

A TOAST TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

Given by Alan Rettig

at the dinner of the "Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes" conference

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Good evening. If you ask anyone in this room the meaning of the number sixty, you'll almost certainly be told that it is the sum of four novels and fifty-six short stories. Some of you will recite the titles alphabetically, along with their four-letter abbreviations.

But I say that the number of Sherlock Holmes adventures is infinitely greater than sixty. And no, I'm not adding up Sumatran rats, trained cormorants, Coptic patriarchs, abominable wives. . .or abominable brides, for that matter. I'm not referring to the writings about the writings, not to parodies, pastiches or pontifications.

I suggest that the actual number of Sherlock Holmes adventures can never be counted, because there are far too many. . .of *us!*

I was recently asked to give a "Sherlock 101" talk. "Tell us what Sherlock people *do*," urged the program chairman. That set me to pulling together bushels of my own memories and adventures since my favorite uncle handed me the Canon when I was a kid. Each of you has a similar trove.

The inevitable conclusion? We come to Sherlock for the stories, but we stay for the people. That is, we stay for each other. We cannot always define the bond that brings us together, that sends us around town, across continents and over oceans to do "what Sherlock people do." But we know the bond is real, and that it starts with that ineffable presence that can never die, the magnet that welcomes one and all to Baker Street. The real life adventures of Sherlock Holmes are right here in this room; no Grand Game is necessary.

And so as we lift a glass to Mr. Holmes tonight, we celebrate not only the Great Detective himself, but all he has given us individually, and especially *together*.

So with gratitude that he's brought us together once again,

I give you Mr. Sherlock Holmes.