



Sherlock Holmes

C O L L E C T I O N S



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"I still retain in my scrap-book numerous clippings and extracts.."

and extracts.."

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"Your merits should be publicly recognized" (STUD)

"I still retain in my scrap-book numerous clippings and extracts..."

by Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI

Richard Caplan, MD, BSI has probably never corresponded with a "fish-monger and a tide-waiter." Copies of letters written to and from Dr. Caplan during 1997 and 1998, which were among the items he recently donated to the Sherlock Holmes Collections, are signed with a handwritten "S H" or "S" above the typed "Sherlock Holmes." Despite his attempts, Dr. Caplan has been unable to determine if his correspondent is truly Mr. Holmes or someone, a fish-monger and tide-waiter for example, assuming his identity. Caplan can say with certainty that his "correspondence has certainly the charm of variety."

Following the 1996 publication of his *"Dr. Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes: The Adventures of Young Stamford and Other Sherlockiana,"* a letter dated 22 January 1997 and addressed to "My dearest Dr. Caplan" was sent to his Iowa home. Signed Sherlock Holmes, it began with "let me reassure you that I am who I am." The writer praised Caplan's book but noted it was "less about me than about that Dr. Stamford. Well, I guess I do not begrudge him his moment in the sun." He provided an update on his life in retirement, his relocation to America, his sadness at the passing of his good friend John Bennett Shaw and his delight that Shaw's collection was "so much closer at the University of Minnesota, where access is easier for me. . . You will no doubt find many interesting things in the library." In closing, he wrote the "sincerity shown in your book inspired me to confide in you" and gave his attorney's address in Albert Lea, Minnesota for replies. Dr. Caplan wrote to that address, questioning the possibility of direct contact with his correspondent, but if that wasn't possible, continuing to use that address as the "postal intermediary."

One month later, Dr. Caplan received his second letter stating "It is not convenient at this time to arrange a face to face meeting, and so for the moment we must remain. . . (as you say) Cryptic." In his two replies, in August and December of that year, Dr. Caplan sent greetings to his new friend and assured him that during the holidays "I enjoy re-reading Dr. Watson's telling of your 'Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle.'"

On January 21, 1998, Dr. Caplan's friend wrote "You have jolted me out



Richard and Ellen Caplan

Photo courtesy of the University of Iowa and Richard Caplan

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100

YEARS AGO

For only ten cents, the October 15, 1910 issue of *Top-Notch Magazine* offered readers two novelettes, three long complete stories, “three rattling serials,” and nine shorter tales. Among the shorter tales was a Sherlock Holmes parody titled “Surelock Homes’ Waterloo” by George Metcalf Johnson.

“In a story not founded on fact, a New York reporter interviews the great London detective.” New York *Whoop* cub reporter Joe Whalley’s assignment to write about “Mr. Surelock Homes, of Baker Street, London,” was an article he felt would be “a determining point in his newspaper career.” With five hundred dollars for expenses, Whalley crossed the Atlantic to interview Homes and his colleague Doctor Swatsem. Determined that something “bizarre and striking was needed to arouse the great detective’s interest,” Whalley concocted a disheveled appearance and presented himself as a client at the legendary Baker Street lodgings. He was greeted by the detective, who was “gently sawing at an enormous bass viol,” and Swatsem, a “tolerable Boswell,” whose eyes were “fixed on Homes with a look of rapt admiration and love. This look resembled, more than anything else, that which a faithful dog bestows on an adored but irascible master.”

Homes began the consultation with the traditional display of his powers of observation and deductions, which, as often happens in parodies, were all incorrect. In keeping with his charade, Whalley described being spied upon and attacked by three German men who cut every button off his clothing. Any attempt by Swatsem to question the client resulted in a terse “Shut up, Swatsem!” by Homes. As Homes pursued his investigation, Whalley

provided the detective with additional false evidence to bolster his story. No one was more surprised than the reporter when Homes announced the next morning “I have your man,” believing Whalley’s resemblance to Prince Wilhelm Von Schabenadel confused “a gang of desperate characters.” When one conspirator was misled into coming to the Baker Street flat to be identified as a gang member, Whalley made a hasty escape while confessing his deception and true identity. Enraged, Homes fired upon the reporter who fled to the wharf and the steamer for his return to New York.

The author of this less than flattering parody was George Metcalf Johnson. Born February 13, 1885 in Yankton, South Dakota, his family moved to New Haven, Connecticut where George attended Yale University, graduated in 1908 and began a teaching career in the New Haven public schools, according to the Yale Archives Office. The 1910 Federal Census indicates he was living with his parents the same year the *Top-Notch Magazine* contained two of his articles, “Surelock Homes’ Waterloo” and “The Crimson Call.” His writing career had begun.

The next year his Western-themed “At Rattlesnake Pool” and “Jumbo—Catching Fish with Brains” were published in *The American Boy* and he returned to *Top-Notch* with “A Rogue of the Air.” In 1914 “The Boss Trout,” “The Art of Bait Casting” and “The Giant of Calico Canyon” appeared in *The American Boy*. Many of his Western writings were published under the name of George Metcalf.

He married Marjorie Thatcher in July 1917, and his World War I draft registration card indicated they resided at 593 Whalley in New Haven, a street name that must have inspired his cub reporter’s name. While Johnson continued his teaching career at Commercial High School in New Haven, several of his short stories appeared yearly in the 1920s and ’30s in publications such as *Popular Detective*, *Soldier of Fortune*, *Rangeland Love*

Stories, *Romance Round-Up*, *Riders of the Range*, *People’s Magazine*, *Munsey’s*, *Dime Sports Magazine*, *Ace-High Magazine*, and *Thrilling Ranch Stories*. In 1927 his first book, *The Gunslinger*, was published under the name George Metcalf, followed in 1932 by *Jerry Rides the Range* and *Riders of the Trail*. *Open Range* appeared in 1935 and *The Saddle Bum* in 1936. He continued publishing short stories through 1948.

Steve Hockensmith, like George Metcalf Johnson, writes both mysteries and Westerns. He is the author of *Holmes on the Range*, *On the Wrong Track*, *The Black Dove* and *A Crack in the Lens*, and addressed the Baker Street Irregulars “Country of the Saints” expedition in Salt Lake City in September 2008. His proposition was that “Holmes might not have been Holmes if the West hadn’t been the West.” Steve stated “Long before John Wayne and Roy Rogers — long before anyone came up with the term ‘Westerns’ to describe stories set on the American frontier — Arthur Conan Doyle was a fan of Westerns. He was an admirer of two of the foremost writers of American frontier literature: Bret Harte, author of ‘The Luck of Roaring Camp’ and other classic stories, and the immortal Mark Twain, who first gained fame for both fiction and non-fiction inspired by his rambles in the West in the 1860s. [Both Harte and Twain wrote Sherlockian parodies as well.] And as a child, Conan Doyle also adored the larger-than-life adventures penned by a then-bestselling, now-largely forgotten Irish writer named Thomas Mayne Reid.” Conan Doyle read Reid’s 1851 *The Scalp Hunters*, which was set on the American frontier. “This romantic imagery — and the thirst for adventure it naturally conjures up — would stay with him for the rest of his life.” Conan Doyle’s writing reflected his fascination with tales of adventure, often set in “exotic locales.”

Hockensmith went on to comment that not only did Conan Doyle help shape the mystery genre, but also “provided inspiration to the pioneers of the emerging Western genre.” Perhaps, he

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YEARS AGO

Julian Wolff and *Still Waters*

Julian Wolff had been a Baker Street Irregular twenty years when he wrote and published *Still Waters* in 1960, having come into the BSI thanks to Edgar W. Smith in 1940. He soon made himself a welcome and familiar figure there: at the 1941 annual dinner, he heard Rex Stout claim that “Watson Was a Woman,” and the following year he retorted on behalf of all, a “That Was No Lady” talk hurling back at Stout, in response to his previous year’s crypto-canonical-acrostic IRENE WATSON, one no less (if no more) legitimate that spelled out NUTS TO REX STOUT.

So Irregulars got a sense of Julian’s pawky humor early, and were surely unsurprised by *Still Waters*, an eight-page parody introducing holiday-season recipients to a Sherlock Holmes whose ability as a chemist rises to the level of alchemy in creating Instant Scotch Whisky — which (judging from Holmes’s and Watson’s condition the next day) involved more than mere scientific curiosity. *Still Waters* had been preceded in 1959 by *A Case of Scotch*, each indicating devotion to Guy Gilpatric’s picaresque *Saturday Evening Post* tales of boozy rapscaillon tramp-steamer engineer Colin Glencannon (today forgotten, but then the subject of a television series starring veteran character actor Thomas Mitchell). Or perhaps to Scotch whisky itself; or just possibly both, self-administered in close combination.

How many copies of *Still Waters* in wrappers were produced by Julian and sent as holiday greetings to fellow Irregulars is unknown, but doubtless not that many in the smaller, more intimate Irregular circles of that day. As I write, the copy inscribed by Julian to the late Stanley Mackenzie can be yours from Boston bookseller Peter Stern for \$175,

\$175 over the original price. Minnesota’s Sherlock Holmes Collections is fortunate to own the copy Julian inscribed to W.T. Rabe “with the compliments of the season”; and knowing Bill Rabe, it would have been just the sort of thing he’d have relished.

Perhaps Julian intended a series of indefinite length of these holiday parodies before the Commissionaire Curse struck him down. *Still Waters* was about the last unofficial act he was able to commit before being inundated by his labors as Edgar Smith’s successor in the Baker Street Irregulars. Julian was well-known to Sherlockians and Irregulars when he took over in 1961, and when he died at the age of 85 in 1990, but now twenty years have passed, and a recital of who Julian Wolff was and what he meant may be in order.

Sometime in 1940, Julian, a physician specializing in work-related injuries, became acquainted with Edgar Smith, a vice president of General Motors Overseas Operations, and they discovered their mutual devotion to the Sherlock Holmes stories. Smith was preparing his gazetteer *Baker Street and Beyond* at the time: Julian drew five beautiful maps for it, turning them also into a privately printed portfolio. (More maps followed at various times, reprinted often, including by the late Lord Donegall of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London as his Christmas cards from 1961 to 1967.) Julian’s presence at the BSI dinners of the 1940s had been interrupted by war service that sent him to participate in the liberation of the Philippines (Army Medical Corps major, awarded the Bronze Star), but he was still one of the first to receive a Titular Investiture, in 1944, as “The Red-Headed League.”

When Julian was home from the war, and Smith and Ben Abramson were starting up *The Baker Street Journal* in 1946, he agreed to be an assistant editor. He was known to Edgar Smith and the Irregulars as not only a delightful cartographer, but a student of heraldry and philately, and a bibliophile with broad interests and knowledge. He was a clubman whose memberships included, besides the BSI, the Grolier,

The Players, and the Dutch Treat. He had returned to his medical practice, but as he remarked more than once, he’d always intended to work for 25 years and be retired 25 years, so in 1955 he retired from practice — in part to assist Edgar Smith with the BSI, making himself helpful with the society’s affairs.

And when Edgar Smith died unexpectedly in September 1960, Julian had become a natural choice for his successor. In these less punctilious days, with other customs, it’s interesting to see how this unfolded. The BSI had suddenly lost the best and wisest man it had ever known, and Edgar’s oldest son, Edgar P. Smith, found himself proprietor of more than he expected in the BSI, Inc. (the incorporation one of Smith’s and Christopher Morley’s less fortune-starred ideas in the late 1940s). So leading Irregulars in New York put their heads together, an unimpeachable committee was formed, and a meeting with the Smiths took place. This report appeared in the January 1961 *Baker Street Journal*, following that month’s annual dinner at Cavanagh’s Restaurant:

On 22 November 1960, at the call of Edgar P. Smith, a group of active Irregulars from the New York area, constituting an Irregular Executive Committee, met at the University Club. In addition to Edgar P. Smith and Robert Smith, the meeting was attended by William Baring-Gould, Owen Frisbie, Charles Honce, Robert K. Leavitt, James Nelson, Tom Stix [Sr.], Earle Walbridge, Frank Waters and Julian Wolff. The problems of The Baker Street Irregulars were discussed — the old ones as well as the more pressing new ones that had arisen with the loss of Edgar W. Smith.

The first item on the agenda was the future of The Baker Street Irregulars, Inc. — as distinct from The Baker Street Irregulars. The corporation affairs, being handled by Edgar P. Smith, his brothers and their wives, required considerable time and effort. Alternative methods of procedure were considered.

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From the President

Thanks to all who have renewed their Friends membership for 2011. If you haven't, it's not too late to send in your donation, which can be made in memory or honor of a special person; we will note that in the Remembrance column of the newsletter.

In October I was able to meet with Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections in Chicago at the Hounds of the Baskervilles [sic] Annual Dinner and in San Francisco at the Boucher-

con XLI. I was on a panel moderated by Michael Kean which featured Peter Blau. While in San Francisco I attended a special meeting of the Scowrers and Molly Maguires hosted by Marsha Pollak and Randall Stock and got a private showing of Sidney Paget's "Sherlock Holmes: A Sesquicentennial Exhibition" at the Grabhorn Institute Arion Press Gallery by Glen Miranker.

I go to the Wikipedia website daily, and on September 21 the Featured Article was the 1900 silent movie, *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* at [http://](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sherlock_Holmes_Baffled)

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sherlock_Holmes_Baffled. The Wikipedia article referenced Julie McKuras's 100 Years Ago column in the December 2000 Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections Newsletter <http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/newsletter/Dec2000.pdf>. It reminds us that by posting the newsletter archive on the University of Minnesota Libraries website, <http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/holmes.phtml>, we all are digitally connected.

I wish you all a Happy Holidays. ♥

Richard J. Sveum, MD, BSI

Musings

It is always a happy endeavor to write an article about someone you admire. That's certainly the case for me in writing our lead article about Dr. Richard Caplan. He has been a Friend of the Sherlock Holmes Collections for many years in addition to being a speaker and attendee at the triennial conferences held by the Library and the Norwegian Explorers. Dr. Caplan's recent donation of his mysterious correspondence as well as his files as described in the article are a great addition to the holdings of the Collections.

I'd like to extend a huge thank you to Steve Hockensmith for sending me a copy of his paper presented at the BSI "Country of the Saints" expedition in September 2008 in Salt Lake City. I recently saw Steve at Bouchercon in San Francisco where he appeared on

several panels, including "Letters from the Grave, The Endurance of Sherlock Holmes" with moderator Les Klinger and fellow panelists Laurie King, Michael Kurland and Graham Moore. After we discussed the subject of westerns and detective stories for the 100 Years Ago column, Steve generously offered to send me a copy of his talk and to allow me to quote from it. Steve is the author of a number of short stories, and his next Holmes' inspired book, *World's Greatest Sleuth*, is scheduled for publication in early 2011. Steve has added a new genre to his bibliography. *Dawn of the Dreadfuls*, a "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies" book appeared this year and the sequel *Dreadfully Ever After* will appear next year.

Jon Lellenberg has written our 50 Years Ago column about Julian Wolff and his pamphlet *Still Waters*. Jon wrote

about Wolff's passing for *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, and when asked to write about this pamphlet, Jon generously offered to include parts of that obituary.

Tim Johnson continues to keep busy promoting The Sherlock Holmes Collections and enjoying meeting the many people who come to the Andersen Library. He's provided us with an update of what he's been up to in recent months. Dick Sveum has also given us the news of his recent travels and meetings with Sherlockians in his From the President column.

All of us associated with The Sherlock Holmes Collections wish you Happy Holidays. ♥

Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI

100 Years Ago Continued from Page 2

speculates, Conan Doyle might have been an inspiration to Zane Grey, "a history buff with an interest in depictions of the West," when he wrote *Riders of the Purple Sage* in 1921. Author Lenore Carroll, in her article "A Study in Scarlet, A Symposium on its Origins" which appeared in the Autumn 1987 *Baker Street Miscellanea*, wrote "Storytellers, including Western fiction writers, seem never to tire of themes

Conan Doyle used." Those themes of "honor, chivalry and justice keep recurring in stories of love, revenge, and search." The combination of setting and theme has continued to inspire authors of both genres, starting so many years ago and continuing into the current day with Steve Hockensmith.

George Metcalf Johnson died on December 14, 1965. He never achieved

the same literary fame as his fellow 1908 Yale alumnus, Sinclair Lewis, a young man from the heart of Minnesota who achieved greater renown. Johnson did earn his own place with devotees of all things Sherlockian, especially John Bennett Shaw, who had a copy of "Surelock Homes' Waterloo" in his collection. ♥

Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI

Adding to the Collections

“ [Edgar W.] Smith was preparing his gazetteer *Baker Street and Beyond* at the time: Julian drew five beautiful maps for it, turning them also into a privately printed portfolio.” So wrote Jon Lellenberg in our 50 Years Ago column.

This summer we were delighted to acquire some very rare items from the collection of Jerry Margolin. Jerry owned one of the only original hand-colored sets of the Julian Wolff maps done in 1940. These maps originally belonged to Edgar W. Smith, then passed to Carl Anderson, then to Lew Feldman of the House of El Dieff and

then to Jerry, who owned them for almost forty years. In all his wanderings Jerry noted that “I have never seen another set of the hand colored maps in all my years of collecting.” The items are numbered #1 and #2 in a set of 200. There are five maps and Jerry did a beautiful job in archivally matting and framing them. We are delighted to display these maps near Allen Mackler’s sitting room. Perhaps some of you had the chance to see them this summer during the conference. 🐣

Timothy Johnson



Don Hobbs admiring the maps

Photo by Julie McKunas

50 Years Ago Continued from Page 3

Then it was decided that the *Journal* would be continued, and Julian Wolff, who had been serving as Editor-pro-tem of the *Journal*, as well as acting Commissionaire of the Irregulars, was unanimously approved as Editor of *The Baker Street Journal* and Commissionaire of The Baker Street Irregulars.

A silver dollar that had been presented to Julian Wolff by Mrs. Edgar W. Smith was adopted as the badge of office for the Commissionaire. This coin, formerly a prized possession of Edgar W. Smith, is dated 1894, the year of his birth, and it is mounted on a neck-cord.

The meeting was then adjourned, after it had been decided to present a report of its deliberations and transactions to The Baker Street Irregulars at their meeting on 6 January 1961.

At that function, “the brief business portion of the meeting consisted of the adoption, without dissent, of the Irregular Committee Report, given above. The report was presented by Edgar P. Smith and briefly discussed by William Baring-Gould.”

Still Waters run deep. The BSI’s Constitution jocularly declares that “the duties of the Commissionaire shall be to telephone down for ice, White Rock, and whatever else may be required and available; to conduct all negotiations with waiters; and to assess the members pro rata for the cost of same.” Julian spent the rest of his retirement working harder than ever as Commissionaire, from late 1960 to January 1986. He also edited 62 issues of the *BSJ* from March 1961 to June 1977, when he turned it over to another. In those days of offset printing before computer word-processing, he produced every issue on two typewriters on his dining-room table, one with elite type, the other with pica, though in 1967 George Fletcher alleviated his burden a bit, and later transferred the production burden to Fordham University Press altogether after he had become its director. (See Fletcher, “Manhattan Evenings: Helping Julian With *the Journal*,” *BSJ* June 1986.)

The succession of Smith by Wolff has been likened to that of FDR by Truman: that the BSI, too, went from strength to strength. During Julian’s quarter-century at the helm, the BSI

flourished — both the select band honored for keeping the Memory green, and the BSI’s proliferating scion societies. During those years, the Martha Hudson Breakfast, the William Gillette Luncheon, the honoring of an avatar of *The Woman*, and Julian’s own cocktail party for Sherlockians became well-established features of an expanded BSI weekend each January. And during Julian’s sixteen years as editor of the *BSJ*, the steady growth of its subscription list eventually forced the change from a cottage industry to the much more professional-looking publication produced by Fordham U.P.

As a person, Julian Wolff was short, balding, cherubic in appearance, courtly if uneffusive, with an underlying warmth balancing the outward reserve of a successful professional New Yorker of his generation. His customary reply to letters was a non-committal sentence or two on a postcard. But no Irregular letter went unanswered, no query from the mundane world ignored. Julian never sought publicity for himself, but neither did he neglect any opportunity to advance Sherlock Holmes’s public standing. While he seldom exercised his authority in society matters visibly, his innate dignity and Ir-

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“I still retain in my scrap-book...” Continued from Page 1

of my lethargy with your recent letter.” Writing from his home “out in the country west of Albert Lea,” Mr. Holmes wrote a 10 page, single-spaced letter to Caplan. It was an amazing story, a case occurring in Albert Lea that brought together Sherlock Holmes, Princess Diana, a threat upon her life and blackmail. After successfully solving the case, Holmes reflected on the death of the princess soon after their meeting and his belief that he could “implicate the proper people in this tragic murder... Please rest assured that justice will be served.”

The next letter was dated March 19, 1998 and is addressed to Mr. Holmes. Hopeful that he would see an announcement from London or Paris authorities regarding the so-called accident, Dr. Caplan also related the activities that had kept him busy since his retirement from medicine. He wrote again on July 23, 1998, hopeful that he would hear from Holmes and advising him that the Norwegian Explorers conference celebrating their 50th anniversary that August would be a “splendid opportunity for a chat.”

Mr. Holmes hasn't written to Dr. Caplan since 1998. In December 2007, Dr. Caplan contacted the attorney who served as an intermediary to determine if the writer was truly Mr. Holmes or someone imitating him. There has been no reply.

While the identity of the writer has yet to be verified, the known half of the correspondence is Richard Caplan. A native of Des Moines, Iowa, he graduated from Iowa State with a degree in psychology. His subsequent studies at the University of Iowa were initially toward a PhD in psychology. Dr. Watson wrote “Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms” and for the young student with an interest in composing and the piano, that meant a change in majors to music. He received his M.A. but soon decided, as he recently wrote, that “it would be better to be a physician with an avid hobby for music, since it couldn't be done the other way

around.” It seems Dr. Caplan shares his interest in music and science with Sherlock Holmes, and like him, found that “education never ends.” He received his medical degree at Iowa and completed a three year stint in the United States Air Force, where he served in Madison, Wisconsin as a flight surgeon. After his discharge, he completed a three year dermatology residency at the University of Michigan. Deciding that he was interested in teaching, he returned to the University of Iowa as a young faculty member and worked his way through the faculty ranks. He served halftime as an associate dean for 21 years and began the Program in Medical Ethics and Humanities at the school where he was honored with The Richard M. Caplan Endowed Chair in Biomedical Ethics and Medical Humanities. He is also a member of the American Dermatologic Association where he served one year as vice president. Dr. Caplan formally retired in 1997, enjoying the great benefit of “free parking privileges as a professor emeritus.” He is a life member of several medical groups and continues to act as a patient in order to evaluate the performance of medical students. He also took an oil painting class soon after retirement but has not divulged if he has any ancestors named Vernet. He and his wife Ellen enjoy retirement together and are the proud parents of four sons.

And he hasn't given up his interest in music as both listener and a performer. He has worked with the local community theatre as music director and performed classical and jazz works, both solo and with friends, in addition to attending an annual chamber music workshop at the Interlochen, Michigan Center for the Arts.

Despite all of these interests, Dr. Caplan has always had time for Sherlock Holmes. Dr. Ben Smith, a fellow dermatologist, invited Caplan to meet with the Sir James Saunders Society. Smith and Dr. Herman Beerman, a Philadelphia dermatologist and Sherlockian, encouraged Julian Wolff to invite Caplan to the BSI dinner. He received

his investiture as “Dr. Jackson” in 1989. He has attended many BSI dinners over the years and enjoyed sharing a table with Isaac Asimov and Edith Meiser. He cites his Sherlockian mentors and influences as Ben Smith and Peter Blau. Another was “John Bennett Shaw, whom I first encountered when he was David Hammer's invited leader at a Sherlockian symposium David arranged in Dubuque. The pleasure of that experience was likely what nudged me to invest some energy for starting a group in Iowa City.” In 1988 he placed an ad in the paper inviting red-headed persons to call him for information. “I figured that any Sherlockian would understand the reference. I had six phone calls in response. All sounded like fairly young (male) voices, only one had red hair, but they were curious and thought it might be some sort of dating service, and had no interest at all in Sherlock or any such incipient organization.” A follow-up article found a suitable audience and soon the Younger Stamfords were off and running. They still meet regularly. The December 2009 issue of this newsletter featured an article about the Younger Stamfords and Dr. Caplan and the role they played in the donation of a copy of a script of *The Sign of the Four* from Mike Kramme.

In addition to the correspondence referred to in this article, Dr. Caplan also donated two large boxes of newspaper clippings, scion society newsletters and announcements, magazines, greeting cards, journals, BSI dinner mementos and photographs, and Sherlock Holmes calendars.

An article in the *Iowa City Press-Citizen* in 2008 featured Dr. Caplan. He stated “I think more people can do more than they think, sort of travel two or three paths simultaneously. The world is such an interesting place and there are so many interesting things in it.” Dr. Caplan is a wonderful example of a man who has explored many of the interesting things in the world and has added much to it. ♡

An Update from the Collections

Interest in the Collections continues in a number of interesting ways. Shortly after our successful conference ended in August I received an invitation from another staff member here at the University to host a visit and tour of the Collections during Parents Weekend, on October 8th. Even before I had said yes they had thirty-six people expressing interest in the tour. That number continued to rise as we came closer to the event, even necessitating a "waiting list." In the end close to sixty parents and students signed up for a session entitled "*Super Sleuth: Sherlock Holmes*." The program description echoed the conference: "Explore the many meanings of the word 'spirits' and how they relate to Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle, and the Victorian Era; view the Elmer L. Andersen Library's collection of Holmes items, and stay for a tour of the University's underground archives." Our good friend Gary Thaden helped out with the presentation, giving some brief background on the Norwegian Explorers. Our only regret was that neither Gary nor I could attend the Hounds dinner in Chicago, happening that same weekend.

Another great chance to present the Collections came through an invitation from Jonathan Morgan, a leader of a local group called "Mindstretch." As Jonathan explained, "Mindstretch is a group of retired professional men

founded by Dr. John Coleman about twenty-five years ago. The concept of the group was for these men (many of them doctors) to engage in "mindstretch" on matters which they may not have had time to explore while in their working careers. Spouses are invited and, now, widows of deceased members." The group meets at a church in St. Paul, and so on October 20th I headed over for a morning presentation entitled "A Study in Maroon and Gold: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes, and the University of Minnesota." It was a delightful and energetic gathering of about forty men and women (including the recently retired St. Paul chief of police). I spoke for nearly an hour and a half, with questions (and answers) interspersed during the presentation and then at the end. (It was clear that the chief, for example, was very familiar with the Canon; his questions were spot on and penetrating, as were the others.) The morning went by far too quickly. Following the presentation I joined seven of the members for lunch at a nearby restaurant. My thanks to Jonathan and 'Mindstretch.' It was an invigorating day.

As we move into this holiday season I want to thank you all again for your continued friendship and support of the Sherlock Holmes Collections. You are the engine that makes this all possible. Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season. 🍷

Timothy Johnson



Tim Johnson and the Parent's Day participants

Photo courtesy of Nicole Holdorff



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regular credentials ensured that it was never questioned. The Irregulars' great regard for him rested upon absolute confidence that the BSI's affairs were in the hands of an unreservedly devoted gentleman. Most Irregulars would agree that if Julian had a fault, it was that he hated to say no to people, and seldom did.

Certainly no one glancing beneath the surface of Julian's aplomb doubted his human qualities and philanthropy. He liked people. He paid attention to newcomers. He was a generous host. For years he quietly subsidized the BSI dinner to make it more affordable to all, and he hosted his own party every January. When it outgrew his spacious Riverside Drive apartment, he moved it across town to the Grolier Club, where the body count of invitees and crashers soon passed 400, Julian paying the bill without a murmur. Julian encouraged Irregular scholarship in countless ways, and gave the BSI a public poise that

avoided the labels of silliness or pomposity which a philistine Press might otherwise have tried to pin upon it. His wry humor could transform a BSI dinner from solemnity to hilarity with just a few words. He won the admiring affection of people far more outgoing and gregarious than himself.

Julian was much celebrated in his lifetime. He was an Honorary Member of both the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and Sherlock Holmes Klubben i Danmark. While all the Irregulars "earn their Shilling," in 1973 they surprised Julian with a Gold Sovereign. In 1976 Michael Harrison edited *Beyond Baker Street*, a collection of outstanding papers by 26 contributors as a *Festschrift* in Julian's honor. In December 1979 his profile, sketched by Henry Lauritzen, adorned the cover and title page of the *BSJ*, instead of Frederic Dorr Steele's trademark profile of Sherlock Holmes. The following month, as Julian turned 75, the microphone

was taken away from him at the BSI dinner for a secretly prepared program of heartfelt tributes. And at the 1986 dinner, Julian's announcement of his retirement was met by dismay and consternation. His brother Ezra, also an Irregular, captured the moment in his traditional morning-after poem recording the dinner's goings-on:

The Commissionaire said, as he rose,
That his tenure had come to a close.
His hearers, amazed,
Spontaneously raised
A thunderous chorus of noes.

But Julian was 81 by then, and his mind was made up. The June '86 *BSJ*, bearing his profile once more, printed a collection of fresh tributes to him. "Keeper of the Flame," one Irregular called him, and it was more than apt. ♡

Jon Lellenberg, BSI

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