractive.

Besides, they assert, who would vote for a party which boasts that it is the party of laissez faire or "do nothing.?" In all honesty can a party committed to doing nothing remedy society's problems?

I end this section of my paper with two very short notes on politics, one dealing with tasteless partisanship and the other describing the unavoidability of at least some partisanship.

When news of the assassination of President Kennedy was broadcast on a small radio set in the Office of the Recorder of Hamilton County, a very bright, often funny, Deputy Recorder whom I knew very well, walked up and down the aisles of the office, loudly proclaiming, "See! I am here! I did not shoot the President!"

On another occasion but after a Cincinnati Councilmanic election, the same genial but loud Deputy Recorder yelled to me, "I have finally found out what is wrong with you God-damned Charterites: You want the best man for the job. I don't want the best man for the job! I want some stupid jerk who thinks just like I do and who would vote just like me if elected to council." THAT IS A POLITICAL ARGUMENT I HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO REFUTE!

SEX AND GENDER

In the 1968 version of this paper, I copped-out and pandered to the old goats among us who still remember our youth, a time of hope, optimism, enthusiasm, sentimentality, great sensitivity, and even greater self-deception. Self-deception is a motherlode of humor, you may remember. In this vein, I can give you two one-liners: (1) "Men feign love in order to get sex; women give sex in order to obtain love and (2) Matrimony is the triumph of hope over reality."

In 1968 I avoided being personal by saying that masculinity is being a good father-figure for your son, showing him how to be aggressive enough to achieve success in life but not so aggressive as to be

obnoxious. Before touching on the intellectually challenging artistic and literary aspect of gender, I would like to recite three short anecdotes which illustrate three different time eras and the public attitude during each with regard to sex:

(1) In ancient times, that is to say during the period after the completion of our Cincinnati Suspension Bridge circa 1867 but before the end of the last century, young gentlemen used to court young ladies by taking them for a walk over the then-new bridge to Covington and back to Cincinnati on Sunday afternoons. After three such promenades, my mother's mother, then Miss Thompson, stood in the vestibule of her parents' house on upper Broadway rather too close to her escort, young Mr. Matthews. The latter, in an impetuous burst of passion, kissed her. She immediately slapped him in the face. He blurted out, "But, Miss Thompson, I was about to ask you to marry me!" "That is different!" she said. "I will think it over." She then turned on her heels, opened the front door with her key, and after entering, slammed the door in the face of her impetuous suitor.

(2) What I regard as the "middle era" involves some insight shared with me by Murray Seasongood as I discussed with him the broad outline of an early Literary Club gem I was about to write. I told him that my idea was to do a modern psychological "Pilgrim's Progress," discussing human maturation especially in late male adolescence. He responded by quoting an English instructor had taught him at Harvard who versified circa 1902 as follows:

There was a woman named Wilde
Who kept herself quite undefiled;
Dreaming of Jesus and venereal diseases
and fear of having a child.

The always forward-looking Mr. Seasongood then added. "In our day fear kept us virtuous. Now that we have the pill and penicillin, what keeps young men honorable?" I thought that he was unkind in referring to "us" as if we were the same age. It was not until much later that AIDS surfaced as a major world concern in buttressing fear as a foundation of virtue.

(3) In the mid-1970's, a brother-in-law told me at cocktail time that a former Methodist minister had sold him and several hundred other people shares in a Clermont County land speculation. The ex-minister had, as proof of his faith in the venture, given himself some generous options to buy shares of stock in the venture at a very friendly price if everything turned out well. Unfortunately he and his colleagues had overlooked Ohio's Blue Sky laws, which, in broad outline, require that stock issues be registered with the Ohio Department of Commerce before sale. Our meddling state government had prohibited selling common stock as if it were wall paper. My brother-in-law had assigned a middle aged female corporate officer to go to Columbus with me and rectify the ex-minister's oversight. The lady was African-American. We had few interests in common to discuss during our four-hour drive to and from Columbus, a drive which is, arguably, the dullest in Christendom. Naturally we discussed the waywardness and lack of self-discipline of today's late adolescents - possibly with some jealousy. "Mr. Hilton," she said, "They jump into bed. They have sex. They jump out of bed, shake hands, and say, 'Who are you?'"

I now turn to the more serious matters of (1) the reason our Club excludes women, and (2) the sexual preference of artists and writers affecting their work. In the case of writers, I refer, of course, to male writers who are not members of this Club.

"Fellowship" and "fraternity" connote masculinity, of course, but, more important from our Club's point of view, is the fact that they are best characterized by the absence of jealousy based on sex. We do not exclude women from our ranks because we consider males bright or more literary. Possibly we are afraid that the reverse will be proven. Our late kindly genius member, Charles Aring, put it best when he said, in a paper titled "Women and Children First":

". . .women have always been interested in style and color. . .It is a rare male who remembers what he wore last week or even yesterday. The achievement of fellowship and harmony is one of the chief goals of the Club." Charlie then

rhetorically asked, "Can you imagine what would happen if your wife were a member and mine was not?"

In my view, considering gender is general, homosexuality is a nonvolitional matter. It is considered by some a "sin," "sin" being described with certainty only by the Rev. Pat Robertson, some members of hierarchical religious organizations, and the Christian Coalition. I much prefer the opinion of the Rev. Peter Gomes, the self-confessed inactive homosexual minister of Harvard University. He claims that the Bible never mentions homosexuality but does condemn the exploitation of one human being by another. Gomes, who was evaluated by Time Magazine as one of the three greatest preachers in America, was paid \$350,000 for prepublication rights to his book titled The Good Book.

But my main point is that if an artist, male or female, is to portray accurately the inner soul of his or her characters, how can he or she do so without consulting that portion of his or her own soul which is less dominant? I hate to contemplate what our world of art, music and literature would be like if we destroyed the creations of Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Tschaikowsky, Sir James Barrie, E.M. Forster, Oscar Wilde, Somerset Maugham, W.H. Auden, Noel Coward, D.H. Lawrence, Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Leonard Bernstein, and countless other geniuses about whose sexual orientation we are uncertain.

In my opinion, the surest way to terminate any friendship is to even intimate to a friend that you consider yourself to be his or her moral superior. I devoutly hope that I have not given any member of my audience an impression that that is my feeling with regard to any of you. I don't even like the word "moral," because it stems from the Latin word "mores," meaning customary. What was customary in Nazi Germany was often horrible. I much prefer the word "ethical," which behavior is the result of applying the Immanuel Kant test to any proposed action: "What would the world be like if everyone did as I propose to do?" This paper may be egocentric in spots, but I assert

that I am a believer in the Kantian categorical imperative.

As a reward for your patience, I have made this full length paper shorter than is my wont. I was sorely tempted to title the paper "The Absolute Truth About Positively Everything," but discovered to my dismay that Bob Allen had long ago preempted that magnificent title. Such title would have tempted me to be longer than courtesy to my audience requires.

I thank you for your attention and conclude with a poem by Elizabeth Clark titled "Another Beatitude" which seems appropriate for me at this time and in this place:

Blessed are they who understand
my faltering step and shaking hand.
Blessed, who know my ears today
must strain to catch the things they say.
Blessed are they who seem to know
my eyes are dim, and my mind is slow.
Blessed are they who looked away;
I spilled tea on the cloth that day:
Blessed are they who, with cheery smile
stopped for a chat for a little while.
Blessed are they who know the way
to bring back memories of yesterday.
Blessed are they who never say,
"You've told that story twice today."
Blessed are they who make it known
that I'm loved, respected and not alone.
And blessed are they who will ease the days
of my journey home, in loving ways.

SOURCES:

11-4-68 paper "Four Forbidden Topics' by Robert Hilton

The True Believer - Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements, by Eric Hoffer, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1951 (166 pages)

The Painted Vail by W. Somerset Maugham, George W. Dorp, New York, 1924 (289 Pages) (Quotation: Pages 231, 232)

"The War Prayer" from Europe & Other Stories by Mark Twain, Harper & Row, New York, 1851 (p. 394)

The Affluent Society by John Kenneth Galbraith, Houghton, Mifflin, New York, 1958

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Excerpt from "Adam's Diary" and "Eve's Diary - Translated from the Original" by Mark Twain, The \$30,000 Bequest and Other Stories by Mark Twain, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1872.

"Women and Children First - The Masculine Club," Literary Club paper by Dr. Charles D. Aring 1-29-79.

The Good Book by The Rev. Peter J. Gomes, Morrow & Co., New York 1996.

"The Absolute Truth About Positively Everything" Literary club paper by Robert H. Allen 5-24-71.

(Word Count: 5,306 including 174 in Notes)

Postscript:

Any discussion of "big dreams" would be incomplete without mention of world famous Joseph Campbell's The Power of Myth, a six-hour tape interview by Bill Moyers. Campbell traces the great myths of the world's chief religions and shows that similarities in core values, tales of virgin births, etc. far outnumber dissimilarities. This and our sophisticated member Dusty Anderson disabused me of the notion that killing an infidel, i.e. a Christian, guaranteed salvation to a devout Mohammedan. "Not so," says Dusty. "Jihad" does not mean "holy war" but does mean "struggle." Dying defending Islam guarantees salvation - not aggressive killing even of infidels." Also Mohammedans gaining salvation must have led virtuous lives. "The most

important jihad is with ourselves to achieve holiness" or so sayeth Dusty.

Quoran = Koran.

BUDGET

October 24, 1999

- 1 - One Hundred Fifty Years Young. . . . Henry Winkler

October 25, 1999

- 2 - The Celestial Branch. John A. Diehl
- 3 - In the Company of Men. John A. MacLeod

1

One Hundred Fifty Years Young

The 150th anniversary of any institution is surely grounds enough for celebration. How much more so when that institution has remained a vigorous, vibrant, and lively adornment of a city that in its turn has changed from the sprawling, brawling river town that so disappointed the mother of Anthony Trollope into one of the modest cultural oases that dot our mid-American landscape. The character of the Club has no doubt changed over the years. It was founded, as Eslie Asbury put it some years ago, by "young men who didn't know better" and certainly who never dreamed it would endure for a century and a half. Dr. Asbury was for many years the historian of the Club and then was succeeded by John Diehl. Like others before them, they have been the memory of our organization, but both have added a dimension that has greatly enhanced the