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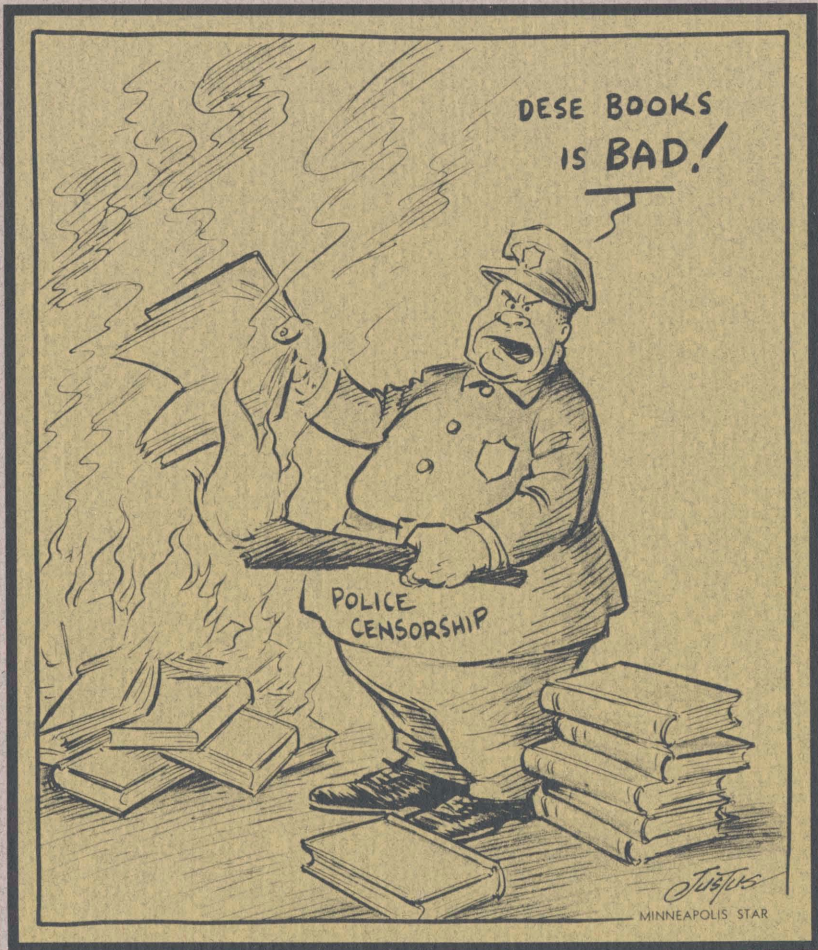
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SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY ASSOCIATES
C O U R I E R



VOLUME XXVIII, NUMBER 1, SPRING 1993

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY ASSOCIATES
COURIER

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NUMBER ONE

SPRING 1993

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*This issue is dedicated with gratitude and affection
to Gwen G. Robinson*

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY ASSOCIATES COURIER contains articles relating to the holdings of the Syracuse University Library, most especially the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, and to the interests of the Library Associates membership.

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ON THE COVER: The cartoon was created by Roy Justus in October 1961. The original drawing, which is part of Syracuse University's extensive Roy Justus collection, is reprinted here with the permission of the *Star Tribune*, Minneapolis. Along with the United States Post Office, the Bureau of Customs, and prosecuting attorneys, police departments in the early 1960s played a part in censoring Grove Press books, notably D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*.

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An Interview with Barney Rosset

BY MARY BETH HINTON

THIS WAS Barney Rosset's Grove Press:

This cheap, exploitative, radical, avant-garde, courageous, daring, pandering, freedom-loving, woman-debasing, stupid, trashy, noble, tight-fisted, profligate press managed, almost always, to provoke or charm some group or other.

Gilbert Sorrentino¹

It was Grove Press, then, that brought to national prominence the art and artists of the counterculture, of the post-World War II disillusionment in Europe and America. . . . [It had] a broad-based avant-gardism, a general post-war dissatisfaction with the status quo, a militant anti-authoritarianism, and an unwavering commitment to absolute freedom of expression in speech, print and finally film.

S. E. Gontarski²

Because of the liberating effect of Grove Press, Inc., on the literary trade, especially book distribution, Barney Rosset, as its chairman and president, has contributed an important chapter to the history of American publishing.

*Current Biography*³

The phenomenon known as Grove Press began in 1952 when Barney Rosset bought the small Manhattan publishing venture. It ended in 1985 when Grove was sold to Ann Getty.⁴

1. S. E. Gontarski, "Working at Grove: An Interview with Gilbert Sorrentino", *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 10 (Fall 1990): 105.

2. S. E. Gontarski, "Dionysus in Publishing: Barney Rosset, Grove Press, and the Making of a Countercanon", in *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 10 (Fall 1990): 8-9.

3. Charles Moritz, ed., *Current Biography Yearbook* (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1972), 375.

4. After the sale Rosset continued to function as CEO of Grove for about a

On the sixth floor of Bird Library, in the closed stacks, a huge room with row upon row of tall shelves full of boxes, 775 linear feet of Grove Press archives are preserved. They started arriving here in the early 1960s because, as Barney Rosset explained, Syracuse University asked for them. Kathleen Manwaring, who has tended the Grove archives since 1985, gave me a tour.

There was a whole range of nothing but Grove Press manuscripts, authored by Samuel Beckett, Eric Berne, William S. Burroughs, Marguerite Duras, Jean Genet, Allen Ginsberg, Nat Hentoff, Eugene Ionesco, Jack Kerouac, Pablo Neruda, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Alan Watts, and many others. Several large boxes contained transcripts of the censorship trials of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, and the film "I Am Curious (Yellow)". Manwaring commented, "One tends to think of Grove in connection with censorship, but they had a lot of South American, African, and Asian, as well as European writers. They translated into English things that we still wouldn't know about but for them. They published in lots of areas: pop culture, psychology, cookbooks." There were endless boxes of production records and correspondence between authors and editors, especially Donald Allen, Fred Jordan, Judith Schmidt, and Richard Seaver. One long shelf was filled with a complete run of the *Evergreen Review*. "That", Manwaring explained, "was the magazine they produced between 1957 and 1973 to give people a taste of what Grove was publishing, such as the California Beat writers. It featured artwork and photography as well as writing." Standing amidst the archives one can feel the world-changing power that Grove Press wielded in a never-to-be-repeated era—call it the magic that clings to culturally significant artifacts.⁵

year. Then, according to Rosset, Wheatland Corporation (owned by Ann Getty and George Weidenfeld) "in effect discharged me. They made it impossible for me to stay." A few months later Rosset sued the owners of Wheatland for breach of contract and editorial interference. The suit was settled out of court.

5. Phillip Larkin wrote, "All literary manuscripts have two kinds of value: what might be called the magical value and the meaningful value. The magical value is the older and more universal: this is the paper he wrote on, these are the words as he wrote them, emerging for the first time in this miraculous combina-

On 15 December 1992 I interviewed Barney Rosset in his loft in Greenwich Village. Having traced his street address to a grim building with multiple locks, I announced my arrival through the intercom. Then I ascended three flights of stairs and came to a formidable iron gate that guarded the last flight and the entrance to Rosset's apartment: a spacious and colorful haven. In an area to the right a woman sat at a computer. A young man rushed by carrying papers (I learned that he was Rosset's son Beckett, named after Samuel Beckett). Both were working for Blue Moon Books, Rosset's post-Grove publishing company. To the left, through a beaded curtain, was a small room mostly filled by a pool table. The walls were lined with copies of all the books Grove Press had published. On the other side of the curtain, in a comfortable sitting area, we talked. I could see that Barney Rosset was no staid businessman, but a man who often giggles as his words tumble out, a man who sits lightly as though at any moment he might occupy another perch.

MBH: When you spoke to the Syracuse University Library Associates in November 1990 you mentioned a recurring dream, which, according to the transcript of your talk, goes as follows: "I'm in a circus-like theater where there is a large audience and I am a great trapeze artist about to perform, yet I have no memory of ever having seen a trapeze closely, let alone ever having been on one. I can only think that since I've been asked to perform, I must know how to do it. The dream always ends just as I'm about to leap out and grab the swing." Grove Press would never have become what it was had you not been willing to take risks—such as losing the family fortune and going to jail. What made you willing to take these risks?

BR: The background I came from was attuned to that. I came from Chicago. I grew up in the 1930s, the Depression, which was bad for people, and I was aware of it. But my father gave me a great deal of self-confidence. He never showed that he was in trouble. So I had a feeling of omnipotence—coupled with total weakness.

tion". Quoted from "A Neglected Responsibility: Contemporary Literary Manuscripts", in *Required Writing* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984), 99.

I went to a very, very progressive school for its time, the Francis Parker School, which was extraordinarily important in my life. That was right at the period of the greatest flourishing of progressive education—"progressive" wasn't a swear word yet. Chicago was international, and we had teachers from Austria, Germany, and other countries who were refugees. At Francis Parker you didn't get grades. We were free souls, but, in a way, very naive. We were free to learn a lot. Things like student government really mattered, along with the usual high school things such as money. So I had a mixed kind of background that encouraged risk. There always seemed to be a reserve left to call upon—a reserve of good will, good advice, admiration, and even money.

In 1940 I went to college at Swarthmore because I thought it was near Vassar. A girl I loved very dearly was going to Vassar, and I chose Swarthmore so that I could visit her. But I discovered to my distress that not only were the two schools not near each other, but at Swarthmore you weren't allowed to own an automobile. I had owned a car since I was fourteen! Furthermore, Swarthmore was a good school, and you were supposed to study there. My philosophy teacher, who I thought would love me, had a sister who had gone to my school in Chicago. He said two things about me. One was that when I snored in class it disturbed the other students. He couldn't really put up with that. And on my term paper he said after reading it that he was discouraged with progressive education.

At Swarthmore I read Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*—not because of the school itself but because the school was near New York City where I bought the [then banned] book at the Gotham Book Mart. Who could stay at a place like Swarthmore after reading *Tropic of Cancer*? I ran away during the first year. (I was good at real running, too. I was the best member of the freshman cross-country team.) I decided that one thing I wanted to do was leave the country and join Henry Miller wherever he was. I headed for Mexico. I didn't make it because the car broke down and—I was with another fellow—we ran out of money. I had to retreat back to Swarthmore. They had a rule that you would automatically flunk a course if you missed two classes—and I'd missed weeks. They said that since nobody had ever done this before, they'd forget that it

happened and let me stay. I didn't really appreciate their response at the time. I should have, but I didn't. With my freewheeling background I thought I could do anything, but I wasn't really equipped to do anything. So that's where the trapeze came in.

MBH: What was your worst fall?

BR: The dismissal from Grove Press by the Gettys.

MBH: With your high school and college experiences in mind, how would you describe a good education?

BR: I think it would be like Swarthmore in some ways. There they did study, and they did learn something, and I think that's good. On the other hand, what we had at Parker was also good. And some people learned a lot there. Some very successful people, especially some very good scientists, came out of my group. But people who were not too well organized to begin with didn't do as well. So I'd say a good education would be somewhere in the middle.

I joined the army, finally, to escape from college, though I did it partially under the guise of patriotism—I truly did consider myself to be a committed anti-fascist. I was one of those people whom my government labeled as “premature anti-fascists”. By then my girlfriend had moved back to Chicago. After the war I went to the University of Chicago, briefly, where Hutchins [the president] said, “If all people want is a degree, I'll give them one, quickly”. Which he did in my case. I got a two-year degree. But the atmosphere was so different with the GI Bill and so on. People were serious. There I did study. But it so happened I wanted to get out of there and come to New York.

MBH: In another section of the Library Associates transcript, you talk about learning to choose authors: “You might not know what's going to fly into your web, but you put it where you think there might be flies. If you leave your web out long enough, you might have the option to pick only those flies that please you, and eventually you can discern a pattern or similarity in the flies you choose, and finally you accidentally learn to choose wisely.” How have you gotten wiser in making those kinds of choices?

BR: I didn't mean to imply that I'd gotten wiser. I don't think that at all. Amongst the first people I chose were Samuel Beckett and Ionesco, and I never got any better certainly. I reached an early peak. Although other people were already publishing Faulkner and Hemingway, I knew there were other authors out there somewhat like them. Many of the ones I published were not American. I found people like Beckett, and that caught the attention of young Americans—people like Kerouac and Ginsberg.

I don't think of Henry Miller as an American. He was American, but the Americans wouldn't accept him. I went naturally toward him. In order to get to Miller I thought it would be a good idea to publish *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which I admired. I wasn't fanatic about it, as a matter of fact. I thought in certain ways it was a sort of set piece. It presented a philosophy in a rigid way—the idea of the industrial society destroying the free man. I wasn't even sure I agreed with it. But it was a means to an end. Miller was thought of as a no-good scoundrel. But D. H. Lawrence, despite everything, had reached a certain acceptability. If he wasn't acceptable, then Miller's chances were very slim. So the first thing was to build a foundation with Lawrence. Actually I did that, exactly and deliberately.⁶

In those days I was going to the New School for Social Research. I finally got a bachelor's degree. I met some wonderful people there like Wallace Fowlie, and I became aware of people like Proust and Beckett. It was in the air. When I read a little of Beckett I felt, There's a kindred spirit. That's another thing that's a little like the trapeze; it's also like being an amoeba: where there's an opening you go. I was a football player, a rather small one. I didn't try running into people; I tried to run where they weren't.

I had lived in France with Joan [Mitchell].⁷ My background because of her was with painters. When we returned from France I

6. Rosset recommends Raymond Caffrey's account in "Lady Chatterley's Lover: The Grove Press Publication of the Unexpurgated Text", *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier* 20 (Spring 1985): 49–79.

7. Mitchell was Rosset's first wife. Within a few years after their return from France, Rosset and Mitchell divorced. Rosset has four children from subsequent marriages.

became friends with Pollack and de Kooning and others. They were living a few blocks from this building. They were poverty stricken. I thought they were great painters. So I learned from them. It worked in both directions. I introduced Joan to Beckett.

I did one very bad thing at the New School. I took a course in art history from Meyer Schapiro. We had to write a paper. I did one on pointillism. There was only one thing wrong with it: Joan wrote it. I found it the other day. It's magnificent. I think it may be the only thing she ever wrote after her college days. Anyway, I handed it in as mine, and then I took the exam. The poor professor said, "I don't understand how the same person could write such a wonderful paper and do so terrible in the exam". Joan and a professor at the art department of the University of California at La Jolla—the two of them did it, they got intrigued.

But somehow I did know something about painting. I watched Joan. She was an extremely capable painter who could do anything. Her father, who was quite a well known doctor, would have exhibits of his paintings at medical shows—sort of like Da Vinci, with tendons and bones; she could do the same thing. Gradually, while we were living in France, she shifted. In the beginning I tried to get her to be a socialist realist—I thought of myself as a communist. Joan even went along with it.

Thank God she changed, and changed me with her. It was because she couldn't *not* do it. I watched her change from a figurative painter to an abstract painter. It happened day by day, and it got very exciting. We watched a bicycle race—the Tour de France. The bicycles all whizzed through this village we were in. Her next painting was abstract—all the wheels and the tires and everything were meshing. It was wonderful. I went on in France about three or four more months. Then I thought, It's done. I should go home. And she needed to go home, where she became involved with de Kooning and Pollack and people on Ninth Street. Our friends were both literary people and painters. There were people like Frank O'Hara the poet, who crossed the lines. He worked at the Museum of Modern Art, he was very attuned to painting, and his friends were painters. Yet he was a very good poet. There was a

cross-fertilization. Painters were a lot more fun to be with, much more relaxed, not jealous, not competitive like writers, who tend to hole up.

MBH: A 1969 *Life* Magazine article about you, “The Old Smut Peddler”, by Albert Goldman, says you were planning to create uncensored movies for the new home videocassette players. What happened to that plan?

BR: That was a figment of his imagination. We did try to make an *Evergreen Review*, for example, on film, but there was no market for it. We took parts of foreign films and we shot a few things. At Southampton College I showed the program, which was announced as “Barney Rosset: From the Word to the Image, with the screening of the first experimental issue of *Evergreen Review*”. It was also the last. This was before the era of videocassettes—perhaps unfortunately so.

MBH: Your choices seem more like improvisations than strategies devised by a businessman to gain profits. Where did the rewards lie for you?

BR: Again, even early in my life—although I thought of myself as being very left-wing politically, which was also very strange for someone who had a convertible LaSalle car—I was imbued with the idea that censorship was bad. In the eighth grade we had our own student newspapers, and I had one called *The Anti-Everything*. I had a strong feeling that people should not be prohibited from expressing whatever they felt like expressing.

As a matter of fact, I heard someone say the other day that he became a communist because they talked about free love, only he never found any. I had exactly the same experience. For me at that time communism symbolized freedom, not Stalin. But it never worked out for me that way.

One of the greatest sorrows of my life is that I was not in the Spanish Civil War. I felt very guilty about it; but I was only fifteen or sixteen when it was going on. That, to me, was the fight for freedom in my lifetime. The memory of that war has always been there. My mother was Irish, and her father was extremely anti-English, and they spoke Gaelic. I must have been imbued with

their revolutionary ire. As a matter of fact, I now have my Irish [dual] citizenship. But I've never been to Ireland.

MBH: Do you want to go?

BR: No. It's a fantasy. It's like Beckett and Joyce. Their road never seemed to lead to home.

MBH: About rewards?

BR: I like to have money. Even when my father was relatively poor, I didn't know it. I never felt a desperate need for money. So it never was a compelling factor. I've wanted it to do certain things. I wanted a car, but I tried to scale my desires so as not to want a jet plane. I didn't have that monetary drive that a lot of people around me had. I looked for other rewards. One of them was peer recognition, I guess. But I did have some money, and I didn't have any great skills, so that's why publishing became a natural for me. It didn't require any special expertise—at least I didn't think so. Yet I did come out of a business background. I knew a lot about it; my father was a banker. And in the army I knew about the army, how it worked. Oddly enough, although I came from this progressive education background, once I was in the army I struggled along, I obeyed all the rules, I thought it was a good war, and I put aside my opinions about censorship and freedom—that would have to wait.

MBH: Regarding censorship, you are often credited with loosening up the publishing world. Do you have any criticisms of the way our increased freedom from censorship is being used?

BR: First of all, I think that's funny. It depends on how you look at it whether you feel that it's censorship or not. I think that there's a great deal of censorship. It's not always the legal kind. I've run into very severe problems in the last few years because of some reverend in Mississippi who threatened K-Mart stores with a boycott if they sold my books in their Waldenbooks stores. So overnight, more than thirty percent of the orders for books I was publishing were canceled. That's censorship. But it's a different kind. It leaves me so baffled. I don't think the reverend should be stopped from saying whatever he wants to say. It's more subtle than that.

The other thing about too much freedom—when we did the

film “I Am Curious (Yellow)”, unbeknownst to ourselves we created a sort of demon that destroyed us, because with the money we made from “I Am Curious (Yellow)”—and it was a lot of money—I bought more foreign films. But there was no longer any place to show these so-called foreign art films. We had opened up the way for the theaters to show sexually explicit films. Now the theaters that had been showing very good foreign films switched over to porno, X-rated films. And all these lovely French, Hungarian, Czechoslovakian, Spanish, Greek, Chinese films I had bought were a disaster. Did I think they shouldn’t show the other films? Not at all.

The only kind of censorship I believe in is this: I don’t think people need to be affronted with something they don’t want to look at. You don’t have to affront the sensibilities of some people to hurt them or their children. Don’t put nude photos or whatever on the door of your theater. If people think that’s censorship, so be it. I don’t think it is, as long as you can go through the door to see what you want to see.

I got a letter the other day from a bibliographer of American and English literature at the library at the University of Texas, asking me for a copy of a book we had published. And this person said, “Would you please send us a copy of the book *Isabelle and Veronique*?” It was sort of unusual because he didn’t offer to buy it—you know, just, “Give me one”. He also included a newspaper called *The Other Texan*, which was a graduate school thing. He just said, “Enclosed is a newspaper. Look at page 12.”

Page 12 had a long, long article about a professor at the University of Texas who was accused of sexual harassment. And, lo and behold, the reason for this was that he’d written this book *Isabelle and Veronique*. I had bought the book from an English publisher. And at first this idiot professor of philosophy denied that he had written it. He said, “It’s a despicable book”—his book! Later, I think, the circumstantial evidence convinced him that he might as well say he wrote it, and he did. And he said, “Well, it’s a fantasy. It’s a world that never existed, but I wish that it did.” His critics attempted to prove through the book that he must be sexually harassing people because in the book he speaks about women in a way

that the person writing the newspaper article didn't like. Particularly bad was that he sort of differentiated between two fictional characters, a dark-skinned person and a blonde, and he treated the dark-skinned one worse—that proves something!

Anyway, I thought it was very amusing. I wrote to them all. I wrote to the author of the piece—"Now I've found my author"—and to the person in the library I said, "If Dostoevsky and Agatha Christie were convicted of every murder they'd committed in writing, they would have been executed very quickly". Nobody's answered.

I've seen censorship from people I previously felt identified with. One of my terrible sadnesses is that the women's movement took a very right-wing turn, from my point of view, in saying that pornography was an attack on women and therefore should be outlawed. In 1970 we were violently attacked—I mean physically—by women's groups.⁸ It hurt me and it hurt Grove Press. I was confounded. People whom I had considered our allies were literally trying to destroy us. Around this same time we published *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. They attacked me about that too. I think they were FBI-inspired. They said the widow of Malcolm wasn't getting paid, which wasn't true. Their attempt [in conjunction with the Furriers Union] at unionizing us and telling us what to publish and what not to publish went on for about a year. As someone who had always fought for unions, I found myself on the

8. Gontarski, "Dionysus in Publishing", 16–17. The incident Rosset alludes to occurred in connection with an attempt by the Publishing Employees Organizing Committee of the Fur, Leather and Machinists Workers Joint Board (AFL-CIO) to unionize Grove Press: "On 8 April 1970 several Grove employees attended a union meeting and took out union cards. On the 9th and 10th Grove discharged nine employees, including union activist and feminist Robin Morgan, who on the 13th led a group of nine women, none of whom, except for Morgan herself, was an employee of Grove, to occupy the sixth floor executive offices of the Press, charging it with 'crimes against women'. . . . The Grove Press takeover was timed to coincide with a union rally outside the Mercer Street offices, and the feminists occupying Grove called on management to recognize the union. Henry Foner, president of the union, filed unfair labor practices complaints against Grove for firing the nine employees."

other side. There was no publisher that was unionized. Wouldn't you think it strange to pick on Grove Press as your target?

The head of the union finally agreed with me. But it was months and months later. Before that happened we attacked back and said, Do you want to have all the seals killed? In that union, which had been much maligned by McCarthy—terribly—they had had to put into their constitution a statement saying you couldn't be a member of any organization that advocated overthrow of the government by violence. We had a lot of young Black Panthers working for us and so on. So we just handed out a constitution of the union, without comment. You'd hear all these kids saying, "I can't be a Black Panther anymore". It was disastrous for the union. During that period we couldn't work; we couldn't function. The building was under constant physical assault, all day long: fire engines, police, sit-ins, bomb threats. At least they did not actually bomb us, as some anti-Castro Cubans had done previously.⁹ For a period of years we were under assault from both the far right and the far left.

MBH: I wanted to ask you about Madonna. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* contains eroticism combined with substance. But the sort of thing Madonna is doing seems empty.

BR: I've thought about that. First of all I haven't seen much of what she's done. But I'd fight to the death to defend her. I think that she did open up some new avenues by her book selling so much, making it acceptable to certain book stores and printing companies. I consider it like a battering ram in front of me. So I'm happy, even though I've seen no evidence of any kind of great intelligence and sensitivity in what she's doing. I'm all for it. That doesn't mean I would have wanted to publish it.

MBH: Who were some of the authors who influenced you? You've mentioned Beckett a lot.

9. Gontarski, "Dionysus in Publishing", 15. "In the early morning hours of 26 July 1968 a group of anti-Castro Cubans launched a fragmentation grenade through the window of the Grove Press offices after a portrait of Che Guevera appeared on the cover of the *Evergreen Review*."

BR: And Miller. They're not too much alike. I brought them together in Paris, actually. They had known each other in the thirties and hadn't liked each other. They were both known as difficult people. I took them out to lunch together and afterwards each said to me separately, "You know, he's mellowed". So that was pleasing. But there were many others. I think Beckett and Miller sort of encompass a lot, because they really come at things from very different directions. I mean, the more Miller could say about something, the better he liked it. The less Beckett could say, the more successful he thought he was. As a person Beckett meant an enormous amount to me. Miller was intriguing, but not as lovable.

MBH: Do you think Henry Miller was a great writer?

BR: In some things. I thought *Tropic of Cancer*, when I read it and when I reread it, really had something to say through its use of language, its concepts, and its surrealism. I published *Sexus*, *Nexus*, and *Plexus*, but I'd be less than truthful if I told you I read them—little bits. But I did read other things, shorter things that I thought also had great, brilliant insights. He was a primitive, what I think of as a primitive, that is, he didn't have an academic background. It's not that he wasn't well-read. He was. But he developed his own approach outside of an organized framework. He was a sort of American Douanier Rousseau.

MBH: Do you want to say anything about the sale of Grove?

BR: The sale was one thing, getting thrown out was another. In looking back I realize I shouldn't have sold it. I thought that finally somebody was going to provide us with the funds to publish a lot of things. We would do the *Evergreen Review* again and all sorts of things. As it turns out they did put in a lot of funds, but not when I was there. They also lost those funds, sunk without a trace. Why all that happened I still don't know. I may be very obtuse about it. I don't think it was the person who bought it, but some other kind of influence around her.

MBH: What have you been doing since you left Grove in 1986?

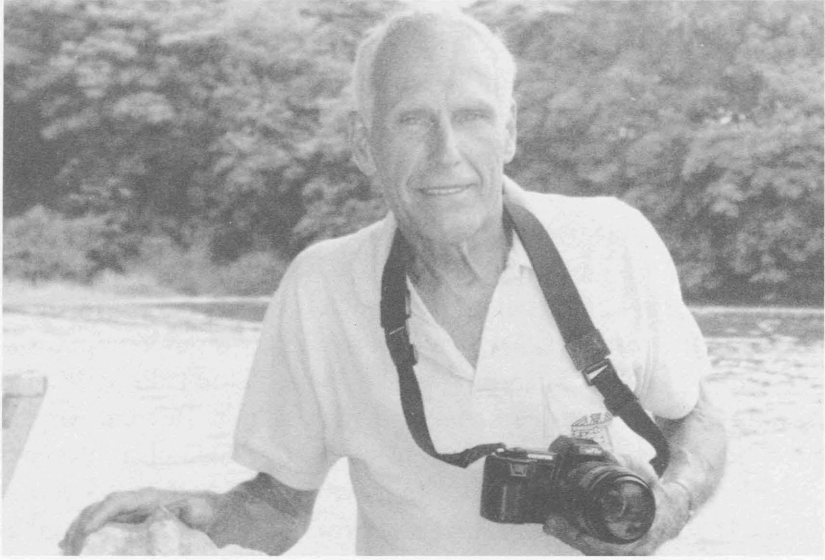
BR: Well, after the state of trauma had somewhat subsided, in '87 I

started another little company, which I've been going along with ever since. Right here. Downstairs is the office.

MBH: Is Blue Moon Books anything like Grove?

BR: Well, in desire it is. We've published one thing of Beckett's, for example, and something by Marguerite Duras. We've redone the *Olympia Reader*. Right now we're doing a new version of the *Evergreen Review Reader*, which will be a compendium of material from the years 1957 to 1967. One of the things I had at Grove, which really kept the company going for a long time, was Victorian erotica—*A Man and a Maid*, and so forth. When I sold Grove I said that they should let me have that [the Victorian Library] in case they decided they didn't want me after a while. They said okay, but later they reversed their position. They tried to sell it after I was gone. I made the only bid, but they wouldn't sell it to me. So I said, "I'll just take the Victorian-style books", and I did. So I started sort of in reverse. Whereas with Grove I started with Henry James and worked finally to the other side, this time I thought, "That is the only thing I know I can publish immediately and I can understand the technical problems and how to do it and so on". I hoped and still hope to branch out into other things. We have done four poetry books, a children's book from South Africa and—it's not been easy.

I didn't get any money out of that Grove Press thing, and I've long since spent what I accumulated. I'm not wasteful, but on the other hand I've never had a concept of saving. But we're doing it. And I've found that I'm getting manuscripts which I've slipped into this so-called erotic group of books. I've been finding some young writers—most of them are women and most of those women are English, I don't know why—but also a professor of neurobiology from Chicago, a lawyer for a big military school, an Israeli who writes wonderful Japanese novels (he's an anthropologist), psychologists from New York—a very interesting group of people. I'd really love to get them together. I haven't met most, and they certainly haven't met each other, and they all use assumed names, but I can sense the quality level going up. Right now we have three new books by three new women authors. They're serious writers. So I enjoy it.



Barney Rosset in Costa Rica, December 1988. Photo: Astrid Myers.

There is an advantage in publishing now—better than a long time ago. With a small operation you use outside facilities. I have a perfectly good production manager. There are now distribution companies for small publishers; there were not before. I have an art director who works for another company and moonlights for me. We have plenty of freelance copyeditors. So I don't think you need a lot of intensive labor on hand. You can run a publishing house this way, but you can't run a big bookstore chain in a similar manner. I think you can get along against big publishers by joining other small ones in service centers. I don't feel completely at a disadvantage.

MBH: People tend to associate you mostly with *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Tropic of Cancer*, and censorship issues. Is this fair?

BR: If you look at the books that I published there are at least as many political books as literary books. In grammar school I was already very politically motivated—the CIA and the FBI and so forth have been filing reports on me since I was twelve. When I was in high school I read Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*, which made a

great impression on me, and *Man's Fate* by André Malraux. Then I got sent to China during World War II. I was chosen to photograph the peace signing in Shanghai (which actually never happened there) before the war ended. And there I was, a live actor in *Man's Fate*, which takes place in Shanghai, and *Red Star Over China*. I was way ahead of everybody there because I had read these books. It gave me insights that others didn't have. This really annoyed the generals because I was only 23 years old and irreverent, spending money as fast as I could get hold of it, while they were putting their money in the bank because they believed it was a golden opportunity to buy land in Shanghai. I told them, "Don't do it; Mao is coming". I had read the script and they hadn't. Reward for my good advice was the Army threw me out of Shanghai. When I came back and got into publishing we republished *Red Star over China*. It was full circle. I even met Snow. This was as important as anything else. So the answer to the question is, Who knows?

MBH: I often think of Ezra Pound's words: "What thou lovest well remains / The rest is dross". What did you love about being "the man who was Grove Press"?

BR: Giving free creative expression to a lot of suppressed feelings and beliefs. The French have a phrase for it: "épater la bourgeoisie" [to confound or to stun the conventionally-minded].

“Say! Dis Is Grate Stuff”: The Yellow Kid and the Birth of the American Comics

BY RICHARD D. OLSON

On 12 December 1992, before a gathering of the Syracuse University Library Associates, Professor Olson delivered the keynote address that marked the opening of the University Library's Yellow Kid exhibition.¹ The following is an edited transcript of Olson's talk.

WHAT HAPPENED nearly one hundred years ago to give birth to the American comics? Who can we thank for having a colorful Sunday comic section to read every week? My analysis of the birth of the American comic strip suggests that it occurred as a result of the interaction of three major factors: (1) the natural evolution of graphic humor, (2) quirks of American history, and (3) Richard Fenton Outcault. In what follows we shall take a brief look at these factors and see how they contributed to the birth of the comic strip.

THE NATURAL EVOLUTION OF GRAPHIC HUMOR

From the earliest cave paintings in Paleolithic times, illustrations have been used as a means of communication. In the Christian West, illuminated manuscripts and depictions of Bible stories on stained glass windows came to enhance the written word. The advent of the printing press and the subsequent availability of books ensured that pictures would in time complement stories.²

1. The exhibition was held on the sixth floor of Bird Library through 31 March 1993. Among the objects on display were eleven original pen and ink drawings by R. F. Outcault that were discovered in 1992 among the Syracuse University Library's archival holdings by staff member Joseph O'Donnell. As a result, the Library is now thought to have the largest collection of original Yellow Kid art anywhere.

2. It is interesting to note that in the East cartooning had for a very long time been developed. For example, the sophisticated Japanese *emaki* cartoons, which

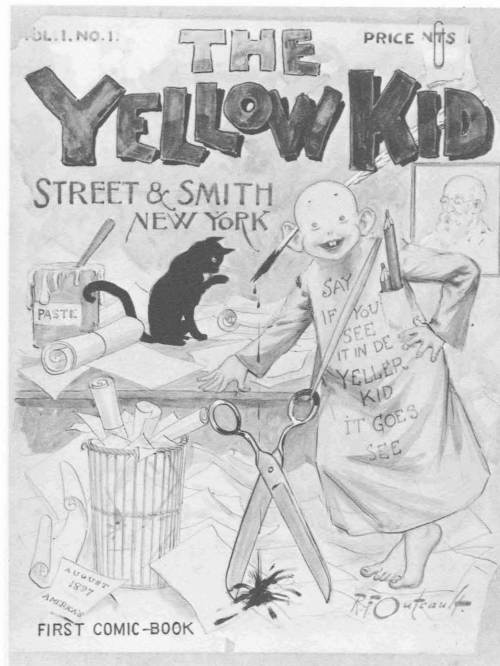


Fig. 1. The Yellow Kid. This is a reproduction of one of the original pen-and-ink drawings created for the cover of *The Yellow Kid* magazine.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that someone would eventually combine prose with art to make an illustrated, narrative sequence. The famous eighteenth-century artist William Hogarth is usually given credit for exactly that innovation. Several of his works used this device to comment on social issues of his day: “A Harlot’s Progress”, “Marriage à la Mode”, “A Rake’s Progress”, and “Industry and Idleness” were all executed in this format.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Thomas Rowlandson, the English caricaturist, added word balloons to cartoons of political satire. He was so far ahead of his time that one hundred years later, when the Sunday comic-page artists re-invented word balloons, they were given great credit for their innovation.

were imported from China, have been flourishing in Japan since the sixth century A.D.



Fig. 2. R. F. Outcault. From the frontispiece of the book *My Resolutions, Buster Brown*, by R. F. Outcault (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1906).

Perhaps the most direct precursor to the comic strip, however, was the work of the Swiss schoolmaster Rodolphe Töpffer, who lived from 1799 to 1846. He created a series of illustrated stories in which the individual drawings were separated by frames, with a continuing narrative enclosed in the bottom of each panel. With an imagination like that of today's artists, he dealt with such topics as space travel, violence, and fantasy. Encouraged by his friend Goethe, he published his story of *M. Cryptogramme* in the Paris magazine *L'Illustration* in 1845.

A few years later, in 1854, the French artist Gustave Doré published *L'Histoire de la Sainte Russie*. It was a series of 477 sequential drawings presenting a serious graphic history of Russia.

Around 1865 Wilhelm Busch published *Max und Mauritz*, which was a story of two bad boys, the trouble they got into, and

their ultimate punishment. Virtually every page had a color illustration in addition to text. Legend has it that William Randolph Hearst brought a copy of this book back from Europe, and it ultimately led to the creation of “The Katzenjammer Kids”. *Max und Mauritz* has proven so popular that it is still available in Germany today.

Simultaneous with the development of the graphic novel was the introduction of the humor magazine. These magazines featured cartoons, humorous prose, and some sequentially illustrated narratives. Frank Leslie, an English emigré, brought the graphic humor magazine to America in 1863 with *Budget of Fun*, *Jolly Joker*, *Comic Monthly*, and *Phunny Phellow*. The San Francisco *Wasp*, *Punchinello*, and *Wild Oats* soon followed. They set the stage for *Puck* (1877), *Judge* (1881), and *Life* (1883) to bring about a new age in American graphic and literary humor. *Life* was the major American humor magazine of its era. Leading cartoonists in *Life* and similar magazines through the end of the nineteenth century included A. B. Frost, Palmer Cox, E. W. Kemble, T. S. Sullivant, Walt Kuhn, Walt McDougall, and Charles Dana Gibson.

St. Nicholas magazine, a product of Scribner & Company (later The Century Company), was started in November 1873 to present prose and poetry as well as humor, especially for America’s children. This was probably the finest children’s magazine ever published. It contained original work by Louisa May Alcott, Rudyard Kipling, and L. Frank Baum. It also presented Palmer Cox’s *The Brownies*, I. W. Taber’s *Jungleland Comics*, and the early work of E. W. Kemble and Harrison Cady.

Given the obvious popularity of these magazines, as judged by their ever-increasing numbers and sales, it is not surprising that newspapers started adding humorous cartoons to their offerings. In fact, some of the earliest newspaper cartoons were those that were simply reproduced from the humor magazines. If an editor saw a cartoon of special brilliance in a humor magazine, it showed up in a forthcoming issue of the newspaper. As an example, several of the cartoons that R. F. Outcault published in *Truth* magazine in the early 1890s were subsequently republished in the New York *World*; typically, captions like “from *Truth*” would identify such pieces.

In those days, before photographs could be sent over a wire, artists had to draw illustrations for news stories (see figs. 3 and 4). Photographs did not become a regular part of newspapers until the very end of the nineteenth century. R. F. Outcault was actually hired by the New York *World* to illustrate scientific articles but, working on his own time, he soon added an independent line of humorous cartoons. Credit must be given to Joseph Pulitzer, who knew when it was time to switch Outcault's assignments and increase his newspaper's circulation! As a result of the growing popularity of cartoons, other newspapers as well began looking for cartoon artists to put on staff.

The first artist to create a continuing cartoon series in a major urban newspaper was James Swinnerton. In 1892 his "Little Bears and Tigers" began to appear in the San Francisco *Examiner*. However, none of Swinnerton's characters caught the public's fancy. The world was ready for someone to create an exceptional comic character that could appear on a regular basis and capture the imagination of the public.

QUIRKS OF AMERICAN HISTORY

There were four aspects of American history in the late nineteenth century that bear on our topic. The first was the invention of photoengraving in 1873, which made it possible, for the first time, to reproduce graphic art inexpensively in a printed format. This was absolutely essential if illustrations were to appear regularly in a newspaper.

The second was the high percentage of the population that was either semi-illiterate or illiterate. I believe it was Boss Tweed who told his colleagues he didn't care what they wrote about him in the papers because the voters couldn't read, but stop those damn cartoons! The implications for the popularity of the comic page among the masses are obvious.

The third aspect was the emergence of population centers of sufficient size to make newspapers extremely profitable. The daily or weekly paper had existed for years as a small business venture, often because of the civic mindedness of the publisher. America was just reaching the stage where several cities actually provided



Fig. 3. Outcault illustration of “May Parties in Central Park” for the *New York World*, 5 May 1895. (This and the following two images were reproduced from the New York Public Library’s microfilm of the *New York World*.)

the population base for newspapers to become big business ventures, with owners willing to try anything that might increase the sales of their newspapers.

Finally, there was an unusually intense rivalry between Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst as they struggled for newspaper circulation dominance in New York City, the largest urban area in America. An examination of that conflict suggests that these rivals would do anything to gain the upper hand. Thus, while newspapers would have developed rapidly anyhow, the battle of the titans served as a catalyst to promote innovation.

Pulitzer and Hearst both wanted to obtain the services of a comic genius who could draw unprecedented attention to their newspapers, and the lucky publisher would do everything possible to promote the artist and his or her creation.

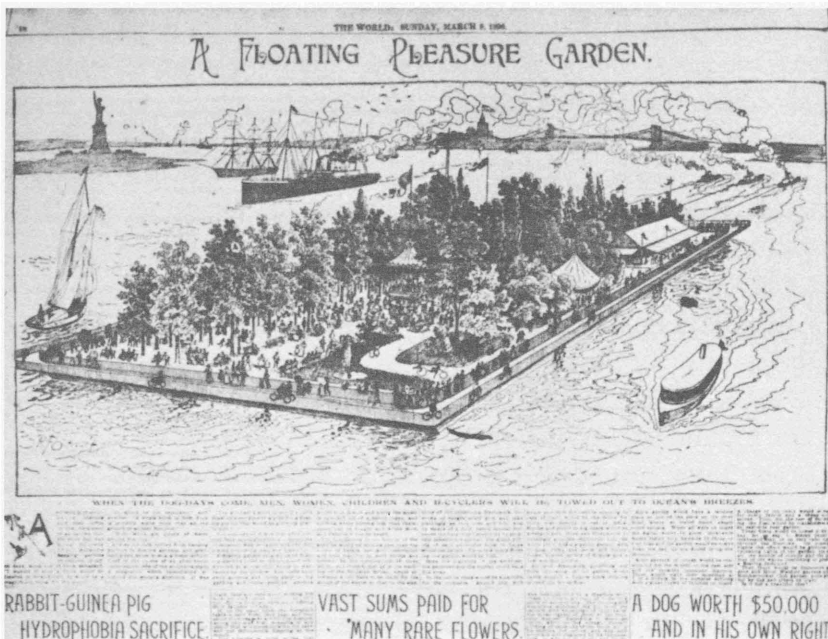


Fig. 4. Outcault illustration of “A Floating Pleasure Garden” for the *New York World*, 8 March 1896. The caption reads, “When the dog-days come, men, women, children and bicycles will be towed out to ocean’s breezes.”

RICHARD FENTON OUTCAULT

Richard Fenton Outcault, better known to all who know his work as R. F. Outcault, was the comic genius who took advantage of these circumstances. Others had tried and failed. Outcault was the first to have the intellect and the artistic ability to depict New York City as many of its residents saw it, and to do this in a manner that made them laugh. For being in the right place at the right time, and for possessing unusual talent, R. F. Outcault became the anointed Father of the American Comic Strip.

Outcault was born in Lancaster, Ohio, on 14 January 1863, the son of Jesse and Catherine Outcault. He died at his Madison Avenue residence/studio in New York City on 25 September 1928. Even when he was a child it was apparent that he had artistic talent, and he developed that talent with training from artists in his own community. He later entered the McMicken University’s

School of Design in Cincinnati in 1878 and continued his studies for three years. When he left in 1881, he took a job as a painter of pastoral scenes for the Hall Safe and Lock Company. In 1888 the Centennial Exposition of the Ohio Valley and Middle Atlantic States was held in Cincinnati. The Edison Laboratories, for their electric light display, needed some sophisticated illustrations. They hired Outcault to do the work. His drawings were outstanding, and he soon moved to Edison's West Orange, New Jersey, headquarters as a full-time employee. In 1889 Edison named him the official artist for his traveling exhibition and sent him to Paris for the World's Fair, where he also continued his art studies in the Latin Quarter.

Outcault returned to New York City in 1890 and joined the staff of *Electrical World* magazine, which was owned by one of Edison's friends. He also free-lanced and sent jokes and cartoons to weekly humor magazines, such as *Capital Chips*, *Harlem Life*, *Truth*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. His humor and art were well received. In 1894 he started submitting work to the *New York World*, which had a bigger circulation than any other publication in America. Morrill Goddard, the *World's* Sunday editor, hired him to do popular scientific drawings. Outcault's first illustration for the *World* was published in September 1894. Meanwhile, he continued to draw cartoons. His first published newspaper cartoon, which contained six sequential boxes of color art and appeared in the *World* on 18 November 1894, was entitled "The Origin of a New Species".³

It should be noted that Charles Saalburg, a former cartoonist who drew "The Ting Lings" in Chicago in 1893, had joined the *New York World* as art director. The exact nature of Saalburg's influence may never be known, but Outcault's work shows some signs of resemblance to Saalburg's earlier cartoons. Like Swinner-ton's, Saalburg's strip also had continuing characters, and they appeared weekly in color; but again like Swinner-ton's, Saalburg's characters failed to captivate the public. Through the end of the

3. This cartoon dealt with a clown who took his dog on a picnic, saw a snake swallow his dog only to have the dog's legs protrude from the snake's belly, and ended with the clown walking away with what then looked like a crocodile.

1890s, Outcault also continued to submit work to *Life* and *Judge*, focusing on blacks living in the imaginary town of Possumville.

Accounts of when the Yellow Kid first appeared in the newspaper and under what circumstances have varied from author to author. In reviewing the microfilm of the New York *World* for 1894 and 1895, I identified the first ten appearances of the Yellow Kid in the *World*:

1. 17 February 1895: "Fourth Ward Brownies" [reprinted from *Truth*]
2. 10 March 1895: "The Fate of the Glutton"
3. 5 May 1895: "At the Circus in Hogan's Alley"
4. 7 July 1895: "The Day after 'The Glorious Fourth' down in Hogan's Alley"
5. 22 September 1895: "The Great Cup Race on Reilly's Pond"
6. 10 November 1895: "The Great Social Event of the Year in Shantytown"
7. 17 November 1895: "The Horse Show as Reproduced at Shantytown"
8. 24 November 1895: "An Untimely Death"
9. 15 December 1895: "Merry Xmas Morning in Hogan's Alley"
10. 22 December 1895: "A Hopeless Disappointment"

"The Great Dog Show in M'Googan Avenue", which appeared on 16 February 1896, is often cited as the first appearance of the Yellow Kid. Its legitimate claim to fame is that it was the first strip in which the Yellow Kid's nightshirt was yellow! Actually, two additional appearances before that date would make "The Great Dog Show" the thirteenth appearance. The confusion as to when the Yellow Kid first appeared is a consequence of the fact that some scholars do not count the earliest cartoons, in which the Yellow Kid's nightshirt either was not in color or was colored blue. Also, some of the earliest strips were in an easily overlooked, one-column format.

The other frequently cited "first appearance" is 5 May 1895—probably because it was the first quarter-page cartoon containing

the Yellow Kid. Two earlier, smaller appearances undoubtedly went unnoticed. My only concern is with the historical record of the Yellow Kid's appearances in the newspaper, which is presented in the above list. Accordingly, I propose that 17 February 1895, the date of the first appearance of the Yellow Kid in the newspaper (see fig. 5), be viewed as the birth of the American comics, and that 17 February 1995, mark the one hundredth anniversary of the event!

I would be remiss at this point not to tell the popular story of how the Yellow Kid's nightshirt became yellow. The legend claims that after Pulitzer bought a new Hoe four-color rotary press in 1893 for his Sunday supplement, his paper was able to reproduce all colors adequately except yellow. After some disastrous attempts to print the old masters in color, the engraving foreman decided to switch to big-panel drawings. He had invented a new drying process and was looking for an open space in which to test it. Apparently he found it in the Yellow Kid's nightshirt, for on 16 February 1896, the Yellow Kid made his first appearance in a yellow nightshirt. Not all comic strip historians accept this popular version of the facts, but no one has ever proved that it did not happen just that way.

Why did the Yellow Kid succeed in capturing the public's fancy when other characters had failed? What made him special? Obviously, his bright yellow nightshirt with humorous messages scrawled thereon caught the reader's eye. Further, the Yellow Kid had a striking appearance. He was bald and big-eared, and at first glance many readers assumed he was Oriental. In fact, his name was "Mickey Dugan" and he was an Irish tenement hooligan. The strip portrayed familiar locales, such as Coney Island, and incorporated topics of special interest, such as the America's Cup race.

Public humor at the end of the nineteenth century often centered on the poor and on ethnic minorities. In the 1890s, the Irish were both. Although the Poles, the Italians, the blacks, and just about everybody else was also the butt of ethnic humor, the Irish apparently were at the top of the list in New York City.

Having captured the imagination of the New York City public, the Yellow Kid soon appeared every Sunday in the *World's* comic supplement, "The Rainbow", and sometimes during the week. He



Fig. 5. The first newspaper appearance of the Yellow Kid (pictured standing next to the dog) was in “Fourth Ward Brownies”. Outcault is making fun of Palmer Cox, the creator of “The Brownies” comic strip. The caption reads, “Mickey the artist (adding a finishing touch)—Dere Chimmy! If Palmer Cox wuz t’ see yer, he’d git yer copyrighted in a minute”. The image, borrowed from *Truth* magazine, was republished on 17 February 1895 in the *World*.

caught the fancy of William Randolph Hearst, who readily observed that the Kid was selling papers for Pulitzer’s *New York World*. Hearst couldn’t stand it, so he offered Outcault a tremendous salary to come to work for him at the *New York Journal* and draw the Kid for the *American Humorist*, the new color Sunday supplement that Hearst was going to start on 18 October 1896. Outcault accepted and, accompanied by a media blitz that would be impressive even today, the Yellow Kid became the lead character in Hearst’s new comic supplement. A frequently quoted line of advertising enticed the public to follow the Kid to the *New York Journal*: “Eight pages of polychromatic effulgence that make the rainbow look like a lead pipe”. How could you refuse to at least take a look?

Pulitzer was among those who looked, and he didn't like what he saw. Legend has it that he hired Outcault back, only to have Hearst hire him back once again. Finally, in a desperately clever move, Pulitzer sued for rights to the Yellow Kid. The judge decided that Outcault owned the character and could continue drawing him, but that Pulitzer owned "Hogan's Alley". Outcault moved the Kid to "McFadden's Flats", and Pulitzer hired George Luks to do his own version of the Yellow Kid. Based on this precedent, the same thing happened with "The Katzenjammer Kids" and "Buster Brown".

Again according to legend, the intense rivalry over the Yellow Kid led to the coining of the term "yellow press" for the first time on 2 March 1898 in the Chicago *Daily News*. As the Spanish-America War intensified in late 1898, and as correspondents fabricated sensational stories to sell newspapers, the phrase "yellow journalism" was popularly applied to those efforts. Remember that there were virtually no photographs or independent reports. Each writer tried to outdo the others with sensational stories geared more to selling papers than describing events of the war.

Perhaps the most interesting twist is that the Yellow Kid came, saw, conquered, and died in a little over two years. His last appearance in the New York *World* was 5 December 1897, while in the New York *Journal* it was 6 February 1898. But in this short span, Outcault's Yellow Kid permanently established the comic page as a critical part of the newspaper industry.

Other important strips of the day included E. W. Kemble's "The Blackberries", Rudolph Dirks's "The Katzenjammer Kids", Charles "Bunny" Schultz's "Foxy Grandpa", George McManus's "The Newlyweds" and later "Bringing Up Father", and, finally, Winsor McCay's "Little Nemo". If any doubt remained about the ability of the comics to sell newspapers, the debut in 1905 of "Little Nemo", a strip now generally considered to contain the most beautiful comic strip art ever created, erased that doubt. Of course, there were many others, but these were the founding fathers.

In my opinion, Palmer Cox's continuing magazine fantasy feature, "The Brownies", set the stage for the Sunday comics to be successful, and Swinnerton, Outcault, and Dirks took advantage of



Fig. 6. The first and last pinbacks in a series of 160 Yellow Kid/High Admiral cigarette pinbacks.

the opportunity to achieve that success and make the comics an integral part of nearly every newspaper in America. That trio established the format shortly after the turn of the century, and it is still being used today with only minimal refinements.

During his heyday the Yellow Kid not only proved that comic characters could sell newspapers, but also he demonstrated that they could sell almost anything upon which the character's likeness appeared, from cigars to gingersnaps. Yes, the Yellow Kid was really America's first comic character success story. He either sold or was sold as dolls, toys, advertising cards, postcards, books, blotters, sand pails, cigars, cigarettes, whiskey, soap, chairs, chocolate molds, and cap bombs. In virtually all cases, the item represented the first comic character merchandising in that format—the first comic character toy, the first comic character book, etc.

Three merchandising formats deserve special consideration. First, the Yellow Kid/High Admiral cigarette pinbacks, which were issued in a set of 160 numbered buttons (see fig. 6). The first 100 showed the Yellow Kid in humorous settings, and as their pop-



Fig. 7. Adams' Yellow Kid Gum Cards. The card on the left was printed in red and yellow. A customer would receive one of these as a premium for buying Adams' chewing gum. The card on the right, printed in four colors, was sold in sets of twenty-five with *The Game of the Yellow Kid*.

ularity apparently waned (in fact, numbers 95 to 100 are not known to have been published), the next 60 continued the series using the flags of different countries. Every time you purchased Yellow Kid cigarettes, you could reach into a big bowl and pick a button. Even in 1896, the marketing experts apparently realized that printing a shorter run of some buttons would sell extra cigarettes to people trying to complete their set of buttons, and today some of the buttons are extremely rare. Second, the Adams two-color Yellow Kid Gum Cards (see fig. 7) were so successful that they were subsequently reprinted as four-color cards with rules on the back and sold as *The Game of the Yellow Kid*. The third was a comic humor magazine for which Outcault agreed to draw original cover art. It featured the Yellow Kid and carried the Kid's name. In spite of Outcault's efforts, the arrangement did not pan out, and his art was published only on the first six issues of the magazine. The original

art for the first issue of the magazine and ten additional unpublished pieces were recently discovered here at Syracuse University.

In retrospect, it is clear that Outcault was not only insightful and a great artist, he was also an entrepreneur of great success. He visited many cities on the eastern seaboard giving lectures on his life as a cartoonist, drawing sketches of his characters for lucky members of the audience, and generally doing everything he could to promote his career. The only characters of the 1990s that rival the Yellow Kid's ubiquitous presence in the merchandising of the late 1890s are Mickey Mouse, Snoopy, and perhaps the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles!

Naturally, the newspaper strip made the marketing efforts more effective, and the marketing efforts made the newspaper strip even more popular. As a result of this wonderful symbiotic relationship, the Yellow Kid was the toast of the town! In fact, he became so popular by 1897 that Outcault painted a portrait of the Kid toasting his in-laws on their wedding anniversary. I think that this is the most significant piece of comic art in the hands of collectors today. "The Toast Master" was dated 2 September 1897. The only piece to rival it in significance (but not in beauty) is the Yellow Kid drawing that Outcault submitted for copyright purposes to the Library of Congress.

Alas, the public was fickle. By 1898 the Yellow Kid disappeared from sight. He was probably too crude, too rough, and just too unpleasant to be publicly acceptable for long. Outcault invented a funny-looking boy in a clown's suit for a strip called "Nixie". He drew on his knowledge of blacks and created a very popular strip called "Pore Li'l Mose". He tried to pass off a boy in a bellhop's uniform as funny, and called the strip "Buddy Tucker". Everything was good, but nothing was great.

Then, in early 1902, Buster Brown appeared in "Buster Brown's Bad Bargain!", and he soon became Outcault's most popular character ever. Some of the strip characters were modeled after certain members of Outcault's own family. Buster Brown was a member of the mischievous children genre, but he was different in that he lived in an upper-class setting, was always punished for being bad, and finished every strip with a resolution to be good in the future.

He was joined by the comic world's first talking animal! Now the children reading the comics had a role model that parents could let them relate to, and Buster quickly won the approval of most parents.

Success was assured in 1904 when Outcault took a booth at the St. Louis World's Fair to license his new creation, Buster Brown, for business ventures. The Brown Shoe Company immediately saw the potential for linking Buster Brown's name with theirs, and to this day they are using Buster Brown's image to sell shoes. Outcault had learned from the Yellow Kid experience, in which many of the products were unlicensed; this time he maintained tighter control over his new character while still letting him appear in every way, shape, and form imaginable. Unlike the Yellow Kid, who was a New York City phenomenon, Buster Brown was a national figure. He appeared in numerous papers, the shoes were sold nationally, and he achieved a fame far greater than that realized by the Yellow Kid.

Outcault showed that comic characters could sell newspapers, that they could be licensed to earn incredible amounts of money, and that they could do this by appearing every Sunday and winning the public's heart. The Yellow Kid gave birth to the American comics, and Buster Brown guaranteed that they would never die.

National Service: A Forty-Three-Year Crusade

BY DONALD J. EBERLY

National Service is the cause to which Donald Eberly has dedicated his life: all of his professional positions have been related directly or indirectly to that cause. In the 1950s he taught in Nigeria and Turkey; in the 1960s he was a foreign student adviser at Harvard University, an undersecretary of the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education, and a consultant on service learning. As a government employee in the 1970s, he worked in the ACTION Office of Planning and Policy Development, and, in the 1980s, with the alternative service section of the Selective Service system. He founded the National Service Secretariat¹ in 1966 and has continued to be its executive director.

DURING THE Truman administration in 1950, I thought I had a novel public policy idea: in times of conscription, but not of full mobilization for war, young men should be able to choose between military service and nonmilitary service. They might plant trees and fight forest fires, work in such areas as literacy and public health, or teach in less developed countries. Nonmilitary service would not be limited to those conscientiously opposed to war but would be open as well to young men from all walks of life, including those who might not pass the physical and mental tests of the armed forces.

For more than forty years I have promoted the concept of national service. The record of how the concept fared during successive presidential administrations is contained in a sixty-linear-foot

1. The National Service Secretariat was designed to conduct research on and to promote the concept of national service by publishing a monthly newsletter, among other activities. In addition to Mr. Eberly, the organization has always had several trustees. Although the word secretariat was often used in other countries to refer to an administrative office, the word was little known in the United States until 1973 when a horse by that name won the Kentucky Derby.

collection of papers and audiovisual materials that recently arrived at the Syracuse University Library. It is called the National Service Secretariat Collection.

The idea of national service was not foreign to my upbringing. My parents had studied in Boston—my mother graduated from Radcliffe College with a major in ethics, and my father had studied at Harvard while pursuing a higher degree at the Boston University School of Theology. I am sure that they were familiar with the text of William James's 1906 speech "The Moral Equivalent of War", in which James recommended, as an alternative to the military draft, channeling the energies of youth toward socially constructive purposes. Although my father never discussed alternatives to military service with me, he was anti-war and, as a preacher of the social gospel, was committed to constructive social change.

In 1946 I entered the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a physics major. Just after I graduated in June 1950, the Korean War broke out, and before long I received a postcard from the local draft board ordering me to take a physical exam. After thinking a great deal about my responsibility to serve the nation, I wrote to President Truman suggesting that I might be of more use to the country teaching in a poor country than going into the military. A letter came back from Selective Service saying that that was not an option.

So closed the door to my personal proposal. But the letter I received, cast in terms of public policy, prompted me to think about my situation within a larger context. I made a bargain with myself: if I survived as a soldier, I would serve overseas in a civilian capacity. Then I would compare the contribution I had made in the two forms of service. If I found the idea of civilian service valid, I would commit myself to implementing it on a larger scale.

After fourteen weeks of basic training at Fort Dix, I spent the balance of my two-year hitch in the laboratory, first in the Signal Corps laboratories near Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, and later at the White Sands Proving Grounds in New Mexico. I learned that I was more interested in people than in things. I had always had a curiosity about other peoples, from occasional visits by foreign visitors and American missionaries to my father's parsonage, and from my boyhood days as a stamp collector.

I decided to search for a job in Africa or some such place. In 1953 I arrived in Nigeria, where I was greeted by Tai Solarin, principal of Molusi College in Ijebu-Igbo. He had advertised in a British paper for a science teacher. A short-lived group in New York City known as the International Development Placement Association got wind of it, a friend told me about IDPA, and the deed was done.

Sooner than I expected, I was able to compare the values of military and civilian service. This is from an account of my first month in Nigeria:

I was surprised to learn that 15 students were in the hospital with bilharzia. Tai informed me that this was not unusual; 15 was about average. He said they got bilharzia by drinking water from a snail-infested stream.

“Why not boil it like you do?” I asked.

“Totally impractical”, he replied. It would have taken enormous quantities of their only fuel, wood, to boil that much water.

A day or two later Tai took me on a tour of the 300-acre compound. I noticed some water oozing out of a hillside and asked if that wouldn’t be safer to drink.

“Not enough of it. It’s just a trickle”, he said.

I asked for a bucket and stopwatch. Tai indulged me and sent one of the students off to fetch them.

It was just a trickle, taking several minutes to fill a bucket, but a simple calculation showed there would be over 600 gallons per day, more than enough drinking water for 300 students.

In short order we took samples of the water to Ibadan for testing, it was approved for drinking purposes, and the workmen built a cement block cistern big enough to hold a day’s supply of water.

All was in place by the end of October, the students called it Eberly’s Spring, and that was the end of bilharzia at Molusi College.²

2. Donald J. Eberly, *National Service: A Promise to Keep* (Rochester, N.Y.: John Alden Books, 1988), 20, 21.



Fig. 1. Louise and Don Eberly (front row, center) in 1954 with members of the Historical Research Society, Molusi College, Ibadan, Nigeria.

The years at Molusi College, despite bouts with malaria, no running water, and no electricity, were in many ways the best of my life. I married, traveled around the world, tested my beliefs about what was possible and what was not, and began to draft a national service proposal.

Much of this writing was done at sea, en route from Nigeria to

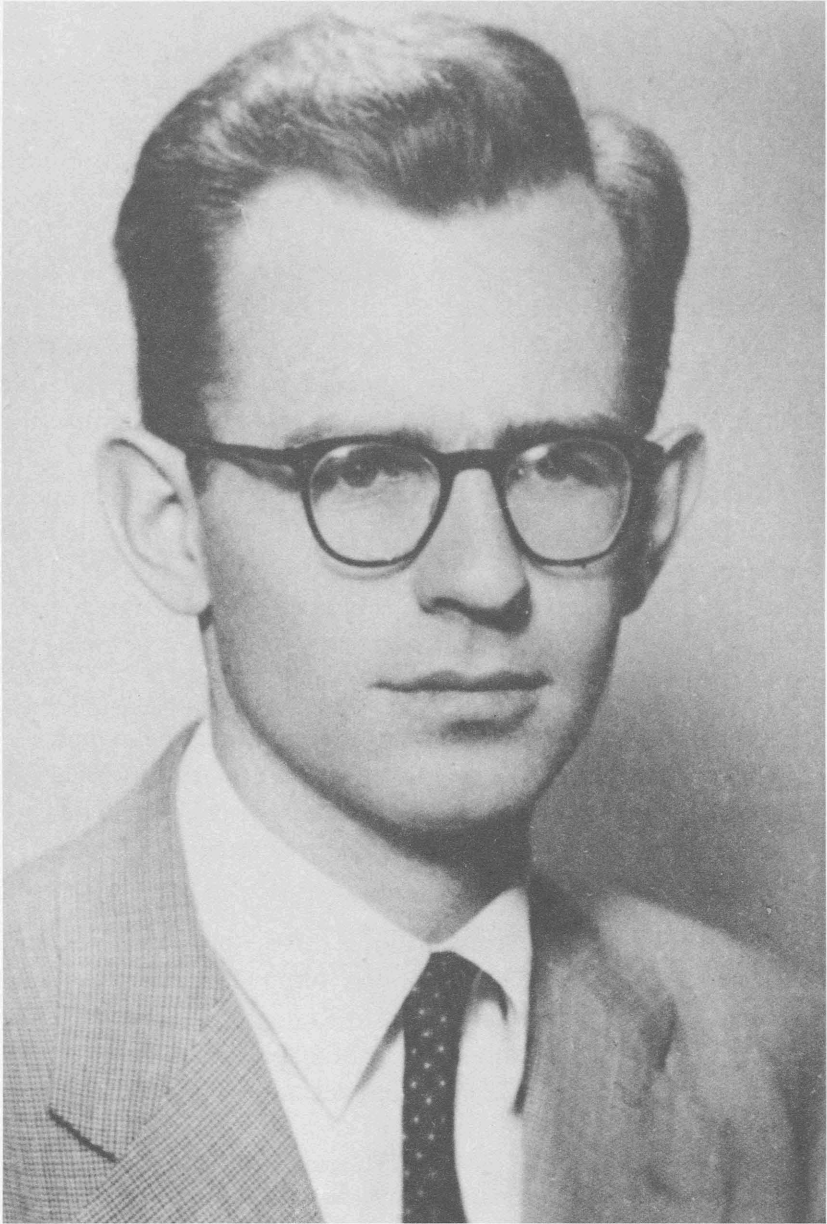


Fig. 2. Donald J. Eberly in 1958.

England, from there to the United States, and from there to Istanbul, where I taught at Robert College from 1957 to 1959. I called the proposal “National Service for Peace”.³ My major concerns were issues of war and peace. I wrote that “we have not reached the point of no return in our armaments program; that it is indeed possible to transfer our investment in manpower from the machinery of war to that of peace”.⁴

The proposal drew on my experiences in the Army and in Nigeria. I knew there would be opposition from those who viewed national service as a way to dodge the draft, so I tried to head off their criticism by suggesting that a young man who opted for peacetime civilian service might face greater danger and discomfort than the person who opted for military service.

Among the forms of domestic service suggested in the proposal were working with the Red Cross, helping farmers in peak harvest seasons, teaching in schools, and helping in institutions for delinquents and the mentally disabled. Although service needs have changed over time, my concluding paragraph seems as germane today as it was thirty-five years ago:

Just as the youth of America owe a period of service to their country, so does America owe them an opportunity to at least explore those areas in which success or failure will determine the kind of America the youth of today will inherit in the coming years.⁵

In 1958 and 1959, I sent my national service proposal to dozens of senators and congressmen, including John F. Kennedy. The only receptive replies came from Senator Kenneth Keating of New York and Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota.

Senator Keating referred my proposal to the State Department.

3. Eberly, “National Service for Peace” (Unpublished paper), 1958. See the National Service Secretariat Collection, Syracuse University Library (hereafter cited as “Secretariat Collection”). Parts of the paper have been published on various occasions, the first as a letter to the editor, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 8 April 1959.

4. Eberly, “National Service for Peace”, 8, 9.

5. *Ibid.*, 9.

The reply that came from Assistant Secretary of State William B. Macomber was discouraging. He claimed that there was no need for such an initiative and, if it were carried out, the austere living standards I had proposed for national service participants would “imperil their health and ruin their effectiveness as public servants”.⁶

I was pleased when Humphrey took up my idea. I carried on a lively correspondence⁷ with him and his aide, Peter Grothe. The Peace Corps bill introduced by Humphrey in June 1960 incorporated, from “National Service for Peace”, the provision that, for purposes of fulfilling one’s military obligation, three years in civilian service would be considered the equivalent of two years in military service.

Humphrey and I were surprised and disappointed when Kennedy, after his election as President, dropped the idea of making Peace Corps service a draft alternative. I learned that the MIT political scientist Max Millikan, whom Kennedy had asked to study the Peace Corps idea, had advised him against connecting it with the draft. Millikan feared that the Peace Corps would be doomed altogether if Nixon’s characterization of it during the presidential campaign as “a haven for draft dodgers” were to take hold.

I thought it vital to make the Peace Corps a draft alternative, because it would mean that the country considered nonmilitary service to be on a par with military service. Indeed, it was this feature of the proposed Peace Corps that had elicited such a positive response, especially from students, during Kennedy’s campaign. The following is excerpted from an editorial, entitled “Peace Corps—Wishful Thinking”, that appeared five days after Kennedy’s inauguration:

The draft exempt provision is undoubtedly the point in the program which brought the most initial response. Yet it would be foolish to assume that a college graduate would

6. William B. Macomber to Senator Kenneth Keating, 11 December 1959, Secretariat Collection.

7. See correspondence with Senator Humphrey and related Peace Corps material in the Secretariat Collection.

want to spend two years in a peace corps and then be subject to a possible draft for another two years. Not exempting participants from selective service seemingly excludes the very persons this type of program is attempting to attract.⁸

This was the first of my disappointments with the way each succeeding president dealt with the idea of national service. But such disappointments made me increasingly determined to see the idea through, because I saw that presidential candidates recognized the potential of it—even though their compromises greatly weakened it. Perhaps by persevering I could help to implement a good and workable program.

Kennedy's decision about the Peace Corps contributed to widespread unhappiness with the draft in the middle and late 1960s. Some Peace Corps volunteers were drafted out of their overseas assignments and sent to Vietnam; others were told by their draft boards that they had completed their service and would not be drafted; still others were permitted to complete their two-year Peace Corps hitch and then were drafted.

In 1965 President Johnson declared an International Cooperation Year and invited proposals to be considered at a conference. I submitted my national service proposal and was invited to the conference. About two dozen people, including one Congressman, expressed enthusiasm for my ideas. With these people and several others I convened the First National Service Conference, held at the Princeton Club in New York City.

At that meeting we agreed on the following points:

- that national service should provide additional manpower to volunteer groups,
- that it should develop gradually,
- that it should be decentralized,
- that it should not be a program of direct political action, and

8. Editorial, *Michigan State News*, 25 January 1961.

- that it should not be intended as a draft-dodging mechanism.

The conference was covered on the front page of the *New York Times*, and soon many people were talking about national service.

I had reason to believe that Johnson would support the idea. As early as 1941, at the behest of President Roosevelt, Johnson had introduced a bill that would have created a permanent Civilian Youth Administration from a merger of two temporary agencies, the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration. The bill came to a standstill when Pearl Harbor was bombed.

In July 1966, President Lyndon Johnson established the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service and gave it two missions: to study reforms for the Selective Service and to examine the idea of national service. He proclaimed, “[N]o man has truly lived who [has] only served himself. . . . For while America has not ceased to be the land of opportunity to succeed, it has also become the land of opportunity to serve.”⁹ Johnson assigned Burke Marshall to head the Commission. Because of my role in the First National Service Conference, Marshall asked me to develop a plan for national service so that the Commission would have something specific to consider.¹⁰

Commission members reacted favorably to the national service plan I presented to them in November,¹¹ and I thought we were on the way. But not long after that I received cautionary signals from

9. “President Calls for Manpower Service Program”, *National Service Newsletter*, October 1966. Also see related papers under “National Advisory Commission on Selective Service” in the Secretariat Collection.

10. To support my research on this plan, several foundations offered me grants. My employer at the time, Education and World Affairs, agreed to receive the grants, to give me leave, and to permit me to work out of my office temporarily. I agreed not to identify EWA with national service and therefore adopted the name *National Service Secretariat* as the organization under which my activities were carried out.

11. The text of the plan is included in Donald J. Eberly, ed., *National Service: A Report of a Conference* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1968), 513–46. For further information, see related papers under “National Advisory Commission on Selective Service” in the Secretariat Collection.

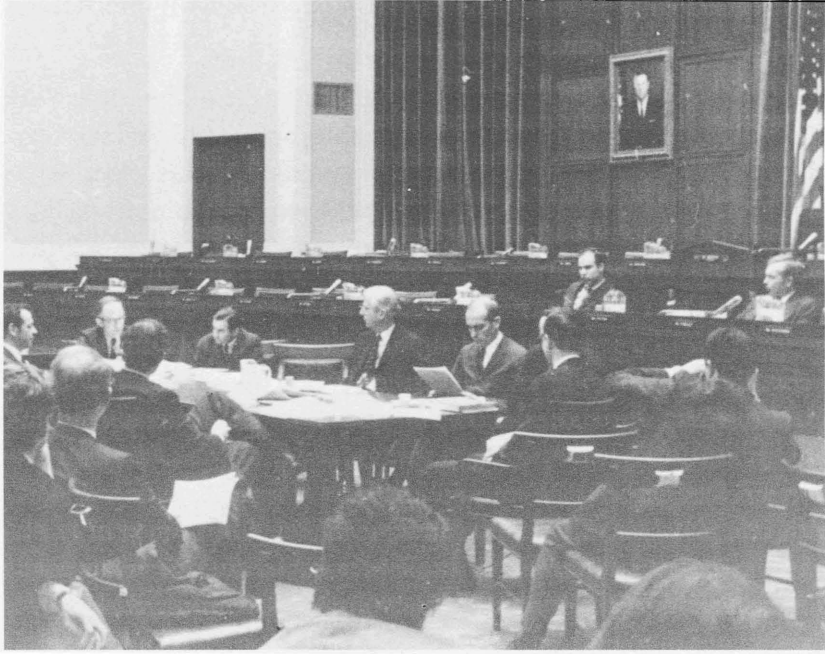


Fig. 3. Donald Eberly in 1970 discussing national service in the House of Representatives. From left to right at the table are: Congressman Don Fraser, Donald Eberly, and Congressmen James Symington and Jonathan Bingham.

White House officials. Soon word was out that Johnson had decided to escalate the Vietnam War, downgrade the War on Poverty, and put off serious consideration of national service.

The national service rhetoric of President Nixon was as promising as that of his predecessor:

There needs to be something more than the mere absence of war. Young people need something positive to respond to—some high enterprise in which they can test themselves and fulfill themselves. . . . I believe that government has a responsibility to ensure that the idealism and willingness to contribute of our dedicated young people be put to constructive use.¹²

12. President's Commission on Campus Unrest, "The Scranton Report", *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, vol. 5, no. 2 (5 October 1970), 24.

As a follow-up to that statement, in 1971 Nixon created a federal volunteer agency called ACTION, an agency intended to embrace the Peace Corps, VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), and other volunteer service programs. At about the same time, he established the All-Volunteer Force and gave it \$3 billion a year to encourage young people to volunteer for military service. Although there continued to be talk of national service, the Nixon aide responsible for eliminating conscription and moving toward the All-Volunteer Force, Martin Anderson, moved quickly to squelch all national service efforts.

But Anderson overlooked Nixon's appointee to head ACTION, Joseph Blatchford. A Republican of liberal stripe, Blatchford had read "The Moral Equivalent of War" in college and had been enthusiastic about the idea of national service ever since. Blatchford hired me to work on the project in 1971, and the next year he submitted a multibillion dollar national service budget to the Office of Management and Budget, which rejected it flatly. Blatchford was told he would not be given any money for the idea, but, even if he managed to obtain funds on his own, he was not to refer to the initiative as "national service". Blatchford took \$1.5 million out of the VISTA budget, which he controlled, and used it to establish a national-service pilot project in Seattle under the innocuous name *Program for Local Service* (PLS).

PLS enrolled 372 participants between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five for a year of full-time service. During its first year of existence, the program generated a wealth of data for the future development of national service.¹³ The evaluators found that a national service open to all young people would attract a representative sample of the youth population, with a slightly disproportionate share of racial minorities and persons who were unemployed and looking for work. It was also found that, through their PLS experience, participants acquired an increased awareness of the needs of others and advanced up a career ladder at twice the rate of the cross-section of young people who had been used to norm the test.

13. See documents under "ACTION: Program for Local Service" in the Secretariat Collection.

Unemployment fell dramatically as participants found jobs after their service, often with or through the organizations to which they had been assigned.

President Ford's brush with national service came with the issue of amnesty for men who had dodged the draft during the war in Vietnam, typically by going to Canada. Ford offered them amnesty on condition that they perform civilian service. Immediately after this I sent him a telegram offering to provide information about running a successful program. Ford did not respond to my telegram. Furthermore, he failed to note what our recent experience with alternative service had confirmed: that without financial support from the government, the program would collapse.

During the Vietnam War, thousands of young men had been granted conscientious objector status by their draft boards and ordered to perform alternative service. It was a difficult order to follow because many COs could not find positions with public service organizations that gave them a stipend or wage sufficient to enable them to serve. In 1971 Ronald Reagan, as governor of California, had eased the stress in the system by creating the California Ecology Corps as a state agency, giving its members room and board and a little spending money. Ford, however, refused to give government financial support to men in the conditional amnesty program, and the morass continued until President Jimmy Carter issued an unconditional amnesty shortly after taking office in 1977.

The end of the draft in 1973 meant less talk of national service as an alternative to the military and more emphasis on its relationship to other areas. The big issue in 1976 was youth unemployment, and the first question put to candidates Ford and Carter in their first debate was what they would do about it. Carter replied that he would bring back the Civilian Conservation Corps. With his election, everyone knew there would be a major youth initiative, and dozens of congressmen submitted various forms of youth employment legislation.

At the request of the Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, I had coordinated in April 1976 a national service conference at Hyde Park with Congressman Andrew Young of Georgia as the keynote

speaker.¹⁴ I worked closely with him on his Youth Initiatives Act of 1977¹⁵ and was optimistic that it would get special attention from Carter, because Young had been a valued adviser during the campaign (he had also helped get Carter out of his “ethnic purity” embarrassment).¹⁶ As it turned out, Carter named Young as United Nations ambassador; Young resigned from Congress, and he was too occupied with international concerns to push his Youth Initiatives Act.

Carter moved slowly to put his stamp on youth employment legislation. Congress threatened to take the initiative if Carter failed to come up with a plan by early March. Eventually Carter did keep his promise from the campaign: in August 1977 he signed the Youth Employment and Demonstration Projects Act, which included the (short-lived) Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC), a modern-day version of the CCC.

The draft issue returned toward the end of the Carter years when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and Carter asked for authority to register young men and women for military service. While that proposal was being debated, I visited Syracuse University to participate in a mock hearing, conducted by the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, on the pros and cons of the draft and national service. Carter’s newly appointed head of Selective Service, Bernard Rostker, also testified at the hearing.

When Rostker and I talked later in the day, he said that, although he did not especially like my ideas on national service, he needed someone of my experience to modernize the alternative service program for conscientious objectors, a program that long-time head of Selective Service Lewis B. Hershey had run out of his hip pocket. The invitation appealed to me because I expected the draft

14. See documents under “Eleanor Roosevelt Institute” in the Secretariat Collection.

15. See files marked “Legislation” in the Secretariat Collection for further information about this and other national service bills.

16. In a campaign speech, Carter referred to “ethnic purity”, which was evidently a code word to some people for segregated housing. Young, a black congressman from Georgia, said Carter was not a segregationist, and the episode was forgotten in a few days.

to follow soon after registration was restored, and I believed that significant numbers of young men would declare themselves to be COs.

A large-scale program of alternative service for COs could become an avenue to national service in the United States just as it has in Germany. Their program started in the late 1950s when a handful of young men had to prove their CO beliefs before a tribunal, but it has grown into a de facto national service program in which young men choose between twelve months of military service and fifteen months of arduous civilian service.¹⁷ By 1993 some 130,000 young men were meeting their service obligation in this way.

In the United States, registration for the draft—for men only—was in fact restored, and I worked on alternative service for the next four years.¹⁸ Although registration for the draft has continued, no one has since been drafted.

National service was not an issue during the 1980 campaign. Candidate Reagan used two newspaper columns to make clear his distaste for national service. Soon after taking office, he closed down the Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC), a move that prompted Congressmen John Seiberling, Morris Udall, and others to propose an American Conservation Corps (ACC). The measure, having worked its way through various committees, passed both the House and the Senate in 1984. Although Republicans working for the measure thought they had assurances from the White House that Reagan would sign it, he vetoed it a few days before the 1984 election because it was “based on the discredited approach to youth unemployment that relies on artificial public sector employment”.¹⁹

17. See Jurgen Kuhlmann, “West Germany: The Right Not to Bear Arms”, in Donald Eberly and Michael Sherraden, *The Moral Equivalent of War? A Study of Non-Military Service in Nine Nations* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 127–50.

18. See papers under “Alternative Service and COs” in the Secretariat Collection.

19. “American Conservation Corps Bill Vetoed by President Reagan; Rep. Panetta Introduces New Kind of National Service Bill”, *National Service Newsletter*, December 1984.

Congressman Leon Panetta was a strong supporter of national service. Several years earlier he had flown me to his district in California where he conducted an all-day seminar on the subject. We talked about what kind of a national service bill might get Reagan's signature and came up with a decentralized approach that would give fifty-fifty matching grants to states and cities that ran youth service programs. There would be certain federal criteria, such as the provision of health insurance for participants and the prohibition of discrimination, but the guidelines within which the program would operate were fairly broad. Hearings were held, and the bill got some attention; but after the veto of the American Conservation Corps bill, there was not enough optimism to carry it all the way through the legislative process. Nevertheless, the Panetta bill,²⁰ together with the ACC, formed the foundation for the National and Community Service Act that was to pass in 1990 and the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993.

Reagan's adamant opposition to national service was one of the reasons the Secretariat organized the Coalition for National Service in 1986. There was still talk in Washington of national service. An opposition tactic was to allege that national service advocates could not agree on what they wanted. I knew that there were differences among advocates, but I also knew we had more ideas in common. Through a coalition we could support state and local service initiatives, encourage discussion, and endorse an official statement of principles for national service.

I had already formulated such a statement,²¹ which I sent to twelve leading national service proponents. I felt we could proceed with a coalition if six of them endorsed the statement and agreed to join. Ten of them did, among them Derek Bok, president of Harvard University; Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Council for the Advancement of Teaching; John W. Gardner, former secretary of Health, Education and Welfare; Donald Kennedy,

20. Called "Voluntary National Youth Service" (HR 6422 of 1984). See files marked "Panetta" and materials under "Legislation" in the Secretariat Collection.

21. See Eberly, *National Service: A Promise to Keep*, 116. For further information, see papers under "Coalition for National Service" in the Secretariat Collection.

president of Stanford University; and Donna Shalala, president of Hunter College. We went full steam ahead.

The Coalition for National Service grew to about 150 individuals and organizations within the year and did indeed influence the course of the national service debate, most notably during the 1988 election campaign. Gene Sperling of the Michael Dukakis camp had called early in the year for information about national service, and we had several long talks about it over the phone. In the spring, Dukakis tepidly embraced the idea of national service for youth by recommending several modest programs, especially in the field of education.

In July the Secretariat convened a conference of Coalition members at the Wingspread Conference Center in Wisconsin to chart a strategy for the coming decade.²² Both presidential candidates declined our invitations to speak, but among those who came was former Congressman Paul N. McCloskey. Like Panetta, McCloskey had been a long-time supporter of national service and in 1979 had introduced a national service bill based on the set of recommendations I had made to the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service.²³ During the Wingspread meetings, McCloskey made numerous calls to George Bush campaign officials, urging them to take up national service in a big way.

Discussions continued in both camps, with Professor Charles Moskos, an expert in military sociology and a Secretariat trustee, working on Dukakis; and McCloskey and then Peace Corps Director Loret Ruppe working on Bush. Just before the Bush-Dukakis debate in late September, Sperling called to say that Dukakis would make a major statement on national service two days after the debate. I was surprised when nothing happened. Sperling explained that Dukakis, because he felt he had won the debate, had not wanted to risk slippage with a major new proposal. A few days after that Bush said that he would establish Youth Engaged in Service to America, “a national service foundation which

22. See Coalition for National Service, *National Service: An Action Agenda for the 1990s* (Washington, D.C.: National Service Secretariat, 1988), and papers under “Wingspread Conferences” in the Secretariat Collection.

23. See footnote 12.

I will begin when I am President”.²⁴ Dukakis, who was slipping in the polls, could not then afford to speak out in support of national service and thus appear to rubber-stamp a proposal first made by his opponent.

The biggest boost to the National and Community Service Act of 1990 came from Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. He proposed that a period of national service be made a condition for receiving grants and loans for higher education. It was not a new proposal; Moskos of the Democratic Leadership Council, and Congressman Dave McCurdy had recommended it years before. But Nunn’s endorsement made the headlines and got it moving. Most of the higher education associations responded by saying that they supported national service on the one hand, but opposed the direct link between service and education on the other. There was such a storm of protest that Nunn withdrew his proposal in mid-April on the grounds that he did not want to hinder the advance of national service legislation.

Like other presidents before him, Bush showed that his national service rhetoric was stronger than his commitment. Although he had declared that America would support programs with stipends, such as the California Conservation Corps, he made clear his opposition to stipends for full-time nonmilitary service when he signed the 1990 act, which allocated \$75 million a year for full-time youth service programs and part-time service-learning programs.

As head of the Democratic Leadership Council, Governor Bill Clinton had supported the Nunn plan, but as presidential candidate he tried a different approach to the same idea. Here is the national service section from his standard campaign speech, which he gave under the heading of the “New Covenant”:

The New Covenant means new challenges for every young person. I want to establish a system of voluntary national service for all Americans. In a Clinton administration, we’ll put forth a domestic GI Bill that will say to the middle class as well as low-income people: We want you to

24. “Dukakis and Bush Declare Stands on National Youth Service”, *National Service Newsletter*, October 1988.

go to college, we'll pay for it, it will be the best money we ever spent, but you've got to give something back to your country in return. As President, I'll set up a trust fund out of which any American can borrow money for a college education, so long as they pay it back either as a small percentage of their income over time or with a couple of years of national service as teachers, police officers, child care workers—doing work our country desperately needs.²⁵

Clinton tried to match his rhetoric with deeds, asking for \$7.4 billion over four years to get his reverse GI Bill form of national service under way. It pleased me and many others in the field when Clinton decided to expand his program to include persons who had not been to college and who could earn the GI Bill from a year or two of national service. By the time the White House and Congress finished compromising, the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 was signed by Clinton in September 1993 and was given an authorization of \$1.5 billion over three years. Time will tell if this is enough of a push to establish national service as a permanent institution.

The interplay between presidents and advocates of national service seems likely to continue. The 1991 Wingspread Conference²⁶ convened by the Secretariat set forth a rationale and a plan for national service to become established early in the twenty-first century. We suggested that national service deserves a place alongside existing institutions such as education and work. Although in the Clinton plan the number of national service openings is very limited and they are expected to rise only to about 50,000, my guess is that a disproportionate share of future presidents and public servants will come from the pool of those with national service experience. If that happens, I expect that national service will become a permanent institution within fifty years.

25. Quoted from a photocopy of a 1991 campaign handout contained in "Clinton File" in the Secretariat Collection.

26. Donald J. Eberly, *National Youth Service: A Democratic Institution for the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: National Service Secretariat, 1991). Also see papers under "1991 Wingspread Conference".

NATIONAL SERVICE IN OTHER COUNTRIES

In recent years I have examined several national service programs overseas. Although the programs have varied origins and objectives, they share the idea of young people performing full-time service for about one year. Most overseas programs include a range of activities similar to that of the United States, with education, public health, and elder care being among the most prevalent.

Germany's national service program grew out of an effort to establish an equitable alternative to military service for conscientious objectors. Young men are no longer required—as they were in the 1950s—to prove the sincerity of their beliefs as conscientious objectors; they merely sign a form indicating their preference for spending fifteen months in civilian service instead of twelve months in military service. As civilian national service activities have become more visible in Germany, growing from about 1000 participants in 1960 to about 130,000 in 1993, they have also become more popular with the general public.²⁷

Several nations that have achieved independence since the end of World War II emphasize the nation-building value of national service. For example, Nigeria and Botswana wanted their future leaders to experience life in a different part of the country from where they grew up. Nigeria requires its university graduates to perform a year of national service, whereas Botswana requires a year of national service from those about to enter a university.

Costa Rica's University Community Service has students teaming up with professors to apply their formal education to real-life problems, usually in poor areas of the country.

The documents in the National Service Secretariat Collection reflect studies and travels associated with the international dimension of national service. Two publications have also resulted from these activities: *The Moral Equivalent of War? A Study of Non-Military Service in Nine Nations*, by Donald Eberly and Michael Sherraden (see footnote 17); and *National Youth Service: A Global Perspective*, edited by Donald J. Eberly (Washington, D.C.: National Service Secretariat, 1992).

27. Kuhlmann, "Right Not to Bear Arms", 143-46.

Hey, Why Don't We Start an External High School Diploma Program?

BY PATRICIA KING AND MARY BETH HINTON

STEPHEN K. BAILEY (1916–1982),¹ a distinguished educator, once remarked that the four most powerful words in the English language are “Hey, why don't we . . .”² In 1972 he and his colleagues Francis U. Macy and Donn F. Vicars, who shared his passionate commitment to educational change, designed the New York State External High School Diploma Program,³ the first program to award high school diplomas based on demonstrated competence, regardless of how that competence was acquired.

Bailey had been an early advocate of “competency-based education”, which was, he said,

a rather fat phrase for a fairly muscular idea: that persons should be awarded academic credits and degrees, or occupational licenses and certificates, on the basis of proven performance rather than on the basis of formal classes attended, prescribed courses completed, or arbitrary amounts of time served in a particular learning role.⁴

1. Stephen K. Bailey was dean of the Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs from 1961 to 1969, at which point he became chairman of the Syracuse University Research Corporation's Policy Institute, a local “think tank”. Bailey also served on the New York State Board of Regents from 1967 to 1973. That year he moved to Washington, D.C., to become vice-president of the American Council on Education.

2. Stephen K. Bailey, “Continuous Education Throughout Life” (address delivered to the Twenty-eighth Annual Midwinter Forum of the Auerbach Service Bureau for Connecticut Organizations, Hartford, Connecticut, 26 January 1973).

3. Some records of the program's early development were given to Syracuse University by Jean Kordalewski, who was part of the original EDP team and who recently retired as director of the Regional Learning Service of Central New York.

4. Stephen K. Bailey, “Career Education and Competency-Based Credential-

In 1971, as a member of the New York State Board of Regents, Bailey helped create the Regents External Degree Program, through which adults can earn a college degree by demonstrating that they have fulfilled specific curriculum requirements.

He and his two colleagues at the Syracuse University Research Corporation (SURC)⁵ saw a need for a similar program at the high school level. To earn a traditional high school diploma, one must spend twelve years in classrooms. But for a variety of reasons—economic, familial, psychological, cultural—not everyone is well served by this system. Nor is the GED (General Equivalency Diploma) Test,⁶ the most widely-used alternative to attending high school, always suitable. In 1972 Bailey et al. wrote:

More than 40 percent of Americans over 22 do not have a high school diploma. A large percentage of students—some 900,000 annually—continue to drop out of high school before graduation. The social and economic price to society is well documented. Statistics on unemployment, welfare, and crime do not adequately reflect, however, the sense of personal failure, the brooding hostility toward others, the psychic withdrawals and lash-outs that so frequently accompany dropping out of an established system that seems to do so well for so many.⁷

By 1991 the External Diploma Program, or EDP, had enabled more than 10,000 adults⁸ who might otherwise have fallen through

ism” (Syracuse University Research Corporation, 1973), 14. (A contribution to the Career Education essays sponsored by the U.S. Commissioner of Education, Sidney P. Marland, Jr.)

5. In 1977 the name was changed to Syracuse Research Corporation (SRC).

6. The GED Test is a five-subject, two-day, high school equivalency test. It was developed after World War II for veterans and service personnel.

7. Stephen K. Bailey, Francis U. Macy, and Donn F. Vickers, *Alternative Paths to the High School Diploma* (Prepared by the Policy Institute, Syracuse University Research Corporation, for the Ford Foundation, 1973), 7-8.

8. Statistic from Florence Harvey, “The National External Diploma Program: An Adult Competency High School Diploma”, *CAEL* [Council for Adult and Experiential Learning] *News*, vol. 14, no. 2. (Spring 1991).

the cracks to obtain their high school diploma—that ticket to self-respect and advancement in our credential-conscious society.

HOW THE EDP BEGAN

In 1972 SURC received a grant from the Ford Foundation to design an alternative route to a high school diploma. Bailey and Vicars convened a thirty-member group of educators, businessmen, and other community leaders to sketch the broad outlines of a high school curriculum for adults. As Dorothea Nelson, a member of that group, recalls, “Bailey wrote three questions on the board: ‘Who’s out there? What do they need to know? How can we help them?’” She said, “We worried about the future of all those adults without diplomas. How would they support themselves and their children?”⁹

The SURC group talked to high-school dropouts—rural and urban disadvantaged, expectant and young mothers, Viet Nam veterans, non-conformists, non-English speakers, the physically handicapped, and those in drug rehabilitation. Nelson said, “We met with them to find out why they had dropped out and why they might drop back in; we met them on their turf—bars, hotel lobbies, living rooms”. The group discovered that these adults were not using existing programs because they felt that the timing was often inconvenient, the course content was irrelevant, and the final testing was intimidating.

The SURC group also identified general areas in which they believed adults needed to be competent: communication, computation, self-awareness, social awareness, consumer awareness, scientific awareness, and occupational preparedness.¹⁰

They envisioned a program based on the needs of adults. Unlike children, most adults can work independently. But because they

9. Dorothea Nelson, conversation with Mary Beth Hinton, Syracuse, N.Y., 6 May 1993.

10. The choice of these areas has been validated by subsequent studies and by students’ assessments of their relevance. See Ruth S. Nickse, *Assessing Life-Skills Competence: The New York State External High School Diploma Program* (Pitman Learning, Inc., Belmont, California, 1980), 31–32. The competency *technological awareness* was later added by the American Council on Education.

tend to have many demands on their time, they need to have choices regarding when and where they will do their work. Furthermore, adults, being used to solving problems of everyday life, often respond best to learning tasks that simulate real-life situations.

In early 1973, Bailey, Macy, and Vicars, drawing on the group's ideas and findings, produced a monograph¹¹ containing a detailed description of the proposed program. Another grant, this one from the State Education Department, enabled SURC to develop and implement that program.

The New York State External Diploma Program was to be administered by the recently-established Regional Learning Service (RLS) of Central New York¹²—also founded by Bailey, Macy, and Vicars. It would be another year, however, before the first twenty-five diploma candidates were enrolled.

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

Ruth Nickse was project director and principal investigator during the EDP's early, experimental years, and she had a staff of about eight people. Although Bailey moved in 1973 to Washington, D.C., Macy and Vicars, as RLS administrators, continued to be involved in the EDP.

Among the first moves Nickse made was to organize a task force of educational consultants to identify specific competencies. She recalled:

It was extremely important to get the right mix of people. We advertised in the paper. We were looking for people who were strong in some content area and who had experience with adult learning. Maybe twenty-five or thirty responded. We took fourteen. We wanted a wide mix because if you bring together two or three English teachers, for instance, they start to show off for each other. They

11. Bailey, et al., *Alternative Paths*.

12. The Regional Learning Service is an educational and career counseling/brokering service. It was designed to help learners assess their strengths and weaknesses, define their career and educational goals, and identify learning opportunities appropriate to their goals. The RLS and the EDP were intended to be complementary.

keep raising the standard as they became more impressed with the importance of their own field. We knew this would take away from answering the basic question, which was always, What does an adult need to know and to be able to do?¹³

After meeting as a group, each task force member produced a list of competencies in his or her own field. When the group met again, each person had to read the list and defend it. Nickse described the process:

There was a huge amount of ridicule and argument. I can remember one person—I guess an English teacher—saying, “Everybody ought to know rules of language and be able to punctuate and love Shakespeare”. Then a phys. ed. teacher got up and said, “That’s not important. Take it off your list. I hate Shakespeare and I can do all those other things. That’s not a functional skill. It’s too difficult.” So when his turn came he said, “Everybody ought to know the categories of food and how to report an emergency and how to find their way to a doctor’s office or a clinic and how to set a bone”. The English teacher said, “That’s absolutely ridiculous. If you have a broken bone, you ought to know how to get to a hospital. Take that off your list.”

After six weeks the group had identified 100 competencies. To refine the list further, Nickse invited people from all over the city of Syracuse to react to it. They voted on the competencies, which were again revised until being unanimously approved. The final list contained sixty-four “life skill competencies”.¹⁴ Following are examples of the competencies listed under the general areas that had been identified by Bailey et al.:

COMMUNICATION [adequate for adult functioning]

Read

Listen

13. Ruth Nickse, telephone conversation with Patricia King, 1 September 1993.

14. There are now sixty-five competencies.

View
Write
Speak

COMPUTATION

Compute whole numbers
Compute decimals
Compute percentages
Compute and approximate area

SELF-AWARENESS

Apply decision-making process
Identify own values and goals
Identify the uses of music to manipulate emotions
Exercise responsibilities for own health and that of family

SOCIAL AWARENESS

Collect information on community resources
Estimate time and distance
State contributions of different cultures to American life
Exercise rights and responsibilities of citizenship

CONSUMER AWARENESS

Obtain and list sources of consumer information
Distinguish between fact and opinion in everyday consumer practices
Identify and compare sources of consumer credit in making a purchase decision

SCIENTIFIC AWARENESS

Read scale on standard measuring device
Solve simple equations
Convert measurements
Classify information

OCCUPATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

Identify own vocational interests and aptitudes
Compare various occupations
Identify characteristics of a good worker.¹⁵

15. Judith Alamprese, Norma S. Feldman, and Linda Lehman, *New York State External High School Diploma Program Manual of Generalized Assessment Materials*

The next step was to create a system for assessing whether diploma candidates had mastered the sixty-four competencies and an individual skill. “Most important to me”, said Nickse, “was developing a fair, viable, and valid assessment system that would give adults an opportunity to demonstrate what they knew”. She hired Margaret Charters, a human development professor from Syracuse University, to devise a system for assessing occupational skills. Charters, too, held focus group meetings, in her case to identify specific tasks that could be used to demonstrate each competency. She said:

It was very challenging, very intellectually stimulating; it was time consuming, but it was fun. I remember bringing in people who were teachers in child care and cooking to help us think through some of the activities that would demonstrate these skills. We really started from scratch.¹⁶

THE EDP IN OPERATION

The result of these labors was a two-phase program. During the diagnostic phase, an advisor evaluated applicants’ basic skills in reading, writing, and math. In addition to basic skills, each person had to possess an individual or special skill—perhaps welding or dairy farming. Using a self-assessment checklist, applicants evaluated their own mastery of the sixty-four competencies. Although the program itself provided no instruction, if deficiencies in required skills were discovered, the advisor suggested learning options, such as attending classes, using the library, or seeking help from a friend or a tutor. Unsuccessful applicants could re-apply after correcting their deficiencies.

Successful applicants entered an assessment phase, which lasted about two to five months. During this phase they demonstrated

(Syracuse, N.Y.: December 1975; revised June 1978). Produced by the Regional Learning Service, a division of the Syracuse Research Corporation, under a grant from the Division of Continuing Education, New York State Education Department, under the Adult Education Act.

16. Margaret Charters, telephone conversation with Patricia King, 1 September 1993.

mastery of the sixty-four competencies, taking time as needed to brush up (on their own) on certain skills. They also had to demonstrate, or supply proof, that they possessed an individual skill. After fulfilling these requirements, candidates received a regular high school diploma through the local school board.

Significantly, competencies were not demonstrated in a sequence starting with number one and ending with sixty-four. Rather, they were integrated within *tasks*. For example, to carry out the task *locate places on a map*, a candidate had to be able to measure the distance and estimate the travel time between one point and another. This task calls for three competencies in three difference areas: *read* (a map), under COMMUNICATION; *estimate time and distance*, under SOCIAL AWARENESS; and *read scale on standard measuring device*, under SCIENTIFIC AWARENESS. Assessors assigned groups of tasks to candidates, who demonstrated them during weekly “spot-check interviews”.

Norma Feldman, who was an assessor during the EDP’s early years, recalled what those interviews were like:

We avoided using language and procedures associated with school. For instance, we never used the word “test”, and we tried to get away from pencils and papers and “You’ve got fifty minutes to write down what you know”. There are other ways to get adults involved. They don’t have to line up in little chairs in front of a teacher. We asked them to deal with realistic situations, such as having to compute the area of a room—it was always a complicated L-shaped room. If they couldn’t do it, we told them why—they may have done the multiplication correctly but added the two squares incorrectly. Then we’d send them home and they’d have to find a way to figure it out. The issue was not, Can you memorize facts? It was, Can you take the concept of area and apply it to this situation? Adults have to be able to do that.¹⁷

17. Norma Feldman and Marion Kalenak, conversation with Mary Beth Hinton, Syracuse, N.Y., 11 August 1993.

Candidates could prove that they possessed an individual skill in one of three ways: (1) by asking an employer to certify the fact, (2) by presenting proof of having completed some course of training, or (3) by demonstrating their skill in front of an expert. For those who chose the third option, a separate assessment instrument had to be developed. Sharon View, who joined the EDP in 1976, developed an assessment for a security guard. First she interviewed experienced security guards to find out what a person in that position had to know. “There were differences”, she explained, “in what the various experts thought should be included”.¹⁸ After weighing these, View cast the list of skills in the appropriate language: “It had to be very concrete”. For example, a security guard must be able to identify the four classes of fire. The completed assessment instrument would be administered by an expert in the field.

Dorothea Nelson, an EDP staff assistant, remembers that an expert had to be found to assess a candidate’s skill in raising parakeets. The program enrolled bricklayers, bookkeepers, carpenters, models, offset printers, meat cutters, small business managers, softball umpires, and ballroom dancers, among many others. However, the most popular skills were, and have continued to be, home management and home maintenance.

The assessment process culminated in an annual graduation ceremony, which was by all accounts a joyful event because, as Sharon View explained,

It was the fulfillment of a dream. Our graduates, like so many adults out there, were worthy of a high school diploma, but for various reasons they would not have been able to get one through traditional means.

Although materials and procedures have been refined, the basic design of the EDP remains unchanged. After the model had been tested for a year, the program was used in other locations. By 1976 the State Education Department had funded five additional sites in the Syracuse area.¹⁹ In 1980, when the Regional Learning Service

18. Sharon View, telephone conversation with Mary Beth Hinton, 8 September 1993.

19. In New York State, candidates may participate in the program only if their

lost funding for it, the local EDP was adopted by the Onondaga County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).

A PROMISING FUTURE FOR THE EDP

Of the more than fifty-one million adults today who do not have a high school diploma, about 2400 a year enroll in the EDP.²⁰ In contrast, almost half a million take the GED (General Equivalency Diploma) Test, a credentialing option that tends to attract younger adults.²¹ Nevertheless, because of its sound design and its suitability for some people—especially adults over the age of thirty-five—the EDP continues to grow. The journal *Adult & Continuing Education Today* predicted that the number of graduates in the program would rise to 40,000 annually:

If the External Diploma Program has been small, it has nonetheless been effective. A study shows that 25 percent of the graduates went on to take educational courses. Of those who are employed, 53 percent received a raise in salary and 22 percent acquired a change in job title after obtaining their diplomas. A whopping 94 percent reported an increase in confidence to undertake new challenges, and 83 percent said they felt more positive about their skills and abilities.²²

The American Council on Education (ACE), which also administers the GED Test, obtained the rights for the New York State External Diploma Program in 1990. By that time ten other states had adopted the New York State model,²³ and the ACE plans to make the program available in all fifty states by the year 2000.

school district accredits the EDP. The program is accredited by all but two of some twenty school districts serving the Central New York area.

20. David Stewart, "External High School Diploma Program Affiliates with ACE", in *Adult & Continuing Education Today* (27 August 1990), 4.

21. Statistic from American Council on Education handouts on the EDP.

22. Stewart, "External High School Diploma Program Affiliates with ACE", 4.

23. The participating EDP states are California, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Some of these states offer the program at only one location, unlike New York State which has twenty different sites.

Portrait of a City: Syracuse, the Old Home Town

BY JOHN A. WILLIAMS

INTRODUCTION BY ROBERT PHILLIPS

THIS HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED portrayal of Syracuse from the perspective of John A. Williams, noted writer and native Syracusan, was written in 1964 for *Holiday* magazine. The typescript is now part of the John A. Williams Collection in the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections at Syracuse University.

Williams, the oldest of four children, went to local public schools—Washington Irving Grammar School, Madison Junior High School, Central High School (where he played football and basketball and ran track), and Vocational High School. He entered the United States Navy in 1943 and received an honorable discharge in 1946. He took an undergraduate degree in 1950, then did graduate work, both at Syracuse University, where he studied writing with Daniel Curley and literature with the legendary Leonard S. Brown. He worked at Oberdorfer Foundry, clerked at a Loblaw's supermarket on Adams Street, became an orderly at Memorial Hospital, joined the public relations staff at Doug Johnson Associates, and served as a caseworker for the Onondaga County Welfare Department before leaving for Los Angeles and then New York City in 1954.

At various times Williams worked in radio and television; he has been a publisher, an editor, a foreign correspondent, a lecturer, and a college professor at several universities (since 1979 at Rutgers University). Meanwhile, he has authored twenty-nine books, including thirteen novels. Many of them draw on his experiences while growing up in Syracuse.

Sissie (1963; reprinted 1964, 1965, 1969, 1975, and 1988) describes the effect of an African American mother's powerful personality upon her children. But it also limns the effect of a specific

environment upon the children. The city of Syracuse—especially the University and an area the narrators call “Jewtown”¹—plays a major role in the formation of the novel’s characters. Syracuse University serves as a symbol of aspiration for the city’s underprivileged:

High above on a hill stood the university. A clumsy shaft of sandstone, one of its sooty Gothic towers[,] was visible from Jewtown. From that tower came the majestic sound of the chimes played by the Delta Kappa Epsilon boys. Perhaps the chimes were responsible for the odd bond that joined the university and Jewtown. Generally the chimes were played twice a day, at eight in the morning and at noon, but during the football seasons they were also used to announce victories with a medley of fight songs. Because Mr. Weinstein [Sissie’s employer] had attended the university, Sissie and her family felt even closer than most to the school. The Weinstains never missed a game, would go off leaving their son with Sissie. Invariably they returned bringing pennants and celluloid football dolls for the Ralphs, Big and Little.

It was with the commoners’ amused tolerance that the residents of Jewtown lined the street to watch the students snake-dance down from the hill in their annual “Beat Colgate” parade. Torches flared, the streets abounded with clean-looking, block-lettered youth. The people of Jewtown dimly hoped that their children someday would be students, snake-dancing down the hill in one of those torchlight parades.

Warily, sometimes, Sissie rummaged through her dreams and thought what all the other Jewtowners were thinking. One day, perhaps, that rare black face in the crowd of students might be her daughter or son. And Big Ralph himself, carried away by bathtub beer, often haltingly voiced the possibility that his son would become a football star. “A

1. See B. G. Rudolph, *From a Minyan to a Community* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1970).

natural little atha-lete,” he would say proudly, and Sissie, pleased, would snort and smile.²

Here is a portrait of a black family and its problems, particularly its financial problems, which tear the family apart. A secondary theme is that of guilt. In an introduction to the 1969 Anchor Books paperback edition, Williams wrote:

The question of guilt because of survival and perhaps even success remains one of the uncharted areas of black life. . . . We have asked combat soldiers who’ve survived the wars, we have asked inmates who outlived the concentration camps, about their guilt about surviving while corpses lay knee-deep around them. But we’ve not bothered to ask Negroes who are surviving the race war about their guilt.³

While sentence for sentence the novel seems simple, the structure is complex. In four sections, its flashbacks shift from the daughter’s point of view, to the son’s, to the mother’s. The fourth section brings the children together at their mother’s deathbed. (The author has said one technical influence was Malcolm Lowry’s *Under the Volcano* [1947], a novel that Leonard Brown not only taught, but in which he was rumored to have appeared as a character. That novel strongly influenced students and writers during the 1950s.)

Sissie had the misfortune to be published almost simultaneously with James Baldwin’s *Another Country* (1962). Apparently, American critics and readers could not embrace two big novels about the black experience at the same time. But *Sissie* had its admirers. One reviewer wrote:

Sissie is a chronicle of Negro life in transition, and it unites, as few novels do, the experience of the brutalized older generation of Negroes with that of the sophisticated young . . . [I]t is full of vivid contrasts, and it conveys memorably an image of the double war that Negroes wage—against

2. John A. Williams, *Sissie* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1988), 217–18.

3. Williams, *Sissie* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), vii.

their white oppressors on the one hand, and generation against generation on the other. . . . *Sissie* is by far better [than *Another Country*]. . . . Baldwin does not seem to possess the grasp of the Negro milieu that Williams displays. . . . *Sissie* is permeated by a quiet anger that builds and builds inexorably. John A. Williams may well be a front-runner in a new surge of Negro creativity.⁴

Sissie was the novel that introduced the Joplin family. Although *Sissie* dies at the end of it, her husband Big Ralph, son Ralph Jr., and daughter Iris inhabit other novels that followed *Sissie*.

In *The Man Who Cried I Am* (Little, Brown, 1967) Iris continues her career as a cabaret singer in Paris, but as a very minor figure. In *The Junior Bachelor Society* (Doubleday, 1976) the city the characters return to for their reunion is Syracuse, though it is not named. Iris is a friend of a failed concert singer from “home” who also lives in Europe. Ralph Jr., who was established as a playwright in *Sissie*, returns to put on a play accompanied by his second wife Eve. While in town he visits his father Big Ralph. In *!Click Song* (Houghton Mifflin, 1982) Ralph’s daughter Raphaella, a college student, is a more-than-minor character. In *Jacob’s Ladder* (Thunder’s Mouth, 1987) Iris is again a major character placed in Africa in the middle of international intrigue; her brother Ralph is mentioned in passing. In *Colleagues*, a work in progress, Raphaella is now a college teacher.

The city of Syracuse has changed drastically in the thirty years since Williams recorded his version of it—as both Democrats and Republicans would rush to agree. Yet he brings it all back, from the battle against impoverishment in the 15th Ward to the “piercing beauty” of Syracuse in the 1920s and ’30s.

4. David Boroff, “Blue Note for Bigotry”, *Saturday Review of Literature* (30 March 1963), 49.

Portrait of a City: Syracuse, the Old Home Town

This was where I lived and grew and was sometimes stunted. Here I romped in the parks, hit the only home run of my life (it was down the third-base line and there was some dispute as to whether it was fair or foul) and thought at first that all bodies of water had bottoms upon which you could walk while moving your arms and call it swimming. This was where I learned how to ice skate, play football, basketball, and baseball, and how to play house with the daughters of the neighbors. Here I found books and went plunging through the doors of other worlds. This was where I was taught a great many myths, but where I also learned a great many truths.

What is this place? Man, it was my home.

I arrived in Syracuse quite early in October last year and went to the real estate agent's office to pick up the key to the apartment I had leased for a month. I had moved away from Syracuse 11 years before after spending most of my first 28 years there. I had not missed the city, only a few people in it. But I had missed the exhilarating four-phase dance of nature; you feel each of the seasons very keenly in Syracuse. It was not by error that the Iroquois Confederacy chose the area around what is now Syracuse as its headquarters. Nature was most bounteous and seductive there. It still is.

My apartment—which I had secured only because a friend of mine convinced the real estate agent that I was a special kind of Negro, an artist of sorts—was located not in a black ghetto, but on North Salina Street, in the heart of the Italian section. That section, I had learned on good authority, was proving to be the most difficult to integrate.

Across the street and a few doors down from me was a firehouse. Several times going and coming, I noticed the firemen watching me. As for the rest of the people in the block, there was no reaction. Downstairs was Stagnitta's Music Shop. Mr. Stagnitta and his son were very friendly, anticipating my rushes into their store for change in order to feed the meter where my rented car was parked

before the neighborhood nemesis, George, the motorcycle cop, could give me a ticket. George was driving everyone in the neighborhood crazy. His sense of timing was uncanny. One swing around the block and he could remember which meters were running out and when. Seconds before the red flag sprang up, screaming EXPIRED, old George was there with his book of tickets. I got one of his calling cards for each week I was in Syracuse.

Syracuse has become such a white collar town that workers in heavy industry seldom wear their work clothes to and from the job. They dress in open shirts and sometimes ties going and coming. They change clothes in the locker rooms. But when I was a kid, we looked forward to the workmen coming home about 4:30 or 6:00, pushing their hand trucks, their faces ringed with sweat and dust, polka-dotted red or blue kerchiefs around their necks and battered hats pushed down upon their heads.

The Syracuse Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, composed of Onondaga, Oswego, and Madison counties, has a population of over half a million people. The city itself should have 222,000 by 1970. It is a growing city that has had great forward economic binges, usually locally controlled. The Ford Foundation has called it "one of the two best places (in the entire United States) for investing money in enterprise". *Fortune* magazine reported that more major corporations have operations in Syracuse than in any other city in the country.

Not far from my apartment was the old Salt Museum. In the seventeenth century the French, urged by missionary-explorer Father Simon LeMoyne, came to the region for salt. They were run out by the Indians. But the city became the principal supplier of salt for the nation. Syracuse is still called the "Salt City". It was incorporated as a village in 1825, bringing together several bickering little communities.

The Syracuse region hankered to be a classic place. This can be seen by the name of not only the city, but also the towns surrounding it: Camillus, Marcellus, Fabius, Tully, Manlius. But the Indians, who were banished to the ragged reservation beyond the south edge of the city, also left their marks: Oswego, Skaneateles, Genesee, Onondaga.

I stood at the window and looked down at the street. It was quiet. Church was over. Syracuse is a church city. There are 252 churches and synagogues throughout Onondaga County, encompassing 28 denominations, and Syracuse is the county seat. Fifty-three percent of the people in the county are Catholic.

I had been across America five times and had flown over or sailed on five of the seven seas; I had visited three continents and been in at least twenty countries. Now I was home again with no pyramids to fill my windows, no sounds of the Mediterranean to wake me, no sprightly calliope music to cheer me as in Amsterdam. It was just quiet.

Syracuse is a city that traps people. You wait to make your move when the summer is over; summer is a dazzling thing here, with the hills and lawns and trees a lush velvet green. But then comes autumn and the city and the outer edges of it are a wild splash of color: bronze, flaming red, ochre, slowly dying green. No one moves during the winter when the Canadian winds, skirting the western edge of the Adirondacks, come roaring down upon the city. The winters are usually so hard that it takes until spring to get over them, and by then you are trapped again.

I learned some things about Syracuse history at Washington Irving School. I always remembered that the bricks of the school were very red. Even on previous fleeting visits when I drove past it, memories of bright red brick shut out the reality that the bricks had become dark and dull, dirty. When, at the demand of the law—and to my mother's relief I am sure—it was time for me to attend public school, I started at Washington Irving. One of my kindergarten teachers was Miss Beatrice Reilly. She is still teaching. I went to the school, where I stood in a hallway and watched her through a window. Her hair is white now, but otherwise she looks almost as she did 33 years ago. I watched her move from blackboard to blocks, from piano to toy cupboard. She was inundated with adoring children whom she sent gently back to their games so that she could give her attention to still other children. There were only two or three white children in her class; the rest were Negro. The neighborhood had changed drastically.

Had children changed? I asked her, pointing out that when I attended her class Negroes were in the minority in the neighborhood. And more than a third of a century had passed. “No”, she said firmly. Children are always the same. Sure, there is television now, and I think that makes them somewhat brighter.” She became a little angry. She motioned to the hordes of colored children pulling at her. “As for these, Americans are only now doing what they should have done 100 years ago for them.” In a softer tone she said, “That was a good class you were in, wasn’t it?”

I didn’t know. But there were people in it who are still my friends, and I supposed that went a long way toward making it a good class. We all lived then in what is now becoming the legendary 15th Ward, or just “The Ward”. There were a lot of Eastern European Jews there, a few Polish families, a few Indians, Italians, and Irish. We had one binding thing in common: we were all poor.

Historically, poor neighborhoods and communities have been most heavily policed. Now I know that we were not being policed, but guarded; we were in many ways in a prison. It is costly to be poor, and those of us who lived in The Ward grew up with no illusions about the police in Syracuse. The 15th Ward paid for the crime that flourished inside its borders. A more corrupt police force would have been hard to come by. Police corruption flourished openly, at least to us, for better than 25 years, mostly in The Ward, but also on the north side, the Italian section. Corruption seemed to go hand in hand with the long-time dominance of the Republican Party.

The cleaning out of police corruption and the upheaval in the GOP, one of the more fortunate things that has happened in Syracuse, began one September night in 1960. Troopers of the New York State criminal investigation unit pounced upon the county GOP chairman and county secretary while he was in a parked car doing immoral things with someone else’s wife. The county chairman pleaded guilty to various charges and was rewarded for his services to the Party with two years’ probation. Months passed. The police department was shaken from top to bottom. The numbers “czar” (as the press called him), a Negro, was made the chief fall guy and was packed off to jail. Ultimately, prostitution,

narcotics peddling, gambling, and a few other things came under investigation.

The Republicans meanwhile had succeeded in finding a “clean” man and ran him successfully for mayor, although his margin of victory was slim. Syracuse closed down as a sporting town, a place for illegal activities. Republican strength has steadily declined, and during the last election the county, so traditionally Republican that it has been in the GOP column for decade upon decade, went for Johnson two to one, ousted the congressional incumbent who had served 18 years, and forced through a number of Democratic judgeships.

Change is in the air.

You hear machines tearing down or building up; girders mount the low horizons. Nowhere is change more evident than in the 15th Ward. Urban renewal and new highways have leveled most of it to the ground. Yellow bulldozers groan back and forth making sure that every vestige of the unhappy Negro who, toward the end, alone inhabited The Ward, is crushed out of sight, out of memory.

One rainy afternoon, I went to The Ward with Walter Carroll, editor of the *Post-Standard's* Sunday Magazine section. We had met in 1953 and, shortly after, when Carroll was writing a series on slum conditions there and I was a caseworker for the Onondaga County Department of Welfare, I took him on a few nocturnal, unofficial and I guess prohibited visits of my district in The Ward. His series shook Syracuse to its foundations and resulted in the formation of the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights, which, as far as I could gather, greatly underestimated the work before it. Carroll, a southerner by birth, was nominated for a Pulitzer for the series. He has a shock of black hair and a sullen look about him except when he has discovered the undiscoverable—the peculiar glow of the sun at dusk, a good piece of writing, a story about a David walloping the brains out of a Goliath. He is inordinately proud of his one-quarter Cherokee blood.

I had lived as a child in one of the few remaining houses in The Ward. The rooms seemed very small and very shabby. The houses in the neighborhood had been sturdy in my childhood, but, like people, houses wear out too. As I approached one of the bed-



John A. Williams standing in one of the homes that would soon be demolished to make way for the construction of Interstate 81. © 1964, Dick Bandy, Syracuse *Post-Standard*.

rooms, I saw a pair of legs stretched across the door and I thought without any great reaction, A corpse. But it was only a derelict sleeping off a night of too much wine. When we went out, Carroll said, “Maybe I ought to go back and see if he’s all right and if he is give him a dollar so he can eat or get another drink”.

“Leave him alone”, I suggested. The man had crept into that abandoned house, burrowed beneath old newspapers like a wounded animal isolating itself from the world. You don’t disturb wounded animals; they are vicious.

From where we stood in the middle of the rubble of the 15th Ward, we could see new buildings rising in every direction. The sounds of riveting and hammering drifted flatly through the rain. The new buildings are sleek, of glass and metal and polished marble. The massive Onondaga limestone, used in so many buildings the century before, is no longer chic. But the newer homes, set in the suburbs amidst the piercing beauty so common to this region, are among the most attractive I’ve seen anywhere.

One day when I was in the eighth grade running and jumping, shouting and wrestling in the cloak room, the teacher, when she finally broke up the melee—there were four other boys involved—took me aside and angrily said, thrusting her finger before my nose, “John Williams you are not like that!”

It had always been my intention to ask Mrs. Emily B. Schamu what she meant, and if I wasn’t like that, why not. Two of the boys later died violently. The other two are serving long-term prison sentences. On previous visits, I had been afraid to ask her; there was something altogether too psychic about it, like having your palm read without being told what your fate is. Mrs. Schamu still teaches Latin and English. Like Miss Reilly, her hair is now completely white, but she is the same small, perky woman she was in Madison Junior High. I conquered my hesitance and drove to meet her in her classroom.

“How did you know I wasn’t like that?” I asked.

She was sitting at her desk, marking papers. Latin verbs were on the blackboard behind her. She simply said, “I knew, and if a teacher doesn’t know her pupils, then she has no business in the profession”.

So the mystery remained. I had not been an angel, and I had not been bright. I do not know, therefore, what she saw, but I am glad she saw it and let me know that she saw it.

My favorite teacher did not teach me in a classroom. Strictly speaking, he is not a teacher in the formal sense. His name is William Chiles, now relocation director in the Syracuse Urban Renewal Program. The city has asked a lot of this mild-mannered little Negro; it has asked him to secure homes on a rental or purchase basis for the residents of the destroyed 15th Ward, who were mostly Negro. It has been an uphill battle, but Bill has been scraping in Syracuse ever since he arrived here from Kansas and Colorado 40 years ago. He has his careless moments when his exhaustion comes down and the depth of the hurt shows. His work goes so slowly, and the hurt is deep and filled with salt.

Syracusans, like most Americans, pride themselves on how far back their family roots go in America. A few Negro families put down roots here before the American Revolution, and one hundred years before Europeans were tempted to emigrate as they ran out of potatoes, truffles, akvavit, sauerbraten, or hot sausage.

Syracuse commemorates its past dedication to "The Cause" with a plaque honoring the rescue by abolitionists of a slave named Jerry. The Reverend Samuel May's name is called up to share the old glory, and that of Gerrit Smith, supporter of John Brown, Frederick Douglass, and a parade of others. Twenty-six miles to the west, on the front of the Cayuga County Courthouse in Auburn, there is another plaque, this one dedicated to Harriet Tubman, who guided hundreds of fleeing slaves up from the South and through the Underground Railroad stations of Utica, Syracuse, and Auburn.

Bill Chiles knows what happened: when men had died, nearly 800,000 of them, and the Negro was freed, when the Civil War was over, the future was left to God and good fortune. But God was still in the vineyard where "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" had placed him, where the grapes of wrath were stored, and fortune had no smile, let alone features. The citizens of Syracuse ended their self-deceiving game called "Save the Negro".

Among a hundred other things, Bill taught me that gold doesn't

necessarily glitter, and that what glitters isn't necessarily brass. In short, he taught that the man who would seek the truth must become enmeshed in paradox.

In a city where too many people avoid the responsibility of leadership, Bill Chiles, without searching for it, has come to be a leader; but City Hall doesn't know it and most of the accredited "Negro leaders" hold reservations about Bill because he lacks their formal education. Formal education is one of the musts for leadership status in Syracuse. Ideally those leaders must derive from Northwestern Europe; they must be Protestant and, of course, Republican. Their fathers must have been born in Onondaga County and also be college graduates; they must earn \$20,000 a year or more.

At one time not long ago the right family politics and a business of some kind automatically placed a man in a leadership position. Then a group of such local leaders could band together and prevent the invasion by large national concerns, for fear that wage scales in the area would be raised. They did just that, avoiding in the process any contact with the labor unions. Most of the local businesses were comparatively small; the owners could themselves oversee wages and raise or lower them according to economic conditions. Control was paternalistic. Until recently, Syracuse was one of the most studied cities in the nation because social conditions had been stable for so long.

Although there were many men of leadership capacity in the community, they were seldom used in more than advisory capacities. They were of the wrong ethnic origins—Jewish, for example, or Italian, or their fathers before them had not been white collar workers. Except for the Irish who over the years grew strong in the city, the rigid requirements for community leadership were retained. Once congregated in a region called Tipperary Hill, the Irish commanded so much power that they demanded and got the green light placed at the top of the traffic signal rather than in its customary position at the bottom. The current mayor, William F. Walsh, is Irish and Catholic.

Because it is now in transition, leadership in Syracuse has become more diverse. Syracuse ranks third among 41 Standard Metropolitan Areas in economic diversification, which suggests that

the quality of leadership is high. It may be. However, the inbreeding of the old bosses has produced weaknesses; sons are not as effective as their fathers. Or perhaps they know that, with the changes brought by social and economic progress, they cannot do what their fathers did. Paternalism hangs on in a few places. The women, the wives, who belong to the League of Women Voters or the Junior League and are members of the Corinthian Club, also have an unrecognized influence.

Young men being bred as possible leaders or advisors avoid certain sections of restaurants because they are reserved for the old breed. Social workers, for example, will not sit with the same group of leaders that industrialists will seek out.

Backers of professional sports go to still another group of leaders. The city has had its ups and downs in sports; it has produced boxing families and boxing champions, most recently Carmen Basilio. It had a championship professional basketball team, which moved to Philadelphia two seasons ago. In many cases, two or three people who are members of one leadership group may also belong to others. The leaders more and more are less local in origin. In most cases they conform to the old income, professional, and educational requirements, and therefore are not dissimilar to other leaders around the nation.

University College of Syracuse University recently conducted a study of leadership in the community and discovered that in 39 major decisions that will influence the growth of the city and its facilities, the number of people involved ranged from 2 to 57, the mean being 21.9 persons present per decision. Far less than one percent of the citizens of the city participated. The study states that "the doctrines of local democracy are incorporated into pieties rather than practices".

In pursuing the question of leadership, I did not think it wise to tell all the people I met that I had come from Syracuse. Chancellor William P. Tolley of Syracuse University, whom I have known since my graduate student days, was not one of those people. He is a medium-sized man, robust, and an executive. He has brought boom to the University and is currently engaged in a capital campaign to raise \$76 million by 1970. The University is a Methodist

school, founded in 1870. Its budget last year was only one million dollars less than the city's \$46 million. There is another school of higher learning, the Jesuit LeMoyne College, but Syracuse University is most prominent. Its 14,000 graduate and undergraduate students from 17 degree-granting schools and colleges spend over \$11 and a half million downtown every year. If the culture of this city within a city moved from "The Hill" to downtown as fast as the dollars, Syracuse, the non-university city, would be another place. The University people like to think that their multi-million dollar art collection, their theater, the total of all their vast cultural enterprises reach the "town guy". They don't. But the city people, although they might even grumble at the increasing power of the University and look with distrust at its representatives who sit on the Common Council or serve with top community committees, are proud of it.

It is the contention of Chancellor Tolley that the East has never poured all the money it could into public education. He means to build Syracuse into one of the most powerful institutions in the country. The University already owns a great deal of property that ostensibly passes for private housing. The Chancellor envisions this area with above par housing and many "green grass areas". Much of this property is in the old 15th Ward. Among its enterprises, the University supervises educational programs in 16 countries and now specializes in Peace Corps training of volunteers for East Africa. The University is the largest Air Force language training center in East European languages in the nation. The State College of Medicine on campus got a big boost when the Upstate Medical Center, containing about two-thirds of the hospital beds in the county, was opened. Quietly, the University is building a superb manuscript collection: the papers of Leopold von Ranke, Averell Harriman, Dorothy Thompson, actor Ed Begley, and sculptor Ivan Mestrovic are only a few of the collections filed away on the top floor of the University's Carnegie Library.

The city and University have their period of greatest rapprochement during the autumn, football season. The most loyal fans and most crashing critics of Bill Orange, as the football team is called, are the "town guys". I can never envision the football season with-

out thinking back to the days during the Depression when I would trudge with my father up to “Jumbo’s Back” (later called “Mount Olympus”) to sit and peer down into Archbold Stadium. When he had to work I went myself and often managed to sneak into the stadium past the ROTC cadets who stood guard against the restless, sports-loving, Depression-maimed men. One night, trying to climb up the wall of the gym in order to open a hall door that led to the stadium, I fell and would have been killed had not two strangers, one with red hair I remember, caught me.

Big Bill Orange used to walk around the edge of the playing field on stilts then. Before my childish, bugging eyes there was Brud Holland, All-American from Cornell; “Indian Bill” Geyer from arch-enemy Colgate; and Al Blozis, a mammoth tackle from Georgetown. Syracuse had Bunky Morris, a pint-sized halfback, and New York sportscaster Marty Glickman, who was also a track star (the United States Olympic Committee would not allow him to compete in the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin because he was Jewish); and there was Hugh Daugherty, now director of athletics at Michigan State. Daugherty was a “watchcharm” guard, small and fast. Vannie Albanese also played for Syracuse, as did Wilmeth Sidat-Singh, a Negro who was considered to be a native of India. He had to stay behind when Syracuse played teams like Maryland. During my own days at the University there were Bernie Custis, Billy Haskins, Jim Dragotta, and Jim Ringo. Then along came the likes of Jimmy Brown, now fullback of the Cleveland Browns, and the ill-fated Ernie Davis, who died of leukemia.

I knew many of the Negro athletes. One day I went with one, a quarterback, to his job downtown. We drove in his new convertible. His job consisted of brushing off the pool table in a private club with a whisk broom. When I was a graduate student, I happened on this same athlete in the library, who was then a senior scheduled for graduation. He asked me to instruct him on how to check a book out of the library.

After the second game I saw during my visit, the University versus Pittsburgh, I heard some of the fans snickering about Syracuse’s (winning) Congo Contingent. This was a backfield made up of a white quarterback and three Negro running backs.

Syracuse University produces the most independent paper in the city. It is the *Daily Orange*, a student newspaper. The two downtown dailies, the *Post-Standard* and the *Herald-Journal*, are both Republican papers, although both endorsed Johnson last fall. Both are owned by S. I. Newhouse, who only last August had his gift of the Newhouse Communications Center dedicated by President Johnson. Newhouse is also the owner of one of the 13 radio stations, 6 of which are independent. Most are “howlers” or rock ‘n’ roll music stations. There is one “country music” station. Over the three television channels, I noticed a preponderance of commercials sponsored by loan companies or banks.

Before I left Syracuse it had been my impression that, of the two papers, the *Post-Standard* was the more liberal. But Alexander F. “Casey” Jones, editor of the *Herald-Journal*, insists that, when the liberal Democratic tide is at the full, the *Herald* will prove to be more liberal. Many of the people I talked to felt that the Democratic era would arrive soon, led by college professors, immigrating Negroes, ministers, and union members.

In the early 1950s these people would have been called communists without hesitation. Their crime? For the most part, being engaged in civil rights demonstrations. The academic freedom that Chancellor Tolley has so often stood for was like a straw in the wind, some alumni say, when the city pressured him to curtail sharply the role of students and professors in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) demonstrations of 1963. One man who did call a demonstrator a communist in print is now facing a libel suit.

A dozen years ago, many Syracusans took second place to no other group in witch hunting. The blacklisting of radio, television, theater, and film people got a big boost in the Salt City, particularly because of the Veterans Action Committee of Syracuse Super Markets. The committee, using the Korean War as a springboard, applied some coercion to national sponsors that used men it thought were communists or “commie fronters”.

A Syracusan, Laurence A. Johnson, a former super market owner, was implicated in the blacklisting when John Henry Faulk charged that because of him and another man he had been deprived of his livelihood as a CBS personality and libeled in the bargain.

Faulk charged that Johnson had blacklisted him or taken part in blacklisting him. Faulk was awarded \$3.5 million dollars by the jury, but Johnson had died in a Bronx motel the night before.

In Syracuse the nastiest men are no longer communists or sympathizers; they are Democrats. But some people get involved in phrases that seem to be current without taking them apart to see what they mean or who they are hurting. My Dad, for example, used to believe that Europe was overrun with communists and he put it to me when I returned from there once, that they were “bad”. He has changed; communists and communism are about as familiar as coffee containers these days, and mean just about as much.

My Dad is a small, chunky man with a mop of gray hair. He has countless smile wrinkles at the corners of his eyes. He is a football buff, always has been. When coaches at Syracuse University were unimpressed with Jimmy Brown, who was trying to win a scholarship there, my Dad, who had seen him work out with the freshmen, concluded that he was going to be one helluva ball player. In eight years with the Cleveland Browns, Jim Brown has proved my father to be more than right.

When my father was a boy he swam in the Erie Canal. He was too young for World War I (and thus, too old for World War II). When most people were walking a mile for a Camel, we’d be hiking two to see a football or baseball game in someone’s cow pasture. Or riding streetcars. The trains came and ultimately the streamliners, and the canal was out of business. His friends were Italian, Polish, Jewish, Irish, Negro. Sometimes he had other names for them. On the bad days. But he liked Italian and Polish foods, and my mother, deft in the ways of southern cooking, preferred American to foreign fare. Sometimes there was a clash in the kitchen. Now my father finds himself surrounded by grandchildren. Sometimes he looks bewildered. But it is nice now to have the football and baseball games played right in the living room via television. What the hell, he seems to say, it’s all gone by anyway, and this is easy.

One night, after days of heavy talking and seeing people, I drove

out to Walter Carroll's home in Marcellus, slept the night, and got up to go pheasant hunting. Marcellus is a few miles southwest of Syracuse and is hilly country. The center of the village itself sits at the bottom of a steep valley. As DeWitt, a suburb to the east of Syracuse, has expanded, so has Marcellus, but with less noise, less garishness. Marcellus still retains, unlike DeWitt, a rugged atmosphere of almost pure country. The Carroll home is a remodeled two-story colonial. A line of Norwegian spruce stands beside the driveway, and behind the house, the slight hills roll, swell, dip, and grow until, far off, the hills almost become mountains blazing with the saucy colors of autumn.

A few days after I visited the Carrolls, I went to DeWitt to see Dr. and Mrs. Robert Seidenberg. Since there really isn't much to do culturally, Syracusans generally entertain at home; one could get very tired of the Italian restaurants of which there is an overabundance. The Seidenberg home is just the opposite of the Carrolls'. It's low and long, extremely contemporary, and with its great picture window viewing west, it seems to jut out beyond the crest upon which it sits. Mrs. Seidenberg is an attorney. She doesn't have to work, and the suspicion among some Syracusans is that she is losing more money than she is making. The cases she handles are not popular. Many of them involve, or have involved, CORE demonstrators; others are concerned with police brutality charges. While Mrs. Seidenberg emphasized that she found the courts in Syracuse extremely fair, she declined to discuss the police department. In one month I had seen cops along Madison Street, which runs through the 15th Ward, stop and examine the papers of three Negroes. One afternoon, I returned to my apartment to find a police car parked across the street. As I started up the stairs after nodding to the superintendent, I heard a voice say, ". . . in this neighborhood!" When I gained my rooms, I looked out of the window and saw the superintendent talking to the cop in the patrol car. And one night, as I started into the building, a cop driving by turned clear around and hit his brakes, then slowed his pace and moved on after looking at me.

I do not know Mrs. Seidenberg's abilities in the courtroom; I have heard no complaints. But I personally would consider it a

mark of shame for a city to have but one person, and that person a woman, willing to handle such unpopular cases. Not from her, to be sure, but from what the newspapers would call “an unimpeachable source”, I heard that the Onondaga County Bar Association, while not making life miserable for her, has given very little aid and comfort. It is little wonder then that Mrs. Seidenberg was described to me as a woman who looked as though she wanted to cry. She is far from tears, but she must be very sad with the state of things she is concerned with. In her lovely home, I am sure, she must be able to regain any of the balance she has lost in the office.

There are few places I have been in the world where I have not met someone I know. And although Syracuse is filled with new faces, the old ones keep reappearing. One face out of the past belonged to Herbert Alpert, “Hecky” as we called him. I remembered that he had been great in arithmetic. He is now an accountant. Heck came by to take me to his house for dinner and to meet his family. He is tall, but his face remains just as I remembered it. “I thought you were skinny”, he said when he came in. “I remembered that you were skinny.”

“Some people tell me I’m skinny”, I said.

We drove to his home on Scottholm Terrace where I met his wife Ettarae, his mother-in-law, and another friend from grammar school, Sidney “Red” Bluman. Red looked the same, although fatter. He was the one everyone was trying to marry off. Still a bachelor, Red was having none of it. We talked about all the guys and girls, from kindergarten up. The Alpersts also live in one of the contemporary houses that mark the extent of Syracuse’s housing boom. We were supposed to get together once more before my visit was over, but we didn’t; there was too much to do, and still too many people to see. I left the Alpersts feeling that Heck had great pride in being a Syracusan. I hadn’t felt that with any other person.

On another night I had dinner with Larry Katzman, his wife Elaine, their children, and—Red Bluman. Larry and I had had the notion that we were the best runners in the fourth grade, and nearly every day, leaving Washington Irving School, we’d dash along the grounds trying to prove which of us was the best. Where

Heck is tall and thin with an elongated face, Larry is short with broad shoulders and a sharp face. He is working at the University in the Peace Corps program; his profession is physical education. Later we were joined by still another 15th Ward alumnus, Eli Pearson, who is now an attorney. Eli's father used to have a meat market on the corner of the block where we lived. The father was a man of great and warm humor; Eli seems to have inherited some of that.

Outside of formal meetings, there was a parade of faces. Joe Bongo, now principal of Madison Junior High School, went to high school with me, and I met him the same night I met Bernice Alpert Schultz, another schoolmate. Then there was Johnny Reddick, whom I saw sitting on a stool in a restaurant, his Oriental face creased in a smile. I saw "Fatty" Levine on the street and said, "Hi Fatty", and he said, "Hello, Johnny". We kept on walking our separate ways. I never knew why he was called "Fatty" because he was always slender. He's still not fat, but his hair is going at a frightful pace. Mike Novak was a dark-haired athlete who often doubled as a referee at the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) when we of the old Dunbar Center played there. Mike always impressed me as being a "neat" athlete, a kid who always made the right move at the right time. I ran into Mike, but he didn't know me. Two or three times, driving along in traffic, I was hailed with "Johnny! Johnny!", and I would catch a glimpse of a brown face smiling, a brown hand waving. Hello, goodbye.

When I was a child, people, Negro or white, in our neighborhood always spoke. It was as though they were glad to have survived the Great War and the Depression, and glad that someone else had survived with them. If both parents were away at work or shopping, you could bet your life that some old biddy or old man whittling on a stick had their eyes on you. If you misbehaved, the folks had the report as soon as their feet hit the steps. Ours was a community, despite everything else, in which survival of the other fellow or his children meant survival for you. That is all gone now. Now there's nothing. Not unfriendliness, just nothing.

Once we lived next door to Mrs. Levy, whose hair was as white as snow. She died some years ago. Her shop with home in the rear

smelled of dill pickles that she kept in a barrel near the door; and there was the rich smell of kosher salami. She had two sons, Herman and Milton (Hermy and Miltie). Mrs. Levy and her boys and the store are gone. Farther down the street, in one of the few remaining buildings, was Guido's market. I walked into the store one day filled with memories. The old man, named Mike, had been a crusty, sharp-voiced Italian. But it was Mrs. Guido who impressed you because she was tall and stately. She always held her hands, one folded gently inside the other, in front of her. I felt that Mike, the father, was dead, but something told me that Mrs. Guido was still alive. Two of the sons, both now gray-haired and lined, Mike Jr. and George, told me that not only was she still with them, but she worked in the store two days a week. The other brother, Willie, was not around, and the daughter, Rosie, was with the mother that day.

I felt foolishly proud of Mrs. Guido and vain about my prediction that she would be alive and going strong. There was just something about her—she was one of the last Romans living in that troubled, bulldozed 15th Ward. Although the city fathers came to the conclusion that The Ward had to go—and it had deteriorated badly—great strength emanated from that polyglot community and, it seems to me, was not utilized. Nothing so badly demoralizes a person who cries out, “I AM! I AM!” as being ignored.

But this is the way of American cities, and may even be the way of most cities of the world.

For generations Syracusans believed that just because they lived in almost the precise center of the state, economic, educational, and cultural benefits would come to them automatically. In its brochures the Chamber of Commerce pointed out the advantages of being centrally located. Syracuse was called the “Central City” or the “Hub”. General Electric, currently “phasing out” its government contracts, moved in during the 1940s. Now, with the previous industries included, there are almost 600 manufacturing firms employing more than 56,000 people in the area. The total labor force in blue and white collar fields is close to 125,000. The city seems to be on its way to a new economic era, and this, of course, will influence education and culture. It is the only city along the

500-mile New York State Thruway that has five exits. Syracuse is the gateway to the Thousand Islands, the Finger Lakes Region, the Adirondack Mountains. The new Penn-Can road, Interstate 81, will provide an important north-south route through the city.

Anticipating even greater expansion, the city is arranging for a 25-million-gallon per day water supply to be piped in from Lake Ontario, which is about 30 miles to the north. And one of the world's largest nuclear reactors, a 500,000-kilowatt, boiling-water system that will supply the city and environs with electricity "at the same cost and maybe less", will be completed in 1968 near Oswego. Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation, which is building the reactor, has been a driving force behind the industrial expansion of Syracuse.

In October 1963, following a wave of demonstrations by CORE, the Syracuse Metropolitan Development Association, an organization formed for the purpose of attracting new businesses to the area, sent a committee of top members to Europe. Among them was the Director of Area Development of Niagara Mohawk, Mayor Bill Walsh, and two Syracuse University officials, one of whom doubles as the president of MDA. Sixteen other people were on the trip, which covered 18 cities in 16 days. Most stops were made in Holland and West Germany. However, James M. Hanley, the new Democratic congressman from the 34th congressional district, said, "That trip accomplished absolutely nothing".

Now licenses for the upstate manufactures of European products are being made available. In the horrible, gothic monstrosity that must continue to be City Hall until a modern one is built (it is already projected), they talk about European malls and promenades and traffic symbols. However, the single most important thing is that, finally, a group of people in the city, worn out mentally, physically, or financially—the reason doesn't matter—decided that the peculiar ecological inbreeding of Syracusans was leaving them far, far behind. Swift, new modes of transportation (the Greyhound bus easily beats the New York Central trains from New York City to Syracuse), vast superhighways, pressure from the University, which itself is in touch with all the nation and all the world, suddenly changing social values, the hard looks of newcomers—all

have forced Syracuse to drive hard to realize the potential it has had since its very inception. At Mayor Walsh's office—"John, call me Bill"—new phrases crackle: "walk-to-work housing"; "more people, more greenery"; "my code of human rights".

Transition has come like a whirlwind. One could have seen it far off on the horizon had he looked. Or maybe a number of people did look and some old guys from the country clubs and leather offices said, "That's no whirlwind, only a blighted tree out there". And the people said, "Of course, it's only a blighted tree".

So the whirlwind of change came hurtling on, blowing some of the old guys away with their tees and golf clubs. Syracusans are scrambling in it now; they have gone out to shake hands with a world that must regard them as suspect and repatriates from the ranks of the missing. One thing is obvious: the people of Syracuse know that they must dig once more for their salt.

News of the Library and the Library Associates

POST-STANDARD AWARD CITATION, 1993

For Gwen G. Robinson

Gwen Groves Robinson, distinguished scholar-editor of the *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier*, you have made significant contributions to Syracuse University and to the academic world at large.

Educated at Bryn Mawr College, Harvard University, and the Universities of Houston, London, and Florence, you began your professional career in the editorial offices of Appleton-Century-Crofts in New York City. Further editing and teaching appointments have added to your varied experiences from which Syracuse University so richly benefits.

Under your editorship, which began in 1983, the *Courier* has been transformed from a small journal to a substantial semi-annual publication that contains "articles related to unusual and interesting aspects of the Library's holdings and, in particular, to rare books, manuscripts, and archival collections in the George Arents Research Library". The *Courier* is widely recognized in the United States for its excellence, and recently one of Germany's leading scholarly publishers stated: "There is not one academic journal of this quality in Germany".

You combine your literary gifts with a keen eye for flaws in style and factual errors in the manuscripts you select. You indeed personify the characterization given to the first fine scholar-printers five hundred years ago: *accuratissimi*.

Your own scholarship is well demonstrated in seven essays you have contributed to the *Courier* between 1988 and 1993. Courageously you broached a subject usually considered dull: punctuation. With a mystery writer's instincts you have pursued hidden clues, and your delightful style brings the subject to life as a significant part of our cultural history. The English author John Ryder



Gwen G. Robinson

expresses his esteem for your work in his newly published *Intimate Leaves of a Designer's Notebook* as follows: "to Gwen Robinson whose work in progress, *The Punctator's World*, has surely opened new perspectives on textual development from the spoken to the written to the printed word . . ."

With gratitude for your outstanding contributions we are delighted to present to you the 1993 Post-Standard Award for Distinguished Service to the Syracuse University Library.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Albert Schweitzer Fellowship Records

This summer the Department of Special Collections became the repository for the permanent records of the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship (ASF). The collection, which occupies thirty-four linear feet, is a wonderfully rich addition to the Albert Schweitzer holdings already at Syracuse.

The ASF was founded by American friends of Albert Schweitzer in 1939 to support his hospital and medical work at Lambaréné in Gabon, Africa, and to disseminate his philosophical and ethical principles, characterized by the phrase "reverence for life".

The collection includes AFS office files; financial records; minutes, reports, agendas, and other papers of the board of directors; documentation of programs and projects; ASF publications; and material on the Albert Schweitzer Hospital, the Association Internationale de l'Hôpital Albert Schweitzer à Lambaréné, and the Albert Schweitzer Center. There is also substantial Schweitzer memorabilia, including 91 letters and other writings (originals, copies, and translations) by Schweitzer, along with photographs by Charles Joy, clippings, articles, and publications dated as early as 1905. *Gift of the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship.*

Reed, John

The Library has acquired a copy of John Reed's first book, a forty-eight-page poem called *The Day in Bohemia; or, Life Among*



Albert Schweitzer (with Sizi the cat) at his writing table in the hospital at Lambaréné. Photo: Charles R. Joy.

the Artists (New York: 1913, [printed for the author by Riverside, Conn.: Hillacre Book House]). This book, of which only 500 copies were printed, adds to the Library's already considerable holdings of primary and secondary Reed material that may be found among the papers of his biographer, Granville Hicks.

John Reed (1887–1920) was an American journalist and proponent of revolutionary politics. After graduating from Harvard in 1910, he wrote articles for various publications. For *The Masses*, a radical magazine, he covered the Paterson, New Jersey, silk workers' strike of 1913. For the *Metropolitan*, he wrote from Mexico about the revolt of Pancho Villa, thus gaining a reputation as a war correspondent. His visit to Russia when the Bolshe-

viks seized power in 1917 resulted in his book (still in print) *Ten Days that Shook the World* (1919). However, *The Day in Bohemia* was published while he was in transition from Harvard playboy to defiant social activist.

Writing in *John Reed: The Making of a Revolutionary*, Hicks noted: “Long before he could regard it as the scene of his success, John Reed loved New York”.* Reed moved there in the spring of 1911 to claim, with characteristic immodesty, the success he felt his one-act plays (called “sophomoric” by Hicks), short stories, poems, and essays deserved. Reed took a room in Greenwich Village with three Harvard friends, and a job with Lincoln Steffens on the muckraking *American Magazine*. By day he enjoyed the company of Ida Tarbell, Albert Jay Nock, Samuel Hopkins Adams, Edna Ferber, and Dorothy Canfield; and by night the camaraderie of Washington Square literary life. However, in June 1912, Reed’s blossoming career was interrupted when his mother summoned him home to Portland, Oregon, to attend his dying father. During his three months at home, Reed’s nostalgia for New York life inspired the witty and intensely personal poem *The Day in Bohemia*.

Dedicated to Lincoln Steffens—“one of us, the only man who understands my arguments”—the poem describes a full day in Reed’s New York, beginning in the morning with his roommates at 42 Washington Square, each poised for literary success:

What care we for a dull old world censorious
When each is sure he’ll fashion something glorious?

Relishing his day among his *American Magazine* colleagues, Reed continues:

So I arrive at work at half-past ten
Sneak to my desk, and madly seize my pen. . . .
Then with closed door we go in secret session,
Allume the fragrant weed! Rest feet on desk!
Work is an eccentricity grotesque!

* Granville Hicks (New York: Macmillan, 1936), 67.

He was proud of his election to the Dutch Treat Club, which placed him in the company of successful literary contemporaries Rupert Hughes, James Montgomery Flagg, Irvin Cobb, and Julian Street:

Souls of Scribblers dead and gone,
Where in Hades have ye known
Better wit or worser grub,
Than Tom Masson's Dutch Treat Club?

Irreverently, Reed describes his friends at a vibrant literary tea that occurs later that day:

With arguments fantastic and absurd,
Each one attempts to sandwich in a word.

The poem continues with a description of an evening of revelry, followed by his late return to Washington Square:

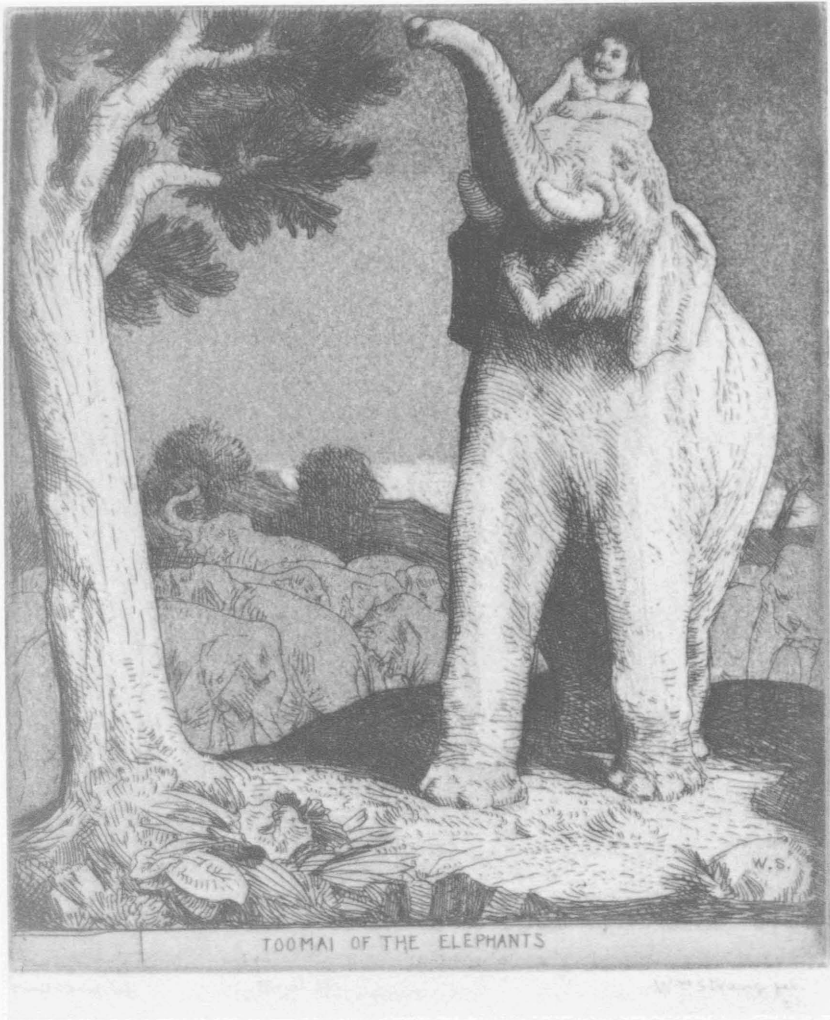
Slyly and quickly we become undressed
Slyly and silently we seek the nest.
I doze; but hear, ere yet oblivion
Enfolds,—REEVES lecturing the rising sun,
and ROGERS, plangent on his Remington.

The Day in Bohemia illuminates the life of a young man preoccupied with his own literary ambitions. Within a year his self-absorption would be transformed into a sober commitment to the cause of the masses. *Purchased with Library Associates funds.*

William Strang Etchings

The Library has acquired twenty-eight original etchings by William Strang (1859–1921). These were proofs of the publication, printed by Strang's son, *A Series of Thirty Etchings by William Strang, Illustrating Subjects from the Writings of Rudyard Kipling* (London: Macmillan, 1901). These rare etchings are considered to be excellent examples of the art of William Strang.

The son of a builder, Strang was educated at Dumbarton Academy and at the Slade School, where he studied under Alphonse Legros, the French graphic artist. Strang produced woodcuts, en-



William Strang illustration for “Toomai of the Elephants”, in which Little Toomai, on the back of Kala Nag, witnesses the nocturnal dance of the elephants.

gravings, and more than 700 etchings, among them portraits of Kipling and Thomas Hardy. With delight in the fantastic and macabre, in 1892 he created illustrations for his own ballad, “The Earth Fiend”. A dark and fantastical atmosphere also pervades the etchings gathered here. *Purchased with Library Associates funds.*

PROGRAM FOR 1993-94

The Syracuse University Library Associates program for the academic year 1993-94 will be as follows:

- | | |
|---|---|
| September 7, 1993
Tuesday, 4 p.m.
1916 Room, Bird Library | René Girard
Andrew B. Hammond Professor of
French Language, Literature, and
Civilization
Stanford University
PRIMITIVE RELIGION AND THE QUESTION
OF ANTISEMITISM IN THE GOSPELS |
| October 7, 1993
Thursday, 4 p.m.
1916 Room, Bird Library | Carol V. R. George
Professor of History
Hobart and William Smith Colleges
GOD'S SALESMAN: NORMAN VINCENT
PEALE AND THE POWER OF POSITIVE
THINKING |
| November 4-6, 1993
Thursday-Saturday
1916 Room, Bird Library | Book Sale
Co-sponsored by the Library Associates
and the Syracuse University Library |
| December 10, 1993
Friday, 5 p.m.
Faculty Center
401 University Place | Annual Holiday Reception |
| February 24, 1994
Thursday, 4 p.m.
1916 Room, Bird Library | Constance B. Schulz
Professor of History
University of South Carolina
THE USES OF PUBLIC HISTORY |
| April 14, 1994
Thursday, 4 p.m.
1916 Room, Bird Library | Greg Johnson
Professor of English
Kennesaw State College
JOYCE CAROL OATES: A STUDY OF THE
SHORT FICTION |

May 13, 1994
Friday, 12 noon
Goldstein Student Center
South Campus

Spring Luncheon and Annual Meeting
Patricia Battin, President
Commission on Preservation and Access

THE SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY ASSOCIATES, founded in 1953, is a society whose efforts are devoted to the enrichment of the Syracuse University Library and especially the rare book and manuscript collections. The Associates make it possible to strengthen these collections through the acquisition of unusual books, manuscripts, and other research materials that are rare and often of such value that the Library would not otherwise be able to acquire them.

Those with an interest in history, literature, book collecting, and the graphic arts are welcome to join the Associates. Perquisites of membership include general use of the Syracuse University Library's facilities, as well as invitations to exhibitions, Associates-sponsored lectures, and special events of the University Library. Members at the patron level may borrow books. In addition, all members will receive our incidental publications, typographic keepsakes, and the *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier*, a semiannual publication that contains articles related to unusual and interesting aspects of the Library's holdings and, in particular, to rare books, manuscripts, and archival collections in the George Arnts Research Library.

SUGGESTED MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS are as follows: Benefactor, \$500; Sustaining member, \$200; Patron, \$100; Individual member, \$50; Faculty and Staff of Syracuse University, \$35; Senior citizen, \$25; Students, \$15. Checks, made payable to Syracuse University Library Associates, should be sent to the Secretary, 600 E. S. Bird Library, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. 13244-2010. For further information about the programs and activities of the Library Associates, telephone (315) 443-2697.

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