

'Last Best Hope' fails to make effective statement

By **WALTER SPEARMAN**
The Last Best Hope
by Peter Tauber

If *The Last Best Hope* by Peter Tauber is indeed America's last best hope of coming to understand the student activists of the 1960s, then their dreams and ideals and dedication were expended in vain. Tauber's lengthy novel, in spite of the zeal and talent with which it was written, is so padded with philosophical digressions and so bloated with significance that it fails to make an effective statement. (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 628 pp., \$10.95)

Born in New York in 1947 and graduated from Hobart College in 1968, Tauber is also the author of a work of nonfiction, *The Sunshine Soldiers* (a diary about basic training). He is too young to have participated in the agonies of Vietnam or Kent State, but he is old enough and concerned enough to care what was happening to the generation of the '60s and perceptive enough to have picked his title from Abraham Lincoln's 1862 message to Congress that "We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last best hope of earth."

Beginning with the astronauts' walk on the moon and ending with the student-National Guard debacle at Kent State, Tauber ties his characters and his story in with all the significant events of the decade: the assassinations of Martin Luther King and of Bobby Kennedy; the election of Richard Nixon; the war in Vietnam; student riots at Berkeley, Cornell and Kent State; the invasion of Cambodia; the Democratic Convention of 1968 in Chicago; the Mai Lai massacre; and the McCarthy campaign in New Hampshire.

Real-life characters like Bobby Kennedy, Sen. McCarthy, Nixon, Johnson, Humphrey, even Einstein, make their entrances and their exits on stage, usually to the accompaniment of Tauber's terse evaluation. But the central characters, the young people who are indeed our "last best hope," are Tyler Bowen, a golden young man

who was just graduated from Cornell and escaped the draft by taking a PR job with the Gila Compound National Laboratories in Arizona; his brother Willie, who fights in Vietnam, is reported killed and winds up living and winning the Medal of Honor; Johanna Reigeluth, reporter for a paper in nearby Tucson; and her husband Warren, a conservative young intellectual working for a think-tank center.

The Warren-Johanna marriage is breaking up and Tyler Bowen moves into the vacuum; but even his emotionally intense love affair with Johanna is sacrificed to Tauber's determination to give "significance" even to love-making in such overblown rhetoric as: "Ignorant atoms engaged to make molecules, molecules wed

to form amines, changing partners, dancing, mating, divorcing, recombining to form amino acids united by a peptide bond that was where poisons linked, recombining once again to make some wholly new, wonderfully proteinaceous thing."

The first 300 pages of this interminably long novel are devoted to the period spent at the Gila Laboratories, where little happens except that Tyler and Johanna meet and mate. The next long stretch of the book is taken up with an exceptionally well-written but hardly pertinent account of Johanna's rape by a hitchhiker and to the court trial of her rapist.

Later, Tyler and Johanna enlist in the Eugene McCarthy campaign in New Hampshire, then switch to Bobby Kennedy until he is assassinated. Final pages move the reader slowly on to Kent State. But not one of these '60s characters is genuinely dedicated to the activist movement; they all hover on the periphery.

Johanna tells Tyler: "You don't make choices, really you avoid them. Things don't happen to you. You get by, you survive." Johanna herself is more dedicated to exploring her own psyche and her feelings for Tyler and for Warren than for the "causes" she enlists in. Warren, who "would

do nothing to impede his chances of being president of anything," eventually joins Nixon's staff and serves on the Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence.

Only Brother Willie, fighting in Vietnam, comes fully alive; and the pages describing his dangerous assignment to take out an enemy mortar are stirring and exciting. When he comes home to receive his Medal of Honor from President Nixon, he found Nixon "nasty to behold" and "wondered if the man wasn't rotting from within."

Peter Tauber appears to exploit the activism of the '60s to give his book relevance, but he writes around his subject rather than confronting it head on. His handling of Johanna's rape and Willie's experiences in Vietnam proves his writing ability, but his clumsy attempts to give "The Last Best Hope" cosmic and historical significance inflate the book beyond the weight it can carry with its central story. Every time the book builds up in pertinent action, it soon bogs down in overblown philosophizing and pages of empty rhetoric. What might have been a truly significant novel becomes a soggy exercise. Tauber seems to have written the wrong book at the right time.

Tickets available at Union

Wertmuller festival on campus

By **PATRICIA C. GREEN**
Staff Writer

Three films that shook Cannes, New York and L.A. are on campus this week.

All Screwed Up was shown last night. *Love and Anarchy* (originally *This Morning at 10 in the Via Del Fiori at the Well-Known House of Tolerance*) will be shown tonight, and *Swept Away* (originally *Swept Away By A Strange Destiny: On An Azure August Sea*) will be shown tomorrow.

Lina Wertmuller, formerly Arcangela Felice Assunta Wertmuller von Elgg Spaniol von Brauchich-Job, directed all three films.

The films and perhaps some insights into the undulating genius of Wertmuller are yours for \$1 per film during the three-day Wertmuller Festival which is being sponsored by the Carolina Union.

Wertmuller, called the "most important director since Ingmar Bergman" by American critic John Simon, had worked as an actress, stage manager, set designer, publicist and radio-television writer before serving as apprentice to fellow Italian Federico Fellini. Already famous for *La Strada* and *La Dolce Vita*, Fellini made the surreal classic *8 1/2* with Wertmuller's assistance.

"It was one of those experiences that opens new dimensions of life," Wertmuller said of her time with Fellini.

After completing *8 1/2*, Wertmuller convinced a cameraman and some of the crew to join her in her first independent film. Fellini helped secure financial backing for the venture.

The Lizards, a serio-comic film about the barrenness of provincial life in southern Italy, written and directed by Wertmuller, won a prize in the 1963 Swiss Locarno Film Festival. *The Lizards* has not been released in the United States.

The director followed *The Lizards* with four comic vignettes about the ways men abuse women. This four-part film, entitled *Let's Talk About Men*, did reasonably well at the box office, just as *The Lizards* had. But the reviews for *Let's Talk*'s 1976 American premiere, 10 years later, were disappointing.

Wertmuller had trouble raising money for a third film and returned to the Italian theater and television. The young director met actor Giancarlo Giannini through her work in the theater; Giannini was so impressed with Wertmuller's scripts and directorial talents that he urged his friend Franco Zeffirelli to consider a Wertmuller production.

In 1965, Zeffirelli produced Wertmuller's *Two and Two are No Longer Four* for the theater. Giannini, now a matinee idol, was cast in the pivotal role. Wertmuller's husband, sculptor Enrico Job, designed the sets and costumes. The Zeffirelli production was a huge critical and commercial success.

By 1971 Wertmuller could financially afford to make a film of her script, *Mimi the Metal Worker, His Honor Betrayed*, with Giannini as a macho Sicilian with Mariangela Melato as his fanatical Communist mistress. *Mimi* was screened at Cannes in 1972. Wertmuller was named best director.

The following year at Cannes, the Wertmuller-Giannini-Melato team scored again with the film *Love and Anarchy*. Giannini was named best actor for his portrayal of Tunin, a "country bumpkin determined to assassinate Italian director Benito Mussolini." *Love and Anarchy* so impressed the viewers at Cannes that the film was distributed almost immediately in the United States.

Newsweek called Wertmuller "the most exciting director on the international scene and the most remarkable talent from the continent since Bernardo Bertolucci."

By the autumn of 1975, American cinema buffs were "swept away" with Wertmuller's talent. Judith Crist called *Swept Away*, "as ferocious as it is funny, and as touching as it is truthful."

Attempting to cash in on the Wertmuller frenzy, agents came up with a film Wertmuller made in 1973 entitled *All In Order, Nothing In Place*. Re-edited and renamed *All Screwed Up*, the film was released in this country just prior to the debut of the long-awaited *Seven Beauties*, Wertmuller's most recent film.



Parking attendant Jasper Allen tries to make the confusing parking situation in Chapel Hill a little less annoying for the drivers who enter his lot on Rosemary Street beside Blimpie's. Staff photo by Sam Fulwood.

Attendant eases 'space race'

By **NELL LEE**
Staff Writer

The parking situation isn't much to smile about in Chapel Hill, unless one happens to be at the parking lot on Rosemary Street next to Blimpie's. That's where Jasper Allen hangs out.

The effervescent 78-year-old parking lot attendant is quick with wit, and equally fast with a smile.

"Join the race to get a space" he tells a hurried businessperson as he hands him a time ticket. The customer smiles and moves along.

If it happens to be raining, Allen's standard line is: "a free car wash today."

"Some people come in and they look like they've had a fight with their husbands or something, but when they leave my parking lot, they're usually in much better moods," Allen said.

He's been minding his lot for about two and one-half years now, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. each day. Allen says the busiest time for him is the noon lunch crunch, but he handles it in his usual easygoing manner.

Allen first came to North Carolina in 1944, when he was stationed in the Navy. He played the bass fiddle and tuba in the Navy band, and after the war, headed up to Chicago to join the nightclub circuit. It was the heyday of the Big Bands, and Allen was associated with many of the top brass. He formed his own band in time, known as Jap Allen's Orchestra.

In 1950, Allen returned to North

Carolina, making his home in Chapel Hill. He began his own carpentry business but reserved his weekends for playing the bass fiddle.

Allen said he took the parking-lot job to keep himself busy.

Allen makes himself comfortable in what he fondly refers to as his "glass house." He has an air conditioner to use in the summer, and electric heaters in the window. A radio blares out the latest pop tune, and in the slow morning hours Allen reads the newspaper.

"I guess the thing I like the least about this job is when it's slow. Time seems to drag then," said Allen.

As for his favorite type of customer, Allen says he loves them all, but particularly the elderly ones.

He shook his head slowly when asked for his comments on the Chapel Hill parking situation.

"I guess the bus system is a good idea, but a lot of residents here have been driving their cars a long time and don't want to start using the bus. More parking lots and parking decks would sure help," he said.

It was near the end of Jasper Allen's shift. A regular customer swung his pickup truck into the lot.

"Hey, I thought you were off today, Jasper."

"Ha, I'm off in the head everyday," came the retort.

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Splish-splash: waterbeds earn place in homes

Continued from page 1

frame for it." Even if the mattress does break, Carswell said, there are at least two consolations: (1) you can't possibly drown in the amount of water a bed contains, and (2) the water would not pour out all over the house. It would be contained by the safety liner.

All waterbeds consist of four separate units: the mattress, safety liner, heater and frame.

"As we assemble the frame," Carswell said, "we explain to the customer what's going on. The bed frames give support to the mattress."

"Then we put in the heating system," he said. There are two kinds of heating systems. The most popular is the thermostatic control, which automatically cuts off when it reaches the desired temperature. The other system is a solid state heater, which Carswell says is the more efficient of the two.

"The safety liner comes next," he said. "This is the most important part of the bed."

Finally, the mattress goes in. "We get the mattress to a level that is the most comfortable to the customer. After that, we wax the furniture, re-check the mattress and make up the bed."

Waterbeds come with a specially constructed sheet to facilitate bedmaking, consisting of a flat sheet sewn on to a fitted sheet.

The bed is filled with ordinary water from a garden hose. When the owner is ready to move, all he or she has to do is siphon the water out with the same hose and pack the mattress in a grocery bag.

A conditioner needs to be used occasionally to eliminate the growth of algae.

Cost is generally cheaper than that of a traditional bed, said Carswell. "By the time you pay for a traditional mattress and bed frame, that alone will cost more than a fully-assembled waterbed."

The most obvious question is, "What's it like to have sex on a waterbed?"

Carswell replied, "A man who bought one recently came back in here the other day. He said, 'Believe it or not, my wife and I actually sleep on it, too.'"

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