

Lunch with.....William “Bill” Bowe (April 6, 2016)

By Eve Moran CD'10

Introductory Note: Bill is a past president of The Cliff Dwellers (2006-07) and a familiar face at the Member's table. A lawyer by profession, he recently retired as Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary at Encyclopaedia Britannica.

How long have you been a “Cliffie?” Since 1997.

Where did you grow up? I was born in Chicago in 1942 and lived in an apartment building on Elm Street on the Near North Side.

What is your favorite childhood memory? Riding my bicycle to Lincoln Park.

What were some of your early interests? I enjoyed playing football, basketball, and baseball during my high school years. Fencing in college.

Why did you pursue the study of law? My father (William) and uncle (Augustine) were law partners in Bowe and Bowe. At the early age of 14, I decided that practicing law would be an interesting way to spend my working life.

Who was a hero in your early career? My uncle, Augustine J. Bowe (1892 -1966) was a man of great integrity and served as my role model. He was president of the Chicago Bar Association (1955 - 1956) and elected chief justice of the Chicago Municipal Court in 1960. Earlier he'd been the first Chairman of the Chicago Human Relations Commission and the first Chairman of the Chicago Architectural Landmarks Commission. He was also a poet. More notably, Augustine and his wife Julia put Harriet Monroe's *Poetry Magazine* on a solid financial footing after her death in 1936. They financed *Poetry* by organizing the Modern Poetry Association in the early 1940s. And they continued to be active in raising money for *Poetry* over several decades before the Lilly gift finally secured its future.

What was a high point in your career? Helping transition Encyclopaedia Britannica from over 200 years of print publishing for the consumer market to multilingual Internet distribution to schools and libraries all over the world.

What is your favorite book? While I'm not sure it's my real favorite, as I've gotten older, I've found myself glancing more and more at one of the Encyclopaedia Britannica volumes in my home office. The spine notes its C to D articles: “Chicago-Death.”

Who is your favorite author? Elmore Leonard

What book are you currently reading? I'm finishing the latest book in The Clifton Chronicles, a series by Jeffrey Archer. I'm not sure I'd have started reading these if I'd known beforehand that this English author had been sent to prison for perjury and manufacturing false evidence in a libel trial.

What is your favorite song/music piece? “Hotel California” by the Eagles

What is your favorite color? Blue

Do you have a favorite artist ? Stanley Freborg - a member of my family (note the bias here) and a lesser abstract expressionist.

What building in the city do you think is most closely identified with Chicago? The Inland Steel Building

What is your favorite “Club” memory? It was the evening of October 24, 2006, and Tim Samuelson, Chicago’s Cultural Historian (Hon’03), spoke at The Cliff Dwellers about Louis Sullivan’s work and the tragedy of losing architectural treasures such as The Stock Exchange. As he was talking, Samuelson could add The Dexter Building (designed by Sullivan and his partner, Dankmar Adler), to this list. Indeed, at about 3 p.m. that very day, a multiple alarm fire broke out and severely damaged this historic structure (built 1887), at 630 South Wabash Avenue. See photo. (At this event, Samuelson also played a recording, made years earlier, of an interview with an early manager of the Club who talked about Sullivan’s life as a Cliff Dweller back in the day).



What are your hobbies/interests? Photography and reading.

What type of Club activities do you most enjoy? Conversation at the Member’s Table

What person (living or dead) would you most like to invite to the Member’s Table? Abraham Lincoln. I’ve always had a strong affinity for Lincoln. I remember, as a schoolboy, memorizing his Hattiesburg Address, ‘Four score and many moons ago, when the Vikings first settled in Newfoundland...’ Quite frankly, I can’t now remember the rest of it. When I matured, I drew even closer to Lincoln. As I’ve told some Cliff Dwellers before, my Rail Splitter guy grew up in Illinois. I grew up in Illinois. He became a lawyer. I became a lawyer. He was tall and thin. I’m, well..uh...a shorter person. He married a girl from Springfield. I married a girl from Springfield. His wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, was a complete nutcase. My wife Cathy is otherwise