



June, 2012  
Volume 7 Number 2

# TRETTER LETTER

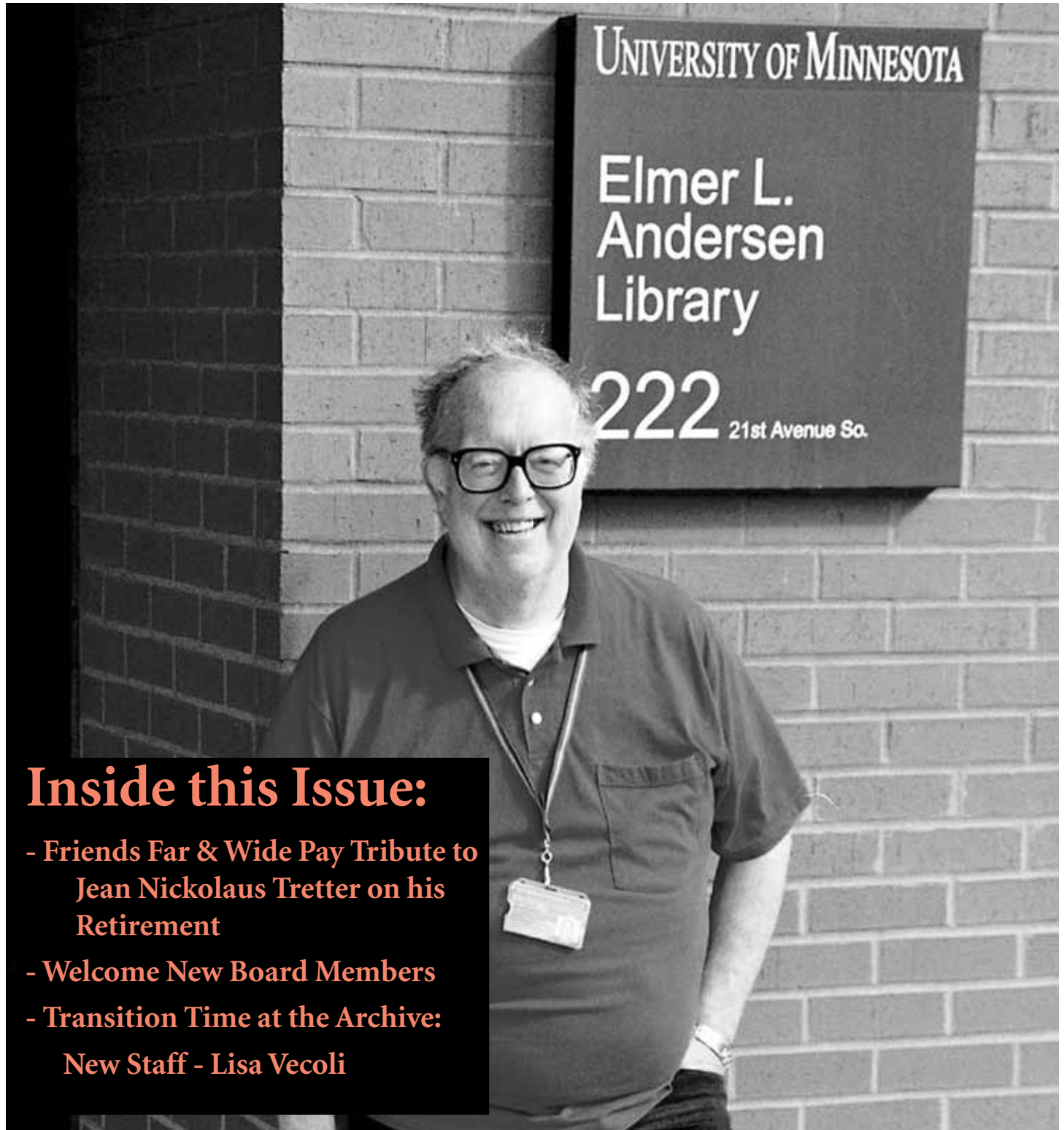
NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE TRETTER COLLECTION



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

LIBRARIES

Archives and Special Collections



## Inside this Issue:

- Friends Far & Wide Pay Tribute to Jean Nikolaus Tretter on his Retirement
- Welcome New Board Members
- Transition Time at the Archive:  
New Staff - Lisa Vecoli

## FROM THE CHAIR

As you can see from this issue of the Tretter Letter, there are a lot of big changes at our home at the University of Minnesota. The most significant, of course, is the retirement of the collection's founder and overseer, Jean Tretter. After starting the collection in his home in the 1970s, the collection was acquired by the University in 2000 to support the new GLBTA program. Under his leadership, the archive holds a number of irreplaceable treasures, and has become one of the largest GLBT archives in the world. His daily presence at Andersen Library will be missed, but we're excited for the new possibilities this next chapter will bring for him.

While a search begins for a permanent replacement, the Tretter Collection is under the exceptionally capable hands of long-time committee-member and former chair Lisa Vecoli.

In December, I was elected as the new chair of the Tretter Collection Advisory Committee after working and volunteering at the archive for over four years as a graduate student in theatre history and instructor in LGBT studies and performance.

The collection itself is keeping as busy as ever, with new acquisitions and a steady stream of community members and scholars using the resources of the archive. The

Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies program has accepted three students into their new graduate program, and we welcome Matthew Antonio Bosch as the new director of the GLBTA Programs Office.

With so many changes and so much growth, it's a comfort to know that the Tretter Collection is as strong as ever. This strength comes from the support of staff, volunteers, and the generous donations from our community.

As we continue to celebrate our past and as we look to the future, please consider volunteering or making a financial contribution - every little bit helps.

We hope you'll visit us at the History Pavilion as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Twin Cities Pride on June 23 & 24 in Loring Park. Follow us on Facebook to stay up-to-date with the latest news and events.

Eric Colleary  
Tretter Advisory Board Chair



Eric Colleary

### You Can Help!

The Tretter Collection relies on the support of organizations and individuals, like you! Please consider making a charitable donation to the Tretter Collection using the enclosed self-addressed envelope as part of your giving plan. Your support will help to preserve GLBT history now and for future generations.

Thank you.

## TRETTER LETTER

NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF  
THE TRETTER COLLECTION

<http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/tretter.phtml>

#### Advisory Committee

##### *Community Representatives*

Eric Colleary, Chair  
Matthew Antonio Bosch  
Jesse Field  
James Garlough  
Greg Gronseth  
Jada Hansen  
Anne Hodson  
Prof. Regina Kunzel  
Shawn Thorson  
Jean-Nickolaus Tretter, Founder  
Phil Wilkie

##### *University Library Representatives*

Kris Kiesling  
Kathy McGill  
Lisa Vecoli, Curatorial Assistant

##### *Sodlis Emeriti, Ex-Officio*

Jim Bones  
Shamey Cramer  
Ralph Hanson  
Christoph Heydemann  
Angela Nichols  
Anne Phibbs  
Adam Robbins  
Linnea Stenson  
Stewart Van Cleve

##### Newsletter Editor/Production

George Hamm

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Tretter Letter June, 2012

## Thanks to the generous support of our donors.....

We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals for their support and give thanks to countless others whose generous spirits have made our work possible. *If we neglected to include your name in the list in this issue, please send us a quick note and we will gladly make sure to include your name in our next issue.*

- Lisa Albrecht - Minneapolis, MN
- Robert K Anderson & John D Schmidt – Saint Louis Park, MN
- Thomas J Blackmar – Minneapolis, MN
- Margaret L Cruikshank – Corea, ME
- T M Fromkin – New York, NY
- Marcia & Leon Greenfield – Minneapolis, MN
- Ms Rosanne E Gronseth – Minneapolis, MN
- Dr Laura J Gurak – Arden Hills, MN
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- Prof Lawrence M Knopp Jr – Seattle, WA
- JoAnn M. Johnson & D. David Lenander – Roseville, MN
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- Jill C. Vecoli – Minneapolis, MN
- Ann C Viitala – Minneapolis, MN
- Dr Phillip A Voight – St. Peter, MN
- Kim W. Waldof – Minneapolis, MN
- Joe A Wenker – Minneapolis, MN
- Philip H Willkie – Minneapolis, MN

## From the field....



What's happening in national & international circles.....

### Special "From the Field:" Transitions at Tretter Collection

While Jean Tretter's retirement leaves a void that is impossible to fill, the work of the collection is never ending. To help provide continuity and maintain the accessibility of the collection, long-



time Tretter Board member Lisa Vecoli has been hired.

Lisa brings several decades of community activism to her new role, in both the non-profit and political arenas. She began her career working in shelters for battered women and helped with some of the early organizing around lesbian battering and anti-homophobia trainings in Minnesota. Lisa worked for elected officials at the City and County

search  
"Tretter Collection"  
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# Welcome to New Tretter Advisory Board Members

## Regina Kunzel

Regina Kunzel is the Paul R. Frenzel Land Grant Chair in Liberal Arts, Professor in the Departments of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies and History, and Chair



of the Department of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies. Her book, *Criminal Intimacy: Sex in Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (University of Chicago Press, 2008) was awarded several prizes, including the Lambda Literary Award for LGBT Studies.

“I feel extraordinarily lucky to have the Tretter Collection here at the University of Minnesota, as an historian of sexuality and of the LGBT/queer past who relies on the collection for my research and scholarship, and as a professor of history and LGBT studies. I am grateful and indebted to

Jean: for his appreciation of the importance of LGBT history and for his keen sense of what’s at stake in its preservation, and for his accessioning energy and savvy.”

## Matthew Antonio Bosch

Matthew Antonio Bosch is the new U of M Director of the GLBTA Programs Office. A Latino hailing from New York, Matthew Antonio immerses himself in Twin Cities GLBTA athletic leagues & community organizations including PFund Foundation, Twin Cities Goodtimes Softball League, & Twin Cities Gay Men’s Chorus. He brings 10+ years in Higher



Education experience spanning Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, & Social Justice with earned

degrees from Cornell University & Harvard University. Matthew Antonio brings energy, excitement, and a fun accent to GLBTA work & the Tretter Board.

“The Tretter Collection possesses incredible resources for our students and community, so any way we can fully publicize the wealth of information for research papers, projects, dissertations, or community gatherings is well worth it! As a people, GLBT folks have been forced to lose a lot of history along the way, and younger GLBT folks have to see us promoting the validity of staying connected to GLBT roots. I have bookcases full of literature that I hope to leave with the Tretter Collection, and I am most excited about the potential to host Book Readings at the Tretter Collection to draw in new folks, while also increasing literature from GLBTQ and same-gender-loving people of color. When family turns us away, we make new families, and the Tretter Collection is like a big brother or big sister, cataloguing our every step in the GLBT movement.”

## Jada Hansen

A Classical Archaeologist by training, Jada Hansen is the Executive Director of the Hennepin History Museum in Minneapolis. Jada further serves the arts and culture community through her work on behalf of the Minnesota Association of Museums where

New Board, continued on page 5

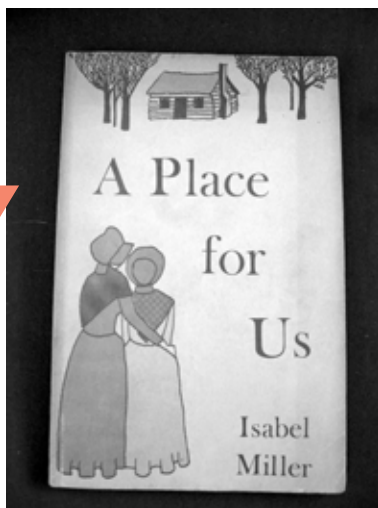
# New Acquisitions

**Trikon/Trikone** – 48 issues of Trikon/Trikone Newsletter, published in California. Issues span from 1986 – 2004. Started as Trikon, the newsletter was founded to address the needs of the Gay population from the countries of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan. The first issue announces that the audience is South Asians both in and outside of South Asia. The name was later changed to Trikone. It remains active today as a non-profit organization.



## “A Place for Us” by Isabel Miller

This title is the original self-published book by author Alma Routsong. Later reprinted with the title “Patience and Sarah,” it was based on the life of Mary Ann Wilson, an American folk artist in the early 19th Century. The reprint was awarded the first Gay Book Award (now the Stonewall Book Award) by the American Librarians Association in 1971. Alma used to sell copies of the book outside New York meetings of the Daughters of Bilitis. Our copy is inscribed “To Neil and Edward, with love from Alma September 1969.”



## Kate Millet Collection

The Tretter Collection was recently presented with 11 signed books by Kate Millett, gifts of the author. Ms. Millett (B.A. 1956) is an alumna of the University of Minnesota and a noted lesbian feminist artist and author. The books include “Sita,” “The Politics of Cruelty” and “Sexual Politics.” We appreciate the generous gift by Kate Millett to the Tretter Collection and the University of Minnesota.



New Board, continued from page 4

she advocates for museums in Minnesota as well as serving in a leadership capacity for the American Association of Museums on a local level. Jada is also a board member for the James Ford Bell Associates at the University of Minnesota, as well as serving



on the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board for the City of Minneapolis. A Minneapolis Civil Rights Commissioner in 2010, Jada has always maintained a commitment to the LGBT community.

“I look forward to helping the Tretter Collection to grow by fostering a spirit of collaboration and partnership. I believe in continuing the preservation of the LGBT story that Jean Tretter has established here. I recently walked the Tretter archives and was struck by the phenomenal documentation of gay culture – from the everyday human experience to the ephemera that goes along with local Pride celebrations. I hope to help in creating a greater awareness of this wonderful collection. “

# Friends Pay Tribute to Founder -

I served briefly on the board of the Tretter Collection; it was an honor. Jean will always be an inspiration to me, and I want him to know how very much I appreciate and admire his enormous contribution to the preservation of history and the promotion of scholarship, not just for GLBT people but for all of us who value knowledge and truth.

## **Joanna O'Connell**

*Associate Professor  
Department of Spanish and  
Portuguese Studies  
University of Minnesota*

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Dear Jean,  
It was a pleasure to meet you years ago at an event organized by the International GL Cultural Association in Berlin.

I have quite a few Czechoslovak materials (and also from neighboring countries such as Poland and Hungary) in my own "archive" at home in my one-room flat which I will someday find a way and means to transport to your archive, unless they find a home in one of the archives nearer by.

Even if I never have the chance to see you in person again, I will never forget you!

I hope your love of this project will keep you alive and well for ages to come and that your collection endures (and continues to grow) forever!

All the best,

**Ms. Jessica Jayne Maertin, M.A.**

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My memories of Jean come from our time together in the Navy. We were in the same year-long Hindi/Urdu class at the Defense Language Institute in Washington, DC. We were both then sent to Hawaii to a unit that was for Emergency Response. (They didn't have a need for Hindi/Urdu linguists any more so they parked us somewhere and used us for miscellaneous jobs that required clearances).

While in HI we were supposed to keep our language skills current so I was taking a beginner Russian class and Jean was taking a beginner Chinese class. Neither of us finished because I was med-evacuated because of a motorcycle accident. Months later I again was with Jean at Fort Meade, MD. He was waiting for a discharge and I was waiting for another school in CA.

You can blame Facebook for letting me get in contact with Jean. Ask him to tell you the story of the events when his cousin and other family visited from Minnesota.

Best wishes to Jean on his retirement. May he always enjoy fair winds and following seas in his future travels.

## **Bob Cain, USN, Retired**

Lieber Jean,

erinnerst Du Dich an unsere e-mails im Jahre 2000? (Remember: one German sentence in every letter!) You were planning for my trip to Minneapolis for Millennium Pride, where you wanted to present our exhibit on

the Magnus Hirschfeld Institute, and our correspondence was very formal then. At one point, when you discussed plans for functions with city officials and local VIPs, including the German Honorary Consul, I became a bit scared: Would I have to dance with the Consul's wife? To my great relief, you answered "[...] I have also removed your dance card from the sign up list." It was only much later that I found out that this was a joke, and that there were never plans for a ball with dance cards.

I remember a happy Millennium summer at the Twin Cities, and enjoyed our trip to the Black Mountains so much. Wish I could return more often than every ten years: I was very impressed to see your collection stored in the library caves on the occasion of the 10th anniversary. And now it is your turn to come to Europe again: Will I meet you in Amsterdam at the ALMS conference in August?

Alle guten Wünsche und herzliche Grüße aus Berlin

**Ralf**

Berlin, May 6, 2012

**Ralf Dose M.A.,**  
*Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft e.V.  
Chodowieckistr. 41, D-10405 Berlin  
[www.magnus-hirschfeld.de](http://www.magnus-hirschfeld.de)*

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I have known & worked with Jean Tretter for the 11 years he worked at the U of M at the Elmer Andersen library while I served as the grand marshal of the 2008 gay pride festival and earlier as the President & then the Executive Director of the

# Jean Nicklaus Tretter on his Retirement

Minnesota civil liberties union. When the MCLU litigated the first same sex marriage case (Baker & McConnell) in the U.S. & the gay pride block party case against the Minneapolis City Council with the help & support of Jean & his wonderful collection of GLBT records, his brain power & his willingness to help were inspiring & vital to MCLU efforts. Thank you, Jean.

**Dr. Matthew "MATT" Stark**

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I'd engaged with Jean-Nickolaus in the important work of the International Lesbian and Gay Cultural Network, in which we both took-up Secretariats (he, History; myself, Literature), generating conferences and events around networking LGBT cultural workers across national borders -- especially with an eye to the many global settings where LGBT culture is most destructively suppressed.

With his particular interest in the product and records of LGBT small presses, we in London drew great encouragement from Jean-Nickolaus' knowledge and understanding of how important it is to preserve these often fleeting embodiments of LGBT heritage.

We send all best wishes to Jean-Nickolaus on his well-earned retirement!

**Ian Stewart**

*ILGCN Secretary General for Literature*  
*Chair, Paradise Press*

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I have had the pleasure of working with Jean-Nickolaus Tretter at the University of Minnesota.

I have been in awe of his collection and have been so proud that we hold this world class collection at the University of Minnesota.

I am aware that this collection has been his baby and has nurturing every single part of this collection and am so appreciative of the legacy that he is leaving behind. I think he should be proud of his accomplishment and know that the University will take good care of his collection in the years ahead.

In working with Jean I was always impressed with the amount of information that he held in his head and the many stories that he would share about different pieces in the collection. I always felt that the library should attach a video camera on him to record this amazing oral history.

I want to share one story about visiting the collection. On one occasion, Nick brought out a large volume of the Marquis de Sade. It was puzzling why he wanted to show me this book. I noticed that it was a bit singed as if it has been burned a bit. He then shared that this was one of the few books that was salvaged from the burning of the Magnus Hirschfeld library (by the Nazis). Chills went up and down my spine and I was left speechless. I quickly understood the importance of preserving GLBT history and protecting it from times that might not be so friendly. We currently stand on the shoulders of brave souls and many of them have left their archives in the Tretter Collection. These stories and histories must never be forgotten.

I wish Jean-Nickolaus the very

best in his retirement -- and know that he will remain active with the collection in body and spirit. We are so grateful for his amazing contribution to the University!

**Eli Coleman, PhD**

*Chair in Sexual Health*  
*Professor and Director*  
*Program in Human Sexuality*  
*Department of Family Medicine and Community Health*  
*University of Minnesota Medical School*

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Jean,

I remember the first time I visited your house and saw the tiny corner that held your bed. I believe it was the only part of your home that wasn't doubling as storage for your collection. As I recall, there were files in your refrigerator and the stove had long ago given up baking anything. Walking through those rooms, I felt as though I had stumbled into Oz, the land where each item held a new story that somehow made the world bigger. I hadn't ever thought of activism as the literal act of reclaiming and saving history before that visit. Intellectually I understood this, but standing in your home and seeing things that made history alive and present, well, it shifted my sense of my own responsibility. I think this is how I ended up at PFund, out of this desire to make sure that the future is always resourced by the past. Thank you for your dreams, Jean, and how you have shared them with all of us. You are truly a gift.

**Susan Raffo,**

*Executive Director,*  
*PFund Foundation*

# Friends Pay Tribute to Founder -

Jean and I went to Russia in 2006 for their first gay pride festival.

When we arrived at the Moscow airport we were put in a lounge with plastic chairs, waited for two hours, “so the papers could be checked”.

I knew after one day why we were held up. On the second evening I noticed two guys in black suits chain smoking, that I saw the first night at another restaurant across the city. I did not tell Jean, as he appeared nervous. The airport delay was to organize our handlers.

When the gay pride demonstration was held outside the Kremlin, near Red Square, a woman from the American Embassy approached us said “Mr. Willkie, the American Embassy is concerned about your security, so we will be with you today”. How did they find us among thousands?

There were perhaps 100 gays and supporters, hundreds of counter demonstrators, skin heads, communists and babushkas throwing eggs at us. Also hundreds of riot police, paddy wagons, and other vehicles to pin people if necessary.

When I got back to the USA my brother Wendell who had worked with the State Department in Russia said “You have a way of bringing people together. You got the KGB and the American Embassy together to keep track of you”.

## **Phil Wilkie**

*Tretter Advisory Board Member*

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I volunteer with the Sherlock Holmes Collections and often had a chance to say hello to Jean as I worked in Special Collections and Rare Books although we didn't know each other very well. One day Jean and one of the student workers were discussing a particular politician. He said somewhat quietly to the student “we should be quiet or she might get upset.” I didn't want this to be an awkward moment and wanted him to know that I wasn't disturbed and actually shared his views. I started my sentence with “Let me set you straight about that...” Without blinking an eye, he replied “It will take more than that to set me straight.” It took about one second to for me to register what he said and then we all burst out laughing. That's the way I will always think of Jean.

## **Julie McKuras**

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In this world, there are “keepers” and “tossers” - people who save everything and those who throw things away. Jean is definitely a keeper. All of us in the GLBT community should be very grateful that this is true, because he has done more to preserve our history than any other Minnesotan. Thank you, Jean!

## **Kathy Robbins**

*Head Librarian  
Quatrefoil Library  
St. Paul, MN*

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What I always remember about Jean is the profound appreciation he expressed for catalogers and the work that we do to help make the collection more accessible. Whenever he gave a talk and he

saw me in the audience, he made a point of acknowledging me and encouraging everyone to “make friends with their catalogers.” It seems every time his praise was more elevated. The last one I remember, which was possibly at a First Fridays event, he declared me as “one of the great catalogers of the world.” Hyperbolic perhaps, but pure Jean. Wishing him the best in his retirement.

## **Christine DeZelar-Tiedman**

*University of Minnesota Libraries*

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I met Jean Tretter in 8th Grade. When Jean was at Ramsey High School he took it upon himself to audition for the role of Teddy Brewster in the school production of the play Arsenic and Old Lace. Teddy Brewster is as mad as his siblings in the play and thinks he is Theodore Roosevelt. Jean at the time with his pugnacious stature and glasses had more than a passing resemblance to Teddy Roosevelt, and the part was his. In the play each time Teddy goes upstairs in a pith helmet and sword he yells “Charge!” and takes the stairs at a run as if he's imitating Roosevelt's famous charge up San Juan Hill. Jean not only took the stairs by storm, he took the audience by storm. To this day I think of Jean charging up those stairs, sword flashing, yelling charge! Not only was it a signature role it was a symbolic role as he's been leading one charge after another throughout his life, and I might add, as brave a hero as Teddy ever was. I've always been proud to be among his friends, and grateful for his enduring accomplishments as an archivist



# Jean Nicklaus Tretter on his Retirement

and as a leader for extending human rights. Thank you, Jean!

## **Roger Arvid Anderson**

*Artist*

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The fact that the Tretter Collection holds 40,000 pieces in its collection and is international in scope is owed to the hard work and efforts of Jean Tretter. Begun at a time when few believed that the LGBT community had a “culture” to be collected and even fewer were collecting LGBT history, Jean’s persistence and perseverance has made this among the largest collections in the United States. I wonder if Jean could have ever imagined that his collection would one day be housed among the Universities of Minnesota’s most prized archival materials?

What Jean has left for the LGBTQ community as he retires is a legacy that we have always been here. As a new advisory board member to the Tretter Collection I recently walked among the many rows of materials and what struck me was how exciting it was to be among ordinary objects and realize that these books, paintings, and films had been created by an LGBT person. While the Tretter collection has successfully documented “gay culture” it has also demonstrated that we are a part of the culture that makes up every one of us.

Jean, thank you for preserving our story at a time when few believed there was a story to be preserved. Because of you the LGBTQ community is empowered to tell its own story and not leave the

annals of history to be recorded through someone else’s lens.

## **Jada Hansen**

*Ex. Dir Hennepin History Museum  
Tretter Board member*

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A modest man with an immodest vision and an intemperate mission, a man with a great heartiness and hospitality, that’s what I experienced when I met Jean in Minneapolis in 2006. At that time he organized with his team the first GLBT ALMS Conference to connect collectors, archives and libraries. This year this conference will be held for the first time in Europe. As a passionate collector and preserver Jean did a lot for the transatlantic alliances. The famous Tretter-Collection at the University of Minnesota preserves a specific part of the world cultural heritage. This archive and library is as unique as their creator. Thanks Jean! I hope we’ll meet again in Berlin.

## **Andreas Pretzel,**

*Historian, Berlin*

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I came out in the early 1970s, and started work at the U of M in 1987. I had worked with LFOC and at Amazon Book Store in the 70s, played in a lesbian softball league and tried my hand at playwriting in a lesbian writers group. I felt--and feel--such pride at being one member of our amazing, creative, contentious and compassionate Minnesota GLBT community. When your collection came to the University, I again felt a surge of pride that the wider community had embraced your materials and made a place for them to be read and used for deeper reflection and

insight about our lives. Thank you for collecting, and for your vision of putting the collection to use at the University for a richer understanding of LGBT history and culture.

## **Susan Hoffman,**

*Interim Archivist  
Charles Babbage Institute*

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When the Tretter Collection moved to the University, Jean asked me to join the Community Advisory Board. After his retirement, I was hired to staff the collection. It is both exciting and terrifying to think about stepping into Jean’s shoes.

Every day I open at least one box and gasp with delight at what is inside. And every day I am grateful to Jean and all the donors for helping preserve the vibrant and diverse history of the GLBT community. The Tretter Collection is an amazing resource that grew out of Jean’s vision and determination.

## **Lisa Vecoli**

*Tretter Collection Advisory Board  
Member and staff*

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Jean,

I can’t tell you how much your counsel and advice meant to me while I served on the Pride board. You have always been an inspiration and your point of view helped bring many heated debates to a conclusion. I wish you all the best in your retirement and hope we have the opportunity to again work together on a project or two in the future.

## **Bill Nienaber**

*TC Pride*

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# Friends Pay Tribute to Founder -

Jean Tretter has been an inspiration since the day I met him. Working with him on the Twin Cities Pride Board, and then with the Board of the Tretter Collection, I was impressed by the knowledge, the good will, and the perseverance that Jean constantly shares. When I received my Everyday Hero award in 2008 he congratulated me... then mentioned that I would just need two decades of work to make good on the honor. I think he was kidding.

Commitment of that level is clearly ingrained in Jean's heart, and plays out in his personal history. From his confrontation with the University over the idea that LGBT history doesn't exist, through his military service, to his personal mission to preserve our community's history, Jean has risen to mighty challenges. As a student of history, as a young gay man, and as a new Minnesotan, I am grateful for the work Jean has set in motion and profoundly grateful to have taken part now, when so much of his mission is bearing fruit. Because of the history that Jean has collected, shared, and legitimized, we can now bear witness to our collective fate and firmly refute the idea that we are a people with no stories to tell.

We owe a debt to Jean that we may never be able to repay. But our gratitude, our service, and our storytelling are some small measure of recompense.

## **Adam Robbins**

*Tretter Board and Outfront MN staff*

In a roundabout way, I owe my being here at Andersen Library

to Jean-Nickolaus Tretter. In the spring of 2006, the museum where I was working in Atlanta hosted the "Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals 1933-1945" exhibition from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. As part of our exhibition programs, I planned an outreach event to the GLBT community in Atlanta to encourage preservation of archival materials by community members.

I envisioned a panel of archivists talking about the range of historical materials available from GLBT organizations and individuals

in Atlanta, which has one of the largest communities in the US. The problem was that the only date available on my museum's events calendar was May 21 -- the Sunday of the first ALMS Conference, held in 2006 at the University of Minnesota. Not a single GLBT archivist would be in town for our event. Some guy named Jean, who oversaw the Tretter Collection in Minneapolis, was organizing a big conference and they just \*had\* to go. I'd have to be my own specialist in community archives.

I enjoyed the experience so much that I began looking for more opportunities to work with marginalized communities who often were excluded from institutional archives. Just a year later, I had a job working in the same building as Jean-Nickolaus Tretter. This past spring, I helped to bring the "Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals" exhibition to Andersen Library, curating a side display with materials from the Tretter Collection and several other campus collections.

Thanks, Jean, for helping me to find my way to Minnesota and for inspiring me in my work with people whose experiences have often been excluded from archives and special collections. I may not have come for the ALMS Conference in 2006, but eventually you got me here to Minneapolis anyway!

## **Haven Hawley**

*Program Director, Immigration History Research Center*

I wish I could say I was smart enough to have thought up the idea of bringing Jean and his collection to the University of Minnesota, but that honor goes to Susan Raffo and Beth Zemsky. Both of those women had a much better sense about the size and importance of Jean's collection: his meticulous work was certainly legendary, as he had boxes and boxes lined up and floor-to-ceiling and wall-to-wall in his apartment, so much so that he would pull out a sleeping bag out at night and sleep on the floor because he just did not have room for a bed. He created a kind of cataloging system for the items, so he could tell you what each item was, where he got it, why it was important. In fact, much of this he also carried in his head, and so he is positively encyclopedic about the collection. And the great part of what I really love about Jean is how unassuming he is-- how quiet he is about the work that he does. He's almost embarrassed sometimes when people praise him for what he's done and how incredibly important it is.

To give you a sense about how

# Jean Nicklaus Tretter on his Retirement

many boxes he had, after I started working at The Schochet Center for GLBT Studies, Jean very casually mentioned to me and a couple other staff from the GLBT Programs Office that there was going to be a fire inspection of his building. We all froze and looked at each other. Jean did not seem concerned about this and he went home because he just wanted to be there when the fire inspector came through the building. In the meantime I made calls over to the University Minnesota Libraries to make sure that on a moment's notice (if we had to) we could move the entire contents of Jean's apartment over to the University-- we were that worried about the size of Jean's collection.

Movers did eventually come and the collection was transported from Jean's modest apartment over to the University of Minnesota Libraries and it was moved into the caverns. I remember at the time we were all working in Klaeber Court, which was over on the east bank. (Klaeber Court is no more-- oh the stories that building could tell!) Klaeber Court had the distinction of having an actual courtyard in the middle of it. I had a couple of Cuban cigars and on the day that the materials were moved over to the libraries Jean and I went out into the courtyard and smoked those Cuban cigars and toasted ourselves with some Coca-Cola and celebrated the arrival of his collection to its new home.

But I think what is all-important to know and understand about Jean is that he did what was right. He had the vision to know that there were materials that someday

we would want to see and read and use and wonder about (and that the "we" would extend far into the future). He knew this, and with a single-minded focus gathered these materials. He did so for years really without any support from anyone. Given an either/or choice, he would rather purchase a rare book by or about GLBT folks than eat. He made national and international connections with other like-minded individuals. He collected without any judgment about the materials collected: if it was about our GLBT community, Jean wanted to have it. The collection owes its depth and breadth to this. And our community owes a huge debt of gratitude to Jean for his dedication and wisdom and perseverance.

**Linnea Stenson,**  
*Associate Vice President and Dean,  
Minneapolis Community and  
Technical College*

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New kudos to Jean:

Jean is a wonderful traveling companion, and it was my privilege to accompany him to the 2007 LGBT ALMS (Archives, Libraries, Museums and Special Collections) conference in New York City. Besides attending conference events together, we made time to wander about Greenwich Village and West Village, visiting the Oscar Wilde bookstore, Christopher Street, and the site of the old Stonewall Inn. Of course, as we meandered, I got to listen to Jean's stories of how LGBT Americans first began to organize and stand up for themselves in huge numbers during the 1970s and 80s. Be sure to ask Jean about how he drove

himself down from Minnesota to Washington, DC for the 1983 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights -- archiving materials and meeting new people all along the way, of course.

Jean's always afraid that he is boring people when he talks about gay life in the US Military, pursuing queer history during his undergraduate years at the U, tending bar at the Noble Roman in St. Paul, or other aspects of his remarkable life. But I am always eager to listen, because it seems to me that Jean always responded to adversity, oppression, and violence with deep conviction and persistence. It's inspiring to think that no matter how many times people told Jean to stay in the closet, to stop collecting, or to give up on the idea of queer history, he just never quits. This lesson is just as important as anything I ever learned from a professor at the U or a book in the libraries.

**Jesse Field, PhD,**  
*University of Minnesota*

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We'll all think of pioneers as rough and ready bearded men and weathered women in homespun pushing ever westward. Well, Jean-Nickolaus Tretter defies that image. He is soft spoken, intelligent, bookish, and dedicated. He's also a great pioneer. Without him Minnesota would be immeasurably poorer in history, and so would we all. His heritage is assured; just as he has assured many that we will have a heritage. I toast you, Jean-Nickolaus and wish you a peaceful and book filled retirement.

**Felice Picano**  
*Author*

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# TRETTER LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA LIBRARIES  
Archives and Special Collections

NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE  
TRETTER COLLECTION

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Special Collections and Rare Books  
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From the Field, continued from page 3  
level for several years before her last position as the Director of Community Relations for the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

Along the way, Lisa worked part time at lesbian/feminist bookstores in Chicago and Minneapolis, triggering her passion of collecting contemporary and pulp lesbian fiction. She has served on the Tretter Advisory Board since its founding and has been an active donor and promoter.

Lisa says her priority is to create a collection summary for the entire collection. "Right now, that summary is Jean's brain. Every time I hear from a researcher, I have to call him and ask him where to look. A collection summary will help me learn what is here and make the collection much more available to researchers on-line."

She is also on the lookout for space to shelve the 3500+ books in

her collection that will eventually be donated to the archive.

The University is delighted to welcome Lisa to her new role. And Jean Tretter says he feels "the collection is in very good hands."

## **Tretter Hosts AAM Reception**

The American Association of Museums held their national conference in Minneapolis in April. And the Tretter Collection hosted the first official reception for members of AAM's LGBTQ Alliance at the Andersen Library.

We welcomed over 30 Alliance members from around the country to the archives and gave them tours most said they would never forget! The AAM conference also provided an opportunity for Alliance members to meet and discuss how to work together on joint projects and exhibitions in the future.

Tribute to Jean Nickolaus Tretter, continued from page 11

Tretter Advisory Board member I met Jean many years ago it seems, and had the privilege of seeing opportunity open up, allowing him to transition from holding down a job to fulfilling a life-long dream. I am honored to have in memory helping Jean move from one apartment to another, bringing with him a host of boxes and other pre-archive materials.

I can't express the level of gratitude and celebration I have for what Jean's work has built for our community. Each of us strives to define a life that creates a legacy and leaves the world something better for our efforts. I believe Jean has done this by creating the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota Libraries.

**George Hamm,**  
*Volunteer Editor, Tretter Letter*