

Ring in the beans

by Susan Fordham
Features Writer

We got to the Farmers' Market early, but the talking had already begun.

The bushels of produce were lined up on the tables, the homemade breads and jams, cakes, pies and cottage cheese set up in each booth. The sugar-cured ham was being weighed, and prices put on the huge blackboard on the center wall.

The sellers were sweeping, or slicing or fixing up their plants. And everywhere there was talk. A special sort of talk, from special people. Timeless.

Surely it's the workers who create the mood. Like one girl told me, they're a hardworking bunch of people. Most of them are up at 5 Saturday mornings, after a week of picking, packing, canning and baking. Some hold down full-time jobs; some are retired. They all have an old-fashioned graciousness, a friendliness that seeks and finds its response in the customers.

The sellers warned us of the stampede that was about to occur. The lot behind Brady's restaurant had its usual line of expert market-goers, some looking through windows to better prepare themselves for the attack.

A coin-purse full of change, a front place in the 8:30 line, and a

good eye for tables is a well-worn strategy, one customer told me. Energy is essential. The rush isn't to get in and out quickly, but to get the buying over with, so that the wandering can begin. From counter to counter, and friend to friend.

The bell rang, the crowds broke in. The townsfolk descended. Some said it was the wildest since the war. Twenty minutes after the bell was rung, the most part of the booths were empty. The cottage cheese was gone. And the talk kept going.

Some sellers told me they enjoy their job. They're there mainly for the social aspect of the day. Others don't mention it. It sure seemed that way, watching the patience of the sellers, their careful explanation of how to turn a green pepper red (let it sit), or sugar-cure ham.

It could be the heritage of the market that brings out the pleasure and pride that goes into the work. It started out 38 years ago, as a home demonstration club. With the hard times that came with the war, they began doing more selling than buying. There are still original charter members who sell each Saturday.

The food-heavy counters are a worthy attraction of the Farmers' Market, but it's the sellers themselves, their welcome, that brings back week after week regular customers "to stampede the place like cattle" with the mere ringing of a bell.

2 yucks win pizza for two

Two pizzas, hot, crisp and bubbly from Peppi's Pizza Den were awarded and duly eaten by the two winners of last week's Gerald Ford contest, Jacob Turner and Larry Stryder of Purefoy Road in Chapel Hill.

The decision was made after careful scrutiny of the many entries and the two best jokes are hereby presented two days after Gerald Ford's 61st birthday. What a coincidence!

Q. Why doesn't Gerald Ford like music?
A. He doesn't know how to operate a jukebox. And,

Q. What's Gerald Ford's conception of abstract reasoning?
A. Watching a T.V. test pattern.

'Chinatown': more than a place

by Tyler Marsh
Features Writer

Roman Polanski has returned. Or was he ever here in the first place? No matter, he has arrived. *Chinatown* serves as his announcement to the film industry and to the viewing public as well. After such non-descript and/or flawed efforts as *Repulsion* and *Macbeth*, Polanski has created an astounding, forceful movie that manages to

string you along for over two hours, somehow never giving you time to finish your popcorn.

The film takes place in 1937 in the county of Los Angeles. Jack Nicholson plays J.J. (Jake) Gittis, a former L.A. flatfoot who left the force after a troublesome stint on the Chinatown beat; he heads a private investigating business, which at the film's start is decidedly small-time and seamy but lucrative. A sudden change makes Jake's business become big-time and seamy and very lucrative, as he is approached by the wife of Hollis Mulway, the water and power commissioner for the county. Mrs. Mulway suspects her husband of cheating and hires Jake and company to verify the fact. Jake produces the requested evidence only to find himself in the middle of a lawsuit, courtesy of the real Evelyn Mulway (Faye Dunaway).

In attempting to rectify the situation, Jake accumulates information that reeks of foul play. In the middle of a drought, someone is diverting L.A.'s water supply; Hollis Mulway knows too much and is murdered, drowned no less. Mrs. Mulway engages Jake to find out who and why. So begins Jake's real dilemma of being caught in between a political machine and its strong arm, the police investigating the affair, and Evelyn Mulway who strings him along with half-truths and deceit.

Chinatown is really Jake's story. His curiosity motivates him to move from the outside into the center of the drama; he becomes the protagonist. *Chinatown* becomes emblematic of his frustration, a place where everyone "does as little as possible," where Chinamen still "spit in the laundry," and where no one really comprehends what's going down. For Jake, *Chinatown* is the seat of his troubles, the place where his life took a bad turn; it's the part of L.A. he knew well, but in which he somehow got lost.

This film holds together very well; there are virtually no weak points, no flaws in the finished product. *Chinatown* captures the

highlights of the Philip Marlowe genre of detective story, but renders them pertinent to the here and now.

It seems that *Chinatown* has everything; humor, irony, dramatic tension and, not least of all, the Polanski touch—the violence and brutality intrinsic to the story. Polanski's purpose was to blend all these elements into a coherent if not concise treatment. He succeeds; the film is fast, definitive and moving.

Jack Nicholson delivers a solid performance, fleshing out the film with his cockiness, subtlety, anger and frustration. Faye Dunaway, too, manages very well with her part, one of her best portrayals to date. She is convincing indeed as a woman threatened on every side, on the brink of collapse.

John Huston plays the part of Noah Cross, Evelyn Mulway's father, who is inextricably bound up in the chain of events by his own greed and acts of infamy. The characterization from this former director is adroit and capable, lending further credence

to the whole drama.

Roman Polanski acts as well as directs, appearing briefly as a diminutive but sadistic thug who performs surgery on Jake's nose, to show "what happens to nose people."

The direction is more than adequate, more than professional. Polanski has taken the rather non-artistic screenplay of Robert Towne and given it a flourish and substance that produces a kind of cinematic metamorphosis into something quite profound and significant.

Chinatown puts a certain pressure on the viewer by means of unresolved conflicts and an uncontrived sense of mystery. Herein is a network of plots and subplot involving people groping for all the money, power, land, gusto and whatever else they can. The progressive complexity of deception and chase creates a kind of mental hunger uncommon in contemporary film.

Do yourself a favor and take it in. *Chinatown* is sure to be one of the year's best; it's an evening's entertainment—and then some.



(Staff photo by Ted Melnik)

Weighing sugar-cured ham at Chapel Hill's Farmer's Market.

UNC grad writes memoirs; recalls Fitzgerald's loves

by CB Gaines
Features Editor

It's really so simple. Here is a book with unusual tragic flaws. And it's such a good book too, already in its third printing after being only three weeks on the market. What a pity.

A word to the wise. Reader beware, this book should more aptly be titled, *After the Good Gay Times: The Memoirs of Tony Buttitta*. Good. Now don't be expecting a smashing tale about Fitzgerald either. Because, after all, by 1935 the Jazz Era of all-night drinking and dancing was dead, over.

But the book is easy to read. It's short chapters and first-person style make it a one-nighter. Imagine the satisfaction of having read a book in one day. Imagine the chargin of having paid eight dollars for a book read in only one day. This is one of the book's tragic flaws.

But the subject matter of the book is interesting and certainly entertaining. Buttitta certainly doesn't beat around the bush. By page 11 he writes of some men in the Grove Park Inn tossing down brandies until it's their turn with Lottie, who is upstairs with their friend, the winner of the toss.

The problem is that with the first person style, Buttitta often gets in the way of the story. The story is moving along smoothly, and pow, all of a sudden he's talking about a letter he got in 1965, or how he ran his bookshop, or what Fitzgerald was doing the previous winter—a fact Buttitta mentions he picked up in one of the many Fitzgerald biographies. "There are many, I was to learn later..."

That's another one of the flaws in this book. And it's due, at least in part, to the advice Buttitta received from the editors at Viking Press. When they bought the story from him several years ago, they told him to de-emphasize the Fitzgerald aspect of the story. They wanted a nostalgia-type of book about Asheville and the era of the depression. It wasn't until after *The Great Gatsby* came out and all the apparent Fitzgerald-boom, that Viking decided to put Fitzgerald back in the title and display

name prominently on the cover of the book by changing the background color from orange to brown.

So what they have you expecting is a perfectly good story about Fitzgerald in Asheville. And what you get is a perfectly good memoir of Buttitta's summer in Asheville with Fitzgerald. And Fitzgerald's summer with Lottie and with Rosemary, a woman who fell in love with him that summer. At times it reads like a sort of literary *Peyton Place*.

In order to appreciate the book you have to know a little about Buttitta. With this in mind, prepare to be informed.

Tony Buttitta was a graduate student here in Chapel Hill in the 30's. From 1931 to 1933 he helped edit a literary publication called *Contempo*; a review of books and personalities. He lived in a small bookstore above what is now P.J.'s, what was then Cavalier cafeteria. It was during this time that he met many literary figures, some of whom enter this memoir. The chapter on William Faulkner's drunken days in Chapel Hill is one of the best in the book.

The death of Faulkner in 1962 got Buttitta on the road to writing about literary figures he met. He was living in San Francisco at the time, and *The Chronical* called him and

asked him to do a story on Faulkner for them. Buttitta also had written before he entered the career of publicity. He wrote a series of articles for *The Saturday Review of Literature*, a novel, *No Resurrection*, and a play *Singing Piedmont*, the tragedy of a black tobacco worker.

He was in Chapel Hill for the first time in 40 years last Saturday. He said, "This town has gotten too elegant for me." He talked about his bookshop called *The Intimate Bookshop* compared to the one now. "It was really an intimate bookshop, this is a supermarket. I'm glad to see people are still reading, though."

He's into *Ching* and he's also glad to see a comeback in jazz. This book is about the historian and living figure of The Jazz Age. "The *Great Gatsby* is outselling the Bible now," he said. "It's the first time I've been with the times." He said that he saw Fitzgerald over-taking Hermann Hesse's role as the college students' philosopher.

About his own book, due to the work of Malcolm Cowley, whom he calls a "master editor," the book is "like riding a jet rather than a freight train." Unfortunately, the price of the book calls for the same analogy. Maybe soon it will come out in paperback.

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