

The
Aldus
Society

Aldus Society Notes

Celebrating Books!

Winter 2025

Volume 25, No. 1

2024 Aldus Society Holiday Dinner and Live Auction

On December 5, 2024, at the Brookside Country Club Aldus members and guests enjoyed a delicious buffet dinner and a chance to bid on the auction items, including the marvelous Biblio-quilt by Margo Thacker.



After the usual bidding war for this year's Biblio-quilt, winner Emerson Gilbert examines his prize with Biblio-quilter Margo Thacker



Loisa Celebrezze, Jan Sorensen, Susan Houchin, and Tricia Herban enjoy coffee after dinner



Geoff Smith, David Brightman, and Tom Metz peruse the auction items

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** (unless otherwise announced). Socializing at 7:00 p.m. Free parking on Jefferson or behind Thurber House and at State Auto rear parking lot (between 11th St. and Washington).*

The Aldus Society

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The 2024 Carol Logue Biblio-fellowship Award: Emerson Gilbert

The recipient of the Carol Logue Biblio-fellowship Award for this year is **Emerson Gilbert**.

The Aldus Society gives the Biblio-fellowship Award each year - but what is biblio-fellowship? It is sharing our enjoyment of books - all aspects of books - with other book-loving people. For Aldus members, it is socializing at the monthly program meetings, having dinner with the speaker beforehand. It is the women members who meet monthly to visit and share their recent reading discoveries. It is people who get together for coffee, or who go on group field trips to libraries or other places of interest to book-lovers. It's having great Board members who organize the Holiday Party, as well as the Summer Book Swap that gets us together in the off-season and gives us a prize to take home. Biblio-fellowship is the friendships that can develop among people who share an interest in books.

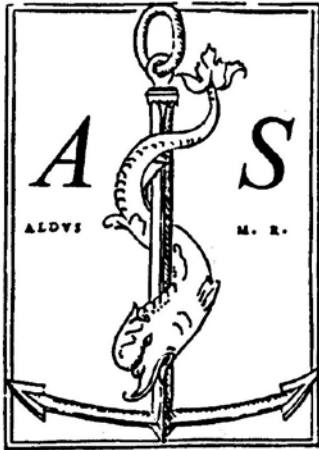
Emerson and his wife Carol joined the Aldus Society shortly after it was founded in 2000. They attended Bob Tauber's talk on the Logan Elm Press and were hooked. A year later, Emerson was on the Board of Trustees. Over the years he has served as Treasurer several times and was President in 2014-2015. In 2023, he volunteered for the vacant position of Membership Chair, which landed him back on the Board of Trustees. He and Carol have been loyal, active members of Aldus over the last 24 years. We say "Thanks" to Emerson for his contributions to biblio-fellowship.

Congratulations, Emerson!



Emerson Gilbert receives the Logue Biblio-fellowship award from Nancy Campbell while Carol Gilbert and Bill Evans watch the ceremony

A New Logo for the Aldus Society



The
Aldus
Society

Celebrating Books!

A picture may not be worth a thousand words, but it is a compelling visual interpretation of the words that accompany it. For this very reason, the Aldus board has determined to update the Society's visual image, adopting a circular representation of books lovingly crammed onto a bookshelf. At a glance, one is invited to place books upright or sideways, and to just grab one out and start reading!

But our Society has always honored books and invited book lovers into fellowship, hence, a few words on the logo chosen by the Society's founders in the year 2000. The intertwined logo of the dolphin and the anchor refer to the Renaissance expression, *festina lente*, which means "make haste slowly." That was the motto of Aldus Manutius, a Venetian printer, credited with the creation of *italic type*—an invention which allowed for much compacted texts and the subsequent development of *libri portatiles*, forerunners of today's pocket books. Aldus' press first introduced this new typeface in a 1501 octavo edition of Virgil. Aldus is further credited with developing the modern use of the semicolon and the modern appearance of the comma. Thus, it is easy to see why our founders chose the name of Aldus Manutius for our Aldus Society—and while we no longer memorialize him in a logo that paid homage to the printer's *device* of the Aldine Press, we continue to pursue a greater understanding of "all things bookish" and to honor this great High Renaissance printer through our name!

Aldus Cookbook

To help celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Aldus Society, we would like to do our own community cookbook, and we need your help.

As you can see in the exhibit <https://library.osu.edu/exhibits/essential-ingredients-cookbooks-as-history>, a cookbook can be many things. For the Aldus community, we can maybe blaze a new trail for a community cookbook. Cooking skills are not even needed to participate!

Please consider contributing:

- Recipes along with any story behind the recipe – if aunt Millie's meatloaf recipe got uncle Carl to propose, we want to know that
- Essential kitchen tips – in pinch, you can swap sour cream, yogurt, or heavy cream when you're baking
- Pantry supplies every kitchen needs – did you know that much like tomato paste that you can find jars of pepper paste in Middle Eastern grocery stores?
- Recommendations for the best books and stories where food was an integral part of the story – there's got to be at least one Agatha Christie short story or novel for that...
- Essays or thoughts on food/dining/or your family story around the table

Some recipe categories to get you thinking:

- Snacks and appetizers
- Beverages
- Soups and stews
- Vegetables and salads
- Yeast bread
- Quick breads and muffins
- Sandwiches
- Cookies
- Cakes and desserts
- Legumes and rice
- etc.

If you would like to contribute or have suggestions for what we should include, please email us at tgthacker@gmail.com by the end of January.

Margo Thacker

Program Recaps

September Program

Dan Sinykin and *Big Fiction*

On Thursday, September 12, 2024, at the Thurber Center Dan Sinykin spoke to Aldus about his ambitious, sweeping, blockbuster of a book, *Big Fiction*, examining how changes in the publishing industry have affected fiction, literary form, and what it means to be an author. We had an inside look at the industry's daily routines, personal dramas, and institutional crises, and he revealed how conglomeration has shaped what kinds of books and writers are published. He talked about how, as multinational conglomerates consolidated the industry through the late 20th century, the business of literature—and literature itself—transformed.



October Program

Angus Fletcher and *Wonderworks*

On Thursday, October 10, 2024, at the Thurber Center, Angus Fletcher discussed his book *Wonderworks: The 25 Most Powerful Inventions in the History of Literature* (Simon & Schuster, 2021), which details the mental health and wellbeing benefits of over two dozen literary breakthroughs from ancient Sumer to the present day.

Fletcher has dual degrees in neuroscience (BS, University of Michigan) and literature (PhD, Yale). His research employs a mix of laboratory experiment, literary history and rhetorical theory to explore the psychological effects—cognitive, behavioral, therapeutic—of different narrative technologies. His work has been described as the work of a “polymath” who combines “a profound knowledge of world literature” with “a deep knowledge of modern psychology and of neuroscience.”

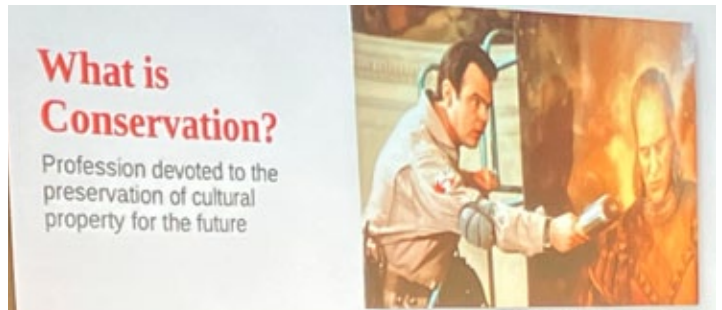


November Program

Sarah Casto on Conservation of Paper and Photographs

We came together once again on Thursday, November 14, 2024, at the Thurber Center to hear Sarah Casto, Paper and Photograph Conservator for the OSU Libraries discuss the conservation and care of paper-based and photographic collections, which begins with understanding the materials that make up these physical objects. At the OSUL she and her Preservation Department colleagues contribute to the stewardship and preservation of the Special Collections.

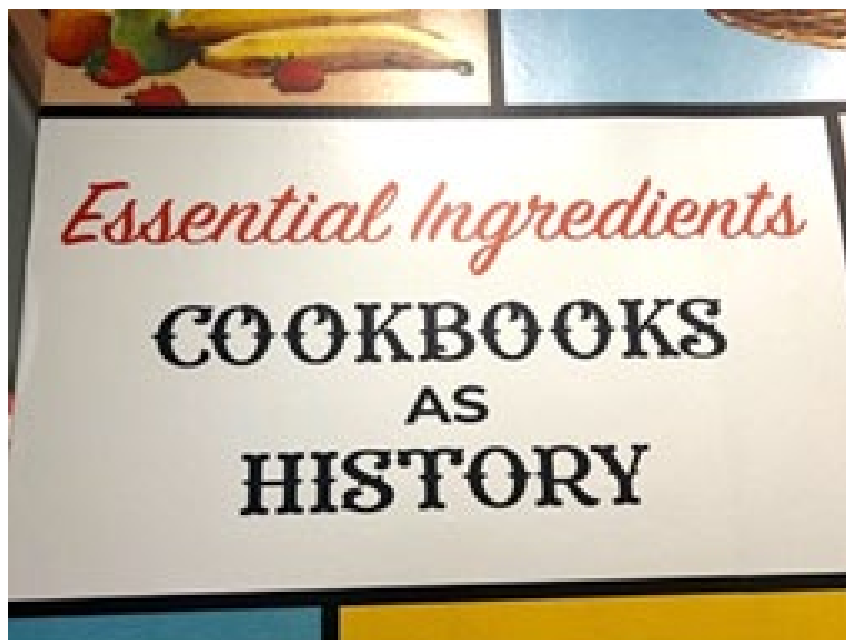
Previously, she was Assistant Conservator at the George Eastman Museum in Rochester, New York and Photograph Conservation Fellow at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth, Texas. She received her M.A./C.A.S. in Art Conservation from SUNY Buffalo State University and BFA in Photography from Bowling Green State University.



Ohio State Rare Books & Manuscripts Library

Cookbooks Exhibition

Photos by George Cowmeadow Bauman



“Cookbooks are the history of an epoch. They show how people prepared and ate the ingredients available to them. Cookbooks provide answers to social, political, and economic questions about the society for which they were written. They are an Essential Ingredient to preserving our past and enhancing our future.” — Julia Child

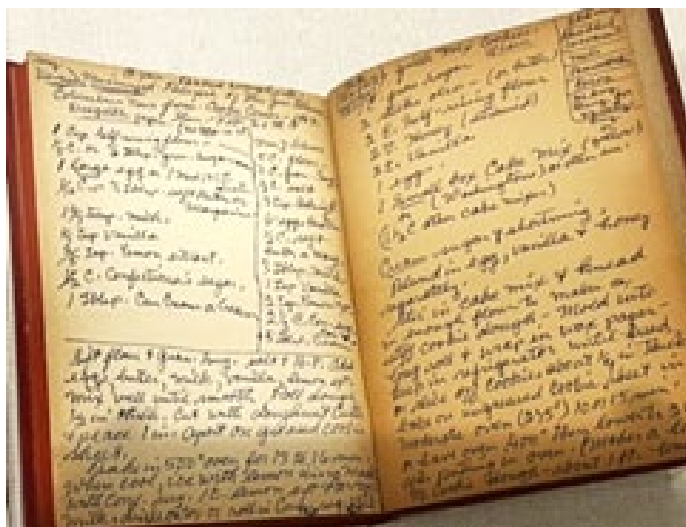
On October 27th, Aldus was invited to a guided tour of an amazing exhibition of cookbooks from the extensive OSU Rare Books & Manuscripts Library. Thirteen Aldines attended.

Visitors were greeted with the following:

Cookbooks are everywhere. Many people own at least one. You find them in bookshops and thrift stores. They are frequently given as gifts and passed through generations. Yet most of us think of them as just collections of recipes, unaware of what else they can reveal.

Drawing from the Rare Books & Manuscripts cookbook collection of nearly 10,000 volumes, this exhibit celebrates more than 200 years of American cookbooks and their unique ability to offer windows into our culture and history. “*Essential Ingredients*” explores cookbooks as a lens for understanding many aspects of our past and present, including social movements, global foodways, local communities, international crises, technological advancements, and personal stories.

This exhibition was curated by Jolie Braun, Associate Professor and Curator of Modern Literature and Manuscripts and Elizabeth Hewitt, Professor and Chair, Department of English.



Authors in Our Midst: John M. and C. Mehrl Bennett

By Emerson Gilbert



John and C. Merle (Cathy) Bennett, Authors in Our Midst

Chapbooks, Mail Art, artistamps, Luna Bisonte Prods, and Lost and Found Times. You may be familiar with each of these, but if you aren't, you can learn about each from Dr. John M. Bennett and Cathy Mehrl Bennett, the quiet couple who often sit in the front row at Aldus meetings. You know them well from their avant-garde poetry which has been published in Aldus Society Notes. Their work has been published, exhibited, performed, and delivered to mailboxes worldwide.

John and Cathy are the Authors in Our Midst for this issue of *Aldus Society Notes*. They met in the mail art network around 1978 (John didn't know Cathy was a woman until later, as she went by "C. Mehrl") and have forged a life together, lives that have focused on avant-garde writing and art.

John joined the faculty at The Ohio State University in 1969, where he was Professor of Spanish and founding Curator of the Rare Books and Manuscripts (RBMS) Library's Avant Writing Collection. He lived in Japan as a child, where his father was an anthropologist, and in México as an exchange student. He graduated from Washington University in St. Louis with degrees in English, Spanish, and Latin American Studies, and received his Ph.D. in Latin American literature from UCLA. He is a prolific writer and promoter of avant-garde poetry, publishing over 500 books and chapbooks of his own work in the United States and internationally, mostly in Europe and Latin America.

Cathy received a B.A. in art from Clarke University, Dubuque, Iowa, and earned an M.A. via "Mail Art"



John Bennett



C. Merle (Cathy) Bennett

participation. She began writing poetry and collaborating on poetry with John after they became a couple and shares her poetry and art through the international mail art network of writers and artists. Mail art is anything that can be sent in the mail; Cathy produces artistamp sheets, little booklets of her art/poetry, artist trading cards, painted postcards, collages and hand-carved rubber stamp prints. She maintains an archive of mail art received from her mail art network contacts; much of her collection is at the OSU RBMS Library and a partial collection from 2018, at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art.

The independent publishing house Luna Bisonte Prods, founded by John in 1974, publishes avant-garde and experimental poetry, writing, and art which “challenge the mainstream of literary norms,” and is a means for artists and writers from around the world to distribute their work, though the LBP press has been winding down in the past few years. John says the name, Luna Bisonte Prods, “is symbolic in several ways of the idea of a union of opposites.” Cathy handles most of the technical side of book and cover design for the “publish on demand” LBP website. John often produces chapbooks by manual means in his office.

John’s book *INFACTURAS* is one of his recent LBP poetry publications. That book, and C. Mehrl Bennett’s book *It’s a Poem or an Event (2023)*, are available on the LBP website. Major collections of John’s archives, as well as those of LBP, are held by The Ohio State University, SUNY Buffalo, and Washington University (St. Louis).

create new content for replying to mail she receives from her mail artist contacts.

Locally, Cathy has been a member of the Aldus Society’s women’s Glimpset group which meets bi-monthly which she says is a good impetus for writing. These sessions are modeled after the original Aldus men’s “Glimpset” gatherings where they have a 20-minute session of original writing, followed by reading their stories without critique. Cathy shares short poems or visual poetry at these meetings, which value creative writing.

Cathy has had art and poetry accepted in six issues of *MAINTENANT: A Journal of Contemporary Dada Writing & Art*, an annual anthology published by Three Rooms Press, in New York City, and John’s visual poems are published in a hand bound book series called *C’est Mon Dada* published by Red Fox Press in Ireland, and in many other presses and online websites.

John and Cathy enjoy performing at various alternative venue gatherings with other writers or fluxus performers. They say it is hard to describe what projects will appear in the future, as the nature of their work is to be open to possibilities that may occur; possibilities that are unknown to them until they appear on paper or any other medium. For them, writing and art are voyages into the unknown.

If you should spend an evening with John and Cathy, they will keep you transfixed as they tell their life stories and artistic endeavors, stories of their fascinating personal and professional careers and travels.

INFACTURAS



John M. Bennett



John writes almost daily, often in the morning, in notebooks and then on a laptop, making art and visual poetry “whenever the desire strikes me to do so.” The two realms of creation are closely related, he says. He usually writes in English and/or Spanish, but also in French, Portuguese, and a bit in Nahuatl.

Mail artists collaborate in assembling zines and one-on-one projects, through the mail. Through Cathy’s original correspondence with John, she found visual poetry to be an effective medium as mail art. Her creativity has been spurred on by mail art exhibition calls and by a need to

o pen fills my mouth

said sore	of vacant
shed	Lake crackles
home a hole	din light
j'ai dit	possesseur
du rien	nada,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,I
por lo hoscuro	fin
al	end a hoy

« qui a donné à l'homme une bouche ? »
 —Marie Lo Pinto, *Le jour à J.*

—John M. Bennett

Aldus Keeps on Collecting

On January 9th, our ever-popular program “Aldus Collects” returns. It will be a night of fun and books and getting to know the presenters a bit, including brand-new members. But remember, no rotten tomatoes are permitted inside the Thurber Center!

This year’s participants are:

- **Scott Williams**, talking about the “Great Postcard Revolution”
- **Jenna Nahhas**, a new member, with “Binding & Beyond: Book Arts”
- **Jay Hoster**, discussing “John Stubbs—The Man Who Gave His Right Hand for Freedom of the Press”
- **Helena Von Sadowszky**, another new member, whose topic will be “Exclusions of Chivalry: An Exploration of How the Enemy is Demonized or Heroized in Depictions of the Third Crusade”
- **Harry Campbell** joins the program to discuss “Doubting Shakespeare?”

What a great lineup of varied topics! Make sure you mark your calendar for “Aldus Fun” on the 9th of January.

OSU Rare Books and Manuscripts Library

Spring 2025 Saturday Spotlights

Saturday, February 22:
Clerk’s Press & Arts and Craft Printers
Curated by Clare Simmons

Saturday, April 5:
Cheese
Curated by Leslie Lockett

Saturday Spotlights are from 10:00-12:00 in the Thompson Special Collections Reading Room (Thompson 105).

Upcoming 2025 Aldus Programs

Thursday, January 9th: **Aldus Collects**

Join us for Aldus Collects!

Thursday, February 13th: **Roger Jerome**

Roger Jerome will present “Dickens in Ohio.” Few people know that the great novelist visited most parts of Ohio in 1842 and wrote about it. “American Notes for...” Roger has studied his travels in detail and promises original details.

Thursday, March 13th: **Alan Farmer**

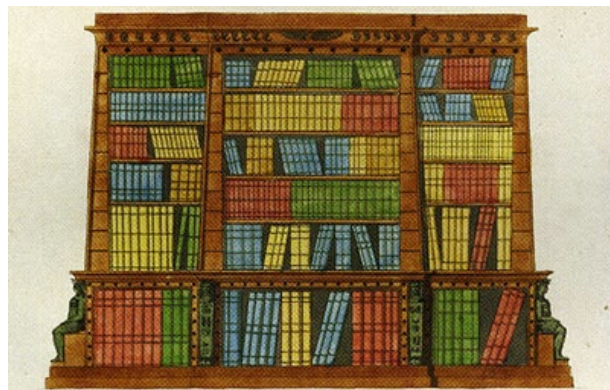
Alan Farmer will build on recent advances in estimating the numbers of lost books to consider how lost books might reshape our view of the early modern English book trade and the cultural history of England from the mid-16th to the mid-17th century.

Thursday, April 10th: **Rhiannon Knol**

Rhiannon Knol will speak about the role wrong ideas have played in Renaissance and early modern science, focusing on the writings of Aristotle, Christopher Columbus, and Athanasius Kircher—and reactions by their readers, from Galileo and Harvey to Sor Juana de la Cruz—and on the ongoing negotiation of authority, empiricism, and imagination in scientific and philosophical discourse.

Thursday, May 22nd: **Kari Gunter-Seymour**

Kari Gunter-Seymour, Poet Laureate of Ohio, is the featured speaker for the May 2025 program.



Lost Utilities

By Donald Tunnicliff Rice

The first thing I have to do is define what I mean by “Lost Utilities,” and it has nothing to do with the gas, electricity, and water being shut off. I dreamed up the term some years ago to describe words and phrases whose original meanings have mostly disappeared and which have been replaced by new meanings. What first tipped me off to the existence of such a category was the rising popularity of the term serendipity, which I believe can be traced to the opening in 1954 of the restaurant Serendipity 3 on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. These days *serendipity* and its adjectival form, *serendipitous*, have come into common use signifying good luck or the occurrence of coincidences.



Cover of the Italian version of the story *Peregrinaggio di tre giovani figliuoli del re di Serendippo*, published by Michele Tramezzino in Venice in 1557.

When I first came across the word I naturally looked it up and discovered that it ultimately derived from the centuries-old Persian fairytale, “The Three Princes of Serendip,” Serendip being the Arabic/Ceylonese name for Sri Lanka.

A key element of the story is the princes’ ability to accurately describe a certain camel they had never seen. It

was, they said, lame, blind in one eye, missing a tooth, carrying a pregnant woman, and bearing honey on one side and butter on the other. They were able to do this by observing certain incidental facts and correctly interpreting them, outdoing Sherlock Holmes centuries before Arthur Conan Doyle created him. In fact, the story is credited with inspiring the modern detective novel, starting with Edgar Allen Poe who, it is thought, was influenced by Voltaire’s adaptation of the fairy tale in his 1747 novel *Zadig*.

The noun *serendipity* was coined in 1754 by Horace Walpole in a letter to his friend Horace Mann. “I once read a silly fairy tale,” he wrote, “called *The Three Princes of Serendip*. . . . [As] their highnesses travelled, they were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of.” He went on to define *serendipity* as “accidental sagacity.” In other words, one stumbles on to something and as a result of one’s acuteness of mental discernment and soundness of judgment, one comes to a conclusion not previously sought.

It wasn’t until well after Walpole’s collected letters were published (an interesting story in itself) that book collectors and bibliophiles glommed on to the word as a useful addition to the English language, and from them it was adopted by scientists and engineers to describe chance discoveries in their fields.

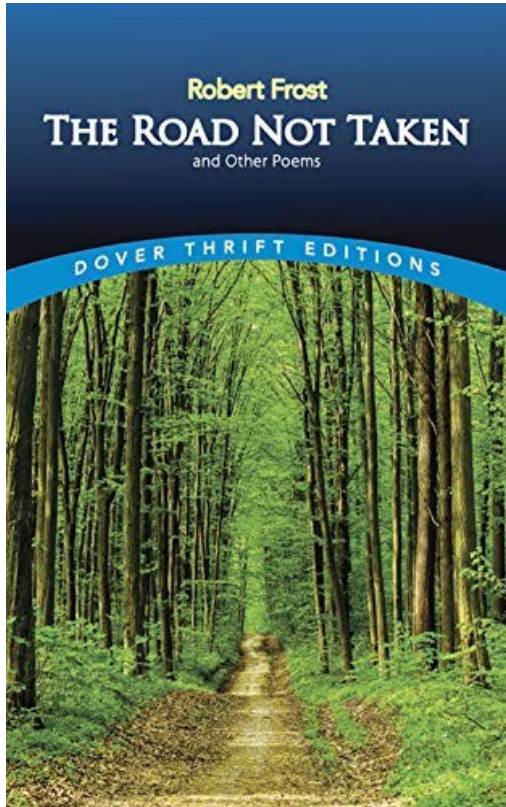
Then there came that restaurant in Manhattan, and *serendipity* took off—even resulting in a 2001 movie with that title. Sometimes it’s still used as Walpole defined it, but increasingly—as in the movie—it’s a stand-in for *coincidence* or *good luck*.

It’s a pretty word and fun to say; it even hints that the user is clever and educated when substituted for *coincidence* in such sentences as, “I went shopping for a new coat and by pure *serendipity* found this one that the store had added to the racks just that morning.” This is a misuse. As Walpole cautioned Mann, “you must observe that *no* discovery of a thing you *are* looking for, comes under this description.” [Italics in original.] What’s wrong with simply saying *luck* or *coincidence*? *Serendipity*’s repeated misuse will eventually drive its proper application out of circulation, and we’ve lost a useful word.

I realize that languages change and grow organically, and there’s nothing anybody can do about it. Most of the time a language is enriched in the process, but not always. Maybe neologisms are more vulnerable to degradation. Anyway, it was because of my acquaintanceship with *serendipity* that I started looking for other lost utilities, a few more literary instances of which I discuss below.

“The Road Less Traveled”

Derived from Robert Frost’s poem, “The Road Not Taken.”



Dover Publications

The Road Not Taken

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

Here’s a common interpretation of the poem I found online written by someone who should have known better: “The poem’s main theme is taking chances and being yourself even when no one else in society understands you.”

It’s much more nuanced than that. As the title indicates, it’s about the missed opportunity to have taken the other road. Frost—or his narrator—readily admits that both roads were equally untraveled, and that the one he chose—even after long thought—was an arbitrary decision. At the time he rationalized his choice by thinking that one day he could return and give the other road a try, even though he knew better—“way leads on to way,” he wrote. Then he pictures himself in later years trying to justify his choice by falsely claiming he took the “less traveled” road.

If all those graduation speakers want to encourage students to “take the road less traveled,” that’s fine, but they shouldn’t mention Frost’s name when doing so, since that is not what he was talking about.

“The Lion’s Share”

Derived from *Aesop’s Fables*.



From Steinhöwel’s *Aesop’s Fables*

Today, in nearly all cases, the speaker of that phrase means that someone has taken the larger part of a reward or earnings of some enterprise, leaving only a small amount for any others that might be involved. Read one of the many renderings of the tale below and see what you think.

A long time ago, the Lion, the Fox, the Jackal, and the Wolf agreed to go hunting together, sharing with each other whatever they found.

One day the Wolf ran down a Stag and immediately called his comrades to divide the spoil.

Without being asked, the Lion placed himself at the head of the feast to do the carving, and, with a great show of fairness, began to count the guests.

“One,” he said, counting on his claws, “that

is myself the Lion. Two, that's the Wolf, three, is the Jackal, and the Fox makes four."

He then very carefully divided the Stag into four equal parts.

"I am King Lion," he said, when he had finished, "so of course I get the first part. This next part falls to me because I am the strongest; and this is mine because I am the bravest."

He now began to glare at the others very savagely. "If any of you have any claim to the part that is left," he growled, stretching his claws meaningfully, "now is the time to speak up."

It sure looks to me as if the lion's share means *everything*—not merely the larger part—and that we've lost a humorous metaphor.

"Burning a Candle at Both Ends"

The following definition from the Urban Dictionary is what this phrase has come to mean today. "An English idiom meaning to work long hours without rest. Working late into the night and beginning again early in the morning."

That is not how it would have been defined when it was first used in eighteenth-century England when a candle was a valuable commodity. To burn one at both ends was a metaphor indicating a frivolous waste, a squandering of resources for temporary pleasure. It's that original definition that Millay intended in her 1920 four-line poem, "First Fig."



Edna St. Vincent Millay
Photo by Carl Van Vechten

First Fig

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
It gives a lovely light!

Millay was quite the Greenwich Village bohemian in her day. Floyd Dell (who once asked her to marry him) wrote that she was "a frivolous young woman, with a brand-new pair of dancing slippers and a mouth like a valentine." When reading her poem it's easy to picture that young woman rather than seeing the dreary image of someone laboring away for long hours at an unpleasant task. I much prefer the former.

More Examples

Here are a few more lost utilities to which I've appended modern definitions that I found online along with the original meanings.

"Play by Ear"

NEW: To make decisions or take actions without prior planning or preparation, based on how a situation develops.

OLD: To be able to play a song without sheet music after hearing it. The new idiom is, I think, more useful.

"Luddite"

NEW: Someone who struggles with modern technology.

OLD: Everybody reading this probably knows the old definition—or, at least, a garbled version of it. During the early nineteenth century angry factory workers in the vicinity of Nottingham claimed to be followers of the mythical character General Ned Ludd as they smashed machinery in many mills. Contrary to common belief, the men had nothing against the machines. They were protesting the labor practices of the factory owners. Many Luddites were shot and a number hanged as a direct result of their actions. The new meaning of luddite—which fills a need—is not going to go away.

"Fortuitous"

A synonym for *fortunate* or *lucky*.

Four hundred or so years ago when *fortuitous*, which was borrowed from Latin, first appeared in English it meant *happening by chance* or *accidental* and had no connotations of good or bad. Early in the last century people began to think it was a classy way of saying

fortunate. Because dictionaries are reflective rather than prescriptive they include both definitions today.

“To Beg the Question”

Employed to mean that something naturally leads to an obvious follow-up question.

I first heard the term years ago while debating something or other with a friend who said, “Don, you’re begging the question.” I had no idea what he meant, but covered up my ignorance by changing the subject. Later I looked it up and it took a while for me to understand the dictionary definition. Here’s one that’s a bit simpler that I found online: “*To beg the question* means to assume the truth of what you are trying to prove, essentially using a conclusion as a premise without providing any supporting evidence. It’s a type of logical fallacy where the argument circles back on itself.” The problem started I think with the translation of Aristotle’s Greek description of the fallacy (τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς αἰτεῖν or *asking for*

the initial thing) into Latin as *petitio principii*, meaning *assuming the initial point*. The term started down its long path to misuse when *petitio principia* was translated into English as “*to beg the question*.”

What distinguishes idioms is that they make no logical sense. What makes them especially difficult to understand is when—as in this case—the *definition* makes no sense—at least to most folks. It didn’t matter as long as the term was used only by logicians who understood it perfectly. But a couple of hundred years ago it began to be used more broadly and was heard and misunderstood by regular people like you and me. They tried to make sense of it by inventing a new definition—the one we see so often today. The old definition—probably known today mostly by boys and girls on debating teams—can still be found in scholarly journals.

If you know of any more examples of lost utilities, I’d be happy to hear of them.

A Garage Sale Profit

A Bookstore-y

By George Cowmeadow Bauman

Many years ago, when I had just become co-owner of the Acorn Bookshop, before I had yet had time to hire other booksellers, I preferred not to buy books on Tuesdays.

At that time we were closed on Sundays and Mondays, and I needed some time at the beginning of my work-week to tidy up, get the banking ready, and prepare for the week ahead by shelving recently-purchased books before getting inundated with lots of incoming books, which was inevitable.

Readers enter bookstores to restock their To Be Read shelf after finishing a book or two over the weekend. Downsizers visit with books to sell to help prepare for a move. Others needed cash for the upcoming Buckeyes’ football game.

Books flow into a used bookstore like bees returning to a hive. They go out; they come back. Maybe not the same books, but lots of books, nonetheless, returned to our book-hive. And those newly-received books drew booklovers to us like an African waterhole draws wildlife.

If I’d had help—a “bookshop apprentice,” they’re called in Britain—then we might have bought anytime when our sign is flipped from “CLOSED” to “OPEN,” welcoming books as well as book buyers.

Shortly after opening on one Tuesday back then, a sunburned, balding man stood before me with a few technical books. I was torn between wanting to give good customer service, and the desire to build that needed

momentum to start the week. He said he’d visited the shop the previous day, only to find that we’re closed on Mondays. So I was inclined to help him out, creating a positive moment out of his moment of inconvenience. If I turned him down, not only might he never come back, he might also begin trade with one of my colleagues/competitors.

Yet I did explain our policy to him for future reference. “It’s not that I couldn’t look at your books quickly, but if I make an exception for you, and someone else comes in before we finish, I can’t very well tell them that I’m not buying today.”

While I was saying this, I was checking out his titles and realized I could speed through them and get him gone quickly. So I told him to put them all on the counter and I’d take a look at them.

Sure enough, as soon as he did that, the parade began. It was over an hour before I stopped looking at and buying books. Once again, I had a large pile of books to process before being able to get to what I really wanted to do—back in the office and on the floor, but any hour looking at possible books to buy was an enjoyable way to spend the time.

Among the sellers was one of our regular bookscouts, Gil Martin, with a book and a story. He did love to bookchat. Gil was a short, dour, penguin-ish man who appraised commercial real estate around the state, and thus got to visit out-of-the-way antique stores and thrift

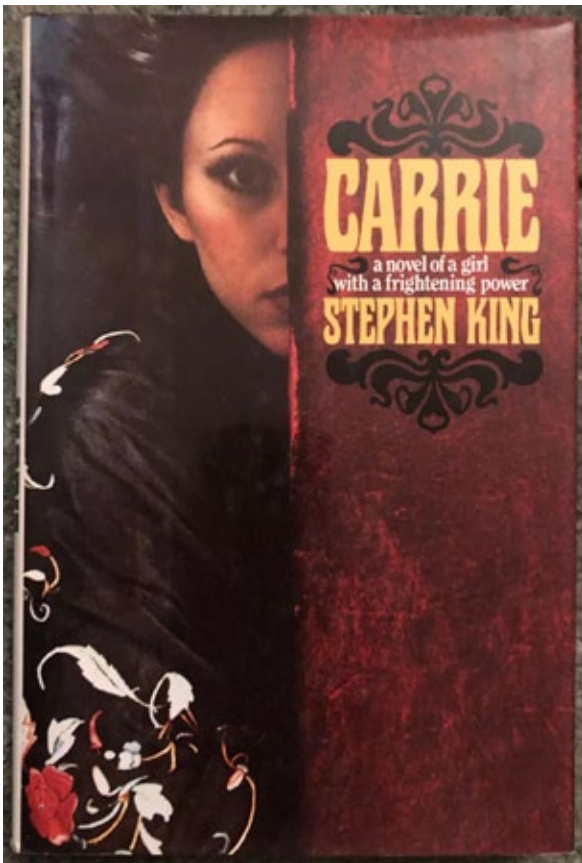
shops, avoiding the Franklin County venues where other bookscouts and dealers might scrounge. We bookdealers are a scrounging lot; not content to patiently wait for books to be carried to us, we hit the book trail hopefully and regularly. I ran into regulars Wendy Caren and Jan Doster at garage and church sales, all but wearing elbow-pads to ensure an edge in getting to those boxed books in the back corner of the garage, past the Christmas crap and vacation-souvenir schlock. Sometimes I'd run into my customers at a sale that had advertised books, though usually the offered titles were the 3Rs—Romance, *Reader's Digest*, and Religious inspiration, which even bookstore scroungers pass up. We did have our standards, don't you know, though we'd go just about anywhere and do most anything to acquire good books.

"Any treasures in there?" I asked Gil, my usual inquiry when he brings in his scroungings, er, offerings. I know that he likes to show off any special books in his batch.

"Well, you know that I like this shop a lot, George. And I've brought you something special this trip."

As he reached into his box of goodies, I thought that he probably liked us not so much for the warm and fuzzy atmosphere we tried to generate but because I tried to pay just enough to keep him coming back. It's a practical kind of favoritism which leaves both parties feeling good.

"Here's something I think you'll like," he smiled, handing me a book. "It's a first edition of Stephen King's first book, *Carrie*."



Now *that* would get any bookdealer's attention. King is very collectible *if* you can find the first editions of his uncommon books, though most of what was offered to us were undesirable book club editions or his later works with hundreds of thousands of copies of the first printing, making them as likely to be collected as receipts from Wendy's.

I examined the book and dust jacket of *Carrie* closely, looking for condition flaws such as ex-library, underlining or highlighting, water damage or mold from being basement-stored.

Gil and I talked about what *Carrie* was going for in what is unofficially known as "*Ahearn*," which is really *Collected Books: The Guide to Values* by Allen and Patricia Ahearn, the standard non-Internet, hard-copy reference work for book-pricing. I also checked online for the latest prices. One dealer was asking \$1200 for a F/F—fine condition book with a fine condition dust jacket, and one crazy seller had his ex-library copy listed— "with the usual condition flaws"— at \$450!

Gil's copy had several flaws on the dj, and a previous owner had taped the jacket in three places, which lowers the value. But still...it *was* a first—a scarce item.

I turned to him and said, "OK, let's get down to it. What do you want for this copy?"

He was savvy enough to counter, "What number are *you* thinking about?"

"Well, I figure we can price this at somewhere between four and five (\$400-\$500), so I would offer \$200, tops."

"You know I'm not difficult, George. That's a good offer."

The rest of his books came to just \$24, so I knew he had rushed into the store only because of the King of books.

As I handed him his bookbucks, I couldn't resist asking him, "Now that you've got the check in hand, can you tell me where you picked this up?"

He laughed and told me of how he and his wife were out in the country on their way home earlier that afternoon when they saw a sign for a garage sale. "It was the end of the day, but they still had about 40 books. When I saw this one, you know how it is, I started wondering if it could be a first. And sure enough, there on the copyright page was 'First Edition.'" He couldn't help but grin widely as he told the story.

"And I suppose you didn't pay them much more than a buck for it," I teased.

"Well, you know how it is at the end of the day at a yard sale, George. Your one-dollar estimate was just a bit high..."

With that triumphant revelation, he left with a \$199.50 profit.

Not bad for a garage sale scrounger.

The Third Book

By Tom Bredehoff

I grew up in a collecting family. My parents mostly collected nineteenth- and twentieth-century American glass tableware, but that was only their primary collecting area. According to one of my mother's half-joking *dicta*, anytime you end up with three items in the same category, it's a collection. My parents, it is safe to say, had many collections.

For myself, I long ago decided that my own primary collecting area would be books, but the moment when I admit that to another collector is almost always the occasion for a follow-up that I have come to dread: what sort of books do you collect? The answer, of course, is that I collect many kinds of books, even while I can happily admit that there are many other sorts of books that I do not collect: I have no wish to become a hoarder, after all! If pressed, I try to tell persistent inquirers that I collect the very best books I can. Murrell Lewis, another Ohio collector, once told me that a rich collector can afford to buy everything, but a poor collector must buy only the very best. Murrell, of course, considered himself the latter sort of collector. If "the best I can" fails to meet Murrell's own standard, it is a failing I will have to live with.

The beauty of either sort of collection is that it has no aspirations of completeness: I never need to buy a place-holder or a filler copy. Nor does such a collection have any built-in limits: I don't need to fear the moment of completion. There is never a shortage of things to buy, and I only need to choose among them—because for true collectors, "the best" is never a matter of mere monetary value. The contents of a book—what it *is*—always matters, or else we might as well be collecting price tags—though I could also imagine a fine and interesting collection of price tags, for the right collector.

So I have come to see that book collections always involve our constant awareness of what makes our books tick, what makes them themselves; it is natural, even inevitable, to notice when two of the books we have bought have an affinity, a key similarity: the same author or illustrator, perhaps, or some other notable feature. For this to happen is inevitable in any accumulation of books, but as soon as we buy a third book *because it fits with the other two*—we have the genesis of a cohesive collection. I have come to see that my mother's joking definition, in fact, has proved to be true: it is the third book that makes the collection.

And I don't know whether to be ashamed or proud to say that I've seen this dynamic play out again and again in my own collection, in ways I could never have predicted. My collections, that is to say, have been born by chance more than design. One particular sub-

collection can serve as an illustrative example: books from Charles C. Bubb's Clerk's Press, a one-man private press in Cleveland, Ohio, that issued about 70 small books (often in very small numbers) between 1908 and 1917. One would have to be a fool, I can admit, to begin collecting Clerk's Press books: many of his titles were severely limited, often with only 32 copies printed. In one case, H. D.'s* *Choruses from Iphigeneia at Aulus*, Bubb printed the first American edition of a book from a poet who would later turn out to be very important indeed—most of the forty copies of this book printed and bound by Bubb have been held in either institutional or private collections for a very long time.

The first Clerk's Press book I ever bought was the pseudonymous *Saxon Lyrics and Legends* (by "Lochnell"), which was Bubb's reprint (limited to 97 copies) of a scarce or rare nineteenth-century pamphlet of poems very loosely modeled on Old English. As a sometime scholar and student of Old English poetry, I have long been interested in this kind of medievalism. Then, in the auction of Murrell Lewis's collection, I was able to purchase a book labelled on its spine as *The Clerk's Press Miscellany Fourth Series 1915*. It is, in fact, a bound volume of ten of Bubb's books (mostly dating from 1914-15, mostly issued in 32 copies each). Quite wonderfully, the individual volumes collected here were Bubb's own copies, each item numbered "2." Presumably preceded by three other *Miscellanies*, this was (like them) a virtually unique production and I was thoroughly charmed by the Arts & Crafts aesthetic, the hand-colored initials and ornaments, and—to be honest—the book's rarity and uniqueness. The Lewis sale also included a copy of the H. D. *Choruses*, which I did not buy: I was not, at that point, a Clerk's Press collector.

I became a Clerk's Press collector a couple years later, when a bookshop in Northeastern Ohio began listing a series of Clerk's Press books on an online auction site at what I thought were good prices. I bought all eight that were listed. Foolishly, perhaps, I asked the dealer if they had any more. They did, and while they wouldn't accept an offer for the whole batch, they listed them eight or nine at a time, and I was eventually able to get the whole lot—including a copy of H. D.'s *Choruses*. My "third book," in this case, ended up being some seventy or eighty volumes, a good number of them duplicates: sometimes a book is really a collection, whether bound together as in the *Clerk's Press Miscellany*, or simply sharing a history. Foolishness, I am happy to say, can sometimes be rewarded.

Book collecting has often been labeled a mania, an addiction, or a disease, although it can sometimes be a kind of blessed foolishness as well. Those of us caught

within its grip may not always be able to tell which sort of thing it is to us. I am, no doubt, still a fool to acknowledge myself as a collector of Bubb's Clerk's Press books: my collection has about fifty of Bubb's seventy or so titles, and the specter of completism seems to be inevitable. Nevertheless, the chances of completing the collection remain as remote as ever—which is now both a strange

source of comfort and an unexpected occasion for that other mania or disease called hope.

(Note: **Hilda Doolittle (1886 –1961) was an American modernist poet, novelist, and memoirist who wrote under the name **H.D.** throughout her life.)*

Spring 2025 Programs at Thurber House

(Stay Tuned for More Announcements!)



Adult Writing Workshops

In-Person and Virtual Options Available

Adult Writing Workshops are designed to enrich a spectrum of writing styles and genres and are open to writers at all levels.

Feb 10 — Creating a Playbook for the Writing Life

Feb 24 — Elevate Your Fiction in Any Genre

March 10 — Observe-Taste-Touch: Creating Sensory Experiences

March 17 — Shaping Family History Into Compelling Stories

March 24 — Pushing Past the Mushy Middle

April 7 — How to Write Better Poetry (and Prose) Using Lessons from Haiku

April 12 — Go Rogue! Write with Reckless Abandon

April 28 — Write the World You Want to See

May 12 — “I’d Know That Voice Anywhere”



Young Writers' Studio for Grades 9-12

In-Person and Virtual Options Available

Every other week, teens gather in-person and virtually to write, create, and explore ways to get their stories on paper. With facilitator Frances Wiley, we challenge students to take a different spin each week through exploratory exercises designed to inspire out-of-the box thinking. Sessions are devoted to fun and unique writing activities and peer discussion and feedback.

A portion of each session is set aside for young writers who would like to bring in their own writing to be reviewed and discussed by their peers in a creative and nurturing environment. Students who prefer not to bring in work take part by learning how to talk about writing in a constructive way while helping fellow writers improve their pieces.

Learn more and register at www.thurberhouse.org!

Collecting Cambodiana: Part Two

By Scott Williams

In July 1973, back in Phnom Penh, a very crowded city in crisis, I had considered taking a taxi from Phnom Penh to Battambang, the nation's second largest city in the far west of the country. All taxis were white French Peugeot "404" station wagons. No buses were available as all had been requisitioned by Lon Nol's military government. Fortunately, my instincts said "not a good idea"—the stressful, worried faces of Cambodians at the bus, now taxi, stand *scared me*. On the way, I would have visited Oudong, Cambodia's former capital from 1618 to 1866. Oudong, is where Frenchman Francois Bizot was captured by the Khmer Rouge on October 10, 1971.

Collecting Cambodiana was Francois Bizot's mission. Bizot was a French academic who had "gone native" by living with Cambodians, marrying, raising a daughter, and, most importantly, learning their language and idioms. Bizot was interested in the unique forms of Theravada Buddhism practiced in the countryside—a syncretic mix that included ancient pre-Buddhist and Hindu practices. He was scouring Cambodia to help save ancient texts and interview old monks before they would be destroyed. Bizot had already been captured once before in 1970! It happened near Angkor Wat where he lived. But it was a North Vietnamese army unit, which, after a prompt investigation, let him go. They gave him a pass to carry should he be captured again. This pass was useless for his new captors, the Khmer Rouge.

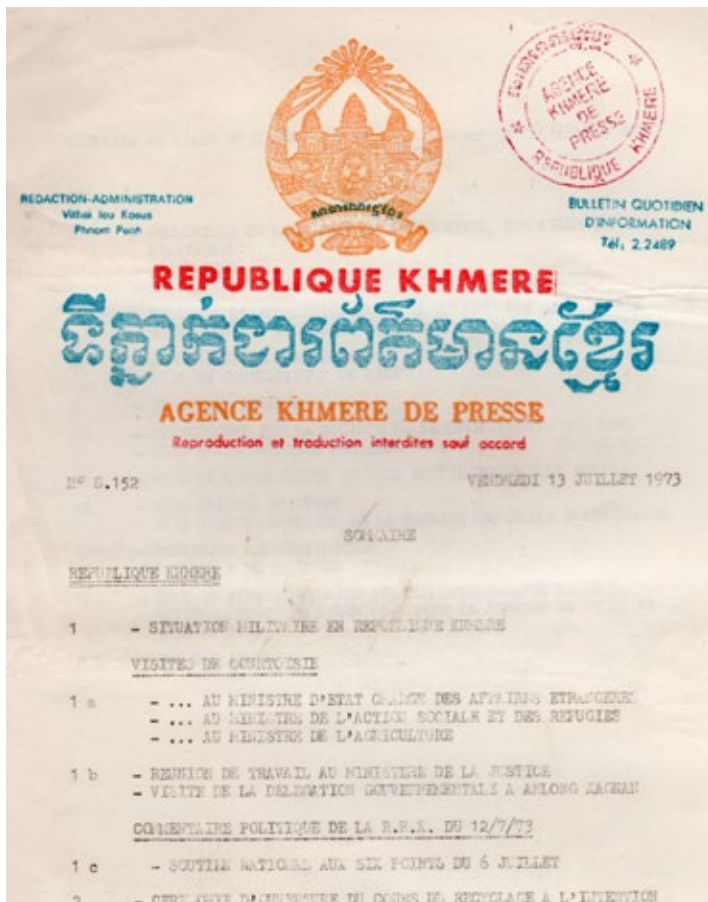
John le Carré, who provides the foreword, calls Bizot's book, *The Gate*, an original classic. It would be made into a French movie. Bizot was *the one exception among all Westerners* captured by the Khmer Rouge—*he was released!* After a long, horrific incarceration, the Khmer Rouge leaders would host a big *dinner party* for his release. It included the infamous Ta Mok. They all laughed at how the fearsome Ta Mok had been forced to return Bizot's watch, at Bizot's angry insistence, which Mok had requisitioned for his own to proudly wear. In *The Gate*, Bizot describes the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge in April 1975. He quickly rises to leadership, with the French Ambassador's approval, to represent the foreign community of about 1,000 forced into the embassy compound. His knowledge of the language and how the Khmer Rouge *thought* would involve him in sometimes fierce arguments, risking his own death. He was able to prevent what would have been a bloodbath and weeks later, all were transported to the Thai border in trucks.

Outside Oudong, Bizot's new prison warden and interrogator was none other than "Comrade Duch" (Kang Kek Lew; aka Douch), who would run the infamous **Tuol Sleng High School** prison (code named S-21) in Phnom Penh. At S-21, *virtually all* of the Khmer Rouge government's *own* departmental and regional political

and military leaders would be taken, tortured for confessions, and then killed ...along with their families! Minorities were also targeted for death including Cambodia's own domestic Chinese. Thus, the Khmer Rouge leaders kept their S-21 prison a secret from their benefactors propping up the regime, the Peoples Republic of China. After the fall of the Pol Pot regime, Comrade Duch would eventually surrender and convert to Christianity! He would be **one of only three** Khmer Rouge leaders brought to trial and prosecuted by the United Nation's special court, whose Kafkaesque name was **The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia**. Begun in 1997, by 2014 the court had already spent an extraordinary \$200 million dollars! After 25 years, the court closed up shop in 2022 leaving plenty of bitter acrimony. On a positive note, the court ran programs across Cambodia collecting testimonies to help its traumatized population heal.

As for Western victims of the Khmer Rouge, we are fortunate that the Canadian Dave Kattenburg took it upon himself to document the truly wild naiveté of young hippie Westerners. Kattenburg's book, *Foxy Lady*, is titled after the name of a wooden Malay boat that was named for the Jimi Hendrix song. Western hippies were buying used boats to smuggle Thai marijuana (called "Buddha grass" and "Thai sticks") beyond the Gulf of Siam, only to be captured by the Khmer Rouge Navy and sent to S-21 to be tortured, killed, and not buried but cremated. The meticulous records that Comrade Duch kept in his S-21 prison retained their written confessions and photos. They are surreal biographical stories about kids growing up and trained to become *both* Soviet KGB and American CIA spies. The Gulf of Siam's Cambodian coastal islands would also be the scene for the last U.S. military combat deaths of our Indochina War. After Phnom Penh and Saigon fell, this May 1975 battle went badly and the Pentagon hid what happened. Ralph Wetterhahn's book *The Last Battle. The Mayaguez Incident and the End of the Vietnam War* is a fine piece of historical military reporting. No book has been written on the couple dozen Western journalists that were lost in Cambodia; but we do have the Australian Kate Webb's book, *On the Other Side*. She would be eventually released by her captors, the Vietnamese army, well after her employer, the Associated Press, declared her "killed-in-action."

So, in Phnom Penh in July 1973, I took an *antique DC3 aero plane* to Cambodia's golden rice-basket province and city in the west, Battambang. This DC3 flight was memorable, too (see Part 1 for other flight story). This time, I decided to be the very last person to get on an over-weight (probably) and over-booked



Press Release. A great “official” souvenir I somehow obtained with an ominous date of Friday the 13th.



Downtown Battambang. Every morning the city was action-packed along its main street. On the right is its French-built market with its natural ventilation design. One can also see, yet to be torn down, early French Colonial buildings with beautiful rustic red tile roofs and cream-colored sidings. Photo by author.

(definitely) plane. Our departure was delayed. An elderly Cambodian woman had created an altar on the tarmac at the side of our departure building. It was complete with burning incense, flowers and a Buddha. She was down on her knees praying fiercely. I decided to not take a picture as Asians, at that time, could be touchy about being photographed. She literally had to be dragged and stuffed into the plane screaming before finally fainting, thank goodness! On mission, I entered last and was given the *tiny* fold-down seat attached to the inside of the plane’s passenger door, lacking a seat belt of course. The peasant-based Khmer Rouge soldiers hated planes so much that when they took control of Battambang in April of 1975, out at the airport they literally smashed and tore apart every plane. Pol Pot often used the word “smash” in his speeches and writings. One historian recounted that the Khmer Rouge would have *eaten* the planes at Battambang, if they could have. That flight also provided me with another printed souvenir—a Cambodian artist’s illustrated barf bag.

In Battambang, much to my surprise, I was offered the opportunity to visit the Vietnamese and/or Khmer Rouge controlled **Angkor Wat** ruins by a *secretive American* who would *not* tell me his name! As we met and visited in an open-air wooden restaurant that jutted out over the river flowing through the provincial capital, he would ask me three times: “You’re not a journalist, are you?” The coffee and French flan that I had with him, was magnificent.

My newfound American acquaintance, perhaps lonely, complained about his life and problems. His business was based in Singapore and his mission was to transfer American military material, in country, to the Khmer Republic’s army. Managing Cambodians was not easy—the truck drivers always tried to sneak their families along, leading to whole families being killed and/or wounded. As the Vietnam war geared up, he had been based on the Vietnamese coast and would drive inland each morning, up through the mountains to provincial capitals like Pleiku and Ban Me Thuot. He used his Ford Mustangs to blow up the road mines which were timed for slower moving military vehicles. “*I lost a few Mustang rear ends,*” he said.



Battambang Wedding Procession. At the corner of the market, I was surprised when a wedding went by me. Photo by author.

Battambang Wedding Orchestra. The one and only gamelan orchestra I ever saw on wheels. Photo by author.

He quoted me a fee of “about \$1,000” to see Angkor Wat, provided a small batch of willing tourists could be organized. I declined, sharing that I did not have the money and was living on \$1 or \$2 a day as a budget backpacker. Little did either of us know that Sihanouk and his lovely wife Monique had just completed their own secret overland pilgrimage from Peking, down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and across rural northern Cambodia to Angkor Wat. They came close to being hit in Cambodia by a B-52 bombing... At Angkor Wat, they would meet with the Khmer Rouge leadership and be entertained. But, even then, as the head of the Khmer Rouge coalition, Sihanouk would be fooled by the Khmer Rouge’s “public” coalition leaders who were *not* really its true leaders.

And what irony—an increasingly desperate Pol Pot in late 1978 would decide to re-open Angkor Wat for international tourism to boost the autarchic genocidal regime’s international respectability. A Bangkok tourist agency got the contract and was able to take in a couple tourist groups before the December 25, 1978, Vietnamese invasion ended such. ***But, how about double irony, as this is Cambodia!*** Pol Pot, in the later 1980s, as a pitiful failure living along the border of Thailand, would re-invent himself, take a young wife, have a daughter, and become a tourist himself by visiting ancient Cambodian sites in Thailand. He is photographed wearing a fashionable leisure suit and smart-looking Western-style hat. He would also make a tourist pilgrimage to Mao’s birthplace while on a visit to China seeking more support for his dwindling guerrilla army. The new Vietnamese-backed Khmer Rouge government under Hun Sen offered a “no questions asked” policy for defectors.



Special Issue
**Samdech Sihanouk’s Inspection Tour
 Of the Cambodian Liberated Zone**
 Supplement to *China Pictorial* No. 6, 1973

Sihanouk’s Inspection Tour. This *Life Magazine*-sized publication is one of my favorites. Shown are the lovely Monique and debonair Sihanouk standing with two Khmer Rouge leaders, Khieu Samphan and Hu Nim. This special supplement to *China Pictorial* has a very large collection of fascinating black & white pictures of their secret journey. But being Chinese, the first pages show pictures of the massive reception given to Monique and Sihanouk upon their return to Peking, as hosted by Zhou Enlai.

In Battambang, I stayed for free at a Buddhist temple on both visits in 1973. At the suggestion of one of my monk friends—he acting as a guide—I would pay for a motorcycle tour to visit ancient ruins and a holy mountain and cave in the countryside southwest of Battambang. We drove down a dirt road, one perpetual forested village, heading due south along the west side of the river that went through Battambang. At our first stop to visit ruins, a lone Khmer Republic soldier we did not notice would fire his rifle, scaring the two of us. But why? Decades later I would shake my head in disbelief seeing a Khmer Rouge map of their liberated territory at this time. If true, *I came within 100 yards of their front line*...the east side of that river. Fortunately, we then headed westward driving on tops of rice field dikes, also used as foot paths, to a much safer area about five miles away. Yet, I had been about 10 miles from the heart of the **Samlaut District** where this river spills out of the rain-forested Cardamom Mountains. There, in 1967, desperate peasants revolted, seizing police arms, to fight against their provincial Governor, General Lon Nol. Lon Nol, whose name is spelled the

same way forwards and backwards, had simply seized peasant land to grow lucrative cotton crops for himself and his military cronies. This large **Samlaut Rebellion** embarrassed Pol Pot who was hiding up in the extreme northeast corner of the country—he had no armed forces ready to help “lead” the peasants. Sihanouk had a difficult time ending the rebellion, too, which the Khmer Rouge would then claim as their own and use to launch their civil war. This new Khmer Rouge army was a very weak guerrilla movement until 1970 when Nixon ordered the invasion of Cambodia and bombed the small country with stunning tonnage that killed about 300,000 peasants. The North Vietnamese army would then sweep across Cambodia in 1970 and 1971, easily defeating Lon Nol’s troops, turning over captured weapons to the Khmer Rouge, and then training its vast new army of rural recruits.

So concludes Part 2 of my story, “Collecting Cambodiana.” Watch for Part 3, the final chapter, in the May 2025 issue.



Tropical Paradise. The author with two monk friends at the Buddhist monastery in Battambang where I stayed. Behind us is a turtle pond for raising fish and fresh aquatic food like lotus. Cambodia’s vast rice “wetlands” provided a bounty of food and leisure in times of peace.



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