



# *Aldus Society Notes*

Fall 2017

Volume 17, No. 3

## September 14: Jeanne Drewes, Chief of the Binding and Collections Care Division of the Library of Congress

Shine a Light on Cuba through the Creations of  
Ediciones Vigia: Publishing House, Matanzas Cuba

Jeanne Drewes who works at the Library of Congress, will present a lecture on Cuban art and culture through Ediciones Vigia, a book collective in Matanzas, Cuba. Drewes will examine this independent publishing house, founded in 1985, that creates handmade books using repurposed materials. Ms Drewes has a personal collection from this book cooperative and has worked with them during some of her visits to Cuba. Her talk will conclude with the opportunity to view items from her personal collection.



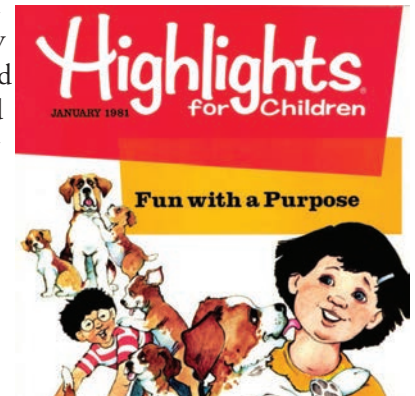
Jeanne Drewes

Jeanne Drewes has been the Chief of Binding and Collections Care in the Preservation Directorate at the Library of Congress in the United States, since June 2006. In January 2011 she added Manager for the Mass Deacidification Program to her duties. Previously she was Assistant Director for Access and Preservation at Michigan State University Libraries, and head of Preservation at

Johns Hopkins University Library. She received her M.A.L.S. from the University of Missouri Columbia and was a Mellon Intern for Preservation Administration at the University of Michigan. She is an active member of the American Institute for Conservation and serves on the National Heritage Responders team. She serves as the Library of Congress representative on the Preservation and Conservation Section Committee of IFLA and as the Director of the North American PAC regional center. She has been active in ALA for over thirty years. Her work has been recognized most recently by the Ross Atkinson Lifetime Achievement Award for 2017.

## October 12: *Highlights for Children* Archives at the University presented by Deidra Herring, Associate Professor Research and Education Librarian, OSUL

Deidra Herring will speak to us about the history of *Highlights for Children* and the amazing archive donated to the Ohio State University Libraries. Founded in 1949, *Highlights for Children* has written and published magazines for children of all ages. You probably had a subscription when you were little.



*CONTINUED on Page 3*

### **Aldus Society Meetings**

*Regular meetings of the Aldus Society are held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month between September and May. Meetings are held at **Thurber Center, 91 Jefferson Avenue, Columbus, Ohio.** Socializing at 7:00 p.m. Free parking behind Thurber House and at State Auto rear parking lot (between 11th St. and Washington)*

## *The Aldus Society*

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Newsletter deadlines are August 1st, December 1st, and April 1st.

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## From the President

Hello friends,

I hope everyone enjoyed the summer break and is looking forward to a new Aldus program year.

To help us promote our programs and activities, we built a new website. (If all goes according to plan it will be live by the time you read this.) Wes Baker connected us to his colleague, Assistant Professor Jeffrey M. Simon at Cedarville University. Jeff's "Designing Solutions for New Audiences" class took on our website as a class project and delivered recommendations for hosting, templates, styles, and content. Members of the class project team were: Benjamin Modayil, Emily Day, Caleb Becker, and Naomi Harward. Their research and final presentation was very professional and I thank them for giving us such a great head start on our website replacement project. I'm especially grateful to Benjamin Modayil who maintained contact with me throughout the website's development and provided not only troubleshooting but design expertise as well.

They investigated domain hosts and web-builder platforms based on requirements provided by the Aldus Board of Trustees. This new WordPress-based site enables us to distribute updating responsibilities, for example, the Program Chair can post new events and the Aldus Notes Editor can upload new newsletters.

A big thank you, too, to Hannah.com, Steve Marks, and Emerson Gilbert for hosting our site all these years!

There are additional features available to us for the new website, and I hope any of you who have experience with WordPress will volunteer to help me implement them! Meanwhile, we have improved and increased the content previously available on aldussociety.com.

Best regards,

*Debra*

## Editor's Notes

The fall 2017 issue of *Aldus Notes* is bursting with descriptions of the fall programs, including the Annual Dinner and Auction. For those of you who missed the summer programs in May, June, and August, photos and summaries are nestled in the inner pages. Two book reviews and two obituaries are tucked within.

There are five articles in this issue. Book Hunter Bill Rich brings us his 34th column. It's about the earliest European language, a topic near and dear to my heart. George Bauman takes us along on his journey to Mexico where he's booking to stores, sites, and local authors. Not to be outdone, Don Rice shares his author and book experiences in Winchester, England where he attended an Arthur Ransome conference. While he doesn't talk about *Swallows and Amazons* (a great series if you haven't read these adventure books), you'll read all about other writers who called the area home. Scott Williams writes about his book related discoveries at ComFest this year, where he was introduced to Cbus Libraries and Little Free Libraries, two very worthwhile organizations. Our fifth article is from Matthew Schweitzer who recounts the mystery around the Diamond Necklace. After reading this shocking account, you'll realize that Dumas drew inspiration for one of his stories in *The Three Musketeers* from the plot.

Of course, there are more stories and tidbits contributed by Aldus members. Thanks to all the authors of long and short pieces. A special thanks to Don Rice for his wonderful copy editing.

If you have an idea for an article, please see me at a meeting or send me an e-mail.

*Miriam Kahn*

Over 70 years of the magazine's archives are housed in the Rare Books and Manuscript Library at OSUL and is a primary research resource for the study of children's literature, cultural literacy, primary education and cognitive development.

Herring will share stories about the extensive collection that includes "issues of *Highlights for Children* (1946-2007), letters to the editor, selected children's submissions, and founder Dr. Garry C. Myers' personal papers." <https://library.osu.edu/find/collections/rarebooks/RBMScollections/highlights/> Deposited at the OSU Library Archives in 2007, as of 2015, the collection has been processed and made available to researchers and the general public <https://www.highlights.com/about-us/history>.

Herring received her Masters of Library Science at the University of Illinois and a B.S. in Education from Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio. She has been at OSUL since 2005. She has presented and published widely in the area of outreach and library user instruction. In 2016, Herring was the principal curator for the exhibition *Fun With a Purpose: Highlights and its Contribution to Childhood Education*, an interactive exhibition that took a closer look at why young readers and adults continue to love *Highlights* magazine. <https://library.osu.edu/projects-initiatives/exhibits/details/fun-with-a-purpose-highlights-and-its-contribution-to-childhood-education/>.

The exhibition was initiated and installed to coordinate with the 2016 annual conference of the Children's Literature Association.



Deidra Herring

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## November 9: Tony Sanfilippo, Director of the Ohio State University Press, will speak about "Disruptive Technologies and Migratory Books: Bookselling and Publishing in the 21st Century"

The technological innovations of late twentieth and early twenty-first century have disrupted many industries but one of its first and most disruptive targets was the publishing industry. Join the director of the Ohio State University Press, Tony Sanfilippo, on a survey of the publishing and bookselling industries over the last thirty years. He will talk about how those disruptions are affecting the publication and distribution of trade books, scholarship, and textbooks, particularly for a medium-size university press. Topics will include industry consolidation, the impact of the digital revolution and online retail, and what the future might hold for independent publishers.

Tony Sanfilippo was appointed Director of OSU Press after a national search. Previously, Sanfilippo had been marketing director and assistant director at the Pennsylvania State University Press. While at Penn State, he drove initiatives to bring the press into the digital age, leveraging technologies and business models that bring content to a broader audience and acting as the press's contact with Google, Apple, and Amazon. He has had key roles in the Association of American University Presses and The Association of American Publishers. Sanfilippo has spent more than 20 years in trade publishing and was co-owner and manager of Svoboda Scholarly Books in State College, Pennsylvania.

Sanfilippo's vast experience in the book business and his activity and high profile among national publishing associations endows him with an in-depth and unique overview of the contemporary world of publishing.

For more about the press, check out their website and catalog <https://ohiostatepress.org/index.html>

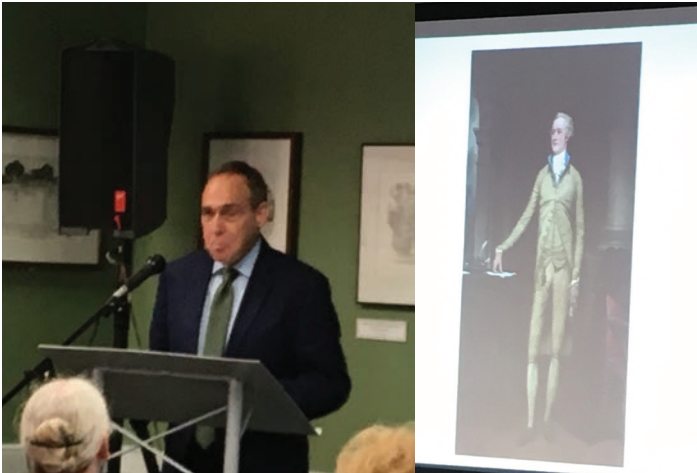


Tony Sanfilippo



## May Recap Hamilton's Papers at Sotheby's

For those of you who missed the May meeting, you missed a fascinating talk and slide show by Selby Keifer of Sotheby's. Keifer regaled us with images from the amazing cache of Alexander Hamilton papers that he located, researched, curated, and then sold at auction in 2017. This incredible collection consisted of over 350 manuscript letters, papers and more. Keifer explained how he divided the manuscripts into 77 lots that sold, in toto, for \$2.6 million dollars.



Selby Keifer

His talk was more than the papers; it was a discussion of the rise in popularity of Hamilton due to the now long-running musical along with sales of the music on CD. Hamilton has long been famous for his duel with Aaron Burr, his friendship with Thomas Jefferson, his role in the early Republic, and his authorship of the *Federalist Papers*. Books on Hamilton include Ron Chernow's *Alexander Hamilton* (NY: Penguin Books, 2004) and Gore Vidal's *Burr* (NY: Random House, 1973) and Thomas J. Fleming's *Duel: Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr and the Future of America* (NY: Basic Books, 1999).

Of course, Hamilton's papers have been edited and reprinted in the Library of America and you can read many of his original publications and letters at Founders Online <https://founders.archives.gov/>. Kiefer mentioned in Allan McLane Hamilton's opus *The Intimate Alexander Hamilton: Based Chiefly Upon Original Family Letters and Other Documents, Many of which Have Never Been Published* (NY: Scribner & Sons, 1910) for a personal and historical view of his paternal grandfather Alexander Hamilton.

Throughout the evening, Selby Keifer read from Hamilton's letters, particularly to his wife Elizabeth Schuyler during their courtship. He also read from some of the political, economic, and legal documents that shed much light on Hamilton's political views.

## The Aldus Society's Annual June Picnic

This year drew a huge crowd to the 2017 Aldus Victorian Picnic "Plain & Fancy." The picnic organizers promised three special features; Victorian diversions, Bangers and Mash (that's sausages and mashed potatoes) along with cucumber sandwiches, and a dish naming contest.

Aldines were treated to a sneak preview of the August "Dickens and Trollope" discussion. Victorian Diversions: Aldus' own consummate actor Roger Jerome described Dickens' immortal words while his Trollopiean debate opponent Bill Rich teased picnic goers with passages from Trollope. Other humorous or dramatic readers rounded out the entertainment for the day.



Bangers and mash or cucumber sandwiches? Oh my, what a treat to contemplate. Aldus members brought their tried-and-true dishes and new recipes, all with a British twist and flavor.



To top it off, there was a "Name Your Dish Contest" which featured creative names for any dish contributed to the vast array of food stuffs. Leah Kalasky led the judging.

Fun, laughter, and good food was enjoyed by one and all. Thanks to Pat Groseck and her picnic committee for a fantastic June afternoon.



## August Recap

### Dickens - Trollope Program

Our newest summer treat is the second annual literary discussion by Aldus members. This year the theme was "Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope: Perspectives on Victorian England." Presenters were our own Bill Rich and Roger Jerome, while the discussion was moderated by Geoff Smith and Erik Jul.



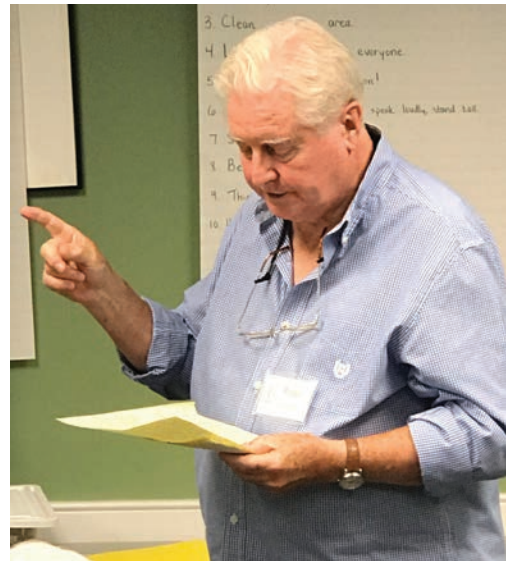
After a successful 2016 program entitled "Who Wrote Shakespeare: Exploring the Authorship Question," featuring Harry Campbell and Jay Hoster, with a guest appearance by Roger Jerome (see Sept 2016 issue of *Aldus Notes*), the Aldus program committee decided to have a literary conversation about Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope. Presenters Bill and Roger discussed varying perspectives of Victorian Britain seen through the works of two of the greatest literary artists of the age.

Roger's observations were drawn primarily, though not exclusively, from *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, and *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens; while Bill's discussion focused upon *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, *The Duke's Children*, and *Dr. Wortle's School* by Anthony Trollope. It must have been difficult to select three titles each from the vast corpus of Dickens' fourteen and a half novels and Trollope's forty eight. Roger and Bill picked from their favorites, or so they told eager listeners.

Throughout the summer, the program committee posted teaser articles and background materials on Dickens and Trollope on the Aldus Society listserv and Facebook page.

When the sultry August night arrived, Aldines were treated to a breathless presentation by Roger Jerome. Roger Jerome showed off his theatrical side, expounding upon

Dickens and his writings. Five dollar words tripped off his tongue as he declaimed at a rapid fire pace, enumerating life events, publishing successes, and a life of writing.



Bill Rich expounded on the life, times, and writings of Trollope in a more stately, scholarly manner. He read humorous passages from various books, perfect examples of the wry and dry wit of Trollope. He emphasized the Trollope's mastery of characterization of British life in the Victorian era.



Stay tuned for the next literary salon in August 2018.

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# Book Hunting Notes 34

## The Oldest Written European Language

### By Bill Rich

Writing originated several thousand years ago in human history, presumably, in the ancient Middle East. But what about Europe? This was much later. But where, when and in what language? Books dealing with this discovery are a fascinating combination of history, archaeology, and brilliant scholarly detection.

### The Mystery

The oldest written language in question was long known to Europeans as Greek. The classical Greeks believed that their writing system, the familiar Greek alphabet, was borrowed from the Phoenicians perhaps around the eighth century B.C.E. This is roughly accurate. It also appears that the Homeric epics were finally written down after this time, after centuries of oral transmission. The Iliad and the Odyssey described a historic time in Greek history, a glorious time when there were kings living in great palaces, who formed an alliance against the city of Troy, invading it with the consequences everyone knows. The classical Greek historians are in remarkable agreement about the date of this Trojan War – Herodotus says around 1250 B.C.E., and other Greek writers of the time suggest approximately the same date. But by later times in the first millennium, there was no such royal system. There remained the ruins of a few of the palaces standing above ground, notably the great citadel of Mycenae, the stronghold of Agamemnon, Homer’s “ruler of

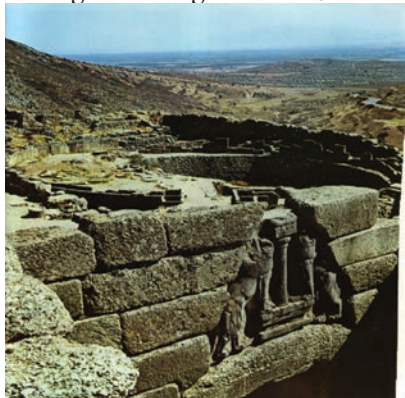


Fig. 1. Mycenae: the Lion Gate

men”, who led the Greeks against Troy (Fig.1). Modern archaeology has determined that this citadel was attacked and abandoned sometime in the twelfth century B.C.E. To the Greeks in the Dark Ages that followed the destruction of the palaces, the site remained known as Mycenae, always visible into modern times, the great lion statues still guarding the gate, the oldest monumental statuary in Europe. But aside from Homer, Greeks into classical and modern times did not really know the history

of the place. And scholarship placed little faith in Homer as a historian. After all, much of the Iliad and Odyssey were clearly mythical – Gods coming down, talking to men, freely interacting in their affairs, and so on.

It was not until late in the 19th Century that this state of affairs changed. The initiator was the German antiquarian Heinrich Schliemann. Inspired by Greek mythology, he discovered what is now generally considered to be the ruins of Homeric Troy, near the Asiatic shore of the Hellespont. Following this success, he excavated in the

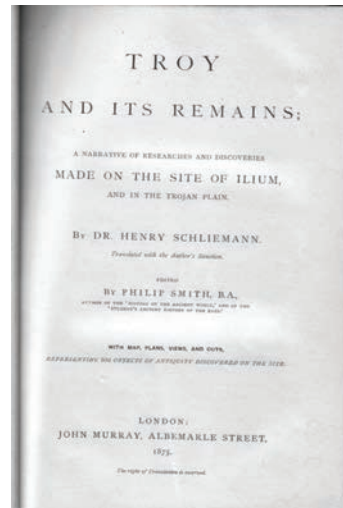


Fig. 2. Schliemann’s first book on Troy

ruins of Mycenae, on the Greek mainland. While the towering walls of Mycenae had been visible in Greece for millennia, Schliemann undertook detailed excavation within the walls. His discoveries of gold-filled royal tombs, weapons, spectacular artifacts from the second millennium B.C.E. are now centerpieces in the National Museum in Athens. Fig. 2

Unlike in contemporary palaces in the Near East, however, Schliemann apparently found no evidence of writing in his excavations. No clay tablets, inscriptions, whatsoever. This situation changed early in the twentieth century, when Sir Arthur Evans, the British archaeologist, found and excavated the ruins of a colossal palace on Crete. Crete is the largest of the Greek Islands, immediately south of the mainland. Evans, a very wealthy man, purchased the site of Knossos, on the northern coast, and began an extensive series of excavations. There, he uncovered ruins of an immense palace. He published his findings in six massive volumes, over a period of years, from 1921 to 1935. Fig. 3 shows the first volume of this set. The palace dates to the second millennium B.C.E.

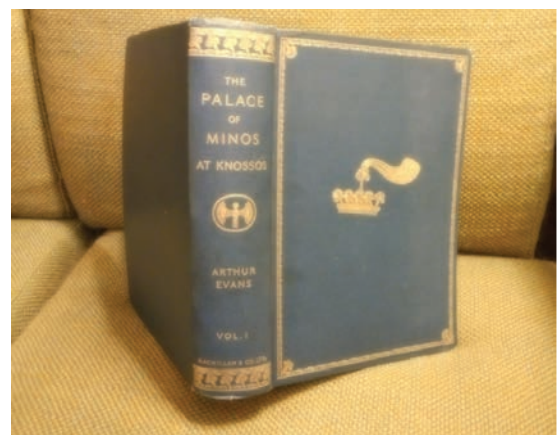


Fig. 3. The first volume of “The Palace of Minos”

Most importantly for our narrative, Evans discovered writing in the Knossos ruins. These were not extensive documents. They appear to be short notes on relatively small clay slabs. Evans deduced that the writing was partly ideographic, with discernable pictographs for men, women, objects of trade, etc. And the documents were often lists, giving totals in a decipherable numeric system for amounts of goods, and so on. But beyond this were symbols, apparently sounds, in a phonetic representation, and written in lines across the tablet. There were more of such symbols than would be needed for any alphabet; the system was evidently a syllabary. And, there were two types of these symbols; the ones from the earlier archaeological strata Evans dubbed “Linear A”; the apparently later script he called “Linear B.” The Linear B symbols appeared to be derived from, and a later adaption of, those in Linear A. There were many more of the Linear B than the Linear A. Fig. 4 shows accurate copies of some of the Linear B tablets found.

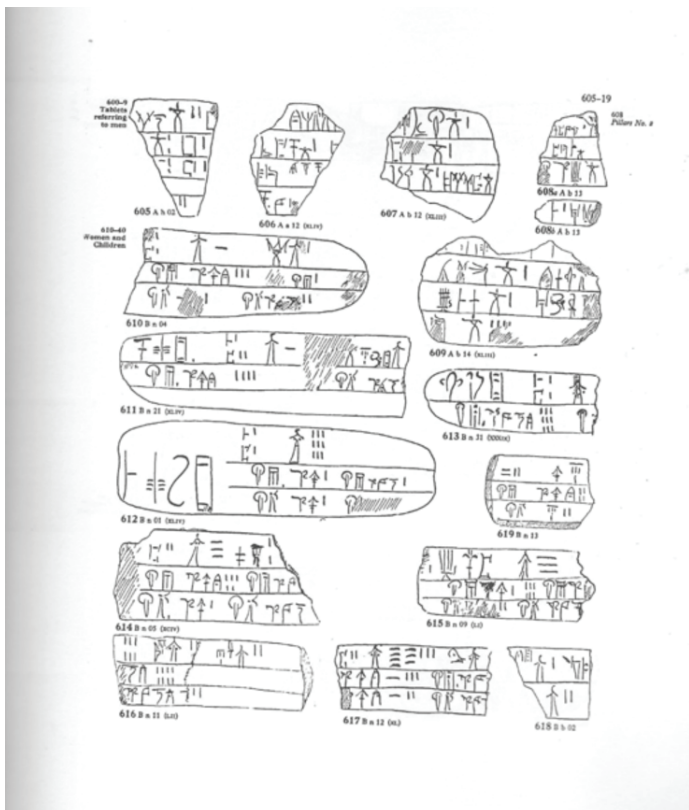


Fig.4. Tablets found at Knossos in Crete

Unlike in contemporary Mesopotamian palaces, the Knossos writing was not on deliberately baked clay, as used to write long documents, including histories, treaties, business contracts, and legal documents. The Knossos palace was destroyed by a giant conflagration, and the tablets, written on wet clay, were accidentally hardened in this fire. Unlike baked clay tablets, these dissolved in water. This happened to a few tablets when a storage shed leaked in a rainstorm. While there was evidence that the tablets were stored in boxes or baskets with clay seals indicating their contents, it was speculated that the Knossos tablets were temporary notes, and their notes were transferred to another writing material – one that did not survive the more than 3,000 years since the destruction of the palace.

Here was a mystery. The writing system was almost totally unknown, and, as far as anyone knew, the language was totally unknown. It is a truism of paleography that an unknown writing system in an unknown language is, and will be, undecipherable. The only hope is to find a bilingual inscription with one part a readable, known, language. The Rosetta stone discovery leading to the unraveling of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics comes to mind. In the present case, Evans believed he had uncovered a totally unknown civilization on Crete. The magnificent wall paintings in the palace, the pottery, and other artifacts seemed new to him – perhaps the first European civilization. He dubbed the culture “Minoan” after the legendary King Minos, ruler of Knossos in Greek mythology.

The Knossos finds date principally from the last half of the second millennium B.C.E. Despite the Homeric poems describing Knossos and other Cretan cities as Greek at the time of the Trojan War and as major contributors to the expedition against Troy, Evans refused to recognize any part of Minoan civilization as Greek. The finds of Schliemann and others on the Greek mainland at Mycenae and elsewhere, with their spectacular art and architecture, he believed were derived from the earlier Minoan civilization, and, indeed, showed the influence of imported Minoan artists. This culture, later archaeologists following the overwhelming influence of Evans, dubbed “Mycenaean.”

### The Decipherment

We concern ourselves here with Linear B; the earlier Linear A material is too sparse, and has never been deciphered,

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September 7  
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*The Last Ballad*

November 2  
Brian Kilmeade  
*Andrew Jackson and the  
Miracle of New Orleans -  
The Battle That Shaped  
America's Destiny*



although various folks have claimed success.

Evans died in 1941 at age ninety. He had never fully published the Linear B material, despite plans long in the works. He enlisted the aid of Sir John Myres, an Oxford don, to bring the work to completion. One trouble was that Sir John was no spring chicken himself, dying in 1954 at age ninety-five. Myres sought the aid of younger folks, notably two names that figure hugely in the rest of our story. One was an American scholar, Dr. Alice Kober, who was an assistant professor at Brooklyn College. She began working on the Linear B problem in the late 1930s, despite a back-breaking teaching load (five courses each semester). In the apartment she shared with her mother, all available spare time was devoted to Linear B analysis. The second figure, unlike Kober, was a rank amateur, Michael Ventris. A brilliant and successful young English architect, Linear B decipherment was an intriguing hobby since his teens. By the late 1940s, both were recognized as among the small group of competent people working on the problem. For this reason, Myres asked for their help.

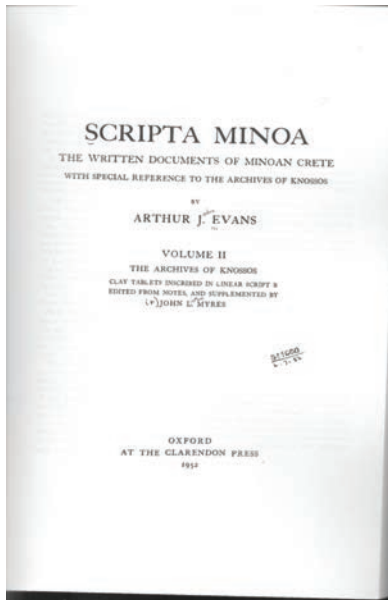


Fig. 5. "Scripta Minoa", 1952

Ventris had other duties, and did not help so much on the publication project. Kober took it very seriously, made trips to England (she won a Fullbright fellowship for one), and continued to help Sir John via correspondence. She became disillusioned, with the many errors of transcription made by the old man, but did the best she could. The book was finally published in 1952! Fig. 5 gives the title page; Fig. 4 is one of the meticulous copies of some of the Knossos tablets, from this book.

It is amazing to consider that this extensive book, published eleven years after the author's death, and near fifty years after their discovery, treats texts no one could read. Well, it was thought, that copies were available to scholars of all the Knossos tablets, despite the errors. But by this time events had caught up with this leisurely approach. There had been several finds of Linear B inscriptions on the Greek mainland, mostly on small isolated tablets and pottery fragments. In 1939, Karl Blegen, the great American archaeologist, found the ruins of an extensive Bronze Age palace on the Greek mainland, near the reputed site of ancient Pylos, the stronghold of Nestor, wisest of the Greek kings who went to Troy. (Figs. 6 and 7).

Blegen's discovery was drama itself. That first year he discovered another cache of Linear B documents, rivaling the



Fig. 6. The ruins of the Palace on Nestor as found by Blegen. The photos on the lower right show some tablets in situ.



Fig. 7. The Palace of Nestor at Pylos. Reconstruction of the megaron.

Knossos finds. This is shown in Fig. 6, which includes some of the tablets as found. Unfortunately for Blegen, World War II broke out immediately after this great discovery. This was followed by the Greek Civil War, and Blegen was able to return only in the early 1950s. The tablets had been



stored in the National Museum in Athens and neither Blegen nor any other scholar had access to them. This whole time must have passed in a nightmare of anxiety for Blegen. But by the early 1950s, breakthroughs in the decipherment had happened.

Alice Kober continued to plug away. Her methods were strictly analytical and deductive; no leaps of intuition for her. But she noted word groups that were repeated in the texts, with only the endings changed (“Kober’s triplets”). This was strong evidence of an inflected language. Further, she saw endings that appeared to indicate plurals, particularly when compared to the number of objects listed at the end of the line. All of this represented a major breakthrough, and no decipherment would have been possible without this foundational work.

The injustices visited on Alice Kober in her short life are enough to make the blood boil. She had become a noted scholar, and her admirers at the University of Pennsylvania proposed her for a Professorship there. Two members of the selection committee “had reservations”, as is the academic lingo (it means “no” – “serious reservations” means “no way in hell”). One reservation was that she was a woman, and therefore unfit for a full professorship! The other was from a man who had been a junior faculty member without promotion for eleven years – and he announced he would not vote for a newcomer to have a senior position higher than his. So Alice remained at her teaching job at Brooklyn.

At this point, a less conservative scholar may have been tempted to postulate the language behind the texts. But not Alice Kober. This was reserved for the other major player in the decipherment, Michael Ventris. Ventris was not a professional scholar, but born to wealthy parents, he had traveled in Europe, and had an amazing ability to acquire rapidly a speaking knowledge of modern languages. But he was not an academic or a professional linguist. Kober did not think too much of him among the people working on Linear B. His amateur status told against him in her eyes, is my suspicion. But he was well aware of her work, and knew her breakthroughs on the structure.

It is curious that despite the tablets being found in localities that were traditionally Greek since Homer’s time, and well before, last thing that occurred to scholars was that the tablets were in some form of Greek. This is partly the overwhelming influence of Evans, who believed he had found an earlier, pre-Greek civilization, perhaps from Anatolia or elsewhere in bordering non-Greek lands. Ventris entertained thoughts of various other languages behind the script. A favorite was Etruscan, which itself was very poorly known. But Ventris had other clues to use. It was recognized by Kober and others that the Linear B syllabary was probably of the “CV” type, each phonetic symbol representing a consonant followed by a vowel. Another clue was that a syllabary of this type had been used down into

classical Greek times on the island of Cyprus to write Greek. Some of the signs were clearly derived from Linear A. So some phonetic clue was available inasmuch as Linear B used some similar signs. It was a great intuitive step forward that Ventris, finally, considered Greek as the language. But initially, no playing with such similarities yielded anything looking like Greek. A further breakthrough step was that Ventris began looking for the names of various cities in Crete, among the Knossos tablets. And he found them. Kicking and screaming against his own thought processes, he began to decipher Greek words in the tablets. He had only two years of formal Greek instruction in preparatory school (although this was at Eton), and here was a language a thousand years older than the classical Greek he had studied.

About this time, friends were being entertained at the Ventris’ apartment. One of the guests was a BBC official. Ventris, in his enthusiasm, had excused himself and retired to his study to work on the tablets. Returning, he told of his growing suspicion that the tablets were Greek. The BBC woman invited him to appear on a Sunday radio show to speak on his possible decipherment. The recording of this show is one of the few records we have of Ventris’ voice. Fortunately the show was heard by a Cambridge philologist, John Chadwick, who knew what Greek this ancient might possibly sound like. Chadwick was actually convinced, and immediately phoned Ventris, and offered his help. This was immediately accepted by Ventris, who was very conscious of his shortcomings in ancient Greek philology. Thus began a famous collaboration, ending only with Ventris’ tragic death a few years later.

More and more, the two wrested Greek words and even whole sentences from the tablets. Archaic Greek words, which would have stumped Ventris alone, were vetted by Chadwick. One example was the noun *anax*, or *wanax*. This was the title reserved for the supreme ruler in the tablets. It appears in Homer as a title for Agamemnon, who led the Greeks against Troy. This title for a secular king had vanished in classical Greek.

Ventris and Chadwick published their discovery as “Evidence for Greek Dialect in the Mycenaean Archives” in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* in 1953. It included some tablets from the Pylos archives which by then had become available. The paper was not universally well received. Notably, Prof. Beattie at Edinburgh University, who had long been working on his decipherment (he was known as “Linear B Beattie”), attacked the decipherment. With the “CV” syllabary, he noted the spelling rules were too arbitrary, and much of the decipherment could be beat into something like Greek if the authors had a prior bias, which he believed they did.

Ventris and Chadwick followed their articles by a definitive book publication, *Documents in the Mycenaean Greek* (Fig. 8). By this time, strong evidence was uncovered that proved, in the general opinion, the soundness of the decipherment. This was the famous “tripode” tablet

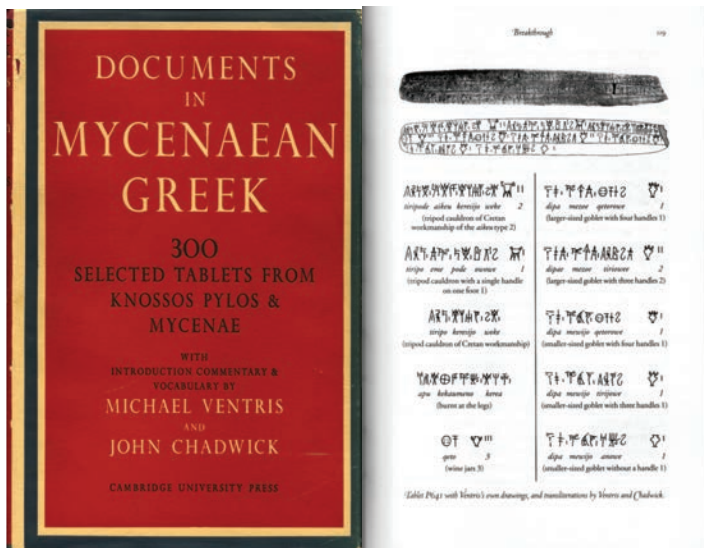


Fig. 8. “Documents in Mycenaean Greek”



Fig. 9. “The Tiripode Tablet”

(also known as the tripod tablet) (Fig. 9). At the time the decipherment was first announced, the tablet was still in the ground at Pylos. But further excavations by Blegen uncovered it. It was a list of various tripods and other large standing vases with ideograms depicting them, and describing the number of handles on each vessel. It contains various nouns and descriptive words that, given the spelling rules developed by Ventris, translated easily into Greek. Blegen, beside himself with excitement, wrote Ventris, who immediately called Chadwick. This was the clincher, and almost all doubters were converted.

The tiripode find provided paleography and archaeology with what is called in biology and the physical sciences a “control,” an experiment to eliminate the possibility of error or bias. By the nature of the beast, it is rare in archaeology, but here it was. A prime example of scholarly pettiness was that Beattie refused even this evidence. He suggested that somehow one of the greatest living archaeologists, Karl Blegen, had given Ventris a look at the tablet before the decipherment was published. This was indignantly denied.

Figures 10 through 12 show some popular books on the decipherment and the principals. Fig. 10, by John Chadwick, is a famous account of the decipherment. Figs. 11 and 12 are biographies of Ventris and of Kober, respectively. All three

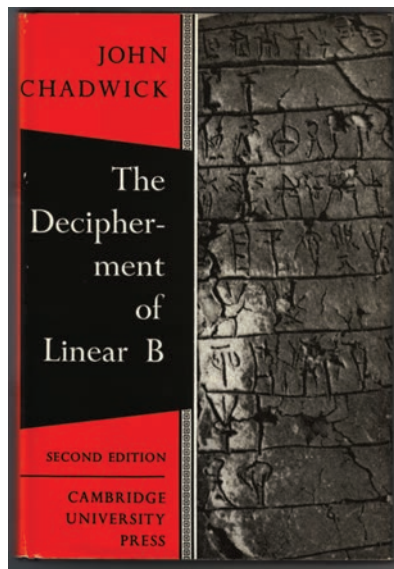


Fig. 10. “The Decipherment of Linear B”. The Earliest Popular Book on the Decipherment

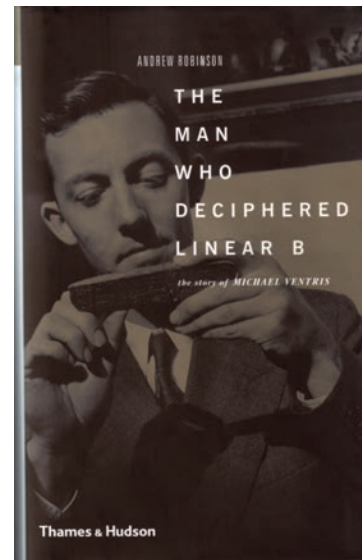


Fig. 11. A Recent Biography of Michael Ventris

books are wonderfully readable.

It was left to Ventris to make the major breakthrough on the decipherment of Linear B, perhaps the greatest work of humanistic scholarship in the twentieth century. His colleague, John Chadwick, wrote of him shortly after his early death:

“Ventris was able to discern among the bewildering variety of the mysterious signs, patterns and regularities which betrayed the underlying structure. It is this quality, the power of seeing order in apparent confusion, that has marked the work of all great men.”

Editor’s notes: For more images of Linear A and B check out <https://linearbknossosmycenae.com/>

I recommend reading *The Riddle of the Labyrinth* if you want to know more about the decipherment of Linear B.

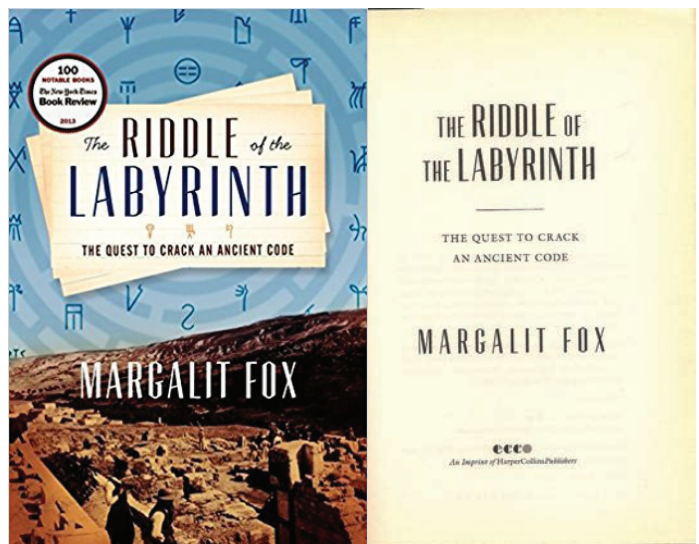


Fig. 12 . The Recent Biography of Alice Kober by Margalit Fox *Riddle of the Labyrinth: The Quest to Crack an Ancient Code* (NY: Ecco, 2013) <https://g.co/kg/a7rz29>



# A Literary Jaunt “an exceedingly pleasant Town”

Article and photographs by  
Donald Tunnicliff Rice

I was fortunate enough in September 2015 to attend a conference of The Arthur Ransome Society (TARS) at Sparsholt College in Hampshire, England. Sparsholt is just outside Winchester, a city of 45,000 souls situated sixty miles southwest of London.

As with so many British towns and cities, it has prehistoric roots, followed by Roman and medieval periods, eventually arriving at the early modern times, generally considered to begin around the reign of Henry VIII.

The main attraction in Winchester is the cathedral, one of the largest in all Europe. Medievalists are delighted

by the mortuary chests containing the remains of Wessex kings, starting with Cynegils (611-643). However, you will not find a chest containing the bones of the most famous Wessex king, Alfred the Great. It's a long story, but the fact is Alfred's bones have been misplaced. A couple of years ago, a piece of a pelvic bone turned up that was believed to be

either his or his son's, but that has yet to be proven. To pay homage to the great man you'll want to visit his bronze statue a couple of hundred yards away from the cathedral at the eastern end of The Broadway.



Winchester Cathedral head-on.



The park surrounding the cathedral is a favorite gathering place for locals and visitors as a Tommy from the Great War stands guard.



In the early 1900s, underground water caused the cathedral to subside, resulting in huge cracks in the walls. At some point it was going to collapse. Because there was no other means to do so, William Walker, a professional diver, worked underwater every day for six years putting bags of cement in place, thereby saving the cathedral. A nearby pub is named for him.

But it wasn't the greatness of Alfred that caused Rudyard Kipling to think of Winchester as second only to Stratford as the holiest place in England. No indeed. It was because both Jane Austen and Izaak Walton are buried in the Cathedral.

Jane Austen (1775-1817) spent most of her life in Hampshire, of which Winchester is what we would call the county seat. She had been quite ill and, with her sister Cassandra and brother Henry, was staying in Winchester to consult with Giles Lyford, a doctor she thought might cure whatever mysterious illness it was that plagued her. It wasn't until 1965 that her illness was determined to be Addison's disease and since then more definitely diagnosed as Hodgkin's Disease. We'll never know for sure, but whatever it was, Lyford was of no help. Jane died in Cassandra's arms on July 17, 1817.



The house in which Jane Austen died is now a private home. Take a picture if you must, but don't knock on the door.

Henry, who was an Anglican clergyman and Jane's literary agent, used his influence to have her buried in the cathedral. Only four people attended the service aside from her sister Cassandra. In those days, it was considered unseemly for females to attend funerals. People have long been perplexed by the fact that Henry included no mention of Jane's auctorial talents on the floor stone under which she's buried. This omission was corrected fifty-three years later by a nephew who had a large brass plaque installed nearby. Finally, in 1900, a window dedicated to Austen was installed in that same area. Today her grave remains a profit center for the cathedral as pilgrims from around the world pay to gain entrance so they might visit it.





Visitors viewing Jane Austen's brass plaque in the cathedral.

Anglers who enter the cathedral are there to see the pleasant Fisherman's Chapel in which Izaak Walton's remains patiently await a strike. Walton (1593-1683) was born and probably educated in Stafford before moving to London, where he eventually became friends with John Donne. His Winchester connection was established in 1662 when he was invited by George Morley, the bishop of Winchester, to move into Farnham Castle. Walton's daughter also lived in Winchester, and it was in her house that he spent his last days.



This tiny church, St. Swithun-upon-Kingsgate, is easily recognized in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden* as St. Cuthbert's. "It is no bigger than an ordinary room, . . . but still a perfect church."

The city has other literary connections. John Keats composed "Ode to Autumn" while staying there. He wrote to his brother in 1819 noting that Winchester was "an exceedingly pleasant Town, enriched with a beautiful Cathedrall and surrounded by fresh-looking country." Renaming it Wintoncester, Thomas Hardy found it to be the perfect place to have *Tess* hanged. And the historian E. A. Freeman claimed that Anthony Trollope confessed to him

that there was a good bit of Winchester in Barchester. Interestingly enough, the fictional Barchester itself has been used as a setting by other writers. My favorite is Angela Thirkill's *Barsetshire* series set in the twentieth century. As a further enhancement, she populated the county with characters strongly reminiscent of Bertie Wooster's friends (if you can imagine them grown up and having actual jobs).

She includes enough romance and misunderstandings to satisfy both Trollope and Wodehouse. One more borrowing has to be mentioned, though the connection is only slight. Both Barchester and Barset are mentioned as nearby towns



The Winchester City Museum is easily the nicest small-city, purpose-built museum I've ever walked inside.

in the film series based on Ronald Searle's hilarious, if sometimes deadly, *St. Trinian's*.

Getting back to literary Winchester, in 1943 an original manuscript of *Le Morte d'Arthur* was discovered in the Winchester College library. This was appropriate since Thomas Malory named Winchester as the site of Camelot, though few agreed



Perhaps the tiniest bookstore I've ever been in—about the size of a small bedroom, though it did have a second floor.



It seems that every British city has at least one thriving book store downtown.



with him. His thinking may have been influenced by its having been the capital of Wessex. To further convince him, there's the famous Winchester Round Table, which is still on display. Even in Malory's day (1400s) it was obviously very old, and there was no such thing as dendrochronology to indicate otherwise, so why not take it at face value?



The Winchester Round Table has been determined to have been constructed around 1250, centuries after Arthur's supposed existence, by Edward I, who was an Arthurian enthusiast. It no doubt hangs so high on the wall to prevent people from carving their initials in it.

I'd arranged to stay at a B&B for a few nights after the TARS conference ended so I might have a little extra time to dig deeper into Winchester's interesting past and to stroll slowly through its pretty streets and many museums; it was well worth it, and I can recommend a visit.

## A Tale of Two Cities at ComFest

### By Scott Williams

On the converting of bambinos into bibliophiles, I stumbled upon a pop-up exhibit at ComFest <https://cbuslibraries.com/> this year entitled a Tale of Two Cities where I met Bryan Loar.



Bryan and Andrea Dixon are co-founders of Cbus Libraries: Exploring Central Ohio's Wealth of Libraries <https://cbuslibraries.com/>. They are on a roll helping to introduce free library books to little ones. Aldus members who are already doing Little Free Libraries <https://littlefreelibrary.org/> or want to join the movement here in Columbus, will want to visit their website pronto (see above), to see all they are doing.

You never know what you will find, hear, see, or smell inside Goodale Park during ComFest weekend, and this was certainly another case of that. Bryan and his volunteers built a chevron-shaped wooden structure with a "green-grass-healthy-environment" side and a "sterile-grey-ugly-concrete" side symbolic of the Tale of Two Cities choice we face creating our city's future.



Given the age of the library patrons utilizing the little free library's cubby holes found in the structure, perhaps the concept was not completely grasped. However, the children's books were. And many a child discovered a book they wanted to take home to read.

Upon visiting the Cbus Libraries website, I was surprised by the amazing little libraries network that Bryan and Andrea have spawned. Most important, I read stories of personal impact in which children reported how a book had changed their lives for the better. The Tale of Two Cities (Eco-Library) is now permanently located in the 934 Gallery at 934 Cleveland Avenue, Columbus, OH <http://www.934.gallery>.



# Booking in Mexico

## Story and photographs by George Cowmeadow Bauman

Why Mexico?

Because of Serendipity, pure and simple.

We'd heard of the central highlands towns of San Miguel and Guanajuato ten years ago from our friends Jayne and David, who took their travel-savvy daughters there on a low-cost vacation. They made the old colonial towns sound appealing, but we gave no thought to going ourselves. We had European countries yet to visit: Portugal, Italy, and Slovenia.

And so, with guidebooks and maps, we planned for Lisbon. At La Cascada Mexican restaurant in Logan last December, we had travel materials, books and maps spread out on our table, waiting for food. We'd met the owner, Ericka Ibarra, on previous visits. She came out that day, saw our vacation dream laid out and asked what we were doing.

"Planning our vacation in Portugal."

"Forget Portugal!" she exclaimed, with what we came to know as typical Mexican passion. "You should go visit my home town, San Miguel, in Mexico."

And folks, that fortuitous moment, combined with David and Jayne's enthusiastic support for the idea, took us to the old "silver cities" in the heart of Mexico.

In anticipation, we read Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz to get a feel, if dated, for their country. Graham Greene, D. H. Lawrence, Malcolm Lowry, and The Beats gave us a sense of *their Mexico*, in *their* time. We've read enough regional literature to understand that for us things would be different than those earlier ink spots on paper, but their writings were like seasoning in a good chilaquiles.

Then I found Tony Cohan's *On Mexican Time* (2002) when someone sold it to us at Acorn. Not only was it fairly recent and about an American in San Miguel, one of our two city destinations, Cohan's writing is marvelous, coming from a deep well of insight and thoughtfulness. We loved the book and highly recommend it.

The booking adventure began before we left Ohio ground.

At the John Glenn International airport, next to Delta's gate attendant's stand, I spied something I'd never seen before: a tiny cart of books available for "any amount of donation". The American Cancer Society sponsored it as a fundraiser for their Relay for Life program. Eight books had been left for others to choose from, generally a rather

forlorn lot. I wished I'd have known about it in advance and could have sent a couple of boxes' worth of good reading to the program.

Among the selections was bestselling author David Baldacci's brand new *The Fix*, featuring his Memory Man character. As my cousin had recommended this mystery not a month before, I wanted to read it, but it was a hardback and space was tight in my backpack. And I already had a paperback to read, Steve Berry's *The Romanov Connection*. Oh, well, those chips for a mid-flight snack would just have to be eaten as crumbs and I jammed the book in after leaving the Berry book and a donation for the ACS. There are priorities!

I enjoyed the Baldacci, especially since the character was first introduced wearing a rumpled Ohio State sweatshirt, having played football on a Buckeyes' national championship team, which was referenced several more times.

San Miguel was one of the two old cities in which we stayed a week. It was founded in the 16th century as one of the towns, which grew up around the heavy gold and silver mining. One of the mines still operates, and both cities draw outsiders. San Miguel has a large ex-pat population and thousands of middle-class Mexican tourists visit Guanajuato. The state of Guanajuato's economy is fairly strong, relying on mining, government, a forty thousand student university, and tourism.

We had a very busy vacation scheduled: walking around, exploring the towns, taking photos, siesta, people-watching, making journal observations, and sitting in cafés while we ate delicious, spicy foods.

And we did some booking, naturally.

First on the list of anyone's booking adventures in San Miguel would be the volunteer-run, bi-lingual public library, Biblioteca Publica Municipal, a cultural center of the city. All profits from the bookstore/gift shop, courtyard café, and concerts go to support the library's substantial charity work in town.

The library's bookstore should be a high priority. Alas, not for its book selection. They have only ten bookcases of tomes available. Four of them show great civic pride by featuring "Books by Local Authors", though most were by gringos. John Scherber alone must have had ten of his books on display. I confess to buying one, *The Book Doctor*, a murder mystery set in San Miguel, which was pretty good. He's written ten books in his "Murder in Mexico" series.

The other six bookcases contained used books in English, which must appeal to the substantial English-reading community of ex-pats. The books' most distinguishing feature is that they aren't alphabetized! There is no way to shop for Graham Greene's short stories of his





world travels or a Dickens or a Trollope.

But books aren't the primary reason to visit this shop.

No, when you are here, things begin looking up by looking up.



This fantastic mural on the upper walls and all over the ceiling of the bookstore is mind-blowing. The images are dizzying: bold colors splashed everywhere to tell unknown stories, though I did inquire about their message and researched online, unsuccessfully.

A nearby room also has been similarly decorated. These murals should be on the list of every "What to See in San Miguel"!

We threw our heads back and in awe gazed at various scenes playing out above us. Gobsnacked. We revisited this artistic extravaganza a few days later, unable to sate our curiosity and admiration for the work.

What a bookstore/library environment!



We spent also a week in Guanajuato, founded in the 16th century as a silver-mining town. The great wealth, which funded the European colonizers, was used partially to

build magnificent churches, museums, and other architectural wonders, including the University of Guanajuato.

Naturally, we visited the U of G and found their small bookstore. As with most college bookstores in the States these days, the books, in Spanish only, were regulated to the back so that T-shirts and mugs and other proprietary, high-profit products could seduce browsers. I confess I left with a U of G T-shirt since I couldn't find any English-language books to buy.



The old city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with a current population of about 73,000, plus a few thousand Mexican tourists who love this city. We didn't come across many Americans here, for which we were grateful. When we travel, we want to be immersed in local culture, local customs, local people.

Each afternoon we practiced *siesta*, as the locals did, returning to our AirBnB in the sky. We had to climb up three sets of uneven stone steps (38 in all) through twisting passageways to get "home". The apartment was very nice, especially the rooftop garden with a view where we spent a couple of hours in the afternoon reading and writing, and we always paid a visit to the nighttime view of the church of San Francisco, which was a baseball's throw away. Well, maybe when I was in high school I could have tossed a ball that far. OK, let's say an eight-iron golf shot away to the twin pink domes.

We knew we'd like the place immediately upon stepping in, for just to the right of the entrance was a tall and wide bookcase, filled with books in English. Linda reminded me that we needed to unpack and get settled more than exploring the *casa's* library. Maybe.

I had finished *The Fix* on the second flight, for we'd had lots of time to read that getaway day as Delta delayed our flight out of Atlanta for four hours, blaming it in succession on the weather, a missing flight crew, and then maintenance issues. Take your choice. Read your books.

So in the spirit of sharing, I placed it in the house

library there, and selected a classic: Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, an easy-to-carry paperback.

We strolled around town, specifically wandering to a bookstore recommended in the Moon Travel Guide for Guanajuato and San Miguel. The listing for La Libreria de Zagan said they had a large collection of books, including some in English. Sounded perfect, for all the other small bookstores we'd visited had little to none in English.

Along a narrow, cobblestoned street with uneven, cobblestoned two-foot-wide sidewalks we came to the given address, but no bookshop. In our Tarzan Spanish, I asked a man sitting in a doorway looking at his cellphone where La Libreria de Zagan was. He pointed across the street to an inauspicious entryway with a recessed door.

Though the glass on the door was etched with the name of the shop, we could see few books inside. Which was confirmed by the manager, Anna. She said in very broken English that the bookstore had moved for profit reasons: they were now making more money renting rooms in the new building than by selling books in the old building. "It's sad," she agreed, and shrugged.

We still looked around a bit, wanting to buy something to help support the non-rental side of the business.

A cozy bar with a few Art books and CDs was to the right. One woman slumped in front of her coffee. A small shaggy dog stretched in the middle of the room, panting against the day's heat, Mexican shops not providing air conditioning. His name was Baracka. I joked that she'd named him after our past president, which took her a minute to translate the words and the humor, but then she laughed along with me. She said that the name means "gift" in Arabic. The other room of the "bookstore" was a truly lovely, if empty, café. If it hadn't been such a beautiful day, we would have stayed inside and relaxed in La Libreria de Zagan. We bought a classical music CD by a Mexican group she recommended.

Another recommended bookstore was around the corner, La Libreria, but it was more of the same new Spanish books in the same editions seen in many of the shops, which all included many popular English-language authors such as Lovecraft and Gaiman, C. S. Lewis and Barbara Vine, in Spanish, rather like the Barnes & Noble chain of the same books in every shop from Fairbanks to Florida. The attendant did have about 50 English-language books, but I knew from her resignation as we walked to them that there would be nothing of interest, unless I needed an '80s guide to Pittsburgh—relevant only because we used to live there then—or a 40-year-old text on how to write a dissertation for an English doctorate!

The sidewalks are very narrow. On a beautiful Sunday afternoon, Guanajuato was crowded with pedestrians walking, talking, standing on those sidewalks or in shop doorways, considering whether to take home tamales, earrings, or a *libro* (book).

After a wonderful lunch of spicy foods in a plaza café, perfect for people-watching, we were wandering, which is a favorite activity when on an agenda-less vacation such as this one. We'd just found one of the tiny *librerias* (bookstores) populating the cities we visited. All of the bookshops had doors open to the street. No A/C anywhere. The bookstores' ubiquitous come-on was racks of comic-books on either side of their doorframe, all of them featuring characters with light-skinned, not brown, faces—the same with all the magazines we saw on display.

If the number of these miniscule bookstores was any indication, the locals were booklovers. They must have bought only new books, for we found no exclusively used-books bookstores, though we asked around in each city. The number of bookstores was wonderful, indicating a high interest in reading. The literacy rate for Mexicans is 94.5 % (the USA's is 86%).

The Mexicans must have excellent eyesight, for most of the shops were underlit by our standards. We noticed that many of the stores generally had low or no light until a customer walked in.

The entrances weren't more than six feet across, widening perhaps to about ten feet, and with a depth of perhaps just 25 feet, or less in some cases. Books along both sides up the walls, and across the back. Maybe one small bland display table near the back. To get past one another, browsers had to "*perdon*" their way around each other.

We were speaking about going into one, when we heard,

"Did I hear some English?" from a grizzle-faced guy in perfect English.

"Si, señor," and I laughed at my pitiable Spanish. "Tarzan Spanish" Linda called it.

So we became the blockers of the sidewalk-strollers as we introduced ourselves. "I'm Keith," said our new friend, offering his hand. We shook it and gave him "George" and "Linda" in return.

"Where are you from?" he asked.

"Columbus."

"Get out! I lived for 10 years in Columbus! From the late '70s through the early '80s!" How often we've run into Buckeyes around the world. On this trip alone, we came across at least a half-dozen former Columbusenos. I told him I owned a bookstore in Columbus.

"Where is it?"

"Grandview."

"Oh that place was a dump when I was there." Then he brightened and said, "A bookstore?! Do you know about the book fair being held today?"

"No!" I exclaimed with surprise and not a little bit of joy. I couldn't believe it.

"Yeah, it's just up around the corner," Keith said, "Come on, I'll show you!"

Sure enough, after a few minutes of working through the crowd on the streets, and twisting through a



few narrow, cobblestoned side streets, there it was: “Union de Libreros ‘Lucio Marmolejo’”.



Four white tents covered thousands of books, a book-browser's dream, unless your dream was for books in English. I asked, in broken Spanish, for English-language books, and the young, diffident bookseller took me to a stack of about 20 books, but nothing of interest at all. Several old Time-Life volumes, no fiction.



I tried to talk to each of the seemingly minimum-wage young people behind the tent counters, but none spoke English, nor appeared interested in the product they were selling, using their cell phones between customers instead of reading. I did see one older man duck into a tent from the back and scoop pesos out of a tub serving as a cash-box. Maybe he was the owner. I tried to talk with him, but he shook his head and walked away.



From my world travels, I have found that those who deal in literature are able to speak at least *un poco* English. But not here in Guanajuato, which seems rather impoverished, if charming and quaint and ancient. At least they have book fairs, and plenty of folks were looking through the table-offerings, a wonderful sight to this American bookseller. I like to bring home a book from each vacation, and I knew something would draw me to it. I browsed and listened for the call of text I'd understand, yet something of the flavor of Mexico.

Not five minutes later, in a stack of old magazines, I found my treasure. A 1901 issue of “Modern Mexico”, published in Mexico City and St. Louis, MO.



It shows 117 years' worth of wear and tear, but is intact and readable. The many advertisements and articles are sometimes in Spanish, sometimes in English. The Mexican Mining and Development Company urges in an ad: “Invest in Mexico. Look to Tropical Mexico! Invest Now at Low Water Mark.” While the Aztec Plantation Company wants investors for their Mexican Sugar and Rubber Plantation. I was thrilled with this unique souvenir.

Guanajuato is a little Cervantes crazy. No, it's a *lot* Cervantes crazy! All around the city are statues and posters and sculptures of the author of *Don Quixote*. There's even a museum, the Museo Iconográfico del Quijote, which is dedicated to the story of Don Quixote as he has been represented in murals, statues, and other forms of





visual media by many artists from all over the world.

Each year the Festival Internacional Cervantino is held here, with many performance sites staging plays, ballet, and operas regarding Cervantes' works. It's a most impressive adoration. There's even a Cervantes Theater as well, but unfortunately no performances were scheduled during our visit. For *Don Quixote* freaks, this city is a must visit.



The festival's book-tents called again; we marveled at the number of people buying books there, when down the street their premier bookshop couldn't get enough business to avoid becoming a rental agency.

Wanting to see more of Guanajuato than our ramblings were taking us, we booked a tour of the city with Susana Ojeda Orranti, a native. We've hired many guides over the years and countries, but she may have been the best. She was a sweetie, and we highly recommend her to anyone interested.

She walked us up and down and all around the 16th century city. We stopped and sampled at food stalls and climbed to a lookout over the city. But she saved the best for last.

"I have a surprise for you at the end of the tour."

And what a surprise! She took us to the University of Guanajuato's (1732) old library, and not only got us in, she took us back into the impressive stacks where we were introduced to "Paco", whose card reads "Ing. José Francisco Gonzalez Garcia, the Coordinator de la Biblioteca Historica at the Biblioteca Armando Olivares".



My spine was tingling.

He had a very craggy face, and Linda quipped that he looked a bit like Don Quixote. Paco was quite animated as he talked with us about the library and the precious books

housed there, "about 60,000" of them he informed us, and added that they were no longer acquiring books.

"This collection would have incalculable value, sir," I enthused, gazing around.

He nodded and agreed that no price could be attached to the library.

He proudly showed us the bottom of text-blocks, where an elaborate image was stamped to prove library ownership.



"Do many scholars come here to do research?" I asked him, looking around for heads bent over rare texts, but we were the only book-rats around.

"No, not many."

The library, built in the 17th century, was originally a hospital and then served as an orphanage before becoming the home to these ancient tomes early in the 20th century.

Paco has been the director there for 20 years, and seemed almost as pleased to see us as we were to greet him. He materialized out of a wall of books as though he was one with them, and assumed a human persona to deal with us. Pulling on purple vinyl gloves, he shepherded us in to the cool atmosphere of a bibliophile's dream-room. "It is cold," he smiled, "and we have machine to control the..." and he couldn't come up with the English word for humidity, so I provided it for him. "Just so," he responded. "We have to be careful with humidity and light."

What happened next was amazing. He began pulling pre-selected books off a table to show us, each one more fabulous than the previous.

One of the finest was an illuminated book featuring delicate fold-outs. He opened it to several images, and paused at an amazing one that showed the Spaniards image of the people they found in Mexico, including one of their leaders—a hand-drawn, illustrated, ethnological





representation of an Aztec chieftain.



Catholic church.

Paco concluded our 45-minute presentation by saying, "I am an engineer by training, and these two books are my favorites," "Early Leonardo da Vinci," he said with great pride, opening the book to the famous illustration.

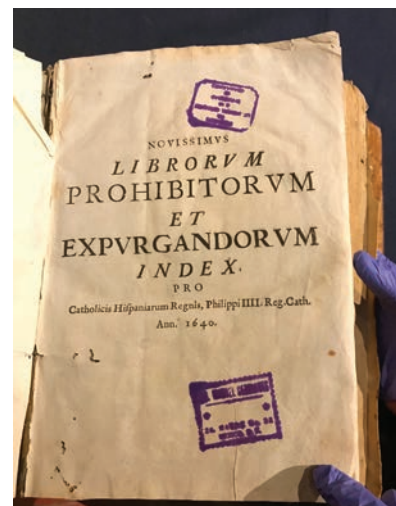


Many of the books were one-of-a-kind, including this beautifully done volume on parchment.

We expressed amazement as he showed us books featuring two kinds of censorship—one with blacked-out text and another with blank paper glued over offending passages.

"Is it possible to read the words under the paper?" I asked.

He laughed and said that he had a machine that has done just that.



"What is under there?"

"Just morals."

I asked him how the library had gotten such forbidden texts. In translation from Susana, he said with a smirk, "The black market!"

Then he smiled and showed us the book of the Index of books prohibited by the

Beside us was a 3'x3'x3' safe. He patted it and said, "In this box are the very best books the library owns! And he rattled off the authors far too fast for me to record him, though I did catch that a first edition of a Newton text rested inside, as well as a first edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species*.

"That would be the 1859 edition published in London by John Murray?" I asked, smart-aleck that I am. Paco looked stunned that I knew those details, and then said, "You are very knowledgeable!" I didn't tell him that Jack-in-the-back at Acorn and I had been having a conversation with a customer exactly about this first edition the previous week, so it was fresh in my mind.

Patting the safe, he said laughingly, "If I open this box, alarms all over the city will sound and we would all be thrown in prison!"

I asked how long he'd been at the library.

"Twenty years," he replied, taking care to replace the books precisely where he'd picked them up. "And my father was the director librarian before me. Like him, I was trained as an engineer. But when he retired, I came here, and he motioned broadly to the large, book-lined room surrounding us.

He looked at us intently and declared, "I have a passion for books!"

We shook hands as I fervently agreed with my new Mexican compadre.

And now to settle in with Aldine Don Rice's book, *On the Road in San Miguel*, about his visit to San Miguel a few years ago.

Keeping vacations alive in one's mind and heart is always a high priority as we settle back into what passes as a normal life here in Columbus, and there's nothing like one's photographs and a book to do just that.

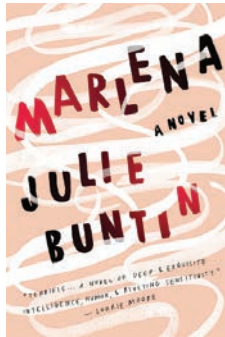


## Members' News

Two Aldus Society members, Julie Buntin and Gabe Habash, recently had their debut novels published by Henry Holt & Company and Coffee House Press, respectively. The couple lives in Brooklyn and both work in the publishing industry in New York City.

Julie Buntin is the director of writing programs at Catapult, a New York-based literary workshop and publisher, and teaches fiction writing at Marymount Manhattan College. Gabe Habash is the deputy reviews editor for *Publishers Weekly* and received his MFA from New York University.

Below are abridgements of reviews for each of the books. Kudos to Julie and Gabe.



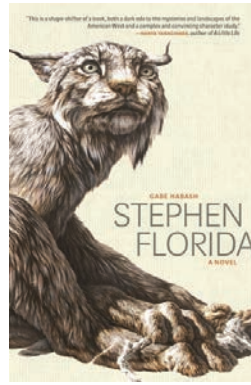
Julie Buntin's *Marlena* (NY: Henry Holt and Co., 2017) was published in April 2017 and follows the relationship of two teenage girls in northern Michigan

What gives this narrative its force is the accumulation of so much potential and the absolute crushing of it. Part of that is circumstantial, the specific conditions Cat and Marlena are up against, and part is more broadly existential. Cat's safe and lackluster adulthood can't compare with her adolescence, which was at once not enough and too much. She's motivated to leave for New York, but in the sections set in the present, her grief has generated numbness so blanketing it renders even the city flat and generic. Drinking seems to be the one thing that brings her to life as it paradoxically deadens her.

-Excerpt of review from *The New York Times Book Review* April 18, 2017

Buntin's story will remind you of your childhood, your first time sneaking out, the first time you realize drugs were around, the first time you noticed someone looking at you lustfully. But the novel is also a love letter to understanding motherhood and your own mother. It's infused with a longing to get back the time you wasted being embarrassed by your parents. And that is how Buntin has cemented her first novel: steeped in nostalgia, as a crush-worthy visit to a childhood that is so very unhealthy and so very romantic in many ways.

-Excerpt of review in *The Washington Post* April 25, 2017



Gabe Habash's *Stephen Florida* (Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press, 2017) is a first-person narrative about the protagonist's final year at college and the all-consuming focus of winning the Division IV national wrestling championship.

It's difficult to know when to trust Stephen, the title character of Gabe Habash's powerhouse debut novel –he's either given to compulsive lies, or his grip on reality

is considerably less strong than he himself is. He's hard to know, but he's also one of the most unforgettable characters in recent American fiction.

Habash is also adept at portraying the landscape of North Dakota and the world of college wrestling in a way that draws in readers unfamiliar with either. Even if all you know about wrestling comes from the likes of "Macho Man" Randy Savage (oh, yeah!), It's hard not to be taken in when Stephen waxes philosophical about the sport. "Wrestling is a series of momentary ejaculations, passions that originate and evolve based on their relationship to one another's passions," Stephen explains. "Wrestling is, at its core, one passion set against another passion for the purpose of determining which is stronger." Stephen's erudition – he speaks with a vocabulary that's not typical for a college kid – is part of what makes him such a memorable character; he's a possible genius who underachieves in every way except wrestling.

In the end, it's difficult not to root for Stephen, despite his impulsiveness and stubborn single-mindedness. And it's almost impossible not to admire Habash's starkly beautiful and moving novel. *Stephen Florida* is brash and audacious; it's not just one of the best novels of the year, it's one of the best sports books to come along in quite a while. It's an accomplishment that's made all the more stunning by Habash's status as a debut novelist: it's his first time on the mat, and he puts on a clinic.

-Reviewed on *NPR* June 7, 2016

Habash has created a fascinating protagonist in Stephen, a hard-driven athlete with a convincingly thoughtful mind – though an erratic one, too. Just when you think you've got Stephen pegged, he surprises you with a meditation on Mary Beth, his brief love interest, or on Linus, a fellow wrestler with whom he has a strange and strained relationship. But most important, I think, is the way Habash understands the limits of his subject matter. He does not try to extrapolate Stephen's narrative into some all-encompassing portrayal of ambition and hubris, but remains firmly in the realm of this particular boy in this particular moment.

-Reviewed in *The New York Times Book Review* July 19, 2017



# The Affair of the Necklace: The Scandalous Memoirs of the Countess de la Motte

By Matthew Schweitzer

In 1784, on the eve of the Revolution, when France was a powder keg waiting for a spark to ignite it, a curious and fascinating scandal took place within the gilded confines of the Royal Court of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Some would later say it lit the match that would explode into one of the most important and bloody events of the 18th century. The scandal involved the Queen, a powerful cardinal, a cunning con-woman of royal decent and dubious character, and a fabulous diamond necklace worth a king's ransom.

The necklace, originally intended as a gift from King Louis XV to his mistress Madame du Barry, consisted of 647 flawless diamonds (worth in excess of \$14 million today) and was created by the royal jewelers Boehmer and Bassenge. Before it could be purchased, the King died of smallpox and his mistress, allegedly detested by Louis XVI, was banished from court forever. With Madame Du Barry exiled, the jewelers sought to convince the new Queen Marie Antoinette to become its owner, but she repeatedly declined. The jewelers became desperate to find a buyer for the necklace as the interest being paid on the diamonds alone was close to forcing them into bankruptcy.



Meanwhile Cardinal Louis de Rohan, one of the most powerful figures in France and hopeful candidate for the position of prime minister, found himself at a frustrating career impasse. None other than Marie Antoinette, who held the Cardinal in the utmost contempt, deliberately thwarted Rohan's political aspirations at every turn. He was accused of spreading slanderous rumors about her as well as having made some ill-advised lewd commentary regarding her mother the Austrian Empress Maria Theresa. Rohan was desperate for a way to heal the rift between himself and the Queen and eagerly sought a means to do so which would place him within reach of his prize.

As fate would have it, at precisely this time, there appeared a young woman who came to the Parisian court with claims of royal lineage. It was said she sought restitution of her family's estate, which had been seized years before by the crown, after her father had been accused of publishing pamphlets critical of the monarchy. Jeanne de

Saint-Remy de Valois, the so-called Countess de la Motte, claimed to be descended from the royal house of Valois and had come to Versailles ostensibly to seek an audience with the Queen and obtain royal patronage. In reality, she most likely came in order to put into play a confidence scheme to make money along with her husband, the self-styled Comte de la Motte. Jeanne quickly found what appeared to be a way into the exclusive circle of the Parisian nobility by falling in with a disreputable gigolo who happened to have an aristocratic pedigree, Rétaux de Villette. Villette was reputed to be a notorious pimp who plied his trade amongst the lesser nobility at court and dabbled in forgery. It was his talent for forgery and scheming that brought him together with Jeanne de la Motte who saw in him an opportunity to swindle a fortune from her contemptuous but affluent peers.

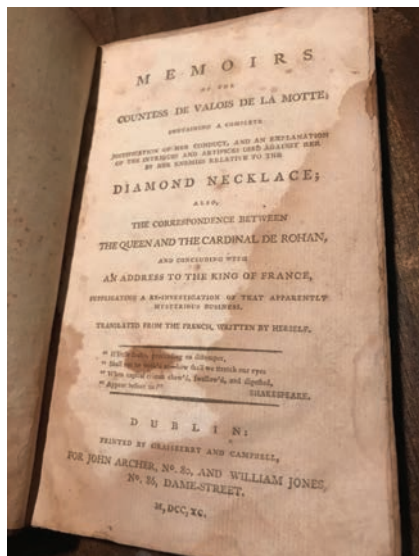
Jeanne would later claim that it was Rétaux de Villette who first hatched the scheme that would ultimately seal their fate and write them into history. Upon learning of the Diamond Necklace, Villette and the Countess soon fell in together in a plot to deceive Cardinal Rohan into buying it for the Queen as a means of reconciliation.



He hoped the Necklace would put him back on good terms with the King and virtually assure his appointment as prime minister. The Countess seduced her way into Cardinal Rohan's circle by becoming his mistress, of which it was said he had many, and by feeding useful salacious information to Villette. Using artfully forged letters appearing to come from Marie Antoinette, but in actuality written by Villette, the Countess was able to convince Cardinal Rohan that the Queen secretly desired the forbidden Necklace, but had been forced to spurn its purchase by her husband who sought to fend off accusations of royal excess.

With Villette's letters in the Queen's name, Jeanne was able to convince the Cardinal that she had been taken under Antoinette's wing as close friend and confidant. She persuaded him to spend lavish amounts of money on her in order to foment a closer and friendlier relationship with the Queen, with the ultimate goal to mend the relationship and secure his position at court. As time went on, the Cardinal vacillated between suspicion and desperation, even demanding that Jeanne submit herself to the scrutiny of his "spiritual advisor," the colorfully nefarious Count Cagliostro, likely a master confidence man himself, seemed to quickly sniff out the Countess's scheme to defraud the Cardinal. Rather than denounce her to Rohan, he blackmailed her into giving him a cut of the profits! Cagliostro, a Freemason, magician, and a reputed member of the Illuminati, could merit an entire article himself, but his relationship with the

Diamond Necklace Affair was mostly tangential to the main players. Nonetheless, he too would ultimately be wrapped up in the plot and its inevitable downfall.



In what was probably the most brazen act of deception by the plotters, Cardinal Rohan became concerned about the validity of his suspicious correspondence with the Queen. He demanded a face-to-face meeting with Antoinette herself in order to convince him to complete the purchase of the Necklace. In the Grove of Venus in the gardens outside Versailles, Rohan

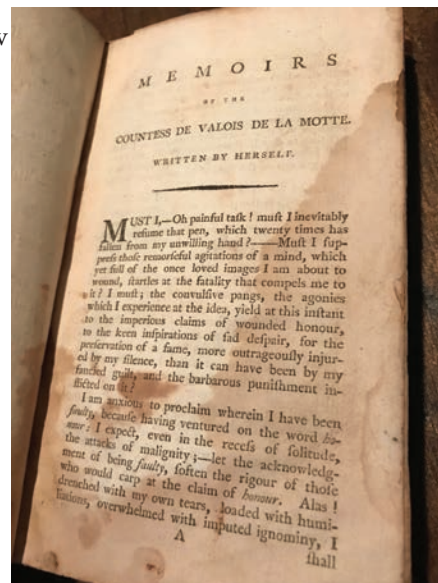
indeed met “The Queen” and was ultimately convinced of the genuineness of her desire for him to act as her go-between for the acquisition of the Necklace. To his eternal shame and embarrassment, Rohan would later learn at trial that “The Queen” had in fact been a “body double” played by a prostitute and street performer named Nicole Leguay d’Oliva, who bore a striking resemblance to the Queen herself.

Now armed with Cagliostro’s approval and the convincing role played by d’Olivia, the Countess persuaded Rohan to front an enormous sum of money as an initial payment on the Diamond Necklace for the Queen. Once in her hands, the most brilliant piece of jewelry perhaps ever created disappeared forever. It was likely broken up in order to sell the pieces secretly on the black market. Jeanne, along with Rétaux de Villette and her husband the Comte de la Motte, quickly vanished and laid low. They spent their ill-gotten gains while continuing to try to deceive Cardinal Rohan as long as possible to prevent the ploy from becoming public. However, public it became once Rohan realized that the Countess and the Necklace were long gone and that he had been swindled for a staggering amount. He attempted to buy the silence of the jewelers Boehmer and Bassenge to contain the scandal, but once the King and Queen learned of it, and the fatefully scurrilous role attributed to the Queen, the proverbial gig was up.

Rohan and Cagliostro were immediately arrested and sent to the Bastille. The Countess and the others attempted to flee France for a safer haven and to avoid the dark cloud of retribution quickly gathering over them. The Countess and Rétaux de Villette were captured and imprisoned. Her husband managed to escape to Italy where he would remain in hiding. The Queen, already seen by the people as largely superficial and indifferent to their plight, soon became the focus of the tempest that now erupted in Paris. The scandal

become sensationalized in the press and quickly became known as “L’Affaire du Collier de la Reine,” the Affair of the Queen’s Necklace. Almost from the start, despite her protestations of innocence and ignorance of the entire affair, the Queen was seen by many as being guilty of excess and financial extravagance with scant regard for the welfare of her country or its people. After a raucous public trial, both Rohan and Cagliostro were acquitted while the Countess de la Motte and Rétaux de Villette were found guilty and sentenced to prison for life. The Countess was also sentenced to suffer the added indignity of a public whipping and to be branded with the mark of a thief, forever proclaiming her guilt. Despite being found guilty, many still believed the La Mottes to have been used as dupes by the Queen in order to further humiliate her enemy Cardinal Rohan. They were quick to accuse the Royal family of a conspiracy and cover-up. These rumors persisted long after the trial ended and fed the flames that would culminate with the storming of the Bastille only a few years later.

In the aftermath of the trial, Countess de la Motte was sent to prison from which she promptly escaped and fled to England. There she was taken in and received almost as a celebrity. In 1789, she published her first book, which was quickly translated into English entitled



*The Memoirs of the Countess de la Motte, Containing a Complete Justification of Her Conduct and an Explanation of the Intrigues and Artifices Used Against Her By Her Enemies Relative to the Diamond Necklace Affair.* Her book was a hit and was reprinted numerous times including this 1790 Dublin edition. Each of the key players in the Affair went on to publish their memoirs in an attempt to clear their names and to take the opportunity to accuse the others of intrigue and complicity in the scheme.

Shocking and captivating in its time, the scandal sent shockwaves through France that generated such anger and contempt for the Queen and eroded support for the Bourbon monarchy. Years after the revolutionary fervor had quieted and the Reign of Terror had finally subsided, many looked back on The Diamond Necklace Affair as the starting point of the Revolution. It was certainly one of the events that would ultimately doom Marie Antoinette to her fate on the scaffold in 1793.



# In Memorium

We lost two Aldus members since May, Bill Radloff and Ron Beach, a great loss to the Aldus Society.

## Bill Radloff

William “Bill” Radloff, passed away peacefully June 7, 2017 at Sunrise of Gahanna with his family at his side. Born on October 21, 1928 in Chicago, he was preceded in death by his parents, William and Anna Nolan Radloff and brother James. An Army veteran of the Korean War era, Bill was a longtime member of Cross and Cockade and the Aldus Society. After retiring from Lucent Technologies, Bill established The Little Book Shop in Westerville. He was a historian of World War I aviation and an avid collector of Ohio history, fine literature and poster art. He enjoyed Otterbein theater, music of every variety, Monday evenings with the charismatic group at St Paul, and the thrill of discovering a mint first edition (dust cover intact) of a collectible book. And he hated the Borman Expressway. But, most of all, he loved his family. Bill is survived by his sons, William, David, Paul (Jennie), Adam (Jackie) and John; his grandchildren, Joseph (Heather), Luke, Jia and Schwen; his sister, Catherine (Tom) Daly; many nieces and nephews and former wife, Pat. Mass of Christian Burial was held at 10:30 a.m. Monday at St Paul Catholic Church, 313 N. State St., Westerville, OH. Interment Resurrection Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Honor Flight Columbus, PO Box 12036, Columbus, OH 43036. Remembrances and condolences may be shared at [www.HillFuneral.com](http://www.HillFuneral.com)

-Columbus (OH) *Dispatch*, (OH) – Obituaries / News page 8B June 9, 2017

Memories from our members:

*I saw this Facebook post yesterday and asked Kassie if I could share it with Aldus . For those of you who knew Bill, and for those of you who didn't, this is a beautiful and heartfelt memory. – Lois*

*“It’s the seemingly small, kind things we do in our lives that end up being big things for others, and most of the time without us knowing. It’s what I thought of today at the funeral of Bill Radloff, who owned a used/rare bookshop in Westerville, a shop that gave me endless hours of escape. I’d arrive at say 1 pm on a Saturday and then it would be 5 pm, as if I’d gone through the wardrobe into Narnia those four hours. Daily life vanished. I’d select a stack of books he’d always super discount, and I’d come away so happy. Little did he know the joy his out-of-the-way, struggling bookshop gave me. Thank you Bill for this that was a big thing for me. Rest in peace.” – Kassie Rose*

*I feel like I’ve lost an uncle. He always had a twinkle in his eyes especially when he talked about his lady friend. I can’t help but believe there was a link between his demise and the selling of the shop. – Deb*

## Ron Beach

Ronald E. Beach, originally of Wharton and Columbus, currently of Wethersfield, CT, lost a brief battle with cancer last Sunday, July 30, 2017. An avid tennis player, book collector and music enthusiast, active member of the Sinclair Lewis and Aldus Societies, the Wethersfield and Connecticut State Library Boards, and a Paul Harris Fellow in Rotary International, Ron will leave a hole in the hearts of his family and friends, his Labrador Owen, his opponents on the court and all those who knew him. He was, overall, a genuinely kind person, and his many small corners of the world are forever made better for his place in them. No services were held as Ron requested his ashes be spread on the beaches of the Outer Banks and some of his favorite tennis courts. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to Stag Vets ([stagvetsinc.org](http://stagvetsinc.org)).

-Columbus (OH) *Dispatch*, page 8B, August 6, 2017

## Do Lunch with the Aldines

Aldus women are invited to link up for lunch on periodic Saturdays during the year in an informal and friendly setting at the MCL Restaurant and Bakery in Kingsdale Shopping Center in Upper Arlington.

Coordinated by Catherine Bennett, the “Lady Aldines” gather for lunch in an open and unstructured discussion on anything from current events, hobbies, family, movies, vacations, and, of course, books. The smaller group and setting provides the opportunity for women members to get to know each other outside of the monthly Aldus meetings and activities.

The Lady Aldines will meet at MCL at noon on October 21, 2017, and again on January 20th, 2018. The schedule is set for quarterly meetings on the third Saturdays of the month. Watch for notices of upcoming luncheons in your Aldus e-mails.

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## 2017 Annual Booklover’s Auction and Holiday Dinner December 14, 2017

Looking for book treasures? The annual Aldus Society Members’ Auction and Holiday Dinner is coming soon! Mark your calendar, today! **Thursday, December 14th at La Scala.**



The Aldus silent auction is our only fundraiser event. Spend an evening bidding against your friends for choice books and book-related items, enjoying a delicious meal, adding to your personal collection, or acquiring items for gifts.

Look through your own collection for one to three books or book-related items that other members are likely to want for their collections. Auction items can be delivered to Debra Jul, 946 Havendale Drive, Columbus, (614) 753-5926.

Cash contribution checks to aid in the purchase of quality raffle items should be made out to The Aldus Society and mailed to Aldus Society, P.O. Box 1150, Worthington, OH 43085-1150. Please note on your check that your donation supports the purchase of raffle prizes.

Funds raised through the auction, cash contributions and the selling of raffle tickets support quality Aldus programming and the annual Ravneberg Memorial Lecture. Your donation to the Ravneberg fund may be tax deductible; donation acknowledgment forms will be made available for you.

The buffet dinner will be followed by the announcement of raffle winners, the recognition of the 2017 Carol Logue Award winner, and auction winners collecting their treasures.

Aldus member and guest dinner tickets: \$45 per person. Non-members, \$55.

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## Aldus 2018 Programs

January - Aldus Collects, a perennial favorite

February - Alan Farmer: *History of Text*

March - Marcia Bartusiak: *History of Science*

April - TBA

May - Damon Jagers: *Research Libraries*

