

## GEORGE TALBOT GOODSPEED

George Talbot Goodspeed died in Brookline, Massachusetts, on May 3, 1997, one hundred and thirty years and one day after the birth of his father, Charles Eliot Goodspeed, the founder of the legendary Goodspeed's Book Shop on Beacon Hill in Boston. The Goodspeeds were directly descended from Roger Goodspeed of Wingrave, Bucks., who came to New England and settled on Cape Cod before 1650, in the second wave of English immigration. Although Bostonian by choice, George never forgot his Old Colony roots and took great pride in them. Undoubtedly the reputation of the Goodspeeds, father and son, for plain and fair dealing can be traced to this sturdy heritage.

George was born in Quincy, Massachusetts, on October 10, 1903, the only son of Charles and his wife Leila May (Pinkham). He has two older sisters, Margaret (Mrs. Wellen H. Colburn) and Miriam (who married Gordon T. Banks, head of Goodspeed's autograph department).

He prepared for college at the Roxbury Latin School (the beginnings of which can be traced to John Eliot, 'Apostle to the Indians' and translator of the Indian Bible) and Phillips Exeter Academy, and graduated from Harvard College in 1925. Always modest to the point of self-deprecation, he characterized his academic career as 'somewhat less than distinguished.' Whether this was true or not, he was a lifelong learner, developing an excellent prose style and an encyclopedic knowledge of literature, history, and 'anything that's a book'—the motto chosen by his father for Goodspeed's Book Shop. His honorary membership in the Harvard chapter of Phi Beta Kappa was at least as well deserved as many a key awarded in course to an undergraduate scholar. Key or no key, he was a devoted Harvard man and generous supporter of its library. He seldom missed the Commencement ceremony and particularly relished the Tree Spread, the special buffet for older alumni.

While a college student, George worked in the Shop during

the summer vacation of 1924 and officially joined its staff on the afternoon of his college graduation in June 1925. He claimed that it was the path of least resistance, but it was clearly in his blood. He never left, until at last he closed the business in February 1995, after its unbroken history of ninety-seven years. Charles Goodspeed had founded the firm in 1898 at 5A Park Street on the border of Boston Common, close by the State House. As the business grew and the staff expanded, the sign of the Monk on Horseback hung at a number of addresses, all centrally located in Boston: 7 and 9A Ashburton Place, 2 Milk Street (for the second-hand and scholarly stock), 18 Beacon Street, 7 Beacon Street, and at last back on Park Street again. At its height the business operated at three locations simultaneously with about one hundred employees. Its departments dealt with a wide range of materials: rare literary, historical, and artistic books and documents; autographs; Americana; prints and drawings; genealogy; and general scholarly and second-hand books. From time to time it also engaged in the publication of both books and prints. Its reference collection was impressive, supplemented at need by the resources of the neighboring Boston Athenæum.

Charles Goodspeed was elected a resident member of AAS in 1921, an honor that he greatly valued, and he remained a loyal supporter until his death in 1950, faithfully attending its meetings and giving generously both money and appropriate books that came his way in the course of business.<sup>1</sup> And the services of Michael J. Walsh, Goodspeed's peerless specialist in Americana (also a member from 1959 to 1984), had long been at the disposal of the Society for acquisitions both retail and at auction.<sup>2</sup>

In 1935 Goodspeed's Book Shop was incorporated, with the father as president and the son as treasurer and manager. As Charles Goodspeed's health slowly declined, George assumed more and

1. Obituary by Clarence S. Brigham, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 61 (1951), 16-19.

2. Obituary by George T. Goodspeed, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 94 (1984), 237-39.

more of the primary responsibility. He knew the Society's collections well and was on easy terms with its director, Clarence S. Brigham, so it was natural for him to succeed his father as a member of the Society. He responded to Brigham's notice of his election in 1951, 'I am, of course, greatly flattered to have been elected. . . . The Society, as you know, meant a great deal to Father and was always one of his first interests. Naturally it has been a great satisfaction to me to follow him.'

Even before his election, the Society meant as much to George as it did to his father, but after he became a member, he attended almost every meeting between 1953 and 1987, an enviable record. His annual support was always forthcoming, and like Charles Goodspeed he constantly kept the Society's collecting interests in mind as suitable materials passed through his hands. Batches of almanacs, odd numbers of provincial newspapers, nineteenth-century American imprints, editions of James Fenimore Cooper, and other appropriate items came from Beacon Hill to Worcester: all grist for the mill. In this he was aided and abetted by Mike Walsh. It did not matter if some were only fragments. As Brigham wrote after one such shipment, 'As the revision of Evans progresses, it is remarkable how many times the only known copy of an item which he described from an advertisement turns out to be some cripple which you gave us long ago. These lay ghosts even if they do not supply the complete context of the book.' The Society and Goodspeed's also cooperated in the issuing of faithful reproductions of scarce American prints made to strict specifications by the Meriden Gravure Company and now themselves much sought after. George rendered further services by contributing to the *Proceedings* the obituary of Mike Walsh mentioned above, and (with Thomas R. Adams) that of another loyal bookseller-member, Richard S. Wormser.<sup>3</sup>

On November 28, 1935, George married Ivis J. Jenney, the culmination of a courtship that began in Goodspeed's Book Shop.

3. *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 85 (1976) 52-54.

She had joined the staff almost exactly when he did. He always maintained that hers was the better head for business. Not much later they built their pleasant home in Concord on the Lowell Road, and in 1938 their only child Carol was born. George began a routine of commuting to Boston, usually six days a week, that continued for some forty-five years and involved a non-stop game of contract bridge with three dedicated partners, famous to all who patronized the Ayer branch of the Boston & Maine Railroad (latterly the 'T'). But he was not merely a commuter. He played an active role in the affairs of the town of Concord, seldom, if ever, failing to attend the Town Meeting, supporting the Concord Free Public Library, and taking particular pride in his work on the School Committee. He and Ivis were involved in the affairs of the First Parish, and she was active in the Concord Antiquarian Society and on the board of the Louisa May Alcott Society; both were concerned and conscientious citizens.

Under both Charles and George, Goodspeed's Book Shop boasted an expert, loyal, and highly professional staff. The senior employee was Mike Walsh, who began in 1909 and served for seventy-five years, fifty of them on the Board of Directors. A later recruit was Norman Dodge, also of the Harvard Class of 1925, who proved to be (George's words) 'the most brilliant cataloguer of rare books and autographs that we have had in our time.' For forty years he was author and editor of *The Month at Goodspeed's*, a catalogue-journal that was eagerly awaited and read by a wide audience of collectors, librarians, and dealers. It was typical of the latitude given to Goodspeed's department heads that Dodge had complete control to select the items and to write about them as he saw fit, a liberty that no one found reason to regret. Similar freedom to conduct their affairs, of course with due regard for the rest of the organization, was granted to Gordon Banks of Autographs, Doris Adams of Prints, Jack Farquharson of Genealogy, Arnold Silverman of the Milk Street branch, and other trusted lieutenants. Staff luncheons kept everyone informed of what was going on and gave them a chance to exchange information and meet

distinguished guests; gala parties on the premises, such as the one celebrating the firm's seventy-fifth year, provided an opportunity to mingle with customers and friends on an informal basis. Loyalty was a two-way street: George continued to operate the business as long as he was able, even when it was no longer very profitable, not merely to occupy himself but also in order to protect the jobs of his faithful colleagues.

Goodspeed's Book Shop was never the spot for flamboyant rarities, books and manuscripts in six and seven figures, though in the course of its history it did have two *Tamerlanes* pass through its stock, and paid the top price at the Streeter sale for the *Cambridge Platform*. But in more than 575 catalogues it described and sold at fair prices many important books and manuscripts and many more off its shelves. The Shop was a friendly place for book people to gather, in particular as a prelude to Saturday lunch at the Club of Odd Volumes, nearby at 77 Mt. Vernon Street. The Concord home of George and Ivis was also the scene of much good talk about books and literature, as was George's later apartment at 97 Mt. Vernon Street; both saw many gatherings of old and new friends, most frequently in conjunction with meetings of the Odd Volumes.

In fact, the C.O.V. was one of George's great loves, and he was without question its all-time senior member. Elected in 1936 and a regular attendee until a few weeks before he died, he was surely present at more Wednesday evening meetings and more Saturday lunches than anyone else ever was or is likely to be. He served several terms on the Club's Executive Committee and was elected vice president for 1971-72 and president for 1973-74. He loved to stage dinners and other functions there for his associates in the Shop and his wide circle of friends. Fittingly, his daughter Carol filled the dining room with his admirers for a ninetieth birthday lunch on October 10, 1993, and on May 19, 1997, the reception following his memorial service in King's Chapel was held in the clubhouse. It was in many senses a second home.

As a sociable man, George belonged to sundry other organiza-

tions, local and otherwise: among them the St. Botolph Club and the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, and in New York the Grolier Club and the Century Association, cherished also because membership gave him access to the Garrick Club during his visits to London. Among professional groups he was a member (to mention just a few) of the Bibliographical Society of America and the Bibliographical Society (London), the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America and the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers, and on a more informal basis the Old Book Table, meeting at intervals in New York and particularly valued by him. He has many friends and admirers in the trade, and many more among collectors, librarians, and scholars.

One of his friends, the Reverend Carl Scovel, summed up his character thus at the memorial service: 'Diffident and sometimes difficult. Affable, at times reserved. Genial, occasionally caustic, a trader, appraiser, bargainer, critic, observer, George Goodspeed dealt not just with books, prints, and autographs, but with amateurs and colleagues, innocents and thieves, the curious and collectors, the inquisitive and the acquisitive, in short, with that congregation which finds in books the prize which life awards.' To such characteristics one must add the Yankee traits of courage and indomitability, never more vividly seen than in 1983 when the tragic death of Ivis in a senseless traffic accident brought to a close nearly forty-eight years of a happy marriage. George was disconsolate, as well he might be, but with the passage of time he came back to most of his accustomed activities. He left Concord and took up residence on Mt. Vernon Street, not far from the Shop and his favorite clubs, and remained there, with the exception of a few short illnesses, to the end of his days. He is survived by his daughter Carol Goodspeed Smith, who stood by him through all adversity.

Charles Goodspeed recorded his reminiscences in *Yankee Bookseller* (1937), and George was at length persuaded to gather his own in *The Bookseller's Apprentice* (1996). These, with the many distinguished catalogues issued by the Shop, and the long run of *The Month at Goodspeed's*, set forth the remarkable history of the

firm. Total integrity was his watchword. George may at one time have considered himself to be an apprentice (and who better to apprentice himself to than Charles Goodspeed), but as usual he was shy about giving himself sufficient credit. He was a leader in an extraordinary generation of antiquarian booksellers—in truth, a master of the profession.

W. H. Bond

## AUGUSTUS GEORGE BULLOCK II

George Bullock represented the best tradition of service to the American Antiquarian Society by local supporters from his election in 1952 until his death in Needham, Massachusetts, on August 22, 1997. He came to this service naturally. A casual count of his relatives who were also members of AAS include two cousins, three uncles, a pair of grandfathers, and two great-grandfathers. Unwilling to coast on the strength of these family predecessors, he secured his own place in the annals of the Society, serving two terms on the Council, acting as treasurer for eleven years, offering his expertise on the finance committee for many years including a stint as chairman, and missing only one annual meeting in a thirty-year stretch.

His roots were in Massachusetts. (One of those AAS great-grandfathers was Governor Alexander H. Bullock.) Born in Worcester on February 10, 1909, the son of Rockwood Hoar Bullock and Elizabeth (Dewey) Bullock, he graduated from St. Mark's School in 1927 and Harvard in 1931. During World War II George served in the Air Force as a major in the European Theatre. He joined State Mutual Life Assurance Co. (now Allmerica Financial) and was its treasurer and chief securities officer during his forty-two years of service. His financial skills were utilized in other capacities, including treasurer and director of the Norwich & Worcester Railroad, director and trust committee member of Mechanics Bank, trustee and finance commit-

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