

Spring Frost

Eight tonight is the time for the annual little pilgrimage to Hill Hall to hear Robert Frost.

There's an essay—"The Other Frost"—by Woman's College's Randall Jarrell, perhaps the best of all commentators on Mr. Frost, that we especially like. Mr. Frost, says Mr. Jarrell, is known to everybody who ever read any American poetry—the conservative editorialist and self-made apothegm-joiner, full of dry wisdom and free complacent, Yankee enterprise, the Farmer-Poet—this is an imposing private role perfected for public use, a sort of Olympian Will Rogers out of Tanglewood Tales.

But this, continues Mr. Jarrell, is only a tiny corner of the real portrait of Robert Frost. Naturally, Mr. Jarrell, a poet himself, knows a great deal more about Frost than most of us do; and he maintains that the "Farmer-Poet" handle doesn't fit Frost at all. "These views of Frost," it seems to him, "come either from not knowing his poems well enough or from knowing the wrong poems too well."

We agree. In any anthology, you'll come across "The Road Not Taken" and "Mending Wall"—good poems, of course, but not at all representative of Mr. Frost's world view. The easy and cordial superficiality of "Road Not Taken" is eclipsed in works like "Design" and "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep"—which convey a deep, almost terrifying, and Arnoldesque picture of the universe.

Mr. Frost, in short, is a poet who thinks and writes about man, the heart of man, and human life—and to a deeper degree than whether good fences do or do not make good neighbors.

His annual visit here is always something to reckon with, and we trust it will be for many springs to come.

Cliche Club

It's a curious season. Amid the Frost visit, the baseball practice down at Emerson, the Graham Memorial cherry trees, comes a chilly rain moke like January than mid-March.

And to add to the confusion, there is the 60 point type on page one bearing the political tidings.

After several years of 60 point headlines, we find it possible to become a little cynical about the plaudits and promises and parliamentary procedure routine.

One could learn, for example, from yesterday's front page that one nominee was "the finest candidate in the finest party in the finest University in the finest state . . ." and had "a brilliant grasp of the world about him."

One candidate promised to be "responsible," another to "uphold the University's principles," another to "serve to the best of his ability," another to "try to do a good job if elected."

How well qualified is the candidate? "Eminently." What will his campaign be like? "Clean and hard." What kind of support will he get? "Overwhelming."

All is for the best, we suppose, in the most political of all possible milieus. But we're tempted to look around for a lazy, no-good, dishonest, unqualified rascal with a dull grasp of the world around him and cast our "overwhelming" one vote his way, just as a matter of "principle."

Carolina Front

Even The Vets Of Politics Are Surprised

Louis Kraar



EVEN THE old-timers in campus politics—the graduate and law students who somehow keep a light finger in the campus political pot—were shaking their heads yesterday.

Manning Muntzing's presidential hopes took on a new light with Don Fowler's filing as an independent. Ed McCurry, the University Party presidential candidate, was also worried.

Here's why Muntzing and McCurry were worried: First of all, Fowler will offer formidable opposition. He gave Muntzing a good race for the SP nomination, and many of the same supporters that he had in that SP meeting are enrolled on his petition.

And, secondly, a run-off election seems almost unavoidable. A majority of all votes cast are required for the election of a candidate. With three candidates as well-known and as energetic in campaigning as Muntzing, McCurry, and Fowler, the student body will be greatly divided.

That's why Muntzing and McCurry—and their backers—are not too happy about Fowler's candidacy.

KENAN HISTORY Professor Hugh T. Lefler the other day answered a question long in the minds of students who have listened to his effective, rapid-fire lectures.

The question: how a Southerner (Dr. Lefler) developed such a fast delivery.

Lefler's answer: "I used to teach at Pennsylvania, which is located in the center of the city. Every time I would get wound up in a lecture, a streetcar would come roaring along. So I had to learn to out talk the streetcars."

A COLUMNIST for the Emory Wheel (an Atlanta, Ga. liberal arts university) included in his list of the "ten worst movies of 1954" the film "The Barefoot Contessa," one of my favorites.

His only comment was, "A fairly good movie, but it had the most disappointing scene of the year."

THE STUDENT party's Monday night session took on a national political convention air as the vice-presidential choosing got underway.

Bob Harrington and Sue Fink were up for the post. And party members asked Harrington and Miss Fink—who had backed Fowler previous to Muntzing's nomination—"Will you pledge, whether you are nominated or not, to support the SP slate?"

SPEAKING FOR Harrington, Dave Reid (whose academic difficulties kept him from running) declared frankly: "Neither one of these candidates are my first choice, as you know."

Politics needs more of this type candor.

WITH POLITICAL campaigns so close at hand the deadline in yesterday's paper—"Fiction Contest Deadline Just 2 Weeks Away"—seemed ironically appropriate.

Perhaps this spring will be different and candidates will be moderate in their promises to voters. It'd be a pleasant change.

TARNATION, CAMPUS humor magazine, will come out with something entirely new this time when it hits the dorms and houses in a couple weeks.

I caught a preview of it the other day. And all I can say is that it's going to be different.

The Script's The Thing: Cast And Crew At An 'American Adventure' Production



SOUND MAN PHIL GOODMAN



ACTOR JACK SPOONER



ACTORS PHIL JOHNSTON & BOB THOMAS



TECHNICIAN GEORGE BRENHOLTZ

'We Were Dealing With The Soul Of America'

Dramatizing 'Man's Greatest Adventure'

By John Ehle

"American Adventure" is a series of radio dramas about the American people produced by the University's Communication Center. It is written by John Ehle and directed by John Clayton, and carried on transcription by radio stations coast-to-coast. The latest series of programs begins on the campus station, WUNC, Thursday night; this, we thought, would be a good time to ask John to write down the purpose of "American Adventure." He responded with the following letter.—Editor.)

Editor:

I hope you read this letter when you are in a reasonably jovial mood, if such moods are permitted editors. It is not that there is anything light, or ever interesting about it, but that the weight I feel as I approach this subject would not be so obvious to you then.

It is a heavy task, writing about America, and you have asked what our purpose was in the 26 recorded American Adventure dramas which John Clayton directed, and which the Communication Center is now ready to distribute nationally.

And I could tell you simply, state it so that no questions would occur unless you are particularly interested. I could say, for example, that we were interested in dramatizing the basic values of the American people.

Certainly no one would care to go on from there.

But the fact is that these values are the life-source of the nation, and that we were dealing with the soul of America. And I must state it like that, because it is the way I feel it, and once having brought up this matter of the soul of this nation—to which we look as citizens with anxiety and hope, and at which the world looks from various viewpoints and with many emotions—then I'm afraid you might ask—"Yes, and what is it—this soul of America?"

And I cannot answer you. I have written 26 dramas about it, and I would not think of putting down here what the soul of America is, even to me. Oh, I know; rather I feel. And I do not hesitate to state my feelings because I fear the extremists both left and right who are bound to attack any definition, for attacking is their outstanding characteristic.

Through A Glass Darkly

Rather, my reluctance is based on a respect for that which is best seen when seen through a glass darkly, not face to face. The soul of the country is not one thing, or so it seems to me, but is many things, so cross-pollinated and grafted one to another that a clear statement belies the subject.

We have grown objective, haven't we, so much so that we have reached the point where we feel we can analyze anything. Doubtless there are those who believe that even so simple a thing as the human hand can be understood only when dissected, when its parts are separated and weighed, when its movements are plotted. On the contrary, I believe the hand is made to reach, to touch, to hold, that that is its highest understanding, and is the one which is commonly known.

The fact is created by the spirit, not the spirit by the fact.

So it is with the soul of the nation, I think. It is understood in action. It is a living organism, made to operate with courage when courage is needed, with boundless love, with suffering, with anxiety, with fear, with confusion, and with a dedication to basic truths which come from other men long dead and buried, but living still in that true life which touches us. The soul of the American people is often bantered about by one authority or another, left wingers and rightists, extreme liberals and conservatives, as if by words they can define it to serve a particular purpose. It is designed to serve no such purpose, but it stands as a composite of all that the people are and believe it to be.

America is her demagogues, as well as her visionary statesmen. She is housewives and farmers, businessmen and miners. She is mothers and sons, the living and the dead and the newly buried. Slavery is older on her soil than Plymouth Rock; yet freedom is the way she tries to follow.

Show me the man who would explain her simply. I would like to ask him a question or two. Oh, there may be some in Hollywood, who explain her every week or so to a world audience. They have the Hollywood point of view, which makes all things possible, and they polish her grandly. They paint the picture of America proudly.

But who are the people they paint? Do they change their babies' diapers? Most Americans do. Do they grow potatoes, chop weeds, crop tobacco, pick cotton, work in steel mills, build ships, or do anything else which Americans do? No, America is not a motion picture concept. It's not so clear, not quite so wealthy, is much more human, and has a better plot.

town that had sprung up on free land along a river bank. He had no job, no money. But he couldn't bring himself to live in a shack, didn't want his mother and his brother to live in a tumbling down place that was held together by rusted nails. So he built a house. With ingenuity and courage he worked, until finally it stood, straight and true and clean, a monument to his spirit. His fellow citizens heard of it, traveled long distances to see it, looked with amazement at this symbol of what could be done by an undefeated man. There was something basic about that house-builder, almost tear-provoking to them.

They Were Out Of Step

So in 26 dramas, we wrote about the American spirit, the inner values. Some were about Jefferson, Lincoln, Lee, Jackson, and other outstanding Americans. Some were about common people, who were not common, after all.

It has occurred to me since the series was finished that a large percentage of the men and women who seemed to represent the American spirit were actually exceptions to their own societies. They were out of step.

If there remains anybody who dares to be out of step today, let him take some hope that in a future generation somebody may write a short play about him.

Of course, if he is soundly motivated, he may be remembered more grandly than that, even in his own day. For we cannot all be as strong as the strongest, and most of us must single out certain ones of the strong among us, hold them up, and shout "Here we are." For it is by the strong that all of us want to be remembered.

And rightly so. We should hold them up and claim them as ourselves. For I believe a people is more than what it is. A people is what it is plus what it dreams of becoming. It may be that we will never become what we dream, but the hope of the nation depends on dreaming, anyway.

Today there is a vast army of people polling us to see what we are. This is valuable, of course, but where is the pollster who is interested in what we want to become? Surely we have not decided individually that we are perfect, or that we have created the perfect country.

What is the perfect country? What is the modern American dream?

We come from a nation of dreamers. No country has ever had greater faith in the common man, in the worth of humanity and the value of aspirations.

What a tremendous day might come if once more this nation caught a glimpse of its own highest visions.

Before a dream, a wilderness of confusion and doubt might fall. Without it, a people could conceivably fight each tree in the wilderness—each person—until the trees conquer them.

Do we have a positive crusade, we Americans? I am asking. I don't know of it, but we may.

What is it? Because we live in a materialistic country, some believe that truly visionary plans are not practical now. But Americans have always been materialistic. What is more materialistically inclined than was the pioneer? From dawn to dusk he was trading and building things—cabins, fences, chairs, cribs—chopping wood, breeding animals. Half of this nation was opened up because of a gold strike. Settlers didn't keep going west because of the sunsets.

But they reached great heights on occasions, and so may we.

A Deep Thirst, And A Striving

If a fault exists, perhaps responsibility must fall on the leaders. It would seem that a high percentage of our statesmen, at least, are bound by their own machinations as they energetically try to control this sort of a type of a kind of thing that has been created, lest it run away with them. And our leaders in other fields are prone to seek comfort by blaming the people for lack of taste and vision. But the people do not lead the people; they follow leaders. Are some of our leaders criticizing the people for being leaderless?

Many of our better artists, for example, who might be exploring and interpreting the hope of man's soul, are intrigued by the more despondent and commonplace aspects of modern life. Some have a greater emphasis on technique than content, assuming, as perhaps artists may in these necessary periods of experimentation, that the method of expression



DIRECTOR JOHN CLAYTON

is more important than what is expressed. The people do not respond warmly to either technique or disillusionment.

No, the fault does not lie entirely with the people. The people are present, and I do not believe people change so radically in a generation or two that they become deaf to their own high values. They are deaf to them only when they are not stated, or when they are stated so that they cannot be understood. If you state them clearly, the people will either follow you or stone you, or both, but they will not ignore you.

The American people know, below the surface, in that area of the human being which chiefly matters, that an individual is of tremendous value and is born free. They do not confuse a man with animals, or with clay—not the common people. They know full well that a man has a fraction of the patience of God but an even greater dissatisfaction—that he was born to be dissatisfied. They know he wants to move forward, even though he falters on the way. There is among them a deep thirst for beauty and a striving for goodness. Most of them recognize with the slightest suggestion that a man is free, not because the law says so, not because the government permits it, not because it's nice to get out on bail, but because a man is a creation of God, conceived in dignity, and that no other man has the right to stand between him and his creator—or his creations.

I do solemnly maintain that the people of America believe these things are true—emotionally believe them.

Yes, they will throw a Joe Palmer into jail on occasion; they will also let him out, and when they do, it is to recognize in him the spirit that should be theirs, also.

And so with us. Which is a way of saying that I think America has the same heart she had a generation or two ago.

She Is Still New And Unfinished

I must also say before I'm done, because it is the framework of the rest, that I believe the best understanding of America begins with the realization that our country is young yet, that she is still new and unfinished, and that she remains man's greatest adventure in time and space.

It is this adventure that should concern us, lead us on with the promise of added greatness yet to come out of it. I'm sure that this was in Earl Wynn's mind when he placed the facilities of the Communication Center behind these productions, in the mind of Robert Schenkkan when he wrote the proposal which obtained the first of two Ford Foundation Agency grants, and in the minds of the nine professors of the University who so ably served as consultants for this series: Professors Bernard Boyd, John Gillin, Fletcher Green, Everett Hall, Frank Hanft, Clifford Lyons, William Poteat, Clemens Sommer, and the late Howard Odum.

But the opinions expressed in this letter are, of course, my own. I have digressed considerably from the series itself, which was not concerned so much with specific problems of our day—real or imaginary—as with the inherent values of the people of the country, which are lasting.

Thirteen American Adventure dramas have been released, as you know. The other thirteen have been recorded by John Clayton with a staff of some sixty actors and technicians from the whole Chapel Hill community, and are now ready for distribution.

I hope they will be heard by others who can state better and will state frequently the greatness of our country.

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