

## Preface

By BERNICE KELLY HARRIS

The idea of a literary supplement to THE CHOWANIAN, suggested by Mr. John McSweeney of the Graphic Arts Department and approved by the Administration, has aroused new interest in the creative writing course. The theme of this second issue is a continuation of the underlying motive of apprenticeship writing in most creative writing courses.

There is fiction potential in the 'fragile bits and pieces' of life, and there is drama in the everyday. This has been an affirmation and an objective for the Chowan College writing class. This issue is an illustration of the simple truth of the affirmation.

## Dinner in the Desert

By ROSA FORD WARD  
Edenton, N. C.

As we went down in the elevator to join our party for the ride into the Sahara, a strange man nudged me. He was wearing a burnoose, the hooded mantle worn by most Arabs to protect their faces and necks against the almost unbearable heat of the sun. There was another slight nudge, and I thought to myself, "At my age can this be someone trying to pick me up?"

When we reached the lobby, the burnoosed man looked at me full-faced and grinned. To my surprise and wee bit of disappointment I realized this was no Arab trying to pick me up, but one of the ministers in our Tour group who had been impelled to wear the burnoose he had just bought.

All of us took our places in assigned taxis for the desert trip. Then began one of the wildest rides I have ever had. The taxi drivers blew their horns all the time, as though they loved the sound of them. They cut across corners and across traffic and laughed as they raced one another to the traffic lights and across the intersection.

We saw Arabs cooking ears of corn over charcoal braziers, with flies swarming everywhere. There was the little Arab boy dressed in his flowing robes and turban and carrying a transistor radio. East had met West, we observed.

We left Cairo and followed the beautiful Nile River for awhile. We felt refreshed at the sight of the luxuriant green grass and tall trees in the oases we passed. Then there were the pyramids, which some of the younger members of our party climbed, and the camel rides.

Our objective for the evening was a dinner party in the desert. Our taxi drivers dashed us madly across the Sahara, while the moon beamed calmly down on scenes many centuries old.

Miles out from nowhere, away from electric lights and running water, we came to a large Arab tent out in the desert. Even the

moonlight looked strange and mysterious. Inside the tent, cushions and low stools were placed for our comfort while we waited for dinner. A smaller tent near by served as a kitchen. Some of us went into this tent to see the Arabs cooking. They were using a gasoline stove and a coal brazier, and everything seemed to be quite clean.

While waiting for dinner, some of our young tourists started doing the twist to the music an Arab made on a strange stringed instrument, and presently the fun-loving natives were trying to do the twist themselves.

We were invited to take our places at the low tables, and our banquet began. Dessert came first, delicious spiced tea with tiny cakes and pastries. After about an hour a second course of hot thin soup was brought around by the Arab men. Next we had tiny meat balls and boiled cucumbers. After another long wait, we had some kind of ground meat spread on grape leaves and cooked with more vegetables. This course was followed by chicken and much later still, by watermelon and drinks.

By then it was getting late, but the entertainment was just beginning. It was hard to realize that I was several thousand miles from Edenton, North Carolina, out in the Sahara in an Arab tent watching a belly-dancer perform. There was a sort of minstrel show, too, with the Arab performers' faces whitened instead of blackened as in our vaudeville acts. Their jokes were all in English, though the accents made them sound foreign. When the trained Arab horse spelled a word or two from large cards and kept time to the dance music, we were really entertained.

A few of us stole quietly out of the tent and walked in the desert sand in the silvery moonlight. The stars were so bright and close it seemed we could reach up and pluck them out of the sky. I thought to myself, "God has put another lovely day to rest."

## THE OCEAN'S MOODS

Yesterday the ocean was a grumbling, gruff old man  
Reaching fingers made the foam  
To snatch my house of sand.

Today at dawn the ocean was a laughing care-free girl  
Skipping, racing, dancing.  
Her foam-flecked skirts a-whirl.

Tonight at dusk the ocean was a lady—calm, serene,  
Trailing garments edged with white.  
Stately as a queen.

Sara Pope  
Drivers, Virginia

# The Literary Chowanian

Campus Editors: Nancie Allen and Donna Ellis

Town Editors: Ethleen Underwood and Billie Robinson

Faculty Adviser: Bernice Kelly Harris

## The Jokers

Billie Love Robinson  
Jonesboro was not a very small town, but it was small enough to have more than its share of interesting characters. The Stalks provided more amusement for Jonesboro than any couple we had ever known. Sally Stalk was certainly worth many hundreds of thousands of dollars, but she bought her clothes from the towns one department store, and then insisted on a discount because of family connections. She was not greedy or miserly. On the contrary, she was more than generous, purchased anything that she desired, and traveled as much as she pleased.

Sally must have been a very pretty young woman. Her hair was still soft and naturally curly, and her skin was clear though ruddy from over exposure in the sun. Sally hated hats. The smile in her eyes and on her lips was always contagious, just seeing Sally made one feel good. She just plain didn't care about her looks. One might even say that she looked seedy and unkept.

Fun was what Sally liked, and playing practical jokes on other people was what she enjoyed most of all. She had a quick wit and a lively imagination which was shared by her husband, Ben.

Sally had come to Jonesboro about thirty years before we moved there. She came to visit her cousin Irene, and Irene's husband, Jim, one summer long before Jim became Mayor of the town. Jim and Ben were brothers, and with all the family anxious to get handsome bachelor, Ben, married and settled down, the courting of pretty Sally was a foregone conclusion.

Sally and Ben pulled their first practical joke on the day

of their wedding. Pleading the need of privacy before the ceremony, the couple eloped, leaving a beautifully decorated home full of guests and music and delicious food to their irate parents who tried frantically to find the run-aways. The note left behind to explain the "joke" did little to calm the hysterical "Mother of the Bride", or pacify the rest of the family. Thirty-five years ago, elopements were ill thought of, and making a joke of a wedding ceremony was considered very bad taste.

Jonesboro was to learn that the Ben Stalks disliked conformity and loved fun. Gay Ben Stalk found that he had met his match in Sally who had charmed the town into thinking of her as a young lady of mind and gentle manners. Sally's spirit and love of life had not showed while she was busy setting her cap for Ben.

The couple came home from their wedding trip and were greeted rather coolly, but Sally's honest love of people soon thawed even the frostiest. The two Stalks made many life-long friends who were to alternately rue the day they had taken Sally and Ben to their bosom, and howl with glee over their practical jokes.

Ben was a stickler for punctuality, and I remember the Sunday that he forced Sally to come with him and sit on our front porch, which was next door to them and talk with us, while bewildered but late arriving dinner guests were waved on to the Stalks home by Ben who at the same time showed no compunction at chiding them for their tardiness, one and all. They actually stayed with us a half hour, until Ben felt the company had been sufficiently admonished.

## The Eye of the Beholder

By  
Frank Underwood Rawls  
Suffolk, Va.

Allison West, one of my friends, asked me to drive her to Murfreesboro to a meeting of the Creative Writing Club, as she did not like to drive at night.

We arrived promptly, and I was introduced to the very interesting and attractive group of girls. Then the instructor arrived. I had always wanted to meet Dr. Harris, and this was my opportunity. She greeted us so cordially. Then the lesson began.

Dr. Harris held up a picture, the basis of an assignment she was about to give for the following week. Then she passed a clipping around. When it came to Allison West, she looked at it thoughtfully for several minutes. Finally she passed it on to Jennie Watson, who in turn passed it on to one of the College students.

The instructor urged that no member of the group express any impression received from the picture, and she herself was careful not to express her own views.

The following week Allison was called on first to read the story the picture had suggested to her. "The Mimosa Club had

been selected to arrange the centerpiece for the luncheon that was honoring the Governor's wife. Mrs. Joyce Pittman, President of the Mimosas, took personal responsibility for the table decorations at this important occasion. Knowing something of the First Lady's enthusiasm for unusual flower arrangements, Mrs. Pittman added sabatia to the exotic flowers used in the centerpiece. Above the bronze container—"

Suddenly there was a laugh from the other members of the writing group. Allison looked around startled.

"In the picture the centerpiece is an arrangement of weeds spilling out of muddy boots!" one of the members hastened to explain. "The caption is 'symbols of poverty.'"

"So, I'm rather afraid you missed the point, Mrs. West," the instructor said.

"Well, I always see the beautiful in everything and everybody," Mrs. West apologized. "The weeds in the picture were beautiful flowers to me. Of course I did not have on my bifocals—"

"Perhaps you did not miss the point after all," the instructor said thoughtfully. "Maybe we should look for the flowers among the weeds."

During the hot summer, the Stalks had their own manner of dress. Ben went barefoot around the house and yard, and he wore only a pair of baggy Bermuda shorts below a sagging naked chest covered with white curly hair. He was never without an expensive cigar in his mouth, which he chewed on continually but never lighted.

Sally had a very definite conviction that no woman, no matter what her size, should ever wear a girldle in the summer. I'll admit Jonesboro could get very hot in the months of June through September, and many of us followed Sally's example, but only in the privacy of our own homes. But Sally went one step further and wore only a cotton dress, with no belt of course, and—nothing else. Sometimes the dresses did not come from Dupes Department Store, often they were expensive gowns from Saks or Best's but it seemed to me, that on Sally they all looked the same. Sally knew that the law required her to cover her nakedness, but it said nothing to the effect that she had to do it in an orthodox manner. She wasn't fat, but "her body had gone to pot" as she put it, and she just wanted to be comfortable.

One night during the last hot summer that we were there, some friends of the Stalks were having a very elaborate dinner party. Extra maids had been hired to serve, and two caterers were bringing the prepared foods from the City. A string quartet was to play, and elaborate decorations were placed throughout the house. Engraved invitations had been sent out two weeks before to thirty couples including the Stalks, but through some twist of fate, Sally and Ben did not receive theirs. No mention was made by Sally of not receiving an invitation even when the hostess, who was also her best friend, read Sally the guest list with the Stalks name at the top. The night of the big affair, the Stalks were among the first to arrive. The other guests were all formally attired as befitted the occasion, but Ben wore his Bermudas, and Sally just her dress. They carried a blanket and picnic basket. When they had carefully laid the blanket out on the beautifully landscaped front lawn of the house, they settled themselves comfortably and proceeded to eat fried chicken, potato chips and other goodies, littering the grass with chicken bones, paper napkins, and coke bottles, much to the hilarity of the other arriving guests. The embarrassed and frustrated host and hostess begged and entreated Sally and Ben to come inside and join the others at the party, but to no avail.

The Stalks' jokes never did harm anyone permanently, but I am sure they set many a matron's hair on end and sorely irritated an ulcer here and there.

We have been gone from Jonesboro for several years now, but I will never forget the parting joke played on us by Sally and Ben. We spent some time at the Airport saying goodbye to the Stalks and other friends, who had come to see us off. An hour after takeoff, we joined our fellow passengers in sniffing the air with obvious signs of distaste. A horrible smell was growing and permeating every