



Sherlock Holmes

C O L L E C T I O N S



"Your merits should be publicly recognized" (STUD)

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Art in the Blood

By Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI

Special Collections and Rare Book Curator Timothy Johnson received an email this spring from Audrius Plioplys, M.D. In the email, Dr. Plioplys wrote



Photo courtesy of Andy Plioplys

Ramute Plioplys

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I received your email address from Mr. Peter Blau. I was wondering if your Sherlock Holmes collection might like to receive a donation of my sister's Sherlock Holmes inspired decorated eggs.

Ramute Plioplys suddenly passed away a year ago. During her life she perfected techniques in Lithuanian decorated eggs (Easter eggs). She also was a fan of Sherlock Holmes and was a member of the South Downers here in Chicago. As part of her decorated eggs, she created a series of Dancing Men eggs.

Her artistic accomplishments can be seen on a website that I have recently set up in her honor: www.ramute-plioplys.com. There you will see her Dancing Men eggs.

From her estate, I received an ample supply of these Sherlock Holmes eggs. If you would like to receive a set of them, and would agree to display them, then I would be glad to donate a set to you.

You can find further information about me on my own website: www.plioplys.com.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Audrius Plioplys MD

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A Sherlockian Egg

Tim didn't take long to respond and advise Dr. Plioplys that these beautifully decorated eggs would be a welcome addition to the Collections.

The website Dr. Plioplys originated about the life and work of his sister is quite informative. A native of Toronto, Canada, Ramute was born in 1953. She contracted polio when she was three years old, which left her with paralyzed legs. In 1964, the Plioplys family moved to Chicago. She graduated from the University of Chicago and moved to Providence, Rhode Island. From there, she relocated to Lithuania for two years where she focused on her interest in the Lithuanian language at the University of Vilnius. Upon her return to Chicago, she taught the language at the Lithuanian Pedagogical Institute and translated several linguistic text books into English. After she passed away, a scholarship fund in her name was established to provide support to a student studying the language.

She brought another skill back to Chicago: her talent utilizing the traditional folk customs and art of Lithuania. While studying there, she

visited museums often and studied with native folk artists. Her art, which incorporated native skills with her own interpretations, was shown at a number of art fairs in the Chicago area and at exhibits at Chicago's Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture <<http://www.balzekasmuseum.org>>. The Museum now hosts a permanent display of her decorated eggs.

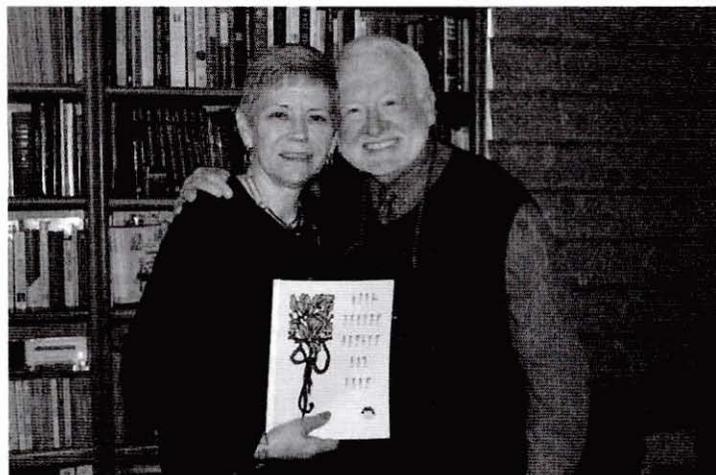
Ramute was a member of the South Downers and the Criterion Bar Association, two Chicago area Sherlockian societies. Her website states:

One of Doyle's stories was entitled "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" in which coded messages were written using dancing figures. Each distinct figure corresponded to a letter of the alphabet. In these decorated eggs, Ramute applied both the alphabetic and the encoded "Dancing Men" expressions. Or, is it possible that Ramute encoded a different message in the "Dancing Men"? Some of the "Dancing Men" patterns were issued in limited edition quantities. These decorated eggs were initialed and numbered by Ramute.

Susan Diamond, ASH, BSI and Allan Devitt, ASH, of Chicago knew Ramute and added that each year she would prepare a booklet with monthly reports for the South Downers' meetings. The covers are a distinctive green, with a message done in the dancing men code. Susan and Allan donated these chronologies to the Collections to add to the recently donated Sherlockian eggs.

"Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms" remarked Sherlock Holmes in "The Greek Interpreter." He might have been talking about the Plioplys family. Dr. Audrius "Andy" Plioplys is an artist as well, and has chosen to combine his artistic skills with his profession. Dr. Plioplys, a neurologist, describes himself as a self-taught artist. His artwork can be viewed on his website, noted in his letter to Tim Johnson.

The Sherlock Holmes Collections is proud to announce the addition of Ramute Plioplys's Dancing Men eggs. We thank Dr. Andy Plioplys for donating them, as well as Susan Diamond and Allan Devitt for donating Ramute Plioplys's chronologies. ♡



Susan Diamond and Allan Devitt, with one of Ramute Plioplys' booklets