

Magic's Great Collaborator

Robert Parrish: Coauthor, Ghostwriter, Caxtonian

David Meyer

In 2012 a young journalist read an old book that so impressed him he was inspired to write an article celebrating its publication 50 years before. His article appeared in a two-page center-spread in the "Printers Row" supplement of the *Chicago Tribune*.

The book – *The Seven Stairs*, "one man's joyful love affair with life and literature" – was Stuart Brent's account of the founding of his Chicago bookstore "that became a mecca for book lovers across America." The cover blurb for the 1989 reprint, released 27 years after the first edition,

describes it as being "filled with personal anecdotes about celebrated authors, pioneering publishers and editors, and illustrious customers such as Katherine Hepburn and Ernest Hemingway." A back-cover photograph, taken at a publication party given in 1949 by Brent for Nelson Algren's novel *The Man with the Golden Arm*, shows a lineup of noted authors of the time, including oral historian Studs Terkel and English poet Stephen Spender. The youngest and possibly least known writer in the photo was Robert Parrish. He was at the party because he had written Stuart Brent's book.

Parrish, who earned his living writing for a public relations firm and was a member of the Caxton Club from 1982 until his death in 1994, enjoyed telling how he and Brent met. He was walking along Rush Street a few days



Studs Terkel, Robert Parrish, Stephen Spender,
Stuart Brent, Jack Conroy, Nelson Algren

Back cover photo and caption for the 1989 paperback edition of *The Seven Stairs* by Stuart Brent

after Brent had opened his bookstore in an old brownstone building. Brent was standing on the sidewalk eagerly seeking customers. Catching Parrish by the arm, Brent led him up seven stairs and into his bookshop. Thus began a lifelong friendship that was anchored by a monthly lunch together at the Cape Cod Room in the Drake Hotel. Parrish said that Brent had numerous ideas and anecdotes he wanted to put into a book but he couldn't manage to write the account himself.

When *The Seven Stairs* was published in 1962, Parrish had already ghostwritten or collaborated on nine previous books in addition to two written solely on his own. All were on the subject of magic as a performing art. The first two – written in the late 1930s when he and his coauthors were still in high school and college – were devoted to tricks

and techniques. They carried catchy titles (*You'd Be Surprised* and *Do That Again*) and were published by a prominent New York City magic dealer. The last book appearing during Parrish's lifetime was his *Words About Wizards: Recollections of magicians and their magic, 1930-1950*. This compilation of previously published articles explains how and why he collaborated on so many of the books. The following adds a bit more about the books he helped create – and those that were proposed but never written.

Inside Magic (1947)

The title page of *Inside Magic* reads "By George L. Boston with Robert Parrish." This is what Parrish had to say about his coauthor:

When I got out of the army in 1946 and
See ROBERT PARRISH, page 2



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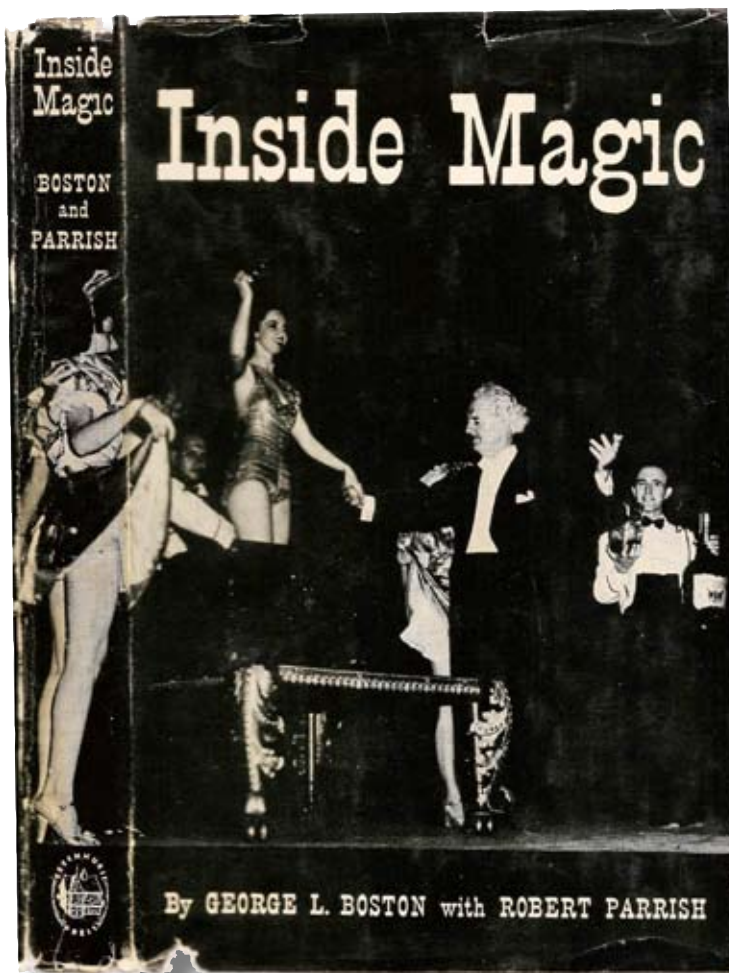
ROBERT PARRISH from page 1 settled in Chicago, I encountered a man who knew magic, who had a fund of anecdotes revealing the curiosities of character among magical showmen, and who possessed a dramatic flair for making these anecdotes come alive. His name was George Boston. He had worked as an assistant for some of the top stage magicians and had been fired by all of them. This wasn't due to incompetence. George was a superb assistant and he knew stage craft. But he was a classic manic-depressive. It went with his dramatic flair. Anyway, we wrote a book called *Inside Magic* that later provided George with an entrée to Hollywood, where his temperament seemed much less bizarre than it did in Chicago. He spent the rest of his working life as a technical consultant and background person in motion pictures and television.

When Boston was writing *Inside Magic*, he was married to Thelma Rankin, who assisted him in his magic act. By the time the book was published, however, the couple had gone through an acrimonious divorce. When Rankin learned that the back cover of the book's dust jacket carried a sentence stating that she and Boston had married in 1937, she threatened to sue unless the reference to her was removed. After deleting the sentence, a new jacket was hastily printed. Very few examples of this second version of the dust jacket replaced the first version on copies of the book not yet sold. Their sole purpose may have been served by sending a single copy of the jacket to the former Mrs. Boston. The question remains as to whether she ever discovered two references to her in the text of the book.

Rufus Steele's series (1949-1952)

Parrish wrote three booklets on card tricks for W.F. "Rufus" Steele, but not the biography the gambler envisioned.

Rufus wanted me to write the story of his life, and I



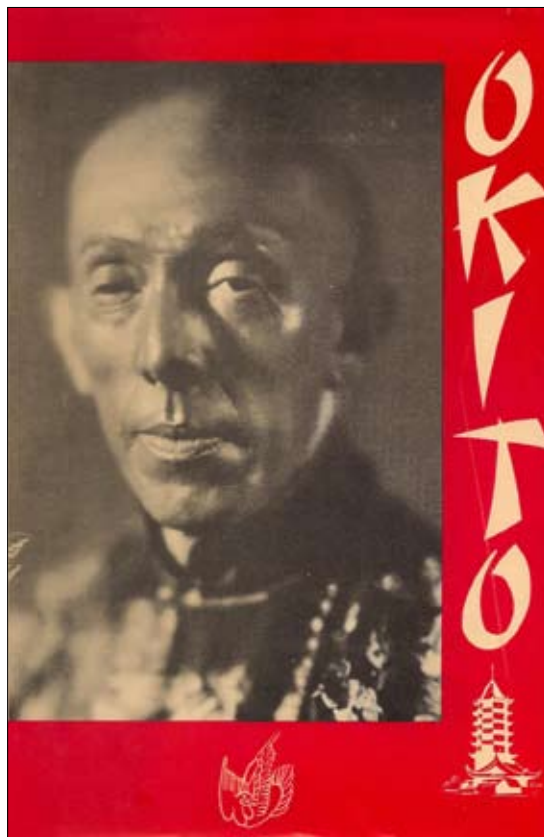
Spine and front cover for *Inside Magic*.

wanted to do so, but I found it impossible. Living a lonely and rootless life, he had no sense of chronology. There was no way to place any of his stories in time or link them into a meaningful sequence. I was, however, able to write some magic books for him. . . . In doing so, I discovered that Rufus was incapable of writing a grammatical sentence. This raised a question in my mind about his [often claimed] college education, particularly in a day when grammar was given more attention in the schools than it is today.

When Steele wasn't in Florida for the winter months, betting on horse races in Hialeah or watching spring baseball training in St. Petersburg, he lived in the semi-seedy Hotel Wacker ("Every Room With Bath") at 111 West Huron Street. He used the hotel's stationery freely to write short letters to Parrish, who lived five miles away. In a letter of August 23, 1954, he thanked Parrish for a "truly wonderful article and it all goes to show what a literary man can really do with a small bit of knowledge that a man like myself has in his brain and can't explain properly." Parrish was credited as an editor for everything he wrote for Steele.



"The gambler" W.F. "Rufus" Steele.



Front cover of dust jacket for Okito on Magic.

Okito on Magic (1952)

This book by Theodore Bamberg "with Robert Parrish" is considered a classic in the literature of magic.

Bamberg...was the fifth and possibly the sixth generation in a consecutive line of magicians to the crown of Holland. In the guise of an Oriental magician named Okito, he presented an act which headlined in virtually every great variety theatre in Europe in the 1920s and 30s.... The book is largely concerned with Okito's technical contributions to magic, but about 50 pages are devoted to his memoirs. Here again, I found it very difficult to get Okito to talk about Theodore Bamberg. The subject of his life was illusion, and what actually happened didn't make much difference. He was quite brilliant in his recollections of other magicians of the first half of the [20th] century. But when I asked for anecdotes related to his own life, he would come up with fabrications....

What Parrish managed to get from Bamberg became a highly readable narrative that included secrets for performing many of the tricks that had been the envy of generations of magicians. Following publication of the book, Parrish began but did not finish an article he titled "Writing for Okito":

Several years ago Ed Drane asked me if I would be interested in editing a book of Okito's tricks and after several seconds' calculation I said, "Yes, I probably would."

The fact is, I do not write magic books at the drop of a hat. The only ones I ever wrote entirely of my own volition were my collaborative efforts with Johnny Goodrum and Oscar Weigle that Max Holden published more than a few years ago. Everything else, somebody had to talk me into. I have just described the amount of persuasion Mr. Drane had to expend to get me started on the Okito opus.

The idea, to begin with, was to put out a new edition of [Okito's book] *Quality Magic*, with the addition of some of the effects which Okito had contributed to various magical journals in the succeeding thirty years. It was a good idea as far as it went, but a few conversations with Okito were enough to convince us that it did not go far enough. We began to add material, and we stopped adding only when Okito moved to Louisville and it looked as though I had better stop making notes and start writing a book. In the meantime, I had been given an education in magic. I tried to put the results of that education into the book.

We ended up with 300 typescript pages

and we didn't know what to call it. It was a memoir, but it was more than that. It was a collection of wonderful tricks, but it was more than a trick book. The one thing that seemed to bind the whole together was a fundamental attitude toward magic, both idealistic and practical. We decided to call it "Okito on Magic," and without apologies for doing so. That is just the best designation which any work merits when it is the product of a recognized authority in its field; and in this field there is no authority greater than Okito, who has fifty-five years of powerful work to his credit in the world of magic.

Okito was living on the eighth floor of the Wacker Hotel, a floor above the room of our mutual friend Rufus Steele....

Two thousand copies of *Okito on Magic* were printed, with an additional 200 numbered copies signed by Okito. This limited edition was issued with a slipcase instead of a dust jacket. The spine is bound in dull blue cloth, in sharp contrast to the front and back covers wrapped in a crepe-like gold foil that looks as if it could be used to wrap party favors. This is a strong clue that the book's publisher was not actually in the book business. Edward O. Drane & Company was a

See ROBERT PARRISH, page 4

Chicago wholesaler of playing cards, trick decks, practical jokes, Santa Claus masks, and puzzles. Books were not a category of his advertised inventory. Why did Drane publish Okito's book? The answer appears in Drane's inscription in Okito's personal copy of the limited edition: "To my good friend Okito, for whom I have considered it a privilege to publish this memento of his long and successful career."

An Evening With Charlie Miller (1961)

Parrish writes about the great sleight-of-hand magician Charles Earl Miller in this way:

He devoted himself to the performance of classical drawing room effects. They are the products of the genius of certain 19th century European magicians who performed primarily in the private drawing rooms of great houses and who refined the art of magic to meet the requirements of this discriminating audience. Chamber music was written for the same circumstances. Drawing room conjuring is the chamber music of magic.

Charlie Miller had more than just the skill to perform classical magic. He was built for it. He was a fat man, and a fat man causes us both to smile and to drop our guard. He also had the innate grace common to rotund people – probably in order to keep their balance. He was the most delightful, most skilled, most mystifying of performers. The only problem was that the field for which his art was designed no longer existed. He was born 100 years too late.

Another problem had to be getting Miller's routines for classic magic tricks into a readable book – but Parrish took the challenge. *An Evening With Charlie Miller* was published in Chicago in 1961 by Caxtonian Jay Marshall and his wife Frances under the imprint of Ireland Magic Company.

"Words by Robert Parrish" the title page reads. A letter from Miller offers a hint as to how much effort it must have taken Parrish to put Miller's thoughts and routines into words:

Dear Bob:

Just a brief note. I promised that I'd write an introduction to that book if and when it's published. Here is what I'd like to say and you may edit it or do anything you wish.

I want to call attention to the discussion of palming of cards. This is important. No one

palms cards more beautifully than Ed Marlo, etc., etc.

I also want to thank all the magical enthusiasts whose ideas have stimulated my efforts.... Many thanks to Bob Parrish for his ability to put things clearly, etc., etc.

The introduction was finally provided by Theo "Okito" Bamberg – not Miller – and may have actually been written by Parrish, who also wrote a short biographical sketch titled "About Charlie Miller."

Discussions with Miller on what tricks to include in the book, and what was needed to make them understandable, probably took place while he "resided" for three months in the Parrish household. According to Parrish, "During this time, [Miller] remained practically invisible, and for a 300-pound man, that's quite a trick."

"Although [Miller] has a genius for improving every trick he touches," Parrish wrote, "Charlie claims that he has never been much of an originator." It also seems that he never stopped trying to "improve" his routines.

Consider the late 19th century "Sun and Moon Trick" or "A Lesson in Magic" as it is also known. Parrish describes Miller's presentation as "a combination of six laughable and surprising effects...involving destruction, transformation, and restoration of a borrowed handkerchief." Eighteen pages were taken to list the many props – including *two* magic wands – and the maneuvers needed to perform the trick as Miller devised it. When *An Evening With Charlie Miller* was published, Miller wrote Parrish saying, "The stuff looks fine. I like the style. Thanks for your help. I've now worked out 'Sun and Moon' where I can eliminate one wand." This is the kind of news that might drive an editor to tear out his hair. But Robert Parrish was a patient man. He had a full head of hair until the end of his life, and, of course, Charlie Miller's letter did not reach



Charlie Miller performing the "Mugs and Hats" trick.

him until *after* the book had been published.

The subtitle for *An Evening With Charlie Miller* is "Part One – Early Evening." Parrish concluded his remarks "About Charlie Miller" saying, "It is quite possible the master can be lured back for a second, and eventually a third part of his 'Evening'."

Unfortunately, Charlie couldn't be lured.

Not every hoped-for collaboration was realized. "As the guy who did the writing," Parrish recalled in *Words About Wizards*, "I began to get requests for literary help from magicians whom I admired very much and whose lives and times I should have been very interested in recording. As it turned out, this was not as easy as it seemed."

Harry Blackstone Senior

Parrish writes:

One of the first to approach me was a man whom I regarded as the outstanding American stage magician of the period, Harry Blackstone, Sr. Blackstone wanted an autobiography, so I went up to Milwaukee where he was opening his season at the Davidson

Theatre (now long gone) to talk it over. What I discovered about Blackstone was something I have found to be common in many showmen. He had devoted his life to creating a persona – the creation that enchanted his audiences and that made him a great magician. He really wasn't interested in the man, Harry Boughton, born in very modest circumstances on the South Side of Chicago in 1885, or in the struggles that went into creating a magic show and keeping it on the road for over forty years. What he wanted was a romance, an invention commensurate with his invention of Blackstone the Magician, and I was neither competent to do this nor interested in doing so.

Hereward Carrington

"I dropped in to see George Boston," Hereward Carrington wrote to Parrish on April 1, 1951, "and he suggested... that I ask your opinion as to a potential publisher for a little book I had in mind." Carrington, a well-known psychic investigator and prolific author, was, at the age of 71, hoping to embark on another project. "My idea is to write a small book giving some reminiscences of mine in magic and contacts with magicians; some experiences in exposing fraudulent mediums, detailing the special tricks they employed; mention of certain tricks I invented; an account of some of the new trick psychic effects, etc."

Carrington had been writing books on numerous topics for the previous 40 years – self-help, history, psychology, science, and esoteric subjects – producing more than 100 titles. Many were *very* "small books" (3½ x 5 in.), selling for 10 to 25 cents on newsstands. He told Parrish his most recent idea came after "going through a lot of old letters, papers, etc," and finding signed photos from Houdini and other famous magicians he had known.

Two weeks after Carrington's first letter, his second seemed to indicate that he was suggesting Parrish be his coauthor. "I was glad... to know that you are theoretically interested in the idea. For what I have in mind, it would not be necessary for you to have any extensive knowledge of psychic phenomena – only of pseudo-spiritualistic tricks, which I am sure you know well. Your part would be limited to these."

By October Carrington finally revealed



Parrish at home in the 1980s.

exactly what he wanted Parrish to do. "The plan is simple," he wrote. "Take my book 'Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism' and run through the table of contents. The plan I had was to cover much this same ground but add to it everything new since – by going through the literature which has appeared since this book was issued, e.g. new slate tricks, new 'mind-reading' methods, sealed letter reading methods, and so on."

Carrington's *The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism*, first published in 1907, reached a third edition by 1920, with reprints before and after that date. Carrington may have hoped to repeat the success of this popular book, but without personally undertaking the research and writing necessary to produce it. This fact likely dispelled any interest Parrish might have initially had in the project. He saved two chiding postcards from Carrington, received in September and November 1953, two years after the project was first discussed. "I never did hear from you regarding the proposed spook book," Carrington wrote the first time. "How about it?" The message on the second postcard was nearly identical.

Although it's unlikely Parrish ever responded, he had not been totally indifferent. He contacted a friend and automotive reporter, Robert Lund, working in the Detroit office of *The Journal of Commerce*, passing along the news that Carrington was seeking a co-author. Lund responded in May 1953:

Regarding the Carrington book, I would definitely be interested in the project, but first I would like to have it spelled out in detail. And contrary to your good opinion, I am no authority on psychic matters. My knowledge of the subject is no more than the curiosity of a guy who has investigated spiritualism from the standpoint of its relationship with magic. Clumsy way of saying it, but you'll get the idea. The question: Am I any more qualified to do the job than you?

Lund, like Parrish, decided not to take on the assignment. Meanwhile, Carrington kept busy producing books with the help of other writers. In a binder holding the letters and postcards received from

Carrington, Parrish kept a flyer for a book published in 1952, titled *Haunted People: Story of the Poltergeist Down the Centuries* by Hereward Carrington and Nandor Fodor.

John Mulholland

While on a trip to New York City in 1963, Parrish was invited to lunch at the Players Club by John Mulholland, editor of the most prominent magic magazine of the 20th century, friend of the great magicians of that time, and owner of one of the largest collections on the history of magic.

"His purpose was to ask me to collaborate with him on a book," Parrish later recalled, "that would not be so much an autobiography as a compilation of anecdotes, experiences, and observations. John was a marvelous raconteur, but he found himself unable to write dialogue. That's where he wanted my help.... But I muffed it."

Parrish suggested that Mulholland could better write the book himself. Mulholland never did and Parrish more than once expressed regret for not having helped him.

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The author thanks Andy Lansing for sharing information on the rare "revised version" of the Inside Magic dust jacket in his collection.

Confessions of a Comma Queen

Wendy Husser reviews
Between You and Me
by Mary Norris

W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., NY and
Castle House, London, 2016 (paperback).

Mary Norris's first book has been praised
not only for its instructional content,
but:

- Norris showcases that there is nothing greater than a woman with a penchant for sarcasm and word puns;
and:
- Mary Norris brings a tough-minded, clear-eyed, fine-tuned wisdom to all the perplexities and traps and terrors of the English Language.
and the best of all:
- Mary Norris is a grammar geek with a streak of mischief, and her book is obscenely fun.

Norris's book was excerpted in 2015 in the *New Yorker*, and when I read that excerpt I wanted to invite her either to come and live with me or maybe to lecture at the Caxton Club.

She is like a stand-up comic, and is just that smart and witty. The book is small, only 228 pages including all parts, and is very straightforward in teaching the book's contents, teaching dramatized with such hilarious examples that you laugh so hard you don't know that you have been instructed. Until later. You even learn, if you read to the end, that Mary was once fitted for her very own rubber thumb. (Editors are laughing.)

This is, however, even though short and easily read, not a book that your surgeon or investment banker would consider picking up to browse. Mary has a degree from Douglass College of Rutgers University where she pursued dairy science. This interest and the early part of her life seem to have persuaded her that belonging to the Brotherhood of Teamsters for life was probably not her calling (though she does still maintain her chauffeur's license, because as she tells us, she is always prepared for everything). And you get an enormous lot of everything in her stories about editing, along with her witty observations of life and her general love for, and proper placement of, words.

Norris went on (after giving up her milk route), after deciding finally not to catch the

boss's son, to a fellowship for a master's degree in English. Luckily UVM had an also had an agriculture school and a great ice cream program. Her first job, by the way, 'was packaging mozzarella at night.'

But back to the reason for this review – Norris's bent for editing words, and for knowledge. In graduate school she read the *New*



Yorker and occasionally visited her brother, on and off, who happened to live in New York City. Her brother also happened to know Jean Fleischmann, who happened to be the wife of Peter Fleischmann. Peter Fleischmann just happened to be the Chair of the Board, and founder, yes, of the *New Yorker*. By the time Mary Norris finished her master's thesis

(on James Thurber) she had met the Fleischmanns. The year was 1977.

Peter Fleischmann saved our author, who by now had moved permanently to New York City in her 1965 *Plymouth Fury*, and was trying to get her hack license so she could earn her keep by driving a cab. She writes, "Peter, possibly sensing an ambulance in my future, suggested" that he try to find an opening listed at the *New Yorker*. Well, Mary failed the typing test, so she was unsuitable for the typing pool, but she did make it to the editorial library. Here she started with the verb to be.

As only Norris could describe, the whole body of the English language shudders when, say, a shoe salesman tries to gain my trust when he leans forward and says? "Just between you and I." She dedicates her book to all those of us who want to feel better about our own grammar. Of course a long story precedes that final sentence in the introduction.

Between You and Me has only 228 pages, as we noted, and includes an Epilogue, three pages of acknowledgments (and this itself is amazing), eight pages of notes from the ten short chapters, an appendix of helpful additional readings, and a 12 page index. The book is thorough to the *n*th degree. I have only one small issue, that the top of each page does not indicate the chapter number or the title of the chapter, so when you browse through to find something specific you have to page through until you find what you want. Probably a very keen decision because as you page through you are stopped by finding yet another topic you also want to read.

Titles of the chapters provide clues to the author's sensibilities. Chapter 1 is called Spelling is For Weirdos. Chapter 2 is entitled The Witch, and it deals with dangling participles, and all the difficult words, for example, garner, garnish, and garnishee just for starters. Chapter 3 is The Problem of Heesh. All great, intellectually challenging titles obviously. In this humorous chapter we learn that many things in language cannot be explained except by custom. Mary herself "has always been confused by sex and gender."

Then we have Comma Comma Comma, Chameleon, and then the most challenging: Who Put the Hyphen in Moby-Dick? Chapter 7 in Norris's educationally charming book is, A Dash, a Semicolon, and a Colon Walk into a Bar. In this she discusses parts of punctuation, and which piece has the most gumption.... Well, just so you know, the exclamation mark packs a punch. The question mark is a gentle, lazy Irishman and so on right

into the semicolon and then those confusing dashes. Funnily enough the author mentions that according to Mark Twain, in the German language a lady has no sex, but a turnip has. "Think what overwrought reverence that serves for the turnip." Quintessential Mary Norris.

Chapter 9 has the stimulating and thought provoking title: F*** This S***.

But don't be fooled. This is a wonderful and educationally superior book to aid boning up on rules of writing and why adjectives do what they do and why editors go on endless which hunts (my favorite), and many other hunts. Norris digs deeply into our English language, made from so many words passed to us from other languages. Here is an example of her description of how words are broken up, and why they are broken as they are, with a little about hot and cold type to pique your interest. "Once, in a piece that was about to go to press, I noticed that the word 'cashier' was broken 'ca-shier.' Curious because 'cash-ier' seemed obvious, I looked it up and found that Webster's has two distinct entries: ca-shier, a transitive verb, meaning to dismiss from service, especially to dismiss dishonorably, with synonyms reject, discard; and cash-ier, a noun, meaning one that has charge of money. The computer, not knowing the difference between cashier the verb and cashier the noun, had chosen the first option."

In the days of hot lead and picas, a typesetter would have to physically move letters down to the next line to achieve what was desired. When cold type took over in the 1980s the poor computer did not know how to break a word, and you might see the word bedroom hyphenated as be-droom. Read all about these tricky issues that many editor know well. And laugh while you learn. (This last from Chapter 6)

In the chapter with the alarmingly asterisked title, Mary says, "Has the casual use of profanity in English reached a high tide? That is a rhetorical question, but I am going to answer it anyway: F*ck yeah." I won't spoil it for you except to present a sentence that used as many taboos as possible in a 1980 issue of the *New Yorker*. "The short, balding man wearing a wig took his menstruating wife to a boxing match." And this was from Ian Frazier who later boasted that he put more curse words on only one page of the *New Yorker* than anyone else had ever done.

In Chapter 8, What's Up with the Apostrophe? we learn than a 'strophe' or a turn, comes from Greek drama. Mary tells us that the

See *YOU AND ME*, page 8



YOU AND ME from page 7

strophe, sung by a chorus, was followed by an 'antistrophe,' that occurred when the chorus "whipped around in the other direction, and sang lyrics in response to the first stanza." So our apostrophe apparently means to turn from. Stories abound with geographic names, the whys and why nots of removing this troublesome apostrophe. And in this same chapter Norris discusses the possessive, and she tells us that Gertrude Stein, by the way, who had no use for commas and hated the question mark, had a weakness for the apostrophe. And we learn, for example, it is official government policy that "the need to imply possession or association no longer exists." So the term United States has been called 'an apostrophe-eradication policy.' "But so that you don't worry for your Irish names, the apostrophes

in O'Malley, O'Connor, O'Sullivan, etc, have been grandfathered."

Norris worries that contracted words like won't, can't, o'clock, and so on, might eliminate their important apostrophe! Apparently in England, which is home to the Apostrophe Protection Society, they faced a ban from the Mid Devon District Council on apostrophe use in some place names, in order to avoid confusion. One proofreader, shuddering at such potential apostrophe removals, had this to say: "Some may say I should get a life and get out more but if I got out more and saw place names with no apostrophes where there should be I shudder to think how I'd react."

Between You and Me is small, but make no mistake, its brevity and precision are a tribute to Norris's deep knowledge and her dedication to her craft. When you have passion for lan-

guage as Ms. Norris has had for three decades, it is joyous and illuminating to learn from her explanations, especially if you are a reader who aspires to sound intelligent using our complicated language. Norris warns us that that even with spelling, which she terms "the clothing of words," a misspelling undermines your authority. So you and I should think seriously about our use of words, or is that you and me?

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Disclosure: The wife of the Chair of the Board of the New Yorker was a Cowles. Ms. Norris gives a fabulous explanation correcting an incorrect one from a writer discussing the Horace Mann School in New York City. This reviewer (wch) was married to a Cowles who graduated from Horace Mann. Coincidence? Heesh.

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We Were Watching You

Dan Crawford looks back on the Revels auction of 2015; pictures are from various years



It's perfect for the holidays, really. You get to talk about the things your fellow Caxtonians own, you get to elbow people out of the way to bid on a treasure going cheap, you get to pretend you're not interested in how that book you donated (and possibly wrote or designed) is selling.... Gossip, competition, pretense: it's all part of the holidays!

No wonder so many people come away from it with bidder memories. The Caxton Keeper of Unwanted Statistics was present, as always, and picked out the following tidbits of trivia.

Items for sale: 275 in 217 lots

Oldest Item: Thomas Bayle's *Commentaire Philosophique*, published in 1713 (donated by Roger S. Baskes)

Newest Item: The 2015 Lakeside Classic was printed just in time to be at the auction (donated by Susan Levy)

Also published in 2015: Alice Munro's *Family Furnishings* (donated by Dorothy L. Sinson), *Everyday Modern: The Industrial Design of Alfonso Iannelli* (donated by Janis Notz), and *Giambattista Bodoni* (donated by the Program Committee)

Items written, designed, illustrated, or printed by Caxtonians: 88

Most Caxtonian Item: Karen Hanmer's map of Chicago showing places of importance in the history of the Caxton Club (donated by Jackie Vossler) OR the poster stating "DRINK IS THE CURSE OF THE WORKING CLASSES" (designed, printed, and donated by Martha Chiplis and John Dunlevy)

Heaviest item: We'll have to start weighing these to prevent arguments, but it could have been the Yale Shakespeare (donated by Jerry Yanoff)

playing cards (donated by Anthony J. Mourek) including one deck for playing and one deck to be kept sealed as a collectible

Most Retro Item: Chares Cutter's Rules for a Dictionary catalog (donated by Bill Locke), paired with an old-fashioned library check-out card tray

Most Exotic Autograph: *Wings of Fire*, the signed autobiography of A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, father of India's space program (donated by Rob Carlson and Paul Gehl)



Most Exotic Tour: A Tour of three institutions in Washington, D.C. (donated by the Program Committee)

Most Exotic Item of Literature: An issue of the little magazine *The Outsider*, from 1962, with original work by Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, Gregory Corso, etc.

Least Exotic but Most Practical Member-

ship Item: Memberships at the Chicago Botanic Garden are free, but this was a pair of free parking passes at the Garden

Lightest item: Two bookplates by W.A. Dwiggin's (donated by the Newberry Book Fair)

Most Knowledgeable About Collectors: The set of Arthur Szyk *Heroes of Ancient Israel*

Items for Collectors of Bathroom Humor: An explanation of Thomas Bewick's censored "Pigsty Privy" print (donated – and printed – by Bill Hesterberg) and *Le Bon Mari*, a 19th century print speaking out for husbands forced to change their kids' diapers (donated by Richard Lamm)

Item Most Suitable for Burning: A Paddy-wax Library Candle (donated by Donna Tuke)

Worst Joke: The reply to a bidder who didn't want to bid on a history of paper because he hadn't finished reading the history of the pencil yet ("Get the lead out")

Items of Sartorial Magnificence: This year we had not only the First in Line Hat but also a genuine 19th century beaver top hat (donated by Adrian Alexander)

Most Bid Upon Item: Each of the three landmark Lakeside Great American Books (donated by Doug Fitzgerald) saw fierce bids each



action, with ten or eleven

Toughest Toe to Toe Battle: The first Caxton Club directory (donated by Hayward Blake) saw nine bids, eight of them from the same two bidders

People Attending: 86

Number of Bidders: 53

Bidders Who Won at Least one Item: 45

Most Active Bidder: One bidder bid on 23 items (and won 15 of 'em)

Bidders Who Won Everything They Bid On: Four people bid on only two things but won both

Most Bids Without a Win: One bidder tried for six items and came in second each time

Most Disgusted Book Collector: The one who fails to get in a reservation for the 2016 Revels

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Book- and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Lisa Pevtzow

(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit.)

Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600:

“The Shogun’s World: Japanese Maps from the 18th and 19th Centuries” (a range of maps depicting both material and spiritual realms), through November 6. **“Moholy-Nagy: Future Present”** (painting, photography, film, sculpture, advertising, product design, theater sets, and book design by László Moholy-Nagy), through January 3, 2017. **“I Am the Sun”** (companion exhibit featuring books on artists, highlighting experimental photography’s collaborations with light and time), Burnham and Ryerson Libraries, through December 5.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: **“Pressing for Plants: Herbaria in Books”** (actual plants are pressed into the pages often with artistic flair), through November 6.

“Pteridomania: The Victorian Fern Craze,” November 11 to February 5, 2017.

Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago, 312-744-6630:

“Stand Up for Landmarks! Protests, Posters & Pictures” (images, artifacts, and ephemera relating to saving Chicago landmarks), ongoing.

Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077:

“Lincoln’s Undying Words” (Lincoln’s changing views toward slavery, through five key speeches made between 1858 and 1865), through February 20, 2017. **“Chicago Authored”** (works by writers that define the character of Chicago), ongoing.

Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: **“Called to the Challenge: The Legacy of Harold Washington”** (an overview of Washington’s life and projects as mayor) Harold Washington Exhibit Hall, ninth floor, ongoing.

Loyola University of Chicago Cudahy Library, 1032 W. Sheridan Road, Chicago, 773-508-2632: **“Art Young Cartoons from the Collection of Anthony J. Mourek”** (38 Art Young drawings, plus books, prints and zinc plates from the collection of Caxtonian Anthony Mourek, including cartoon drawings from 1892 of then-mayor Carter Harrison, and of FDR from 1943), Donovan Reading Room, through March 31, 2017.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: **“Creating Shakespeare”** (Shakespeare’s life and afterlife, from the 16th century through the 21st), through December 30.

Northwestern University Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: **“Dawes Delivers the Vote: A Libraries Exhibit”** (political correspondence, speeches, two original *Chicago Tribune* editorial cartoons, and ephemera from the presidential campaign trail of 1924 in exhibit about Vice President and Evanston resident Charles Dawes), Deering Library third floor, through November 11. **“You’re No One ’Til Somebody Hates You: Karen DeCrow and the Fight for Gender Equality”** (DeCrow’s personal papers and materials from Northwestern’s Femina Collections documenting the first and second wave liberation movements), through December 30.

Pritzker Military Museum and Library, 104 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-374-9333: **“SEAL The Unspoken Sacrifice”** (features photographs from Stephanie Freid-Perenchio and Jennifer Walton’s 2009 book and artifacts on loan from the Navy SEAL Museum), ongoing.

University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: **“Alma Lach’s Kitchen: Transforming Taste”**

Chicago Botanic Lenhardt Library / Pteridomania



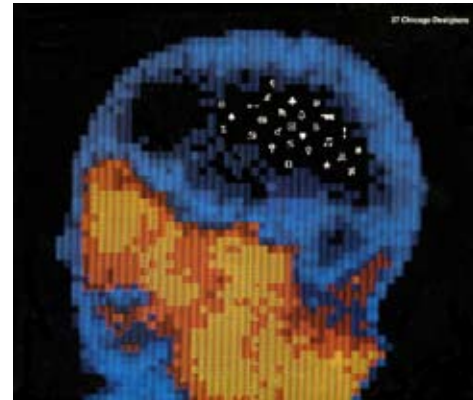
Art Institute / Moholy-Nagy

LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY. DUAL FORM WITH CHROMIUM RODS, 1946. SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, NEW YORK.



U of I Daley Library / 27 Chicago Designers

VOLUME 33, 1979.



(explores the Chicago chef’s culinary career and displays selections from her fascinating collection of cookbooks), through January 6, 2017.

University of Illinois Richard J. Daley Library, 801 S. Morgan, 312-996-2724. **“Selling Design: 27 Chicago Designers 1936-1991”** (celebrating the 80th anniversary of 27 Chicago Designers, an organization of illustrators, typographers, photographers and designers, through February 28, 2017).

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, 346 Main Library, 1408 W. Gregory Drive, Urbana, 217-333-3777: **“H.G. Wells: Time Traveler”** (items related to the fantastic fiction and political writings of H.G. Wells, curated by Simon J. James and Caroline Szylowicz), through December 21.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Krannert Art Museum, 500 E. Peabody Drive, Champaign, 217-333-1861: **“Making and Breaking Medieval Manuscripts”** (Western European manuscripts from the 13th to 19th centuries showing marks of provenance, the effects of printing on the manuscript industry, and the practice of “book breaking,” curated by Maureen Warren and Anna Chen, through February 11.

Send your listings to Lisa Pevtzow at lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net

Caxtonians Collect: Jean Gottlieb

Interviewed by
Robert McCamant

Jean Gottlieb first joined the Caxton Club in 1977 (sponsored by Ned Rosenheim and Gwin Kolb). This was during a period of her life when she was working for John Tedeschi at the Newberry Library. At the time, he was editor of the *Journal of Renaissance Studies* and worked in special collections at the Newberry. Gottlieb worked with him researching materials for an exhibit exploring items at the Newberry, primarily from the Renaissance, which showed the influence of science on literature. To give additional visual appeal to the exhibit, she talked the Adler Planetarium into loaning astro-labes from the Webster collection there, and the Websters became friends.

The association with Tedeschi continued; she became one of his assistant editors for *Bibliographie internationale de l'humanisme et de la Renaissance* in 1978. She also worked for the Council of Planning Librarians and was a conservation specialist in the Regenstein Library's special collections department. There she got to know more Caxtonians in the book arts, including Bob Middleton, Scott Kellar, and Bill Anthony.

Subsequently, she stopped being an employee at the Newberry and served it as a volunteer. Her favorite task was creating a checklist of the more than 1,500 books that related science and literature in the Newberry's collections. It took her years, and proved fascinating. "Science comes into literature through such topics as travel, astronomy, medicine – even alchemy." As more years passed, she was working for Paul Gehl, and she fondly remembers getting to record and organize the gift of marbled and other papers from Norma Rubovits under his guidance.

Fort Myers Beach (actually an island) in Florida had long been a family favorite, so when her husband retired in 1990, they decided to make that their permanent home. Though she is disappointed in what she sees as shortsightedness by the Fort Myers Beach town fathers, who have allowed commercial



development of sport fishing to change the character of much of the town, she admits that she and her husband did enjoy fishing themselves. They had a 16-foot boat with an outboard. "Harry navigated, I pulled up the anchor. Oh, and I cleaned and cooked the fish." Snook was a favorite, though she also mentioned redfish, trout, and tarpon. They still came back to Chicago during the summer, but would rent a different apartment each year. During this period, Gottlieb allowed her Caxton membership to lapse. But following her husband's death, she decided to become a full-time Chicagoan again, and asked for the reinstatement of her membership this past March.

But perhaps we should turn back the clock and begin at the beginning.

She grew up in Chicago, attending Francis Parker for grade and high school. She went on to Scripps College in California for one year, then married Harry Gottlieb. (They were married for 73-½ years.) "We had a wonderful marriage," she sighs. They raised six chil-

dren, four girls and two boys. (The children are scattered around the country, but two currently live in Chicago.)

She went back to school when her youngest child was in kindergarten, getting a BA from Mundelein in 1969 and a master's and PhD in English literature from the University of Chicago, studying with abovementioned sponsors Kolb and Rosenheim, among others. Her specialty was the 18th century, especially plays.

In midlife, she worked on publications at the Council of Planning Librarians. Along the way, she extended her interest in bindings and book conservation. She studied with Edward Lhotka and got to know Elizabeth Knerr and Gary Frost. (As a matter of fact, when she volunteered at the Fort Myers public library, they put her to work restoring bindings.) Her husband worked in real estate, first for Draper and Kramer and then as a paid administrator for nonprofits such as the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities and the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference.

Currently she is at work on a family memoir. "A friend of mine compiles genealogies, so I'm leaving that to her. But I love to tell the stories myself," she says. I sense that she is someone who is continually busy.

Another thing I sense is that she has her feet planted solidly in both the past and the future. She has given up on old-fashioned cameras and uses her iPhone for all photography. But she also hand writes paper letters to her grandchildren, "and they love it."

I interviewed her just before the September luncheon meeting, and Paul Gehl got onto the elevator right after us as we were riding up for lunch. "You know what this woman did?" he tested me. "She gave the Newberry a first edition Keats, a variant edition that the scholarly world only discovered recently." The backstory: her husband had given the Keats to her years earlier, and it had been loved and cherished – "fondled and read" – for many years. She and her husband presented it to the Newberry in 2007.

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Bookmarks...

Luncheon: Friday, November 11, Union League Club
William Tyre on the 50th Anniversary of
the Glessner House Museum

Oh yes, there will be cake! The Glessner House is a Prairie Avenue gem, taking visitors to the Gilded Age and beyond. This is its 50th anniversary as a museum and we'll be celebrating with executive director and curator Bill Tyre. John Glessner made his fortune in the farm implement business that became International Harvester. The building comes to life as much more than a touchstone landmark. That's because Mrs. Frances Macbeth Glessner – bright, engaging, and deeply supportive of the arts – was a faithful diarist, whose writing transports us to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Pioneering educator William Rainey Harper at the University of Chicago approached her in 1893, asking if she could help involve faculty wives in the life of the city. In response, Frances began the Saturday Morning Reading Club, which she hosted for nearly 40 years. Fresh research now reveals what these women read and discussed. Join us as Bill Tyre takes you inside the home, inside the lives of its residents, and inside this one-of-a-kind reading circle. And – did we mention – there will be cake?

November luncheon: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Luncheon buffet (main dining room on six) opens at 11:30 am; program (in a different room, to be announced) 12:30-1:30. Luncheon is \$32. Reservations or cancellations by noon Wednesday for Friday lunch. Call 312-255-3710 or e-mail caxtonclub@newberry.org.

Beyond November...

DECEMBER LUNCHEON

Mr. Bumble's cry that "the law is an ass" reflects the role law plays in life and literature. Emily Kadens, a specialist in premodern European legal history, will open Northwestern's remarkable collection of rare law books to tell the fascinating story of how volumes dating to the 13th century influence our lives. Friday, December 9, at the Union League.

DECEMBER DINNER

On December 14 (note that this is the *second* Wednesday of the month), we'll meet at the Newberry Library for our annual holiday revels, including a fund-raising auction. Get your auctionable materials to Dan Crawford at the Newberry!

Dinner: Wednesday, November 16, Union League Club
Mindy Dubansky on "Books: Books That Aren't"

The Caxton Club has long explored books from all angles and aspects, but this presentation pays homage to items that go beyond: book look-alikes, or "blooks." Blook and book cultures have a parallel existence and blooks provide a side-angle view on the use and meaning of real books. Join in hosting Mindell (Mindy) Dubansky as she places blooks in their historical context, reveals their forms, and dazzles us with their beauty, ingenuity, and humor. Her exhibit of blooks was hosted by the Grolier Club in January 2016, where it was covered by the *New York Times* and CBS morning news. Dubansky is the head of the Sherman Fairchild Center for Book Conservation at the Thomas J. Watson Library, the main research library of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Copies of Dubansky's book *Books: The Art of Books That Aren't* will be available for sale and signing for \$29 on the evening of the event. We will also present grants to our 2016 recipients, and host prior recipients. Last but not least, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign "Illini Days Chicago" Library visitors will join us.

November dinner, Union League Club 65 W. Jackson Boulevard, Chicago. The evening will follow this order: Social gathering 5 to 6 pm, announcements and awards. Presentation 6:30, dinner immediately to follow. Drinks \$6-\$10; dinner is \$60. Reservations are required for either the program only, which is free and open to the public, or for dinner and presentation, which costs \$60. Reservations MUST be received no later than NOON Monday, November 14. Cancellations after this deadline will be billed.

JANUARY LUNCHEON

David Jones will deliver a beautifully illustrated talk that draws on his experience in the paper arts at Columbia College and now at Propp Jones studios. He'll serve up the inside scoop about a new paper arts partnership that has taken culture behind the cheddar curtain. Friday, January 13, Union League Club.

JANUARY DINNER

We meet on Wednesday, January 18, at the Union League Club, to hear Sarah Prichard, Dean of Libraries at Northwestern, talk on "The Chicago Collections Consortium: Connecting Resources, Enhancing Access, and Preserving History."