

Fall 1990

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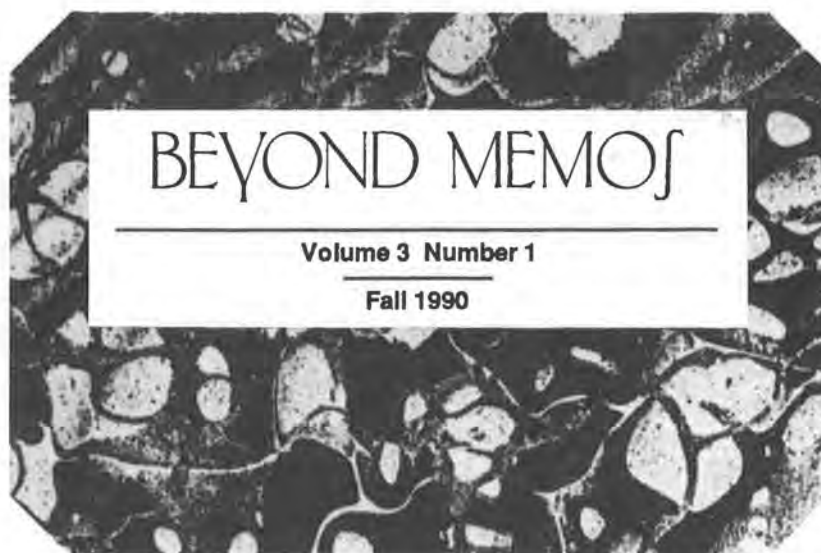
BEYOND MEMOS

A Journal of the UMF Faculty

Volume 3 Number 1

Fall 1990





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BEYOND MEMOS is meant to be just that--a forum where UMF faculty can share ideas and creative work that go beyond the day-to-day campus routine of teaching, advising, committees, and memos. We welcome submission of anything of general interest: poems, stories, essays, drawings, photographs, interviews, humorous pieces, etc. All materials, inquiries, and comments should be sent to Philip Carlsen, Editor, **BEYOND MEMOS**, University of Maine at Farmington, Farmington, ME 04938.

The Fourth Man

THURSDAY NIGHT, Oct. 4, 1990, Thomas Auditorium filled with students and faculty and community people to hear Tim O'Brien read from his latest work, *The Things They Carried*. I was late, not so late that I had to walk into a reading in progress but late enough to have to scan the sea of heads for an empty seat.

Dianne and Wes McNair were standing in the back, leaning up against the wall. Linda Britt and Valerie Huebner were already settled in their seats near the back, close to an aisle. Norma and I greeted them and talked briefly while scanning the crowd. It was good to see some familiar faces among a throng of so many new ones. I looked around feeling anxious and unconnected. The reading was about to begin. I spied a couple of spaces down front and shot around to the other side and down the stairs to the third row, inquired, and settled in. After I landed, I realized that the entire front row was empty. As I considered moving, Norma arrived and sat next to me. I surveyed the area and recognized a few students nearby. Within a couple of minutes, the front row filled.

In preparation for this evening, dutifully, I had begun to read *Going After Cacciato*, *Northern Lights*, and some stories from *The Things They Carried*. Although I was not at all prepared to like or be interested in war stories, O'Brien's powerful prose drew me in. In *Going After Cacciato*, I was intrigued, not only by the main character and his caper, but by the pursuit itself and the pursuers. Before I knew what was happening, I was after Cacciato too. So, I had been looking forward to this reading, and, as far as I was concerned, Tim O'Brien had a receptive audience.

Pat O'Donnell welcomed the crowd, announced the other artists in the series, expressed her hope that we'd all attend those readings too, and introduced Tim O'Brien.

A balding man in a charcoal-gray, V-neck sweater and well-washed blue jeans walked to the podium. His face was alert, his body taut, his eyes dark and direct. I had seen several book-jacket photos of him. Obviously taken years ago, they bore little resemblance to the man before me. In person, he had more age and less hair, looked more like a grocer than a celebrity. And he was short. Not only did the pictures on the books show a smiling, curly-headed, personable, outgoing face, but they were all head or bust shots, giving no indication of his stature. After imagining him bigger-than-life, it was

a bit of a shock when Tim O'Brien arrived in a real-life-size package.

Holding on to the sides of the podium, elbows out, the way speakers do, he began by explaining that the story he would read was originally called "Everybody Dies," but *Esquire* wasn't keen on publishing it with that title. He said it was necessary to know this to understand the first sentence, "But this too is true: stories can save us."

He read, hardly ever looking at the page. The story was so completely his that he was telling it rather than reading. He told it, complete with gestures and eye contact. He punctuated with silences, raised eyebrows, and grimaces. Lots of grimaces. He looked right at the audience and said his words, told his story about Timmy and Linda in love at 9 years old. He looked right at the audience, told his story about Kiowa and Curt Lemon, Ted Lavender and Rat Kiley. He looked right at the audience, sending out his message, telling his tale.

Intermittently, he paused to drink water from a clear, ridged, short, stout glass. He'd shift his weight, step back, lift the glass, swallow, lick his lips, and replace the glass on the podium. Even after it appeared drained, he'd pause, lift the glass to his lips, tilt his head back and swallow. At least three times, he lifted the empty glass coaxing the final drops down his throat. I wanted to run down there and give him some more water.

The story, now called "The Lives of the Dead," is about love and death and the sustaining power of stories. The images are sharp, stark, and shocking, the feelings raw and real; we are moved. The story shifts between the moral, emotional, and physical landscapes of Vietnam and O'Brien's childhood Minnesota. Both were fraught with courage, cowardice and confusion. We were with him. The audience was transported back and forth between Vietnam battlefields and a Minneapolis school yard, swinging between combat's first shocks and love's first certainties. We identified with Timmy's moral dilemmas, his inability to act, his longing to know, and his courage to cry. We identified with Tim's disgust and disbelief, his repulsion and reticence, and his plodding and perseverance. We could smell death, see bloat and feel shame. And, as the original title indicates, everybody dies: Linda from a brain tumor at 9, Lavender by a shot in the head, Lemon from a booby trap, and Kiowa in a shit swamp—everybody. Yet Timmy continues to dream Linda alive.

In Vietnam she is with him. Her presence sustains Tim through all those deaths. He recalls from a dream her startling reassurance, "Once you are really alive, you can't ever be dead."

And it was done. He finished telling his tale. There was a long round of applause, genuine appreciation for this man's directness, his craft, and his courage. He left the podium and slipped into the crowd. Pat announced that there were refreshments and that Tim O'Brien would autograph books. People streamed down the aisles towards the stage. We were swept into a cluster near the cider table and exchanged greetings and appreciation with familiar and unfamiliar faces alike, feeling connected now. O'Brien had disappeared. I couldn't find him anywhere. He was there, though, in the midst of admirers, now disguised as a Minnesota fan, in his dark-rimmed glasses and blue baseball cap. The writer and story teller were gone; the man remained.

Soon all the books were either bought or repacked. Some were signed and tucked under an arm or into a bag, and the crowd dispersed. I listened to Wes tell Tim his work had a ring of truth to it—it reminded him of the first time he read *Catcher in the Rye*. More dispersal. I also heard Tim tell someone that he had arrived early and watched the people come in. After seeing them, he selected his story. The crowd thinned. And my last image of the evening was four men looking into each other's eyes. Four men, squared off like the corners of the head of a long, sturdy, steel bolt that threads through, reaching the core. Four men: Tim O'Brien, Doug Rawlings, John Smith and a fourth man, whom I didn't know, standing there looking at each other, connected because they had been there.

—KATHLEEN BEAUBIEN

He sees it

As a child in the North country, all day he'd play
with brothers in a cold blue lake.
One night he dreamed he was burning in ice,
woke locked frozen, staring from his body.
To this day a mystery, and now it's
sixty-seven years in a wheelchair.
Others, he knows, are less fortunate.
At a dinner for the handicapped
confronted by a phalanx of retarded kids
he fled the room.
Watching a young woman
stagger spasmodically down the street,
he wept for a week.

Four pills a day, at almost a dollar each:
he can sleep, no more cramping
in the swollen fingers
and arms that won't bend to his face.
With long-handled fork and spoon he feeds himself,
shaves himself with a long-handled razor
(he pantomimes the gesture)
before he rolls off to his station
by the hanging baskets at the market entrance
with his apron of postcards —
loons, bears, fox cubs, and moose
knee deep in water, eyeing me.

—LEE SHARKEY



Three Poems

JEN

the birch splits
its bark
the snake its skin
the child leaps
into the woman
she always has been

nothing is new
nothing is changing
the birch is the bark
the snake the skin
the child the woman

the seed, flowering
dies back into the earth
as the child, growing,
turns forward
toward her new birth

TO JOSH TURNING SIX

1.
the loon fishing
quietly swallows itself
into the lake

2.
going simple
you have now
more than you will
ever need to use

3.

the morning rain
gathers
onto the apple bud
only to fall
of its own weight

4.

going clear
knowing you gain
exactly what you need
to lose

TO JOSH AND DAVID: TURNING THIRTEEN

If we were
ancient shamans
now would be
the moment
we'd choose
to give you
shelter
from the coming
storm

But we are merely
survivors
of suburbs and cities
not forest nor mountain:
Modern men
offering
silence and words
to guide you
going out
on your own

Yet we have known
for years now
that the silence
of our fathers
will not do

And yes, we have also known
that words alone
cannot become
the sacred knives
you need
to bleed you free
of raging doubts

So listen up
to what we
have learned
from the silence
found
between words:

Open up your fists

Watch women move

Scorn uniforms

Don't march

Dance

—DOUG RAWLINGS



The Roofing Man

LAST SUMMER my mother and her sister, Claire, were looking forward to a number of quiet, peaceful days. After all, this was the usual pattern of their life. Mom was 79, and Claire was four years older. They had their house all paid off, the house where Mom and Dad raised us two boys. After Dad died, Claire came to keep Mom company. And they'd gotten along well together during these last sixteen years. So they thought they would have a quiet time and enjoy the warm, upper New York State summer. But they hadn't counted on Mr. Flaherty.

Mom and Claire are religious people. Most of their time outside the house is devoted to church activities. In this way—over the years—they have met a great many people, for theirs is a large congregation. One of the people they noticed in passing was a short, stocky man of about forty-six, Mr. John Flaherty.

Actually, they didn't know his name until that day he appeared in their driveway in his pick-up truck. Whenever an unheralded stranger appeared at their door, Mom and Claire would get immediately flustered. They rarely knew what to do with strangers, especially sales people. They never wanted to be impolite or unkind, so they always showed an interest in what the person was saying. And, of course, this gave the sales people the impression that Mom and Claire would buy something.

In any case, Mom and Claire had practically no sales resistance. I'm not actually sure, however, that's the best phrase. At the last moment, they usually resisted buying whatever it was—simply because they didn't have much money. But they never seemed to realize that the time to say "No" to the salesman was during the first two minutes.

I vividly remember one early evening years ago when a vacuum cleaner salesman announced himself at our front door. Somehow my mother couldn't refuse him at the outset. So the poor man carried from his car about five boxes and his vacuum cleaner. These items he carefully stacked in our living room. After discussing the wonderful array of attachments and what they could do, he thought he had my mother sold. So he continued with the next phase: his demonstration. After a considerable to-do, he smilingly showed Mom her shining-clean carpet. After this one-hour presentation, it was tough for Mom to find the words to refuse the guy. But since she didn't have \$500 in ready cash, she did turn him down.

There had been many such escapades over the

years. Mom and Claire had gone through their share of salespeople. There had been all sorts of magazine salesgirls, encyclopedia salesmen, Fuller Brush people, and cosmetic saleswomen. Whatever American sales genius had devised to sell door-to-door probably made its way sooner or later to my mother's house. You might think that the ladies would be rather brusque with salespeople after these experiences, but they remained sensitive to other people's feelings. They didn't want to hurt anyone.

So the day arrived when they found Mr. Flaherty's truck in their drive. It was a bright green pick-up with the lettering "Flaherty—General Contracting" painted on its doors.

When Mr. Flaherty introduced himself to my mother, he knew what he was about. "I'm John Flaherty, Mrs. Ryan. I know you from church."

"Oh, of course," said my mother. "I recognize you now, you're the young man who always sits behind us on the right side." This made Mr. Flaherty an upright man in my mother's eyes. She never suspected people anyway, and if you were a church-goer, then you must be a morally upright person in every area of your daily life. Mom had her blind spots when it came to the business world.

Flaherty got right to it. "In driving by your house, Mrs. Ryan, I noticed that a few of the shingles on your roof are pulling up around your dormer window. Now usually that's a sign of wear in your roof. Of course, it may be nothing serious, but I thought I should let you know because I wouldn't want you to get water damage in your upstairs and perhaps in your ceilings."

This suggestion automatically sent my mother into one of her anxiety attacks. And my Aunt Claire, who came immediately to her side, was no better. They kept their small house in impeccable condition, and the thing they feared most was any kind of serious damage. For them, a water-stained ceiling would be a disaster.

So my mother said to Mr. Flaherty, "Do you think you could take a look at the roof for us and let us know how bad it is?"

"Well," said Flaherty, "I really have other business to attend to today. I have a couple of jobs a few miles down the road, and I just stopped to tell you about your roof so you wouldn't get into any trouble. After all, we have to take care of the people in our church, don't we? We just can't pass by when we notice a problem."

As you see, Flaherty knew the tack to follow with

my mother and aunt. Now they were worried Flaherty wouldn't help them out. This would be a problem because they never seemed to know how to contact workmen to fix things around their house. It was a major enterprise for them to get hold of people to repair things. And that is why my younger brother, Steve—who lived about fifteen minutes away—always took care of such arrangements for them. Steve prided himself on helping out Milly and Claire. He kept a continual eye on the house, the grounds, and their automobile. He had kept close charge of their maintenance for the past ten years.

But in their panic, Mom and Claire forgot all about dutiful Steve. Claire joined in the conversation now. "We'd appreciate it, Mr. Flaherty, if you could take a few minutes to tell us about our roof. We'd be happy to pay you for your time." Claire, you see, prided herself on her business acumen. She figured she could persuade any business person to do work she wanted done.

Of course, Flaherty didn't need much persuading. "Oh, you don't need to pay me anything, Miss O'Neill. I guess I can take a ten-minute break here to look more closely at your roof. My men can look after the other jobs for a few more minutes. I can't let you ladies have water damage problems."

With that anxiety-producing comment, Flaherty got his ladder from the hooks on the side of his pick-up. In seconds, he was up on the roof, inspecting the shingles next to the dormer. Claire and Milly meanwhile were standing in the yard watching his every move.

Flaherty called down, "These shingles around the dormer are all bent up, Mrs. Ryan. It must have been from the snow and ice. They could cause you some problems." Mom's face tightened perceptibly at these words, and Claire began to clasp her hands.

Flaherty scanned the rest of the roof for a minute or two, then climbed back down. "See the way those shingles bend down on the other parts of the roof, Mrs. Ryan. That's a sure sign of wear. I think that within two or three months, water can begin to get under there. I'd have somebody put new shingles on the roof, if it were my house."

Knowing his audience, Flaherty stopped there, and began loading his ladder back on the truck. It seemed to take him a long time to do. Meanwhile, Mom and Claire were talking over the bad news.

"I guess we'd better fix the roof, Milly," said Claire. She always favored immediate responses to a crisis. Claire never was one to ask for time to make a decision.

"I don't know who to get," said my mother. "Mr. Baker retired last December, and he used to do most of our work. I hate to look in the yellow pages because we wouldn't know who we were getting."

"Well, maybe Mr. Flaherty could do it for us," noted Claire. She knew enough to look close at hand for solutions.

Flaherty could hear all this from his truck, but he gave the women another few minutes to talk themselves into their need of his help. Finally, he finished fussing around his ladder and turned to the women.

He said, "Sorry to bring you the bad news, ladies. But it's a good thing that you found out about it now—before the fall rains begin. Is there anything I can do to help you find someone to put a new roof on for you?"

Claire said, "Well, since we know you, Mr. Flaherty, we were wondering if you could do it for us? We don't know anyone else who does this kind of work."

"Oh, I'd like to Miss O'Neill," said Flaherty. "It's just that this is my busiest time of year. I'm already working on two houses down the road."

"We'd appreciate your fitting us in when you can, Mr. Flaherty. The sooner the better," said my mother.

"You know," said Flaherty, "I can see you ladies need help right away, and since I know you from church, I'll see what I can do. I'll talk to one of the ladies down the road who needs work on her house siding. Maybe she can wait a day or two. If that works out, I'll show up here in the morning with my crew and we'll get your new roof on right away. Without delay. How does that sound to you?"

"That will be fine," said Claire. "I just knew things would be okay for us with your help."

Mr. Flaherty smiled graciously, went to his pick-up, got in, and pulled out of the drive. From his open window, he called, "I'll try to be over in the morning, ladies." And off he went.

After he was gone, Claire and Milly remained in the yard for a few minutes, looking at the roof as they walked around the house. "I see what he means," Claire said, "about those shingles bending down. You know, you'd think they would last longer than — uh, seven years. Was it seven years ago we did the roof?"

"Seven years?" said Milly. Let me see. It must have been longer than that. It was before Mary died."

"Mary? She died after Ella did. That was nine years ago. So I guess it was eight years ago we did the roof," said Claire.

"You'd think they'd make roofs to last longer than that, wouldn't you, Claire?" said Milly.

The two sisters then went into the house through the back door. They continued their talk for over an hour, then decided to do their grocery shopping. Thoughts of the roof thus began to fade as their normal routine took over. After lunch, they took their naps and their baths. In late afternoon, they went to the church library to help index books. Then they returned home for a late supper.

After evening prayers and two hours of television, they went to bed.

Usually they slept until about 8:30 a.m. But not this day. At 7:00 sharp they were awakened by noises coming from the roof. Claire was the first one out of bed—wondering whatever could be going on. She ran to the front window and raised the blinds. There was Mr. Flaherty's pick-up. And two other trucks as well.

"Milly, Milly," said Claire. "Mr. Flaherty is working on our roof already. Didn't he say he was going to phone us first?"

Milly joined her at the window in her confusion. Neither of them were quite awake. "Oh, what will we do?" said Milly.

"I guess we can't do anything now that he's already started," said Claire. Thoughts of my brother Steve were far from their minds at this point.

So Mr. Flaherty and his crew replaced the entire roof. And they did it all in one day. No one ever saw a project completed so quickly. He didn't give anyone a chance to reconsider the project.

The next morning after returning from shopping, Claire and Milly saw no more trucks. Instead, they noticed a mess in their yard. There, scattered all around the house were the old shingles. The workers had left them there.

However, my mother and aunt assumed Mr. Flaherty would soon return to pick up the mess. They admired the new roof, although Claire commented, "Those new shingles seem to bend down, too."

But Mr. Flaherty did not return the next day, nor did he come back on the weekend. My mother and aunt began to worry. They always hated disorder in their house and yard, and the shingles were strewn all over the place. So they did what they always did when they were in trouble, they decided (finally) to call my brother, Steve.

They did not expect the furor that Steve was to make about Mr. Flaherty. Of course, in their excitement about Mr. Flaherty's first visit, they had forgotten to say a word to Steve about the roofing project. Unfortunately, Steve has developed something of a temper as he grows older. And he really cut loose when Mom told him she had a brand new roof, also a yard full of old

Sounding

INNERSPACE

Submerged
mountains
valleys
lava flows

Strange life forms
lurking
along a fault
living
without light
without air
feeding
on toxic sulphur
oozing
from the River
of Fire

OUTERSPACE

Scrutinized
they
will die

—MAGGY ANDERSON

shingles. Caramba. The anxiety level went higher and higher.

I never did get all the details concerning the aftermath of Flaherty Day. Milly and Claire do not like to discuss their errors. I did learn that Steve had some rather hot phone conversations with Flaherty, that he stopped payment on Mom's check for awhile, and that Flaherty's crew returned in short order to pick up the mess in the yard. All the rest is silence.

I've learned through the years not to press my relatives on sensitive issues. I wish I thought something like this experience couldn't happen to Milly and Claire again. But what can you do when there are charming people out there going door-to-door—people like John Flaherty?

—A. BRUCE DEAN



Jacob Mooker

July 3, 1842-October 10, 1941

IN JUST A FEW MINUTES the Grand Army's 75th National Encampment Parade will pass this way. The Boys in Blue were here in Columbus, Ohio, in 1888 by the thousands with Gen. William T. Sherman. They were here in 1919 with many hundreds. They are here today, Sept. 17, 1941, ninety-two strong. It is rumored that several Civil War soldiers may march afoot! A thoughtful City Service Department has just gone over the mile-long route with sprinklers, releasing cooling jets of cold water upon the hot asphalt and granite cobbles. Thousands line Town, Third, High and Broad streets. The grandstand, beside the reviewing stand, holds 7500 more. Suddenly, with uninhibited martial pizzazz, the Marine Band, in the lead, renders "The Stars and Stripes Forever." The procession advances more slowly than expected. Spectators ahead become impatient. Spectators opposite the featured unit understand and applaud demonstratively, paying as best they can that unutterable abstract human response—**homage**. Civil War men *are* marching, at *this* point, past the reviewing stand. Here in the front is Jacob Mooker, 99, of Valparaiso, Indiana, fulfilling his finest hour. Still able to snappily step high to the cadence, though some of his old spring is surely missing, he is 5'2" of his youthful 5'4". Off to his left and slightly behind him marches his grandson, Vernon Mooker. Close following is Chicago's Albert E. Gage, 97; nearby is Richard R. Graham, 96, of Madisonville, Kentucky—these three having long been notable among the G.A.R.'s most diehard marchers. With them today are J.W. Petri, 91, of Denver; Oliver H. Castle, 94, of Los Angeles; Alfred Hendee, 95, of Panama, Nebraska; and Edwin Morris, 95, of Elmira, New York.¹ Briskly, courageously they step out, these seven ancients, somewhat bent and stiffened though they are. Some onlookers quietly weep, while most cover their feeling with cheers, applause, picture-taking. Seven old men doing their thing. Seventy-four others ride in automobiles, but four of these seven on foot complete the entire parade route in the exacting heat . . . and "Jake" Mooker is the first of these to do so.

JACOB WAS BORN in Germany, the son of John Mooker (Holmoker, Homooker), Jan. 6, 1797-July 6,

1896. He was a farmer who, like many another villager in the old country, became attracted to the new lands in America. On Apr. 1, 1848, John with his wife, two daughters, fourteen and two-and-a-half, and son Jacob, six, took passage on an old sailing vessel bound for Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. During the three-month crossing, over half the people, including Jacob's mother, died of cholera. A few days after landing, his baby sister died in the quarantine camp where they were detained. Late one night John noiselessly unfastened a wide plank from the high fence and took his two remaining children out into the wilds and fresh, clean air. For three months they followed an Indian trail along the St. Lawrence until they came to Detroit. Though ragged and torn, they trudged on toward Chicago until early winter weather. By late November they entered a clearing in Indiana called Westville. Their feet were bare, bruised, swollen. Finally they rested along the old Sac Indian Trail in another clearing named Valparaiso or Valpo (for short). The chief attraction was the Goul House, Valpo's first hostelry, eventually replaced by the Spindler Hotel and still later by the Premiere Theatre. A fellow named Shinebarger lived east of Valpo, near Prattville, and he invited the sad family to stay the winter. Their home for two winters was a maple sugar house with an earthen floor and fireplace. They then moved to the old Jake Fleming place at Snake Island. Jacob's sister had already left home to work at a neighboring farm. Corn meal was their main staple those earliest years.

In 1851, John got a job with the company that was building the Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania Railroad. Young Jake also worked, earning from 16 to 24 cents a day while John made 40 to 50 cents wheeling gravel mostly. "It was the hardest work I have ever done," Jake would reminisce in after years. "I was only a child, but I was glad to be able to work and to help earn some money."² Jake and John did much work on the section from Wanatah west to Winslow. They saw the first locomotive run through, a glorious event. After nearly four years working for what became the Pennsylvania Railroad and not receiving all their wages, they were finally offered a discount of \$400 on eighty acres at \$10 an acre in Portage Township. They acquired the land, owing another \$400. On this farm Jake spent his contented "bachelor youth"

with his father, cutting, hauling and selling wood at \$2 a cord to the railroad at Bushore Crossing. Early-day steam locomotives were fueled with wood. In 1856 they bought their first rocking chair and a walnut chest. In his youth Jake went to school two weeks. The main thoroughfare then was a plank corduroy road from Valpo to Chesterton.

One spring morning when maple sapping was over, Jake, then nineteen, awoke to news of war with the South. Feeling grateful to the North as their land of opportunity, Jake said his goodbyes and hurried to Michigan City to enlist in the 29th Indiana. But he was refused for being too small. But John assured his well toughened boy, "Never mind, son, there's a day comin' when they'll be glad to take you, no matter what your size. This has only begun and it's agoin' to be a bitter fight to the finish."³ Jake plowed fields and cleared land another thirty-three months until Feb. 7, 1864, when he enlisted at Michigan City for service with Co. H, 128th Indiana Inf. After a march to Evanston they were issued uniforms and muskets. Though the long marches were a lark for Jake, they were an ordeal for most of the regiment—teenagers three, four and five years junior to Jake. Being part of Hovey's Division, they soon got named "Hovey's Babies." However, they marched through Kentucky and Tennessee to Chattanooga, got two weeks rest, and in two more had caught up with Sherman's army.

Pvt. Mooker, with the 128th Indiana, fought in many battles on the soil of Georgia which at least twice absorbed his blood. At Resaca May 14-15, 1864, he was badly wounded *in the leg* and had to be carried to an operating tent and placed on a table. A bullet had to be removed *without* any anaesthetic. Jake steeled himself to this severe test as the doctor's sharp instrument probed for and extricated the bullet. No murmur! Though his thigh was sore and painful, Jake the sixth day after was marching with his unit. He took part in operations on Pumpkin Vine Creek and in actions at New Hope Church and Altoona Hills, in operations about Marietta. On June 26-27, the 128th Indiana helped catch the enemy in a weak spot at Kennesaw Mountain.⁴ The Southerners had felled trees and sharpened them into points as a defense. Men in Jake's lines were sent in to cut off these barbs so they could penetrate. At 4:00 p.m. on the 27th the 128th was part of a heavy charge. It was at this time that Pvt. Mooker took a 'sorry thrust from a bayonet, cutting away several teeth. This would leave a lifelong scar from the corner of his eye across his cheek bone to the lower part of his jaw. The sun that day set upon many men dead or dying. "For weeks we couldn't step on a thing but dead bodies,"

Jake many times recalled.⁵ He again had his wound dressed without anaesthesia. At the large Army hospital in Knoxville he convalesced in bed where he was given whiskey and milk, what the men called a milkpunch. Upon recovering strength, Pvt. Mooker was allowed to go home to vote. He voted for Oliver P. Morton for governor while casting his ballot for Lincoln. After the glad reunion with his father, he returned a week later to duty at Evansville. His Company H was placed with the Veteran Reserves and became Co. D, 18th Regiment. Here Jake learned to play the drum at the captain's behest. They were stationed in Washington, D.C. The Civil War episode that ex-Pvt. Mooker would most often retell in his senior life occurred shortly after he began his new duty in the capital. Here is how he told it. (See also Dr. Zeeb Gilman, Sixth Unit, *The North's Last Boys in Blue*, unpublished.)

I could have had a share in the John Wilkes Booth reward money, but I didn't want it. Everybody present at the tragic scene asked for a share of the money except Maj. Gen. W.S. Hancock, Maj. A. C. Richards, William Rollins and me. The whole thing was a disgrace. Secretary of War Stanton on April 20, six days after Lincoln's assassination, had a reward circular sent all over, intended for the civilian population. The number of claims that flooded Stanton's office, once Booth was killed, included seemingly everyone who had seen the man immediately before the crime, everyone who had known him, or was in the Virginia vicinity during the search. Stanton was so bewildered he set up a Claims Commission to weed out the frauds. Claims poured in until December when Stanton published a notice that further claims would not be accepted after Jan. 1, 1866. The commission appropriated \$30,000 for the head officers of the pursuit force, and \$45,000 to be divided among lesser claimants. However, there was great dispute, so that Congress put a committee to work with final say. The final distribution gave Lt. Doherty, E. J. Conger and the two Lts. Baker \$32,000 divided according to their efforts. Boston Corbett, who killed Booth, got \$16,000; the rest was divided among twenty-six soldiers who had surrounded the Garrett tobacco shed.

I was one of that group, for I was the liaison messenger between the 18th Regulars and the 16th N.Y. Cavalry, and appeared on the scene as soon as word was passed that Booth and David E. Herold were hiding in Garrett's shed near Port Royal, Virginia. My duty took me there at that exact time. I had a message for Lt. Ed Doherty. I saw Herold come out from the straw-covered pile of discarded furniture in a corner of the shed. He tried to surrender without his rifle, but the officers wouldn't let him unless he brought his rifle. So he went back and got it, leaving the defiant Booth inside with one rifle. He's said he'd never be taken alive, and would take a few Union soldiers with him.



Jake and Johnny standing in front of Valparaiso's Memorial Opera House, built in honor of Civil War veterans. (Courtesy of Joyce Philley Steltner of Buchanan, Mich.)
Upper right: Jake, 99, marching at Columbus, Ohio, in 1941. Lower right: Jake at 86.
(The two inserts, courtesy of Gladys Mott Mooker of Valparaiso.)

When Herold was taken into custody, officers called to Booth and offered him a chance to surrender, but he wouldn't. So Bill Byrne and Hank Putnam slipped around back and set the building afire. Soldiers were peering through chinks in the logs, and as soon as the interior was lighted up they saw Booth, leaning on his crutch, his rifle leveled at the doorway. Corporal Boston Corbett, of the 16th, fired first. Booth dropped. The men went in and dragged his body out.

You know, being the son of a famous actor, Junius Brutus Booth, Wilkes was erratic like him. But Wilkes was also immature and open to suggestion. Numbers of Copperhead newspapers had openly suggested the assassination. I'm sure in my own mind that Wilkes Booth deliberately stepped out into the center of the shed so's to be seen and invite a bullet. I read someplace that not one of those who got reward money ever profited materially, and Corbett was finally sent to an asylum . . . One of the most peculiar things about Wilkes Booth's life was the Gypsy's Prophecy which his sister Asia received from her brother's hand when they were still not grownups. Booth wrote it all down too at the time—"You've a bad hand. All lines are criss-crossed. It's full of trouble. You've got in your hand a thundering crowd of enemies and not one friend. You'll make a bad end. You'll have a short life. I've never seen a worse hand."

It was the flag of the United States that brought about his death, for in escaping he was caught by its folds and thrown to the stage floor, breaking his leg.

In January 1871 Jake married Miss Rebecca Henry (Oct. 28, 1848-Jan. 18, 1918), daughter of William and Susannah Wise Henry. They raised three children: Susan Agnes "Aggie" (Oct. 14, 1871-Oct. 7, 1893); John Henry (1874-July 23, 1936), who married Hester Prentiss; and Catherine Mertella "Mertie" (Aug. 27, 1876-Aug. 31, 1956), who married Edward Ludolph.

In her Feb. 8, 1980 letter from Valparaiso, Faye Horner speaks of her (*great*) Uncle Jake—

Jake's wife and my dad's mother, Hannah, were sisters and very close all their lives, so I often visited Uncle Jake with my father, Garfield Samuel Horner. Mertie's brother, John, has a granddaughter, Joyce Philley Steltner, living in Buchanan, Michigan. Joyce had a brother, John David Philley, who was Jake's "most favorite" that was to get all Jake's "good," but Johnny tragically died of polio at age 15 in

Land Ready

A too dark dawn began his life
so he created make-believe moonrises
to light his way, always full moons,
white-silver silhouettes above
the real Earth he could not accept.
Late in life he learned to be
land ready, for the real land,
realized one way or another
he would go back to the land,
molecule by molecule,
the molecules knowing what to do
whether he be happy or sad
about his life.

—ROD FARMER

1940—a supreme hardship on Jake, who wanted him to have all his Civil War artifacts and 1864 Springfield. Mertie has a daughter, Lenore Smallidge, living in Cottage Grove, Minnesota, and grandson, Ronald Smallidge, who remembers Uncle Jake. My only son, David, 19, is in a Civil War re-enactment unit—Co. H, 9th Ind. Vols.—activated by our governor. Valparaiso's S.U.V. is very active in this.

Uncle Jake kept many scrapbooks. One was entirely on the Dionne Quintuplets. He used to pay children 5 cents a picture for any poses or shots of the Dionnes he didn't have. Most people today who knew Jake remember him as living in his own little house about thirty feet behind his son John's home at 556 W. Chicago St. He took his meals with the family, but was partial to being in his one-room retreat near the wood-burning, pot-bellied stove where he often rocked and read in a chair with cushioned arms. He liked children and let them visit. Uncle Jake grew his own tobacco. He handcrafted walkingsticks from Christmas trees by bending down the boughs (shortened to about 9") and fastening them against the inch or so thick bole or trunk. They were fancy and on top as a kind of soft handle, Jake glued on a scooped-out, store-bought rubber ball. During his last years these creations helped lend fire to his daily walks.⁶

In his Feb. 12, 1975 letter from Valparaiso University, Kenneth Nichols, of the Biology Department,

shares boyhood recollections of "that fine old man in blue"—

Mostly I remember as a boy envying him his late hours. My family moved to Valpo in 1933 when I was 12. We lived next door (across the alley) from John Mookers. John was a retired interurban operator, a son of the old man. Mr. Mooker lived in a room built on one end of their garage. At night I couldn't go to sleep until I'd heard the old man shuffle past my bedroom window on his way to his quarters. He spent afternoons downtown usually, came home for supper with John and his wife, and then walked back downtown for the evening. I've no idea where or with whom he spent his time. In any case, who was to tell him where he could go or when he had to come home?

His great-grandson, John Philley, whose home was in South Bend, would spend each summer with his grandparents and was a constant companion of the old man. Johnny was a year younger than I. My younger brother and I often wished we had a great-grandad to take us to the movies. Johnny accompanied the old man on several of his last encampments. We three boys often visited with Mr. Mooker. I most remember the pictures on his walls and their intricately carved frames. He was a woodcarver. He showed us some of his tricks—like balancing two dinner forks (stuck in a piece of wood) on the end of a pin. Johnny died of polio, but things were never the same afterward. The old man's shuffle seemed a bit slower.

In his Aug. 10, 1974, letter from Valparaiso, James O. Cox, 87, a retired business executive, reminisces—

Jacob Mooker was a nearby neighbor who always seemed happy, cheerful, and proud of his uniform and what it meant to him. I was visiting with him one day shortly before he went to Columbus for his last encampment. He said he had always marched on foot in the parades and would do so at Columbus as he did not want people to feel that he had lost the spirit, even though his friends urged him to take it a little easy. He was always tinkering around doing something. He had whittled out with his penknife a large picture frame in the shape of a horseshoe and had it hanging on the wall above his bed. He was so proud of it and wanted me to inspect it that he just climbed upon the bed and walked across to the wall and lifted it down and handed it to me. I guess he wanted to prove that he was able to march at Columbus so he could keep up his record. Word came that he had nearly exhausted himself—a real blow to his neighbors and friends throughout the nation. He was an honor to Valparaiso. His earthly dust lies in the family plot at Valparaiso's Kimball Cemetery.

Jacob Mooker was a comrade and commander of Chaplain Brown Post 106, G.A.R., and seldom missed the semi-monthly meetings whether held on the second Saturday or the fourth Tuesday. Yes, it was a fact that Jake stole off downtown twice daily as a routine. Why? He passed many a fine hour in the park or on a sidewalk

settee cronying with several long-time chums. Prominent among these last loyal few were Charles Doty and Thaddeus K. Whitlock. Comrade Doty, Valparaiso's only other Civil War veteran, survived Mr. Mooker seventeen months to die at ninety-six on Mar. 12, 1943. T.K. Whitlock, Canadian-born June 10, 1838, was not a veteran but a close friend who lived about a century. No doubt they talked over, perhaps debated, many issues—world, national, state, county and local, for Jake read the papers and radioed. World War I took one of his grandsons, and World War II took another. But old Mooker kept on marching, marching to a cadence that never really left him, that he could hear from old army days when his generation of Hoosier youthdom were carefree, limber, and ready to meet whatever came. In hours alone he thought of those youngsters of the 128th Indiana who hadn't come home. His gray-green eyes asparkle, he thought of them all, as he marched along trying to represent them well . . . at Muncie in '34, at Marion in '35, at Kokomo in '38, at Pittsburgh in '39, at Springfield in '40.

"It's my last march," Comrade Mooker kept saying audibly, inaudibly that Sept. 17th, 1941, at the conclusion of the 75th Encampment Parade in Columbus. Alternately bragging and regretting his age, he hastened to a gasoline station and ordered a bottle of orange soda-pop . . . "It's my last march" . . . and he knew it. Just three weeks later at 4:00 a.m. he quietly marched on, to bivouac with those whom he had so long missed.

Notes

1. *Journal of the 75th National Encampment, etc.*, G.P.O., Washington, 1942, pp. 205-208.
2. "Album Leaves," *Valpo Reminder*, July 19, 1940.
3. "Album Leaves," *Valpo Reminder*, July 26, 1940.
4. "Dyer's Compendium of the War of the Rebellion, 1959, p. 1156.
5. "Album Leaves," *Valpo Reminder*, July 26, 1940.
6. During a research swing into the Midwest, the writer had the extreme good fortune to rendezvous on June 11, 1980, with Faye Horner and Gladys Matt Mooker, a granddaughter-in-law, who shared their memories, pictures, and the walking-stick Jake used in his last parades. After their meeting in the Indiana State Historical Library, these three dined together and declared for themselves a Red Letter Day.

—JAY HOAR

The School Crisis Solved at Last

More Corn, Squash? And What Do You Think of God?

Please Pass the Salt

WHO CAN RESIST an appeal to explain oneself further? So, when Editor Sternlieb asked me to elaborate on a question I asked at *Maine Progressive's* School Symposium, I (modestly) agreed to give it a try.

My question was this: how can we "improve" the schools, no matter what energy, intelligence, expertise, money, or goodwill we pour into them, so long as the schools are at war with the prevailing culture?

I want to make clear, at once, that I'm not talking economics or government spending. I'm not talking about a battle over funds: the price of one megaweapon vs. text books; the price of one Inaugural Ball vs. teachers' salaries. We know what those figures look like, and we know what they say about values. I'm talking about a more invasive, nearly invisible, insidious force I'm calling the "prevailing culture." And by that word I mean something big and vague like "the spirit of the times; or "this day and age," that sort of thing.

I'll define "prevailing culture" as swiftly as possible. It is, by and large, a culture of waste, sloth, indulgence, silliness, ugliness, inequality, vulgarity, and muddle. It promotes the worship of noodnicks, lovable wimps, media stars, fast bucks, slick deals, cheap thrills, cheap laughs, cheap slogans, cheesy questions and easy solutions, thieves, charlatans, steroid-inflated winners of either sex, heartlessness, deadpan values, narcissistic self-involvement, and mountains and mountains of trash. Need I go on? No litany is needed here, not for any reader of this publication.

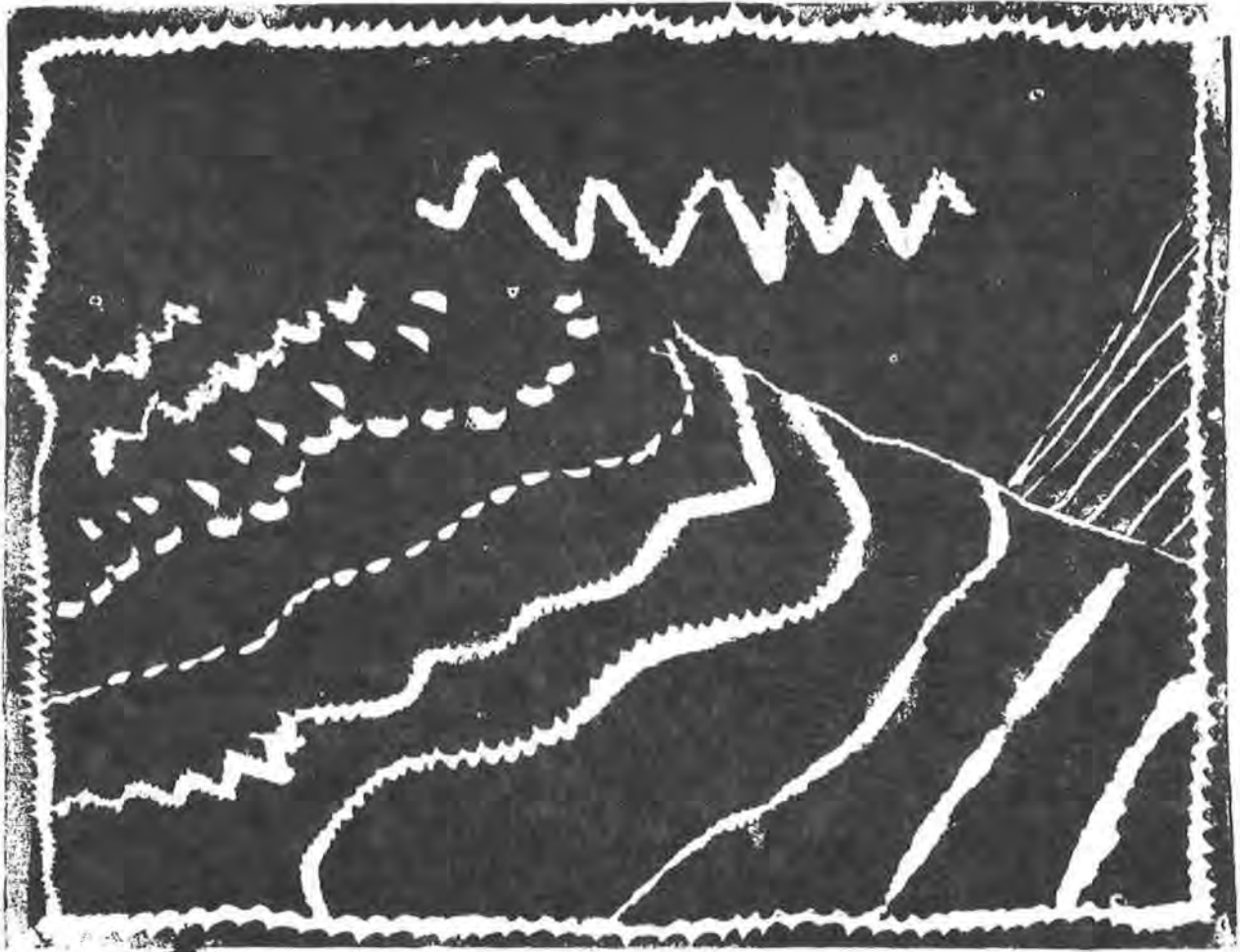
Our schools cannot be "improved" until we, as an entire country, admit that although we apparently value schools, we do not value mind. If we valued mind, our daily culture (which, if we do not actually create we at least allow) would not be mindless. It would neither create, promote, advertise, laud, encourage, laugh at, reward, dignify, nor pay so much as a penny for mindlessness. If we believed—up and down and across the board—that intelligent life mattered, we would not tolerate what we and the children are given as daily fare in politics, popular films, TV, newspapers, magazines, best sellers, styles, or promotional hype for any of the above.

Not so bad as all this, you think? I want to be reasonable here. Take a test. Buy six popular maga-

zines and read them, page for page, straight through at a sitting. Or watch six straight hours, any night, of NBC, ABC, CBS, or the stuff on cable. Or get the six American box-office hits of last year from your friendly Video Outlet and watch them with nary a break. If you pass this test, you will feel as though you've (A) just eaten a mattress; (B) been through Oriental water torture; (C) spent a weekend in Hell; or (D) all of the above. Congratulations. You just overdosed on "prevailing culture." Eat a microwave-zapped snack while doing any of the above, and while it's heating try to catch Tom Brokaw explaining what Pres. Bush just thought he might have tried to say if he thought about it, and you graduate with honors.

"Improve" the schools all we like, stamp and shout. Whatever and however the schools teach, they cannot compete with this. We can't promote one value (love of Shakespeare, say) in the school room, and expect that to compete with a louder, richer, cuter value (love of "The Cosby Show," say) in the culture. Wherein lies the glitter, the money, the repetition, the laughs, the excitement, the stardom, the applause, the sponsorship, the glamour? What do we reward? No one, least of all any child, is stupid enough to make a mistake about this.

We are all taught, every minute, hour, and day, by the culture. Whatever else we learn is going to be, right now, in weak opposition. The culture instructs us more thoroughly and persistently than anything "formal" education can possibly do. Our culture doesn't even second education. It supports education in no meaningful way whatsoever. A few gestures: "educational" TV; school summits; special issues of *Newsweek*. So what? What's it like to try to get gas money for the minibus to transport local winners to the county spell-off? You'd think you were asking for enough fuel to play golf on the moon. Should we continue to struggle, at P.T.A. level, to help inaugurate a "Save Our Planet" project at the expense of what hard-earned (bake sale, calendar sale, etc.) nickels and dimes, and encourage third graders to recycle tablet paper when today, I alone, one beleaguered post office box holder, received seven slick and colored paper, therefore non-burnable, non-recycleable "holiday" catalogs offering, among zillions of must-get items, Pilgrim-shaped salt & pepper shakers, the World's Largest Macadamias, Hallowe'en Wreaths



(Hallowe'en whats?) and, in one, a wee sequined evening bag in the shape of a watermelon slice with a tag of \$1,450.00. Plus tax. Plus delivery. According to our Postmaster, nearly every one of the local 800-something boxholders received the non-recyclable catalog offering the sequined watermelon-slice evening bag. (Made in Taiwan, as most things are.) Meantime, a hand-lettered poster urging everyone to help the third graders save tablet paper hangs in the post-office lobby.

"The times" are bizarre. Evidently the left hand hasn't been coordinated with the right hand for quite some time. The list of daily absurdities and contradictions, which we barely register but keep trying to bridge, is getting to be truly medieval. I see this tiny struggling band, on foot, wet, hungry, but undaunted; pilgrims with some unholy holy urge: Culture. Youth. Education. The Planet. The Life of the Mind. Science. Poetry. Philosophy. Hey, try Charity. Other Ancient Virtues.

While overhead, like fat lords in a snug castle, thrilled consumers with millions of channels and billions of dollars and trillions of laughs, heroes of deals and heroines clutching watermelon-slice evening bags, jet back and forth, one destination per minute. I conclude that our capacity to tolerate irony is just about stretched as far as it can go. What to do? How, in other words, to support the schools? How to make them important, whereupon I believe that whatever "improvement" was needed would be a matter of clear-headed, good-spirited tinkering? (And a bit more money, of course.) I hereby offer two solutions. One of them is insane; the other is utopian. I like them both, and think that either would work.

The first is this: find the Big Plug (this may be somewhat difficult) and pull it. Keep in mind the indisputable fact that Real Culture has been around thousands of years longer than the Plug.

The second is this: keep learning (and teaching) yourself. Real Culture depends on All Adults. Yes, all of us. Real culture, I am convinced, is found at any kitchen table. Provided. It is a by-product of every sensible, interested, curious adult, and in the example which that adult sets for any child. Education is in that fallout; education is an infection. Even if the schools, in my utopian vision, were suddenly deemed important and no longer had to fight for their lives and their messages, they still couldn't do it all. Hire only Master Teachers. Pay everyone gorgeous amounts. Reform everything in sight. Do this, that, more, or otherwise. Argue till Doomsday. Schools can't do it all. They never have before. At their finest, they can do a little bit.

One child, "educated," takes an infinite number of adults. Adults (let's really bring this solution home) around the kitchen table: talking, gossiping, reading, looking up definitions, arguing, making music, making hay while the sun shines, discussing the planting of seeds, our policy in Kuwait, the feeding of cats, how to cook a squash, write to Grandma, read Tolstoy, spell

"culture," and what do we think about the existence of God? The scandal of the current Road Committee? The meaning of Life? Pull the household's plug and talk all night. Force the children to stay up late; they can listen. I don't mean turn your household into Cranks on the Mountain; we all have to live, somehow, in 1990. But the great basis of all education has been the campfire; or its modern version, the kitchen table. The best questions, talk, pursuits, engagements, curiosity, aliveness, and education-by-fallout will come unforced and spontaneous and through a contact-high out of any adult's ongoing love of his or her own wonderful mind and the various world. (If children don't have that spirited example, and if this is not going on as a general thing around every kitchen table, then I think the important question is this: did the "schools" fail 30 or 40 years ago?) What can combat the "prevailing culture?" We can, in each house. At least enough to make a household's worth of difference.

—ALICE BLOOM

In My Mind

I had a vision
Of deer in my mind.
Dare I tell you?
I had an antler in my eye
And there in the bushes
Where I thought I saw it
I fired at his creamy ass.
Two mittens fluttered up,
Dreamy and white.
I had a vision
Of deer in my mind.
I begged her not to die.

—GLENN FRANKENFIELD

Silver Screen and Golden Days

BOOKS AREN'T IMPORTANT: movies are. You can't hold hands, let alone neck, reading books, but you can, or can try to, at *Casablanca* or *I Know Where I'm Going*. You can't clap while reading without dropping the book, but they clapped at the end of *Dead Poets' Society*, as Pauline Kael notes in her *New Yorker* review of the film (26 Je 1989, 71). Movies, not books, have animated the seasons of my life, and the memories of those seasons.

It's not that I've rushed to be the first in line for a new hit at the box office, at least not since the *Tarzan* series of childhood, and my viewing has tended to fall increasingly behind release dates. Not only the volume of films, but also a tendency to get hooked on a few epics, have contributed to my failure to keep up. I saw *Dr. Zhivago* three times before reading the book, an afterthought followed by the sneaking sensation that *Zhivago* was sort of a Russian Walter Mitty, writing verse while healing the afflicted, misunderstood and confined by marriage, but empowered by the loved of Julie Christie, from whom he is nevertheless torn by implacable fate.

Perhaps it takes one to know one. My Walter Mitty is the college English teacher and scholar, who for years struggled to escape the banker's three piece flannel suit, still hanging in the closet, emblematic of Mitty's loss of nerve and the difficulty of distinguishing illusion from reality. But surely, you might argue, the English teacher, real or imagined, must own the primacy of books. Not so; the axiom of movies' dominance over books remains unchallenged. Hollywood has seen to that, and in the *Dead Poets' Society*, which my wife and I rented from the video shop Saturday, literature, life, and teaching "combine and mingle," sparkling on the screen to "bring a strong regard and awe," as the devout are moved by light streaming through stained glass in Herbert's 17th century poetry. The devout worship; the *Dead Poets' Society* audience applauds.

Well, yes, there are differences. For instance, we did not applaud, and the poet of choice in the film is not Herbert but Whitman, although Herrick and others get nods. It may be that I identify more with the high school oafs at the high school princess' party than with the Welton Academy preppies, and from lack of experience am unconvinced of sadistic, vicious headmasters. And maybe it takes the deeper illusion-creating gloom of the movie house than is offered by our den and dog-haired sofa to encourage "buying into" this melo-

drama, and the extreme polarities of good and evil occupied by its characters.

Indeed, so extreme are the characterizations, that I mentioned to Wendy that the story is like a fairy tale, although instead of the Wicked Witch of the West we have the headmaster, and a psychotic father as stand-in for the malevolent stepmother. Of course, we need a few gender changes, but in fairyland that is no particular problem. When later I learned that the film was produced by Touchstone, the "adult label" of Walt Disney Studios, it all made sense: the *Dead Poets' Society* is a male version of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, personified by the seven members of the secret society named in the title. Honors, however, for discerning the cartoon classic sub-text behind screen writer Schulman's story must go, I believe, to Peter Travers' review in *Rolling Stone* (29 Je 1989, 29), where he admits surprise the "Schulman didn't try to squeeze in Sneezy, Sleepy, and Dopey."

The figure of Snow White, by the process of elimination and our magic gender wand, must be awarded to the teacher of English, Keating. How good a fit is this match up? Whiteness abounds in *Dead Poets' Society*—the schoolboys are white as can be, the high school princess is an alabaster blonde, and their purity is set off by snow-covered scenery, with snow still falling in the most melodramatic moments.

As the dwarfs followed Snow White, so Keating leads his students outdoors, where he commands them to march, but not together or in step, as befits independent spirits. Semanticists may argue whether walking by command constitutes marching, but the single file parade he organizes as coach for soccer practice includes reciting verse by the seven as they step forward sequentially to kick. One might expect them to break into "Whistle While You Work." The favored poetic line in the story is Whitman's "O Captain! my Captain!," applied by the students, whom he does not discourage, to the charismatic Keating. A leader, then, of troops. Dwarfs with a mission.

So what about the teaching of English? Teachers learn with their students, a dynamic which denies the leader in combat role of Keating. A truth, if clinched, is that "writing is thinking," and the same principle would hold true for the parallel process of reading. Despite their overlapping names, not for Keating is Keat's approval of "being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts." For the "Captain," the voice of literature is a call to

action, not hesitation and thought. *Carpe Diem* is the slogan he brandishes before his troops, or dwarfs. If my Walter Mitty is an English teacher, he does not look, act, or think like Mr. Keating, let alone Snow White.

Literature belongs to the world, not to a private club. At Welton Academy, however, the students resurrect a secret society, founded by Keating in his student days, meeting at night in a cave where they share old literary chestnuts with each other. Their enthusiasm is suggestive of Christopher Isherwood's visit in 1932 Berlin to a "pathfinders" clubhouse, with its arcane symbolism, and his notes on their magazine, "written in a super-enthusiastic style, with a curious underlying note of hysteria, as though the actions described were part of a religious or erotic ritual." Youthful allegiances were passionate but fluid, like the woman "talking reverently about 'Der Fuhrer'," although she voted communist at the last election. (*Goodbye to Berlin*, 247, 255).

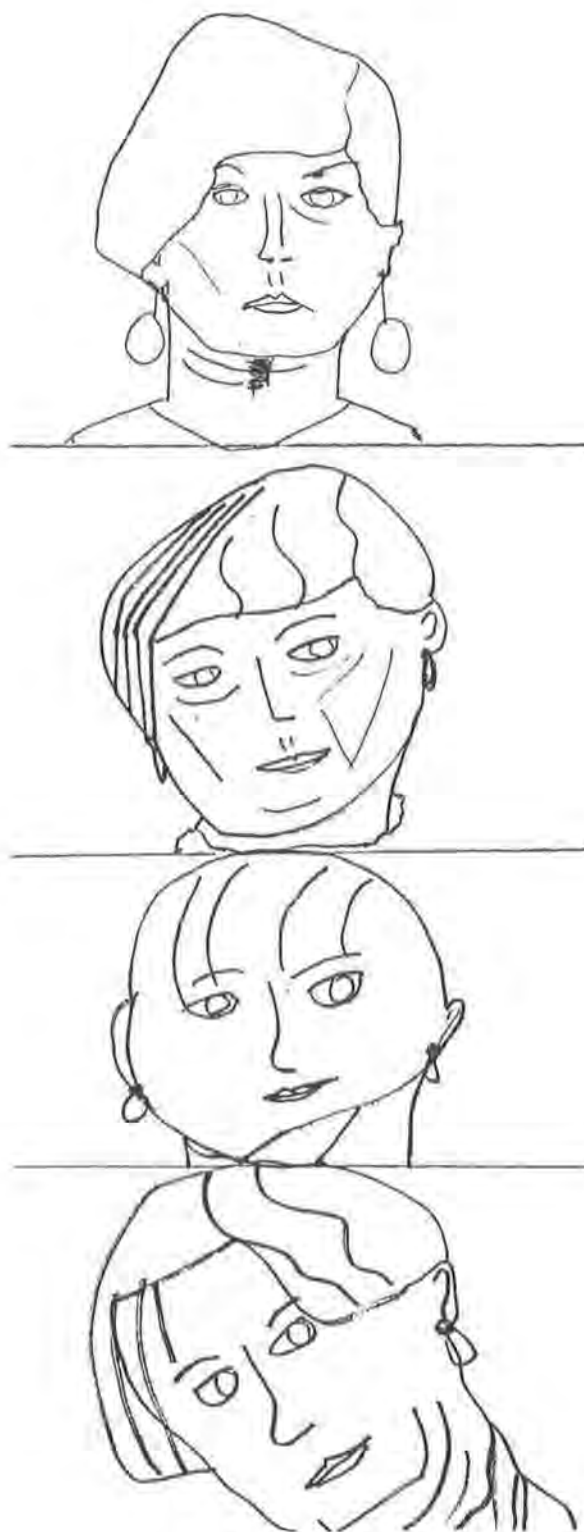
There are enough echoes of secret clubs, privatization of art for the elect, anti-hegemonic posturing, and the word-play of "Fuhrer" and "Captain" to suggest that the spirit of 1932 Berlin is not frozen in time and place, but may materialize at an exclusive boys' school in 1959, perhaps even on a Maine college campus. The movie, in fact, tends to make appealing the teacher-student relationship, style, and philosophy, which unfold grimly in the earlier film, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, with the central character's overt endorsement of Franco and fascism.

Keating inscribed the title page of his poetry text with Thoreau's explanation that "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, . . . and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" (*Walden*, 81). Thoreau, however, did not stay in the woods, justifying his departure with the observation that "I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one" (288). One wonders if Keating's dwarfs will ever emerge from the woods and recognize the possibility of other lives. Perhaps Walt Disney Studios already is working on a sequel. Meanwhile, perhaps I'll read some books.

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 Whitman, Walt. "O Captain! my Captain." 1865.
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—W.G. SAYRES



Rabbit Ears Pass

Two miles high
All is in brightness:
Snowfields, blinding white
Stretch before us,
Reaching upward in the distance
Toward a thin blue horizon.

Ponderosa and aspen,
Rimming the high mountain meadows
Shimmer in the bright light,
Grays and greens
Washed out
At high noon.

Purity, clarity abound;
And utter quiet,
Save the low rush of the wind,
Skittering through the
Sentinel trees
That break its sweep
Over the high divide.

A primeval quality
Hangs in the air.
We two figures
Stand, and look on
At a world apart.

Far beneath the snow cover,
Columbine, paintbrush,
Yampa and meadowgrass
Wait for June.
A slight slump here,
And a line there,
Describe rivulets
That spring will set free
Weeks away.

I breathe deeply
Savoring the cold mountain air,
Drawing it through my teeth,
Then releasing it
Slowly, finely.
It has a taste,
An edge.

We push off
Across the whiteness,
Gliding on the brief flats,
Then zig-zagging up
A broad slope
Growing large
In the work,
The sheer determined effort
Of movement at high altitude;
Yet, too, I feel myself
becoming smaller
Against the vast, white meadow.

Topping out on the ridge
I see the endless ridges
Before me, to the north and east,
And a long still course behind.
Serenity, tranquility, purity
Are here
In the high country.

Then, the turn:
Double-pole-push,
Down, down;
Skis slip through unbroken snow,
With a whisper sound
That mingles with the wind.
Double-speed fast and slow-motion,
Both, all at once,
Gliding
Down,
Down,
On and on and on.

Open, aware, and full,
I see, and hear,
Taste, feel, and smell
Meadow and mountain,
Sun and snow and wind.
I am here and
I see myself from afar,
Gliding in the whiteness
Clear and bright.

—DOUG DUNLAP

CONTRIBUTORS

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