

Literary Club Memorial - Arnold Schrier

By Michael H. Kremzar

Sharing in this Memorial were Bob Watkins, Bob Dorsey, Dale Flick, Nico Ranieri, and Michael Meyer. Also, thanks to the diligent scanning work by Jim Myers, Dave Edmundson, and Mark Schlachter, it was easy to access Arnie's papers on the club web site, and help me gain in knowledge of several subjects as well as bring back memories of Arnie.

Arnie Schrier joined the Literary Club in 1992 and went to the celestial branch of the club on January 6 of this year. He was 90 years old and left a great legacy of contributions as educator, family leader, and Literary Club member.

Arnie was the son of Russian immigrants who came to this country speaking only Yiddish and settled in New York City, where Arnie grew up. The Schriers ran a grocery store and lived above the store with the entire family working to stock shelves, move stock, or run errands. His love of handball originated on the streets of his neighborhood, and he continued playing the sport until just a few years before his death. Following five years as an officer in the Navy, where he claimed he never set foot on the deck of a ship, he earned a PhD from Northwestern University. He wanted to do his dissertation on the Russian migration to the United States. His advisor thought that he would be too emotionally involved in the subject, so he did his dissertation on the Irish migration instead – which became his first published book. Arnie spent his entire working career at the University of Cincinnati where he retired as the “Walter C. Langsam Professor of Modern European History, Emeritus.” We should note the connection to the Literary Club since Walter Langsam was a member of the club and served as Club President as well as President of the University of Cincinnati. Arnie authored several books including at least two text books – the club has five of his books in our library. Also, he helped public high schools develop curricula, and served as President of the World History Association. However, the most long lasting academic memory is the influence he had over generations of students. In his eulogy for Arnie, Michael Meyer, who considered Arnie to be his mentor, said: “ Arnold Schrier was not just a fine teacher and a gentleman but possessed what in Yiddish is called *Menschlichkeit*, a genuine humanity.”

One of Arnie's students was Nico Ranieri, our Club Steward, who took a course in European History from Dr. Schrier while an undergrad at UC, and another at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). Nico was impressed by how interesting history could be if taught by the right professor. He recalled that Arnie's course at OLLI was so popular that it was moved to the largest auditorium available for OLLI. Nico also remembers that Arnie's drink of choice every Monday night was Dubonnet Rouge with a twist. In his memory, Nico served that drink to me tonight.

As a member of the Literary Club, Arnie delivered nine papers – all carefully researched, well organized, interesting, and most with extensive bibliographies. As preparation for this Memorial, I read all of his papers, and, although I am a better informed man for the reading, I miss Arnie even more. His papers taught us about the origin of the greatest navy on earth in the 15th century – the Chinese navy led by eunuchs. Yes, not an insult, eunuchs were the prime bureaucrats and military leaders of their day. The current ambitions of the Chinese navy can be seen as a return to Chinese glory on the world's seas as described in Arnie's paper. Also, there was an enlightening paper about the Russian attempts to control the Caucasus, and the Islamic opposition and terror that resulted. This paper provides remarkable insight into the motivations of ISIS and other Islamic terror groups of today. Who knew about the history and tragedy of the Russian obsession with vodka? Arnie knew and engaged us in a thorough review of the impact of this Green Dragon on the Russian nation. To continue my education, Arnie took me into the history of Genghis Kahn and his near conquest of all of Europe. Back in the U.S., we learned about the Russian immigrant who founded St. Petersburg, Florida, through his determined entrepreneurship. Of course, Arnie could not overlook Rasputin and the interesting tale of his rise to power and demise in the Malaya Nevka River. His last paper was about Whistler's father, whose impact on U.S. and Russian railroads was the practical force behind his son – the painter James McNeil Whistler, who immortalized his mother.

As a parting comment, we must remember Arnie's sly sense of humor. He was always on the lookout for a pun or play on words. Bob Watkins and I share driving on Monday nights with Arnie as our regular passenger, so we had ample opportunity to hear and re-hear some stories. One he repeated in his paper about the Seder dinner at the beginning of Passover. He reported that there are four questions asked at this dinner and the first one is: Why is this night different from all the rest? The question is always asked in Hebrew: "MAH NISHTANAH HA LAILAH HA ZEH MICALL HA LAILOT?" Arnie continued with this story: "Years later, as an adult, I came to enjoy a cross-lingual pun based on this question. It seems that King Arthur decided to hold a full dress review of his knights. They all gathered in the courtyard and formed a reviewing line. As King Arthur and his adjutant came slowly down the line to inspect them, he was pleased to note that each knight's suit of armor was bright and shiny, until he came upon one whose armor was dull, dirty and dingy. Whereupon King Arthur turned to his adjutant and asked: MAH NISHT ANAH HA LAIAH HA ZEH MICALL HA LAILOT?" Yes, we groaned too.

Arnold has been missed at the club since his declining health forced him to move to Associate Member status in 2013 and then to resign in 2014 when he could no longer attend meetings. His literary and personal contributions to the club are a lasting memorial for all of us. We all miss him, but are reminded of the loss that must be borne by his family. To his wife, Sonny, his children Susan, Jay, Linda, and Paula, his brother Gene, his ten grandchildren, and two great grand children, the Literary Club expresses our deepest sympathies.

Literary Club Papers by Arnold Schrier

The Eunuch and the Giraffe	5/15/95
The Avar and the Tsar	2/2/98
Millennial Madness	11/30/98
The Green Dragon	1/8/01
The Woman Who Saved Europe	6/9/03
The Name Giver	1/2/06
A Family Affair with Wine	4/3/07
The Man from Tobolsk	1/28/08
Whistler's Father	5/24/10