

# Figuratively Speaking

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HISTORICAL FIGURES FOUNDATION

## Rise of the Norse Gods?

This fall Mr. Stuart's collection of legendary Norse Gods may make their long-awaited first appearance in the Smith Gallery. What makes the Norse so interesting is that Mr. Stuart gives no monologs about them, albeit for good reason.

In the early 80's, he featured the Norse Figures in a two hour multimedia drama about three famous sagas (tales) of the Gods. A state-of-the-art system involed a small computer, two Carousel projectors sequenced through about 400 slides by Stella Martin, and accompanied by Mr. Stuart's dramatic narration.

Now MVC Curator Ariane Karakalos and HFF Ex. Dir. Leroy Becker are painstakingly restoring the original images and soundtrack. If they are successful, the drama will be presented at the MVC Pavilion this fall. Stay tuned!

*Norse Gods Wotan and Loki.*



## Song of the Open Road



*Historical Figures traveled first class between monologs.*

***G. S. Stuart remembers...***

If it were never again necessary for me to operate a motor vehicle, it would be too soon. Unlike the average American male, my masculinity is not dependent on sitting behind the wheel of an automobile.

Perhaps this is an odd observation for a child born to parents who were both lifelong car owners and devotees of vehicular freedom. My father, at the time he married my mother, was immersed in flying. Airplanes that came out of World War I were the latest toys for young thrill seekers. And like many others, he was also heavily into motor

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## Fact vs. Fiction

**Stuart Critiques Hollywood on August 13 & 14**

In the final part of this series, Mr. Stuart reviews movies about Marie Antoinette, comparing the 1938 epic to the 2008 reprise by Sofia Coppola. In addition, he will review and comment on the 1987 movie, *The Last Emperor* in terms of accepted history of the times.

The presentation is studded with video clips from all three movies and running commentary about the costumes, sets, actors, scripts and more.

**For tickets call MVC at (805) 653-0323 x 7**



*Marie Antoinette meets future Louis XVI, in two films.*

*Pu Yi as movie child and imprisoned emperor, and in real life*

## ... Road *continued from Page 1*

racing (those gigantic vehicles of the late 'teens), and he also went about on motorcycles. I still recall my first ride with him on one of those monsters.

I also recall the spacious elegance of those pre-Depression motor carriages with plush seat coverings, polished nickel plating, window straps, and all. While my father's exploits as a 'pilot' and race car driver soon vanished after my birth (my mother's insistence that he remain alive for the good of his family), he never lost his interest in flight. He went on to become an aeronautical engineer with his teenage chum John Northrup. As for my mother, she continued to drive until she was bedridden in old age.

Both my parents encouraged me to drive and both attempted driving lessons; unfortunately, tempers easily flared with my efforts. They gave up and left me content to be driven around. Of course, this led to embarrassing moments as I entered my late teens; nevertheless, I was always able to find peers who had mastered the wheel at an early age. There was no problem with double dating, for someone else always had a car.

The whole business of my driving was somewhat delayed. Living in New York City and Washington, D.C. did not depend on owning a vehicle. There were never any garages around and besides, there was no place to park. Of course, I had begun driving and had my own vehicle by the time I went away to college, but I was never wedded to any car and only had to keep one when I finally settled down in California.

I have driven ever since, and I am to this moment a good driver. I am also convinced that the Department of Motor Vehicles and car insurance companies have given me all manner of little discounts for not running over people or crashing myself repeatedly. I believe I also receive a discount for being very, very old and not being a menace on the highways!

My antipathy toward driving resulted from my so-called career choice. In 1959, I embarked upon a career as a monologist. A public speaker necessarily has to do some traveling. Along with all the stage equipment and four or five boxes of Historical Figures, I traveled from one side of the country to the other several times. Eventually, most of my gigs were in California, and I found the back roads of this great state fascinating ....perhaps not at the moment I was driving them, but later on.

The peak speaking season for the clubs I worked was late September to late May and, as a result, involved significant winter driving. My sole goal was to get to the next engagement on time and with all the gear intact. I had no time for stopping at national parks or other



*Driving companions*

forms of diversion; I just needed to get to the next town as soon as possible.

For several years, I drove a magnificent hearse that was purchased for its "load space." It required special snow chains for the big wheels and always a protected garage at the destination. I'll never forget the horrors of those winter drives. Gas shortages required carrying five extra five-gallon tanks of gas. (Try not to run into anything...think of the explosion...)

I once had to cross the Columbia River far above The Dalles, with its great rapids. There was no bridge at that time, so my big car was hauled by cables on a tiny raft across the roaring February floods of that river. I can't remember when I was so terrified.

Another time in late winter while I was driving from Chicago to Grand Rapids, Michigan, the motor began to falter as I rounded the bottom of Lake Michigan. My fear of being marooned in the winter wilderness kept me in a state of panic until I limped into a Grand Rapids garage late that evening.

On another occasion I did run out of gas between Seattle and Spokane, somewhere in the middle of nowhere. This was a huge dilemma. I feared to leave the Figures and hitch a ride to the nearest town. I tried to stop a truck for some extra gas, only to be reminded that the truck ran on diesel. Naturally, I had no phone to call the Auto Club, but finally I gave in, hitched a ride to the nearest settlement, filled my gas can, and hired someone to drive me back to the hearse.

These types of experiences happened all the time on long winter trips and were nerve wracking.

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## New Chinese Figure Captures Tzu-Hsi as Young Concubine

Tzu-Hsi began her career as Yehenara when chosen as one of Emperor Hsien Feng's concubines. Starting at the lowest level, she gradually worked her way up to a "grade" where the emperor took notice of her. He impregnated her and she gave birth to (who turned out to be) his only son. Now she was of considerable importance.

When Hsein Feng died (1861) she was part of a coup along with the Empress Tzu-An, the dead emperor's brother Prince Kung and others to seize power in Beijing. Now known as Tzu-Hsi, she and Tzu-An were elevated to being "Co-Dowager Empresses and co-mothers" of the former Yehenara's young son, now the Emperor Tung Chih.

Throughout the next thirty years, she was known as Empress Dowager Tsu Hsi. Her powers in China were much exaggerated by western propagandists, while western nations gradually gained control over China. Tzu Hsi was actually more of a figurehead whom the Chinese recognized as their "real" ruler, whereas the West really determined China's affairs.

The new Figure of Yehenara will debut as part of "All That Glitters," a new exhibit opening August 19 and running until November 17.

- G. S. Stuart



*Exquisite embroidery by Lu Zheng Liang Studio on Yehenara's beautiful robe features a classical, colorful Phoenix*

## ... Road *continued from Page 2*

Furthermore, I knew that all that sitting and the greasy meals at the end of the days would turn most men into lard buckets, but in my case, I was down to 178 pounds.



*The show must go on!*

Just a few seasons of this routine with worry about wrecks, worry about the Figures, worry about being late...all this and more put me off driving forever.

By the end of my thirty years as an itinerant speaker, I was hiring a driver and a rental van. I had several drivers in those final years, all pretty good men. They doubled as assistants in setting up for the show, so this was a big load off my mind and energies.

I always enjoyed the speaking and showing the Figures, but I hated the traveling. As it was, I never saw any of the wonderful sights that our country is so rightfully proud of. It was always eyes on the pavement or what glimpses I could get being driven to the next location. I was probably a backseat driver as well. I'd done so much of it, I knew better. Somehow it never came to blows, and we always got to our destinations in one piece.

Nowadays, I just turn the driving over to whoever is at the wheel. Of course, I do select the drivers with some care. If I never get behind the wheel again, it will be too soon. So far, so good! - G. S. Stuart

## Famous Diamonds to Meet Historical Figures in 2014 Exhibit in MVC Smith Gallery

### Saga of the French Blue Diamond



*The French Blue Diamond  
(69 carats, actual size)*

*Louis XIV bought, cut and mounted the gem in a stick pin. Later Louis XV enshrined it the Golden Fleece. Stolen with French crown jewels. Resurfaced in England and sold to a wealthy American. It remains the largest and purest of blue diamonds.*

In 1653, the French Blue begins a three-centuries long journey from Mughal India, to the court of Louis XIV and Louis XV, to theft of the French crown jewels, to resurfacing in Victorian England, and finally to the United States as the famous Hope Diamond.

This is the short version, and of course we eagerly await Mr. Stuart's monolog on the story of the French Blue and many other famous, historically significant diamonds. Stay tuned for more details!

### Tales of Famous Historical Diamonds

For centuries, tales about historically famous diamonds and their owners have intrigued people of all ages and nationalities. The histories of the world's famous diamonds are replete with grand events, wars, theft, political intrigue and even murder. Countless books, articles, movies and documentaries on the subject have shown that truth about gems can be as interesting to the public as any fiction. Now for the first time, a museum-quality exhibition will tell these fascinating stories about history's famous and infamous characters through whose hands those magnificent gems have passed.

### The Exhibition

New technologies and historical art are being combined to present to the public these famous gems, their owners and the amazing stories. An entertaining and educational museum exhibition will tell these intriguing stories through the work of two leading artists, renowned for exquisite three-dimensional replicas of famous diamonds and their historic owners. Replicas of the historically famous gems will be furnished by Scott Sucher of Museum Diamonds. Mr. Sucher is known worldwide as a leading researcher and replicator of historical diamonds. The portraits of historical characters involved with the diamonds will come from the Historical Figures by George Stuart, who will also develop the stories for presentation as a series of vignettes and monologs.

Watch for the list of famous diamonds and Historical Figures will be published in our next newsletter.

## Video Clips of Russian Monolog hit HFF Website, YouTube

Ever wonder who murdered the mystic Rasputin? How a German princess became Catherine the Great? Or, how Prince Potemkin lost an eye?

If you ever wanted to know more about Mr. Stuart's take on the Romanov Dynasty, you are in luck because these rare performances were videotaped. In his famous Romanov monologs, Mr. Stuart describes the lives and times of Russian rulers from Ivan IV to Josef Stalin.

Now the Foundation has extracted short video excerpts of Mr. Stuart describing each of the 36 Historical Figures in the Russian Collection.

The clips of 2 to 10 minutes each have been uploaded to YouTube and linked to each Figure's website page.



Watch video clips on [www.galleryhistoricalfigures.com](http://www.galleryhistoricalfigures.com) and YouTube

In a few short weeks, clips have been seen more than 1,000 times. A magazine editor in Moscow reported that Mr. Stuart's take on Rasputin was exciting and accurate, especially his murder in St. Petersburg.