November 1998

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Recommended Citation

Newlin, Lyman (1998) "Papa Lyman Remembers - Reunions and Kansas," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 10: Iss. 5, Article 34.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3013>

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Papa Lyman Remembers — Reunions and Kansas

by **Lyman Newlin** (Book Trade Counsellor) <broadwater.books@usa.net>

Before attending the 1998 annual convention of the **American Booksellers Association**—now saddled with the lugubrious moniker of **BookExpo America**—thanks to the ABA sellout to a **Reed Elsevier** subsidiary—I took a trip to Holton, Kansas. There I attended the annual Alumni Banquet of Holton High School, where my class of 1928 was given special recognition. Actually there was very little chair scuffling as the members of my class were asked to stand for recognition; of the three old men one was ably assisted by his wife in rising from his wheel chair. The other two of us made it without a boost. Three of sixty-nine after seventy years was not an accurate count of survivors. We knew there were at least six or eight others living. Here I should add that the most important one to me of those has since died.

As I think back over the years I am reminded that I have been privileged to meet or become acquainted with more than an average share of people prominent in various fields of human endeavor. One of the first of these was **Dr. James Naismith**, the inventor of the game of basketball. Among the several extra bright girls in the HHS class of 1928 was **Frances Pomeroy**, whose family was active in local politics and community service. One of three sisters who attended the **University of Kansas** in **Lawrence**, she entered the newly formed department of architecture, in fact was the first female graduate therefrom. Frances was courted by and eventually married **James Sherman Naismith**, the youngest of the by-then internationally famous doctor. Both Frances and the younger Jim have passed on but their son, Ian, came up to northern Minnesota from his home in Corpus Christi, Texas to work the summer of 1954 at our lodge. I had not seen Ian since that summer but I was able to spend a day with him in Chicago after the close of BEA. Jim is busily engaged as founder and director of the **Naismith International Basketball Foundation** whose purpose is to “preserve the integrity, spirit and ideals which Dr. Naismith intended when he invented basketball in 1890”... If any of my readers would like a facsimile of the original two-page set of rules with the doctor’s signature I’ll be happy to send one along (P.O. Box 278, Lewiston, NY 14092).

While on the subject of the **University of Kansas** and since I’m writing for library interested readers, I’d like to mention the **Watson Library** which was named for li-

brarian **Carrie Watson** and occupied September 11, 1924. This was the library used by Naismith who was not only an athletic activist, but a practicing M.D., an Army chaplain, and an ordained Presbyterian minister. I have only recently been reminded through a re-reading of his biography by **Bernice Webb** that he had frequently filled the pulpit of the Delia, KS Presbyterian Church, a privilege I also had when I was a prospective ministerial candidate at the **College of Emporia** about fifteen years later.

I have twice visited the latest (1981) renovation, in fact, I would call it “re birth” of **Watson Library**. I suppose one could now call that building “dated” but I cling to the notion that Watson is still a most suitable and wonderful library.

“I cling to the notion that Watson is still a most suitable and wonderful library”

I cannot leave KU without mentioning the **Kenneth Spencer Research Library** with its most remarkable collection of books on ornithology, the bibliography of which subject stands closest to my bookseller’s heart. The basis of the Spencer collection was the acquisition of the private library in 1945 of **Ralph N. Ellis, Jr.** The story of this acquisition is, in my opinion, one of the greatest of all bits of library acquisition. The story was recorded by one of the most outstanding librarians of the twentieth century: **Robert Vosper**, who was director of KU libraries 1952-1961, in a pamphlet entitled: “A Pair of Bibliomanes for Kansas: **Ralph Ellis** and **Thomas Jefferson Fitzpatrick** (Lawrence, University of Kansas libraries, 1964 and reprinted 1982, both with permission of the Bibliographic Society of America—(see my bibliography below).

Unfortunately the annotated catalog of the Spencer Library Ellis collection compiled by **Robert M. Mengel** has stalled with the completion of Volume 2 (C-D) 1983. I have from time to time talked to **James Helyar**, Editor with **Alexandria Mason**, Librarian of Spencer (whose retirement is imminent)

about this catalog but was unable to make contact as I write this. The adrenaline has reached such a high point that I am now promising myself and any interested readers to use the Ellis story in a complete column in a future **ATG**.

Now back to a few memories of the late twenties and early thirties. To begin with, there’s a need for a book about American high school reunions, not in New York City and its suburban secondary schools where single class enrollments exceed the entire average U.S. secondary school population.

As the class rolls were called off at our reunion a fair percentage of the audience recognized in almost every class the name or names of alumnae who have made their mark—educators, including university deans; lawyers, including state supreme court judges of Kansas and Oregon; an inventor of widely used agricultural machinery, etc., etc. The book I was trying to review was more concerned with clothing and jewelry worn at the affair. The ladies at our reunion were well turned out, but I don’t believe that there was much concern among them about those subjects. And the guys seemed least concerned about other net worths... We were all glad to see each other and made, I believe, every effort to suppress “my how you’ve aged!” exclamations or “Oh, great, I thought you were long since dead!”

Of course we remembered when blue jeans were called overalls and no one ever wore them to school. Girls wore skirts well below their knees over which their tan or black lisle stockings stretched. Most boys, especially after their passage from frosh to soph had forsaken their knee breeches and black stockings and wore “long pants” like their dads did.

Libraries often served as study halls or vice-versa. Ours was one of the last classes to use the main building of **Campbell College**, a defunct **United Brethren Church** institution which had turned out several noteworthy musicians. I can therefore honestly say that I first became acquainted with a college library at the tender age of fifteen. I still recall the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition originally published in 1911 and not wholly revised until the 14th edition in 1929. I give this special mention because it was, from the eleventh through the fourteenth editions, the pre-eminent set of books being traded by used-book dealers and the major reference work most sought after by public and educational libraries looking for bargain prices. The *Britannica* in our high school library predated the reprints by **Sears Roebuck and Company** after **Julius Rosenwald** became owner of *Encyclopaedia Britannica Co.* As I write this I’m looking at my 10th edition of *Sheehy’s Guide to Reference Books*. Are you librarians heeding the advice on

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Other Side of the Street from page 66

can cover anthropological implication of red ants in the Andes or zoospore distribution in inner city America. No skills necessary, ever again.

Where Have All the Shelves Gone: Storage in an Era of Virtual Space. Instructor: David Copperfield. Art 321. Prerequisite: A rabbit and a hat. Taught by the magician extraordinaire, this workshop provides the novice with a set of basic techniques to make ranges, shelves and even floors of books vanish into thin air and reappear at the fifty-yard line of your institution's football stadium at half-time of the big homecoming game. Learn to levitate whole volumes of the heaviest (in terms of isotopes) serials and drop them into the Dean's office whose star professor uses this information at least once every two years. Also, discover innovative sight gags that allow you to turn promises into monetary reality. Recommended for deans and department heads.

The Dark Side of Publishing. Instructor: Jamaal Swinerind (pseudonym). Lit 333. Prerequisite: Confession or similar activity. See instructor for approval. A definitive and intensive survey by a once top publishing executive who is now in the Federal Witness Protection Program, this distance-learning course will answer all of the following questions. 1. Why do publishers charge at least twice as much for cloth titles when they only cost a few dollars more than a paper edition? 2. Why do publishers rely solely on institutions to support their serial publications? 3. Do publishers really know what WIPO is? 4. What is the difference between profit margin and profit mania? No cameras or recording devices will be allowed.

Customer Service: Who Needs It? Instructor: to be announced. ConsumerSci 900. Prerequisite: Some knowledge of dental tools. Primarily aimed at the Reference librarian, this course asks the question "What if?" Participants will be presented with the "no customer" scenario (i.e. what if you had a library and no one came). Tasks will include beating boredom by completing the *Sunday New York Times*' crossword puzzle, preventing Carpal Tunnel Syndrome by using antiquated techniques to search the Web, deciding on how many times your phone should ring before you pick it up, and using creative ways to say that it's just not your job.

Surveillance and Security. Instructor: Jane Reno. CriminalJust 486. Prerequisite: No criminal record. As library walls "come tumbling down" and self-service innovation eliminates jobs, take the first step toward a new career. Drawing on her vast knowledge of crisis situations, Reno provides ten key, core skills for use in finding employment in the high-paying security field. Learn how to operate a concealed camera, to record even your closest friends' phone conversations, and to get in the "back door" of almost any computer system. Transform yourself into a sleuth

with the flair of Bond, the guile of Mata Hari, and the cunning of Kim Philby. Enrollment limited. Sign up now! Call 1-800-GET-REAL.

Oregon Trails from page 76

There are just a couple more items left to mention, both associated with a book collector and a bookseller who is still very much alive and very active, a true bibliographer, too, who has more book stories than *Aesop* had fables. I don't know how these two keepsake books got separated from the others that are on a bookshelf in my office at work, a reminder of a librarian's roots, but they did. I am glad that they ended up in this particular box of books with good memories and associations but sad reminders of book people no longer with us except in spirit.

The two keepsake books in this magical box were New Year's gifts from **Blackwell's**, selected by **John J. Walsdorf** and mailed under his signature. Jack collects many authors and genres but he is best known for his interest in **William Morris**, so it was no surprise when the 1990 keepsake was *William Morris: Master Printer* by **Frank Colebrook** with an introduction by

William S. Peterson. The book was designed by **Neil Shaver** at the **Yellow Barn Press** (Council Bluffs, Iowa) and has woodcuts by **John DePol**. Showing Jack's range of bibliographical interests, the 1992 keepsake was *My Two Oxfords* by the Mississippi writer **Willie Morris**. Again, the book was designed by **Neil Shaver**, printed by the **Yellow Barn Press**, and illustrated with wood engravings by **John DePol**.

There is an old country song called "Hillbilly Heaven." If you don't know the song—it has been recorded by several singers—it is a tribute to some of the great country singers of all time going back to the **Carter Family**, **Jimmie Rogers**, and so on. As the names of these revered singers are recited, the singer adds his or her own name to it and then wakes up. If I dreamed I was in **Booklover Heaven**, all those associated with the books in this one box would be there and I hope that when the roll call is sounded, I will wake up and know that my bibliographic entry, and Jack's, still have open dates.

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p.135 of this work that the "great" 9th may be used "profitably" etc? I haven't had my hands on a 9th or even an 11th for years but I'll wager that Sheehy's advice is still valid.

As I remember it, the *Century Encyclopedia* was the most used. It's been so long since I've seen a *Century* I can't give a proper bibliographic description of it—it's even gone from my Wilson's Cumulative Book Index 1928-1932... Of course we had sets of the *Complete Works of...* (famous authors). My friend **Cliff Hillegass** had not come out with his *Cliff's Notes* until many years later—1958.

We were also fortunate to have a better than average public library, named **Beck-Bookman Library**. It was not then a publicly funded library—The Beck family, contemporaries and peers of **William Allen White**, a leading Kansas newspaper publisher, were the prime supporters along with several "literary" clubs.

Now that I'm started on the subject I'll include more about Kansas public libraries in my story about the Ellis Collection—next time.

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