The Friends Honor
Elizabeth and Albert Kidd
A Letter to Friends

Dear Friends,

Having finished serving my year as president of the Friends of Fondren Board of Directors, it is a great pleasure for me to hand the gavel to the incoming president, Amy Taylor. This has been a great year for me and to have someone as competent as Amy take over is very satisfying. She is very capable, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the workings of the board and library.

This is a time for me to thank all of you for allowing me to serve as president. As many of you have heard me say, the library is the heart and soul of any university. We are fortunate to have an outstanding one. It is also time for me to thank all of those on this board who have given time, talent and resources this past year. All officers have fulfilled their duties faithfully. Starting with the Homecoming brunch, all event chairs have done yeoman’s work and produced stellar events. The gala is our biggest fund raiser and Cathryn Selman led us to a very productive event that was also a lot of fun. A special thank-you here to Elizabeth and Albert Kidd for their wonderful gift to the library. The “boats” will be enjoyed by many for years. Also, a thank-you to them for allowing us to honor them at the gala. They were a natural!

We began the year with a review of the mission of the Friends of Fondren. This mission states:

The Friends of Fondren Library, founded in 1950, is dedicated to stimulating growth in library resources and facilities for the 21st century. The Friends seek to heighten community and alumni interest in Fondren Library and to support academic programs at Rice University by funding library collections and facilities.

In an effort to continue to fulfill the mission and to remain current with library needs a Long Range Planning Committee was formed. It is hoped that through careful reviewing and thought we will be better able to continue to make significant contributions to Fondren Library.

Thank you to our Librarian, Sara Lowman, for her guidance and to Mary Bixby, our Executive Director for making the president’s job easy. The board has quite a team of leaders for 2009-10. Have fun!

Peggy Barnett
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Livres d’artistes: 1918 to 2000:
a Very Special Collection

by Jet Marie Prendeville
Art/Architecture Librarian

In July 2003 the faculty of the art and art history department separated to form the visual arts and art history departments. Karin Broker, the first chair of the visual arts department, applied for special library funding to initiate a collection of livres d’artistes in 2004. The visual arts faculty expressed support to continue using a substantial portion of the library’s new allocation in future years for visual arts to acquire livres d’artistes. With advice from Devin Borden of Devin Borden Hiram Butler Gallery, faculty members and the art/architecture librarian formulated a collection development philosophy to guide acquisition efforts. The original premise was to collect livres d’artistes by prominent post-World War II American artists. These were to be collaborative works with significant literary authors, preferably in bound book form rather than a portfolio. The purpose of the collection was, and remains, to expose visual arts students to original artwork by major artists without the constraints typical of a museum piece. This exposure is intended not only to offer an intimate connection to important artists, but also as inspiration to student artists early in their careers. Active collecting of livres d’artistes began during winter 2005.

Pablo Picasso from Le Chef d’oeuvre inconnu.
A livre d’artiste is a limited edition, handmade book combining original prints with the artist often supervising the production of the book and collaborating with the author of the text. The livres d’artistes acquired by Fondren Library are distinct from another tradition, widely known as artists’ books, which has been developing as a genre since the early decades of the 20th century. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, these artists’ books were designed, illustrated and produced using inexpensive photomechanical printing for large editions. The objective was to make the books accessible to a wider audience and to broaden exposure to the artist’s work. By the 1980s, artists’ books had become the primary medium for many artists. Some are produced in limited editions, others are unique items. Because many of these books are not constrained by the normal limits of a bound book, often assuming sculptural qualities, book art is perhaps a more appropriate term to use in describing these artists’ books. The historical and critical literature discussing what constitutes an artist’s book, book art or book work is not extensive, perhaps because the broad spectrum of artists’ books makes defining the genre almost impossible.

Locating livres d’artistes is challenging because they are limited editions, as few as 40 copies or only as large as a few hundred. Many were sold by subscription to financial supporters of the collaborative work. Among the first books considered were “Emblemata” by James Turrell and Balzac’s “Le chef-d’oeuvre inconnu” with thirteen original etchings by Pablo Picasso could not be ignored. By purchasing the Picasso work, the collection development policy had been modified to include examples of prominent publishers and artists of the French livres d’artistes tradition, not solely American works. Decisions to purchase expensive livres d’artistes are based on the significance of the artist and author, the publisher and quality of production, and how the book enhances the collection.

Artists have been intimately involved in the creation of illustrations for literature of cultural and religious importance from late antiquity to the present. One has only to think of the “Ambrosian Iliad: (c. 500), the “Vienna Genesis,” a Greek illuminated manuscript of the 6th century, the “Book of Kells” (late 8th century), “Tres riches heures du duc de Berry” (1411–16), and other well-known illuminated manuscripts from the Medieval and early Renaissance periods. With the invention of printing, illustration of literary, religious and scientific works flourished. The phenomenon art historians describe as livres d’artistes began.
around 1900 in Paris with the efforts of Ambroise Vollard and Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, both art dealers who became publishers of literary works illustrated by the most important contemporary artists of the early 20th century. Gallery owners became publishers, commissioners and partners with artists who created original prints, perhaps a medium for which they were not otherwise known. Picasso, Bonnard and Rodin were among the artists collaborating with Vollard. Kahnweiler published livres d’artistes over a 50-year period with artists such as Picasso, Derain, Vlaminck and Leger. Other important publishers of livres d’artistes were Deplanche and Teriade. After World War II, the French tradition of livres d’artistes was embraced by American artists who collaborated with several significant printers and publishers like Universal Limited Art Editions, Tyler Graphics and Arion Press to produce exceptionally fine works of art and literature.

Houston is fortunate to have two major works by James Turrell: “Light Inside,” an ever-changing muted color light installation in the tunnel connecting the Law and Beck buildings of the Museum of Fine Arts, and the entrancing “Skyspace” of the Live Oak Friends Meetinghouse. In January 2009, Rice University announced that James Turrell was commissioned to design an open-air installation piece for the campus. The work will be the gift of alumna Suzanne Deal Booth, who worked with Turrell as a part-time assistant in 1980. Because much of Turrell’s work has been large-scale installations, even architecture, which explores light creating space, a livre d’artiste does not seem to be a likely medium for him. However, according to the colophon in “Emblemata,” Turrell was inspired by a book written in Latin in 1636 by Gulielmus Hesius with 116 woodcuts by Jan Christoffel Jeghers after designs by Erasmus Quellinus. All of the images in Turrell’s book are photogravures or aquatints printed from copper plates. By printing images of the original 17th century woodcuts in sequence with his own prints, Turrell acknowledges his admiration for Quellinus’s depictions of the properties of light. If most of
Nancy Dine and Andrew Hoyem, director of Arion Press, gathered modern poems by outstanding literary authors that specifically mentioned the flowers Dine had chosen for his printmaking. Twelve poets were commissioned to write poems for the book, including Robert Pinsky, Robert Creeley, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Robert Graves and E. E. Cummings. In their book "Jim Dine Prints 1977–1985," authors Ellen D'Oench and Jean Feinberg describe Dine's engraving techniques as encompassing the use of "sandpaper, needles, nails, wire brush on an electric drill, a rotary sander, the electric German mezzotints and aquatints as direct studies for 24 of the 29 drypoint engravings he created for his livre d'artiste published by Arion Press in 1984. Thornton's "Temple of Flora" was revolutionary for its time as his meticulously illustrated flowers, sometimes coupled with birds or insects, were placed in the foreground of landscape compositions. Besides botanical essays, Thornton's book was filled with poetry and philosophical commentary. Arion Press published Dine's "Temple of Flora" on the same scale as its predecessor — 14 inches by 20.5 inches. New botanical essays were written by Glenn Todd, while Dine's wife Nancy Dine and Andrew Hoyem, director of Arion Press, gathered modern poems by outstanding literary authors that specifically mentioned the flowers Dine had chosen for his printmaking. Twelve poets were commissioned to write poems for the book, including Robert Pinsky, Robert Creeley, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Robert Graves and E. E. Cummings. In their book "Jim Dine Prints 1977–1985," authors Ellen D'Oench and Jean Feinberg describe Dine's engraving techniques as encompassing the use of "sandpaper, needles, nails, wire brush on an electric drill, a rotary sander, the electric German..."
The Flyleaf 8

vibrating needle, and the Dremel with its assortment of bits, without a drop of acid." The richness of texture, dense blacks, grays, high whites of the prints are astonishing. It is art, the process of creative printmaking, which is paramount in these images, not botanical accuracy. Exquisite monochromatic engravings of flowers coupled with beautiful poetry define this superb livre d’artiste. As if the prints and poetry required a special introduction, Jim Dine created a bas-relief bronze sculpture depicting classical arch-like trellis for the clamshell box housing the book.

The book in the collection that seems to be the epitome of collaboration between poet, artist and the fine press printmaker, is Robert Motherwell’s “El Negro.” As one of the most important American artists of the post-World War II era, Motherwell is probably principally known by the public for his large abstract paintings. He was also a superb graphic artist whose insistence on perfection in the print process led him to work with one of the most renowned master printers of the 20th century, Kenneth Tyler of Tyler Graphics. Spanish poet Rafael Alberti wrote “El Negro Motherwell” specifically for the occasion of the Barcelona retrospective exhibition of Motherwell’s paintings in 1980. Alberti’s poem was inspired by Motherwell’s series of paintings “Elegies to the Spanish Republic.” Deeply moved by Alberti’s unexpected reading of his poem at the opening of the exhibit, Motherwell decided to undertake his second triple fold-out size. The abstract saturated black and white lithographs with color used sparingly are poignantly set against Alberti’s lyrics which appear in the book in Spanish and in English translation. If Motherwell’s art is powerful, so too is the poetry that inspired each lithograph. To contemplate both word and graphic expression is to understand this extraordinary livre d’artiste as a lament over the tragedy of the Spanish Civil War, a theme which provided the allegorical content for Motherwell’s series of “Elegy” paintings for well over 30 years.

If “El Negro” represents Abstract Expressionism, the collection also offers an example of a livre d’artiste by the quintessential Pop artist, Robert Indiana. “Numbers” boasts the most magnificent rendition of color in any of the livres d’artistes in Fondren’s collection. With poetry by Robert Creeley and ten saturated color silkscreen prints, “Numbers” clearly has been a favorite of the visual arts classes. Slender but large in format, the book presents ten prints measuring 25 inches by 19 ½ inches. The large-format vibrantly colored silkscreens that are iconic images of the 1960s seem to overwhelm Creely’s poems, which are placed

Joan Miró from Parler seul.
working with Arion Press, Puryear proposed creating art for a fine printing of “Cane.” “Cane” was important to Puryear who first read the book when he was teaching at Fisk University in Nashville as an assistant professor of art from 1971 to 1973. Like Toomer, he grew up in Washington, D.C. During his years at Fisk, Puryear traveled widely through the South and found it was not much different from the South experienced by Toomer.

A sculptor, Puryear worked principally with wood, and in his hands the implements of woodcut printmaking produced exquisite linear evocations of the essences of the principal characters of “Cane.” Each of the 10 woodcuts is abstract, such as an abstraction of a woman’s personality created by crisp, flowing white lines in dense volumes of black against cream-colored delicate hand-made Japanese Kitakata paper. In a prospectus announcing the publication of the limited edition of “Cane,” Puryear describes his woodcuts, explaining, “My respect for Toomer’s work required that I be very careful about the relationship between the images and his narrative. Because the book is so poetic, I did not want to try to depict its events in any way. Early on I decided to make images inspired by the female characters as a way to organize the work, given the complex nature of this book. The women are such strong, pivotal characters. In retrospect, I see I was making portraits of these women, but not likenesses. They are abstract, with some reality flowing through. I wanted to maintain subtlety in the balance between what is suggested and what is not.”

If Jean Toomer’s prose is as powerful and rich as Puryear’s...
pressed them. The inspirational impact on these students has been significant.

Early in our efforts to build a modest collection, Karin Broker inquired if the library would consider purchasing an outstanding student livre d’artiste for the collection. In response to this inquiry, a protocol was drafted by which a student work could be nominated by visual arts faculty for consideration. A committee consisting of the art/architecture librarian, a representative from the museum or gallery community, and three members of the visual arts faculty would evaluate the portfolio for purchase by the library. In 2006, an exceptional work by Thomas Hardin entitled “Via Crucis” was nominated by Karin Broker. By unanimous approval, the committee authorized the purchase of “Via Crucis.” This work consists of 14 intaglio prints on 19 inches by 20 inches linen panels with delicate embroidery that subtly punctuates the monochromatic prints. Hardin incorporated the colophon on the inside back panel of the silk-covered clamshell box, which he handmade under the direction of Carolyn Chadwyck, guest instructor.

Thomas Hardin’s “Via Crucis: A Meditation on the Way of the Cross in a Set of Fourteen Stations” is not a true livre d’artiste; acts with historical characters in 1612. The creative genius has gone somewhat mad in his efforts to paint the masterpiece of all time, “La Belle Noiseuse.” When Poussin finally persuades the elderly Frenhofer to show him the painting, Poussin admits he cannot see a portrait, but describes an abstract painting in language familiar to 20th readers. Ashton believes that Picasso was most affected by Frenhofer’s total obsession with the painting to the extent that it became real to him — as real as his beloved mistress. In his etchings, Picasso explores ideas of artistic imagination, the model in relation to the artist, to creative process, and to the image being created. The artist and his model would remain a dominant theme throughout Picasso’s long and prolific career.

Every semester since the library began collecting livres d’artistes, the visual arts professors have brought their students to the Woodson Research Center to see them. Printmaking techniques and processes, principles of design, bookmaking, and art history are all discussed. Professors often point out a specific technique like spit-bite and encourage a particular student to use it in his or her art. At the end of his presentation, one professor always asks students to choose one book and explain why it impressed them. The inspirational impact on these students has been significant. Modest in size, but encompassing beautiful and important livres d’artistes, the collection offers inspiration not only for visual arts students, but also primary source material for art historians and literature scholars.
Choosing which livres d’artistes to discuss in this article was at once easy and difficult — difficult because wonderful books were left only to be listed in a bibliography which is available in the Woodson Research Center. Modest in size, but encompassing beautiful and important livres d’artistes, the collection offers inspiration not only for visual arts students, but also primary source material for art historians and literature scholars.

Indeed, it was primarily conceived of as an installation piece to be donated to St. Paul’s Methodist Church. Hardin made two additional sets — one he retained, and a third set was purchased by Fondren Library. “Via Crucis” was exhibited in Shine, the 43rd Rice Student Exhibition, which took place April 22–May 13, 2006. Suspended from a transparent fishing line in a subtle curving S across the northwest corner of the Rice Gallery, the linen panels created the ambience of a liturgical space requiring the viewer to process along the way of the cross, stopping at each of the fourteen stations to reflect upon the compelling images. Text merges into image. Narrative becomes symbol as linen surface becomes rent garment, cross becomes chalice; the resurrection, transcendent images. Conceptually rich and artistically mature, as a student work “Via Crucis” is a worthy exemplar for other students who might aspire to produce a portfolio significant enough for the library to consider purchasing for its collection.

Martin Puryear from Cane.
Many in the sell-out crowd at the Friends 29th annual gala held on March 28th exclaimed that the library has never looked so glamorous. More than 290 Fondren supporters gathered on a balmy spring night to honor Elizabeth and Albert Kidd ’64 for their many contributions to Rice, most recently their gift of Lino Taglapietra’s nine-piece blown glass installation, “Endeavor,” which was installed last October to hang delicately from the center ceiling of the library’s ground floor. Draped in shimmering cloths of the palest blue, orange and yellow, the 30 dinner tables arranged below the already-iconic glass “boats” echoed the brilliant colors above and the entire room seemed to sparkle.

As in past years, guests enjoyed cocktails and hors d’oeuvres in the south reading room while bidding on silent auction items ranging from a hand-pieced quilt to original china from the first eight residential colleges to a genuine Fondren wooden card catalog. The ever-popular “special occasions” offered to larger groups of bidders included dinner at the Wiess President’s House after a private tour of the Terra Cotta Warrior exhibit at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, a reception featuring Professor Douglas Brinkley discussing President Obama’s first 100 days and dinner with Professor John Boles speaking on Thomas Jefferson in France.

Rice President David Leebron welcomed guests, and former trustee Raymond Brochstein presented the tribute to Elizabeth and Albert. In keeping with the Italian theme of the evening, guests dined on osso buco, enjoyed tiramisu for dessert and then had the opportunity to join in the spirited live auction bidding for a one-week stay in a magnificent villa in Italy, near Perugia. Buona notte!!

Elizabeth and Albert Kidd with family
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Elizabeth and Albert Kidd have been intertwined with Rice University, directly and indirectly, for decades. Albert's ties to Rice began with an uncle, who earned a B.A. in 1935. Albert then matriculated to Rice in 1960 and graduated with a B.A. in 1964 and a B.S. in 1965, both in mechanical engineering. Elizabeth, a University of Texas alumna, also holds Rice bragging rights, as her brother-in-law, nephew and niece are all Rice graduates. Her uncle, the distinguished scholar Dr. David Minter, is the Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie Professor Emeritus of English at Rice.

Following graduation, Albert began what was to become a distinguished executive career with Exxon and moved with his family to several locations, including New Orleans, Los Angeles, New Jersey and London. During this time, Elizabeth earned an M.A. in international affairs from Drew University and was a Ph.D. candidate at Rutgers. The family's geographic and intellectual breadth offered their three sons, Andrew, Robert and Addison, many youthful adventures, as well as a foundation for establishing independent and vibrant adult lives.

Albert has served on the Rice University Board of Trustees as alumni governor, term trustee and trustee emeritus, and he continues to be a member of the Buildings and Grounds Committee. He also has worked with the Alumni Trustee Nominations Committee, Alumni College, the Fund Council, the Fondren Library Planning Committee, the Computational Engineering Steering Committee and his class reunion committee, which he served as chairman from 1979–81. He is credited with founding the Alumni Institute, a lecture series that began in the early 1970s and spanned
approximately 20 years. In 2004, Albert received the Association of Rice Alumni’s Meritorious Service Award for his generous and significant voluntary support to the university. He currently serves on the Susanne M. Glasscock School of Continuing Studies advisory board, the Rice Historical Society board and the Lynn Lowery Arboretum advisory board. Albert and Elizabeth also take special pride in their roles as two of the co-owners of Houston’s Brazos Bookstore.

Elizabeth’s service to the Friends of Fondren Library has been extensive. As a board member from 1993–2002, she chaired the 1997 gala honoring Anne and Charles Duncan ’47, served on numerous other gala committees, and chaired the Distinguished Guest Lecture in 1995 that featured David Halberstam and in 1996 that featured Jonathan Miller. Elizabeth served as president of the Friends of Fondren in 1997–98 and as vice president of publications in 2000. She currently serves on Rice’s art history advisory board.

The Kidds have been Rice Associates since 1989 and have attended countless Rice dinners and events over the years. They have generously supported the university through contributions to the Rice Annual Fund, the Computational Engineering Facility Fund, the Susanne M. Glasscock School of Continuing Studies and Friends of Fondren Library and various scholarships. Because of their steadfast commitment to the university, the third-floor terrace in Anne and Charles Duncan Hall is named in their honor.

The generosity of Elizabeth and Albert became even more evident to Rice and Houston on Oct. 13, 2008, when the university unveiled “Endeavor,” a nine-piece cascading installation by renowned Italian glass artist Lino Tagliapietra that the Kidds commissioned especially for Fondren Library. On the occasion of the dedication, Albert remarked, “It is so fitting to have [Lino’s] work in a university, given his commitment to teaching and mentoring. We hope that this will be the first of many important works of art on campus.”

For all that they have done for Rice University and for Fondren Library, the Friends of Fondren Library is delighted to honor Elizabeth and Albert Kidd.
The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao
by Junot Díaz
(Riverhead Books, 2007)

Reviewed by Susan Alexander

Until recently, about all I knew about the Dominican Republic was that it shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti and produces a lot of professional baseball players. If I ever knew that Columbus landed there in 1492, I’d forgotten. Likewise, I had a vague recollection of a U.S. troop intervention there in 1965 but never learned the reasons behind it.

What changed is that I read “The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,” the 2008 Pulitzer Prize winner for Fiction. Oscar is Oscar de León, who lives with his mother and sister in a Dominican immigrant community in Patterson, N.J. Through Oscar, author Junot Díaz, who teaches writing at MIT, not only educated me about the Dominican Republic, but made me care about it, too.

Like adolescents everywhere, Oscar has trouble finding his niche, but it’s much worse for him. His college roommate, Yunior, who narrates most of the book, explains:

“Sophomore year Oscar found himself weighing in at a whopping 245 (260 when he was depressed, which was often) and it had become clear to everybody, especially his family, that he’d become the neighborhood parigüayo. Had none of the Higher Powers of your typical Dominican male, couldn’t have pulled a girl if his life depended on it. Couldn’t play sports … or dominoes, was beyond uncoordinated, threw a ball like a girl. Had no knack for music or business or dance, no hustle, no rap, no G. And most damning of all: no looks. He wore his semikink hair in a Puerto Rican afro, rocked enormous Section 8 glasses … sported an unappealing trace of mustache on his upper lip and possessed a pair of close-set eyes that made him look somewhat retarded.” (Excerpted from Page 20)

Socially challenged, Oscar takes refuge in the speculative genres of fantasy and science fiction like “Dungeons & Dragons,” Japanese animation, such as “The Watchmen,” “Dr. Who” and “Lord of the Rings.” Yunior complains that Oscar talks like a “Star Trek computer” and writes slogans in Elvish on their dormitory door. Oscar is too colored for the white kids at Rutgers, and too geeky for his fellow Dominicans.

It’s no surprise that girls don’t find him appealing at all, and unfortunately, Oscar is very romantic. As Yunior says, “He had secret loves all over town, the kind of curly-haired, big-bodied girls who wouldn’t have said boo to a loser like...
him, but about whom he could not stop dreaming. His affection — that gravitational mass of love, fear, longing, desire and lust that he directed at any and every girl in the vicinity without regard to looks, age or availability — broke his heart each and every day. Despite the fact that he considered it this huge sputtering force, it was actually most like a ghost because no girl ever really seemed to notice it. Occasionally they might shudder or cross their arms when he walked near, but that was about it. (Excerpted from Page 23)

Oscar’s story is part of a family saga, which includes the stories of his sister, Lola; and mother, Belicia, and their grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. Cabral. The question is whether they suffer from a family curse, what Dominicans call a “fukú,” that started with Dr. Cabral and the “bad thing” he said about the island’s dictator, Rafael Trujillo. Whether there really is a fukú or not, I can’t say, but certainly the Trujillo dictatorship was a curse; his regime was brutal and his control of the island absolute, so that one poor joke could land a man in prison and set in motion a series of calamities for his entire family.

The story of the Dominican Republic under Trujillo haunted me long after I read what happened to Oscar and his family. My Cold War-era childhood taught me that dictatorship was an evil thing, but this novel’s vivid portrait of a society in which everyone was controlled by and complicit with the dictatorship showed me how evil it truly was.

This novel’s greatest delight is its language. Yunior, the narrator, often mixes streetwise English and Spanish. Here is his description of Samaná, a province on the northeastern coast of the Dominican Republic:

“For those capitaleños who never leave the 27 de Febrero or who think Güaley is the Center of the Universe: Samaná es una chulería. One of the authors of the King James Bible traveled the Caribbean, and I often think that it was a place like Samaná that was on his mind when he sat down to pen the Eden chapters. For Eden it was, a blessed meridian where mar and sol and green have forged their union and produced a stubborn people that no amount of highfalutin prose can generalize.” (Excerpted from Page 132)

Spanish is not a foreign language in this novel, set off by italics. The mix of Spanish and English lets you travel in both cultures as the characters do and asks you to understand what you can from context. Ride the wave of Yunior’s speech, and do not resist it by stopping to look up every unfamiliar word in the dictionary. Take it as a novel and not a course for improving your Spanish.

The Pulitzer Prize is awarded “for distinguished fiction by an American author, preferably dealing with American life.” “The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao” enlarged my notion of “American life” to include the Dominican American immigrant experience and gave me an expanded definition of America, to include the island where Columbus first landed.

You know it’s not going to end well for Oscar. The title promises that his life will be brief. But his life is also wondrous, and Díaz keeps you enthralled until the novel’s end.
On Saturday, Nov. 4, 2008, the Friends honored Dorothy Know Howe Houghton with the annual Friends of Fondren Library award. Her accomplishments during her 19 years as a member of the board of directors include serving as secretary, writing many articles for “The Flyleaf” and serving on the gala committee. President Peggy Barnett presided at the brunch, and Harriet Latimer, a long-time friend of Dorothy Knox, presented the award. Many guests asked that Dorothy Knox’s remarks be included in this publication.

Thank you, Peggy and Harriet, for your kind words. When I told my daughter, Rowena, about this event she quipped, “Don’t you think it’s a bit late in life to be a homecoming queen?”

This is a most unexpected honor, and I am deeply appreciative of the board’s choosing to recognize me in this way. I often have said that Rice is my adopted school, because my own school is too far away for me to be involved with it and use it as a resource as much as I would like.

I confess that my attitude about Rice was not always so enthusiastic. Growing up in Houston I thought Rice was a place of drudgery where everyone worked all the time and no one had any fun. So I went to Bryn Mawr College, the smallest of the Seven Sisters, in the suburbs of Philadelphia, which also has the owl as its mascot. There, in an all-female environment, surrounded by snow dusted with black soot, everyone worked all the time, and the only entertainment available was intellectually stimulating: concerts, plays and lectures. The movies at the Bryn Mawr Theatre stayed for at least six weeks. One of my classmates observed that being locked up in an ivory tower was character building. By now my family sitting in the audience is thinking, “So that’s what’s wrong with her!” I must say that one of the unexpected pleasures of serving on the Friends board was the opportunity to serve along with Bob Patten, who had been a child prodigy and thus a very young faculty member in the English department at Bryn Mawr when I was a student there.

When I finally returned to Houston after earning a master’s degree in English literature at UT and marrying Tom Houghton, I became seriously interested in the local history in which I had been immersed since childhood because of my family’s roots here. At that time (the late ‘60s and early ‘70s) the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, now housed in the Julia Ideson Building of the Houston Public Library downtown, was just being started in the basement of Fondren Library. I got to know the archivists here and did a lot of the preliminary research here which ultimately resulted in
Anne and John Ribble, Dorothy Knox Houghton
define modern Houston came into being. Harrisburg and later Houston had always been transportation hubs where goods from the surrounding countryside were transferred from ground transportation to water transportation to be shipped abroad, and vice versa. By 1910, Houston had become a rail hub with the motto, “Houston, Where Seventeen Railroads Meet the Sea.” Union Station and the Houston Chronicle Building on Texas Avenue had just opened. In 1912, Arthur C. Comey, a landscape architect from Cambridge, MA, was hired to submit a developmental plan to the city parks commission. Among his suggestions was a band of parks following the bayous, an idea only recently in the process of being implemented. In 1913, the Houston Symphony Society was founded.
and the first two wings of the Rice Hotel were built. The oil industry was beginning to consolidate in Houston from Beaumont because of our transportation network.

In October 1914, George Hermann died. He was an eccentric bachelor who was probably Houston’s wealthiest citizen. In May of that year, he had given the city 278 acres of land across Main Street from Rice which became the nucleus of Hermann Park. He left his family homesite to the city for an urban park called Hermann Square. This property is directly in front of City Hall and now features a reflecting pool. Also in 1914, Hermann gave the triangular plot of land at Main and Montrose to the Houston Art League which later incorporated as the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The museum’s first building opened there ten years later.

Hermann left the bulk of his estate to be administered by a board of trustees charged with building and maintaining a charity hospital. Hermann Hospital, on the edge of Hermann Park, was the first hospital in what eventually would become the Texas Medical Center.

Finally, while Buffalo Bayou had served as a route for transportation and trade since the early 1820s, it had become too shallow for larger more modern ocean-going ships. It was dredged to a depth of 25 feet and opened on Nov. 10, 1914, as the Houston Ship Channel.

The Rice Institute opened amidst all of this dynamic activity. At that time, and ever since then, the members of the Rice Board of Trustees, many faculty members and graduates have been intimately involved in developing all aspects of Houston. I cannot imagine Houston without Rice, and I am very proud to be a very small part of this institution.

Remarks by Dorothy Knox Howe Houghton
July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008

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