

Some Looks At Books

By Betsy Lindau

FROG SALAD, by Sally George. Fiction. 210 pp. (Scribners. \$10.95.)

It's impossible to say when it began and when it ended—the years of the drop out generation. The groundwork was laid in the '50's.

John Kennedy's assassination doused any hopes the young people had about bringing their dedication to the improvement of the establishment, as they saw it. Widespread damage was done to an entire generation (or generations) who, after rising to white heat of involvement, were left, suddenly, rudderless.

"Frog Salad" is about this generation. What are they doing now? Now the demonstrations and the confrontations have lost their relevance and it's time to be about one's business, whatever that is.

Undoubtedly every generation has its problems. I remember sitting in a parked car on a downtown street in Black Mountain in 1943 or '44 mulling over the ways in which life had been grossly unfair to me. I remember hitting the steering wheel with my fist and saying out loud, "First the Depression and now the War!" and startling a passerby.

Terrible as they were, the Great Depression and World War II seemed to have resolved themselves by the time the "Frog Salad" kids were arriving on the scene.

Remember all that togetherness and suburbia and having babies and conformity that seemed to refute any doubts about the health of the American system in the '50's? Everything was working right. Doubts brought on by the Depression were dispelled.

The McCarthy witch hunt was on, to be sure, but that hardly concerned the children. The Supreme Court made a landmark decision in 1954 but it would be years before integration became a factor in the lives of the "Frog Salad" kids.

John Kennedy woke them up with his "Ask not—" invitation to become involved. It hit them—most of them in their teens or early twenties at exactly the right time.

They must have been bored out of their gourds with the bland diet of the '50's. How exciting it must have been to be encouraged to join the Peace Corps, march for Racial Equality, celebrate Earth Day.

The tragedy of Kennedy's assassination was especially traumatic for these young people. It was obviously going to be a lot harder to remodel the world than they had thought. For many of them it was a signal that remodelling wouldn't do the job—the world (as they knew it) would have to be remade and that called for tough tactics.

For many others it meant giving up on the world, withdrawing from the effort, dropping out. They became Flower Children, some of them. Some made their own fantasy world of drugs. Some of the luckier ones found themselves living and working close to nature.

But there are some, like the "Frog Salad" kids (now in their mid-thirties) who are still rudderless. They have found jobs—not very exciting jobs for the most part. They have established relationships—not very meaningful ones.

They are still looking. Ben, for example, copies forms for the city and paints pictures of food. He has just recently, with his latest composition, introduced a new element into his painting, live (if tranquilized) frogs.

In spite of all the sad elements in "Frog Salad," the publishers are right to call it a "crazy, wonderful, wickedly funny novel."

And it is virtually impossible not to care for its characters, even while you laugh at them. I just hope they will all find themselves and be all right. At least Ben seems to be heading in the right direction.

Sally George is a writer to be watched. She handles all this comedy and tragedy deftly and convincingly portrays a scene so totally foreign to many of us that we could easily be turned off otherwise.

HOSPITAL ANNIVERSARY Cape Fear Valley Hospital celebrates the 25th anniversary of its opening June 8-12 with a week-long series of observances and activities. Seventh District Congressman Charles G. Rose will speak June 8 at a 2 p.m. ceremony on the front lawn of the 420-bed hospital, commemorating its dedication on June 8, 1956. The ceremony, open to the public, also will honor members of the 1956 Cumberland County Board of Commissioners and the hospital's original board of trustees.

'Honkytonk Man' Is Both Hilarious And Touching

BY RUSSELL LORENSEN
HONKYTONK MAN by Clancy Carlile, Simon & Schuster. 345 pages. \$12.95. Fiction.

During the 1930's parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Texas and New Mexico, an area comprising about 96,000,000 acres, suffered severe wind erosion resulting in what came to be known as the "Dust Bowl."

Over a period of time before the first World War hundreds of homesteaders took over the land, plowing under the Hardy grasses and planting row crops such as wheat, cotton and corn, instead of using the land for grazing cattle. In the early 1930's the soil started to blow away, several severe droughts followed and by 1935 thousands of farmers had been ruined, many emigrating westward.

The term "Ookie" was coined to describe the impoverished families and "The Grapes of Wrath" became a best selling book, later being turned into a popular motion picture.

The Wagoners were typical Ookies, they lived in Oklahoma, they were exceedingly poor tenant farmers and they tried to make a living raising cotton. Virgil Wagoner's father, Grandpa, made his home with the family. He had come to Oklahoma when he was eighteen, riding a mule from his native Tennessee, wanting to return to his birthplace to live out his few remaining years.

There was Margery who had a room to herself, big brother Howard, little brother Willie and Whit who turned out to be the book's hero, fourteen years old and tired of chopping cotton.

During a heavy dust storm Mrs. Wagoner's brother, Hassle Stovall, drunk as usual, drives into the yard in a black Packard limousine. Red Stovall is on his way to audition for the "Grand Ole Opry" radio show.

Uncle Red persuades the family to let Whit—whom he



Clancy Carlile

affectionately calls Hoss—drive him to Tennessee. Grandpa Wagoner joins them and the rest of the family wave farewell to the three men in the Packard embarking on their unforgettable journey. On their way to Nashville they are joined by another aspiring singer, Marlene Moonglow, who can't carry a tune.

The story of how these travelers get from the Dust Bowl to lush Tennessee with no money, relying on Uncle Red's singing, his improbable plots and his reluctant ingenuity to provide their daily meals and gas for the Packard, is by turns hilarious and touching and always authentic.

The book is rough and ready and rowdy and ribald but if you can overlook the four letter words and the immoral acts of the principals you will find it rib-tickling entertainment.

Clancy Carlile is a native of Oklahoma who has lived most of his life in California. He is the author of "When I was Young and Easy" and "Spore Seven." He is a composer and frequently plays guitar with a Country and Western band. He is currently at work on the screenplay of "Honkytonk Man."

A new book of poems, a first novel about a fat woman, a history of the famous Astor Family, an account of Raleigh's Lost Colony and new paperbacks about Southern guest houses and the Myrtle Beach Strand—all these come this spring from Southern writers.

James Applewhite, associate professor of English at Duke University, is the author of a splendid new collection of poems, "Following Gravity," which he says were written "about and for those folks down home." (University of Virginia Press. 69 pp. \$7.95) The volume is dedicated to his wife, Jan, who appears in many of the personal poems.

"Following Gravity" is the fifth volume of poems to appear through the Virginia Commonwealth University Series for Contemporary Poetry. More than 300 collections were submitted in this year's contest—and Pulitzer-Prize-winning poet Donald Justice made the final decision from the 11 contestants and wrote the introduction. "Like the best of Southern writing," Justice writes in his Foreword, "Applewhite's is at heart traditional, and all the more resonant for being so."

One of the joys of Applewhite's poetry is that it is intelligible to the reader. Another is that it is undeniably fresh and imaginative. The reader is constantly surprised by an unexpected turn of phrase, a freshly seen image, a provocative idea. The poet supplies the telling detail that makes the poetry leap from the page. On one page he can write about "Whiskey workers with no front teeth, men from down home," and on the next he describes "the broom sedge fields ruddy from sunset."

In his poems he takes us to an "Elephant Graveyard" of old cars, where you can "Sift with your nails under seats, through the buckshot pebbles, cigarettes' tinsel—pearl buttons from back-road adulteries." He has "Some Words for Fall." "The tobacco's long put in. Whiffs of it curing—Are a memory that rustles the sweet gums." Longer poems included are "My Grandmother's Life" and "The Mary Tapes," in which a woman named Mary remembers when she lived "in a tenant shack out behind grandpa's," where "Sun made the roof tin creek like a stove cooling off." And she remembers how her husband used to stand on a pier at White Lake, looking at the girls in tight shorts. "Just because you've ordered," he said, "don't mean you can't look at the menu."

Jim Applewhite may have left his birthplace in Stantonburg long ago, but teaching at Duke has not made this warmly reminiscent poet forget his past. "Fat Woman" Leon Rooke was born in North Carolina, studied at UNC and lives in British Columbia, but his first novel, "Fat Woman," goes back to his Southern boyhood in telling the story of a woman so fat she surpassed the ability of the scales to show her weight, so fat she weakened the kitchen floor, so fat her loving husband could no longer pick her up.

The Literary Lantern

By Walter Spearman



AUTHOR — John D. Gates of Winston-Salem is the author of "The Du Pont Family," reviewed this week in the Literary Lantern.

(Knopf. 179 pp. \$9.95) The geographical scene is never established—but there's mention of the Dorothea Dix Hospital, the poor white trash living in a trailer next door who planted flowers in an automobile tire in their yard, then let them die, and there's a wealth of kudzu vine and honeysuckle that sounds like North Carolina.

Ella Mae Hopkins was a compulsive eater: hot buttered biscuits, chocolate chip cookies, a carton of ice cream, banana splits at the Dairy Queen. "I've heard fat people are like drunkards, they can't help eating," her nose-ty neighbor told her. "I reckon you weigh more than the whole house, Momma," said her obstreperous young son Ike.

But her husband loved her. Edward worked hard in the freight yard, was a tease and a show-off—and, of course, was rail skinny. He also collected useless things like old lampshades, worn-out toasters, discarded lawn chairs and fiddled with them around the house. When Ella Mae's finger gets so fat she has to get her wedding ring sawed off, Edward decides to take action. What he does and how Ella Mae reacts is the theme of "Fat Woman," but Edward never loses his love for his "fat woman," any more than author Leon Rooke ever condescends or pities Ella Mae. She is real, she is human, she is pitiable, she is even funny. The novel is full of purposeful clichés that build up the kind of life these people live, the kind of folks they came from, "dirt people," and the kind of problems they have to suffer.

The Astor Family

of New York from 1870 to 1900; William Astor Chanler, who lost a leg in a Paris bordello brawl; and John Jacob Astor IV, who went down with the Titanic. And of course, there was the famous Nancy Langhorne Astor, who "told Winston Churchill that, were he her husband, she'd poison his coffee, and Churchill replied that, were Nancy his wife, he'd drink it."

The book has an excellent and helpful index and a useful family tree, but lacks photographs that would have made it infinitely more interesting.

Raleigh's Colony It's an Englishman this time, David Durant, who contributes the retelling of an old familiar Carolina story in "Raleigh's Lost Colony: The Story of the First English Settlement in America." (Atheneum Publishers. 188 pp. \$12.95) The author of this Alternate Selection of the Library of World History Book Club has also written "Bess of Hardwick" and "Arbella Stuart." Most of the known facts of the Lost Colony are well known to N.C. readers, but Author Durant does make an interesting point in stating that the experience at Roanoke was helpful in the later English settling at Jamestown. He seems convinced that the remnants of the Lost Colony were definitely massacred by Pawhatan and his Indians.

Also from Atheneum comes a new paperback edition of Reynolds Price's "The Surface of the Earth," the highly regarded novel about four generations of a North Carolina Virginia family, in connection with the hardback publication of its sequel, "The Source of Light" (491 pp. \$9.95)

And two new paperbacks from East Wood Press, 820 East Boulevard, Charlotte, N.C. 28203 are "The Southern Guest House Book" by Corinne Madden Ross (192 pp. \$6.95) and "The Grand Strand," a guide to Myrtle Beach by Nancy Rhyne (123 pp. \$4.95).

Southern Pines Library

New books at the Southern Pines Public Library include the following:

Memorial Gift Books—J. Davidson, The Way to End Inflation; P. Dowell, Cooks' Ingredients; L. Marshall, Cooking Across the South; The New Milton Cross' More Stories of the Great Operas.

Fiction—J. Clavell, Noble House; F. Hill, The Stanbrooke Girls; T. King, Small World; B. Lopez, Winter Count; MacWilliams, Mistral; R. Price, The Source of Light; R. Roderus, Jason Evers, His Own Story; N. St. John, Guinever's Gift; M. Sharp, Masterstroke; E. Spencer, The Stories of Elizabeth Spencer.

Adult Non-Fiction—American Women Writers, Vol 3; B. Andrews, Loving Lucy; M. (Continued on Page 4-B)

Narrative Energy Shown In Both Poetry, Prose

BY SHELBY STEPHENSON
THE FLOOD STORY by Ann Deagon. (Winthrop College Chapbook Award in Fiction, Winthrop College, Rock Hill, South Carolina 29730) 1981, soft.

THERE IS NO BALM IN BIRMINGHAM by Ann Deagon. (David R. Godine, Publisher, Boston, Massachusetts), 47 pages, hardback.

In Ann Deagon's recent book of poems—"There Is No Balm in Birmingham"—the third and final part of a poem called "The Tree House" is this:

Why does a grown woman build a tree house of words (a word house of trees)? The metaphor at best is inexact. True, we scrounge anything to cage us from the wind.

True, from there we see further than the yard. True, what once streaked on snow falters in the melting, hangs at rust. Call it allegory.

But if it wasn't true, why these flakes of rust along my palm? Why these dreams of falling?

These lines hold the qualities which distinguish Ann Deagon's poems: the lyrical line rhythmically given to the voice speaking the language brimming with myths and anti-myths and more than anything else—a narrative energy which makes all her lyrics narratives first.

This quality of lyrical storytelling also marks "The Flood Story"—which recently won the Winthrop College Chapbook Award in fiction.

The teller of the tale—Joan—has returned to her mother's house to die, going finally into a little dollhouse portion of the home-place, a space off-limits to her as a child because she was crippled. Squeezing inside the hole, she waits for the flood, "the future with the past." As the water rises, she changes her mind about dying, however, and decides to live. "She chose the future, thrusting her head and shoulders through the casement, her seldom extended legs now trailing behind her. And letting go of the drainpipe she began to swim with long, deep strokes toward the impossible light."

Joan is a writer. Throughout "The Flood Story," she comments on her story through the imagined dialogues with her dead mother. This is a modern story in the sense that it is about the act of writing, about creating something. And it is modern in that it concerns one person's attempt to arrest time. Joan's past becomes present when she decides to live and to write about

her life. The third and last story within the main story is this imagined commentary between Joan and her mother. The mother speaks the first line—then Joan, then the mother, then Joan:

Were you expecting something more? Well, the whole thing seems pretty pointless to me.

That's funny. Since I wrote it for you.

To quote from "The Tree House" again: "The metaphor at best is inexact." And earlier in the poem, the speaker says "Is there no truth? you ask—only this shape-shifting, this growth of lies like kudzu altering the

into a stand of monsters? No. I never built a tree house. Until now.

"The Flood Story" may be read as an allegory of the writer. The woman Joan survives fire (she lost her family in a fire) and flood to tell the story. Yet more than that, "The Flood Story" is a poetic narrative of one basic myth—the going away through darkness to return to some "impossible light."

Moore County Library

The following is a list of new books received this week by the Moore County Public Library, a member of the Sandhill Regional Library System. They are available at the Moore County Public Library and Bookmobile in Carthage.

Adult Books Jane Brody, Jane Brody's Nutrition Book and Home Food Systems; Alexis Parks, People Heaters; Rembrandt Harmsenszoon, Rembrandt II; Hiroake Sato, From the Country of Eight Islands; William F. Shanahan, College—Yes or No; James Clavell, Noble House; E.X. Ferrars, Experiment with Death; John Gardner, License Renewed; Gerald Green, Murfy's Men.

Children's Books Henry Gilford, Afghanistan.

Leather bound books need special care, starting when new. Once a year, apply white petroleum jelly, lanolin or saddle soap.

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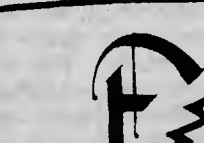


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