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## In Memoriam: Alfred Jaeger (1923-2003)

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Don Jaeger with Connie Foster

On January 9, 2003, Alfred Jaeger succumbed following a length illness. The serials world would be remiss without special recognition of his influence on serials through the founding of Alfred Jaeger, Inc., a back volume business. Don Jaeger graciously supplied the following narrative that gives historical perspectives and shares family memories with the readers of *Serials Review*.

Alfred Jaeger was born in Queens, New York, on November 15, 1923. He was the oldest of eight children. His father left the family when Alfred was only five or six years old, so he and his brother Kirby had to grow up very quickly and become surrogate fathers for the other siblings. Alfred attended public school in New York, graduated high school, and worked odd jobs to earn extra money for the family. During World War II he entered the Navy and was involved in the European effort while stationed in England and Scotland until January 1945.

After the war Alfred Jaeger worked for a manufacturer who produced aircraft altimeters. A few years later he joined Walter Johnson Inc., in Long Island City, New York. Walter Johnson sold antiquarian magazines and journals to the library community. Jaeger soon became manager of the warehouse and learned to love the trade. Part of his work involved collating journals by using his basic knowledge of German to catalog many of the early Springer titles and other German language publications. Although he enjoyed

increasing responsibility in the Johnson company, he developed a master plan to create his own back volume business. In 1955 he created A&A Landscaping, a business that he shared with his brother-in-law Arnold, and raised capital during the summer months so that he could purchase library collections in the winter to develop a periodical inventory. In 1958 he leased office space on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York City and employed part-time, former employees of Stechert-Hafner and other back issues/antiquarian dealers to run the small office. That same year he had acquired enough inventory to engage full-time as Alfred Jaeger, Incorporated, a back volume business. In 1963 the offices moved around the block to 115 E. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, where the company occupied the eleventh floor. With this expanded facility that matched his ever-growing inventory and business contacts, he entertained dignitaries from Japan and other faraway places.

Following discussions with Len Schrift and Barry Bernstein, who worked for Taylor Carlisle, Jaeger became a principal investor in Ballen Booksellers International. Ballen occupied part of the tenth floor of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street building, rent free for a few years, and utilized Jaeger's credit to obtain publishers' materials without draining start-up capital. Schrift and Bernstein had expertise in the book trade and extensive knowledge about special libraries. The partnership benefited both companies for many years. Alfred Jaeger also introduced his new partners to the academic library field which the Jaeger Company already serviced, and the Ballen business grew rapidly.

In 1972 Alfred Jaeger, Inc., moved to its present location in Commack, New York, where it occupies a 40,000 square foot building in the newly formed Hauppauge Industrial Park.

In the late 1980s Ballen Booksellers International employed over one hundred people, and Jaeger frequently lent his expertise in contract negotiations, including one for the State University of New York. The Ballen Company later moved to another location in the industrial park when Alfred Jaeger, Inc., exercised the option to buy the building at 66 Austin Blvd. Alfred Jaeger retired from the Ballen operation at that time and devoted his total interests to the back volume business.

In 1991 Alfred Jaeger retired from the Jaeger Company and his son Don, after twenty years in the business, became president and CEO of the company. Alfred Jaeger's daughter Joanne resides in Massachusetts as does the son Glenn, who is also in the trade. Alfred Jaeger will always be remembered as a caring individual whose opening questions were "How are you?" and "How is everything going?" Throughout his lifetime his siblings could always call him for any reason, and he would never said "no" to any family need. Don Jaeger considers himself privileged to have been his oldest son and to have worked with his father closely on many projects and to meet so many clients and people associated with the industry. According to Don, "his legacy was that he loved people and always enjoyed the friendships and relationships that he and my mother Lillian Jaeger realized through the business. After attending the recent American Library Association conference in Philadelphia (January 2003), I assure you that his relationships continue and all of the kind words and sentiments from the library trade rang through during my conversations with people at the conference. He will be sorely missed by his family and those who were fortunate to have been touched by his presence."

The vision, reality, and now the true legacy of Alfred Jaeger emerge through these reflections. The company remains a family-owned one, a rarity in these days of mergers, conglomerates, and, sadly, failures. We extend to the Jaeger family the sympathies of the serials community as a group and as individuals who are well acquainted with the staff and work of Alfred Jaeger, Inc.<sup>1</sup>

Don Jaeger is president and CEO of Alfred Jaeger, Inc., Commack NY 11725; e-mail: don@ajaeger.com

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<sup>1</sup> For a photograph of Alfred Jaeger, see <http://www.ajaeger.com/pages/legacy.html>