

## Obituaries

### John L. Mish (1909–1983)

John L. Mish, chief of the Oriental and Slavonic divisions of the New York Public Library until his retirement in 1978, died on August 22, 1983.

Before coming to the New York Public Library in 1946, Dr. Mish taught Oriental studies in Warsaw, taught German in Baghdad, and worked as an intelligence officer in Bombay. These experiences provided broad exposure to the Orient and its written traditions, and they provided him with material for stories—Mish was a raconteur par excellence. In addition to European languages, he was conversant in Malay, Chinese, Manchu, and Japanese, he knew Arabic, Sanskrit, and Hindi well, and he was familiar with several other Oriental languages.

Dr. Mish pointed the Oriental Division of the New York Public Library toward the Far East. By the end of World War II, the division had strong Middle East and Indic collections and a much smaller Far Eastern collection. Under his direction, the Oriental Division strengthened its Chinese, Manchu, Japanese, and Korean holdings, and it joined several Public Law 480 programs, which vastly increased vernacular holdings for India and strengthened the Arabic collection. During his tenure, the Oriental Division was reorganized into three sections, greatly improving the division's ability to cope with the increasing flow of materials from the Orient, and area specialists, the backbone of the division's reference expertise, joined the staff.

Dr. Mish held a number of adjunct appointments during his career at the New York Public Library, including professorships at the Asia Institute (1946–1951), Dropsie College (1961–1963), Seton Hall University (1963–1976), Fordham University (1967–1969), and Barnard College (1970–1973). Dr. Mish was a prolific author, and his reputation as a Manchu scholar is international. His most important publications are devoted to questions in early Chinese history and, especially, to texts published in Manchu, the official language of the Chinese Empire until 1911.

John L. Mish spent many productive years at the New York Public Library, building and expanding the collections of the Oriental and Slavonic divisions. He placed his profound knowledge and expertise in the service of the institution and its public. The collections are his living memorial.

DAVID H. STAM  
*New York Public Library*

### Robert Milton Somers (1942–1983)

Early on August 23, 1983, Bob Somers took his own life, thus bringing to a close several years of acute suffering from depression. He also ended a career of great distinction, and an exceptionally rich family life with his wife Miko and their four young daughters.

Bob developed his first interests in Asian studies with John Cady at the University of Ohio. In the mid-1960s, he studied Chinese at Taiwan Normal University and met Miko in Kyoto. He took an M.A. from the East-West Center in Chinese studies, then completed his doctorate at Yale in medieval Chinese history, under the affection-

ate guidance of our mutual teacher, Arthur F. Wright. Bob held a Fulbright in Kyoto, taught briefly in the Oriental Faculty at Cambridge, and in 1976 took up his position in the history department at the University of Missouri. In 1978 he was awarded a Mellon postdoctoral grant for study in anthropology with G. W. Skinner at Stanford.

Bob's contribution to the *Cambridge History of China*, his articles, his completion of Wright's posthumous *The Sui Dynasty*, and, most recently, a thoroughly reedited compilation of the latter's periodical publications reveal his thoughtful, nearly contemplative style of scholarship. He was held in high esteem professionally because of his intensely active style of involvement with his academic colleagues. He consistently chose challenges—the oboe in his early thirties, marathon running, singing, teaching film history—and he brooded for years over Joyce, Yeats, Eliot, and Mann. Overwhelmer of tasks, virtuoso on the telephone, restless nurturer of dozens of people, poet from time to time in praise of home, and a tumultuous and persistent friend, Bob was a stubborn, ingenious, exacting, unforgettable man.

Remembrances may be sent to The Robert Somers Children's Trust, in care of the Department of History, University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo. 65201.

MICHAEL DALBY  
San Francisco

### Philip E. Lilienthal (1914–1984)

Philip E. Lilienthal, retired associate director and editor at the University of California Press, died at his home in San Francisco on January 4, 1984. Sixty-nine years old, he had been sick with cancer for over a year.

Members of the Association of Asian Studies knew Phil as a leading editor and publisher at the University of California Press, with which he was associated from 1954 until 1979. But perhaps more important for Phil were his life-long activities in the field of human rights and civil liberties. He believed that, as a wealthy man, he had a special moral and social responsibility to serve his fellows, and he did so energetically but quietly. While living in Shanghai and working for the Institute of Pacific Relations just prior to World War II, he secretly met and aided representatives of American Jewish organizations eager to help European Jewish refugees. For most of his adult life he worked for the American Civil Liberties Union and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Upon retirement he began volunteer work with prisoners at San Francisco's city and county jails; with a rare moral sensibility, a desire to help and not to judge, he refused any knowledge of what had brought them to prison.

Phil was born in New York City. He graduated with honors from Phillips Exeter Academy in 1932 and with high honors from Harvard College in 1936, where he was elected a member of Phi Beta Kappa. After traveling extensively in Asia, Phil found employment in 1938 with the Institute of Pacific Relations, where, from 1946 to 1953 he served as editor of *Pacific Affairs*; for several years he also served concurrently as editor of *Far Eastern Survey*. Taking leave from the institute during World War II, he served as Chief of the Chinese Division, United States Office of War Information (San Francisco Bureau), where he supervised United States short-wave broadcasts to the Far East and also wrote and edited special features and news broadcasts. With the collaboration of John H. Oakie, Phil wrote *Asia's Captive Colonies* (1942); with William L. Holland, he authored *Meet the Anzacs!* (1944). In 1944 the IPR also published his translation of G. H. Bousquet's *A French View of the Netherlands Indies*.

Phil Lilienthal made the University of California Press into a major publisher of books on Asia. He took particular pleasure in encouraging the translation and