

President's Letter

We have exciting news! JASNA will publish excerpts from the diaries of Jane Austen's favorite niece, Fanny Knight, researched and with a commentary by the English Austen scholar, Dierdre LeFaye, as *Persuasions: Occasional Papers, No. 2*. We are extremely pleased to have the opportunity to issue this never-before published material that adds new information to our knowledge of Jane Austen and her relationship with the niece she called "almost another sister." The diary entries are from the years 1804, when Fanny was eleven, to 1817. Ms. LeFaye's research is supplemented by further information from letters Fanny wrote to her ex-governess, Miss Dorothy Chapman, which sometimes expand entries in the diaries and sometimes provide further details. Gene Koppel, professor of English at the University of Arizona and member of JASNA's Publications committee, is serving as editor of *Fanny Knight's Diaries: Jane Austen Through Her Niece's Eyes*. Publication is planned for spring 1986. You can reserve your copy on the order form enclosed with this issue of *Persuasions*.

Another bit of exciting news is that *Persuasions* has received a glowing review from *Choice*, a publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries, part of the American Library Association. In its July-August 1985 issue, *Choice* recommended *Persuasions* for purchase and called it "of extreme interest to libraries."

It is owing entirely to the skill, taste, and artistry of our editor, Joan Austen-Leigh, that *Persuasions* has achieved this recognition. For the past seven years she has given unstintingly of her time, talent, and editorial expertise to produce *Persuasions*. We take this opportunity to thank her on behalf of the society and to congratulate her, not only for her JASNA journal, but also as the winner of the 46th annual Canadian Playwriting Competition in which her play, "Victims," won top prize.

Another type of recognition has come to JASNA. The National Referral Center in the Library of Congress has asked that the society allow the Center to list it as an information resource in the arts and humanities. The Center is a free referral service that directs questioners to organizations that can answer their queries.

With such splendid events occurring, it is easy to understand why *exhilarating* is the word that best describes JASNA's past year. Our activities have involved hundreds of members in dozens of cities from coast to coast in two countries, sometimes attracting international attention to our beloved author. Regional programs of the most imaginative kind have been devised from Victoria to Savannah to Tampa, from Boston to Chicago to Los Angeles, and points in between. Lovers of Jane Austen have gathered to "talk Jane" and enjoy music, art, dance, drama, and lecture programs that would satisfy even Emma, on grounds of taste, and Mrs. Elton, on grounds of originality. It has been an excellent year.

No society undertaking, whether regional or international, however, has been more rewarding than our effort to help restore St. Nicholas Church in Steventon, the Hampshire village where Jane Austen was born. JASNA enjoys the love and respect of all the parishioners. In JASNA's honor, a special service was added to the usual two a month when I visited the village

in July. I was asked to read the lesson at the service and was given the Reverend George Austen's Bible to read from. Afterward, members of the congregation gathered at the home of Joyce and Joseph Bown to express their kindest gratitude for the assistance JASNA renders to St. Nicholas Church. In turn, we expressed our appreciation that the Church is always kept open, that we are made to feel the Church "belongs" to us, too, and that all of us who have visited have been so warmly welcomed. It was a heart-warming occasion.

Now that basic repairs to the Church roof have been made, the tower is receiving attention; it may have to be re-rendered on all sides but the front. It has been agreed that current JASNA donations will be earmarked for very much needed improvements on the inside of the Church. Joyce Bown writes: "Send our greetings to all who know us and tell them how truly grateful we are for their friendship, interest and support."

I would like to express the Jane Austen Society of North America's appreciation to another Hampshire resident, Sir Hugh Smiley, retiring Honorary Secretary of the Jane Austen Society. At the request of our founders, Sir Hugh copied out the names and addresses of the English Society's North American members (more than 300 names), who were then invited by the founders to join the North American organization. We thank Sir Hugh for his help and co-operation in the formation of our Society and wish him every happiness in his retirement after 32 years of service. At the same time, we extend our best wishes to Mr. Anthony Trollope of Overton, the new Honorary Secretary. On meeting Mr. and Mrs. Trollope in Steventon, we received most cordial greetings and expressions of interest in our society. We look forward to continued co-operation and friendly relations with the Jane Austen Society.

As of October 1985, JASNA had 1,814 members, 1,603 living in 50 states of the United States, 171 in 9 provinces of Canada, and 30 in 10 foreign countries. New York had 315 members, California 246, Pennsylvania 120, Illinois 117, Massachusetts 111, Ontario 89, British Columbia 50, and England 15. JASNA had 23 Regional Co-ordinators in 17 states and the District of Columbia and 6 Regional Co-ordinators in 3 provinces. We gained 532 members in the U.S. and 50 in Canada, 20 of them choosing life membership. Twenty-eight institutions, mainly university libraries, have purchased our publications.

As to progress on goals for the Society, I can report that during the past year I initiated a dialogue on long-range goals, benefiting from the counsel of members who are professional long-range planners. These talks are continuing and are broadening. At its meeting in Savannah, the Board of Directors elected a planning committee to consider the Society's objectives for the next five or more years. Special projects, our organizational structure, and various operating procedures are among the topics to be discussed. Any member who would like to offer suggestions for future planning is invited to write to the President.

Other committees were formed to review the bylaws of the Society and to consider future conferences. Any member can become involved with these committees by sending comments to me.

Your responses to the first issue of the *Jane Austen Society of North America News* were most heartening. I am delighted to announce that Bettye Dew of St. Louis will edit the next issue, which will contain notes on regional

meetings, news of our future conferences, Quips and Quotes, and other items, and will be published in March. Bettye Dew would be pleased to hear from you directly at University City, Missouri.

One very dull January day a year ago the postman arrived at my door with a mysterious looking box; it wasn't huge, but it was of a size to pique my curiosity immediately because it looked unfamiliar. I set to work at once taking off layers of paper and plastic packing, and finally I had my reward: the *JASNA AGM and Conference Handbook*. It was a work of art! Beautifully organized, profusely illustrated, and thoughtfully complete, it has sections covering finances, hotel, program, registration, printed materials, displays and sales, and publicity, and an introduction, all arranged in a looseleaf notebook permitting additions and deletions. It is a valuable tool for all conference co-ordinators and already has been—and will continue to be—passed on to each new conference co-ordinator, ultimately enhanced by her or his suggestions. The book was planned and designed by Shirley Bassett and Nancy Kaprelain, co-ordinator and finance chairwoman of the JASNA St. Louis conference. It is a superb contribution to the Society. Among my goals mentioned in last year's letter was the compilation of "a manual of procedures for conference co-ordinators." I was thrilled to receive this handsome "answer to a quest." Thank you from all of us, Nancy and Shirley!

JASNA is obviously an organization of volunteers. During the past year, **Joan Brantz**, our Membership Secretary, processed nearly 1,200 letters and requests for the Society. Her untiring volunteer efforts have kept the membership roles in order—she keeps track of nearly 2,000 members. Another unsung heroine is **Susan Schwartz**, our Treasurer, whose financial expertise guides JASNA along a prudent and proper fiscal path. Our untitled volunteer, **Eileen Doudna**, has singlehandedly dealt with orders for *Persuasions* from libraries and members across the continent, devising methods of handling some very complicated paperwork. We owe a debt of gratitude to all these volunteers and on behalf of the Society we thank them sincerely.

During the coming months a number of Board members, Regional Co-ordinators, and members will participate in an exploration of the relationship of the Society to the regional groups. What should it be? If you are especially interested in this subject, you are encouraged to join in the "exploration" by sending me comments for consideration. In the future we also intend to look into how we can bring JASNA closer to our members in remote areas. Your ideas on this subject are also welcome.

The energetic dedication of JASNA's officers, wholehearted support of Board members, creative leadership of Regional Co-ordinators, and undiminished loyalty, interest, and enthusiasm of members have made the past year an outstanding one. We look forward to 1986!

Lorraine Hanaway