

THE "TIMES" PRIZE-WINNING COLUMN



From ALMAR FARM In Transylvania

BY CAL CARPENTER

The little booklet by Ora L. Jones that I wrote about in the last column, is truly a delight. From the introduction, in which Mr. Jones briefly outlines a 60-year career as reporter, editor, publisher and printer, to the final "30" when he retired as a printing plant owner, it is filled with first hand sketches of unusual human interest.

Mr. Jones noted in his introduction that he never, in all his 60 years in the news business, "solved a baffling mystery that had stumped the police and thus made chumps of the entire detective force," and never once "gave any material aid to solving any police mystery;" thus failing to meet the prime requirement of a newspaper reporter as it is pictured in modern movies and books.

With this conspicuous failure, he says, maybe he shouldn't aspire to add his name to the list of authors writing about newspaper reporting. "But, on second thought," he says, "it occurs to me that this glaring deficiency may in itself set me apart in a special category."

After this bit of self-depreciation, Mr. Jones proceeded to write a number of real, first-hand insights into the happenings of the times of years ago and into the characters of many famous people he met. These latter personal glimpses are particularly valuable because they are probably additions to the official biographies on the library shelves today.

One of them is about a man who was probably the greatest of all American short story writers if not the greatest in the world — William Sidney Porter, who wrote under the pen name of "O. Henry."

While a reporter on an Asheville newspaper shortly after the turn of the century, Mr. Jones ran into a friend who told him that the already well-known O. Henry was about to marry his sister. O. Henry was, at the time, living in Asheville and had a studio "in the heart of the business district."

The engagement having been mentioned to young reporter Jones in the strictest confidence, he immediately went to O. Henry's studio to get confirmation so he could print the newsworthy story. He found O. Henry sprawled out at his ease in a Morris chair.

"I think I've never seen a man so thoroughly relaxed," Mr. Jones says.

O. Henry was apparently an easy man to get to know, as his relaxed attitude suggests, for even though Jones failed to get permission to publish the engagement story, he struck up a friendship with the writer. There followed several visits when O. Henry seemed always glad to see the young reporter and drop anything he was doing in order to converse. It was from these relaxed and friendly conversations that Jones gives

some insights into the noted author's personality that are very probably unique.

He says O. Henry couldn't definitely announce his marriage plans at the time because he was broke and evidently couldn't afford a wedding much less a wife. Already quite famous, it seems the great writer must have mismanaged his financial affairs, for Mr. Jones says he was always short of cash. He was always, also, being bombarded with letters and telegrams from editors of magazines from whom he had received advance payments for stories he'd not gotten around to delivering.

The famous man, Mr. Jones says, was "no doubt the champion 'manana' promiser of his day."

During their talks, O. Henry told Jones the now-famous story of his imprisonment. It seems that, while working in a bank in Austin, Texas, O. Henry had been charged with a bank irregularity actually committed by the bank's president, a highly respected ex-Confederate general. The, then, unknown William Sidney Porter had been tried, convicted, and sent to prison. But he escaped and spent several years in Central America where, Mr. Jones notes, he wrote several stories with tropical backgrounds.

After a few years, O. Henry and an escaped train robber with whom he'd become friendly, decided their crimes had been forgotten and returned to the U. S. They were nabbed as they crossed the Texas border and rushed back to prison.

The famous writer spent two more years in prison, serving as the prison pharmacist. He told Mr. Jones about those years and the particularly dismal Christmas when he wrote one of his most soul-searching stories, "Compliments of the Season."

Jones says the stay in prison left permanent scars on O. Henry's personality. He says the author had dearly loved people and enjoyed nothing better than mixing with crowds until the imprisonment; but afterwards he was "apparently afraid of people. He held himself aloof."

Mr. Jones notes that O. Henry did finally marry his friend's sister and in the years that followed gained worldwide fame.

This we all know, but it is in the personal insights into the characters of famous people now long dead, such as the talented O. Henry, that Mr. Jones makes a lasting contribution to his profession as a newsmen.

I shall review more of his little stories in future columns.

When you think of prescriptions, think of VARNER'S adv.

Book Review

Writer Charges Sick Die Like Manipulated Objects

The sick die like manipulated objects rather than dignified human beings, says journalist Neil Elliott in *The Gods of Life*. Presenting shocking facts about hospitals, nursing homes, and the role of an advanced medical technology, Elliott examines modern attitudes towards the aged, the infirm, and the incurable.

Asserting that doctors have become the technological masters of life, Elliott shows that medical care today ranges from extremes of neglect and indifference to expensive mechanical care which prolongs life long after the patient has ceased to function on his own. He reveals information about the problems of the old and the institutionalized.

-Older people have difficulty

getting bank loans, home mortgages, and automobile insurance. Often they are told falsely by auto rental companies that their renting a car is "against the law."

-Earnings from employment are the largest source of income for those over sixty-five—not Social Security, pensions, or welfare. Only about 10 per cent of all aged employees ever qualify for pension.

-Seventy-five per cent of all patients in nursing homes do not see a doctor for six months.

-Reported nursing home fires occur more than once every day. The National Fire Prevention Association claims that nursing homes are the most dangerous places to live in the nation.

-Patients in nursing homes

are mistreated. They are often locked in their rooms, tied to chairs, given unnecessary drugs, and served food which costs the home less than one dollar per day per person.

Elliott states that doctors and health establishments must observe the abused rights of their patients, including their right to die with dignity if their illness becomes incurable.

Most terminal patients, he charges, are kept alive artificially after vital signs have ceased. He presents the concept of a "living will," written by the patient before illness, instructing his doctors on how to proceed or not proceed with artificial means of life.

Elliott calls for a redefinition of attitudes

Adult Classes At Rosman High

Rosman High School will conduct classes in Adult Education beginning in the near future. The date will be announced later.

In order to plan for these classes the school needs to know how many people will be interested.

One class is in brick-laying, and another class is in home improvement. Interested citizens should contact the school for further information and have their name placed on the list for the class they prefer.

toward the aged, requirements for good medical care, and our concept of death.

A former television producer, Neil Elliott has been an actor, a singer, as well as a news correspondent. He lives in London.

"THE GODS OF LIFE, By Neil Elliott, MacMillan and Co., New York; \$7.95.

Burning Permits Needed Forest Ranger Warns

A burning permit is required in Transylvania County from October 1, 1974 through June 1, 1975 between the hours of midnight and 4 p.m.

This permit applies to anyone burning within 500 feet of any forest land protected by the state, according to County Forest Ranger Clark Grissom.

"If you plan to do any burning keep in mind that you should never burn during periods of high wind or when the woods are dangerously dry.

"The proper time to burn is following a rain, in the late afternoon or at night, when the air is damp and the fire is more easily controlled, and never without notifying adjoining landowners," Mr. Grissom said.

Buring Permits can be obtained at the following

locations:
Burton's Store, Rosman; H. Bunyon Grocery, Cedar Mountain; Hilltop Grocery Brevard; McCall's Auto Supply, Rosman; Mrs. James O. McCall, Balsam Grove; Virgil McCall, Rosman.

Also Walter McNeely Sapphire; Don Merrill, Little River; Penrose Grocery, Penrose; Transylvania County Ranger, Brevard; Transylvania County Sheriff Brevard; Transylvania County Tax Collector Brevard; Robert Wilson Grocery, Quebec; Riverside Grocery, Pisgah Forest; North Toxaway Grocery Lake Toxaway.

TRENTON—A demonstration of fence post durability, begun over 20 years ago on the Jones County fairgrounds, is still providing valuable information for fence builders.

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