



# THE FLYLEAF

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## THE FLYLEAF

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### DON'T GO NEAR THE WATER. PART II

The article which follows contains Mr. O'Keefe's impressions of the Fondren flood of 1966, and the way in which he puts his experience to use after the Corpus Christi hurricane of 1970. The first flood article in the spring issue of the FLYLEAF was written to capture some recollections before they faded away, and also with a practical thought in mind that the experience gained at Rice might some day prove valuable to some other library. That day came sooner than was expected, and the FLYLEAF article was used at Corpus Christi and was commended by Mr. Cunha, the Boston expert, who had also served in the worst library and art gallery disaster of all, the Florence flood.

What Mr. O'Keefe's article does not say is that he was one of the first volunteers to reach the scene in Corpus Christi and that his library know-how and his personal take-charge ability got the rehabilitation under way. Nor does the account tell all that should be told about R. A. Wright's contributions, not the least of which was a cheerfulness promoting good morale. Only those who have been through a trial like one of these floods can know how fatigue builds up and numbs that first feeling of enthusiasm in confronting obstacles. The University

of Corpus Christi is reported to have fed its volunteers in handsome fashion, which no doubt enabled them to carry on through summer heat and humidity and clouds of mosquitoes. Mr. Wright took along seven boxes of penny candy, a panacea for which he is famous, and no one should underestimate the beneficial effect of penny candy in a rugged situation.

H. C.

## A TALE OF TWO WATER-DAMAGED LIBRARIES

Fondren Library, Rice University

I recall the morning of Friday, May 13, 1966 with some embarrassment because I was late for work. For what appeared to be good and compelling reasons (including the rainy weather), I had made arrangements with another Fondren staff member to drive me to the library that morning.

By the time we reached the Fondren, crews composed of staff, students, faculty, and other volunteers were organized and at work in the flooded basement removing books from all the bottom shelves. I joined a crew before I was fully equipped; my wife brought my rubber boots and work clothes as soon as she could. My most vivid impressions of that disaster to this day are of the darkness of the basement and of water-soaked volumes coming apart in signatures as we lifted them out of the water that had already reached a depth of twelve to fifteen inches. The work of retrieving books from the flood continued until all the damaged books were removed and the fire department and our own buildings and grounds crews had pumped the water out of the basement.

The task before us during that weekend and throughout the remainder of not only the academic year but the entire summer that followed, was to dry out the largest number of volumes in the shortest length of time, while fighting mildew in and on books. Others who have written of the flood before me have described well the various steps taken to bring our water-damaged collec-

tions back to the shelves with as little loss as possible.

It was a blessing for us that the flood came near the end of the school year. We were able to spread water-damaged materials out for treatment in all the first floor reading rooms throughout the summer. Never was I more pleased that Rice does not have a summer session. Never have I been more proud of our Fondren staff who stuck with the salvage operation long after all the volunteers had left.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI LIBRARY

Most of my fading memories of flood damage in the Fondren were brought back by a visit to the hurricane-damaged library of the University of Corpus Christi on August 13 and 14 of this year. Hurricane Celia had hit hard both the library building and its collections on August 3-4. R. A. Wright, Fondren Stack Supervisor, and I volunteered to go to the Corpus Christi library and offer the knowledge we had learned the hard way from the Fondren flood.

Power had been restored to the library building only a few hours before we arrived, but it was to be several days before all broken windows could be either replaced or covered over. This college community faced the almost impossible task of cleaning out the entire building and of salvaging thousands of books in various stages of deterioration due to water damage in the three or four weeks before school opened again in September.

Mr. Wright and I were written up in the Corpus Christi and Houston papers as experts on book conservation. It was George Cunha, Conservator of the Library of the Boston Athenaeum, who also came to help, who is the expert. R. A. and I represented a library in the same region which had been through a flood, and we knew not only the work it takes to salvage a library but that a water-damaged library can be salvaged. Mr. Cunha was kind enough to approve the methods we applied both at Rice and at the U.C.C.--especially getting books off the shelves and fanned

open on the floor in the direct flow of air from fans; the interleaving of soggy books with newsprint every two or four pages; spraying the sides, spine, tail, fore edge and end papers of each book with a solution of thymol in methanol. His experience with other water-damaged volumes and his research at the Boston Athanaeum (which has led, in part, to the publication in 1967 of his Conservation of Library Materials) had made him aware of other and related measures that should be employed in such emergencies.

Because of his wide reputation Mr. Cunha will undoubtedly be called on in other emergencies. Two such disasters are sufficient for me. There is nothing quite so depressing as the sight of thousands of water-soaked books that have already begun to show mildew growth, all desperately in need of essentially the same kind of treatment at one and the same time. For this reason I echo Mr. Cunha's call for the development and regional availability of large portable vacuum fumigators in which the whole job of drying out and protecting thousands of wet volumes could be accomplished, while a damaged library building is scrubbed with soap, water and formalin to create a sterile environment that inhibits further mildew growth.

There is increased awareness and concern for a national preservation program for research library materials. The 1969 annual report of the Librarian of Congress refers to the Library's interest in having a Preservation Research Laboratory. There is growing interest in the care, preservation, and restoration of library materials which should work in the in-

terest of libraries that suffer from water damage. You can be certain that Rice and the University of Corpus Christi will follow and encourage these developments.

Richard L. O'Keeffe

## A SPECIAL GIFT FROM LEOPOLD L. MEYER

The Fondren Library has recently recieved a number of books and manuscripts from the personal library of Leopold L. Meyer. All the items are rare, autographed, or represent special editions.

Mr. Meyer has made these gifts in honor or in memory of relatives and friends. Because of the unusual interest of these materials, each item is listed and decribed herewith, below the name of the person whom Mr. Meyer wished to honor.

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tions of specimen pages and a listing  
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YEATS, WILLIAM BUTLER: POEMS  
Published by T. Fisher Unwin, London,  
1895. Autographed twice by the author  
25 copies were printed on Japan paper,  
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