

"It was so complete," she said, "and yet he wasn't finished with it."

It's been a big year for McMahon's work. Last fall, the University of Chicago Press reissued his previously published novels in paperback, cementing his reputation. He never topped the bestseller lists, but his fiction has assembled a devoted cadre of readers and, in some cases, writers. "When I hit a wall," the novelist Sue Miller said, "Tom is one of the people whose prose I turn to."

Such praise is impressive for a scientist who spent every afternoon working with students and every evening in his lab, dining on a candy bar in between. But according to his sister Jean Humez, herself a writer, the orientation toward science and fiction was in his blood: his father was a physical chemist, while his mother was interested in literature. "I think she conveyed to the kids how exciting words were," Humez said. "[Tom] was always interested in creative writing." Even so, she never expected her scientific brother to publish a novel. "I was surprised," she explained. "He played his cards very close to his chest."  
~NATHAN HELLER

## CHAPTER & VERSE

*A correspondence corner for not-so-famous lost words*

Winthrop Drake Thies seeks the legal citation for a British Admiralty case "which supported the necessity of the foreign tribunal having had personal—or at least *in rem*—jurisdiction for a foreign judgment to be respected by asking rhetorically: 'Shall the writs of Antigua bind the whole world?'"

Virginia Wetherbee would like information about the origin of her Southern mother-in-law's expression "snatching [someone] skywest and crooked." A variant is traced to the mid 1800s in Robert Chapman's *New Dictionary of American Slang* (1986).

"shaves the victim's cane" (May-June). Paul Hendrick identified Marc Connelly's O. Henry Award-winning story "Coroner's Inquest," a tale of rivalry between two dwarfs, first published in *Collier's Weekly* (February 1930). Michael

Bell noted that the same idea appears in the song "Did You Do That, Sid?," sung by Jackie Gleason in *Take Me Along*, the 1959 musical comedy by Bob Merrill based on Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!*

"young detectives" (May-June). Charles Shurcliff, who "grew up with *The Secret of Dead Man's Cove*," sends word that the Mackie family detective stories were written in the 1930s by R.J. McGregor.

Correction: We thank Judith Robbins for pointing out our misstating of poet Edwin Arlington Robinson's first name in the May-June issue and hope that someone can provide an attribution for "It's not what you don't know that hurts you, it's what you do know that ain't so!"

Send inquiries and answers to "Chapter and Verse," Harvard Magazine, 7 Ware Street, Cambridge 02138.

## FRIENDS OF HARVARD MAGAZINE

*Students of Art and Lovers of Beauty*

**O**n May 13th, *Harvard Magazine* welcomed loyal and generous donors to the magazine to a private viewing of *To Students of Art and Lovers of Beauty*, highlights from the collection of Grenville L. Winthrop. This extraordinary collection has now returned to the Fogg Art Museum after being exhibited at the National Gallery in London and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

For more information about becoming a member of the Friends of Harvard Magazine group and about making a donation to the magazine, please call Felecia Carter at 617-495-5746.

At left, Carol Austell and Rhett Austell, M.B.A. '50. Above, clockwise from left, John Tudor, M.D. '64, and Dodie Tudor with Sue Fleming, M.Ed. '60, and Donald Fleming '55; Benita Burch and Renato Tagiuri, Ph.D. '51; and Margaret Gunness with Maud Wilcox, A.M. '45.

