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Wisconsin Academy review. Volume 39, Number 3 Summer 1993

Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, Summer 1993

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SUMMER READER
LAND USE: THREE PERSPECTIVES

Wisconsin Academy Review

A JOURNAL OF WISCONSIN CULTURE





John Beecroft, editor for the Literary Guild, at his desk in the early 1940s. Courtesy the John Beecroft Collection, Jim Dan Hill Library, University of Wisconsin-Superior.

Cover: *Walt Whitman's Dream* (detail) by Randall Berndt. Acrylic on paper, 21 x 27 inches. 1991. Collection of Richard and Marilyn Mazess.

The *Wisconsin Academy Review* (ISSN0512-1175) is published quarterly by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, 1922 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53705. All correspondence, orders, manuscripts, and change of address information should be sent to this address. The *Wisconsin Academy Review* is distributed to annual members as part of their \$35 dues. It is available by subscription for \$15 per year (four issues). Individual copies are available for \$4 plus \$1 postage from the Academy. (Please remit in U.S. currency.)

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Designed by University Publications
Printed by American Printing Company

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Ah, those lazy days of summer! I say *those* to put *lazy* in its proper time frame—in other words, I'm referring to the past. Didn't we used to have time to *read* during the summer? Remember those long, hammock days, disrupted only by brief trips for lemonade refills? Well, I intend to bring *lazy* back into my life, and that means finding time this summer to *read for pleasure*. Leo Hertzels article on John Beecroft and the Literary Guild, which appears at the beginning of this issue of the *Review*, has pushed me into serious resolve.

Now that I have made a commitment for some lazy time, it's hard not to proselytize and recruit. In our culture, being lazy carries guilt with it, and one wouldn't want to be the only Lazy Literary Loafer in town. So we are being subtle about it. We will not use *persuasion*, but rather *temptation* in the form of an expanded selection of short fiction along with an essay on one of Wisconsin's most elegant and eloquent—some would say controversial—writers, Glenway Wescott, in addition to our usual offerings of Wisconsin poetry and book reviews. Where possible, we have teamed up Wisconsin artists with Wisconsin writers to more successfully lure you into your hammocks and/or lawn chairs. (Incidentally, we are further inspired by two literary anniversaries this year: Peter Rabbit is one hundred, and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, which you can read about in Leo Hertzels article, is fifty.) Included in the mix is an opportunity to become better acquainted with Bruce Taylor, editor of *Wisconsin Poetry*, the special poetry edition of *Transactions*, which has just gone into a second printing.

But, alas, we must not remove ourselves completely from responsibility, awareness, and concern. As mentioned in previous issues, this year the Wisconsin Academy is placing an emphasis on math, science, and technology education. In the spring (1993) *Review* we presented an overview of Project 2061, a nationwide program which addresses changes in curriculum and teaching methods. In this issue, Jim Johnson, distinguished Academy fellow, provides us with insight into the development process in a report on his experience as a member of the national committee responsible for the technology section of Project 2061. (The Academy is the fiscal agent for this program in Wisconsin.) As an additional glimpse of in-house activity, the Inside the Academy department offers an introduction to the new Wisconsin Academy Foundation.

Even as Earth renews itself each spring, we tend to renew our relationships with Earth, and summer offers the perfect time to reinforce that bonding. In this issue, we explore difficult questions relating to land use from three perspectives: the value of community life (city, village, and farm) and the challenges

presented by urban growth; sustainable agriculture as an alternative to "traditional" methods, established in recent decades; and an interpretation of Aldo Leopold's land ethic as it relates to economics, based on his writings. If you agree or disagree with the authors, we'd like to hear from you. A suggestion for additional reading: *The Origins of Agriculture and Settled Life* by Richard S. MacNeish (director of research for the Andover Foundation for Archaeological Research). Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.



A shopper in an English village walks past row houses on her way to market.

Photo by Faith B. Miracle

I happen to live in just the kind of non-community which Justin Isherwood decries in his commentary. It is a subdivision, made up entirely of houses. There is no store, post office, library, or school within reasonable walking distance. When we moved into our home in 1981, I enjoyed the wooded land around us, regretting the fact that our children had grown up in a Milwaukee neighborhood and would miss the pleasures of this quasi-rural setting. But I was wrong to have regrets.

It is very nice where I live. But though we can see corn fields, we don't have the advantages of farm life; and though it is fast becoming densely populated, we don't have the conveniences of town life. I no longer think it is an *ideal* environment for families.

I recently viewed the splendid exhibition of treasures from the Vatican Library at the Library of Congress. One of the books, Ptolemy's *Geography*, showed a view of Rome, 1469; the caption read, "The ancient monuments rise stripped of . . . urban sprawl." We are not alone in facing the tough challenges of land-use decisions—obviously, it is a global problem. But we have to find solutions where we are. Or not.

Faith B. Miracle

WISCONSIN ACADEMY GALLERY SUMMER EXHIBITION SCHEDULE:

June: Anders C. Shafer, acrylics and pencil
July: Ann Alderson Cabezas, glass
August: Helen Klebesadel, watercolors

CONTRIBUTORS

- ▶ The work of Randall Berndt, Madison, has been widely exhibited and appreciated throughout the state. He has received numerous grants and awards and has been commissioned to do theater set designs and paintings and drawings of historic architecture. He has taught art in Madison and worked as a colorist for Kitchen Sink Press, Princeton. He is a technician on the Wisconsin State Capitol conservation project and is restoring a prairie on his family farm in Green Lake County. He recently traveled in Europe to study Flemish art, and he visited some of the old cities referred to in Justin Isherwood's essay on lane use.
- ▶ Neil Bohrod, Madison, studied at the Art Students League in New York and works primarily in pen and ink, watercolor, and acrylics. His work can be seen at the Valperine Gallery in Madison and at the Riveredge Galleries in Mishicot. An avid baseball fan, he still pitches knuckleballs for a Madison amateur baseball team.
- ▶ Denny Caneff holds a master's degree in agricultural journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is executive director of the Wisconsin Rural Development Center, Mount Horeb. The center focuses on rural resource stewardship and economic opportunity, promoting practices which "protect soil, water, and animals, and which help farmers and small business people profit."
- ▶ Barry Carlsen received his BFA degree from the University of Nebraska-Omaha and an MFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he now works as a senior graphic artist for the publications office. His work is exhibited regionally and nationally and appears in corporate, public, and private collections. He recently received a Wisconsin Arts Board grant, and this fall he will be visiting artist at the University of Wisconsin Center-Marshfield/Wood County. His work will be shown in the Wisconsin Academy Gallery during October 1993.
- ▶ Phil Davis received his BA and MA degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communications. His writing has appeared in such publications as the *Village Voice*, *Milwaukee Magazine*, *Wisconsin Trails*. During the 1980s he was staff writer for *Isthmus*, a Madison weekly newspaper. Two music albums, *The Heart of the Heart Country* and *The Good Life*, recorded with his group, Fire Town, have recently been released by Atlantic Records. At present he is director of public relations for Waldbillig & Besteman, Inc., a Madison marketing communications agency, and he is at work on a novel set in northwestern Wisconsin.
- ▶ Credo James Enriquez, Madison, worked until recently as international trade and investment consultant with the Wisconsin Department of Development. He has contributed to the *Review* in the past and is currently working on a play called *A Midwest Mephisto* and a series of poems based on the AIDS crisis.
- ▶ Jolene M. Frechette, Madison, has shown her work in numerous galleries in Madison and Milwaukee. Exhibitions include the 1985 Wisconsin Women in the Arts group show in Milwaukee, the Native American Artists exhibition in Madison, and a solo show at the Sunprint Gallery in Madison in 1992.
- ▶ Pete Fromm is a winner of *Sierra's* 1991 nature writing contest and the 1992 Writer's Voice "New Voices of the West" awards. *Indian Creek Chronicles: A Winter in the Bitterroot Wilderness* has just been published. His first novel, *Monkey Tag*, and his second collection of stories, *King of the Mountain*, will appear in 1994. He grew up in Milwaukee and now lives in Great Falls, Montana.
- ▶ Leo J. Hertzler is emeritus professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Superior and curator of the John Beecroft collection there. He also is adjunct professor of languages and literature at The College of St. Scholastica in Duluth.
- ▶ Justin Isherwood operates a potato farm and writes at his home near Plover. His articles and fiction have appeared in many Wisconsin publications, and he is a regular columnist for the Stevens Point newspaper. His novel, *Farm West of Mars*, was published in 1988 by Heartland Press, Minocqua. He previously has contributed fiction to the *Review*.
- ▶ Curt Johanson, a Denver court report, was born in Superior. His poetry and short fiction have appeared in such literary journals as *Mind in Motion*, *Cosmic Trend* (Canada), and *Art Times*. He "employs creative writing as a welcome respite from legalese and mainstream jargon."
- ▶ James R. Johnson is a retired engineer and executive scientist for the 3M Company and was a pioneer in ceramic design and application. He is a past president of the Wisconsin Academy council, an Academy fellow, and a member of the Wisconsin Academy Foundation board. He lives in River Falls.
- ▶ David Mays is director of forensic psychiatry at Mendota Mental Health Institute, medical director of mobile community treatment at the Mental Health Center of Dane County, and a member of the clinical faculty in the psychiatry department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has lived in Madison for ten years.
- ▶ James J. Nora, Denver, received his medical degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and practiced medicine in Cambridge, Wisconsin (1955-1960). He completed his pediatric residency and fellowship in cardiology during the 1960s in Madison and is now emeritus professor, University of Colorado School of Medicine. He has published twelve books (mostly scientific), two novels, hundreds of articles, and many poems.
- ▶ Dennis Palmmini is an associate professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point where he teaches courses in environmental economics and government regu-

John Beecroft and the Literature Business

by Leo J. Hertz

In the autumn 1925 issue of The Transatlantic Review, Glenway Wescott, complaining that in America conservative citizens viewed serious literature with “moral disgust,” concluded, “It seems necessary to do something—to deliver a lecture, to commit suicide, to take the next boat to Paris.”

Many Americans agreed. Some of the more talented—James Thurber, Gertrude Stein, Duke Ellington, Sylvia Beach, e e cummings (there were many more, of course)—fled to Paris using the city as a refuge from American censorship, prohibition, and other restrictions imposed by the puritan ethic. Back home expatriates were denounced in newspapers, magazines, sermons, accused of immorality, cultural treason. Americans should work to make this a better country, said the critics, not run off to foreign places in pursuit of false values in decadent societies.

About the time this conflict was at its height, twenty-three-year-old John William Beecroft graduated from Superior Normal School in Superior, Wisconsin. “Expect great things of yourself and expect to do these great things now,” said the speaker at his graduation ceremony. Beecroft was an idealistic, ambitious young man, product of Superior elementary and secondary schools. He was, unfortunately, taunted by his classmates, who called him a “sis” and a “pet.” Willie Beecroft “did not participate in the running and thumping of our athletic outfits,” a schoolmate recalled. Willie Beecroft was interested in Shakespeare and Greek drama in translation and had been advised by his high school English teacher that his life work should be “in literature.”

In 1923, restless after a bleak year of teaching arithmetic to junior high school children in Duluth, Beecroft arrived in New York City. He worked as a bit player in a Broadway play. He earned a degree in literature at Columbia. He wrote a guide to the study of the Harvard Classics (“The Harvard Classics will repay you manyfold in dividends of delight and satisfaction for the hours you have spent in the company of the immortal writers.”).

In 1927 he joined the expatriates in Paris.

John Beecroft enjoyed the old buildings, the paintings in the museums, the statues in Paris. He went to Italy to learn about antiques and architecture. He spoke no Italian and very little French—he was not a sociable young man. He was withdrawn and shy—some people said arrogant—and he was uncomfortable with the disorder of expatriate life. One day he came across *Andrew Bride of Paris*, a thinly clever novel by Henry Sydnor Harrison which satirized the very American expatriate life Beecroft himself was trying to live.

The character Andrew Bride is a “frenchified” American, part of a group of post-World War I intellectuals living in France who “. . . poured a deadly fire upon the American scene . . .” Fortunately, Andrew meets Mary Jackson from Michigan. She helps him see America as the land of the future, the proper place for *real* Americans to live and work. Andrew and Mary return to Michigan together where they plan to build a virtuous and productive life.

John Beecroft liked this book. It reminded him of the faith in American institutions he had known at home, back in Superior, learned in school—especially from his high school English teacher, Miss Lulu Dickinson, who was very much a rebel herself but a patriotic American nevertheless. He and Miss Dickinson had spent hours together reading poetry and talking about literature and the frontier virtues. “Suddenly, I discovered that everything new in Europe was coming straight from America,” he told Bennett Cerf later, “so I decided to go home.”

Aboard ship he found a brochure describing the Literary Guild, one of the new book clubs in America. Calling itself a “guild” instead of a “book club” in order to emphasize the high intellectual and literary levels of its offerings, the Literary Guild promised that it would bring a new book of classic quality every month to Americans across the nation. It was especially committed to bringing high quality books to readers in the Midwest, to towns (like Superior) where good new books were hard to find. This was exactly what John Beecroft was looking for. The day after he got off the boat, he applied for a job with the guild and was hired as a junior editor. Among his other duties, he would edit *Wings*, the little promotional magazine sent monthly to every member.

This was an exciting job for an ambitious young man from the Midwest with literary hopes. He met authors. He visited the offices of important literary journals and met editors. He wrote promotional copy for the guild. Sometimes he even wrote endorsements for the monthly classic selection, and the endorsements appeared in *Wings*. The senior editors, however, would not allow him to sign his name to these pieces. Nevertheless, this was a good job. He was working to improve American culture instead of ridiculing it like the expatriates back in Europe. He was also making a good salary.

But the timing was wrong. The Great Depression was nearly fatal to such luxuries as book clubs. ("One of the saddest experiences to be had by any writer in America now is to go into the office of almost any American book or magazine publishing house," wrote Sherwood Anderson, back from Europe himself, in 1932. "Lord, what gloom, what deep despair.") John Beecroft lost his job.



New York writers and editors were talking about socialism, the inevitability of socialism in America. John Beecroft invested his savings in a trip to Russia to see for himself what socialism was like. He returned to New York with a confirmed faith in capitalism and other American institutions. "To anyone who thinks he is suffering from deprivation in America by loss of a settled income and its attendant standard of living, I recommend a trip to Russia," he wrote in an essay titled "Bread Not So Bitter," which he tried unsuccessfully to sell in 1932. "... my lasting benefit from my Russian trip was a shrunken stomach."

He also said the difference between people in Russia and people in America was that people in Russia willingly gave up luxuries like meat and bread because they had hope of a better future. "We, here in America, go without sufficient food because our system is not efficient and suffer hopelessly while nothing is done to make our system efficient."

Hopelessly. The need for hope in America became an important matter for John Beecroft.

Meanwhile, the Literary Guild was having problems. There was member concern that guild sales of books by foreign writers was taking jobs away from needy American writers. There was concern that some guild selections by literary intellectuals held America up to ridicule.

The June 1932 guild selection was an anthology, *America As Americans See It*, by Fred J. Ringel. It contained forty-six humorous pieces and some cartoons about America: skyscrapers, Hollywood, chain stores, graft, the Great Depression itself. A letter in the September 1932 issue of *Wings* from C.A.B. of New York City told the guild it wasn't funny when cynical intellectuals made fun of America:

I should like to know what could have possessed those jurors of yours when they selected *Americans As Americans See It* . . . It is about as cheap stuff as one could imagine being written and is an insult to every normal American. Each contributor seems to have been imbued with the idea that he or she should be funny,



John W. R. Beecroft.

with the result that they were not in the least amusing, nor arising even to the dignity of satire—just cheap, is all I can say, as one might expect to find in *The New Yorker* or something equally of the gutter class.

When the guild tried to deal more soberly with the painful realities of the depression by choosing Burton Rascoe's *Hungry Men*, a book with "authentic and graphic pictures of men out of work, hungry, living in makeshift shelters, in 'flop-houses,'" members protested they did not need to buy a book to see such things. We see those things every day right outside our own doors, they said.

Eventually, the Literary Guild was reorganized and John Beecroft was rehired. In 1937, experienced and ambitious, he survived a bitter office power struggle to become the sole editor. He alone would choose the monthly guild books sent to members for the next twenty-five years.



One of Beecroft's first book selections was *American Dream* by Michael Foster. "In this novel Michael Foster explains the reasons for America's greatness and tells us more about ourselves as a nation than is found in many history books," Beecroft wrote in *Wings*. "Until you have read it you will have to take



John Beecroft and two of his high school teachers, Miss Niles, who taught classical literature, and Miss Dickinson, who taught English, probably taken in 1919 or 1920. Both teachers were important influences in Beecroft's decision to make literature his life work. Miss Dickinson achieved some national attention in 1927 when Superior students went on strike to protest her dismissal by the school board following "a meeting in secret session" (The Nation, May 25, 1927, p. 573)

our word that *American Dream* is a grand book—a story that gives the reader faith, hope, and courage."

Early in 1938 he chose *American Years* by Harold Sinclair. Beecroft wrote, "Here is a book that throbs with the life blood of America, that shows what sort of people made America." Then there was *America Now*, Harold E. Stearne's encouraging survey. Then *The Tree of Liberty*, followed by *The Fifty Best American Short Stories*. There was nothing heavy or intellectually demanding about Beecroft's choices. They were light and entertaining. They were uniformly optimistic about America's future.

The Literary Guild was going in a new direction and membership began to grow.

Most members, then as always, were women. Most had graduated from high school, but very few had gone to college. They lived in towns with populations of less than 100,000, and many lived in villages or on farms across the prairies of the Midwest. During the waning days of the Great Depression and the long anxious years of World War II, more and more of them looked forward to receiving Beecroft's monthly selections in the mail. The books he chose were entertaining. Most of them were simple, down-to-earth stories about trials and victories. A lot of them were about America's rich past and its promising future. Women told their friends, "The guild keeps your spirits up."

John Beecroft married Melenda Pollen Schmidt, a descendent of John and Priscilla Alden, and they moved into a large home on Long Island which they proceeded to fill with paintings, statues, cats, and antiques.

He selected *Wild Geese Calling*, *The Sun Is My Undoing*, *Frenchman's Creek*, Elliot Paul's *The Last Time I Saw Paris*, *Congo Song*, *Chicken Every Sunday*, Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*, *Anna and the King of Siam*, Samuel Shellabarger's *Captain from Castile*, Sinclair Lewis's *Kingsblood Royal*. There was variety—romantic fiction, humor, light history, even some poetry, but nearly all of the selections left the reader with a good feeling about life, especially about life in America. Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* did not make the guild list nor did anything by Nathanael West. Observers at the time said Beecroft wanted to raise the reading level of the public, as

long as the process did not diminish book sales.

The Literary Guild grew and prospered and became at the time the largest commercial publishing venture in the history of the nation. In 1948 critic Merle Miller, writing in *Harper's* magazine, called John Beecroft "one of the two or three most powerful figures in the American publishing business." By that time, Beecroft's selection of a book meant the author became an immediate celebrity, rewarded with substantial sums of money. Guild membership had reached nearly 2,000,000, and each month about 75 percent bought the Beecroft selection. Beecroft was convinced that the guild was successful because members genuinely liked to read his choices. He was getting Americans to read books. Hadn't that been his hope when he returned from Paris?

"Probably the most important thing we can say about the Guild is this: *It helps increase book reading*," said an article in a 1946 issue of *Double-Life*, the house publication of Doubleday Company. There was no mention of the guild offering books of a high intellectual or literary quality.

"On my visits to department stores," Beecroft said, "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." Whether or not this statement was accurate, guild members did buy so many books that

anxious writers began studying the books' structures and style, hoping to produce the one that Beecroft would select next time. Bookstores were filled with imitation Beecrofts.

Doubleday book sales were so strong the company built a special plant in Hanover, Pennsylvania, to handle book club editions.

John Beecroft read and read. Other book clubs had editorial boards that spread the reading around, but Beecroft alone chose the guild selection each month. He read at least twelve books a week every week, some in proofs, some in manuscript form. He told friends he skimmed as many as twenty-five other books and manuscripts every week. He visited his New York office only two days a week, usually to oversee copy for the next *Wings*, sign correspondence, and attend editorial conferences. Afterwards, restless, he might drop in at a bookstore, visit with sales people and customers, and ask what they thought of guild books, how they compared.

He avoided authors. He avoided literary luncheons.

His real work was done the other five days of the week when he remained at home reading far into the night. It was lonely, tedious work. He drank gin as he read, and he began to feel a dull, corrosive anger toward authors of the endless books. He grew angry at what he saw as the cynicism of New York editors and publishers, people who cared for nothing but money. He began to think of greed as the main ingredient of the eastern literary mentality, the promoters of the literature business. He romanticized the innocence and the idealism of the Midwest, places like Superior, places where readers waited for his hope-filled books.

In 1947 he returned to Superior to give the graduation speech at his old normal school, now grown into a full college. It was a proud day for him, a local boy who found success in the brutal literary arena of the East. He gave a rambling speech, sentimental, avuncular. He talked about his work and his bitterness and his romantic faith.

I spend the evenings and the night reading, not because I enjoy it but because I earn my living by having opinions about books, and the only way you can have an opinion is by spending hours

reading. If the book is bad, you have spent hours on a dull and unrewarding job. But what about those interesting authors? In the days when I was too lowly to be invited to the literary parties, I would imagine the high class literary conversations I missed. But conversation at literary parties I later learned ran to "How much money will I get for my next book?"—"What do you think the sale will be?" and "How much will I get from the movies—so and so got \$150,000, I should get \$250,000 if he could get that for his lousy book." Fortunately, I am a book club editor with hundreds of thousands to spend each month and I usually avoid meeting authors.

He made some exceptions:

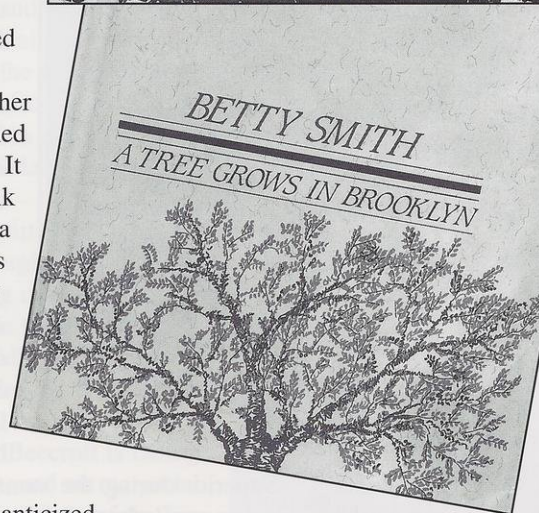
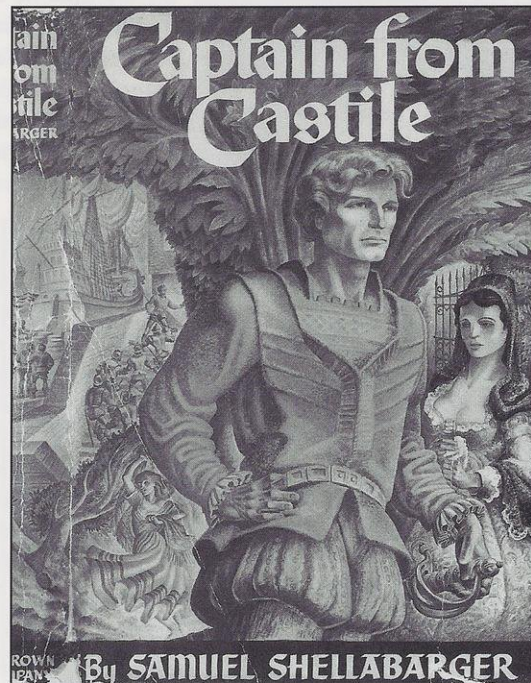
Mr. Maugham is one of my favorite authors—I have the greatest respect for his craftsmanship and sincerity as a writer—though he calls me Johnny I still address him as Mr. Maugham.

He thought of Thomas Costain as his best friend. He liked Sigrid Undset. He continued:

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. Twenty

years of quiet living and believing virtue is rewarded is not fit preparation for New York. New York is not typically American . . . New York is cruel. It offers no help. There it is sink or swim. There you face the most ruthless and bitter competition. Don't be guileless enough to think you will get to the top because you have knowledge. . . . Count your blessings here.

Living and believing virtue is rewarded, looking to the future, these were the things he said he remembered about life in the Midwest, in



The 1945 dust cover for *Captain from Castile* and the cover for the 1982 large print edition of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*.

Superior, in Miss Lulu Dickinson's English classes in the heart of America. Never mind that life in Superior was not always promising, that life was tough and no one could grow up in Superior without knowing about the bullies and the beatings and the brawls, the lake sailors and loggers, and the sporting girls on Tower Avenue. Perhaps it was only the childhood illusion of goodness that counted.

Or did he really believe the things he said in that speech?

"My feeling is that John probably based his speech on what he thought his midwestern audience would like to hear," said A. Milton Runyon of New York about Beecroft's speech. Runyon worked with Beecroft for many years at Doubleday and knew him well.

We are left to speculate on whose cynicism was greater.

John Beecroft returned to Long Island to his endless reading. Late into the nights, drinking gin, he read on and on, looking for entertaining and hope-filled books to sell to midwestern readers. He chose *Elizabeth*, *Captive Princess*; Robert Penn Warren's *World Enough and Time*; Daphne du Maurier's *My Cousin Rachel*; Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*—this last title a controversial book, something of a departure from his usual practice.

Always reticent and withdrawn, he became increasingly ill tempered. At the office, he tolerated no questioning of his editorial decisions. "When he is crossed, the mild and scholarly Beecroft charges upon his foe with the fury of a hurricane, creating such a furor that all opposition literally dissolves," wrote Bennett Cerf in *The Saturday Review of Literature*. Cerf's playful tone did not conceal the harsher judgment beneath. "As long as the membership rolls of the club keep soaring, he is the white haired favorite, the Grand Mahatma, the ruler of the roost—and boy, does he know it!"

Some of the people who worked with Beecroft thought he was jealous of authors whose books he chose, that he wanted to write novels himself. He wrote no novels. Some thought he had special difficulties dealing with women. Perhaps he remembered the neighborhood girls back in Superior, taunting him with cries of "Willie, Willie" before they yelled at him to go home and put on a dress when he was going off to read poetry with Miss Dickinson at Pattison Park. But that was back in the Midwest where people were good, wasn't it? Perhaps he had some things confused. "He enjoyed being difficult," said a co-worker who did

not explain the judgment, "and at times he could be extremely cruel. It would make him laugh sardonically if we created a portrait of him as a sort of benevolent literary dictator."

By the time he retired in 1962 (book club business had begun to fall—television was on the rise) he had chosen nearly three hundred titles. He also had edited fifteen anthologies, several of them collections of stories about cats. In one, he included a story he himself wrote about Rocco, Patience, Carrie Nation, and Mr. Persephone, the four cats he and Melenda

owned. Four times he chose one of his own anthologies as guild selection for December—guild sales were highest during December, and authors or editors received a percentage of the sales. "He had what lots of people of noble feeling lack which was commercial judgment," wrote a Doubleday editor who worked with him for many years.

John Beecroft was not what we think of as a literary critic. He was not a literary intellectual. If we judge from his own writings and from the opinions of his contemporaries, he was not an unusually intelligent or profound man. There is no evidence that his learning was broad or deep in any field. He was not much interested in abstractions or in theory. He was industrious, practical, shrewd, ambitious, reserved, temperamental.

He also was a sensitive man who some people described as "quiet, rather gravely courteous." He had a sure feeling for the likes and dislikes of American midwesterners, especially midwestern women of his time. Long after Beecroft's death, a boyhood friend remembered Beecroft in

.....
*There's a tree that grows in
Brooklyn. Some people call it the
Tree of Heaven. No matter where
its seed falls, it makes a tree which
struggles to reach the sky. It grows
in boarded-up lots and out of
neglected rubbish heaps. It grows up
out of cellar gratings. It is the only
tree that grows out of cement. It
grows lushly . . . survives without
sun, water, and seemingly without
earth. It would be considered
beautiful except that there are too
many of it.*
.....

Author's inscription for A Tree Grows in Brooklyn.

Superior during the summer when he was eleven years old, going regularly to the home of the sick mother of a classmate where he would read novels aloud to her for her afternoon's entertainment. Even then he knew what fiction was for.

He believed his readers cared little for the preoccupations of literary expatriates and intellectuals—concerns with literary form or the absurdities of dada or the despair of post-war Europe or the end of nineteenth-century romanticism. He believed midwestern women used books the way men in Superior in his boyhood used hunting, boxing, and football—as diversions from the monotony of everyday life. Books were fantasy, excitement, escape, entertainment, hope for hard-working, middle-class women who did not have very many alternatives. He knew guild readers did not want literature that questioned the values in their lives. They were too busy for that. Literature was a comfort, a

message that they were doing all right—things are tough but they'll get better, America is strong, up in Michigan Andrew Bride and Mary Johnson are making it fine.

People will buy books like that.

Beecroft cared very little for the niceties of literary form. Merle Miller quoted Beecroft as saying he didn't like to choose novels with flashbacks—most readers want a forward moving plot, he said. Something has to happen to someone. That something should be external, physical. Guild readers were not much interested in conflicts inside the mind.



A few years after John Beecroft's death in 1966, I visited Melenda Beecroft in the house on Long Island which they shared for over twenty-five years. They had no children. Surrounded by antique furniture, large oil portraits on the walls, a marble head of Shakespeare on a pedestal, several cats on the patio, Melenda talked about the way John saw his life after his retirement.

She said he had feared that after his death people would think of him only as a book seller, a pusher of popular trash. He felt he had done a great deal more than that. He was proud of the variety of choices he had made for the Literary Guild. He had given hope when people badly needed hope. He had helped make Sinclair Lewis and Somerset Maugham and Thomas Wolfe and Betty Smith household names. Unlike the expatriates who had deserted the country, he had worked to improve the cultural level of the American people. Perhaps he had given his readers some thin froth from time to time, but he had never forgotten the larger purpose of his work.

He had expected more recognition, especially from the academic world. He thought a university library in his name would be a fitting memorial for the work he had done with literature. He thought it would be appropriate if the new library building at the university in Superior were named the John W. R. Beecroft Library. But that did not happen.

The memory of John William Beecroft is fading in Superior. He is buried in the East, and no memorial buildings bear his name. On the second floor of the Jim Dan Hill Library at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, the Beecroft Room holds some of his guild papers and a few posters he brought back from Russia. Shelves on one wall hold a nearly complete set of his guild selections and some bound volumes of *Wings*. The room is small and dark. Months go by and no one opens the door.

Maybe we should look at Beecroft's work again. Maybe we owe him that in return for all he did to bring entertainment and hope to the nation half a century ago.

Photos courtesy the John Beecroft Collection, Jim Dan Hill Library, University of Wisconsin-Superior.

A suggestion.

Go to your library. You'll almost certainly find Elliot Paul's *The Last Time I Saw Paris*, Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, and Samuel Shellabarger's *Captain from Castile*. These were three of Beecroft's most popular choices in the late days of World War II.

Check the books out.

Start by reading *The Last Time I Saw Paris*. This is not what at first you would expect a Beecroft selection to be. This is a series of journal entries and letters recording details of daily life on a street in Paris where Elliot Paul lived between 1925 and the beginning of World War II. It is a light personal history. The book is initially playful, full of curious people and scenes. Maybe you'll enjoy the description of the laundry that doubles as a whore house. By the time the book reaches 1929, the good life on the street has begun to come apart. This is an earthy book. Elliot is not a skilful prose stylist, but he cares about the people and the places he describes. I think the book is worth your time.

Pick up *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. This was John Beecroft's selection for September 1943. It sold over 4,000,000 copies, huge sales for that time, and it is the ideal guild book. It is the story of an Irish Catholic girl named Francie Nolan growing up in immigrant poverty in Brooklyn during the years before World War I. Immigrant families on her street are trying to forge a mesh between the old world and the new ways. Francie's mother scrubs floors. Her singing father dies. All the children are hungry. They save pennies in a soup can nailed to the floor. They are good and honest, brave and hard working, and they must survive many challenges. At the end everything is changed by a rich politician who marries Francie's widowed mother. Only in America could this happen. Foolish and romantic and sentimental as it is, it retains even now an innocence and vitality and excitement that make you feel good about life. It is a book full of hope.

Finally, read Samuel Shellabarger's *Captain from Castile*, a very long book. Spain and the New World in the sixteenth century are described by a friendly narrator who rides along beside you. He explains, cautions, instructs as you go among wenches, Indian kings, villains, sword fights, loyal servants, beautiful virgins, evil inquisitors. ("The Inquisition," whispers the narrator, in case you are a Catholic and uncertain about how these terrible people could exist in a Catholic society, "represented the very reverse of Catholic, a peculiar Spanish development, narrow, local, fanatic; a parasite repudiated by traditional Catholic thought then as well as since.") That out of the way, you can go on with a clear conscience to the horrible pain inflicted by the dread *strappado*. The sawtooth structure of this book makes it ideal if you, like many busy readers in 1944, have only a few minutes at a time for reading. You can put it down any time and then pick it up later with no great loss of focus; each chapter is largely self contained and you don't have to remember too much from one episode to another.

What do you think? L.J.H.

Glenway Wescott: A Final Farewell

by Phil Davis

The whole episode looks good in hindsight, but at the time, I have to admit, I was running on full-tilt bluff. This was in 1981, and it was easier to fail then. I was in graduate school, finishing up my degree with a short thesis on Glenway Wescott, who was arguably one of the greatest writer ever to come out of Wisconsin and the confidant of such twentieth-century luminaries as Somerset Maugham, Jean Cocteau, and W. H. Auden.

I flew to New York on pure speculation, in the hope that if Wescott knew I had come so far, he might give in and open his door and let me interview him. I had no real reason to believe this would happen, no reason except that I wanted it to. But sometimes faith works its own magic.

Wescott's much anticipated memoirs, *Continual Lessons: The Journals of Glenway Wescott, 1937-1955*, have been published posthumously. (Wescott died February 22, 1987.) It seems appropriate, then, to turn back to that strangely joyful spring afternoon when for a few hours we sat together in Monroe Wheeler's Manhattan apartment, drank tumblers of scotch, and watched the sun go down on the city as Wescott talked about an American writing life that had spanned eight decades.

I remember many things about that day, including being amazed that Wescott (who had just turned a spry, silver-haired eighty and was quite proud of his longevity) took the interview as seriously as he did. I had gone to great lengths to track him down, and he apparently appreciated this. He did not appear put off by my eagerness or anonymity, nor did he seem inclined toward condescension. But I'm sure he had his reasons. No one had to tell Wescott that his days for interviews were almost over. And of course there was also the fact that he who lives longest laughs last.

Wescott had outlived virtually all of his "lost generation," that elite collection of American writers and artists who had flocked to Europe in the 1920s and '30s. As he explained why he'd been unable to write any fiction for the past thirty-five years or how Hemingway had gotten the story all wrong in *The Sun Also Rises*, there was the overriding sense of setting the record straight, of personal justice being served. I like to think that perhaps Wescott saw this interview as a way of saying one last public *goodbye* to Wisconsin, the state from which he'd

fled at the earlier possible moment, yet which still filled his dreams and visions and art.

Wisconsin Memories

"You may wonder why I don't really slam the door," Wescott said, leading me into the small but elegantly decorated Upper East Side apartment where he stayed when he was in the city.

(Most of the time now he lived alone in an old stone house on his brother Lloyd Wescott's New Jersey farm.) The famous theatrical lilt in his voice, which his detractors had deemed Euro-affectation, made his phrases sound musical. It was an untraceable dialect, as much *willed*, I imagine, as *influenced* by life abroad.

"I don't slam the door," he went on, "because I think very little truth gets told. I'm astonished by all the books that come out that not only ignore the things I know, but that ignore the things my friends

know. But when you're an extinct volcano you don't just puff at people. It's just not polite."

He led me to a small bar cart that held fine crystal and ice and liquor. He built an enormous drink, four or five shots at least, then pointed me toward a wing-backed chair. Tall, thin, slightly stooped, and still handsome enough to turn heads, he was wearing a dark, dapper three-piece suit with a red tie and matching pocket square. With his pink cheeks, white hair and probing eyes, he looked more like an aging count than an aging Wisconsin farm boy.

.....
*With his pink cheeks,
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eyes, he looked more like an
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.....

I thought then how far the farm boy had come. Born in 1901, Glenway Wescott had grown up on a hard-scrabble Washington County tract outside Kewaskum. He was a beautiful, haplessly sensitive boy with no aptitude whatsoever for the backbreaking life of a farmer, and he always detested farm life.

"The life was so hard for me physically I thought I was going to die all the time," he said. "My father admitted years later that he hated me and he didn't know why. I remember once saying to him: 'Now listen to me, Father. I didn't want to be brought into this world, and I don't want to be in it now.' He fell on his knees and wept. I was aware then it was a very bad situation for a youngster to be in. I was eleven or twelve, and it was a hectic period."

Wescott published his first story in the West Bend (Wisconsin) junior high school newspaper, and by the age of nineteen he had already written his first volume of poetry, *The Bitterns*. By then he was living in Chicago, where he had become friends with Vincent Sheean, Carl Sandburg, Yvor Winters, and, most significantly, Monroe Wheeler. It was Wheeler who published *The Bitterns* and would become Wescott's lifelong companion and supporter. The book was an immediate sensation in the poetry world, inspiring Wallace Stevens to personally write Wescott. "It is difficult to make poetry as sophisticated as this fly," Stevens wrote. "But you certainly make it tremble and shake. I will watch your work with the greatest interest."

In 1921 Wescott and Wheeler moved to Greenwich Village. They spent the next twelve years shuttling back and forth between New York and Paris. Wescott published his first novel, *The Apple of the Eye*, to win great acclaim in 1924, and three years later he won the 1927 Harper's Prize for his second novel, *The Grandmothers*, which was a thinly-veiled fictional biography of his own family. The book is set in post-frontier Wisconsin and presents a bleak picture of midwestern life. Wescott wrote:

Night after night had been troubled by worry over the weather and the crops, by misunderstandings between husband and wife

which there had not been time enough to settle, by the breakdown of women who had borne too much, some falling ill and welcoming death, some going mad and waking their distracted menfolks to talk nonsense ...



Glenway Wescott (1901-1987). Courtesy Milwaukee Public Library.

It was a book, Wescott recalled proudly, whose ground-breaking structure was later widely imitated. "There was a whole flock," he remembered. "Not just my rivals, either, but Conrad Richter and a whole lot of Southerners. Using the family tree [structure] was a lucky intuition."

By then he was living in Villefranche, France, and it was there that he published his first collection of short stories, *Goodbye, Wisconsin*. The stunted emotional lives and crushed dreams of his friends and ancestors were his subject matter. But what sometimes has been overlooked is the ravishing beauty of Wescott's prose, which comes close to matching the breathtaking natural beauty of Wisconsin itself:

Ranges of hills strung from the great lake to the Mississippi river in long, lustrous necklaces, one above another from the northern throat of the state until well below its waist. Peacock lakes of bronze weeds and vivid water, with steep

shores; sad forests full of springs; the springs have a feverish breath. There are metallic plants which burn your hands if you touch them. All summer the horizon trembles, hypnotically flickering over the full grain, the taffeta corn, and the labor in them of dark, overclothed men, singing women, awe-stricken children.

The Lost Generation

Wescott's talent did not go unnoticed. The poetic clarity of his writing led *Time* magazine to declare that "by 1928 Glenway Wescott of Wisconsin had lived in France for four years, and was one of America's two or three most sensitive stylists and most promising novelists." Wescott was now being mentioned in the same breath as Fitzgerald and Dos Passos, and in critical

circles he was considered several rungs up the ladder from another ambitious midwesterner, Ernest Hemingway.

His refined sensibility and prodigious talent gained him entrance into an exclusive coterie of artists that included Cocteau, Colette, Maugham, Ford Madox Ford, Rebecca West, Katherine Anne Porter, Marlene Dietrich, Edmund Wilson, Edith Sitwell, Frederic Prokosch, Isadora Duncan, pianist Elly Ney, poets Marianne Moore and Louise Bogan, Picasso, Igor Stravinsky, and the painter Pavel Tchelitchew, to name a few. Yet, when Wescott looked back on that extraordinary collection of peers, he seemed neither impressed nor sentimental about his humble roots.

"I don't think it's so extraordinary," said he. "Do you realize the background of Ernest Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Thornton Wilder, William Maxwell, and George Kennan? They all came from the Midwest.

"The misapprehension I always liked to squelch is that we were supposed to be maladjusted and rebellious, not getting along well with our families, not getting along well with the American world. But it couldn't have been farther from the truth. We were just simply the cream of the crop, and we went abroad for the dollar exchanges. We could get a good-size apartment, so that we were free in a way that very few writers in other countries were. But we weren't very friendly. It wasn't really a society. There was some frequentation in the cafes, but that was all very superficial. We were all working very hard. And jealous of each other, I think."

Suddenly there was a distracting commotion out on the street, and Wescott got up to see what was going on. I looked around the room again, reconsidering what I had at first only dimly taken in. Beautiful Persian rugs. A copy of Pablo Antonio Cuadra's *Selected Poems* resting on top of a pile of books on a table. And on the walls, opulent bursts of line and color courtesy of—I realized with a start—Miró, Matisse, Courbet, Klee, Tchelitchew, and Johns. Acquired, I assumed, when Wescott and Wheeler were in Europe.

"You know, most of them drank themselves to death or something," Wescott said, turning away from the window and studying me with curiosity. "I managed only to have just a nice old heart condition."

One of the great literary self-promoters of the century was Ernest Hemingway, who ran around in some of the same circles in Europe that Wheeler and Wescott traveled in. What were Wescott's experiences with "Papa"?

"Hemingway hated me," he said cheerily. "Partly, of course, because I was homosexual. Curiously enough, he had a reputation for being homosexual himself, because around the bullfights there were an awful lot of silly boys who idolized him and gave him a rather dubious reputation. He was so exhibitionistic and so good-looking, that it was easy to jump to conclusions. I used to spend quite a lot of time cleaning up after him, saying, 'No, no, no, it isn't anything like that. I believe he couldn't get into a homosexual relationship if he tried.' And the fact that I thought that, and probably said it, was perhaps offensive to him.

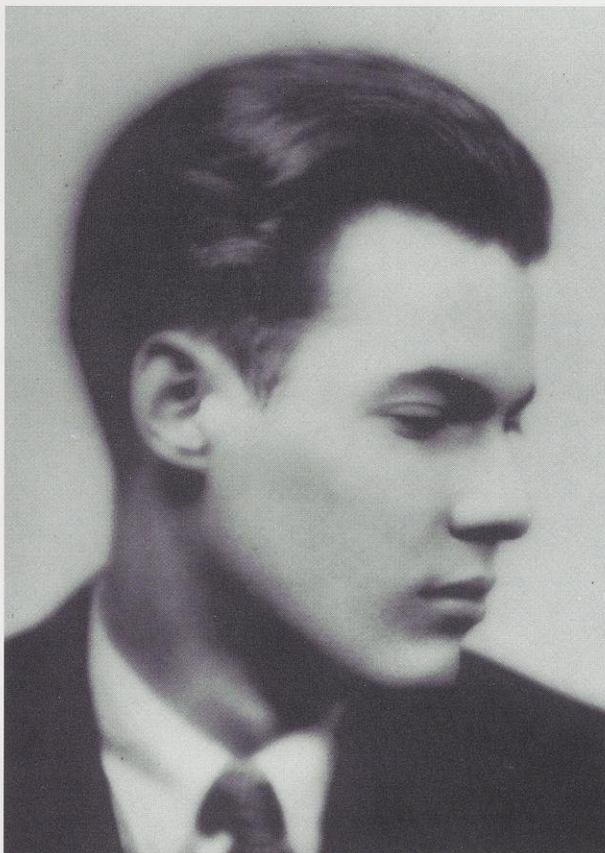
"I think he was so intelligent as a writer that he knew it was a dubious prospect to be a novelist if you couldn't judge people's behavior with any accuracy. Strangely, he was the sort of person who would go to somebody's house for a weekend and get everybody mismatched. He'd get it all wrong.

"He did it all wrong in *The Sun Also Rises*. He got Duff Twysden [the model for the heroine Lady Brett Ashley] all wrong.

I knew exactly what she said and felt about him. He invented, you know, that he'd been injured in his private parts in the war to give himself an alibi, because she wouldn't go to bed with him. She had a love affair with Harold Loeb right there *under Hemingway's nose*. And he went away in a rage. I know all of this because I saw her when she came over here and married an American and went to live in Mexico.

"Oh, he blundered around. But that, of course, was an advantage for him because it narrowed his focus. What he was good at were those situations where cause and effect didn't work, weren't involved. A bullfight and a battlefield and a fishing expedition. In that field he was absolutely unbeatable. He also had this gift for dialogue that I never had. At the end of his life I could never believe he was as drunk as he seemed because he was a

very sensible man and surrounded by very nice women. They weren't the sort of women who would make a man destroy himself."



WHH(x3)28206

Glenway Wescott as a young man. Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Fear and Trembling

By 1933 Wescott had decided Europe was a "rat trap," and he came back to America. He had published two books of essays, *Fear and Trembling* and *A Calendar of Saints*, which, though critically respected, were commercial disasters. For the next seven years he was unable to publish anything. He was writing, of course, but unhappy with everything he created. Then there was a new creative burst. In 1940 he published the much anthologized novella, *The Pilgrim Hawk*, which the *Times* of London would later call "as perfect a literary work as anything in the English language," and *Apartment in Athens* (1945), which went on to become a best seller.

And then . . . nothing. Wescott aborted one novel after another, prompting Somerset Maugham to scold him, writing, "Don't tell me you have fallen back into your old neurasthenic, detestable habit of leaving a work unfinished just because what you have written doesn't come up to what you saw in your mind's eye before you began to write. It never does."

When asked why he stopped writing fiction, Wescott answered very matter-of-factly: "After *Apartment in Athens* I thought I was going to perhaps write some more fiction. But then I found I didn't have any more fiction to write. As Gertrude Stein, who *liked me* but *didn't like my work*, wrote in her biography of Alice B. Toklas, 'Glenway Wescott has syrup, but it doesn't pour.' As time has passed there has been more and more truth to this. Anyway, by this time my journal had become very important to me. Right now I've got six volumes of journals and memoirs and letters all ready to publish. And I've got a volume of autobiographical essays that my publishers don't want to publish until they've got Volume One of the journal."

He devoted the next twenty years to public service in the arts. He was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1947 and was elected president in 1958, serving until 1961.

"I was president for a while, but I didn't like that very much," he admitted. "There was too much to do for other people. I didn't have time to push my own programs. I was busy getting other people's

done. And I was good at it, good in the chair and all that. Making people behave."

His last major work was *Images of Truth* (1962), a collection of remembrances and criticism of Katherine Anne Porter, Maugham, Colette, Isak Dinesen, Thomas Mann, and Thornton Wilder, among others. Though well received, there was irony in writing about these more celebrated figures. As a writer he'd

leaped out of the starting blocks, and for a time he was leading the pack. But he'd

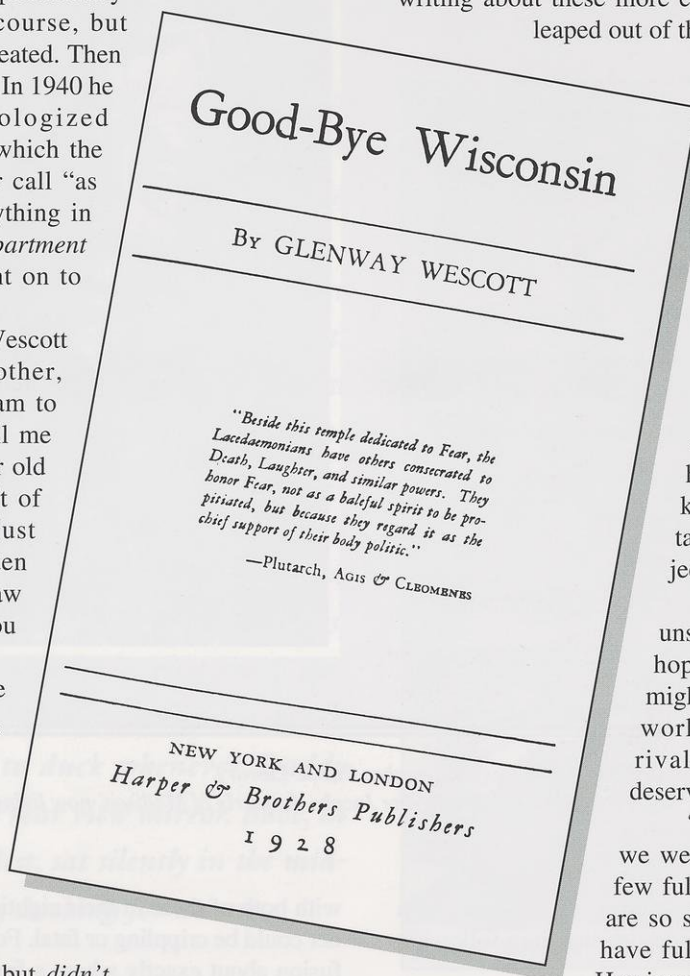
lost his speed and stamina down the stretch and had been passed. And now, near the end, as far as the reading public was concerned, he was on the sidelines watching, either unknown or almost forgotten. It had taken its toll, even if he preferred not to dwell on it.

"Even now I'm haunted," he confided, choosing his words carefully. "I have a feeling of not having a genuine talent. I don't know what I'm doing. I make mistakes. I waste years on hopeless projects."

Yet, seen through the distant, unsentimental eyes of history, Wescott hoped that perhaps his achievements might stand up. At least as well as the works of some of his more famous rivals, none of whom, he believed, deserved to be called *great* writers.

"We were meaningful, and perhaps we were significant," he said. "But very few fulfilled their talent. American artists are so short-breathed. I certainly will not have fulfilled my talent. Fitzgerald didn't. Hemingway did, but only in a peculiar way, in that his baby talk became the language of world journalism. But you know," he said, pausing for effect, "the amazing thing to me, when I think about those early post-frontier days when I was growing up, is that people didn't tell the truth about their lives then and they still don't. As a writer I have tried to do that."

Then Monroe Wheeler burst into the apartment with a Bloomingdale's shopping bag filled with purchases, and the spell was broken. There was a dinner appointment to get ready for, and though no specific names were mentioned, Wescott had earlier alluded to social circles involving Rockefellers and Mellons. But this was not so surprising, given Wheeler's work in the art world. Wheeler had befriended Renoir and Picasso and Chagall in the 1930s, joined the staff at the Museum of Modern Art upon his return to New



Title page for *Goodbye, Wisconsin*. Courtesy Milwaukee Public Library.

*From Helamos' letter, Apartment
in Athens p.230*

*"I will tell you how it is when
one contemplates dying... A part of
your spirit loosens away from you,
it turns unearthly; and some of
your mind keeps wandering what
you want more than anything is to
have your friends and family in-
formed of what has happened to
you. At the thought of losing the
bodily life you can't help it; you
begin to consider how, without a
body, you might still have another
existence in their minds; as if you
were a ghost making his little
plan to haunt someone."*

Glenway Wescott



Above: Handwritten page from Apartment in Athens. Courtesy Milwaukee Public Library.

Right: Terracotta sculpture of Glenway Wescott by his sister, Katherine Jacobs, formerly of Madison, now living in Berkeley, California. Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

York, and now was on the museums's board of trustees. (As a tribute, the museum named a reading room after him following his death in 1988.)



I'd like to say there was more, some beautiful parting line Wescott gave me that tied everything together. But that isn't the way these things usually work. No, I finished the afternoon by changing the light bulb in Monroe Wheeler's kitchen. He fetched a stepladder, we made sure that it was sturdy, and then I climbed up, though it only took a few steps to reach the fixture. But now,

with both of them in their eighties, even falling from a stepladder could be crippling or fatal. For a second there was some confusion about exactly where a fresh bulb was, but then Wheeler returned with one and handed it to me. I screwed it in, and when he flicked on the switch I was still standing up on the ladder.

And that's my parting memory: these two old men, companions for over sixty years, looking up at me, smiling broadly in the warm light.

Reprinted from Isthmus, April 26, 1991, with permission.

The Summer I Learned Baseball

by Ron Rindo

We were driving to Madison to buy a new car from one of Daddy's former teammates. Daddy never did anything that didn't pertain to baseball in some way.

"This car smells like piss," Rosie whined, her nose pinched closed as she slouched in the back seat, behind Mama. Her dirty knees were pressed against the seat back, her bare feet dangling above torn tennis shoes. Because she was the youngest, she always got to sit on the good side where the springs were still coiled safely beneath the upholstery. On my side, the sharp points had punctured the dirty vinyl in rows, leaving tiny holes rimmed with rust, so I was allowed to sit on the Sears' Christmas catalog, which made me taller. I had to duck whenever Daddy wanted to see through the rear view mirror. Babe, at fifteen the oldest and tallest, sat silently in the middle with her arms crossed, ducking for no one.

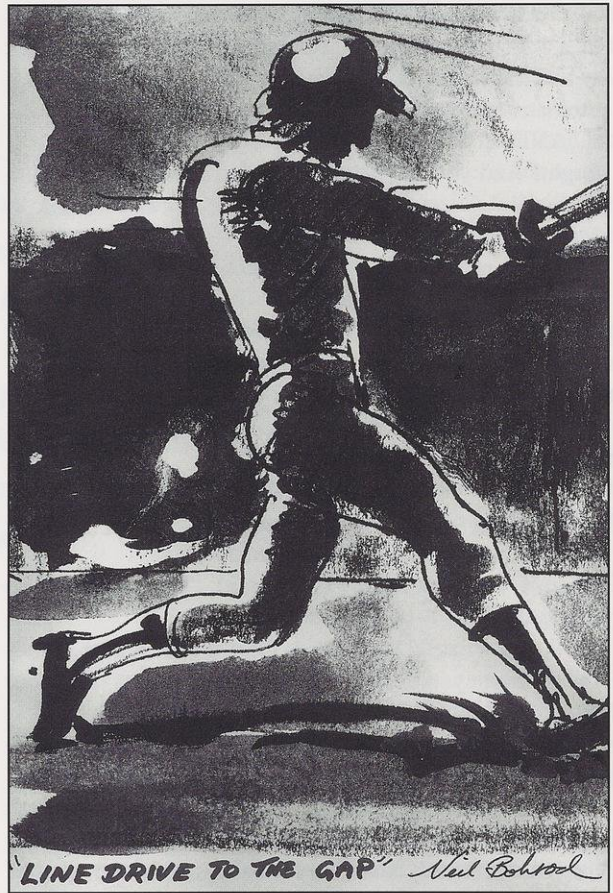
"What's that, honey?" Daddy called back to Rosie. It was hard to hear anything in that car. Daddy was driving fast, and the wind was a rush in our ears. Also, the car had no muffler, and the quarter panels were so rusted they flapped like hummingbird wings.

"I said: THIS IS A PISSY CAR!" Rosie shouted. It was 1978, and we owned the only 1964 Chevrolet in Waushara County, Wisconsin.

"Ah, but it's a WONDERFUL WORLD," Daddy shouted back. He was always saying things like this to make it up to us. The car really did smell.

"It's the cat," I said. "He relieves himself in here."

"Well, chase him out, Ty," Mama said. She was holding the hair down on both sides of her head, but some of it swirled across her face and mouth. All of the windows were wide open—it was late August, and sticky. I had no choice. My win-



Line Drive to the Gap by Neil Bohrod. Ink and wash, 12 x 7 1/2 inches. 1992.

dow was lost inside the door somewhere, off the track. Without the dirty glass between me and the world, I saw everything clearly. Field mice had built a nest under the back seat. One morning I had watched their squeaking, pink babies pulled out one at a time by one of our tomcats, who ate them like shrimp cocktail.

"Sonny, you should have fixed that back window," she said.

Daddy laughed.

The mice came in through the holes in the floorboard. Under my feet were two pieces of soiled cardboard cut from a produce box, which covered two holes nearly as big around as a baseball. Baseballs were always rolling around the floor of our

car, and one almost fell out before Daddy covered the holes. If it hadn't been for Daddy's fear of losing one of his precious baseballs, one of his children might have fallen through the floor of the car before he would have done anything about it.

"Tell us again, Daddy," Rosie said. "Tell us about the car we're going to buy."

"Well, it's a glittering goddess," he began, "a gift from Detroit fit for a home run king, with chrome so clean you can comb your hair in it. And under the hood," he smiled, "under the hood are two hundred and eighty horses drinking gas at three bits a delicious gallon. That's right, and inside you've got your AM and FM radio, standard. Your tinted glass, standard. Your automatic transmission . . ."

"STANDARD!" Rosie shouted.

"Right! And your carpeted floors and beautiful *real* cloth upholstery . . ."

"STANDARD!"

"And your refrigerating air conditioning . . ."

"STANDARD!"

"No! It's extra but worth every penny to keep your mother's pretty hair from blowing out to left field."

"What color is it?" Rosie asked.

"Ah, baby, it's Dodger blue," Daddy said. "Blue like a June, baseball sky."

"Sonny, how are we going to afford this?" Mama asked him. "Who's going to loan us the money?"

"Don't you worry about that," Daddy said.

"Even if we get a loan," Mama said, "how we going to make the payments?"

"I tell you what," Daddy said. "We'll take a vote. Whoever earns the money in this car and wants a new one, raise your hand." Daddy raised his hand. "There you go." He looked at Mama. "Think of it, Deary. Automatic transmission. Air conditioning."

"Those are wonderful things," Mama said. "But we can't afford a new car, Sonny. You know that."

The back of Daddy's neck turned red, and in the mirror I could see the blue veins bulging like tangled vines on his forehead, below the rim of his baseball cap. His anger rose quickly, we knew. Beneath the mask of calm smiles and pretty words bubbled deep, troubled waters.

"Woman, don't you dare work against me on this," he snapped.

"Big man," said Babe, suddenly.

My face smashed against the back of the seat when Daddy hit the brakes and stopped the car. Rosie slid to the floor. Daddy had his right finger pointed at Babe's face, and his hand was shaking. Babe looked scared, but she raised her eyebrows and stared at Daddy, waiting. Rosie whimpered.

"Just forget it," Babe said. "Let's just go get the stupid car. It's hot."

Daddy gripped the wheel with both hands and jammed his foot on the gas. The muffler roared and the quarter panels flapped as the car sputtered back up beyond the speed limit.

Babe grabbed Rosie by the back of her shirt and pulled her into her seat. Slowly, the blood drained from Daddy's neck, and the blue veins in his forehead flattened and disappeared.

"Brakes are still good," Daddy said to Mama, and chuckled. Babe looked at me and rolled her eyes.

I was born the year Daddy quit playing baseball. 1966. Mama said he probably never would have stopped playing if he hadn't had a son. She said my coming along saved them all, because Daddy wasn't making enough money for food playing baseball, traveling around Texas in a minor-league bus, her home alone raising Babe. When he had a son, she said, he could play the game at home, get it out of his system.

They met when Daddy was a high school baseball star, an all-state third baseman who could gobble up those bullet groundballs, what Daddy called worm-shavers, with ease, a switch-hitter who could hit to both fields, bunt if needed, steal a base or two. He played professionally for nine years, just Class A ball mostly, though in 1963—his best year—he hit .253 with a triple, four doubles, and a home run in a half-year in double A, or so I'd been told at least one hundred times. He never made the majors and attributed it to many things, but mostly to his name: Jack "Sonny" Smith. It wasn't a name a manager was likely to remember, he said, not like Warren Spahn or Hammerin' Hank Aaron or the Yankee Clipper, Joe Dimaggio. So he named his firstborn child Babe after Babe Ruth, even though it was a girl. Rosie's full name is Rosetta, for Pete Rose. He named me Ty, after Ty Cobb. "That son-of-a-bitch was the greatest hitter the game has ever seen or will see," he said. But I couldn't hit a baseball if you dangled it in front of me on a string.

Not that Daddy didn't try to teach me.

Each birthday I'd get a wooden bat that was a little longer, a little heavier, than the year before, with promises that when I grew up I'd receive the major league bat which hung above the dresser in his bedroom, the one he'd used to hit his only professional home run. The wood had yellowed and dried out over the years, but Daddy always treated it with special reverence, and I was expected to treat it the same way. He put a new coat of clear finish on that bat every year. When thunderstorms rumbled through the county and the radio crackled tornado warnings, we'd rush into the crawlspace beneath the trailer, and Daddy would join us a minute later, cradling that wooden bat in his arms.

I was not gifted with a bat or a glove, and my right arm was incapable of throwing the ball hard enough to make the leather of Daddy's glove snap when he caught it. He'd toss soft pitches to me as I stood against the back of the trailer, bat in hand, but more often than not I'd swing and miss and the ball would bounce off the trailer and roll halfway back to him. Then he'd throw the ball and I'd miss it again, and he'd pull down the brim of his cap.

"Why don't I hit you some pop-ups," he'd say, and I would stand in the field off the back yard, pounding a fist into

my glove, smelling the leather and the mink oil Daddy had worked into the pocket. At the crack of the bat the ball would rise, spinning, the seams hissing in the air, and then would turn in a gentle arc and fall. If the ball came right to me I caught it, amazed to see it nestled in my glove like an egg in a nest, but usually it would bounce in front or behind me, or thump off my chest, my wrist, or my head. "When you're older," Daddy'd say, as we walked back to the trailer, "you'll surprise yourself."

Sometimes on my bike I would carry his lunch to the building supply store where he worked, and he would eat as he walked me through the lumber yard, pointing to pieces of hardwood that would make the best baseball bats, or we'd sit down on a pile of two-by-fours, and he'd retell stories I'd heard dozens of times. "Son," he'd say, "without the Game you and I wouldn't be sitting here. God made this world with one big, home run swing." He'd wink and point at me. "Now, a priest will tell you different, but what's he know about baseball, right? Devil threw his best pitch and God took that big old God-bat, swung it like this . . ." he extended his arms in a slow-motion swing, his forearms bulging like the meaty end of a bowling pin, ". . . and POW! he knocked this old Earth spinning into heavenly orbit. Hit it so hard it ain't yet even coming down."

"The world's a baseball," I would say, doubtfully, dutifully.

"Hell yes it is!" he'd say, smiling. "The Rocky Mountains are just a big pile of dirt covering one of the seams, and the Alps cover the other. You take a shovel and you dig deep enough, you'll find the red string holding the cover of this old Earth together."

"And the oceans?" Daddy would wink. "That's what makes it special. That's what really makes it amazing," Daddy'd say. "The devil threw God a spit-ball, and he hit it out of the park."

As I grew older, I stopped sitting long enough for Daddy to finish his stories. I refused to join Little League even though he coached a local team, and eventually he stopped asking me to play catch, or to hit a few to him.

After work sometimes, Daddy'd go out alone in the yard and hit a bucket of baseballs into the field. Mama would look imploringly at me. "Play with him, Ty," she would say. "You're all he's got."

But I remember thinking, how can a grown man let his life be ruined by baseball?

The Chevrolet dealership in Madison looked like a parking lot filled with new cars. It was hard not to be excited about it, all that glass and chrome shining. In the cool showroom we met the salesman. He was a former baseball player who made it to the majors for two years. Daddy called him "Red." "Utility

infielder. Played with the Cardinals," Daddy said. "Next to Lou Brock, the greatest base stealer the game has ever seen." We all nodded appropriately. You could see that Daddy admired the man.

"Baseball opened a lot of doors for me," Red said, opening the door of a Cadillac that was in the showroom. Only Daddy laughed. He saw baseball as a fraternity of men who viewed the world in the same way.

On the lot, the salesman led us to the car that Daddy had picked out, a 1979 Chevrolet Caprice Classic. It was beautiful, long and sleek and blue, with whitewall tires, wire wheel covers, a hood ornament shaped—Daddy pointed out—like an umpire's chest protector.

"Here," the salesman said, handing Daddy the keys, "take it for a test drive. Baby rides like a rising fastball. With that power steering, you can turn a corner with one finger."

Sitting inside that car was like being in a new world. The seat was soft and plush, a royal blue velour, and you couldn't even feel the bumps on the road. With the windows up and the air conditioning on, I could even hear myself breathing. Daddy turned on the radio, and the smooth sound echoed from behind my head and in front of me.

"Quadrophonic stereo," Daddy said, and turned it off. "Isn't that something?"

On the highway, all you could hear was the hum of the tires on cement. No one was speaking. The ride was so quiet, no one wanted to disturb it.

Mama said softly, "Sonny, it costs twice as much as you make in a year."

"Deary, come on," Daddy said, "I played ball with Red in the minors for a year and a half. Had trouble hitting the curve ball or he might still be with St. Louis."

"What does that matter?" Mama asked.

"It matters."

"It is a beautiful car," she said.

"Fills your heart up like a balloon, doesn't it?" Daddy said. "Like watching Mr. Spaulding disappear over the wall, then going into your home run trot nice and slow, circling the bags, feeling the warm sun on your face, hearing the cheers of the crowd."

"This is a great car," Rosie said.

"I love it," I said. It was hard not to get caught up in the moment.

"Could you put the radio on again?" Babe asked.

"Did I hear something?" Daddy asked Mama. "Was that the silent one, speaking?"

"Come on, Daddy," Babe said, slapping him on the shoulder.

.....
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wooden bat that was a little
longer, a little heavier, than
the year before, with promises
that when I grew up I'd
receive the major league bat
which hung above the dresser
in his bedroom.*
.....

Daddy turned on the radio. He put on a country station, but the radio sounded so good that didn't even matter.



Back at the dealership, we waited in chairs by the Coke machine while Mama and Daddy sat down at the salesman's desk to talk business. His desk was in a separate office, but we could see them through a large window. A screen had been placed in the glass on an angle, so that each of the squares, tipped on its point, looked like a baseball diamond. Daddy would have been proud that I noticed that. He smiled at us when the salesman sat down, and we watched anxiously as they talked. After a few minutes, Babe wandered away to look at brochures in a display by the window. Rosie got bored and followed her. I sat with my back to the glass, closed my eyes, and waited.

And waited.

An hour passed. I looked in the office and Daddy was pacing the floor. Mama was sitting with her knees together, holding her purse on her lap. Red was on the telephone.

Thirty more minutes passed. I heard the door to Red's office slam open, and I turned just in time to see Daddy rush past. He walked out of the showroom without looking at us, just passed between a new Chevette and a new Cadillac and headed into the sunshine.

Mama and Red came out of his office together.

"I'm terribly sorry," Red said. "Please try to make him understand that. The credit company is a separate division. There's nothing I can do."

Mama forced herself to smile. "I understand," she said.

"We really do have some beautiful used cars on the lot," he added. "You come back, we'll fix you up with something nice. I want to do right by you folks, I really do."

"We already have a used car," Mama said.

We heard Daddy pull up in our old car before we saw him. He appeared at the front window of the showroom, revving the engine. Clouds of blue smoke billowed from under the car. We all climbed in, slamming the doors behind us. The vinyl seats were hot.

Daddy punched the gas so hard I hit my head on the back window as we roared out of the lot.

No one said anything until we were out of the city, cruising the flatland north between fields of rippling, green corn.

"It's okay, Sonny," Mama said.

"Hell it is," Daddy said. He hit the steering wheel with the palm of his hand. "The HELL it is."

Halfway home, Daddy pulled over at a gas station and bought a twelve-pack of beer. Back on the highway, he rested one arm on the twelve-pack and steered with his left hand.

"This country's going to hell," Daddy said. "I mean it. When a decent, working man can't walk into a showroom and buy the car he wants, it won't be long before it's all over."

"We know you work hard," Mama said.

"Don't patronize me," Daddy snapped.

"We couldn't afford the car, Sonny," Mama said. "There's no shame in that."

Daddy glared at Mama and yelled. "Don't tell me what we can and cannot afford, goddamnit!" he said. "I won't hear it. We got a roof over our heads. No holes in our shoes. All the food we want. A color TV."

"But Sonny . . ." Mama said.

"Just shut up," Daddy said. "We should be rich. Hell, we are rich. We got all the money we need."

"Hah!" Babe said. She shouldn't have said it, but she did. "We're poor white trash," she said.

Daddy jerked the car to the gravel shoulder and stopped. He glared in the rear-view mirror at Babe. "What was that?" he asked.

My stomach knotted.

"People say it," she said. "Kids at school."

"What do they say?."

Babe swallowed. "You heard me."

"And you believe them."

"We *are* poor," Babe said. "Pretending we're not doesn't change it."

Daddy spun in his seat and the back of his hand caught Babe flush in the face.

Babe screamed.

"Sonny!" Mama shouted. Blood spurted from Babe's nose. When Rosie saw it, she started crying, a high-pitched, deafening wailing.

"Big man!" Babe shouted.

Daddy hit her again. This time he leaned over the seat, and he slapped Babe in the face with his palm. Babe covered her face with her hands.

"Sonny stop it!" Mama screamed. She turned in her seat, put her back to the door, and started kicking Daddy's side with her heels. The first kick caught him in the ribs, and he had to pull in his arm to defend himself. Mama kept yelling, "Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!" And each time, she kicked Daddy hard.

Daddy opened the car door and went out, then slammed the door behind him.

"Respect me, goddamnit," he shouted so loud his voice was hoarse. "Respect me."

Mama slid over in the driver's seat and shifted the car into gear.

"Mama, what are you doing?" I asked.

She didn't answer. She pushed down on the gas pedal and we roared away. Daddy kicked the car once, kicked my door and made me jump. Next to me, Babe and Rosie were crying. Babe was holding the front of her shirt against her nose, and it darkened where the blood soaked in.

"Babe, you okay?" Mama asked.

Babe nodded.

We drove the rest of the way home in silence. Mama parked the car in the gravel out front of the trailer and left the beer on the front seat. We went inside, ate supper. Darkness came. We sat together in the living room, and waited.

"Ty, lock the front door," Mama said. "Babe, you get the back one."

We did as we were told, and returned.

"Your father's not a bad man," Mama said. "He's got a temper like a hive of bees, but he's got a lot of honey in him, too. Can't get one without the other in most men."

"Why's he have to lie about everything?" Babe asked. "He knows we're poor."

"That's your father," Mama said. "Ever since I've known him, he could talk himself into believing anything. Even has me going most of the time."

"Are we poor?" I asked. It really bothered me to hear Babe say that. I had never heard anyone in our family say it.

Mama looked at me. "We aren't rich," she said. "Put it that way."

We went to bed at ten o'clock, and there was still no sign of Daddy. All the windows were open. Through the screens, we could hear the buzz of crickets in the fields, the sound of cars passing on the highway, farm dogs barking in the distance. Rosie and I shared a bedroom, and after she fell asleep, I knelt on my bed, my elbows on the window sill, waiting and watching for my father. But after an hour passed, I went back to bed and fell asleep.



Just after midnight, I was awakened by a loud noise. I heard it a second time and sat up. Daddy was back. He had kicked in the front door. I pretended to sleep as he came down the hall. The floor creaked as he went into Babe's room. I heard Babe's bed squeak when Daddy sat down on it, then I heard both of them whispering. After a minute or so, Daddy stood back up and walked into the hall, past our room, then into his own room. I heard him kiss Mama. When he emerged from the room, he was carrying his baseball bat. He took it back down the hall, through the kitchen, and outside. I half expected him to ask me if I wanted to catch some pop flies, but he didn't. He walked past my room and kept going.

I sat up in bed and watched. Outside, Daddy walked to the car, leaned the baseball bat against the front bumper, then opened the passenger door. In the moonlight, I could see his shirt was unbuttoned and soaked with sweat. His baseball cap was backwards on his head. He pulled the twelve-pack of beer from the front seat, set it on the hood, and tore the box open. He drank the first beer quickly, chugging it down and then squeezing the empty can before dropping it on the ground. He sat down on the hood and reached for another beer. Then another.

Sometime later, after I'd grown bored watching him drink, Daddy slid off the car to his feet. He looked at his prized baseball bat, picked it up, and took a few practice swings. He had a good, minor-league swing—compact, consistent, and powerful. Each time he swung, the barrel of the bat moved in a perfect parabola across the front of his body and thumped against his back.

Daddy squared his shoulders in front of the car and raised the bat over his shoulder, as if there were an imaginary pitcher standing on the trunk.

I held my breath and watched, astonished.

With the first swing, he drove the end of the bat through one of the headlights, shattering the glass and knocking the metal frame across the yard. Even though I expected it, the sudden noise startled me.

Rosie stirred. "What was that?" she asked.

"Daddy's home."

Daddy moved to the other headlight, took the same tight, powerful swing, and popped it like a glass balloon. Rosie jumped off the bed and ran to Mama's room.

Daddy circled the car with his baseball bat resting on his shoulder. He shattered the windshield with two fully extended home run swings, destroyed the windows on the passenger side, then the rear window. With each swing of the bat, glass exploded into the car and sprinkled the gravel driveway. The sound echoed off the trailer, but between swings, the world was reverently still. In the distance, even the dogs had stopped barking.

Babe, Mama, and Rosie came into my room. Mama pulled the curtains back and the four of us watched together, our four faces framed by the window casing.

"Is he drunk?" Babe asked.

Mama shrugged.

When Daddy hit the driver's side mirror, it popped high into the air, its square, chrome casing spinning and flashing in the moonlight, then clattered to rest on the roof of the trailer. He pivoted 180 degrees—my father the switch-hitter—and dented the door with a crushing left-handed swing. He raised the bat over his head and with a loud grunt caved in the roof. With a staccato flurry he peppered the hood. He paced. Raspy breaths heaved from his open mouth. Every few seconds he squared himself and brought the thick barrel of wood hard against the car in explosive, alliterative strokes. Sometimes he swung so hard he fell down, but he would curse, get back to his feet, to swing even harder the next time. Each time he connected, splinters of wood flew from the bat.

Watching Daddy then, something started happening to me. Beneath my pajamas, I could feel sweat trickling down my back, between my shoulder blades. The muscles in my body tensed. Every time Daddy hit the car, I sensed my own shoulders turning, my own wrists breaking in perfect rhythm. I shifted my weight from right foot to left, felt the sting of the wooden shaft vibrating in my hands. Like the pulse of new blood, I felt the wonder and glory of God's creative power surging in my skinny, school boy arms.

That summer, I learned to play baseball.

Media Blitz

by Curt Johanson

I sat in my comfortable armchair, mesmerized and perfectly happy, another American with nothing else to do but focus on twenty-seven inches of sparkling color drenched with action, suspense—mostly murder and rape—and pick a few pieces of popcorn out of the bowl, unconscious of eating and drinking, content to be spoken to and not responding in any verbal way, just an occasional groan or mellifluous sigh.

The program was reaching its conclusion. It concerned a seventy-year-old double-dipper who'd been kicked off welfare and was suing the state government for unconscionable prejudice and, in particular, politically incorrect heartlessness, the law according to producers and networks.

The show contained just about everything that was hitting the papers these days, enough to capture the attention of viewers who were not focused on anything else.

I switched off the tube and sat in silence for fifteen minutes or so, and something significant began to happen. I felt a twitch in my brain, like circuits turning on, opening and closing with precision, *and I began to think*, which was quite surprising to a mind full of mush. It was an experience I hadn't enjoyed for some time, and I realized what had happened to me and my fellow pseudointelligentsia, all those poor suckers who'd found religion on the screen and in the tabloids.

We are all part of a cult, I thought, the world's largest, putting our faith in a few charlatans who profess to be all-wise instructors on what to think, what not to question, and, finally, how to live.

But it goes far, far beyond manipulation. It's the age-old system of power, the one ingredient that sustains civilization and keeps the gears well-oiled and periodically repairing themselves; produce fear, convince the enemy—anyone who wants a share of your personal wealth—to lock themselves inside their homes, keep the drug flowing into those cerebral veins. The result is a slow-working miasma which ultimately divorces creativity from human interaction.

Then it occurred to me, could I actually begin to *read* again? I mean *really read*? The books were at my right, dusty and silent in my long-forgotten shelving unit. I vaguely remembered a time when I would laugh, weep, and rejoice over their contents. They were the classics, from Hugo to Lawrence, Tolstoy to Henry James, George Eliot, Dickens, a different time, a different frame of mind.

This would be the litmus test—oh, God! I had thought of the phrase *litmus test*, which was on everyone's lips at the moment, one of those verbal contagia that infects whole societies, lingers for a year or so and then vanishes without a whimper of retention. Shame on me! I'd better try to clear my mind before I enter the sacred domains of authors with original thoughts and styles—well, as original as possible, I suppose.

I meditated a while longer, concentrating on a lack of concentration, feeling the circuits open and close, more slowly now and retarding into a pristine rhythm, quiet anticipation with just an occasional rude, unconscious spasm keeping me from regressing into oblivion.

Reaching up, I fingered a few of the books until I settled on *Notes from Underground* by Dostoyevsky. Pulling it out and opening it to "White Nights," I read aloud from the first paragraph of The First Night:

It was a marvelous night, the sort of night one only experiences when one is young. The sky was so bright, and there were so many stars that, gazing upward, one couldn't help wondering how so many whimsical, wicked people could live under such a sky. This too is a question that would only occur to the young, to the very young; but may God make *you* wonder like that as often as possible.

My mush-mind couldn't absorb it at first reading, which was tragic, because it was not a complex paragraph by any means, at least on its surface. So I read it three or four more times, and it began to sink in.

I noticed the obvious alliteration, "whimsical, wicked people," and wondered if this were a wishful whim of the translator.

Would Russian and English alliteration coincide? Then I recalled a conversation with a Russian doctor who had emphasized, "The poetry of the Russian language can never survive translation." I'd felt sad but realized that at least we were able to absorb some of the power and philosophy of books like *War and Peace*, in my opinion the greatest novel to grace the annals of western literature.

Then I focused on the two main subjects of the paragraph, night and youth, favorite protagonists of the poet. Russian poetry? The doctor must have been right.

So I read the paragraph again and again, four or five more times, and the subterranean themes, from underground, began to seep up like rarefied air, filling my nostrils and entering my brain, lighting up my concentrative powers. I was astonished to realize that one paragraph could contain so many subtleties.

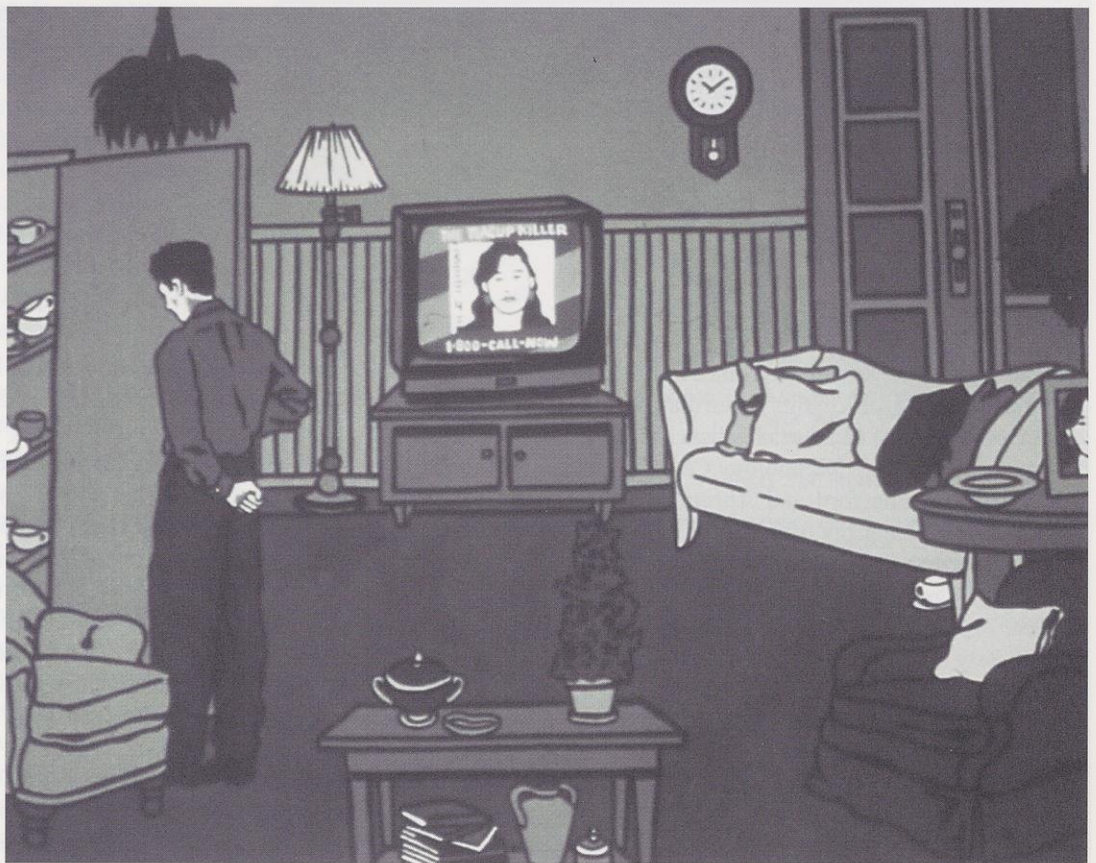
For example, the marriage of youth and night, not just separate, poetic personae, but compared, contrasted, intermingled, held up to the reader as a challenge to our interpretation.

Further, Dostoyevsky calls on *whimsical* and *wicked*, two words that excite the senses, and we question whether they are used disparagingly or, resignedly, to sum up the nature of our species.

Then he mixes into his literary blend a third and ultimate ingredient, God, and ends the paragraph by directly challenging us to *wonder*, and as often as possible.

I paused, raised my head, and fixed my gaze on the opposite wall. Time to think. I've never been a particularly fast reader, and perhaps with my stubborn concentration I sometimes read into such paragraphs things which the author didn't intend. But I guess any authors who intend anything are deluding themselves; the power rests with the reader—creation begins when each book is opened and read in earnest.

Power. I looked at the dark screen of my television set. Now that it was off, I felt a power halfway between the screen and my bookshelf. We hold the power, our innate ability to



His Suspicion Grows by Jolene M. Frechette. Acrylic, 18 x 24 inches. 1992.

choose. Those producers and networks, they're *us*, really. We created them with our apathy. Too easy to slip and slide back. I thought of the screen as a blazing fire somewhere inside a cave in the Mesolithic Age; rudimentary minds staring at the light, not understanding but fascinated all the same, mind-challenging during that era but not remotely relevant to our age of rapid discovery and runaway progress.

I sat back. The electronic age is marvelous, I thought, but it's way ahead of us. I glanced toward the long-neglected books, my mind picking up speed. If we could use great literature as a foundation to recapture an age of thoughtful insight and make creation synonymous with our own present position on the evolutionary scale, it would vitalize a very powerful tool. And we could proceed with the most important commodity known to us, *ourselves*.

It was exciting, heady stuff. I looked around the room and realized I had everything I needed for now. Enough for a good start. I spouted a not-so-mellifluous sigh and read on:

Now, mentioning whimsical, angry people makes me think how well I behaved that day. A strange anguish had tormented me since early morning. I suddenly had the impression that I had been left all alone ...



Phase I of Project 2061: The Technology Panel

by James R. Johnson

Introduction

I was visited the year of the comet by James Rutherford and Andrew Ahlgren of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Herbert Johnson, then president of the Minnesota High Technology Council, had suggested that I might help Rutherford and Ahlgren with a project called "2061." We met near my office at the University of Minnesota where I learned that the project had been named after Comet Halley and that 2061 was the year of its return. Rutherford assured me immediately that the project was not going to take that long to complete!

The idea was intriguing. Like most people interested in education, I had read with dismay *A Nation At Risk* and other critiques of modern K-12 education. Rutherford argued that it was time to stop criticizing education and educators and start suggesting solutions. He said the idea they had was simple: We had only to describe what every person should know about science, math, and technology when she or he graduated from high school. Then perhaps educators could develop curricula and programs that would enable young people to learn about all of these things.

The association had already made the decision to establish five panels to consider the charge: Physical Sciences/Engineering, Biological Sciences, Social Sciences, Mathematics, and Technology. The panels were to be convened in five locations across the United States. They proposed that the technology panel be located in the Midwest, and I was asked to serve as chair. There were few guidelines: We were to have about eight or nine members on each panel; the members were to be people who used technology; no K-12 teachers were to be panel members (teachers were to be involved at a later phase of the project); we could bring in consultants who might augment our discussions. We were expected to complete our work in approximately one year and write a report that likely would be combined, along with the other panel reports, into a document to be shared with those responsible for phases two and three of the project.

I agreed to chair the panel, but I was somewhat disturbed that engineering had been combined with the physical sciences rather than with technology. The decision had been made and

apparently could not be reversed. I also was concerned that we could not have on our panel K-12 teachers who might bring a touch of classroom reality to our deliberations. In spite of the rule, I asked Sister Marquita Barnard, who had taught high school chemistry for nearly forty years, to join our panel. I also asked Karen Olson, a young teacher of exceptional children, to

serve as our panel administrator and welcomed her participation in the deliberations. The rest of the panel was made up of engineers and scientists from industry and academia, a social scientist, and a mathematician. Over the more than two years we deliberated we brought in twenty-two consultants whose careers had involved a broad range of technologies.

Panel members were chosen for their expertise in certain fields of technology and for their ability to find others who could advise us. Further, they were selected because they were known to have interest in education and sensitivity to human needs and values.

.....
*We need once again to
look at the arts and crafts,
designing, engineering,
and applied and basic
science as part of a
spectrum of human
technical activity.*
.....

Technology—What does it mean?

A critical first step was to define the word *technology*.

As a former member of the advisory board of the International Technology Education Association (at that time it was still the American Industrial Arts Association), I had been exposed to a number of definitions of technology and learned that there was no agreement among educators. The literature was no more enlightening. I found that most K-12 educators and administrators referred to technology as "computers, video equipment, telephones and the like," confusing education *about* technology with the *products* of technology. The term "technology" was used by the media and general public in the same way. More often than not it meant television, radio, automobiles, and so on.

We began our deliberations with a broader view of technology that described it as *activity*, processes that brought about new products and systems: It is *designing* things (engineering), *making* things, *doing* things, and *introducing* those things into society. It is the action part of the technical world, guided by the

values of the society it serves. Earlier I had developed a scheme that illustrates this definition by modifying an idea by the late Arthur Koestler who proposed a notion he called *bisociation*. Koestler suggested that we tend to think on a self-consistent plane of thought and that it is only when we allow ourselves to think on another plane quite different from the original and allow the thoughts to intersect that something creative occurs. This happens, for example, when we tell a joke and an unexpected and humorous consequence comes as the punch line.

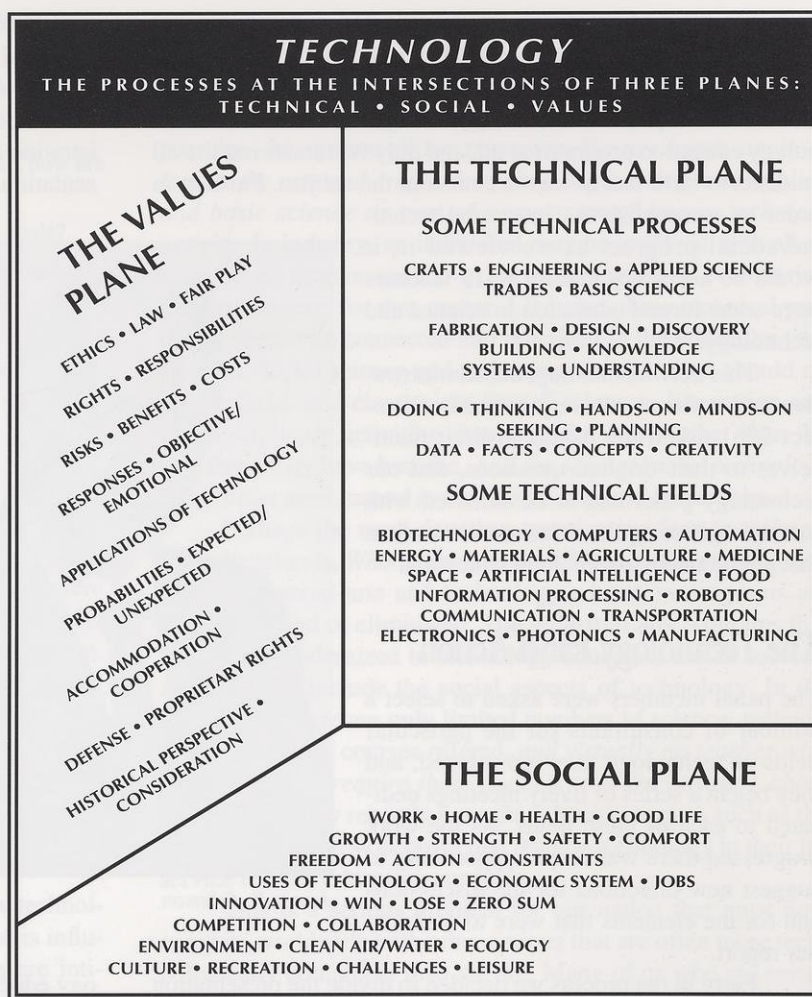
This same notion can be used to represent the processes of technology. The chart which accompanies this article shows three planes: a technical plane, a social plane, and a values plane. Their intersections represent interactions that in concert describe the processes of technology.

Technology cannot be viewed apart from its technical interactions with society and the values of that society. Thus, for example, at one intersection new technical equipment that changes manufacturing methods will affect the skills and education needed to perform the jobs and at another intersection may generate debate or resistance over the rate of introduction of the changes. A classic example is the technology that introduced the industrial age to steam power and the subsequent opposition by the Luddites. Today we are in the midst of yet another change, with automation and computer integrated manufacturing that have many economic consequences.

This broad view of technology, defined by technical/social/values interactions, may not be universally accepted, but it is the definition we used in our deliberations and gives meaning to what Anna Harrison once described as a group of processes for which, she said, there is no word in the language.

Science and Technology

We also found misunderstanding of science and technology. Science is also defined as a *process*, the systematic *discovery and understanding of nature*. Science is fundamental to modern technology but does not necessarily precede it. Technology is enhanced by the *discoveries* of scientists, shaped by the *designs* of engineers, conceived by *inventors and planners*, and implemented and used by society. It is technology, not science, that gave us radio and television, took us to the moon, and has brought us most of the other wonders of the modern world. This statement does not diminish the vital role of science in modern technological developments; rather, it states an important fact that is all too often misunderstood and has had serious consequences for the nation.



The Charge

Technology is shown in the chart as a *human adventure*, at once technical and serving human purposes. Technology is the process in this adventure—designing, making, doing, deciding, introducing—so that foremost it is *action*. We revised the question for the technology-panel-to-be: “What should every young adult graduating from high school learn about technology and what should she or he be able to do with the skills and knowledge that were derived from this education?”

We perceived two other significant general issues, but we were urged by the Project 2061 administration to ignore them as they were not included in our charter. We asserted, however, that they *had to be considered* because of the unique status of technology education in this nation. The first issue was the lack of a strong technology education infrastructure in our school systems along with a dearth of educational materials and programs that address technology in the holistic manner we had outlined, and the second was that there are few teachers who have the necessary background to teach such programs.

We noted, of course, the major effort of the International Technology Education Association and others who are working

to convert the old industrial arts programs into a modern technology education curriculum. Although this effort is well underway, it is by no means universal and often includes little of the social aspects of technology. Many schools have no technology education programs at all, and only two states require all students to have had at least a course in the subject. Further, in order to accomplish the integrated technical/social program as we viewed it, it would be necessary that *all* K-12 teachers have some formal education in science and technology.

This notwithstanding, the administration and national advisory council of Project 2061 asked the panels to limit themselves to their original questions, and our technology panel had to be satisfied with merely registering these serious constraints that are unique to technology education.

The Technology Panel Action

The panel members were asked to select a number of consultants for the particular fields of technology they represented, and they began a series of lively meetings dedicated to each of these fields. As the work progressed there was ample opportunity to suggest new directions for the discussions and for the elements that were to make up our report.

Early in the process we decided to divide the presentation into two sections: One section would deal with general concepts that underlie the processes of technology and the other with a group of technologies through which the concepts would be illustrated. In this way the relationships among technology, science, and mathematics and between technology and society could be outlined in a way that might be useful for developing an integrated technology education program for primary and secondary education. At the outset we knew we could not cover all of the fields of technology in the limited time available, but we believed that in discussing the fields we chose we would find the important elements of technology suitable for our mission.

After many months of individual panel deliberations, the first of many general meetings was held by the Project 2061 administration for the panel chairs. Here we were told that the final report for Project 2061, Phase I, was to be developed and written by the administration and the panel reports were to be only internal documents used as sources for that report. Further, the panel reports were to be no more than fifteen pages in length. This changed what panel chairs believed to be the original intent for the panel reports and severely limited their scope. (As the project evolved over the next two years, this decision was modified.)



James R. Johnson

In the end individual panel reports were issued, but the principal report was indeed an administrative report, *Science For All Americans*, which included some of the materials and ideas from the panel reports but also much more that the administration of the project believed to be important to the final presentation. And although the fifteen-page constraint was lifted,

we continued to be pressured to keep the panel reports as brief as possible. This limitation removed from the record much information that panel members believed to be important to their reports. (It also forced more concise writing which may have made the reports more useful for the purpose finally adopted.) To accomplish this and to accommodate all of the suggestions from myriad reviewers, at least eight complete drafts were written by the technology panel before a report was found acceptable by the administration and the National Advisory Council. It seemed that the advice of reviewers was often given far more credence than the studied contributions of panel members and their consultants, to the dismay of the panel.

The Technology Panel Report

The final report included an introductory section, a section that developed a framework for the elements of modern technology education, and a third section that briefly described eleven technologies wherein some of the basic concepts of Section Two were amplified.

In the introduction we defined technology in the broad sense illustrated in the chart. We justified the need for much greater attention to technology in our schools. Because in our modern highly technological world everything we have or do bears some relationship to technology, so, it would seem, should the curricula of our schools. Not only should all students learn something about the *technics* of technology, they also should know about the *ethics*. To some extent the responsibility for the use and control of modern technology belongs to *every citizen*.

All panel members and consultants emphasized the need for more hands-on learning opportunities. I had coined another description for the kind of learning that I thought was appropriate for our recommendations: *hands-on, minds-on* education. This was defined as *the purposeful honing and use of knowledge, talents, and skills*. Again, we were reminded that our charge was *what* should be learned, not *how* it should be learned, but since making and doing things is central to technology education, we insisted that the notion remain a part of our presentation.

We stated that those who generate new technology and those who participate in its use and control consider many ques-

tions that should be familiar to the technologically literate citizen. Some of these questions were:

- ▶ What is the goal? What is to be done, to be made?
- ▶ What can be conceived or invented to achieve the goals?
- ▶ As technology evolves through ideas, designs, and practice, how are the goals achieved?
- ▶ What knowledge and skills are needed to accomplish the goals?
- ▶ What materials will be used to construct the artifacts of the technology? What tools and machines are needed? What energy source or form will drive the activity required?
- ▶ How is its manufacture or use to be operated, controlled, or managed for optimum efficiency and quality?
- ▶ How does it enter the social system?
- ▶ What are its benefits and risks?
- ▶ After the product has served its useful life, *what will be done with the waste?*

In the second section a number of aspects of technology were discussed. Problem solving, observation, measurement, analysis, invention, and use of the imagination were among them. The use of *concepts* in learning was presented as a means for promoting understanding of processes that may appear quite different but have a common underlying principle. Conversion, storage, and flow are examples. In technology we may deal with the flow of water, electricity, sunlight, traffic, or ideas. Flow is a process common to water wheels, electric energy, solar heat, automobiles, and thoughts.

It was important to show the relationship of new technology to history and how technology both influences and is influenced by society. The economies of modern nations are intimately tied to technology. The weighing of risks and benefits forces unusual dilemmas on modern society, and all too often we find ourselves trying to choose among difficult and complex alternatives.

It was these and many other issues raised in Section Two that were used in Section Three as we pondered a number of selected modern technologies. Whether it is energy, transportation, agriculture, biotechnology, or communications, each technology has elements that are rich sources of themes and concepts useful in the education process. Unfortunately, the many interesting deliberations about the eleven technologies we explored with our panel and consultants had to be condensed to a few paragraphs. I am convinced, however, that this would be a fruitful way to present technology, particularly if students also had the opportunity to explore in laboratories and on field trips as they acquired knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

Project 2061 will undoubtedly have a major influence on education reform. Our hope is that as the project evolves, there will be fundamental change in the way we present science, math, and technology to our K-12 students and new ways for them to learn.

Education has become too discipline-oriented and much too compartmentalized. Science in academia seems to be increasingly separated from the hands-on activities that made it useful and interesting. And an elitism—science over technical pursuits—has grown all too pervasive. *We need once again to look at the arts and crafts, designing, engineering, and applied and basic science as part of a spectrum of human technical activity.* In industry, an individual may be involved with all of them at one time or another in his or her career, or even during a single project, for that matter. Likewise, these technical processes should be connected and practiced in the education curriculum. Social science and technology in education should no longer be second class to the “pure” sciences. Integration and interdisciplinary activities should be the norm rather than the rare thing they have become. *And the science/math/ technology integration must extend to the liberal arts and humanities.*

Perhaps the most daunting question we face in technology education is, *Who is going to do it?* Across the nation many of the industrial arts and technology education programs are being curtailed or eliminated. The industrial arts programs that have been modernized to technology education are all too few and may not include the social aspects of technology. In the universities there are only limited numbers of science, technology, and society courses offered, *and virtually no teacher education colleges require their students to learn anything about technology.* Only recently have there been programs such as the Cray Academy in Wisconsin that include technology in their in-service teacher education curricula.

This is a serious problem for our nation that must now compete worldwide with other nations that are often more technologically competent than we are. Many of us who are scientists or engineers are delighted that Project 2061 acknowledged and included technology in its program. It remains a major challenge to infuse technology education throughout the K-12 curriculum.

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Contemplating Sprawl: Old World Feudalism and New World Values

by Justin Isherwood

I

*Sprawl is not merely falling down,
sprawl is doing a bad job of it.*

During the last four decades industry has had to alter its approach to the world, confront its own technological zeal. Federal agencies and environmental interests have generated a veritable carpet of law and regulation to protect and restore the environment. Industry was either cajoled or compelled to forego routine chemistries and redesign factories to satisfy stringent environmental requirements. To cite these alterations as expensive is an understatement.

The Age of the Environment has been well served by the citizen activist, using a variety of methods as could and did exact a pound of flesh from any industrial foe labeled as “dirty rotten polluter.” The main source of the problem usually has been identified as industry. Few environmental problems affected the behavior of private citizens in their role as consumers; in fact environmentalism has only slightly modified our choices. Home recycling of glass, metal, and paper may take a little time, but generally the environmental cause has not inconvenienced us. We have not yet had to restructure or reinvest on the private level as has industry.

Environmentalism is, without too much bravado, one of the achievements of humankind, and for the most part it has been a ready partner of science. Problems remain which, should we choose to address them, will require remediation which will occur at the *citizen* level, not the *industrial* one. We will all feel it and it will hurt. It may even erupt into a national debate as strenuous as state’s rights and slavery. After the rain forest, after ozone, after the greenhouse, the owls, the eagles, and the whales, the environment becomes *our* problem. Unlike those instances where specific industries were isolated and forced by ethical or scientific imperatives to change, in this case the problem is everywhere at once. Industrial, Developing and Third World countries alike suffer it. In one situation the cause is reckless population, in another it is the motorcar. In some cases it is both. The name of the pollutant is *sprawl*.



Sprawl is not the last pollutant we will meet, though it may be the greatest test of our moral intellect. It seems the outcome of everything in modern life is sprawl. Sprawl is a kind of pathogen, an unquenchable virus. Sprawl is not bite-sized, it

cannot be isolated like air quality or spotted owls. Sprawl is, like it or not, *how we do life*: in America and lots of other places too.

Urban planning is widely perceived as the *management* of sprawl, and this is what we would like to think it is. Urban planning is instead how we *mediate* and *compromise* sprawl. Planning insures that sewer, water, and street intersections are correct and the subdivision or shopping mall is up to code. Planning does not believe in the finite city. The municipality has no wall and reigns absolute over everything in its path. We mollify our environmental sensibilities with green belts and parks, are satisfied if there are wilderness tracts “somewhere up north.” Wilderness, it seems, is just another shopping mall experience. Landscape protection, where and when it is granted, is a charity case, because protection is a favor bestowed by a consciousness that believes the city and its population are the only true value—the rest are accessories. The efforts of city and landscape planners have, to a great degree, gone for naught. A cure is impossible until *the patient is willing to change* the behavior intrinsic to the spread of the disease.

Controlling sprawl is to build walls, impermeable walls separating what is city from what is not. It means every city has an absolute limit. No more gracious sub-agricultural zones where urban workers can have ten-acre farmettes. No subdivisions with “country-like settings” on three acres. Addressing sprawl is to re-create how urban people live.

As surely as there was the gas-guzzling automobile there is the land-guzzling house. It “hauls” an average of 2.2 people around during any one life and is called “home” on average less than ten years at a time. Ironically, the most efficient housing methods are the most despised . . . the inner city ghetto and the mobile home park. We have forgotten the term “ghetto” once had a positive connotation, that of a village within a city, where a strong ethnic identity reinforced belonging. At the same time it was a remarkably stable and self-sustaining community.

Ending sprawl will take a reformation of our ideals concerning personal land. Nothing in the American identity has been more captivating, more descriptive of who and what we are, than land. Our heroes were landed. They fought not so much for ideals and philosophy but for big raw chunks of *real estate*. The time of the pioneer in the New World was not so very long ago; in many ways the pioneer is the only legend we have of ourselves. It is not very surprising, then, that land should be at the root of our attitudes and behavior. Land is what all the old stories are about. The Old Testament is land driven: Unspoken is the motto, “You ain’t no where and you ain’t safe until the

land is yours.” In the end it seems even God wants a little place in the country. Henry David Thoreau idolized landedness—land was his implement, the tool by which moral man is made. Land and being on it is how people best sense their spiritual dimension. The back-to-the-land movement is a consistent American saga—we recycle the motivation again and again, always toward Thoreau. Each with our own little chunk. Ironically, Henry didn’t own his.



The American land sense is different from how land is thought of in Europe. Early European immigrants perceived America as being empty. We didn’t acknowledge, nor was history any teacher, that the wilderness was *civilized* before we got here. Neither did we believe the wild could be filled so quickly. What took 20,000 years in Europe and Asia was accomplished in 200 years in America. The pioneer and the idea of endless, open land is yet strong. We are not at all in agreement as to what population constitutes a full America: 300 million? 400? 500? A

billion? The issue of sprawl is tied to population. How dense can we live? How dense do we wish to live? The questions are similar but the answers radically different.

How dense *can* we live is not hard to answer. Any good engineer can design for a variety of human densities, including some real extremes where a surprising amount of comfort is maintained. The problem then becomes our willingness to accept the result. People are different, and making judgments about quality of life is impractical. Quality varies from person to person. One person may live very well in Hong Kong, the densest city on Earth; another may need a square mile to feel comfortable, with lots of other choices in between. Sprawl destroys the opportunity to choose.

American cities are engines, and we perceive them as being powered by land. Remove land from the engine and it ceases to run. Is this true or just a consequence of our own history and myths? What happens to economic growth without land? Is there another way to grow?



Life on the Farm: The Threat of Progress by Randall Berndt. Acrylic on paper, 21 x 27 inches. 1991.

Ecology has a moral dimension as much as it has a physical one. We have made moral decisions about water, wolves, wilderness, and snail darters. We have a sense of what a long-term, technologically safe Earth should look like. As surely as there is a Hong Kong with a population of 14,000 per square mile, there ought to be unfettered old growth in Oregon. The same state that is home to the gleaming cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul harbors the Boundary Waters canoe area. How do we define what is in between? How do we draw the lines and where do we draw them? The problem then isn't whether to have walls around our cities but where we shall raise them. Should Chicago and Milwaukee be allowed to grow together? How about Appleton and Oshkosh? Madison and Portage? Sprawl is inevitable because the walls to our cities are mere stage props. They are moveable according to the script . . . so who writes the script?

Permanency is frightening for Americans. It means *the frontier is really over*. Many think bringing an end to sprawl will destroy the economic vitality necessary to business. What happens when the village has walls?

I I

*Sprawl is inevitable. Sprawl is a fact of life.
A cure is, of course, impossible.*

In the twentieth century we often act as if the city is a new idea, something Henry Ford invented as a companion to the assembly line. The city isn't a modern creation. Cities, or something like cities, were among the very first *inventions* of humankind—they began not long after fire and tool-making. Soon after the plough and agriculture came the city, or at least the village (city is nothing more than a coincidence of villages).

Despite the fact that almost every good thing this side of the plough is the result of urban man, we have yet, after seventy centuries of urban dwelling, to make peace with the metropolis. Every time the wilderness is held up alongside an equal portion of city, people choose wilderness as the inherent good. The city is a bad habit, out of sync with the natural order; cities are artificial. We admire the diversity of nature but not the same complexity in metropolis. Solving sprawl requires an understanding of this dualism . . . the inherent wish for that which is rural but the supreme advantage of being urban. Our twin loyalties represent the basic fuel of sprawl and what automobiles have allowed us to so abundantly pursue.

Cities have always had problems. Julius Caesar complained of senators whose villas were too far from Rome for them to attend to their duties. A city is as *natural* as a termite mound or a coral reef. It resembles an organism with a circulatory system and a rudimentary nucleus, but whose cell wall is almost nonexistent.

Not until the advent of the automobile did urban growth become so distended. As a result, modern cities are remarkably hollow. An enormous amount of space in cities is used for road-

ways, parking lots, turn circles, ramps, and bridges. All of this structure, expensive and robust as it is, is for single use. An organism would not make this mistake. A highway bridge built to withstand storm, fire, and earthquake might serve as a roof for something . . . a school, an apartment . . . it seems strange even to think of a highway structure having multiple utility.

Were we to total the horsepower expended in any modern city, the energy to move one person from point A to point B—whether a bag of groceries or the child to the movie—we would quickly appreciate how wasteful cities have become. With a great deal less power we could run a conveyor belt down every street and alley—all of it weather tight, noiseless, accessible, and without hazard. The problem, as we well know, is *the personal car*. One cannot feel towards a conveyor belt as we feel toward our cars.

A recent study of Portland, Oregon, determined the city has within its boundaries enough vacant land to accommodate projected growth for the next 180 years. So why are cities hollow? The problem isn't the simple inefficiency of motorcars and the redundant excessive service provided the automotive culture. Rather, it is our failure to appreciate the city in its historical context.

Tourists traveling to Switzerland, Italy, and England are struck by two opposing sensations: One, European cities seem in many ways more efficient than their American counterparts, and two, the landscape surrounding these cities is attractive. Some of it is downright rustic by American standards. The distance between London and Aberdeen is the same as between Washington, D.C., and Boston, but every tourist sees the difference. One expanse of land is charming while the other is on its way to becoming a continuous suburb. Why?

European cities have walls. This is why the English countryside is as popular to photographers as mountain vistas are in America. The American city has no walls, no ethic of containment as does its European counterpart. Urban walls, which is to say limitations on growth, are the result of a feudal land policy. Feudalism was once all we knew of ecology. It was, in many ways, a useful system and as understandable as Leopold's land ethic—the land ethic also represents a faith in walls: the willingness to create a wall around land, to preserve its value, its function, and its vulnerability.

From the time of the earliest settlements it was clear that the agriculture which made the village possible eventually would be displaced by a village whose growth was not contained. An equal component of feudalism was the desire of the powerful to keep and enjoy the rustic environment. Feudalism balanced the inherent growth of the village with the practice of agriculture and the King's Forest. Walling in the village prevented expansion, and the result is the present British and European feudal countryside. Despite high population densities it remains postcard attractive, the quaint village surrounded by rural shire and province.

The row-houses of the Industrial Revolution have suffered bad reviews by those who think of them in terms of



The Neighbors by Randall Berndt. Acrylic on paper, 21 x 27 inches. 1991.

forced-labor camps. These tight, efficient communities, however, have resulted in improved land access so that even the landless can enjoy some measure of land participation. Confinement of the village maintains open space. The feudal villages enjoy the benefits of dense population *and* the countryside.

The tradition of the British walker's right-of-way traces its origin to feudal concepts. Because of its compactness and the protection of surrounding land, village life had a rural context. In effect the village and the landed aristocracy—the feudal system's twin proprietors—maintained a land ethic despite a millennium of population increases and technological developments.

In some respects the twentieth-century American city is an anomaly. The automobile came at a bad time—we had no practice in walls, hence our inability to control sprawl. The problem has just one answer: Either there are walls and they are robust, or there are none. Ending sprawl means walling in American cities and villages as never before. The process is simple: Set distinct, incorruptible limits on city borders.

The risk, of course, is to stifle growth. Many who wish to contain sprawl describe the means as *no-growth economics*. But

the real objective is not to *end* growth, but rather to *refocus* it—turn growth inward by retraining our neglected village skills: Smaller, more efficient houses; multiple level cities; row-housing; communal gardens; and some genuine woods (not devitalized parks). These are village skills.



What to do with the personal car, the reason we have ignored village design in America? Cars take more space than people do, more than all our other functions combined. They reduce urban efficiency below what we can afford in the long run in terms of energy, commuting time, health risk, isolation from workplace, impact on the family, and construction costs. To have walls is to practice land preservation on a scale as never before attempted. And to end our subservience to the automobile. The automobile, however, continues to enjoy an undisputed liberty within all the known dimensions of the American landscape—our culture, mores, technology, and economics.

Sprawl has robbed modern cultures of its long-sought-for leisure. Our dilute urban design necessitates transporting children to school, and it affects our other activities as well: Shopping,

dining, recreation, even exercise require a car. The village solves these needs without the auto. The motto of village design is *Nearby*. Life and its needs become walkable, what might be called “consumer friendly.”

By definition a village is the smallest denomination of any complete set of needs for urban life. Church, clinic, entertainment, sports, food, fuel, nature—you don’t need to go anywhere in order to maintain yourself in a well-done village.

Mobile societies, or at least societies accustomed to their mobility, are somewhat threatened by the village idea. Imagine not having to go somewhere for the casual maintenance of the household! We are not yet willing to give the village the

same practice and credence in our lives that we have given the wilderness concept. But it is out there, *the village ethic*. It has functioned before and can again.

Just as we have restrained a wide range of industrial choices and practices, we need now to wall the village. The resulting economic balance sheet is by no means clear. We will lose some functions and gain others. In the end we shall better define the gap between the wilderness and the metropolis. This middle ground, in all its variability, its scene, and its productivity, is far more erodible to sprawl than it ever was to wind. Devastated farmland is not only the result of soil erosion, but also the result of the pastel ranch house where just a moment before there was a field or woodlot.

Sprawl is entrenched and well-rehearsed. To gain control we need to drastically alter our zoning laws and the thinking behind them. Zoning has done little but create a specialized urban pattern that has led to the hollowness within our urban structure. In this model, land is perpetually vulnerable, existing



Facts of Life by Randall Berndt. Acrylic on canvas, 35 x 40 inches. 1989.

only until a “higher use” is found, be it a shopping mall, subdivision, or four-lane roadway. Can we prevent development from destroying an older and wiser way of life? Can we bring back the village ideal, that familial bond in community?

We can if planners get some measure of new patriotism and fight like hell to preserve cities and green space even as we have learned to fight for clean air and decent water. The fight is for our cities, farmlands, and woods.



Americans do not think kindly of walls. If walls once served Fort Augustine and Boonesborough, it was only for a little while, and we never learned about their protection and how to function behind them. Walls make the livable village possible. With walls we can engage sprawl and bring it to stalemate, and at the same time fulfill the oft-made promise to revitalize our cities. A retail rebirth is in order: to create a family-centered consumerism, an avowal of neighborhoods, a defense of landscapes, a bastion of safety, quiet homes, and a nice walk to work.

Sustainable Agriculture: *Sustaining the People, the Animals, and the Land in the American Food System*

by Denny Caneff

Introduction

Pick your vision for agriculture:

Scene One: You see a young man driving a vehicle with a claw-like device dangling from its front. He's wheeling it through a long, dark, windowless, smelly, noisy place called a hog confinement facility, where 5,000 sows are nurturing tens of thousands of baby piglets. He pulls up to one of the narrow stalls each sow is confined in—there's no mingling of "pig families" in this building—lowers the claw-like device into the stall, and lifts out a dead sow. The driver then scoots his vehicle—known as a sow hearse—to the end of the building, where dead animals are disposed of. The facility's foreman barks at the driver to work faster. The driver doesn't understand at first—he's a recent immigrant from Mexico. But once he gets it, he responds quickly, because the \$4.00-per-hour wage is far better than his pay back home.



Piglets on the Clift family farm at Edgerton.

Scene Two: A farmer spreads straw in small A-frame huts where his sows tend their broods. The huts are scattered throughout a pasture next to his barnyard, in which sows and piglets are free to roam. The farmer hurries through his chores on this particular morning. Five of his hogs have been processed and are ready for sale. Selling for this farmer is not through the commodity hog market, but on the streets of a neighborhood in a nearby city, where he goes door to door, offering his hogs as packaged chops, roasts, and sausages. Once he hits the streets on this day, he finds sales to be slow, but the farmer gets a lift when one of his customers runs into him in the hallway of her apartment complex and tells her neighbor, "Hey, here's comes my farmer with my pork!"

While the second of these scenes is much more appealing than the first, the first one predominates in American agriculture. Those who wrote the script for the first scene would argue that raising mass-produced crops and animals in a streamlined, controlled way is more efficient and productive—the only way

to provide low-cost food for a burgeoning world population. Those who wrote the second scene would argue that this industrialization of our food production abuses resources, farmers, animals, and those who eat the food and is no guarantee against world hunger—in fact may exacerbate it.

Though the first scene is predominant, the second vision represents a back-to-the-future effort to reform the food system, from the soil to the table, so that agriculture's natural *and* human resources are preserved. We say *back* because in many ways the second scene invokes agriculture's past, of many farmers on the land operating family farms with diversified crops and livestock. This new back-to-the-future vision is not founded in "yeoman farmer" sentimentality, but in strong values and well-informed pragmatism. It is what unifies farmers, environmentalists, consumers, workers, and others involved in the sustainable agriculture movement.

I will attempt to briefly describe the history and origins of that movement, what shapes and motivates it today, and how it



Peter Wood explains maintenance of permanent birdfoot trefoil pastures to other farmers at a field day farm walk. Wood and his wife, Hillary, operate a sheep farm at Blanchardville.

represents a creative, exciting, and necessary challenge to this country's food system.

"Sustainability" Not Easily Defined

The fact that *sustainable agriculture* defies a tidy definition speaks to its complexity—and to its beauty. This movement's roots tap several sources. They tap the energies and concerns of the environmental movement of the 1970s, when people began to recognize the adverse effects of our industrial and consumer existence. Agriculture clearly had its impact on the environment in the form of soil erosion and pesticide contamination of surface and groundwater. The movement also taps the frustrations and pain of the 1980s' farm crisis, where farmers across the country, particularly in the Midwest, were failing by the thousands. The farm crisis as a source of the sustainable agriculture movement's energies is perhaps the most important and the least understood.

Farmers—whose work produces the most basic of human needs—had been reduced to teary spectators at their own auctions. The spirit and commitment of a farm family, starting with its immigrant founders four generations ago, were lost in the staleness of the economists' numbers and hollow explanations that this was "a normal shakeout of the industry." There were many reasons for the crisis—United States trade and monetary policy, a fixation on technology that displaced people, policies which kept commodities in constant surplus which kept farmers' prices chronically low, and a strong cultural pull away from

the hard work of farming and toward the brighter lights of more easily gained opportunity in Des Moines and Milwaukee.

The farmers who survived and those concerned citizens who worked on their behalf asked, *How did this happen? What's the source of the cruel irony that in the world's most productive agricultural nation, the people who make it possible are driven to glean their food from food pantries? What is structurally wrong in American agriculture that we can work on to improve—from the land grant university's research to the farmer's loan repayment to the overuse of pesticides on our fields?* In other words, an emerging movement was challenging agricultural orthodoxy and

beginning to ask how the nation could *sustain* the natural and human resources that made our agriculture so productive.

The Movement Takes Shape

By the mid 1980s, several organizations had sprung up in the Midwest (and in other regions to a lesser extent) to address these underlying environmental, political, and social concerns in agriculture. Sustainable agriculture was truly a grassroots movement. Grain and livestock farmers of both Dakotas formed the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society to market organic grains and seek research for more environmentally benign farming practices. The Practical Farmers of Iowa chose to marry the practical knowledge of farmers with the rigors of experimental science by doing agronomic research on their own farms. PrairieFire Rural Action in Iowa challenged the lending policies of rural banks and sought to counteract a dangerous anti-Semitic and survivalist mentality engendered by hard times in the countryside. Minnesota's Land Stewardship Project challenged the soil conservation practices of big insurance companies which had acquired farmland through bankruptcies.

But the primary focus in the movement's early days was to develop networks and linkages among farmers so they could teach each other and themselves farming practices that went easier on the environment and, essential to their own self-interest, easier on their pocketbooks. Practical farmer experience and wisdom began to challenge decades of established thinking about farming.

Sustainable Agriculture in Wisconsin— A Microcosm

Established thinking among Wisconsin dairy farmers, for example, was that corn could not be grown without herbicides. It had for millennia, of course. But with expanding acreages, less farm labor available, advertising campaigns by chemical companies, and the irresistible tug to be modern—not to mention the fact that *they worked*—herbicides had largely displaced mechanical weed control devices by the late 1970s.

In 1986, a group of farmers in southwestern Wisconsin, calling themselves the Southwest Farmers' Research Network, tried a bit of heresy. In two years of on-farm research trials, they showed that not only could corn be grown without herbicides, but farmers could drastically reduce (or with the right crop rotations, eliminate) their use of commercial nitrogen fertilizer.

The farmers had a broader goal in mind than merely proving that corn could be grown without chemicals. First, they wanted to prove that cutting chemicals actually worked. They firmly believed that farmers needed to reduce the harmful environmental results of their practices, knowing full well that their farming neighbors wouldn't try it without assurances that their production wouldn't be hurt. The Southwest Farmers' Research Network wanted to show that it could be done, and how. Related to this first objective was reducing farmers' out-of-pocket costs. If farmers couldn't be profitable by simply *producing more* (and that particular bit of established agricultural



Dr. Larry Bundy, professor of soil science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has developed soil nitrogen tests which have resulted in significant reduction of the overapplication of nitrogen fertilizer on corn fields. Dr. Bundy is pictured in a university demonstration field at the Arlington research station.

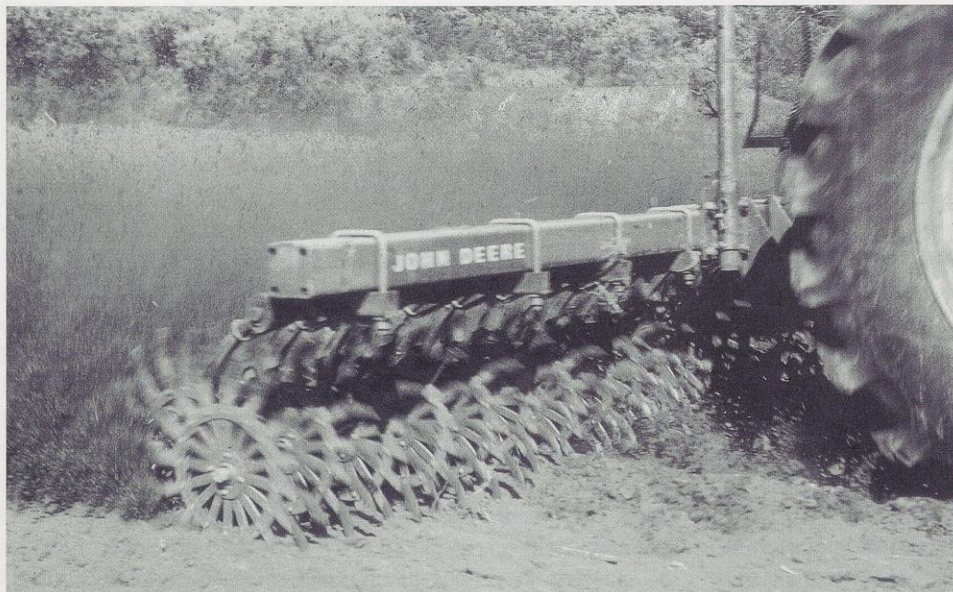
wisdom was also being challenged by this time), then they had to be profitable by *spending less*.

Second, they wanted to prove that farmer innovation, ingenuity, observational powers, and wit were effective in generating agricultural knowledge. Behind this notion was a sense of farmer power. (Academics who would later study sustainable farmers' networks would apply a term previously reserved for

farmers in developing countries—*indigenous knowledge*.) The Southwest Farmers felt their counterparts had become too dependent on “experts,” from researchers and veterinarians to bankers and fertilizer salesmen. Many experts were, as one of the Southwest Farmers lamented, “milk-ing the farmer, while we milked the cows.”

A third objective was to challenge the ideology of the University of Wisconsin's research and extension apparatus. The Southwest Farmers felt the university needed to take their efforts more seriously by helping farmers curb environmental impacts of farming and help them be not just *more productive*, but *more profitable*.

What happened on the Wisconsin scene in sustainable agriculture



Rotary hoe used to control early season weeds in row crops.

happened elsewhere. Farmer networks were forming. Land grant universities (and some state agriculture departments) were creating sustainable agriculture and agroecology research and study programs. The farm press was abuzz with trite discussions about "court-ing LISA" (Low Input Sustainable Agriculture, an unfortunate acronym for a U.S. Department of Agriculture research program). Even the agrichemical industry, after directly (and when that didn't work, more subtly) challenging sustainable agriculture, began to appropriate some of the movement's language, and farmers started to see the positive influence of the movement on industry in the *green-ing* of its advertising.



Mike Irwin of Lodi with a group of farmers at a field day. He is comparing organically-produced amaranth to amaranth and corn produced with herbicides.

In summary, many specific objectives of the sustainable agriculture movement had been realized by 1990. Farmer consciousness about harmful pesticide impacts was aroused, pesticide use on farms was down, and farmers' pocketbooks were being spared unnecessary expenditures. The country's agricultural institutions were slow to adapt to the new realities but were moving in the right direction. Most importantly, a vanguard of farmers concerned about the environment and the future of family farming emerged from the countryside. They gained esteem and satisfaction for themselves in seeing the progress they had fostered, and they changed the debate about farming in America, perhaps forever.

Still, something is missing. The movement has challenged some long-held beliefs and practices in American agriculture, but in many ways it has not changed the fundamental economic and power imbalance preventing family farmers from earning a good living on the land and preventing a restructuring of the food system. Environmental integrity, a good living for farmers and their rural neighbors, wholesome food for consumers, and well-being for farm animals may not be achieved without that restructuring. The sustainable agriculture movement is realizing this and is bringing new allies and new tactics to pursue its vision.

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*Practical farmer experience
 and wisdom began to
 challenge decades of
 established thinking about
 farming.*

serious challenges, and they could be characterized differently. But I raise these five because they are interrelated, and they illustrate well where agriculture is going in Wisconsin, America, and the world.

The first—industrialization—has, as subsets, immigration and irrigation. Industrialization of food production simply means applying industrial mass-production and manufacturing techniques to growing peppers, pigs, and other foods. It strives for streamlined sameness in a mega-scale, energy-intensive, ecologically damaging, and cheap labor environment. It does not need widely-dispersed, independent family-operated farm businesses to function.

Industrial agriculture's cheap labor is supplied more and more by recent immigrants—Mexicans and other Latin Americans in California and the Southwest—to work on the vegetable, fruit, and industrial dairy farms. Even in the Midwest, recent Mexican immigrants (some unregistered) are being bused into Iowa and Nebraska to work in de-unionized packing plants and hog factories whose unsavory working conditions and low wages repulse local residents. Industrial agriculture's social order is characterized by a hierarchy of owners, managers, and investors on the peak of a pyramid, with a mass of unorganized wage earners and contract farmers at the base. "Pecking order" is an apt descriptor, one used by *Time* magazine in an October 1992 article describing the dark side of the "economic miracle" of Arkansas—the poultry industry. This industrial organizational pyramid perpetuates economic imbalance and social dis-

Pursuing that vision, given some new realities in agriculture, will be a daunting task. I will briefly describe what some of those challenging realities are, how they are unsustainable, and how the sustainable agriculture movement will try to address them.

Challenges: The Five I's

These five major challenges all start with the letter *I*. They are industrialization, irrigation, immigration, internationalism, and imagination. There are other

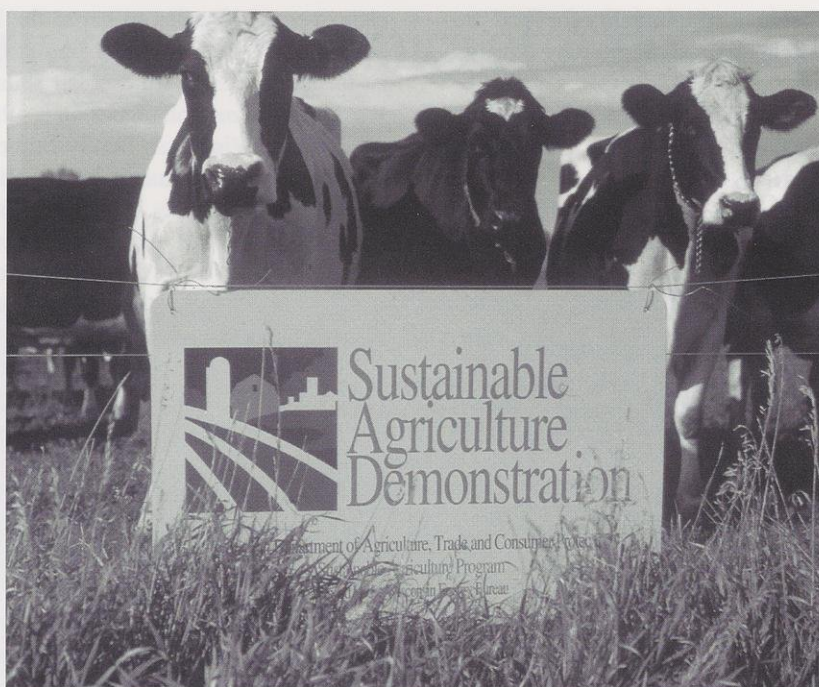
order in agriculture. It is ultimately unsustainable.

Irrigation is what makes California's industrial agriculture possible. The fact that all American taxpayers pay the water bill is what makes it economically feasible. Nearly 80 percent of California's water goes to irrigate crops, including alfalfa fed to dairy cows. Irrigation undermines the sustainability of Wisconsin dairy farming. Irrigation (and, by virtue of immigration, cheap labor) has allowed dairy farming to expand tremendously in California, undercutting Wisconsin's dairy product markets.

Is this the inevitable and invisible "free hand" of the market at work? Not really. "Water welfare" in the form of federally subsidized irrigation props up this ultimately unsustainable milk production system. (Much of federal farm policy is distorting and counterproductive in this way, unfortunately.) California adds nearly three-quarters of a million new people (water-users) every year to its population. When the debate intensifies about how that state's vulnerable water supply is distributed—*Will it be showers or alfalfa?*—the alfalfa (and the cows) will ultimately lose. But that fight will be ugly and may play out over at least ten years. In the meantime, Wisconsin will lose thousands of dairy farmers.

Internationalism is another way of saying "free trade." Free trade seriously threatens social and ecological sustainability in agriculture. This will not even be a cursory analysis of free trade's impact on farming. Suffice it to say that multilateral trade agreements will allow agricultural capital to move around to where it can operate without the constraints of food safety standards, environmental protections, and farm worker health and safety standards. From allowing low quality cheese from Eastern Europe to enter the United States foodshed to undermining Mexican subsistence farmers' ability to grow corn, free trade agreements will seriously alter social and economic relationships, to the detriment of small farmers, consumers, and the environment. Trade agreements, too, are unsustainable.

Finally, I bring in imagination as a challenge to sustainability. First, the lack of it: American agricultural leadership, in most instances, lacks the imagination to generate a new vision



Holstein cows on Paul and Judy Swenson's dairy farm at Arena. The Swensons are involved in an intensive rotational grazing program with their milking herd.

for agriculture. Often these leaders (academics, large farm groups, politicians, and many farmers) merely see current trends as *inevitable*, as if they had occurred willy-nilly and without any human intervention. Farmers then cease imagining themselves as stewards and providers of food. They cease imagining themselves as part of the culture. As indigenous peoples have recognized, the loss of identity and imagination as a social group is the beginning of the end of that group's self-determination and existence. This is what is most tragic about the unsustainable directions of

our agriculture and food system.

With that comes a phenomenon whereby the plight of family farmers, and agriculture as culture, vacates the imagination of non-farmers, too. In the mid-1980s there was empathy for the family farm; in the early 1990s there is lack of interest. (Recall the dearth of farm policy discussions in national campaign rhetoric.) Farmer and author Wendell Berry decries this disconnection of people from those who sustain them. He writes,

The industrial eater is one who does not know that eating is an agricultural act, who no longer knows or imagines the connections between eating and the land, and who is therefore necessarily passive and uncritical—in short, a victim. When food in the minds of eaters is no longer associated with farming and with the land, then the eaters are suffering a kind of cultural amnesia that is misleading and dangerous (*East/West* magazine, December 1990, p. 51)

Achieving Sustainability and a Sustainable Food System

Helping to put food and farmers back into the American imagination and encouraging eaters to participate more in the food system may be the sustainable agriculture movement's greatest challenge. But more *participation* by non-farmers is what the movement is striving for in this decade. Indeed, their participa-

tion may be the only way to achieve sustainability for food production and for its producers. There are some exciting developments taking shape.

The first step seems merely semantic, but it is critical to sustainable agriculture's future thinking and acting. The talk now is much more about *the food system* rather than just about *farming practices* or *agriculture*. The change in terms helps expand the boundaries of the debate beyond farmers' fields. By so doing, it appropriately brings in everyone that has something to do with food. That is, through the act of eating, everyone shapes the nation's food system. As Indiana University biologist Martha Crouch puts it, "It's not just 'you are what you eat.' You also eat what you are."

Localizing food production and reconnecting farmers with their customers is essential in enhancing participation in a sustainable food system. This is evident in the nationwide resurgence of an age-old farmer-to-customer connection—the farmers' market. The fact that people desire this is best illustrated by the communal joys of the Dane County Farmers' Market on the Capitol Square in Madison.

Community Supported Agriculture

But there is new "connecting tissue" forming around the country, called *community-supported agriculture*. Consumers *subscribe* to buy a certain amount of food to be grown by a farmer during the year. There is great mutual benefit in this system: Farmers know their customers, and customers know exactly where their food comes from. Consumers share the financial risk with the farmer by paying up front the subscription fee for the food. Best of all, consumers get fresh, tasty food produced just how they want it.

In Wisconsin, Peter and Bernadette Seely have been operating a subscription farm north of Milwaukee for years. On the other side of the state, Verna Kragness and Rick Hall operate Philadelphia Community Farm. Both these community-supported farms encourage participation by subscribers in the farm work (though it is not required). It is taking other forms across the country. Hendrix College in Arkansas and St. Olaf College in Minnesota are both working to buy more of their food within a fifty-mile radius of their campuses. (In analyzing where their food came from, they found that a vast percentage of it had trav-

eled over 1,000 miles to get to the kitchen stoves on campus, even though some of it had been grown in-state.) And journalist-turned-farmer Ward Sinclair sells his produce to his former *Washington Post* colleagues on a subscription basis.

Some Wisconsin family farmers are working to literally sell the ecological and animal welfare benefits of their livestock-raising methods in the form of humanely-raised, natural meats. They will form a marketing association in hopes of increasing their incomes and consumers' access to good meats. These farmers, in linking up with environmental, animal welfare, and social justice groups, see the need to help their customers "vote with their wallets" for food which reflects their own and their customers' mutual values and convictions for a food that treats people, animals, and the land with dignity and respect.

The current food system does not do that, and the sustainable agriculture movement will work to forge a new food system for the future.

Conclusion

It's not enough, then, that we wait for farmers to *get more sustainable* in order to have a sustainable agriculture. Sustainability is up to all of us as consumers who eat and, thereby, participate in the food system. As Marty Strange, author of *Family Farming: A New Economic Vision*, reminds us,

Agriculture can't live up to a public standard of moral purity that is higher than that expected of the rest of our society. If farmers are expected to steward natural resources, even when doing so is not in their immediate self-interest, the rest of us must be willing to sacrifice the immediate benefits of cheap food for the long-range benefits of a sustainable food system. If we expect farmers to conserve resources without providing sufficient economic reward for doing so, we only shift an impossible burden onto their shoulders (p. 250).

So if a farmer's products represent social and ecological values important to you personally—and which you feel are vital to our sustainability as a culture—and you respond by offering your support, you will be voting for a sustainable food system.

Photos by Richard L. Cates. Courtesy Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Resource Management Division.

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The Conservation Economics of Aldo Leopold

by Dennis J. Palmini



(x25 677)

Aldo Leopold as a forest assistant in the Apache National Forest, Arizona, 1910. Courtesy University of Wisconsin Archives.

Readers of *A Sand County Almanac* find themselves contemplating with Aldo Leopold the ecological complexities and the ethical difficulties of participating in the natural community of life. The carefully crafted and poetic blend of ecology and ethics in *Sand County* ensures that this slim volume is, perhaps, more often quoted than any other writing in the canon of today's environmental movement. Yet the appreciation of Aldo Leopold, in my opinion, has long suffered from a narrowly romantic reputation as a philosopher-naturalist. The fact that Leopold also wrote frequently and perceptively on the practical economics of conservation is less known, in spite of his having raised many issues which continue to be relevant today.

The naturalist and ethicist who penned *A Sand County Almanac* was a working conservation professional deeply interested, throughout his long career, in the question, "Just how do economics and biology condition the problem of game conservation in America and Europe?" ("Game Methods: The American Way," p.157). For Aldo Leopold appreciated the paradox that though the desolation of land may dominate human society in the long run, markets and economic incentives determine land uses in the short run. He also appreciated that an understanding of how economics both *motivates* and *constrains* land use decisions may help us devise alternative institutional arrangements to preserve and promote land health.

The Forest Service Years: Emerging Problems with Land Use

As one of the early generation of Yale-trained foresters, Leopold began his career in the newly-formed U.S. Forest Service in 1909 imbued with the utilitarian conservation doctrine of Gifford Pinchot, founder of the Forest Service. His training in mensuration, silviculture, millwork, and volume estimates emphasized forests as commercial crops to be cultivated and harvested. Further, in his first position as assistant to the forest supervisor on the Apache National Forest in Arizona and later

as acting supervisor of the Carson Forest in New Mexico, Leopold spent much of his time out in the field. He led reconnaissance parties to inventory timber, inspect lumber mills, measure and mark timber for sale, and scale logs. With other forest officers he fought fires, supervised use of range land for cattle and sheep, and helped to establish the practical administration of the new forests.

Thus it is not surprising that efficiency and economic productivity were important concerns to Leopold, or that he normally took a utilitarian stance in his early writings on land use. In 1918, for example, Leopold sided with farmers and ranchers against restoring elk to New Mexico because of the damage they would cause to farm crops and their direct competition with sheep and cattle. Response to unmet recreational demand was the utilitarian rationale offered for urging the Forest Service to grow and protect wildlife as well as trees, while productivity was an important motivating theme in his classic text, *Game Management*.

But Leopold's experiences and duties in the Southwest caused him to increasingly question Pinchot's commercial utilitarianism. Returning to work after a lengthy illness, Leopold was placed in charge of, first, game protection efforts and then, a little later, recreation policy in the service's District 3 (Southwest). In 1915 he completed and distributed a handbook on game conservation for forest officers. He also led the effort dur-



Leopold on the Rio Grande in New Mexico, 1918. Courtesy University of Wisconsin Archives.

ing 1915 and 1916 to establish game protective associations in New Mexico to promote effective enforcement of game laws and the establishment of game refuges.

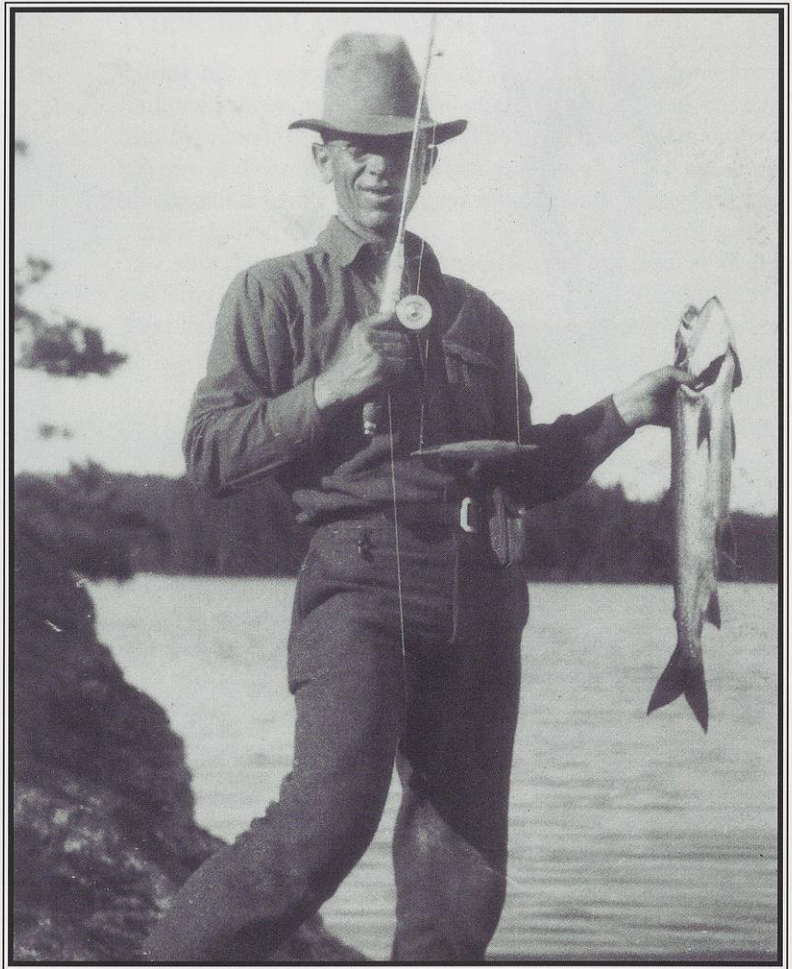
Leopold's emerging interests in game conservation and wilderness preservation reflected his growing sense that *more values were to be found in wild country than simply the commercial production of boards*. For example, in a 1913 letter "To the Forest Officers of the Carson Forest," published in the *Carson Pine Cone* (a newsletter for Forest Service personnel in the Southwest), Leopold urged his fellow foresters to consider themselves responsible for not just the timber resources of their forests, but also the "water, forage, farm, recreative, game, fish and aesthetic resources." Further, he urged them to measure the value of their actions and policies by the effects on the whole forest ecosystem, rather than by simply the production of lumber (pp.43-4).

From January 1918 to August 1919, Leopold served as the secretary for the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, having resigned (for the time being) from the Forest Service. Leopold rejoined the Forest Service in August 1919 as chief of operations for District 3 in the Southwest. A key task was to conduct inspection tours to assess range and forest conditions on twenty million acres of forest land and to recommend improvements in the service's day-to-day operations.

During these inspection tours, Leopold observed "pervasive and obvious" grazing problems, gaping gullies, and "practically no game in [the] country" (Meine, p.108). Two decades later he wrote in a letter of "the perpetual feeling of attending a funeral which beset me when I first became erosion-conscious" (quoted in Meine, p.186). He also produced, at the end of 1923, a *Watershed Handbook*, addressed to field personnel, which explained how the frequency of fires and the deterioration of range and forest conditions were both related to cattle grazing and to mis-administration of the forests. These experiences provided Leopold with a broader and more critical perspective on how both commercial society and forest administration affected land use and land health.

The Wisconsin Years: Experiences with Conservation Policy

In 1928 Aldo Leopold left the Forest Service and worked for several years as an independent forestry and wildlife consultant. He conducted pioneering surveys of game and habitat conditions in a number of midwestern states. He was asked in 1929 to chair the committee on game policy of the American Game Conference, and he took the lead in drafting the committee



Leopold with catch while on a canoe trip in the Quetico region along the Minnesota-Canada border, 1924. Courtesy University of Wisconsin Archives.

report published in 1930 recommending a national game policy. In 1933 Leopold published his pioneering text *Game Management* and assumed the position of professor of game management at the University of Wisconsin, a post he held for the remainder of his life.

During the 1930s Leopold also became immersed in sponsoring graduate students and research in wildlife ecology. He helped found the Wilderness Society in 1935 and served as president of the Wildlife Society in 1939. Along the way he gained a broad view of the land and wildlife conservation problems in the United States.

In 1933 and 1934 Leopold helped to supervise erosion control work in the Southwest and then conservation reconstruction projects in the central sand counties of Wisconsin, both with the Civilian Conservation Corps. He spent the fall of 1935 studying the intensive forest management practiced in Germany, which differed so greatly from American philosophy and methods. In 1943 Leopold was appointed to the Wisconsin Conservation Commission, and he quickly became embroiled in several disillusioning conservation controversies.



Early spring planting at the Shack, Leopold's farm in central Wisconsin sand country, near the Wisconsin River, 1938. Courtesy Bradley Study Center files.

These experiences of government conservation, combined with a pair of hunting trips to the still unspoiled wilderness of northern Mexico, appear to have subverted his early enthusiasm for government programs into an increasingly pessimistic view of government's ability to promote conservation. The frequent failures of these programs led Leopold to look closely at the bureaucratic and economic obstacles to government conservation programs. He concluded that certain essential characteristics of the conservation problem limited government's ability to deal effectively with abuses of land ownership.

Utilitarianism and Social Justice

In 1918 in "Forestry and Game Conservation," Leopold proposed that foresters go beyond producing timber, that they exercise their "special responsibility and special fitness" (p.54) for rehabilitating depleted game resources by using the scientific management model they had developed for managing forest and range resources. Beginning from the economic ideal of "putting land to its highest and best use" (p.53), he argued that failing to save the game resources would permanently and seriously reduce "the recreational value of the Forests" (p.55). He justified this claim by noting, "There is a demand for every

head of killable big game in the United States . . . Five million sportsmen are looking for hunting grounds, and many in vain" (p.57).

Aldo Leopold was urging the Forest Service to satisfy a perceived demand for hunting recreation that lacked market expression. He suggested the service could create an overt market by devising a system of federal hunting permits for sale to hunters with valid state licenses. This "market for hunting rights" would generate a cash flow the service could use to fund the restoration and protection of game. Such a proposal was clearly based on a utilitarian, commercial business model, with Leopold writing as an entrepreneur who saw a market opportunity for the Forest Service.

Yet Leopold proposed the program not for the financial benefit of the Forest Service but for the benefit of several millions of hunters of modest means (and millions more households who enjoyed adventures with wildlife). The proposal originated in a concern for social justice which he discussed more explicitly a year later in his paper "Wild Lifers vs. Game Farmers: A Plea for Democracy in Sport."

By 1919, there had appeared the early beginnings of a movement to develop profit-motivated game farms that would provide shooting opportunities for a price. Leopold feared that

"the general spread of commercialized shooting privileges" (p.66) would mean "the end of free hunting" (p.65). Thus the national forests, supported by public revenues, could serve the larger goal of social justice by offering a broader range of opportunities for sport to hunters from a wide range of backgrounds and incomes. Leopold often argued that conservation programs not based on widespread public participation were almost certainly doomed to failure.

During these early Forest Service years, Leopold also wrote on why it is that market-driven decisions on land use so often lead to degradation of land resources. In "Pioneers and Gullies" he observed that the ownership of natural resources is split among many private and public agents, creating a "scattering of cause and effect and of loss and gain among different owners" (p.106). Thus overgrazing and poor farming practices caused many thousands of acres of fragile range land to be lost to erosion, even while many thousands of other acres were being developed through expensive reclamation projects. "While one individual is putting the new field under irrigation, another individual is losing the older field from floods, and a third is causing the floods through misuse of his range" (p.106).

There are two kinds of losses noted here: one, the direct loss of valuable land, as of range land through erosion; and second, the "externality" damages to other land users of the erosion-caused floods. Moneys being devoted to expensive reclamation projects could have been spent more economically, to prevent the loss of presently fertile lands. So in spite of the total expenditures, Leopold wrote, "it is doubtful whether we are creating more useful land with the labor of our hands than we are unintentionally destroying with the trampling of our feet" (p.109).

These costly externality interdependencies meant that markets were incapable of the coordination necessary to protect the land. They would create no problem were all resources under a single owner, who would take account of the interdependencies to realize maximum value from the total block of resources. But in the semi-arid land of the Southwest, the consequences of uncoordinated land use decisions were exacerbated because these lands were "often set in a hair-trigger [ecological] equilibrium which is quickly upset by uncontrolled use" (p.112-13).

Thus, Leopold concludes, "The day will come when the ownership of land will carry with it the obligation to so use and protect it with respect to erosion that it is not a menace to other landowners and the public" (p.110). He is talking here not of ethical attitudes held by individuals but of the "enforced responsibility of landowners" (p.111); however, this must, as he eventually realized, rest on a political consensus derived from an agreed-upon conservation ethic.

Problems of Conservation Policy

During his Wisconsin years, Aldo Leopold continued to argue for conservation, often from an anthropocentric perspective: A healthy economy rests on a healthy land base; there is great spiritual and aesthetic value in landscape beauty; and conservation avoids a heavy charge against the public treasury for correcting abuses of land use.

But Leopold also briefly extended the argument to an ethical dimension. Game management shares with agriculture a sense that "to make the earth productive and to keep it clean and to bear a reverent regard for its products is the special prerogative of good agriculture" (*Game Management*, p.21). Leopold regarded as a "milestone in moral evolution" the idea that "our conquest of nature carried with it a moral responsibility for the perpetuation of the threatened forms of wild life" (p.19). These statements imply a larger purpose than simply preserving the resource base of economic prosperity; *they imply a moral obligation to the non-human natural community.*

The corollary to this moral commitment is the question, "How shall we conserve wild life without evicting ourselves?" (*Game Management*, p.19). This question reflects a pair of broader concerns: how to encourage landowners to apply conservation stewardship to their land and how to ensure that economic and ecological concerns are integrated in land use decisions to protect the "public interest in private land." What is needed is a social mechanism to facilitate this integration, drawing from "the social and physical sciences" ("Land Pathology," pp.214-15).

Leopold came to view government conservation as largely a Band-Aid approach: The public will either buy out the landowner, adding to public land holdings and costs, or will wind up paying for conservation repairs, as with the CCC programs. Either way, abuse of the land involved more than "depleting a capital asset, but of actually creating a cash liability against the taxpayer" ("Conservation Economics," p.200). Leopold also wrote, "Bigger buying, I fear, is serving as an escape mechanism—it masks our failure to solve the harder problem" (p.197) of ensuring that landowners properly protect and care for their land, preventing the problem in the first place.

The nature of the conservation problem is important here. In the 1930s Leopold wrote two widely read papers wherein he observed that soil loss and low game and forest production are widely dispersed problems, that all three problems are "coextensive with the map of the United States" ("Conservation Ethic," p.187). Their solution requires "the universal reformation of land use" ensuring "the conservative use of every acre on every watershed in America" ("Conservation Economics," p.196).

Consequently, Aldo Leopold stressed the importance of giving the landowner an economic stake in conservation. He

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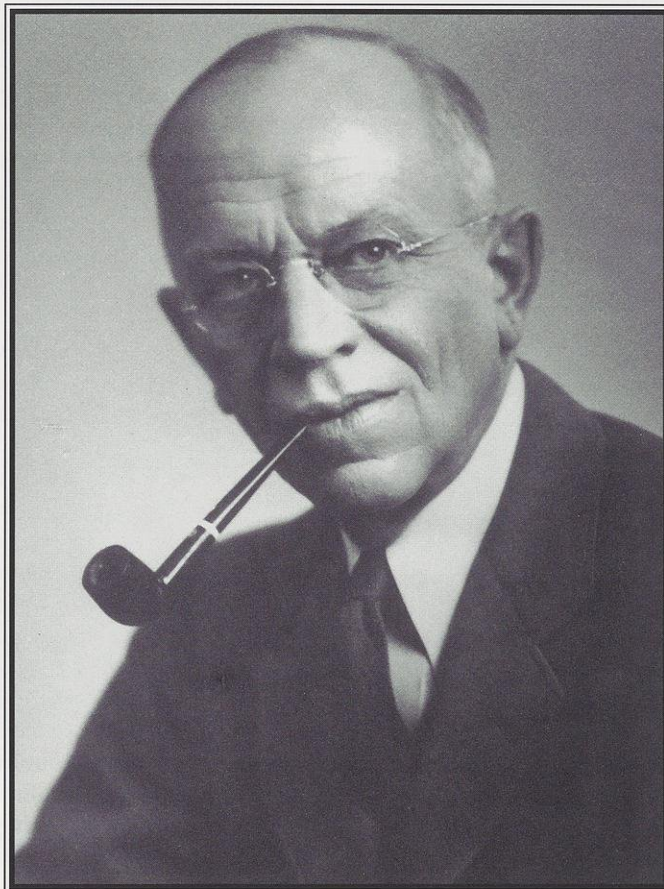
observed that “the economic cards are stacked against some of the most important reforms in land use” (“Conservation Ethic,” p.187). A conserving type of land management is not in itself very often profitable for landowners, especially where deterioration of the land has gotten very far (“Conservation Ethic,” pp.186-87; “Conservation Economics,” p.199). Leopold suggests we “set up within the economic Juggernaut certain new cogs and wheels whereby the residual love of nature, inherent even in Rotarians, may be made to recreate at least a fraction of these values which their love of ‘progress’ is destroying” (“Game and Wildlife Conservation,” p.166).

Leopold recommends in “Conservation Economics” that “if we are going to spend large sums of public money anyhow, why not use it to subsidize desirable combinations in land use . . . ?” (p.200). Specifically, he suggests a program of differential taxes, reducing by, perhaps, 25 percent the taxes levied on landowners practicing a conservative use of their land. Speaking of farms subject to erosion abuse, he asks, “Is it any more radical to offer careless farmers a differential tax than to offer them free dams?” (p.200).

From a modern standpoint, Leopold’s proposal treats land health as, in economic terms, a public good, one in which the public has a joint interest with the landowner, but for which there is no market by which the public can express its desires as they can for apples, autos, and appliances. On the public’s behalf, therefore, government buys *conserving behavior* from landowners. This, in turn, creates economic incentives that motivate private behavior consistent with the public good. It is now in their own best profit-making interests for farmers to adopt conservation methods in managing their farms: They now have a profit motive to produce *land health* as a joint product with corn and potatoes.

But as importantly, these proposals align personal economic incentives with conservation ethics. Even if a conservation ethic exists among landowners, contrary commercial incentives will induce abusive land use, because conservation farming will be costly, in the form of foregone income earnings.

For a few farmers, even a small cost may be too much; but as the lost income per acre increases, it will become excessive for more landowners and thus lead to more widespread land abuse. A conservation ethic that ignores contrary economic incentives calls for heroic and unlikely commitments to conservation.



Professor Leopold, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1944. Courtesy University of Wisconsin Archives.

The Question of Cost: How Much Conservation Can We Afford?

Because of the depressing population theory published in Britain in 1798 by the Reverend Thomas Malthus, Carlyle, writing in the nineteenth century, was moved to refer to economics as “the dismal science.” Quite apart from population concerns, many thinkers have entertained the same attitude, because economics insists on raising the dismal question of *cost*. Almost without exception, economists argue that questions of cost can be ignored in public discussions only at great peril. And Aldo Leopold as well had to face the question, How much conservation can we afford to have? Leopold, the *philosophic* thinker, was brought up short on this question by Leopold, the *economic* thinker.

In the last decade of his life, Leopold developed rationales for conservation that did not depend on a utilitarian philosophy. For example, he inferred from the new field of ecology a sense of value that regarded land as much more than a source of commodities, or even of recreation and cultural and scientific values. Ecology, he wrote, sees “a biota so complex, so conditioned by interwoven cooperations and competition, that no man can say where utility begins or ends” (“A Biotic View of the Land,” p.267) so that value inheres in the total biota rather than in individual species.

Leopold noted in other essays that the benefits derived from encounters with wildlife and the natural world are largely unmeasurable and incommensurable. “Our output,” he wrote, “is weighed in esthetic satisfaction . . . [and] the ends so largely of the heart” (“Means and Ends in Wildlife Research,” p.236). And in his most famous essay, “The Land Ethic,” he presented

his penultimate observations that *Homo sapiens* must change its self-image from "conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it" with a corresponding obligation to respect the other members and the ecological complexity of the community (*Sand County*, p. 204).

By "value," then, Leopold meant much more than the market prices of commercial products extracted from the land. In "Goose Music" he wrote, "Few have so far clearly realized and expressed the whole truth, namely, that all these things are but factors in a broad social value, and that wildlife . . . is a social asset" (*Round River*, p. 240). Wildlife and the integrity of natural systems are essential, Leopold argued, to human community and culture. This is a very broad and long-run sense of worth, but still anthropocentric and thus utilitarian; it transcends the commercial and recreation values ascribed to particular—and, at best, to only a few—plants and animals. But Leopold's insistence on the respect owed to our fellow members of the natural community and on "value in the philosophical sense" (*Sand County*, p. 223) imply the philosophical notion of *inherent worth*, that the natural community "is valuable in and of itself, not because of what it can do for us" (Callicott, p. 212).

Thus Leopold had developed a complex notion of value which opposed the self-interested commercial use of land.

But there is a painful dilemma here that Leopold noted in "The Land Ethic": "When one of these non-economic categories is threatened, and if we happen to love it, we [must] invent subterfuges to give it economic importance . . . It is painful to read these circumlocutions . . ." (*Sand County*, p. 210). This is not simply because we are a crass, commercial society. It is because the fundamental reality of scarcity forces upon us the necessity of choice, of determining *comparative* values so that we, as a society, can decide how much consumption and production goods we are willing to give up for the sake of further increments in conservation (or environmental quality).

Unfortunately, an ethical/ecological theory of value does not relieve us of this painful dilemma of choice. So Leopold resorted, even in "Goose Music," to the circumlocution of trying to establish the money value of goose music.

Origin of the Land Ethic

From the late 1930s on, Leopold's writing took a more pessimistic turn as he explained how economic concerns prevent landowners from engaging in conserving behavior and how bureaucracy impedes the development and implementation of effective government programs. Ultimately he resorted to the idea of moral obligation, to social and natural communities, as the prime motivation for conservation.

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Leopold experienced a number of unsettling observations of the failures of government conservation in the last dozen years of his life. On a hunting trip to the Sierra Madre mountains of northern Mexico, in 1936, Leopold discovered a mountain country "with a history and a terrain . . . strikingly similar to southern New Mexico and Arizona" which presented "so lovely a picture of ecological health" that differed markedly from the southwestern United States with its badly damaged "National Forests, National Parks and all the other trappings of [government] conservation" ("Conservationist in Mexico," p.239). Indeed, he wrote, "It was here that I first clearly realized

. . . that all my life I had seen only sick land, whereas here was a biota still in perfect aboriginal health" (foreword to *A Sand County Almanac*, pp.285-86).

More failures of government conservation are recorded in his accounts of being a Wisconsin conservation commissioner ("Adventures of a Conservation Commissioner"). He described the roadblock to management of an irrupting deer herd posed by hunters and resort owners stubbornly ignorant of ecological realities, aided and abetted by vote-hungry politicians. And with some evident bitterness, he recounted the raid on the Flambeau River, which sac-

rificed a wilderness river for the sake of a dam to provide the cheap power demanded by local farmers and their political allies. These experiences, added to his trips to Mexico, appear to have shaken considerably his faith in the efficacy of government conservation programs.

Finally, the science of ecology teaches that conservation must be viewed as a holistic concept of land health, as the functional integrity of the entire biosystem, rather than simply the abundant supply of some particular, commercially important, natural resource ("Conservation in Whole or in Part"). Hence a unified approach to conservation is necessary. But ecological complexity (and our corollary lack of understanding) combined with the narrowly-focused sense of mission that administrative practicality demands of government bureaus make it difficult to place much faith in government design of conservation programs.

Thus Leopold retreated during this period to a less optimistic, and more limited, role for government in the conservation movement. On several occasions he criticized the public for falling back on an easy reliance on government, for hiding behind government "bureaus, laws, and programs" ("Land Use and Democracy," p.295) rather than getting directly involved in trying to influence land-use decisions. Governments can run hatcheries and predator control programs, he noted, and they can safeguard the flow of information by funding research and promoting standards. But government cannot change the behavior of millions of landowners, it cannot move them toward

responsible land husbandry which "is the heart of conservation" ("Land Use and Democracy," p.298).

Conservation falls by default, therefore, to farmers, the active managers of land. Yet even here problems arise. Reflecting on the programs of government subsidies and differential taxes that were tried in the 1930s to motivate conserving behavior, (and for which he had argued in his paper "Conservation Economics"), Leopold wryly noted that "the practices were widely forgotten when the five-year contract period was up" ("Ecological Conscience," p.340). He concluded by observing that "no one has ever told farmers that in land-use the good of the community may entail obligations over and above those dictated by self-interest . . . [but] obligations have no meaning without conscience" (pp.340-41).

Conclusion

Disillusioned with government efforts and seeing little long-term effectiveness of tax/subsidy programs, it seems that Leopold resorted to an ethic of conservation as the key to motivating otherwise unprofitable land stewardship. Conservation must be grounded on moral obligation to the social community and on moral virtue in being a constructive member of the land community.

And so he concluded, as early as 1937, "We seem ultimately always thrown back on individual ethics as the basis of conservation policy. It is hard to make a man, by pressure of law or money, do a thing which does not spring naturally from his own personal sense of right and wrong" ("Conservationist in Mexico," pp.243-44).

This article is based on a paper presented at the 1992 annual conference of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters in Eau Claire.

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This Day: These Poems

by Bruce Taylor

"It is the psalm that brings the poet to God."

Paul Valéry

I think of these poems as poor strange things, almost a secret I have kept for many years, writing but not reading them aloud or sending them much around while I wrote my other poems, which are the ones I am most known for, if I am known at all.

Recently I overheard a report on the radio about two young boys who, anxious to try their first overnight camping trip, gathered what they felt to be the necessary equipment—including a book called something like *How to Survive in the Wilderness*—and headed up into the mountains. Now I wish I had listened more closely and had more detail. It seems that night and a cold rain came early, and though try as they may, consulting their book each step of the way, the boys were unable to erect even a rudimentary shelter or to start a fire by any of the various methods covered in the book. Faced with either humiliation or hypothermia, they wisely chose the former, lit the book itself on fire, were spotted by an observant ranger, and saved.

The poems in *This Day* find their analogy somewhere in that smoke and that rescue, while the *other* poems rest, if my uneasy analogy is to continue, somewhere in the appendix to that book, or in the table of contents as the sun is going down.

These *Day* poems, however, continue to come now and then, once in awhile, usually out of those stray moments of grace that somehow find us amidst the rest of all this. They



Bruce Taylor

Photo by Karen Taylor

seem to me to be religious, in my own fumbling sense of the word. Often they seem translated from perhaps some other language I cannot speak, or from something else into language itself.

John Updike was asked, along with many others, by *Life* magazine a few years ago, "What is the meaning of life?" He responded in part, "Ancient religion and modern science agree. We are here to give praise . . . to pay attention. Without us . . . the universe would be unwitnessed." The meaning of life, Updike continued, lies "in our delight and wonder at existence itself, and the occasional surge of blind gratitude for being here." One of the epigrams for *This Day*, taken from the book of Isaiah (38:19), expresses this directly:

"The living, the living, he thanks thee,
as I do this day . . ."

Poem

There are cornflowers in a blue vase
and a window with a remnant
of daylight sky receding through
fresh curtains pulled back
with bows of their own color.

There is green suntea steeping
in a bottle on the sill
and a familiar breeze
that's brought home today
a parcel of lilac and dogwood.

There's a porcelain thimble
afloat in the reflection of
the vase on the table
and a single thread is all
that keeps the silver needle
from embroidering the moon.

There's the too familiar robin,
the clown on the polished lawn,
smug and overfed again,
and the other, the dove,
the longed for, early at her calling
in the thickest of the trees.

For Dancing

trembling in sympathy
unstroked by the bow
not the string played but
the string next to it
not music but what
in music makes us
wish we were dancing
in the present arms
of not forgotten lovers
whose sweep and purl
as midnight disappears
whose glide like that
lightly out of control
breathlessly unaware of
ability and will
whose reach of flesh
under fabric whose wanton
body of a beautiful youth
ever eager in our arms

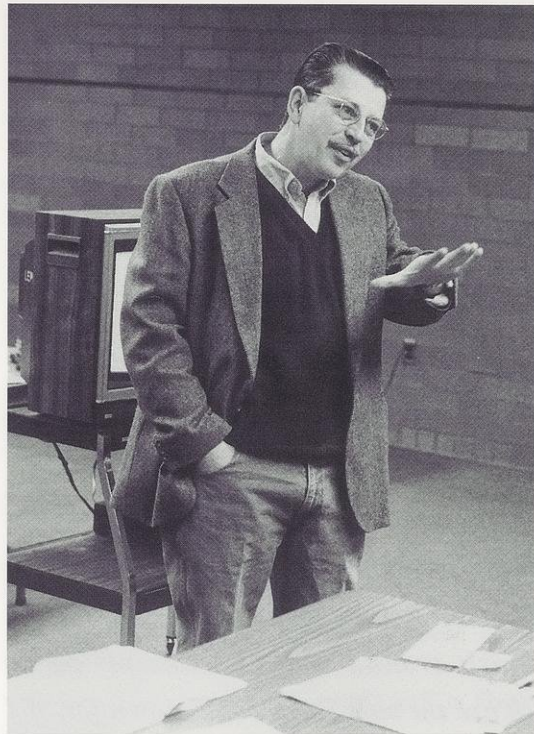


Photo by Frank Smoot

Weathering

In the fullness of summer
the busy pastures thrive,
vast, thirsty and shy
to migrant shadows that bend
to harvest, stretch to load.

A hymn all harmony and joy
in an immaculate minor key
sustains the narrowing
and ever absent-minded stream.

But this day, this rest, this blue
frozen wood, a scattering of fog
across the placeless air,

a stubborn, longer with us snow
pools around the edges,
recedes into the shadows,
softens as it goes.

Guest Room

Even without their story told,
more than a knickknack here and there,
a spoiled antimacassar,

some dried milkweed and dusty cattail
steeping for how long in a lidless teapot
a mysterious brew of nostalgia or regret,
or driftwood cast up on what huge tides
to settle here in winter in a prairie farm,

or grandfather's watch, stopped
ten minutes from now,
how many untold years ago?

A damp cloth across a dusty aspidistra,
a half-finished sampler,
"Oh Bear Me Away On Your Snowy Wings."

Bay View

Two hawks overhead one
soars off out of sight
one folds its wings
and drops into the trees

and there is crow
off somewhere in the silence
and a dove among the lilacs'
early perfume

a loon with violet eyes
glides a pond all full of
the sky and its stillnesses

a green dragonfly floats
downstream hits rock
scrambles up catches hold
and stays a long time
its wings in the sun.

Antistrophe

Moment at the edge of itself,
given to completely,
precocious stumble and step
toward whatever season we
are counting on now to repeat us.

Moment, sometimes all opaque,
the feint, the double feint
of a shadow of a swallow
embroidering the evening
with a wild but telling hand,

Winter in Autumn's bright eye,
Spring in the heavily lidded
sated eyes of Summer—

in practice we do not cease
trying everything with everything,
the problem of the moment
in a useless world—

in its absence and its presence
rent from time to time by cries—
What? O what else unforeseeable?

The collection of poems by Bruce Taylor titled This Day will be published this fall by Juniper Press, 1310 Shorewood Drive, La Crosse, WI 54601.



Photo by Frank Smoot

Eulogy

by Pete Fromm

“He’s never sicced lawyers on us before,” Kagan said, opening the long envelope his wife had handed him. He unfolded the stiffly creased letter and took a sip of his drink. He could feel his wife watching as he read and he lowered his face so she could not see his eyes.

He folded the paper again and took a drink. “He’s dead, Beth.”

She started to get out of her chair but Kagan waved her back down. “My brothers will be ecstatic.”

“Kagan!”

“He was the meanest man alive, Beth. Now he’s probably the meanest one dead. I suppose I should call my brothers.”

“I’m sure they know.”

Kagan shook his head. “I just got a letter saying my father’s dead, Beth. A letter. Not a phone call. He’s already buried. This,” Kagan waved the letter, “is about his will. He put it in his will not to let any of us know of his demise until all the arrangements were taken care of. To the bitter end, Beth, that’s how he was.”

Kagan looked at his wife for the first time since he opened the letter. “You know what he left us? Me, I should say. Patrick and Tom got nothing. His moldy, old wooden canoe and his fly rods. I suppose that’s my punishment for sending him the annual guilt letters.

“Those were probably the only things he had left that meant anything to him.”

“Well, they don’t mean anything to me.”

Kagan stood abruptly and paced to the end of the room. He turned and held out his empty glass. “Do you want another?”

Beth shook her head. “How are you going to get the canoe?”

“I wouldn’t take it if it was delivered.”

“It will be the only thing you’ll have from him. The only thing the kids will have from their Grandpa.”

“They never even met him!”

“I never met him, either. In eight years. That’s pathetic.”

“Well, he’d have hated you too.”

“Kagan!”

“See? You take it personally too. It’s hard not to, isn’t it? But don’t. He hated everybody.”

“Stop it!”

Beth stood up. “Kagan, I read last year’s ‘guilt’ letter. You left it on the computer.”

“You had no right.”

“You don’t hate him, Kagan. You never could, no matter how much you tried. Why is that something you need to hide?”

“He never answered a single one of those letters, Beth. Never. Not a single one.”

“But you wrote them.”

Beth smiled at him and held out her glass. “Mix another while I pack for you. You can visit Tom when you go through Minneapolis.”

Kagan took the glass and stared into it. Beth turned down the hall toward the bedroom. “You had no right to read that letter,” he called after her.



Two days of solid driving from Seattle to Eau Claire. One thousand miles a day. The night layover in Glendive, Montana. It was how he had always made the trip home when he was in college, when his mom was alive. And once the year after.

He remembered how his father and brothers used to meet him out front, charging across the lawn as soon as they saw the car pull in. His mother always stood just outside the door and called for them to come inside where it was warm. And, no matter how tired he was, they would always stay up talking late into the night.

He did not plan to stop in Minneapolis. Tom hadn’t lived there when he used to make the drive. But he jerked the car onto Tom’s exit at the last possible second.

He had just stepped out of the car when Tom rushed out of the house. “’Bout time. Beth said you’d be in by noon.”

Kagan wished she hadn’t called. “Not as young as I used to be on the highways,” he said.

Tom’s family collected around them on the lawn. Kagan shook his brother’s hand and said, “Dad’s dead, Tom.”

“I didn’t even know he was sick.”

Kagan smiled. It was an old joke about their mother, a famous funeral attender. She would go on about a relative they had never heard of before, fretting about how she would get to the funeral. Their father would lower whatever he was reading and say, “So and so? I didn’t even know they were sick.” He’d said it so often she’d stopped scolding him for it. It always



Slow Current by Barry Carlsen. Charcoal, 29 x 44 inches. 1993.

made the boys laugh. But the joke was the only pleasant allusion to their father made that evening.

As he had known they would, Tom and his wife refused to let Kagan leave before morning. Tom's wife had shooed the children away when Tom continued to tease Kagan about coming for the canoe. And, when the talk turned ugly, she left too.

"I think we could have tried harder, Tom."

"You don't know a thing about it. Kagan. You were already off at school. We still had to live with him. So don't give me that tired old line."

Kagan bowed his head and nodded. "I know. But I can't forget how he was before."

"That only makes it that much worse. Can't you see that?"

Kagan shook his head, not because he didn't agree, but out of helplessness. "He snapped when Mom died, Tom. He was out of his head."

"Please, Kagan. Don't guilt me into anything. You hated him just as much as the rest of us, when it was all said and done."

"I know."

Kagan sneaked out of the guest room long before dawn. He left a note he didn't mean, saying he'd stay longer on the return trip.



When he reached Eau Claire he did not follow the familiar route to his old home but drove directly to the lawyer's office. There was more handshaking, and when Kagan asked the lawyer about the canoe he answered apologetically. "The canoe is in my garage. We had to move it out of your father's house for the new occupants."

There were more surprises like that. The lawyer wasn't allowed to say who owned the house or where the money for it had gone. If Kagan hadn't known his father he would have suspected a swindle. But he had not been taken unawares by the limitless bitterness for years. He kept shaking his head, though, as he followed the lawyer to his garage.

They tied the heavy wooden canoe to the racks Kagan had bought in Seattle. The lawyer found the rod cases and Kagan

put them in the trunk without opening them. The lawyer came from the garage one more time with the paddles and a canvas Duluth pack that looked one hundred years old. "These were not specified, but this is all full of fishing and camping paraphernalia. I couldn't see what good one would be without the other. You don't have to take them."

Kagan threw the pack in with the rod cases and took the paddles. "I don't have to take any of it," he said, slamming his door shut.

"Thanks," he said through the open window, wishing the door hadn't closed quite so hard. "Thanks for everything." He put the car in gear and, just before driving away, asked, "Is he buried with Mom, or is that a secret too?"

"He was cremated, Kagan. He didn't say whether I should tell you that or not."

"Oh, for Christ's sake. Well, where the hell are the ashes?"

"I'm sorry, Kagan. That I can't tell you."

Kagan's tires squealed as he shot out of the lawyer's driveway. "You son of a bitch," he shouted, beating his fist against the steering wheel. If his dad were still alive Kagan could just about have killed him.

He drove around Eau Claire aimlessly. It was too soon to get back on the road, but he had nothing else to do. He hadn't been here in ten years. He finally turned away from the street where he had grown up, and he drifted through the town. He turned north accidentally, but held the course until Eau Claire was behind him. For the longest time he would not admit where he might be going.

Kagan was surprised to find the dirt track was still there. His father was even stubborn enough to fight off the trees' relentless siege. He followed the long, slow curve through the hardwoods and stopped at the tiny strip of white sand at the edge of the lake. He surveyed the lake and then struggled singlehandedly with the canoe the way his father must have done until he died, at sixty-five.

Before pushing off, Kagan dropped the rods into the bottom of the canoe. The cases rolled back and forth on the dark, glossy wood of the ribs. Finally, Kagan struck straight through the tangle of bushes at the edge of the lake and stooped. He came up with the raspberries he'd known would be there, and he picked until he had handfuls of them wrapped in his handkerchief. He dropped the handkerchief into the Duluth pack, which smelled as mildewy as ever, then pushed out into the lake.

"Like riding a bike," he said out loud after putting the canoe through its paces. He laughed for the first time since leaving Seattle. His father's last bitter trick had backfired. He was going to enjoy this. He pointed the bow straight across the lake and put his back into the paddling. He didn't care if he would have to pay for that later.

When Kagan entered the left-hand bay on the far shore he craned his neck, searching. He looped the canoe around for

another pass, but still could not find what he was looking for. He paddled, much more slowly now, into shore.

He nudged the bow of his father's canoe against the sand and listened to the waves hiss away along the small stretch of beach. He did not move for a moment, then stepped carefully over the side, taking the Duluth pack with him. He pulled the canoe up and lay beside it, using the pack as a pillow.

Clouds drifted up from the south, reflected against the far end of the lake. Kagan reached above his head and fumbled in the pack. He found the raspberries and set them on his chest. Still gazing into the clouds on the water, he sucked the first one into his mouth. He rolled it on his tongue then bit down, closing his eyes to hold the taste.

With the sun red-black against his eyelids, and the old taste in his mouth, Kagan let the warmth of the sand work through his shirt and the fall breeze eddy across his chest and legs. Over the small grassy knoll behind him, just before the dark pines took over, was where the abandoned lodge had been. The one he had looked for from out in the bay. Kagan thought of its long, forbidding logs and boarded windows. They had all been very young when his father first showed the lodge to Kagan and his brothers.

Kagan ate another raspberry but it didn't taste as good as the first. He flattened a lump in the sand with his shoulder. Years and years had piled up since he'd last been here. Or since he'd last seen his father.

The lodge was visible from the left bay, about a mile off, but it melted back into the trees if you didn't find the right spot. Thompson's Lodge, home and hideaway for Chicago's gangsters—as boys, that'd been all they'd needed.

When the canoe had eased onto the sand that day, and the towheaded boys had splashed and struggled until their father pulled the boat ashore, they'd been off to inspect the building. Kagan found the one window with the faulty boarding. Their father came up the hill with the enormous Duluth pack and smiled at them, all lined up, Tom pointing up the hill, not daring to speak. He knew what they had found. "Maybe we should see if they left any of the loot?" he suggested.

The decision to sleep in the lodge came later, out of necessity. Rain spatted across the lake with the dusk and they'd moved through the window following their father's flashlight. He swept the mouse droppings aside with his poncho and guided the spreading of the sleeping bags.

They set up near the base of the stairs. The dim, flickering light of the two candles took over for the usual campfire. The dampness of their smoky clothes and the musty, rodent smell of the lodge mingled. Soft scurrings and sharper taps and gnawings encircled them.

After dinner Kagan asked his father if he was done percolating. Their father's smile was lost in the darkness of his shadowed face. His quietness was traditionally broken around the campfire. The stories were "percolated" with his after-dinner

pipe and poured out to them once it was dark enough to be scary.

He cleared his throat and said that he couldn't talk without a fire. Kagan and his brothers whined and pleaded until he agreed that candles could count this once.

Kagan's father's eyes roved about the room, settling on the stairs behind his sons. Taking a deep breath, he began, and the story wove its way through the flickering light in the rough bass that Kagan had vainly hoped would come to him when he was older.

The boys followed the echoing voice along the walls of the lodge into the dismal void beyond reach of the candles. Each log's shadow leapt and quavered as the candles guttered.

But it was the stairs the story revolved around. And, when the wild man entered the story, living on the second floor with whispered hints of daggers and axes, the stairs pressed down on the boys until they all leaned toward the candles.

Kagan's father's quiet, deep voice rumbled on. He sat back and his face became completely hidden in shadow. Soon he had the grizzled man, dripping wet from the storm outside, easing his way toward the stairs. The collapsing, rotten stairway, leading up to the black hole of the man's abode, crushed down upon the boys. Suddenly they knew he was coming down those stairs for them!

Their father made it impossible for them not to hear each footfall of that descent, and the low, unearthly cackle, and the swish of the final blow through the dead, stale air.

Then they had all turned and glanced back toward the stairs at the same time. Their father had been waiting for that moment. A bellowing, frenzied laugh filled the lodge and the room was turned into something worse than black as the candles were doused. Without a chance to move, Kagan had been knocked sideways, engulfed in impossibly strong, hard arms, the breath squeezed from him in a gasp.



Kagan opened his eyes and squinted against the brightness of the beach. He sat up and brushed the sand from his back. He remembered his father relighting the candles and soothing Tom, the youngest of them. The attack had been in fun, he explained. He hadn't meant to scare them that badly. It was just a ghost story.

Kagan started to laugh. He'd have to go home through Minneapolis now, just to thank Tom for crying at that awful moment. It had stopped their father's attack and Kagan, who had been too old to cry, had been saved the embarrassment.

The short laugh died out on the quiet beach. Kagan plunked a stone into the water, breaking apart the reflection of the clouds. He knew the spot from the left bay as well as his father had. The lodge was no longer there. Kagan knew he should go up the hill and find out what had happened, if it had burned, or been moved or whatever.

Kagan ate another raspberry but it was dry and seedy in his mouth. He picked himself up from the beach, not bothering to brush away the sand. He was stiff already, from that little bit

of paddling, and the trudge up the hill was longer than he remembered.

He came to the great open square in the trees. He could still make out foundation lines, and he pictured how tightly the branches must have closed around the lodge. There were still bits of charred metal about, and sodden lumps of gray ash. Some of the trees bore blackened scars along the lodge side of their trunks. It all looked fairly recent, but he felt certain his father had known.

Kagan kicked at an ash pile and tried to remember that quiet rumbling of his father's voice caught up in a story, but the other came back—the cutting edge of that beautiful bass, sharper than any knife. And Kagan remembered how, starting even before their mother's funeral, his father had slashed and slashed until his isolation was inviolate even to Kagan.

He realized, as he had at the time, that it wasn't the boys that his father had struck at, but at himself. He had cut himself off from everything that reminded him of her, including her children.

But knowing that hadn't helped. Kagan turned away from the empty hole where the lodge had been and walked back toward the beach. He looked once more at the grassy slope that just hid the lodge from view, then walked across the clean sand and through the water to the canoe which was now his. The small wave ridges on the bottom held his weight without giving away, stinging his numbed bare feet.

Kagan backed off shore and spun the long canoe toward the fleecy clouds that continued to drift up from the south. The rod cases rolled slightly on the canoe's ribs. He paddled away from shore, keeping his back to the lodge's beach.

He put his paddle down suddenly and picked up one of the cases. Even as he fumbled with the threaded lid, Kagan pictured the glossy layer of yellowy varnish on the bamboo splits, knowing that his father would never have let these slip away from him. And when the rod slid out and he peeled away the felt wrapping, that's exactly how they were.

He found the reel case in the Duluth pack and though his hands were shaking now, he threaded the line through the guides and made his first cast in ten years, short and awkward, and he could see his father smiling at that.



The canoe drifted in the spot where it had once been possible to see the lodge, and Kagan made another cast and watched the flyless leader as if something could still come up to it. Now Kagan could see the lodge, and he could see his father standing by it. He knew now where his father's ashes were, and he knew the canoe and the rods were not one last, cruel joke. He gripped the cork butt of the rod more tightly, feeling the rough spot where his father had stuck the flies, and he made one more cast, toward his father and his lodge.

This story is from The Tall Uncut published by John Daniel and Company, Santa Barbara, 1992.

On the Water

This bright day
how surprising
to look over
the side of the boat
and see our shadows
crowned in light
as if in spite of our
various darkneses
we were heavenly
bodies
all along—
grey saints
haloed
by the light
of merely looking.

R. M. Ryan

The Round

I'm doing what
I always did
answering
the telephone
driving
to work
coming home again
sleeping beneath
the canopy
of stars
that circle
the sky
lighting up
and going
dark
again.

R. M. Ryan

Lorine Niedecker

Lorine Niedecker (1903-1970) was described by Peter Yates as "the most absolute poetess in our language since Emily Dickinson" and by Basil Bunting as "the best living poetess." From 1957 to 1962 she worked as a cleaning woman in Fort Atkinson (Wisconsin) Memorial Hospital.

We knew each other
and yet we didn't know.
We nodded and talked only a little—
not wanting to intrude.

I was the young doctor in the on-call room
waiting to deliver babies.
If the labor was long
I would choose a thick notebook
and work on my novel.
If the labor was short
I would pencil poems
into a thin notebook.

And you, the gray-haired woman
with the mop and pail
smiled approval when I explained
I was trying to write poems.

Did you merely say that you liked poetry or
that you wrote poetry?
You certainly did not say that
two volumes of your verse had been published.
Or that an authentic poet-doctor,
William Carlos Williams,
admired your work.

What I could have learned from you—
if only I had known.
But, of course, I was the
professional in the hospital.
And you were a cleaning woman.
This I do know:
You are my ideal of a writer.
Not the "writers" who appear on talk shows
Plugging their multimillion-dollar book-deals.
You, with mop and pail
and love of words,
were a writer.

James J. Nora

Weightless

At 280 miles out, the astronauts sleep weightless.
Their ship flooded with darkness,
they're dead men on the bottom of the sea—
lashed to their hammocks
arms floating upwards
moved by unseen currents
dead to the world.

At 1500 feet, I sleep with gravity.
The weight of blankets and bodies press against me.
The mattress pushes my shape back at me.
Gravitons grip me.
Here
I Am.

By day I work at being light.
I know my attachments bring me sorrow.
I am a true, if not quite faithful, believer.
I wait my turn for enlightenment,
disavow the world,
seek a weightless life as best I can.

But at night . . .
(astronauts notwithstanding)
I am embarrassed at night—
how every night I am seduced again by Earth
who comes to me and pulls me toward her center—
how I fall into her,
full of myself
and the world
and its warm, heavy darkness.
And how I sleep,
at last,
so Solid.

David Mays

Theology

I try to ascribe this dull ache to the weather's
conjugations, the fog having made a day
a complete subjunctive so that as I breathe in
and swallow its thick matter, whatever's out there:
Melting lake, bad luck, the seeming triumph
of cruelty and the unburdening called love
that palls quickly into its true commerce,
rush into, and through me, unselected,
a ruinous lungful perhaps, the world's ejecta
at winter's end. From up high, invisible
starlings let out a burst of singing:
No angels surely, but this morning requires so little
to become transcendent. And if you look that way,
where the knife of water rips the ice cover,
common goldeneyes and coots appear,
their return to this world a declaration
that for them there never was expulsion
from Paradise, but the mere leaving and entering,
a flying into, and out of, the fog.

Credo James Enriquez

Education

No doubt its young will die. The August heat,
if not the ants, now circling, will kill it,
but for now, the shrieking and quick scissoring
is a warning to keep out, stay out, while the swallows
try to save this chick, forced out of nest
too soon, by some miscalculation,
and is now dragging its translucent pod
away from the blue shade of juniper, into the blacktop
heat; its wings purple, incomplete . . .
It was not until eight (a breeze from Canada,
a prediction of comets), when the swallows reconsid-
ered;
all that commotion to no avail,
which is to say how instinct failed
not the final once, but twice.
Later, in the dark blue juniper-scented night,
the swallows cut in and out, winging food
into the spot where the young had died.

Credo James Enriquez

Morton Salt Girl

*"Consider the mysterious salt:
In water it must disappear."*

May Sarton

I walk corridors of rain
—the one I fear sleeps
as I slip by in the downpour
with my cylinder of salt, my
umbrella; crackling yellow
unzips heavy clouds

I hurry past thin walls,
stone fences, past houses
crumbling into the mist.
There are times I
walk so far so fast

my life widens; I enter
familiar rooms that turn
in lamplight, starlight, mindlight:

my stepfather at the window
with blood on his hands,
grandmother correcting her hat
in the mirror

the urgent dogbark of my plan:
go forward, carry the box, keep
silent, pass through curtains

of water. Salt falls, dissolves;
I walk through trees into my life.

Patricia Zontelli

Secret

The night speaks to her
as if it's been waiting.
Lately she cannot sleep.
Night grows impatient, its dark
hive hums around her head.

Speak Say Tell

what he's done. Night
presses its damp face close
to hers. *Speak* says the night.
She cannot unfold her tongue.
Say says the shadow. Words
swim in her mouth, bob
to the surface. *Tell*

says the bee circling her head
as her voice flies out of her mouth.

Patricia Zontelli

Circles

Lying in bed, a bed of hay
in a barn off Highway Seven,
one arm cocked behind
her head, her other encircling
the salt cylinder, she thinks
of her future, what she wants
the world to say to her:
She had to lie to tell the truth
or *She never cried no matter what*

OR

She was not polite. She
laughed aloud at that one,
smearing drops from the damp hay
onto her face, beginning the ritual
that keeps him away, the slow
exact movement of hand on wrist;
take a little salt. Rub in circles.
Rub hard, harder into the cuts.

Patricia Zontelli



EMERSON ON THE SCHOLAR by Merton M. Sealts, Jr.
Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1992.
326 pp. \$39.95.

by Max D. Gaebler

Ralph Waldo Emerson has always been something of an enigma—to his own contemporaries and, surely, to our century. He possessed the ability both “to stimulate and to exasperate,” as Perry Miller described his effect on Herman Melville. And Emerson himself, in his Divinity School Address, suggested that this was precisely his intent: “It is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul.”

It is the recognition of this intention and of Emerson’s success in fulfilling it, what Merton Sealts refers to as “the rediscovery of the man behind the formal writings,” that helps explain the revival of interest in Emerson in recent decades. For, truth to tell, there was a time when Emerson was dismissed almost patronizingly: a popular if often obscure lecturer, who voiced the superficial optimism of the nineteenth century but who surely had nothing to say to the post-World War I generation chastened by overwhelming evidence of the persistence of our human capacity for evil.

There were those, of course, who continued to find inspiration in his rhetoric. But they were likely to be such as would have astonished Emerson himself. They were the champions of “rugged individualism” who were drawn to the author of “Self-Reliance,” the one essay of Emerson’s that remained in our high school textbooks during the earlier decades of this century. They were people like Woody Hayes, the football coach who evidently found the words of that essay good half-time encouragement for his teams.

Merton Sealts, Henry A. Pochmann Professor of English Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, reminds us in his fascinating and stimulating book, *Emerson on the Scholar*, that Emerson has often been misunderstood. He cites a study by Mary Kupric Cayton that suggests he “may have been systematically misconstrued by his audience.” Reports of his lectures “consistently fail to grasp the full implication of his words.” Cayton’s point, Sealts tells us, “is that when listeners were given such seemingly ‘familiar and practical’ topics such as ‘Power,’ ‘Wealth,’ and ‘Culture’ without having a clear understanding of Emerson’s overall design, they could easily mistake the lectures as ‘endorsement of the existing order’ rather than, ‘as Emerson intended, a subtle indictment of its shortcomings.’”

Sealts does a superb job of setting the record straight. He presents, in effect, an intellectual biography of Emerson from the perspective of Emerson’s own guiding conception of himself as a scholar. Sealts notes at the outset Emerson’s insistence that “The key to every man is his thought.” Accordingly the focus in this study “is on the course of his own thinking over the years, not on his literary sources.” The result is a deft tracing of the development of Emerson’s understanding of what it meant to be a scholar.

Thus “the scholar of 1834 is . . . a moral astronomer, a ‘Watcher’ set on a tower ‘to observe and report of every new ray of light in what quarter soever of heaven it should appear.’” By 1837 Emerson had enlarged upon the social function of the scholar, his obligation to be not only a “see-er” but also a “say-er.” The true scholar is not merely society’s “delegated intellect”; it is his role “to convert life into truth.” In other words it is to discern and to express the universal meaning of particular events, to lift the incidents and interactions of daily life to the level of general significance.

Emerson always felt that a measure of detachment was essential for a scholar faithfully to fulfill his function as “Watcher.” Indeed he continued to argue with himself over the extent to which a true scholar could become engaged in the issues of social and political life, even when confronted with such an egregious evil as slavery. It took passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 finally to drive him into open advocacy of the anti-slavery cause. Through this long and tortuous process “the peace-loving scholar . . . finally metamorphosed . . . into an active crusader for abolition.”

Perhaps the highest tribute Sealts pays to Emerson is his having found in the latter’s ever-enlarging conception of his role as scholar a compelling model for himself. His dedication of the book is to the man who was “the first to know that I could be a scholar.” The tone and substance of this book demonstrates that Sealts has succeeded in becoming one whom Emerson would have been proud to recognize as colleague.

Max D. Gaebler is pastor emeritus of the First Unitarian Society of Madison.

THE MULTICOLORED MIRROR: CULTURAL SUBSTANCE IN LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS. Merri V. Lingren, ed., Cooperative Children’s Book Center, Madison. Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin: Highsmith Press, 1991. 195 pp. \$29.

by Anthony Peyton Porter

This book is composed of essays based on papers by authors and illustrators presented at a conference held in April 1991 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. (The Wisconsin Center for the Book at the Wisconsin Academy was among the co-sponsors.) Essayists include black people, a Chicano, white people, and an American Indian. A black wife-and-husband publishing team and an Asian-American editor at Scholastic Books represent the publishers’ side of things.

Virginia M. Henderson, a psychologist, writes well of her family’s racial experiences and relates her daughters’ traumatic reactions to current academic notions about the development of self-esteem. Part of the problem with multicultural discussions is that we use the language of the oppressor, the words and values of an oppressive society. Henderson categorizes people as African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander, American Indian, or Alaskan Native, and goes on, “A note of

caution: There are many differences within and among these groups including religions, languages, dialects, and cultural foci. Not to recognize this is to continue the damaging stereotypes of the past." Actually, recognizing that nearly all cultures are amalgams is only a step, not the whole journey. The tendency to group people in traditional ways can lead to stereotyping as a means to make workable a wildly simplistic view of people.

"Evaluating Books," by Rudine Sims Bishop, a professor at Ohio State University, gets to the heart of things—the books. Her examples and quoted passages from modern books about black children could be useful for selecting books in that genre.

Tom Feelings, a black illustrator, begins with a quote from August Wilson that ends "... someone who does not share the specifics of a culture remains an outsider, no matter how astute a student they are or how well-meaning their intentions." Wilson knows what he's talking about, and so does Feelings, who cites children's books to support his views.

Cheryl and Wade Hudson exclusively publish books by and about black people. Two of their principles are "a commitment to a value-centered publishing philosophy" and "accountability [to] and respect for our audience," not what I'd expect to hear from a mainstream publisher. Cheryl Hudson also comments, "There must be positive and aggressive action in hiring, training, and retaining people of color as editors, artists, art directors, managers." Many a book has had its cultural flavor filtered out by an editor or art director in search of inoffensiveness and broad sales appeal.

Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard, a professor at West Virginia University, eloquently tells stories of her childhood. She says, "I was definitely and most happily colored and aware that it was pretty nice." Howard's story is not the inner-city, up-from-poverty saga we've all heard, because she wasn't poor and never lived in a ghetto. *And yet her story is still culturally authentic*, which is the point.

Doris Seale, author and children's librarian, presents a history of Native Americans since the late fifteenth century. Her litany of death, lies, greed, and destruction is riveting. She is unforgiving of white oppression and unhelpful that it will go away. Seale's tough honesty is a breath of fresh air.

Walter Dean Myers explains how his history lets him write authentic African-American literature, and his stories are disjointed, the way memory is often a patchwork of sensory vignettes.

Kathleen T. Horning and Ginny Moore Kruse include a list of 101 recommended books. The list is divided by age groups but not into fiction and nonfiction, a progressive and positive omission for people of color, who know that much of what passes for nonfiction can be anything but.

The last chapter samples conferees' opinions on various books about Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, and black people. The commentary is seldom incisive, but sometimes indicates how the author's cultural background makes inevitable differences in the text, differences of which a white author and white editor would be unaware.

The Multicolored Mirror is an interesting compilation. The primary conclusion contributors and participants arrive at can be simply stated: Cultural authenticity in books requires that authors and illustrators come from the appropriate cultural backgrounds, working in concert with editors and publishers from the appropriate cultural backgrounds or mainstream editors and publishers who are sensitive and willing to let the authentic voices be heard.

Anthony Peyton Porter is managing editor of Colors, published by Four Colors Productions, Inc., in Minneapolis.

FOLEY & LARDNER, ATTORNEYS AT LAW 1842-1992
by Ellen D. Langill. Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1992. 245 pp. \$35.00.

by Henry S. Reuss

Wisconsin's oldest and most eminent law firm was founded on September 8, 1842, by two recently arrived Yankees from upstate New York, Asahel Finch and William Pitt Lynde. Finch & Lynde begat Finches, Lynde & Miller, which begat Miller, Noyes & Miller, which begat Miller, Mack & Fairchild, which begat Fairchild, Foley & Sammond, which begat the present Foley & Lardner. Since 1842, the firm had grown from two lawyers to 450.

This carefully researched Anglo-Saxon chronicle is the work of historian Ellen D. Langill of Waukesha. Because her focus has been on Wisconsin, she has succeeded in making the story of the law firm a counterpoint to that of the state—its lumbering days, its railroad-building, its utilities, banks, and industries.

For almost its entire life the firm has been counsel to business. Ready to try a case if it must, it has always preferred "getting to yes" by negotiation and in-office counseling. Over the past 150 years, this has been developed into a fine art.

The early Finch & Lynde saw no inconsistency between private practice and public life. Lynde served two terms in Congress in the 1870s. Earlier, in 1848, the two partners, Lynde the Democrat and Finch the Whig, had run against each other for Congress. Both waffled on the issue of slavery, and the seat was won by Durkee, an abolitionist.

The early partners were active not only in politics but in pro bono activities. In 1842, for example, Finch rescued a runaway slave girl from encircling southern slave catchers across the street from his law office, and sped her on her way to Canada and freedom. The *Evening Wisconsin* eulogized Finch, "for his great heart was in the work of breaking the shackles of slavery."

In more genteel, modern times, the firm steered clear of partisan politics and robust pro bono action, finding expression rather "on the boards of local educational and philanthropic bodies."

Langill rightly emphasizes the glory days of Miller, Mack & Fairchild (1906-1951). All three were fine corporate lawyers

and respected civic leaders. Edwin S. Mack, one of the first Jewish partners in a Yankee law firm, was the intellectual peer of a Brandeis or a Cardozo. He belongs at the top of any Wisconsin lawyers' Hall of Fame.

In a brief epilogue, Langill describes Foley & Lardner's metamorphosis into a national law firm since 1974, from 35 partners in 1970 to 255 in 1992, scattered in a dozen cities in five states, but managed from Milwaukee. One wonders what Finch & Lynde would have said to this?

Henry S. Reuss, a member of the Wisconsin bar since 1936, served in Congress 1955-1983 and now lives in Maryland.

LEARNING TO TALK by Robin S. Chapman. Madison: Fireweed Press, 1991. 69 pp. \$7.50.

by David Graham

In these days of burgeoning publication, it sometimes seems that every new volume of poetry is the same tedious family slideshow: generic childhood epiphanies, mist-wrapped reminiscences, elegies, and vacation vignettes. Anyone who has judged a literary contest or read manuscripts for publication will testify to the numbing monotony of most such work. This is not to say, of course, that a poet ought not write about family memories—who could avoid it?—but the sameness of most such verse does point clearly to the challenge faced by those who exhume their pasts for publication. To her credit, Robin S. Chapman faces the problem head on, fashioning her book as a sustained and coherent meditation upon the theme of family life—from childhood to parenthood. The results are rather a mixed bag poetically, though always admirably clear and unflinching.

The book recounts a family history with which it was plainly difficult to come to terms. We read of a father abandoning his wife and children, a mother's alcoholism, a daughter fleeing her pain by cutting herself off from others. By the end of the book, the narrator has truly "[taken] her ghosts for a walk," as she puts it in the haunting poem, "Signs," that serves as epilogue:

... the silent lover,
Absent father, angry brother, weeping mother,
The faces she has looked for everywhere,
Hoping to see her own.

Like the wind shaking the clusters
Of aspen and birch, questions pass
From one to another. Whispers rise
To a chorus, and waves, in counterpoint,
Swell and break on the lakeshore,

So that now, when she would gather them in,
To console and answer as best she can
She finds them rooted there, white in the shade
Of hemlock and pine, taking leave of her.

Instead, all day, the birds have come,
Chickadee, nuthatch, landing on trunks
Close by, as though there might be seed
In her empty hands, straw in her silver hair.

Quite a few poems in the book achieve this sort of quiet power: an anecdote is told sparsely, with resonant detail and emotional force. Among these I would recommend "Vacant Lot," "Hollyhocks," "My Father, The Sailor," "DTs," "Boyfriends," "Things We Remember, Things We Forget," "Catching Rabbits," and "High School." Furthermore, the narrator who emerges from these reflections is winningly modest, resilient, clear-eyed about the cross-currents and ironies of ordinary life.

A plangent universality, for instance, marks the opening of "Holiday Phone Call," effectively detailing the autumnal mood of middle age:

It was our semi-annual catch-up
On everyone's life, me divorced,
My stepdad widowed twice—half an hour
Of his grandkids, my kids,
SAT scores, colleges, whether either of us,
Along these last four years, had a date.

Here Chapman captures with pitch-perfect ease the *tone* of such mid-life conversations—a little weary, a bit amused, yet stubbornly longing for the "cure for loneliness" that, as everyone well knows, is not forthcoming. But what can one say about such a thing as poetry? The very flatness that makes it accurate can make it tedious. If you go to poetry for a heightening of reality, a musical experience that is, somehow, more than mundane, such lines are bound to disappoint. *Learning to Talk*, despite rather a lot of such lines, nonetheless is an honest, moving book.

David Graham, who chairs the Department of English at Ripon College, is the author of four books of poetry, most recently Doggedness.



Another Golden Era

by Richard J. Daniels

The vision of the Wisconsin Academy as expressed in the contemporary slogan, "where the sciences, arts and letters converge in Wisconsin," may be favorably interpreted as simply overly ambitious. However, in the aftermath of the modern age of analysis and its residue of acute intellectual compartmentalization, the vision may be considered preposterous. Whether or not this vision is realistically achievable, the Academy holds it today just as it did at the turn of the century. Thomas Chamberlin, a founder and president of the Academy, called the decade before the twentieth century "the Golden Era" of the Academy. He writes: "The distinctions of departments, that were rather formally defined at the outset, began to fade away, while the departments themselves grew more divergent. A more cosmopolitan spirit arose which made less of subjects and more of method and real intellectual advance."

The mission of the Academy is also essentially the same today as it was in the beginning. The original charter, approved by the State Legislature on March 16, 1870, reads: "The general objects of the Academy shall be to encourage investigation and disseminate correct views of the various departments of science, literature and the arts." The mission, approved by the Academy council on October 5, 1992, reads: "To encourage investigation, disseminate knowledge, and promote the application of the sciences, arts, and letters."

The mission is broadly conceived, the vision profoundly relevant. Taken together they constitute a powerful motive. But if the mission and vision are juxtaposed with the available resources of the Academy—a relatively small endowment—they appear unrealistic. How valuable is a mission that cannot be accomplished and a vision that cannot be realized? Yet we recognize that in themselves they are supremely valuable and that the effort to bring them to fruition is a noble one.

Acknowledging this, the Academy created the Wisconsin Academy Foundation. The conservative purpose of the Foundation is to ensure the long-term financial stability of the Academy; the active purpose is eventually to provide the Academy with the resources necessary for the achievement of its mission and vision.

None of this is to imply that the Academy has been idle. Indeed, this Academy is considered by many to be the most active academy in the country. In the "Inside" section of the winter 1992 edition of the *Wisconsin Academy Review*, there is a complete inventory of Academy activities. The length of the list and substance of the activities are impressive. Also impressive is the fact that most academies in the country are devoted to science alone. Only Wisconsin and two other states have academies

devoted to the three branches of knowledge, and there is a conscientious effort at the Wisconsin Academy to provide balance in the absence, except on occasion, of true convergence.

The Wisconsin Academy Foundation was incorporated in 1989 as a nonprofit, charitable organization. Terry Haller, a founder of Exel Inns of America, Inc., and a member of the Academy council at the time, was the chief proponent for establishing the Foundation. Haller argued: "Foundations tend to strengthen and broaden the fundraising base by providing a vehicle for participation by community leaders and potential major givers." Haller is currently serving as president of the Foundation's board of directors.

Ira Baldwin, former vice president of academic affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and currently on the Foundation's board of directors, originally conceived the idea of an Academy foundation. In a 1973 Academy report, Baldwin first provides this assessment: "When compared with other similar State Academies it is my belief that the Wisconsin Academy rates well. . . . [Within Wisconsin] it has served well to foster a spirit of tolerance and understanding among scholars in many diverse fields of Science, Arts and Letters."

He then expresses his concern over the management of the Academy endowment, which was created at the bequest of Harry Steenbock: "Part of the responsibility resting on the Academy officers comes from their realization that many will be watching the quality of stewardship which the Academy exhibits in the use of the Steenbock legacy. Good stewardship will not only bring the pride of achievement and accomplishment, it will also encourage other legacies."

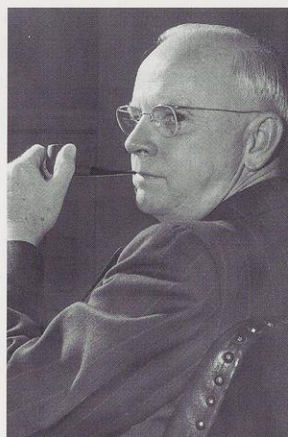


Courtesy the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. WHI(x3)33074

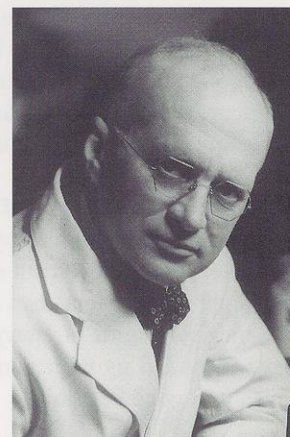
Thomas C. Chamberlin
(1845-1928).



Terry Haller

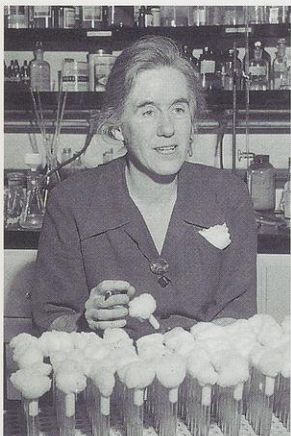


Ira Baldwin



Harry Steenbock
(1886-1967)

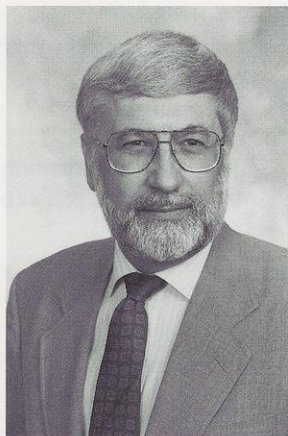
Courtesy the University of Wisconsin Archives. x25 857



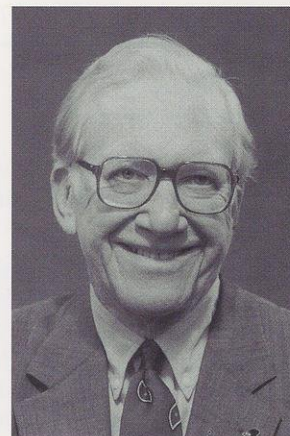
Elizabeth McCoy
(1903-1978)



Walter Scott (1911-1983) and
Trudi Scott



LeRoy R. Lee



Daniel H. Neviasser

Harry Steenbock, University of Wisconsin-Madison research scientist whose distinguished career included the discovery of vitamin D, and Elizabeth McCoy, also a research scientist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a pioneer in microbiology, are the Academy's major benefactors. Both made generous provisions for the Academy in their wills.

Baldwin's concern finally led to his proposal in 1985 for the establishment of a single committee which would have the functions of long-range fundraising and management of the endowment. Today the functions Baldwin proposed for this committee rest with the Wisconsin Academy Foundation.



The Foundation is the appropriate recipient of gifts to the Wisconsin Academy where there is a desire to have the gifts provide long-term financial support and a perpetual contribution to the achievement of the Academy's mission and vision. (Gifts made directly to the Academy, if the giver has not specified otherwise, are employed for daily operations.)

Given its age and nature, the Academy easily could have become an anachronism. That is what one member, surveyed in 1954, called it. Walter and Trudi Scott responded that year by establishing this very publication, the *Wisconsin Academy Review*. A special committee and the Academy council agreed "that there is a need for an Academy publication which would cover the highlights of the State's many activities in the sciences, arts and letters."

This year's theme, which will direct the Academy's annual activities, could not be more relevant to the current needs of our society. The theme is science, mathematics, and technology education. Through its subsidiary—Center for the Advancement of Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education—and through more than a decade of work by the Academy's executive director, LeRoy Lee, and with the leadership of Daniel Neviasser, president of Neviasser Investments, Inc., and the Academy council, the Wisconsin Academy is assuming a leadership role to improve education in these areas throughout the

state. The Academy's current major effort, the proposed Wisconsin Staff Development Initiative, is a plan to make much needed pedagogical improvements. If implemented, the Academy will strongly influence science, math, and technology education in Wisconsin for the next decade and beyond.



The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters remains as vital an organization today as it was at the turn of the century. However, the achievement of its mission and vision requires a far larger endowment than the Foundation currently has. The philanthropic spirit of Harry Steenbock and Elizabeth McCoy have provided us with good examples. Their bequests have given us a good beginning.

Richard J. Daniels is the director of administration and development for the Wisconsin Academy Foundation and the associate director of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters.

Contributors

continued from page 3

lation of business. He has published and made presentations on his special interest in the use of writing to teach economics.

- ▶ Ronald Rindo is an assistant professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. His first book, *Suburban Metaphysics and Other Stories*, was published in 1990 by New Rivers Press. He recently returned from teaching in Alabama and now lives in Berlin, Wisconsin, with his wife and twin children in a house built in 1868. The short story that appears in this issue of the *Review* is from a recent collection titled *Secrets Men Keep*.
- ▶ R. M. Ryan, translator and teacher, was a poetry student of Howard Nemerov. He won an award from the Council for Wisconsin Writers for his book of poems, *Goldilocks in Later Life*, published by Louisiana State University Press. His work has appeared in such journals as *Exquisite Corpse* and *Light* and will be included in an anthology, *Dreams and Secrets*, forthcoming from Woodland Pattern in Milwaukee. He has just completed a novel and two more books of poetry.
- ▶ Bruce Taylor is a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He has had two chapbooks published, and his poems have appeared in *The Nation*, *New York Quarterly*, and *New Orleans Review*. He was poetry editor for *Wisconsin Poetry*, published by the Wisconsin Academy (now in its second printing), and is editor of the *Upriver* series of Wisconsin poetry and prose. He has just been awarded a Bush Foundation Artist Fellowship for 1993-94.
- ▶ Patricia Zontelli lives in rural Menomonie. Her poetry has appeared in a number of literary magazines, including, most recently, *Spoon River Quarterly* and *Kansas Quarterly*. Her first collection of poems, *Edith Jacobson Begins to Fly*, was published by New Rivers Press in 1992.

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1922 University Avenue
Madison, Wisconsin 53705



Second Class Postage
Paid at Madison, WI