



# Mark Twain Circular

Newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America

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Volume 22

April 2008

Number 1

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## The President's Letter

**Lawrence I. Berkove**  
Univ. of Michigan-Dearborn

My two-year term is coming to its end, and this will be my last official letter. At the end of the business meeting at the ALA conference in May, Bruce Michelson will be our new president and Jim Leonard our vice-president / president elect. Both should make excellent officers, and both are especially qualified to handle the electronic complexities that the Mark Twain Circle, like other successful author's organizations, will have to deal with from now on.

I was honored, four years ago, to be nominated for the vice-presidency, and I still feel honored to have served the Circle as an officer. Service: that's what being a president comes down to. There's very little fame or power involved in the job. If I've done a good job, then the whole trick has been to move the organization a bit ahead of where it was when one came on board. My goal as president has been to move the Circle into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and see to it that it is in good shape when I hand it over to Bruce.

The position has become somewhat more demanding. When I became president, the duties and responsibilities were few. We had to prepare two panels for two conferences: MLA in December, and ALA in May, and we had to get out the *Annual*. Our relationship with the ALA has continued to be good, but when the MLA decided to penalize organizations, like ours, for offering two panels, we found it necessary to re-evaluate our relationship with it. Perhaps we will find another venue for our panels. The *Annual* is a major item in our budget and the Executive Board

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## Remembering an Extraordinary Scholar and Public Intellectual: Jim Zwick

**Shelley Fisher Fishkin**  
Stanford University

Jim Zwick, legendary Twain scholar, American Studies scholar, and public intellectual, died peacefully at his home outside of Syracuse, New York, on January 24, 2008, as the result of complications from diabetes. He was 51.

Speaking personally, I have lost one of the most generous friends and colleagues I ever had. American Studies and Twain Studies have lost one of the most insightful, original and important voices of our time.

Jim Zwick's groundbreaking contributions to American Studies and Twain Studies are legion. His 1992 book, *Mark Twain's Weapons of Satire: Anti-Imperialist Writings on the Philippine-American War*, made available in one impressive volume texts that had been largely recondite before, and analyses of Twain's anti-imperialism that had not been salient in Twain criticism before Jim laid them out for us. (It is interesting that his book pre-dated *The Cultures of U.S. Imperialism*, edited by Kaplan and Pease—testimony to Jim's always being ahead of the curve.) That this landmark book has long been out of print has been a constant frustration for Twain scholars around the world.<sup>1</sup>

Jim pioneered in recognizing the ways in which the Internet could be a major boon to scholarship and education, developing the first major Twain-focused site on the web. He was one of the first scholars to bring together e-texts, criticism, and visual images on the web in a manner that made them instantly available to anyone with access to the

(Continued on p. 2)

***Report from the President (cont. from p. 1)***

and especially the editor will have to learn how to negotiate with electronic publication, which is to begin later this year.

We began, two years ago, to partner with related literary organizations to have Twain panels at three events in a year. Ann Ryan arranged to co-sponsor a meeting with the American Humor Association in New Orleans, and last year, Bruce Michelson arranged a summer meeting in Hannibal, to bring its resources and our membership together. Plans are afoot for another Hannibal meeting this summer, and Joe Csicsila and Chad Rohman will be holding an international symposium on *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger* at Elmira College in October. We established the Tom Tenney Award for service to the field, and Bruce Michelson has successfully upgraded and updated the Circle's website.

We achieved 501 (c) (3) status with the IRS last year. That simplifies our tax reporting and makes available to us some benefits relating to donations and mailing. We also, for the first time, received a grant from the Mark Twain Foundation. That helps with our finances for this year, and may make it easier to re-apply for another grant. As for problems, apart from the chronic one of getting the *Annual* out on time, the new Executive Board may wish to seek out another main purpose for the Circle besides sponsoring panels and being the *Annual's* proprietor. Apart from these issues, my main concerns have been to increase membership, and get out of the way of Mark Twain scholars and let them do their work.

One of the saddest memories of my scholarly life occurred a few years ago, at an ALA meeting. I was chatting with a leading scholar of an important author when he surprised me by confiding how tired he was of that author. He said he felt he had hit bottom on the author some years before and since then, each new article that he produced was written without any joy. I asked him why he didn't shift his attention to a new author, and he replied that it was too late in the game for him to gear up for another author; he would just grind out an article or two each year until he retired.

That is most definitely *not* the way I feel about Twain studies. If anything, it keeps opening up new perspectives and new

challenges. Twain scholarship has boomed these past few years, both quantitatively and qualitatively, with many exciting and consequential new insights. Twain is one of the few authors I know of whom I can say that a lifetime of study can result in a complete education. There is God's plenty in Twain studies, and we even may be in the field's Golden Age.

In conclusion, I wish to thank you all for the high privilege of representing you. I have greatly enjoyed the experience, and look forward to seeing the Circle continue to go from strength to strength.

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***Tribute to Jim Zwick (cont. from p.1)***

Internet. He started doing this back in 1994, when few of us could imagine the future that he was already mapping. Jim's sites devoted to *Mark Twain on the Philippines* and *Mark Twain Resources on the World Wide Web* were opened to the public in January 1995. His site on *Anti-imperialism in the United States, 1898-1935*, was opened to the public in March 1995 (one reviewer noted the "astonishingly rich collection of material" the site provided, adding that it included seven full-length novels, countless poems and short stories, over 50 anti-imperialist essays, speeches, and pamphlets from the years 1898 and 1899 alone, etc. "One particularly fascinating section presents a treasure trove of documents related to the African American experience in the anti-imperialist movement. Another collects articles, cartoons, and other sources related to the American pursuit of a canal through either Nicaragua or Panama.... All of these collections are contextualized with short, useful introductory essays by Zwick"<sup>2</sup>). Zwick's *Sentenaryo/Centennial: The Philippine Revolution and Philippine American War* went live in September 1997. From March 1997 through September 2001, he created and ran the *Mark Twain* site at About.com. In February 1999, he consolidated his many writings into the widely-cited BoondocksNet.com, adding material involving the Congo reform movement; the Progressive-Era campaign to end child labor; political cartoons and cartoonists; world's fairs and expositions; and other topics at the intersections of political, social, and cultural history. His sites enriched college syllabi and reading lists at universities around the world. In 2000, he ran Mark Twain's popular posthumous online campaign for the presidency.

Jim closed his web sites in August 2007. His print publications continue to be available, however.

Over the last decade he continued to publish

important work on Twain and imperialism, both on the web, and also in *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1899-1999*, edited by Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis Francia (NYU, 2002), in the Oxford *Historical Guide to Mark Twain* (OUP, 2002), and elsewhere. He broke new ground again in 2006 in his eye-opening book, *Inuit Entertainers in the United States: from the Chicago World's Fair through the Birth of Hollywood* (Infinity 2006), a book which my students have found enormously useful. *Inuit Entertainers* (which includes a number of illustrations) charts the history of Inuit involvement in American mass entertainment from 1892 to 1922. It documents performances at eleven world's fairs and expositions, at dime museums, with Barnum & Bailey's Circus, at Coney Island, and in the film industry throughout the first decade of the Hollywood studios. At the center of the story are two extraordinary women: Esther Eneutseak, who led a group of Labrador Inuit from the Paris World's Fair to Hollywood, and her daughter Columbia, a World's Fair baby born at Chicago in 1893, who wrote and starred in the first Hollywood film with a credited Inuit cast.

Jim continued to come up with illuminating insights in his most recent book, *Confronting Imperialism: Essays on Mark Twain and the Anti-Imperialist League* (Infinity, 2007), a book which analyzes Twain's writings on the Philippine-American War—a war Twain called “a mess, a quagmire”—and explores their continuing relevance today. In his Preface, Jim observes that

The U.S. Military's use of waterboarding began during the Philippine-American War. Euphemistically called the “water cure,” it was said to be a form of torture the U.S. Military “inherited” from the Spanish. They had used it since the Inquisition. In his 1902 essay “A Defense of General Funston,” Mark Twain wrote, “Funston's example has bred many imitators, and many ghastly additions to our history: the torturing of Filipinos by the awful ‘water-cure,’ for instance, to make them confess—what? Truth? Or lies? How can one know which it is they are telling? For under unendurable pain a man confesses anything that is required of him, true or false, and his evidence is worthless.” Mark Twain and other anti-imperialists were protesting the U.S. military's use of waterboarding and other forms of torture one hundred years before their recent use in the “war on terror.” (xii)

A bibliography of his many publications appears at

the end of this piece.

Jim served on the Executive Committee of the Mark Twain Circle of America, the Editorial Advisory Board of American Studies Asia, and the Advisory Board of H-Amstdy, a member list of H-Net Humanities & Social Sciences Online that provides a forum for research and teaching in the field of American Studies. He has also worked as a consultant on documentary films (including Ken Burns' *Mark Twain*) and on educational uses of the Internet.

Jim was a public intellectual of the highest order who was as adept at publishing informative and persuasive opinion pieces in major newspapers as he was at crafting scholarly articles in academic journals in the U.S., Canada, the Philippines, and the U.K. He was admired around the world by scholars indebted to his work. In 2006, the Japanese journal *Mark Twain Studies* dedicated a hundred-page international forum on “The War-Prayer” to Jim, noting that “‘New Perspectives on ‘The War-Prayer’: an International Forum’ honors the achievements of Jim Zwick, whose pioneering work on Twain's anti-imperialist writings and on the anti-imperialist movement in general—both in print and on the web—has played such a crucial, illuminating role.”<sup>3</sup> (The forum on “The War-Prayer” will be reprinted in the “Reprise” section of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, a new online, open-access journal that will begin publication this fall: <http://repositories.cdlib.org/acgcc/jtas/>).

Jim Zwick's scholarship was exemplary—a model of accuracy and empathy that inspired scholars everywhere to mine the archives for the hidden stories that mattered, and to tell those stories in language that was compelling and clear.

But his personal generosity as a scholar was at least as remarkable as the lapidary writing he produced. I'm sure that many of you had occasion to encounter his many special qualities: his willingness to answer questions, point you to relevant readings, provide images, and generally be helpful in any way he could any time he was asked; a passion for social justice that infused everything he did along with a visceral hatred of racism and prejudice; a dedication to mining history for insights that could illuminate the present; a refusal to be distracted by pettiness or jealousy or even ego; a naturally eloquent and compelling writing style that was probably shaped by all that time he spent reading Mark Twain.

The obituary that ran in the *Hartford*

*Courant* noted that Jim had lived in Hong Kong during the 1970s, and that his language skills allowed him to travel extensively in the People's Republic of China in 1979, long before the current openness. Jim later traveled in the Philippines, was active with the organization, The Friends of the Filipino People, and edited that organization's publication, the *Friends of the Filipino People Bulletin*, from 1989 to 1994.

Jim earned a BA from Earlham College in 1981 and an MA in Comparative Politics and World History at Syracuse University, where he subsequently did post-graduate work and taught classes. He also served as Associate Director of the Connecticut Food Bank.

In addition to serving on the Executive Committee of the Mark Twain Circle, Jim participated in Twain Circle conference sessions, such as a panel at the MLA in San Francisco in 1998 on "The Author as Public Intellectual." He attended the 2005 conference sponsored by the Center for Mark Twain Studies at Elmira College (the photo on this page was taken there by Twain scholar Mariko Takashima).

Jim attended Wethersfield High School and the Shanti School in Hartford. He is survived by his father and stepmother, Frank and Lynn Zwick, of Myrtle Beach, SC, his sister Joan Zwick, of Tolland, CT, brothers David, of Old Saybrook, Douglas, of Los Angeles, and their families. His mother, Joan Jenkins Zwick, and sister, Susan Laurie Zwick,

predeceased him. His family has asked that contributions in Jim's memory may be made to Human Rights Watch, 350 5th Avenue, 34th Floor, New York, NY 10118 ([www.hrw.org/donations](http://www.hrw.org/donations)).

#### Notes

1. This past November Jim wrote me that *Mark Twain's Weapons of Satire* would soon be back in print and available at Amazon.com—but he was still waiting for some permissions and anticipated that he probably wouldn't "be able to send the book in to be published until January." "It's funny that I'm already getting impatient with this only a few months after deciding to get it reprinted," he wrote. "The first edition took two years to make it into print. I got the photographic plates for that edition from the Press after they remaindered it. The new edition will be sent to the publisher as a PDF file. Publishing technology sure has changed." I do not know whether Jim was able to finalize the reprinting of the book before his death on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

2. Matthew Karush, review of Jim Zwick's "Anti-Imperialism in the United States," October 2003 <http://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/d/192.html> (accessed 3/15/08).

3. Shelley Fisher Fishkin and Takayuki Tatsumi, eds. "New Perspectives on 'The War-Prayer'—An International Forum." *Mark Twain Studies*. [a publication of the Japan Mark Twain Society] Vol 2 (October 2006), 8.

Gregg Camfield, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, and Jim Zwick at Elmira in 2005. [Photo by Mariko Takashima.]



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## Mark Twain Circle Sessions at ALA San Francisco, CA — May 2008

[All sessions at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco (Embarcadero Center)]

### Session 6-D The International Mark Twain (Pacific F)

Chair: Joseph McCullough, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

1. "Mark Twain in the 1890s: Europe on Only Dollars a Day," Jerome Loving, Texas A&M University
2. "The International Twain and American Nationalist Humor," Judith Y. Lee, Ohio University
3. "Mark Twain as Transnational Animal Welfare Advocate," Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Stanford University

### Session 9-D Mark Twain's Use of History (Pacific F)

Chair: James Leonard, The Citadel

1. "History in the Making: Mark Twain's Anti-Imperialism and the Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands," James E. Caron, University of Hawaii, Manoa
2. "'I am white and I am stronger': The Literary Comedians and American Racism: Mark Twain in Context," David E.E. Sloane, University of New Haven
3. "Mark Twain's Roxy and Frances E. W. Harper's Iola Leroy: A White and Black Writer Confronting Slavery: The Tragic Mulatta and the Plantation Tradition," John Bird, Winthrop University

### Session 10-M Business Meeting: The Mark Twain Circle of America (Pacific G)

**To:** Prof. Kerry Driscoll  
Executive Coordinator, Mark Twain Circle  
Department of English  
Saint Joseph University  
1678 Asylum Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06117

Please enroll me as a member of the **Mark Twain Circle of America** and subscriber to the *Mark Twain Circular* and *The Mark Twain Annual*. I enclose a check for \$25.00 (\$27.00 for a non-U.S. address) made out to "Mark Twain Circle of America."

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**ABOUT THE CIRCLE.** The Mark Twain Circle of America was formed at an organizational meeting held at the 1986 Modern Language Association convention in New York. Although many members are academic specialists, the Circle also includes many non-academic Twain enthusiasts.

**ABOUT THE CIRCULAR.** The *Mark Twain Circular* is the newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America. It is published twice per year (April and November) and is mailed, by the editor, to all members of the Mark Twain Circle. The *Circular* prints news of Mark Twain events and scholarship, directories of members, and current bibliography. Subscribers are distributed among 44 states and 14 foreign countries.

**ABOUT THE ANNUAL.** The Mark Twain Circle also publishes an annual volume titled *The Mark Twain Annual*, edited by John Bird (Winthrop University) and Ann Ryan (Le Moyne College), featuring criticism and pedagogy related to Mark Twain and his works.

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Permit No. 779

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ISSN 1042-5357

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The *Mark Twain Circular* is the newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America.

The *Mark Twain Circular* is published at The Citadel (Charleston, SC). Publication is funded in part through a grant from The Citadel Foundation.

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 *Humanities International Complete*, the *Literary Criticism Register*, *American Literary Scholarship*, and "A Checklist of Scholarship on Southern Literature" (which appears annually in the Spring issue of the *Mississippi Quarterly*).

Thanks to Chris Wharton, Alisa Whittle, and Danielle Saia for their valuable work on this issue of the *Mark Twain Circular*.