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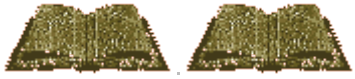

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Editor's recommendation. This book is recommended by the editor.	**AN IRREGULAR LOOK AT THE MASTER DETECTIVE**

The Pipe Dream Continues: An Irregular Look at Sherlock Holmes in Minnesota *(1998)* Video Cassette, running time 58 minutes 30 seconds, Written and Directed by Rolf J. Canton; Producer: The Salamander Co. Inc.,; Composer: Paul Eide; Editor & Videographer: Gary Ludwitzke
Galde Press Inc., PO Box 460, Lakeville, MN 55044. Price: $ 34.95



Sherlock Holmes is undoubtedly one of the most discussed fictional characters. Since he first made his appearance way back in *A Study in Scarlet* in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887, lot has been talked, written and filmed about him. He is one of those few fictional characters on whom more has been written by others than the original author himself. Several journals completely devoted to him are published regularly, one of the best known being The Baker Street Journal, which was founded by Edgar W. Smith, way back in 1946, and is being published regularly since then.

Even his residence - 221b Baker Street - is a legendary address now. Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson lived in this Victorian lodging house between 1881-1904, according to the stories written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The house was built in 1815 and has become so important now, that it is listed by the Government to protect its architectural and cultural heritage. It is now open as a museum dedicated to the life and times of Sherlock Holmes, and the interior has been faithfully maintained for posterity exactly as described in the published stories. The famous study overlooking Baker Street (which incidentally has been portrayed in numerous films and plays) over the years is located on the 1st floor above a flight of 17 steps. Visitors can sit in Mr. Holmes's armchair by the fireside to pose for photos and enter his bedroom adjoining the study. His possessions are in their usual places: his deerstalker, magnifying glass, calabash pipe, violin, chemistry equipment, notebook, Persian slipper and disguises.

Click on picture to enlarge



Holmes' fans have formed numerous societies around the world, whose main aim is to meet, discuss and preserve the Sherlockian tradition. The earliest to form was *Baker Street Irregulars of New York* (BSI), which was founded in 1934 by Christopher Morley, who is widely regarded as one of the greatest of all Sherlockians. This society remains the most prestigious of the societies devoted to the study and appreciation of Sherlock Holmes.

The name of the society is an interesting take-off from a fictional bunch of street urchins by the same name, who used to help Sherlock Holmes in his various adventures. Holmes used to pay them a shilling a day with a guinea bonus to the one who found the object of their search. They were also paid for expenses. In 1948, some of the Baker Street Irregulars formed a kind of sub-society -a scion- called the *Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota (NEM)*. The video cassette under review is a commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of this society (falling in 1998). The cassette comes along with a companion book *The Moriarty Principle - An Irregular Look at Sherlock Holmes* by Rolf J. Canton (also by Galde Press), which is reviewed in the book section of this journal.

The Cast

Sherlock Holmes: James D. Wallace
Dr. John H. Watson: Terry O'Sullivan
Professor Moriarty: Robert F. Sommer
Irene Adler: Anita O'Sullivan
Mycroft Holmes: Arnold Walker
Inspector Lestrade: Gordon Morris
Mrs. Hudson: Mez Van Oppen
Voice of Arthur Conan Doyle: Rolf J. Canton
Violet: Renee Karen Werbowski
Swiss Hikers: Ellen Sommer,
John Harold Sommer, Rolf J. Canton
Carriage Driver: John Block
Col. Sebastian Moran: Rolf J. Canton
Criminals: Joe Hendren, Rolf J. Canton
Narrator: Rolf J. Canton

How the society came to acquire this curious name is also an interesting story. They wanted a fitting name to link the society to the Lake State. There were several Irish names, but no Norse name. Ted Blegen, one of the co-founders of the society remembered of a character called Sigerson in the Sherlockian Story "The Empty House". He was a Norwegian, and from this, they derived the name "The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota".

The cassette is basically a docu/drama, which shows numerous interviews with various founders, co-founders and other members of the *Norwegian Explorers*. These interviews are interrupted time and again by dramatizations in which a much older Sherlock Holmes and Watson are shown chatting. They are very much older, who are preparing to visit Minneapolis, Minnesota, for the Anniversary Conference. Obviously they are in the current times. You can see the modern era around - there are cars in the background, electric lights in the streets and other similar artifacts, which show that they are in the contemporary times rather than in the Victorian period. Why this obsession with Sherlock Holmes? Rolf J. Canton makes his point at the end of the tape by saying, "Yes, the need for Sherlock Holmes is now greater than ever. Just read the newspapers and you'll agree. A murder here and a robbery there; a vandalism here and a mugging there. Yes, Sherlock Holmes, stay awhile longer with us, will you?"

Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota and Sherlock Holmes Society of London have jointly produced this video, and through this video, they have shown how nostalgic they feel about Sherlock Holmes. They would not let him go away from the world at any cost. It is partly their nostalgia, and partly a keen desire to live with the famous duo forever that manifests itself in showing them alive even in this modern era. Sherlock Holmes however is shown cribbing that people have unnecessarily made him a celebrity. Time and again he tells his friend Watson, that he would rather like to go for retirement in his quiet village in Sussex. In fact at one place he blames Christopher Morley - the founder of *Baker Street Irregulars* - for keeping him alive.

Dr. C. Paul Martin, BSI. President 1987-1989 (From the companion book "The Moriarty Principle" by Rolf J. Canton, Galde Press)



In the beginning of the tape, the narrator announces how real and alive Sherlock Holmes has been, what with so many stage shows, films and radio dramas devoted completely to him. We are shown stills of two of the greatest actors who have played Sherlock Holmes, the American playwright and actor William Hooker Gillette (July 24, 1853 - April 29, 1937), noted for his portrayal of the title role of Sherlock Holmes, and the British screen actor Basil Rathbone who played Sherlock Holmes with Nigel Bruce as Watson. Together they acted in as many as 14 Sherlock Holmes films between 1939 and 1946.

The Three founders of *Norwegian Explorers*, who are interviewed by Dr. C. Paul Martin in this cassette. From left to right: E.W.Ziebarth, E.W. McDiarmid and Bryce Crawford (From the companion book "The Moriarty Principle" by Rolf J. Canton, Galde Press)



This introduction is then interrupted by Sherlock Holmes and Watson shown chatting and then comes the major interview, in which the physician Dr. C. Paul Martin interviews three founders of the *Norwegian Explorers*. They are Errett Weir McDiarmid, professor of Library Science, the burly Bryce Crawford, professor of chemistry and E.W. Ziebarth, professor of journalism at the University of Minnesota. In the foreground are lying several important works related to Sherlock Holmes, ranging from 1887 till 1993. This quartet - which incidentally gives us much useful information about the *Norwegian Explorers* - keeps cropping up repeatedly throughout the playing time of the tape.

The first question of course is about how the society was formed, and the three quite nostalgically relate the formation of society. We discover that the society just grew out of general conversation "over a cup of coffee or possibly a martini or two..". Over the interview, the trio discusses the contribution of several other founders, whose photographs are shown, as their names are spoken. Some important persons who find mention here are Wallace Armstrong, Theodore Blegen and Edgar Smith. Bryce tells us that it was Ted Blegen, to whom the idea of starting a new society came first of all.

Founder Ray Shove (From the companion book "The Moriarty Principle" by Rolf J. Canton, Galde Press)



After a brief intermission, when we are again shown a conversation between Sherlock Holmes and Watson (in which incidentally, Holmes keeps cribbing about people unnecessarily eulogizing him), comes the interview of Ray Shove, another founder of the Norwegian Explorers. He tells us that he was a librarian since the age of 12, and has known Holmes all his life. He can't even remember when he did not know Holmes!

We are taken back to the main quartet, and now it is C. Paul Martin's turn to narrate his experiences. He tells us of a remarkable experience when he was a Chief Resident in Internal Medicine at a hospital in San Hosé affiliated to the Stanford University. He had an attending staff of about 10-15 people, 10 residents, 20 interns and about 20 medical students, and he had the unenviable task of keeping them awake during his bedside lectures. He decided to play Sherlock Holmes. Once a patient was brought to them in an unconscious state, and true to the spirit of Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Martin amazes everyone by announcing that he was a sailor having an overdose of Tuinal (a very strong sedative having a mixture of Seconal Sodium and Amytal Sodium). And then again in a true Sherlockian style he unfolds the mystery of his deduction in a condescending way. He deduced that the person was a sailor by seeing a tattoo of an anchor on his arm. And he deduced Tuinal poisoning by seeing a capsule of Tuinal stuck between the patient toes! This narration evokes exclamations of praise from all the three founders of Norwegian Explorers.

Edith Meiser, BSI (From the companion book "The Moriarty Principle" by Rolf J. Canton, Galde Press)



An interview with Allen Mackler, past president of *Norwegian Explorers* (1995-1997) comes next and then comes a lady, P.j. Doyle, who has also been a past president of *Norwegian Explorers* (1990-91). She is also a member of ASH (Adventurists of Sherlock Holmes). She tells us that 221A is the address of Sherlock Holmes' landlady Mrs. Hudson. She was introduced to Sherlock Holmes at

the age of 10, when she read *The Hound of Baskervilles*. Since then she began to like mysteries so much that she became a teacher and writer of mysteries. She also shows us a very interesting book *Baker Street Dozen*, which is a collection of 12 best tales selected by the master himself, and one more tale added to it by the NEM.

Several important persons are interviewed by P.j. Doyle. One of them is Judge Bill Sturtz of Albert Lea, Minnesota. He tells us that he got a paperback copy of "*The Speckled Band*" for his 11th birthday, and was so engrossed by it, that he had to finish it up under the blankets with a flashlight, because his mother had asked him to switch off the lights and go to sleep! So enamored was he by the persona of Sherlock Holmes that for his next birthday, he demanded for the complete works of Sherlock Holmes - and got it. Rev. Bob Brusic, a Luther seminary, and Pastor, St. Paul, Minnesota tells us that he was interested in knowing why Sherlock Holmes's works are known as canon. There are scriptural canons too, and why should there be a similarity in the names. He surmises that Holmes' methodology to tackle adversaries is quite similar to that adopted by Biblical Scholars and perhaps that is why his works are called "the canon" (I checked up the Oxford Dictionary and came up with this interesting information. The word "canon" is actually used for those books of the Bible which are accepted as genuine by the Church. This term is also used of other sacred books and also of an author's genuine works. We also speak of "Chaucer canon". Perhaps that is why we talk of Sherlock Holmes' genuine 56 stories and 4 novels as "the canon").

He tells us a very interesting story when he went to Switzerland in 1965 for his honeymoon and saw a plaque commemorating Sherlock Holmes near Reichenbach Falls in the village of Meiringen. Reichenbach Falls, incidentally is the place where Sherlock Holmes had his legendary encounter with his adversary Professor Moriarty in *The Final Problem*. He was quite intrigued by this plaque and wanted to know who put this plaque there.

Statue of Sherlock Holmes in Town Square at Meiringen, Switzerland (From the companion book "The Moriarty Principle" by Rolf J. Canton, Galde Press)



The quartet returns again, and we are told by McDiarmid that the idea of putting a plaque there first came to none other than the Nobel Prize winner in Medicine, Dr. Philip Showalter Hench (1896-1965), of Mayo Clinic, USA. He received his Nobel Prize for the year 1950 for his discoveries relating to the hormones of the adrenal cortex, their structure and biological effects. After a lot of discussions and correspondence, the plan was finalized and the plaque was put there on 25 June, 1957.

The famous plaque in honor of Sherlock Holmes, placed at Reichenbach Falls, Switzerland by the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota (From the companion book "The Moriarty Principle" by Rolf J. Canton, Galde Press)



C. Paul Martin tells us that great celebrities like Isaac Asimov were also members of BSI. During an annual dinner of BSI at New York he met Isaac Asimov and other celebrities, such as the Chief Justice of the New York Supreme Court, and several famous physicians from all over the world. Incidentally the annual BSI dinner falls on January 6th each year. According to BSI bye-laws, an annual meeting shall be held on January 6th, at which the canonical toasts shall be drunk; after which the members shall drink at will! The date was however seldom strictly adhered to in the early days of the society. Morley, the founder, felt that the BSI was "too wise to hold stated meetings, which would belie their name and take the fun out of their indoctrinated irregularity".

But this is not all that the tape shows. It shows several characters from "the canon", such as Irene Adler, whom we meet in *A Scandal in Bohemia*. To Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman. We meet the lovely Violet, who informs us that she is lucky enough to find place in as many as three of the stories of the Master - In *The Copper Beeches* as Violet Hunter, in *The Solitary Cyclist* as Violet Smith and in *The Illustrious Client* as Violet de Merville. The tape shows us Professor Moriarty confronting Holmes, it shows Holmes' elder brother Mycroft giving a word or two of advice to his more famous younger brother, and it also shows Inspector Lestrade of the Scotland Yard cribbing over Sherlock Holmes' astounding success. There is much much more in the tape to see, and what I have written is just a sampling.

If you are a die-hard Sherlockian, as I am, then certainly you are going to love this cassette. I am told that this video costs $34.95, but if I had to buy it for double the price, I would buy it any day! It is an interesting addition to my Sherlockiana.

Order *Galde Press Videos* by Clicking here
To go to the review of this video's Companion book, Please the linked page (page007).