

envy, how tie-less, tweeded, and shod in pigskin loafers he could appear so relaxed and still so *dashing*!) Worldly and well-travelled, he and his wife, art historian Janet Cox-Rearick, regularly spent summers in Florence, where Hitchcock often indulged in his 'other' research, that of seventeenth-century Italian and French music, especially the operatic. He was gregarious and convivial; laughter came easily to him and was joyously shared with those around him. As a scholar, teacher, and editor he was always supportive but maintained rigorously high standards, which could lead him to be direct, even forceful, in constructive criticism of one who failed the Hitchcock rule. Those of us on the end of that criticism (and most of us have been at some time or other!) were appropriately upbraided, but honored as well for this was *the* Wiley Hitchcock reading our work carefully and taking its matter seriously. We were always the better for his touch.

The size of the hole he leaves in our lives and our disciplines is unmeasured and unmeasurable. A call goes out for a requiem, solemn in tone, but climaxing in a rousing, joyous fuguing tune that combines the strands of a rich life exceedingly well lived.

Dale Cockrell

KENNETH G. LEACH

THE *Brattleboro [Vt.] Reformer* printed a report: 'Kenneth G. Leach of 19 Elm St., Brattleboro, died at home on Sunday, Oct. 21, 2007. Mr. Leach was born on Dec. 2, 1926, in Chicago, Ill.,

The writer is grateful to those who shared recollections and information about Ken, namely: Richard Adelson, North Pomfret, Vermont; John Crichton, San Francisco; Charles Cummings (Ken's friend and lawyer of Brattleboro); Ellen Dunlap, American Antiquarian Society; Steve Finer, Greenfield, Massachusetts; Robert Fraker, Lanesboro, Massachusetts; Kevin Graffagnino, Vermont Historical Society; James N. Green, Library Company of Philadelphia; Douglas Harding, Wells, Maine; David J. Holmes, Hamilton, N. Y.; Jeffrey Marshall, University of Vermont; Matthew Needle, Newburyport, Massachusetts; William S. Reese, New Haven, Connecticut; John Waite, Ascutney, Vermont; Clarence Wolf, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania; and Michael Zinman, Ardsley, N.Y. Written reminiscences by some of these colleagues of Ken are on file in the Manuscript Department of the American Antiquarian Society.

the son of Harold B. and Lucille B. (Hobson) Leach. He was an antiquarian and a long-time resident of Brattleboro who primarily appraised and sold old books. He was predeceased by his wife, Elaine, on May 7, 2007, and his brother, Richard B. Leach. There will be no service.' This spare, unadorned announcement of the death of our friend and benefactor is emblematic of his character and personality.

Despite his reticence, something is known of his life. There were New Englanders on both sides of his family. The Leach branch moved to the Midwest in the nineteenth century and Ken's father, Harold, a native of Iowa, was a 'section chief' for the Western Electric Company in Chicago. Ken's mother, Lucille Hobson, was, as Ken said, 'a Vermont girl.' Ken's middle name was Gaylord, named for a paternal uncle. In the Depression year of 1932 the Leach family moved from Chicago to Burlington, Vermont. They left there in 1940, and Ken dropped out of school at the end of the ninth grade. His parents' last years were spent in Belchertown, Massachusetts, with their son, Richard. Leaving home, Ken 'bummed' around the country working as a short-order cook, not settling down until 1956. In that year he went to work for the A & W Root Beer Company in Springfield, Massachusetts. He was scrupulously honest in all his dealings.

Accordingly, he was made the manager of all of the A & W locations from the Connecticut River valley to the entire western part of the commonwealth. He began to accumulate books as he travelled. He had a prodigious memory and a sharp, native intellect, although he did not, as he once said, 'read the books; I sell them.' In time, he developed a penetrating and imaginative instinct for American antiquarian books that were important and sellable.

In 1962 Ken Leach moved to Brattleboro, Vermont, and by that summer, while employed by A & W, he was a hard-working book scout. A colleague recalls a winter visit to a shuttered A & W stand when cold root beer was not in demand. There, an array of books, all in excellent condition, was spread out on the back counter. My first contact with Ken was in August 1965, when he

inquired for information about a possible Vermont broadside and asked how he might obtain a copy of 'a definitive listing of American children's books' about which he had heard—d'Alté Welch's great bibliography then being published in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*. Meanwhile, A & W's competitive environment became vexed, and Ken found it difficult to hold onto store managers who met his exacting standards. In July of 1968, with five thousand dollars in cash and two boxes of books (or was it three thousand dollars and three boxes?), he gave up root beer for the life of a full-time book scout.

Those first years were difficult. Leach was on the road seven days a week. He handled thousands of books while learning the book business from the ground up. In business, as in all else, Leach was disciplined, punctilious, ambitious, and ultimately successful. He regularly listed his stock in *Antiquarian Bookman* (after 1967, *AB Bookman's Weekly*) and reported in his first year he grossed \$18,000 but by the end of the decade he had attained \$150,000. Leach quickly became an imaginative and innovating businessman. He built a substantial reference collection to guide himself. He consigned to local auctions material he did not choose to stock or to catalogue for his regular, mailed lists and he 'flogged off' sets of edition bindings to Jack Bartfield in New York City. John Crichton of the Brick Row Book Shop (now) in San Francisco reported that Leach sold books 'by the trunk load for decades' to George Chamberlain of Scottsdale, Arizona, when the latter could find 'no books in the desert.'¹ Leach's scouting routes took him all over New England and out to central and western New York, where in those days antiquarian books could still be found. He may have developed relationships with a line of small shop owners and antique dealers who put material away, awaiting the next time he arrived driving his very large automobile—following the lead of Benjamin Tighe

1. Crichton also commented on the two men's taciturnity by citing an incident at a Boston book fair when he introduced the two booksellers to each another, they having done business together for years. Leach responded to the introduction by saying, 'Nice to meet you,' then turned and walked away.

of Athol, Massachusetts, Leach's supreme New England predecessor in the art of scouting books.

Leach held forth in a small office located at the rear of his large, rambling house. The office was dark and as the years passed appeared to get smaller and darker. Its ambiance seemed appropriate to Leach's physical appearance, which was somewhat somber, an effect enhanced by the rather wispy beard he affected in later years. In the office, which had but one rickety Windsor chair for visitors, he wore a pair of old 'Indian' moccasins and smoked Lucky Strike cigarettes, while fending off one of the numerous cats that were part of the Leach household. Next to the office was a room in which stood home-made, wooden book-stacks, on whose shelves his stock might be viewed by potential purchasers—if admitted to the premises. One story went around the trade that Mike Ginsberg of Sharon, Massachusetts, once took the very large (320 pounds) Ray Walton, a Texas bookseller, to visit. Leach came to the door, looked at Ray and said, 'You can't come in here; you're too big.' Upstairs above the office and in other rooms Ken kept material he was gathering for future catalogues or in anticipation of a collection he intended to sell *en bloc*.

Leach's manners were polite but to the point. He would answer a telephone call by saying merely, 'Ken Leach.' Invariably his salutation of a letter was, 'Good morning, Mark (or Robert or Bill).' But, he could exhibit an explosive temper and pity the poor soul who crossed his path at an auction or committed some other sin, known or unknown. Thus, Leach's relations with his fellows in the trade were a mixed. Douglas Harding recalls that for '20 years or so we did quite a bit of business. I would go on house calls with him and he would take the rare items and I would take the rest. . . . It was a very good arrangement, but nothing lasts forever.' Robert Fraker said, 'I enjoyed consistently cordial relations with one of the otherwise famous curmudgeons of the business. On several occasions, I received in the mail gratis a choice bit.' And, David Holmes testified, 'Ken was most important to me as a

contributor to my knowledge of the ways of the book trade. . . . He was one of the last of the old-school of proudly self-termed book scouts and few have ever turned up greater books at the ground level.' Steve Finer's assessment of Leach's place in the New England world of books was that 'he was, for our time and for our common pursuits, a fascinating and peculiar Yankee character. People did not equivocate. They liked him, respected him, appreciated him; or they were quick to revile his presence in the book trade. . . . [H]e was often fierce and usually unwilling to negotiate with others in the back of [an auction] room. That was simply not his style. Buyers who outbid him would wonder, occasionally, about the cost of prevailing.'

Leach's principal interest, in which he developed a thorough knowledge and expertise, was American literary and historical materials of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first issue of his catalogues in the AAS file is dated March 27, 1969.² He followed it by four to six issues per year, although in 1985 he issued eight, plus a lengthy quotation to AAS. Like all the others until his last of February 27, 2004, he typed the entries on what eventually became an aged, electric typewriter. The format in 'printed' wrappers did not vary. The contents were mimeographed on eight-by-ten inch paper. The material that he found most interesting was usually 'off subject'—that is, items of unusual interest—children's literature (before the field became popular and overpriced), local politics, tracts by eccentrics, scarce literary works by little-known authors—in short, the printed record of American common life:

It did not take long for Leach's colleagues in the trade to discover that his stock was interesting and invariably in good condition. In a 1983 catalogue he wrote, 'I have dug deep & have been highly selective to bring quality material to my customers.' His

2. However, in *Catalogue 1985-8* (November 1985), he wrote that "this is the 20th year of catalogs." This statement dates his earliest issues to 1965, so it must refer to his listings placed in *Antiquarian Bookman* during those early years.

books were moderately priced, with a 15 percent discount to dealers, rather than the usual 10 percent. Of course, private and institutional collectors were not far behind the trade. From that first 1969 catalogue, I bought a scarce pamphlet relating to a murder, *The Narrative of the Pious Death of the Penitent Henry Mills, Who Was Executed . . . for Murder* (Boston, 1817). Although AAS did not get on Leach's early mailing list until a year and a half had passed, we managed to snag a few treasures from time to time—for example, for fifteen dollars, a presentation copy from Isaiah Thomas to Elizabeth Andrews of his own *Town and Country Almanack* for the year 1815. From another catalogue, we lost the best lots to our dealer-friends Stephen Weissman and Roger Butterfield, but managed to buy an uncommon novel, *The Remarkable Narrative of Cordelia Krats; or, the Female Wanderer* (Boston, 1846). With the October 1971 early mailing, our opportunities increased. Of forty-nine lots put on hold we captured thirty-nine. They included a bound volume of pamphlets printed in the Cherokee language issued by Samuel Austin Worcester, the missionary to that tribe, at Park Hill, Oklahoma Territory (\$350).³

In 1972 Leach issued two upscale, printed catalogues. One was *The Writings of the New England Church Fathers, 1640-1740* presenting the contents of the library of Mark Bortman, a Bostonian and a friend of AAS. Leach sold this collection on behalf of Richard Mills of Exeter, New Hampshire, to whom it had been consigned. (AAS, fortunately, had purchased thirteen items prior to the release of the catalogue.)

The other offered the libraries of the author, Louis Untermeyer, and Boston bookseller, Bill Young. Willing to take a chance (or unwilling to let another dealer get the books), Leach bought Untermeyer's library and that of his late friend Bill Young. The offering of these two purchases resulted in this

3. Samuel was the son of Leonard Worcester, an apprentice of Isaiah Thomas, who was named for a minister of the town of Worcester's first parish, Samuel Austin.

startling, but not uncharacteristic, announcement in Leach's October 1980, list:

READ READ . . . The basis for the collection was the LOUIS UNTERMEYER library: with the stock of WILLIAM YOUNG, dealer in modern literature. . . . WARNING: [Untermeyer] had a life time habit of putting things into book(s) . . . if you are a 'purist' of books as issued from publishers do NOT order material when I have used L.U. ownership identification . . . WARNING: I have almost no knowledge of this field of books [and its pricing]. . . . My thanks for your understanding and patronage.

In addition to these ventures, Leach built collections around a genre or a subject. Early on AAS bought a collection of early nineteenth-century broadsides relating to transportation—canals, stagecoach lines, and the like. He offered a collection of Walt Whitman books to Clarence Wolf, owner of MacManus Rare Books. Wolf also recalled 'two collections that I would love to get back—both were, if my memory is correct, screaming bargains. The first was a collection of Lewis & Clark that comprised about 50 or so books for which I paid the grand sum of \$3,000.00. It had, among other things, the 1807 [Patrick] Gass *Journal*, the 1814, London, Lewis & Clark, and many other good titles! Another memorable acquisition [in 1980] was a wonderful collection of [Joel] Munsell imprints. There were at least 20 or so journals and orderly books [of the American Revolution] that were very limited (100 copies or so).' As an addendum to this tale, prior to Wolf's purchase of the Munsell material, AAS bought from that lot Munsell's copy of Isaiah Thomas's *History of Printing* (1810). It was enhanced with Munsell's own annotations made in preparation for the Society's second, 1874, edition of the *History*—he being one of its editors.

Leach set aside odd volumes, hoping to find their missing mates. He issued a catalogue of them in January 1984, listing 805 titles. Leach stated the catalogue would be good for ten years and asked his colleagues to help him supply lacunæ, but it became

something of a joke in the trade. More significantly, however, Leach patiently gathered over a period of a dozen years, with the 'help of many booksellers around the country,' what he believed to be the 'largest group of 19th-century American [book] dust jackets ever assembled.' After failing to find a buyer when he offered it *en bloc* at \$21,500 in his catalogue of October 1981, he put the collection of 450 lots without reserve at auction in June 1984.⁴ The sale may have been held before its time. It was not a success and Leach was bitterly disappointed by what he considered the obtuseness of collectors and librarians who, failing to recognize the significance of book coverings to bibliographic inquiry, did not take advantage of his offering. Nearly half the lots were passed, unable to elicit the mere five-dollar bid at which many other lots were sold. AAS, however, acquired six, pre-1877 American lots, five of which were boxed sets of children's books. The sixth was a copy of *California Notes* by Charles Turrill (San Francisco, 1876). It bears an example in a format that is now commonly accepted as a publisher's dust jacket—perhaps the earliest American example of such.

Leach's gathering of late-eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth-century American publisher's bindings, however, is his greatest achievement. He worked at it for many years, shelving his selections in an upstairs room. Occasionally, he would show them to colleagues, but the books were not for sale! In 1990, Leach decided to part with the collection. He summoned me to Brattleboro to view the situation. The books were and still are in beautiful condition; about seven hundred titles in one thousand volumes. Some are leather-bound, but nearly all are in cloth or paper-covered bindings. The entire collection vividly demonstrates the development of trade binding during the seventy-year period when American publishing practices changed dramatically

4. See the catalogue of his sale, Oinonen (now New England) Book Auctions, no. 71, June 10, 1984, and G. Thomas Tanselle, 'Book-Jackets, Blurbs, and Bibliographers,' in *The Library*, ser. 5, 26, no. 2 (June 1971): 91-114, with ten plates.

from handmade to manufactured products. Examples range from ornate, indeed bravura, productions decorated with mother-of-pearl appliqué, to the most humble schoolbooks bound in coarse tow or hemp cloth. To my mind, the choice book is the extremely fragile, but still mint, copy of William Wells Brown's *The Black Man* (Boston: James Redpath, 1863.) It is bound in covers of printed, polished green paper, over boards. This title, in any condition, is scarce enough—but in this condition, unique—thus. I bought the collection! It took the staff some time to work through it. They found some duplication, of course, but we retained the poorer copies for use by readers, thus preserving the binding of the better. To protect the volumes many copies were boxed, a project very generously supported by Michael Zinman. However, during the reception held for Ken and Elaine Leach in 1991, when shown the protected books on our shelves he protested, 'But, you can't see my bindings!'

By the early eighties, Leach had really hit his stride. His customers, in addition to those in the trade, included the Strong Museum in Rochester, New York, the late Gertrude Mallary of Fairlee, Vermont, and the Library Company of Philadelphia, among many others. On the cover of his September 1982 catalogue, he scribbled, 'Mark—an early copy. Regular mailing Sept. 20th. 99% of first section in your period. Ken.' From it, we bought two first American editions of novels by Anthony Trollope in wrappers, for \$45.00 each. His prices were going up! A year later we bought an 1854, privately printed, whaling narrative by Cyrene Clarke at \$1,500. From seventy lots of children's literature in the same catalogue we selected an 1863 boxed set of seven miniature volumes, *Little William's Library*. Later, Leach issued a catalogue of texts printed on textiles, but withheld a collection of Masonic aprons that he successfully sold at auction in October 2006, after he had closed his business. The January 1985 catalogue featured the stock of the late Marvin Hatch. It included Leach's tribute to Hatch, an eccentric antiquarian of Hartland, Vermont, who had been in business for seventy years. Another

catalogue listed a selection of the bibliographical contents of the two-hundred-year-old homestead of the Tufts family of Dover, New Hampshire, one member of which became a founder of Tufts University. Leach had brought home some two hundred cartons of books.

As with the catalogues, one could go on and on reminiscing about special purchases—a run of the rare *Racing Calendar*, 1861–69, privately published by H. G. Crickmore; the American Sunday School Union's *Picture Lessons* [Philadelphia, c. 1850],⁵ a great example of an illustrated children's book; sheet music from a 1988 catalogue; and from his January 1992 catalogue, the last that arrived during my tenure, we bought Lot 27, a stunning broadside printed in three colors, *Leach & Co's. Packet Line* (Philadelphia, 1837) illustrated with cuts of a canal boat with mules on the tow path and of 'Tom Thumb,' the famous B & O Railroad locomotive with its carriages (\$2,000). After she became librarian, Nancy Burkett continued to buy material from Leach but as time wore on he became less able to locate good material, as he bitterly complained. He issued his final catalogue on February 27, 2004, consisting of but 120 lots. From it AAS bought a copy of *The Album* (New York, 1824) in a fine binding with contributions by William Cullen Bryant (\$750), and *The Life and Adventures of Sinbad the Sailor* (Boston, 1806), an unrecorded edition of a popular children's book. In 2006 he sent a notice to his customers: 'Greetings—Stock now all at auction at Baltimore [Baltimore Book Auction Co.]. You can see it there, Ken.' In June and September of that year his stock and reference collection went under the hammer. The business at 19 Elm Street was closed!

5. *Picture Lessons* is one of a number of beautiful lithographic works published by the ASSU in the mid-nineteenth century. Augustus Köllner, a German immigrant lithographer, executed one plate in this collection. However, Köllner's greatest works constituted a number of genre scenes that appeared in ASSU publications, two of which are at AAS—*City Sights for Country Eyes* and *Common Sights in Town & Country, Delineated & Described for Young Children*. We obtained those from Ben Tighe some time earlier for about \$75 each, a far cry from the \$4,500 we paid Leach for *Picture Lessons*.

A colleague of Leach's has remarked that Leach could be loyal and generous. Certainly, this was the case in his relations with AAS and its staff. From the beginning he seemed to trust and like us. In 1967 he sent a list of seven Vermont imprints, saying, 'Check off what you need and put your own price on them.' Another list included a 1719 publication of Cotton Mather that we lacked; he wrote, 'top booksellers would price this retail about 300.00. I am just a little ol' bookscout, so . . . \$175.00.' We tried to reciprocate. Once, I rejected his price of \$35 for a poem and approved his bill for \$50. Leach made fairly frequent trips to AAS to buy our duplicates and often sent us quotations of desirable items. At least once he blew up, severely chastising me for leaving a bid with another agent while he was bidding (against us) for the same item. In May 2003, Leach acted for AAS at a Pacific Book Auction Galleries in San Francisco. We hoped to buy a series of ten pamphlets and broadsides relating to the establishment of a Boston, joint-stock manufacturing company of 1738-40. (We lost it at \$8,500.)

To his delight, Ken Leach was elected to membership in the Society at the April 1990 meeting. After his death, when several of us from AAS visited the house on Elm Street. I was moved to find, tacked to the end of a wooden book stack, our 1973 Christmas card, the invitation to the AAS reception in honor of Elaine and himself, and a typewritten verse:

Ode to Marcus A. McCorison in Mid-July 1983

Gaze upon this dejected man,
 This troubled, melancholy Li-brar-ian.
 31 August ends his fiscal year
 When all debts SHOULD disappear.
 Please try to ease his burden harsh
 And solace him with check or carsh!

Ken Leach once said, 'I did three things right in my life. I didn't bother with college, I got into books, and when I could afford it, I

got married.' He married Elaine (Carpenter) Deragon of Springfield, Massachusetts. The right moment of that achievement occurred in 1973, in the same year that he bought the house on Elm Street. It was a good, loving marriage, bringing both partners measures of happiness and security they had not experienced before. Unfortunately, as the years wore on each was afflicted with illnesses. Ken experienced a series of strokes and severe heart troubles, coupled to general, physical desuetude. Elaine contracted cancer, which she endured for some time before succumbing to it in May 2007. It is sad beyond measure to think about Ken's final months, alone with his beloved cats in that big old house.

Ken Leach, book scout, did many other things right in his life. He built a life from unpromising beginnings. He enriched the lives of his wife and his friends. He made life interesting for those who found him difficult. He gave pleasure to book collectors whose shelves he filled and he made booksellers happy with the substance of the collections he built, piece by patient piece. He added immeasurable riches to great libraries, which benefitted from his dogged, rooting out of scarce literary and historical materials from obscure sources. To the American Antiquarian Society he gave his loyalty and admiration and a bequest of the substance of his estate. Steve Finer wrote, 'Ken Leach died October 21st and his death does, truly, mark the passing of an era.' To which this writer adds, 'Amen! God give you peace at last, Ken Leach.'

Marcus A. McCorison

CLARENCE L. VER STEEG

Clarence L. Ver Steeg, a distinguished scholar in early American history and a member of the American Antiquarian Society since 1972, died in Evanston, Illinois, on July 2, 2007. A native of

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