

Rollin Workman's Memorial

Dale Flick and Paul Franz, Memorial Committee

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Foreword: *Rollin Workman wrote his own memorial and entrusted it to Dale Flick years ago. Rollin felt committee-drafted memorials were "too sanitized." What follows is Rollin's "auto-memorial," abridged to focus it on his life in the Club. An excerpt from Rollin's Presidential address has been added.¹ Rollin's full piece will be posted on the Club website.*

Rollin Workman was a professor of philosophy at UC who became a member of The Literary Club in 1981. He served as Secretary from fall 1994 through spring 2001. His minutes were far too long and detailed, as a result of which, in a well-executed coup d'état, he became in 2001 the only Secretary in the history of the Club to be voted out of office. As a consolation, he was appointed to fill a vacant one-year term as a Trustee. He was then elected President for 2002-2003. During his presidency, the meeting time was changed from 8:30 to 8:00, the election night was changed from the first meeting in June to the last meeting in May, and the process for proposing and vetting a prospective member clarified and tightened.

....

Rollin assumed ... continuing projects related to the Club. When he became Secretary ..., he started constructing four indexes of Club papers, one chronological, one alphabetical by author, and one alphabetical by subject. In all of the indexes, the entries include a one or more sentence description of the content of ... each paper, something usually hidden by the title. The indexes are available in the Club library. The fourth index, which was secret, was chronological, with a personal evaluation of each paper attached. The evaluations ranged from "Outstanding" to "Abominable".

In his 2002 Presidential address, Rollin pondered the symbolism of the three torches in the Club's coat of arms. He proposed one stood for authorship, one for fellowship, and one for honor. He said

It is part of the essence of the Club for the brightness of Honor to rest upon paper readers. In one perspective, the honor is for the day. But in another way, it is permanent. Beyond the day, we continuously honor each other for being writers and for being us, authors and fellows all.²

... Rollin brought 10 full length papers and 15 budget contributions. All of the full length papers were fiction, most of baroque form, *i.e.*, a plausible story with a sudden fantastic twist at the end. The paper which probably made the greatest impression was his first full length effort, a mingling of the battles of Agincourt and the WW1 Battle of the Somme, with a corresponding mingling of two soldiers, one in each battle. Rollin was most proud of two budget length poems, both old-fashioned, with rhyme and meter. The one he considered his greatest literary achievement, entitled "Basilisk" was the tale of St. George and the dragon, poetically told from the dragon's point of view.

¹ Additions and changed words are in *italics*.

² From October 28, 2002 Presidential Address.

In 2006, Rollin was made an Honorary Member.

Rollin loved the Literary Club, and esteemed its members and the Ranieri family members who did so much to make meetings pleasant occasions. In the whole span of his membership, [*while healthy*] he attended all but three meetings of the Club. He was something of a loner, finding that he rarely had anything important enough to say among people he regarded as more knowledgeable, capable, and significant than himself. In his last few years, he had trouble hearing, against the background noise, what was said at the post-paper tables

In 1999, during the Club's sesquicentennial celebration, Rollin wrote and placed anonymously on the mantle a poetic meditation on the Club. A revised version can serve as his epitaph. He would also have called it his farewell.

For honor, letters, fellowship
The triple torches burn
Beside the shield's enchevroned strip,
Ne'er dimmed by years they spurn.

Symbolic light within this place
On those who come to read,
And those who hear, who then with grace
Empraise the writer's deed.

Yet short the hour for those who come,
It swiftly runs its ways,
And one more's added to the sum
Of memory's fading days.

How many papers have been read
Inside these muse touched walls?
How many words of men now dead,
Which no man now recalls?

Far dimmed are now the thoughts I wove;
But, though they disappear,
I gained the rank for which I strove:
Calliope's compeer.

So let forgetting shadows turn
O'er me, who, living, saw
How bright the triple torches burn;
Luceat Lux Vestrá.