

Minutes of the Literary Club  
September 19, 2011

Fred McGavran gaveled the new season to order before 57 members and three guests. New members Randy Baily and Joe Dehner signed the registry. Fred noted that Robert Smith and Jack McDonough would chair memorial committees for Sam Trufant and Herb Flessa, respectively. News and views of various awards, fund-raising efforts, the price of a Farny and Norm Levy's expertise on Twitter followed. So did the sad news that Archie Christopherson suffered a massive stroke on the night of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Club's Web site is updated and complete. All papers through the current year are now bound and scheduled for delivery to the Club in the coming week.

The night's paper, "The Man Who Walked Too Much," was delivered by Robert Vitz, and a strange tale it was. John Ledyard, a New Englander born amidst modest circumstances in 1751, became, in the short life span of 37 years, an adventurer of epic – though largely unsung – proportions. He sailed on Captain James Cook's third and last voyage to the Pacific, including the Bering Strait and Hawaii. He traversed much of northern Sweden and Finland on foot in the *winter* – imagine! -- of 1786-87 – then to St. Petersburg and far eastern Siberia, all in the space of some 10 months. Returning to London, he was hired by the newly formed Association for Promoting the Discovery of Interior Parts of Africa to probe the Dark Continent. He got to Egypt and died soon after, of complications from dysentery, we think.

This odyssey, remarkable by any measure, was punctuated by a variety of outlandish experiences, including a short tenure at Dartmouth, where his unending hi-jinks outraged the dour head of school; dinners in Paris with Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin; memories of a blue-eyed German girl, about whom he later wrote, "I wish I could die at her feet, or higher up . . . ."; running afoul of Catherine the Great by circumventing her refusal to grant him a Russian passport, and so on.

So why should we be concerned with this "mad, romantic, dreamy" wanderer as he was once described? Bob offered several possibilities: Ledyard's travels may have helped spur interest in trade with China; his conversations with Jefferson may have paved the way for Lewis and Clark; he may have been the prototype for more famous American explorers to follow – think Lewis and Clark and Zebulon Pike.

In this present era of America not feeling very good about itself, Bob suggested, Ledyard's outsized exploits may still "have something to say to us." At least, that's what the recent publication of three new biographies would suggest.

The evening concluded with an update on the improvements to the Club's physical plant over the summer (read primarily: new roof over the reading room!) and a financial report from treasurer Bill Sena. In brief, all is well. The balance sheet is strong. The endowment fund has slightly outperformed the market year to date, and it yields a cash return of six percent. Emerson Knowles is hard at work developing support for the Asbury Building Fund. If your phone is ringing, it may be Emerson. Pick it up!

#### Minutes of the Literary Club Sept. 26, 2011

Before 58 members and five guests, President McGavran sadly reported the death of Archie Christopherson; Rollin Workman will head a committee to memorialize Archie. Then followed news and views on many matters, including Stewart Maxwell's exhibit on the Terrace Plaza at UC's DAAP Library, and several published pieces by members, both in print and online. Fred said that Jerry Kathman, who, like all great marketers, knows his target audience, has introduced a third new bourbon, Devil's Cut, to the Club's bar.

It was a budget evening, with Tony Covatta doing the honors for David Reichert, who was away on medical leave. The first paper, by David, recalled his several encounters with poetry giant Robert Frost. David's father, we learned, came to know Frost when the great man addressed the Ohio Valley Poetry Society in the late 30s and subsequently invited David's father – himself a poet and writer – to the Bread Loaf Writers Conference in Middlebury, Vermont. David's own intersections with Frost grew out of that acquaintance. Few but memorable, they resulted in at least one inscribed copy of the "Complete Poems" and several insights as to the nature of greatness, which David was happy to share with us on this occasion.

The second paper, by Tony, was a loving and perceptive deconstruction of Frost's famous poem, "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening." Examining the structure, the tension in tone and the rhyme scheme, among others, Tony demonstrated why this "deceptively

simple” poem, as he put it, has long exerted such a powerful pull on readers.

The final paper, by Aaron Betsky, was a celebration of the power of poetry to frame the world we live in, both literally and metaphorically. Citing three poems that have held lifelong enchantment for him – “To His Coy Mistress” by Sir Andrew Marvell, “London,” by William Blake and “Musee de Beaux Arts” by W.H. Auden – Aaron said that he reads poems “spatially.” Or as he put it, “Poems do more than describe or provide metaphors; they amalgamate intimations into complete worlds.” Aaron also reads poems passionately – and hearing that was one of the great treats of his delivery. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Polk Laffoon IV

Minutes of the Literary Club

October 3, 2011

President Fred McGavran called the meeting to order before 51 members and three guests. Following brief news and views, he turned the podium over to Sam Greengus, who gave us a touching, albeit fictionalized, reminiscence of an immigrant mother’s frustrated quest for academic advancement. Entitled “Molly’s Diploma,” the paper was in the form of a letter from a grandfather to his four beloved granddaughters, three in college and one graduating.

The letter’s message: Never take for granted the gift of your education. Understand that your great-grandmother, whom you never knew, wanted nothing so much as higher learning, but due to the cultural and economic limitations of her world, she never achieved it.

Sam then drew a richly textured portrait of that world: the mother Molly’s hidebound, unsympathetic father, who grew up in tsarist Russia and worried that “over-educated girls” would not attract husbands; Molly’s own husband, a construction worker named Leo, who was a decent man, not without some education himself, but “who did not share Molly’s yearning to explore fiction and poetry.”

Later in life, Molly had a chance to acquire more education in evening classes at the local public school. But the press of domestic duties, problems with penmanship and spelling, and finally, Leo’s

implored her to give it up, conspired to defeat her. Said Sam, in this fictionalized version of a story close to his heart: "I remember how my mother looked at Leo. Her face did not reflect anger but rather a kind of understanding, tinged with sympathy and resignation."

I think all of us could feel her pain.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
October 10, 2011

Fifty-five members and four guests moved quickly into "Preeminence Gone Sour," Otto P. Geier Jr.'s rueful elegy for his family's once-great enterprise, Milacron.

Otto divided his tale into three parts, the first of which began in 1884 with his Uncle Fred A. Geier's buying into the Cincinnati Screw and Tap Co. Then followed its rapid evolution, seven years later, into The Cincinnati Milling Machine Co. Through the Panic of 1893, the rise of the auto industry, the challenges of World War I, its rocky aftermath, the Roaring Twenties – with demand and employment peaking in 1929 – and then the Depression, we saw how something small and local becomes something big and international in a relatively few years. Wise management and careful nurturing of employees were critical.

The Middle Years covered the Mill's many acquisitions and expansions in the 50s and 60s. Intriguingly, it got into plastics just months after Dustin Hoffman's character Ben, in "The Graduate," was famously told "plastics" was the way of future. It also became the world's largest supplier of epitaxial wafers, upon which semi-conductors are built. Clearly Otto wanted us to have the fullest possible picture.

Then came "the Unraveling," as Otto dubbed it. After 1990 (and the end of family management), leadership changed often, and so did businesses bought and sold. Financial engineering became more important than operations. The combination, Otto believes, led to poorly conceived acquisitions, poor operational stewardship and poor understanding of how much debt and capital were required for a company of this size.

In 2009, the Mill declared bankruptcy. It was a bitter passage for Otto, and indeed, for our city. Who, just a generation ago, would have thought?

Minutes of the Literary Club  
October 17, 2011

Before 54 members and nine guests, and stipulating that good journalism is essential to good government, Scott Aiken took on one of the hot topics of our media-drenched culture: Whither the daily newspaper?

Today's "emaciated" broadsheets, he said, reflect three factors: the rise of digital technologies, the absorption of most newspapers into chains owned by corporations and the recent economic slump. Each of these, he argued, has been a nail in the coffin of substantive journalism.

Leaving the ills of the economy to our imaginations, Scott said that corporate ownership, with its indisputable orientation to financial management, has left journalism in the lurch. "Pleasing" Wall Street, he said, is the altar at which corporate chieftains worship.

But of the three factors cited, Scott seemed most concerned with digital technologies, primarily because – in his view – their net effect has been to distance reporters from the news they are covering. "Yes," he said, "reporters connect with their sources through the Internet, Face Book, and so on, but at the cost of restricting personal contact." Information gathered digitally, he explained, permits publishers to hire fewer foot soldiers and to send them ever less further afield.

All of this was leavened with anecdotes from Scott's own career: an encounter with the future Queen Margrethe of Denmark, a conversation with Nikita Khrushchev's wife, his slipping into an important European press conference on slim credentials, a scoop concerning Federated Department Stores' new corporate offices. While the points of the anecdotes varied, from the lax security of days gone by to the values of today's celebrity-obsessed readership, his larger message remained the importance of feet on the ground to gain insights.

Where will the news media be 15 or 20 years from now? On that, Scott punted. Except to say that change is constant, and who can argue with that?

Minutes of the Literary Club  
October 24, 2011

Fifty-two members and three guests heard Tom Murphy raise a very red flag concerning Internet intrusiveness in our lives. To make his

case, Tom cited one example of Facebook gone awry and one instance of Orwellian overreach from his own dossier. Combining these with informed speculation about where the Internet's capabilities may be heading, he invoked a Kafka-esque universe of unsettling possibility.

First out of the gate was the Facebook example, telling of 63-year-old writer Susan Arnout Smith, who signed on to the social network only to find her profile page shanghaied anonymously, suddenly misrepresenting her as a person "trolling for sex with all comers." Smith's struggle with the faceless Facebook, both to rectify the wrong and to identify her assailants, was long and frustrating. Ultimately, it was successful, but not before plenty of damage was done.

Tom's own experience was learning at the airport that he had been placed on a terrorism watch list. It came out of nowhere, with no explanation. Happily, it didn't inhibit his travel; the authorities moved him right through. But it gave Tom a terrible case of the willies, and it didn't help when, as instructed, he later called the TSA to try to extricate himself; they assured him they would send him the proper forms . . . but never did.

Throughout, Tom bolstered his case by references to, and even a short fable from, Franz Kafka, the Czech master of state imposed terror. He closed with two cautions: First, that soon the Internet may be able to tell any of us a great deal about someone simply by scanning a photo. And second, that already the Internet records our every digital move so as to target advertising messages –and Lord knows what else – directly.

In short, Tom structured his remarks in such a way that even the most digitally naïve among us must now feel some of the terrors he feels, thus effecting a metamorphosis that even Kafka could have admired.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
October 31, 2011

The Club's annual dinner, managing, as always, to be both festive and formal, was attended by 77 members and graced by two papers.

The first, the latest installment in John Diehl's annual glimpses into Literary Club history, celebrated Rutherford B. Hayes, an early and distinguished member of our brotherhood. John traced the arc of Hayes' life and career, moving from marriage to Cincinnati lawyer to Civil War combatant to congressman, governor and President. Nothing Hayes did

was less than impressive; typically, he entered the war as a staff officer and left a brigadier general, three times wounded and greatly admired for his bravery.

Greatly enlivening the paper were the many audience-appropriate diary entries concerning the Literary Club itself. “Well what good times we had!” said Hayes in one passage. “Wit, anecdote, song, feast, wine and good fellowship.” In another, he reported returning from a meeting “sober . . . at 1:45 a.m.” Discussion of a White House gathering for the Club’s 29th anniversary precedes discussion of the President’s election as the Club’s first honorary member.

The paper closed with remarks from a 1912 paper by Club member William Cochran, offering a sparkling assessment of Hayes’ Presidency. By the time John left the podium, we might have been forgiven for wondering why Rutherford B. Hayes is not a fifth face on Mt. Rushmore. Or failing that, perhaps a first face on Mt. Adams.

Fred’s presidential address, an ode to what he called “the spirit of literature,” despaired of much of what passes for American letters today. But he is not giving up. “Apollo does pay an occasional visit,” he told us, and from that he takes hope.

The paper first described parallel orbits of contemporary fiction, both equally dreary in Fred’s estimation. One consists of candidates for MFAs in academia; the other are the more commercially minded, ever circling the New York publishing houses.

Fred found cause for optimism, however, in the memory of Ted Solotaroff, an editor and essayist of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century who wrote for, as he put it, “a few good voices in my head.” The concept inspired – and inspires – Fred: “. . . a few good voices that confirm and expand consciousness and values and sensibility.” We read, he noted, “to discover the good that enlightens us and informs our actions and confirms who we are.”

Out of such thoughts, Fred defined his “spirit of literature” – something that is “erratic and uncontrollable,” but that somehow incorporates the kinds of virtues he finds in Anglo-Saxon poetry: “power, humility, masculinity, yearning, sadness and faith” – in other words, all the emotions, passions and vitality of life itself. It is why we are drawn to good literature, why we need, as Fred said, “to keep reading and expanding our vision and sensibility” if we are to embrace it fully.

It is in this pursuit, he concluded, that we meet once weekly here at the Literary Club. And he finds that a very uplifting thing.

Respectfully submitted,

Polk Laffoon IV

Minutes of the Literary Club  
November 7, 2011

“This Land is Your Land” is the most popular song folksinger Woody Guthrie ever wrote, but for most people its provenance is a mystery. They don’t know that it took almost a decade to catch on, that its original version incorporated three social protest verses, and that it was first written as a critical retort to Irving Berlin’s schmaltzy but infectious “God Bless America,” as popularized by Kate Smith.

So reported Jerry Kathman in a reverent and meticulously researched homage to Guthrie, read before 57 members and twelve guests. Guthrie, who was born in 1912 and died in 1967, was a refugee of dustbowl Oklahoma and a migrant to California, where he bore witness to the suffering of other migrants throughout the state. That experience proved crucial to his career as a bard of the common man.

But in unearthing all this, Jerry ran headlong into Irving Berlin. Another refugee, this time from tsarist pogroms, Berlin managed to form, and sustain, a far rosier vision than Guthrie of the America that adopted him. These feelings found their way into “God Bless America” – a song that Berlin had composed and placed on the shelf fully 20 years before Kate Smith inspired him to dust it off. Hearing it, Woody Guthrie felt compelled to push back.

Jerry’s paper, “Woodrow and Israel,” dealt with both songwriters, but was weighted to Guthrie. Briefly, he sketched their life stories, larding them with highlights from their careers, and likening them to the poet Walt Whitman, who had always believed that his work “gave the American people a voice.” Effective on many levels, the paper reflected Jerry’s passion for his topic, as in: “Guthrie’s songs and other writings are indeed part of the core curriculum of my emotional education – helping me understand, from a very different perspective, the nature of bigotry, class struggle, my religious tradition, and most importantly, the majesty of our land and its people.”



Applause was long and loud.

Following the paper was a brief business meeting in which President Fred McGavran reviewed the Club's gift policies, asked the members if they endorse the weekly "News and Views" (they do) and discussed proper procedures for presenting a candidate for membership.

## Minutes of the Literary Club November 14, 2011

It was the first meeting following the city's bi-annual Council election, and those gathered – 58 members and seven guests – gave a hearty round of applause to P.G. Sittenfeld, the Club's youngest member, who was elected on his first run for office.

Fran Barrett's paper, "Washington," was, in part, an examination of the famous name within the context of our city – drilling down on Fort Washington, the city's earliest settlement, and later on General George Washington, for whom the fort was named. With archeological attention to detail, Fran pinpointed the fort's location (very near where we sit tonight), recalled the exhumation of its powder magazine in the early 1950s, and referenced a blockhouse monument, less than 100 feet from here, that provides lasting testament to the fort's configuration.

Actually in use for fewer than 20 years, the fort succumbed to the emerging grid of streets now forming our downtown. Yet even as he lamented its evanescence, Fran celebrated the fort's importance; it was the staging place for the military operations necessary to securing peace with the Indians then savaging much of the Northwest Territory.

One anecdote, showcasing the dry Barrett humor, brought all this to life: John Van Cleve, blacksmith of Fort Washington, "ventured out of the fort and northwest into the area which later became known as Over-the-Rhine. While in the vicinity of what today is known as Elm Street, where Music Hall is located, Mr. Van Cleve was attacked, stabbed multiple times, scalped and killed. Now, some 220 years later, conditions around Music Hall are quite different in many ways, yet similar in other ways. It is still possible to be stabbed and killed near Music Hall, but highly improbable that the victim would be scalped."

Fran went on to recall "Mad" Anthony Wayne's suppression of the Indians at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, to praise the prowess of Indian Chief Tecumseh, to rhapsodize about Ohio and its production of U.S.

Presidents, and finally, as noted, to bow down before the greatness of the Washington who made it all possible. It was a bravura performance, signaled by the gusto with which Fran delivered it.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
November 21, 2011

Robert Smith opened the meeting with a lovely elegy to longtime member Sam Trufant, who died in New Jersey early this fall.

John Steiner then delivered his presciently named paper, "Burnet, Etc." to 43 members and two guests. Focusing first on the formation of Burnet's Rifles, a company of Civil War volunteers, John reported that it was organized by Rutherford B. Hayes and named for Robert Burnet, its first drill instructor. For reasons not specified, Burnet withdrew soon after joining, leaving his eponymous brigade to do a good deal of marching, but no recorded fighting. Burnet's Rifles, comprised of Literary Club members, had a constitution, but, as John noted, "Other than swearing fidelity to one's fellow members, it had no higher purpose." It did deplete the Literary Club, which closed for 17 months at the height of the conflict.

John peppered this portion of his narrative with observations about the firing on Ft. Sumter, the impact of early Civil War battles on Cincinnati, getting the wounded from battlefields to medical help, the reactivation of the Literary Club in 1864 Et. Cetera.

Turning, then, to a deconstruction of the Burnet flag, hanging on our east wall, John reviewed its fabric, dyes, numbers of stars and stripes, tattered lower right corner, how it came to be encased et. cetera. We learned that just as Burnet's Rifles never saw battle, neither did the Burnet flag!

John embellished this portion of his narrative with discussion concerning restoration of the flag; of various border states' decisions as to secession; a cameo bio of Lloyd Johnson, the Club's steward from 1872 until after 1910, who first encased the flag; and the role of Club members in service to the Union.

Et Cetera!

Minutes of the Literary Club  
November 28, 2011

Jack McDonough offered an affectionate memorial to Herb Flessa, a member of 17 years, from 1991 until 2008.

Kingston Fletcher brought a budget before 55 members and eight guests, warning us upfront that no common theme would emerge from the three papers.

First up was Dick Wendel, recalling how Lyndon Johnson threw him a most unwelcome curve in April 1968 by calling to active duty Dick's 311<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital – until then a happily somnolent participant in the Army's active reserve. Within three months, the unit was at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, where the program to ready them for deployment was pitifully inadequate. No matter . . . by October the 311<sup>th</sup> was in Vietnam, staffing a POW hospital. Dick described the prisoners, the kinds of wounds they suffered and the impact of it all on his colleagues. Although the 311<sup>th</sup> remained in Vietnam only 10 months, it was long enough to cause Dick to reconsider earlier priorities – and to conclude, as he put it, that “military intervention is not a suitable catalyst to spread democracy around the world.”

King's paper was a serious look at labor unrest in the five decades following the Civil War, with a focus on three famous clashes: the Molly Maguires of Pennsylvania in the late 1860s and '70s, the lockout at the McCormick Reaper Company in the middle 1880s, and the 1905 demise of Idaho's ex-governor Frank Steunenberg, who had called in federal troops to end a miner's strike. Murder was the modus operandi of the Maguires. A bloody bombing distinguished the McCormick fray. Newly invented dynamite was the instrument of Steunenberg's undoing. The paper concluded with Clarence Darrow's defense of William (big Bill) Haywood) one of Steunenberg's three assassins, and with King's reflections on the place of unions today.

The final paper. Rich Lauf's rehash of a trumped-up toilet paper shortage in the mid-70s, was a lively chronicling of consumer hysteria run amok. When a chance remark by Johnny Carson fingered toilet paper as “the next big shortage,” buyers emptied store shelves nationwide, forcing producers to work overtime. Rich, running a line of Charmin for P&G in Green Bay, was in the middle of it. But the beauty of his paper was less in the facts than in the telling, as in “. . . this wasn't gasoline – this shortage would strike at the very seat of human existence.” It was funny, it was clever, it was – my one pun pales beside Rich's many – a royal flush!

Minutes of the Literary Club  
December 5, 2011

Thirty-seven members and nine guests learned that Bill Pratt has published a book about Ezra Pound. They then heard Jim Durham report on several of his experiences as a technology specialist in aircraft design safety.

Jim talked with some specificity about five airplane accidents with which he was involved during his career. From them, he has taken away at least three lessons: (a) You always learn how to enhance safety via an accident (b) No accident is the result of a single failure, but of “inherent redundancy,” or multiple failures, within the design (c) As technology changes, old processes and old ways of thinking concerning design need to change as well.

The first of the accidents, concerning Jim’s time as a new recruit at Boeing in Wichita, almost killed him. A test flight to gauge the high-altitude effects of positive to negative G forces, it was to have included him in the crew; at the last minute he was told to remain on the ground. The alternators failed, the plane lost power, the ejector seats didn’t work, and all but the pilot were killed.

Each of the other four accidents received considerable publicity in its time, and hearing Jim’s post-mortems was intriguing. Examples: An Egypt Air Flight 990 that went down south of Nantucket in 1990, killing all 217 aboard, was in all probability the result of a suicide wish by the a fundamentalist pilot. The SwissAir flight that crashed in the North Atlantic off of Halifax in 1998 was blamed on a fire from faulty wiring, but later information yielded by an esoteric process called “remote viewing” has prompted new thinking; the investigation may be reopened.

Jim promised he would not weigh us down with technology, and he tried. But between the G forces at the nacelles and the remote viewing, and a pitot tube occlusion (which caused another of the accidents), and localized inertial loads, he may have given us more credit than we deserve!

Minutes of the Literary Club  
December 12, 2011

“Explosion on a Sunny Sunday,” Bill Friedlander’s paper on Pearl Harbor, lured 63 members and nine guests from pre-nativity revelries to hear the answers to two questions: (1) What led the Japanese to attack the U.S.? (2) And why, with our sophisticated code and cipher detection, were we not able to recognize what was coming?

The answer to the first involved our ever-tightening embargo against Japan, which, by July 1941 included oil. Once that occurred, Bill said, the Japanese were forced to seek fuel elsewhere. Contemplating the Dutch East Indies, they recognized that an attack there would probably cause the U.S. to declare war. So they planned preemptively – and that led to the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

The answer to the second question: how could we not have known, was more nuanced. Bill cited a cable from Joseph Grew, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, sent in September 1940, warning that in the current world situation, Japan saw a “golden opportunity” to carry its dreams of expansion into effect. Grew believed the threat to U.S. interests in the Pacific would only be deterred by our military power. But his cable moved no one to action.

Two weeks prior to the attack, Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall and Navy Chief of Operations Admiral Harold Stark warned Roosevelt in writing of their mutual view that Germany represented the primary threat to American interests. This was based to a great extent on their services’ intelligence efforts. And as Bill told us, however good those efforts might have been, none of the deciphering and decoding ever named Pearl Harbor as an attack point, and not until late on December 6<sup>th</sup> and early on December 7<sup>th</sup> did they discern that December 7 would be the date.

Bill, a member of the Army Security Agency in the mid-50s, told us a whole lot more about military codes and ciphers but, in the spirit of Joseph Grew, I’m just going to put that out there and let you do with it what you will.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
December 19, 2011

It was a grand Yuletide celebration. Sixty eight members and four guests drank egg nog, consumed a full turkey dinner, and basked in the glorious holiday sounds of Chris Miller’s music. Albert Pyle, filling in for

Fred McGavran, gave Nico his holiday check, and then all settled back to hear three sparkling papers.

Mike Kremzar imparted a rollicking history of the famous P&G gift baskets, morphing from live turkeys in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to primarily samples of P&G products today. This chronicling was framed by some of Mike's thoughts on effective management of people – and how something as symbolic as gift boxes can play into that. It was, in the end, a message of good cheer, as many great Christmas stories are.

Allan Winker's paper (read by Bill Friedlander) was a memoir of growing up Jewish in surroundings often dominated by Christians and, come December, by Christmas. The holiday was "inescapable," Allan said, and so, as a "concession to the culture at large," his family sent seasonal cards and gave Christmas presents atop Chanukan presents. Allan talked about going to camp, as a boy, with mostly Christians, then, as an adult, his marriages to two Christian women. The upshot has been some ambiguity but also knowledge of both Christmas carols and Jewish ritual. "Deck the halls! Light the menorah candles," he says. "I'm ready for whatever comes next."

Jack McDonough undertook the surprising question of why we don't eat swan instead of, say, turkey or goose, for Christmas dinner. Henry VIII did, he said, and moreover, Jack's wife has been wondering. So Jack set out to learn: about types of swans, legends and myths of swans, the unavailability of swans in grocery stores, and what should you do if you're determined to have swan for Christmas? The answer, it seems, is to call the Exotic Meat Market in Las Vegas and let them ship you a live one for \$1,000. Jack, a trustee who would do anything for the Literary Club, might have – but Barbara put her foot down, leaving those of us so inclined to continue to fantasize. Oh, and by the way, Jack said, he has it on good authority that swan tastes very good!

Respectfully submitted,

Polk Laffoon IV

Minutes of the Literary Club  
January 2, 2012

The New Year opened quickly, perhaps too quickly for many Literary Clubbers inasmuch as only 42 of us and one guest showed up to hear Ethan Stanley's swan song; Ethan moved to Maine shortly after his delivery.

Ethan's paper reaffirmed for those in attendance his parturition as an English professor and his deep love for the arcane corners of English literature. His topic, the two seventeenth century writers, poet Charles Cotton and essayist Izaak Walton, provided fertile ground for academic inquiry, and Ethan did not shrink. We heard about their families, their temperaments, their personal foibles, their varied literary pursuits, the political climate in which they operated and quotes – many, many, many quotes – from both.

Of course the centerpiece of the paper was Walton's great work, *The Compleat Angler*, and Ethan gave it full measure. He described the primary players and their pastoral stage, comparing Cotton's handling of them to Walton's. He analyzed the book's prose and recounted some attempts, over the years, to ascribe to it hidden meaning. In the end, though, he concluded that *The Compleat Angler* – next to the Bible and Book of Common Prayer the most republished book in our language – is loved for its simplicity, serenity and window into seventeenth century English country life.

The meeting ended with a business report from Bill Sena, reminding us that dues and yield from the Endowment Fund provide about \$70,000 a year, covering many of the Club's basic operations. He talked about recent capital expenditures, borrowing from the Endowment Fund to pay for them, and the campaign to raise money for an enhanced Building Fund, now underway. He said we need to raise about \$25,000 more than the \$25,000 already in hand.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
January 9, 2012

Beneath a full moon and clear skies, 64 members and five guests came to hear a touching memorial to Archie Christopherson, read by Gordon Christianson and submitted by Gordon, Rollin Workman and Paul Franz.

They also heard Bill Pratt's epic and reverent portrait of America's great painter of birds, John James Audubon. Focusing first on the creation of the artist's magnum opus, *Birds of America*, Bill recounted

his tribulations in finding a proper engraver for his watercolors, first in Scotland, then in England. Happily, the search ended well. Audubon's 435 life-size paintings appeared in four volumes, published in London in 1838 – with 119 complete sets still intact. The engravers, Robert Havell and his son, Robert Havell, Jr., were superb. According to Audubon's most recent biographer: "the finest work of colored engraving involving aquatint ever produced."

Bill then made several points about Audubon: that he was self-taught, that his paintings preserve much of what we know about several extinct species, that he was a scientist as well as a naturalist, and that "the great book he produced has become one of the wonders of the civilized world," "a monument of human achievement," with only three serious rivals as the rarest books in the world: the 8<sup>th</sup> century Book of Kells, the Gutenberg Bible and the 17<sup>th</sup> century First Folio of Shakespeare.

The second half of Bills' paper was concerned with how it all came about: the artist's biography, his commitment to his mission, his methodology in the wild – shoot the birds, arrange them in lifelike poses, paint them, eat them – and his passion for ever improving his art. We learned that Audubon was a crack shot, an instinctive outdoorsman, a difficult husband and a conservationist before almost anybody else recognized the need. Said Bill, "Audubon's Birds of America remains the highest standard of visual art, and proof that great art can capture what nature cannot always preserve."

Minutes of the Literary Club  
January 16, 2012

President Fred McGavran formalized his appointment of a seven-man committee to review the Club's bylaws and traditions. Included are trustees Bill Friedlander, Jack McDonough and Allen Winkler, along with members Paul Franz, Bill Pratt, Tom Murphy and Ted Silberstein. The committee will have a year to deliberate before reporting back.

Fifty-four members and 10 guests were on hand to hear Bill Burleigh's account of Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, youngest daughter of novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne and founder of the Hawthorne Dominicans, Roman Catholic Servants of Relief dedicated to the alleviation of suffering among impoverished and incurable cancer victims.



The paper began with some discussion of Nathaniel Hawthorne himself – “icy on the outside but empathetic within” – his literary successes, family life and financial struggles. Said Bill, “Although he found little attraction in organized religion, he returned again and again to the central theme of so many of his stories: sin and its consequences.”

All of this, however, was really context for Bill’s larger purpose, which was to trace Rose’s personal evolution. Born with a literary pedigree but no special literary talent, she became, in the second half of her life, one of the truly great humanitarians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The catalysts were several, including a conversion to Catholicism, examples of friends, her five-year-old son’s death from diphtheria, a friend’s death from cancer and, after years of marital struggle, separation from her husband. But the biggest influence, Rose told the NY Times, was “the attitude of my father’s mind toward both moral and physical deformity and corruption.”

Bill’s presentation was clear and crisp. He selected details carefully, kept the narrative flowing and elucidated his points with such thoughtful flourishes as weaving messages from some of Hawthorne’s finest fiction – “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment” and “The Birthmark” – into the philosophy of Rose’s calling. The sustained applause following his conclusion reflected this good work.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
January 23, 2012

Jim Myers, our indefatigable steward of online entries and, in his spare moments, transcriber of pre-1900 Literary Club papers into an electronic archive, presented. On this night, to the delight of 64 members and eight guests, he shared excerpts of what he has been finding in those early, hand-written records of Club papers.

Topics ranged from impressions of contemporary San Francisco and the court of Franz Joseph to the wake of a man not actually dead to happy speculation over French failure and American success in creating a canal in Panama. While all Jim’s examples offered something memorable, I will quote just one to memorialize the flavor. From the response of a former Literary Club member to an Anniversary Dinner in 1886, it is notable for both its restrained eloquence and introspective certitude:

In reply to your kind invitation, I regret that I cannot attend the Anniversary meeting of your club, to be held on the 30<sup>th</sup>; nor can I furnish you with a “short reminiscence.” When I was a member I esteemed the honor; but did not, to any great extent, avail myself of the privilege of taking part in the debates and other intellectual exercises of the club. Possibly I did not look upon myself as an Oracle, and was too diffident to bear the exposure of my ignorance and inability among those who knew so much, and had such capacity for imparting their knowledge. There were always enough surcharged gentlemen able and willing if not eager to impart unlimited information and argument to such as would listen . . . .

Ah, well. Would that we could all be, when asked by a colleague to contribute to a budget, as tactful and nuanced in any wish to decline.

Applause for Jim’s paper was hearty, and it was followed by a voice from the audience thanking him for his many efforts on behalf of the Club. More applause ensued.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
January 30, 2012

Before 57 members and nine guests, Albert Pyle, filling in for Fred McGavran, announced that Fran Barrett has been elected president of the UC Board of Trustees.

John Tew then stepped forward to host the evening’s budget, which he said would be about mentors, and he quickly followed with a definition of a mentor’s influence as a kind of “divine intervention – a moment when wisdom intersects with the course of a young life and directs it.” We then heard about three remarkable men.

John’s mentor was Francis D. Moore, a surgeon from the Harvard Medical School who was, said John, “a teacher, a scholar, a scientist . . . and a Magellan of ideas.” John worked with Dr. Moore for three years, never less than mesmerized by his “fierce intensity,” his “relentless pursuit of knowledge and patient care,” and his brilliance in brokering interdisciplinary collaboration. “Death was not acceptable,” John said of Dr. Moore’s modus operandi. “You had to know ALL the details of a patient’s metabolic composition . . . and if you bluffed, you were toast.”

Bill Burleigh's mentor was Jerry O'Sullivan, or, as he was known for the 33 years he presided over Marquette University's journalism school, The Dean. O'Sullivan's impact was legendary: for his nurturing of his students, his counsel to his peers, his careful shaping of the journalism curriculum, his high standards, demanding approach and, not least, his famous wire to a UPI boss when resigning to launch his academic career: "Hours too long pay too little life too short I quit."

Robert Smith's mentor, Lord Walter Russell Brain, was the most prominent neurologist and revered physician in post-war Britain, claiming King George VI and Winston Churchill among his patients. At the heart of Robert's story was his own early-career effort to entice Lord Brain into establishing a Migraine Trust for the alleviation of headache sufferers, then a neglected sub-specialty in England. The effort was successful, with impressive results for both the afflicted and for Robert. He received much wisdom from Brain, but perhaps none more valuable than the great man's admonition that he be presented with not more than four problems per phone call. As Robert recalled, "This worked quite well."

Respectfully submitted,

Polk Laffoon IV

Minutes of the Literary Club  
February 6, 2012

Part of the title of Jim Wesner's paper, *Plus Ca Change, Plus C'est La Meme Chose . . .* was in a foreign language; for your secretary, whose MBA is in marketing, not finance, that was the easy part.

Sixty people, including 59 members and one guest, turned out to hear this chronicling of the infamous South Sea Bubble in early 18<sup>th</sup> century England. Jim set the stage well, with a war-ridden England unable to meet its debts and a newly minted Bank of England trying to help. But when it didn't, and its backers, the Whigs, were forced to give way to the Tories, the new government sought a new scheme to deal with the debt. Thus the South Sea Company.

What followed was the firm's inflated rise and inevitable fall, marked by enough financial maneuvering to make the creators of

today's collateralized debt obligations sit up and take notice. One example: "In addition, the Company would make the government a gift – not a loan – of three million pounds. The proposal seemed feasible, since the market price of the stock had by then risen to 126 pounds and any bargain with the debt holders between 100 pounds and 126 pounds would produce enough profit to pay the Government's three million pound sweetener several times over."

Jim was on top of this complex material the entire way, and he left no doubt, as he stated in his introduction, that the South Sea Bubble evinced all the same abuses of economic crises today. It was interesting to hear what happened to some victims of the bubble, like the daughter of the Rector of Exeter, who lost her 1,200-pound inheritance "and had to endure the ultimate indignity of becoming a governess." It was intriguing to hear the word "ratably" in a Literary Club offering. But it was not easy going.

Perhaps I should ask Albert if the Mercantile has a copy of *Finance for Dummies*.

#### Minutes of the Literary Club February 13, 2012

Richard Hunt's debut was a kind of cherry surprise: at first you weren't sure where it was going or what it would contain, but once ingested, there was plenty to chew on and much very tasty.

Fifty-five of us, including three guests, heard a paper in three parts: the first, very short, acknowledged the speaker's passion for the Literary Club and gratitude to previous presenters for the path shown him. Part II, only a tad longer, reminisced about a school friend who went on to win a Pulitzer Prize by returning, decades later, to the scenes of James Agee and Walker Evans' Depression-era masterpiece, "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men." The friend's reporting revealed that little had changed for the descendents of those pictured in the book.

Richard's part three, much longer, was the fictional tale of James Cheever Snell, Jr., or Cheever, the self-made "eulogist" of Harris, Indiana, who spent his entire adult life waxing eloquently about the passing of his neighbors and, eventually, his wife and, finally his best friend. He came into this unlikely role, Richard wrote, because he knew instinctively both what to say and what not to say.

Through memories of five specific eulogies, we were shown how Cheever first assumed his mantle, then learned to wear it well. In language both charming and distinctive, Richard brought vividly to life Cheever's talents. Consider: "Last, he found a couple of metaphoric apples in the overgrown orchard of his father's time on this earth and polished them up until they shone like the flashing lights at the railroad crossing that ran through the middle of town." Or: "Once or twice early on, he felt put off by a family, as if they might be clamoring for special sanction in the way that a bride might covet a certain caterer."

The story went on to relate some other deaths with significant impact on Cheever, and it provided a surprising twist at the end. But what listeners came away with, I think, was a gentleness of tone and a turn of phrase unusually endearing in these quarters.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
February 20, 2012

Sober news of a proposed dues increase and a procedure for relief to assist those unable to pay it marked the beginning of the evening's proceedings. President McGavran informed 59 members and three guests there would be a special business meeting Mar. 19 to vote on it.

Ted Striker's paper, "Gas" was a romp in the best Muff-Gale tradition. Starting with a flashback to the famous trial of Carl Coppolino in the mid-1960s, Ted described the bizarre events that led to the defendant's conviction for second-degree murder. Prominent among these was an unsavory love triangle that prompted Coppolino's spurned mistress to rat on him after his alleged hand in the demise of her husband, and then of his own wife. When the latter's body was exhumed, the putative murder weapon, an anesthetic gas called succinylcholine, remained visible in her buttocks tissue.

Ted then introduced us to Part II of his opus: the young doctor/narrator's recollection of meeting a "tall, lithe, fair-skinned, fair-haired, obviously athletic" charmer named Emily Adams in the Bryn Mawr library in 1976. Our narrator – Ted – was "instantly captivated" and began dating her at once. In a scene that had his audience on highest alert. Ted then described Emily's seduction of his earlier self in, as he put it, "a frenetic, gasping, panting coupling."

Soon enough, the smitten narrator had married Emily, but only months later was informed of her nymphomaniac tendencies, which he

quickly confirmed. These aroused in him – why were we not surprised? – a murderous rage. Reduced, he said, to “the status of an animated dildo,” he chose cyclopropane as his poison. Carl Coppolino had shown him the way.

To reveal the denouement here, I think, would be inappropriate. But let me tell you: I have a friend who describes writing she particularly likes as “delicious.” I think she would say that this paper was delicious.

## Minutes of the Literary Club February 27, 2012

Before 60 members and seven guests, Steve Strauss convened a budget with the theme: Things are seldom what they seem.

Gibby Carey teed off with one of his patented explorations of the past – he has either experienced more colorful incidents than most, or he is able to dress up the unremarkable so stylishly that it just seems like he has. This time the subject was his hitch with Uncle Sam – and his corresponding epiphany that despite all preconceptions to the contrary, the Army had much to teach him. Said Gibby, “My first big learning – and it came like a glass of ice water dashed in my face – was that there was absolutely nothing special about me.” We then heard considerable support for the point, none more amusing, perhaps, than his dawning awareness that his bunkmate from rural Missouri, who had never heard of Princeton, could do a number of things more competently than Gibby!

Coincidentally, Bill Pratt’s story also featured a military setting – but his lessons learned differed markedly from Gibby’s. From an early age, Bill had wanted to go to war, to fight for his country, but no sooner was he old enough to sign up than the war was over. He thought he would experience battle; the navy sent him to college. He was prepared to master the Navy’s required curriculum – geometry, chemistry, physics – but he found he liked literature better. He did finally learn to fly a plane, but was discharged before he could put it to good use. Even so, he said, learning to land it taught him to overcome his fear of death – “one of the most valuable lessons of my life.”

Steve’s topic was Carlo Ponzi, the eponymous author of the infamous financial schemes whereby money from new investors pays promised premiums to earlier investors – until the new investors evaporate. Never more than a rogue, Ponzi made his name for himself –

and for the ages – by flimflamming something called International Reply Coupons in the 1920s. Very quickly, it all fell apart; Ponzi went to jail, was eventually deported to Italy, took a job by the kindness of Mussolini and died in ignominy in Rio. History records that as a youth he had had big dreams for his life, but true to the evening’s theme, none of it played out as he had wanted.

Respectfully submitted,  
Polk Laffoon IV

Minutes of the Literary Club  
March 5, 2012

Nobody loves a well appointed home more than Stewart Shillito Maxwell, Jr., and when the home is his own, his enthusiasm is electric.

So it was that on this night 59 members and three guests were ushered into his parents’ master bedroom, as it was arranged nearly 50 years ago, with its “colonial-style canopy bed, and its cascade of crisp, white organdy bed hangings and ice blue satin comforter.”

The thrust of Stewart’s story was the interior renovation of his boyhood home on Grandin Road – occasioned, he said, by his mother’s quest to replace a worn lampshade. As one thing led to another, his parents hired famed designer Michael Greer, whose credits included the White House, and thus began an eight-year project that transformed both the graceful old home and its impressionable young master in ways such that neither would ever be the same.

We learned that Stewart left his sixth grade class at Lotspeich several times to meet Mr. Greer in New York “to select fabrics, carpets, colors, light fixtures and furniture for the space.” We learned that in New York, Stewart’s family always stayed at the Plaza, and that Stewart, “felt a certain affinity with Eloise.” He said, “An all-knowing appreciation was shown by me with a nod and a wink as I passed her full-length portrait each time in the hotel’s foyer near the Palm Court.”

Stewart lived on the third floor of the house, and he was in charge of decorating his domain. “With my desk selection,” he said, “an all important decision for a student, I purchased a Parsons-style desk of very simple lines and openness, and it was finished in a faux painted walnut burl – an early 1960s example of faux finishing decades ahead of its time.”

In “Other Voices, Other Rooms” and “The Glass Harp,” two early works by Truman Capote, the descriptions were ripe and sensuous in a way that was not familiar to most readers. I think Truman would have felt a certain affinity with Stewart.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
March 12, 2012

Sixty members and three guests were on hand to hear Allan Winkler and Jack McDonough’s reverent memorial to Stan Troup, a member of the Club for many years, a vice-president of the UC Medical Center at a critical time and an exemplary human being.

Gordon Christenson then read a paper on the bitterly contested 1876 Presidential election, pitting Republican Rutherford Hayes against Democrat Samuel Tilden – known as, Gordon reminded us, the “Corrupt Bargain” or the ‘Compromise of 1877’ (depending on your point of view).” But Gordon put his own spin on the proceedings, and that, really, was what the paper was all about.

Taking as his focal point a founding member of this Club, a Cincinnati lawyer named Stanley Matthews, Gordon wove together themes of Reconstruction, railroad power and money, civil rights and down-and-dirty politicking with a cliffhanger election almost certain to create bad blood no matter how it was decided.

Start with a popular vote in favor of Tilden, and electoral votes leaning heavily in his direction, but . . . 20 of those electoral votes disputed by allegations of fraud. If Hayes won all 20 of them, he would beat Tilden by one vote – and have the Presidency. To adjudicate, Congress appointed an Electoral Commission of 15 members, carefully comprised of seven from each party and one independent. Intriguingly, as Gordon was careful to trace, seven members of the Literary Club were engaged with this Commission in one way or another.

In early deliberations, the Commission positioned itself to examine evidence of fraud. Enter Stan Matthews who, as the lawyer for Hayes, argued persuasively that the Commission couldn’t inquire into fraud in the election of electors because Congress has no power to authorize it. Under the Constitution, that power rests only with the states. And *mirabile dictu*, Matthews carried the point. The Commission split along party lines, but the one independent sided with Stan. State by state, the contested electors voted for Hayes.



History was made. And no matter how subsequent historians may slice it – Gordon gave us several examples – the Literary Club was more than a bit player in its staging. That, I think, was his real message!

Minutes of the Literary Club  
March 19, 2012

For his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, Carl Eisen decided to climb Mt. Rainier, at 14,441 feet, the highest peak in Washington State's Cascade Range. Carl had had previous experience quarry climbing and ice climbing in New Hampshire, and he had spent plenty of time in gyms. He also had, by his own recognition, sufficient ego to think he could make this assault successfully despite any obstacles. One of the obstacles was an early-May climbing date; because he had delayed signing up, he missed the teams who were forming for the prime season. But he was determined.

Following that introduction, 56 of us, and nine guests, learned a considerable amount about the history of climbing Mt. Everest. We heard about the gear worn by climbers in the 1920s, the advances in equipment over the years, the emergent use of bottled oxygen and, morbidly, the frozen corpses littering the paths to the top.

In all of this there were lessons, and Carl took each to heart. To assure readiness, he ran on a treadmill with tape across his nostrils at up to eight m.p.h. He ran around Hyde Park Square with a 60-pound pack on his back.

But it was not to be.

Carl got to the mountain, where the spring date had manifested itself in six feet of fresh snow, forcing the climbers to go straight up in knee deep drifts rather than using the much more accommodating switchbacks. At 8500 feet, Carl straightened up to rest his aching back and, as bad luck would have it, lost his balance. His backpack pulled him backwards onto the snow, and – you really have to read his description to get the full impact – for the next 1000 feet downward, his only hope was that he could dig his ice axe into the hardened snow and arrest the fall – or join the long line of corpses he'd read about.

Carl's presence among us attests that he avoided that disappointment, but not without learning yet another lesson: that life's other challenges all come into proper perspective when, as he put it, "one goes mano a mano with nature."

A business meeting followed. Motions for an amendment to the bylaws concerning increases to both the initiation fee and dues were on the table. After discussion notable for heated arguments from the floor, Tony Covatta's Solomonic adjudication of the disputes, and President McGavran's perhaps liberal interpretation of Robertson's Rules, the motions passed. Copies are attached.

### Amendments to By Laws

Proposed by the Board of Management February 13, 2012

Section 1. INITIATION FEE. Beginning January 1, 2012, the initiation fee shall be \$500 for new members, payable at the election of the member over twelve or twenty-four months.

Section 2. DUES.

- a. Beginning with the March 2012 dues billing, the annual dues for members shall be \$500, payable half in April and half in October.
- b. Beginning with the April 2012 dues billing, the annual dues for Associate Members residing within a 50 mile radius of Cincinnati shall be \$200, payable half in April and half in October, and the annual dues for Associate Members residing beyond a 50 mile radius of Cincinnati shall be \$100, payable half in April and half October.
- c. Any member may request the Board of Management to reduce his initiation fee or dues by consulting with the Treasurer and providing such information as the Treasurer deems sufficient to determine the

request. The Treasurer shall then present the member's request and the information provided to the Board of Management for decision.

The

Treasurer and the Board shall keep such request and the information provided confidential.

### Minutes of the Literary Club March 26, 2012

A budget before 59 members and six guests gave us Lou Prince on Antoine de Saint-Exupery, Fred McGavran on remodeling a kitchen and Scott Aiken on the run-up to the Battle of Hastings. The evening produced many laughs and some mystification.

Lou, long a fan of the great French aviator and writer, gave a succinct accounting of his career and varied accomplishments. The real edge to this short paper, however, was the author's view of how Saint-Exupery's wife, Consuelo, defamed him in a posthumously published memoir. "This situation impels me to digress," Lou told us, and with that he was off on the outrageousness of what women can do to damage the reputation of men, referencing Genesis Chapter 3 verse 6, them moving substantively – and vividly – to the mishap befalling the horny Monsieur Strauss-Kahn, Chief of the International Monetary Fund, in a New York hotel room two years ago. Lou's ruminations on oral sex were alone worth the recent increase in our initiation fee.

Fred's deconstruction of a kitchen makeover was every husband's dream – which is to say, a droll and jaundiced fable of all that goes wrong in such undertakings, spliced with the author's inimitable surrealistic flourishes, like the contractor's tattooed arm embalmed in the recycled glass of a kitchen countertop. Two excerpts for flavor: "Like an open heart operation that has lasted six months, the project was draining the life out of the patient without any sign of ever being finished." And: "Joyce had argued for weeks with Hillary (her decorator) over that countertop. Like most decorators, Hillary's taste was the exact

opposite of her clients.” As they shout at the end of any great aria, “Bravo!”

Scott’s re-imagining of William the Conqueror’s move to establish his monarchy in England was ambitiously crafted, yet hard to decipher. Through the eyes of Souris, the duke’s devoted aide-de-camp, we received glimmerings of William’s personal, political and religious motivations. All was steeped in a kind of medieval mist, with coats of mail, fluttering banners and, most conspicuously, courtly language. Example: “Ah! I still chortle, Herleve . . . a tanner’s daughter, but pure cream face, dark eyes, saucy lips, a body as pleurably mounded as our own sweet Normandy – she did not slink by night to the castle.” This kind of thing is not without its charms, but when it defines the narrative, it’s difficult to absorb aurally. Nonetheless, kudos to Scott for aiming high.

Respectfully submitted,

Polk Laffoon IV

Minutes of the Literary Club  
May 7, 2012

Fifty-six members and three guests were on hand to hear David Edmundson’s bifurcated “ruminations,” as he termed them, concerning the nation’s founding fathers. More specifically, Dave was grappling with literalist interpretations of the Constitution vs. more liberal, or “enlightened” – another word he used – ways of coming at it. Likewise, he was questioning what it means when certain parties claim us to be a “Christian” nation.

Noting the propensity of students in his English classes to accept the Bible literally, because that’s what their preachers imbue in them, he drew a parallel between Biblical fundamentalists and Constitutional literalists. Then, not so subtly, he condemned both, suggesting, for example, that by their measure, “We must abhor homosexuality because the Founding Fathers would have done the same, as if the world were unchanged since 1776.” Ditto, slaveholding might still be legal.

The bifurcation surfaced in a whole second part of Dave’s paper devoted to one Barnabas Strong. Mr. Strong, a grandfather to Dave of

many great-greats, lived in the latter half of the eighteenth century, fought in our colonial wars, and eventually made his way to Hamilton County. Along with several others, he also deserted his army duties at one point – an incident later forgiven by George Washington.

The link to the founding fathers was this: He was one of the many humbler individuals whose support made the work of the recognized founding fathers possible. But in context of his lack of perfection – the desertion, remember – Dave found another link, asking, “I wonder whether the near-deification of the Founding Fathers isn’t too much of a good thing. As Exhibit A, I give you Barnabas Strong.”

Dave concluded with a reminder that the founding fathers were mortals, not gods, a call for tolerance in the clash of ideas and this sure conviction, “When it comes to matters of belief, I need not yield to anyone’s judgment but my own.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, Nick Ragland was elected to membership.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
May 14, 2012

Fred McGavran opened the meeting to report that Ted Gleason, an associate member who lives in Washington, D.C., has resigned.

On this night, before 59 members and four guests, Allan Winkler delivered a love letter to his father, framed by a song – “Give Me the Roses” – that he and Dave Edmundson performed with strings and voice. Allan’s intention, unabashedly stated, was to let his father know, while he could still absorb the sentiment, how greatly admired and beloved he is by friends, family and colleagues. Henry Winkler, now 95, was there to hear it all, although not without great effort. Allen intimated that there won’t be time for many more such moments.

And so we heard the story of Henry’s jam-packed life, from “gawky adolescent,” as Allen imagined him, to history scholar at UC, to World War II service in the Pacific under MacArthur. After 30 years at Rutgers, the death of his first wife and his marriage to Bea, Henry came to UC, where he soon enough became university president. Allen touched on his father’s accomplishments in the position, his curbing of the athletic department’s excesses, his hassles with the board, his return to teaching and the publication of two final books.

What was really wonderful about the paper, though, was the way Allen personalized his narrative with amusing memories like the time his father hit a squash ball into the scrotum of an adversary who had been unable to have children – and then the fellow conceived! Or the time he took up gardening, only to come down with an industrial strength case of poison ivy; he has stayed mostly indoors ever since. In all of it, Allen's affection and respect for his father was a gentle joy to be shared among us.

He had pushed Henry, he told us, to come and hear it. I suspect Henry was very glad he did.

Minutes of the Literary Club  
May 21, 2012

Charmingly and almost nostalgically, Tom Cuni took 50 of us, and four guests, back to the town of Man, West Virginia, where he grew up a long time ago. I say that because some of the things Tom did, like camp with 10 and 11-year-old friends for three days in the mountains, with guns and without adult supervision, inspired him to recognize how long ago and far away his childhood world was.

But Tom's agenda was less the idiosyncrasies of a rural upbringing than the characters he encountered there, most prominently one Harry Renter, who lived outside the law but well inside the affection and imagination of the town's youth. Tom reported amusingly on several escapades that he and his friends experienced at Harry's behest, typically launching homemade grenades at some hapless target like the C&O Railroad.

He also etched cameos of several of Man's other eccentrics, like this frequent customer at the local Smoke House: "In addition to 3.2 percent beer, he had a fondness for the hotdogs which Andy served at the bar. I never learned his real name, but calling him 'Hotdog' was a source of entertainment for generations of teenage boys and for patrons of the bar made brave by their consumption of too many Pabst Blue Ribbon beers. At the low end of Hotdog's reaction scale was a string of fairly clever profane references to the speaker's parentage. The real prize was when Hotdog launched his crutch like a spear at the offender."

Forty minutes of that kind of prose was not hard to take, and the membership responded accordingly.

Following the paper, Fred McGavran announced that Tony Covatta has been appointed the Club's parliamentarian. He said that the Board has approved the posting of members' photographs on the Web site and asked that members consider sending Jim Myers a j-peg of their likeness.

Officer elections for the 2012/13 year followed. Albert Pyle was elected president and Jack McDonough vice president. Mike Kremzar, Bill Sena and Polk Laffoon will continue on as clerk, treasurer and secretary respectively. Bill Friedlander was elected a trustee, after filling an unexpired term as a senior trustee.

Fred announced that, sadly, former member Walter Herz, now a resident of Washington, D.C., has died.

Respectfully submitted,

Polk Laffoon IV

Minutes of the Literary Club  
June 4, 2012

Before 53 members and two guests, Bob Faaborg told us that he likes best Club papers that recount the exciting or adventurous experiences of the rest of us, and he would like to give us such a paper . . . except that his life has been notably lacking in such drama, and that has been frustrating!

Never mind. Bob told us several quite funny anecdotes from his small-town Iowa childhood: First, the derivation of his nickname "Frosty" – incurred when he donned a warm-up jacket on the pitcher's mound one hot summer night. With skills so mediocre as to be embarrassing, he had inspired the opposition coach to place a wheelchair-bound batter before him. Bob hit the batter on the shoulder, who then took his base – in the wheelchair! Next, adding insult to injury, the wheelchair runner then took a lead-off, preparing to steal second. It was more than Bob could stand. He threw to first, the player was tagged out, and the stands erupted in ridicule. Bob was so unnerved by the whole thing that he felt chilly. Thus the jacket, and thus "Frosty."

The second incident involved 13 beer-laden undergraduates peeing on a burning tire to prevent it from igniting a trailer containing their musical instruments. A third recalled Bob in a saxophone audition

in which he thought that he might distinguish himself, only to hear the evaluator declare, “Lousy, just lousy.”

The second two-thirds of the paper talked about Bob’s training in philosophy and his gradual emergence as a professor of business ethics. Bob built a strong case for his work, noting that it is not about black-and-white issues, and that as students mature, they can well change behavior – thus disproving the naysayers who say our ethics are locked in at an early age.

While Bob remains skeptical as to whether business ethics classes actually improve moral behavior and decision-making, he sees great value in the “increased sensitivity and awareness of ethical issues” that students develop. If the unexamined life is not worth living, he said, then “understanding the implications of one’s own ethical beliefs and theories should be a central aspect of a truly examined life.”

At the conclusion of the paper, three new members were elected. They are: Bernie Foster, Ted Jarocewitz and Mark Schlacter.

#### Minutes of the Literary Club June 11, 2012

The spring outing was held at the Mt. Lookout Observatory, with 84 members in attendance. It was a splendid evening, Cincinnati at its finest, and .

Bob Dorsey initiated the formal proceedings with a well-crafted and fond memorial to former member Walter Philip Herz, who died on June 3.

Paul Shortt’s Three Reunions was a fictional tale of the charged relationship between two one-time friends as they attended their twentieth, thirtieth and fortieth reunions at a Midwestern prep school.

Jared Moritz and Willy Bates had actually fallen out with one another by their junior year, and so had ceased being roommates. Their conflicting personalities, and differing approaches to life, had driven them to the point where, as Paul said, “Willy couldn’t abide Jared.” And as we came to know the two of them through their decennial reencounters, we could see why.

Jared, swaggering, superficial and ambitious, is a young college president when we meet him. Willy is an instructor in art at a different college. Never outstanding at either sports or academics, he is, however, passionate – and genuine – in his commitment to art.



The contrast made for an intriguing character study over the course of the three reunions; attitudes toward art, fund-raising, material goods, career aspirations, project brainstorming and marital transgressions were all probed. Paul teed it up smartly enough that when, finally, things don't work out well for Jared, we are neither surprised nor sorry.

Indeed, what made the paper particularly forceful was the author's many takes on Jared, a character he knows well and dislikes enough that he takes every opportunity to reveal his frailties. Consider:

"Jared Moritz, standing in the leaded-glass window, looked more affluent now than ever, with silver hair flowing flamboyantly over his collar. Compared to his classmates, Jared knew he appeared much younger, especially in his custom Italian cashmere. And he felt young, that is, until a year ago. But now the weight of the year's pressures bore heavily upon his mind. Naturally he refused to let any of it show. Appearance and demeanor were everything."

It was a good read, and it kept its audience alert.

The meeting concluded with short addresses by Fred McGavran, outgoing president, and Albert Pyle, the incoming.