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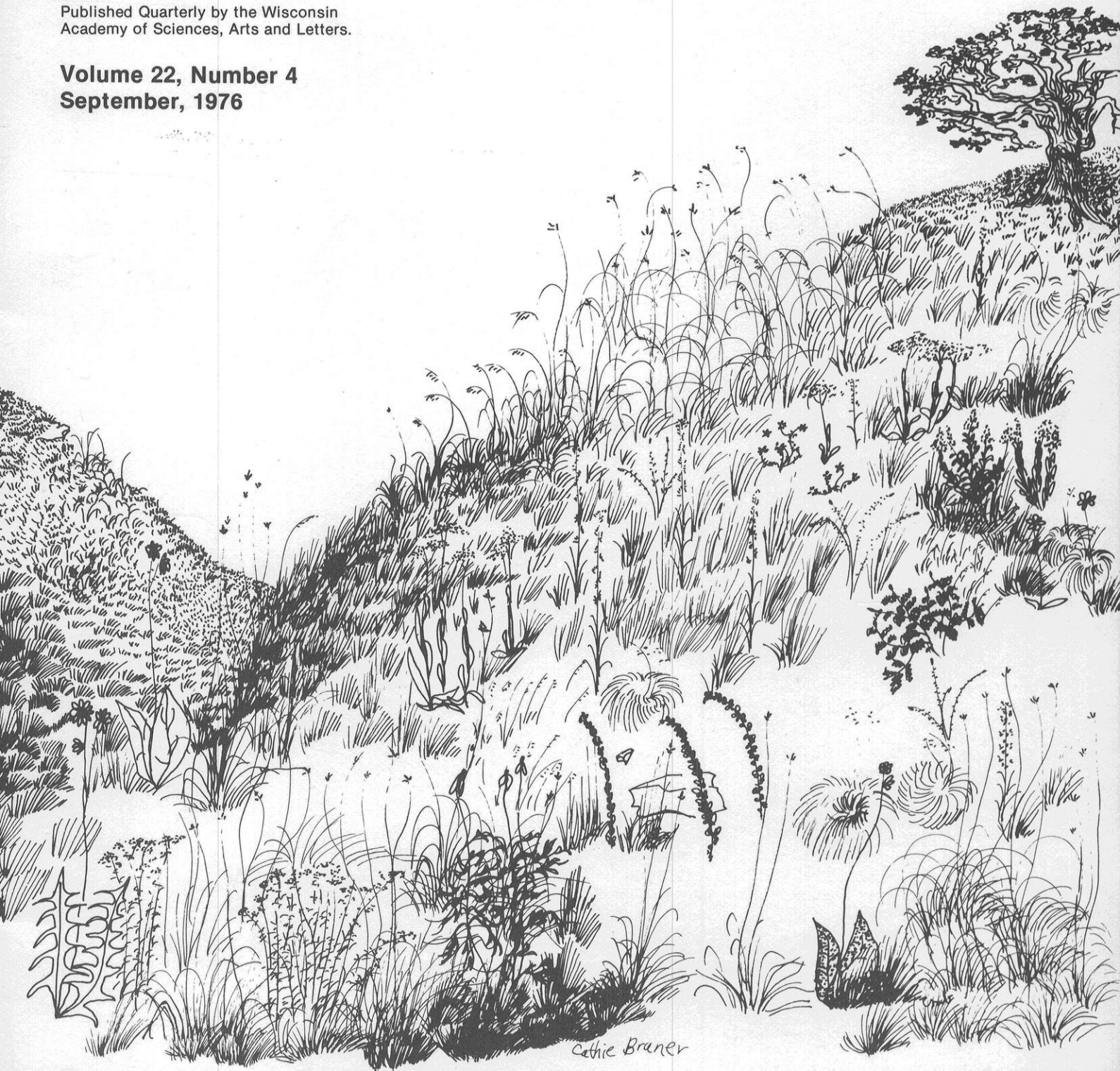
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WISCONSIN ACADEMY REVIEW

Published Quarterly by the Wisconsin
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Volume 22, Number 4
September, 1976



Ashland Autumn

Here it is, September already. And you know what that means. Well, it means that we're looking for a way to remind you about October—more specifically, about October 8-10. That's the time for our WASAL Fall Gathering to be held at Northland College, Ashland, Wisconsin.

It's difficult even to mention this year's program without sounding like one of those hyperbolic travel brochures. You know: Northland Autumn Beckons! Sate Your Senses! Tour Backwoods Byways Amid Autumn's Arboreal Artistry . . . Whoop It Up With A Native American Dinner and Ceremonial . . . Cruise With Us To The Apostle Islands . . . And Cap Your Stay With A Stimulating Array Of Scientific And Cultural Programming.

You can, however, check out the more mundane matters, including registration information, in our sister publication, the WASAL newsletter "Triforium." But do come! You might just find we haven't been so hyperbolic after all.

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WISCONSIN ACADEMY REVIEW

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James R. Batt

“... a huge and undulating ocean of long, rich grass and flowers” aptly describes the prairie which this month's cover drawing depicts. The artist, Cathi Bruner, who is a graduate in the horticulture department at UW-Madison and who helps create native plant communities, has illustrated for this month's cover numerous varieties of grasses and prairie flowers. For identification of some of these plants turn to Lynn Entine and Stan Nichols' article on the prairies, pages 2-8.





Photo by Betsy Doehlert

"There was nothing but land: not a country at all, but the material out of which countries are made . . . this was the complete dome of heaven, all there was of it. Between that earth and that sky I felt erased, blotted out."

—Willa Cather, *My Antonia*

The Random Beauty of Wisconsin Prairies

by Lynn Entine
and Stan Nichols

Whatever else their plans or purposes, no one was neutral about the prairies. Early explorers were awed by the beauty and threatened by the extent of these unfamiliar grasslands, often comparing them to deserts or oceans:

There is a huge and undulating ocean of long, rich grass and flowers, which the warm, soft wind keeps in a gentle ripple There is not a shrub or bush to break the dead level of the distant horizon—nothing to vary the widespread sea of verdure but its own masses of bright wild flowers. This is the prairie

—Nicholas Woode, *The Prince of Wales in Canada and the U.S.*, 1861

Although Charles Dickens denounced the prairie as "oppressive in its barren monotony . . . not a scene to be forgotten, but . . . scarcely one . . . to remember with much pleasure, or to covet the looking-on again," other writers, notably Ole Rølvaag and Willa Cather, found the prairie grasslands a source of inspiration.

In *Giants in the Earth*, Rølvaag's

brooding portrait of Norwegians in South Dakota, the prairie is the source of one woman's madness and the instrument of destruction for her husband who dares take too much pride in his power to conquer it.

While artists and poets were tasting the grassland and shaping its heroic myths, farmers, surveyors, and land speculators were debating its utility and value. In the absence of facts and experience, opinions varied widely. The soil seemed to be deep, but water and wood were often miles away. Breaking the prairie sod was arduous, but still easier than clearing trees and grubbing stumps. The grasslands offered excellent forage, but winters were harsh and fires rampant. There were widespread plagues of "fever and ague" popularly attributed to plowing the wild soil or to a "miasma" arising from the standing water of wet prairies. Nevertheless, the press of population, the railroad, and the lure of cheap land soon brought the prairies into cultivation—the oceans of mid-America were furrowed and fenced in a matter of sixty years.

Land . . . could be purchased from the government for a dollar and a quarter an acre but . . . no one counted himself wealthy because of the land he possessed. What made the value of the crops . . . was the labor expended upon them, hard gruelling labor under adverse conditions and oftentimes with no return but a living.

—Isaac Stephenson,
Recollections of a Long Life, 1829-1915

Wisconsin's prairies were smaller, hillier, and more frequently crossed by streams and trees than the trackless expanses of the Dakotas or Kansas. The largest ones stretched no more than forty miles. And in total they covered a little more than two million acres—about six percent of the state's land area.

Grasses, tall and short, mixed with wildflowers called "forbs," shrubs, and an occasional oak tree make up the prairie plant community. In the earliest spring days the hardy pasque flowers, only a few inches tall, appear in dry areas covered with fur to protect

them from the cold. As the weather warms, the small flowers give way to taller grasses. These plants have adapted to the cold, late springs common in Wisconsin: rarely do they begin to grow before the end of May. They thrive during the heat of the summer when the immigrant weeds from Europe have turned brown. The grasses and flowers stretch upward toward the sunlight until, in August, an adult can stand completely hidden among them. Fall burnishes the prairie like antique copper. Hummocks of prairie dropseed, tall spikes of big bluestem, shafts of yellow goldenrods and asters form subtle, shifting patterns in gold and red and bronze.

Originally the grasslands were swept by yearly fires. Many of these were deliberately set by Indians to flush game, control insects, and clear pastures and pathways. Their effect was to keep out encroaching trees, return nutrients more quickly to the soil, clear away plant debris, and allow the blackened earth to warm more quickly in the spring. These grass fires, which created a great spectacle and threatened the structures built by pioneers, were intense and fast-moving but rarely harmed the roots and underground buds of prairie plants.

Also living in the prairie community was a grand variety of animals, insects, and birds—many of them now endangered or extinct. Bison, elk, and deer fed on the grasslands, were in turn eaten by wolves, and their bones picked clean by coyotes, foxes, magpies, and insects. One early settler wrote:

I became acquainted this year with the prairie flies about which I heard so much in Vermont These this season would entirely cover a horse and when fastened they remain until killed either by smoke or being skinned off with a knife and then the horse will be covered with blood.

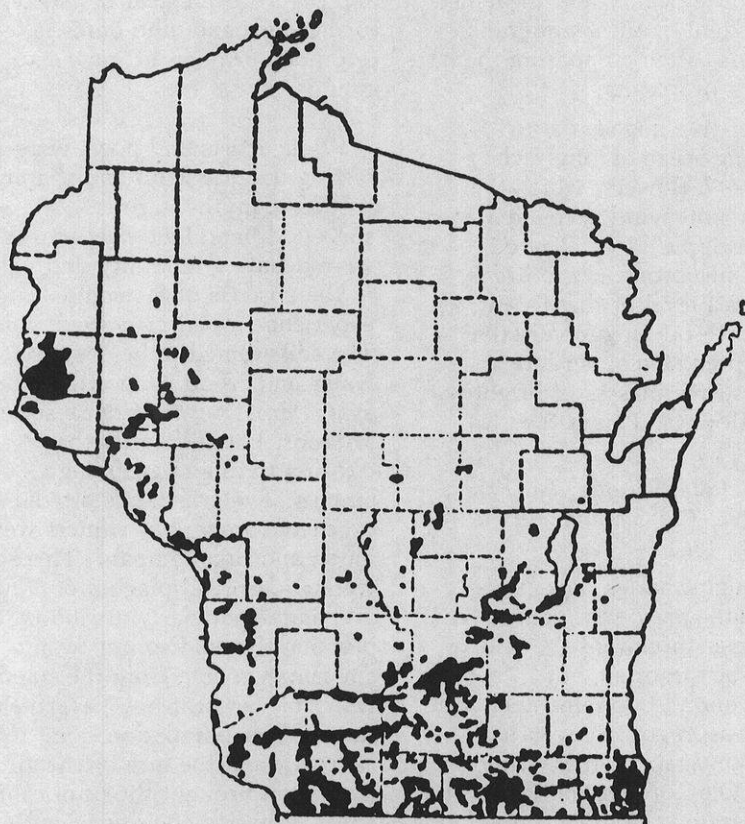
Eagles, hawks, and owls found the open skies a good vantage for hunting and found the prairie dog, ground squirrel and other rodents a tasty prey. Prairie chickens, bobolink, and dickcissel—birds unique to the prairie—have disappeared since the prairie lands became cornfields and woodlots.

A variety of conditions can play host to the different forms of prairie: arid, dry soils on steep, rocky slopes; marshy, deep clays; or something in between. Hundreds of plants may grow there. Some are as rare and ephemeral as the white-fringed orchid. Others like milkweed and blackeyed susan are so common they seem like weeds. A few easily identified plants act as sentinels, alerting an observer to the presence of prairie. These are: big bluestem, Indian grass, lead plant, blazing star, yellow coneflower, prairie dock,

and rattlesnake master.

Near Spring Green is the largest remaining undisturbed prairie remnant in Wisconsin. Too wet to plow, the Avoca Prairie was mowed for marsh hay and occasionally burned—a process which helped keep out the trees and helped maintain it as prairie. It is now owned by the state and in part protected as a scientific area. Other remnant prairies have been preserved by the state and by private organizations like the Nature Conservancy. Out of the original two million acres, a few scattered thousand remain to remind us of our natural heritage.

Dedicated botanists like H.C. Greene and John Curtis recognized in the early 1930s that some prairie plants were still to be found in fence rows, along railroad tracks and in other odd corners, and began to preserve them. Transplanting in-



Original Wisconsin prairies



Photo by Betsy Doehlert

"The last twelve miles we traveled after sundown and by firelight over Prairie, it being on fire. This was the grandest scene I ever saw, the wind blew a gale all day, the grass was dry . . . In high grass, it sometimes burns 30 feet high, if driven by fierce winds. By light of fire, we could read fine print for $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile or more."

— Alfred Brunson from *Prairie State* by Paul Angle, 1968

dividual species and even whole chunks of prairie sod, they experimented with restoring farmlands to prairie replicas in the University of Wisconsin Arboretum. These restored prairies will never be complete, with all prairie types and all the prairie species represented, but work on their creation and management has resulted in a much broader understanding of how the plants relate to one another in this complex ecological community.

Bits and patches of prairie, sometimes with only a few species of plants, can be found along roadsides and railroad rights of way, in neglected pioneer cemeteries, protected by wetlands, or cut off from cultivation by roads or rocky outcrops. The highway department has found in Dane County that some roadsides sprouted prairie species within a couple years after mowing and herbicide use were discontinued.

Perhaps they survived like the oak grubs of the original prairies, putting up a few shoots every year, garnering enough nutrients to maintain roots and stem underground.

Wildflowers are slowly regaining popularity. In sunny corners of yards, on the grounds of a few commercial office buildings, in the back lots of weekend farmers, and even in some of our heavily used state parks, the noble grasses and bright flowers of the prairies are reappearing. Many more nurseries than ever before are stocking the native grass seeds and rearing prairie forbs.

It's no easy task nurturing a backyard or an acre through a weedy adolescence and into the beauty of a mature prairie. Thistles and quack grass and angry neighbors are only a few of the problems. Fears of fire and allergy often rise like a "miasma" where prairie begins to sprout. But as

with malaria—the "fever and ague" of one hundred years ago—facts and good management can quell these fears.

A wild yard or a natural roadside, a few acres allowed to grow and change through the stages of plant succession can bring benefits of beauty, wildlife abundance and relief from the labor and energy cost of mowing. And they can make common once again the lost experience of a landscape's random natural beauty that our grandparents took for granted.

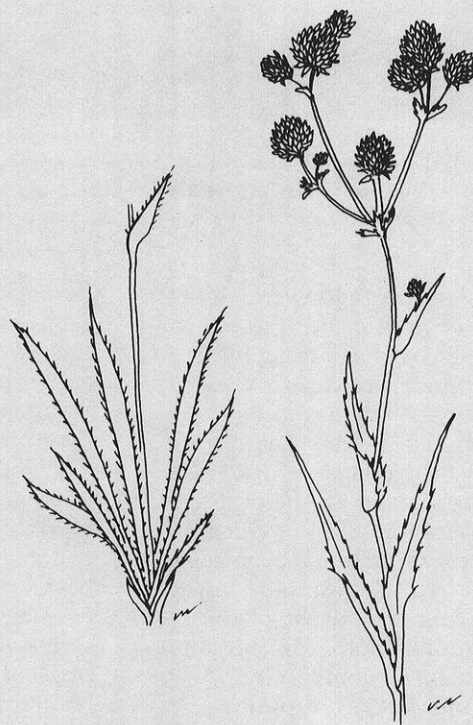
(Illustrations of prairie flowers and grasses on following pages.)

Lynn Entine is program coordinator and Stan Nichols, biology chairman at the Environmental Resources Unit of the University of Wisconsin-Extension. They have also co-authored the booklet, Prairie Primer, available from local Extension offices.

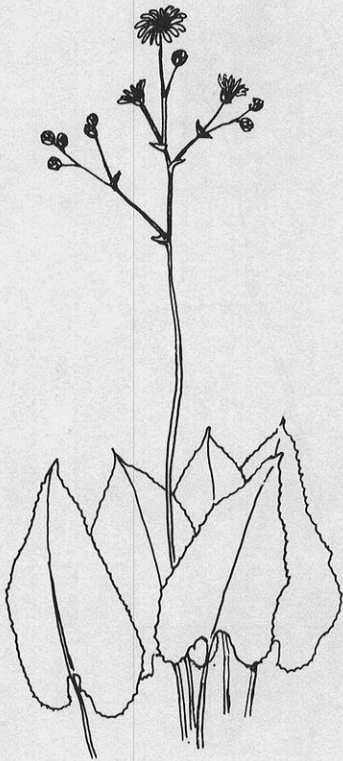
Flowers



Leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*). 18"-3' tall. Blooms June-July. The violet to gray colored flowers are found in dense spikes 2" long and ¼" wide. The numerous leaves are approximately ¼" long and are placed opposite each other on many small branches. Dry-mesic prairies. (branch of plant)

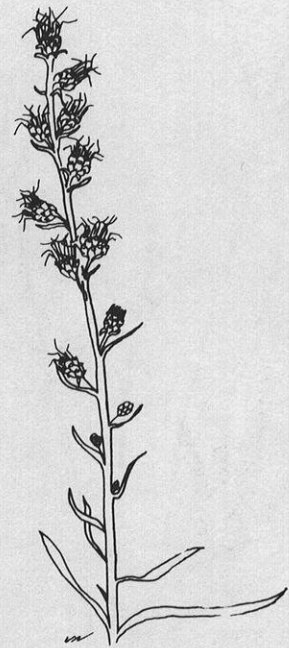


Rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*). 3'-4' tall. Blooms July-early August. The balls of flowers are white, hard, stiff, and prickly. The stiff leaves are long, narrow, thick, sharply pointed, with spines or teeth along the margins. The seed heads have a "honeylike" odor. Dry-moist prairies.



Prairie dock (*Silphium terebinthinaceum*). 5'-7' tall. Blooms July-October. Large (12" wide, 16" high) heart- or arrowhead-shaped leaves grow in a clump at ground level. They are smooth on the front and rough on the back. The flower stalk is stout, without leaves and rises from the clump of basal leaves. Moist-dry prairies.

Blazingstars (*Liatris* species). All the blazingstars bloom July-September and they have rosy-lilac colored heads of flowers. The flowers bloom at the top of the stalk first and at the base of the stalk last.

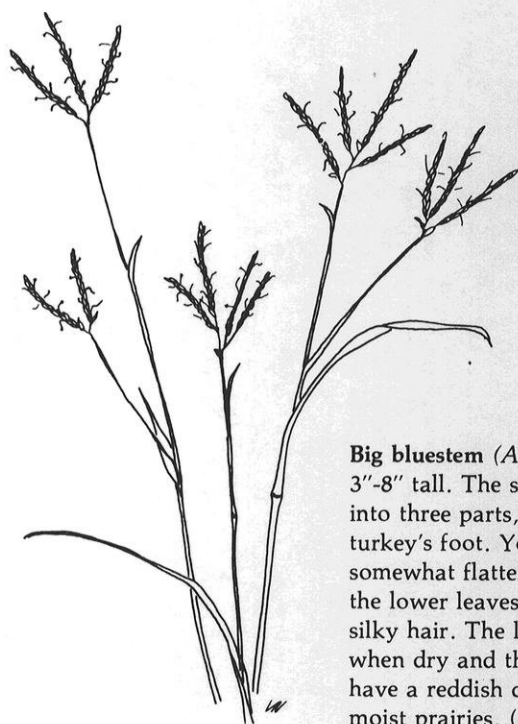


Illustrations by
Victoria Nuzzo
from the
publication,
Prairie Primer,
by Stan Nichols
and Lynn Entine.

Yellow coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*). 18"-5' tall. Blooms June-August. The flowering head is gray in the center with yellow "petals" (ray flowers) which droop downward, almost parallel to the stem. The alternate leaves and stem are hairy. The leaves are deeply cut into lance-shaped segments and tend to droop slightly downwards from the stem. Dry-wet prairies. (top third of plant)

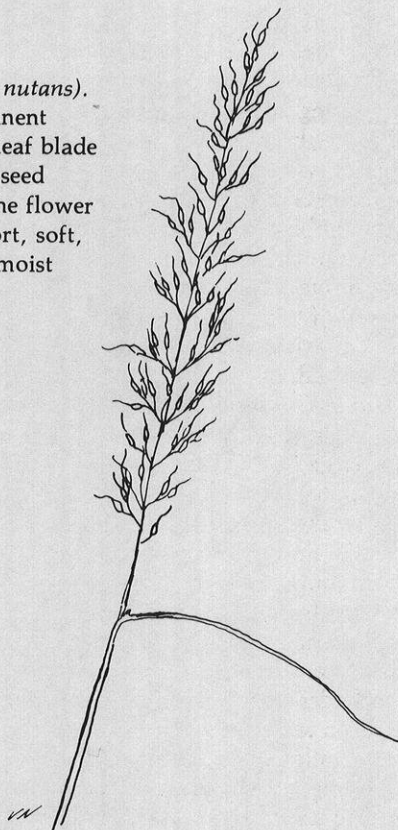


Grasses



Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardi*).
3'-8" tall. The seed head branches into three parts, resembling a turkey's foot. Young shoots are somewhat flattened at the base and the lower leaves are covered with a silky hair. The lower leaves curl when dry and the mature plants have a reddish cast in the fall. Dry-moist prairies. (top third of plant)

Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*).
4'-8' tall. There is a prominent clawlike ligule where the leaf blade attaches to the stem. The seed head is 4" to 8" tall and the flower clusters are filled with short, soft, golden-brown hairs. Dry-moist prairies. (seed head only)



Letter to Hilton From Madison by Warren Woessner

Dear Dave: It's Saturday. The light,
that never got to work, is falling down
drunk on a stormy afternoon.
The two plum trees are in bloom
and shaking with wind and life.
The tulip patch which half-opened last week
is folding up like a church bazaar
caught in the rain.
Even the cat won't go out today.
The roof leaks some.
The drops falling on a rag in a pot
sound like a hot engine cooling down.
Miles just finished blowing "Round About Midnight."
I'm not sure if I'm lonely
but I'm going to hang around and find out.
Maybe I'll write some letters
maybe some poems. Love, Warren.

4-24-76

EDITOR'S NOTE: The occasion of our nation's Bicentennial has prompted a variety of actions on the part of individuals and organizations alike. You may or may not agree with the one reported here, but we think you will find it thought-provoking, and maybe that is a good part of what the Bicentennial celebration should be all about. Your own comments may be sent to: Editor, *Wisconsin Academy Review*, 1922 University Ave., Madison, Wis. 53705. The author, William G. Rice, is emeritus professor of law, UW-Madison.

A few months ago I was in a crowd singing "My Country, 'Tis of Thee"—something I have done hundreds of times in my eighty singing years—I thought to take a careful look at the words of the song to see how well they fit the celebration of the two hundredth birthday of "My Country." Their ineptness appalled me—no reference to history (except "the Pilgrims' pride"—and I wondered whether and, if so, why, the Pilgrims were proud of the land); no mention of what, in the family of nations, "My Country" has stood for in its two hundred years of growth.

But criticism should be constructive. So I set to constructing what now appears in print as "Torchland of Freedom." Any who shudder at reading destructive criticism may well leap over the intervening paragraphs to the verses beyond. But I invite those who are curious, to travel with me through the forest of discovery of some particularities that seem to me to make "My Country 'Tis of Thee" not only unfitting but even misfitting for use in 1976.

"My Country"? It is not mine, or thine: it is ours, is it not?

If, as the song declares, we sing of the country, to whom do we address our song? It is only in the fourth stanza that we reveal that we are singing to "our fathers' God" who there appears both as "author of liberty" and as "our King." Perhaps these are compatible roles; but "our King" is, at least, a startling conclusion for a patriotic song of a nation which born with republican fervor, was the child of successful revolt against King George III, and has lived for two hundred years under a constitution whose first amendment divorces government and religion. Why should we sing to either a celestial or a terrestrial king?

Even more disturbing is the waspy tone of the verses. Perhaps, one may excuse the lack of mention of the pre-European settler of America; whether he is part of our country or almost independent from it depends on one's appraisal of what constitutes a "country" or this particular country that is celebrating its two hundredth birthday. But the reference to "my native country" and "land where my fathers died" seems to rule out all newcomers to America, though the singer's heart is said to thrill with rapture over "rocks and rills" and "the noble free" (meaning the pilgrims progeny?). Incidentally, why is the only genealogic reference made directed to the "land where my fathers died" rather than to the land where they lived?

One wonders too about the significance of "sweet land of liberty." Is not the price of liberty eternal vigilance?

So far as the United States has attained and promoted liberty, we may well celebrate the achievement; likewise that of federalism between thirteen or fifty states. It is for these relative successes that in singing "Torchland of Freedom" we honor our country.

—William G. Rice

U.S.A. 1976

A Bicentennial Song

Copyright William G. Rice, 1976

Tunes: America or Trinity

1.
O country ours, to thee,
Torchland of liberty,
To thee we sing.
Settlers from all the Earth,
Mingling their hopes and worth,
Now, as before thy birth,
Gifts to thee bring.
2.
We prize thy wooded hills,
Thy prairies, cities, mills;
And, even more,
Discoverer revere,
Pilgrim and pioneer,
Teacher and pamphleteer,
Now, as of yore.
3.
When, centuries ago,
Patriots' telling blow
Rent Britain's yoke,
They, in this grand "new world,"
Our fed'ral stars unfurl'd
And new ideas hurl'd
To all Earth's folk.
4.
Debasing slavery,
Violence, knavery
Have dim'd thy light.
Over such ways of shame
May freedom's cleansing flame,
Blazing henceforth, fairclaim
Triumph of right.
5.
Impel'd in later years
By hatreds, hopes, and fears,
Which nourish war,
Discoverers have found
Resources that abound
Can blast Earth into ground
Where life's no more.
6.
O union that we praise,
Lead on in quest of ways
World peace to make.
To those of ev'ry race
Show forth the saving grace
Of fed'ralism's embrace,
For mankind's sake.

Wisconsin's John Beecroft: Popular Culture and the Book Clubs

by Leo J. Hertzell

The commercial book clubs that sprang up in America in the latter part of the 1920s exerted a profound influence on the reading habits of Americans. Long before the sales of inexpensive paperback books in drugstores and supermarkets, book clubs were selling at bargain prices millions of copies of current books to readers in every part of the nation, many of whom would otherwise have had neither the opportunity nor the inducement to purchase books or to read them.

One of the most influential of these book clubs from the mid-1930s at least until the 1960s was the Literary Guild, owned since the early 1930s by Doubleday and Company. The Guild was founded in 1926 by Harold Guinzburg, then associated with Viking Press. It was launched with an expensive brochure of thirty-nine pages which, often in vivid language, outlined both the nature of the venture and the justification for its existence.

"The Literary Guild has been established to publish and sell good books on a basis which assures them a wider audience than any American publisher now has,"

the brochure begins. It goes on to present what it terms "A Survey of the Field," a picture of The Book in America at the time.

The average American small town is a place of apparent wealth. It has at least one paved street, a wide thoroughfare lighted with electric cluster lamps and the generous surplus of merchant's windows and gay mechanical signs. It is almost as difficult to find a parking place in the business center as it is in the equivalent section of Chicago or Philadelphia. The clothing stores show metropolitan styles in fine and costly cloths. The motion picture theatres exhibit the latest releases from the studios of Mary Pickford and the various Countesses and Marquises of the industry in palaces as gaudy, costly, and almost as large as one finds them in Chicago or New York. You can buy there a Cadillac, a Kuppenheimer suite or a coca-cola—in fact it is difficult to escape buying them. You can find a hotel

with marble hallways, elevators, and a bedroom with a tiled bathroom and a shower; and you can eat a well-cooked dinner from fine plate and clean linen. Not only you, the visitor, will do these things, but the inhabitants of the town as well.

But in this small edition of Chicago you will not find a well-stocked book store carrying a representative selection of current books. The local book store will probably be a variety shop on a side street carrying a line of stationery, novelties, and secondhand books—the discards of past seasons. You can purchase there a few volumes of recognized merit. And if there is a little space set off as a public library it is more likely to contain the works of Gene Stratton Porter, and Harold Bell Wright, then it is Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, or Willa Cather. The works of Shaw and Ibsen are as foreign to the average inhabitant of the American town of five to

twenty-five thousand as are those of Kit Marlowe and Ben Jonson. Many of the larger cities are little better off.

"All of this," concludes the writer, "we find regrettable."

The Guild prospectus then goes on to note that in 1926 the New York *Herald-Tribune* concluded that the typical American household consumed an average of only two books a year, though it subscribed to two weekly and three monthly magazines. "It is a reasonable assumption that among the millions of regular readers of magazines who do not now read books, there are at least a hundred thousand who would buy current books if they were brought to their attention." The Guild offered to bring the books to the readers' attention for an annual cost of fifteen dollars per member for twelve books.

But in its early years, the Guild did not prosper. Book choices were made by a board of judges more or less dominated by Carl Van Doren who "... chose what he liked and what he thought the public ought to read." The choices were not popular. Contemporary critics seemed to think that the books offered by the Guild during those years were either too difficult or simply too dull to interest the average reader. The 1928 Literary Guild selections, for example, included Wyndham Lewis' *Francois Villon*, Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point*, and Mark Van Doren's *An Anthology of World Poetry*. In 1929 the trend continued with such works as Lewis Mumford's *Herman Melville*.

During the first five or six years of its existence the Guild seemed to lack a clear direction. It was not certain whether the Guild was trying to educate the public, "raise" popular literary taste, or simply entertain the masses. In general, however, the Guild seemed to maintain a kind of elitist attitude in its choice of books. Many of the selections were heavy. Sales were not good.

In the 1930s the Guild fell on hard times. The man who eventually took over its directions in 1936 and fashioned its enormous success during the following twenty-five years was John W. R. Beecroft. He came to exert an enormous influence on mass culture through his monthly choices of books read by millions of club members. John W. R. Beecroft, a culturally and commercially astute man, was born and raised in Wisconsin.

At one time it was estimated that John Beecroft each month chose books purchased by

2,500,000 readers; in 1946 *The New York Times* reported that Doubleday was mailing 75,000 book packages daily to book club members. By far the largest numbers of these books were being mailed to readers in small towns, on farms, in areas where there were poorly stocked libraries and no bookstores. At the same time that Beecroft was turning the Guild into a hugely successful financial enterprise he was also creating an entirely new reading audience. People were reading books who had never read books before.

Obviously Beecroft understood



From the Beecroft collection, University of Wisconsin-Superior.

John W.R. Beecroft

the popular American sensibility. He chose the kinds of books that American enjoyed reading. He was proud of the fact that people were actually reading the books they were buying from the Guild. In 1951 he wrote, "On my visits to department stores, the employees and Guild representatives told me that Guild books were read; whereas the Book-of-the-Month Club books were taken home and put on the shelves." There is no record of Book-of-the-Month Club executive response to Beecroft's comment, but all facts point to the conclusion that the Guild did prosper under Beecroft's direction because he shrewdly assessed the public's taste and wants.

All of which raises some interesting questions. How does one go about choosing books geared to the tastes of millions of people? Is there a yardstick? Was there a kind of formula? What kind of background prepares a man for such a job?

In the first place Beecroft's background was a curious mixture of provincialism and cosmopolitanism. He was born in Superior in 1902. He attended Superior public schools and his high school literature teacher remembers him as a talented student. "William (Beecroft later

from the two-year "college course" at what was then Superior State Normal School where he took a heavy load of classical literature courses.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Superior was a brawling city of steel foundries, lake shipping and railroad yards. Superior Normal was a conservative teacher training institution practically untouched by the waves of cynicism washing over colleges and universities in the East. Nathanael West's biographer, for example, speaks of "the malaise which produced dadaism in Europe in 1916" blossoming in American colleges in the East in the 1920s. For West, who was attending Brown at the same time Beecroft was attending Superior Normal, "All aspects of American life touched on the grotesque and the absurd." But it is doubtful if a consciousness of the grotesque and the absurd tainted the classrooms of Superior Normal. There was an earnest, conservative, highly traditional, mid-western tone to the school. Its 1921 *Quarterly Bulletin*, for example, advertised its "college course" by reminding parents of the practical advantages of the school: "In taking advantage of this opportunity, parents should remember that they not only save a large

mid-western thinking.

Moreover, John Beecroft's home life was led in very modest and conservative circumstances. His father was a teamster who worked for a construction company. The family lived in a middle-class neighborhood of small frame houses set close together on narrow lots. "Almost every afternoon when school was over," Beecroft wrote years later of his school days, "some of us went down to see what had happened during the day. Nothing ever happened but none of us could be disappointed for we didn't expect anything to happen in Superior, Wisconsin. Most of the boys and girls went to Hoyts to have a soda. I very seldom went with them for I did not often have a nickel to spend and when I did have a nickel, I didn't spend it for frivolities. I used to walk down Tower Avenue, stopping in at the ten-cent store at 12th Street to see what I might buy if I had ten cents and giving a quicker viewing of the other ten-cent store at 11th Street. Looking in the window of Berthiaumes I could see they were having a sale of canned peaches which I would tell my mother about."

The point, of course, is that the temper of Superior's mid-western life, the earnest attitudes absorbed at the normal school, the middle-class home background, all would be ideal cultural underpinnings for a man who would later anticipate the reading preferences of masses of American scattered across the country. Beecroft, in his later years, seemed to have understood the value of this early experience. In 1961 he returned to Superior to address the graduating class of his alma mater:

We are people of the Midwest—we are the heart of America—we know America in the making—we look to the present and the future. Most of us are somewhat this side of the angels in our thoughts and not wily as serpents . . . New York is not

. . . the temper of Superior's mid-western life, the earnest attitudes absorbed at the normal school, the middle-class home background, all would be ideal cultural underpinnings for a man who would later anticipate the reading preferences of masses of Americans scattered across the country.

began using his father's given name, John) was always brilliant in anything pertaining to literature," she recalls. "He was reading books far beyond his years when he was eleven or twelve years old, and it seemed certain even then that books were to be his field." He went on to graduate

amount of money, but that they can have their children under home influence and home care at a time when such oversight is needed." John Beecroft's education here would not only familiarize him with the traditional values of American culture, it would also expose him to the practical side of

typically American. It is interesting. It is exciting. But New York is cruel. I am glad I had the advantage of the Wisconsin educational system. My parents were poor people To do my work it is necessary to know the taste and the temper of the American public. I believe being Mid-Western helps me. American public taste is my taste, your taste, the taste of the people out here. If I did not have a sound Wisconsin background, I do not think I could be Editor of the Literary Guild.

The words have something of the solid ring of the halls of Superior Normal. Just as Flaubert said he could write *Madame Bovary* because he *was* Madame Bovary, Beecroft is saying that he could choose for the masses of readers because he is of the mass.

John Beecroft went on from Superior Normal to Columbia where he received an A.B. degree in 1924. Bennett Cerf, in a profile of Beecroft written in 1946, noted that by the time he enrolled in Columbia he had read "most of the classics." Beecroft's dedication to classical literature continued, and in 1926 he began his association with the publishing world by writing a reading guide to *The Harvard Classics*, "Dr. Eliot's Five-Foot Shelf of Books" for Crowell Publishing Company: *Fifteen Minutes a Day Reading Assignments—"15 Minutes a Day Makes All the Difference . . .*

365 Nights' Entertainment with the Five-Foot Shelf," from Milton to Cicero in January to Darwin and Marvell in December. It is the work of a man thoroughly familiar with the literature of the Western world from the Greeks to the present.

In the late 1920s John Beecroft spent some time in Europe. He made a trip to Russia, a nation that had aroused in him a strong curiosity. The travel gave him the opportunity to study some of the

15 MINUTES A DAY

Dr. Eliot's Five Foot Shelf of Books
The HARVARD CLASSICS

From the Beecroft collection, University of Wisconsin-Superior.

15 Minutes A Day, Dr. Eliot's Five Foot Shelf of Books, The Harvard Classics which John Beecroft wrote for P.F. Collier and Son Company in 1926.

things that particularly attracted him: painting, architecture, antiques. And it added a note of internationalism to his education. Throughout his life, Beecroft seems to have retained a combination of the small-town, middle-class American outlook with the sophistication of the world traveler

devoted to classical art. The cynicism of the post-dada era seems not to have affected him in any way; the trauma of the economic depression did not shake him. He retained a native faith in traditional values and a love for American institutions that is most unusual for a literary man of the

times. It is not possible to imagine him being influenced by the iconoclasm, the literary faddism, the social protest literature of the era. In 1932, for example, he wrote an essay "Bread Not So Bitter," on the distress of the Great Depression. The essay sharply differs in theme from almost every other literary statement of the times.

What most people learned from the depression is that we not only had a false sense of values, but that we were too dependent on *things*. We have been astounded to learn that when those *things* are taken from us life does not stop but only goes through a period of readjustment, which is rather painful, and then proceeds rather speedily on its way and we get on the best we can One learns with considerable astonishment that the life force is stronger than the enrichments we have added to it, and it is with a feeling of great relief and freedom that the emancipation from possessions is realized What I have learned in America . . . and what has kept up the morale is the knowledge that many things formerly considered essential are not at all essential; that dependence on *things* for health and happiness is not necessary. Instead of being an aid towards happiness and freedom, *things* are frequently a hindrance.

The idealism manifested in these words comes from some deep native root. And though the idealistic words may not express the actual practice of most Americans, they do express a remote dream we somehow all share.

In something of this same bent of thinking, Beecroft admired the work of Booth Tarkington for his pleasant, comfortable picture of small-town America. Beecroft

wrote lovingly of Tarkington's treatment of Indiana towns. "The lawns were broad, often generously without fences to mark dividing lines. There were shade and orchard trees in every yard; some yards had fountains and one or two cast-iron deer were left. In the milder seasons the verandas were the foregathering places of youth and courtship. Pleasures were simple then, but that has never meant less pleasure. Life was slower but that means there was time to enjoy it a little copiously." If the pictures are romanticized and depict a world that never really was, they also present a way of life of which a great many Americans dreamed. And if that dream is naive, it is also a sustaining force. For millions of Americans, then as now, the harshness of realistic art, the irony and cynicism of the *avant garde* were equally unacceptable. Literature, to satisfy, must present what could be, the possibilities, the thrill of success, love, and contentment. It is not accidental that the writings of Ralph Connor were amongst the most popular books printed in the United States in the first forty years of this century. John Beecroft understood these things very well.

In a time that produced Nathanael West's cynical *A Cool Million* and Jack Conroy's bitter *The Disinherited*, Beecroft could maintain a faith in the ideal and a love for the America of Booth Tarkington. But those loves were no hollow naivete in his case. He was a learned man of experience and sophistication. He simply went on believing in the things in which most Americans wanted to believe. It's not surprising that such an outlook would be ideal for one who would choose books to nourish our hopes.

How did all of this come together in the book selection process that pleased and influenced so many millions of readers? Because of the wide variety of books chosen for Guild readers, the answer to this question is not

simple. One place to begin to find an answer is in the pages of *Wings* magazine. During his years as editor for the Guild, Beecroft edited a monthly publication sent to every member. Each issue of *Wings* carried a short essay by Beecroft describing the book choice of the month and his reasons for making the choice. Reading through these essays written over a period of nearly thirty years, one is impressed with Beecroft's emphasis on the American story, the real America, the novel that affirms the native faith. Over and over again Beecroft writes that he has chosen a particular book because it reflects the true hopes, beliefs, experiences of Americans, and by those terms he means the positive values of the traditional Puritan ethic as he would probably have learned them growing up in the Midwest, attending Superior Normal—an idealism cherished in the center of a brawling lake port.

Typical of these essays is the one introducing Howard Fast's *The American*, the controversial Guild selection for August, 1946. Fast's novel, attacked by conservative groups as subversive propaganda, was for Beecroft a valuable description of the American opportunity. The book is a highly fictionalized account of the life and career of John Peter Altgeld, the poor Midwestern youth who grew up to become governor of Illinois and whose political career was a constant struggle between the forces of liberal thought and conservative caution. It was exactly the kind of story that Beecroft liked to choose for his readers: rags to riches, the American dream. "John Peter Altgeld, though born a poor farmer's son, rose to power and riches. His life proved—as have the lives of others of our great—that a man can better himself limitlessly in America," wrote Beecroft in *Wings*. "*The American*—a novel written with the urgency of sincere purpose, the story of a new American hero—is a book that will be a revelation to America of today. It has far deeper

emotional appeal than a mere romance, a greater message than many religious novels, more understanding than a simple biography."

Not all of Beecroft's Guild selections were in the area of the American dream—the Guild choices ranged from historical romance to biography to travel books, indeed in every direction; *Captain from Castile* is often thought of as the typical Guild book—but novels affirming our dreams were favorite choices.

Beecroft, who made the Guild selections with very little help from anyone else, talked at various times about his norms for choice. Mostly, he said, there were few hard rules for choosing a book that would appeal to millions. One needed a kind of intuitive sense, a feel for the American taste and a rich background in the history of literature. But there were a few guides. "The members of our particular book club are interested primarily in fiction," he told a *Milwaukee Journal* writer in 1956. "They buy books to read, not to impress their friends. So we put a lot of emphasis on a good story. We select a good deal of non-fiction for the Guild as well as novels. But even in non-fiction, story values count heavily if a book is going to be read very widely."

And later Beecroft added a shrewd footnote: ". . . my experience is that there is a shortage of the kind of fiction that people want to read. A lot of young writers try to tell us in their books what a miserable time they have. Most readers shy away from that sort of thing because they've had a miserable time themselves."

Merle Miller in *Harpers* quotes Beecroft as saying that he doesn't like to choose novels with flashbacks. Most readers want a forward-moving, fast-paced story with a plot. Something has to happen to somebody. A careful portion of passion helps.

But Beecroft did not choose fast-moving novels and narrative non-

fiction to the exclusion of everything else. Occasionally, when there was a good chance of the book selling well, he chose a controversial work dealing with social issues: anti-Semitic feelings, anti-Black prejudice. *Kingsblood*

of his tastes were very special and would not have lent themselves to mass distribution at all."

There are some critics who believe that what came to be called the "literature business" of the book clubs debased the cultural

"A lot of young writers try to tell us in their books what a miserable time they have. Most readers shy away from that sort of thing because they've had a miserable time themselves Most readers want a forward-moving, fast-paced story with a plot. Something has to happen to somebody. A careful portion of passion helps."

Royal, for example, was a successful selection.

Beecroft had a faith in the reading taste of his club members:

In selecting the books for the Guild, we have found out that big names, the well-known authors, are not always the best ones for our purposes. Our "discoveries" are more successful than second-rate books by big names. In selecting for Guild members, we keep in mind that book club people are very discriminating, and we try never to offer them less than the best available. Quite often, I can tell you frankly, I'm not satisfied with the selection, but it's the best that I can do that month.

Ken McCormick, a consulting editor for Doubleday, tried to sum up John Beecroft's eclectic literary sensibility. "He had an enormous appetite for reading and the desire to bring good books to readers. He had, however, what lots of people of noble feeling lack which was commercial judgement. He knew what his audience would respond to and what they wouldn't. He was able to draw a line between his personal reading taste and the demands of his professional job. It wasn't that he didn't enjoy thoroughly the books that he selected—it was that some

level of American life. Elitist critics have tended to regard book clubs as mere vendors of popular trash. Such criticism was particularly widespread in the 1940s. *The Literary History of the United States* record of the rise of the book clubs begins with a tone that catches the mood of such criticism:

At the end of the thirties, there was a boom in what was coming to be known as the literature business; and the boom continued until after the Second World War. Book and magazine publishing began to be organized as a mass-production industry. Most of the 11,806 professional authors—to borrow a figure from the 1940 census reports—were still insecure and underpaid; but those who had achieved or blundered into prosperity were living like speculators in a bull market.

But looking back now it seems that in the main John Beecroft and the clubs did a considerable service. They developed an entirely new reading audience. The list of Guild selections during John Beecroft's time as editor contains the names of many of the major writers of our time: Robert Graves, Somerset Maugham, Edna Ferber, Thomas Wolfe, Upton Sinclair, Pearl Buck, Gabrielle Roy,

Robert Penn Warren. Because of the Guild these names became household words. And the books provided Americans entertainment, diversion, and a kind of dream through the long difficult time of the Great Depression and the years of World War II.

These are not insignificant accomplishments.

I found an old copy of *Captain from Castile* on the library shelf not long ago. I decided to check it out and read it. The librarian was a pleasant, motherly looking woman maybe in her early fifties.

"*Captain from Castile*," she nearly sighed, "Samuel Shellabarger."

"Yes. It's an old Literary Guild choice, maybe thirty years ago."

"It was 1945," she said. "I remember. I remember I was working in Washington—that was during the war—and everyday I'd take that book with me and read it on the streetcar to work. And then I'd read it during lunch and on my way home. I didn't want to put it down. It was one of the best stories I ever read. I sure hated to see it end."

Leo J. Hertzler is curator of the Beecroft Collection and Assistant Professor of English in the Department of Languages and Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Superior.

Poems by

Deep Anchorage (for Mary Elizabeth Smith 1905-1975)

The wind turned tonight after the close and still
of the Neenah Creek and the earth
that stays.

The oaks broke tillage midfield and slid into mist
against the hill. If I wandered there
wondering

had I mentioned the watercress that grew
along the edge below the eagle mound
it was only

that once I knew you were beyond time like the teal
paddling the Creek's current—which is,
in all,

its nature and its stay, and now my anchorage
where the gray mists rise. I like it less
without you.

It was not the dark that took me from the fields
at last, but certainty of a following light
a little less

than yesterday, and the life you left me here.
The life. Sometimes it seems I wander
in these poems forever

hunting artifacts and news, and wonder, too,
what part of prophecy this is, if it is,
to keep

returning and see again the teal take flight
above the fern in the close and still
of dusk

knowing tonight a little less that there is time
to speak of fields and ducks
and watercress,

the turning wind, for you.

Mary Shumway

Only the Gulls Survive

Caught in the kinetics of classical spins
I swung east to the coast with no more
reason than an edge on the air three days
running of leaf smoke and pancakes

and wanting you. I slowed to a raft beached
at Belmar, planks whiskered by tides and indefinite
weather, trying off masks until skinned down
to that essential sea. 25 knots

thumped a small craft warning on my back
noticed by gulls, hermetic on air,
who studied the drift clinging to wood,
an instant's least poise cast out of chaos,

inedible and not itself eating, small
reason to hang there. Wind whipped
the surf and sun irised the spindrift
as the gulls dropped to wester on pilings.

When the flotsam, freed by tide, spun out
again, they only cocked their heads, following
with bare eyes the raft's unbeaching
and the comic ride.

Relic

A chain of mourners
dangled from a cleft of hills
to the pyre.

It danced grief there.
They placed the old ones
side by side

facing the mute skies.
No new encounter: in life,
themselves, implacable.

But when the flames
began to rise, they stood,
their arms moved

and then their jaws began
to work as though
alive, roused at last

to sentience by the fire.
What broke the chain, and soon,
were eyes: inside,

what moved was
the limitless world of sun
and of the moon.

Mary Shumway, of Plover, has long been interested in native-Wisconsin traditions and locales. She teaches at University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and has taught poetry writing in Denver and elsewhere. Her most recent collection of verse is Headlands (Sono Nis, 1976).

(This is the beginning of the *Review's* spotlight on prominent Wisconsin poets.)

Thoughts on Leadership— A Projection

by Robert G. Heideman

“

The present decade is the beginning of an entirely new phase of social development, neither tradition- nor revolution-oriented.

”

Any projection of the immediate future must take into account the nature of the individuals who will be the primary forces in determining its direction. For the most part, it is the individuals born between 1910 and 1950 who are the present major determinants of public policy, and our social and economic evolution has reflected the varying mores and lifestyles of these generations. The dominant philosophy of this period, despite modifications due to the depression and wars, was that of the “work ethic” with its concomitant rewards for goal-oriented accomplishments.

For the next twenty-five to fifty years, those individuals born during the 1950s and 60s will be the dominant forces in shaping world policy, and it is important to develop understanding of their personalities and potential as well as the environmental forces that will help to determine and influence their decisions. This age group represents in part the large number of children born during the post World War II decade, a group which has dominated our social system for the past twenty-five years. As this group matures, it will dominate again, in each progressive age bracket, our mores and lifestyles and will contribute the bulk of our educated work force.

Equally important, however, to those who were *born* during the 1950s and 60s are those individuals who spent their young adulthood in the 60s. This is the group who were of college age during the 1960s, and were characterized in part by a concern for radical politics and the questioning of public policy, social and religious traditions, and prevalent lifestyles.

In my capacity as a university administrator who has interviewed and counseled thousands of students during the past twenty years, I have been able to develop some opinions concerning them and their capacity for contribution to an evolving society.

I believe each of the generations to be characterized by unique traits which influence them and society. As mentioned, the generations born during or influenced by the 1920s, 30s and 40s have been generally characterized by an adherence to the "work ethic." This philosophy has dominated our society during the past thirty years and has been highly contributory to the type of leadership which we have had. It was a goal-oriented society with males as the "dominant" members. Virtue, although not necessarily persevering, was rewarded and idealized. Despite wars, depressions, and social upheaval, there was an underlying constancy which enabled one to "hang in there," knowing that everything would turn out "all right." Movies, plays, radio, and the press repeated the theme; if anyone faltered in this belief, the media were there to reinforce it.

With the advent of the 60s, however, all of this began to change. For a variety of reasons, including the impact of television and the stimulus of the war in Vietnam, our society changed very quickly, and the desire for a new social structure met head on with that established during the preceding three decades. The results are well known, although the ramifications are still being analyzed.

The present decade is the beginning of an entirely new phase of social development, neither tradition nor revolution-oriented. It is, however, the individuals born during, or influenced by, the 1950s and 1960s that must be considered in projections for the next twenty-five to fifty years.

There have been many analyses made of the personalities and lifestyles of these individuals. The analyses range from despair to exhilaration. My experience with college-age students would suggest the following generalized observations about them:

(1) There is a tendency toward dependence on others to meet needs they consider essential to life, a feeling of society "owing them something."

(2) Goals are transitory and not long range—a feeling that there will always be something to do and that they will "muck their way" through. Although they are *goal-oriented* they are not generally *work-oriented*. Work is often a means to an end and not an end in itself. There is also some evidence to suggest that they will bend ethics to obtain these goals.

(3) There is a pursuit of "experiences." Although materialism is still prevalent, though re-defined, it is the desire to find and sustain the "ultimate experience" which motivates many students. This in itself is not necessarily a negative attitude. However, the means available to enhance sensory impulses and improve motor responses leads many individuals to search forever through mazes of drugs, sex, and transcendental experiences for hedonistic satisfaction. Pursuit of pleasure becomes a way of life rather than an enhancement of life's processes.

(4) There is a threat to male and female egos as a result of merging identities through co-habitation and

blurring of sex roles. Compensation patterns result in many psychological problems ranging from impotency or frigidity to suicide.

(5) The understanding of loving, caring, and responsibility as positive virtues is often ignored. Particularly misunderstood is the realization that love is a *giving* not a *taking* process.

(6) There appears to be a lack of any widespread appreciation for disciplined, structured action. Too often, self-concern makes this impossible.

Despite these generalizations about college youth, which I feel can be extrapolated to most individuals in these age groups, I do not feel completely apprehensive about their leadership potential. The reason for this seeming incongruity lies in my arbitrarily defined nature of emerging groups in our population and their relationship to evolutionary leadership:

- *The Illusionary Group*—This group is characterized by imaginary and often unreal concepts of society and in most ways rejects traditional lifestyles and values. The individuals comprising it are generally non-productive, in the traditional sense, and justify their existence on the premise that they are "searchers for truth." They neither invite nor reject the participation of society as a whole in the process. The *Illusionary Group* has been apparent since the 1960s and is relatively static and non-productive. Individuals in this group have not contributed actively to evolving leadership, but many possess the possibility to do so. They are, however, more or less "permanent" and although often producing localized problems, are not generally a significant social problem at this time. Unless their numbers increase dramatically, our present social system does not need to give them a great deal of attention.

- *The Reality Group*—These are individuals who range from the inadequately trained to the disinterestedly affluent. They are characterized by tacit acceptance of the social system of which they are a part. Their life is characterized by attempts to extricate themselves from their position of inadequacy or by adjustment to their affluence. In neither case, however, is a construct for the long-range future a significant part of their thinking. They are usually a part of change but do not direct it nor project it. The *Reality Group* presents a major challenge to society due in part to its size, in part to its being "consumer" oriented, in part to its indifference, and in part to the inadequate training of many of its population. It is the group toward which most information systems, most educational programming, and most social service programs are directed.

- *The Idealistic or Evolutionary Group*—These individuals, relatively few in number, are characterized by active participation in determining the directions and regulation of society. They are concerned with projections of the future and are the most innovative

Contrasting Decades 1920—1980

Decade	Dominant Social/Political Feature of Decade	Dominant Characteristics of People (Lifestyles, Philosophies)	Political and Economic Crises	Social Crises
1920-1930	Prosperity. Expansion in trade and world influence.	Conservative, expansionist, work-oriented. Strongly religious. Male dominated. Ethnically grouped. Strong family orientation.	Collapse of economy. Bank failures, beginning of depression. Stock market collapse.	Prohibition. Rise of "gangsterism."
1930-1940	Depression	Adaptive. Strongly religious. Family and institution oriented. Patriotic.	International conflicts. Beginning of World War II.	Depression. Drought. Dislocation and migration.
1940-1950	World War II. Advent of Atomic "age." Cold war with Russia.	High patriotic. Work-oriented. Goal-oriented. Family and institutional loyalties. Innovative. Adaptable. Determined.	World War II. Cold war with Russia (post World War II). "McCarthyism," political purges.	Adjustment to tragedies and demands of war.
1950-1960	Korean War. Development of Atomic power. Development of hydrogen bomb. Space exploration.	Developmental. Beginning of permissiveness.	Korean War. Cold war problems.	Post-War adjustment. Housing problems.
1960-1970	Continued exploration of space. Civil Rights legislation and desegregation issues. Vietnam War.	Reactionary. Politically extreme. Iconoclastic. Polarized. Innovative. Creative. Materialistic.	Political assassinations. Missile Crisis. Racial Riots. Student riots. Confrontation over war. Political upheaval. Questioning of traditions and political systems.	Adjustment to racial problems. Desegregation. Equal rights. Draft. Rise of drug usage. Rise in crime.
1970-1980	Change in lifestyles. Increasing socialization of services. Uncertainty of role and function of government. End of Vietnam War.	Laissez-faire, introspective, isolation-oriented, more conservative politically, more experimental socially. Goal-, but not work-oriented. Tendency toward acceptance of government "paternalism." Hedonistic. Experience-oriented.	Inflation, unemployment. Great increase in international problems. Energy difficulties. Ecological/Environmental problems. Crime-oriented problems. Problems of urbanization. Social welfare and educational financing pressures.	Conflict of lifestyles. Adjustment to changing population trends. Fight for racial, sexual, and social equality. Human relations.

users of systems design, communications technology, and logical frameworks of analysis. They spend most of their time generating ideational frameworks for future action. The *Idealistic Group* is the one that an enlightened society must be most concerned about since it is from this group that the leaders which influence the future direction of the country generally emerge.

The diagram indicates my interpretation of certain features of the decades 1920-1980. It is interesting to observe that although our society was successful in meeting the challenges of the 1920-1950 decades, it appeared to be somewhat predictable and dull. In an evolutionary sense, it adjusted to what was without attempting to influence the direction of the future. The decades of 1950-1970, however, despite contributing to the *Illusionary Group* and greatly increasing the *Reality Group*, have contributed heavily to the *Idealistic Group*. I am struck by the observation that the intellectual and social ferment necessary for change has been so dominant in these decades.

This would seem to suggest that despite the significant traumas of our present social system, many of the individuals involved possess the necessary characteristics for effecting long-lasting and, it is hoped, beneficial changes.

What can these individuals do to accommodate a future in which crises of every sort will dominate their lives? How can they prepare themselves to meet these pressures as individuals and as individuals in groups? I can offer some suggestions based on my experience with the area of human resource development:

(1) We must recognize that societies and civilizations are transitory and minuscule in an evolutionary sense, and that contributions toward perpetuation of the human spirit within a universal framework has the most significant lasting effect.

(2) There is a limit to how much undisciplined searching for individual identity an evolving society can tolerate. Continual perpetuation of experimental systems of behavior in a future crisis-oriented society could be catastrophic. There is a need, therefore, for reassessment and a more disciplined and structured approach to life. Educational systems both formal and non-formal, the media, and family and non-secular groups must be the catalysts and the directors of this reassessment.

(3) Individuals will need to develop flexible alternative approaches to work. Since the results of change are expanding geometrically it is no longer advisable (or possible) to isolate oneself in a rigid one-line approach to work. However, the alternatives must come within a construct of an overall disciplined and future-oriented plan of action.

(4) Individual rights of men and women will need to be reassessed to insure that each group is allowed to function independently but in concert with the

other. It is important to search for an equality that does not de-humanize anyone.

(5) We must be sensitive to the cultural differences of all ethnic groups and accept them, not as a threat to, but as an enrichment of, our lives.

(6) Finally, the factor of demographics must be considered. In a society that is composed of greater and greater percentages of "older" individuals, we will need to re-think our social system to accommodate this phenomenon. It will be mandatory that we minimize confrontation and competition between young and "old," and that each be seen as significant and important in the evolutionary continuum.

Implications for human resource development and education are many. However, the following skills will assume great significance in the future.

- *Articulation/Communication* skills—Individuals will need the ability to speak and write with clarity and meaning, and to understand the techniques of effective communication.

- *Persuasion* skills—There will be a need to use the skills of articulation and persuasion to stimulate individuals and groups to accomplish crisis-oriented adjustments.

- *Evaluation and Assessment* skills—These will be necessary because of the constant need to evaluate and assess programs and to monitor progress.

- *Projective or Planning* skills—There will be a necessity to "project into the future" in order to anticipate and plan for long-term trends.

- *Decision-making* skills—Individuals will need to learn and apply the skills involved in decision-making, since the time between identification of needs and implementation of programs will shorten considerably.

- *Language* skills and skills involved with inter-relationships with other cultures—Global programs and problems will become increasingly prevalent, and broad training in the cultural backgrounds of other peoples, as well as comprehension of their languages, will become imperative.

Use of these skills in enhancing the development of human relations will be of particular importance since there can be little real evolutionary progress without it.

The challenge educators, both formal and non-formal, face is to focus their efforts on channeling the great energies of youth so that they can apply themselves in ways that are productive and beneficial to an evolving humanity. Anything less could be calamitous.

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Coulees and The Coulee Country of Wisconsin

Photos and Text
by Cotton Mather

Hamlin Garland did more than any other person to emblazon the term "coulee" on the regional consciousness of Wisconsin. Born in 1860 on a farm in Green's Coulee, north of La Crosse, he moved west with his family at the age of eight and did not return to Coulee Country until about a third of a century later. When he returned, he settled in West Salem in La Crosse County and remained there until 1915. Through his *Middle Border* books he immortalized Coulee Country in American literature. Yet the term "coulee" has been somewhat loosely used and the region of Coulee Country remained undelineated both in the mind and on the map.

Regional names that identify blocks of land are useful communication tools. They are employed in our official government documents, by commercial organizations, and are omnipresent areal references in the speech of the ordinary person.

Americans have used two major scales in the verbal demarcation of their land. Large expanses of territory have been labelled with such names as the South, Southwest, New England, Midwest, and the Rocky Mountains. And on a scale which pertains to smaller areas, for example, Californians have used such regional terms as the San Francisco Bay Area, the Sierra, the Redwood Region, the Mother Lode, and the Central Valley. Georgia has its Coastal Plain, Piedmont Mountains, and Coosa Valley. In Virginia are such regional references as Tidewater, Southside Virginia, and the Northern Neck. Texas has its Big Bend Country, Blacklands, Cross Timbers, Edwards Plateau, Panhandle, Piney Woods, and Rio Grande Valley. Similarly, New York is subdivided into the Catskills, the Finger Lakes District, Mohawk Valley, Niagara Frontier, and the Adirondacks. Indeed, most of the nation has been regionally named, and these appellations of both large blocks of land as well as of their subdivisions have become colorful cultural strands in the fabric of the national nomenclature.

An investigation of nationwide regionalism reveals that the Midwest has been less regionalized than most other parts of the United States. This lesser chorographic consciousness is particularly evident over most of Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana. Wisconsin, however, has its Indianhead Country, Door Peninsula, North Woods, Blackhawk Region, Kettle Moraine, and Coulee Country. Although these regional references are widely used, they generally have been vaguely defined. The use of the term "coulee" illustrates this well.

"Coulee" stems from the French word "couler,"



The dry bed of a coulee in northwestern Upper Coulee Country, three miles south of Prescott. Stream flow occurs only after rains and in spring at the time of melting snow.



Associated with the dry stream beds of coulees are the strata of porous, soft sandstones such as these in the northern part of Lower Coulee Country, twelve miles southwest of Black River Falls.



A "hollow" in the southern part of Upper Coulee Country, eight miles southeast of Arcadia, near Holcomb Coulee.



The names of farms, as well as those of rural roads, often use the word "coulee." This farm example is in Upper Coulee Country.

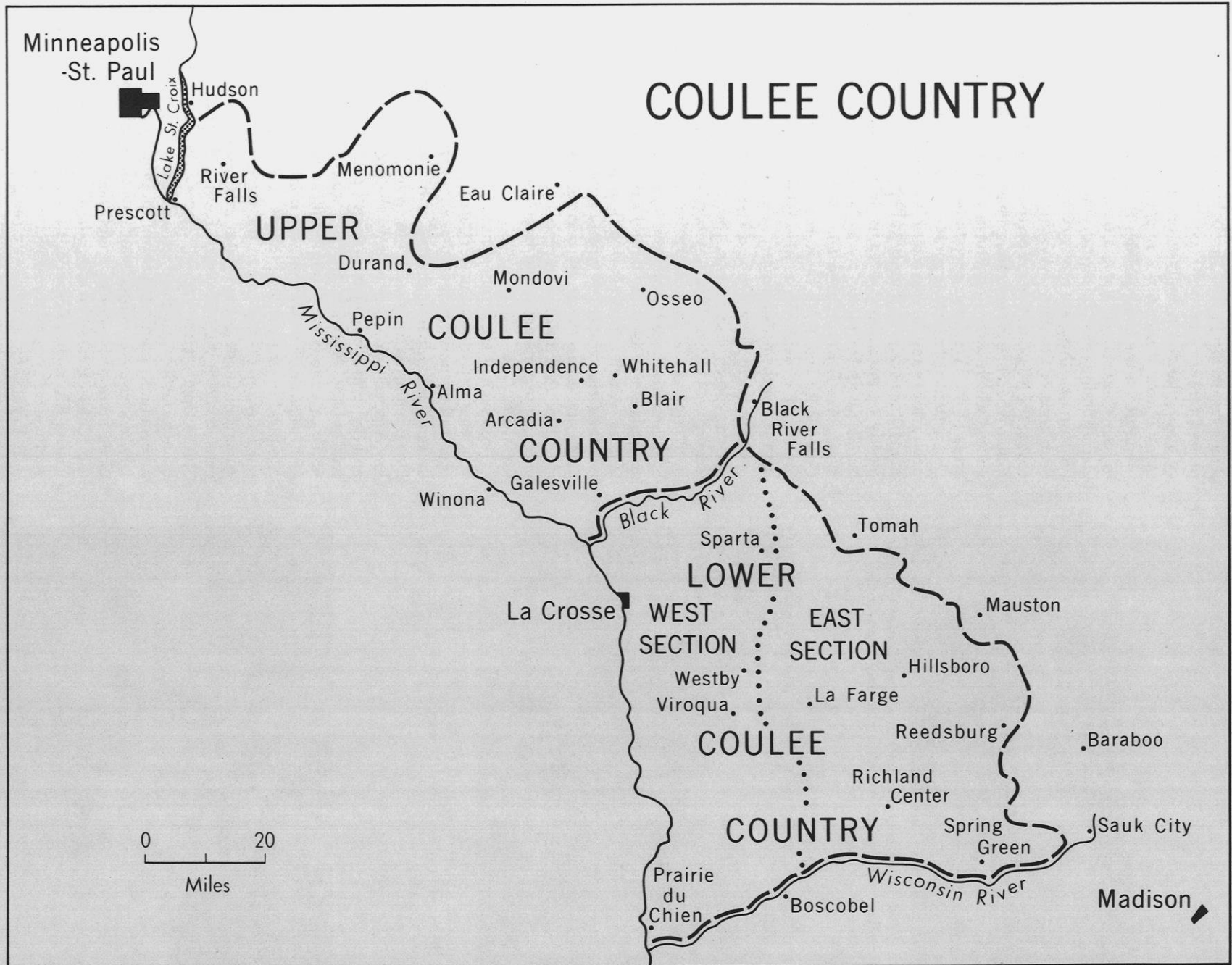


"Coulee" occurs widely in town and city advertising, such as this example in Coon Valley, near La Crosse.

which means "to flow." Throughout most of the present century, the word "coulee" has gained currency among landform analysts and has been applied in many places of the world. In geomorphological literature on the United States the word is used largely in four contexts: (1) the anastomosing channels of glacial drainage established during the Pleistocene—these are now dry and form a part of the Scablands of the state of Washington; (2) the area east of the Missouri Coteau on the northern Great Plains where the ground moraine is furrowed by valleys which carry only storm water; (3) in volcanic areas of the West where separate solidified lava flows on the flanks of volcanic cones form tongue-like protrusions; and (4) in western Wisconsin where many steep-walled tributary valleys are occupied mostly by intermittent streams. Most Americans familiar with the word "coulee" associate it with the West. *Western Words: A Dictionary of the Range, Cow Camp and Trail*, by Ramon F. Adams (1944), for example, defines it as a "dry creek . . . a synonym for the Southwest's arroyo."

Many scientific terms have stemmed from the vernacular speech, but science, too, has contributed to the regional idiom. This the word "coulee" is used in both popular and scientific realms as applied to the Scabland drainage channels of Washington and to such place-names as the Grand Coulee and Moses Coulee, which are recognized throughout America. But the term "coulee" is largely a vernacular term when applied to the grooved ground moraine east of the Missouri Coteau. References to "coulee" in volcanic regions are found largely in scientific literature.

Professional geographers and geologists when writing about Wisconsin, on the other hand, have used rather sparingly the vernacular names for either areas or individual landforms. While the bounds of a Door Peninsula are readily perceived, Coulee Country has escaped demarcation up to the present decade, and the term is rather imprecisely perceived though widely used. Notwithstanding, coulees have been noted in various important publications on the state of Wisconsin. For example, the book *Wisconsin*, compiled by the Works Projects Administration and published in 1941 as one of the largely forgotten American Guide Series, states that the "coulee country extends along the Mississippi River one-third of the State's length. Here valleys, narrow and secluded, branch out like tributary streams from a river system, all eventually coming to an abrupt blind end." Lawrence Martin in his classical work, *The Physical Geography of Wisconsin*, published in 1916, discusses the coulees located between the Chippewa and La Crosse Rivers and describes the coulee at the southeastern boundary of Nelson Dewey State Park near Wyalusing. Writings by the greatest of all American regional geomorphologists, Nevin M. Fenneman, have several discussions pertaining to coulees



in western United States while his volume on *Physiography of the Eastern United States* (1938) is devoid of mention of either coulees or Coulee Country, Wisconsin.

The writing of a regional series of small volumes on Wisconsin is being undertaken now by America's oldest county geographical society, the Pierce County (Wisconsin) Geographical Society, Inc. The mere twenty members of this organization include persons who serve in the Library of Congress, on the faculties of eight universities and colleges (including the University of Wisconsin-Madison), and in other important capacities across the nation. Two volumes have been published already by this society: one entitled *Upper Coulee Country* published in 1975; a forthcoming volume will be *Lower Coulee Country*. The map on page 24 outlines the areas of both Upper and Lower Coulee Country; both are hilly portions of what Lawrence Martin describes as the Western Upland.

Upper Coulee Country has glacial deposits northward from about the Chippewa River, but these deposits are mostly thin and discontinuous so that the pre-Pleistocene topography is dominant. There, as in the remainder of Upper Coulee Country, much of the region is underlain by porous sandstones, and many tributary valleys have stream flow only after rains or from melting snow in the spring season. North of Upper Coulee Country, the glacial deposits largely obscure the pre-Pleistocene topography and regularize the stream flow; consequently there is an absence of coulees.

Lower Coulee Country is entirely within the "Driftless" area. The West Section has many valleys, which by strict definition are indeed coulees. They are steep-walled, tributary valleys, with sandy beds that are occupied by water flow only intermittently. Most of the time their stream beds are dry. In the East Section, vernacular usage of the word "coulee" is less common and more indefinite. Sometimes it is used interchangeably with the word "hollow." Both terms, however, are applied almost solely to small tributary valleys, and "coulee" is used most often to designate valleys with only intermittent streams while "hollows" may refer to spring-fed tributary valleys that have permanent water flow.

Coulee Country is bordered on the east by the most flattish Central Plain of Wisconsin, a region devoid of both hollows and coulees.

South of Lower Coulee Country, beyond the valley of the Wisconsin River, is the Military Ridge Country of southwestern Wisconsin. In this section even the valleys of tributaries are usually spring fed, and the names of these tributaries most often include the word "valley" or "hollow," though occasionally the term "coulee" is employed.

West of Wisconsin's Coulee Country, across the Mississippi, there is only a narrow belt of hill country with sandy, dry stream beds. But the word "coulee"

reappears there. For example, within ten miles of Wabasha, Minnesota and to the north of the Zumbro River are the coulees of Handshaw, Riley, Kepler, King, Dutchman, Free, Schmidt, Hope, Ryan, Marx, Dankwardt, Bade, and Cockwood.

This writer explored the use of the term "coulee" in western Wisconsin through 218 interviews: by studying the use of place-names in advertising, on road signs, in farm names, and on community edifices while making an extensive criss-cross reconnaissance of the western part of the state; and through a detailed study of the use of the words "hollow" and "coulee" on the fifteen-minute quadrangles of the United States Geological Survey. This investigation revealed that both "hollow" and "coulee" are vernacularly employed as far north as southern St. Croix County; that both terms are used south of the Wisconsin River, although use of "coulee" is confined almost entirely to the area north of that stream; that the most common usage in Wisconsin of "coulee" is in the Blair, North Bend, La Crosse, Galesville, and Stoddard areas and in northwestern Buffalo County—especially in communities dominated by Norwegians and Germans; that the terms "coulee" and "hollow" are rather indiscriminately applied to small valleys in the East Section of Lower Coulee Country; and that "Coulee Country" as a regional reference in Wisconsin is broadly recognized and accepted.

The wide acceptance of "coulee" as a regional reference is a certain tribute to the great writer born in 1860 on a farm in Green's Coulee. It is also a testimony of that person's appreciation of vernacularly derived terms which have regional meaning.

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SENDING & RECEIVING

A COLUMN ABOUT COMMUNICATION

by Arthur Hove

Requiem for the Alley

Green Bay, I was advised during a recent telecast, is losing people. They're moving to the suburbs in a steady migration that has the city fathers worried. In its most practical sense, of course, the exodus means a loss of revenue. It can also mean a host of other things.

The flight from the cities of recent years has produced a number of worrisome side effects. Jeremiahs and Cassandras regularly remind us that cities are in moral and physical decay throughout the land. As a part of this development, hardly anyone has bothered to note with any appreciable sensitivity that the rise of the suburb has all but eliminated a familiar element from our landscape. The out-migration of people to the suburbs has stimulated the building of new homes, shopping centers, and other amenities of the good life, but it has also produced a casualty. There are no alleys in the suburbs.

Sad. Anyone who has grown up in a neighborhood or a city that

has them, remembers them. The alley was often the place where you took the real measure of city life.

The normal items encountered in any alley would be a cultural anthropologists delight. Even a casual inventory was fascinating to a child: a variety of cardboard boxes, tin cans, and bottles; bottle caps pressed into the dirt by a tire or a wheel rim; endless scraps of paper blown up against fences or buildings; a coaster wagon with a broken wheel or missing tongue and handle; an umbrella with its ribs hopelessly broken, but its shiny handle still intact; unidentified pieces of wire and metal that obviously belonged to something larger and more complicated (possibly a spaceship that broke into pieces as it entered the earth's atmosphere); or maybe a personal letter with its handwritten message smeared into illegibility by the rain.

These were the commonplace items, but there was always the

promise of something really special to be found among the debris, always the potential for surprise. Something unexpected could be encountered in the alley, something hitherto unknown. The secret was to discover it first, to be the first to know of its existence.

In my own experience, growing up in Chicago a few blocks southeast of Studs Lonigan territory, I remember the alley as one of the main focuses of life. Its basic function was to provide a place for systematic trash removal. Large orange city trucks would rumble through each week like giant warthogs cleaning up everything in sight. But there were other regular travelers down this thoroughfare—ragpickers who would course slowly along on their horse-drawn wagons; George, the Greek vegetable man whose truck was loaded with produce in season and who, my father claimed, simply pulled up to our back gate and unloaded his stock into my mother's shopping basket; and anonymous strangers who drifted through the alley like sticks floating down a stream.

And then there were the urchins, like myself, who saw the alley as a source of constant adventure. It was a place where we not only acted out our fantasies, but a landscape teeming with precious junk to be uncovered, a place where fistfights took place behind someone's garage, a place where garbage cans could be tipped and other mischief created during Halloween season. The alley was also an alternate transportation route, a marvelous communication network of adventure connecting one neighborhood with the next. If you played it right, you could travel for miles without having to utilize any of the city streets.

Perhaps it is presumptuous to talk about alleys in the pages of a magazine devoted to the sciences, arts, and letters. Alleys are pedestrian, unworthy of serious consideration because of their banality. But no serious scholar would admit that there are any

alleys—literal or figurative—that do not merit at least a preliminary exploration. History is filled with stories of the Robert Frosts who avoided the royal road, chose "the one less traveled by," and found a particular kind of personal truth.

Even though there are fewer and fewer of them, alleys are still a familiar part of our idiom. If you can demonstrate a particular aptitude, things are right up your alley. Then there is always the ominous possibility of encountering a sinister character lurking up some dark alley. An animal of questionable lineage or character is an alley cat. If you are a kegler, you demonstrate your skill on a bowling alley. If you are a baseball pitcher who throws fast straight strikes, you send them right down the alley. Bombers flying missions over occupied Europe during World War II had to contend with a concentration of anti-aircraft fire that was promptly labeled "Flak Alley."

And there are still enough of us around who can recall with nostalgia the regular portion of the Fred Allen radio show which featured a trip down "Allen's Alley." During the course of his perambulations, Fred would run into the likes of Mrs. Nusbaum, Titus Moody, Senator Claghorn, and sometimes a surprise guest. Each would have an observation for him, some pithy comment on a topic of the day. It was a visit over the back fence with the neighbors, a kind of sounding which gave one the realization that things were changing, but, at the same time, that certain universals remained a common part of the human condition. The denizens of Allen's Alley made a business of being what they were. Being among those who heard the program regularly, it is hard to forget a typical response to one of Fred's knocks on the door:

"Ah, Mrs. Nusbaum, I presume?" came Fred's nasal greeting.

His solicitousness would be met with a typically acid retort, "You

are expecting maybe Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm?"

There are additional interesting people in folklore with alley connections. Some stretch back more than two centuries, like Henry Carey's Sally:

"Of all the girls that are so smart,

There's none like pretty Sally.
She is the darling of my heart
And she lives in our alley."

Several generations of tunesmiths have, since Carey's time, plied their trade plugging and writing songs in New York's Tin Pan Alley. Other Americans grew up following the adventures of Walt Wallet, Skeeze, and Nina Clock who were characters in a comic strip called "Gasoline Alley," created by Wisconsin-born Frank King. And there are comic strip devotees who continue to follow the adventures of that articulate Neanderthal, Alley Oop.

In spite of such permeation, alleys are no longer a clearly delineated portion of our national geography. Yet they remain a very real part of our psyche. Alleys are where we reveal our true selves. Most of us have an "out front" personality. We also have a very essential self that remains out back a substantial part of the time. Here we can be ourselves without fear of censure. That is one of the comforting things about alleys in a deeper, symbolic sense. Too much of modern society requires that we play roles, that we put up facades that are only partial representations of our true selves. It is in alleys, those comfortable and sometimes wide seams of life, that we can be who we think we are or who we want to be without fear of immediate contradiction. No need to dissemble here.

There is cause then for lamentation in the passing of the alley as a natural part of our lives. Messy and fetid as they sometimes may be, alleys—whether they be actual or merely symbolic—tell us things about ourselves and others that are essential to know.

BOOKMARKS/WISCONSIN

There comes a time in the critical life of each book reviewer when he/she must face the stack of books that few people will ever read. It is a painful, weighty task for the careful reviewer, for if one is to be true to the description of this particular department, "Bookmarks/Wisconsin," these tomes beginning to gather dust must be brought to the light of the printed page, *à la critique*.

Why? Because any time an individual commits his/her life, or a portion thereof, to a work, someone should publicly recognize that effort, even though the time consumed in considering each book could have been more enjoyably spent with a "good" book. The same may be said, to a lesser degree, about the publisher who commits capital and labor to the packaging of that work. Exposure is, at least, a kind of reward.

No writer creates in a vacuum. Never. That is not part of the driving force within the word manipulators' minds and spirits. Even eighteenth-century closet dramatists presented their works to closet audiences. Although the poets recognized the dramatic impossibilities of their creations, they also knew they would find readers with equally immense visualizations. The writer who writes merely for himself/herself is the equivalent of a literary onanist or a monk whose meditations are heard only by the mountain winds—the value is not in the sharing, only in the doing.

This reviewer, however, feels that there should be some kind of recognition for reasons other than just rewarding the artist. It is my feeling that the discovery of a particular book is a very peculiar kind of realization. A book has a life of its own, obviously. Once the author has put down the pen, once the print dries upon the unbound

pages, once the publisher's inventory has either been depleted or has been donated to the cause of recycling—then the fate of the book is in the hands of those who pick it up.

Part of the purpose of "Bookmarks/Wisconsin" is to create the feel of a bookstore, where one may browse and ponder the words of others. My own commitment is to the perpetuation of literature and its readership. If ninety-nine people consider a particular commentary to have no more than passing value, so be it. My feelings are not hurt nor my pride bent, for there is always that chance that one reader will be interested enough to find a way to have a relationship with that work. That is the magic of books. One never knows when a fancy will be struck.

How many people collect books? How many collect bookstores and libraries? The two go hand-in-hand. If a person loves to pause among the booky smells of floor-to-ceiling shelves, likely as not, there's a book collector. Book collectors run the gamut as any collectors' group, from the aficionado of antique Bibles to the reader who collects Harold Robbins in various languages—like the art dealer and the gatherer of beer cans.

What thrills each person is the rush that comes when spying a special title, a name, a binding, an edition, a type face, uncut pages, watermarks, autographs, and so on. Personally, I'm a title nut. Never mind what's happening inside the book, the title is what catches my attention. So my shelves are filled with such unknown classics as Charles Egbert Craddock's 1895 *In the Tennessee Mountains* (in honor of my Knoxville birth), Zane Grey's 1911 *The Last of the Plainsmen* (because as a boy I collected

paperback Westerns), and an 1874 "softcover" edition of Defoe's *History of the Plague* (because I hadn't read it).

There's also the nineteenth century *Songs for the Little Ones at Home*, which contains such musical hits as "I'll Never Use Tobacco," "Good Advice for the Little Ones," "I Must Die," "Never Forget to Pray," and the enigmatic "Dressed or Undressed." How about *Personal Magnetism*? It was written long ago by Charles J. Carter, L.L.B., who parenthesizes his moniker ("Carter the Great") to demonstrate his personal magnetism as he points out the astounding thought: "The first essential of great magnetism is to believe in one's self: . . . to feel and know that one's thoughts and actions are the right ones. A weakling cannot do this, hence he or she lacks magnetism." Now put that in our pipe and smoke it!

One of my personal shelf favorites is Henry Stanley's 1890 *In Darkest Africa*. Stanley has always been one of those historic journalists—Ambrose Bierce, Jack London, even Joseph Conrad—who travelled to faraway places with strange-sounding names and captivated millions everywhere when they came back or while they were corresponding from the boondocks. Having spent a couple of years in Africa's light, I was fascinated at Stanley's nineteenth-century perceptions of the "Dark Continent," a synonym which reeks of all kinds of racism and myopic anthropology or geography. I am also intrigued by the fact that only two short years after these volumes were published, Stanley left the country that had been his home for more than thirty years, returned to England for knighthood and election to Parliament. How fickle fame makes one!

At any rate, titles, authors, and volumes gather oblivion about them like corners of porches holding autumn leaves in winter. Death comes more quickly in the literary arts—with quick blossoming, fast fading, and preordained falling in solitary neglect. So I feel some real pleasure when I can bring resurrection to some lost book, if only for a title, or an off-beat subject, or even for an example of literature that is rightly dead and buried save for my small gesture of acquiring the book.

In contemporary terms of fame and glory, a number of Wisconsin writers deserve acknowledgment before their premature burial. "Bookmarks/Wisconsin" is certainly not an epitaph or a death-knell for the writers whose works will be considered. Critically, perhaps, it is a small blessing. There is still an abysmal dearth of reviews of our state's authors when compared to the number of Wisconsin writers trying to communicate their ideas to the people of this state and to the world. As far as I know, "Bookmarks/Wisconsin" is, indeed, the only publication so committed.

As is my wont, I will begin with a contradiction: Larry Woiwode's *Beyond the Bedroom Wall* will not suffer the misfortune of being forgotten. It is a novel I have neglected to mention here before, and it is one in which I have profound confidence.

—Hayward Allen

BEYOND THE BEDROOM WALL by Larry Woiwode; Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, 1975. 620 pp. \$12.50.

This is one of the few superlative novels I have read in recent years. Its scope, its dimensions, its descriptions, and its characters do not reach out like beggars in Beirut to pluck at the critical reader's robes and whine for a tiny coin of praise. They do

not, on the other hand, seek, like Ozymandias, to make us obsequious witnesses to false greatness. All that resides in *Beyond the Bedroom Wall* is the miraculous process of the recreation of our humanity.

Book reviewers are not supposed to write in such fashion. Our tastes are too jaded, too specialized, or too ingrown to allow emotion to flow readily. Our objectivity must be our North Star. Well, that is usually the case, but when I finished reading Woiwode's history of five generations living and dying in our Midwest, I could only shake my head and sigh. I felt that I had been brought into a family, had lived through joys and crises, had mourned passings, had forgotten distant relatives, had come to care about the fates of the Neumiller family of North Dakota, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

Proof should be offered to substantiate my claims, but that is difficult. I turn to a passage here, another there, wanting to quote a scene or a description of a character, and I can't do it. Why? Because in preparing the reader for the sample, I must recreate the chapter, the lives, the place in the time of the book. Woiwode is that meticulous. Nothing is superfluous, wasted.

Many descriptions are long, several paragraphs at a time, as if the reader is scanning a room, a person, a particular moment in slow motion, panning every way so as not to lose a detail. Yet, unlike so many overly descriptive writers, Woiwode's selection process is so humane that the reader is transported through time to another place. It is not detail heaped upon detail like some baroque construction or like one of those strange houses built out of bottles or icons.

The first sentence, for most novelists, is the most important and the most difficult sentence in the entire work. It must give the reader a feeling of beginning something significant, a realization of the importance of the journey

ahead. At the same time, it must be joined with the final words, as the sunset is to the sunrise. Woiwode begins: "Every night when I'm not able to sleep, when scrolls of words and formulas unfurl in my mind and faces of those I love, both living and dead, rise from the dark, accusing me of apathy, ambition, self-indulgence, neglect—all of their accusations just, and there's no hope of rest, I try again to retrace the street." It reveals a narrative sensitivity and hints of labyrinthian directions.

By the end of *Beyond the Bedroom Wall*—the first sentence explains, also, the story's title—one has come to know how families continue their courses. There is nothing remarkable about the Neumillers, save in their continuation. They are born, they grow up, they marry, they give birth, and they pass one another, leapfrogging eternally.

Woiwode, who was once writer-in-residence at the UW-Madison, has given Midwestern readers a gift of themselves, and he is offering the rest of the world the rare opportunity to see how universal our condition is and how much we do share with each other.

THE BOOK OF THE ARCHPRIEST OF HITA (*El Libro de Buen Amor*) Translated by Mack Singleton; Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975. 181 pp. \$7.50.

Without a doubt, this is the most obscure work by a most obscure writer to come across my desk. If anything serves to prove my original thesis of literary obscurity, *The Book of the Archpriest of Hita* is a metaphor in print. Mack Singleton, Professor of Spanish and Portuguese at UW-Madison, writes in his mandatory introduction: "About the composition of the poem a few words may be said. It is usually assumed that it is the work of a single author who gives his name as 'Joan Rroyz, Aciprest de Hita.' I

do not myself believe it can be proved that the poem is the work of a single author; nor do I believe that in a period spent in jail (we know nothing for sure about this) any single author made revisions in manuscript S and inserted additions in it."

The plot thickens. The question is raised about multiple authorship. And imprisonment. And different versions of the poem, which runs 1,709 stanzas for 163 pages.

But there is more to come. It seems that earlier translators have made Juan Ruiz (even the names change) into "a libidinous sex-crazed toper who sang his ribald songs in streets and taverns in the company of Jewish and Moorish singing-girls." What is this book? It sounds like a cross between the *Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The time is about right, right in the fifteenth century. "A drunken archpriest trying to invade nunneries has seemed to some to be more interesting than a simple village priest in prayer against the terrors of the night."

Of course, Ruiz's latest translator believes differently: "In addition to the basic motif, which is concerned with the hero's attempts to find himself a mate, there are long passages devoted to discussions about the nature of love; there are apologues and fables of a didactic nature, a free translation of the twelfth-century Latin poem *Pamphilus*, some ecclesiastical satire, a little treasury of sacred and profane lyric poems, a parody of epic styles, and a plentiful offering of moral and ascetic disquisitions."

It appears a great deal has been lost in the work's relative obscurity. Ruiz writes in the beginning:

If, masters you'd a bit relax and
give some hours to pleasure,
Then harken to my narrative and
savor it at leisure.
Deceit I shall not practice in the
process of my tale—
Though gross prevarications
universally prevail.

Alas! The warning and the rub to the entire work—all in that stanza. The author wisely admits to lying throughout the poem, and the reader may also discern the problem with the versification in translation. So, except for the verisimilitude in setting and descriptions of characters, we have trouble separating the facts from the fiction.

Translations are only as good as the translator's command of two languages and idioms. It is especially difficult when poesy is involved, for the translator *must* also be a poet to make the work come alive in translation.

Even so, *The Book of the Archpriest of Hita* is fascinating and illuminating in its medieval nature, and it shall go on my shelves next to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, an equally strange work for entirely different reasons.

ZEN AND THE COMIC SPIRIT
by Conrad Hyers; The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1974. 192 pp. Paper \$3.95. Cloth \$6.95.

And between *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* and *Kamongo or, The Lungfish and the Padre* has been *Zen and the Comic Spirit* by Conrad Hyers, who is a professor of comparative mythology and the history of religions at Beloit College. There's no special reason why it is here, except that I've been waiting for a time when some small commentary could be made about this potentially interesting little book.

For so long, we Westerners have been given the heavy, soul-searching picture of Zen reality (if there is such a thing). Zen has always fascinated me because it is so equivocal: one may find the meaning of life in its meaninglessness and its meaningfulness. I always loved the epigrammatic endings of haiku, and tanka which turn from a generally bucolic mood into a universal metaphor.

But Zen was either cute or turgid, and part of the problem

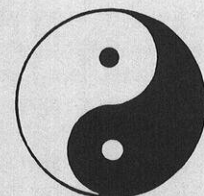
was that we didn't know if we should laugh or not, because one doesn't want to be sacreligious even if nobody is nearby who's in to Zen. Now, however, Hyers writes of the "comic spirit" of Zen, and why not?

"Like all mysticisms, Zen is concerned with overcoming certain dualities which are seen as splitting up existence, delimiting experiences, and hiding true reality. But in overcoming such dualities, it is very easy to become caught up, perhaps quite unwittingly, in certain other dualities." See? Now there is the perfect comic situation, one expects to eat the pie, not get hit in the face with it.

Hyers continues with the yin and yang of it all, but this time he includes the comic side of Zen: "seriousness and laughter, commitment and detachment, zealotry and detachment, earnestness and disinterestedness, sense and nonsense, purpose and purposelessness, work and play." With a list of dualities like that the literature of Zen must be nearly overwhelmed by comedy.

As early as the fourth century A.D., Indian Buddhist scholastics were classifying seven kinds of laughter, from the kind of smile Mona Lisa wears to the obnoxious guffawing of the rocking fat lady outside the fun house of Cleveland's Euclid Beach. What Hyers points out is the similar gradations of Zen humor, from the sublime to the *buffo*. Yet, he, too, is caught up in Zenness, for his analysis reflects that all-pervading calm Zen tends to evoke. Thus, what might seem riotous to him generally goes no further on the scale than did Di Vinci:

Yes, the young sparrows
If you treat them tenderly
Thank you with droppings.



CHINESE STORIES FROM TAIWAN: 1960-70 edited by Joseph S.M. Lau and Timothy A. Ross; Columbia University Press, New York, 1976. 359 pp. Paper \$6.95. Cloth \$20.00.

This necessary book of short stories by young Chinese writers, the oldest being forty-five and the youngest twenty-nine, runs the gamut of Taiwanese experience from rural to urban settings from colloquial to urbane subjects, from Mainland culture to counter-culture.

For the longest time, Americans have looked askance at the Taiwanese. Thought primarily to be a political pawn between the U.S. and the People's Republic of China, we forget that these people are just as human as anyone else. We see them kicked out of the Olympics because they refuse to change their country's name. We think of Chaing Kai-shek and cheap merchandise. It is cultural myopia at its worst, for we forget that everyone's daily life is quite tangible.

Chinese Stories from Taiwan edited by Joseph S.M. Lau, Professor of Chinese, UW-Madison, represents the visions and perceptions of eleven writers. Reading these stories brings insight into a neglected part of the world, that, in and of itself, is a gift that should not be obscured or ignored.

PROGRESSIVE CENTURY: THE AMERICAN NATION AND ITS SECOND HUNDRED YEARS by Paul W. Glad; D.C. Heath and Co., Lexington, Massachusetts, 1975. 559 pp. \$9.95.

In *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*, or *Sitting Bull's History Lesson* Sitting Bull said that through his magnificent translator's osmotic communication, he wanted to present a massacre as truthfully as it happened. Buffalo Bill, who's in "the show business," says that kind of truth is no good; besides, he's got a better sense of history. Until the sixties, we mainly got the Buffalo Bill version of American

history. Now, it appears that we might just be getting Sitting Bull's version.

In his introduction to *Progressive Century*, Paul Glad, Professor of History at UW-Madison, states: "I have written this book neither to glory in the achievements nor to castigate the failures, but rather to provide explanations of both. Perhaps the subject is so various and complex as to foredoom any such effort. Yet this study of the American nation in its second century may at least suggest some of the wonderful as well as some of the awful possibilities in our existence as human beings."

Glad's chapter subtitles indicate that tack: "The Land: Coordinate of time"; "The Myth of the Self-Made Man"; "The New Immigration"; "Ethnic Religion and Social Gospel"; with his sections' titles hitting out hard; "A Time of War, Affluence, Disruption, and Judgement"; or "A Time of Reform, Consensus at Home and Conflict Abroad." We didn't see words like that in our American history books twenty-five years ago!

We also did not read much about the automobile, except that Henry Ford made it all possible. We certainly did not spend much time on the growth of labor unions and the reasons why. Nor did we see chilling pictures of four lynched blacks hanging from a KKK tree. Glad certainly shakes the timidity out of our nation's history, and we are forced to consider ideas spoken, deeds done, and facts documented which were not part of our formal education in the past. It's about time.

LATE-GLACIAL CHRONOLOGY by Richard J. Lougee and Clara Rom Lougee. Vantage Press, New York, 553 pp. (illust.) \$15.00.

Usually books printed by "vanity presses" come and go by my desk with only a mere glance because there are so many writers and the good ones (and many not-

so-good ones) find publishers that pay them, not the other way around. Well, *Late-Glacial Chronology* deserves more attention than that, if for no other reason than it's the longest Vantage Press publication I have ever seen. Somebody really wanted to get that book published, and somebody paid a bundle to do so.

Clara Rom Lougee did both, in memory of her husband's lifework, I'm sure. The jacket reads, "At his death in 1960, Dr. Richard Jewett Lougee was one of the world's foremost glaciologists. His theory of a single, unified glacial period had been proposed by earlier geologists, but Dr. Lougee's approach to the subject so differed from theirs, and his research included so much more attention to local geologic conditions, that his theory emerged as new and revolutionary." For thirty-three years, Professor Lougee bucked the academic and scientific establishment with his theories, according to the writer, and this book is "a testament to the inquisitive mind, and a clarion call to keep dogmatism out of scholarship and science."

What *Late-Glacial Chronology* is then is a labor of love, by a man with a vision that could not be changed or destroyed, and by a woman (also a geologist) whose dedication to the memory of the man to whom she was married carried her to the completion of a work that would serve as a monument to him. Therein lies its beauty: for would not any scholar or scientist prefer as a headstone a book instead of a stone?

Besides, there's a great deal said in the book about Wisconsin's glacial past.

—Reviews by Hayward Allen

THE NEW AWARENESS: RELIGION THROUGH SCIENCE FICTION edited by Patricia Warrick and Martin H. Greenberg; Delacorte Press, New York, 1975. \$7.95.

"Science" and "religion" are

presented by the editors of this volume of short stories in terms which would scarcely satisfy either a scientist or a serious student of religion. "Science" they tell us, for example, "holds that only through logic (inductive and deductive reasoning) can we arrive at a reliable hypothesis . . . Religion, on the other hand, has always held that truth can be revealed by intuition—knowledge mystically received in a flash of insight without the use of reason." Yet surely science and religion are not simply two different ways of knowing!

The stories themselves are also open to serious criticism. Not more than two or three of them present genuine human dilemmas. Most of the situations are of the highly contrived "what if" variety, and the characters are two-dimensional at best. I was struck by the pervasive yearning for something more than science which these writers almost without exception express. Over and over the key to the story is the crucial importance of emotions, of the sensitivity to beauty, and the capacity for love which make our lives truly human. These qualities, it is suggested, are at best ignored, at worst opposed and rooted out by the scientific spirit.

This conception of science as cold, totally rational, and ultimately inhuman keeps cropping up in these stories. In one a computer is elected Pope. In another the work is carried on in the temples of Hardscience, where computer printouts are the sacred writings and the holy of holies is the Main Computer. There is nothing here to suggest the human dimensions of science itself: intellectual curiosity, commitment, and imagination. What one gets in these stories is often not science—not even an extrapolation of science—but a caricature of science and the scientific enterprise. To the extent that this misperception of science characterizes these stories, they may provide entertainment but are not very fruitful sources of

religious insight. Or, at least, they are not very fruitful sources of the kind of religious insight the editors claim for them. (Patricia Warrick is Assistant Professor of English at UW-Fox Valley Center and Martin Greenberg is director of Graduate Studies at the UW-Green Bay.)

"Good science fiction," they write, "utilizes the concepts and equipment of contemporary science and technology. It is, as a result, uniquely able to examine technological man in his search for meaning." These claims by the editors (not by the authors of the stories, be it noted) struck me as pretentious. There is precious little elucidation of the relationship between science and religion in these stories. What one does find is a perhaps deliberately distorted image of science linked with a pat and superficial understanding of religion to produce simplistic responses to rigged questions.

Despite all these deficiencies, the book makes pleasant reading. A number of the stories are really good tales, several are well-written, and one or two are genuinely moving. A few of them do raise genuine issues of human living in terms that stretch our imagination and challenge our thinking. My own favorite was "The Nine Billion Names of God" by Arthur Clarke, the well-known author of "2001: A Space Odyssey"; Walter Miller's "A Canticle for Liebowitz," two stories by Theodore Sturgeon, one by Ray Bradbury and another by Edward Bryant are also appealing.

—Max D. Gaebler

Received and Noted:

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: ISSUES AND STRATEGIES FOR RESEARCH edited by Steven H. Chaffee; Sage Annual Reviews of Communication Research, Vol. IV, Beverly Hills, California, 1975. 319 pp. Paper \$7.50. Cloth \$17.50.

PROGRESS AGAINST PROVERBITY: A REVIEW OF THE 1964-1974 DECADE by Robert D. Plotnick and Felicity Skidmore; Academic Press, New York. 246 pp.

RESPONSES OF PLANTS TO AIR POLLUTION edited by J.B. Mudd and T.T. Kozlowski; Academic Press, New York, 1975. 383 pp. \$29.50.

CONCISE GUIDE TO LIBRARY RESEARCH (Rev. ed.) by Grant W. Morse; Fleet Academic Editions, New York, 1975. 262 pp. Paper \$5.50. Cloth \$12.50.

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION: AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH (2nd ed.) by Oliver S. Owen; Macmillin Publishing Co., New York, 700 pp.

TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ by Richard J. Smith and Dale D. Johnson; Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, Massachusetts, 1976. 384 pp. \$9.95.

THE RESPONSIBLE GOD: A STUDY OF THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF H. RICHARD NIEBUHR by Donald E. Fadner; Scholars Press for the American Academy of Religion, Missoula, Montana, 1975. 276 pp. \$4.20.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE by David Patrick Geary; John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1975. 430 pp. \$10.95.

THE SNAILS

by Ron Slate

It is because of the rain that they can be seen at all, flushed out from under ivy.

And they stretch all the way out to meet the rainfall head on so as not to drown within.

Arthur Hove is an assistant to the University of Wisconsin-Madison chancellor. He is also a regular contributor to this journal, a member of its ad hoc Editorial Advisory Committee—and a friend.

Art telephoned one day this past summer to tell me, among other things, that I could not be “all things to all people.” The editorship of the “Wisconsin Academy Review,” he explained, was deserving of more attention than I could give it and still meet other responsibilities as executive director. He was to the point: the Committee, he said, believed that the editorial quality of the “Review” was not showing the improvement they thought it should. It was the Committee’s opinion, he added, that its advice too often went unheeded, that it was the Committee’s intention to recommend that its ad hoc status be changed to that of a permanent subcommittee of the standing Publications Committee.

This didn’t set so well, as Art was to discover. After all, wasn’t the Committee only advisory in nature? Wasn’t it a creature of my own making? And where did it get off taking pot-shots like that? Hadn’t the “Review” not only won an award for graphic excellence from the Educational Press Association, but also placed five of its articles (including two firsts in short non-fiction and one first in short fiction) in competition sponsored by the Council for Wisconsin Writers, Inc.? And all this in the course of only two years?

Friend or not, he had touched upon the Ego, and defense mechanisms went into operation. Then reason raised its noble head, and I began to realize that Art and his fellow Committee members did, indeed, have a point and that their recommendations were borne of concern and caring for *their* Wisconsin Academy. So the matter will be taken to the proper decision-making bodies. It will have my support, including a

personal proposal that the immediate editorial responsibility for production of the “Review” be separated from the office of executive director.

All of this speaks to a coming of age for the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters. When I became executive director of the Academy in 1971, we had a very small staff. To say that it has since doubled in size—including full and part-time, salaried and volunteer personnel—is still nearly to stay within the fingers of one hand in making the count. Thus did I come to wear many hats, and thus did I become accustomed not only to having things done my way, but to actually doing them myself.

In truth, there was sometimes little choice. Other times it may have been more impulse than necessity. But over the years the Academy operation has evolved. It has become far more complex and wide-ranging in its program planning, publications, business procedures, and state and institutional relations. It wasn’t, it isn’t, and it never should be a one-man-or-woman show.

This business with Art and the Committee also brought to mind an essential element in effective administration. I pose it as a question: if you were to ask someone who had served in important administrative capacities for over forty years just what he or she had found to be the single most contributive factor to administrative success, what do you suppose the answer might be? Establishing priorities? Meeting deadlines? Dedication and drive? Planning and implementation?

Well, I did ask such a person; the answer was none of the above.

Several years ago I had the pleasure of serving as assistant to the University of Wisconsin Center System chancellor, L. H. Adolfson, now retired. As he neared the close of his long and distinguished career in higher education, I put the question to him. His response



Inside the Academy

By James R. Batt
Executive Director

came without hesitation: “Surround yourself with good people and delegate.”

While I lack half the total experience and accumulated insights of Chancellor Adolfson, I have come to see what he means. Sometimes the lesson was learned the hard way. But the fact of the matter is that, unless you do delegate, it is difficult to keep good people around for long. And really good people will be tempted to take matters into their own hands.

Increasingly, the work of the Academy is being sharply delineated among the officers, staff, committees, and individual members. The custody of the Academy is in many good hands; may that be so, always.

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