



The Fossil

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Amateur Journalism in the 1920s

THE BORING TWENTIES?

by Dave Tribby

THREE YEARS AGO I knew little about amateur journalism in the 1920s, other than a vague notion that not much happened. In mid-2014 I began corresponding with Carsten Flaake, an H. P. Lovecraft aficionado living in Germany. His research had led him to a puzzling closing page of a letter he believed discussed the 1927 National Amateur Press Association election. He had gathered a significant amount of research and wondered if I could shed more light on the topic. That launched my own research into the era's controversies.

Truman Spencer's *History of Amateur Journalism*, written in 1940 and published by *The Fossils* in 1957, doesn't say much regarding that period of NAPA history:

Anne Kuliقة Kramer of Massachusetts, a poet and essayist, had been elected Official Editor at Detroit in 1925, [and] edited an excellent volume of the *National Amateur*. At Philadelphia [in 1926] she seemed to be the common candidate for the presidency, receiving 58 votes, with 11 scattering proxy ballots. Jacob J. Moidel, of Warren Ohio, editor of *Justice*, was chosen Official Editor. President Kramer carried on the policy of Presidents Cook and Lovecraft, paying more attention to suitability of prospective members than to their number. She also tried in every way to introduce an era of good feeling, when all bitterness and animosity should cease, and all should work together in a common loyalty and love for the Association. The feeling largely prevailed at the convention in Warren, Ohio, in 1927, when Moidel was promoted from the official editorship to the presidency, receiving 76 votes to 18 for Miss Caddie M. Whitsitt. His vote was the largest received by any candidate up to that time. The campaign had been a warm one, but after the election harmony seemed to reign.

Another source of NAPA history, *The Moving Finger*, was published daily at the 1941 NAPA convention in Cleveland, Ohio. Issue number 1 included the first installment of "Giants in the Earth: A History of the National Amateur Press Association Since 1928." It painted a rather bleak picture of NAPA in the late '20s.

Amateur journalism is a hobby which needs the warmth of companionship. In normal times little lick-

ing flames sprout from the coals of old enthusiasms and of enthusiasms not yet fully ignited. In the varied years since 1869, when the forerunner of the National Amateur Press Association was founded, there have been periods when the flames burned fiercely—as in the '70s, the late '80s, the so-called Halcyon Days of the '90s, the period from 1905 to 1909,—the years from 1931 to 1936 and the Great Revival of 1940-41—but there have also been periods when gray ashes covered the coals and the fire seemed out.

There was such a time in the years of the New Era in Business. From 1926 to 1928 little save habit and the unflinching faith of Louis C. Wills kept the NAPA alive. Wills paid for the only issues of *The National Amateur* in those three years. *Tryout*, the typographically-impossible product of C. W. Smith, an old-timer, was the only regular paper. Jacob Moidel, the president, was ending his 1927-28 term with a single ambition: Not to let the old association die on his hands in its fifty-second year.

So Vincent B. Haggerty of Bridgeport, Conn., was drafted to be president and the convention was held in Niagara Falls. It was a flop. Only four persons attended.

Burton Crane later wrote a detailed history of NAPA that was a prequel to the "Giants" article. Titled "The Weary Years: Argumentative History of Amateur Journalism From 1908 to 1928, Recounted in Pedestrian Prose," he published the first installment in his *Masaka* No. 11 for May 1943. Its 18 pages covered only 1908 to 1910. In it, he noted how by mid-1908 NAPA "activity was starting to taper off." The second installment of the "weary" history was published in the June 1947 *Masaka* (No. 15), but it only covered one additional year. Since that was the last issue of *Masaka*, it seems unlikely that further installments were ever published. Alf Babcock, in his 1984 book *Crane*, comments on the history: "While the writing was fine, the subject matter stunk. ... I cannot find the rest of it. Maybe it was never printed, by popular demand."

These histories agree: The 1920s were a low point for the organization, with relatively little going on.

The United factions were also slumping. As Ken Faig's presidential message notes in this issue, activity

in the Hoffman-Daas-Lovecraft UAPA ground to a halt in 1926-27 as the faction disappeared. The rival Erford-Noel UAPAA remained barely viable. Here's how Spencer's *History* sums up United activity in the 1920s:

The poet Reinhart Kleiner, of Brooklyn, N. Y., was chosen President in 1918, and another woman President in 1919, Miss Mary Faye Durr, of Marietta, Ohio. But its members began to relax, recruiting was not carried on, interest waned, and this branch of the United, though seeming to have the best claim to lineal descent from the original body, gradually ceased to function, and in 1926 it passed out of existence.

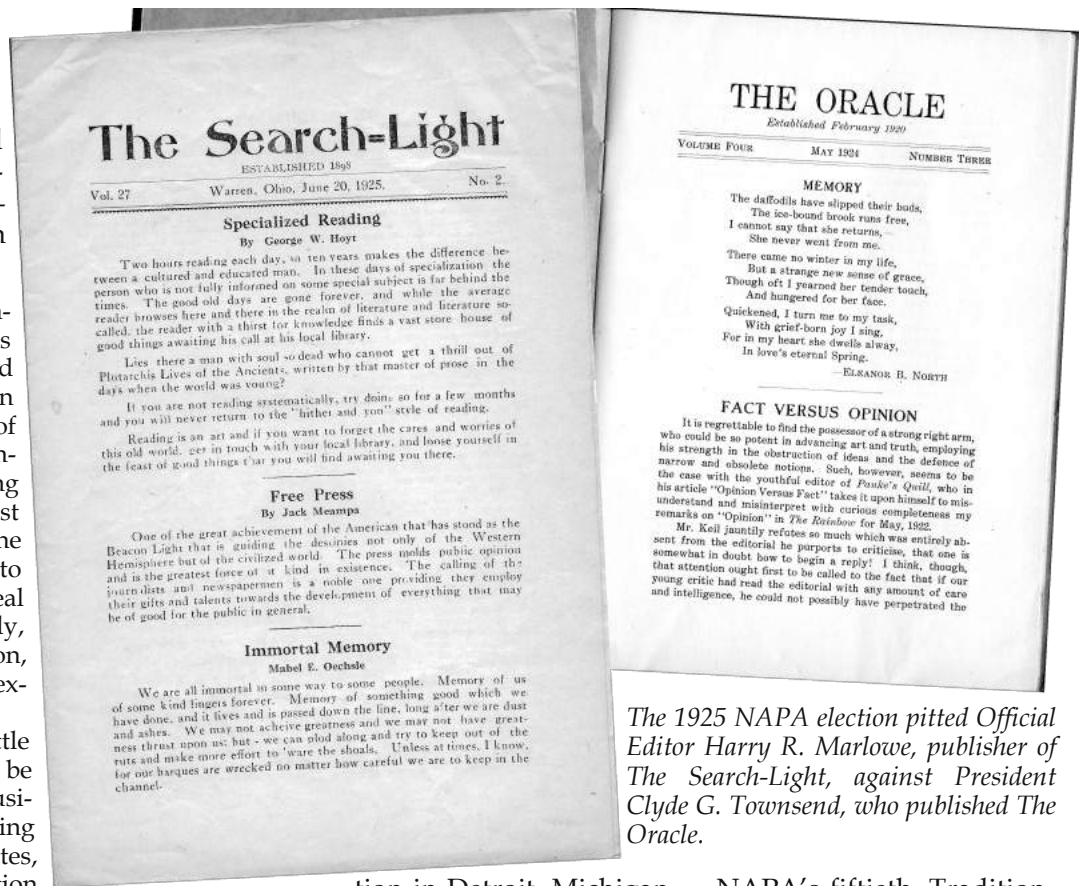
In the meantime the Seattle branch, for so it came to be considered, under the enthusiastic and skillful campaigning of Roy Erford and his associates, had built up an organization numerically strong and imbued with a stock of unbounded energy. Yet its papers were few and it became for a time little more than a correspondence club.

In the 1920s, The Fossils considered itself an alumni organization of former amateur journalists, older men who celebrated the golden era of amateur journalism from their youth. Modern amateur journalism was considered inferior to the nineteenth century version. A report in the December 1923 issue of THE FOSSIL reflects the attitude many members had toward the contemporary NAPA. That organization's president sent The Fossils a letter of "greetings and other things, among them a polite hint to the Fossils to aid in financing the 50th annual convention, to be celebrated July 4, 1925... To most of us that organization is dead. It breathed its last a few years after 1904. ... The Fossils, as an organization, will keep hands off, in order to have a clearer thought as to how to cherish the traditions of Amateur Journalism of our olden day and olden time."

All of these sources reinforced the idea that amateur journalism was at a low ebb in the 1920s, and nearly everyone had lost interest. Certainly activity was much slower than during the birth and adolescence of amateurdom, from the 1870s up to 1908. And in the early 1930s, successful recruiting campaigns for boy printers brought new vigor to both the National and United. The in-between years paled in comparison.

Yet a closer look shows there were people who continued to care deeply about the National and United APAs—cared so much as to cause deep division.

One of those divisions occurred at the 1925 conven-



The 1925 NAPA election pitted Official Editor Harry R. Marlowe, publisher of *The Search-Light*, against President Clyde G. Townsend, who published *The Oracle*.

tion in Detroit, Michigan — NAPA's fiftieth. Tradition held the president would serve a single term, and the official editor, if he had done a credible job, would be promoted to the top office. In 1882, President Frank Reeve declined re-election because he felt it important to have a fresh point of view each year. That precedent had been broken only once, when George Houtain was re-elected in 1917. In 1925, President Clyde G. Townsend decided to run for re-election, standing in opposition to Official Editor Harry R. Marlowe, who also wanted the job.

Marlowe, who sometimes spelled his name Marlow, joined NAPA and began publishing *The Search-Light* as a teenager in 1898. He lived in Warren, Ohio, with his parents, brother, and four sisters. He became a printer by trade and lived in Warren the rest of his life. He published *Search-Light* several times a year, typically 4 to 12 pages of 6 by 9 inches containing mainly short essays on a variety of topics. He discovered a number of locals interested in the hobby, and published their articles — perhaps so they would qualify to vote.

Townsend, 18 years younger than Marlowe, came into NAPA in 1921 from the United. He began publishing *The Oracle* in 1920, and by 1923 it was twenty 5 by 7 inch pages plus cover, with poetry and lengthy essays on a variety of topics, including amateur affairs. He published pieces from prominent amateurs, such as Edna Hyde (known as Vondy), Dora Moitoret, Sonia Greene, and H. P. Lovecraft.

The June 1925 issue of *The Hoosier Amateur* (Vol. 1, No. 3) laid out the case for Townsend's re-election. James F. Morton, Jr., an NAPA elder statesman (active

since 1889) authored "A Word from Morton":

It is also a pleasure to me to endorse the candidacy of Clyde G. Townsend for reelection to the presidency. ... As a rule, I am not favorable to reelection for this office; but in this case nothing less is the due of one whose labors have been incessant under the greatest difficulties. ... and it is solely at the call of duty and under pressure from a number of amateurs to whom the welfare of the National comes before all personal considerations, that Mr. Townsend has reluctantly consented to face the prospect of a second term. With the indispensable support of a regular and efficiently conducted official organ, his real power of service will be manifested to the common good.

In that same issue, editor Helm C. Spink offered his own "Views and Reviews":

There is one thing about the campaign this year which appeals to us greatly. In spite of its heat, the contestants seem to be on the best of terms. When the contests are warm and those who have chosen opposing sides can still remain friends conditions are improving. May it always be thus.

The closing year in the National's affairs has been disappointing. The activity of the members has fallen far below that expected of them. But through it all, President Townsend has worked unceasingly, urging others on and making a good record for himself. The delay of the official organ and the lack of finances have prevented his accomplishing great things. The members owe him another term in which to put them through.

One of the local Warren recruits, 18-year-old Jacob Moidel, advocated for Marlowe in the inaugural issue of his *Justice* (April 1925):

In 1898 the *Search-Light* first appeared, dedicated to the cause of amateur journalism, a cause he has held as sacred.

For twenty-seven years he has labored arduously for the success of this organization. ... Year in and year out, the highest honors in this association have been offered to him. And the grandest men of any convention have begged and beseeched him time and time again to accept, but modestly he has rejected their offers, refused their pleas, declined their invitations.

But when the last convention met, so great was the demand and so sincere were his friends that he was elected Official Editor by almost acclamation and against his protests. ... when he had been persuaded to accept and was ready to serve, an illness over came him and left him prostrate in his bed. ... For many months, he and Death were close neighbors. But fate prevailed and destined that his life work was not yet completed.

So true, staunch and loyal has he been that in a comparatively short time he has had the *National Journal* [sic] published up to date and has sent out several *Search-Lights*.

The campaign may have been friendly, but disputes over election procedure caused long-lasting hard feelings. The pre-convention NAPA membership list included twenty Ohioans "admitted since last conven-

tion" — a huge number that raised suspicions Marlowe was stuffing the ballot box with their proxies. Nineteen members were in attendance at the convention in Detroit, thirteen of them from Townsend's home state of Michigan. When it came time to accept new recruits into full membership, nearly all those from Ohio "who had a credential printed of less than half a column" were challenged. Ten of the Ohio recruits were accepted, but another ten were rejected. (Only one non-Ohio name was rejected.) Six of the rejected Ohio recruits had submitted proxy ballots, which were then discarded. Here's how Spencer's *History* describes the 1925 NAPA election procedure:

The election was one of the closest and most stubbornly fought contests in the history of the Association. Marlowe had 26 proxy votes and Townsend 20, with 5 for Ex-President Cook. The first ballot gave Marlowe one more vote than Townsend, but not a majority. On the second ballot Townsend received the entire vote of the members present and had now one more vote than Marlowe, but no majority. On the third ballot, the candidate receiving the least number of proxy votes having been dropped according to the constitution, Townsend received 27 votes to Marlowe's 26, and was elected. The year that followed was one of intense bitterness, personal hostility and ill-will. Cries of fraud in the close election were raised, some proxy votes that had arrived late not having been counted, and several applicants for membership being refused admission.

Writing in the post-convention issue of *The Search-Light* (Vol. 27, No. 1, August 1, 1925) Marlowe was disappointed, though not bitter:

The important matters at the business sessions was the rejecting of many excellent applications against our protest, and the attempt to expel a member without opportunity for defense, practically all admitted they knew little or nothing about the matter, yet to my surprise most if not all of these most excellent people were willing to put across this program of political expediency, appearing to know the number of votes needed and with about a 7 to 1 majority did as they pleased with this purpose in view, for which they will have credit, good or bad according to future results.

With a thankful feeling to my friends and a kind regard for all, I ask no favor or consideration in this matter for myself. The real purpose of amateur journalism is not centered in office holding, if we truly enjoy the work that is our real reward, and no one can take it away from us. The best thing any of us can give to the cause is "good work" and "good work" only.

Moidel's *Justice* for September 1925 (Vol. 1, No. 3) was much angrier:

Nothing short of a miracle could re-elect Townsend as president, and realizing that he was beaten by an overwhelming vote, confided his sorrow to Goff who immediately revived the methods used to elect Wills in 1902. ... the Townsend forces knew just how many proxies must be thrown out, and they could never have ascertained the Exact Number without opening up the letters enclosed with proxies. Not MERE accusation,

but logic combined with circumstantial evidence. ... These proxies were laid aside, so that Almighty Clyde could again be president. Such procedure is not tolerated by honest and broad-minded journalists. The number of proxies torn-up and burnt in the secret meeting held the evening before will never be known.

Perhaps the best representation of the Townsend side of the controversy was found in *The Michigan Amateur*, Vol. 1, No. 1, September 1925, issued by seven Michigan members, including Townsend. Here are excerpts from "In Defense of the Convention," written by Walter S. Goff:

Mr. Marlowe was given every opportunity to present on the floor, his side of every question. At first the Ohio candidate felt, as he expressed it to me, as being like unto a "Daniel in a Lion's den." But while the lions possibly were more skillful at political maneuvering, still their numerical superiority precluded their being anything but fair and above board. Mr. Marlowe had an enviable record of over twenty years' service to the National. His *National Amateur*, while in very truth, (and I have always been plainspoken, writing just as I feel and believe) was a mediocre volume. But Mr. Marlowe labored under great difficulties the past year; the volume as well as the occasional *Searchlight* warranted his election to the presidency. President Townsend had not been so supremely active as president, as to demand his re-election, thought many.

The exigencies of the situation, the precarious condition of the National, the great need of assistance from the Fossil organization, which would be denied us were a man in his forties elected president, precluded the election of Mr. Marlowe. Better, indeed, the man be sacrificed, than the association. He who is not willing to subvert his political ambitions for the good of the association is not worthy of having his ambitions consummated. All this I explained to Marlowe who has been my friend ever since the historic convention of 1902 at New York, where I, likewise, was sacrificed on the altar

of necessity. Therefore, President Townsend was re-elected.

We are prohibited from accepting the application of a prospective member unless it comes within the specifications of the Constitution. ... There was no alternative nor loophole. They were not qualified for membership and there was no other course allowable than to act as we did.

As chairman of the Proxy committee, I will publicly state that each and every member worked conscientiously and that the results were only tabulated after hours of work.

The convention went on record distinctly as to when a credential is not a credential. A number of applicants presented encyclopedic articles of very few words as credentials. These applicants were brought in at the last moment in the campaign in an endeavor to swing the election.

In the same *Michigan Amateur*, George W. Macauley noted, "After the experience of judging credentials at this convention, I believe that an amendment to the constitution should cover the point as to the minimum number of words allowed as a credential." In other words, the delegates did not have criteria for judging credentials, but knew bad ones when they saw them.

The March 1926 *National Amateur* included an official report by Executive Judges Edward Cole, Anthony Moitoret, and Hazel Pratt Adams on complaints regarding convention procedure. On many points they agreed with the actions taken, and in others noted that judges cannot override convention decisions. "Therefore, in view of lack of authentic evidence to the contrary, we hereby declare to the best of our knowledge and belief, and without prejudice or favor to either side, said Clyde G. Townsend to have been duly elected president of the National Amateur Press Association in July 1925."

The report didn't resolve the controversy for everyone. C. W. Smith, in his *Tryout*, noted, "That the findings of the Executive Judges are a measure of political expediency; that the Judges should have ruled upon the proper length of a credential; that the election of Townsend as president will forever remain doubtful; that the entire report was one of 'passing the buck'."

From a distance of 92 years it's hard to understand all the nuances of the controversy. Should Townsend have followed tradition and allowed his long-serving official editor a shot at leading NAPA, or was he justified in taking one more year to implement his plans? Was Marlowe trying to steal the election by recruiting people with almost no real connection to the hobby — or were the Townsend forces forcing out valid memberships based only on their own whim? (This controversy echos the long-standing debate of whether to recruit just anyone, or only those who have true literary aspirations.) Is it worth winning a victory if you destroy the enthusiasm of many members in the process?

The controversies were real—and certainly not boring—to our ajay predecessors. The emotions of 1925 persisted, and influenced the next two NAPA elections. But that's a story for another time. ♦

Is This Credential Valid?

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE of a credential that was rejected by the 1925 NAPA convention. Harry R. Marlowe published it in his *Search-Light* shortly before the convention.

Free Press

by Jack Meampa

One of the great achievement of the American that has stood as the Beacon Light that is guiding the destinies not only of the Western Hemisphere but of the civilized world. The press molds public opinion and is the greatest force of it kind in existence. The calling of the journalist and newspapermen is a noble one providing they employ their gifts and talents towards the development of everything that may be of good for the public in general.

Centenaries Once More

by Ken Faig, Jr.

IN MY FIRST presidential message in THE FOSSIL for October 2014, I commented on the centenaries of the beginning of World War I in August 1914 and of the founding of the Providence Amateur Press Club on October 30, 1914.



Nearly three years have now turned on the calendar, and we will not mark the centenary of the end of World War I until November 9, 2018. However, the arrival of July

2017 provides occasion to celebrate the centenaries of the commencement of two notable presidencies of amateur journalism organizations: the election of H. P. Lovecraft (1890-1937) to the presidency of the so-called Hoffman-Daas faction of the United Amateur Press Association in Chicago, Illinois, and the election of Elsie Alice Gidlow (1898-1986) (later known as Elsa Gidlow) to the presidency of the so-called Erford-Noel faction of the same association in Montreal, Canada, at about the same time. Verna McGeoch was elected as official editor of Lovecraft's faction and dutifully produced six bimonthly numbers of the *United Amateur* during her term, while Gidlow's official editor, Chester O. Hoisington, managed only one number of the rival official organ.

Lovecraft had been recruited for the Hoffman-Daas faction of UAPA in April 1914 by Edward F. Daas (1879-1962) himself, as a result of his participation in a long-running "war" over the romantic fiction of Fred Jackson in the letter column of *Argosy*. He was appointed chair of the Department of Public Criticism by President Dora Hepner as early as October 1914, and continued in that office through 1919, with the exception of his presidential term in 1917-18, when the work was taken over by his friend and fellow poet Rheinhart Kleiner. Edward H. Cole (1892-1966) of Somerville, Massachusetts, early on connected Lovecraft with the Providence Amateur Press Club founded by evening high school alumni and alumnae in Providence at the end of October 1914. Irishman John T. Dunn (1889-1983) was probably the central figure in the club; Lovecraft eventually broke with him because of his refusal to register for the draft and his resulting imprisonment. Lovecraft became known for intellectual controversies with Charles D. Isaacson, Elsa Gidlow, F. Graeme Davis and others in the columns of his own amateur journal *The Conservative*, of which he published thirteen numbers between 1915 and 1923. Lovecraft was advanced to first vice president of his association as early as its Rocky Mount, North Carolina, convention in July 1915. Curiously, however, he was never to attend any of the conventions of his faction of UAPA. Perhaps his

mother's fragile health and her unfavorable opinion of the hobby inhibited his attendance.

Perhaps the most notable event of Lovecraft's 1917-18 UAPA presidency was his decision to join NAPA in early November 1917. NAPA stalwart F. Graeme Davis had been railing against UAPA in the editorials in his *Lingerer* in 1917. However, when he became NAPA official editor in July 1917, Davis agreed to forego attacks on UAPA if Lovecraft would do the same regarding NAPA. UAPA hardliners like Edward F. Daas were furious with Lovecraft for joining NAPA, but the president maintained that his action would help to promote inter-association co-operation and to dampen feuding and raiding for members. Lovecraft was succeeded by three friendly UAPA presidents: his friend Rheinhart Kleiner (1918-19), Mary Faye Durr (1919-20), and his protégé Alfred M. Galpin (1920-21). He served as official editor in Galpin's administration and carried over to the same position under the succeeding president Ida C. Haughton (1921-22). Lovecraft and Haughton, however, had a rocky relationship. She wanted him to broaden the appeal of the *United Amateur* and to open its columns to contributors other than his own circle of literary friends. In addition, she infuriated him by accusing him of mishandling the official organ fund. In a stinging rebuke, the members of UAPA voted Lovecraft and his faction out of office in the succeeding administration of Howard Conover (1922-23). When his old opponent William B. Dowdell resigned the presidency of NAPA at the end of November 1922, Lovecraft's friend James F. Morton, as a member of NAPA's board of executive judges, recruited Lovecraft to assume the NAPA presidency. Edward H. Cole wanted Lovecraft to stand for a full term as NAPA president in 1923-24, but Lovecraft declined the honor. His future wife Sonia H. Greene was elected UAPA president in July 1923, and Lovecraft served as her official editor. They were returned to the same offices for the 1924-25, after Lovecraft had married Mrs. Greene on March 3, 1924. But the United of which they assumed the helm in 1923-25 was a pale shadow of lively association of 1915. Alma Sanger, the former treasurer in the Howard Conover administration (1922-23), refused to turn over the funds in the treasury. As a result, Mr. & Mrs. Lovecraft were able to produce only a few, thin issues of the *United Amateur*. For the 1925-26 term, Lovecraft's friend Edgar J. Davis was elected president, and his recruit Victor F. Bacon official editor, but activity virtually ceased. No officers were ever elected for the 1926-27 year, and the so-called Hoffman-Daas United perished. The only United left in the field was the one presided over by Roy Erford and Clyde Noel from Seattle, Washington. After having lived in New York City since



Howard Phillips Lovecraft (left) and Elsie Alice Gidlow (right) were elected presidents of rival United APA factions one hundred years ago.

his marriage, Lovecraft moved back to Providence in April 1926. He did not involve himself again actively in amateur affairs until he attended Boston's NAPA convention in 1930. He did yeoman's service on NAPA's board of critics in 1931-35, serving as chair in

1933-35, and was elected an executive judge in 1935-36 in honor of his service. (He had previously served in that role in 1923-24—a traditional role for the retiring president.) He died, aged only forty-six, of cancer on March 15, 1937. Of course, his professional writings, beginning in *Weird Tales* in 1923, eventually secured his fame. His *Tales*, selected by Peter Straub, were published as a volume in the prestigious Library of America in 2005.

Lovecraft's rival president, Elsa Gidlow, became famous in her own right. She became active in the rival United association about the same time as Lovecraft. At age nineteen, she served as in-house editor for a company paper, *Factory Facts*. By 1917, she had gathered around herself a literary circle including students at McGill University in Montreal. They began to publish a spirit-duplicated paper, initially titled *Coal from Hades*, but eventually retitled *Les Mouches Fantastiques (The Fantastic Flies)*. Gidlow and her associate Roswell George Mills (1896-1966) also published work in W. Paul Cook's *Vagrant*. Aesthetically, Gidlow was an advocate of free verse. Philosophically, she and her circle attacked traditional religious values and advocated a materialistic, hedonistic outlook on life, including advocacy of same-sex love.

Gidlow had published her poem "Two Lovers" and Mills his poem "Once" in Cook's *Vagrant* for June 1918. Writing to his friend Rheinhart Kleiner on May 5, 1918, Lovecraft commented:

Cook's latest *Vagrant* is assuredly a marvel. The literary standard is this time even higher than before, I think. The esthetic Elsa Gidlow's outburst could undoubtedly be a great deal worse, as free verse is reckoned. Of the "two lovers that woo her unceasingly," I would advise her to choose oblivion. That is the best way for all *vers-libristes*. Her colleague, Rossy George, tangles himself all up in some words & phrases, in which a trace of metre is observable. His spasms, however, are less definite in thought (if, indeed, there be any definiteness in imagistical chaos!) & less meritorious altogether.

Lovecraft's protégé Alfred Galpin wrote a parody of Gidlow's poem entitled "Two Loves"; eventually, Lovecraft published Galpin's poem, as by "Consul Hasting," in *The Conservative* for July 1918. In the same number, Lovecraft commented:

It seems to The Conservative that Miss Gidlow and Mr. Mills, instead of being divinely endowed seers in sole possession of all Life's truths, are a pair of rather youthful persons suffering from a sadly distorted philosophical perspective. Instead of seeing Life in its entirety, they see but one tiny phase, which they mistake for the whole. What worlds of beauty—pure Uranian beauty—are utterly denied them on account of their bondage to the lower regions of the senses! It is almost pitiful to hear superficial allusions to "Truth" from the lips of those whose eyes are sealed to the intellectual Absolute: who know not the upper altitudes of pure thought, in which empirical forms and material aspects are as nothing.

Gidlow published her signature essay "Life for Life's Sake" in Horace L. Lawson's *The Wolverine* for October 1919. She wrote of her life-centered philosophy:

The usual accusation of materialism need not be advanced to meet Life for Life's sake for it is too absurd. If logic and scientific truth are materialism, we need more materialism, for it is healthy and strong and selfish, and antagonistic to the sentimental idealism that the weak-willed, weak-charactered, weak-minded lean to, and that is the cause, or one of the causes, as well as the effect of their weakness.

In the same month, Mills had published his lesbian play "Tea Flowers," dedicated to "Sappho" (Gidlow's nickname among her associates), in Cook's *Vagrant*. Earlier the same year, F. Graeme Davis had published an extended defense of *Les Mouches Fantastiques* in his *Lingerer*. "Life for Life's Sake" drew several rebuttals, including Lovecraft's "Life for Humanity's Sake," eventually published in John Heins's *The American Amateur* for September 1920.

Davis had risen to the NAPA presidency for the 1918-19 term, but he skipped NAPA's July 1919 Newark convention to spend a month with Gidlow and her circle in Montreal. Davis fell in love with Mills, whom he hoped to make his permanent partner. However, Gidlow's Montreal menage was not to endure much longer. In March 1920, Gidlow and Mills issued a final, typeset number of *Les Mouches Fantastiques*. They were planning to relocate to New York City, and perhaps intended the typeset number of *Les Mouches* as a calling card for American amateurs. Gidlow finally broke away to New York in April 1920, and Mills followed her there a few months later. He subsequently broke Davis's heart by taking Khagendrenath Ghose as his lover.

Young John Milton Heins, son of Charles W. Heins, cultivated the friendship of Gidlow and Mills. Young Heins met Gidlow, Edna Hyde ("Vondy") and Hyde's fiancé Philip B. McDonald for a May Day outing in Central Park on May 1, 1920. Heins and his father both visited Gidlow in her apartment on 34th Street on September 25, 1920. Later, Gidlow and Mills both attended the famous gathering at the Heins home in Ridgefield, New Jersey on October 17, 1920. This gath-

ering was made famous by Edna Hyde's alleged rude treatment of her hosts, which young John Milton Heins publicized in his magazine *The American Amateur*, where he was also publishing the works of Gidlow and Mills. Heins had published a scathing article by Gidlow, entitled "The Literary Decadence of E.G.," in his number dated July 1920. She declared:

That is what is wrong with amateur journalism—it is futile. None of its members appear to have anything to say, yet they write unceasingly. I have read all amateur journals that have appeared during the past six years and I can truly say that I have not found in those journals, in all that time, as many as six original ideas, or six artistic expressions of any sort of ideas.

She wrote scathingly of amateurdom's poets:

All amateurdom is pervaded by an atmosphere of middle age, mustiness, fossilism. Every pseudo-poet writing in AJ imitates or plagiarizes Poe, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth or Pope, and some bend their muse to lengthy pastorals. The favorite subjects of the prose writers are mysticism, politics or theosophy, evidently culled and rehashed from Sunday afternoon forums and newspapers.

If these were the first fluttering attempts of younglings, one could be tolerant, trustful of development, but this is not so. Most of these offenders are middle-aged, settled and hopeless and they will ride their wooden "hobby" at a dull, satisfied joy-trot till it or they shall crumble.

Here is Mr. Goodenough with his rhymed very-moral maxims; Mr. Lovecraft with his morbid imitations of artists he seems not even able to understand; Mr. Ward Phillips who admires Poe wisely and far too well, since he mimics him so laboriously, and a host of others, male and female, who apart from having no new word to speak, cannot write three consecutive rhymed verses in even metre, although they raise their voices continuously and wildly against "modern" poetry and that in their opinion heretical expression of a perverted intellect, *vers libre*.

Pearl K. Merritt, James F. Morton, and Lovecraft all replied to Gidlow's essay in the pages of *The American Amateur*. Lovecraft's response in "Life for Humanity's Sake" was fairly measured:

Miss Gidlow has discovered the fact that there is no vast supernatural intelligence governing the cosmos—a thing Democritus could have told her several centuries B.C.—and is amazingly disturbed thereat. Without stopping to consider the possibility of acquiescence in a purposeless, mechanical universe, she at once strives to invent a substitute for the mythology she has cast aside; and preaches as a new and surprising discovery the ancient selfish hedonism whose folly was manifest before the death of its founder Aristippus.

Perhaps he revealed his real feelings toward Gidlow more clearly in his comments in "Lucubrations Lovecraftian" in *The United Cooperative* for April 1921:

In the July *American Amateur*, the precocious Miss Elsie

(alias Elsa) A. Gidlow of *Les Mouches* fame refers with admirable courtesy to "Mr. Lovecraft with his morbid imitations of artists he seems not even able to understand." Perhaps Mistress Elsie-Elsa would prefer that the amateurs follow her own example, and perpetrate morbid imitations of morbid artists whom nobody outside the asylum is able to understand.

Lovecraft made his hatred of Mills even clearer in his letter to Rheinhart Kleiner dated May 21, 1920:

As to day dreams & Rossie George—I am afraid that the wildest of his flights is rather tame compared with what I have seen in other universes whilst asleep. He can't even get off this one poor planet, or rise much above the animal instincts here. Carcass-worshippers like Rossie & Elsie make me so infernally sick & tired that I lack patience with them. This reminds me—I never shewed you that putrid fellow's letter, which he wrote me last summer. I promised to do so, & will enclose it herewith. My personal comment is twofold: (a) Nobody home. (b) Throw it in the garbage pail behind the house & cover well with chloride of lime. Kindly return this bit of mental & moral aberration for preservation as a horrible example in my private museum of mental pathology.

Mills' letter to Lovecraft does not appear to survive among Lovecraft's papers as preserved in the Lovecraft Collection at Brown University.

Gidlow and Lovecraft were both residents of New York City in 1924-26, but there is no evidence that they ever met. For part of this time, Gidlow worked as a cataloger for the antiquarian bookseller W. A. Gough. While she resided in New York, Will Ransom of Chicago published Gidlow's first collection of poetry, *On a Grey Thread* (1923), often described as the first collection of explicitly lesbian poetry published in the United States. In 1926, the same year Lovecraft returned to Providence, Gidlow migrated to the San Francisco Bay Area, where she spent the rest of her life. She published a further poetry collection *Sapphic Songs* (1976) and her autobiography *Elsa: I Come With My Songs* (1986). On February 9, 1937, she wrote to Edwin Hadley Smith of her involvement in the amateur journalism hobby:

I have pleasant memories of amateur days and some friendships grew out of them. Some of us had fun editing and publishing. I imagine the members did not realize what a child I was when they were corresponding—about 15 or 16 when invited to join the association. Since 1921 I have been a professional writer, editor, or journalist of one sort or another.

Gidlow numbered Kenneth Rexroth and Alan Watts among her friends in San Francisco. She devoted much time to her artists' community at Druid Heights. In old age, she traveled to Japan and China, and was admired as a spokesperson for women's rights. She had two long-term lovers, Violet W. L. Henry-Anderson, who died in 1935, and Isabel Grenfell Quallo.

As for the other players, Roswell George Mills spent much time in Europe in the 1920s, but eventually returned to the New York area. He was working as a re-

porter for the Brooklyn *Eagle* and resided with his widowed mother when he registered for the draft in 1942. Eventually, he retired to Miami, Florida, where he died in 1966. F. Graeme Davis, who had been ordained as an Episcopal priest in 1910, was deposed from the priesthood in 1925. He subsequently became a Liberal Catholic priest, then an Old Catholic bishop in Chicago. He attended NAPA's 1934 Chicago convention in full bishop's regalia, and published one last amateur journal, *Letters from the Lingerer*, in 1937, the year before his death.

I don't know how many amateur journalists of today will find much to remark in the lives or the work

of Lovecraft and Gidlow. For me, they remain two of the most interesting figures who ever participated in our hobby.

Portions of this essay originally appeared in Graeme Phillips's journal Cyäegha (whole no. 7) for autumn 2012 under the title "Gidlow Versus Lovecraft." Cited quotations from the works of H. P. Lovecraft can be found in Collected Essays: Volume I: Amateur Journalism (Hippocampus Press, 2004). Cited quotations from the works of Elsa Gidlow can be found in my article "Lavender Ajays of the Red Scare Period: 1917-1920" in THE FOSSIL (whole no. 329) for July 2006 (available online at www.thefossils.org). ♦

Shivvers Papers at University of Iowa

by Dave Tribby

THE WRITINGS, manuscripts, and notes of long-time Fossil Martha Shivvers are being placed with the Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. The Archives contain more than 1100 manuscripts chronicling the lives and work of Iowa women, their families, and their communities. Its mission is to make available primary sources about the history of Iowa women from all walks of life. The Archives, located on the third floor of the Main Library, are open to the public. Researchers wishing to use materials need to complete a registration form and list the materials they will need so the boxes can be retrieved from storage.

In addition to her work in amateur journalism, Martha wrote poetry, essays, and stories for several Iowa publications and national religious magazines. As reported in the April issue of THE FOSSIL, she died on January 31, less than two weeks before her 102nd birthday.

On March 6, Martha's poem, "Let's Save Our Prairies," was read during Blenko night, a fundraising event on Iowa Public Television (IPTV). (This poem was printed in THE FOSSIL for January 2011.) Since 2002, IPTV has partnered with Blenko Glass Company to give glass pieces as gifts to members who pledge financial support. For the past three years, Martha's son Melvin designed one of these pieces, a vase referred to as the Iowa Piece.

While going through his mother's manuscripts and writings, Melvin found two previously unpublished poems, which he forwarded to THE FOSSIL. The first is an untitled piece written for the October 16, 1976, wedding of Melvin and his wife Linda:

As we stand before the altar
 Pledging our love and life
 To share together whatever comes
 Be it happiness or strife;
 The vows we speak are sincerely meant,
 They are not words without meaning

I cherish you now, I shall cherish
 You more, even when life is waning.
 Admiration, respect and tolerance,
 Are blest with strong emotion,
 While love is entwined with every word,
 I bequeath you my devotion.

The second poem was an entry to the Iowa State Fair Educational Department in 1930, when she was 15 years old:

At Shady Lane

by Martha Sherwood

When springtime comes to Shady Lane farm,
 Life is begun anew,
 From the dark dreary days of the winter,
 To the flowers and the dew.

The vines, the branches and the trees of
 Old Tanglewood, do not seem the same;
 They find pretty dresses of green and brown,
 And now, they are not ashamed.

Again the vines are used for swings,
 To please the children fair,
 Who play there when chances come,
 With, "Now please do take a care."

From Goldbank and Skunk Hill,
 Above a little stream,
 The wheat fields are in plain view,
 Which add to golden dreams.

The willows along Sleepy Valley,
 In the wind nod to and fro,
 And the water gently flows o'er rocks,
 Where paddling feet often go.

Sleepy Valley, is the little stream,
 Flowing below Skunk Hill;

It babbles along each day and night,
As though it knew a thrill.

Perhaps it does, for all we know,
That is its life to live —
Daily does it receive,
So daily does it give.

There is a road, perhaps a path,
And one tree in the center of the field;
It's the "Trail of the Lonesome Elm" —
An outlook for crows, it yields.

Last, but not least, is Shady Lane,
The road that leads to our home;
Large, beautiful trees, and pastures
Border it, it's there where family roams.

At the first sign of spring, green shoots
Are seen along this lane so fair;
They are violets, purple and yellow,
Which bring happy children there.

At the end of this road, is "Home Sweet Home,"
A place that I'll always love,
The place that grows dearer to me day by day,
And from there, I will never rove.

Melvin notes, "This poem was written about the mud road lane which went from the gravel road to her home in the field, a trip of about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. In Mom's poem she saw it as happy, exciting, joyful." ♦

Charles Hamilton Bloomer, Jr.

March 27, 1915 – June 12, 2016

by Dave Tribby

CHARLES HAMILTON BLOOMER, JR., was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, the son of Charles H. Bloomer and Dorothy A. Hamilton. According to family lore, Boomer Sr. "always felt he deserved better and was

sure he would get the perfect job in a new town." The quest for a perfect job took the family to Colorado, Nevada, and California. Boomer Jr. never started and ended an academic year at the same place until high school. In 1933, shortly after he graduated from San Diego's Hoover High School, the family moved north to San Francisco.

Several years after living in the

Bay Area, Charles became interested in science fiction and fantasy. He founded the Science Fiction Advancement Association (SFAA), for which he published *Tesseract*. He also learned of amateur journalism, became active in the Oakland Amateur Press Club, and published *Bloodstone* for the National Amateur Press Association. He met Mary Knowlton at a local writing club; they were married 54 years when she died in 1994.

World War II intervened and Charles spent two years in the South Pacific with the U. S. Army. After the war he went to college on the G. I. Bill, receiving a Business Administration degree from Golden Gate College of San Francisco in 1952. He was business manager of Boxcraft Paper Box Company, retiring in 1981. After retirement Charles enjoyed traveling, in-

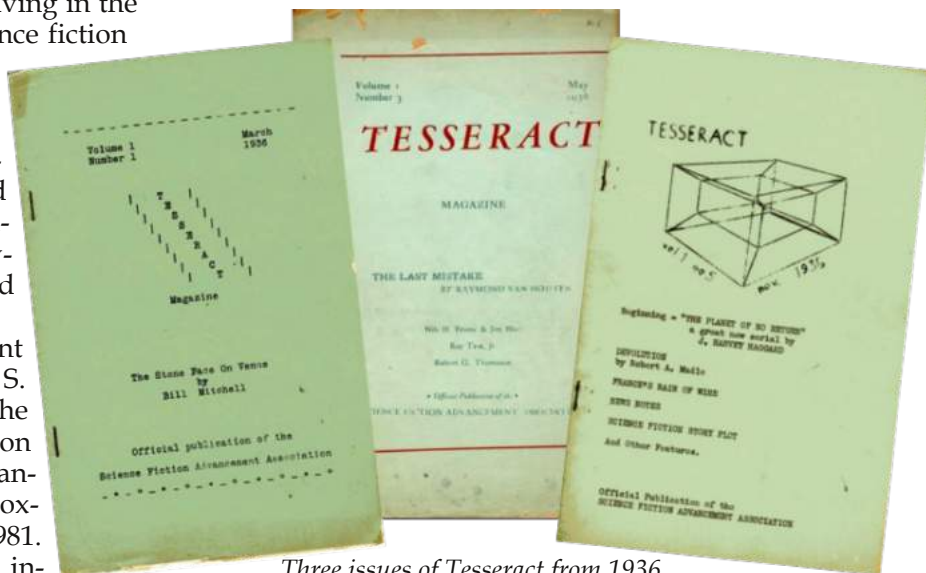
cluding trips to New Zealand, Australia, Antarctica, China, and the Galapagos Islands.

In THE FOSSIL for April 2006, Ken Faig described C. Hamilton Bloomer as "an almost legendary figure in science fiction fandom" for his work with SFAA in the 1930s. Although he published *Tesseract* only from 1936 to 1938, it is still recognized for the quality of the authors it attracted. After writing about him, Ken was able to contact Charles, publishing his recollections in the July 2009 issue. Charles joined The Fossils a few months later, and maintained that membership through 2013.

Charles is survived by three children, Barbara Steinberg, Don Bloomer, and Lynn Richie; six grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren. ♦



Charles Hamilton Bloomer, Jr.



Three issues of *Tesseract* from 1936

My Mentor, Wes

by Dave Tribby

THIS JUNE 18TH would have been the 95th birthday of Sheldon C. Wesson. Next to Les Boyer, who recruited me into the AAPA in 1970 (when I was 16) with his first



The irreverent Sheldon Wesson

Kelsey campaign, and Lee Hawes, my Tampa Bay Area neighbor when I joined, he had the most profound affect on my enjoyment of amateur journalism.

The Wesson clan had been active in amateur journalism for many years. Helen Vivarttas and Sheldon Wesson met at an Amateur Printers' Club meeting in the early 1940s, she from AAPA and he from the rival NAPA. Eventually they overcame their differences and began co-publishing *Siamese Standpipe* in April 1942. They married seven months later, just as WW II swept him into the U.S. Army. In due time, their three children, Sheldon P., David, and Pamela, would publish their own amateur journals.

Pam, a year younger than I, was elected AAPA president in 1969 and was among the first to welcome me into the organization. Her *Peko's Pages* was a well-written, hefty journal. Helen sent a card of encouragement when my own tiny *Handset Journal* first appeared, in the September 1970 bundle. Sheldon did most of the printing for the family—and he knew how to get crisp, artistic results from his

letterpress equipment.

I met the three Wessons in person at the 1971 AAPA convention in Tampa. He was "head stoneman" for the convention paper, and by watching him in action I learned a lot—not only about printing but how to motivate others. He could say more with a raised eyebrow and piercing look than anyone else I had met, but always maintained a fun, high-energy atmosphere.

At the convention I asked Helen and Sheldon if they could provide back issues of their *Siamese Standpipe*. She suggested I first ask for extras from other amateurs—in particular Ray Allen Albert and Milt Grady. That opened up some interesting mail exchanges with those fine amateurs, and I received a variety of amateur journals, mainly from the 1950s and 60s.

By mid-1972, Wesson had changed jobs and the family relocated from New Jersey to Sarasota, Florida—about 60 miles south of my home in Dunedin. I was among the Suncoast Amateur Press Society (SAPS) printers who helped unpack his print shop, an amazing

collection of type, ink, paper, presses, and other equipment efficiently organized in his garage.

The following December, the Wessons invited me down for an overnight stay if I wanted to help sort through their amateur journals. I received a treasure trove of extras, mainly from the 1940s but some from much earlier. Some of these papers came from the collections of Ed Cole and Tim Thrift. It was around this time he let me know he was tired of my calling him "Mr. Wesson." From that point on it was Wes.

Much of the research I'm able to do for articles in *THE FOSSIL* is enabled by the papers they gave to me. Wes himself was *FOSSIL* editor from 1957 to 1962.

I learned more about printing as the SAPS met at the Wesson shop to print various items in the lead-up to the 1973 NAPA convention in St. Petersburg. I learned some of the shop rules: the cases of Kennerley type, saved in the 1940s by Ed Cole from Monotyped issues of *THE FOSSIL*, were available for amateur papers, but the ATF Garamond was *only* used for Wesson publications; the "st" ligature is used only in the middle of words, not at the beginning or end; the green printers' apron is for guests: do *not* use Wesson's.

In the spring, my 5 by 8 Kelsey press's rollers were shot, but I needed to publish some items for the bundle. Wes generously offered me the use of his shop. During my semester break I headed south for a three day visit. Helen was traveling and Pam was at Princeton, so it was just the two of us at Sandalwood Studio. I had set four pages of my own type in preparation, and I used his 8 by 12 C&P to print *Tribby Tribune* No. 8. Printing pages two-up on a motorized press was quite an upgrade from my tabletop press. I used his Kennerley, plus some Libra and Peignot, to produce a second four-pager, *TT* No. 9.

When we fixed sandwiches for lunch, it became clear he was *not* a white bread person. Since then I haven't been either.

In September I left Florida for California. Although we didn't see one another nearly as often, it was always a happy event to meet up with any of the Wessons at an ajay event. And I continue to incorporate the lessons Wes taught me into my own life.

Anyone who would like



Wesson & Tribby after 1973 NAPA convention.

to learn more about Wesson and read some of his essays can visit his page on the AAPA website:

www.aapainfo.org/sheldon-c.-wesson.html

—■—

The initial research for “The Boring Twenties?” was done using my own aJay collection, but the details from papers published in 1925 came almost exclusively from the Library of Amateur Journalism housed in the Special Collections Department of Memorial Library at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I wrote about “A Day at the LAJ” in THE FOSSIL No. 369 for October 2016 (available at www.thefossils.org/fossil/).

Tom Parson, Ivan Snyder, and Pam Wesson helped determine whether any additional installments of Burton Crane’s “weary” history were ever published; they found no evidence.

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Anyone interested in receiving an e-mail notification when a new issue of THE FOSSIL is available online should contact the editor. ◆

Health Issues Affect Fossils

by Dave Tribby

FOSSIL JACK SCOTT was hospitalized after Christmas when he fell and broke his hip, although he was healed up enough by April 13, his 88th birthday, to put away his cane and walker.

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Fossil Trustee Gary Bossler has been battling skin cancer for several months, requiring surgeries and skin grafts in March and April. In June he completed a year as NAPA official editor. As usual, he arranged printing for this issue of THE FOSSIL with his local printer, and then mailed the completed copies.

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On April 14, while on a family trip to Southern Wisconsin, Kay Schrader, wife of Fossil Barry Schrader, suffered a serious stroke. She was taken to the University of Wisconsin hospital for surgery. Her major issues were loss of memory, speaking ability, and comprehension. An initial loss of strength improved significantly, although motor skills on her right side needed attention.

She soon transferred to Marianjoy Hospital in Wheaton, Illinois, where she worked on speech, memory, mobility, eating and swallowing, occupational, psychological, and physical therapy. On May 10, Kay returned to the retirement center in DeKalb where she and Barry make their home. She continues working on restoration of speech and memory. ◆

Fifty Years Ago in THE FOSSIL

Number 186 • March 1967

IT HAS BEEN MORE than a year since the last number of this publication appeared, and many Fossils have wondered about the silence.

Because of family death and illness, coupled with business problems, Editor Jack Dow was unable to continue with the fine issues that started his volume. He was reluctant to resign until the situation was seemingly impossible to resolve, at which time he informed Board of Directors members. President Jennings in January appointed Matilda S. Haywood as interim Editor. Materials on hand for THE FOSSIL did not arrive from the former editor, and it was necessary to assemble this number from material obtained from the Secretary-Treasurer.

A Nominating Committee consisting of Matilda S. Haywood, Chairman Harold Segal, and Albert Lee, has been appointed to select a slate for the election in April.

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The Library of Amateur Journalism, formerly housed at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, and which more recently has been undergoing an overhaul and catalog updating by Librarian Stan Oliner in Wyoming, is now in a new home at the New York University Library in New York. The cost of this transfer has been borne by The Fossils, but it is expected that other amateur press organizations, as well as individuals, will contribute to this worthy cause. Periodic maintenance costs for the collection are expected to be paid by the hobby groups, and the University has assured us that the insurance will be handled by them, and that it will have the collection available for inspection by amateurs at all times. All Fossils can be proud that this great collection is now in good hands, has been carefully catalogued, and is ready for service to amateur journalists.

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Being the second woman in Fossil history to become Official Editor has its recompense. Especially when the first was Vondy—I always did hanker to follow in her footsteps.

—■—

Those of us fortunate to attend last year’s Reunion share even more strongly the feelings Fossil Cole expressed in his closing words. On June 11, 1966 he was gone. With 62 years in amateur journalism he was truly “Mr. Fossil.” It was more than a hobby, it was a way of life for him and his gracious lady, wife, and partner, Mildred B. Cole.

The Haywoods are only two of scores of amateur journalists past and present, who have admired, respected, loved, and benefited from association with Edward H. Cole. We too, “have become unalterably persuaded to the belief that our Fossil fellowship is almost the greatest thing in amateur journalism.” How about you? ◆

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The Fossil

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www.thefossils.org

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