



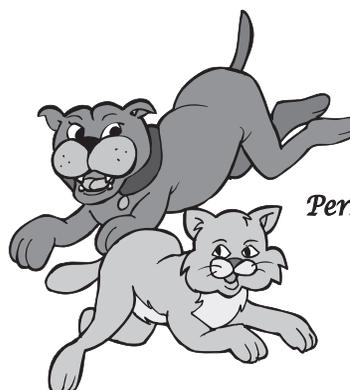
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Sheldon and Shirley Rich. One of Sheldon's many pencil drawings of Andover scenes graced the cover of the Town Report in 2006.

Staff photo: Heather Makechnie



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An Andover Profile

Sheldon Rich and His Many Interests - Part 1

By Heather Makechnie
 Beacon staff

"It's a full-time job to keep up with that man," says Shirley Rich with a twinkle in her eyes, "and another full-time job just to take care of his shelves of books!"

These books have accrued as a result of one or another of Sheldon Rich's driving interests. Indeed, Sheldon Rich has a lot of books in his Andover home. Shelves and boxes and a whole shed of books deal with motley topics ranging from the history and mechanical end of firearms before the 1860s to ships, ship building and ship models, cabinetry, logging and the railroad engines that pulled all those logs, map-making, aircraft, war, farm tools, tool-making, metallurgy, gemology, mining, clock-making, colonial and Civil War history, and the Wild West.

Bring up any topic... ask Sheldon any question... and he will most likely turn to a shelf and pull out a book. "At this point in life my mind often slips. But I know which book to look in for the answers."

So says the blonde, congenial, energetic, nearly six-foot man in his 89th year. "Over the years, and through a couple of moves, I have given away or sold about three libraries of books. A lot of my books simply didn't follow us, and I lost them," bemoans Sheldon. But he explains that most of his books (many of them signed and given to him by the authors) were carefully chosen

and cherished.

"We once happened upon a street fair in Peoria, Illinois. There we walked for almost a mile past table after table of books, and at one book table, I looked down and saw the title of one of the books I had lost. It was a rare two-volume book by Diderot, one of the most important sources of information on the trades of the early Industrial Revolution, and nearly impossible to replace. I paid the guy \$2 for the book and went home a happy man!"

Sheldon has covered many of his books by hand with a protective dust cover. He loves nothing more than to share them with like-minded enthusiasts. "We are looking forward to a visit soon from a German Lufthansa pilot we met on a trip we made to the Saugus (Massachusetts) Iron Works. We struck up a conversation and learned that he studies and writes about aircraft of World War II. I am excited to give him my collection of books about the subject."

It soon becomes obvious when holding discourse with Sheldon that it is not a matter of finding out what his interests include, but rather what they don't include. "That's easy," quips his wife. "It's completely determined by running out of money and time."

Married to this eclectic-minded man for 63 years, Shirley worked at Almy's Department store for many years, and even did a stint in the office of the President of MIT, but with three daughters, six grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren, Shirley mostly stayed home and tried to keep Sheldon focused on the straight and narrow.

"That man will strike up a conversation with anybody," she says, shaking her head, "and he attracts kindred spirits."

See Sheldon on page 40

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DEAN'S LIST Abigail Lance

Abigail Lance was named to the dean's list for the fall 2009 semester at Northeastern University in Boston.