

Shakespeare Newsletter
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SNL Editor Louis Marder Dies Unexpectedly
SNL Seeks New Owner

Evanston, IL, April 1, 1990. I have the sad duty to report the unexpected death of my husband Louis. It was the last thing he expected to do. He wondered all along whether this would be the promised end. It came all unlooked for. I think he died of a broken heart. He wanted to spend the rest of his life working on the Shakespeare Data Bank and this has thwarted his plans. He would have wanted no tears for himself -- only the reaction, "My God, What's going to become of SNL? Who's going to do the Shakespeare Data Bank?"

Where can I find a clone with his devotion to Shakespeare who will carry on in his tradition? Is there anyone?

He won a prize for a Shakespeare skit on Julius Caesar in a charity camp when he was fourteen. He memorized Shakespeare quotations. After two of his eight years in night school at Brooklyn College as a pre-med (he worked during the day) he became an English major and went back to his old love, Shakespeare.

He had a year of Shakespeare at Brooklyn College, started a Shakespeare Club there with the motto, Spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues, founded an Arts Appreciation Society, married me in 1940 [we have two children, M.B.A Dan a computer engineer with Xerox and Dr. Diana a clinical psychologist], won the Senior Award and Student Council Award at graduation in 1941, went to Columbia in 1941, was drafted in 1943, served three years and two days, came home in 1946, went back to complete his M.A (1947), earned his Ph.D. in June 1950, and started The Shakespeare Newsletter in March 1951. After that, for forty years I wondered whether he was married to me or to Shakespeare. (Send me an envelope and I will send you a copy of his list of forty-odd criteria for a workaholic. He was proficient in all of them.)

He Retired for Time to Work

His retirement in 1980 was not to relax but to devote full time to SNL and later to planning the SDB which was a long time dream of his. Almost every summer since 1966 he went to England to attend meetings of the International Shakespeare Conference AND to ransack antique shops to build his prized collection of Shakespeareana. He collected with a passion. Not only memorabilia but books of which he claimed to have over 7000 on Shakespeare and related literature alone. When I went to Spain with a friend last November -- he was too busy to go -- I had an order to bring back another Lladro statue. I bought a beautiful Hamlet for him.

The collection was an amplification of his interest in Shakespeare's reputation and how it manifested itself. His one book is *His Exits and His Entrances: The Story of Shakespeare's Reputation*. Lippincott, 1963, pp. 386. [I have a couple of boxes of them which he bought for sale when he gave public lectures. Send \$17 plus \$1.50 and you can have one autographed.] He wanted to update the book, had an offer, but never had time. He would say he was so busy tracking Shakespeare's reputation that he had no time to write about it. His favorite word was intercalary: he was always looking for a month or more of free time between that night and the next morning so he could clear his large desk on which there was hardly space for a 3 x 5 card.

He leaves undone a Variorum Life of Shakespeare, An Elizabethan Literary Calendar (with over 5000 dates covering 1550-1623), an outline for a real book on teaching Shakespeare, an outline for a book on the pervasiveness of sexuality in Shakespeare, about 1000 notes on law in Shakespeare (left over from his dissertation), half of a biography of Shakespeare, and notes for many other articles. All was to go into the Shakespeare Data Bank.

He considered himself as a pioneer in planning mechanical, photographic, and electronic scholarship. He outlined a tentative plan in a paper in 1957, had a piece about it in his book, had a computer issue of SNL in December 1965, and formally established the SDB in 1984 as an educational, tax exempt corporation. The project is unique.

Psychic Income Was Enough

He lived on psychic income, the pleasure of his work, the friends his work brought him, and the cordial letters of appreciation he received from his subscribers. I print a column of comments on page 14 in this issue, not to praise him, but as a sample of what he would want his successor to deserve.

The Unshocking Real Truths

If you were shocked and a little pained by the account of Louis's death on April Fools Day, don't be.

I think it is all a hoax to dramatize his desire for a successor. He can't be dead. He was too busy to die.

Many times he told me that if God came to get him he wouldn't go. "What will happen to the Newsletter when you die?" his wife would often ask. "You know you can't take it with you!" He would retort, "If I can't take it, I ain't going."

As a matter of fact I think he is perfectly well, and very active. I have the external evidence for this. I saw him, unless it was his Ghost, taking his wife to dinner on Mother's Day, I heard him being interviewed on the authorship question on KSL, Salt Lake City on May 8, and he presented a lecture on the same subject at the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center on May 9.

Many a time and oft he had told me that every batch of mail would bring new excitement if not enlightenment in the Shakespeare world. Old chestnuts were waiting to be cracked, new analyses were needed, new problems were coming up, original research was a necessity, and less jargon and fewer "isms" in critical scholarship would be a blessing. Why would he die at such an exciting time when there is more "news" than ever?

Theatre history, he said, was in a violent flux; with the discovery of the Rose and Globe foundations and the Hancox drawings we might yet get an acceptable Globe reproduction. Gary Taylor, Peter Levi, and Don Foster are causing excitement by evaluating old poems. Charles Hamilton is seeking to add new signatures to the seven we are positive about and insisting that he has identified Cardenio as Shakespeare's.

Sometimes Knowledge Increases Our Ignorance

Eric Sams, Elliott Slater, Mark Dominik, and others are seeking to verify Shakespeare's hand in the apocryphal plays; M.W.A. (Wilf) Smith and others are stylometricizing (first use of this word in the language) Shakespeare's language and style for authorship attribution; Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor and others spend about ten years on three editions of Shakespeare (modern, old spelling, and short version with a supplementary Textual Companion) which doesn't make all scholars happy, and John Andrews of Folger and SQ fame is producing another attractive set called the Guild Shakespeare with Quarto and Folio principles. Just look at the 4500 and 5000 items in the last two SQ bibliographies. When will it end? The Oxfordians under the aegis of Charlton Ogburn and Ruth Loyd Miller and their cohorts are getting more publicity than ever with their stories of the mysterious William Shakespeare; Ward Elliott's Shakespeare Clinic with Robert Vincenza's new computer program of modal analysis (a brand of stylometry), released to the Shakespeare Authorship Roundtable in April, has excited the press with their announcement that according to their present studies, after Shakespeare, Elizabeth I and Sir Walter Raleigh are millions of times more likely to have been the authors of Shakespeare's works than Bacon, Marlowe, or Oxford.

No, Louis is not dead at all. Had the Grim Reaper come he would surely have wheedled a ten year extension out of him at the least.

It is in the SDB that he sees a much needed aid for Shakespeareans. There are many thousands of references and no library can have them all. With the SDB fully implemented every scholar would have the same access to all the material. He thought that many controversies and questions would be resolved, better teaching and study possible, staging would be improved, and repetitious scholarship eliminated if there was the solid foundation of a Shakespeare Data Bank in which all that we know and all that will be known is compiled, condensed, simplified, fully cross-

referenced and indexed for easy reference wherever a computer was available. We would be able to see all problems steadily and see them whole.

No, Marder cannot have died and left these problems to us alone. He wanted to spend the rest of his life compiling the Shakespeare Data Bank with the more than 150 Associates who have volunteered. The Newsletter is wonderful; he enjoyed it thoroughly, but it was taking all of his time.

I therefore think the headline story on page one is a hoax to dramatize Louis' desire for a capable successor. Forgive him for it. If anyone with the proper qualifications and fortitude would write to Marder you would find that he or his clone would be open to negotiation and willing to help.

Alter E. Golmar

Running title on page two reads: "Marder's Quite Premature Obituary Shed no tears, yet!"