

Rare Book Notes 101

Introduction

I entered the rare book trade in 1985 before its transformation by the internet, on the cusp of change. This paper is a sketch of my personal experiences as a bookseller for the ensuing 31 years, doing what I love to do, discovering how to do it, and meeting some extraordinary people along the way.

Choosing the specialty of jewelry, gems, gemology books for my used, out-of-print, and rare book business plunged me into a world completely unknown to me. In the community of antiquarian and rare books, the subject I chose is barely mentioned.

To find books on these subjects in used book shops in 'the old fashioned way' back in the 1980s, one had to explore a variety of shelves labeled Geology, Decorative Arts, Fashion, Travel, Earth Science, Art, where a book on diamonds, or pearl diving, or period jewelry might be stowed. Later, searching on the internet for these books, catalogues and key words pointed to similar classifications.

Strange it is that antiquarians should have neglected this subject, because the culture and history of ancient civilizations is often revealed by jewelry unearthed by archeologists, and there is barely a town or village that lacks a jewelry store. Many museums feature gem and mineral collections. And to press the point, there are substantial numbers of people so enamored with gems and minerals that they mine for them, dig for them, buy, sell, and trade them, and form organizations such as The Geo-Literary Society and The American Society of Jewelry Historians around their common interest. And every February, the entire town of Tucson, Arizona, becomes the gathering place for these lovers of the treasures of the Earth.

A huge body of literature on the subject garnered more attention in the rare book world with the 1993 publication of John Sinkankas's bibliography, *Gemology. An Annotated Bibliography*. Some 7,458 citations of rare books on ancient myths and legends, superstitions and astrological lore associated with jewels and gems, crown jewels of Europe and France, minerals of Russia,

diamonds, pearls, jade, ruby, sapphire, emerald, and other gemstones fill the two-volume work. More recently, from the 1990s on, works by Australia's Len Cram on opal, Portugal's Ferreira on lalique bijoux, from Japan, Andy Muller on cultured pearls, from Jerusalem, Rachel Hasson's 2-volume work on early and later Islamic jewellery, Stephen Hofer's book on coloured diamonds, Richard Hughes' book on ruby and sapphire, and John Sinkankas' volume on emeralds. Most of these were published in small editions, many are destined to become classics, and they will become increasingly rare, with escalating prices to match.

Over time, books on other subjects filled my shelves, arriving uninvited but always welcome, so inevitably a few personal collections on other subjects developed. I could never resist a book about books, so over two dozen adorn my shelves. In some mysterious way, I've accumulated over fifty volumes of bibliography.

In my pantheon of "would haves" and "should haves", I regret not applying for membership in the major antiquarian booksellers organizations, like ABAA (American Antiquarian Bookseller Association) and IOBA (Independent Online Booksellers Association). I never believed that Twelfth Street Booksellers could continue from one year to the next, and the many decisions about ordering new letterhead stationery, cards, renewing various subscriptions, sales tax forms, etc., became moments of decision, truth, and commitment.

There have always been the high moments that encouraged me, such as the completion of my annual catalogue, written and personally proof-read, sent to the printer, sorted and mailed to hundreds of customers, followed some two or three days later by the response by telephone and U.S. Postal Service.

And there are those memorable times when I've ordered a scarce, pricey book from an unknown bookseller with little to go on but his or her reputation and the belief that the book would be as described. I can't recall ever being disappointed, and most often I was pleased beyond expectation.

Here is a summary of what has engaged me so happily for the past 31 years--and continues to do so.

In the Beginning, There Was an Auction

The article leaped out of the page. Just a small item about a book auction to take place under the auspices of the Los Angeles County Public Administrators. Book auctions are not uncommon and are regularly conducted by Christie's, Sotheby's, Pacific Book Auction Galleries, and Swann to handle the great collections.

This one, conducted by Norm Sufflow and Sons, was the collection of a noted Los Angeles bibliophile, known to every bookseller in town, who had died intestate leaving no will or provision for the 35,000 books that he had collected over his 50 years as a career postal worker on an income that never exceeded \$25,000 a year. His small rented house in Huntington Park was filled with books from wall to wall, floor to ceiling including the attached garage, causing him to sleep on a cot in the kitchen for lack of any other space.

His name was Michael Hurley, a book lover, book collector, and bibliophile teetering on the slippery slope of bibliomania. He had hitchhiked from Iowa to Los Angeles at the age of 23 after graduating from high school as valedictorian with a two-year scholarship to Iowa State College. His taste ran to the great English writers though he collected others as well.

The Los Angeles County Public Administrators consigned some 800 of his books to the highly respected booksellers, Dawson's Book Shop, who issued Catalogue #477 of 206 items in August 1984, and Catalogue #479 of 554 items in May 1985, compiled by Stephen Tabor. Tabor's brief biographical notes, laced with wit, gentle humor and modesty, bring a portrait of the reclusive book lover to light. (Stephen Tabor, some 30 years later is now Curator of Early Printed Books at the famed Huntington Library.)

Thousands more of Hurley's books were sold at a series of public auctions, probably three or four, and it was my good fortune to read about them in the *Los Angeles Times*. It was there that I experienced my very first auction and where I acquired hundreds of books that became my starter inventory. They were wonderful books on all subjects, travel, poetry, literature, children's themes, and one gemological book, *The Book of the Pearl* by Kunz and Stevenson, published in 1908. It was beautiful with its ornate gilt and faux pearl pattern to light green

covers, top edge gilt, more than 548 pages, color frontispiece with tissue guard, 24 color illustrations on 16 plates all with tissue guards, black and white photos on numerous plates, illustrations and maps, and a 14-page bibliography. I recognized it as a very special book and tucked it away carefully for some future time.

I had phoned the auctioneer's office for information about where the auction would take place, time, location, and how to get there for it was miles away from my home in Santa Monica, in the eastern part of Los Angeles County near Whittier. Armed with all that plus the stated amount of money needed to deposit upon registration to qualify for bidding, my husband Bernie Axelrad and I set out for a grand adventure.

It was one of the later auctions, probably the third, that I attended as a "newbie" bookseller on the cusp of an exciting new venture, my first auction ever. We drove up to a great bare warehouse, with dozens of 'regulars' standing outside in the cold morning air, drinking hot coffee, waiting for the doors to open at 8:00 a.m. that allowed an hour when the vast number of items could be viewed before the 9:00 start. There were used refrigerators, pianos, dressers, cabinets, all sorts of household items from a series of estates, and hundreds of boxes filled with books as well as long tables showing especially important single volumes laid out for careful examination. I had just one hour to discover and decide on what to bid.

I wandered alongside the massive, heavy, book-laden cartons, timidly peeking into a few, lifting one book and then another from boxes that were each crammed with some thirty or more books, and felt a sense of despair at the enormity of it all. What was I thinking to come into this world of books from lost lives, thousands of them, that challenged everything I thought I knew about books and how to select them? I could have cried with shame and disappointment in myself to imagine that I could enter this world so poorly prepared with the necessary knowledge and appreciation to cope with the vast quantity of books. All I knew I had was a love of books.

Bernie, walking alongside me saw my look of desperation and gently asked if I wanted him to help me. He was my rock and knew much about a lot of things, and he was especially astute about people, but while he is a great seeker of

knowledge and reads several newspapers daily, he knew little about books and had limited affection for them. How could he possibly help me with this, when it was I who knew and loved books, beautiful bindings, artistry in typography, thick laid paper, fine illustrations, and could surmise the quality of content. But I was overwhelmed with what I was facing, so disappointed in myself, so baffled by the choices that were facing me, and so I said yes to his offer.

Just in time, for the auction was about to begin. We took our seats, and noticed that Muir and Glenn Dawson were seated in front of us; and by coincidence, we were seated next to a woman whose husband was a co-worker of Mr. Hurley, and she told me that most of the books to be auctioned were from the Michael Hurley collection. Her husband was one of his very few friends, for he was a recluse and discouraged most friendships. When they invited him to their home for Christmas or Thanksgiving, he would invariably refuse, preferring to spend the time with his books. Sadly, she said, he suffered the loss of his eyesight in his last years depriving him of his only pleasure.

And so the auction began, with lot numbers rapidly called by the vigorous auctioneer who knew all the 'regulars', facing each bidder to acknowledge their assent or refusal. While I had chosen some lots to bid on, I really felt hopeless about what I was buying. However, my husband bid for me on one particular lot that was bitterly fought over by the Dawson brothers. We won the lot, and after the auction was over, my husband approached the Dawsons, introduced himself, and casually inquired about their interest in the contested lot. They mentioned that the box of books containing some 30 books that we had won included a very special book, *Trent's Last Case*, by E. C. Bentley, famous for breaking new ground in its genre. Muir Dawson suggested that when I was ready to sell it, he would be interested in buying it. That was an "Aha!" moment for me that explained why one bids on a box of some 30 books of unknown quality or value because of one important book whose sale would compensate for the cost of the entire lot.

Later, it didn't take me long to research the book, its importance and value. Off to the library I went to check out auction records in *American Book Prices Current* and *The Bookman's Price Index*, long ago and now forgotten reference aids, because the Internet now supplies the information and has a further reach with a few clicks of the computer.

Over the period of the three or four auctions, I bought more than a thousand books which were boxed and piled floor to ceiling into my husband's brand new car. Easy enough to request some help from the auction house staff to load up the car, but after the long drive from Whittier to Santa Monica, I had to face carrying the boxes up a flight of stairs to our apartment. Happily, we had strong, sturdy sons.

My job at UCLA occupied my days, so it was only in the evenings after dinner that I plunged into the boxes to extract my treasures, one at a time, to examine, inspect and discover the strengths, weaknesses, quality, and content of each item, to record on 3 x 5 cards the author, title, publisher, year of publication, size, dust jacket or not, number of pages, index, bibliography, illustrations, and most important, condition. Any wear, stains, bumped corners, torn pages, writing, soil, was noted on the 3 x 5 card. On the same card, place of purchase, price paid, and then, a judgment call for condition. No flinching from that bit of sun fade to the spine, tiny tear to the endpaper, stained title page--not a science but an art and test of one's mettle to call it "fine", or "very good", and when unsure, "very good plus" or "near fine", or much worse.

Of course, the edition is paramount. And one needs bibliographies and books of publisher's identifications and habits, and first editions, first printings, second printing, second edition. And then there is the state, first, second, etc. And then there are publisher's idiosyncratic ways of identifying the above, and some, for example Princeton University Press, designates the first edition by printing nothing about it at all. Unless that title is reprinted or reissued, and that fact is then recorded on the copyright page.

My evenings were well spent, and the pile of 3 x 5 cards grew, as book by book revealed its secrets.

Becoming

My first thought was the memory of my father coming home from downtown Los Angeles where he trolled the 6th Street row of used book stores. In 1943, we lived on West Adams Blvd., and the yellow "A" streetcar was the mode of transport to downtown L.A. It had an open front section, a closed mid-

section, and an open back section. I would greet my father at the streetcar stop, and he would descend lugging huge paper wrapped volumes of old books. Some were old Hebrew books, which eventually landed on a high cupboard shelf, and others were Victorian literature, a memorable one in particular by Lord Bulwer-Lytton (“It was a dark and stormy night....”), folio or at least large quarto, bound in brown cloth, printed two columns per page on thin paper.

My father and I were the book lovers of the family, and the public library was my resource providing me the opportunity of borrowing four books for two weeks, barely enough to keep my appetite for fairy tales and novels satisfied. It was a long time until I could afford to buy a book of my own. Our home always housed books and were of my father’s choosing. My voracious hunger for books was always there, and I’ve often felt that I was born knowing how to read. I still remember the set of The International Encyclopedia bound in dark red cloth, a constant feature of our New York living room. When we moved to Los Angeles in 1942, they were placed in storage and eventually forfeited along with our piano and other remaining treasures for lack of payment.

It took me a long time to discover the world of out-of-print and rare books, and I was 60 before it occurred to me that what I really wanted to do was to become a bookseller of out-of-print and rare books.

I’m not one to appreciate the fine points of astrology, but sometimes the stars and planets, sun and moon, are all aligned to bring me exactly what I want. The confluence of a few events in 1984 must have been the result of an astrological event because they led me to do what I wanted to do:

A small article in the Los Angeles Times about the auction of Michael Hurley’s books;

A trip to Death Valley en route to Las Vegas where my husband and I befriended a customer in a restaurant who happened to be a rare book dealer, and who became my teacher, mentor, and friend;

And my planned retirement from my job as a secretary at UCLA.

August 1985. Denver.

During the time I was cataloguing the Hurley books plus others that I'd gathered over time, I took a week off from my job and attended the week-long Out-Of-Print and Antiquarian Book Market/Seminar Workshop at the University of Denver arranged by Jake Chernofsky, editor of *AB Bookman*, a weekly journal for the Specialist Book World which included listings of books for sale and books wanted.

For a week of complete immersion in the story and life of books and bookselling, I flew to Denver, lived in the dorm of the University of Denver, and shared an apartment with two other women. Never in my life had I done anything like that, for my limited college experience was urban, a couple of years at Los Angeles City College while young and living at home, and a couple of years of Valley Junior College while raising my three children. Living in the dorms was a fantasy, a dream of my youth, never realized till now, at 60! It was great. We all got along, ate in the college cafeteria, attended sessions from 8 or 9 a.m. until late afternoon, with a brief break for lunch learning about book bindings, identifying editions, bibliographies, describing condition, book values, scarcity, and even how to package and wrap books for shipping. Reams of information were distributed containing all sorts of bibliographical information, rare book material, etc. A panel of experienced booksellers, Michael Ginsberg, specialist in Americana, Ed Glaser who specialized in Science and Medicine, and another, an owner of a Denver book shop that we later visited, and several other speakers, laid the foundation for discussion and questions. What might be mind-numbing to some was stimulating and exhilarating to this crowd, and I knew I was in my element. I belonged in the world of books.

Groups of us gathered before, in between, and after each session. At one such gathering, Dick Weatherford discussed the use of the computer in bookselling. This was 1985, very early in what would become an ever-increasing role for computers in the book trade. My resistance was palpable. I didn't want such a change, didn't understand it, didn't welcome the innovation and the need to learn something so new. In 1985, the internet was barely discovered. Dick was very kind and patient with my negative reaction to computers. So we spoke about other things. I had recently purchased a set of the *Arctic Bibliography* which was of interest to him and though he only really wanted two or three of the volumes, he agreed to buy the whole set. I was glad to be freed of these many massive

volumes which took up a lot of space in my small apartment. Not having any idea of their importance or value, I simply doubled the price of what I had paid for them at the local library sale. He was delighted. Later, he developed the book site now known as Alibris. My sale to him was one of my very first aside from *Trent's Last Case* to the Dawsons, both memorable in the way that first experiences of any kind are memorable.

We had opportunities to go book hunting in several Denver book shops, and I teamed up with two other young women, both who later became active and successful booksellers. One of the best things about the seminar was the sense that my questions and feelings of lack of knowledge were experienced by most of the participants, and I felt validated to discover that I was no less knowledgeable than most, and was learning the important aspects of bookselling. My values about books, their condition and completeness and truthfulness in describing them were validated, and all that I had been learning on my own was confirmed by the Seminar experience.

The Denver rare book course is still in existence though under a different name and different leadership and is still mentoring and educating upcoming booksellers.

Death Valley En Route to Las Vegas: Harry Levinson.

Meeting Harry and Sophie Levinson was serendipitous. My husband-to-be Bernie and I were driving to Las Vegas and detoured in Death Valley. We stopped at Stovepipe Wells for Thanksgiving dinner where I ordered the last turkey dinner available, thus providing the opening of conversation between the couple seated next to us. Idly speculating as people are wont to do about our neighboring diners, wondering where they were from and what kind of work he, she, or both did, we figured him to be a dress manufacturer by his strong New York accent. In this way we met Harry and Sophie and spent the next hour getting to know one another. It turned out he was a rare book dealer from Beverly Hills, selling antiquarian books from the 15th century on.

When Harry learned we were en route to Las Vegas for a spin at the tables, he expressed surprise that such seemingly intelligent people would be willing to

gamble their money away. My husband, a Harvard Law School graduate, remarked that it was no more a gamble to go to Las Vegas than to do what Harry did, buy expensive rare books not knowing where or when he would sell them. Harry responded that what he did wasn't a gamble at all--it was a sure thing because fine books (provided they were the right fine books) assuredly rose 10 to 15 percent yearly providing a pretty good return, and a certain one at that.

We enjoyed each other's company so much that we arranged to meet and spend an evening together after returning to Los Angeles from our holiday. And so we did, and spent many more evenings together. We became good friends and later, back in Los Angeles, were invited to visit him in his library, a separate building adjacent to his Benedict Canyon home in Beverly Hills, where we heard him speak to a small group of friends about rare books. Subsequently, we were invited to various functions at his home, and on several occasions, they were invited to family affairs at our Santa Monica apartment. They were at our wedding in 1986, attended several Passover seders at our home, and we attended one of the Estelle Doheny auctions at Camarillo together.

Soon after our return from Las Vegas, I began to work on Saturdays with my new found friend Harry in his special library where he conducted his antiquarian book business and kept his rare incunabula (books from the earliest days of printing, up to the year 1500) in addition to other fine books. I loved the library, the books, the music invariably playing classics in the background. I did a variety of things: typed letters, helped Harry with his appraisal of the Los Angeles Law Library, worked with him on pricing his magic and witchcraft collection, developed lists of small collections, such as the works of Lafcadio Hearne to offer to local dealers, and drove him to the Beverly Hills Post Office to pick up his mail. Often the high point would be the arrival of a book he had ordered, sometimes from England or another European country. He was like a small boy opening a birthday gift with genuine delight. He would leaf through the book, pointing out some special illustrations or a rarity with volvelles with strings, and he'd smile broadly and say, "Isn't that nice?"

He specialized in these early printed books from the 15th century and 16th century, when books about the history of ideas flourished. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, he published his greatest catalogue, #60, a 4-volume work with

illustrations of books on history, literature, science, and scholarship before 1700, including a subject index listing the vast diversity of the books including those of the great printers, Aldus, Elzevier, Jean de Tournes, and books with fine bindings, sure to be added to fine bibliographic collections and used by antiquarian booksellers to advantage. That catalogue was his pride and joy, with 1532 items beautifully presented with over 300 full-page illustrations. Harry regarded this “his most lasting monument”, to quote Joel Silver, Director and Curator of Books at the Lilly Library, Indiana University, in his *AB Bookman's Weekly* 4-page homage in March 1996 titled “Remembering Harry Levinson.”

Harry died in 1995 at age 91, after 75 years in the antiquarian book trade. Joel Silver remembered how, as a young law student he met Harry, and while he could only work part time for him, recalled the variety of tasks he performed in that wonderful library. I wrote Joel in appreciation of his article and spoke of the feeling of recognition and familiarity coming from having experienced Harry's friendship and mentorship as Joel had. In the conclusion of his article, Joel wrote, “A generation of booksellers is disappearing and unless much more is done soon, a generation of book and bookselling history is disappearing with them.”

I was working with Harry one day in his library when he asked me what I would specialize in. It hadn't occurred to me that I needed to do that, for being a lover of books and literature should certainly lead me to the books I wanted to sell. A specialty was an unexpected concept.

Having spent a recent Saturday afternoon book hunting in Hollywood with Michael Rosove, a dear friend and knowledgeable collector of Antarctica, I decided to specialize in Antarctica. The subject of Antarctic exploration with its tales of heroism was challenging and I took it on for about a year. I bought the Spence Antarctic bibliography and several items that were cited in it, but found that the important books in the condition that I wanted were beyond my purse, and decided to change direction.

Maybe there was another astrological event or just plain luck that again shined upon me when we were in the Netherlands attending a book fair in Eindhoven, just a short train ride from Amsterdam.

At the fair, I found an important key book for any Antarctic collection, James Murray and George Marston's *Antarctic Days: Sketches of the Homely Side of Polar Life by Two of Shackleton's Men* (1913). Then and there, I decided to buy it, add it to my current inventory of Antarctica and sell the entire collection. And so I did, together with my mailing list of Antarctica collectors, to Jean and Jerry Parmer who were specializing in polar exploration, were good friends, and well-known booksellers in San Diego. They were delighted with the acquisition and I was with the sale.

Our friendship and professional relationship deepened, and it was they who eventually opened my mind to the world of computers in book selling. We remained firm friends and colleagues throughout the years.

Jerry developed BookStacks, an inventory software for the Macintosh, which was used in their business and which he sold to other booksellers. He and Jean frequented the various book fairs where we often met in that happy environment of buying and selling unusual material, and running into friends with similar interests. They understood my reluctance to enter the computer age and offered to search for books for me with their program. And so they did. I would let them know, by snail mail, what books I was looking for and they would send me lists of quotes every month. They were wonderfully patient and generous with me for they spent their time and energy with little recompense. Eventually I realized they should be paid for their work and we worked out a modest commission schedule. They had been too kind to raise the issue with me, and I'm embarrassed to say that it took me such a long time to realize the value of what they were doing.

They were both dear, kind, generous friends, and when I published *Looking Around With Bernard Axelrad* (1999), a collection of Bernie's astute, good-natured, and witty writings on all matters of daily living, to honor my husband on his 80th birthday in an issue of only 25 copies, I sent an inscribed copy to them, as the only meaningful way to truly thank them.

Sadly, Jean passed away in November, 2009 at age 72, much too young at heart to leave us so soon, as I wrote in my guest blog for *Fine Books & Collections* in their September 2010 issue.

Parmer Books is no longer listed.

Later, when Harry asked me again about what I would specialize in, I finally had an answer. 'Literature' was vast and much too general and not at all unique. During this period, the younger of my two daughters, Jo Ellen, who was struggling to find her own specialization, finally determined to become a gemologist and was attending The Gemological Institute of America (GIA), the finest institution of its kind.

I decided to specialize on books about gemology, gems, and jewelry, subconsciously hoping to strengthen the fraying bonds with my daughter through the books on the subject that interested her.

It was a good choice, for not too many booksellers specialized in this area, only a few throughout the country. And once I began to delve into the subject, I found worlds within worlds that I never knew existed. What did I know about diamonds, rubies, sapphires, jade, opal, pearls, or quartz? Did I have any idea of where they were found, how they were mined, who worked those mines, what were the qualities of these precious gems, how they are traded, bought and sold, what are the conditions of the mines and miners, who are the merchants who seek them? How are they used in society, what is their cultural and historic significance, and what of their art and history?

Beginning with a subscription to *AB Bookman's Weekly* where lists of sales and wants were published weekly, I gradually learned which books in my chosen field were desirable, very desirable, and *very, very* desirable. Pricing was an indication of importance, though not every bookseller knows what is important, so when I saw a copy of A. C. Hamlin's *The Tourmaline* (1873), containing four chromolithographic plates by Prang, listed in AB at \$20, I jumped on it. The bookseller sent the book to me, and a very nice copy it was. He subsequently asked me what it was about and why it was important. Seems that some dozen or so other booksellers wanted the book and he realized he had underpriced it by about \$100. I was so chagrined that I sent him \$100. I was truly a novice and still was to learn that every bookseller experiences "the one that got away." Twenty-five years later, still scarce, there are only three copies listed on the internet, two of which are ex-library copies priced at \$450 and \$656.

Additionally, I scoured the book stores. At that time there were many here in Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Hollywood, and the West Side, as well as Ventura and Orange County, where I checked out their sections of art books, earth science, geology, decorative arts, history, travel, any and all that might have books relevant to my specialty. Bookseller friends of mine like Shirley Jacobson from New Mexico and Laura Festinger from New York joined together with me on these hunts and we all had a grand time, often finding wonderful material in our specialties. Shirley collected the Beat Generation and Depression material, and Laura searched for special children's books, from the 1950's.

During those years, Bernie and I traveled extensively all over the world, to South East Asia, China, Israel, Europe, England, France, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, South America, and in nearly every country I bought gem and jewelry books, many in foreign languages, for example, books on amber in Polish, French jewelry in French, books on minerals and gems in Russian. In Jerusalem's Mayer Memorial Museum, I found Rachel Hasson's beautiful 2-volume work *Early and Later Islamic Jewellery*, bought several copies at once to take home with me and ordered several more later, transported personally by a family member who lived in Israel and was coming to visit in Los Angeles. And on that same trip to Israel, I saw an ad in a Jerusalem newspaper for *Diamonds and Gemstones in Judaica*, and quickly purchased half a dozen copies from the publisher. More often than not, I needed to purchase an additional suitcase with which to bring my treasures home. I found rich material in every aspect of this field and acquired and sold unique and scarce books that collectors yearned for.

Sometime after listing my books with abebooks.com in 2002, they interviewed me for their Bookseller Spotlight Rare Book Feature, and when asked to name some of the most valuable or interesting books that I had listed on abebooks.com, I named several: *Rings for the Finger* by Kunz (1917); *The Romance of the Jewel* by Stopford (1920); *Lalique Bijoux* by Ferreira (1997); *Finger-Ring Lore* by Jones (1877); *The Handbook of Engraved Gems* by King (1866); *Au Jardin Des Gemmes* by Rosenthal (1924); *A Journey with Colour: A History of Queensland Opal* by Len Cram (1998); *A History of the Crown Jewels of Europe* by Twining (1960); and, of course, *The Book of the Pearl* by George Frederick Kunz and Charles Hugh Stevenson (1908). All but one (the Rosenthal) were first editions, some were printed in small editions (Len Cram's Opal had an

edition of only 1600), Stopford's *Romance of the Jewel in a small edition* was privately distributed to customers.

Purchase of these was memorable, for example *Lalique Bijoux* by Ferreira, Maria Teresa Gomes, published in Lisbon, 1999 by the Musee Calouste Gulbenkian, was discovered while visiting the book store of the Gulbenkian Museum on our visit to Lisbon. It was a catalogue of the famed Lalique collection at the Gulbenkian and had just been published in two languages, French and Portuguese. I bought a couple of copies in French to take with me and ordered half a dozen more to be sent to my home in Santa Monica, and as soon as I catalogued them, they all sold. Even now, it's hard to find a copy on the internet.

Another book, *A Journey With Colour: A History of Queensland Opal 1869-1979*, by Len Cram, published in New South Wales in 1998 in an edition of 1600 copies, was one in a series of books by Len Cram on Australian opal. It was a huge, gorgeous book that captured the author's love of opal and was the first of his planned 3-volume series, the culmination of his many years of experience in research, prospecting and mining, cutting, selling, and exporting the stones. His superb photographs showed the early days of discovery and the interesting characters and events in the opal world. I spoke with Len Cram by phone while we were in Australia, then several times from California (though never on Saturday as he was a Seventh Day Adventist), to arrange shipment and payment for subsequent volumes in the series. All were published in small editions, usually 1500 or 1600 copies, he signed all of them, and all were destined to become classics.

Catalogues

I began to wonder how to sell the books I was accumulating, for that was what I was supposed to want to do, though I needed to be reminded that the point of business was business. Like believing that it was a business, with a State of California Resale License, separate check book, ledger, stationery, and all.

The Catalogues started as a simple listing. One day, I listed about 15 gem and jewelry books by title, author, bare bones description and a very modest price. Not knowing what to do with the list, it sat on my desk for a few weeks,

then in a sudden burst of clarity I mailed it to the Gemological Institute of America located in Santa Monica at that time. I didn't know to whom to address it and didn't think to save a copy for my files. They bought practically every book on the list.

It took me a while to realize that I should save copies of my lists for my own files. So the earliest gem and jewelry list I have is #4, dated July 1987.

I also sent a copy of my first catalogue to Bert Masia, Professor at Western Reserve University and husband of my best friend from New York, who had expressed some curiosity and interest in what I was doing. He responded with great enthusiasm and remarked that what I had produced was an annotated catalogue. Made me proud!

Over time, I compiled 31 catalogues. The one preceding the final one, Catalogue 30 containing 129 books was written for my 25th anniversary as a rare bookseller, and I titled it "Tribute to Michael Hurley." It featured a full-page narrative about him and included the two modest catalogues, *Selections from the Library of Michael Hurley*, written by Stephen Tabor of Dawson's Book Shop in 1984 and 1985, and the books still remaining in my collection that I purchased from the auction so many years ago. It received a full-page description from Michael Stillman in the *Americana Exchange* issue of August 2009, commonly known as AE, a popular online bookseller's publication.

My last catalogue #31 was mailed April 2010. Though it contained just 67 books, it included some of the best and most desirable books for gemologists, jewelry historians, antique and estate jewelers, jewelry appraisers, and lovers of fine jewelry books, demonstrated by the following brief list:

Bapst, Germaine. *Histoire Des Joyaux De La Couronne De France*, 1889, the last in his family line of jewelers to the French Court.

Gubelin and Koivula. *Photoatlas of Inclusions in Gemstones*, 2004, written and photographed by two of the world's most renowned experts of the fascinating world of microscopic inclusions in gemstones, which are a foundation for reliable identification of gemstones, distinguishing them from imitations.

W. King's *Handbook of Engraved Gems*, 1866, one of the great works on the subject detailing the history of gem engraving, rings and signets, cameos, intaglios, important collections of engraved gems, artists' signatures, and more, including a section describing each of the plates.

Kunz and Stevenson. *The Book of the Pearl. The History, Art, Science, and Industry of the Queen of Gems* (1908). The monumental work on pearls coveted by pearl dealers especially as well as all other lovers of great gem books. Includes everything worth knowing about saltwater and freshwater pearls, covering their history, origin, sources, fisheries, culture, mystical properties, antiquity values, commerce, aboriginal use, literature of the pearl, famous pearls and famous collections, medicinal properties and uses, treatment and care of pearls.

Ng and Root's *Jade for You. Value Guide for Fine Jewelry Jade* (1984). Issued in a limited edition, one of the most useful and hard to find books on jade with a practical view of what must be considered in buying jade, and a systematic approach in jade grading and evaluating jade. A double-page color chart provides a guide for judging types and grades of jade.

Streeter, Edwin. *Pearls and Pearling Life*, 1886. Extremely scarce, coveted by jewelers, collectors, pearl dealers, and lovers of pearls and pearl books.

Lord Twining's *A History of the Crown Jewels of Europe* (1960). An immense work that took Lord Twining 30 years to complete. It covers a period of 17 centuries, and each of the 27 chapters presents a different European country, beginning with Austria and ending with Yugoslavia, with a chapter for The Holy See. Contains detailed account of regalia and crown jewels and includes information on more than 600 crowns, 187 scepters, 98 orbs, and 116 ceremonial swords. Details on these famous gems and jewels are an invaluable source of information for historians and gemologists. Lord Twining, a diplomat, was Governor of Tanganyika.

Veveur, Henri. *La Bijouterie Francaise au XIX Siecle (1800-1900), 1906-1908*. Published in three volumes with only 1000 copies issued. Our copy was numbered 144, signed and inscribed by Veveur to Gabriel Mourey, French poet, playwright, translator. Considered by Sinkankas (6872) to be "one of the great books on the history of jewelry".

Though Vever was the most expensive set of books (at \$2500) I've ever listed, it was claimed as soon as the catalogue was received by a jeweler in Quebec, who was excited to find it and simply had to have it. After placing his order and securing it, he asked if he could pay for it in three separate payments, 2 weeks apart. He was a lovely man and so very happy and appreciative to have the books saved for him that I easily agreed. The first payment of \$830 came promptly, and then there was silence. After about a month, I wrote a letter requesting payment as gently as I could and he assured me that the payment would be forth coming. But it didn't happen. I phoned his shop in Quebec and spoke to his son, who worked with him, and he assured me that his father would send payment. But it didn't come. I began to rethink the transaction, and wrote another letter offering a discounted price for the remaining amount due, conditioned on receiving payment within seven days. His immediate response was one of overwhelming gratitude along with his check. Upon receiving the check, I shipped the books to him and he promptly wrote me a letter so appreciative and happy, along with photos of the books which he wanted me to know he had sent to all his jeweler friends. I felt it was all worth the loss of the small amount of the discount to make such a nice gentleman so happy. On reflection, I wonder if that's a way of doing business? But he really seemed so nice and genuine that I've brushed aside any shadow of disbelief.

My catalogues were written every year, and sometimes twice in one year. They were simple, straightforward works on my 8½" x 11" letterhead, neatly organized with each book numbered. Nothing fancy. Every book that I entered into the catalogue was carefully described and annotated. A local printer produced the final catalogue and mailed them out to several hundred names on my list. The early catalogues, up to #22 in 2000 I typed on my Selectric typewriter (so ancient that WORD underlines it in red as though misspelled). From year 2001, Catalogue 23, I wrote them on WORD, with a great deal of patient and agonized coaching by my son, Andy. Without his teaching and guidance and forbearance with my desperate phone calls and questions of "how do I do....???" it never

would have happened. I finally entered into the new world that technology was creating, and shortly afterward, began listing my books on the internet.

There are some catalogues issued by booksellers that are very beautiful, illustrated in color, some on glossy paper, veritable works of art. I've saved many of those because they are lovely to look at and usually contain important bibliographic information though not on the subjects of my specialty. My catalogues are plain, simple, unadorned. Still, booksellers and librarians have saved and used them as references.

The process of creating my catalogues was a matter of great personal satisfaction. I was developing a personal relationship with every individual book. I miss the process and the creativity.

Specialists within the Specialty

The World of Pearls: Andy Muller.

In 1991, I received a letter post marked Kobe, Japan, from Andy Muller. He was a pearl dealer in Kobe representing a Swiss jewelry company, Golay Buchel. While visiting gem dealers in Thailand, he learned that I had a copy of George Kunz's *Book of the Pearl*, and was interested in buying it. I received the letter just as Bernie and I were about to leave on a trip to Europe and Israel, stopping in Switzerland for several weeks. I wrote him and told him that I would be in touch with him upon my return.

Thus started my relationship with a highly respected pearl dealer who collected pearl books and was eager to see my copy of *The Book of the Pearl, The History, Art, Science, and Industry of the Queen of Gems*, New York, The Century Co., 1908. It was the first of many such copies of this classic that I sold over my 31 years in business. The price for this one was \$300. As time went on, the price rose and continued to do so, and the last one I sold was for \$1500 in April 2010, though I watch with awe as the price for this book continues to escalate for copies that are less than Fine and only Very Good, with various faults.

Andy asked me to offer whatever books I could find on pearls, and so I did. He bought most of what I offered and ultimately wrote his own book on the

subject titled *Cultured Pearls: The First Hundred Years*, published in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1997. As a world-renowned leader of the cultured pearl industry, he was well versed in the growth and development of the cultured pearl industry from its beginnings over more than a hundred years ago in Japan. Upon his book's publication, he sent me a beautifully inscribed copy, thanking me for helping him build his pearl book collection and also sent several more signed copies for my inventory.

We had a lively ongoing correspondence, and when I told him we were planning to stay at Thun in Switzerland, he wrote that he was from Interlaken not far from Thun, and the next time he visited his family there, he raised a glass for me and my husband. Every Christmas I received beautiful cards from him and often from his staff.

In January 1994, the major Northridge earthquake struck the Los Angeles area, and rendered the building Bernie and I were living in on 12th St. in Santa Monica uninhabitable. We were forced to move our residence and my place of business, but I retained the business name Twelfth Street Booksellers all the same. The catastrophic Kobe earthquake occurred a year later in January 1995 and proved disastrous for Andy Muller (who had kindly inquired as to our well being a year earlier) as well as the people of Kobe. The horrific earthquake caused the deaths of 6434 people, of which 4600 were from Kobe. His description of the havoc reaped in his office was poignant and his photos included the sight of his book collection, ravaged by "le tremblement de la terre". Eventually, however, all was salvaged and recovered.

It was through Andy that I began to receive copies of *Pearl World*, a new publication, edited by Bo Torrey, devoted to the pearl industry. Thus started my correspondence with the editor, who continued to send copies of *Pearl World* to me for many years. In one issue, he promoted me and my business as well. The world of pearls is a world unto itself, and every issue was a fount of essential information with reports on the pearl industry, market trends, auctions, trade fairs, interviews with industry leaders, statistics, shows and controversies. I saved my copies of *Pearl World*, some 67 copies from Volume 1 (1993) to Volume 18 (2009) and have them listed on abe.com as a collection.

John Sinkankas

It's embarrassing to admit to being a little bit star struck. I am still awed by men and women who write books, or are expert on anything. I've shaken hands with Linus Pauling, Paul Robson, as well as one of the greats in the natural sciences and book world, John Sinkankas.

A catalogue from Peri Lithon was my introduction to him. He and his wife Marjorie, ran an antiquarian book business concerning gems, minerals, and the natural sciences. They named their company after Theophrastus's Peri Lithon, Greek for "about stones," said to be about the first-known work about minerals without ascribing magic powers to them.

My copies of their catalogues, that I eagerly looked forward to, were marked heavily with the books I planned to order. A brief phone call to place an order sometimes evolved into a conversation. One time, when I was puzzled about identifying an edition of *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones* (1913) by famed George Kunz, a book that had gone through several printings, I asked petulantly, "How is one supposed to know the true first edition?" He replied, "That is the reason I am writing a bibliography on the subject." A few years later, in 1993, his work *Gemology: An Annotated Bibliography* was published, a 2-volume work with 7458 entries on 1179 pages, eagerly awaited especially by booksellers who specialized in the literature of gems and jewels.

Over time, I learned that he was renowned as gemologist, mineralogist, author, artist, historian, scholar, linguist, world traveler, lapidary and more. In a brief biographical sketch about him in his bibliography is a list of 27 significant works including his unequaled *Emerald and Other Beryls* which included some 20 of his watercolor paintings, as well as countless articles written for various journals, including the Geo-Literary Society which he co-founded.

As a self-trained lapidary, he faceted large gemstones, three of which – a 7000-carat rock crystal egg, a 4500-carat smoky quartz egg, and a 2054-carat golden beryl – are in the collection of the Smithsonian Natural History Museum, and in 1955 he wrote his first book titled *Gem Cutting, A Lapidary's Manual*.

As an author and artist, he illustrated his book *Gemstones in North America*, first published 1959 and reprinted at least 10 times. He created the

colored illustrations and line drawings, and he produced the watercolor illustrations from specimens in his personal collection that became the color plates for his book.

Especially meaningful to me was the personal correspondence we had with the publication of his great bibliography in 1993. His initial written response was that he was “pleased and gratified” to receive my letter of appreciation on receiving my copy of the bibliography, and later, another letter of thanks for my suggesting to *AB Bookman’s Weekly* that his bibliography be reviewed.

In 1989, his huge collection of gemological literature, some 14,000 books, reprints, pamphlets, illustrations and virtually all the major works related to gems and jewelry amassed over some 40 years was acquired by the GIA, to be absorbed into its library as the core of the Richard T. Liddicoat Gemological Library and Information Center. Bernie and I were invited to the elegant champagne reception of the special viewing of the newly acquired Sinkankas Library. I have saved the announcement, invitation, and personal name plate.

I saved every memento of any and every occasion, every book he inscribed to me including my working copies of his bibliography, every letter he wrote to me regarding its publication, the 8-page birthday celebration homage to him that he signed to me on the occasion of his 85th birthday at a lovely party in Fallbrook at famed mineral dealer and rare book collector Bill Larson’s grounds of Pala International, in conjunction with the GIA and the Geo-Literary Society. And also, sadly, just two years later in 2002, a copy of his 4-column obituary in the *Los Angeles Times*.

As a lasting tribute to him, the Sinkankas Symposium was established, an annual Symposium co-hosted by the San Diego Mineral and Gem Society and the GIA featuring experts on precious stones and minerals, issuing a publication with beautiful color illustrations of the featured gem for that year. My collection of these included those on spinel, feldspar, diamond, and ruby, each signed by the outstanding speakers on the panel.

With additional material saved over the years, I had amassed an archive of John Sinkankas material, which was acquired in May 2016 by Arnaud Mignan’s Tricotett Online Natural History Museum in Switzerland. It gives me great

pleasure to have the Sinkankas archive installed as part of the Tricotett collection and to know how pleased Arnaud is with it.

Appraisals

In March 1993 after I had been in business 8 years, the GIA referred me to Durwood Howes. His father, D. B. Howes, an eminent Pasadena jeweler who collected jewelry and gem books including engraved gems eventually sold his entire stock of books in foreign languages to John Sinkankas. Durwood Howes requested an appraisal of the remaining collection of over 350 volumes and 5 lots of catalogues and pamphlets.

A huge challenge, for I had never done an appraisal before. I agreed to take it on, and knowing nothing about the subject, I ran to the public library to find books that would teach me the process. There was not a single book to be found about appraisals. However, in books about rare books, there was often a single chapter on appraisals that contained what I needed to know. With that slim bit of help, I launched into one of my most challenging experiences as an antiquarian bookseller, and learned the lessons needed, resulting in a comprehensive document that covered all the requirements of an appraisal document. I've saved my appraisal documents as a token of blindly accepting a challenge and rushing headlong into its fulfillment.

With the GIA staff led by Dona Dirlam, Head Librarian, and two library staff members including my daughter, we went to Mr. Howes' home in Pasadena where the books were removed from their boxes, sorted and set out for examination. Some books badly damaged by water, mold, and mildew were placed in baggies and set aside. I spent three days on site, examined every book in the collection, and prepared notes. I took the lists home where I researched values using auction records such as Christie's 4-part auction of the Joseph Gill Collection, *American Book Prices Current* (ABPC), dealer catalogues, price guides, and other reference sources including *Bookman's Price Index* and Sinkankas's bibliography.

What I learned from that frantic time were the factors determining value, including condition, scarcity, importance, desirability, completeness, edition, and

whether a book might contain a presentation, inscription, signature, or other special provenance

With condition a major factor determining the value of books, values on books damaged by water, mold, and mildew, had to be adjusted accordingly. One of the rare books that had been originally published in three volumes lacked one volume, so the value of the remaining two volumes was considerably lessened. Values were enhanced on several books that were given to Mr. Howes with warm and personal inscriptions by the authors.

Every book in the collection was given a value, and in the end, an appraisal amount was given, with the recommendation that a 15% reduction be given due to the size and condition of the collection.

I worked on the appraisal from morning to midnight for 9 days, approximately 74 hours, and have never worked so hard in my life.

This was the first of five subsequent appraisals, always a rewarding and challenging experience.

One was a collection of 16 scarce mineralogical books in Russian, German, Latin, and English, for which I called upon the friendship and services of the mother of an acquaintance who could read Russian.

Another was a Pliny incunable dated 1496.

Another by Krebs from 1700 in German.

Later, a scarce 2-volume work on the diamond mines of South Africa, 1906, easier to research though no less important.

And then, there was one very rare work written in French of a single rare pearl. Extensive research on this item revealed that another copy was owned by the Empress Maria Feodorovna (1758-1828) in the library of the Pavlovsk Imperial Palace. For this appraisal, I appended a list of sources and references with the appraisal document, as I did with the Pliny.

I've saved copies of all the appraisal documents, with the references enclosed, all in separate folders. These documents, along with my 31 (now 32) catalogues that I issued represent work that was challenging and gratifying.

Curse or Blessing

The Internet

Oh joy! To find a book on the history of jewellery by Lady Joan Evans is an absolute coup for lovers and collectors of jewelry books.

Is it a curse or a blessing to know that there are some 44 used copies listed on the internet, 33 are hard covers, 31 soft covers, 20 have the dust jacket, and 14 are first editions. Looking further, some booksellers claim the Boston 1970 edition as a first edition, but in truth the first edition was published by Faber in London 1953 as well as in the United States by Pitman in 1953. And then the wild array of prices is no small consideration, from \$31 to \$172.

Another example is the very desirable book by George Kunz, *Rings for the Finger*, Philadelphia and London, 1917. Best to ignore the figure of 143 copies listed on the internet for it includes print-on-demand copies, but looking further there are 53 used copies of which 41 are hardcover and 17 first editions. And among the first editions, most are ex-library copies, practically unsaleable to collectors, or copies worn, faded, weak-hinged, stained, or otherwise dismal, rambling from \$10 to \$150.

“In the olden days,” I found treasures in bookstores in Los Angeles, Orange County, San Diego, La Jolla, Las Vegas, New England, France, Portugal, England, Denmark, Poland, Russia, and Israel. I brought them home, examined, priced, described, and catalogued them. After I finished catalogues with anywhere from 100 to 250 titles, I mailed them to a carefully developed list of interested people. Books in general sold well, and orders came from customers in France, Italy, Germany, England, Amsterdam, Israel, Australia, as well as the United States. I wrapped the books carefully and protectively as though they were my babies, and shipped them via the United States Postal Service. There was never a complaint or a return. In those “olden days”, a bookseller’s detailed description of condition, edition, and content was what was required to sell the book, and the book buyer took it all on faith and trust in the bookseller, knowing that the book was returnable if it didn’t live up to its description.

When bookstores began to close because landlords raised the rent, the internet provided a place of residence, cheaper than a storefront, and with a wider audience. Thus, migration to the internet proliferated.

What the internet did, and does, for the book buyer as well as the bookseller is that it tells us things we didn't know, and things we didn't know that we didn't know. It tells us how many of these books are available in the marketplace, where they can be purchased, the variations in condition, edition, and price. It provides a guide for the bookseller who can now see how other copies compare with his/her copy, with consideration of edition, condition, and price. It also provides a great advantage for the customer who can now see that Lillian Cole, Twelfth Street Booksellers, isn't the only one who has this or that book, and how her copy may compare with those listed on the internet regarding edition, condition, and price. And maybe, after all, the book buyer realizes that an out-of-print or scarce book isn't what he or she needs, but only the information, so that a print-on-demand book may suffice, and for a lower price.

More than all this, the internet provides an opportunity to learn more about the book. Among the many listings, one learns of the various publishers, editions, and sometimes a little background about the book written by a generous and knowledgeable bookseller who loves and respects his/her book and wants to share his/her extensive information about it. For example, while checking the listings of Paul Leicester Ford's book *The Great K & A Train Robbery* (1897), I learned that he was murdered by his brother in 1902, not relevant to the book but a glimpse into the life of the author that came to such a sad end just a few years after publication of his very collectible book.

With the growth of the internet, photographs of the books began to accompany their description on the various listing sites, and the photos provided an additional enhancement for book buyers. Ill equipped as I am with the talent, versatility, and computer literacy, I was approaching my limits of learning new tricks, and though I tried for a short time, I got stuck on how to transfer the photos of the book to the web site. So, with utter humility, I must say that I failed photography.

And then, there's social media. Not my thing either.

I began Twelfth Street Booksellers in the mid-1980s which, according to Nicholas Basbanes in his book *A Gentle Madness* (1995) “created unexpected opportunities for book collecting enthusiasts.... Bolstered by a robust economy, aggressive new collectors satisfied their lust for beautiful objects.” So again, the confluence of events served me well, and since there were not a lot of booksellers who specialized in out-of-print rare gem and jewelry books, my business thrived.

But if I was asked what I would need to do to become an antiquarian bookseller now, in the age of the internet (and whatever else may be coming along), photos and social media are a given reality. From a bookseller’s point of view, the internet is both friend and foe, a curse and a blessing, has something for everyone for better or worse, and we must embrace it.

People

I’ve been thinking about friends and relationships, how they began, and how did these folks enter my life, in this instance, my book world life.

I received a phone call one day from Henry Polissack. Seems he discovered me listed as a specialist in books on gems and jewelry in the *American Book Trade Directory*, which offers free listings.

Henry had a passion for collecting beautiful things, starting with his early collections of antique pens. Within ten years he built one of the largest collections in the United States, which when completed, was sold en bloc. While searching these beautiful pens, he became fascinated with antique jewelry and turned his interest into a business, where he became well known and loved as evidenced by the moving tribute by Diana Singer in the *Newsletter of The American Society of Jewelry Historians*.

This passion for jewels led him to build a library on the subject, and his book business was a natural result of his soon overflowing collection of books on jewelry, gems, and related topics.

He was usually the first caller when my yearly catalogue was mailed out.

He created his own catalogues and issued 12 of them from 1999 to 2007 featuring books about jewelry, gems, history of jewelry, engraved gems, crown jewels, noted jewelers and goldsmiths, and travels and related adventures.

During our many long telephone conversations, we exchanged tales about books in our mutual interest, and it was he who told me about a book titled *Beyond Price: Pearls and Pearl Fishing* by Donkin, published by The American Philosophical Society in 1998. It was one of the best and most handsome modern books on pearls, and after seeing one copy, I ordered a dozen more at a very modest price, and it didn't take long before they had all been sold.

In another of those conversations, he confided his decision to build the finest, most comprehensive library of books on the subject in the United States, and ultimately built a collection of over four thousand volumes. When he was satisfied that he had the best, scarcest, rarest, most significant and important books in the field, he offered them at auction with Swann. He promised me a signed, presentation copy of the auction catalogue.

Swann advised him that because of its size, there should be two auctions, and so there were. The first auction titled *Books on Gems and Jewelry. The Henry Polissack Library, Part 1* containing 307 lots was held March 20, 2003, the day after the United States bombed Iraq, and though sparsely attended, there was a lot of phone activity and price realizations were very good. The second, *Books on Gems and Jewelry. The Henry Polissack Library, Part II* had 250 lots and was held May 27, 2004 and was equally successful. The catalogues were very attractive, with lovely illustrated covers and numerous illustrations. As promised, he sent beautifully inscribed copies to me, and together with his catalogues, they became an important part of my own reference library.

The enormous volume of books in his private collection as well as the inventory for his book business was evidence of his obsession, his "splendid addiction", his "gentle madness," as Nicholas Basbanes would have said.

We met several times. He lived in Northampton, Massachusetts, and when Bernie and I traveled to New England we arranged to meet for lunch. Henry and Bernie hit it off immediately--actually all of my friends, male and female alike--fell in love with my husband! Henry and Bernie talked about everything *except* books,

mostly about relationships, family, areas that are rarely explored by men. The conversations continued when Henry and his friend, Lana, came to California and had dinner with us in our apartment. Henry was a lovely man, a wonderful colleague and friend who I admired and respected with deep affection. He died on May 5, 2010, just short of his 71st birthday. Too young, too soon.

A phone call from Laura Festinger in the mid 1980s was the beginning of a long and treasured friendship. She lived in New York and was visiting her mother in California. I said, "Come on up!" A short three-block walk from her rented apartment in Santa Monica brought her to my front door. She saw me listed as a bookseller, possibly in *AB Bookman's Weekly*, and introduced herself as a bookseller specializing in modern children's books from the 1950s. She had been a children's librarian in New York.

We had much in common and thrived on conversations about books, bookselling, booksellers, book gossip, and our friendship strengthened resulting in frequent book scouting trips throughout Los Angeles County and surrounding areas. She was, and still is the most marvelous storyteller about the book world, booksellers, where and how she found signed books, presentation copies, all the most desirable items and all in fine condition, usually by trolling the many New York thrift shops on a regular basis.

Since her mother passed away, she no longer makes her yearly trip to California, but we talk on the phone regularly, and in 2013 when I visited New York, we spent several days together.

She was born in Belgium where her father was in the diamond business. When she was ten years old, the family fled the Nazis, travelling through France, Spain, and Portugal until they finally were able to obtain visas and come to the United States. Though French was her native language, her English is impeccable, without a trace of an accent.

She lives in the suburbs in an old 3-story house and drives into Manhattan frequently. After parking her car, she meanders on foot following her inclination, visiting thrift shops and book stores in various neighborhoods, sometimes resulting in spectacular triumphs: for example, she once found a copy of a

Thomas Pynchon novel, inscribed by him with an additional personally written note signed by him laid in.

This is how we spent our time together on my visit. Different than scouting in Los Angeles where we drove all over the county visiting bookstores. Thrift shops hold the promise of treasure, and she did find one for me, a copy of Andy Warhol's Christmas Cards that he designed for Tiffany. We walked for hours, visiting every shop on her program for the day. We had a grand time.

She has thousands of books in her basement as well as throughout her home, and hundreds of other irresistible things picked up at the thrift shops, pottery, ceramics, paintings, knick knacks of all sorts. She, like Henry Polissack, loves beautiful things, and her elegant taste finds them during her wanderings and leads to the obsessive, unrestrained collecting that fills her home. She is happy in their midst. She does wonder, as we all do, what will happen to her many thousands of books when she's gone. It's something we touch upon briefly but don't dwell upon.

We share our bookselling successes and commiserate when business is slow. She has always said that she didn't have the patience and couldn't sit still long enough to produce a catalogue, and yet her book listings on the internet are beautifully described, clearly and elegantly. We talk books and writers and recommend our favorites to one another. I regularly sent her my catalogues which she often edited, commented upon, and always supported, and sometimes I consulted with her on pricing a book. For example, one of my children's books written by Lisa Rovitch published 1989 was inscribed to Bernie and me, and she had added an adorable illustration on the title page. Laura advised me to increase the price.

She is one of the few people with whom I can share my book life, and our friendship, though mostly by telephone, is as staunch, rewarding, rich, and pleasurable as ever; and she is still a wonderful storyteller, sharing her acquisitions and triumphs as always.

Michael Rosove and I have been friends for nearly 40 years. He is one of several doctors that I worked for at UCLA, where he is Clinical Professor of

Medicine, specializing in hematology. Our friendship took root in 1979 when we discovered our mutual interest in books and spent a Saturday exploring the many used book shops that used to line Hollywood Boulevard.

Happily Michael lived in Santa Monica just a block from where my husband-to-be Bernie and I lived. It wasn't long before I introduced them to each other and we all became fast friends. Michael and I have never lost track of each other.

He was just beginning his collection of books concerning Antarctica and was the inspiration for my first foray into specializing in that subject (which I later discontinued). His collecting instincts were exquisite, and he has a wonderful collection of books concerning the classical and heroic eras of Antarctic exploration history. He actually reads his books and became so enchanted that on several occasions visited that immense continent as tourist or lecturer.

He has authored or edited several books on the subject. His first was *Let Heroes Speak: Antarctic Explorers, 1772-1922* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000), an account of the great explorers of Antarctica in the 150 years of early exploration and scientific discovery. Then, after ten years of research, his great bibliography was published, *Antarctica, 1772-1922: Freestanding Publications through 1999*. Its stated publication year is 2001, but with the kinds of delays that typically dog the publishing business, it was released officially on January 28, 2002. Produced in an edition of 500 numbered, signed copies, Michael published it himself as Adélie Books. The volume is a stunning quarto of 537 pages bound in quarter buffalo, elegant natural linen covers, gilt lettering, with a figure of his beloved Adélie penguin on the spine. Another volume containing additions and supplements to the bibliography was published in 2008, similarly bound. Both of these works were presented and beautifully inscribed to Bernie and me.

These publications were joined in 2004, 2007, and 2010 by works that he edited and published under the Adélie Books imprint. The 2004 publication was a slim volume of English translations of papers originally published in Spanish or Swedish concerning the controversial Argentinean relief of Otto Nordenskjöld's Swedish Antarctic Expedition, *When the Corvette 'Uruguay' was Dismasted: The Return of the 'Uruguay' from the Antarctic in 1903*. The 2007 work was *Rejoice My Heart: The Making of H. R. Mill's "The Life of Sir Ernest Shackleton"; The Private Correspondence of Dr. Hugh Robert Mill and Lady Shackleton 1922-33*, concerning

the collaboration of these two in producing the official biography. The 2010 work was Chet Ross's groundbreaking masterpiece, *Lieutenant Nobu Shirase and the Japanese Antarctic Expedition of 1910-1912: A Bibliography*.

There's more. Michael is a gifted pianist and from time to time has held recitals in his home to which I've been lucky enough to be invited. He is a birder, photographer, hiker, nature lover, and has "always preferred the less civilized parts of the world" (from his preface to *Let Heroes Speak*). He has an active medical practice, and one time mused he'd like to be a bookseller someday. Whether a fantasy of his younger years or another journey to take is unknown, but with all his natural gifts and accomplishments, he is a most modest, unpretentious, endearing man, and I feel privileged to be his friend.

I would never have met Dona Dirlam if GIA hadn't been my first customer of gem and jewelry books. Dona is the Founder and Director of the GIA's Richard T. Liddicoat Gemological Library and Information Center.

From her appointment as Director in 1995, she has grown the collection to more than 57,000 books, 700 journals and magazines, 175,000 digital images, over 1800 videos and DVDs, and the Cartier Rare Book Collection, the world's largest repository of information on gems and jewelry, where the Sinkankas collection resides.

She earned her Master of Science in Geology and Geophysics at the University of Wisconsin and was a high school teacher of the Earth Sciences before coming to GIA in 1979, where she earned a Graduate Gemologist degree and was chosen by GIA Chairman Richard T. Liddicoat to take over the job as GIA librarian. She and her staff created a world class state-of-the-art gemological information resource, and was the driving force behind the acquisition of the John Sinkankas collection for GIA.

She was one of the leaders and officers of the Geo-Literary Association, co-founded by John Sinkankas. And in July, 2016, she was awarded the Women's Jewelry Association (WJA) Special Service Award for Excellence, a significant honor.

My respect, affection and admiration for Dona is boundless, and I feel blessed to have such an on-going warm, personal friendship with someone of her stature.

My catalogues were a conduit to others in the field, like Stephen Hofer, specialist in coloured diamonds, who wrote and published a magnificent book on the subject, *Collecting and Classifying Coloured Diamonds: An Illustrated Study of the Aurora Collection* (1998), a lovely volume bound in black silk covers, with 742 pages and over 700 color photos. I bought and sold several copies of his book, one of which he signed and inscribed to me, and over time he ordered many books from my catalogues. Those telephone orders provided the opportunity for some good conversation about books as well as the pleasures of living in the Berkshires.

One of my catalogues found its way to Richard Hughes, who phoned to inquire about a gem book that I didn't have, but I promised him a copy if one turned up. That conversation led to getting to know Richard Hughes, who was a specialist on rubies and sapphires and wrote the definitive book on the subject: *Ruby & Sapphire* (1997). He had traveled as a young man and worked and studied in Thailand where he met his wife, and immersed himself in the study of ruby and sapphire. Inevitably, in 1991 his first book on the subject was published but he wasn't pleased with the publication, so he published it himself in 1997, and a beautiful book it is. Bound in red cloth, profusely illustrated with 350 full color and dozens of black and white photos, it covers every aspect of the subject beginning with its history, chemistry, crystallography, properties, color, inclusions, treatments, methods of fashioning, judging quality, geology, and followed by world sources of ruby and sapphire, with sections for each of 45 countries where they are found. Every chapter has an extensive bibliography comprising 2400 references, the most complete reference list on the subject ever assembled.

I finally met him in person with his wife and daughter at the party celebrating the 85th birthday of John Sinkankas, in Fallbrook, California. I bought a few copies of his book that day, and he inscribed a copy to me. I wish I had bought more than a few from this world renowned expert because they sold from my catalogue immediately (at \$98), and it is hard to find a copy now for less than \$1000-\$1500. He also journeyed to Myanmar's (Burma's) jade mines in 1996-97

with three other gemologists, all experienced Asian travelers, and he sent me copies of his articles and photos which were published in *Jewelers' Circular Keystone*, November 1996 and January 1997.

There were times that I needed to call upon my friends for help. When I learned about a book recently published about Conch and Melo pearls in a small edition in Italy, and that the publisher neither spoke nor understood English, I called upon my dear friend from UCLA working days, Rita Bachtol, of Swiss-Italian origin, who conducted the entire negotiation in flawless Italian regarding quantity, price, shipping. The book was authored by Roberto Sciaguato, titled *Rare Perles: Conch and Melo Pearls*, Milan, 2004, and I knew that pearl dealers would want it. It was a lovely and unusual book, and the half dozen copies that I ordered were snapped up as soon as they were catalogued.

Chasing books can provide an interesting glimpse into someone's life. I saw an unusual and desirable book about a museum collection published in 1920 listed in an Australian dealer's catalogue. Figuring that Australia is 17 hours ahead of California, I phoned the dealer at 5:00 p.m. California time to reach him at 10:00 a.m. the next day. "I'm calling about the book in your catalogue [I've forgotten exactly what book it was], and want to order it, but need to know its condition." He sounded hurried and harried, "I was just on my way to the airport". "Oh, vacation?" "I'm on my way to Russia to pick up my bride."

As it turned out, he phoned me about a month later with a description of the book. I asked him to send it, and then inquired about his trip to Russia. My impression was that his new bride was not happy and wanted to go back home.

Watching a TV cable show one Sunday morning that featured writers and artists, I was delighted to see an interview with Nicholas Basbanes. I had recently bought a copy of his book, *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes and the Eternal Passion for Books*, originally published 1995, with the paperback published in 1999. Having spent three years interviewing book collectors, booksellers, and librarians, browsing various sources of literary gems including used books stores and flea markets, visiting antiquarian book fairs, auctions, the great libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, London and Paris as well as throughout the United States, and reading everything he could find on book collecting, he says, "To provide a context for this 'gentlest of infirmities' ... I wanted to show that however bizarre

and zealous collectors have been through the ages, so much of what we know about history, literature, and culture would be lost forever if not for the passion and dedication of these driven souls.” A huge book of some 635 pages with a 37-page bibliography, it has become my favorite book, one that I frequently dip into for a peculiar kind of book sustenance, similar to the way some people seek nurturing from the Bible.

Basbanes’s book abounds in an utter treasury of personal tales throughout, history of great collectors and collecting, how their collections were developed, and their ultimate destination. As an example, seeking some of that “book sustenance” and just opening the book blindly to reach for one of his innumerable tales, I came upon the 7-page account of Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) and his unusual journals (6 volumes) written in a kind of shorthand called tachygraphy, and his library of 3,000 books. Probably not a way to ease into casual conversation with a dinner companion, but one that afforded me a wonderful journey of the mind.

Basbanes’s style of writing is very accessible, and that’s the way he is as a person. I wrote him, probably as a blog, and he was so pleased and appreciative for evidently blogging was a new experience for him too. A world-recognized writer, investigative journalist, he was very modest and easy to communicate with, and that experience is memorable for me. When I told him that I dealt in used, out-of-print and rare books on jewelry and gemology, and spoke about the GIA’s world class library of these books, he showed genuine interest in a subject that he had not encountered.

He mentioned that he would be giving a talk at the UCLA School of Library and Information Science, and I arranged to go with my good friend Dona Dirlam, Head Librarian at GIA and Mary Murphy, a knowledgeable collector of gem and jewelry books who was in the graduate program there so we could all meet him personally. I brought my copy of *A Gentle Madness* as well as another of his books, *Among the Gently Mad* (2002). His generous inscriptions to me included “one of the gently mad, thus a kindred spirit.” He couldn’t have said anything nicer.

Not For Sale

Bookselling is about selling books. But not these books, set aside on a small shelf in my own personal space.

Some were written by close friends of many years, signed and inscribed to me. They are reminders of cherished relationships with Karen Holden (poet), Marvin Farber (poet), Peggy Aylsworth (poet), Norm Levine (essayist, blogger), Louise Farr (writer, and author of a true murder tale), Michael Rosove (writer of Antarctic heroes and Antarctica bibliography). Others were gifts given to me on special occasions, signed and inscribed by my children.

And then, the one given to me by my husband, Bernard Axelrad, whose encouragement and loving support throughout my entire bookselling adventure never waned, never failed me, always made me feel as though I could do anything. The book is a handsome large 8vo (8 ½" x 11"), bound in black cloth featuring a photo of him on the front cover wearing a red cap, red flannel shirt, grey tweed jacket and full white beard, leaning on a railing by the side of a river. The photo is 5 ½" x 8 ½", gilt bordered, white lettered title on red background inlaid on its black covers; Introduction, 221 pages, color illustrated endpapers, numerous black-and-white illustrations throughout, Introduction, We Celebrate, Acknowledgments, Afterword, and Colophon.

This book, *Looking Around with Bernard Axelrad*, is a collection of his essays and columns written from 1982 to 1998, lovingly completed by our families and published by Twelfth Street Booksellers in an issue of 25 copies, and presented to him on his 80th birthday, September 21, 1999.

Lillian Cole
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Lillian Cole
Twelfth Street Booksellers
Used, Out of Print & Rare Books, and Search Services
1730 Washington Avenue
Santa Monica CA 90403
Email: 12thstreetbooks@gmail.com