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## Papa Lyman Remembers: Books for Younger Readers

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# Papa Lyman Remembers

by **Lyman Newlin** (Book Trade Counsellor)  
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Since we were all children at one time or another and, on the assumption that many of you must have read books written by **Marguerite Henry**, I will deviate somewhat from the usual academic scene to write about some early experiences with books for younger readers.

Ms. Henry died November 26, 1997 at the age of 95 plus. I met her only once during my **Follett** days; on one of her early visits to **Wilcox and Follett Company**, Chicago, when she was meeting with **Dwight W. Follett** who was in charge of the company's publishing activities. I have no distinct recollection of this meeting. I do know that in 1945 W & F published the first edition of *Justin Morgan Had a Horse* for which she received a Newbery Honor citation. This book was rewritten later and was illustrated by **Wesley Dennis**, the first of their many collaborations. It was published in 1954 by **Rand McNally**, Chicago. I have been unable to locate any Follett archive on Henry but **Wilson's Cumulative Book Index** indicates that she published in 1944 under the Follett imprint an earlier title: *A Boy and a Dog*. My memory tells me that the author knew early on that she was bound for great success and she thoroughly shopped Chicago and other midwestern publishers. In addition to Follett and **Rand McNally** she published with **Donohue/Hubbard** and **Albert Whitman** as well as with **Bobbs Merrill**, in Indiana and **Saalfeld**, in Ohio, before going to **McGraw Hill**, **Macmillan** and other New York houses. Talk about targeting! Horses were her prime theme and midwestern publishers were her prime source of dissemination! In addition to winning the Newbery Medal (and Honors), Henry's works have been praised by almost every contemporary critic of literature for young people. Several movies based on her titles include *Justin Morgan Had a Horse* (Disney, 1972) and *Misty* (20th Century

Fox, 1961). For much of this information I am indebted to **Karen Nelson Hoyle**, University of Minnesota Libraries. She is Curator, Children's Literature Research Collection in which is located the **Kerlan Collection** containing a considerable part of **Marguerite Henry's** papers, 1947-1984.

Another Newbery award winner, whom I had the privilege of knowing quite well, was a regular customer of the **Minnesota Book Store** during my tenure there in the 1940s. She was **Carol Ryrie Brink** author of *Caddie Woodlawn* (Newbery 1935). She was the wife of **Raymond Brink**, a highly regarded mathematics professor at the **University of Minnesota** and author of several widely used texts published by **Appleton-Century-Crofts**.

One more encounter with children's books and we'll get on to more discussion of adult publishers. In 1941 — when I was business manager of **Follett Book Company**, **Simon and Schuster** introduced what was to become the largest selling se-

*"I'm taking the chance that some of our readers will take a fancy to writing something for young Americans."*

ries of books for youngsters: **LITTLE GOLDEN BOOKS**. They were bound in fully illustrated colored boards and sold for 25 cents each. These titles caught on like wildfire with kids, parents, and librarians. Only trouble was that their bindings could not hold up to ordinary child usage. **Sylvestre Watkins**, our buyer, and **Virgil Gentilin**, advertising manager, came up with a great idea: prebind them! Our first order was for 50,000 books divided among the twelve titles available (1942). The one best remembered (and still in print as are all others of those original titles) is *The Poky Little Puppy*. So we had the entire 50,000 books pre-bound in library buckram. I remember as if it were last week

staying into late hours for several nights helping write sales copy so that **Sylvestre** and **Virgil** could get their publicity out quickly. We scooped the market with bound copies and at the low library price of one dollar each we had to reorder within a relatively very short time. Because of this brilliant



scoop **Gentilin** was stolen from **Follett** by **Montgomery Ward** to manage their entire book operation. From **Wards** he was hired by **Simon and Schuster** and worked there as head of their "Golden Craft Books" section and eventually became head of the **S & S** educational books operation. While in that capacity **Virgil** developed what came to be known as "library binding" by **S & S** and soon was copied by almost every other publisher of children's books. Library binding resulted from **Virgil's** observation that ordinary binding wore out before the pages wore out and that in **Class A Library Binding** the pages wore out before the binding!

I have been helped in the **Little Golden Books** story by **Ronald Gentilin**, who followed his

father into publishing via **Affiliated Publishers**, **S & S**, **Grolier** and **Oxford University Press** from which he retired in 1997. He is now a resident of the **Charleston, SC** area and promises to be present at the 1998 **Charleston Conference**.

I hope you will excuse the lengthy story about children's books — but I'm taking the chance that some of our readers will take a fancy to writing something for young Americans: Perhaps there are not as many horse lovers now as there were in 1949 when **Marguerite Henry** was awarded the Newbery Medal for *King of the Wind*, but there still are dogs and cats and lizards and snakes in the pet department to say nothing of computer and space travel as subject matter in good books for kids. Now you have a great idea for what to do with your spare time!

## Papa Lyman's News Items

Concerning three recent periodical stories — 1) **College of Charleston Conference** founder, **Katina Strauch**, and her number one right hand conference honcha, **Judy Webster**, have gone international as authors of "The **Charleston Conference**", an article in **LOGOS**, 8/3 (1997), p. 165. **LOGOS** is the brain child of **Charleston Conference** alumnus **Gordon Graham**. With his wife, **Betty**, he was in attendance

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*A word from the title of a medical book published in 1741 eventually came to define a branch of medicine dealing with the preservation and restoration of function in the musculoskeletal system. The word is "orthopedic" and it was coined by Nicholas Andre, a French professor of medicine, (con't pg 78)*



**Vendor-Library**  
from page 75

representative can visit both campus libraries in less time than visiting two libraries on two campuses. Another example of small economies of scale results from increasing business with an existing customer. Being able to place three more books in a shipping box spreads the cost of the box across twenty-one books instead of eighteen. If this seems like a minuscule number, imagine the effect on hundreds of boxes. After all, economies of scale mean just that: savings that result from fixed costs spreading over more units, lowering the per unit cost and therefore ultimately the per unit price. But this won't happen to any significant degree in a consortium. The individual campuses will still require a sales call. There will be more boxes, but except for a few libraries where more existing business results, there won't

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**"High volume with inadequate profit just means a quicker demise."**

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be more books in those boxes. Labor costs, which are such a large factor, do not change at all.

If this vendor gets the consortium-wide book contract, and assuming the five libraries that originally were customers for part of their purchasing now buy all their books from that vendor, there are some small economies of scale accruing to the vendor. Combine that with the fear factor, the threat of loss of existing business, and the consortium should see some small increase in discounts. But not much of an increase, because discounts are already at an all-time high and the economies of scale are not significant. But that does not mean that a vendor won't be swayed by fear or delusions of grandeur into making a big mistake. I am not talking about being stupid. I am talking about being afraid. International bankers, for instance, are not thought of as people who are dumb about money. Yet they continued to pour huge amounts of cash into some Asian economies, the same economies that talking heads on TV predicted were on the verge of collapsing. Each banker was afraid another would have an advantage if, despite all the evidence to the contrary, a miracle occurred and Indonesia suddenly became Switzerland. And so it may be in our business. In fact, so it has been.

Last year the universities in southern England put out a consortium bid for their

book purchases. The prize to the chosen vendor was about two million pounds sterling in book buying. The winning vendor bid 23% across the board, with 25% promised if purchases exceeded a certain level. I happened to be at a conference in the UK within days of this contract award, and the losing vendors were expressing both astonishment and sadness. Since each of the consortium members would be ordering

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**"Electronic journals and some other products seem to lend themselves to economies of scale."**

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separately, and would be shipped to separately, where were the economies of scale that justified a discount that was substantially higher than any others offered? The losing vendors were astonished that the winner thought they could stay in business with such a discount, and they were sad that experienced librarians accepted such a price as realistic. A few months ago the winning vendor, a formerly stable and profitable company, closed its doors forever. Another victim to fear, another believer in the flawed maxim, "We'll make it up in volume." High volume with inadequate profit just means a quicker demise.

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*In the next issue of ATG I'll discuss other aspects of consortia and vendors, with some suggestions on how vendors can bring real value to libraries in this environment.*

**Papa Lyman**  
from page 74

at #17, November 1997. We will be glad to furnish a copy of this story to non-subscribers to LOGOS. 2) *Forbes*, December 29, 1997, p. 58 runs a story by **William P. Barrett** titled "Mousetrapped." A few weeks ago Katina called me with the news that I would probably be called by *Forbes* for some discussion about the **H. W. Wilson Company**. Apparently Barrett had got wind of my June 1994 *ATG* story about **Halsey William Wilson** (v.6#4, p.62-63). No phone calls from *Forbes* but an officer of HWW Co. advised me to look for the December 29 issue. Breathlessly I charged off to the **Niagara Falls Library**, some six miles distant and, sure enough, I found the magazine and it took only a couple of seconds to learn why I did not hear from the publisher. My story was all pro Wilson; it would have been contributed to a *Festschrift* had there been one and had I been asked. (Here's a chance to amend my plug for the *Oxford Desk Dictionary* in *ATG* (v.9#6, Dec 1997/Jan.1998, p.82). How come *Festschrift* does not appear in it whereas *Merriam Webster's Collegiate* and *American Heritage* have even anglicized the word enough to have dropped the capital "F" "already!?) 3) Another periodical story — **Charleston Conference** alumnus **Richard Abel** started 1998 with a piece entitled, "Return of the Native in *American Libraries*, January, 1998 (v.20#1, p.76). Perhaps if enough of us decry the use of the word "outsource" whenever we think of hiring another person to mow our lawn or repair a blown auto radiator hose, we may rid ourselves of this inappropriate and pretentious-sounding word.

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