

between the Plainsmen and The Maggie Jones that would continue for years.

Twenty-five attended that dinner, which took on a further Hallowe'enish tone with The Devil's Foot as the adventure of the evening. Steve Mann took the Chair in Lellenberg's absence, and ran a lively program including Eille Norwood's 1921 silent-movie version of the story (screened by John Altman, now well-launched in his career as a documentary movie-maker), and a Devilish quiz won by newcomer John Lehman. Besides Lehman, a self-described miserable hireling of the Internal Revenue Service, several other noteworthy figures debuted that night: a saintly seminary student, Stephen Harrell; Tim Kirk, a famous fantasy artist; Hallmark artist Vikki Marshall; and two journalists, Lenore Bradley for the Kansas City Star and Stan Carmack for KMBC-TV.

Both reporters carried further word of the Plainsmen to the public. Although Bradley later boned up on Irregular history to write a good account, she was wide-eyed that night, never fully recovering from the "curious blend of fact and fantasy which characterizes the meetings of the Baker Street Irregulars," as she put it in her January 23rd story, "Holmes Is Where Their Hearts Are". Some Plainsmen could not resist pulling her leg. While Milt Perry was matter-of-factual, for Milt, in discussing "The Body Beside the Tracks", Steve Mann told her that he was "combing the Canon to prove that Holmes was consulted by extraterrestrials, interplanetary visitors, supernaturals and ghosts from the past." (It was Hallowe'en, though it seems not to have occurred to her.) And Ernest Willer assured her that a dinner invitation had been sent, as always, to Sherlock Holmes in London, and had been answered by Mrs. Hudson, who had said that the Master was on his way west to investigate "the Tonganoxie Terror".* Stan Carmack's two-part television report on November 6th and 7th was treated less hilariously, though, and it was a fortunate day for the Plainsmen when Brother Carmack became a member of the caravan.

The Maggie Jones was a success. "Although it lacks the aura dispensed by that incomparable stained-glass dome at the Savoy," Daisy Wright wrote to Lellenberg afterwards, "it was quite appropriate to a Sherlockian gathering. ...dark enough in the corners to give rise to mysterious speculation." December 18th, however, saw the Plainsmen gather next at the Plaza Theater for an advance screening of The Seven-Per-Cent Solution. Afterwards it was a short walk to lunch at Annie's Santa Fe, where the Plainsmen heatedly debated the movie, and John Altman did his gleeful best to get the distraught Milt Perry drunk. Such was the price of a fundamentalist attitude in the bad old days of the Sherlock Holmes Boom of the 1970s.

When the Plainsmen returned to The Maggie Jones on an unseasonably warm December 27th for the Feast of the Blue Carbuncle, it was to a specially prepared roast goose dinner, confirming the worth of The Maggie Jones to the thirty-one who attended. The Yuletide event was a happy conclusion to the most active year the Plainsmen had ever known. Eloquent toasts were drunk, including one in verse to Peterson the Commissionaire, "who brought the goose," offered by Marilyn Levinson, the first person ever to turn in a per-

* Kansans will understand.

fect answer to one of Ernest Willer's double-acrostic puzzles. Milt Perry wept into his whiskey as Altman praised The Seven-Per-Cent Solution, but regrouped to win an entertaining round-robin quiz that posed New Year's resolutions by unidentified canonical victims and villains for the Plainsmen to identify -- deciphering entries that were usually difficult, often humorous, and mostly canonically justified.

1976 was "an exceptional year for The Great Alkali Plainsmen," the Daily Journal proclaimed. The scion had acquired interesting new members, and become acquainted with many visitors from other scion societies. Highlights included the publication at long last of Milt Perry's "The Body Beside the Tracks", Brother Shaw's return, and the discovery of a pleasing new home for Plainsmen dinners. Accolades went to Frank Mitchell who found The Maggie Jones, Jerry Gaines for going out of his way to make us comfortable and well fed, John Altman who made cinematic treats possible with his equipment and expertise, and Steve Mann for his assistance arranging Plainsmen affairs. And of course 1976 had also seen the creation of the Kansas City Daily Journal itself.

"Who are you, though?"

By December, Lellenberg had begun to reflect upon the considerable change that the last twelve months had wrought, and to muse about the scion's future on paper, playing with the question of what directions the Plainsmen should take now, having found their feet. The one-page document was "started as a joke," he noted at the bottom of the sheet later, but "continued and finished as a serious effort." He asked himself, out of a knowledge of BSI scion societies second only to Shaw's among the Plainsmen, what the other scions were that he admired most. He came up with a half dozen or so. He admired the interesting, often distinctive programs of some of them. He envied the elegance that others achieved at their gatherings. Still others seemed worthy of emulation because of their scholarship, or (in the somewhat contrived case of The Bruce-Partington Planners) a certain mysterious aura.* He recognized that The Great Alkali Plainsmen would always retain a certain, not discreditable, frontier roughness, but also that the Plainsmen had begun to do interesting things with good prospects for continuing in that vein.

There has never been anything mysterious about The Great Alkali Plainsmen, except perhaps how they put it all away, but in later years Lellenberg would consider himself well-pleased with the scion's "wiry and vigorous constitution". That was not entirely self-congratulatory, either, for he was often surprised by developments; and the scion's strong qualities and often unique attributes, he realized, were owing mostly to other members who were

* In addition to Lellenberg, the founder of The Bruce-Partington Planners within the Military-Industrial Complex, one other Plainsman is a member honoris causa of this shadowy scion. Part of its mysterious aura is that its membership rolls are classified, however, and it would therefore be a breach of security to admit that that other Plainsman is George Erickson.

on the spot in Kansas City. But for what it is worth, this is what Lellenberg was thinking as de facto Avenging Angel at the end of 1976. It would be kind to remember that he was talking to himself at the time.

After the successful October '76 meeting chaired by Steve Mann, Lellenberg had told John Bennett Shaw that he hoped to diminish his own direct role in the scion over time. In 1977, he continued his soon familiar pattern of turning to Plainsmen in Kansas City to plan and run most meetings. His next opportunity came in February, when a Columbia Artists road company production of Gillette's Sherlock Holmes came to town for a one-night performance at the Lyric Theater on Valentine's Day. Not the best night for a theater party, perhaps, but twenty-seven Plainsmen turned out for it. Reactions were cool, though, because the production employed an exaggerated approach unpleasantly close to outright burlesque. Art Suskin, reviewing it for the Daily Journal, chided the director for resorting to cheap laughs in obvious ignorance of Holmesian values. Some Plainsmen were so offended that they declined to join members of the cast at Crown Center's Signboard Bar afterwards, but others did, and discussion of the play, William Gillette, Sherlock Holmes, the Baker Street Irregulars, and the Great Alkali Plainsmen, continued until 1:30 a.m.

Some Plainsmen felt that they could perform Gillette's play as well as the road company they had seen. Though they never undertook it, it's worth recording the casting that John Lehman proposed in a letter to Lellenberg. It captures some leading personalities of our scion at that time, and also the kind of humor for which Lehman, and the scion itself, to a considerable extent, was becoming known:

Speaking of the Gillette play, the idea of the Plainsmen staging the play themselves is excellent. With twenty persons in the cast, there would not be enough in the audience for anyone to be embarrassed. I have a few suggestions as to who should be cast in some of the roles, though I admit I am vulnerable to accusations of typecasting.

Alice Faulkner -- a sweet innocent -- John Altman

James Larrabee -- blackmailer, kidnapper, a man without a single redeeming social merit -- Milt Perry

Professor Moriarty -- "the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city" -- Lenore Bradley

Alfred Bassick -- Moriarty's chief flunky -- Stan Carmack

Sherlock Holmes -- "the best and wisest man whom I have ever known" -- John Lehman

Dr. Watson -- also known as "Boobus Britannicus" -- Steve Mann

Billy -- a young lad, a blushing little fellow -- Jon Lellenberg

Parsons -- butler to Watson, a wooden character requiring little talent to play well -- Steven Harrell

Jim Craigin -- professional hit man, early advocate of non-smoking in public places -- Marilyn Levinson

Twenty-one Plainsmen convened at The Maggie Jones again on May 28th to celebrate Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's birthday. That was still unusual, even unorthodox for a BSI scion society in those days, but Lellenberg, more than most Baker Street Irregulars, harbored a serious interest in The Literary Agent. He was back in the Chair again to welcome more newcomers to the caravan: insurance executive Martin Baier, Lenore Carroll (who had submitted a fine Holmes pastiche to Baker Street Miscellanea,* and been swooped up for the Plainsmen by Co-Editor Lellenberg), Vern Corriell, president of Burroughs Bibliophiles, a similar literary mania, and the Mayor of Kansas City, Charles Wheeler, who years before had been Napoleon No. 43 of The Six Napoleons of Baltimore. Alas, it was also the first Plainsman meeting that Ernest Willer ever missed -- because of his wife Betty's health, not his own. John Lehman discussed Conan Doyle's life and literary career, Stephen Harrell gave a sympathetic exposition of his Spiritualist beliefs, and the deceased author spoke for himself via his 1927 Fox Movietone film interview. John Altman scandalized the Plainsmen by admitting that he had forgotten to bring the text of 221B, and the meeting adjourned for the first time ever without it. (A good thing for Brother Altman that Ernest Willer was not there!)

Plans were already well afoot for the remainder of the year. On August 6th, John Bennett Shaw joined the Plainsmen again, stopping in Kansas City after his first Sherlock Holmes workshop at Notre Dame University. Quite a few of his students followed him to Kansas City, too. Fifty Plainsmen and visitors from other scion societies were present, denizens of The Brothers Three of Moriarty, The Master's Class of Philadelphia, The Afghanistan Perceivers of Tulsa, The Noble Bachelors of St. Louis, The Bagatelle Card Club of Milwaukee, The Red Circle of Washington, The Arkansas Valley Investors of Little Rock, and The Scowrers of San Francisco. (No Jezails? It had been an educational undertaking at Notre Dame. "We progress, Watson.") Tim Kirk drank to Mean Old Moriarty, John Altman dryly offered Plain Old Alkali, and Lenore Carroll toasted Good Old Holmes, in verse that managed to link together Shaw, mirth, and girth. John Lehman educated the masses that night on the subject of "Sherlock and Sorokin: A Study in the Sociology of Literature".† After hearing at length how the Canon's progression demonstrates Pitirim Sorokin's mind-numbing theories of the decline of Western Civilization, the Plainsmen were more than ready for diversion. That was provided by Shaw, who recounted the past week's doings at Notre Dame -- though the grim note was restored afterwards, sure enough, by another horrid Shaw quiz. The enthusiastic meeting lapped over onto the following morning, when sixteen bleary-eyed Sherlockians joined the Shaws at the Buttonwood Tree for brunch.

Plainsmen were getting out and about Sherlockians elsewhere, too. Frank

* "Before the Adventures", BSM 12, December 1977. In 1984, BSM's editors reviewed their first ten years and picked Lenore's story as the best contribution of 1977.

† Mercifully abridged for The Baker Street Journal, March 1980.

Mitchell showed up at Brother Shaw's home in Santa Fe, and Marilyn Levinson attended the Sub-Librarians Scion at the ALA convention in Detroit. John Altman descended downriver in August to visit The Noble Bachelors, and Lenore Carroll dined with Jon Lellenberg and others of The Red Circle in Washington.

On September 24th, two dozen Plainsmen gathered for A Dartmoor Evening on the Baskervillean grounds of the Kansas City Museum. Lellenberg forever afterwards gnashed his teeth over missing this meeting. "But the moor with its mysteries and its strange inhabitants remains as inscrutable as ever," the Canon says, and the Evening's chief plotter, John Altman ("a smiling face and a murderous heart") kept it so. After a canonical repast of bread, tinned tongue, and preserved peaches, the Plainsmen were subjected to a Something Hunt -- a scavenger contest around the museum grounds based on The Hound of the Baskervilles -- and then treated to a pantomimed reenactment of the adventure by Altman, Carl Helmstetter, Tim Kirk, Vikki Marshall, Mary Nelson, and Ernest Willer. The evening ended with Christopher Plummer's film version of the Master's other famous Dartmoor case, Silver Blaze.

Altman was dissatisfied afterwards with the Dartmoor Evening, and it's true that the Something Hunt, designed none too smoothly from afar by Jon Lellenberg, was confusing and inconclusive (though Keith Jameson, a newcomer late of The Brothers Three of Moriarty, was declared the winner). Then too, there were the squadrons of mosquitoes that rose like vampires as darkness fell. But Altman underrated the stellar success of the Hound pantomime that he had written and directed.

"Dartmoor. The Sun sets. The Moon rises. The Powers of Altman are exalted," one spectator gleefully reported, and The Hound was certainly retold as only someone whose middle name is Stapleton would dare do it. Mrs. Hudson was more intimate with Sherlock Holmes than usual, Watson a trifle denser. Sir Hugo was more lustful toward his maidenly victim than ever, but alas for him, she was "not into kinky relationships." (She swooped down on Tom Gee, a very married Kansas City Policeman joining the caravan for the first time, and turned him as red as a tomato with a sudden kiss as she fled from Hugo and his wicked companions.) Dr. Mortimer showed a sinister interest in adding Holmes's skull to his anthropological museum without further delay. Miss Stapleton blew bubble gum. Sir Henry was nutty enough for the squirrels to pick up and carry off. The Barrymores bore an uncanny resemblance to "American Gothic". And when Holmes, disguised as a tramp, tried to approach Watson and Sir Henry surreptitiously, he was rewarded with a severe thrashing for his impudence.

But the Master solved the case, and Stapleton got his comeuppance with a sneering "Sic semper botanists!" from the narrator, with much cheering and hissing by the audience throughout. The purists present might have decried Altman's production as a travesty, had they not been laughing as hard as everyone else.

That autumn saw Jon Lellenberg in London, where he met Dame Jean Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur's surviving child, for the first time, and discovered in passing that Sir Arthur had visited Kansas City in 1923. It was during the author's second Spiritualist speaking tour of the United States, and in his book Our Second American Adventure, he was clairvoyant enough to call Kansas

City "a young giant of a town, half-formed and sprawling, but with the seeds of greatness in it." He marvelled at the city's parks and especially admired "The Scout", Cyrus Edwin Dallin's bronze statue of an Indian scout on horseback, overlooking downtown Kansas City from atop Penn Valley Park. Conan Doyle tried hard to buy postcards of it, and was surprised to find none at all, but he did include a photograph of it in his book. When the Feast of the Blue Carbuncle rolled around on December 27th, a modern-day postcard of "The Scout" was signed by all present and sent to Dame Jean with the Compliments of the Season.

There were twenty-three Plainsmen present that night, enjoying Jerry Gaines' roast goose. Milt Perry reminisced about Harry Truman, John Altman screened all forty-five seconds of Sherlock Holmes Baffled, and everyone listened appreciatively to a recital of the Master's favorite violin music by Bonnie Trimmer, a talented young guest who performed Mendelssohn, Paganini, Offenbach, and Chopin, concluding with "Auld Lang Syne" that brought tears to Plainsmen eyes. Or maybe that was John Lehman's poetic accompaniment, for he had plagiarized far and wide; and with many a glance over his shoulder for representatives of the Rudyard Kipling Estate, he declaimed canonical narratives not necessarily found in the Canon.* His four poems, some very extensive, are in Daily Journal No. 11 (January 23, 1978), but here is a taste:

Sing, Muse, of Homeric times,
 And aid me in my rhyme
 As you helped that blind Achaean's rhapsody,
 Of that fatal bane of Watson,
 The Jezail with his shotgun,
 Whose fearful blast smote the Doctor's knee;
 Then bouncing from the ground,
 That nasty Maiwand round
 Struck the subclavian artery!
 Now with his fill of this,
 And wounded tendo of Achillis,
 Watson foreswore his Afghan surgery,
 For he knew he needed peace
 From his recent near-decease,
 But he knew not where to go nor how to seek it.
 So he went begging through the city
 For one kindly word of pity --
 And Young Stamford was the man
 from whom he got it.

Ah! Stamford! Stamford!
 Heart of stone,
 Blackhearted, blackguarded gnome!
 Your friend under stress
 Needed years of rest,
 And you sent him to that blighter
 Sherlock Holmes!

* "Can I help it," he protested, "if my Muse is also an Amateur Cracksman?"

That was only the first of a wonderful series of Blue Carbuncle musicales and theatricals over the next several years, entertainments in which Lehman was the principal moving spirit. By now, The Maggie Jones found it hard to get rid of the high-spirited Plainsmen at the end of their meetings. "The wells are to the right, my brothers!" cried Milt Perry, heading for the bar. Die-hards simply moved to other tables in the by-then nearly deserted restaurant, lingering on into the early hours of the morning, as long as the bar remained open.

"Will you come with us on these terms?"

As the entire world surely knows, the annual dinner of the Baker Street Irregulars in New York falls on the Friday closest to the Master's birthday, January 6th. In January '78, John Altman joined Shaw and Lellenberg there for the first time. Lellenberg relished the opportunity to introduce Altman to the BSI by pointed reference to his middle name, upon which the open-mouthed Altman was roundly hissed by the roomful of delighted Irregulars. Altman threw himself bravely into the maelstrom of events: cocktails at the Algonquin and dinner elsewhere Thursday; the Martha Hudson Breakfast, the William Gillette Luncheon, and the BSI dinner on Friday -- followed by the afterparty given by The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes later that night, plus room parties at the Algonquin and Royalton Hotels into the early hours of Saturday morning; and then, after very little sleep, the Baker Street Cinematograph screenings, Julian Wolff's cocktail party at the Grolier Club, and dinner elsewhere on Saturday. Altman gave the Plainsmen a vivid account of the BSI weekend at their next meeting in March, when he had sobered up again.

That meeting was another film evening at The Maggie Jones on the 18th: John Altman in the Chair, The Valley of Fear as the adventure of the evening, and Arthur Wontner's Triumph of Sherlock Holmes on the screen. John had forgotten about toasts for the meeting, causing Ernest Willer to look at him more like Moriarty than ever. John did give his candid account of the BSI weekend, though. "He seems to have enjoyed himself," the Daily Journal remarked later, "and those who know Altman know what that means." At least he remembered 221B this time -- about two seconds after concluding the meeting as everyone was stampeding out of the room towards the bar.

If John Altman was forgetful in March, Milt Perry was nonplussed in May. The American Association of Museums was coming to town for its annual convention, and Milt was its program chairman. Back in December, the bright idea of a BSI scion society within the AAM had occurred to him. Museums had been of great significance to Sherlock Holmes, after all. They played instrumental roles in some of his investigations, the British Museum had formed an important part of his education when he first came to London, and other museums are mentioned by name in the Canon. What better -- remembering Henry Baker's comments in The Blue Carbuncle -- than an AAM scion society called The Alpha Inn? A joint luncheon meeting with The Great Alkali Plainsmen was scheduled for May 28th, at Union Station across Pershing Road from the convention at Crown Center. An appealing announcement to the convention-goers was drafted, and an invigorating quiz on museums in the Canon was prepared.

When the day came, seven Plainsmen including Milt Perry gathered in the lobby of Union Station, as the announcement had advised. To Milt's chagrin, only one AAM member was present for the "joint" meeting -- Milt himself. Not a single museum troglodyte crossed the road to join the new scion. Unlike Henry Baker, they were to be found in Crown Center's bars during the day. The meeting adjourned early, and The Alpha Inn -- a good idea, withal -- went unrealized, alas.

The Plainsmen were luckier with movies. Jon Lellenberg knew Irregulars who owned prints, film critic John Tibbetts (a Plainsman since 1976) had resources as well, and John Altman was always able to provide equipment. Quite a few pseudocanonical epics had been shown at Plainsmen meetings, as far back as 1964. September 2nd's gathering at The Maggie Jones was another occasion, this time to watch Basil Rathbone's The Scarlet Claw, the Plainsmen's easy favorite of Rathbone's Universal Holmes. This time, thanks to Altman and Tibbetts, the Plainsmen were able to see it complete, uninterrupted, and on a big screen. The projection, Ernest Willer reported happily, "was clear and sharp and the sound perfect." The level of merriment was above average that night, despite Lehman's long, gruesome talk marking Jack the Ripper's 90th anniversary. It might have lasted even longer, had Altman not grabbed his projector and announced that movie time had arrived during one of Lehman's infrequent gulps for air.

It was around that time that Milt Perry was chosen to supervise the restoration of several historic sites in Clay County, Missouri, including the Jesse James Farm just outside Kansas City at Kearney. Back at the July 1975 Plainsmen dinner, Milt had hinted at a Jamesian sequel to "The Body Beside the Tracks". Now he was more or less in charge of Jesse James affairs in Kansas City. The restoration work received a great deal of publicity, and the site was often visited by tourists whom Milt would guide around the premises. He had spoken to some one late-summer day, standing in the excavation of Jesse James's original grave at the Farm, when he noticed one of them lingering behind. He looked up from the excavated grave to see a long pair of shapely legs. Raising his eyes reluctantly, he saw a good-looking blonde grinning down at him, wearing eyeglasses that Tolkien's elves might have fashioned for her. "Hi, Milt!" she said.

Margaret Weis was back.

She was Margaret Baldwin now, married with two children to a Missouri Highway Patrolman, and working as an editor for a small publisher in Independence. Her return to the Plainsmen's caravan was well-timed to coincide with the scion's fifteenth anniversary celebration in October, and John Altman nearly keeled over when Margaret walked into a Plainsmen meeting for the first time in ten years.

That celebration took place at The Maggie Jones on October 28th. The crowd included not only Margaret, but John Bennett Shaw up from Santa Fe, Ron Paradise returned from a year's stay in Philadelphia with The Master's Class, and, for the first time, Craig and Patricia Brown, formerly of The Arkansas Valley Investors. Jon Lellenberg read a message of congratulations from Julian Wolff, who said in part that "the strength of the Baker Street Irregulars lies in its robust scions, and The Great Alkali Plainsmen is one of the truly

active ones." Refuting suspicions of forgery caused by the message's reference to Lellenberg as "my good friend," the Chair called upon John Altman to reminisce about the scion's founding. It is hard to reminisce when you can't even remember, of course, and it was difficult for John to recall the early days, he said, when he was only a teenager with Ernest Willer and Milt Perry pouring strong drink down his throat. (Shaw was heard to snort at this juncture.) But John evoked the scion's beginnings, when the founders had little surmise of its duration and growth and activities over the years to come. As counterpoint, John Lehman rose to deliver a Scion Prophecy, recaptured in part here:

- In the next fifteen years, John Altman's motion picture enterprise will grow so prosperous that in some of his movies the cast will wear clothes.

- Within the next fifteen years, Stan Carmack will leave a Great Alkali Plainsmen meeting sober.

- Within the same period of time, Ron Paradise will arrive at a Plainsmen meeting that way.

- Ernest Willer will eventually resolve the troubling familiarity of his appearance by confessing himself to be the Napoleon of Crime.

- Vikki Marshall will become internationally famous as the author of the bestseller Altman Was a Woman.

- Milt Perry will complete his paper on Sherlock Holmes and Jesse James when (1) the Great Pyramid has at last eroded into the Nile; (2) Jon Lellenberg becomes a pacifist; (3) John Bennett Shaw founds a chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous in Moriarty, New Mexico; (4) Jerry Gaines serves a bad meal; or (5) Tom Gee hits something he shoots at -- whichever takes longer.

- John Bennett Shaw will retire from Sherlockiana when his much-vaulted collection is revealed to be merely a cunning wall painting.

- And John Lehman will meet an untimely end in the parking lot of a Kansas City restaurant late one October night.

That autumn, a young Minneapolis student, Virginia Lou Seay, was polling Sherlockians across the country to analyze the background of their interest in The Great Detective. Jon Lellenberg distributed her questionnaires at the October '78 meeting, and collated the results before sending the completed questionnaires on to her. Returning completed questionnaires that night were Lellenberg himself, John Altman, Margaret Baldwin, Craig Brown and Patricia Brown, Stan Carmack, Tom Gee, Stephen Harrell, Keith Jameson, John Lehman, Vikki Marshall, Frank Mitchell, Ron Paradise, Milt Perry, John Tangerman, Ernest Willer, Bill Wright, and Daisy Wright. The results were interesting.

[continued on page 47]



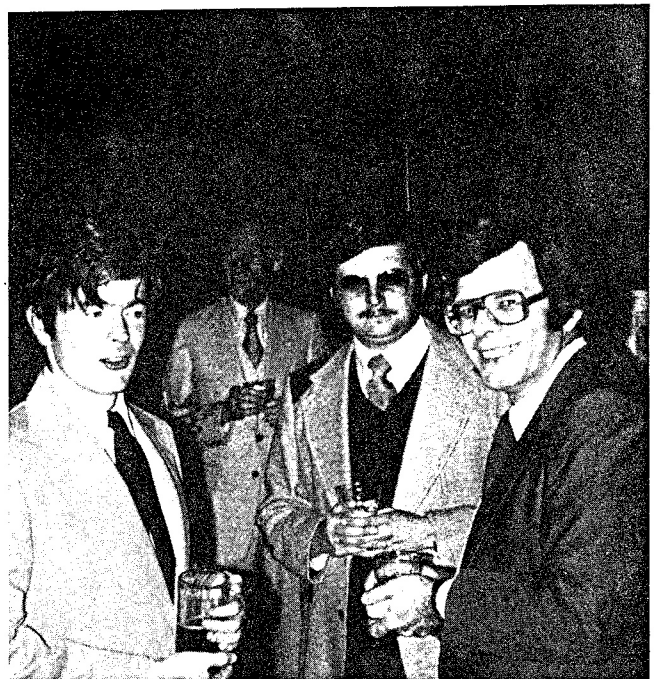
Jon Lellenberg



John Bennett Shaw, Ron Paradise,
Margaret Weis, Milt Perry.



John Bennett Shaw



John Lehman, Ernest Willer
(in background), Tom Gee,
Stan Carmack.

PROFILE OF A SHERLOCKIAN*

(Great Alkali Plainsmen Edition)

1. At what age did you first become interested in Sherlock Holmes?

Ages ranged from 10 to 29, most were teenagers at the time.

2. Under what circumstances?

Most discovered Holmes as a result of being a heavy reader, of family influences, or a library. (One checked Holmes out after her mother told her that it was terrible.) Only two as a result of a movie or TV.

3. What characteristic(s) do you admire most in Holmes?

Intellect and logic, attention to detail, courage, integrity. One remarked Holmes's "subtle but extremely true friendship with Watson."

4. Which of the stories in the Canon do you like best? least?

Best: HOUN by far; also SPEC, STUD, SCAN, REDH.

Least: MAZA.

5. How old are you now?

Ages ranged from late 20s to mid 60s, average age 38.

6. What is your occupation? Your parents' occupations?

Plainsmen tended to be professional people, out of similar or upwardly mobile family backgrounds. Medicine, journalism and media, engineers.

7. Were you a good, average, or poor student?

3:1 good over average. One said excellent,† none admitted to poor.

8. What were your best subjects? Your favorite subjects?

History and English were vastly the majority of both the best and the favorite subjects, though mathematics made a significant showing.

9. What other hobbies or interests do you have?

Three led by far: in order, sports, reading and writing (history, mys-

* Seay published her overall results in Baker Street Miscellanea, No. 20, December 1979, and the Plainsmen Profile may be compared with them.

† Margaret Baldwin, I'll bet.

tery, fantasy & science fiction especially mentioned), music. A few esoteric ones, from paleontology to old home restoration.

10. How does your hobby and/or occupation influence your study of Sherlock Holmes?

Scattered, though most indicated little or no connection. A couple of people did indicate significant connection, however, and one said that the study of Holmes influenced almost every aspect of his life.

11. Do you like to read? What kind of books? Who are your favorite authors?

All said they were readers. Heavy emphasis on history, biography, mystery, fantasy & science fiction. A heavy measure of Victorian writers, from Kipling to Dickens. But the author mentioned most frequently as a favorite was J. R. R. Tolkien.

12. Do you prefer British or American literature?

The great majority preferred British literature.

13. Do you enjoy writing?

Plainsmen enjoyed writing by 2:1.

14. Have you ever attempted to write a Holmes parody or pastiche?

About 40 percent had attempted to write a parody or pastiche.

15. Are you interested in British history?

The great majority indicated some to strong interest.

16. Do you enjoy music? What kinds? Do you play an instrument?

Almost every Plainsman enjoyed music. Classical music led by far, with showings by jazz and rock. The most frequent instrument was the piano, but some esoteric ones like jew's harp and dulcimer were there too.

17. Would you consider yourself to be an introvert or an extrovert?

Extroverts outnumbered introverts by 2:1.

18. Are you generally optimistic or pessimistic about the state of the world today?

Optimists outnumbered pessimists by about 2:1.

19. As a child were you read aloud to seldom, frequently, not at all?

More Plainsmen were read aloud to frequently, when they were children, than those read to seldom, but barely. Only a few not at all.

20. Who is your favorite Holmes illustrator?

The great majority preferred Sidney Paget.

21. Of all the actors that you have seen impersonate Holmes on the stage or screen, which do you like best?

The great majority preferred Basil Rathbone, but some indicated Nicol Williamson and Arthur Wontner.

The Feast of the Blue Carbuncle two months later was not its true fifteenth anniversary, because of past dry spells, but twenty-two Plainsmen celebrated in gala fashion nonetheless. Milt Perry spoke about the "first irregular dinner" of 1963, praising the improvements that The Maggie Jones had wrought. After a quiz and an intermission for spiritous fortitude, John Lehman presented another Yuletide musicale, and of them all, this may have been the best received. A concert of Sherlockian carols was performed (with passable guitar accompaniment, plus sleighbells), by Maestro Lehman, Nola Wright (the only first-rate singing voice in the entire scion), Daisy Wright, and John Altman.

Nine in all were sung, punctuated by equal measures of audience applause and catcalls at frequent intervals, and once by Nola, the scion's well-armed killer angel, shooting an unsuspecting Milt Perry down like a dog. The lyrics all survive in the scion archives, and several were published in Daily Journal No. 17 (January 26, 1979), but we will reprint three of them here -- the first simply because this historian likes it a lot.

BLUE CARBUNCLE

(after White Christmas)

(Verse)

The theft was clean,
 The escape was good,
 The prize it was in hand.
 There never was such a crime
 In London, England, U.K.
 But it's December the twenty-fourth
 And my heart is filled with remorse.

(Chorus)

I'm dreaming of a blue carbuncle
 Just like the one I used to own.
 How it shined and glistened
 As I stopped to listen
 To hear policemen in the snow.
 I'm dreaming of a blue carbuncle;

Such is the nature of my song,
For stealing is evil and wrong
When what you have taken is gone.

I'm dreaming of a blue carbuncle
With every Christmas goose I pluck.
How I wish they all had zippers,
Instead of like Jack the Ripper,
I open each little critter up.
I'm dreaming of a blue carbuncle
Even when faced with jail.
May all your days be merry and true
And may all your carbuncles be blue.

The second, because, sung con brio, it contained the best in crowd-pleasing stage business:

AGRA JEWELS

(after Jingle Bells)

Dashing down the Thames
After one-legged men,
With revolvers cocked
Since we left the dock;
A pygmy taking aim
Is fair game:
What fun it is to ride and sing
A slaying song tonight!

(Business: Nola whips out a pistol and plugs Milt Perry three times in the chest, causing him to fall out of his chair in cardiac arrest.)

Agra Jewels! Agra Jewels!
Mary wants them back!
Watson will get them safe
Unless the steam goes slack!
Agra Jewels! Agra Jewels!
From Pondicherry House!
What a dowry to give
Watson's new spouse!

And finally, the notorious

LENORE CAROL

(after Deck the Halls)

Deck the halls with Martin Baier,

La la la la Lellenberg, & Milt Perry.
 Tibbetts kibitz with the waitress,
 La la la la Wallace, Paradise lost.
 Margaret Baldwin is an odd one,
 Tom Gee, Stephen Harrell, Keith Jameson;
 But in this crowd she is normal --
 Willer, Willer, Jones & Frank Mitchell!

(Readers may speculate about cryptic meanings as they see fit.)

"...deeds of blood and violence..."

Prospects seemed fair for the Plainsmen at the beginning of 1979. For some time they had yearned for a Victorian costume party; the one at Stan Carmack's home on February 17th left nothing to be desired. The house itself made an important contribution, for it was a brooding 1910 example in stone of Midwestern Gothic architecture, located in Kansas City's Hyde Park district. In anticipation, Vikki Marshall had written a Daily Journal guide to Victorian costume made easy, so simple and well-conceived that it was later reprinted by a number of other scions. Twenty-seven Plainsmen came, through the falling snow, disguised as Victorian ladies and gentlemen, housemaids and costermongers, Army officers and nonconformist clergymen, sweet young girls and leering villains, plus an expatriate Plainsman from Washington who showed up unexpectedly in ragged sweater and jeans, calling himself Levi Strauss. Popular acclaim gave the best-costume awards to Daisy Wright as a downstairs maid and Ernest Willer as himself, the Napoleon of Crime.

John Altman reported on the '79 BSI dinner, confessing that Julian Wolff had forgotten to reserve a place for him (though he did not, as John Lehman claimed, eat his dinner sitting on Julian's lap). It was during this report that Lenore Carroll cried out suddenly: the valuable jewel that she had been wearing on a ribbon around her neck was missing! Plainsman eyes turned suspiciously toward each other. "They always blame the servants!" sobbed the housemaid. Charles Wheeler came under scrutiny, since anyone simultaneously a doctor, a lawyer, and a politician is obviously not to be trusted. Even poor Levi Strauss became the object of unwarranted suspicion for a moment. The Plainsmen searched for a solution to the mystery, both where the missing jewel had been hidden and the identity of the scoundrel who had stolen it. Margaret Baldwin succeeded in recovering the gem, but only an eventual confession by the guilty party led to the culprit's apprehension. (And in a company that included a Kansas City Policeman and a Missouri Highway Patrolman!) Earlier in the evening, the bartender hired for the occasion, Charles Replogle by name, had spilt a bowl of peanuts on Lenore Carroll -- and had taken advantage of the distraction to abstract the jewel in front of everyone with a sleight of hand worthy of the skilled stage magician that he actually is.

Chagrined by the ease with which they had been deceived, the Plainsmen poured their own drinks for the rest of the night. As the evening wore on, and the snow outside continued to fall, they settled around a crackling fire