

# THE FOSSIL

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## ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE

TO  
MARION FIELDS WYLLIE  
OCTOBER 26, 2006

### Some Of Marion's Own Poems

#### LEAVES FALL SWIFTLY

The leaves, as golden as your hair,  
fall gently  
on the grass.

Like tender fingers they caress  
that grave I cannot  
pass.

O let me hear some well-known word,  
with laughter  
in your voice.

To feel your presence now would make  
my sorrowing soul  
rejoice.

No mirth is here, or echo of  
the voice I loved  
so much;

But leaves fall softly on my head  
with silent, soothing  
touch.

#### OLD PHOTOS

Old photos bring the past to life.  
Here's Mother at the age of ten  
in buttoned boots and navy serge.  
Her face suggests a quiet mood  
with mischief for a time subdued.  
In buttoned boots and navy serge  
here's Mother at the age of ten.  
Old photos bring the past to life.

## TRUE TEST

I love you as you are  
(it is the test of caring)  
not for your gifted hands  
or for your dauntless daring  
nor for your lucky star.  
My heart's devotion stands  
on firmer ground by far;  
your open-hearted sharing  
and grace to understand.

## WEATHER CLEARING

The fog rolled in this morning  
enclosing a cold grey room.  
It dulled the tints of the landscape  
creating a sense of doom.

But rain has sprinkled creation  
and the air's turned fresh and sweet.  
The sunshine added a polish  
till the day was bright and neat.

The green returned to the foliage  
and the blue came back to the sky,  
renewed at last, as Old Witch Wind  
on her broom went sweeping by;

And always, in God's creation,  
however the day may start,  
He works through His servant, Nature,  
to gladden or soothe the heart.

## GARDENER'S ADVICE

Pull off the dead nasturtiums  
for the young buds must have room.  
Take roses from your garden plot,  
encouraging new bloom.  
Sweetpeas, if harvested each day  
blossom the summer weeks away.

God-given talents also  
flower and have their day.

Harvest them at their brightest  
to use or give away;  
Still hoping the maturing tree  
may bring more loveliness to be.

### VEILED SUNLIGHT

Snow-mist of winter  
marsh-mist of spring,  
smoke-haze of autumn  
shield everything.  
Willow-shade,  
forest-glade  
tenderly He hath made.  
God, ever wise  
filters the sunlight  
for mortal eyes.

Tear-mist,  
pain-mist,  
dreams that fly past,  
deep night and  
lonely day,  
death-mist at last  
for a space  
veil Thy face;  
Thou whose assuaging grace  
on mortals fell  
siftest our sunlight;  
Thou doest well.

### WEEDING MY GARDEN

My garden's thick with Worry-weeds  
they grow up strong and tall.  
The lovely things I planted there  
are hardly seen at all.

The rank and thorny Might-have-beens  
and What-ifs and Who-knows  
are pushing in, and crowding out  
the Cheer-somebody roses.

To dig out those Worry-weeds  
is hard, and then, you know,  
wherever there's an empty space  
More Worry-weeds will grow.

The Yesters and the Morrows leave

big spaces where they've been.  
I'd better plant some Happy-nows  
and Have-a-guest between.

The frightening Could-happens and  
the whispering They-say  
are bad for all the nice plants—  
best throw them all away.

The lovely Look-about-you and  
the fragrant Evening-Prayer  
will flourish in my garden, and  
I'll love to linger there.

### MARCH

Frost chalks scenes on dark  
windowpanes till spring arrives  
with soft eraser.

Sealed against the cold,  
timid hearts, like crocuses,  
await love's springtime.

### OCTOBER

How bright, warm and strong  
autumn's glory in the woods,  
and yet how fragile!

In rose-tinted sky  
wild geese make their flying vee  
in black silhouette.

*(The editor wishes to thank Martha E. Shivers for selecting these poems for a Fossil tribute to Marion Fields Wyllie on the occasion of her one hundredth birthday celebration. "Old Photos" and "True Test" appeared earlier in Spring Onions, copyright 1987 by Marion Fields Wyllie. "Weather Clearing," "Gardener's Advice," and "Veiled Sunlight" appeared earlier in A Hunk of Wonderful, copyright 1989 by Marion Fields Wyllie. "Weeding My Garden" appeared earlier in Flowers of the Field, 2004. "March" and "October" are selected from "Haiku Calendar, 2006." Birthday greetings from fellow Fossils can reach Marion Fields Wyllie at 875 Sixth Street East #237, Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada N4K 5W5.)*

## HELEN V. WESSON

### Guy Miller

Our irreplaceable, irreplaceable Helen may have departed our little ajay world on September 7, but those of us who remain to mourn our loss can agree that she has willed us more than mere memories.

Although intensely devoted to AAPA from the moment of her arrival in 1938, just two years after the founding of that group of lively youngsters, Helen with husband Sheldon later found time to slash an indelible mark across the records of NAPA as well.

But, as much as Helen loved her association in AAPA and enjoyed her activities in NAPA, we find it safe to observe that both she and Sheldon held a special affection for The Fossils. For, while both Helen and Sheldon garnered many laureates in both AAPA and NAPA, the ones to which they most aspired were granted by The Fossils. As we leaf through the pages of the awards chapter in the recently published *100 Years of The Fossils*, we see mention of the duo at almost every turn, attesting to their contributions to the Fossils and, as a result, to the entire realm of our beloved hobby.

For example, devotees of Howard P. Lovecraft will be forever in debt to Helen for her extensive biography "The Phenomenon of H.P.L." which occupied ten 9 x 12 pages in *The Fossil*, vol. 5 (no. 154) for July, 1957, and for which she received The Fossil Literary Award. But the crowning, maybe everlasting achievement, was her participation with Sheldon in supervising the publication in 1957 of Truman Spencer's masterpiece *The History of Amateur Journalism*. No small accomplishment this, considering the fact that *The History* rests in at least 80 academic libraries and still holds an attraction in the used book market.

But even before this memorable milestone, The Fossils in 1955 had awarded the Wessons the Gold Composing Stick "for exquisite Craftsmanship in that Labor of Love which is Amateur Journalism." Helen cherished this token to her dying day, and we are happy to learn that daughter Pamela will see to its preservation.

## MEMORIES OF HELEN WESSON

### Johnny Vaglianti

*(These remarks given by Mr. Vaglianti at the 1998 AAPA convention are reprinted from Robert Lichtman's letter of comment in Vegas Fandom Weekly no. 84, <http://www.efanzines.com>.)*

Very early in 1938, a mere 17 months after George Henry Kay and his ragged band of rebels founded the American Amateur Press Association, George, then serving as Secretary, received an inconspicuous piece of mail postmarked from an odd-sounding place in New Jersey. The postmaster in the community of Little Falls, Minnesota, was used to seeing Kay receive and send more than the usual volume of mail for their average citizen, and certainly more than the previous local Linotype operator. In his position as Secretary, George received mail from all parts of the country, and even overseas. He had no trouble separating this envelope from the normal junk mail, as it had first class postage of three cents. Junk mail in those days wasn't all bad—there might be something from the Kelsey Company in Meriden, Connecticut, Turnbaugh Service in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, or even Johnson and Smith in Racine, Wisconsin.

Upon opening the envelope, George found an application for membership, a credential and the usual fifty cents dues. He rarely recognized the name of new applicants for membership unless they were members of another association. The name on this application was quite uncommon—certainly nothing like Smith or Jones. He did, of course, recognize the name of Sid Cohen as the person suggesting this applicant for membership. Sid was from Brooklyn, New York, and then serving as Second Vice President. Along with the application was a question: "Do you allow girls to join?"

Most of you know I am talking about Helen A. Vivarttas, then of Weehawken, New Jersey. Secretary Kay obviously immediately recognized a true jewel and published the credential, a short story titled "O'Malley's Kid," in his February 1938 issue of *American Journal*. The story won the Fiction Laureate for 1938, and so was launched the 60-year, and still counting, career of Helen Vivarttas Wesson in organized amateur journalism.

*(In his letter of comment, Robert Lichtman also notes Helen's longstanding membership in the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, which dated back to 1946. In recent years, Helen had contributed Pendragon to FAPA. A new issue of Pendragon was in preparation at the time of Helen's stroke, and Robert is still hopeful that it can be completed and distributed if the incomplete copies can be recovered.)*

## OUR FAMILY DRAGON

### Helen V. Wesson

*(Reprinted from Siamese Standpipe no. 23 for April 1952.)*

Upon a cold and wintry day,  
When we cannot go out to play,  
We go a-hunting mighty prey—  
Ormond-san the Dragon.

He's writhing there upon the wall,  
And playing with a silver ball.  
He doesn't frighten us at all—  
Ormand-san the Dragon.

He's fierce and gruff and fiery wild,  
But he would never harm a child.  
(We rather think his claws are filed.)  
Ormand-san the Dragon.

Beneath his lair we stalk his track.  
It isn't courage that we lack.  
We know that Ormond won't fight back,  
For he's our family dragon!

### MY FIFTEEN YEARS IN A HOBBY

**Helen Vivarttas Wesson**

*(Reprinted from Siamese Standpipe no. 28, May 1954.)*

At the last Fossil Reunion that we attended before returning to Japan in 1952, I told the members gathered that they had only to hang on for one more year and I would be eligible to join—"and I just love to kiss bald heads!" So consider this a trans-Pacific salute on your bald spot, Fellow Fossil. I was dismayed when the Fossils changed the membership requirement from 30 years' to 15 years' activity in Amateur Journalism (as I interpreted it.) As I had joined the hobby in my teens, that left me little to aspire to, and I don't feel old and venerable at all. Nobody gathers at my feet while I rock away, spinning tales of the glorious past of my beloved hobby...probably because my present full-speed-ahead publishing activity doesn't give me a chance to sit down except when we're collating.

They have been 15 years of ajay personalities, joys, achievements and heartaches. Amateur Journalism has been the core of my life since I learned of it; and when I become a famous Somebody, and my press agents write my autobiography, it will be inseparable from the hobby. I may as well write it now...a girl's-eye view of the American, National and Fantasy amateur press associations.

My Dad had one desk drawer in his den which was a pirate's treasure cove to me. Apparently I was permitted to open that drawer just a few inches, because I

have memories of a jumble of old coins; rare stamps; medals for such as the Century Run, ACC of N.Y.; Masonic Awards; game warden badges and medals of the Audubon Society. Later, when I finally went through the entire drawer. I found in back every Father's Day card and other greeting I had ever drawn, a letter with a ghost story (written at age 8) and another short story (age 10) written for St. Nicholas Magazine. My Dad's encouragement in every creative talent I had (and some I didn't possess!) was perhaps the greatest single influence at work in this history.

### Early AAPActivity

It was not the poems published on the King Arthur page of the *Hudson* (County, N.J.) *Dispatch* that mattered, but much later, the satire that appeared on the Amateur Page of the *New York Journal-American* which caught an ajay's eye. "Drop Your Compact—The Boys Will Fall, Too" is not a headline that would escape Sid Cohen. I received from him a bundle of strange little pamphlets, none of which interested me. (I have been consistent in my disinterest in United APA affairs ever since.) Over a year later, 1938, another batch of these strange little papers caught and held my attention because *these* had personality.

As I used to clip coupons and send 10 cents and a box top, because I loved mail (I am still a mail-call clock-watcher), I invested the 50 cents and sent my name in...to the American Amateur Press Association...hoping that nothing nefarious would result. I received promptly an encouraging letter from Secretary Kay, and replied with the requested credentials—a batch of short stories—and a letter which I shall always remember: "Do you allow girls to join?" For a long time I was the only girl in AAPA, and the pride of holding my own in a man's hobby is still with me. I refuse to piggy-back on even my ajay-husband.

George Henry Kay, "father" of AAPA founded in 1937, is a Midwest bachelor with a stomach complaint and a deep wariness of women that was later to blind his eyes and lose him his Galatea. My enthusiasm was just what the AAPA needed at its inception, and Kay, with his hands at the reins, yet let me have my head. In 1939, my second year in AAPA, I became Manuscript Manager, the next year President; and those were my happiest years in the hobby. My contemporaries who remember will agree that this was the heyday of our teen-age enthusiasm and activity. My year as President was marked—whatever the issue—by strident leadership, and of it Historian Bob Kunde wrote: "The Vivarttas administration has been without doubt the most successful in our brief history."

During that period some of our best ajays were sharing my enthusiasm, and these friendships are still treasured by me. Most notable of them was Bill Groveman, then publishing *Printer's Devil*. To me, although he became a father recently, Bill is still the 13-year-old whose absorption and zeal matched mine in intensity; but whereas mine was effervescent, Bill's was dead-serious. His letters, written solid from edge to edge of the paper, were so light I sometimes wonder if he used a typewriter ribbon in his machine. They were crammed with news and views and plans, which culminated in the first meeting of AAPA's first local club, the Metropolitan Chapter of AAPA, at my home in April 1939. I was elected President and Bill Secretary.

The Metchaps were my first personal contacts in ajay. Bernice McCarthy (now Mrs. Helm Spink) turned up for the first meeting, I remember. She had a substantial background of activity in the hobby, including *Happy Daze*, but I didn't know that; and since AAPAnS and NAPAnS were are foreign races to each other, our interests led off on tangents at that time.

Frank Miller, *Echoes*, attended one early Metchap meet, with Bernice and Bill at my home, and I don't believe any of us will ever forget the quiet, blue-eyed Yankee who magically held our attention. Frank was well-rounded in the hobby, and though we disputed many points, I must admit that I profited, sometimes against my will, by his check-rein on my naive activity before his untimely death. It was Frank, as Mailer, who perhaps saved my reputation in ajay by returning to me the insufficient copies of the rubber-stamped juvenile four-pager called the *Dark Horse*. (Only one copy remains, mislaid someplace.) I was indeed a dark horse, and judged by that childish effort, nobody would have bet on me in the Ajay Sweepstakes!

By the time the Metchaps, publishing the *Metropolitan Amateur*, had outgrown home meetings, so to hold the first AAPA convention in July 1939, and further Metchap meetings, we obtained a room in the Hudson Park Branch of the New York Public Library. Dad escorted me to our first meeting there, and I am still teased about my huge cartwheel hat, which *Contributor* likened unto an umbrella.

Edgar Allan Martin descended on us from Connecticut, and his appearance was in perfect character with his exceptional talents in all media of the Weird. A tangle of raven hair surmounted a long, thin, rather cadaverous face with green eyes. His mad titter revealed rather fang-like white teeth, vampirish as his Lycanthropic Press, and his long thin fingers were as talented playing weird music on the library piano as they were cutting weird illustrations out of linoleum blocks for his *Contributor*. (Here began, I believe, my linoleum

block work.) I shuddered at the thought of meeting him in the dark, but I delighted in his zany friendship. (Meeting him almost a decade later, my "weird" impression vanished—beautiful blond Madeleine has fattened him up so that he now appears almost human, but thank Yuggoth the mad laughter remains to punctuate our infrequent gab-fests.)

Mike Phelan, an *Open Road* boy, publisher of the *Katydid*, and Bill Haywood, *Topix*, joined the Metchap circle. Mike has been for many years a stalwart in the AAPA, an informal, college-bred roamer in corduroys and sweater, one of those men whom other men respect. Bill was a dry-witted Yankee whose emergence from his cocoon of social introversion into ajay society changed his life completely. His unexpected broadmindedness and insight, and his caustic wit have never failed to amaze me, a Yankee myself. I found in him the necessary ajay companionship I needed. (It was this friendship which led to other "complications" in our lives; for when the time came that Burton Crane invited both of us to his 1941 APC meet, my mother's disapproval could not surmount Dad's assent and Bill's obviously fine character. It was the first APC meet for both of us, and at that meeting Bill met his Matilda, and I fought my first fight with Sheldon Wesson.)

As National conventions go, the American's first convention, sponsored by the Metchap in New York City in 1939, was a childish affair run by babes innocent of parliamentary procedure. However, it was an optimistic start and an encouragement to other teenagers in AAPA to hold their own conclaves. AAPA members were more widely scattered in rural areas than NAPAnS, and being younger could not afford travel expenses (and frequently could not get parental consent for long trips). Bruce Smith, *Four-Star Sports*, did come from Wisconsin and the personal contacts whetted his appetite for more. He is now editor for a Midwest trade journal, so the time he spent on the hobby was never wasted. Apparently he agrees, for he is still an active AAPAn.

Throughout the hobby years of 1938-41 chronicled here, I had been publishing 11 quarterly numbers of *American Dawn* with Erich Werner, a college student in Michigan. We were indeed stiff-necked and idealistic as the young and unworldly are, but the laureate-winning *Dawn* and our success in coediting sparked many such ventures in AAPA. This yielded heavier and meatier bundles than that association or NAPA has ever achieved since—especially considering the fact that the membership list was half an association norm.

A highlight of editing the *American Dawn* was Erich's trip to the East and his surprise visit to my home where he was warmly welcomed. He was an extremely

tall, thin-faced blond Nordic, with washed-out blue eyes which revealed the serious intelligence that counter-balanced my light-hearted bubbings. We were both thrilled at actually coediting one issue together, and our partnership continued until a most strategic time...the *Dawn* folded due to financial pressure on Erich at exactly the time Wesson ventured the idea of my coediting a paper with him.

It was my first correspondent in Amateur Journalism—Bob Kunde—who introduced me to Erich with coediting in mind. Bob printed the *American Banner* and was also idealistic and earnest in his love for the AAPA. Although he was only a name on paper to me until 1951, his round handwriting transmitted a personality which made me resent his typewriter later on.

His *Banner* Awards stimulated literary competition among us almost as much as the official quarterly laureates. I still have one of my *Banner* Badges, but the dozen annual and quarterly laureates I won mean nothing now, for the AAPA never issued laureate certificates which would have given permanent meaning to the honor. Though his activity has diminished considerably, Bob today heads the NAPA. But to me, especially since he has no current publishing personality, he is still pages of round penmanship, increasing activity and enjoyment with his topical discussions.

About this time, Hempstead, Long Island, was a center of ajay activity. Groveman and Levin were joined by Tom Erhard of the mad *East Coast Earbender*, and by the Smith Bros., Bob and Bill, the *Cough Drop* kids. Willard was quietly active in AAPA until he dropped out of ajaydom altogether; but Bob (*Sour Notes, At Random*) was the glittering extrovert, the printing playboy of AAPA and then NAPA.

The AAPA Hempstead Convention held at the Smith home in September 1943 was a riotous success. President Haywood, with whom I coedited a mimeo'ed *Welcome Mat*, tendered official greetings. Gabby Gabaree, *Nutmegger*, contributed his Mortimer Snerd hilarity, abetted by Paul Jackson, and Walt Strombach, *Kinks*, whose latest issue is a girl. (Nothing would please me more than to welcome Smitty, who attended a fairly recent APC meet with his wife and infant son, back to the hobby where he belongs, and where he has made life-long friendships.)

Ethel Myers related in Cook's *Ghost* no. 1 the objections of her Victorian mother to her receiving letters from people unknown to her personally. So, too, my mother had objected to his "pen-pal club" I had joined. Though she met the youngsters who came to meetings at my home, and later the young people I met through the hobby, and approved of them individually, she continued to disapprove of journalism as she had my high school

and church clubs, and regarded my hobby as a waste of time. Twice I had been offered a professional newspaper job I was particularly suited for, and twice she made me turn down this magical opportunity. Though it was obvious I'd been born with a silver typewriter in my mouth, my mother's antipathy grew into an obsession. The reasons lie not in Amateur Journalism but in my mother.

The issue reached a climax when I started college, also a "waste of time." At that time I came of age to marry without parental consent, and so I chose to wed Amateur Journalism. I learned with dismay that, despite Dad's tacit approval, my mother was purloining my mail—presidential mail concerning official business. In tearful desperation I turned to her family, and a solution evolved which still has its hilarious aspects. My cousin owned a millinery shop about 15 minutes' bus travel from my home. I was to receive my official and necessary mail care of Roné en route to college evenings. Days when I did not have classes I managed the trip anyway, stuffed the letters into my two-way-stretch, and managed my administration from my Dad's architectural office where I worked as his secretary (though he was innocent of the address subterfuge) or at Columbia U. The expression "turtle in her girdle" still evokes smiles from the few in the know.

The war broke and decimated the ranks of printers who had grown up in the hobby and were now of an age to replace the press with the bazooka and M-1 rifle and Grumman Wildcat. Kay resigned as President early in 1943 and I again became President. With an energy that amazes me now in my moments of lassitude, I held together the AAPA which scattered to every Theatre of Operations. The American Ajay Hostesses were organized, and since there were not enough girls to write to the third of the membership that needed mail-hostessing, I recruited my girlfriend at Columbia, Vivian Chatfield. (Later Vivian herself entered the WAVES, and Hiram Ira Swindall, designed of the AAPA seal, once of the *Horned Toad* but then of the Army, returned her "hostessing" in kind. They now live in Texas where he is a printer, she an ad writer, son Peter a schoolboy.)

The servicemen were charged dues, to assure us of their continuing interest. However, in return, they were pelted with mail and First Class bundles of journals they published in far-off places, including a cooperative, *GI-AJ*. They got their money's worth back in morale, and I felt I was doing my Canteening with those I loved most and knew best.

When Ed Wall of the aptly titled *Wallpaper* followed me as President, 1944-45 and 1945-46, the boys complained of non-receipt of bundles. The matter was investigated even up to consulting Ed's Senator, and

bounced right back to Mailer Irwin O. Brandt.

### Sheldon Wesson and NAPA

But to retrogress several years...Burton Crane had confided to Sheldon Wesson in 1941 that he wished Helen Vivarttas, former President of AAPA, could get to an APC meeting, but (wrong for once), "she's about 35 and a nurse or something at Columbia and might not be able to attend."

"Oh well" stated APC Secretary Sheldon Wesson, a mere upstart of six months in the hobby, "we don't want any old fuddy-duddies at APC meetings anyway."

He acknowledged our introduction at the August meeting at Crane's by lifting his left eyebrow and turning back to the imposing stone, scarcely a proper reception for Madame former AAPA President. Further complications set in when Groveman evidently decided that Wesson might lure me from AAPActivity, and built him up as a National wolf lurking outside the AAPA fold for unwary Little Red Riding Hoods...or Li'l Red Devils, as 'twere. That *nom de plume*, incidentally, was the result of Haywood-Wesson jesting at my expense, but I made it pay off later, in my publishing activity—a four-pager printed by Wesson in June 1942, with a Haywood-drawn masthead.

So I was quite surprised when little me was favored with a letter-questionnaire that Fall, gist of which was what night would I cut classes for a date? I answered that I'd cut classes for no man (certainly not for a NAPAn, after all the vitriol George Henry Kay had poured out against the rival association) but that I had a study night I was free. We went to a movie. He put his arm around the back of my seat, and I bounced away to the very edge. (No National wolf is going to make passes at an AAPAn!) The arm withdrew and stayed withdrawn. I did not know that it was Wesson's first date with a girl, and he was convinced he'd offended me, and felt as unsure of himself as only a 19-year-old can.

Things might have stalemated indefinitely, with the ajay feud between us our only mental contact, when my mother inadvertently stepped in and revealed him in the cliched true light. Briefly, she intercepted an ajay note of his and telephoned him, asking his aid to have me ostracized out of ajaydom. Troubled, Wesson phoned me at work, and on a Park Row bench I explained. I learned then that he wasn't the brassy personality, the empty glamour boy that his National front presented. He was, indeed, as nice inside as any AAPAn I knew!

These were the years when my ajay circle were emerging from adolescence and their horizons widened. Groveman had struck a cruel blow when he joined the

National, and I had sent him forth with cries of "Turncoat!" Haywood, having met NAPA's *Sugar and Spice* Tillie Schabrucker at that memorable August 1941 APC meet, had also hopped the fence, understandably. I remained staunchly American, fighting furious feuds with Edwin Hadley Smith for his subsidized proselyting of select actives, and Bob Holman, *Cubicle*, for proselyting the Pennsylvania Chapter of AAPA en masse. It never occurred to me, cemented in AAPA as I was, that my own "loyalty" would be questioned when I up and married that NAPA whippersnapper in 1943. But it was—and by George Kay!

Pearl Harbor caught us at Wesson's APC meet in Brooklyn. When Burton came in late with the news, in his knowledge of Japan, he added: "...the poor bastards!" Having lived in Japan only five years, I still cannot see how this basically-primitive country found the temerity to attack the mighty *Beikoku* (literally, Big Bales of Rice).

At that APC meeting we did not realize, those of us who were most concerned, the full implications. (I had a boyfriend in the Officers' Reserve and I remember wondering if he would have to go on active duty, though I did not know what that entailed.) I certainly never thought that almost everyone at that APC meet—Segal, Smiths, Jacksons, Groveman, Wessons, Crane, Trainer—would be in uniform, even in combat, before we all met again.

Wesson signified that I was to out-stay the gang and a certain young lady who wanted to see him alone so I out-waited her, and in a Brooklyn candy store we drank chocolate sodas and laid plans to coedit a paper. The name, *Siamese Standpipe*, we decided upon later (see SS 1)...and here we are mailing out our 28th issue, twelve years and two sons later!

So this tale converges at the same point, for First VP Helen V. Vivarttas became President for another term, to preside over a publishing USO-by-mail, and accepted in the name of Helen V. Wesson in September 1943 (the Wessons having married exactly one week earlier than the Haywoods). Kay, the confirmed bachelor, writhed in the grave of inactivity he had dug for himself with his resignation (one of many) and toppled the tombstone long enough to wag a warning finger. That I had married was abominable enough, but a *National*...!!

Then *Index* Linton Clark stepped in. Now, it is a true picture of Linton Clark to say that he is the type who paints "Jesus Saves" on rocks. Rather, "Repent, for the day cometh." We have met him since, in our Army travels, and it was an interesting gab-fest that developed; for he has his own interpretation of the Scriptures, of the chosen Sabbath, and of the AAPA Constitution. There is

no reasoning with him, but this I did not know at the time. I knew only that I was desperate for an Official Editor when Ken Kulzick, *Trouvere*, resigned. I never did receive an answer from Bob Kunde to my plea that he take the office, on his release by the Air Force. I appointed an Editor [her husband Sheldon—ed.] who, though he was hampered by a piggy-bank budget and uninspired country-shop printing, is talented enough in his own field to overcome these drawbacks. I shared my brand-new husband somewhat jealously with my other love.

During the brief hours Wesson had off from his military duty, he would make marginal notes on official letters, and I would attend to his correspondence later. *AAJ* copy was edited, proofs read, pages dummied, in whatever odd unpredictable hours the Army allowed him off. After we struggled to fill capably the offices of President and Official Editor, to have Clark & Co. cry “Dictator!” because there were two officers under one roof, was too much. That the Founding Fathers of AAPA were still sensitive to dictatorship of the UAPA (from which they had recently seceded) was no excuse for maligning our efforts so bitterly and libelously. However, the clouds burst and the Deluge was upon us. Charlie Heins at his vituperative worst cannot compare with Linton Clark's most righteous self. Nevertheless, I was elected a Director in Ed Wall's administration and Shep was re-elected Editor.

To scratch the scar of old wounds is perhaps to bleed again. So I shall say only that when, as my last presidential move, I resigned from AAPA in protest, effective October 1944, my heartbreak was quite complete, and much deeper than that caused by most First Loves. Clark's libellous filth left me no alternative. After all the years of clinging precariously to my hobby, I was finally in a position where Authority actually encouraged me, and competed joyously with me, yet all was lost. You know how emotional women can be...

During those war years I joined the Fantasy Amateur Press Association after Alf Babcock showed me a copy of *Acolyte*, scholarly publication of Fran Laney, a NAPAn briefly. That in turn led to Howard Phillips Lovecraft, one of NAPA's great literary figures, and renewed my interest in the Weird.

For FAPA I have published (1946-52), with Burton Crane co-editing for three issues, five numbers of *The (Unspeakable) Thing* of China, New Jersey, Japan and New York, totaling 148 mimeographed 8 1/2 x 11 pages, illustrated and hand-painted. When the FAPA surplus stock sale was held, *TUT* sold for 20 cents per copy, the others only 1 cent to 10 cents, which indicates something. I'm not sure what.

My admiration for Laney's complete lack of

inhibition in his thinking and writing “unlaxed” my own mental restrictions from whalebone stays. *Helen's Fantasia*—of which three issues have been mimeod in FAPA's tradition of thoughts-first-appearance-second and devil-take-the-prudish—is currently fulfilling my activity requirement of eight pages per year for the limited membership of 65.

I had joined the National also, and as an Army wife published five hand-painted *Spigots* (1944-45), printing tiny ones myself on my 2 x 4 Peripatetic Press from one enclosed two-thirds typecase holding three faces of type. The deluxe numbers—printed after Shep left for European duty—boast such illustrious printers as Burton Crane and Cliff Laube, *Monasticon*, who actually phoned me to ask my desires on a minor point of layout!

Though I was active in publishing, writing, art work, etc., for the ensuing ten years to the present, in both NAPA and FAPA, I have sometimes felt like a Man Without a Country in ajaydom. Despite my longer activity record in NAPA, winning the 1946 Story Laureate, I am to many Nationals “that AAPAn”—or worse yet, just another printer's wife, “Mrs. Wesson.” The feeling was emphasized when newcomer George Freitag, acknowledging a *Spigot*, wrote: “...and now that you have become his wife you are as active as anyone I know of.” As a consequence I entered a period of parliamentary mischief, and amused myself by exposing the straw in the stuffed shirt of NAPA procedure. This left parliamentarians wringing their hands when I voted illegally at the 1949 Brooklyn Convention, a deciding vote for one Executive Judge. Intentionally, this pointed up the slipshod balloting method and led to a reform of the procedure.

In a fast shuffle called Redeployment, Lt. Wesson breezed through the Zone of the Interior en route from Germany to Japan, and we set type in the Brodie Shop, Helm Spink, Custodian, during the 1945 NAPA Convention at Cleveland. We extended that convention somewhat at smaller meets in Ed Cole's and Frank Batchelder's shops.

However, Wesson had been overseas again almost a year in mid-1946, and I was not happily situated. My Dad had been almost 50 when I was born, and the quiet companionship I shared with him in his den over things literary and artistic ended in an illness of the aged, which left me only a shell. Even after my momentous decision to join Wesson and Crane in Tokyo, one month dragged out to the next and still the Army refused me passage. Alf Babcock, Ernie Pittaro (*Hoot Owl*) and I instituted a Monday-noon-at-Seward's-Cafeteria Club, and met visiting firemen like Helm Spink and the Service ajays who hit New York.

Bob Smith chose then to amuse me with an



invitation to paw through his collection of duplicates, and I lit out for Hempstead for an ajay day that extended over a weekend. We went to a night-club with Bill and his date, and arrived home too late for my train. Ma Smith tucked me into bed and kissed me goodnight. During my first stay in Japan I collected miniature cats for her and after returning, when we were finally settled in Levittown in 1949, I dropped a card asking to call and deliver them. Pop Smith phoned that I was a week too late...and now when I want to make someone glad, I do it in the present, for I shall never trust the future again.

It was at the 1946 NAPA Convention in Newark that Vondy had the good sense to bunk me with Jeanne Sullivan of *Falling Stars*. Jan and I considered putting up a sign on the door:

SULLIVAN AND WESSON—KNOCK LOUDER

but my mimeograph made it unnecessary. As the hotel detective complained to Vondy, “There are young men in that room at all hours of the day and night. Is it all right?” And Vondy, being Vondy, answered without hesitation, “Oh yes, she's chairman of a committee.” Groveman and I spent one night mimeographing a travesty on all good convention papers, containing such poetic gems as Bill's: “Who put the benzedrine in Tillie Haywood's Ovaltine?”

Wesson wrote from Japan that I sent him 104 photos, count 'em, of the Convention, 100 being of me with somebody's arm around me...Ensign Bob Smith's, veteran Groveman's and his cousin Bill Jackson's...just about the entire Convention assembled. “But I don't care,” he wrote blithely, “because the other four are of Hazel Segal in a bathing suit!”

I saw little of my room-mate at that Newark Convention, for Jan was busy with her own little affairs, dancing lightly from one heart to another. Some time during that era I flirted blatantly with Ed Harler of *Harler's Ferry*, who does not make friends gladly. Jan soon caught on that if he can like me, he can love her; if I can be happy though married, so might she. We were the only ajays invited to attend their wedding in 1949. Jan, leaving in a red traveling suit, said she wore it in honor of the Li'l Red Devil.

The inter-associational New Jersey Chapter of Amateur Journalism, publishing *New Jersey Amateur* was at its peak of activity when I left for Japan in 1946. The monthly meetings—weenie roasts, picnics, holiday parties—were social affairs which boosted activity and fellowship to such high levels that New Jersey became The Ajay State, a thumb-nose to those who would decry such sociabilities in the hobby.

### Tokyo-wan APC

Alf Babcock had told me that Crane, in OSS in

China, had sold his 7 x 11 Bilious Bull to Tom Grimes, and that Tom, in the Marines, would sell if I made him a good offer. I wrote Wesson I was buying the press, and he answered that he couldn't make use of it and didn't want it. I bought it anyway, for myself. To this day the Griddle Press itself belongs to the distaff half, and the printer is so reminded when there is a matter of letterheads or other distasteful job work to be done.

After all that, the Army left the press behind when it packed me off to Japan in November 1946. Alf used Ferdinand (so re-named) then during our two-year stay. Meanwhile, we had bought back from Smitty the 4 x 6 Josephine he had bought from SCW previously, and so we installed our printshop in a large closet in the War Ministry Apartments. I brought some 10-pt. Garamond to Japan but forgot spaces, which came at enormous expense by mail later on. Burton called Sunday waffle-breakfast meetings of the TWAPC, which we attended in company with incidental members including a FAPAN, Mike Fern.

In Tokyo, I started my professional writing, for the \$10 number of *American Fabrics*; and as correspondent for the *Times of India*, Bombay, and the *Manchester Guardian* of England; but principally for Fairchild Publications, where I became their highest-paid string correspondent. This contact had lasting influence, since Shep joined them in New York for four years and now heads their Japan Bureau. I still write professionally for Fairchild in the fashion (textile, apparel and home furnishings) field that is my second interest. However, I have convinced myself that I can hold my own in the newspaper business after all, never having forgotten the lost opportunities previously mentioned, and I am quite content to let Shep be the family pro. Laney says that his wife feels that my “writing is too good to be wasted on amateurs...” but I feel it scarcely merits the rich largesse I have derived from Amateur Journalism, which cannot be measured in dollars and cents.

Here also I entered a new phase of ajay activity. I started recruiting new members by growing my own. Sheldon, born in Tokyo and now 6 1/2, is adept at slip-sheeting, Copy-boy David joined the growing staff in Long Island four years ago, and has many times toddled the long distance between printshop and study upstairs with proofs for correcting, or illegible sarcasms about my sacred copy and widow lines.

Crane bought our 4 x 6 press and type when we left Japan in 1948, but used them only to print admission tickets to the plays which the Tokyo International Players produced under his direction. We'd get frantic appeals for cap I, B, and C sorts—to be sent airmail! It was an inkling of the future activity—or inactivity—of a personality who had done more than any other ajay to shape the lives of

Us Wessons. Well do I remember his little tete-a-tete with me at the 1943 NAPA Convention in Columbus, when he sought to convince me that I could do worse than marry his protege. My mother permitted me to attend that convention, my first trip without her, not because there was a convention, but because "Helen's young man" was stationed in Columbus that eventful week and had invited me to visit him at the university where the Army had deposited him pro tem. (Vivian Chatfield, who accompanied me, ruminated on the train how I could ever say SCW talked so much when I gabbed incessantly myself. Homeward bound, she exclaimed, "Now I know—you both talk simultaneously!")

There had been many obstacles in the path of the marriage which Crane and Wesson each sought in his individual way. Many ajays have misinterpreted the emotional reunion on the sofa outside the convention room, while Rusty *Comet* Weixelbaum hovered near, ready to peck out the eyes of anyone who interrupted us. It was not as romantic as Rusty believed, for I was telling Wesson that it was impossible, I could not marry him. (We were married eight weeks later!)

### APC and "Hectic Helen"

We returned to the States in 1948, after two happy years and three issues of *Siamese Standpipe* in Tokyo. The ensuing four years on Long Island are a whirling blur to me. Conventions were hectic, with two babies to guard; indeed, I missed the 1950 Cleveland Conclave after David was born. It became clear that, for a while at least, I must resign myself to the distaff gallery of the hobby; and I drew little mental nourishment to sustain me during the 16 hours of housework each day which I allotted myself in an inefficient burst of over-efficiency.

Shep attended Columbia evenings and had night assignments. Weekends were fierce earthquakes of busyness which left me limp, and when they were expended in the hobby were too overdone. Little more was accomplished than winning the NAPA Printing Laureate in 1951-52 with *Siamese Standpipe*, which included the gold-and-silver five-color dragon that is the highlight of my linoleum-block carving efforts.

It was not our fault that we were not oriented well in our chosen Long Island neighborhood, but the loneliness made the days endless drudgery to me. Dad's death and other factors distressed me, and I entered a period of post-natal depression which is not uncommon but is difficult to live through. At this point, when my social and mental outlets were limited to the few APC meets I could enjoy, the hobby came to my rescue in the form of the long-forgotten AAPA.

Bob Price, first President of AAPA, for two terms, 1937 and 1938, publisher of *Today's Youth* and *Branding Iron*, had rejoined after a long period of inactivity. In a moment of beery sentimentality in the summer of 1951, he phoned me Long Distance from Pueblo, Col., that I must rejoin. Lee Hawes, of *Gator Growl*, also AAPA President for two terms, 1949-1950 and 1950-51, had reawakened Price and was busy working on me. Bob is a gay flatterbox, and the combination of his scandalous letters and Lee's newsy ones was just what the doctor ordered. I rejoined to earn more letters from them; and made new friends, when I attended the Cleveland 1951 AAPA Convention, in the inky Adams sisters, "old-timer" Joe Curran, and Ruth Kapusta, who this year became the second young lady to be elected AAPA President. Bob and I coedited two rollicking numbers of *Houri*, which he printed, in 1951-52.

However, I found my First Love had grown bald, paunchy and sexless. In other words, the AAPA itself is the one great friendship I have re-made after a lapse of many years that I have not found as spicy and enriching as I did then. The 1944 wound cut too deeply—it had amputated.

If I could not find myself in AAPA again, at least I found old friends during my flash visit. President Floyd Akcerman had recruited a sailor friend into the AAPA, and that friend had left his bundle, with my current address, on a table where his brother picked it up. Shep, who put up with Price's 2 a.m. phone calls that he must answer for me, informed me with only slightly raised eyebrows that a man was on the phone who would not give his name. It was my college buddy, a reluctant AAPAn of a decade ago, now a naval air pilot temporarily stationed nearby, and could he drop around? His words are pithy and his mastery of expression superb, and I welcomed Le Roy De Marrais and his friendly Astrid as one does a sunny day during the *nyubai* (rainy season). Father of a year-old daughter, he edits at McGraw-Hill at last report.

Somehow I also picked up the lost thread of Edgar Allan Martin (now printing *Satyric* for NAPA and mimeoing *Grotesque* for FAPA). They, too—Ed, Madeleine and Janine—stormed our August 1951 weekend APC meet armed with their own cots and The Monster—a giant turkey which Madeleine had stuffed deliciously. They evidently liked our ranch house, for they have bought one in Connecticut.

Elliot Rubin, wife and son, also showed up, and here again I regret a good editor lost to the hobby because women just don't understand.

We packed them in 32-strong at that APC meet, and over 40 at our previous August meet when the 40-

page *APC News* was printed, as if we knew they would be the last we'd hold for many years.

In Long Island we had one favorite "neighbor"—only 40 minutes' car travel away in Great Neck—Ralph Babcock. His ajay friendship was good for us both, and dispelled the previous opinion I'd received of him when we were all stationed at Fort Benning in 1944. Shep had been an Officer Candidate, Ralph a Lieutenant-instructor. Social advances could come only from Ralph and he offered none, though it would have been good to talk ajay. (Elizabeth "Hedy" Jordan of *Wings Over Jordan* had married a Lieutenant and tried to dispel our loneliness there with her hospitality. Even now I wish I were able to pick up the dropped stitch of her friendship, for I enjoyed her immensely.) Certainly it was not Ralph's fault he snubbed us, I know now, for he has gladly shared his mother's hospitality and his applesauce with us many times.

Ralph has endeared himself to me through his ready wit. At the last APC meeting at our house on LI, eight-year-old Janine Martin wanted to take a bath, so someone must remove the ice from the tub. "Is there a man in the house?" I asked, just as Ralph entered. "No, but I'll try!" he snapped back. His footnote rejoinder to Ed Cole's scholarly "APC Redivivus!" was "Printer's translation: Kleenex Pops Up, Too." And credit his title for the APC history: "The Maiden's Lament: Nineteen Years in the Cellar! Or, Why Ma Quit Heating Sunday Dinner."

But we have made three trans-continental trips, visiting ajays, and many side-trips; and I could never start to list the ajay personalities who have been more than ships that pass in the night on my life-stream.

Beloved Felicitas Haggerty...Nita Gerner Smith, born and bred in the hobby...motherly Dorrie [Moitoret]...gallant Jack Diamond...suave Heljeson...gentle Cliff Laube...dynamic Ed Wall...and though we've never met, whimsical Bob Maney, the Wacky Wabbit of Wabbit Wun; and the Cadaverous Kangaroo, Jim Guinane...and Vondy.

My first reaction to Vondy had been a very feminine one...Sheldon Wesson had said at an early APC meet that he would rather talk with Vondy than any other woman he knew. I didn't realize that he exempted me! I know now she is Vondy because she has a heart but is not maudlin, she loves Amateur Journalism without being Valentiney, and no preconceived notions clutter her mind which is masculine in its lack of pettiness.

As this history is written, we have plans for three more *Standpipes* this year, and copy on hand for one. Our household setup—and no commutation for Mr. Editor—gives us an enviable maximum of opportunity to enjoy the hobby in all of its facets; but we sorely miss the

personal contacts from which it is obvious I derive so much satisfaction. Amateur Journalism is like marriage—never a chance for boredom. Just when things are running along perhaps too quietly, diversion pops up—like Milton Grady, who, though he has not yet found himself editorially, sparks the hobby like the electric-shock wand at Coney Island, used to get an unexpected rise out of participants in the audience.

It will be several-to-many years before I see you again at a Fossil Reunion. But some day I hope you will notice an old bag in the corner, wearing earrings big as dinner plates, and surrounded by a coterie of tall, handsome ajays. That will be Helen. (Coincidentally, those ajays will also answer to the name Wesson.)

## CO-EDITOR'S BULLETIN

*(reprinted from Siamese Standpipe no. 28, May 1954)*

Letters have inquired: "What, if anything, does Miss Editor do?" To which she replies with tilted nose: "I provide SS with wit, charm and intelligence. Wesson? Oh, he only prints the rag."

—SS 2, 1942

## THE RECORD BUSTERS PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Guy Miller

The Fossils have just broken a voting record, I am certain. And I mean hobby wide. Final count after the July 31 deadline showed that the Fossils registered a 65% return. Imagine that. Any organization anywhere would be overjoyed to experience such a turnout. In our case, at least, this strong showing is indicative of the interest of our members in our affairs to the extent that, during my years as president, whenever I have sent out a call for assistance I have seldom been disappointed. Needless to say, I am privileged to serve such a fine group.

Further, I am pleased to be returned to office with the same capable cadre of officers: Vice President Lee Hawes, Secretary-treasurer Tom Parson, and Official Editor Ken Faig, Jr. In addition, I have asked the same appointive officers to remain in their stations. So, Historian Sean Donnelly, Membership Chair Martha Shivvers, Webmaster Dave Tribby, and Librarian Martin (Mike) Horvat will continue to offer their valued assistance. Of course, the Board of Trustees maintains its role under the chairmanship of Jack Swenson along with fellow directors Stan Oliner and your president.

As a result of the approval of the proposed amendments to our By Laws, all elected officers will

serve for a two-year term, which means that our next election will occur in 2008. At that time—and again as the result of the new amended By Laws—the office of vice president will be eliminated and all present elective offices will become appointive positions to be determined by the Board of Trustees. And, for the first time since the 1985 adoption of our present By Laws, the members of the Board of Trustees will become the only officers to stand for election.

Hopefully, this drastic change in our political structure will benefit us in several ways. Most important, it will allow a member, including a member of the Board of Trustees, to assume more than one position in the event that we cannot find enough capable people to fill our offices. Sadly, natural attrition is shrinking our rolls; and unless we experience a revival in the form of a fresh supply of individuals who are interested in research and reporting or at least in reading the results of that research, the duties attendant to the function of the Fossils will fall on fewer and fewer shoulders. Of course, we hope some of those many inquisitive minds we refer to will find their way into our organization. They're out there, we know.

Election Results: (35 ballots cast)

President

Guy Miller, 34

Blank, 1

Vice President

Leland Hawes, Jr., 32,

Blank, 3

Secretary-treasurer

Tom Parson, 34

Blank, 1

Official Editor

Ken Faig, Jr., 34

Blank, 1

Proposed amendments to the By Laws

Yes, 26

No, 4

Blank, 5

I should mention that Trustee Stan Oliner will continue to chair the Gold Composing Stick Award committee assisted by Secretary-treasurer Tom Parson and long-time Fossil and a former Fossil Librarian Les Boyer. Vice President Lee Hawes will remain as our Chairman of the Russell L. Paxton Memorial Award for Service to Amateur Journalism.

And, so, fellow Fossils: Let's "bust" some more records!

## A LETTERPRESS REVIVAL

Guy Miller

Once upon a time Springfield, Ohio, was noted as much for its plethora of printing plants, both small and huge, as for its roses—which is saying a lot, considering that before the Depression dealt its death blow, the city was famed far and wide as the world's largest exporter of roses. The enormous structure once home to the Crowell Collier family of magazines still stands. The building whose ground floor was leased to Perrine and Company Printers (after Jessie Perrine switched his interests from men's clothing), is now the parking lot of our local cable company. By the early '60's, almost all the letterpress shops had fallen by the wayside, victims of the new offset presses and increasing efficiency of the copier.

During our heyday the shops depended on the local newspaper plant and the Springfield Engraving Company for its cuts and engravings. The newspaper is now printed in nearby Dayton; and the engraving firm, lately reduced to a quick print shop, is on the auction block. Included in items up for auction are "large cast iron reliance printing press mfg by Paul Sciede, old wood planers, wood router, lg. cast iron camera, proof press, other old equipment and scrap related items." We won't try to speculate what might be included in those "scrap related items." Truly, the end of an era.

But, as many of us have been aware over these last several years, letterpress is not a dying art, but is, indeed, increasing in its appeal to devotees far and wide. So much so, in fact, that *Time Magazine* in its September 11 edition saw fit to highlight the activities of enthusiast Ben Webster of Salt Lake City, Utah, who is an avid collector of all the letterpresses he can get his hands on. Those of you who have had the happy task of having to dismantle a C&P or a Heidelberg in order to move it from someone's basement, will recognize Webster as a true collector. Further, Webster, like other followers of the art, does not just trade in old presses; but he also puts them to use in his shop, Seraph Stationery.

But, it is not only Webster who sees a letterpress renaissance; for also quoted in the article is Fritz Klinke from whom many of us have purchased supplies, including rollers. From his perch at NA Graphics in Silverton CO, Fritz estimates that over the past three years, about 500 people have joined the ranks of letterpress printers in the United States. He himself presently has 3,000 customers.

We urge you to find a copy of the September 11 issue of *Time* and read the accounts of other devotees who are helping to further a far-from-lost art.

## WE WELCOME TO OUR RANKS

### Robert Lichtman

My so-called career in amateur journalism lies almost entirely in the science-fiction fan subculture, which I discovered as I approached my sixteenth birthday in the summer of 1958 in the back pages of what turned out to be the final issue of *Imagination*, where the late Robert Bloch conducted a column called “Fandora's Box” in which he wrote of doings in “fandom” and reviewed “fanzines.” I sent away for a few, they came, I enjoyed them, and the rest is, as we say, “fan history.” By the end of 1958 I had published my first fanzine, *Psi-Phi*, in collaboration with a high-school friend whose father was a paper salesman and who had a ditto machine and (more importantly) loads of free paper at our disposal. About eighty copies of that (let's face it, frankly awful) first issue went out to people whose names we'd gleaned from the pages of the several dozen fanzines received over the summer and fall of that year.

Because both my coeditor and I had a reasonable grasp of the English language and how to compose in it, our first issue was reviewed as “promising” and contributions of articles and artwork—and all-important letters of comment—came in and we went on. My coeditor dropped out after half a dozen issues when we went our separate ways to different universities, but by then the habit of publishing had stuck, my star had risen in the annals of fandom, and I've stuck to it to this day.

I've been a member of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association since 1984 and its Secretary-Treasurer since 1986 (this after an earlier membership that ran from 1962 to 1971). And I've been a member of the Spectator Amateur Press Society since 1983 (and was a member previously from 1959 to 1965). As of this writing I've published 47 issues of *King Biscuit Time* for the FAPA and 91 issues of *Door Knob* for SAPS. I've also published two dozen issues of a general circulation fanzine, *Trap Door*, since 1983. It's very well regarded in the fan community and consistently places high on popularity polls conducted there. I'm also a “past president” of the Fan Writers of America, and have been the “fan guest of honor” at several conventions.

My introduction to ayjay came in the early '60s, when a number of science-fiction fans were checking out the National and other associations. I joined the NAPA in 1962 and produced a couple of mimeographed papers for the mailings during the three or four years I remained a member. At that time I lived not far from the late Wesley Porter, who invited me over to his house on several occasions and gifted me with great gobs of vintage ayjay

publications from his collection. One of the things he gave me was a warped but serviceable copy of John Travis Nixon's *History of the National Amateur Press Association*, published in 1900. It was warped, Wes told me, because it had gone through the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and become water-damaged in a house that was saved from the ensuing conflagration that wiped out a large part of the city.

Another amateur with whom I had considerable contact, although we never met, was Alf Babcock. He also saw me, as I suspect Wes did, as a potential Young Hope for the ranks of the NAPA and ayjay in general, and sent me a huge stack of *Alf's Cat* and a number of very limited edition hardcover books he produced (in editions of well under 100 copies) on travel subjects (*Tropical Isles and Things*), ayjay anthologies (on the likes of Burton Crane and Emerson Duerr, as well as more general anthologies such as *Ajay Goodies*), and children's books (*Lingo the Cat* and others). I also had considerable correspondence with Willametta Keffer, who at that time was still but a Turnipseed, and when my interest drifted away from ayjay in the mid '60s I sent her my entire ayjay library, for which she was most grateful.

I know some of the titles I've listed above because over the past five years or so I've reacquired some of them, and now have a fairly small but decent ayjay library including a rare copy of the Nixon book (which I hunted for years on the book search engines before finding one at a stratospheric price and bargained with the seller to knock the price down to something more in line with my budget), a bunch of Alf's books and some *Alf's Cats*, Spencer's *History of Amateur Journalism* (and separately the index thereto) and his *Cyclopedia* of same, Ahlhauser's *Ex-Presidents of the National Amateur Press Association*, Harrison's *Career and Reminiscences of an Amateur Journalist*, a number of Tim Thrift's self-published books, a copy of *Five Years of The Fossil 1924-1929*, and even an actual copy of the first issue of *The Fossil* (won on eBay a couple of years ago along with an 1896 *National Amateur*). And I have what was told to me by Ralph Babcock himself to be the last available copy of *Your Thoughts* when I bought it from him years ago (along with which he included many issues of *The Scarlet Cockerel* and *Weaker Moments*). I value all of this highly, and feel a kinship with amateur journalism.

Personally speaking, I'm a native of Cleveland, Ohio, who's lived in California most of his life except for the first seven years and the decade of the 1970s when I lived on a commune south of Nashville, Tennessee. I have four grown sons who were all born there—all born at home and delivered by midwives—and one granddaughter just turned ten. I retired from a civil service job in August

2005 and live with my wife Carol in the Oakland hills in a house that was spared destruction in the 1991 fire by just two houses distance from the ruins.

I'm enjoying my membership in The Fossils, finding the quarterly *The Fossil* an interesting read because I know (from my past membership and extensive reading) many of the names and events. I look forward to retaining my association here for many years to come.

—Robert Lichtman, May 2006

*(The editor thanks new member Robert Lichtman for contributing this sketch and reminds all of our readers that member sketches and recollections are always welcome in our pages. In fact, they are vital if we want to avoid a journal consisting predominantly of reprints.)*

**THE GOLDEN JUBILEE SPEECH  
OF  
LOUIS KEMPNER  
AT NEW YORK**

*(Reprinted from Burton Jay Smith's Eisegesis no. 26 for December 25, 1939.)*

On the fiftieth anniversary of his election to the presidency of the National Amateur Press Association, friends of Louis Kempner held a dinner in his honor at the Hotel Parkside in New York City.

(Mrs.) Elizabeth Kempner, wife of the guest of honor, read Mr. Kempner's speech for him. She prefaced that reading with the following remarks:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

There is one particular reason why I am pleased that Mr. Kempner has asked me to read his speech. It gives me an opportunity to say something to his friends in amateur journalism gathered here to honor him on the fiftieth anniversary of his election as president of the National Amateur Press Association. Here is what I want to say: I have not always been in harmony and sympathy with the things Mr. Kempner has said and done from time to time. For example, I was not in favor with his attitude in the so-called Fossil Strife which took place some five years ago.

Mr. Kempner should not have taken part in that quarrel. All the parties in that strife were his friends and my friends. I visited many of them at their homes and entertained many of them at my home during a period of many years.

Our friendships having existed for so many years should have continued for all time.

I know that the Fossil Strife could and would have been settled, even if Mr. Kempner had kept out of it.

Following these brief remarks Mrs. Kempner, with the permission of Vincent B. Haggerty, the Toastmaster, read the speech prepared by her husband as follows:

Mr. Toastmaster, Ladies, and Gentlemen:

Please forgive me for delegating to my wife the task of reading this rambling talk to you. Mrs. Kempner has suffered much to keep me alive all these years, hence one more task will not be a hardship.

This is rather an unusual thing to do at a gathering of amateur journalists of the past and present, but then I am always doing unusual things. However, I find it necessary, for your comfort as well as my own, to ask Mrs. Kempner to read my speech.

Brothers Trainer and Haggerty, Chairman and Secretary, respectively, of this gathering, said in their invitations sent to you: "It is given to a few men to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of an election as president of the National Amateur Press Association."

I have much to be grateful for, and I am sincerely thankful to the Almighty God for permitting me to live to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Boechat-Kempner presidential campaign of 1889.

The N.A.P.A. was organized in 1876 by the late James M. Beck and others. It has continued to live more than 63 years in spite of the rival organizations coming into being from time to time with the sole purpose of ruining and wrecking the parent body.

Various excuses were used to explain the formation of these rival organizations, but, in my judgment, every one of these rivals of the N.A.P.A. was fostered by some disgruntled or disappointed office-seeker.

In the June 1939 *National Amateur* I find a letter from Truman J. Spencer, publisher of the History of Amateur Journalism, which will no doubt be the greatest achievement accomplished by anyone connected with our hobby.

Mr. Spencer states that one of the chapters in his book will be devoted to the "Rivals of the N.A.P.A."

I am looking forward to this chapter with much anticipation and some concern. Brother Spencer has a tender soul and will no doubt treat the subject in his usual soft and respectful manner, but he will find me one of his severest critics, unless the rivals receive their just deserts.

How will Mr. Spencer handle the rival organization started by Max A. Lesser after he received a well deserved defeat for president at the 1881 convention?

This is the same Max A. Lesser, who in 1934 tried to wreck the Fossils, after his definite [sic] for president. Once a wrecker always a wrecker.

How will our good friend Spencer treat the rival

organization started by Jim O'Connell? O'Connell was known as the worst enemy N.A.P.A. ever had. Jim O'Connell was known best by the fact that he invariably carried a knife up his sleeve always ready to thrust the knife into the heart of any amateur who incurred his displeasure.

The strangest part of this incident is that [of] one amateur, the only one who stood by O'Connell at the time. This amateur was honored last year as a vice-president of The Fossil's, had the rashness to write a story called "The Forgotten Leader." This tale referred to Jim O'Connell as a leader and one of the great men connected with the hobby of amateur journalism. If Jim O'Connell was great in A.J. then Benedict Arnold was great too.

I am sure that those living will recall that Jim O'Connell refused to cross the threshold of any meeting of amateurs held in New York, Brooklyn and Jersey City. In the year 1883 the good old M.A.J.C. decided to march from Pythagoras Hall to the meeting place of the N.A.P.A. but Jim was not in that procession.

In 1904, when the Fossils was formed, O'Connell was urged to let bygones be forgotten and join the unique organization of boys of the past, but Jim O'Connell went to his grave without coming into the fold.

It gives me a sick feeling whenever it is mentioned that Jim O'Connell was a leader among us.

But I will be patient and await Mr. Spencer's treatment of the traitors who, at one time or another, tried to wreck the N.A.P.A.

This gathering brings back to me many loving and interesting memories. It does not seem like fifty years since the Boechat-Kempner presidential campaign was making history in the N.A.P.A.

I have always maintained that that campaign ended by the defeat of the best man, and although my opponent was defeated he and I have remained firm friends all through the half century which has passed since that eventful campaign. I am happy, yes, happier than I can express in appropriate words that Michael F. Boechat is at my side tonight. God bless him and keep him in health and happiness for many years to come.

Perhaps it is inappropriate to turn back the hands of time to the 1889 campaign. I wanted to be president of the N.A.P.A. that year, even if my dearest friend had to be sacrificed. I had stepped aside in 1885 to make way for Fred Heath, and then stepped aside in 1888 to make way for A. Z. Barker. But when the campaign of 1889 came around I was determined to enter the race against the field.

Very early in the Barker administration my campaign was started. At that time Michael was one of my supporters. He entered the race months after my campaign was well organized and there was some

thought that I would be elected without opposition.

Certain conditions arose which brought Michael into the race. The truth about the matter is that Michael was practically forced to enter the race against me. When I learned the truth I was not angry with Michael.

I am not betraying secrets when I relate the story as I understood it.

The East was against Louis Kempner for president and when it appeared that I was expected to become president without opposition the East went frantic. Something had to be done and done quickly.

Mr. Willard O. Wylie was then the recognized leader of the East, he, with a few friends, decided what was to be done to stop Kempner.

They had to find a candidate. My dear friend Michael was picked to make the race. Then Mr. Wylie had to find a good reason to satisfy Michael that he was the logical man for the job. So Mr. Wylie and his friends pointed out to Michael that the Buffalo 1889 convention would be a complete flop if it became generally known that Kempner would be elected president without a contest. Those of the East would not go to Buffalo and every possible effort would be made to keep all opposed to Kempner from attending the Buffalo convention. These were powerful reasons for showing Michael that he must save Buffalo at all costs and so he yielded to the entreaties of Mr. Wylie and his friends and entered the race against me. I have never found fault with Michael's action.

By this time the convention was close at hand and my campaign managers, Messrs. Brainerd P. Emery and Charles R. Burger, had obtained pledges from members in sufficient numbers to insure my election.

Michael was defeated by a few votes only. Had he entered the race earlier he would have won. I recall that one of my friends at the convention told me that he saw the ballot cast by Michael and that it bore the name of "Kempner." This gratified me very much, but I don't think it is necessary, even at this late day, to tell you who I voted for.

Frankly, my friends, I was not very sorry for Michael. I wanted to be president and my ambition was gratified. Besides, Michael should have been president two years earlier. He received a majority vote at the Philadelphia convention of 1887 but he refused to accept the presidency because the then custodian of proxy ballots had tampered with the proxy ballots and Michael refused to profit by the stupid conduct of the custodian although it was clearly and definitely certain that Michael was in no way responsible for the stupidity of the custodian. Michael could have accepted the presidency without injury to his reputation for honesty and integrity. But Michael thought otherwise and Sam Stinson was

elected president without turning a hair of his head to get the honor.

About a month ago I went to Philadelphia to look up the records of the 1887 convention. I verified my memory of that convention and assure you that Michael was properly elected and had no right to refuse the office because the custodian of ballots had made a stupid blunder.

Hence I may be excused for not grieving for Michael after his defeat in 1889. But in 1934, 45 years later I had an opportunity to serve Michael during his term as president of the Fossils. Let Michael tell you if I served him faithfully in that crisis.

Speaking of my visit to Franklin Institute last month, I take pleasure in reporting that Secretary Rigling has a rousing reception in store for members of the N.A.P.A. who attend the 1940 convention. Mr. Rigling's interest in our collection was inspiring, he also pointed out a collection recently acquired. It is known as the National Puzzlers League Collection. The binding of the collection is far superior to ours. Our old friend, Willie Wildwave Delaney, spent hundreds of dollars to make this collection. I believe if Willie were alive today he would be happy and proud of seeing the two collections side by side in the famous Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. Mr. Rigling also speaks highly of the work of Edwin Hadley Smith in keeping the collection up to date.

My position as president of the N.A.P.A. fifty years ago was by no means a bed of roses, but I stuck to my post to the end.

Cleveland, the convention city for 1890, broke all records for loyalty; the boys of Cleveland who came to Buffalo in 1889 to secure the convention seat for 1890 fell down with a dull thud. All their promises for activity were just pie crust. Later, when my authority as president permitted me to drop Cleveland for inactivity, not a word of protest was uttered. I thereupon named Indianapolis as the convention city for 1890. Some of the officers were inactive too, so I removed them. These are a few of the things I was compelled to during my term of office.

Then came the greatest incident which happened during my administration. I am very sorry that Willard O. Wylie is absent from this gathering. I did want him to hear the incident I am about to relate, as he played a most prominent part in it.

My thoughts were constantly of the East, where the members not only tried to defeat me for the presidency, but after the election they showed no desire to help the administration.

Now was the time to do something drastic. Now when [sic] I was not seeking votes. My whole life was devoted to the welfare of the National Amateur Press

Association. I felt that my administration had to accomplish something so that my friends should realize that their choice for the presidency was well placed.

After thinking over the matter carefully I decided to visit Howard M. Carter in his home in Chicago. Howard was my dear friend and was also my official editor. After consulting with Howard for several hours we arrived at a plan, which if successful, should help the N.A.P.A. and at the same time break up the hatred felt toward Louis Kempner in the East.

I like to call this incident the "Winning of the East."

Howard and I agreed that as president I had the authority to issue a call for a get-together meeting of the N.A.P.A. to be held in Boston. I named Willard O. Wylie to have full charge of the meeting. It is with great pleasure I announce that Brother Wylie not only accepted the job but that he has made a fine job of it.

I hardly expected Willard, who led the revolt against me only a few months previously, would come to my aid now. Willard proved that he was a great leader in the East and was in complete control off the members he rallied to this gathering. Two sessions were held; the attendance was larger than we mustered to the annual convention a few months earlier. Brother Wylie not only showed his strength as a leader, but he helped to soften the feeling against the president. From that date the East came back into the fold, and proved their loyalty to the N.A.P.A.

I look back to the get-together meeting of the N.A.P.A. fifty years ago as one of the highlights of our organization and I earnestly hope that this meeting will help the Jorgensen administration. Loyalty to the N.A.P.A. must help the N.A.P.A. at all times.

I hope it will help the membership, too, but that is another matter. In the first issue of the *National Amateur* sent out 50 years ago by Howard M. Carter the membership list contained some 260 members, all paying members. Today about the same number appear on the membership list, of which some fifty are dead-heads paying no dues because at one time they were presidents.

Hence in fifty years the N.A.P.A. has not increased its members. I will not try to explain the discrepancy. It's up to the active boys and girls who have taken up the hobby to do something about it.

But, my friends, if you are interested in a recruiting campaign, then look up my first message as president, written and printed half a century ago, and you will find a comprehensive plan suggested to add to the membership. I cannot and will not say that my plan met with success. Then as now the president of the N.A.P.A. must have the support of every member, without this support the president's administration comes and goes



without any marked progress, especially with respect to the membership.

I recall that one period of the N.A.P.A. someone said, "We have too many members and steps should be taken to reduce instead of increasing the membership." I may not be using the exact words of the man who thought we had too many members, but I can say that he said a mouthful, or in more elegant English I should say that his prediction was becoming a reality.

I don't want to be considered a pessimist. The fact remains that the good old N.A.P.A. has lived 63 years even if it has not thrived in membership and I predict it will live for all time.

Now, in conclusion, I want to thank you all for coming to this celebration. I also wish to extend to President Jorgensen and her official family my very best respects. I trust that the Jorgensen administration will stand out as one of the very best.

*(We stand in debt to Burton Jay Smith for the text of Louis Kempner's remarks at the dinner held at the Hotel Parkside in New York City on September 3, 1939, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Kempner's election as president of N.A.P.A. Kempner (1862-1944) served The Fossils as President in 1910-11 and as Librarian in 1923-30. His old friend Michael F. Boechat (1862-1949) never attained the N.A.P.A. presidency, but served The Fossils as President during the difficult 1933-34, when the fight over the proposed move of the Library of Amateur Journalism from its longtime home at 150 Nassau Street in New York City to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia was raging. As Mrs. Kempner remarked before reading her husband's fiftieth anniversary address, Louis Kempner decided to stand by his friend Michael F. Boechat in demanding that the transfer of LAJ to the Franklin Institute be carried out, thereby damaging the close friendship he had enjoyed with Charles C. Heuman (1857-1940) and other local amateurs who wanted to keep LAJ in New York City. Today even the most dedicated N.A.P.A. loyalists would consider Kempner's view of all rival associations short-sighted, but Kempner's speech shows us that even the so-called "halcyon days" of the 1885-95 decade were not without their struggles.)*

**AAPA CONVENTIONEERS  
VISIT WARREN J. BRODIE  
AMATEUR JOURNALISM COLLECTION AT  
WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
IN CLEVELAND, OHIO**

**Ken Faig, Jr.**

Western Reserve Historical Society Reference Supervisor Ann Sindelar and AAPA convention chair Susan Petrone organized a visit to the Warren J. Brodie amateur journalism collection at the Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) on Friday, August 11, as an optional part of the program of the convention of the American Amateur Press Association taking place in Cleveland August 10-13. Over a dozen conventioners opted to take advantage of the optional event and arrived at library reading room about 2p.m.

Ms. Sindelar provided some background concerning the collection of over 15,000 journals, donated by Brodie in 1918. The collection is not catalogued electronically, but there is a four-tray card file index by place of publication and a two-tray card file index by title. The place of publication index shows individual issues owned.

Not only the card file indexes but also some sample journal files were on display for the conventioners. Our President Guy Miller got to look over a file of Warren Brodie's own *Shillalah* while George Hamilton examined a file of *American Youth*, produced by American boys printing at the international exhibition in Vienna in 1873. Gary Bossler gloried over a photograph of Brodie's own printing press, which he himself had once owned.

The WRHS library also has a magnificent genealogy collection including the full census 1790 through 1930 on microfilm and the best open shelf collection of family genealogies and genealogical reference works yours truly has ever seen. Ms. Sindelar had made for us visitors prints of the 1930 census page listing donor Warren J. Brodie. He was then boarding in a private home while his longtime offices were in room 480 of The Arcade Building.

Fossil President Guy Miller recalled a much earlier visit by amateurs to examine the Brodie Collection at the WRHS Library in connection with the Cleveland diamond jubilee NAPA convention of 1951.

The Brodie Collection at WRHS remains an excellent "bridge" collection spanning the era 1870 to 1918. Like all sizeable ajay collections, it contains many items which are unique. Items which I have seen at WRHS which I don't believe exist anywhere else include John and Edith Minter's *The Webster Amateur* (1887) and Frank Graeme Davis's *El Gasedil* ("The Little Newspaper" in Volapük) (1899-05). I am sure there are dozens of other unique items.

It was a beautiful Friday afternoon in Cleveland, but over a dozen AAPA conventioners showed their interest in the history of the hobby by spending more than an hour of their time at the WRHS Library. In addition to the library, WRHS also maintains

an outstanding museum, including two adjoining turn-of-the-century mansions and an outstanding collection of antique automobiles.

There is a further description of the WRHS amateur journalism collection in the *Survey of Institutional Collections of Amateur Journals* which I published as Fossil Historian in 1999.

## FRANKLIN INSTITUTE

### Willametta Turnepseed

*(Reprinted from George W. Trainer's The Empire (vol. 2 no. 7) for February 1942.)*

Franklin Institute has taken its place in my list of must-go-back-tos. During the NAPA Convention in Philadelphia [July 1940—ed.] the Institute was on the program and while our betters pored over the marvelous amateur material in Edwin Hadley Smith's library, some of the more frivolous minds wandered the many floors and exhibits of the building. We climbed up on the real locomotive and practiced “running“ it. We X-rayed our hands and tested our hearts [Elizabeth's and mine were astonishingly steady when you consider Jack and Harold were right beside us.] [Bernice's fluttered a little]; listening to our voices [I've heard mine so often I'm beginning to recognize me] and watched them vibrate on a screen. Incidentally Jack's crooning looked terrible. We pushed buttons on all sides and made tires skid, and hung over cases of exhibits and, in short, saw just enough to realize that we needed weeks to absorb even part of the fine display of natural wonders, science and industry.

Some summer when the N.A.P.A. convention is held on the South Pole [the only location immediately occurring where I wouldn't attend] I'll make up a vacation plan of my own, and mark off half of it for Franklin Institute.

## SIX CHINESE POEMS

### Samuel Loveman

*(Reprinted from The Clevelander (vol. 2 no. 1) for April 1923.)*

#### I

Li Ho Chan in the sunset's gleam,  
Murmurs: “Life is an opium dream.

“Drugged or drunk were the gods  
that blew,

This world on their lacquered pipe of  
dew.

“That wrought in the poppy's  
coloured deep,  
Laughter and love and an endless  
sleep!”

Li Ho Chan descries from afar,  
The yellow moon and the evening star.

#### II

I am a fan embroidered by Ming in  
the month of the nightingale,  
With petals of tranquil roses that  
drift and fall in the sea-blue sky,  
With a youth who pleads and a maid  
who listens forever to his tale—  
They love and they know not why.

But Ming with her almond eyes and  
her heart of dew is dead long  
years.

She, who wrought me and taught  
me my beauty—then crept away  
to die:

Yet the soul of my gossamer silk  
remembers and shivers again  
with tears,  
At her one heart-broken cry.

#### III

At night the azure flowers unfold,  
Each on their swaying stems:  
Their dream is of a world of gold,  
Strange kings and orient gems.

And whoso in the moonlit night,  
Finds rapture in their scent,  
His soul becomes a chrysolite,  
His heart grows somnolent.

He, to their naced bloom shall fall,  
And o'er their petals bend,  
A spirit grown imperial,  
But lonely to the end.

#### IV

A wind in the jade-green grasses,  
That shivers and passes.

The swallows that nesting call,  
In the almond-blossoms' fall.

I know their passionate cry,  
As they vanish to die.

V

Fu Chu of Yen came back to his  
village at dawn;  
“Where have you been, O Fu?”  
the old men say;  
“We that were young have grown  
silver—Ah, long ago,  
And our eldest have crept away.”  
“I have been” says Fu, “for an hour  
with the sleepers of Yee,  
I have drunk of their wine and  
hearkened enchanted song;  
Their eyes are of amber, their lips  
are as melody,  
Yet I tarried not overlong.”  
And he says not a word as he sits  
with unshed tears,  
Fu Chu, the mortal, returned to die  
with his kind;  
But he holds his head as one who  
listens and hears  
The temple-bells in the wind.

VI

I am Li Sun who threw my net in  
the haunted sea,  
In the haunted sea by the dragon-  
castle of old,  
And out of the emerald deep there  
came in my net to me,  
A marvelous sight to behold.

Fishes of lilac and violet, silver and  
bronze and gold,  
With faces of human ken and with  
yellow hair,  
And some spoke soft and cajoling,  
and some were sweet and bold,  
But each had a strange despair.

So that after a moment's space my  
madness and horror grew,  
And I flung my obscene burden far  
in the foam,

And a sonorous wind came out of the  
sea and a tempest blew,  
As I turned my dazed way home.

SUNSET IN FOREST

[unsigned]

*(Reprinted from Frank Graeme Davis's El Gasedil,  
whole no. 21, dated winter 1904-5.)*

As sinks the sun to rest  
In a heaven opened west,  
The light wind softly whispers  
To us, ev'ning's vernal vespers.

A pall of myst'ry droops  
Over yonder cloistered groups  
Of vaulted trees—arches  
Of some woodland temple.

Birches  
In a white-robed procession,  
And sullen shadows of night,  
Enhance a haunting impression  
Of some unseen sylvan rite.

The murmurs of dark'ning water,  
And echoes of insect laughter,  
With odors of mists ascending,  
Faint gleamings of day nonending.

All seemeth a symbol vast  
Of a priestly age and past,  
When a medieval somberness  
Held mind in slumb'ring distress.

*(The editor thanks the readers who had the patience to  
wade through his long article on Frank Davis and his  
ajay friends in the last issue of The Fossil. Thanks to Lee  
Hawes for providing the correct name of the UAPA OE  
who challenged Elsa Gidlow over her lack of activity—D.  
Z. Gourman. The following dates from the article also  
need correction—Johann Martin Schleyer (1831-1912),  
Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986), and Dwight Anderson  
(Fossil President 1945-46).)*

AN AMATEUR JOURNALISM COLLECTION  
IN THE  
MELBERT B. CARY, JR.  
GRAPHIC ARTS COLLECTION  
AT THE  
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

## ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

### Karl Kabelac

*(The editor thanks David Pankow, Curator of the Cary Graphic Arts Collection at the Rochester Institute of Technology, for permission to reprint this descriptive material written for RIT's website by Mr. Karl Kabelac, a retired staff member of the Rare Books and Special Collections Department at the University of Rochester. The material about the amateur journalism collection can be accessed on the Internet at <http://wally.rit.edu/cary/CCpages/CCAidsnewspapers.html>. The inventories by title and by publication location are directly accessible from links in this html. Cary Collection Curator David Pankow ([dppwml@rit.edu](mailto:dppwml@rit.edu); (585) 475-2408) indicates an interest in possible additional acquisitions for the amateur journalism collection.)*

### About the Melbert B. Cary, Jr. Graphic Arts Collection

The Cary Collection is one of the country's premier libraries on the history and practice of printing. The original collection of 2,300 volumes was assembled by the New York City businessman Melbert B. Cary, Jr. during the 1920s and 1930s.

Cary was director of Continental Type Founders Association, a former president of the American Institute of Graphic Arts, and proprietor of the private press of the Woolly Whale. His professional and personal interests in printing led him to collect printer's manuals and type specimens, as well as great books of the printer's art.

In 1969, the Cary Collection was presented to RIT by the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust as a memorial to Mr. Cary, together with funds to support use of the collection. Today the library houses some 20,000 volumes and a growing number of manuscripts and correspondence collections. Also included are impressive holdings on bookbinding, papermaking, type design, calligraphy and book illustration. The goal of developing the digital image database is to enable users all over the world to sample the wealth of rich materials housed in the collection.

Though many of the volumes in the library are rare, the Cary Collection has maintained, from the beginning, a policy of liberal access for all students and especially those enrolled in the School of Print Media. An additional feature is the inclusion in the school's curriculum of several courses which actually meet in the library. The Collection's holdings are also available to

outside researchers. While use is strictly supervised and nothing in the Collection circulates, all of its resources may be examined and studied, a priceless opportunity for students who are preparing for careers in the graphic arts.

The development of the Cary Collection into a nationally recognized graphic arts resources has been dramatically boosted during the last twenty years by a number of major gifts. In 1982, for example, The New York Times Museum of the Recorded Word was donated. In 1983, through the generosity of the Frank M. Barnard Foundation, the Bernard C. Middleton Collection of Books on Bookbinding was acquired, the most complete collection of its kind in the world. Recent gifts include the Jonathan and Patricia England Collection of American Fine Printing, and a substantial archive documenting the work of the type and book designer Hermann Zapf.

### Amateur Journalism Collection

Amateur newspapers are those published by non-professionals, often young people, with interests in printing, publishing, and/or journalism. Though they continue to appear to this day, the great period of their prominence was the last quarter century of the nineteenth century.

#### *The Collection*

The Cary Collection at the Wallace Library of the Rochester Institute of Technology has a representative collection of amateur newspapers with strengths for the period from the mid-1870s to the mid-1880s. The collection contains slightly over 1,300 issues representing something over 500 titles. For many of the titles there is only an issue or two, but for a few there are as many as ten or more issues. Thirty five states and two Canadian provinces are represented in the collection.

Cary's collection of amateur newspapers came in four separate acquisitions. Each issue is represented by a code letter signifying its provenance in the last column of the database. The collection formed by R. W. Burnett of Cuba, NY, who published an amateur newspaper in the late 1870s, (B) was acquired by Cary before 1979. In the early 1990s, two other collections were acquired, one from the Abacus Bookshop in Rochester (A) and the other from Debra Williams of Rochester (W). Lastly, a very few titles were transferred from the departmental vertical file (V) and added to the collection.

#### *The Database*

A database for the collection was created in

2004/2005 and has been mounted on this website in two forms: alphabetical by titles (PDF 232 KB) and geographical by location (PDF 228 KB). For each issue, its title, place of publication, volume and issue number, date, editor or publisher, height rounded up to the nearest centimeter, and a code representing its provenance is given.

If an editor of the newspaper was given, he or she was listed. If two editors were given, both were listed. If three were given, only the first was listed along with the term “*et al.*” If no editor was given, but a publisher was, he was noted along with the term “pub.”

A very few titles in this list are technically probably not amateur newspapers, but as they came with the collection, they were entered into the database.

Duplicate issues were retained. That is why there are sometimes identical entries in the database.

A few amateur booklets, and a small amount of paper ephemera, came with the collections. This material has been foldered at the end of the collection (in box 5) and is listed here [link].

Because of the challenges of the computer program, an issue that has a number such a volume 2, numbers 3 and 4, is listed as volume 2, number 3.4. And an issue that spans two months, such as July and August is listed as 7.8. (In other words, the program could not deal with the word “and” or the “&” symbol.)

For titles beginning with “The,” the “The” was entered after the title, thus “The Observer” has been entered as “Observer, The.” However, the computer has understood it such that it has filed it after a title such as, “Observer and Critic.”

In the geographical listing, the two Canadian provinces, Nova Scotia and Ontario, were inter-alphabetized with those for the states.

#### *Related Topics*

The Cary Collection contains several reference titles useful for studying amateur newspapers. They are Truman J. Spencer, “A Cyclopedia of the Literature of Amateur Journalism,” 1891; Truman J. Spencer, “The History of Amateur Journalism,” 1957; and Ralph Babcock, “Your Thoughts: The Story of Amateur Journalism,” 1983.

The National Amateur Press Association [link], founded in 1876, as the first group in the world for those interested in amateur newspapers and the various aspects of their publication and production, continues to this day. It has an annual convention, a quarterly journal, and an exchange program. Its website contains historical information relating to the history of amateur journalism.

The American Antiquarian Society in

Worcester, MA has a collection of about 50,000 issues of amateur newspapers representing over 5,000 titles. Their website has a descriptive essay [link] on the collection as well as an informative history of the genre. They have begun to mount the geographical inventory [link] for their collection on their website.

*The Amateur Newspaper Collection was organized, and this finding aid was prepared by Karl Kabelac.*

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

### Ken Faig, Jr.

Amateur journalism lost a powerful exponent—and a wonderful lady—with the passing of Helen Wesson at Harbor Chase Assisted Living Center in Venice, Florida on September 7, 2006. We are fortunate to have Guy Miller's tribute to Helen in this issue of *The Fossil*. I have also included a few reprints, including the account of her first fifteen years in the amateur journalism hobby which Helen published in *Siamese Standpipe* in May 1954, to celebrate her having achieved sufficient seniority to join The Fossils. The amazing thing about Helen's account is that more than fifty additional years of hobby activity remained in her future at the time she penned this autobiographical account. As Guy recounts, Helen and Sheldon were outstanding members of The Fossils, shepherding Spencer's *History* to publication while they were residing in Japan in 1957. Their daughter Pam was born in Japan during the same period. Tragically, yet another strong amateur bond broke for the Wessons when the bitter hostility of President E. Sherman Cole drove them out of The Fossils in the early 1980s. Ever a gracious lady, Helen consented to rejoin The Fossils in recent years. After Sheldon was severely injured in an accident, the Wessons retired to Florida, but remained involved in hobby affairs. After Sheldon's death, Helen endowed an award to encourage the preservation of letterpress printing in the amateur journalism hobby. She continued her involvement in the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA) and matters Lovecraftian, donating Helm Spink's file of letters from H. P. Lovecraft to the Lovecraft Collection at Brown University. The Wessons nurtured Fossil Historian Daniel Graham as heir for the amateur journalism collection Sheldon inherited from Ed Cole; and not too many months before Helen herself passed away, this collection was recovered as “abandoned property” in Staten Island NY. Hopefully the legal system will see it through to the home it deserves.

I first encountered Helen in the Fantasy

Amateur Press Association when I was a member of that organization in 1976-1991—a number of years before I became well-acquainted with “mainstream” amateur journalism. Helen was one of a limited number of ajays—her contemporary Bill Groveman was another—who maintained an active interest in the science fiction and fantasy genres and their fandoms. Helen published *The Unspeakable Thing* for F.A.P.A. in the 1950s. I personally first met Helen at a fantasy fan convention—NecronomiCon, held in Providence, Rhode Island in 1997. Helen was unintimidated by an aggregation of H. P. Lovecraft fans most of whom were probably one-third of her age. She spoke eloquently of the important role which “mainstream” amateur journalism had played in Lovecraft’s life.

As Helen A. Vivarattas, Helen was one of the leading lights of the American Amateur Press Association in its early years. She met her husband-to-be Sheldon Wesson in the New York metropolitan area’s Amateur Printers Club (APC) and like Bill Haywood and Matilda Schabrucker the Wessons became a super-active amateur couple with many decades of notable hobby activity—their most notable journal being *Siamese Standpipe*. For *The Fossils*, the Wessons did outstanding work in seeing Truman J. Spencer’s *History of Amateur Journalism* (1957) to publication while they and their family were residing in Japan.

I probably had my best opportunity to get to know Helen at N.A.P.A.’s Wilmington, Delaware convention in 2001. By this time, it was apparent that Helen was struggling with physical impairments and illness, but she was equally determined to continue to play a part in the amateur journalism hobby. I can remember spending a good part of one afternoon chatting with Helen in the hotel lobby—we had decided to forego the planned activity for that afternoon. I remember very well her speaking with great pride of the accomplishments of her sons Sheldon and David and her daughter Pam. She told me she was a bit jealous of all the attention I had lavished on the late Edith Minter but allowed me to be her escort into the dining room for that evening’s banquet.

So, I can only claim to have known Helen personally for a small segment of her long career in the amateur journalism hobby. By rights, the best and most comprehensive tributes to Helen will undoubtedly appear in the journals of the associations—A.A.P.A., N.A.P.A. and F.A.P.A.—where she was active for so many years. If any *Fossils* would care to contribute further recollections of Helen for publication in *The Fossil*, I would be delighted to publish them. I hope the material printed in this issue of *The Fossil* will help our members recall Helen. Helen’s was an active, giving life which family

and friends will always recall with affection. The amateur journalism hobby enabled her to show forth her many talents. She shined in every aspect of the hobby—as writer, as artist, as printer, as appointed and elected official, and perhaps as importantly as the other aspects, as a distinctive personality in the social side of the hobby.

I am grateful to everyone who contributed to this issue of *The Fossil*. I’m delighted to have a new member’s sketch by Robert Lichtman and a selection of Marion Fields Wyllie’s poems as a tribute for her one hundredth birthday. I would love to have *your* contribution for a future issue of *The Fossil*.

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Bossler, Gary, 145 Genoa Ave., S.W., Massillon, OH  
44646

Botterill, Guy R., 5502 Craig Avenue, Baltimore, MD  
21212-3907

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Brady, Donald E., 4224 Foxboro Drive, New Port  
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Ashland, OR 97520

Charter, Orma Jane, 8316 N.E. 33rd Street, Spencer, OK  
73084-3104

Conover, Theodore, 1565A Virginia Ranch Road #309,  
Gardnerville, NV 89410

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Donnelly, Sean, University of Tampa Press, 401 West Kennedy Blvd., Tampa, FL 33606

Faig, Kenneth Jr. & Carol, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, IL 60025-2741

Fontenot, Mrs. Eunice M., 3320 Elliot Street, Alexandria LA 71301

Gage, Frederick H., 1394 Minot Avenue, Auburn, ME 04210-3724

Geier, Marguerita, 21253 N. 78th Place, Scottsdale, AZ 85255

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George, Richard S., 5276 Zebulon Road, Macon, GA 31210-2136

Gilbert, Annie Ri, HC76, Box 197, Marshall, AR 72650

Guinane, James F., 321 Park Street, New Torn, Tasmania 7008, Australia

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Horn, John, P.O. Box 175252, Little Rock, AR 72222-7252

Horvat, Martin M. (Mike), P.O. Box 741, Stayton, OR 97383-0741

Lichtman, Robert, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, CA 94611-1948

Liddle, Frederick J., 404 Erie Avenue, Tampa, FL 33606-3642

Lincoln, Louise (& A. Walrus, Jr.), 400 South Broadway Place, Apt. 1277, Tucson, AZ 85710-3792

Macauley, Charles C., 731 Sea View Drive, El Cerrito, CA 94530

Millar, Betty B., 2680 Ironwood Avenue, Morro Bay, CA 93442

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Newman, J. Ed., 603 W. Warren Street, LeRoi, IL 61752-1041

Norris, Patty Sue, P.O. Box 34, Ocotillo, CA 92259

Oliner, Stan, 1278 Dexter Street, Denver, CO 80220

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Scott, Jack E., 15 Mallard Pointe, Mt. Vernon, OH 43050

Shivvers, Martha E., 1526 165th Avenue, Knoxville, IA 50138-8939

Smolin, Harold, 14475 Strathmore Lane #203, Delray Beach, FL 33446-3030

Speirs, Dale, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2E7 (subscriber)

Swenson, Jack G. & Mavis L., 24353 Hines RToad, N.E., Hines, MN 56647

Teed, Merlin F., 9031 Fort Hamilton Parkway, #2L, Brooklyn, NY 11209-6434

Tribby, David M., 1529 Fantail Court, Sunnyvale, CA 94087

Vrooman, Ann, 288 Avenida Barbera, Sonoma, CA 95476

Weigel, Robert D., P.O. Box 427, Normal, IL 61761-0427

Wetzel, Benton E., 1613 S.W. 166th Street, Seattle, WA 98166

Whitbread, Thomas B., English Department, University of Texas, 1 University Station B5000, Austin, TX 78712-0195

Wyllie, Marion F., 875 Sixth Street East #237, Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada N4K 5W5

#### **FOSSIL OFFICERS: 2006-2008**

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Historian, Sean Donnelly, University of Tampa Press, 401 W. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa, FL 33606, (813) 253-6266, <sdonnelly@ut.edu>

Webmaster, David M. Tribby, 1529 Fantail Court, Sunnyvale, CA 94087, (408) 737-2193, <dtribby@stanfordalumni.org>

Membership Chair, Martha E. Shivvers, 1526 165th Avenue, Knoxville, IA 50138, (641) 842-3212

Official Editor, Ken Faig, Jr., 2311 Swainwood Dr., Glenview, IL 60025-2741, (847) 657-7409, <moshasuk@interaccess.com>

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preserved the Library of Amateur Journalism, a repository of amateur papers and memorabilia dating from the 1850s, acquired in 1916 and donated in 2004 to the Special Collections Department of the University of Wisconsin Library, Room 976, Memorial Library, 728 State Street, Madison, WI 53706. Individuals or institutions allied with our goals are invited to join The Fossils. Dues are \$15 annually—\$20 for joint membership of husband and wife. Annual subscription to *The Fossil* without privileges of membership is \$10. Make remittances payable to The Fossils, and mail to the Secretary-treasurer.