

NO.53
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BENE
LEGERE
NEWSLETTER
OF THE
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The Library Associates

Join more than 6,000 other friends, book lovers, alumni, and faculty who recognize that the influence of a great research library reaches beyond the university it serves to the many communities of which it is a part.

Library Associates receive complimentary copies of the quarterly newsletter *Bene Legere*, as well as invitations to special occasions at the Library. For more information on the Library Associates program, please write or telephone: The Library Development Office, Room 188 Doe Library, University of

Cody's Books

An Historical Berkeley Landmark and Independent Bookstore Begins Archive at the Bancroft Library

Cody's Books, one of the nation's most famous and successful independent bookstores, has entered into an agreement with Bancroft Library to archive its materials, which include tapes of readings, manuscripts, and letters.

With great pleasure the Library has accepted from Cody's owner, Andrew Ross, the first installment of 769 audiocassettes consisting of readings at Cody's Books from 1991-1998 by authors, poets, and other personalities. It is hoped that additions will be made to the archive over the years.

Anthony Bliss, rare book librarian at Bancroft Library, stated: "Cody's Bookstore is an intellectual hub of the Bay Area. Hundreds of key figures have spoken there and the tapes of their talks constitute a real treasure. Bancroft is delighted to be the repository for this archive and looks forward to continuing its collaboration with Cody's. Together, Cody's and Bancroft share a common mission of encouraging reading, scholarship, and intelligent discourse. The Library is extremely grateful to Andy Ross for his farsighted generosity."

Continued Bliss: "Great library collections are built by acquiring manuscript collections through donation, rather than by purchase." While donations of money are essential for Library acquisitions and programs, one cannot underestimate the subtle work by library curators and staff in carefully building relationships with potential donors that result in the acquisition of often much sought-after collections. The acquisition of Cody's archives is a good example of why libraries place importance on receiving donated manuscripts in adding depth to their collections.

In acquiring an archive such as Cody's, the Library opens yet another window into the complex and diverse history of the San Francisco Bay Area and its role in bringing together the literary and political culture. Cody's has played an important part in this respect, and the many authors who have read their works at Cody's over the years, such as Isabel Allende, C.P. Snow, Tom Robbins, and



The first Telegraph Avenue store at 2476, across the street and south of the present store.

California, Berkeley, CA 94720-6000; telephone (510) 642-9377. Or, [check our website](#).

Alice Walker, among many others, are well represented in the donation, and will provide rich material to future researchers and scholars and researchers.



Andy Ross and Salmon Rushdie at Cody's, circa 1977.

"I...have great satisfaction for all the work we did over 21 years...we did not earn much money but it was psychic money...it was a labor of love to own Cody's."

--Pat Cody

In 1977 when Ross purchased Cody's from Fred and Pat Cody, Cody's was located at the present Telegraph Avenue site. Ross not only joined the ranks of independent booksellers for whom he is a passionate and outspoken

supporter, but also stepped into an historic Berkeley site that has weathered Telegraph Avenue's ups and downs during student and police confrontations, over, for example, People's Park, or the Salmon Rushdie incident at Cody's in 1989 (please see box). After acquiring Cody's, Ross added 15,000 square feet to the present store in 1978, and in 1997, opened a second Cody's in the heart of Berkeley's bustling Fourth Street shops.

These two bookstores would have certainly fulfilled the dreams of Fred and Pat Cody when they opened the first Cody's in 1956. Stated Pat Cody in her book, *Cody's Books--The Life and Times of a Berkeley Bookstore, 1956-1977*: "We had no savings...We borrowed \$1,000 from each of three friends and from Fred's parents, and took out a loan of \$1,000 on Fred's life insurance, for a total of \$5,000. By mid-June, Fred had leased a place at 1838 Euclid Avenue on the north side of the University campus. It was small, 16' by 29', on the left street-corner side of a courtyard. Over the door was the marquee for an art film theater inside the courtyard. There was no heat, office, or bathroom space. This first Cody's, where we were to stay for four and a half years of our apprenticeship, is now one corner of a pizzeria."

Today, Cody's continues a tradition of supporting writers whose work might not otherwise be published, distributed, or heard. Stated owner Andy Ross: "Independent booksellers...are the carriers of the values of civility, diversity, and respect for literary individualism, values which are

A pipe bomb was thrown through the front window of Cody's on February 28, 1989 in response to Cody's commitment to sell Salmon Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses*, when other bookstores had removed it from their shelves. Earlier that month, the Iranian government announced a fatwah (death threat) against Rushdie over the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. According to Ross, "Shortly thereafter, America's largest chains including Barnes and Noble, B. Dalton (now owned by Barnes and Noble) and Waldenbooks (now owned by Border's) removed *The Satanic Verses* from their shelves nationwide. Over 1500 bookstores stopped selling *The Satanic Verses*.... Since retail book selling was still relatively heterogeneous, the book continued to be available to American readers primarily because of the willingness of independent stores to sell the books, even in the face of considerable threats surrounding the act. On February 28, 1989, (after) a pipe bomb was thrown into Cody's, the staff and I convened and my staff voted unanimously to continue selling

fundamental to a free and humane society.

The Satanic Verses despite the firebombing incident..."

Or as original owner Fred Cody said:

"I am a bookseller--the owner and operator of a personal bookstore. We are, I'm afraid, members of a fast-vanishing tribe. I agree with those who say that the small personal bookstore is a somewhat picturesque carryover from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Yet there are still people who are so badly adjusted to reality that they insist on either writing books or selling them."



Memorial Day, 1969: National Guardsmen block Telegraph Avenue at the corner of Haste during the People's Park riots. Cody's entrance visible in background. (photograph by Richard Sammons.)



C.P. Snow signing copies of his book in the courtyard of the Euclid Avenue store, 1960.

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