The Circle at MLA

The Mark Twain Circle was active at the 1992 Modern Language Association Convention in New York, sponsoring two formal panels sessions, two talks at the Mark Twain Suite, and an Executive Business Meeting.

The first panel session was chaired by Scott Michelson. Titled "Other Views and Visions in Mark Twain's Works," it provided a chance for several young scholars to present their work. Shalley Fisher Fishkin discussed her discovery of an article suggesting an origin for Huckleberry Finn's voice in the voice of a young African American boy with whom Twain claimed to have talked. Kate H. Winter pointed out similarities between the feudal structure of the Hawaiian islands during Twain's visit there in the 1860s and the 6th-century English society he describes in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. Glenn Scott Allen discussed The Great Dark as a modernist text, and Gretchen Beidler suggested that Adventures of Huckleberry Finn can be seen as a parody of contemporary travelogues.

The second panel session was given to "Theoretical Approaches to Mark Twain." These included Elizabeth A. Kessler's examination of narrative structures through the dual lenses of Hegel and Maslov, Victoria Thorpe Miller's analysis of ironic discourse in the narration of Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc, Pamela A. Boker's examination of Twain's modes of expressing grief and mourning, and John Ernest's reading of cultural politics in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. Despite being set at both the first and last hours of the convention, both sessions were well attended.

As in past years, the Circle and the Mark Twain Journal sponsored a suite, hosted by Thomas Tenney and David Sloane. Situated at the Warwick Hotel, across the street from the Hilton, the Suite provided respite from the convention and a chance for Twain aficionados to eat, drink, and chat. Scholars also presented two papers at the Suite, on separate nights. The first, by Victor Doyno, briefed the audience on the newly discovered first half of the manuscript of Adventure of Huckleberry Finn, which Doyno has been examining in Buffalo. Although no reproduction of any portion of the first half of the manuscript is permitted for three years, Doyno was nevertheless able to show his audience the kinds of choices Twain made as he wrote; Doyno also showed that manuscript breaks--i.e., when Twain laid the manuscript down for extended periods--occur in places different from those suggested by earlier scholars. The second paper, by Gregory W. Zacharias,
closely examined Twain's relationship with Henry Rogers, suggesting in part that Twain's late reputation as the quintessentially moral American was intentionally and expertly created by Standard Oil's public relations unit. Each session lasted about 35 minutes, followed by socializing.

Finally, the Circle held an Executive Business Meeting during the convention. Its most important business was appointing a Membership Committee consisting of David Barrow, Victoria Thorpe Miller, and Andrew Jay Hoffman. The Committee was charged with expanding the membership both within and without the profession, and with creating programs appealing to lay members. The Executive Board also created an Awards Committee consisting of the Circle's President David E. E. Sloane, Past President Pascal Covici, Jr., Past President Alan Gribben, Executive Coordinator Michael J. Kiskis, and Past Executive Coordinator James D. Wilson. The room as a whole then voted to honor William S. Linn and George F. Meenagh as Lifetime Members of the Mark Twain Circle. Calls for papers were noted for the 1993 MLA and ALA.

The Circle will next meet at the American Literature Convention in Baltimore, at the end of May.

Susan K. Harris
Penn State Univ.
Vice President, MTCA

POSTSCRIPT FROM THE PRESIDENT: The Mark Twain Suite will again be a feature of Mark Twain Circle activities at the MLA convention in December 1993. There will be light breakfasts at the Suite from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and cocktail hour readings at 5:30 p.m.

David E. E. Sloane
Univ. of New Haven
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Circular Directory

The following is a directory of members of the Mark Twain Circle of America as of January 1993. Honorary (Lifetime) Members are listed separately following the general list.

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Call for Papers
Fall Twain Symposium: Book Banning in America

The fourth annual Fall Twain Symposium will take place Saturday and Sunday, October 2 and 3, 1993 at the Mark Twain Memorial in Hartford, CT. Submitted papers should be about 20 minutes in length. We hope to attract work pertaining to historic and contemporary episodes of book banning in America. This conference is not restricted to the study of Mark Twain, and the submission of non-Twain-related papers is encouraged. Research in progress and recently published material are especially encouraged. All travel costs and accommodations will be provided for the presenters. Anyone interested in submitting an abstract (no more than 500 words) should do so, with a curriculum vitae, before May 1, 1993. Notification of selections will be made by June 1, 1993.

A flyer and registration form for the conference will be available by early summer. Please send materials or queries to Debra Petke, Director of Education, Mark Twain Memorial, 351 Farmington Ave., Hartford, CT 06105; or call 203-247-0998; FAX 203-278-8148.

Walter Blair Remembered

I note with sorrow the passing of that good man, Walter Blair. Alav ha-shalom. I quite agree that "there's no better way to memorialize Walter Blair" than to reproduce the citation presented by Carl Dolmetsch, whom I've not had the pleasure of meeting and Ham Hill, whom I have.

It was Ham who, thirty years ago, favored me with two acts of uncommon decency and good nature. I was, in the Spring of 1963, a Ph.D. candidate at Washington University, studying with Guy Cardwell. Guy had
me working on the then-unpublished Webster letters, and on Twain the publisher. He thought I needed to go to Berkeley. I was no richer than the average doctoral student, and I wanted some reassurance that the trip was worth the money.

Guy suggested that I call Ham Hill, who was then at New Mexico, and get his advice. I did, and when Ham, whose dinner I had interrupted, found out what I was after, he told me to give him my number so that he could call me back and pay for the call.

He told me I needed to spend a couple of weeks at Berkeley, and offered to call Henry Smith and tell him I was serious. I got the necessary permissions, and in July of 1963 I went to Berkeley. I booked a room at the YMCA in Berkeley, though I did splurge to the extent of getting a single for a dollar a night, instead of the 75-cent double also available.

The MTP wasn't nearly so well organized then, but was generous and kind to visitors. The papers I wanted were in various filing cabinets, and there was a sort of reading room with nearby offices for Henry Smith and an uncommonly nice young fellow named Fred Anderson.

After a few days I was slogging along, bogged down, discouraged, and not so sure what to do when. Then one fine morning a short, dapper fellow, gray-haired, wearing a gray suit, came in, looked around and said "Is there a Mr. Gold here?" I identified myself, and he came around the table to me, shook my hand and said, "How can I help you? I'm Walter Blair."

Ham had called him, told him I was going to be at Berkeley, and asked Mr. Blair to look out for me because, he thought, I was a bit confused. Indeed I was. Mr. Blair was there on business, but he spent some time with me every day for a week or so, guiding me to things I needed to see, encouraging me and generally befriending me. He even took me to dinner one night.

Well, this is perhaps an overly long reminiscence, and what I'd really like to do is write a letter of condolence. I don't know whom to write one to, but all of us are poorer for his loss, richer for his life, so I'll content myself with saying, as I do at the Sabbath prayers for the departed, "Zecher Tzaddik L'vracha." May the memory of the righteous be for a blessing.

Charles H. Gold
Executive Director
The Diabetes Institutes Foundation

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**Dates to Circle**

May 28-30, 1993. The Mark Twain Circle will present two sessions at the American Literature Association Conference in Baltimore, MD. (1) "Teaching Huckleberry Finn" (Chair: James S. Leonard, The Citadel); Victor Doyno (SUNY, Buffalo), "That Rowdy Boy in the Class: Three Approaches to Teaching Huck"; Pascal Covici, Jr. (Southern Methodist U), "Teaching Huckleberry Finn: The Uses of the Last Twelve Chapters"; Michael J. Kiskis (Empire State College [SUNY]), "When I read this book as a child, ... the ugliness was pushed away": Adult Students Read and Respond to Huckleberry Finn"; Respondent: David O. Tomlinson (U.S. Naval Academy). (2) "Mark Twain's World Reviewed" (Chair: David E. E. Sloane, U of New Haven); Victoria Brehm (U of Iowa), "Mark Twain and the Economics of Silence: 'Old Times on the Mississippi' as Working Class Autobiography"; Gregg Camfield (U of Pennsylvania), "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Canon: The Suppressed Sentimental Side of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"; Elizabeth S. Prioleau (Manhattan C), "Huck Finn as CAO: Child of an Alcoholic Parent"; Laura Skandera-Trombley (SUNY-Potsdam), "A Women's History of Elmira and Some Forgotten Mark Twain Essays."

ABOUT THE CIRCULAR. The *Mark Twain Circular* was launched in January 1987 by Thomas A. Tenney (Editor of the *Mark Twain Journal*), who edited the first issue, then passed the Circular baton to the present editor. An individual who pays dues to the Mark Twain Circle and/or subscribes to the *Mark Twain Journal* receives one subscription (four issues per year) to the Circular.

ABOUT THE CIRCLE. The Mark Twain Circle of America was formed at an organizational meeting held at the December 1986 Modern Language Association convention in New York; the membership has since grown to more than 350. Current officers are: President—David E. E. Sloane; Vice President—Susan K. Harris; Executive Coordinator—Michael J. Kiskis; Executive Committee—Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Pascal Covici, Jr., and James D. Wilson. Past Presidents: Louis J. Budd, Alan Gribben, Pascal Covici, Jr. Past Executive Coordinators: Everett Emerson, James D. Wilson. Although many members are academic specialists, the Circle also includes many non-academic Twain enthusiasts. The Circle is in communication with other Mark Twain organizations, including those associated with sites important in his life, and cooperates with them.

ABOUT THE JOURNAL. Founded in 1936 by Cyril Clemens, the *Mark Twain Journal* is the oldest American magazine devoted to a single author. In 1982 Mr. Clemens retired, and the Journal moved to its present home in Charleston, S.C., under the editorship of Thomas A. Tenney. There are two issues per year, Spring and Fall, with a new volume each year (rather than every second year, as in the past). The Journal tends to appear late, and begs your patient indulgence. New subscribers may wish to begin with the 1989 issues rather than the 1992. Although the Mark Twain Circle and the *Mark Twain Journal* are separate entities, Circle members enjoy a reduced subscription rate for the Journal (see coupon below for prices). Back issues from 13:1 to the present are available at $5.00 each, postpaid ($2.50 on orders for ten or more; pre-1983 issues are thinner than modern ones and some are badly reprinted). An index 1936-83 counts as a back issue.

To: Michael J. Kiskis
Executive Coordinator, Mark Twain Circle
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Please enroll me as a member of the MARK TWAIN CIRCLE OF AMERICA and subscriber to the MARK TWAIN CIRCULAR. I enclose a check for $7.00 ($9.00 for a non-U.S. address) made out to "Mark Twain Circle of America."

(printed name)

(address)

(city, state, zip)

To: Mark Twain Journal
Box 1834
Charleston, SC 29402


I am not a member of the Mark Twain Circle. Subscription rates are $15 for one year, $28 for two years, $43 for four years, or $50 for four years.

I am a member of the Mark Twain Circle, or about to join. Subscription rates are $10 for one year, $18 for two years, $25 for three years, or $30 for four years.

(printed name)

(address)

Libraries: $17.00/year, no discount. Foreign: Add $2.00/year for postage.
LIBRARIANS: Please note in your computer that the Mark Twain Circular provides publication information on the Mark Twain Journal. This may help reduce avoidable claims. Your cooperation is important. The Journal's staff is very small, and must allocate time between responding to claims and finishing the issues due on your subscription. Avoiding needless claims will help speed the publication of issues you need.

FULFILLMENT NOTICE: The Fall 1990 issue (28:2) of the Mark Twain Journal was mailed to subscribers in September 1992. The two 1991 issues (29:1 and 29:2) will be mailed in March 1993.

SERIAL LIBRARIANS: The Mark Twain Circular is entered selectively in the annual bibliographies of the Modern Language Association and the Modern Humanities Research Association, and in the American Humanities Index, the Literary Criticism Register, American Literary Scholarship, and "A Checklist of Scholarship on Southern Literature," which appears annually in the Mississippi Quarterly (Spring issues). The Mark Twain Circular contains ongoing annotated bibliography which was begun in Thomas A. Tenney's Mark Twain: A Reference Guide (G. K. Hall, 1977) and continued in seven issues of American Literary Realism, from 1977-1983. Please file and bind with your Mark Twain Journal.

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