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ART • MATHEMATICS • MUSIC • ESSAYS

Wisconsin Academy Review

A JOURNAL OF WISCONSIN CULTURE

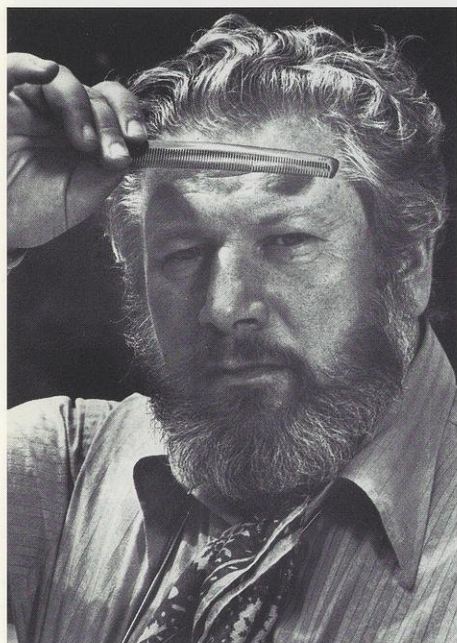


Wisconsin Academy Review

Winter 1998-99

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 compiled by Jean Sebranek and Jen Holderman



Peter Ustinov by Gianni Bozzacchi. "I first met Peter Ustinov on the African set of *The Comedians*. It was in Mexico, however, as he directed *Hammersmith Is Out* that I came to know him. Familiar with my love of racing, he once imitated the different sounds of car engines at the Monte Carlo Grand Prix, using accents to indicate the country of manufacture. It makes me laugh to this day."

FRONT COVER: Self Portrait by Gianni Bozzacchi

BACK COVER: Elizabeth Taylor by Gianni Bozzacchi. "This is one of Elizabeth's favorite photos."

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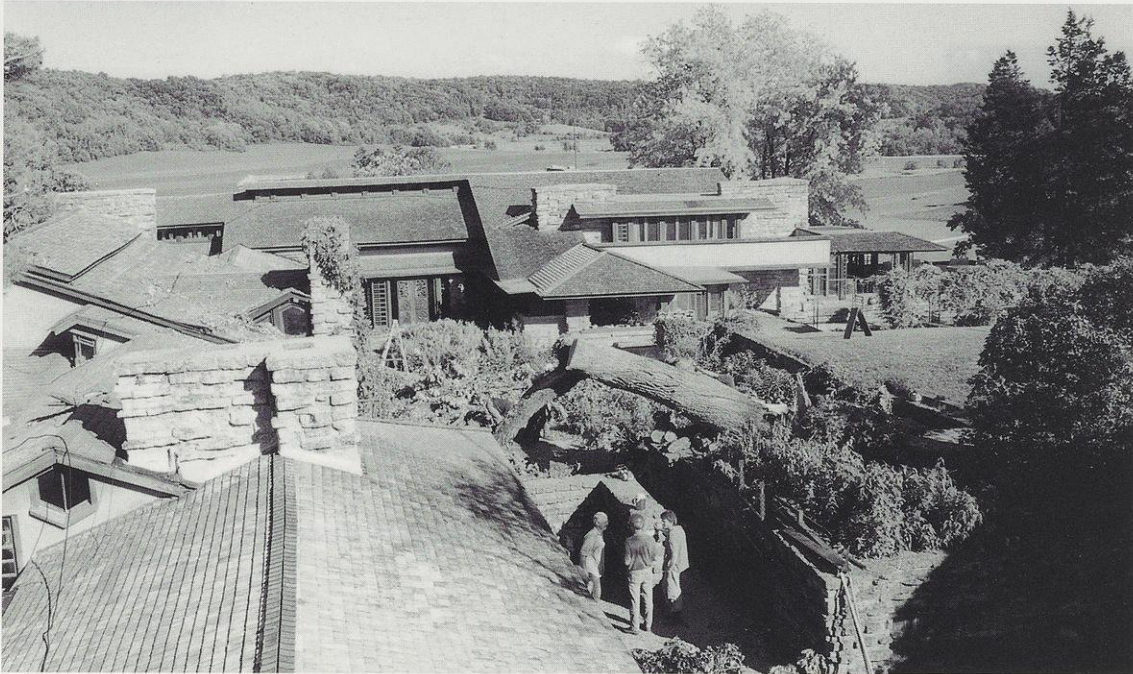
LeRoy R. Lee, Publisher
Faith B. Miracle, Editor
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The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters was chartered by the State Legislature on March 16, 1870, as a membership organization serving the people of Wisconsin. Its mission is to encourage investigation in the sciences, arts, and letters and to disseminate information and share knowledge.

Editor's Notes



Ari Georges



*Farewell to the Taliesin
"Tea Circle Oak,"
brought down by a storm
on June 18, 1998.
Courtesy The Frank
Lloyd Wright
Foundation.*

It seems to me the contributors to this issue of the *Review* have affirmed the appropriateness of our subtitle, *A Journal of Wisconsin Culture*. It was a joy to immerse myself in this textual and topical mix—eastern, western; rural, urban; historic, contemporary; interracial, international—all with a Wisconsin connection. We can even find cultural diversity within specific topics. Consider the essays with rural settings—Bruce Allison's moving piece set in the rolling hills near the Wisconsin River at Taliesin, one of the America's most famous homes; and Justin Isherwood's engaging bit of memoir set in the sandy potato-growing region of central Wisconsin, on a traditional working farm, operated by the same family for more than a century. Both reflect life in the Wisconsin countryside, but from different perspectives.

Gianni Bozzacchi has interdisciplinary interests which so well exemplify the Academy tradition. As a photographer and filmmaker he is best classified as an artist, but early training with his father in Rome introduced him to the science and technology necessary to work with some of civilizations most treasured documents and manuscripts. He has now become a *Wisconsinino*, and in this issue he shares with us some of his early photo art as well as glimpses of his extraordinary life.

East and West meet in these pages with Richard Askey's story about Ramanujan, the great mathematician from the south of India, and Joan Price's account of painter Robert Sully's historic experience with American Indians, including Black Hawk.

David Lührssen offers a fascinating account of how a chair company in Sheboygan fostered a recording business and brought the blues from the rural south to mainstream America. To broaden our appreciation of letters in Wisconsin, Academy fellow Ron Wallace documents the history of the Institute for

Creative Writing at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Also, we include poetry, reviews, and an author/title index of Volume 44 of the *Review*.



I have come to think of these quarterly issues as an ongoing archive of life in Wisconsin. We now have printed author/title and subject indexes for both the *Review*, beginning with its inception in 1954, and for *Transactions*, which has been published since the Academy's founding in 1870. A walk through the listings of authors, titles, and subjects provides opportunities for cultural understanding, appreciation of our history, and contemporary enrichment. It is indeed an amazing resource when seen as a whole, and eventually the indexes will be available on the Academy's website. Meantime, we have shelf copies, and we invite you to stop by and browse.

We welcome editorial assistance in this issue from Michael Goodman, who has recently joined the Academy staff to help with the *Review* and perform other editing and graphic design tasks. Michael, who has impressive computer skills, also will be responsible for maintaining the Academy website. He comes to Madison from Detroit, via the University of Chicago and New Mexico.

Faith B. Miracle

WISCONSIN ACADEMY GALLERY SCHEDULE

December:	Jane Fasse, painting
January:	David Klein, painting
February:	Anthony Walczak, photography

CONTRIBUTORS

- ▶ R. Bruce Allison has operated Allison Tree Care and Consulting service in Madison since 1974. He received his undergraduate degree in English from Brown University and holds a master's degree in forestry and a Ph.D. in environmental studies from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He has been involved in arboriculture on the national and international scene, and his published works include *Wisconsin's Champion Trees* and *Wisconsin's Famous and Historic Trees*.
- ▶ Richard Askey, John Bascom Professor of Mathematics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, has been influenced by Ramanujan's work for the last twenty-five years. He has studied orthogonal polynomials for more than forty years, and polynomials he and his student James Wilson found almost twenty-five years ago are now called the Askey–Wilson polynomials. Askey spent a year on leave as a Guggenheim Fellow in Amsterdam. He edited the *Collected Papers of Gabor Szego* and recently completed an advanced textbook on special functions with George Andrews and Ranjan Roy, forthcoming from Cambridge University Press. He is an honorary fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore, and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
- ▶ R. Byron Bird is Vilas Professor Emeritus in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He was a postdoctoral fellow in theoretical physics at the University of Amsterdam and has lectured and published widely, including several works on technical Japanese. His many awards and honors include the National Medal of Science, conferred by President Ronald Reagan. Since his retirement in 1992 he has taught at the *Technische Universiteit Delft* in the Netherlands and the *Université Catholique de Louvain* in Belgium and continues to teach part-time at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and was named a fellow of the Wisconsin Academy in 1982.
- ▶ Gianni Bozzacchi is a filmmaker and chairman of Rhea & Julia Entertainment, with offices in California, Canada, and Italy. His life as a photographer began in Rome at age thirteen, and at age twenty-two he became photographer for Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. For almost twelve years in the 1960s and 1970s he traveled throughout the world with Taylor and Burton, photographing them and other celebrities and dignitaries. He now makes his home in Wisconsin, and he is working on a book with co-author Kurt Kreznar of Milwaukee.
- ▶ Daniel Harr is a published poet and fiction writer and has recently completed his first novel. Currently incarcerated, he has used his writing talent to express himself beyond the walls that confine him in an effort to take the experiences gleaned through his troubles and turn them into triumphs.
- ▶ Justin Isherwood, ploughman and writer, works the farm that has been in his family for a century. He notes that “the days afield are precious . . . at peace with physical earth, with plain muscle and chores unmodern—so rare this chance to farm and every day the rare thought I have come to cherish it like an exquisite jewel—and follow that droll country dictum: ‘to farm till the money runs out.’” His forthcoming collection of essays is titled *A Sacrament for Trees*, stories of trees, farmers, grandmothers, Indians, a poacher, and a river pilot or two.
- ▶ David Lührssen is a free-lance, award-winning feature writer and reporter whose work appears in such publications as *Billboard*, *Milwaukee Magazine*, and *Entertainment Weekly*. He is arts and entertainment editor for *Shepherd Express*, a weekly Milwaukee newspaper, and adjunct faculty member or lecturer at a number of Milwaukee colleges and universities. He received degrees in history from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.
- ▶ Elmer Otte is a retired advertising writer, agency partner, and lecturer who has received numerous awards for his poetry. He is the author of nine books, and his work also has appeared in *Compass*, *Fox Cry*, and *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar*. He lives in Appleton.
- ▶ Joan Elliott Price has been an assistant professor of art history at the University of Texas–Brownsville since 1993. She has a Ph.D. in American art history, an M.A. in Far Eastern art history, and an M.F.A. in studio glass from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She is author of *Louis Comfort Tiffany: The Painting Career of a Colorist* (Peter Lang) and has written articles for American art journals, including *American Art Review* (February 1997), in which her feature on Wisconsin sculptor Vinnie Ream Hoxie appeared. Price currently is completing a text on Wisconsin Indian mounds titled *Ancient Sauk and Winnebago Cosmology: Myth, Mound and Artifact*.
- ▶ Kathy Kennedy Tapp lives in Janesville. Her poems have appeared in *Wisconsin Poets' Calendar*, *Skylark* (published by Purdue Calumet), *Ariel*, and *A Summer's Reading*. She also has published several juvenile and young adult novels.
- ▶ Ron Wallace is a professor of English and director of the Institute for Creative Writing at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. His published collections of poetry include *The Making of Happiness* and *Time's Fancy*, and his most recent book is *The Uses of Adversity*, a collection of one hundred sonnets, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press. He also has published three books of criticism and edited an anthology. He has contributed poems, stories, and essays to numerous publications, and his short story titled “Quick Bright Things” appears in the special sesquicentennial edition of *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters*. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and was named a fellow of the Wisconsin Academy in 1996.
- ▶ Timothy Walsh's poems and short stories have appeared in various publications, such as *The Midwest Quarterly*, *Boston College Magazine*, and a Loonfeather Press anthology. His book of literary criticism and theory, titled *The Dark Matter of Words: Absence, Unknowing, and Emptiness in Literature*, is forthcoming from Southern Illinois University Press. The actual chair which inspired his poem “The Storytelling Chair” is still on display at Eagle Bluff Lighthouse in Peninsula State Park near Fish Creek.

Exposed Memories: My Life as a Photographer

by Gianni Bozzacchi

During the 1960s and early 1970s I had the opportunity to capture glamorous celebrities on my black-and-white TRI X film. I was caught up in this world for twelve years, and when I finally walked away from the photography business, I was a very long way from where I had begun.

I was born in a poor neighborhood of Rome in 1943, and my earliest memories were of destruction and struggle in a world without color. More than any other element, this view of a black-and-white world, painfully obvious and powerfully distinct, shaped my artistic vision.

My introduction to the world of photography was as an assistant to my father, Bruno Bozzacchi, who served as the director of the photography department at the *Patologia del Libro*, the "hospital of the book," in Rome. My father had developed a process using cameras, coupled with ultraviolet and infrared light, to expose places where faded ink had once etched parchment. Blank pieces of paper and half-lost pages of books came alive with pictures and words through this restoration process.

Letters and tomes from such Renaissance artists and writers as Michelangelo, Leonardo, Dante, and Raphael passed through my father's hands to mine as we worked our dark room "miracles." My education was never formal, yet I learned the intricacies of scientific photography at my father's side. I was a restless teenager, however, and this apprenticeship grew into a darkroom imprisonment.

One day I abruptly left my father and what I then perceived as the photography of the dead.

Eventually I found a job at the PierLuigi Agency in Rome, named after the most famous photographer in Italy. It was here that I honed my skills as a retoucher and began to photograph people.

My life changed dramatically when I was sent to Africa to serve as special photographer on the set of *The Comedians*. The

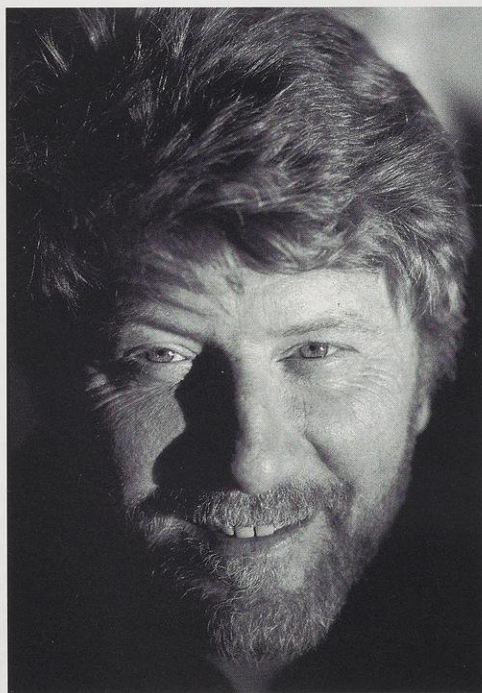
movie was based on the Graham Greene novel of the same name and starred Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Alec Guinness, and Peter Ustinov.

The film's publicist was wary of my rough-edged youth and forbade me to photograph Elizabeth Taylor. More cocky than sensible, I simply took this as a challenge. My camera found Elizabeth repeatedly, and before I left to return to Rome she offered me a job as her permanent traveling photographer. Elizabeth Taylor was world famous at the time and arguably the world's most glamorous film star. Her marriage to Richard Burton brought even more international attention. And I, a street-wise kid from a fringe neighborhood in Rome, accepted the position.

I stayed with Taylor and Burton for the next eleven years, though I worked exclusively for them for only two of those years. They became my professional ticket and opened doors to the movie and fashion industries, the worlds of politicians, and the merely pretentious.

Ultimately photography became fun and ceased to be art, at least as I interpreted the word. The time came when I felt I had to break with the past and move to another form of expression. In 1976, as abruptly as I had left the work with my father, I quit.

Today I live in an 1843 farmhouse south of Milwaukee, and for the last fifteen years I have worked in the motion picture industry. While it is necessary for me to travel frequently, this is now my home. I am a *Wisconsinino*, and my life here with my wife and daughter is good. This life is real. I can create here, and I can be myself. That other life was what I did. It was never who I was.



Gianni Bozzacchi.

Kelley Vander Velden Bozzacchi

"Exposed Memories: My Life as a Photographer" is dedicated to my wife, Kelley Vander Velden Bozzacchi



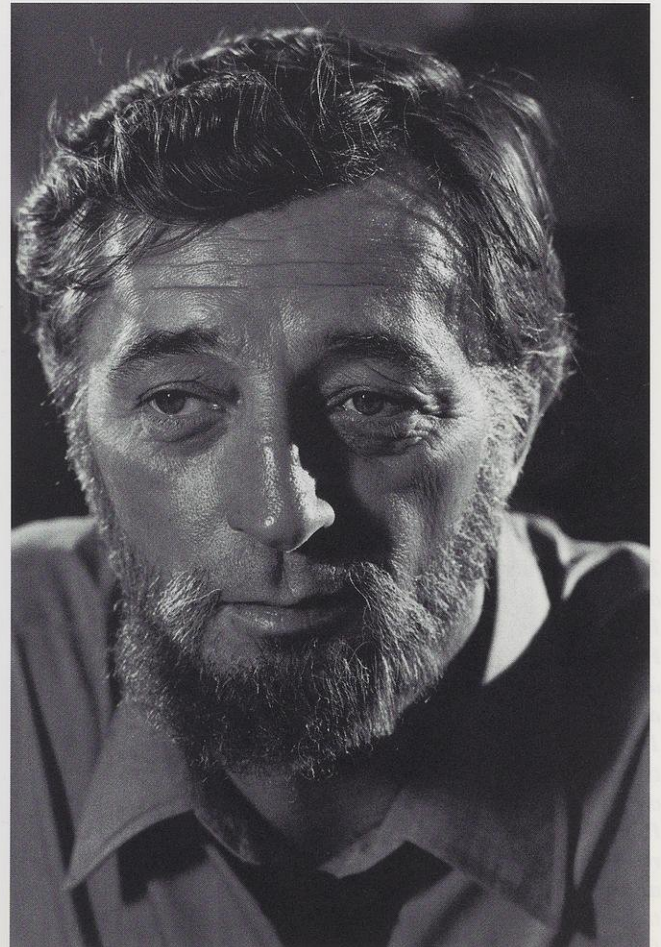
Elizabeth Taylor and “baubles, bangles, and beads—pieces from her world-renowned collection of jewelry.”



*Richard Burton.
"The camera
was in love
with him."*



Elizabeth Taylor and grandchild Leila. "Elizabeth was a star at age seven. Becoming a grandmother was a new joy. Leila had a child in August, and Elizabeth is now a great grandmother."



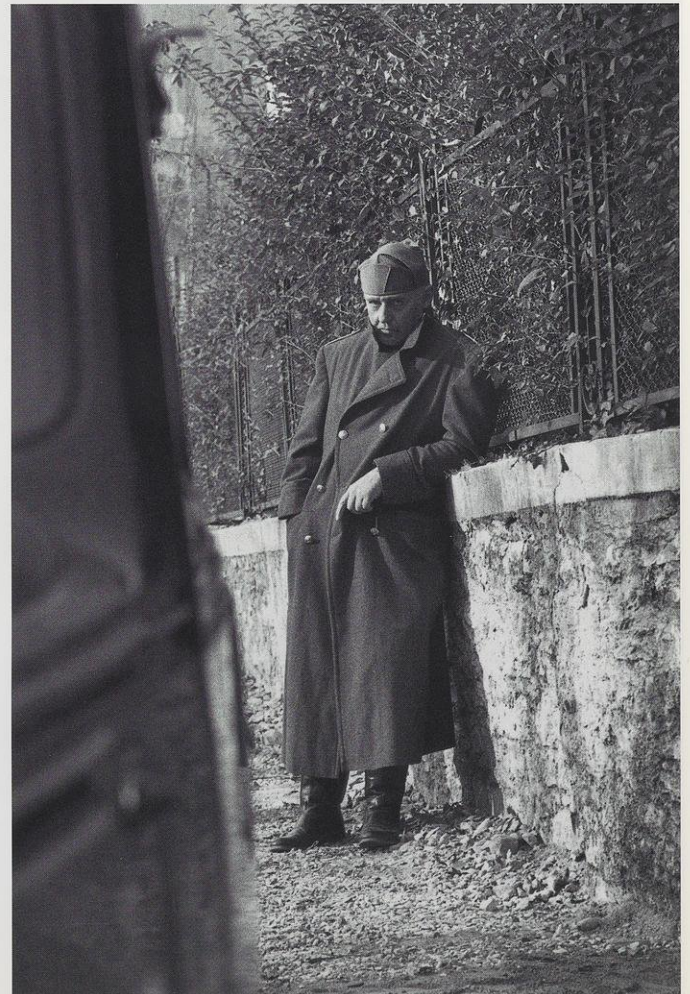
Robert Mitchum, who was "blessed with an extraordinary face and a low threshold for laughs."

The royal family of Monaco: Prince Rainier, Princess Grace, and their children, taken in 1974 for the twenty-fifth anniversary of Prince Rainier's reign. "I enjoyed a special relationship with this family."





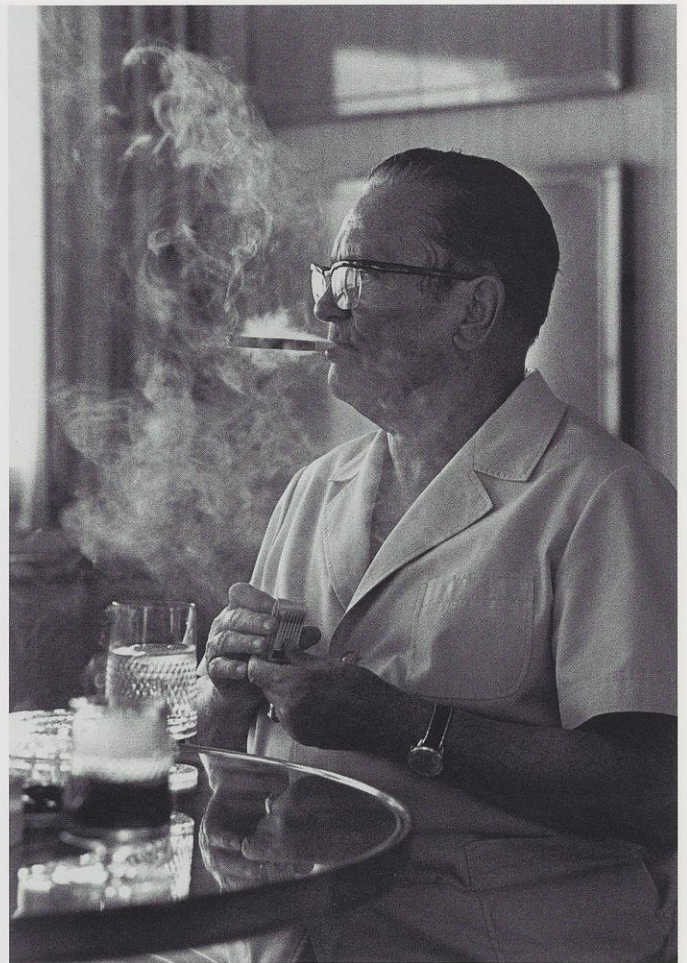
A relaxed, smiling Grace Kelly. "I had strong feelings toward the extraordinary Grace Kelly. She especially liked this photo."



The most powerful
of monarchs
Prince Ranjitsingh
and his wife
Queen, riding in
1900. Photo by
H. J. ...

The Shah of Iran and his wife, Farah Diba Palavi, arriving at a charity barbecue on a motorcycle. "This whimsical shot displays a different side of a man notorious for his staid demeanor."

Rod Steiger dressed as Italian dictator Benito Mussolini for a film role.



Marshall Tito, ruler of Yugoslavia. "The nation collapsed after his death."

Brigitte Bardot, "the most sensual woman I have ever photographed, besides my wife."

Gianni Bozzacchi in the 1960s. The photo was taken in Wales by Elizabeth Taylor's son Michael Wilding during the making of the film version of Under Milk Wood by Dylan Thomas. The production starred Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, and Peter O'Toole and was donated to Oxford University by Taylor and Burton.



Romance in Mathematics: The Case of S. Ramanujan

by Richard Askey

Romance: A mysterious or fascinating quality or appeal, as of something adventurous, heroic, or strangely beautiful.

American Heritage Dictionary

Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887–1920) was among the most talented natural mathematicians of this century. His contribution to understanding of number theory, continued fractions, and partitions was significant and surprising. He also influenced young people who went on to do great work.

When Atle Selberg, a retired professor at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, was seventeen, he read an article on Ramanujan in a mathematics magazine his father subscribed to. The article told about Ramanujan's life and was full of "extremely remarkable, strange, and beautiful formulas," according to Selberg. His oldest brother, who was a research fellow at the university, read the same article and brought home Ramanujan's *Collected Papers*. Since this was a vacation period, Atle Selberg had a chance to browse through the papers for several weeks. This opened up a new world for him, and today Ramanujan's work still seems to him as exciting and full of mystery as it did then.

Freeman Dyson, another retired professor at the Institute for Advanced Study, was a third-year high school student at Winchester in England when he won a school mathematics award and chose Ramanujan's *Collected Papers* as his prize. By the time Dyson entered Trinity College, he was able to conjecture a combinatorial reason for the divisibility by 5 of the number of partitions of $5n+4$ (see sidebar). Throughout Dyson's distinguished career as a physicist, he has retained his interest in mathematics and in Ramanujan. Dyson once wrote that whenever he is angry or depressed, he pulls down the *Collected Papers* from the shelf and takes a quiet stroll in Ramanujan's garden. He recommends this not only as good therapy for headaches, but because of the beautiful ideas which may lead one to more interesting mathematics.



Ramanujan was born in 1887 in Erode, in the south of India. His family lived in Kumbakonam, south of Madras. His early schooling was ordinary, and he was a good student. By the time he was ten years old, he had passed the primary examinations in English, Tamil, arithmetic, and geography. He then started high

school. Town High School still has many of the same buildings where Ramanujan studied, and one of them is now named Ramanujam Hall (the spelling in Sanskrit).

When Ramanujan was approximately twelve years old, the family took in two boarders. One of them was taking a course in trigonometry, and Ramanujan asked to see the book. A few days later, Ramanujan had finished the book and was able to help the older student with problems. This was an early indication of his aptitude for mathematics.

While Ramanujan was still in high school, one of the boarders brought him Part I of George S. Carr's *Formulas and Theorems in Pure Mathematics*. This book and its second part are a collection of over 5,000 facts to be used as coaching notes for mathematics examinations. There are few proofs. Some of the content is pre-calculus; the rest is more advanced material. There are many results on infinite series, one of Ramanujan's favorite topics.

Ramanujan attended Government College in Kumbakonam on a partial scholarship when he was sixteen, and he took full advantage of the fine library there. However, he also had to study other subjects. He was a Brahman, and dissecting

frogs in his class on physiology was not to his liking, so he did not do it. Since his primary love was mathematics, he did not spend the time needed to pass all of his courses. As a result, he failed two courses and lost his scholarship.

For the next six or seven years, Ramanujan tried to find someone who appreciated his mathematical skills. Twenty-five years later, a contemporary wrote about this period and his impressions of the frustrated young scholar:

Everyone who came across Ramanujan knew that he was gifted, that he was a genius. No one had the least doubt about it. But he was by no means an eccentric . . . I have often seen him lying on his stomach on a mat with a pillow under his chest writing on a slate. The slate was large, but the letters [numbers] were small, and the slate pencil invariably squeaked, which irritatingly set one's teeth on edge. He had a very peculiar mannerism of rubbing out some of the numbers with his elbow! No one could distract him when he was doing his sums. When he was done, he would enter the results into a notebook (Ramaseshan).

During one of his travels, Ramanujan found a person who appreciated his genius and gave him money to live on, on the condition that he not stay in Nalore, where he was at the time, but return to Madras. Back in Madras, he met S. Narayana Aiyar, who was a good mathematician and chief accountant of the Madras Port Trust. Narayana Aiyar made arrangements for Ramanujan to be hired in the accounts section, and for a time Ramanujan lived with Narayana Aiyar's family.

Narayana Aiyar and Ramanujan would sometimes work together on mathematics at home in the evening, and the noise of the slate pencils would frequently wake the children. Ramanujan would occasionally wake up in the middle of the night and record something on his slate. Once when Narayana Aiyar asked him what he was doing, Ramanujan replied that he worked out mathematics in his dreams and jotted the results on the slate to remember them.

In 1913 Ramanujan wrote a letter to G.H. Hardy, a mathematician at Trinity College in Cambridge:

I beg to introduce myself to you as a clerk in the Accounts Department at the Port Trust Office at Madras on a salary of 20 per annum. I am now about 23 years of age. I have had no University education but I have undergone the ordinary school course. After leaving school I have been employing the spare time at my disposal to work at Mathematics. I have not trodden through the conventional regular course which is followed in a

University course, but I am striking out a new path for myself. I have made a special investigation of divergent series in general and the results I get are termed by the local mathematicians as 'startling' (Berndt and Rankin).

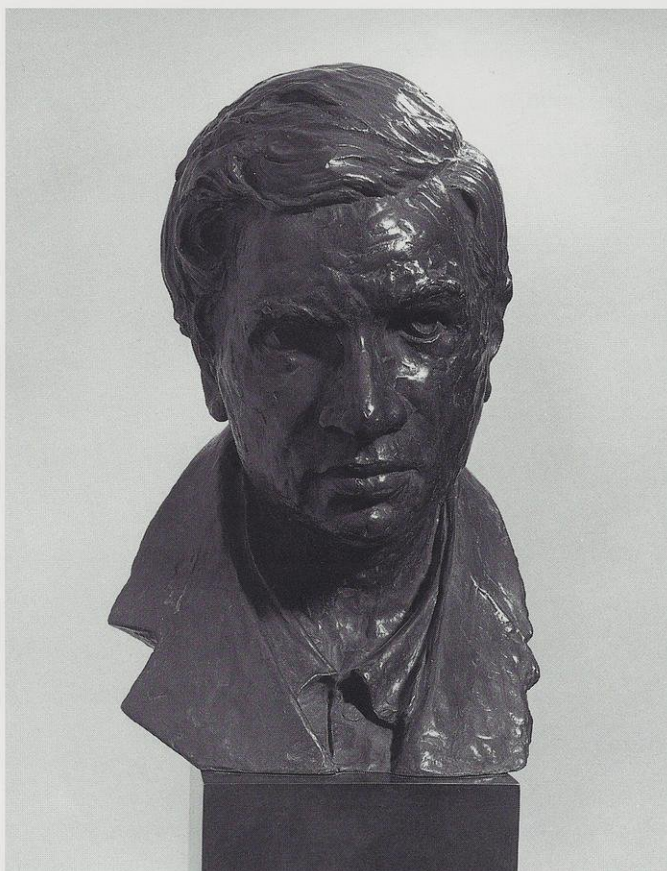
Two more paragraphs are followed by about one hundred mathematical claims, with no indication how they were obtained.

Hardy was a first-rate mathematician, and since he had written a well-regarded textbook, *A Course of Pure Mathematics*, two other books, and many research papers, he was well known. Prominent mathematicians receive letters from cranks, and Hardy had received his share. On looking briefly at Ramanujan's letter, Hardy felt bored, or so C.P. Snow wrote many years later. Snow and Hardy were good friends, so Snow's comment is probably accurate.

Hardy put the letter aside and went about his usual routine for the day. That evening, Hardy and his colleague, J.E. Littlewood, looked seriously at Ramanujan's eleven pages of claims.

In 1936, sixteen years after Ramanujan's death, Hardy gave two lectures on Ramanujan at the Harvard Tercentenary. These lectures were expanded to a book about the mathematics Ramanujan did. The first chapter was a general introduction and included a little about Hardy's reaction to this 1913 letter. He listed fifteen claims made by Ramanujan. Some were vaguely familiar to Hardy, and he knew enough to recognize that the first four formulas were instances of more general results Ramanujan must have found.

The formulas which followed were clearly deeper. Hardy wrote that three of Ramanujan's results on continued fractions defeated him completely. They could only have been written by



Bust of Srinivasa Ramanujan by Paul Granlund.

Bill Frisch

Partitions of 4

The partitions of 4 are 4, 3+1, 2+2, 2+1+1, 1+1+1+1. The expression $p(n)$ denotes the number of partitions of n , i.e., the number of ways of writing n as the sum of positive integers where order does not matter. So 3+1 and 1+3 are treated as the same.

Hardy and Ramanujan first discovered an approximate value for $p(n)$ when n represents a large number. To see how good their approximation was, a table of $p(n)$ for $n=1$ to 200 was constructed by Major Percy MacMahon. Their approximation to $p(200)$, which is 3,972,999,029,388, was only off by 0.004. Ramanujan looked at the numbers $p(n)$ and observed that $p(5n+4)$ always seemed to be divisible by 5, that $p(25n+24)$ seemed to be divisible by 25, and other surprising divisibility results. He proved the two examples just described and many others.

No one had suspected that an additive problem, such as the number of partitions of an integer, would have the divisibility properties which Ramanujan found.

a mathematician of the highest order; and they must be true, because no one would have had the imagination to invent them.

A further indication of the excitement felt by Hardy and Littlewood can be seen in a letter from Bertram Russell to Lady Ottoline Morrell:

In Hall I found Hardy and Littlewood in a state of wild excitement, because they believe they have discovered a second Newton (Berndt and Rankin).

However, there were problems with the next two formulas. One is approximately true, but the error is significantly large; and the next formula is misleading. These and other incorrect claims in Ramanujan's 1913 letter are important not only to see what Ramanujan's limitations were, as Hardy wrote, but they help explain the letters which Hardy would subsequently write to Ramanujan.

In his first letter to Ramanujan, Hardy commented on some of the results. They seemed to fall into three classifications:

- some had already been discovered;
- some were new and interesting, but the main interest was their curiosity and difficulty rather than their importance; and
- some were new and important, but only if rigorous proofs could be found.

Hardy commented on examples in each group. About those in the first, Hardy wrote that given Ramanujan's lack of training, it was impressive to have rediscovered interesting results like these.

In the second group, Hardy expressed a desire to see proofs, and said that he and Mr. Littlewood thought that one of the claims was false. It was, but it was the first approximation to a correct result related to one which Hardy and Ramanujan would prove in a few years.

Hardy invited Ramanujan to come to England, but at first Ramanujan refused. In order that Ramanujan could do mathematics full time, Madras University had provided a scholarship which was more than twice what he earned at the Port Trust. This scholarship was not sufficient for Ramanujan to live on in England. There were also cultural reasons for Ramanujan's

refusal of this invitation. A year later, however, E.H. Neville from Trinity College came to Madras to give lectures, and he befriended Ramanujan. A much larger scholarship was provided by Madras University, and Trinity College in Cambridge also provided some money. This, and Neville's friendship, changed Ramanujan's mind, and he went to Cambridge.



Life in England was both good and bad. For the first time in his life, Ramanujan had mathematicians of a very high level to talk with. There was so much new going on that he put aside his Indian notebooks and worked on new problems. With all of the excitement of new people to talk to, a much better library to use, and time to work, what could lead to the mixed feelings that Ramanujan must have had about his experience in England?

First, there was the problem of food. He was a strict vegetarian and did not trust the college food to be prepared without animal fat, so he cooked all of his own meals. Needless to say, he had not done this in India. It was not easy to get the spices he was accustomed to, and the food packages sent from India frequently had become rancid by the time they arrived.

Then there was the problem of climate. The temperature in Madras reached a winter low of 70 degrees. In England, Ramanujan piled a coat and other clothes on his bed to keep warm.

Ramanujan also was alone. In 1909, when Ramanujan was twenty-two, his mother had arranged a marriage to a nine-year-old girl, Janaki Ammal. When he left for England his wife had asked to come with him, but she was only thirteen or fourteen at the time. He had no idea how hard life would be for him, much less for her, so he did not permit her to come. He did not receive any letters from her for an extended period of time—he found out later that Janaki and his mother did not get along well—and the worry drove him to the point where he attempted suicide.

Finally, for the last two of the five years he was in England, he was very ill and spent most of his time in nursing homes.



Ramanujan returned to India in 1919 after having been elected a fellow of The Royal Society and of Trinity College. His health seemed to have improved somewhat, and the hope was that being back in the climate where he grew up, with the food he loved, he would recover.

A year after returning to India, Ramanujan wrote a letter to Hardy. In this letter he said that he had discovered a new class of functions, which he called mock theta functions. He gave some examples and some of their properties.

In three months he was dead. We do not know for sure what disease killed him, but the current best guess is a parasitic infection of the liver.



In the 1970s the University of Wisconsin played a role in the Ramanujan story. Professor George Andrews of Penn State University was brought to Madison for the academic year 1975–76. While Andrews and I worked in different areas, there was a field in the intersection of our interests which was starting to have applications to algebraic coding theory. Both of us wanted to learn what the other knew, so Andrews and I ran a joint seminar two days a week.

That spring Andrews went off to France for a meeting. Since he was not teaching that summer, he had time to extend his stay; and after spending a week in Strasbourg and Paris, he went to Cambridge to see what old manuscripts he could find.

One discovery was a box labeled “G.N. Watson” which contained 120 loose sheets in Ramanujan’s handwriting. Andrews was uniquely well qualified to find these sheets; I doubt if anyone else would have recognized that about 5 percent of the work dealt with mock theta functions, the functions which Ramanujan had discovered after returning to India. What Andrews had come upon was the only record that has ever been found concerning what Ramanujan did in India in the fifteen months between the time he left England and his death. Ramanujan’s widow said that he continued to work until four days before he died.

These sheets contain gems more valuable than anyone suspected, as well as just ordinary, good work. Very little of the mathematics on these sheets had been rediscovered by others during the more than fifty-five years from Ramanujan’s death to the discovery by Andrews.

How did these sheets get into a box labeled “G.N. Watson” in the Wren Library at Trinity College? Around 1930, G.N. Watson had given his presidential address to the London Mathematical Society. It dealt with mock theta functions. He had spent up to two years working on these functions, and he had been able to prove some of the claims made by Ramanujan. After Watson’s death, J.M. Whittaker was asked to write an obituary of Watson for the Royal Society. He contacted Watson’s widow and asked if he could examine Watson’s

papers. He was invited to Watson’s home, and after lunch her son took him to the study. Here is what he tells us about the papers he found there:

They covered the floor of a fair sized room to a depth of about a foot, all jumbled together, and were to be incinerated in a few days. One could only make lucky dips and, as Watson never threw away anything, the result might be a sheet of mathematics but more probably a receipted bill or a draft of his income tax return for 1923. By an extraordinary stroke of luck one of my dips brought up the Ramanujan material which Hardy must have passed on to him when he [Watson] proposed to edit the earlier notebooks (Berndt and Rankin).

It was decided that it would be best to store this material at Trinity, where both Ramanujan and Watson had been fellows.

One other Wisconsin connection is the magnificent scholarly work which Bruce Berndt has done on Ramanujan’s notebooks. Berndt, who received his Ph.D. in Madison in 1966, has recently published the last of five volumes giving proofs of the claims in the three Indian notebooks. He and George Andrews are now working on the remaining identities in the “Lost Notebook.” Berndt was awarded a prize for scholarly exposition for the first four volumes and was given a Guggenheim Fellowship for 1998.



After Ramanujan’s death, Janaki Ammal Ramanujan supported herself by sewing. Her great disappointment was that while there had been a promise to make a statue of Ramanujan, nothing had been done about this. Using Ramanujan’s passport photo as a likeness, Paul Granlund, sculptor-in-residence at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, agreed to make the bust, and money was raised to cover the cost.

In 1987, the centennial of Ramanujan’s birth, my wife and I went to India for the celebration. While in Madras, we visited Mrs. Ramanujan in her home. She expressed thanks for the bust, which she garlanded every day. She said that when the bust arrived, it was as if Ramanujan’s spirit had returned to her home.

In an appreciation of Ramanujan, S. Chandrasekhar wrote:

It is hopeless to try to emulate him.

But he was there, even as the Everest is there. ❧

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Blues in Wisconsin: The Paramount Records Story

by David Luhrssen

Nowadays it would be called niche marketing. But during the early years of recorded sound, the music industry's efforts to tap African-Americans for their entertainment dollars were tainted by segregation. Paramount Records, a Wisconsin company with studios in Port Washington and Grafton, was among the first to specialize in "race records," as African-American discs were called before World War II. Sixty-five years after its demise, Paramount remains the most historically significant record label to operate in Wisconsin.

Paramount, along with its sister companies, recorded a wide variety of music, but today it is remembered chiefly as an important footnote in the development of blues music. Probably Paramount would have received even greater notice from historians had it been located in Chicago, Memphis, or other places known as meccas for black creative endeavor. Operating instead from a pair of unlikely towns in what was then rural Wisconsin, Paramount has been relegated to the status of a curiosity, albeit an important one, for its role in documenting the first generation of blues musicians.

The Paramount story is also interesting for what it tells us about the origins of today's glitzy, multi-billion-dollar recording industry. Not unlike several other early record companies, Paramount began in a most unglamorous fashion, as a subsidiary of Wisconsin Chair Company, whose Port Washington and Grafton factories made low-cost chairs, tables, and school desks which were marketed in the Midwest and the South. A line of wooden cabinets for Edison phonographs was added sometime around 1914. Before long the company began to consider producing phonograph



records as an incentive to phonograph buyers. From such nickel-and-dime concerns a new industry was nurtured.

The move from home furnishings to home entertainment came against the backdrop of a remarkable recovery for Wisconsin Chair Company after its facilities were badly damaged by the million-dollar fire in 1899 that destroyed most of what is now Port Washington's marina area. During the years in

which Wisconsin Chair was rebuilt, the technology of sound reproduction improved. The wax cylinders originally employed by Thomas Edison's 1877 invention, the "talking machine," gave way to ten- and twelve-inch shellac discs containing up to four minutes of music per side. The phonograph business flourished by the onset of World War I, with record players selling for anywhere from \$10 to \$500.

The man who proved to be instrumental in Wisconsin Chair Company's bid to become part of the new industry traveled even farther to Grafton than the southern blues artists who later came there to record. Arthur C. Satherly, a romantic young Englishman, the son of an Anglican cleric from Bristol, came to Wisconsin in 1913 in search of the Old West he had read about in dime novels. Apparently the new world of sound recording came to fascinate Satherly as much as the mythic American past. He left Wisconsin Chair to work for Thomas Edison's company, but returned to Port Washington in 1917, or shortly thereafter, when Wisconsin Chair founded its first musical subsidiary, the New York Recording Laboratories, whose name conveyed the glamor of Manhattan and the scientific wonder of the phonograph.

Satherly was put in charge of manufacturing sound discs from clay mixed with shellac, a kind of varnish that was probably familiar to Wisconsin Chair from its more traditional product lines. Although fragile when compared with the vinyl recordings that replaced them after World War II, shellac discs were an effective medium for preserving sonic inscriptions. Satherly quickly set up a pressing plant in Grafton, a factory for stamping out copies of recordings. The recording sessions were done elsewhere for several years, primarily at New York Recording Laboratories' studio at 1140 Broadway in New York City, but also in Chicago. Recording sessions were not held in Grafton until 1929.

The New York Recording Laboratories' name appeared in fine print on the rim of the record labels. Most of the company's product was marketed under the bold-lettered legend of Paramount Records, though others were issued under the Broadway, Famous, and Puritan labels. The Famous label was sold in dime stores. Broadway records were marketed as a mid-line product. Selling at 85 cents a disc, with its blue-and-gold label bearing the image of an eagle perched atop the world,

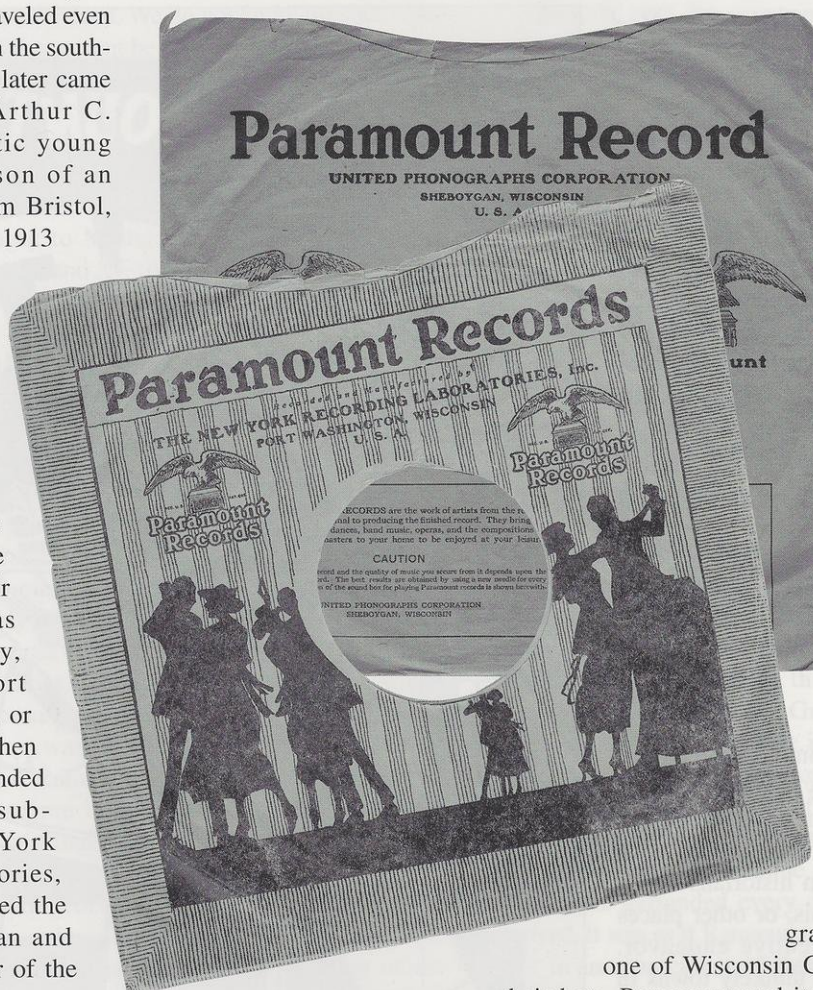
Paramount was the company's prestige brand. Even today, many record companies issue their product under several brand labels.

By the time New York Recording Laboratories was ready to release its first recordings to the public in 1918, the company's management—probably Wisconsin Chair president Otto Moeser and sales head Maurice Supper—decided there was limited value in trying to compete in the popular music market against Columbia and Victor, recording companies that would evolve during the second half of the twentieth century into Sony Music Entertainment and RCA Victor. It was decided that the Port Washington-based labels would concentrate on ethnic music, especially German, Scandinavian, and Mexican performers who would appeal to the large immi-

grant populations in the Midwest,

one of Wisconsin Chair's sales territories. To hedge their bets, Paramount and its sister labels would also release recordings of popular singers, marching bands, and dance bands. During the 1920s the company also began recording country music, a form of popular music that was just beginning to coalesce from the folk traditions of the southern mountains.

Until the advent of electrical microphones and amplifiers in 1925, the recording process employed by New York Recording Laboratories and its competitors was extremely primitive. Performers played or sang into a recording horn which vibrated a diaphragm, causing the needle of a stylus to cut a wax master disc from which all copies would be stamped. Singers stood inches from the horn; brass players kept back lest they drown out the featured performer. The three-inch-thick wax masters recorded in New York or

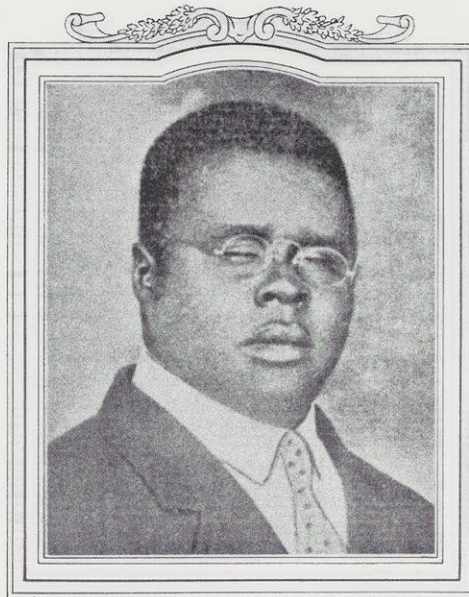


Chicago studios were packed in dry ice and shipped to a Grafton furniture factory that had been converted into a pressing plant. Shellac and other materials used in manufacturing the records were delivered to Grafton by railroad and hauled to the pressing plant by horse-drawn wagon. The plant was run by a rope drive powered by a water wheel. Both men and women were employed on the production floor.

Accidents sometimes found their way onto recordings. On a 1920 Paramount disc by Selvin's Novelty Orchestra, a peculiar racket is heard as the band offered its rendition of a contemporary hit song, "Avalon." Evidently a carpenter was at work in the next room, and his hammering became part of the recording. A few weeks after "Avalon's" release, Selvin's Novelty Orchestra was called back to make another recording of the song, this time without any unwanted accompaniment.

By 1921 the New York Recording Laboratories experienced financial troubles as the still nascent record industry reeled from the arrival of a competitor for home entertainment, radio, a medium which did not usually play music discs in its early years. Apparently it was Arthur Satherly, employing the clear-eyed cultural perspective of a foreigner, who saw that the African-American market might prove profitable even in the face of this new medium. His decision was surely influenced by the fact that most African-Americans still lived in Wisconsin Chair's major sales territory outside the Midwest, the South.

By 1922 Paramount began issuing "race recordings" of black artists. Since music shops and even dime stores were not always accessible to many of Paramount's potential customers, especially in the rural South, the label marketed its products largely through advertising in America's flagship black-owned newspaper, *The Chicago Defender*, which enjoyed a wide black readership below the Mason-Dixon Line. Paramount customers could order records by checking off selections on a form included with advertisements, in a manner not unlike today's CD clubs, and



Blind Lemon Jefferson, blind from birth, was born in Dallas and learned to play the guitar to entertain his friends. Eventually he became a commercial artist, recording exclusively on Paramount.

Black Swan's first blues record featured Ethel Waters singing "Down Home Blues." Blues singer Alberta Hunter recorded "Bring Back the Joys" for Black Swan with instrumental backing by Fletcher Henderson, the African-American who later



Ma (Gertrude) Rainey, from "the Bottoms" of Georgia, believed the blues expressed the heart of the south. She brought these beautiful and sad melodies to New York and greatly influenced other blues musicians.

mail in their orders. Payment was C.O.D. Each of the fragile shellac discs was insured for a dollar, and many were returned broken. Paramount subcontracted its mail order business to F.W. Boerner Co. of Port Washington, who continued to market 1920s vintage Paramount blues recordings to black listeners as late as the end of the 1940s. According to local folklore, the heavy volume of orders received by Boerner for Paramount resulted in an elevation for Port Washington's post office from Class 3 to Class 1 status, putting it on the same footing as post offices in big cities.

African-American music proved profitable for Paramount. In 1924 New York Recording Laboratory decided to expand its reach into that market by purchasing the Black Swan label. Founded in 1920 or 1921 by black entrepreneur Harry H. Pace, the pioneering company recorded everything from ragtime to grand opera, as long as it was sung by African-Americans.

penned arrangements for Benny Goodman, the "King of Swing." Paramount reissued discs from the Black Swan catalog, a practice still prevalent today among recording companies who own material originally made for other labels.

The scratchy old Paramount and Black Swan discs have become a vital primary source for historians reconstructing the history of black American music. Paramount's biggest star was Ma Rainey, a blues moaner who influenced the legendary singer Bessie Smith. Recordings were also issued by such women blues singers as Elzadie Robinson, Ida Cox, Irene Scruggs, and Edmonia Henderson. During the 1920s women rose to the forefront of the blues, a genre that has remained largely male-dominated ever since. The blues women mostly came out of the vaudeville circuit. They were entertainers rather than folk artists, but their lyrics and expressive delivery tell us much about the lives

of African-American women in the rapidly changing times that followed World War I into the Jazz Age.

Paramount did not neglect male blues singers, who tended to be folk artists in the sense that their music was made initially for the entertainment of isolated rural communities. These included the singers and guitarists Charlie Patton (an influence on Robert Johnson, whose recordings have become the touchstone for the Mississippi Delta blues sound), Blind Lemon Jefferson (for whom the 1960s rock band Jefferson Airplane was named), Blind Blake, and Charlie Spand. Blues piano records were made for Paramount by Henry Brown, Will Ezell, Cow Cow Davenport, Jimmy Blythe, and Blind Leroy Garnett. The great pianist Meade Lux Lewis helped introduce the world to the rowdy, upbeat music known as boogie-woogie with a 1927 disc for Paramount, "Honky Tonk Train Blues." Some jazz recordings were issued by Paramount, including discs by King Oliver's Dixie Syncopators, Louie Austin's Blues Serenaders, Jimmie O'Bryant's Famous Original Washboard Band, and John Williams's Synco Jazzers. Apocryphal stories abound, including rumors that the great Louis Armstrong traveled to Grafton late in Paramount's existence to make a record under a pseudonym. As far as historians can determine, Armstrong's only Paramount recordings were made as a member of King Oliver's band, and those were recorded in Chicago or New York. There were also many Paramount gospel recordings, usually by unaccompanied vocal quartets.

Arthur Satherly, fellow British expatriate Art Laibley (Paramount's sales manager), and early African-American music executive J. Mayo Williams (manager of Paramount's "race series") scoured the South for black talent. They received tips from unusual sources, including traveling salesmen from Paramount's parent company, Wisconsin Chair, who discovered blues singers while calling on customers. The Paramount catalog included this solicitation for talent:

What does the Public want? What will you have? If your preferences are



Ida Cox of Knoxville, Tennessee, began to sing on the stage as a child and became known as "Queen of the Blues."



Elzadie Robinson was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, and was a popular entertainer at age twelve. As a chorus girl she played engagements in such major southern centers as Houston and Galveston and eventually came north to Chicago.

not listed in our catalog, we will make them for you, as Paramount must please the buying public. There is always room for more good material and more talented artists.

A number of singers were recorded by Paramount after hometown fans wrote the label, recommending them.

Such methods of artist development were in contrast to the more top-down direction of Victor, Columbia, and other larger labels. Paramount was more closely linked to a grassroots audience than its bigger, better-financed competitors. This would also prove to be a recurring theme in twentieth-century music with smaller independent labels, such as the Memphis-based Sun Records, which discovered Elvis Presley, blazing trails that the heavyweights of the industry would later claim as their own.

In 1926 the New York Recording Laboratories closed its New York City studio. The following year J. Mayo Williams resigned from Paramount. He formed his own Chicago-based label, Black Patti Records, and remained active in the African-American segment of the music industry through the 1950s. In 1928 Arthur Satherly resigned and went on to discover some of the

most popular singers in country music, including Gene Autry, Bob Wills, and Roy Acuff. Satherly was recognized for his accomplishments by his election to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1971.

In 1929 Paramount's recording sessions ceased in Chicago. From then on all recording was done under the direction of Art Laibley on the second floor of what had once been a Wisconsin Chair Company factory in Grafton. To avoid noise from nearby plants, most of the recording was done at night.

Black and white musicians traveled by the inter-urban train line or by car from Chicago through Milwaukee to record in Grafton. Some of the artists may have slept in apartment houses near the recording studio where many of Wisconsin Chair's employees lived, or even on cots in the studio. According to some reports, the presence of black musicians in all-

white Grafton was kept secret, and blacks were shuttled back and forth to Milwaukee between sessions. Other black performers remember staying without incident at the Grafton Hotel.

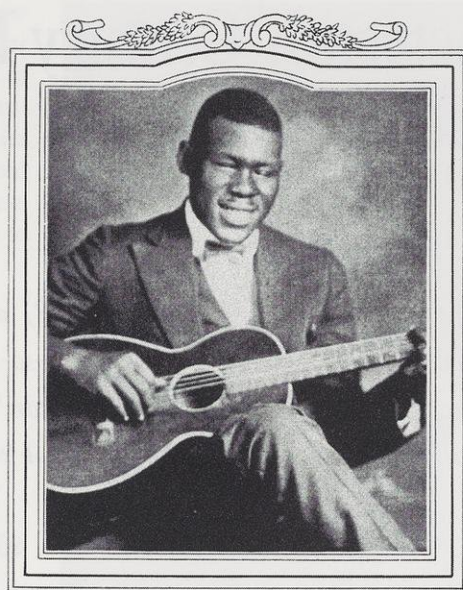
The process of recording a blues musician from the rural South is illustrated by the fruits of Art Laibley's May 1930 trip through Mississippi and Texas. Laibley contacted Charlie Patton, already a familiar name on Paramount's roster, and asked him to recommend some new talent. Patton suggested Willie Brown, Louise Johnson, and Son House, who would become a legendary figure after his "rediscovery" by blues enthusiasts in the late 1960s. Laibley entrusted Patton with \$100 to cover traveling expenses and arranged for singer Wheeler Ford of the Delta Big Four gospel quartet to drive the musicians to Grafton. A day after their arrival in Grafton, the musicians sang and played with each other for a Paramount session that resulted in a lascivious recording of "On the Wall" and a pair of darker-hued blues pieces, "Moon Going Down" and "Bird Nest Bound."

White southerners also trekked to Grafton to record their own folk music, including the 1929 recording of the ancient Anglo-Celtic ballad "Black Jack Davy" by a duo who called themselves Professor and Mrs. I.G. Greer. Wisconsin performers also recorded for Paramount, including the dance orchestra of Bill Carlson, still remembered in the Milwaukee area as the weather forecaster for WTMJ radio and television in the 1950s and 1960s.

The onset of the Great Depression devastated the recording industry, especially the smaller companies. The last blues recording for the label was made by Skip James, a legendary figure whose song "I'm so Glad" was the basis for a hit in the 1960s by Eric Clapton's group Cream. In 1932 or 1933 Paramount and its sister labels ceased operations.



Although the Great Depression ended the golden era of Paramount, there would be a postscript to the record label's story. In the early 1940s jazz enthusiast and University of Chicago chemistry professor John Steiner purchased Paramount and its siblings from Wisconsin Chair Company. He reissued many of the company's jazz records, as well as a few of its blues discs, and made some new jazz recordings for



Blind Blake was born in Jacksonville, Florida, and developed an inner vision which allowed him to see things in a positive way. He listened to talented musicians and taught himself to play the guitar.

.....
*Performers played or sang into
 a recording horn which vibrated
 a diaphragm, causing the needle
 of a stylus to cut a wax master
 disc from which all copies
 would be stamped.*

Association for Recorded Sound Collections to be held in Madison May 19-22, 1999.

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Mills Music Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Interview with record collector Paul Pedersen of Port Washington.

Paramount. During the 1950s Steiner sold the Paramount name to the entertainment giant ABC, which released new recordings under the ABC Paramount label for several decades. In the early 1970s Steiner sold the rights to Paramount's back catalog to a New Orleans enthusiast, George Buck, who has since released a half dozen CDs of Paramount blues on his GBH Jazz Foundation label. Only a small percentage of Paramount's recordings have ever been reissued on LP or CD, most of them by blues specialty labels like Biograph or Yazoo.

While most of Paramount's music is not heard today, the greatest of its blues recordings haven't lost their ability to inspire recording artists of our own time. The company's management may have marketed Paramount's "race music" along strictly segregated lines, but the power of blues and other African-American music contributed eventually to breaking down some of the social barriers taken for granted in early twentieth-century America. ♣

Editor's note: A related article, "The Rise and Fall of Paramount Records" by Sarah Filzen, will appear in the winter issue of the Wisconsin Magazine of History, published by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The Mills Music Library at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has scheduled a related exhibition in connection with a national conference sponsored by the

Robert Sully's Nineteenth-Century Paintings of Sauk and Winnebago Indians

by Joan Elliott Price

When the great Sauk leader Black Hawk (1767–1838) arrived in chains in Fort Monroe, Virginia, he was looked upon as a celebrated but not-so-noble “savage” who was headed for domesticity, as planned by President Andrew Jackson’s administration. Two American artists, George Catlin and Robert Sully, visually recorded Black Hawk’s transition from “warrior” to “gentleman” during 1833.

Prior to his arrival in the winter of 1832, and following his August defeat at the Battle of Bad Axe and the subsequent surrender of the Sac and Fox nations to the United States government, Black Hawk spent a choleric winter in the Jefferson barracks, ten miles south of St. Louis, with over sixty of his captured men. During that winter, he was visited by American artist George Catlin (1796–1872), who painted *Blackhawk and Five Other Saukie Prisoners*, and completed colorful individual portraits of Black Hawk, or *Muk-a-tah-mish-o-kah-kiak*; his son Whirling Thunder (a literal translation from the Sauk language; the name also has been translated as Loud Thunder), or *Na-she-ask-uk*; and White Cloud the Prophet, or *Wah-pe-kee-suk*, a half-Sauk and half-Winnebago visionary who betrayed Black Hawk.

In mid-March 1833, following United States Secretary of War Lewis Cass’s command, the six Sauk prisoners traveled to the East Coast. On April 26, 1833, after a month-long journey by railroad, stagecoach, and steamer, Black Hawk and his entourage stood before President Jackson in Washington, D.C. Believing that he had been brought merely to visit the president, Black Hawk became upset when Jackson informed him that he was a prisoner of the United States government and would not be permitted to go home, but rather would be sent to Fort Monroe to remain there until Jackson would decide when to return him to his people. President Jackson reminded him to keep the peace between the Indian nations and the United States government, and then, much to Black Hawk’s dismay,

presented him with western clothes to wear for the new, domesticized image.

Black Hawk commented on President Jackson’s demeanor during this visit, stating, “He looks as if he has seen as many winters as I have, and seems to be a very great brave” (Donald Jackson, p. 170). Then Jackson informed Black Hawk they were to go to Fort Monroe.

After touring Washington, without the iron shackles, the Sauk entourage journeyed by stagecoach to Richmond, Virginia, where they remained for several days and briefly posed for portraits painted by James Westhall Ford. They then boarded a steamer, *The Patrick Henry*, and sailed to Fort Monroe on Old Point Comfort on the James River. Considered to be a resting spot by the Jamestown travelers, the site was chosen by Captain John Smith as a military post in 1608. A large bastion, with moat, cannon, and draw bridge, was enclosed by a thick cement wall. While there were cells called “casemates” available for prisoners, Black Hawk and his men were allowed to walk freely within the fort and reportedly were treated well by the post’s commander, Colonel Abraham Eustis. They were accompanied through their entire journey by their interpreter, Charles St. Vrain, although Black Hawk complained about translating errors.

During the Fort Monroe confinement, from May 1 to June 4, 1833, the Sauk prisoners were visited by several artists, including Robert Sully, who recorded their new domesticized image.



Drawing of Robert Sully by Barry Carlsen, based on what is believed to have been a self-portrait which appeared in an undated newspaper article now in the collection of the Valentine Museum.



Robert Matthew Sully (1803–1865), nephew of the famed American portrait painter Thomas Sully (1783–1872), was privileged to record the images of three Native Americans: Black Hawk, Whirling Thunder, and White Cloud the Prophet. Sully presents an idealized and domesticized image in European dress following the surrender of the Sauk people to

.....

Believing that he had been brought merely to visit the president, Black Hawk became upset when Jackson informed him that he was a prisoner of the United States government.

.....

the United States government. This painting may be viewed as a political propaganda piece, as part of the Jackson, Cass, Lewis administration, inasmuch as it emphasized the fall of the Sauk Nation, depicted by the flaming Battle of Bad Axe in the lower left corner, and subsequent westernization of its leader. Black Hawk has been transformed from a “savage” to a “civilized man,” exchanging his buckskins and shackles for a dark suit, which is covered with an alizarin crimson robe. Sully comments on this imagery in a letter sent to Lyman Draper in Wisconsin dated April 20, 1854:

The old chief had, to a degree, modernized his costume by a blue coat, which in Portrait is almost entirely concealed by the red blanket, which I have fashioned or disposed somewhat in the manner of a Roman toga. This particularly civilized dress of B. Hawk may be found fault with, nevertheless, it was the dress he always wore when at the Fort. It looks picturesque enough, and for aught I know, may have been his habit when with you (Valentine Museum archives).

In the portrait, which is in the collection at the Virginia Historical Society, Robert Sully presents a youthful Black Hawk, with no wrinkles and smooth skin. During recent restoration, it became evident that a portrait of a man in a grey suit originally had been



Black Hawk and Five Other Saukie Prisoners by George Catlin. Oil on paperboard mounted on heavier paperboard, 18 5/8 x 24 1 5/16 inches, 1861/1869. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Paul Mellon Collection. LEFT TO RIGHT: White Cloud the Prophet, the powerful shaman who betrayed Black Hawk; Neapope, who was considered the warrior chief; Black Hawk, wearing fringed buckskins and holding a black sparrow hawk, the bird from which his name is derived; Black Hawk's eldest living son, Na-she-ask-uk (literally translated as Whirling Thunder), who is wearing strands of sacred megis shells; and White Cloud's adopted son, Pawasheet, who is second from the right. On the far right stands Pamaho, Black Hawk's adopted son, who was in training to become a warrior chief.



Fortress Monroe, Va. and its Vicinity by J. Wells. Litho print, 1862. Courtesy The Library of Virginia.

painted on the canvas, and that Black Hawk's portrait was painted over this image.



Robert Sully became well acquainted with Black Hawk during the Fort Monroe period, commenting that he knew him better than anyone in Wisconsin. Sully was given an apartment in Fort Monroe and offered every possible privilege by Colonel Eustis. He spent a great deal of time painting Black Hawk, describing his work in a May 3, 1854, letter to Draper as a "perfect fidelity, painted with daguerreotype exactness" (Valentine archives). Sully, among others, thought his Black Hawk painting was the closest in likeness of all the artists, citing a vast difference between a portrait and a sketch. Sully believed a hurried portrait conveys only general character without individuality, while a true portrait demands a perfect likeness captured with individual expression.

Colonel Eustis compliments Sully's accuracy in portraiture in a farewell letter dated May 18, 1833:

Understanding, you are about to leave us with the Portraits you have recently executed of Black Hawk, & his comrades, I take leave to congratulate you on your happy success in portraying these sons of the Forest. You have probably had a better opportunity & have devoted more time to this subject than any other artist, and the speaking likeness you have produced (especially of B. Hawk and the *Prophet*) will I trust, not only amply remunerate the expenditure of your time and talents, but greatly add to your Professional reputation (Valentine archives).

.....
*Sully, among others, thought
his Black Hawk painting was
the closest in likeness of all
the artists.*
.....

The following day, Charles St. Vrain, Black Hawk's interpreter, also wrote a complimentary letter to Sully, indicating he preferred Sully's portraits to George Catlin's:

It affords me pleasure to express to you my opinion of the Portraits of B. Hawk and the Indians under my charge. I regard them as the best I have seen taken from Jefferson Barracks (Missouri) to this place (Valentine archives).

Sully's letters agree with these statements and offer insight into Black Hawk's character by viewing Black Hawk as having been very distinguished. In March 1855 he wrote to Draper:

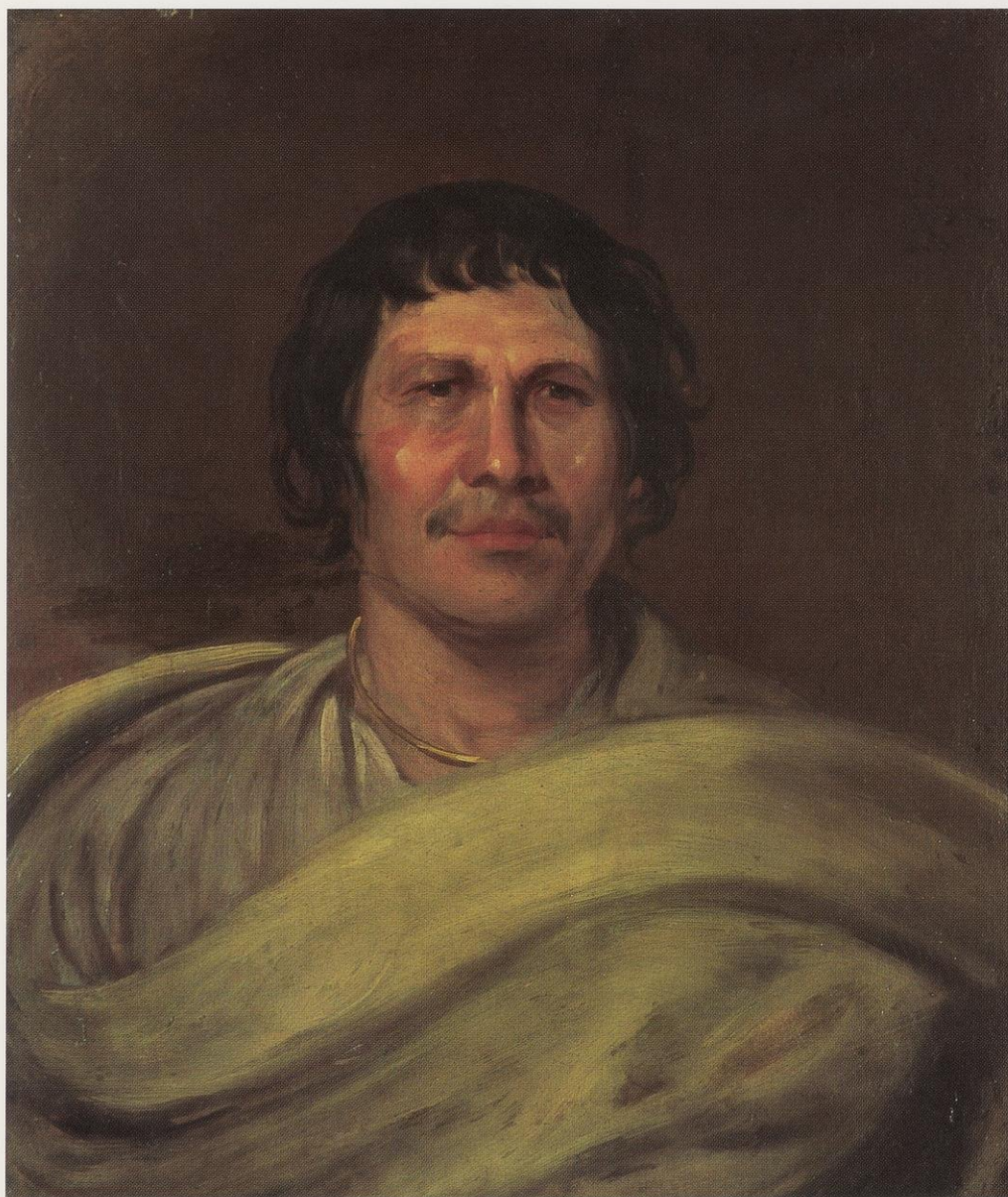
He was no common savage, . . . His frequent intercourse with British officers in the War of 1812; '13, '14, had given him something of polish and refinement. He was fully acquainted with all points of etiquette, in civilized life. It is possible that all this had been partially concealed among his native wilds. Take him altogether he was the finest savage specimen I ever met with (Valentine archives).

The accuracy of Black Hawk's portrait is a result of Robert Sully's European training. An extremely talented, yet unrecognized artist, Robert Matthew Sully was born in Petersburg, Virginia, on July 17, 1803, son of Charleston artist and actor Matthew Sully and Richmond musician Elizabeth Robertson. In his eighteenth year, after displaying a talent for drawing, his uncle Thomas Sully invited him to study portraiture for several months in Philadelphia. In addition to private painting lessons, Robert received a great cultural education from Thomas, who admired Shakespeare.

Encouraged by his uncle, in 1824 Robert traveled to England where he copied the portraiture of John Jackson, Thomas Lawrence, and Sir Joshua Reynolds at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Through his friendship with the elderly



Portrait of Black Hawk by Robert Sully. Oil on canvas, 36 x 28 ⁵/₈ inches, 1833. Courtesy Virginia Historical Society. This early painting of Black Hawk has been heavily retouched.



Portrait of Wa-bo-kia-shiek or White Cloud the Prophet by Robert Sully. Oil on canvas, 1833.
 Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

James Northcote, a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Robert received artistic criticism and instruction that enhanced his painting skills.

In 1826 young Robert Sully painted a portrait of Northcote at the age of eighty, which received praise from London art critics, and a portrait of Charles Beloe, a secretary in the British Institution. The Beloe portrait so impressed Northcote that he sent Sully one of his own portraits to study and copy, an act that greatly improved Sully's technical skills. In terms of color and style, Sully's work closely resembled Northcote's, particularly in the modeling of faces. Sully incorporated Northcote's thematic oeuvre—they both painted the Tower of

London, which so intrigued Sully that he sketched the armor from this site.

When he returned to Richmond in 1829, Sully began his career as an artist, painting oil portraits of local socialites and politicians. Inspired by his British experience, Sully began painting romantic Shakespearean scenes, including *Hamlet in the Graveyard*, *Murder in the Tower*, and the *Banquet Scene from Macbeth*. He also began a watercolor journal that recorded his personal life with poems, angels, children, fallen soldiers, and dogs. However, by 1833, following his marriage to Isabella Thompson and the birth of their children, he was in a severe financial situation in Richmond. Thus, the arrival of Black Hawk presented him with an opportunity to raise his professional status.

Near the middle of May 1833, after completing Black Hawk's Fort Monroe portrait, Robert Sully created a domesticized portrait of *Wa-bo-kia-shiek* the Prophet, or White Cloud the Prophet, by drastically altering George Catlin's visionary image. Sully's *Prophet* resembles a fine, Roman warrior, elegantly draped in a green robe with gold chain. Precisely following Northcote's portrait palette, Robert completed the Prophet's

face with accents of white highlights on cheek and brow. Robert Sully did not view White Cloud as particularly distinguished, but did record his newly grown long hair and moustache. Sully discussed this painting in a letter to Draper dated May 13, 1854:

The *Prophet* has simply a plain common blanket of light color. This is a good contrast to his massive black hair, and dark Spanish inquisitorial look (Valentine archives).

Near the end of their Fort Monroe stay, Robert Sully painted Whirling Thunder in Native American costume, colorfully adorned with a red robe and gold chains. Whirling Thunder



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The portrait of Nasheakusk the Son of B.Hawk, (a handsome fellow by the way) as well as that of the *Prophet*, are precisely in the costume such as they wore on their own soil. The young man is entirely bare, arms & shoulders, crimson or red blanket, head decorations in its primitive war costume. His face, which he was most anxious to improve, by having one side black, the other vermillion, I would not consent to, as you may imagine. His fine features would have been utterly destroyed (Valentine archives).

As part of the domesticization of Black Hawk and his entourage, it had already been decided by the Jackson administration that they should tour the eastern United States after Sully had finished the portraits. Thus Black Hawk and his group departed Fort Monroe and were taken to Norfolk.

On June 6, 1833, William Whiting of Richmond, Virginia, was a witness at the navy dry dock when Black Hawk and associates embarked to reunite with President Jackson and, as noted in the Whiting's diary, to accompany the president "as far as New York in order to give them some idea of the population, resources . . . of their more civilized brethren" (Virginia

Historical Society archives). Before their departure, both Black Hawk and White Cloud spoke to the crowd from the Exchange Hotel balcony in Richmond. They expressed gratitude to the colonists and assured the crowd that in the future they would be more amicable.

Further insight into the personality of the six Sauk prisoners can be found in Whiting's diary:

The appearance of Black Hawk is very presupposing. His face is much like Madison's, perhaps it captures more fine volume—and more united to as much true dignity as I can behold.

Portrait of Loud Thunder by Robert Sully (literally translated from the Sauk language as Whirling Thunder). Oil on canvas, 29 x 25 inches, 1833. Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

wears several layers of red shell earrings, his hair is pulled back in a myriad of green and red feathers. Sully presents him as a draped spectacle, not as a "wild savage." Deemed as "the perfect Apollo" and "the heartthrob" of the Sauk tour, Whirling Thunder was five feet, nine inches tall and weighed 190 pounds. This portrait, painted in May 1833, was the last Sully painted of the Sauk trio; and perhaps due to the lack of time with the sitter, it appears not to have been completed, as there are few layers of paint or finishing touches. Sully chose not to present Whirling Thunder as a full Sauk warrior, wearing red and black facial war paint. In a letter to Draper dated May 13, 1854, he explains:

His son is a fine looking man, but his face has no indications of a superior mind. The Prophet seems to be the most cunning, but I thought he seemed . . . very anxious to be very polite. Pa wa sheet was more carefree than the rest, he laughed a good deal and was always in a smile. Pamaho had nothing pleasing about him, his felorn [sic] smile and was not little interested in what was going on. Neapope is a small man with a face full of meaning, he looked in fact like a warrior. He was very cheerful and cracked jokes very freely with the Prophet, at which they both laughed immediately. The whole group was an interesting one, well worth the prices of some eminent artists . . .

By mid-June 1833, "Black Hawkania" had swept the country and the Sauk prisoners had become a focus of interest. On June 9, Black Hawk rode in the streets of Philadelphia as did President Jackson, whom he nearly outshone in popularity. However, on June 22, over 5,000 people mobbed and attacked Black Hawk's group in Albany, New York. When Black Hawk arrived in Detroit wearing a brass-buttoned, blue-collared red coat, as recorded in a portrait by J.M. Lewis, he was weary of his travels and anxious to go home.

Black Hawk at last was permitted to return to Wisconsin, and he was then sent to the reservation near Des Moines, Iowa, where he died in 1838.

Robert Sully returned to Richmond to paint for nearly two decades—his Main Street studio portraiture advertisements appear in the *Richmond Whig* into the 1840s. Richmond newspapers document his historic paintings of Ivanhoe and individual portraits of Lord Byron, Izaak Walton, and Junius Booth. He became fascinated with the Indian maiden Pocahontas, whom he called his princess, and painted her in a lavish forest setting. However, he was unhappy in Richmond, as he felt unrecognized as an artist and financially devastated. Therefore, he was extremely pleased to receive an offer from Lyman C. Draper, secretary of the newly formed Wisconsin State Historical Society (now the State Historical Society of Wisconsin) to become their official portrait painter.



In 1854 Thomas Sully had introduced Robert to Lyman Copeland Draper (1815–1891), and a lengthy written correspondence had begun. Draper envisioned a state art gallery within the society in Madison to house the portraits of all the Wisconsin governors, Indian chiefs, senators, representatives, and early settlers, thus creating a visual record of the formation of early Wisconsin. In 1854 Draper asked many artists to send

copies of their paintings in exchange for honorary membership in the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

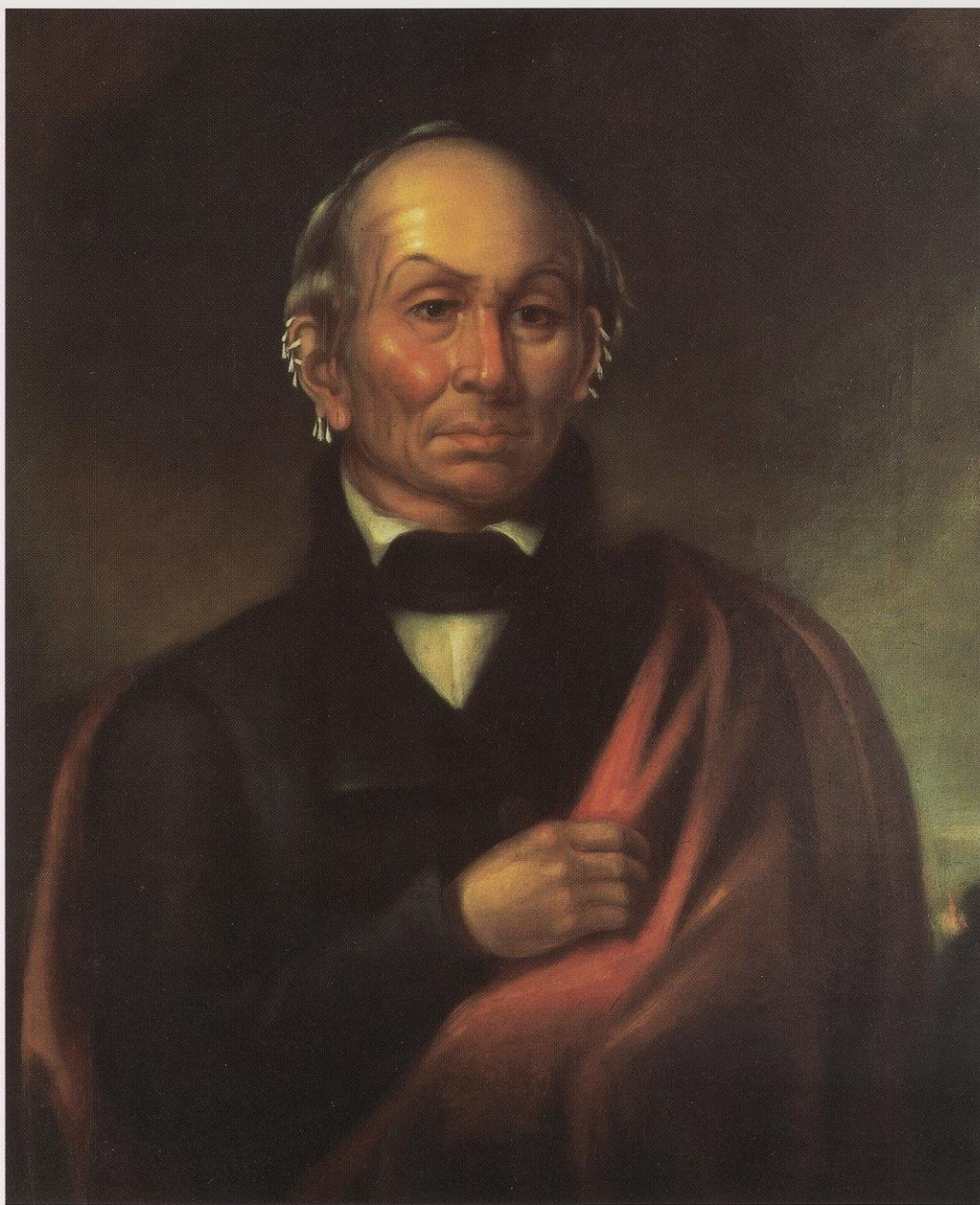
Sully replied to Draper's request by suggesting a painting tour of Wisconsin, proposing to paint the Black Hawk War battle grounds as historical documents. He also asked to compose the Wisconsin state seal, suggesting that the image of the "Infant Hercules Strangling Two Serpents" represent the state's logo, symbolic of the United States government's victory over the Sauk and Fox nations during the Black Hawk War. Draper answered by asking Robert Sully to become the full-time Wisconsin State Historical Society artist. By promising official portraits to Wisconsin citizens, Draper raised enough money to bring Sully to Madison.

As part of the arrangement, Draper requested copies of Sully's *Black Hawk*, *Whirling Thunder*, and *White Cloud the Prophet* portraits to be placed in the new Wisconsin State Historical Society's picture gallery (the original 1833 paintings from Fort Monroe had been donated by the artist to the Virginia State Historical Society).

When Draper's \$100 prepayment for the three paintings arrived early, Sully was greatly distressed, as he had only copied one of the paintings and had sent the two *originals* from the Virginia State Historical Society. Sully describes his prepayment concerns to Draper in a letter dated April 21, 1855:

Your letter has given great pleasure for I cannot tell you the anxiety I have felt, respecting the safe arrival of the pictures, as well as the approbation they have met with. Your liberal and premature payment made me all the more anxious. "You did not think Black Hawk so dignified a person." Let me assure you, his unique dignity, manly and intellectual beauty was the subject of general remark. He was no doubt seen in Wisconsin under a disadvantage (Valentine archives).

In October 1854, twenty-one years after painting the original portrait from life, Robert Sully began to paint a second copy of the *Black Hawk* portrait, depicting an older, more wrinkled warrior. The copy emphasized the Sauk's defeat by enlarging their final Battle of Bad Axe, painted in red and orange on Black Hawk's left side. Placed against a Dutch background of burnt sienna, Black Hawk again wears eleven ornamental megis shells, earrings of his clan. His ruddy face, accentuated with rich flesh tones and white highlights, again reflects Robert Sully's British training. On two occasions in October, while copying the Black Hawk portrait, Sully informs Draper of his declining health, claiming to have been "somewhat of an invalid," explaining this as the cause of his unusual silence and the delay of the pictures. In February 1855, he cites a mid-win-



Portrait of Black Hawk by Robert Sully. Oil on canvas, 35 x 38 inches, 1855. Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

ter attack of rheumatism as the reason for his work having been delayed.

Sully did not have time, strength, or interest to copy *Whirling Thunder* and *White Cloud the Prophet* paintings, located in the Virginia Historical Society. Instead, he gave his original *Pocahontas* painting to the Virginia State Historical Society in order to legitimately secure the original portraits of *Whirling Thunder* and *White Cloud the Prophet* for the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

On February 10, 1855, when the copies of *Black Hawk* and *Pocahontas* were finished, Sully addressed Draper, giving full explanation for sending the original paintings of *Whirling Thunder* and *White Cloud the Prophet*:

At last the Pictures are completed. An attack of rheumatism, in the early part of the winter has caused this delay. But the funds of the [Virginia] Society are at a very low ebb. My price for the picture was \$70. Anxious to possess it they made this offer; although not to my advantage (for I could have sold the picture) for your sake I consented.

They offered to exchange with me the original Portrait of the "Prophet & the son of Bk Hawk," for my Picture of the Princess. I will tell you why I so gladly acceded to this proposition. There is in the original Portrait of the Prophet a peculiar indescribable devilish expression, a something that you cannot explain that I hit exactly, and might not hit again so perfectly in any copy. It might be a Facsimile and not retain that something which has been a subject of remark to all who have seen it. I therefore congratulate you. The Portrait of the old chief is different. Under any circumstances I would have preferred sending

a copy of the original. Besides being a perfect copy, I have made a better Picture. I preferred as any Painter would, to paint the Prophet in his massive, unkept, black locks, any Fantastic head gear to such a subject would have been as much out of keeping as a ruffled shirt on a Spanish Inquisitor (Valentine archives).

In all, the Wisconsin State Historical Society received five oil paintings from Robert Sully, including a copy of *Pocahontas*,



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Portrait of Lyman Draper at age forty by an unknown painter. Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches, 1854. Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Supreme Court Justice John Marshall, and several watercolor studies of his Jamestown relics.

Sully left Virginia for Wisconsin in early October 1855. On October 19, he stopped briefly in Buffalo where, following a "strange illness," he died. Sully's affliction, described by his younger sister, Mrs. M.R. Chamberlain, in her letters to Draper, was in fact advanced alcoholism. She had forewarned Draper of Sully's condition, describing him as a romanticist, and had asked Draper in a letter dated November 3, 1855, to pray for his affliction, and keep him from the path of destruction, which was apparently due to domestic sorrows (State Historical Society of Wisconsin archives).

Yet his mysterious death actually followed a severe beating, robbery, and drinking spell. Sully had left Buffalo's Railroad Motel for four or five days, according to the owner, and when he returned he was filthy and his clothes were torn. He was missing the inner money belt which was sewn to his waistcoat, he had a black eye, had lost all memory, and had external and internal bleeding. Apparently he had been robbed of the \$180 he carried, as the Railroad Motel owner, Mr.

Laramie, later billed his sister \$40 for his indigence and kept his luggage until her payment arrived.

The attending physician, Dr. Lockwood, noted that he believed Sully had been drugged, stating the vomiting and bleeding stomach were caused from excessive drinking (Mrs. Chamberlain's November 3, 1855 letter, State Historical Society of Wisconsin archives). Yet it is entirely possible that Robert Sully's death was a result of the beating and robbery, a crime of 1855 which was unsolved. Dr. Lockwood was sum-

.....
*"Sully is gone . . . who can worthily
 fill the place his untimely death
 has made vacant?"*

moned October 27 to the Railroad Motel, and Sully was sent to the Sisters of Charity Hospital, where he died October 28, 1855.

In Madison, Lyman Draper gave the eulogy at the Wisconsin State Historical Society's December executive committee meeting, citing Wisconsin's great loss of a portrait painter for the society's picture gallery. Draper laments:

He had devised liberal things for our Society—to sketch and paint the battlefields of our Black Hawk War and portraits of our noble and fast fading band of pioneers . . . Sully is gone . . . who can worthily fill the place his untimely death has made vacant? (State Historical Society of Wisconsin archives).

Draper's plans for a great picture gallery did not materialize within the development of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. However, his attempts did establish a large collection of nineteenth-century American portraiture, which includes Robert Sully's finest paintings as well as significant examples of George Catlin's work. ■

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The Taliesin “Tea Circle Oak”: In Memoriam

by R. Bruce Allison

*F*rank Lloyd Wright's grandson, Brandoch Peters, called me at home early in the evening of Thursday, June 18, 1998. In a very solemn voice he said, "I have bad news." My first thought was that another senior member of the Taliesin Fellowship had died. In the past few years I had attended memorial services for Wesley Peters, Kenneth Lockhart, John DeKoven Hill, and Richard Carney. I was witnessing the passing of a generation of architects who had come to Mr. Wright as young students and stayed as disciples of the philosophy that Taliesin epitomized.



© Pedro E. Guerrero

The Taliesin “Tea Circle Oak” before the June 1998 storm.

“The Tea Circle Oak,” Brandoch continued, “just minutes ago was blown over in the storm and crashed onto the roof of the drafting studio at Taliesin.”

Brandoch had correctly gauged the impact this news would have on me. As a professional arborist, I knew that oak intimately; I had climbed it, fed it, and pruned it regularly for nearly twenty years.

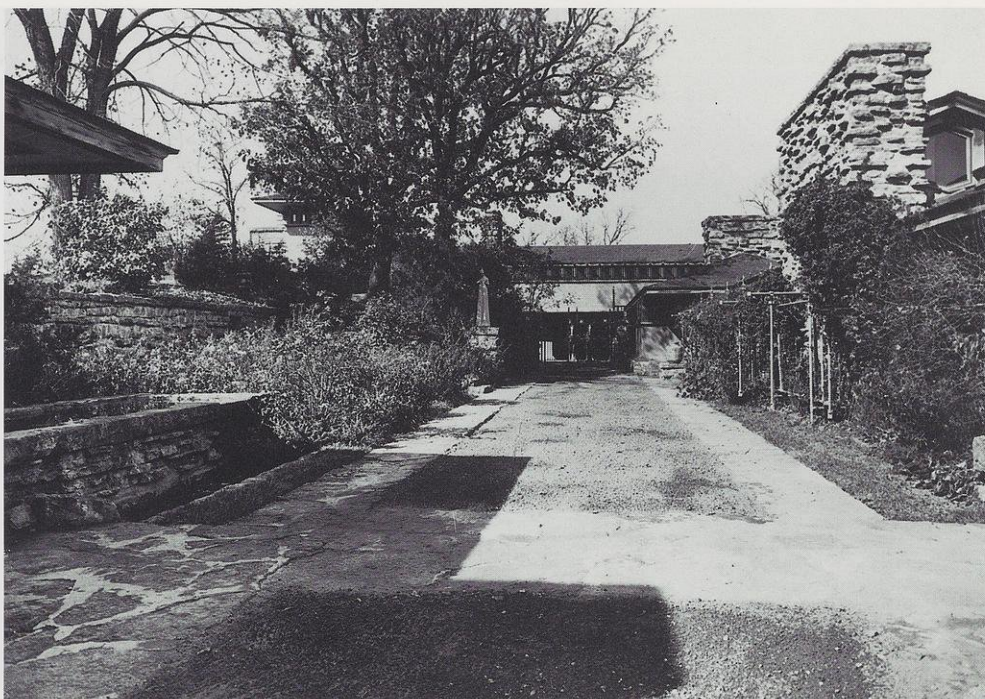
I remember one bright autumn day, while climbing with rope and hand saw in the upper branches of the oak’s sixty-foot crown, I paused to survey the remarkable scene around me. Looking north towards the Wisconsin River, the intense blue sky was matched by the burgundy, mustard, and copper glow of the peaking autumn hardwoods. I could hear a honking cacophony of migrating geese as they circled above the Taliesin pond in the foreground. The road leading up the hill to Taliesin passed by stone gates and a waterfall. The building wrapped the oak on three sides with its long, low prairie roof. Looking down through the leaves and branches I could see the native stone courtyard with steps leading past the oak to the hillcrest behind it.

I understood what Mr. Wright meant in his autobiography when he wrote about Taliesin:

Finally it was not so easy to tell where pavements and walls left off and ground began. Especially on the hill-crown, which became a low-walled garden about the surrounding courts, reached by stone steps walled into the slopes. A clump of fine oaks that grew on the hilltop stood untouched on one side above the court . . . The hill-crown was thus saved and the buildings became a brow for the hill itself.

Taliesin is Welsh for shining brow. Originally, three clustered oaks comprised the “clump of fine oaks” around which Mr. Wright built Taliesin in 1911. By the time of Mr. Wright’s death in 1959, two remained: a dominant white oak, which was the original Tea Circle Oak, and a suppressed bur oak along side. The larger oak was destroyed by lightning the year after Mr. Wright died. The smaller oak, released from the dominant canopy, accelerated in growth, rising like a phoenix from the ashes of the older tree to become the new Tea Circle Oak.

In recent years I have observed Brandoch gathering acorns from this oak, establishing seedlings near the aging population of oaks in other parts of the Taliesin property. Motivation to plant had no doubt been heightened by the fact he had been a



Two oaks stand side by side in the garden court at Taliesin in this circa 1919 photo.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 1403.0026

witness to the sudden death of the original Tea Circle Oak. Brandoch told me, “Gene Masselink, my grandfather’s long-time personal secretary, and I were at Taliesin that night when lightning split the tree from top to bottom. I will never forget the smell of lightning mixed with charred wood.”

Likewise I will never forget the scene of utter devastation the day after the June storm when I arrived at Taliesin with a four-man crew and chain saws. The trunk of the Tea Circle Oak had broken off just a few feet above ground level, splintering like a shattered baseball bat. The tree crashed onto the cedar shingled roof, leaving a gaping hole into the drafting studio. Other branches were spring-loaded against the chimney, the side of the building, and the courtyard below. My job was to remove the unstable, eight-ton hulk of chaotic limbs and trunk from this internationally treasured building without doing more harm. The site was inaccessible to a crane, so everything had to be cut and pieced down by hand.



My crew and I in orange hard hats scrambled over the roof and crawled along horizontal limbs. Each cut with the chain saw was nerve racking. It was impossible to know the exact weight distribution of the fallen oak. A wrong cut could cause the tree to twist or to fall, further damaging the building or injuring one of us. Brandoch and Taliesin architect Stephen Nemtin helped with the ropes and protected the courtyard garden plants underneath.

A crowd of young apprentice architects and visitors gathered on the hill to watch the drama. Cornelia Brierly, one of Mr.



The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. Air Georges.



Taliesin Preservation Commission.



Taliesin Preservation Commission.

Wright's original student architects in the 1930s and a resident member of the Taliesin Fellowship, placed her chair on the hill beside the crowd.

I had met Cornelia in 1980 when I first came to Taliesin to consult on the landscape. Her apartment was adjacent to the courtyard just below the Tea Circle Oak. I fondly remember being invited by Cornelia on several occasions to join her and the other fellows and apprentices in their daily, time honored, mid-morning ritual of breaking for tea or coffee and conversation while sitting in the generous shade of the Tea Circle Oak.

Cornelia, like the oak, has witnessed some remarkable history and significant changes at Taliesin. The most recent is a renaissance in construction and public interest following the

advent of the Taliesin Preservation Commission in 1990. The commission was a recommendation of a study committee appointed by Governor Thompson. The Taliesin Preservation Commission has assumed the responsibility of preserving the Taliesin property and interpreting it to the public. Juli Aulik is the director of the commission. I am grateful that its goals include the inventory and careful management of the trees and landscape on the Taliesin grounds.



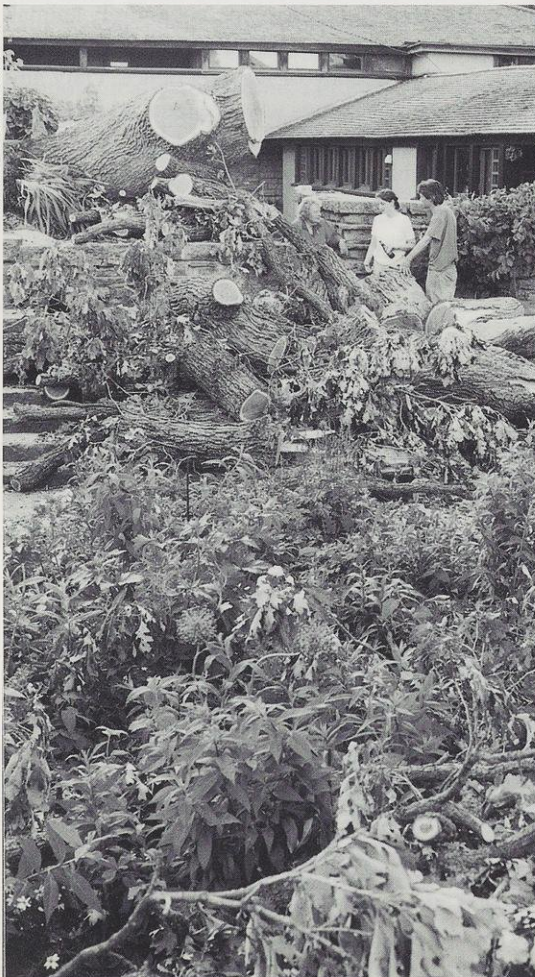
It was 6:00 p.m. before my weary crew and I neared the end of our task. Using our biggest chain saw, I made the final cut into the prone lower trunk revealing the tree's recorded life history



The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. Photo by Art Georges.



Taliesin Preservation Commission.



Taliesin Preservation Commission.



The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. Photo by Art Georges.

in stored annual rings. Two hundred twenty-five. The acorn had germinated in 1773 when the British still ruled America; the oak was 75 years old when Wisconsin became a state in 1848; it was 94 when Frank Lloyd Wright was born in 1867; and it was 128 when Taliesin was built. Scorch marks buried deep in the annual rings indicate that the oak had endured prairie fires, just as Mr. Wright had endured devastating fires at Taliesin in 1914 and 1925. Both tree and man had the strength to survive and continue to build.

After picking up the chain saws and preparing to leave following these long hours of work, I looked up and saw that Cornelia was just rising from her chair on the hillcrest. Like a faithful, respectful friend at a wake, she had remained silent and still throughout the day, witnessing the last chapter in the life of the Tea Circle Oak. 🌳

The Hop Pole

by Justin Isherwood

In the granary, hanging above the ceiling joists, is an ash pole sixteen feet long. It tapers from two inches in diameter at the small end to three and a half inches at the large. The bottom end is sleeved with a coarse, galvanized band bent over and screwed to the wood. The top of the pole has a smaller band to which are attached four rings, each installed at 90 degrees, one to the other.

When a child, I would gaze up into the ceiling joists of the granary at the mysterious objects sequestered there. It does not require much to mystify a child . . . parts of some machine that for unknown reasons was entombed like a dead Pawnee warrior in the rafters. Among the collection was a dashboard from a Model T, a wooden rim from a bicycle, the moth-eaten hide of a black bear, a bull-hook, and that sixteen-foot pole. I assumed without query or input from my parents that the pole was the actual jousting lance used by King Arthur, the same who as a boy-child lifted the sword from the stone, a variant feat I was anticipating for myself, if maybe some amazing thing done with a crescent wrench.

Later I was to learn this artifact was not the lance of King Arthur with the finger rings of Guenevere attached, but instead a considerably less fabulous hop pole. The large end was socketed to install over a ground post of suitable caliber, with the rings on the far end to be secured to wires that were strung either to other poles or to the ground for support.

The pole had belonged to my maternal grandmother who raised hops for two purposes only, one of which was approved by the annual conference of the Methodist kirk. The approved purpose of hops was for bread, the other, unapproved, was for threshing time.

According to my grandmother, there were in the world two kinds of bread, both were white and made of bleached Durham. The superior form countenanced in the recipe a quantity of hops whose flavor was undetectable and nontoxic, except that it did somehow excite the yeast to greater passion. Methodists of the old form considered yeast an immoral animal on account of its sole purpose on earth appears to be the generation of the most grievous product in human history. Never mind my Uncle Jim

thought tractor gas accomplished the more complete sin against nature and an honest day's work.

What the brethren Methodists were referring to in this matter was bottle alcohol, whose presence in human conduct is entirely the fault and coincidence of single-cell creatures stranded in biological definition somewhere between quack-grass and white-tailed deer. Not quite plant, not entirely animal, and as any naturalist can tell you, wild millet and honeysuckle don't get stupid for the pleasure of the experience. Only animals do, or human beings who are reduced thereafter to the animal condition. This was the exact hazard to the soul that Methodists were kirked to believe in and resist with all their might.



As any decent person knows, hops had nothing whatsoever to do with sinful chemistry; they just kept bad company. They did not prevent, sustain, catalyze, or effect in any way the process of alcohol formation from various sugars, cellulose, starch, taters, beans, seaweed, or from whatever else human folk have attempted its secretion. Except that when hops are included in a bread recipe, the dough is, for some reason, the more ecstatic. Hop cones ground to a fine grayish powder, rendered then to a tea, this in turn stirred into bread yeast, caused the carbon dioxide that spewed forth from asexual torment to come off in the most exquisite bubbles. Not belching, gargantuan bubbles that lift the crust of the bread so horribly that the result is bread with gopher holes. Hops do for white bread what only an extra half hour of intensive hand-to-hand combat with the bread board could equally bestow. A fine-stranded gluten that gives farm bread an unblemished texture, almost silken smooth was the flesh of this oven varmint. Hops in my grandmother's bread recipe brought about the same result as three rounds on the wrestling mat.

When my grandmother grew hops, she had two purposes—one being bread, the other was threshing.



Threshing during those bygone days depended on a factor that modern farmers can largely dismiss, except those unfortunates who raise taters and must likewise raise a crew from an otherwise unwilling public to collect and subdue the harvest. Well might a farmer of that former age have a glorious crop, a bounteous bin-busting crop, a crop capable of filling his mow with straw, filling his granary with oats, and yet have nothing at all. Exactly like chapter thirteen Corinthians implied, even if you have a threshing machine and a perfect field and perfect weather and nary a lodged stem, you are still empty and hollow and poor as dirt until the crop is befriended by a roof.

The well-known problem with threshing machines was they took an old-fashioned, somewhat slow, and unpleasant chore of hand threshing and rendered it even more unpleasant. Threshing grain out of beard with hand flails was an odious chore which the threshing machine compressed into high-velocity, technologically marvelous odiousness. Instead of human beings pounding the grain, a machine did, and as consequence raised a minute form of evil, a dust pulverized and small capable of causing tormenting itch wherever it landed. The hand threshing did the same, but spread the torment over a dozen days that a good dunking in a cow tank could unfasten. The tractor engine affixed to a threshing machine smashed the itch of grain chaff into a residue so infinitesimal and pervasive the entire person set to itching at a gallop. A truly intermolecular itch. An itch so invasive and tormenting it got behind eyeballs, wormed its way into testicles, inner ears, fallopian tubes. Hair, bones, and brain itched as a result of threshing.

Had my ancestors been up on their oriental horticulture they would have realized this itch was the very same effect sought through use of various aphrodisiacs whose intent was to set a person itching in a highly suggestive manner. When otherwise chaste women were known to throw off their clothes and scramble white as summer leghorns for the nearest creek, never mind it being three quarters of a mile away. Was a known fact that just the act of dispensing with clothes was halfway to getting at a threshing itch. This is why womenfolk were not

allowed to work with the men and boy folk at any Christian threshing. And why Methodists were generally about three years behind the Loostrans when it came to advanced agricultural apparatus.



My grandmother knew the onlyest remedy for mechanical threshing, short of stark naked, was beer. Home brew. A beer so caustic it couldn't be bought, mixed up in four ample batches, the recipe the wise farm woman began about the first of June, until she had four quarter-barrels stashed away in the cool cellar.

Threshing beer was by custom as heavy with hops as is possible to do and not end up with a chewable stew. Hops by the pailful, borne on the hop pole the year before, and a beer so bitter it'd straighten a bent nail. A beer taut enough to cure a day so hot, and chafe so thick, and work so hard, and wages so low.

Neighbors came from a radius of a dozen miles to thresh for my grandfather's place. Thresh for nothing, no hard currency, just two cubic meals of beef steak and boiled taters, fried ham and more taters for supper.

Itching by then as all billy hell, hardly able to stand it as the last bag was tied and hauled to the granary. The ground raked of the straw, the tractor idled down and cooled, then taken from the belt and attached to the drawbar of the threshing machine as would on the morning go a bit farther down the road. This was when grandfather cracked the barrels waiting in the cattle trough. Popped the bong, smacked home the tap, and stood back as the sweat-encrusted men and boys held mason jar and soup can under the amber stream and quaffed it down in the same fit of orneriness as when a fox snake swallows a toad. One long unashamed swallow. Ten minutes after, a layer of neighbor folk was spread out under the shade of the elm trees, somewhere between unconsciousness and bliss.

That night when my grandmother prayed, she asked her Methodist god for absolution of the sin she committed that day. My grandmother knew even before asking that the gods are lenient in matters of sin done for worthy purpose, especially threshing. For the time in hell was served that day in dust so thick geraniums took root. Legend has it that acres of it were sold at good loam prices before anybody realized it was only the vagrant passing cloud of the threshing machine.☛



.....
*This was when grandfather
cracked the barrels waiting in
the cattle trough.*
.....

The Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing: A History

by Ron Wallace

"I said, 'Hey, Señorita, that's astute.' I said, 'Why don't we get together and call ourselves an institute?'"

Paul Simon, "Gumboots"

In September 1984 at the annual University of Wisconsin–Madison English department cocktail party—now called a “fiction and poetry reading and reception” because state funds have been ruled unsuitable for cocktail parties—E. David Cronon, then dean of the College of Letters & Science, said in a few welcoming remarks that he “wanted his faculty to dream dreams.” The statement could have been merely pleasant rhetoric, the kind of thing that deans are wont to say at the beginnings of academic years but don’t really expect to be taken literally.

Indeed, standing there on that bright September day, gazing out the spacious window at the sun setting over Picnic Point on Lake Mendota, no one on the creative writing staff—myself, Kelly Cherry, Lorrie Moore, Jay Clayton, and visiting writer Michael Wilkerson—could have known that we *would* take it literally and, by the end of the year, be presenting the dean with a dream that would require more than a decade and a million-dollar endowment to fulfill. No one would have imagined that fourteen years later, in September 1998, we would be in that same room with a different dean, a revised party format, and five new fellows of the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing.

The agenda for the writers committee that fall was not to propose an institute; it was to propose an M.F.A. program. When I was hired at Madison in 1972 there was no creative writing program as such. Some introductory fiction and poetry workshops were taught by graduate teaching assistants in the literature Ph.D. program, and the occasional upper-level undergraduate workshop was taught by a faculty member. I was the first faculty member hired specifically to teach creative writing, and it was at a time when the whole creative writing area was poised to boom.

When hundreds of eager undergraduate students lined up outside my office to apply for the thirty spaces in my two workshops, I knew that my priority for the next few years had to be hiring more writers and expanding our course offerings. Thus

when many universities across America were implementing graduate programs in creative writing, Madison’s priority became the establishment of an undergraduate program.

Kelly Cherry was hired in 1977, and the two of us implemented an English major with a creative writing emphasis in 1978 involving a sequence of workshops and a book-length senior thesis. Jay Clayton, now at Vanderbilt, was added to the program in 1979; Lorrie Moore in 1984. More recently, Ron Kuka and Roberta Hill joined the staff.



By 1984, even with four full-time faculty writers, there were still many more applicants for undergraduate creative writing courses than we could accommodate, and sentiment was growing for the establishment of an M.F.A. program. Faculty writers wanted the experience of working with graduate students and believed that an M.F.A. program would provide Madison with a certain amount of prestige. I had achieved my goal of getting the undergraduate program firmly in place, but I remained reluctant to try to establish an M.F.A. program. In meetings in the fall of 1984, I argued that the M.F.A. programs which had burgeoned around the country during the 1970s were already turning out more writers than could be employed by colleges and universities—or published by houses that had been taken over by conglomerates that cared more about the bottom line than the well-written line. I felt it

was somehow unethical to produce yet more M.F.A.s in a market that was already glutted. Further, the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee already offered an M.A. and Ph.D. in creative writing, and there was a state law prohibiting the duplication of programs within the university system. We could have made a case that the M.F.A. was a different degree from the M.A. or Ph.D., but the distinction seemed mostly technical, and it would not have made us particularly popular with our colleagues at Milwaukee.

Although the Madison English department was prepared to support us in proposing an M.F.A. program, it was clear that little money would be available from the university for fellowships. The only M.F.A. program I could support would be one in which every student was on a full fellowship.

As we debated the merits of the idea and my resistance began to flag in the face of my staff's enthusiasm, the discussion moved to a more theoretical plane. What did new writers *really* need? Our staff might want an M.F.A. program for personal reasons, but given the nearly three hundred programs already in existence, did new writers really need another? And, if not, was there something else that they did need?

The discussion moved to a consideration of the writer who had completed an M.F.A. degree, but had not yet published a book. Many such writers (including some of our own former undergraduate students), facing an impossible teaching job market, found themselves working as adjuncts in low-paying, heavy-course-load positions, or in other menial jobs that left little time for writing. Others were returning to graduate school for Ph.D.s in English, and some were leaving the profession altogether. What could be done for these promising writers?

Both Kelly Cherry, permanent writer in residence, and Michael Wilkerson, visiting writer, had been thinking independently about a *post*-M.F.A. opportunity, something akin to a post-doctorate for a scholar. Nothing like that existed for writers. National Endowment for the Arts and Wallace Stegner fellowships were the closest approximations. If we were going to dream dreams, why not dream of something really new, something developing writers needed more than another M.F.A. program.

The idea sparked enthusiasm, and by the end of the semester I had been directed by the writers committee to draft a proposal for a "Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing," which would offer \$12,500 fellowships for from four to six writers who had completed the M.F.A. degree but not yet published a book. Fellows would teach one introductory fiction and poetry workshop of fifteen students each semester and participate in the activities of the creative writing program. The department agreed to supply the salaries for the teaching (approximately

\$5,000 each for courses then taught by Ph.D. candidates in the literature program) if we could come up with funding for the remaining \$10,000 stipend and benefits package per fellow. Four fellows would require \$40,000 per year, or (given the return the Wisconsin Foundation, our development organization, projected) approximately a million-dollar endowment.

Relieved that we were not proceeding with plans for an M.F.A. program, but skeptical about the possibilities of attracting such substantial funding, I sequestered myself for a week during the Christmas vacation and batted out a proposal. I began by noting the University of Wisconsin's long history of fostering writers—Delmore Schwartz, Saul Bellow, Joyce Carol Oates, Alicia Ostriker, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, August Derleth, Eudora Welty, and Ed Ochester were among our distinguished alumni. The proposal described the current activities in creative writing in the English department—we had just expanded *The Madison Review* literary magazine and inaugurated, with The University of Wisconsin Press, the new Brittingham Prize in Poetry, which attracted over seven hundred book-length manuscripts from poets around the country—and then pointed to the proliferation of graduate M.F.A. programs, arguing that their existence, and the number of talented and promising new writers they were turning out, had introduced another need.

I noted the virtual impossibility of writers supporting themselves solely on their writing and the very few teaching jobs available for a rapidly increasing pool of highly qualified applicants, and pointed out that while National Endowment for the Arts fellowships provided money, they did not provide the sense of community that a new writer needed. I argued that a Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing would provide time, space, and an intellectual community as well as financial support for our best new writers at a point in their careers when they needed it most. Six post-M.F.A. fellows (three poets and three fiction writers) would be selected by members of the creative writing staff on the basis of anonymous writing samples in an open competition each year.



Because the funding proposal would have to appeal to a variety of audiences, I tried to be as inclusive as possible in my elaboration of the benefits of the program. University funding sources might be most interested in how the fellowships would affect the university, its students, and its faculty. Thus I noted that the fellows would participate actively in the creative writing program—teaching the course, attending a weekly literary "salon" for undergraduates and a monthly colloquium with the other fellows, judging campus competitions, and giving readings from their works-in-progress.

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Corporate funding sources might be more interested in how the program would affect the community at large, so I described the fellows as goodwill ambassadors for contemporary writing, contributing to university outreach initiatives, going forth from a year at Madison to spread their experiences here to communities around the state and around the country.

The institute would benefit the writers themselves, but also writing in general. I included some information on how the institute would be administered (mainly through volunteer faculty involvement), and concluded with the request for a million dollars.

Although writing the proposal proved to be an interesting exercise, it also seemed a waste of time. What real possibility was there, I thought, that the university or some corporate or private donor would come up with a million dollars to fund an idea a few writers had kicked around in a back room of Helen C. White Hall on the Madison campus? Nevertheless, after incorporating comments from my writing staff, I sent the proposal off to three additional people for feedback. Their reactions were varied but encouraging.

Art Hove, who was assistant to the chancellor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and liaison with the Thomas E. Brittingham Trust (a possible local funding source), was concerned about the focus on the academic dimension of creative writing. He felt that unlike those who pursue advanced degrees in engineering, the sciences, or the professions, writers should be encouraged to get some experience before entering such a program. He felt it would be helpful for them to have some understanding of what it is to work and live "on the ragged edges" for awhile, under circumstances that are less than ideal, so they would "have some understanding of the fear and desperation that characterizes too many American lives."

He went on to express concern about the proposal's requirements for teaching and participating in the creative writing program, requirements that might conflict with writing time. He suggested a counter-proposal involving scrapping the whole fellowship idea and funding the *publishing* of new writers' works. He also, in subsequent conversations, wisely suggested that instead of pursuing the full million dollars at the outset and trying to spring the whole program full-blown from the head of Zeus, that we might consider proposing a more modest "pilot program." Pilot programs were easier to fund, he remarked, and he had, over the years, seen many pilot programs become permanent. "It is always easier to keep something going than to get something new started." This last bit of advice proved crucial: a more modest proposal, for funding one fellow at a time, led to our eventual substantial endowment.

R. Eric Staley, then executive director of the Associated Writing Programs, was also concerned about the fellows them-

selves. He liked "the concept" of the institute but was leery about "some of the obligations, focus, and pay." He thought our proposal sounded too much like a low-residency M.F.A. program, without the degree but with more work. There were "too many strings attached," he wrote in March 1985, asking, "I wonder who gets off better, the fellow or the department, which gains highly qualified teachers and judges for considerably less pay than a new assistant professor." He felt the institute should be comparable to the Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellowships in the Humanities, which pay between \$18,000 and \$21,000 per year for either straight research or research and one course to teach.

Staley endorsed the idea of a pilot program, because if successful it eventually could become a regular budget item, but warned that modest grass-roots support would never form an endowment that large.

Staley concluded, "Your Institute provides the proper haven and some of the money, but too much work. Up the support and down the obligations, and invest—gamble, if you will—on the promise of your fellows. Treat them more like writers who have arrived and less like students. It's riskier than what you propose, but it provides your fellows with the kind of support they really need."

Staley's comments were welcome; I hadn't realized that, in my eagerness to justify the fellows' existence to the university and other funding sources, I may have lost sight of the primary reason for proposing the fellowships at all: providing financial support and writing time for writers early in their careers.



With Hove's and Staley's critiques in mind, I recast the proposal, emphasizing the time for writing, making the participation in writing program events voluntary, and raising the stipend to \$15,000. (Later, by retitling the fellows "artists-in-residence" and post-doc "fellows," we would be able to decrease the cost of benefits and raise the stipend to \$17,000 and then \$20,000.) I retained the teaching component because, in addition to its necessity in the funding package, I believed that teaching and writing often go hand in hand, and that some teaching responsibility would both enhance the fellows' later marketability and ensure their sense of belonging in the English department.

Our third respondent, John L'Heureux, then director of the Stanford writing program and the Stegner fellowships, in a June 1985 letter was enthusiastic about the proposal. He was appalled to learn that over half of the creative writing workshops at Madison were taught by Ph.D. candidates in the literature program. He felt there might be harm in this and it would be much better to have *fellows* teaching those students.

"Terrific idea," he wrote. "It gives *you* some good teachers and gives *them* some money and some time to get on with their

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work.” He warned about the amount of administrative time such a program would consume, and encouraged us to work closely with our dean and development office, being prepared to do whatever we could to help the development office raise money, “for any purpose they wish.” He concluded that eventually the money would make its way to the writing program, but that it would take faith and hard work.



Hard work was not a problem for me; faith was. I simply could not believe that the institute would ever get off the ground. Nevertheless, together with the unfailingly supportive chair of the English department, Joseph Wiesenfarth, I presented the revised proposal to Dean E. David Cronon, a somewhat formidable figure who was known for his ability to say “No,” but who would turn out to be one of the writing program’s most important allies. Dean Cronon found the proposal interesting, but suggested that we prove ourselves by first attracting some outside funding. If we could fund one of the fellows ourselves, he would look at the idea again, possibly drawing on a special source for a match—the Anonymous Fund, which had supported *The Madison Review* and a reading series over the years.

With this encouragement, the visiting writer who had been involved with the project from the beginning, Michael Wilkerson, and I compiled from sources in the graduate library reference room a list of possible funding targets. We tried to focus especially on companies with Wisconsin connections, thinking they would be more likely to be sympathetic. Mike and I also sent letters to national corporations and foundations. All came up negative.

By fall of 1985 I was exhausted and ready to give up. But Mike, reappointed as a visiting writer for another year, retained his faith in the idea and offered to revise the request letter and keep trying on his own. I was happy to hand the fund-raising responsibilities over to him and concentrate on other things, rather than continue to expend my energies for a losing cause.

It is fair to say that without Mike Wilkerson, the institute would never have seen the light of day. In response to his continuing efforts, in March 1986 the Evjue Foundation (the charitable arm of Madison’s liberal afternoon newspaper, *The Capital Times*) committed \$10,000 to fund one fellow for the 1986–87 academic year. There’s nothing like a little miracle to restore one’s faith. *Someone had actually given us \$10,000!* My enthusiasm for the project returned. Armed with our outside funding, we went back to the dean, who quickly approved a second fellow for 1986–87 and another fellow for 1987–88.



Since I hadn’t believed that we would ever actually be selecting fellows, I had not seriously considered the details of a selection procedure. The writers committee met to discuss possibilities. We agreed that there should be no application fee. Although the charging of fees was becoming a

common method of funding opportunities for writers (graduate programs required application fees of from \$25 to \$50; university press poetry and fiction book competitions charged from \$10 to \$20; literary magazine contests often required entry fees to subsidize the cash prizes), the writers we hoped to serve were, in all likelihood, unemployed and paying off graduate school debts. Any fee seemed to us like exploitation.

We decided to ask for a writing sample and letters of recommendation. Although we planned to make our decisions solely on the writing sample, not consulting recommendation letters until the final decisions were being made—a practice we still follow—we decided to require letters for two reasons. First, they would serve as a check and balance, perhaps helping us to choose between equally qualified applicants and possibly highlighting other factors that might affect the candidate’s suitability for the institute. And second, we knew that letters would assure that the letter writers (in most cases faculty in M.F.A. programs) would become familiar with the fellowships.

Finally, to make the competition as fair as possible, we decided to number-code the samples and read them anonymously, even though the process would significantly add to the administrative burden.

Mike hastily threw together a simple flier announcing the fellowships, and we sent it out to every M.F.A. program in the country, hoping it wasn’t too late in the year to attract good applicants. It wasn’t. Within a few weeks we had nearly two hundred applications; that number would double in subsequent years and eventually settle at approximately three hundred per year.

Kelly Cherry and I each read all ninety of the poetry samples and independently selected the same poet as recipient: Juanita Brunk, who had received her M.F.A. from George Mason University and who would subsequently publish her poetry collection, *Brief Landing on the Earth’s Surface*. Mike Wilkerson, Jay Clayton, and Lorrie Moore read the fiction samples and unanimously selected Debra Spark, who had received her M.F.A. from the University of Iowa and who would subsequently publish her novel, *Coconuts for the Saint*. Spark and Brunk enthusiastically accepted our offer, and the institute was born. Over the years, although submission numbers have grown and the quality has remained exceedingly high, and although committees have changed, the unanimity of opinion about recipients has remained surprisingly constant.

Buoyed by our success, I took over the fund-raising responsibilities and in October 1986 received a commitment from the Knapp Bequest, a university funding source, for two additional fellows, although I had only asked for one; and in December 1986 a commitment from The Brittingham Trust, administered by the Brittingham family, one of the most dedicated supporters of the arts in Madison, for another fellow. The Kohler Foundation, charitable arm of the Wisconsin-based kitchen and bathroom supply company, committed an additional \$2,500. With support from the Evjue Foundation, the Anonymous Fund, the Knapp Bequest, the Brittingham

Foundation, and the Kohler Foundation, we had secured a three-year pilot program of two fellows per year; and, with the dean's help, we had been added to the Wisconsin Foundation's funding "wish list."

A year passed. Having had no further success in attracting an endowment, and worried about even the small funding of the creative writing program's other activities, English department chair Joe Wiesenfarth, my colleague Jay Clayton (who had taken over temporarily as director of the institute), and I visited the dean again to discuss the future. I had drafted a lengthy report on the status of the writing program and the institute and prepared an emotional appeal for further funding. I expected to be rebuffed, or to be offered a minimum subsidy to keep our programs going for another year. The dean ushered us into his office, his stern countenance betraying nothing of the dramatic announcement he was about to make that would stun us all. I had barely begun my planned speech when he waved his hand and began his own narration.

He and the Wisconsin Foundation had been working for some time, he said, with a wealthy California alumna, Mrs. Jay C. Halls. She was in her eighties and was prepared to leave several million dollars to the university in her will. She was particularly interested in the classics and English departments, and had asked for suggestions as to how those departments might use her money. The dean had told her that the English department was eager to hire a literary theorist and would welcome the establishment of a Halls Chair in Literary Theory.

"A literary theorist," mused Mrs. Halls. "What is that?" The dean explained. Mrs. Halls considered, and then replied, "I don't like it. Tell me something else." The dean then described the creative writing program and the new institute fellowships. "I like that," said Mrs. Halls. "That, I like."

"It appears," the dean concluded to the three of us silenced in his office, "that you'll be getting a two-million-dollar endowment." Only then did he smile. "Congratulations," he said. Although the money would not be available until the death of Mrs. Halls, the dean suggested that we write a proposal for an advance, ongoing commitment from her, with the promise that the dean would fund our program out of the Anonymous Fund until such time as the Halls money became available.

After expressing our wonder and gratitude, we stumbled out into the bright December day. My colleague Jay Clayton, famous for his enthusiasm, was ecstatic; his whoops and hollers rang across Bascom Hill and echoed in the icy, leafless trees. I was, of course, delighted, but more subdued; we didn't actually have the money yet, and I had been at the university long

enough to know that things can move excruciatingly slowly, or not at all.

In fact, we never did see the two million dollars, and the one million we did get was not in place until over five years later, in June 1992. The story gets blurry here—I have it only on hearsay and gossip—but apparently, despite all the advance planning, Mrs. Halls died intestate, and current university officials had ideas about where to invest her money other than in the creative writing program. The new dean, Donald Crawford (who had continued to fund the institute through the

Anonymous Fund), did his best to honor her wishes and preserve our promised endowment, but somehow half of it slipped away. In retrospect I think that perhaps I should have protested more loudly, or raised more questions, but at the time I was so relieved to be seeing a million at last that I was disinclined to object. The two fellowships were named after Jay C. and Ruth Halls, and our original plan for four to six fellows was put on hold.

About this time, however, a new development officer, Bob Lange, joined the University of Wisconsin Foundation,

and began working to attract more money to the writing program. He secured funds for new undergraduate writing prizes and apprised us of a possible donor's interest in the university: Carl Djerassi, who currently lives in California and is the founder of the Djerassi Foundation (an artists' colony south of San Francisco), received his Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Wisconsin in 1945, and later went on to develop the birth control pill. He is a renaissance man interested in all the arts, including the art of creative writing. In addition to his scientific writing he has published poetry, short stories, autobiography, and several significant novels including *Marx*, *Deceased* and three volumes of a projected tetralogy—*Cantor's Dilemma*, *The Bourbaki Gambit*, and *Menachem's Seed*—which he describes as "science in fiction." One of his goals is to bridge the gap between science and the arts, something he has successfully done throughout his very productive life.

Development is a curious business. Courting potential donors, going on the road to visit them, inviting them to campus and ensuring that they receive gracious treatment, commandeering sometimes recalcitrant faculty to fete prospects who may never be forthcoming, and trying not to appear vampirish in what is essentially a vampirish situation, requires a special talent. Fortunately, Bob Lange and Philip Certain, current dean of the College of Letters and Science, have it.

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It is, of course, an easier job when the focus of the development effort results in more than a possible monetary gift. Over the years, Carl Djerassi has brought to the campus his excitement and energy and commitment to both the arts and the sciences. He has lectured, met with students and faculty, and given enthusiastically attended fiction readings. His wife, Diane Middlebrook, a distinguished scholar, poet, and the acclaimed biographer of Anne Sexton, has similarly contributed to the intellectual life of the campus. (Middlebrook's new biography of the jazz singer Billy Tipton, a woman who lived and worked as a man, was published this past fall). Were Carl Djerassi and Diane Middlebrook never to have committed any money to the university, we would nevertheless have been the richer for their campus visits.

However, it was gratifying in the spring of 1997 to learn that Mr. Djerassi had committed a substantial portion of his estate to the university and had agreed to make an advance commitment to funding two additional fellows a year, beginning in 1997–98. In April 1997, from among the three hundred applicants from nearly every M.F.A. program in the country, in addition to the two Halls fellows, we selected the first Carl Djerassi Fellow in Fiction and the first Diane Middlebrook Fellow in Poetry.

That was not the end of our good fortune. In July 1997, as I sat talking over dinner in an Austrian chalet with my California brother- and sister-in-law, who had invited us to join them in the Alps at their expense, the topic of the institute came up. My sister-in-law, Lynne McCreight, an artist herself and an avid reader of fiction, was especially taken with the idea. She listened as I enthusiastically described Carl Djerassi's bequest and the development of the fellowship program, and then mused, "If I came up with the funding, I could have my own fellow?" I assured her that she could; and some months later she and her husband, Ed, and their two grown children, Jennifer and Gordon, held a family meeting to discuss the possibility. With the help of Bob Lange at the University of Wisconsin Foundation, the McCreights arranged to endow a fifth fellow, the James C. McCreight Fiction Fellowship, named for Ed's and my wife, Peg's, father, a retired lawyer and lover of literature.

It had seemed something of an embarrassment over the past decade to call two fellows an institute. It sometimes felt a bit like false advertising, or the kind of musical joke Paul Simon might make in a song—too grand for the size of the actual program. With five new fellows beginning in 1998, the name seems finally justified.

Over the past dozen years, the institute fellows have become an integral part of the creative writing program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. I cannot imagine doing without them. At a time when English departments are downsizing and new hiring is at a minimum, the fel-

lows annually bring new ideas and new life into the department and the classroom. In the first years of the program, fellows taught sophomore introductory creative writing workshops, which were often dominated by business students filling a writing requirement. In recent years fellows have taught a newly designed course for more advanced undergraduate writers who must submit a writing sample for admission. With our recent expansion to five recipients, some fellows may have an opportunity to teach even more advanced courses (but never more than one course apiece per semester), including our senior creative thesis tutorial course for majors.

From the beginning, the fellows have thus made an important impact on our undergraduate writers and have formed lasting friendships with the writing faculty. In many cases, after their productive year in Madison, fellows have gone on to secure good teaching jobs and publish books that grew out of their work here. A number have returned as visiting writers to teach in the program or read in the reading series.

What have I learned from all this? That when someone invites you to dream a dream, you should follow up on it; that even the most prestigious and well-established organization had its humble beginnings somewhere, and that hard work and faith can go a long way toward realizing a goal; that persistence pays off, and that there are generous and visionary people in the world willing to take a chance on something new and exciting; that despite the loneliness of venturing forth for a year into strange territory and braving the bitter Wisconsin winters (and this may be enough of a gesture to the "less than ideal" situation that Art Hove recommended for writers), if you build a program, and build it well, they will come; that there are more exciting new poets and fiction writers out there in America than any single institute can possibly accommodate.

With a new director, fiction writer, memoirist, and poet Jesse Lee Kercheval; and with the continuing commitment of our program coordinator, Ron Kuka, who has for some years handled many of the time-consuming administrative details; and with the generous support of Carl Djerassi and Diane Middlebrook and the Ed and Lynne McCreight family, the institute will continue to evolve. We hope to raise the stipend—currently \$22,000 plus benefits—in the near future and increase the number of fellows to six. We plan to design a web page, publish a newsletter, and organize a series of fellows' reunions or colloquia.

At heart, though, the focus of the institute will remain what it was when we were dreaming our dream back in the fall of 1984: an opportunity for the country's best new writers to devote an unencumbered year to their writing, at a crucial point in their careers, in the supportive atmosphere of the creative writing program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

The Addiction

Pain is something I know,
my lover, everything
I live for unwillingly.
The hunger, ravenous hunger
waiting for a fix,
sated by pleasure,
weak to the bone.
Habit controlled by will,
will controlled by need and
we all need something
by habit.

Demons suffer in hell
and here the fire burns bright.
Do you think hell shuts down
after a couple of years?
Like a vulture picking at bones
I let the dying know
who they are.
Mirrors covered,
avoiding every chance of
seeing who I am as
angels mourn my passing.

Wasted skin pulled taut
across what's left inside.
Small, fragile, easily broken
by just a word.
Tired legs stumble, crawl
to a familiar hole where
past lives are left
for another's view.
Spasms wrack an empty soul
as momentary relief spews out
and covers yesterday's droppings.

For a moment all is quiet
then the monkey starts
his chatter once again.
It's a long time until sunrise
and the dying have
living to do.

Daniel W. Harr

Morning in Germany, February 1945 *near the Hürtgen Forest*

Morning
another dreary day begins.
In the distance, pines stand lifeless
jagged
against the clouded sky.
Roofless hulls of houses paint an ugly scene.
Along the muddy, deeply rutted road
lie miles of countless wires
bearing the messages of war.
Close by
an armored monster crouches near a wall.
Across the way
a smoldering, shattered church.
A monument to Mars!

R. Byron Bird

Old One

I lean into your strength
my back held by
your ridged bark skin.
My toes find yours,
gnarled, earth-packed.
I always wanted a grandma.
Someone to write my name
in proud clan capitals;
to stretch *I am*
wider,
deeper.

Elm arms, winter bare,
hold back the sullen sky,
call down the wan sun's
benediction.
Heartwood finds heartbeat.
Pulse joins;
we stretch together
to touch the river,
silver, ice-glazed,
beyond the dried grass
shore.

Kathy Kennedy Tapp

The Storytelling Chair

Now it has a story of its own to tell,
this barrel-chested chair with a winged back,
hewn of a single tree, hollowed and shaped
by the lighthouse keeper during the long dark
of winter when the bay froze over
and there was no need for his beacon.

It remains in a corner of the room
where seven brothers slept in two beds
beside a wood stove,
the chair's cavernous belly a trove of storybooks,
hidden away like a store of honey.

When by night a force five gale blew the whitecaps
off the waves and whistled through the eaves,
stories animated the lamplight
in the huddled, wallpapered warmth—
each boy, in turn, taking the chair and telling
of horses and schooners, jousting or rainbows,
while above in the tower the Fresnel lens
gathered the merest flicker of a lamp
and sent a message of light sixteen miles
across the bay, warning ships off the shoals,
admonishing coastal dwellers to remain steadfast
in faith, to fear in the Lord,
whose all-seeing eye illumines the oceans of night
and brightens the dim shores of death . . .

The murmur of words mingles with the crack
of the storm and the crash of the waves.
In a verdant glen, Lancelot joins in mortal combat
the Green Knight . . .

Drifting, drifting on the black seas of sleep,
the youngest boy in the trundle bed climbs
in a dream the winding tower stair, sword drawn,
round and round the winding tower stair,
up to where the revolving eye of the Lord
keeps at bay the dragons beyond the edges
of our world.

Timothy Walsh

Grandpa Was a Grump

Ancestors please excuse me
most of you died too soon
except for the Grandpa who
never seemed like much fun
always better with horses
than with family members

Milk of human kindness
wet-nursing a Jewish mother
did not seem to soften
his grumpy heart and soul
fathered nine children
his studs sired forty horses

Lightning struck his house
while he sat telling tales
to one envied grandson who
swears Grandpa sang songs
fun German ditties he knew
but shared far too seldom

Twenty-nine below for his
sparsely attended funeral
school nuns let me be there
God it was a really cold day
hearse on a sleigh hauled
his snow-bound burial passage

Elmer Otte



SELF STORAGE AND OTHER STORIES by Mary Helen Stefaniak. Minneapolis: New Rivers Press, 1997. \$14.95 softcover, 155 pages.

STALKING JOY by Margaret Benbow. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1997. \$17.95 hardcover, 76 pages.

by James A. Gollata

Mary Helen Stefaniak's *Self Storage* was designated the 1998 Banta Award winner by the Wisconsin Library Association. The stories are filled with compassion and life-affirming humor presented in solid narrative style. Stefaniak's writing is polished yet energetic, and the stories address both traditional and contemporary themes.

"Voyeurs" is a non-traditional coming-of-age story in which two little girls discover that they can see a naked man through his apartment window every night from their vantage point on a high bridge. They begin to charge their girlfriends admission to the show, but must face an inevitable moral dilemma.

"America the Beautiful" deftly illustrates the culture shock experienced by a Croatian grandmother when a mail-order commode is ordered for the family house. Refusing to eat in the same abode where such a thing could be, even if it is in "Milwaukee in Wisconsin of America," the proud woman finds ways to come to terms with the porcelain monstrosity, with comic effect.

In "The Lonely Seat" the removal of a tree house once built for a neighborhood boy who has drowned parallels a father's anguish when his daughter is suddenly absent from the red velvet chair at the ballet: "You couldn't keep them safe, I thought. You had to keep them safe, but you couldn't."

"On the Coast of Bohemia" is a familiar but welcome story of an old woman and young girl brought together by their interest in books, and "The Dress From Bangladesh" is whimsically mystical as the marked-down garment's wearer becomes obsessed with the people of Third World countries—their food, their climate, "suffering, poverty, injustice."

Stefaniak reaches the apogee of the collection in the title story, "Self Storage." The visitors to or denizens of the Nutty Squirrel include a country and western band named Knucklehead, Emily the bag lady, the "citizens of El Salvador," "Mexican detasslers," and Lola, who died of breast cancer and left her urn of ashes to be kept by the manager/narrator who had befriended her. Stefaniak frames her entertaining and humane story with the detritus and transience of life, as the characters all store themselves for a time before moving on.

Margaret Benbow's poems in *Stalking Joy* are especially noteworthy for the energy conveyed in their vivid images, their judicious streetwise talk, and their always interesting and sometimes manic characters.

In "Racine" a little girl is reassured of her safety by her grandfather—"He showed me his shotgun, his Bowie knife /

and an old Boche rifle with fixed bayonet. / I sobbed with relief, then smiled, / then slept. Beneath lilac / robbers croaked, yards deep." A different kind of fear of a different kind of villain appears in "Bogeyman"—"I'd expected horns: and that he'd gibber, and bounce off walls / like an ape. Yet here he was, an angel-haired / sexy prince, giving off heat and light / like a blast furnace."

Sometimes the violent are rewarded justly, as "when Andreas was blown through the wall like a knife" in "Larson Arson," or in "The Mother's Night Thoughts"—"In the hot theater of the head / mothers from revenge westerns and murder ballads / ride horses to death to save my lily daughter, / slip knives between his fat / short ribs and rear up in old bloody matriarch curses. . . ."

Physical passion abounds in "Out of Hand"—"Even the cats, little twisters, / are up to something / animal fast in the lemon grass" and in "Cat-Burglar"—"Full of hopped-up whoopees, he races up the stairs, / and, made for each other, they embrace like mink."

There are more tender moments as well, albeit sometimes ironically posed, as in "Woman Carrying Twins"—"Robed in white and sitting down to the breakfast farina, / I'm a skintight madonna, full of fat chances, / with the gravid bloom of a still life's plums." And when the crisis has passed in "Scarlet Fever"—"A rose stood with its lips / pressed against the glass, archipelagos of leaves / flying into the dark."

Benbow's lively presentation of contemporary themes and her poetically appropriate use of humor in somber situations bring surprise, delight—and even joy—to the reader. *Stalking Joy* won an Outstanding Achievement Award from the Wisconsin Library Association.

James A. Gollata is director of the library at the University of Wisconsin–Richland, president of Wisconsin Academy's Center for the Book, and a member of the Wisconsin Library Association literary awards committee.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM ON TRIAL edited by W. Lee Hansen. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. 352 pages. \$25.00 softcover. ISBN 0-9658834-1-8

by Michael Longrie.

This collection of essays commemorates the University of Wisconsin's germinal and continuing role in establishing and maintaining the idea of academic freedom in American higher education. Covering a number of topics, the book begins with a detailed historical examination of the Richard Ely case of 1894. This event ostensibly placed Wisconsin in the vanguard of the debates which eventually led to the establishment of academic freedom and tenure as unassailable features required for the honest and open pursuit of truth in academic research and teaching. Its pages reproduce the talks presented at the September 1994 academic freedom conference sponsored by the Department of Economics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

The conference—and this book—not only commemorate the university's historical role, but respond also to recent challenges from forces external and internal to American universities. As editor W. Lee Hansen, economics professor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, notes in an informative and helpful introduction, the benefits of academic freedom and tenure were won after much struggle. He defines academic freedom as “freedom of inquiry, freedom of teaching, and freedom of speech and action as citizens.”

The compilation is informative, both historically and analytically, and will certainly satisfy readers interested in these matters. The issues discussed inside these pages are important and serious ones. The book is divided into seven sections, uneven in value.

Part one, “Ely, the Ely Trial, and Academic Freedom,” consists of seven essays that examine the historical conditions surrounding the Ely case. It represents a solid survey of the issues and the role that the University of Wisconsin played in the first two decades of the struggle.

Part two, “Clarifying the Issues: Free Speech, Hate Speech Codes, and Academic Freedom,” includes eight reflections by professional writers, students, and professors on the tricky problem of campus speech codes. (I puzzled over the fact that this book's publication appeared four years after the conference.) Parts three through five contain nine essays focused on the “sifting and winnowing” concept—the often-cited phrase emblazoned on the plaque affixed to the exterior of Bascom Hall in Madison. This section is the most intellectually stimulating of the book and includes various observations by distinguished thinkers on the subject. What these essays notably accomplish is to re-evaluate what academic freedom means in a new historical context. For example, in “Academic Freedom: Threats and Limits,” Madison political science professor Joel B. Grossman argues that “the role, mission, and autonomy of public academic institutions are under increasingly hostile external challenge.” He claims that academic freedom and tenure are viewed as “impediment[s] by those who seek to re-invent the university as a hypothetically efficient business organization whose main purpose is to supply and drive the economic system.”

Taken together, the essays in this section identify and expound on matters that all who value the liberal protections we have taken for granted in higher education will find illuminating and clarifying. Sometimes ominous, they properly identify attempts to erode the university's unaligned ideal of open research and free speech. Such a re-contextualizing of the issues in present historical conditions, and envisioning academic freedom as a dynamic concept requiring constant vigilance and recommitment, is the central purpose of this section, one that it admirably achieves.

This explains part six, “Rededicating the Sifting and Winnowing Plaque,” a series of brief statements delivered by politicians and administrators re-emphasizing academic freedom at the university in a ceremony on the steps of Bascom Hall.

The book concludes with part seven, “The Photographic Story,” a portentous-sounding but rather ordinary series of sixteen photographs of people involved in the book's topic.

As a graduate of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, I found the reading fascinating, at times insightful, and at other times unabashed Badger-boosting, cheering Wisconsin's important (but perhaps dusty) role. Still, such trumpeting can serve as a new clarion call, as well.

Michael Longrie teaches English at the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater.

LA MYSTIQUE DU RENARD, THE FOX RIVER AND THE PASSAGE TO THE WEST by George Nau Burrige. Green Bay: Brown County Historical Society, 1997, 39 pages. \$8.00 softcover. ISBN 0-9641499-5-8

THE NAU TUG LINE by George Nau Burrige. Amherst (Wisconsin): Palmer Publications, 1990. 202 pages. ISBN 0-9629219-0-4

by George Parker

These two books by George Nau Burrige will appeal to those who are interested in aspects of Wisconsin maritime history and the commercial use of the state's waters. Both books will be of interest and relevance to residents of the Fox River Valley in particular, and northeastern Wisconsin in general.

La Mystique du Renard relates to that water link, the Fox River, as it runs from Green Bay to the portage between the Fox and Wisconsin rivers (located at the present city of Portage). At this point, only a mile and a half of land separates the two rivers, representing the only land barrier between the St. Lawrence River and the Gulf of Mexico.

But, as Mr. Burrige points out, the Fox River drops 170 feet between Green Bay and Portage, making the passage down the Fox anything but easy. His short book clearly and concisely spells out the problems travelers had in traversing the Fox and fully describes the various locks which were built to enable large craft to navigate the river. A large number of photographs are included which add immeasurably to understanding the difficulties that had to be overcome in making this stretch of the Fox River navigable.

The book is valuable to the historian who is interested in ways in which this passageway has been used for the past 350 years and to today's user who is interested in the river's modern recreational potential.

The Nau Tug Line is a reminder to all of us who know, love, and use the Great Lakes that these immense, often dangerous, bodies of water had an important role in the commercial development of the Upper Great Lakes area. While this book is a history of the author's family business, which existed from 1890 to 1917, it also points out the importance of water-borne commercial traffic. The author describes business of the Nau Tug Line:

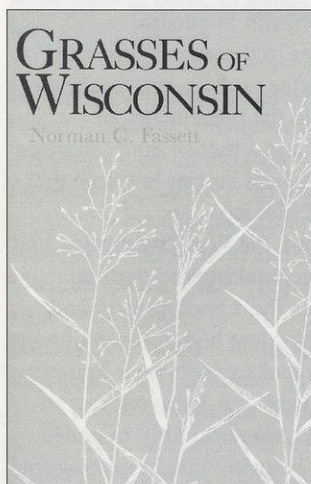
Towing ships, rescuing stranded vessels, crushing ice to release ships, performing menial tasks in the harbor of Green Bay, towing barges and rafts of logs for the lumber mills, but most of all, the towing of large rafts of pulpwood to Green Bay for the new, growing pulp and paper mills of the Fox River valley was the greatest contribution this tug line made to the economic life of northeastern Wisconsin. This was a unique thirty years in the maritime life of Green Bay and upper Lake Michigan.

The book is copiously illustrated and consists, for the most part, of verbatim comments made at the time as recorded in the company journals, coupled with and preceded by explanatory comments for frame of reference. *The Nau Tug Line* will be of value and interest to anyone wanting to learn more about maritime commercial activities that took place a century ago in Wisconsin.

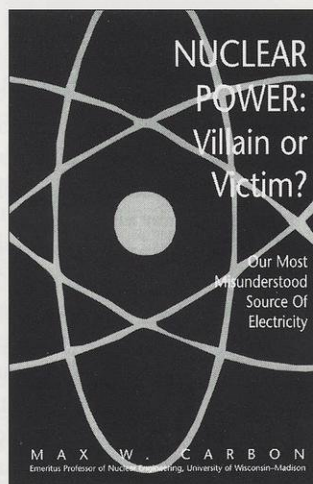
George Parker, a retired businessman, is an occasional contributor to this publication and president of the Wisconsin Academy Foundation.

ADDED NOTES

Science



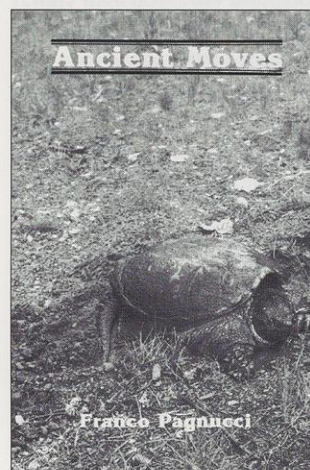
GRASSES OF WISCONSIN
by Norman C. Fassett.
Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, 173 pages. \$15.95 softcover
ISBN 0-299-00814-2



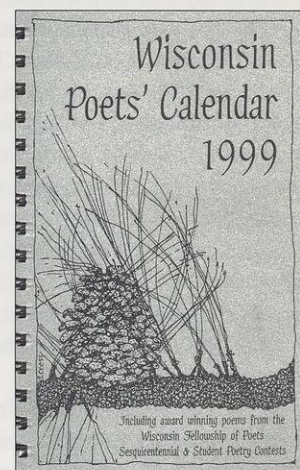
NUCLEAR POWER: VILLAIN OR VICTIM? by Max W. Carbon. Pebble Beach Publishers, 1997, 100 pages. \$13.95 softcover
ISBN 0-9658096-0-9

“WISCONSIN MINERAL LOCALITY INDEX” by William S. Cordua, *Rocks & Minerals* magazine, Volume 73, Number 6 (November/December 1998). Visit Cordua’s website: <http://www.uwrf.edu/~wc01/welcome.html>

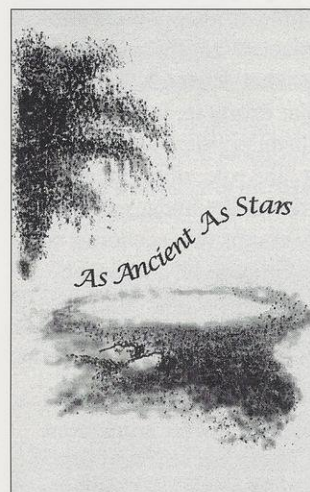
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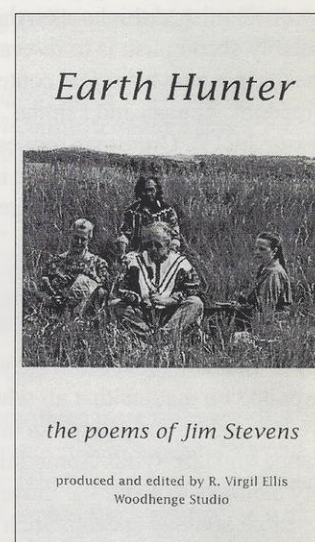
ANCIENT MOVES by Franco Pagnucci. Bur Oak Press, Inc., 1998, 60 pages. \$6.95 softcover
ISBN 0-929326014-8
Order from 8717 Mockingbird Road, Platteville, WI, 53818. (608) 348-8662



WISCONSIN POETS' CALENDAR 1999 edited by Yvette Viets Flaten. Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, 160 pages. \$9.95 softcover ISBN 0-9618384-1-8
Order from 665 Old Highway 16 West, Pardeeville, WI 53954-9313; (608) 429-3842.

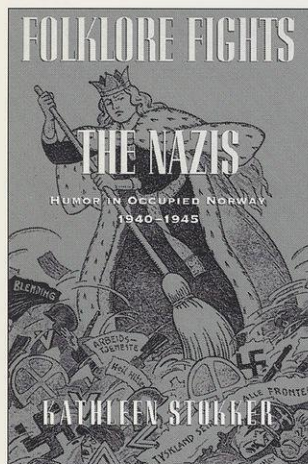


AS ANCIENT AS STARS, Poems by Michael Belongie. Star Gazer Press, 1997, 48 pages. Order from 1421 Hiawatha Drive, Beaver Dam, WI 53916.

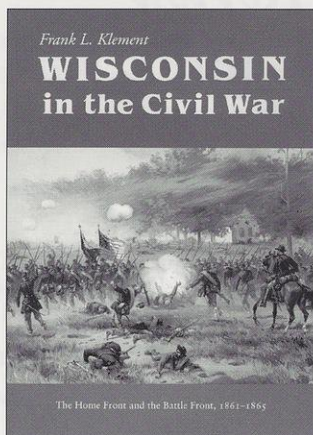


EARTH HUNTER: The Poems of Jim Stevens edited by R. Virgil Ellis. Video and booklet, Woodhenge Productions, 1997, \$29.95
Order from N2416 Rockdale Road, Cambridge, WI 53523.

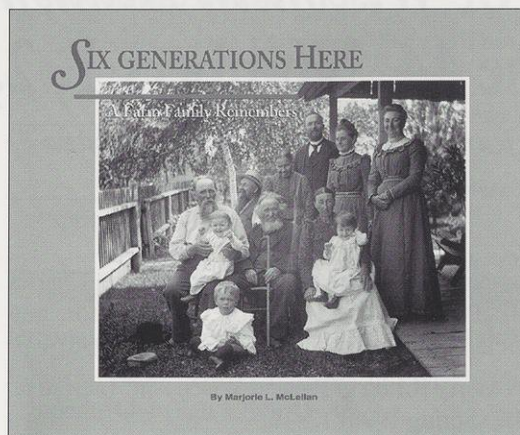
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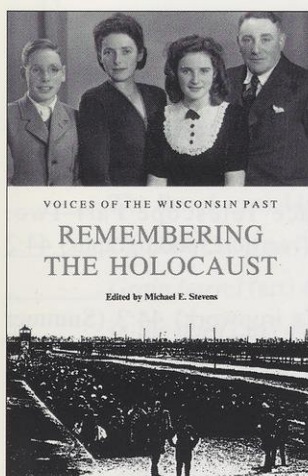
FOLKLORE FIGHTS THE NAZIS: Humor in Occupied Norway 1940-1945 by Kathleen Stokker. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, 273 pages. \$17.95 softcover
ISBN 0-299-15444-0



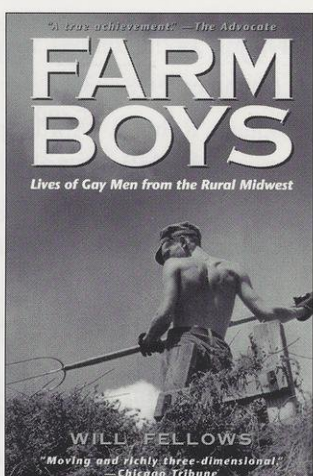
WISCONSIN IN THE CIVIL WAR: The Home Front and the Battle Front, 1861-1865 by Frank L. Klement. Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1997, 141 pages. \$30.00 hardcover
ISBN 0-87020-286-3



SIX GENERATIONS HERE: A Farm Family Remembers by Marjorie L. McLellan. Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1997, 138 pages. \$24.95 softcover
ISBN 0-87020-283-9

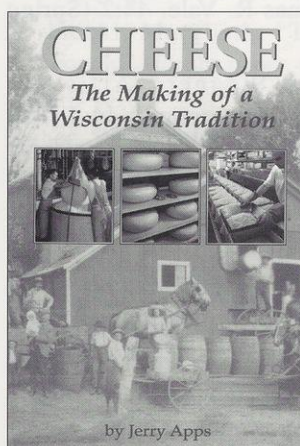


REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST (Voices of the Wisconsin Past) edited by Michael E. Stevens. Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1997, 172 pages. \$12.95 softcover
ISBN 0-87020-293-6

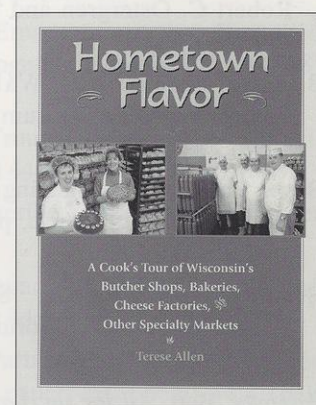


FARM BOYS: Lives of Gay Men from the Rural Midwest by Will Fellows. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, 322 pages. \$14.95 softcover
ISBN 0-299-15084-4
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Food



CHEESE: The Making of a Wisconsin Tradition by Jerry Apps. Amherst Press, 1998, 231 pages. \$18.95 softcover
ISBN 0-942495-80-2
Order from 318 N. Main Street, P.O. Box 296, Amherst, WI, 54406. (715) 824-3214



HOMETOWN FLAVOR: A Cook's Tour of Wisconsin's Butcher Shops, Bakeries, Cheese Factories, & Other Specialty Markets by Terese Allen. Prairie Oak Press, 1998, 182 pages. \$18.95 softcover
ISBN 1-879483-42-4



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- Wilde, John. *John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Wallace Stegner & Gaylord Nelson meet high on a Mississippi bluff to contemplate saving the Earth* (art) 44:4 (Fall 1998) 5.
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- _____. *Friebert, Joseph*
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- _____. *Mears, Helen Farnsworth*
- _____. *Moeller, Gustave*
- _____. *Niedecken, George Mann*
- _____. *Priebe, Karl*
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