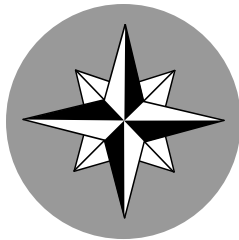




EXPLORATIONS



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's always a pleasure to welcome new and returning members to the Norwegian Explorers. Chuck Dowd has rejoined the group, and Catherine Clair and Tom Munday are new members. Please welcome them when they join us at meetings.

Planning is well under way for the Norwegian Explorer's conference. We hold our symposiums every three years, and our next one is scheduled for July 6-8, 2007. More information will be made available as our planning continues. I would like to thank my co-chair Dick Sveum and conference committee members Phil Bergem, John Bergquist, Mike Eckman, Tom Gottwalt, Tim Johnson, and Gary Thaden. They all give a

great deal of time to the planning and execution of such an event as well as contributing good ideas that help to make these conferences a standout Sherlockian occasion.

Speaking of occasions, consulting the online Sherlockian calendar will give you an idea of upcoming events. Ron Fish maintains this calendar and does a fabulous job of keeping things up to date. Feel free to consult this schedule to see if any Sherlockian events coincide with your travels. You can find it at <http://sherlockiancalendar.homestead.com>.

We were greatly saddened when Allen Mackler, former President of the Norwegian
(Continued on page 2)

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

No, your editor has not had Lasik surgery and acquired a toupee. The gentleman at the editor's desk is George Newnes, publisher and Editor-in-Chief of *The Strand Magazine*, which published every Sherlock Holmes story of Arthur Conan Doyle from "A Scandal in Bohemia" to "The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place." The illustration was reproduced in one of Stanford University's facsimile editions of Holmes stories as they first appeared in *The Strand*. Stanford mailed out twelve facsimiles, one per week, to those who registered for the program, each issue supplemented with annotations, period graphics and background information. See

<http://sherlockholmes.stanford.edu> to download PDF files of the facsimiles.

In this issue we review our activities to date in 2006, including the latest radio play performed by The Red-Throated League. Charles Clifford continues his reports on our monthly Study Group sessions, and Gary Thaden reviews *Holmes on the Range*. Finally, we pay tribute to a prominent Explorer who fell from the ranks.

Submissions for *Explorations* are always welcome. Please email items in Word or plain text format to john.bergquist@gmail.com ❖

John Bergquist, BSI





"Planning is well under way for the Norwegian Explorer's conference. We hold our symposiums every three years and our next one is scheduled for July 6 - 8, 2007."

FROM THE PRESIDENT (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

Explorers, passed away at the end of December, just after *Explorations* had gone to press. Before serving as president, Allen was the editor of this newsletter. It came to my attention that Allen edited 17 issues, more than any other editor. We'll all remember Allen and his interest in all things Sherlockian. In addition to his contributions to our scion society, Allen was a member of The Baker Street Irregulars as Sarasate, an honor bestowed upon him in 1990. In this issue you'll see a photo of our Vice-President Gary Thaden and Board Member Phil Bergem when they presented a check to The Baker Street Irregulars Trust Co-Chair Constantine Rosakis, MD, BSI. This donation was given in memory of Allen and in recognition of his involvement in the BSI. During our trip to New York for the annual BSI weekend, many people from all over the country expressed their sadness upon learning of Allen's passing.

As always, please feel free to contact me with suggestions or comments. ❖

Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI



BOOK NEWS

In the last Explorations, Gary Thaden reviewed the best-selling novel *Arthur & George*, by Julian Barnes. A new non-fictional account of the George Edalji case and the background detail leading up to Conan Doyle's intervention is now available. *Conan Doyle and the Parson's Son: The George Edalji Case*, researched and written by Gordon Weaver was published by Vanguard (Pegasus Elliot Mackenzie) in March 2006 and is available from bookshops and Amazon.com. Explored is the background detail from 1876 up until Conan Doyle's spectacular intervention and the campaign built up to secure a pardon for Edalji. The acrimonious and bitter conflict waged between the chief architect of the miscarriage of justice against Edalji - Captain Anson, the Chief Constable - and Conan Doyle is also comprehensively covered. For an overview of this work visit www.theplebeian.net.

(Note: I am not familiar with this book. I am including this notice as a courtesy to the author, who sent me the information. - Ed.) ❖



THE 2006 BIRTHDAY WEEKEND IN NYC



“The Norwegian Explorers flying in from frigid Minnesota were delighted to be greeted by warm sunshine in New York City.”

Once again the Norwegian Explorers were well represented at the annual Sherlock Holmes Birthday Weekend in New York City. This year’s official events took place from January 12-14, allowing those of us who attended to also be present for the Baker Street West dinner in the Twin Cities on the Master’s actual birthday of January 6. (See report on page 12.) Making the trek this year from the Twin Cities were Paul and Carole Martin, Dick Sveum and Jennifer Olson, Julie and Mike McKuras, Tim Johnson, Gary and Andy Thaden, Inez and I, and – for their first Birthday Weekend – Phil and Karen Bergem. Flying in from frigid Minnesota, we were delighted to be greeted by warm sunshine in New York. Checking into the Algonquin Hotel, the unofficial headquarters for the Weekend, we were further delighted to be greeted by old friends and introduced to new ones.

The BSJ Reception

The first official event, late Thursday afternoon, was the reception in the Williams Club to honor authors whose works were published in *The Baker Street Journal* (BSJ) during the past year. I was attending this event for the first time, and I enjoyed renewing old acquaintances while partaking of passed hors d’oeuvres and the hospitality of the open bar. BSJ editor Steven Rothman presented this year’s Morley-Montgomery award to Catherine Cooke, whose article “Mrs. Hudson: A Legend in Her Own Lodging House,” was judged to be the best article from the previous year’s BSJ. Among the people I met at the reception was Lila Wolff Wilkinson, the niece of Julian Wolff, who single-handedly had led the BSI and edited the BSJ for many years. Lila had written a charming reminiscence of her uncle that had been published in the BSJ the previous year.

The 2006 BSI Distinguished Speaker’s Lecture

The BSI Distinguished Speaker’s Lecture was held upstairs in the Williams Club immediately after the reception. Michael Dirda introduced the lecturer: Leroy Lad Panek, who won an Edgar in 1988 for *Introduction to the Detective Story*. Leroy spoke on “Sherlock Holmes and the Emergence of the American Detective Story.”

Despite the academic nature of his topic, his easy manner at the podium and his self-effacing humor quickly won over the audience.

The William Gillette Memorial Luncheon

Mrs. Hudson’s Breakfast, an official although informal event that had been held at the Algonquin on the Friday morning of the Weekend in previous years has been discontinued, so the first official event on Friday is now the Gillette Luncheon. This event, as it has been for the last several years, was held at Moran’s Chelsea Seafood Room and organized by Susan Rice and Mickey Fromkin. The luncheon was originally intended for out-of-town Sherlockians, but it is also well attended by those from New York and New Jersey. Besides good food and conversation, the highlight of the event was a witty performance by The Friends of Bogie’s, consisting this year of Paul Singleton, Andrew Joffe and Sarah Montague. The comedic acting trio portrayed Denis, Adrian and Jean Conan Doyle disagreeing about how they should manage their father’s literary estate. Toward the end of the event, Norwegian Explorers member Paul Smedegaard, from Racine, Wisconsin, gave us a scare by having a heart-related episode requiring emergency medical care. While waiting for the paramedics to arrive, our own Paul Martin ministered to the patient. Thankfully the incident was not as serious as it first appeared, and after an overnight stay in the hospital, Paul S. was back with his fellow Irregulars, including his wife, Margaret, at the cocktail reception on Saturday afternoon.

The BSI Dinner

The Baker Street Irregulars and invited guests assembled Friday evening at the Union League Club for the central event of the weekend: the Annual BSI Dinner. During the cocktail hour preceding the dinner, Mike Whelan (“Wiggins”) honored Norma Hyder as this year’s “The Woman.” Norma expressed her appreciation for the honor before being escorted to a private dining room in the Club by Mary Ann Bradley to join “The Women” of past years at their annual dinner.

The pre-dinner and post-dinner programs

(Continued on page 4)



**“BSI Investitures
were announced for
Richard Olken,
Regina Stinson,
Curtis Armstrong,
Paul Churchill, Jerry
Kegley, Trevor
Raymond, Jennie
Paton and Don
Terras.”**

2006 BIRTHDAY WEEKEND (CONT.)

closely followed tradition, with a welcome and announcements from “Wiggins”; the reading of the BSI Constitution and Buy-Laws; Canonical toasts to Mrs. Hudson, Mycroft, Watson’s Second Wife and Sherlock Holmes; and the recitation of the Musgrave Ritual.

After dinner, attendees heard talks by David Musto on the many incidents of atavism in the Canon, Terry Belanger on collecting rare books, and Lloyd Rose on the spate of detectives portrayed on current popular television programs – finding them all wanting compared with the figure who inspired them all: Sherlock Holmes. Pianist Tyke and vocalist Teddie Niver treated Irregulars and guests to song and dance in the style of music hall circa 1900. Irv Kamil presented a moving “Here we stand upon the terrace ...” for the eight Irregulars who fell from the ranks in 2005, including Allen Mackler “Sarasate”. (Allen’s good friend Paul Martin had supplied Irv with information about Allen.) Attendees were then treated to a fascinating “Tribute to an Era of Old Irregulars” by Art Levine, who gave a lucid, engaging account of the Edgar W. Smith era.

To a suddenly hushed crowd, Mike Whelan presented this year’s Birthday Honours list, announcing Investitures for Richard Olken, Regina Stinson, Curtis Armstrong, Paul Churchill, Jerry Kegley, Trevor Raymond, Jennie Paton and Don Terras, whose Investiture had actually been awarded at the October meeting of *The Hounds of the Baskerville* (sic) in Chicago. Roy Pilot closed the program with a recitation of Vincent Starrett’s “221B.”

Although the annual Baskerville Bash took place at the same time as the BSI Dinner, Phil and Gary, along with their own and other long-suffering Sherlockian spouses, chose instead to see Andrew Lloyd Weber’s *The Woman in White* on Broadway. (Of course a Sherlockian can make a connection to the Master almost anywhere: The musical was based on a novel by Wilkie Collins, whose detective novel *The Moonstone* was an early influence on Conan Doyle.)

The Dealers’ Room and Otto’s Open House

On Saturday morning of the Weekend each year, a reception room on the second floor of the Algonquin is turned into a Sherlockian flea market (although some of the rare items for sale command prices unheard of at other flea markets). As usual, vendors from around the country and abroad presented an enticing array of new and used books, ephemera and all types of memorabilia. Authors including Les Klinger, David Hammer and Paul Jeffers were available to sign copies of their books.

As if we hadn’t had enough to tempt us in the dealers’ room, Dick, Gary, Phil and I made our way to Otto Penzler’s Mysterious Bookshop for Otto’s annual wine-and-cheese reception. It was our first visit to the bookshop in its new location in the Tribeca area of the city.



Peggy Purdue of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection in Toronto meets her counterpart at Minnesota, Tim Johnson.

The Cocktail Reception

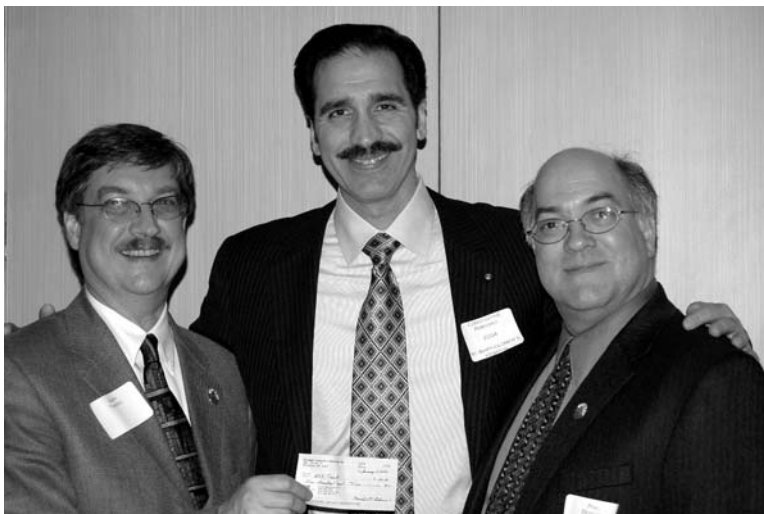
On Saturday afternoon, Sherlockians assembled at 24 Fifth Avenue for the annual BSI Cocktail Reception. Before the program, attendees mingled and chatted while enjoying passed hors d’oeuvres and an open bar. Tim Johnson was able to chat with his new counterpart in Toronto, Peggy Purdue. Gary Thaden and Phil Bergem presented a check from the Norwegian Explorers in memory of Allen Mackler to Costa Rossakis for the Baker Street Irregulars Trust. After formal greetings, master of ceremonies Don Novorsky introduced Mary Ann Bradley,

(Continued on page 5)

2006 BIRTHDAY WEEKEND (CONT.)



"Lila Wolff Wilkinson's reminiscences about her uncle Julian as we sat in the charming Gramercy Tavern turned out to be one of the highlights of the Weekend."



Gary Thaden and Phil Bergem present a check from the Norwegian Explorers to Costa Rossakis, Co-Chairman of the Baker Street Irregulars Trust.

who presented Norma Hyder to the group as "The Woman" for 2006 and then acknowledged all "The Women" present from previous years. Mike Whelan acknowledged Catherine Cooke as winner of the Morley-Montgomery Award, and the newly invested Baker Street Irregulars were introduced to warm applause.

The highlight of the afternoon for many was the father-and-daughter duo of Al and Betsy Rosenblatt performing their annual review in verse of events of the past year in the Sherlockian world and in the world at large. Each year Al and Betsy seem to top their previous year's offering, and this year's review added a musical coda contrasting the old with the new, sung *a cappella* to the tune of "My Favorite Things."

Peter Blau served as auctioneer for the annual sale benefiting the John H. Watson Fund, which provides financial help to those who otherwise would be unable to attend the Birthday Weekend. Bidding was brisk for the auctioned items, which included a custom-designed Inverness cape, a framed large-scale photograph of the 221B sitting room formerly in the Holiday Inn in San Francisco, and a complete set of medals for the six pilgrimages of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London to Switzerland (donated by Paul Smedegaard.) The raffle prize, a gold snuffbox with an amethyst in the center

- said to be a replica of the one given to Sherlock Holmes by the King of Bohemia - was won by Catherine Cooke, who must have brought along her lucky charm for the weekend.

The Cocktail Reception is the final formal event of the Weekend, and for many attendees it is a time to say their farewells until next year. However, much of the fun of the Weekend is to be had in many informal gatherings in bars, restaurants, theatres, or in the lobby

of the Algonquin - and these were to continue for another day. While waiting for a cab to take us to dinner, Andy & Gary Thaden and Inez & I struck up a conversation with Lila Wolff Wilkinson. Andy asked Lila if she wanted to join us for dinner, and she gladly accepted! Her reminiscences about her uncle Julian as we sat in the charming Gramercy Tavern turned out to be one of the highlights of the Weekend for me.

The ASH Brunch

Although not an official part of the BSI Weekend, the Sunday brunch organized by the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH) has become a popular "last gasp" of the Weekend for many. The brunch was held at the Oldcastle Pub, whose staff laid out a tempting buffet. Paul Smedegaard, back in good form, was heard to claim that he was watching his cholesterol, as he wryly pointed to the three grapes on his plate among the heaps of bacon and eggs.

It was too soon time to catch a cab to the airport, and we said our goodbyes, looking forward to Birthday Weekends to come.

Note: Portions of this report are based on a slightly different version by me that appeared in the Spring 2006 *Baker Street Journal*. ❖

John Bergquist, BSI

SHERLOCK HOLMES-RELATED CHILDRENS BOOKS A TALK GIVEN TO THE NORWEGIAN EXPLORERS BY KAREN HOYLE

On February 22, Washington's Birthday, the Norwegian Explorers met in the Givens Suite of the Andersen Library to hear Curator Karen Hoyle's fascinating talk about juvenile mysteries held in the Kerlan Collection within the Children's Literature Research Collections in the library. Considering her audience, Karen wisely focused on the *Basil of Baker Street* books by Eve Titus. In a happy coincidence, the Sherlock Holmes Collections owns Ms. Titus's original manuscripts, and the Kerlan Collection owns the original illustrations by Paul Galdone.

I was intrigued to hear Karen explain how University of Minnesota alumnus Dr. Irvin Kerlan had assembled his original collection, which now is maintained by the University. Among other things, he wrote to every author and illustrator whose works he desired and just asked whether they would send him their manuscripts or drawings. Many authors and artists took him up on his offer!

On display for viewing were pages Karen had brought from the Titus manuscripts, original artwork, and other examples of Sherlockian books and films for juveniles, such as Disney's *The Great Mouse Detective*, which was based on the Basil books. Thanks to Tim Johnson for making room arrangements and to Phil Bergem and Julie McKuras for providing treats. ❖

John Bergquist, BSI



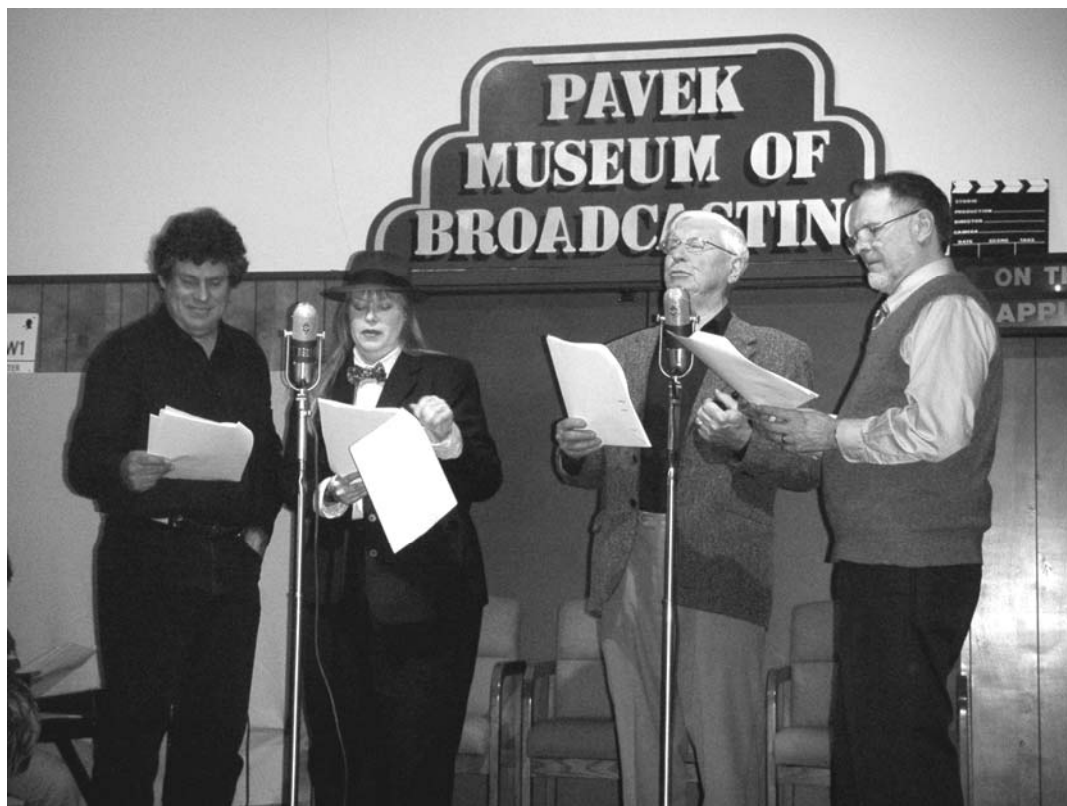
Illustrations by Paul Galdone from
Basil of Baker Street, by Eve Titus

“Dr. Kerlan wrote to every author and illustrator whose works he desired and just asked whether they would send him their manuscripts or drawings.”

THE CASE OF THE DEPARTED BANKER
A SHERLOCK HOLMES RADIO SCRIPT BY EDITH MEISER:
A VIEW FROM THE STAGE



“Bob Brusica noted in the copy he wrote for the announcer that Betty Crocker is ‘just as real as Sherlock Holmes himself!’ ”



From l to r: Nigel Spottiswoode (Alexander Holder), Karen Ellery (Miss Terwilliger), Mark Hillmer (Sherlock Holmes) and Bob Brusica (Dr. Watson) in *The Case of the Departed Banker*

A standing-room only crowd braved downpours on the soggy afternoon of Saturday, April 29, 2006 to reach the Pavek Museum of Broadcasting in St. Louis Park. The draw was The Red-Throated League performing *The Case of the Departed Banker*, a Sherlock Holmes radio script from 1944 written by Edith Meiser.

Red-Throated League organizer Bob Brusica strives to include a unique element in each performance, and this one was no exception. Unlike most scripts in the Meiser collection at the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota, this script did not include ads from the original sponsor. Instead of inserting ads from another script, Bob decided to include an inspiring wartime message from General Mills spokesperson Betty Crocker (voiced for this performance by Lucy Brusica) that was broadcast on a local radio show during the war years. Bob noted in the copy he wrote

for the announcer that Betty Crocker is “just as real as Sherlock Holmes himself!” In keeping with the wartime motif, the cast opened and closed the performance by singing Betty Crocker’s theme song, “Keep the Home Fires Burning,” with the audience invited to join in on the chorus.

Cast members, in addition to Lucy and those pictured above, included John Bergquist, Wade and Mary Manthie, Jamie Hubbs and Bob Schmall. Organist Morva Klein and sound-effects men Bill Teeple and Adam Brusica contributed greatly to the atmosphere. At one point during the performance, I noticed a long-time Explorer in the audience wearing a serene smile and sitting with her eyes closed, all the better to experience the magic of old time radio. ❖

John Bergquist, BSI

THE RED-THROATED LEAGUE AT THE PAVEK: A VIEW FROM THE AUDIENCE

The Pavek Museum houses an impressive collection of vintage radio equipment. Surrounded by shelf after shelf of displays from the early days of broadcasting, it was easy to begin slipping back in time. As the lights dimmed, and Betty Crocker began to speak, we found ourselves pulled into the 1940s. The advertisement with Betty, a familiar icon to those who lived in or around the Mill City in the 1940s, was the only liberty taken from the original broadcast of *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Departed Banker*. The show first aired January 17, 1944 on the Mutual Broadcasting System. That episode was likely sponsored by Petri Wine and featured Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Dr. Watson. Although General Mills did not sponsor the original broadcast of this presentation, Betty Crocker did have a local and national radio show during the mid-1940s. Her words were from an actual broadcast of that show, and her influence helped to define the role of women

during and after the war years. As Betty's voice faded, we continued to slip farther back in time as Mr. Alexander Holder (a character familiar from "The Beryl Coronet") desperately appealed to Sherlock Holmes to look into the death of his banking partner. Was it suicide? Would there be a run on the bank causing financial ruin? Was it murder? What happened, and ...why?

Once again, the Red Throated League has done a wonderful job with an Edith Meiser script. Under the direction of Bob Brusic, the cast and crew brought Holmes to life on the stage of the museum. Sound effects, music and good performances all around helped to create the aura of suspense and excitement that the original radio audience surely must have felt. ❖

Tim Payne

"Under the direction of Bob Brusic, the cast and crew brought Holmes to life on the stage of the museum."



BOOK REVIEW: *HOLMES ON THE RANGE*

Holmes on the Range, by Steve Hockensmith (St. Martin's Minotaur, February 2006)

A GALLOPING GOOD READ

Would the publication of the Sherlock Holmes stories span imitators around the globe? What if an illiterate cowpoke had the stories read to him and was so taken with Holmes that he started solving mysteries? What if his literate younger brother tagged along to act as his Watson? You needn't speculate – you have *Holmes on the Range*, by Steve Hockensmith.

It's 1893, on the range in Montana (isn't all of Montana a range?) and Old Red has heard his younger brother read "The Red Headed League" around the campfire during a cattle drive. When Old Red and Big Red find a dead body that has gone through a stampede, Old Red finds his calling.

"He ain't Humpty Dumpty," I said, tossing a shovel at Old Red's boots. "You can't put him back together again."

My brother made no move to pick up the shovel. Instead, he wiped his hands on his Levi's, pulled off his Stetson, and ran his fingers through his close-cropped, cherry-red hair. He usually wears upon his face an expression of vaguely irritated disappointment, as if he can't stop stewing on what he would've done with those six days God took to make a botch of the world. But he didn't look vexed or even disgusted now. He merely looked puzzled.

"It ain't *him* I'm tryin' to piece together," he said, rubbing the back of his head like it was a magic lamp and he was Aladdin trying to coax out the genie.

"What's that supposed to mean?" I asked as I unhorsed myself.

"I'm tryin' to put together how he got like this."

"Well, I reckon some *cows* might've had somethin' to do with it," I said, quickly plunging my shovel into the sappy muck. If I

had to bury a body that looked like an explosion in a butcher's shop, I wanted to get it over with fast. "That's the only way I can figure it...unless you spotted some *elephants* out this way yesterday."

One day maybe I'll get a laugh out of my elder brother. This was not that day.

"I'm just wonderin' if those cows had 'em some help," he said.

I froze mid-dig. Without quite knowing it, I'd been waiting for this moment for months. It was like waking up at the sound of a train whistle – and remembering you'd fallen asleep on the tracks.

"Damn it, Brother," I said. "You're a cowboy, not a detective."

Old Red didn't answer with words. He just turned and showed me that little wisp of a grin he slips under his mustache when he thinks he's being clever.

Oh? his smile said. *A feller can't be both?*

Old Red battles his fellow cowpokes, ornery rustlers, stampedes, an evil ranch manager, visiting British aristocracy (owners of the Bar VR ranch), and the Montana wilderness to solve his crime. All this while his brother is searching for the copies of "Harper's Weekly" so he can hear the latest Sherlock Holmes story.

What places this novel above most imitators is the reader's transformation. If you approach the novel thinking that Hockensmith has merely placed Holmes and Watson onto a different continent and social class you do the novelist a disservice. Part way through the book Holmes's story becomes Old Red's, and then you are galloping along through a rousing good novel.

Throughout Hockensmith uses slang, italics, and apostrophes effectively to give a feeling of cowpokes talking in the Old West. He tells a good story, uses language to evoke the era, place and characters, and uses humor to poke fun at two well developed characters. What more could you ask for? ❖

Gary Thaden



"What if an illiterate cowpoke was so taken with the Holmes stories that he started solving mysteries?"

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

THE ADVENTURE OF THE DYING DETECTIVE

The Study Group story for January, “The Adventure of the Dying Detective,” was not a favorite of the members present. Two-thirds of attendees rated it in the lower twenty-five percent of the Canon. Luckily, the Canon sets a fairly high standard, so we were still left with an interesting read and discussion. Our group met on a Saturday, the twenty-first day of January, at the White Bear Lake Library, which supplied us with a nice, large, and warm meeting room. We thank them and all the other local libraries that have provided us with places to meet.

“The Dying Detective” is not really about the demise of Sherlock Holmes. *Illustration by Walter Paget* was in it.

I know that Sherlock Holmes will never die, yet I felt a bit uneasy with the title when I first read this story. Thankfully, only a murderer pays the price in this short adventure. Calling this story a mystery might be an incorrect use of the word. What this story really turns out to be is a testament to the long-standing friendship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. Holmes treats Watson very poorly in this story, and at one point lays into him very severely. Yet Watson carries out Holmes’s instructions “to a ‘t,’” so to speak. For whatever reason, Watson does not even include a Holmes apology in his version of the events.

Mrs. Hudson is also portrayed here as extremely loyal to Sherlock Holmes. She looks in on Holmes during his feigned illness and visits Dr. Watson on Holmes’s behalf. Our group speculated on whether Mrs. Hudson had been

widowed or divorced. She obviously was not wealthy but most probably had inherited her real estate. We actually know very little for certain about Mrs. Hudson except for her personality traits. Many a treatise has been written about the long-suffering landlady, but much of this has been speculation. We talked about the legal aspects of the case. Our legal experts pointed out that British law at the time prevented conviction solely on a confession in certain types of cases. This apparently means that the ivory box that Watson picked up was essential to the case against Culverton Smith. The presence of Watson during the confession added to the government case, but that might not have been enough without the physical evidence of the box and whatever



Illustration by Walter Paget was in it.

It was mentioned that Conan Doyle wrote this story in a style that was different from many of our favorite stories. John Bergquist speculated that “The Dying Detective” may have been originally intended for a play. It was also suggested that Dr. Joseph Bell had given Doyle the idea of centering a plot around some deadly disease. Though this story is certainly not one of the best in the Canon, it does tend to widen the Canon’s scope.

At the close of the meeting, this week’s moderator Karen Murdock consented to be the person to pick names of five attendees from a hat. Two of those people received free sweat-shirts and three others received free hats, emblazoned with “The Norwegian Explorers,” courtesy of the website HolmesToATee.com.” ❖

Charles Clifford



“What this story really turns out to be is a testament to the long-standing friendship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.”

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

(CONTINUED)

HIS LAST BOW

Quite often, there is a correlation between the presence of certain elements in Canonical stories and the amount of enjoyment that Sherlock Holmes Study Group Members experience while reading those stories. We enjoy the conversations at 221B in front of the fire and the bearskin rug. The explanations of simple deductions at Watson's expense are favorites of the group. We love descriptions of the London weather, with Holmes and Watson venturing out by train, by dog-cart, or afoot. The narrative "His Last Bow" contained few if any of these elements, yet surprisingly the story was enjoyed by most members present. The weather was cold, but a large group assembled at The University Club on Saturday, February 18, 2006.

"His Last Bow" was first published in 1917. We do know the exact date that the story occurred: August 2, 1914. Perhaps the timing of the story is what keys our interest. The setting is the British coast, with the continent in the far off distance. The leading German agent, Von Bork, is meeting with the German ambassador, Baron Von Herling. The diplomat is congratulating Von Bork on the eve of Von Bork's departure for Germany, with the coming of World War I only days off. Von Bork, though, is preoccupied with closing a transaction with a certain spy, whom it turns out we have met before. His chauffeur very closely resembles the Dr. John Watson that we used to know, although the world had not heard from Watson in several years. The spy, Altamont, at first does not resemble Holmes, but we find out at the end that he is our long lost hero.

"His Last Bow" is mostly a propaganda instrument for the British war effort. It is also a reunion of our famous duo. We find that Holmes has spent years establishing the identity of "Altamont" the Irish traitor. He originally went to Chicago, USA, to begin his assignment, insinuating himself into the underworld. This is the only Canonical reference to Holmes visiting the USA, but he often journeys there in the world of the pastiche, notably the five novels written by St. Paul's own Larry Millett.



Illustration by A. Gilbert

Our first question posed by discussion leader John Bergquist: "Who wrote this narrative?" Possibly Mycroft, the servant Martha, Watson's wife, Holmes, or Watson in

the third person. Who was Martha? Some thought she might be Mrs. Hudson. Holmes is described as looking like he was sixty years old; that would mean he was born in 1854, but did he just look sixty because of his disguise? Is this the only Canonical reference to Holmes riding in an automobile? Yes. Is the German language more expressive than other languages, or was it Von Bork's choice of words? What was the root of Holmes's choice of the name "Altamont"? Phil Bergem informed us that the Duke of Altamont was a friend of Doyle's grandfather and that Sir Arthur's father was named Charles Altamont Doyle. We noted the similarity of "His Last Bow" and the films *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* and *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror*. The Rathbone-Bruce films are often criticized for being non-Canonical, but in a way, those two films are fairly Canonical.

We spent half of our discussion time in a very interesting review of the politics that led up to World War I, with much background information brought to our attention by Ken Timoner. The German government is often portrayed as the bully that brought the conflict on, but there is enough blame to share amongst the leading powers of the time. Sherlock Holmes will surely live forever, but it is not certain that mankind could survive another such conflict. ❖

Charles Clifford



"The German government is often portrayed as the bully that brought on WWI, but there is enough blame to share amongst the leading powers of the time."

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

(CONTINUED)

THE ADVENTURE OF THE MAZARIN STONE

“**B**ut why not eat?”
“Because the faculties become refined when you starve them. Why, surely, as a doctor, my dear Watson, you must admit that what your digestion gains in the way of blood supply is so much lost to the brain. I am a brain, Watson. The rest of me is a mere appendix. Therefore, it is the brain I must consider.”

This quote goes a long way in defining Sherlock Holmes. Modern-day doctors will affirm that eating does cut mental capacity while the stomach digests. I suppose that none of us is Sherlock Holmes, but I would bet that most doctors would not generally recommend starvation to heighten one’s mental capacity. Sherlock Holmes is human, but unlike the rest of us he has trained his body and mind for one thing: deduction.

The Sherlock Holmes Study Group, meeting on March 18th of 2006 to discuss “The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone” found the use of the word “appendix” in the above quote to be quite interesting. Since the story is told in the third person, not Dr. Watson’s normal style, we might conclude that Dr. Watson did not write this story. The term “appendix” might have been used mistakenly instead of “appendage” by a non-medical person. “Appendix” implies something that provides no useful purpose. “Appendage” implies other very useful organs. At any rate, Dr. Watson, Mrs. Hudson, Mrs. Watson, Inspector Lestrade, or even Sir Arthur Conan Doyle may have penned this story.

“The Mazarin Stone” is very much “The Empty House” revisited. We have the likeness of Holmes, this time done in wax, attempting to lure an air-gun shooter into his trap. This is another reunion for Holmes and Watson. However, Watson is present only for a few minutes, before leaving to summon Scotland Yard.

Discussion leader Phil Bergem pointed out that the reason this story resembled a play is that it apparently was a re-write of Doyle’s play *The Crown Diamond*. The play was written first, and the play-like structure of the short story is unmistakable.



Illustration by A. Gilbert

One of us thought that Holmes in disguise trailing Count Sylvius through the streets of London would have provided excellent theatre, although no such scene was in the play. Someone mentioned that one of the Granada television episodes was based on this story and expanded it beyond the one-act format.

Holmes’s disguises mentioned in this story must have been some of his better efforts:

“Other people can observe as well as you. Yesterday there was an old sporting man. Today it was an elderly woman. They held me in view all day.” (Count Sylvius)

“Really, sir, you compliment me ...” (Holmes)

“It was you – you yourself?” (Count Sylvius)

Each reader creates a different version of that scene (and the scene within the scene) in his or her mind. This is the luscious fruit of the Sherlock Holmes stories that always has us coming back for more.

If you should attend one of our monthly meetings, we encourage you to bring a book or item for show and tell. For example, this month Steve Miller showed off his “Veggie Tales” magnifying glass and poster. ❖

Charles Clifford



“Watson, you must admit that what your digestion gains in the way of blood supply is so much lost to the brain. I am a brain, Watson. The rest of me is a mere appendix.”

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

(CONTINUED)

THE PROBLEM OF THOR BRIDGE

"Somewhere in the vaults of the bank of Cox and Co., at Charing Cross, there is a travel-worn and battered tin dispatch-box with my name, John H. Watson, M. D., Late Indian Army, painted upon the lid. It is crammed with papers, nearly all of which are records of cases to illustrate the curious problems which Mr. Sherlock Holmes had at various times to examine." So begins "The Problem of Thor Bridge." It is implied from Dr. Watson's comments that "Thor Bridge" was an old case drawn from the dispatch-box. Where Sherlock and Dr. Watson were at the time of writing was not mentioned.

On April 15, 2006, the Sherlock Holmes Study Group ventured to the Oakdale Branch Library on the east side of the metro area to discuss "Thor Bridge." The group was smaller than usual, but the discussion was lively. The weather was so pleasant that we might have met out-of-doors on this spring day. We settled for convening in the fine meeting room to discuss one of our favorite stories. Of note was the title, which implied that this story was different from our normal "Adventure." The first page of Conan Doyle's manuscript shows that the author tried out several titles, including "The Adventure of the Second Chip," before settling on the final title. It is not obvious why "Problem" was chosen instead of "Adventure." Possibly the title implies more of a mental exercise than a narration of action.

The victim, or should I say the *criminal* in this case, the former Maria Pinto, was quite imaginative, unlike the run-of-the-mill London criminal. If not for Mr. Sherlock Holmes, she might have had her revenge on her intended

victim, Miss Grace Dunbar, and possibly on her husband, the American Senator Mr. Neil Gibson (the "Gold King"). The case against Miss Dunbar appears to be quite convincing as the

"problem" unfolds. In fact, the problem confounded Sherlock Holmes for at least a day.

Our group wondered why Scotland Yard had not been called into the case. Apparently, the local policeman, Sergeant Coventry, was reluctant to call them in: "Anyhow, I'd rather have you than Scotland Yard, Mr. Holmes," and "If the Yard gets called into a case, then the local loses all credit for success and may be blamed for failure." Holmes does not play against the bumbling of "the Yard," but we wondered if Lestrade's pen-

chant for "casting in ponds for evidence" might have turned lucky for him in this case.

The main subplot in this story is around the attraction between Miss Dunbar and the "Gold King." Gibson is obviously unworthy, despite his financial fortune, of Miss Dunbar. We know Mr. Marlow Bates's low opinion of Gibson, his employer. But is Bates also guilty of jealousy? Could Holmes have erred in solving the "problem"? Could Bates have set up the whole thing?

The story does imply, between the lines, that somehow Gibson may be changed by the experience of his wife's death, that he may have learned the lesson of his life, and that Miss Dunbar may influence him "for the betterment of mankind" in the future. Not likely, but possible. In real life people *can* change for the better, so keep on trying, all you billionaires (and all of us poor people, too)! ❖

Charles Clifford



Illustration by A. Gilbert



"The victim, or should I say the *criminal* in this case was quite imaginative, unlike the run-of-the-mill London criminal."

ALLEN MACKLER, 1943-2005



“Stand with me here upon the terrace...”

The final days of 2005 concluded the colorful life of Norwegian Explorer S. Allen Mackler, Jr., BSI “Sarasate,” who died on December 29th, 2005.

Allen was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1943 at Michael Reese Hospital where his father was a cardio-thoracic surgeon. He attended the Chicago Latin School, New Trier High School, and studied classical music at the University of Indiana and Baldwin-Wallace College in Ohio.

He continued his interest in music by operating “Grooves Unlimited,” a classical record store in the Chicago area while building his classical record collection to number sixteen thousand items! His Sherlockian interests were nurtured as a member of Hugo’s Companions.

In the early 1970s, Allen moved to Washington, D.C. and began a career in radio broadcasting. Surprisingly, he initially worked for a country western music station before joining WETA of National Public Radio. He began as a record librarian before becoming an on-the-air host for several programs including “Collectors’ Forum,” an interview program for classical music listeners, working with Bill Cerri. The Red Circle of Washington became his Sherlockian home, and he and fellow Sherlockians Jon Lellenberg, Peter Ashman, and Bob Katz formed “The Dining Detectives” for

gourmet experiences.

In 1991, Allen retired and moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, to explore the bookstores and restaurants and join the Norwegian Explorers; however, he came mainly for the cold weather!

Again he formed a gourmet dining group, “The Fowl Fanciers,” and he continued enjoying the company of several cats. His collections of Sherlockiana, Victorian literature, and books about gypsies were augmented by the constant “booking” adventures he relished. Unfortunately, his health declined in late 2005, and he died suddenly of a heart ailment in December.

If time is only a hypothetical construct, perhaps Allen can now interact freely with those Victorian authors and times he loved. Their lives, as ours were, will be enriched by knowing Allen. ❖

C. Paul Martin, MD, BSI

Note: Allen’s substantial collection of Sherlockian books and original artwork as well as the 221-B room he created in his home have been donated to the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota Libraries. More information will be made available when legal matters are finalized. We are humbled by Allen’s generous bequest.

BAKER STREET WEST

A group of 25 or so Explorers and guests crowded around two long tables at Khan’s Mongolian Barbecue in Richfield to commemorate the Master’s birthday on January 6. Because of the recent passing of Allen Mackler and the presence of his brother Mel and sister Sally, the evening turned out to be largely a tribute to our departed friend. Paul Martin read a formal eulogy, and most of the rest of the evening was devoted to informal telling of “Allen stories,” with Mel and Sally eagerly listening and adding some stories of their own. ❖

John Bergquist, BSI

“If time is only a hypothetical construct, perhaps Allen can now interact freely with those Victorian authors and times he loved .”

The Norwegian Explorers

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“ YOU MAY HAVE
READ OF THE
REMARKABLE
EXPLORATIONS
OF A NORWEGIAN
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I AM SURE IT
NEVER
OCCURRED TO
YOU THAT YOU
WERE RECEIVING
NEWS OF YOUR
FRIEND.”