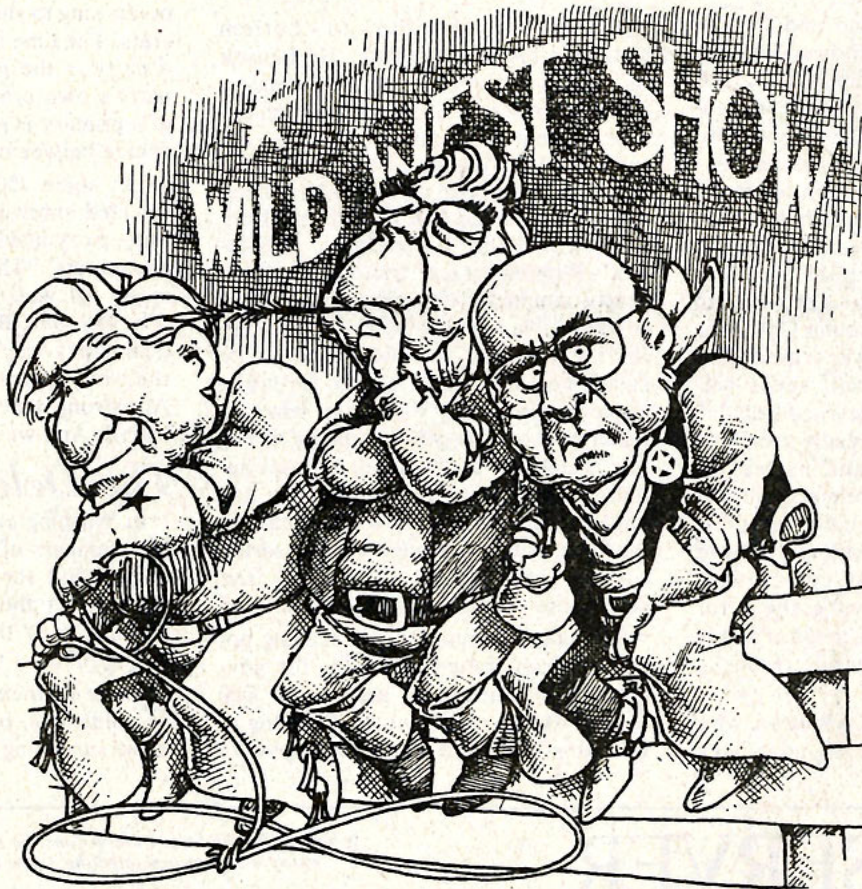


THE TEXAS OBSERVER

October 23, 1981

A Journal of Free Voices

75¢



Illustrations by Ben Sargent

Ever a Bridegroom

Reflections on the Failure of Texas Literature

By Larry McMurtry

About fourteen years ago, as I was trying to force several rather disparate essays to join hands and look like a book about Texas, I complicated the problem by adding an essay called "Southwestern Literature?" — emphasis on the question mark.

At the time the piece was thought to be harsh, not because I had questioned the existence of a Southwestern literature but because my attitude toward the Holy Oldtimers — Dobie, Webb and Bedichek — was less than reverent. In fact, it wasn't much less than reverent: the books of all three men were given more

in the way of praise than they really deserved. A recent attempt to retrace the literary steps that led me to that essay proved very rocky going indeed. Time has begun its merciless winnowing; today the sheaves these three men heaped up look considerably less sub-

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Hightower Hits Hustings

We welcome our friend and former *Observer* editor, Jim Hightower, into the race for agriculture commissioner. We think he's going to win this time. A few readers who blamed us in 1980, when he got 48% of the vote for railroad commissioner, for not telling them in advance, "Hey, he might win — get with it," stand explicitly predicted to this time. The incumbent agriculture commissioner, Reagan Brown, has done nothing anyone has noticed except alienate former Governor Dolph Briscoe. Hightower's meat and taters populism works with Texas voters; he's well known; he learned from his mistakes last time (especially from his overconfidence about and neglect of South Texas). The GOP primary, a brawl between very expensive cats, will draw off from the Democratic primary tens or hundreds of thousands of conservative voters who'd ordinarily be there for Brown. Yeah, Hightower'll win. Pitch in for him — he'll make real differences.

In Washington Cong. Jim Mattox, who may run statewide himself, advocates

the formation of a top - to - bottom statewide progressive slate. He himself might run for attorney general, maybe lieutenant governor, if he gets enough encouragement. This may be the time for such a ticket. Whatever the Democrats in charge have been doing has produced Bill Clements and Bill Hobby and Billy Clayton and the "Democratic" legislature's Republican redistricting. Anything nearly would be an improvement, and any plausible new strategy is worth a go. If "the liberals," as they used to be called, help each other and go for broke in the primary, they well might win as a result of the draw-off into the GOP primary, and like as not then, by next autumn, the reaction against Reagan will have shuddered deep down enough into the body politic, we can sweep assorted rascals and bounders out of the statehouse — and assorted good guys in.

The plan to entail the five leading potential Democratic candidates for governor in a "consensus" meeting of "200 leading Democrats" to pick The One to Run is nothing but an obvious plot to

short-circuit democracy, and not too clever a plot, at that.

Whose scheme it is, we leave to your suspicions to conclude. Most probably, the purpose is to shut out the attractive, persuasive progressive of moderate tonalities, Land Cmsr. Bob Armstrong. If they sucked Armstrong into that trap he'd wake up trying to find his breakfast in a spider's belly.

"Unity and harmony" is the decades-old siren song conservative Texas Democrats sing to shut up progressive Democrats. The time for unity and harmony in a party is the general election, not the party's own primary. The very purpose of a primary is giving voters a chance to decide between the party's candidates.

Let some 200 "Democratic leaders," selected shrewdly by a cabal of two or three party insiders, try to tell the state's Democrats, "This Is The One," and we might as well abolish the elections. Whether, say, Bob Slagle likes it or not, democracy, guys, is democracy. Despite the misinformation put out that Armstrong had agreed to the plot, he hadn't. And we trust he won't.

The Delegation

In Washington I have been interviewing members of the Texas delegation in preparation for the *Observer's* special issue about them. So far I have interviewed 15 of the 26 Texans; I will be seeing more of them before year's end.

Some of them made little impression as politicians, but some stand out. The most surprising member so far, to me,

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was the Republican-Libertarian from Houston, Ron Paul. Quick, unorthodox, and consistent apparently without heed of the consequences, Paul composes his posture out of anti-state reaction, libertarianism on behavioral matters, and anti-militarism in foreign policy. Obviously he thinks for himself — one can almost hear him thinking. An impressive guy.

At present I think that the four best Texas members from the point of view of the public interest are Mickey Leland, Henry Gonzalez, Martin Frost, and Mattox. Leland, who purposes to lead the progressive movement in Texas, is also the black caucus' specialist on Cuba, which has led him into controversial postures. Gonzalez, in the course of conducting many crusades, has launched important new hearings on the scandal of housing for farmworkers. Frost, although faced with a strong possibility of minority opposition in his new district, is calmly preparing to run hard for reelection.

Jake Pickle, the Austin Democrat and the most important man in the House on Social Security, the subcommittee concerning which he chairs, is seeking what he regards as a middle way between Reagan's drastic cuts in Social Security benefits and the Democratic liberals' fierce opposition to any cuts. Pickle's plan, still being worked out, comes down much closer to Reagan's than to the liberals'. There are hard choices to be made here, but the reduction of Social Security benefits is absolutely not necessary — if the Congress will just do any of the many things that will prevent it. While Pickle is on top of the complexities of the Social Security system and its problems, I do not believe he understands how angry voters are going to be if the Democrats go along even partly with the emasculation of Social Security which Reagan desires.

The famous Phil Gramm, Boll-Weevil-in-Chief from College Station, is a professorial sort, just as consistent as Paul, but a totally orthodox conservative. Calmly and at great length, as if conducting a class, he justifies the abolition of the Social Security minimum benefit despite the hopelessness of that cause — even Reagan has abandoned it for now.

The dashing Charley Wilson, the now-here, now-there East Texas Democrat and friend and supporter of fascist dictators, deftly fielded my argumentative questions. Senator Bentsen was his usual quiet, understated self. I was to see Senator Tower one afternoon, but he was called to the White House for a briefing at precisely the hour of our interview, and forced to choose between Reagan and me, he chose Reagan. Stifling my feelings of rejection, I look for-

ward to interviewing Senator Tower a little later in the year.

Chaos

It's difficult for me to visualize the effects on being a person never having known a world without nuclear bombs in it. That same younger generation must be absorbing impacts from the assassinations that those of us older did not have to try to live with, when we were young.

The late Al Lowenstein was godfather to my son, Gary, and my daughter, Celia. On Oct. 7 Celia, a reporter on the *Atlanta Journal*, wrote me:

"Yesterday I stayed up all night helping out with the coverage of the Atlanta mayor's race (Andy Young is in a runoff with a white legislator), so I spent the day at home watching the news and weeping for Anwar Sadat and the Middle East. We are so vulnerable to terror. And these violent events have a cumulative effect. For me, each time one occurs it is worse. Each one brings all the others back to me as though they had just happened. Kennedy. King. Kennedy. Al. Sadat. Young said yesterday in a television interview that you can kill the dreamer, but you can't slay the dream. I'm not sure. History is different because these men are gone. Each time heightens my sense that we are not in control of

our destiny. I am filled with a vague and pervasive fear that chaos lies through the portals.

"Today and yesterday I have gone through the motions, but my mind is blank of all else. The assassination is so large and monstrous an event, its effects so multiplicitous and terrible, that one's own efforts to do good are dwarfed by its evil. And how to fight it? By giving to the candidate of your choice? By writing a searing expose?"

The Newcomers

We welcome *Third Coast*, the serious and attractive new Austin monthly. Besides performing, in an outsize quality-paper format, what one expects of city magazines, *Third Coast* has substance. In its October issue, for instance, there is Jackie Calmes' intelligently admiring study of Sen. Lloyd Doggett (entitled "Mr. Doggett Makes A Difference," which he does). Other good stories, too.

The premiere issue of *Ultra*, the new Texas monthly that's sent free to rich people, isn't bad, either. Prepared to snicker, one finds instead a one-state *Town and Country*, with book reviews, a literary excerpt, two pages on a painter. The predictable things are here, of course, too, features on richies, Deverald D. George on "Shopping for Diamonds." Handsomely printed. R.D.

The Observer's Position

On the Amendments: Three Yeses, Three Nos, One Maybe

The *Observer* here makes recommendations to our readers concerning the seven constitutional amendments to be voted on Nov. 3.

Proposition 1: Yes

This would let cities issue revenue bonds to finance improvements, such as parking garages, malls, sidewalks, and lighting in run-down commercial areas and pay the bonds off with the tax revenues generated by the higher property values, and it would also let cities temporarily freeze taxes on both residential and commercial buildings in run-down neighborhoods as an incentive for the owners to renovate them.

This might help rebuild some commercial areas and give owners of run-down

homes a little financial help. With federal aid to the cities drying up under Reagan, cities are going to have to find ways to help themselves. Mayor Henry Cisneros of San Antonio sees this as a way to help poorer areas of cities. "It's a question," he says, "of whether we want two cities in San Antonio or Dallas as they exist now: one poor and one prosperous."

Reducing cities' tax revenues just as Reagan squeezes the cities is the other side of the issue, but the amendment may help some to reduce imbalances between rich and poor.

Proposition 2: OK

This would let the Land Commissioner issue land patents to persons in situa-

(Continued on page 20)

Social Security Can Be Cured, Wright Says

Washington, D.C.

House Majority Leader Jim Wright of Fort Worth suggests higher federal taxes on cigarettes or liquor to avoid cutting Social Security benefits. He suggests a system of tax credits for persons who choose to continue working from age 65 on, encouraging them to do so and reducing financial pressure on the system. And he is perfectly willing to turn to general revenues to finance Social Security if necessary to avoid cutting benefits.

By these statements Wright distances himself from his fellow Texan Jake Pickle of Austin, chairman of the House subcommittee on Social Security, who is going along with substantial cuts in Social Security. As well, Wright appears to be seeking to stake out new ground for the Democratic Party in the defense of Social Security against any cuts.

During an hour and a half interview with Ronnie Dugger of the Observer in his office in the Capitol late last month, Wright also related how he wheedled his fellow Texas Democrats not to support the Reagan tax bill, to no avail. "I've never in all my years here witnessed such really craven fear of the public," he said. "Why are people more - Are they more cowardly than they were?"

The following excerpt from the interview opens with a discussion of full-page ads that have been appearing in North Texas newspapers calling for Wright's defeat, although the election is next year. These ads are sponsored by the National Conservative Political Action Committee. (NCPAC).

• *There are these big ads in the North Texas papers against you. What do you think of the methods, and what do you think of the tactics?*

Well, Ronnie, I may be engaging in self-deception, I hope I'm not, but if I'm any judge of reaction, this effort is backfiring. . . . I have received very few negative responses as a result of the mailings and the newspaper ads inviting people to send me cards. The NCPAC crowd said that they mailed out 10,000 . . . soliciting criticism, and I have a daily count of my mail. This is far from the top thing that I hear. And I hear from my people that they're picking up comments all over town, even in the country clubs and in the downtown Fort Worth Club atmosphere and the business community, to the effect that who in hell do these people think they are, you know, what business is it of theirs. . . .

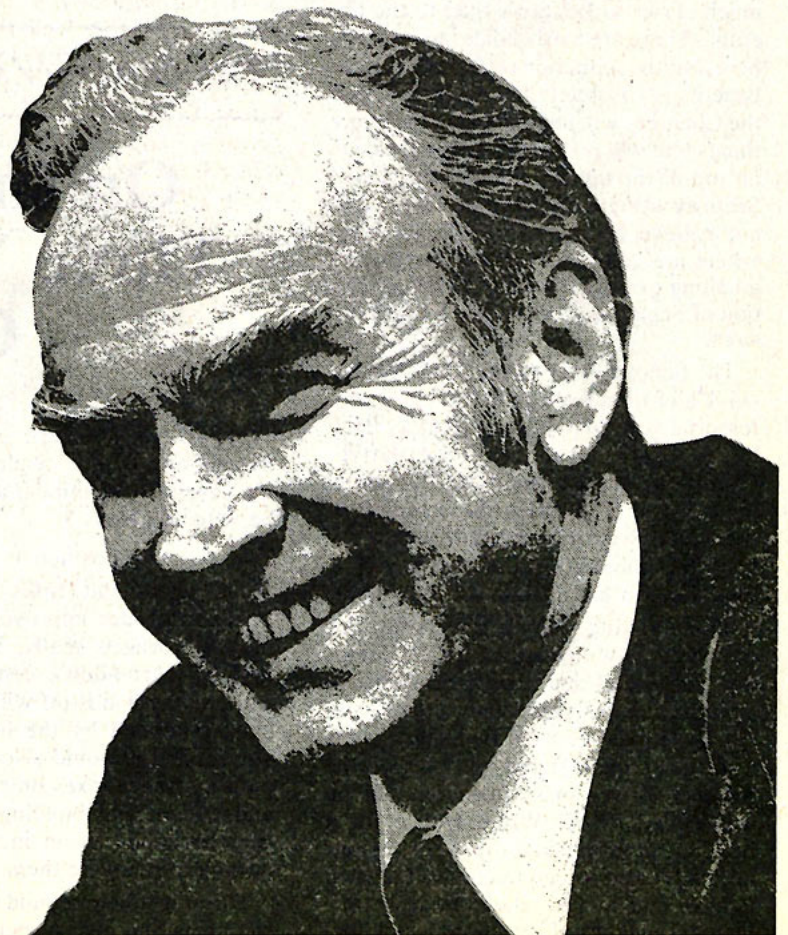
• *Coming in from out of the state. . . .*

That's it, it's a boomerang effect. . . . (The responses on cards) have been coming in now for about ten days since the first ad ran. . . . They sent out 10,000 . . . each person gets three cards and is asked to give two of 'em to someone who will send them in, so 30,000 cards went out to 10,000 people, presumably . . .

and in ten days 107 have come to me . . . which is one-third of one percent of the cards that were out. So I'm not concerned or alarmed about it. . . .

I may just well have to expect that I'll have to have well-financed opposition as long as I'm in the leadership, it for no other reason than to keep me at home and reduce the amount of time that I can give to my colleagues. . . .

Now whom did he [Terry Dolan of NCPAC] pick for his first three named victims in the House? He picks Jim Jones, Dan Rostenkowski, and me. Now if he were really credible as an ideologue wanting to defeat the wild-eyed radicals of Congress, there are several you could nominate who would be more logical targets for his tarbrush than the three of us. Because Jim Jones is a conservative. Clearly 95% of the members would regard him as a conservative. His victory as chairman of the budget committee was considered broadly to be a victory for the conservative and moderate wing of the party. Then Dan Rostenkowski never has been considered an ideological liberal by any stretch of the imagination. I suppose . . . you could call Dan a moderate. Ironically the whole first six months of this year he spent trying to devise tax incentives for business. . . . and I don't know what people call me, but I think up here among my colleagues I'm generally regarded as a moderate.



... What have you been hearing from the people . . . especially in your district, about Social Security?

Oh, people are concerned about the efforts of the Administration to cut benefits. I think it is probably the overriding emotional issue. . . .

I think the tax program was sold by a blitz campaign designed specifically to evoke an ersatz facsimile of a grass-roots response. Judged professionally, as an exercise in political activity, it has to be given high marks, but it was phony . . . and many of the responses that it generated were phony. There were at least five national companies that employed people to make telephone calls to members of Congress. They include Exxon, Philip Morris, Monsanto, two others — one of them a brokerage firm, the name of which was not familiar to me. . . .

• *Now, on the long run . . . on Social Security, I have this question posed on (Cong.) Jake Pickle's figures about the projections, and other people's information that the reserves are low, and so forth: It seems to me that in the long run, as Pickle says, the choice is cut benefits, raise payroll taxes, or go to general revenue, not going into the short-run (problem). And cutting benefits can take many forms, and one of the forms I hear some of the Republican members advocating is regarding some of the benefits of Social Security as welfare, therefore either dispensable or convertible to the general fund . . . but it still comes to cutting benefits: or suspending inflation risers, or whatever you do —*

The cost of living increases —

• *The effect is to lower the benefits.*

Exactly. Precisely.

• *So what's the long-run answer of the Democratic Party to this long-run problem? I think Mr. Pickle's bill cuts benefits by going to (retirement age of) 68. . . .*

Yes, it does.

Well . . . I don't think the Social Security fund is on the verge of bankruptcy. . . . A study by the Congressional Budget Office concludes that with no changes, the trust fund by 1990 will be \$75 billion better off than it is right now. . . .

There is a temporary problem which can be cured by interfund transfers. One of the funds is going to show strain toward the end of next year. The other two project substantial surpluses from which funds can be transferred. . . .

• *Mr. Pickle wants to use general revenue to replenish the medicare fund. . . .*

That pleases me fine, I don't have any problem with that. I don't know any reason why it wasn't done that way initially. Most European countries, and I think

almost all other countries that have social security systems, tend to finance them one-third, one-third, and one third: one-third from the employee, one-third from the employer, and one-third from general revenue. That's a very common practice in Europe.

• *And you could see that as a precedent if it became necessary?*

Oh, surely.

Or we might do this, if necessary, we might just put in enough funds to the basic retirement program so that it would be forever inviolate and then periodically enrich the other two funds, the disability fund and the medicare fund, as need occurs, from general revenue. You could do that, easily enough . . . in the long run.

Or if it were determined advisable for a variety of reasons, including longer life span and other things, less wear and tear on the human body from rough hard work . . . to encourage later retirements, I think we could do it in a much less attractive way than ordering it. It seems to me that we might create an incentive, a carrot rather than a stick. What would be wrong, for example, with providing that in one's 65th year, the year of one's 65th birthday, he or she, if electing to work rather than to retire, would be entitled to \$1,000 tax credit. That would save the government several thousand dollars. It would save the trust fund \$4,000 or \$5,000. And that would be compensated for by the \$1,000 tax credit. In the 66th year, if a person still were willing to continue to work and postponed retirement, he might be entitled to a \$1,500 tax credit. . . . In the year that he's 67, he would be entitled to a \$2,000 tax credit. Or some variation of that plan.

Thus a person could not feel deprived. No one could feel that the government had reneged on its pledge or its promise, but the individual would be confronted with an attractive choice. If a person still feels like working, still wants to work, would like to continue to work, and is attracted to do so by a tax credit of this kind, the government saves money on everyone who does it.

• *I haven't heard that idea. Is it current up here? Sounds like your idea.*

It is my idea so far as Congress is concerned. I have expressed it to Jake, and I've expressed it in leadership meetings and elsewhere as one option, one way to go. But let me be truthful with you, it is not original with me, it was confided to me by that great fellow Texan, P. Mangum, in the Driskill Hotel coffee shop in Austin earlier this year. . . .

• *Preston Mangum?*

Yes, Preston Mangum gave me this

idea, and I thought it'uz a damn good one. . . .

• *One of the possibilities you would contemplate would be, if it became necessary, possibly the third-third-third possibility?*

Yeah.

In other words you're not at all alarmed about all this?

I'm not the least bit alarmed about it. . . . It needs a temporary infusion into that one trust fund, and then that will carry it for a number of years — I don't know how many years.

But let's look at the long range.

There are any number of things we can do . . . to keep it from going broke, and we must do those things, I think it's absolutely incumbent upon us to preserve the actuarial soundness of the fund and its integrity. I think we owe it to the public to assure them emphatically that whatever it takes, that's what we're going to do. But it doesn't take renegeing on our promise to the retirees.

If we didn't want to enrich the fund from general revenues, we could dedicate some revenue to it. It doesn't have to come from the payroll tax. We could put another nickel on a package of cigarettes, put another quarter on a gallon of hard spirits, and dedicate those funds. . . .

• *But that's new taxes, and that's supposed to be prohibited under the present environment. . . .*

Prohibited by whom? I'd rather do it that way than to renege on the pledge to the retirees.

• *I hear you saying. . . . that as a Democrat you're not going to see the Democratic Party cut benefits.*

No, sir, I'm not if I can help it. If I can help it, I'm not. Because it seems to me that we have a good-faith commitment.

• *Does that extend to all benefits in the Social Security system or just to the retirement benefits? That's a different question?*

It may be a debatable question. Let's face it, Ronnie, we lost a fight already this year, and some of those benefits have been lost as of this moment. The dependent children's benefit, the educational benefit is cut off at 18 instead of 21, for dependent children. The minimum benefit of \$122 a month has been abolished, and that will cost the average recipient, I am told, about \$61 a month. . . . Now, that's a meager amount to whittle away from the oldest and the poorest. Most of those people are in their seventies. . . . Most of 'em are women, for the most part widows. Now, they have a certain pride, which

disinclines them to go and ask for charity or for what they would regard as a handout, welfare, and I think many of them would go in want rather than doing it. In fact, predicated on that very assumption is the idea that you're gonna save money by doing it. If nobody's going to lose any money, the government's not going to save any money.

Now the further argument is made against the minimum benefit that they didn't earn it. Now let's see who these people are. We don't know who all of 'em are, but I know who some of 'em are. Some of them are people who were domestics for a very long time, weren't covered, and maybe they reached the point of physical incapacity before they were able to accumulate the requisite 40 quarters of covered earnings. But they worked all their lives, at the most menial of drudgery in some cases. As far as I'm concerned they're entitled to receive it — they've earned it, in my book — whether they've got those ten years, 40 quarters, of covered payments or not.*

Some others who they use as a sort of a scapegoat to justify doing away with this benefit are federal retirees, people who have other pensions. They call it double-dipping. Well, what do they mean, double-dipping. I know a great many situations, people I know personally, mail-carriers and other federal employees, trying to bring up families and send kids through school, who just simply weren't paid enough in the government employment and moonlighted. . . . But they are entitled to whatever they earned. . . . My position is that if a person has qualified for both through his or her efforts, then we have little justification in denying it. . . .

• *Can we talk about the defense spending issue now. Mr. Reagan sent up his \$13 billion cut (for the next three years) in his second wave of cuts. . . . Pretty severe cuts now in social services, maybe more to come. . . .*

This would be \$2 billion in outlays during the coming fiscal year. I think that could be achieved. I don't regard it as necessarily excessive.

• *Do you think it's enough?*

Well, it isn't going to get him to the goal of a balanced budget . . . by 1984. I think you can just make an axiom of the fact that you simply cannot indulge the biggest peacetime military buildup in America's history and the biggest tax cut in America's history and have a balanced budget, all three. . . . the inexorable laws of mathematics are against it. . . .

I don't think you can take out of Social Security what he intends to take out of it.

• *According to (Cong.) Jake's (Pickle's)*

*President Reagan has since given up the fight to kill the minimum benefit.

figures it's \$190 billion pending requests by 1990.

That's correct, I think that's about right. . . . In the next five years it would be something like \$70 billion that they would hope to squeeze out of the Social Security recipients to help them balance their budget. Well Congress isn't going to stand still for that. That means that a person who has made plans for early retirement (at 62) on a lesser 80% benefit would find 35% of his expected retirement income taken away from him. No way. . . . No way we're going to tolerate that. . . . So those things are illusory. Those savings aren't going to occur.

. . . The reason for these deficits which the president so grandly denounces is his insistence upon this excessive tax cut. The tax cut is gonna take \$280 billion away from the public treasury in these next three years. . . . Now how can you keep a straight face and tell the public that you're going to reduce government income by \$280 billion in these three years and at the same time you're going to achieve a balanced budget in the last of those years.

I think Mr. Reagan probably believes this because he has been sold a bill of goods. I think he has bought off on this dogmatic ideology that the way to great riches for America is simply to shrink the federal government. But so few people actually believe that among the economists and other knowledgeable people in government that I can't but wonder why his secular, mystical faith in the thing hasn't been shaken already. . . .

Some of us kept saying, those are radical prunings, this isn't trimming away fat, this is amputating arms and legs. . . . When people fall through those gaping holes in the so-called safety net, absent these cushions they're gonna fall on bare concrete. This is what we were tryin' to say, and this is what we had to say, Ronnie, because here comes this guy running right down our throats, and three times he rallied at least what passed for substantial public clamor for his programs. . . .

The reconciliation bill was probably the most devastating one of all. . . . the members didn't even get to see it until the day of the vote, and yet so great was the appeal that this man Reagan had generated behind it on the premise that it was essential to his economic recovery plan — which I think is an economic retrenchment plan, I think it's a misnomer — that members of Congress who knew better supinely lay down and let them run over us. It was a new experience to me. Four votes changed would have won the crucial battle. . . .

Members of Congress knew better than that. They knew that . . . a good,

responsible legislative craftsmanship was not employed, they didn't know how many drafting errors it contained, they knew it contained too many, they knew that it eliminated entire programs, it repeals at least 20 public laws *en toto* and parts of 60 or 70 other public laws.

Never in my recollection, and I dare say seldom in American history has an Administration succeeded in dictating the last dotting of the last "i" and the crossing of the last "t" as they did in this Gramm-Latta II. I just don't think it's ever happened. . . .

Now other people told me when we considered the tax bill . . . guys from our delegation from Texas, I would have 'em in here and say, "Gee, fellas, you guys campaigned against this Kemp-Roth thing, and you won. I can show you what I think are very reliable polls that will prove to you that the people in our area don't want a tax cut that's paid for on borrowed money. Given a choice between a balanced budget or getting a big tax cut they'd choose the former. These fellas are running absolutely contrary to what your people believe."

They'd say, "Jim, I know that, I know that it isn't responsible, I know that my people if they knew what was in it wouldn't like what was in it, but they don't know what's in it, and they won't sit still long enough for me to tell 'em what's in it, they just know that the President oughta be given a chance, and they're looking to me to give the President a chance."

I say, "Hey, they're lookin' to you to use your judgment. They didn't elect you to come up here as a flunky, for cryin' out loud, they elected you to be a man responsible in your judgments."

"Jim, I know that, but if they elect me again I'm gonna come back again and if they don't I'm not."

I mean I've never in all my years here witnessed such really craven fear of the public, and I don't know what it betokens. You can sit here and pontificate and try to philosophize about it. Why are people more — Are they more cowardly than they were? If so, why? Do they have less sense of responsibility? If so, when did it start? Where did it begin? What do you do to change it? I don't know the answer to those questions. But I know that those questions loom very large in my mind.

Mr. Rayburn had these difficulties, but never quite to this degree. Mr. Rayburn was disappointed on numerous occasions in votes (in) the House, but members who voted contrary to what he wanted and what they really thought was best were few, and when it occurred they were somewhat apologetic about it to their colleagues. . . . □

Strauss Talks Business

✓ "There has always been a far right group in the Republican Party who would rather have a small party and rule it and never elect anyone. The same thing is true of the Democratic Party." The sentiments are those of former Democratic Party chairman Bob Strauss, speaking to former *Observer* editor Kaye Northcott in his Washington, D.C. law office. "We have a far left group," Strauss continued, "that would like to run out everybody else and never elect anyone. And neither one of them serves the state very well."

"The same thing is true in national politics. What we need to do is to have a party that tilts a bit left from center, a little to the liberal side. And a Republican Party that tilts a bit to the conservative side. Where the difference between the parties is a 15 to 20 percent shift in degree, not a 180-degree shift. Then when you change administrations, you don't have these dramatic changes. The American people, pretty generally speaking, are pretty moderate. They don't want extremism. In Texas we tend to want to give them extremism."

Strauss mentioned Jess Hay, the Dallas fundraiser for Dolph Briscoe; Calvin Guest, the former Democratic Party chairman; Charles Duncan, head of the DOE during the Carter Administration — and, of course himself, as the type of Democrat he had in mind. "We come from the business community, but we're not rightwingers," he pointed out. "With that kind of posture you can attract the business community back into the Democratic Party. I think we can do it. I see no reason to be pessimistic."

✓ Kaye also talked politics with Clifton McCleskey, author of the standard textbook on Texas government, who's now teaching at the University of Virginia. Sitting on the front porch of his 1830-vintage farmhouse overlooking the Virginia hills south of Charlottesville, McCleskey warned against seductive — and expensive — mass media campaigns. "It will *always* be too expensive for liberals to be successful," he said. "And to engage in that kind of politics is to accept the challenge of conservatives

and Republicans to play their own game. They're always going to have more money.

"The real test, I think, is to be able to build an organization that in effect works year round so that you have people at the precinct and county levels who are doing the little things between elections that make them influential. The candidates can't deliver anything unless there is a network of people down there talking to the voters. . . . The real challenge of the Democratic Party in Texas and the nation is to rebuild those cadres of party activists, not the abortion activists, not the labor activists as such, but people who are committed to the party as an organization. Now, if you ask how to do that, I'm not entirely sure I could answer that. But I think it's crystal clear that that's where a lot of the problem is."

✓ While the possibility of Cong. Jim Mattox of Dallas opposing Cong. Phil Gramm in 1982 has attracted notice, there is savvy talk in Washington that Tom Vandergriff, who was mayor of Arlington 25 years, is ready to undertake that task. Close to House Majority Leader Jim Wright, Vandergriff is well-regarded in his area. He is now the Chevrolet dealer in Arlington.

✓ The political future of Leonel Castillo at a statewide level probably also rides with November's city election in Houston. Thrice Houston city controller before he became Carter's INS commissioner, Castillo is running for controller again. His major opponent is Councilman Lance Lalor, who says he decided to run after Castillo told him he would not. Also running are Cynthia Oliphant, a city accountant, and Richard Mills, a businessman. The present controller, Kathy Whitmire, is in the race for mayor.

✓ Talk around the wine-and-cheese table at the recent Austin fund-raiser for Lloyd Doggett concerned Billy Clayton's political future. One of the speaker's House colleagues suggested that Clayton was waiting until January to announce for Land Commissioner because he wants the fate of his Water Plan decided before he makes a decision. The repre-

sentative also predicted that Clayton will run against Garry Mauro — as a Republican.

✓ Republican State Sen. Walter "Mad Dog" Mengden of Houston made it official last week. He will run for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate next year. A lawyer and independent oilman, the 54-year-old Mengden claims he'll run a stronger race against Sen. Lloyd Bentsen than the other still unannounced Republican candidate, Cong. Jim Collins of Dallas. Mengden says his age and his hometown are advantages. Collins is 65.

A third GOP candidate, San Antonio businessman Donald Richardson, filed his candidacy Jan. 21.

✓ Another San Antonian, City Councilman Frank Wing who has been a staunch supporter of San Antonio's participation in STNP, has now changed his mind and wants the city out. This development underscores the criticality of the Nov. 3 election in Austin on this same issue.

✓ President Reagan was set to name a new chairman for the National Endowment for the Humanities at a luncheon last week for his task force studying federal support for the arts and humanities. He named a new chairman for the National Endowment for the Arts, but put off making the NEH choice.

According to White House sources, Reagan had decided not to appoint University of Dallas professor Melvin E. Bradford, the self-described "arch-conservative" who supported George Wallace for the presidency in 1968 and was Dallas County chairman of Wallace's American Party in 1969-70 (See *TO*, 10/9/81). The Reagan choice was apparently Robert Hollander Jr., a professor of European literature at Princeton University, but intense pressure on Bradford's behalf from Senators Thurmond, East, and Helms persuaded the President to reconsider his choice.

Reagan's nominee to become chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts is Francis S. M. Hodsoll, currently a deputy to presidential chief of staff James A. Baker III. Hodsoll, a former New York attorney who was a deputy assistant secretary and later an assistant to the undersecretary of commerce in the Ford administration, was a staff coordinator in Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign, concentrating on the debates with Jimmy Carter and John Anderson. The only background in the arts Hodsoll has, at least according to a biography provided by the White House, was an interest in theater and radio while he was a college student at Yale, Cambridge, and the Stanford University Law School. □

The death of the cowboy had been lamented sufficiently . . . from page 1

stantial than they seemed only fourteen years ago.

J. Frank Dobie, by far the most prolific and most popular of the three, has fared much the worst. It is now clear how much his books needed the support of his forceful and infectious personality. Like Will Rogers and other raconteurs, he was better in person than on paper. Less than two decades after his death in 20-odd books are a congealed mass of virtually undifferentiated anecdote: endlessly repetitious, thematically empty, structureless, and carelessly written.

His reputation has declined so swiftly that it was recently possible for the editor of the state's most popular magazine to refer to his writings as "bed-time stories for ten-year-olds." True, although the world he wrote about must now seem irrelevant to most ten-year-olds. Dobie had the energies of a Mencken, but not the reach. It is his energies and his application, rather than

the literary result of them, that makes him seem still worthy of salute.

In years to come Roy Bedichek's *Karankaway Country* and *Adventures With A Texas Naturalist* are apt to give more pleasure to readers than all the books of his friend Dobie — merely because they are written well. I don't think Bedichek had much to say, but his eye and his whimsy were served by an excellent, flexible prose style. He is as appealing — if as minor — today as he ever was.

Nonetheless, I am not sure that the Bedichek influence has been wholly benign. The bucolic essay may be a sweet form, but it is also a limited one — indeed, almost a retrograde form, the most likely route of nostalgic retreat from our increasingly urban realities. I think we have too many bucolics, too many Richard Jeffrieses, W. H. Hudsons, Gilbert Whites. Now what we need is a Balzac, a Dickens, even a Dreiser. Texas writers have paid too much attention to

Novelist Larry McMurtry now splits his time between his native Texas and Georgetown in Washington, D.C., where he is part-owner of Booked-Up, a high-quality shop that sells rare and used books. His regular returnings to Archer City and his native Texas have led to a prevailing impression that, like Willie Morris' return to Mississippi, McMurtry has returned to Texas. It seems to be the case, rather, that he has taken up a regular alternation of being between Texas and Washington. His stays in Texas last three, four, five weeks.

To pick up McMurtry's assessment of Texas writing we called on him at his bookstore in Georgetown, on a Saturday morning. He leaned back in a swivel chair at his large desk, his feet crossed up on it, in the one main room of the shop. Later we discussed the piece in his and the shop's inner sanctum upstairs. Perhaps some of the more valuable books are kept on the shelves there, and McMurtry sank deeply into his armchair up there; no doubt he reads and writes there some.

Larry McMurtry has been musing on this essay on Texas writing for much of the summer. One evening in September he read the paper in its form at that point to an overflowing crowd at the Solarium of the Fort Worth Art Museum. Larry Swindell, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* book editor, reported:

"Texas literature, or its reputation, is reeling from the heavy assault it absorbed Tuesday evening, when Larry McMurtry did all of the punching. . . .

"The author chose to read an essay on current Texas literature that he has written for a forthcoming issue of the *Texas Observer*. He read for 40 minutes and fielded questions for another 40 minutes, never wavering in his conviction that 'new' Texas writing is something less than has recently been made of it. . . .

"He acknowledged a plethora of writers who have had brief modest success — 'one-book authors' — but maintained that even their best attainments were modest, and that Texans have produced no truly major work for American literature."

From other reports we have heard, some of the audience got mad. McMurtry told us most of them were too young to have read much of the work under discussion, but that older persons present seemed, in their responses to him, to agree with him.

nature, not enough to human nature, and they have been too ready to fall back on the bucolic memoir or country idyll rather than attempting novels, poems, and dramas. Minor forms only rarely prompt major books, and the lack we suffer from most is a lack of major books.

So far, by my count, we have a total of one.

Our literature is not *evenly* minor — some Texas books are better than others — but none of it is major.

WERE I SET the task of seeking an exception to that dictum, I would probably try and make a case for Walter Prescott Webb. Unfortunately, I think the case would fail. Webb's achievement was genuine, but small. He had a first-rate mind and he continued to extend its reach throughout his life, but the yield, finally, was two important books, *The Great Plains* and *The Great Frontier*, the latter being by far the more impressive. It is one of the few Texas books that bespeaks a true intellectual vitality. By contrast *The Great Plains*, comprehensive though it is, seems dull and rather wooden. Webb lost much of his energy to academic store-keeping, and more of it to his huge romantic work on the Texas Rangers. Though he matured late, he matured fully, and might finally have delivered a masterpiece had he not been killed. The longer Webb wrote, the greater seemed his potential, an unusual thing. In writers late growth is not the norm, in Texas or not.

When I say that Texas has produced no major writers or major books, the exception I most expect to hear argued against me is Katherine Anne Porter. Again, I think the argument would fail, but hers is a subtle case and merits more prolonged address than I can give it here.

Alone among Texas writers of her generation, Miss Porter thought of herself as an artist and had the equipment to be one. Though often sharply critical of modernism, she touched most of the modernist bases, usually at a time when no one else was occupying them. A large part of her artistic equipment was dedication — or stubbornness, as she called it. Another part was what might be called a high neurosis, driving her from place to place and prompting her to leave, like dumped baggage, a remarkable body of evasions and misrepresentations, through which her biographers will be sorting for the next few decades.

In her *Paris Review* interview she speaks of the various other "half-talents" she possessed: for dancing, singing, acting. Reading through the *Collected Stories* now — Miss Porter being no longer around to distract one with her

For all [Porter's] trafficking with revolutionaries and mad poets, for all her scorn of middle-class convention, she was genteel to the core.



charming accounts of their composition (some of these are better stories than the stories) — one is forced to think that all but the best of her work — perhaps a half a dozen stories — is, like her singing and dancing, the work of a half-talent.

Oh, the whole talent was there, and a fine talent it was: but a talent seldom either fully or generously put to use. Miss Porter believed in a pure style; hers, at times, is purified almost to the vanishing point. By her account, she did this in the name of an aesthetic, removing the local and the immediate in order to reach the timeless and universal.

Unfortunately for her aesthetic, and unfortunately too for many of her stories, the local and immediate is the true street of fiction — at least of the sort of realistic fiction she was trying to write. The great ones, the Dickens and Balzacs, Flauberts and Hardys, Faulkners and Tolstoys, wasted none of their time attempting to boil the accents of their own times and places out of their fiction.

I doubt, though, that it was aesthetics

that drove Miss Porter to smooth her sentences so carefully. More likely what was at work was her profound evasiveness, an uncertainty not so much about what she knew as about what she could bring herself to admit about what she knew. For all her trafficking with revolutionaries and mad poets, for all her scorn of middle-class convention, she was genteel to the core. It may be that all that purification of style was undertaken in order that she might conceal her own experience perfectly — perfectly meaning even from herself.

Within her terms she is very skillful, but her terms are seldom embracing, or even interesting. Too often she reminds one of a minor French *belles-lettrist*: an intense purity of style concealing a small — very small — grain of experience. Compare her stories to Chekhov's, or Flannery O'Connor's, and they seem fragile, powdery, and frequently just plain boring.

Of course, there are a handful of noble exceptions, when the artist won the battle with the lady. These few fine stories satisfy — despite the alabaster prose — because Miss Porter has for once not been able to hide her own fascination with — and terror of — such primal concerns as lust, revenge, birth and death. But these stories are few. In too many cases the story struggles against the all but opaque language, and loses; one very seldom feels that the experience has been allowed its full life.

Ironically — how often this happens to those who think they live solely by their fiction — Miss Porter's passionate, often vengeful essays now seem more alive and probably more permanent than all but a few of her stories. In attack she was always quite confident, and far less genteel.

In her own time Katherine Anne Porter virtually eluded criticism. The surface she presented, both in person and in her fiction, was taken to be impeccable, when in fact it was merely inscrutable. Edmund Wilson paid her a few compliments, chided her gently for irrelevance, and that was about it. Both as an artist and as a person she seems to have needed to attract attention, and yet to escape it, and in large measure she succeeded. Gertrude Stein, whom Miss Porter did not like, once made a famous remark about — I believe — Oakland, California. There was no there there, she said. I feel very much the same way about the fiction of Katherine Anne Porter. The plumage is beautiful, but plumage, after all, is only feathers.

DESPITE its criticism of the Holy Oldtimers, my fourteen-year-old essay seems on the whole a surprisingly op-

timistic document. It was written in the mid-sixties, when there was every reason to think that Texas was about to experience a literary coming of age. There were at least a dozen young writers loose in the state whose potential everyone was ready to welcome. *Goodbye to a River* had appeared, and *The Gay Place*, and *Adam's Footprint*, all interesting beginnings. A flowering seemed not merely imminent, it seemed already to have occurred.

One reason for my optimism was my sense that the country — or Western, or cowboy — myth had finally been worked through. It was clear by then that this myth had served its time, and lost its potency; insofar as it still functioned it was an inhibiting, rather than a creative, factor in our literary life. The death of the cowboy and the ending of the rural way of life had been lamented sufficiently, and there was really no more that needed to be said about it.

Moreover, this realization seemed widespread. Most of the young Texas writers I knew were quite willing to face



[Barthelme] is the one prose writer I know of to whom an analogy to a trapeze artist seems exact: a miss means death.

John Graves likes to farm, William Humphrey likes to fish, William Goyen enjoys living in L.A., and none seem much interested in slighting their absorbing pursuits to write the Great Texas Novel.

the fact that they were city people; they all seemed well aware that the styles which would shape their lives and sustain their fiction were being formed in Houston and Dallas, not back on the homeplace, wherever it had been.

For reasons I don't fully understand, my mid-sixties optimism was unfounded, generally as regards our literary flowering, specifically as regards the Western myth. At a time when the latter should have ceased to have any pertinence at all, drug-store cowboyism became a minor national craze. Boots became trendy in New York just as the last of the real cowboys took to wearing dozer caps and other gear more suitable to the oil patch and the suburb.

I recognize now that in the sixties I generalized too casually from a personal position. *In A Narrow Grave* was my formal farewell to writing about the country. It had dominated four books, which seemed enough, and I began rather consciously to drain it from my work. I proceeded to write three novels set in Houston, one set in Hollywood, and — most recently — one set in Washington, D.C.

I didn't deplore country living — still don't — but I had no doubt at all that urban life offered me richer possibilities as a novelist. Granting certain grand but eccentric exceptions, virtually the whole of modern literature has been a city literature. From the time of Baudelaire and James, the dense, intricate social networks that cities create have stimulated artists and sustained them. No reason it should be any different in Texas, since we now have at least one or two cities which offer the competitions of manners upon which the modern novel feeds.

It was thus something of a shock, as I started looking at my shelves of Texas books in preparation for this essay, to discover how few of them deal with city life. Not only are there few readable city books, but many of the country books are filled with explicit anti-urbanism. Writer after writer strains to reaffirm his or her rural credentials.

Why? The vast majority of Texas writers have been urbanites for decades. Many are veterans not only of the Texas cities, but of the cities of the East Coast, the West Coast, and Europe.



Where has this experience gone? Where are the novels, stories, poems, and plays that ought to be using it? Why are there still cows to be milked and chickens to be fed in every other Texas book that comes along? When is enough going to be allowed to be enough?

PART OF THE TROUBLE, I am afraid, lies with Texas readers, who, if my experience is any indication, remain actively hostile to the mere idea of urban fiction. Virtually every time I give a lecture in Texas I find myself being chided by someone in the audience because I have stopped writing "the kind of books I ought to write."

Evidently, in the eyes of these readers, only my first three books were the kind I ought to write — the ones that happened to deal with small towns and cowboys. *Leaving Cheyenne* forever is what my readers seem to want.

Speaking at the University of Texas a year or two ago, I was confronted by a young lady who suggested, in distinctly resentful tones, that my next book would probably be set in Princeton, which, in her innocence, she took to be synonymous with the East. When I pointed out that I was more familiar with Virginia than New Jersey, she said, "Oh well, all those places up there are so close together."

Her attitude, though severe, was not much different from that of many old friends, who sigh wistfully and cast fond glances at their copies of *Leaving Cheyenne* when they ask me what I'm writing now.

The reader's attitude, reduced to basics, is that the writer who doesn't want to keep rewriting the book that pleased them most is merely being selfish. Once a writer manages to write a book that gives a reader pleasure, his

duty, presumably, is to repeat the book so that the reader may repeat the pleasure. Attempts to offer the reader more advanced and subtle pleasures — or, indeed, pleasures that are in any way *different* — are not only unnecessary, they are unwelcome.

This is an understandable prejudice, but one which any healthy writer will ignore.

Unfortunately, not enough Texas writers are ignoring it. Too many of them love repeating themselves — after all, it's easier than thinking up something new to say. Many seem to find offering up an endless stream of what might be called Country-and-Western literature an agreeable way to make a living. Easier to write about the homefolks, the old folks, cowboys, or the small town than to deal with the more immediate and frequently less simplistic experience of city life.

What this amounts to is intellectual laziness. Most Texas writers only know one trick, and seem determined to keep from learning another. The result is a limited, shallow, self-repetitious literature which has so far failed completely to do justice to the complexities of life in the state.

THE DALLAS CRITIC A. C. Greene is plainly aware of many of these problems. In the April issue of *The Lone Star Review* he comments forcefully and perceptively on the very anti-urbanism I have been describing. A few months later, in *Texas Monthly*, he published a list of his 50 favorite Texas books which, in my view, merely confirms the tenacity of the bias he himself has criticized.

He was kind enough to list two of my books in his selection and they were *Horseman, Pass By* and *Leaving Cheyenne*, the first two. It seems incredible to me that a critic as intelligent as Mr. Greene could choose a piece of juvenilia such as *Horseman, Pass By* over, say, *Terms of Endearment*, unless a) he hadn't read the latter, or b) was approaching the material from a position of deep bias.

The deep bias is the more likely explanation. I think this bias operates against all Texas writers who deviate from whatever type-casting they may have acquired. In the same essay Mr. Greene prefers Edwin Shrake's *Blessed McGill* — a Western book — to the same author's *Strange Peaches*, a city book. Within the minuscule context of our local literary life, *Blessed McGill* — like *Leaving Cheyenne* — is over-praised, *Strange Peaches* completely neglected. Not much time has passed since the two books were written, but the little that has been kinder to the latter than to the

former. *Blessed McGill* is an interesting *tour de force* that seemed to work when it was published — our *Sotweed Factor*, as it were. Now, like *The Sotweed Factor* itself, it seems alternately grandiloquent and stilted. *Strange Peaches* addresses itself to more complex material and treats it well, with a humor and a balance that is more difficult to sustain than the archaic style of the earlier book.

What one wonders is whether Mr. Greene, or anyone, has attentively reread those books or any of our literature lately. Or were his choices, like those of the many readers who sigh for *Leaving Cheyenne*, made on the basis of fond memory?

If I suspect the latter, it is because I now know from experience how difficult most Texas books are to reread. There are none that one would want to go back to time and again, and very few that can be read with genuine pleasure even twice.

If *Texas Monthly* wants to do us a real service, it ought to solicit not merely A. C. Greene's list of 50 Texas books, but a listing of the favorite *non-Texas* books of 50 Texas authors. My own sad impression is that there are plenty of Texas authors who haven't read 50 non-Texas books in the last decade. Books about Texas cross my desk constantly and I search them hopefully but in vain for any sign of the author's reading. Where are the borrowings and subtle or not-so-subtle thefts? Where are the echoes, allusions, correspondences, and restatements with which most richly textured books abound? Where, in our books, will one get a sense of a mind actively in contact with other minds, or a style nervously aware of other styles?

Almost nowhere, that's where. The most shocking but also the fairest charge that can be levelled at Texas literature is that it is disgracefully insular and uninformed. Writing is nourished by reading — broad, curious, sustained reading; it flows from a profound alertness, fine-tuned both by literature and life. Perhaps we have not yet sloughed off the frontier notion that reading is idle or sissified. At the moment our books are protein-deficient, though the protein is there to be had, in other literatures. Until we have better readers it is most unlikely that we will have better writers.

IF SOME of the above seems overstated, it is because I've concluded that nothing short of insult moves people in Texas. This is perhaps another aspect of clinging frontierism. Gentle chidings go unheard. In these parts the critical act has never been accepted, much less hon-

ored: literary criticism generally means two writers having a fistfight in a bar.

Not only do we need critics, we need writers who are willing to get along without one another's approval. Literary comradeship is a fine thing up to the point at which it begins to produce a pompous, self-congratulatory, and self-protective literary culture. In Texas, rampant good-old-boy-and-girlism has produced exactly that: a pond full of self-satisfied frogs.

In my opinion the self-satisfaction is entirely unjustified. There are as yet *no* solid achievements in Texas letters. Those who fancy otherwise probably haven't tried to reread the books. Cyril Connolly felt that the minimum one should ask of a book was that it remain readable for ten years. When this modest standard is applied to one's Texas books their ranks are immediately decimated — indeed, almost eliminated, in view of which it seems the more unfortunate that our in-state literary culture has begun to exhibit the sort of status-consciousness characteristic of literary society in New York or London, without the excuse of talent or anything resembling the intellectual density to be found in those cities.

The hunter who is reluctant to use a gig might as well avoid the frog-pond of Texas letters. Gigs are what's needed. As it is, most Texas writers work for a lifetime without receiving a single paragraph of intent criticism, and if they should get one now and then it will usually come from out of state. Anything resembling a tough-minded discussion of Texas books by a Texan is thought to be unneighborly. The writers get reviewed, but reviews are merely first impressions. Criticism begins as the second impression, or the third, and even the thumb-nail variety, which is all I can offer, is almost never practiced here.

The need for hard-nosed, energetic, and unintimidated local critics is plainly urgent. It's one thing that our literary society has gotten so clubby and pompous, quite another that the books which constitute the reason for having a literary society are still predominantly soft, thin, and sentimental — not to mention dull, portentous, stylistically impoverished, and intellectually empty. The large majority of them are dead where they sit, and reading them is about as pleasant as eating sawdust.

IN FAIRNESS I should point out that I realize this is a condition not unique to Texas. Minnesota hasn't produced a great literature either, nor Idaho, nor perhaps even California. Fortunately I am not from any of those places, and

their failings are not my concern.

This brings me to another point, or another aspect of our literary immaturity — *i.e.*, the habit we have of attempting to annex any writer who happens to stray across the state line. Recently I received a prospectus for a bibliography of Texas authors which included such well-known Texas boys as Max Apple (Detroit), Michael Mewshaw (Takoma Park, Maryland), and Willie Morris (Yazoo City, Mississippi).

The inclusion of Willie Morris is particularly amusing, since he has spent much of his life proclaiming — with almost every waking breath — that he is a Mississippian.

Michael Mewshaw has probably spent more time in the south of France than he has in Texas. Does a job at the University of Texas automatically make one a Texas writer? If this strange standard were rigorously applied I would have to consider myself a Virginia writer, since I once held a teaching job there.

There is no point in wasting space on these claims, which are almost never made by the writers themselves. Attempts to bolster our ranks with late-comers or temporary residents won't work. Joyce found it convenient to live much of his life in France. Did this make him a French writer? Beckett even

learned to write in French, without, however, ceasing to be Irish.

I am mainly going to hew to the simple rule that only those born and raised in Texas have the dubious honor of literary citizenship. Even writers who become absorbed in the state, and make good use of some part of it — as Beverly Lowry has of Houston, in *Daddy's Girl* — shouldn't have to consider themselves Texas writers. Graham Greene has used a great many places well, while remaining thoroughly English.

The one case that could be called either way is Donald Barthelme, who has lived enough of his life in Texas to be considered a Texas writer if he wants to. Whether such a designation matters to him I have no way of knowing, but what is obvious is that his fiction has no need of Texas. Barthelme is a brilliant, high-risk modernist, who operates on a hair-line, with no greater margin of error than that of a lyric poet. In quality, his work has almost no middle. The stories that are perfect are wonderful; those that are off by a millimeter fail completely. He is the one prose writer I know of to whom an analogy to a trapeze artist seems exact: a miss means death. In the best stories, just watching him not miss provides an intellectual excitement so high that it often brings emotion with it. The perfect stories accumulate slowly, usu-

ally one or two a year, but Barthelme keeps working; the recently published *Sixty Stories*, despite many misses, is an impressive achievement.

IN THE HASTY SURVEY which follows I am going to concentrate mainly on books published since 1950 — it seems to me it has been within this 30-year span that Texas literature has clearly failed to realize itself. I would prefer to talk mainly about fiction, but see no way to avoid some discussion of the reminiscential literature which has, from the first, been so popular with Texas writers. One explanation for this may be that lying doesn't come easy to children of the frontier. It is ironic that Texans, known the world over for being big liars, still can't lie well enough to write interesting novels, preferring, for the most part, the milder fabrications allowable in reminiscence.

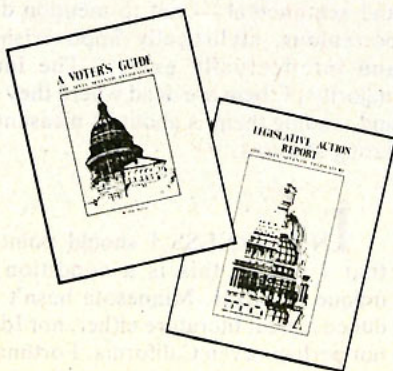
As I said in my previous essay, there is not much Texas fiction earlier than 1950 that needs to be looked at, other than that of Miss Porter. James Phillips' *The Inheritors* (1940) seems wooden as any plank; the same can be said for Edward Anderson's *Thieves Like Us*. George Sessions Perry's fiction is now as dead as the magazines he wrote it for. *Hold Autumn In Your Hand*, his farming novel, seems workaday indeed when compared

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to Edith Summers Kelley's *Weeds*, the one masterpiece of this genre.

In general, the best Texas books of this period confuse honesty with artistry. Their writers produced, without self-consciousness, what might be called novels of information, for readers who had not yet grown accustomed to getting their information off a television screen. Such writers told it like it was, but unfortunately didn't tell it very well, and their books now have only a period interest.

In the mid-fifties a considerably more interesting generation began to be heard from, its principal voices being John Graves, William Humphrey, William Goyen, and John Howard Griffin, all of whom differed significantly from the Texas writers who had come before them. In their differing ways they were our first literary aesthetes, the first writers after Miss Porter to feel that literature should be elegant as well as honest. Also, they were internationalists, well-educated and well-travelled; and all had been to school to the masters of modern literature. They were more likely to echo Faulkner or Joyce or the French Symbolists than to imitate J. Frank Dobie or Roy Bedichek.

The most obvious thing that can be said about this gifted group is that they have not produced very many books. Granting that the three or four best books — *Goodbye to a River*, *The Ordways*, *The House of Breath*, *The Devil Rides Outside* — are among our very best books, it seems nonetheless a slim yield.

Perhaps an admirable desire to put quality over quantity has held their yield down — or then again it may be that in their travels they acquired a rather more Mediterranean outlook on life than is common between the Red River and the Rio Grande. They have managed the nice trick of sustaining their ambitions without being absolutely driven by them, in the process acquiring a balance that may be good for their souls while keeping a brake on their output. John Graves likes to farm, William Humphrey likes to fish, William Goyen enjoys living in L.A., and none seem much interested in slighting their absorbing pursuits in order to write the Great Texas Novel. Each has made it plain that he doesn't intend to be a blind slave to the Protestant work ethic.

Two of them, Griffin and Humphrey, seem to have been pressed into fiction by the force of one compelling traumatic experience, the like of which never happened again. In the case of the late John Howard Griffin, this resulted in an odd, lop-sided career, of the sort that often happens when a writer has the always serious, usually fatal misfortune to write

his best book first.

The Devil Rides Outside has the lonely distinction of being the best French novel ever published in Fort Worth. It is a strange, strong book whose verbal energy — a quality very rare in our fiction — still seems remarkable after almost 30 years. In the mostly all-too-healthy and sunlit world of Texas fiction, the book remains an anomaly, dark, feverish, introverted, claustrophobic, tortured.

It was so complete and so explosive an outpouring of intellectualized emotion that Griffin seemed, from then on, a sort of emptied man. His second novel, *Nuni*, had neither energy nor force. He then wrote a history of a Midland bank, and finally, perhaps in desperation, turned himself black, in a last effort to find something strong to write about.

There are reports that Griffin left at least one completed novel, perhaps several. When these are published his career may seem less strangely truncated than is the case now.

William Humphrey has had a considerably more satisfying, not to mention more intelligible development. The short stories collected in *The Last Husband*, his first book, were fairly conventional, but did make clear that he was working toward a style of his own, one which was not to mature fully until *The Ordways*. *Home from the Hill* succeeds to the extent that it does on the strength of the story and is actually somewhat hindered by the style, which had not yet worked itself clear of Southern portentousness and Faulknerian hype.

Full clarity came with *The Ordways*, in 1964, a beautifully crafted novel which turns the traditional family chronicle into a kind of dance of the generations. *The Ordways* is funny, moving, elegantly written and firmly controlled. It was as if a less prolix Thackeray had turned his attention to East Texas, though rather too briefly, as it now appears.

In the succeeding 17 years Humphrey has produced a couple of fishing books and a graceful memoir, but no more novels. One of the fishing books, *The Spawning Run*, is very charming, but I would still rather have a successor to *The Ordways*. And of course, we may get it. There is no indication that William Humphrey is exhausted, or even tired.

Like Humphrey, William Goyen is an East Texan who adroitly managed to escape both the region and the state. Goyen, too is a stylist; in fact he is probably more styled-obsessed than any Texas writer. It was language, rather than story, that immediately marked *The House of Breath* as something new in Texas letters. There had been no sentences quite that well-considered, in our

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books. Goyen went to school to the French, and worked hard to make his prose as elegant and firm as that of the French masters.

For a few years, at least, he succeeded, and the fact that he succeeded constitutes his most fundamental problem as a novelist. Goyen has the instincts of a prose poet and is slightly resentful of the demands of narrative, with which an extreme concern with style must often be in conflict. His fiction tends to break into moments, or memories, each highly textured and embellished. But in arresting the moment in order to describe it in its fullest intricacy, he also arrests the movement of his story; the prose gathers so much attention to itself that virtually none is left for his characters; in the end one comes away with a sense of having passed through something gorgeous but ultimately vague. This tendency to weave spells with his prose has persisted. Goyen is aware of it and now and then makes an attempt to write more simply, but simplicity is not really his *metier*. Since his language at its best is beautiful most readers prefer the seductions of the early books to the condescensions of the more recent.

THIS BRINGS US to John Graves, the nature of whose work seems to me to be a good deal more complicated than it is popularly thought to be. Thanks partly to his geniality, partly to his relative accessibility, and partly to the fact that he writes about the country, Graves has to some degree been made heir to the Dobie - Webb - Bedichek tradition, with the surely unwelcome responsibility of keeping that branch of Texas letters vital.

That he is quite restive in this role is constantly apparent in his writing: one of his most frequent rhetorical devices, used almost to the point of abuse, is to undercut himself: questioning a story he has just retold, doubting an observation he has just made, twisting out from under a position. Often he simply reverses his field and abandons whatever line of thought he has been pursuing.

He is popularly thought to be a kind of country explainer, when in fact he seems more interested in increasing our store of mysteries than our store of knowledge. He loves the obscure, indeterminate nature of rural legend and likes nothing better than to retell stories the full truth of which can never be known. If nature continues to stimulate him it may be because it too is elusive, feminine, never completely knowable.

Certainly he is not looking forward to becoming the Sage of Glen Rose. His best writing is based on doubt and ambivalence — or, at least, two-sidedness;

The journalists are usually smart and quite often write excellent prose, but all are insecure in relation to readers.



he is not eager to arrive at too many certainties, or any certainty too quickly. The persona he adopts most frequently is that of the man who *considers*. He may choose to consider a goat, a book, an anecdote, or some vagary of nature, but the process of considering is more important to the texture of his books than any conclusions that may get drawn.

John Graves differs from many Texas writers in that, apart from a few short stories, he did not publish his apprentice work; instead he sprang into view full grown in *Goodbye To A River*, a book that represents not so much an abandonment of fiction as a form of accommodation with it. Though based on a real trip, it is essentially an imaginary voyage whose affinities stretch back to *Gulliver* and beyond. What strikes one about it

today is not the natural description, but the harshness of the experience which the traveler recapitulates. It is rich in massacres and feuds, old angers and bitter defeats.

The gentle style in which these angers and defeats are described is an end product whose beginnings are hidden in the unpublished fiction. It is a lovely style whose one disadvantage is that it tends to suck the rawness out of experiences which need to remain raw if they are to be fully felt. An idiom that is perfect for a boat trip won't necessarily serve for a massacre. The cogency of *Goodbye To A River*, and the fact that it encompasses in concentrated form so much that is central to Graves' experience and feeling, has left him with the problem of extension: how to go beyond himself? This is a

problem all writers eventually come to, but the writer who starts late and starts well is apt to feel it more acutely.

LOOKING AT IT HARD, these four talents — Humphrey and Goyen, Graves and Griffin — produced between them only six or seven keepable books in some 25 years, which is not exactly spinning them out. Add to that the list of Texas writers who have so far produced only *one* book and a view emerges of a literary climate productive either of early blight or extreme constipation.

The one-bookers would include William Brammer, William Casey, Hughes Rudd, Tom Horn, Dorothy Yates, Walter Clemons, Mack Williams, Sherry Kafka, and probably numbers of others whose one book I can't find. Of these Brammer and Casey are dead, Rudd and Clemons busy at other tasks; the rest, so far as one can tell, simply stopped. None of their first books was an absolute heartstopper, yet each had some strength and some appeal, good enough to encourage one to look for the next book. *My Escape from the C.I.A.* and *The Poison Tree* each contain one or two excellent short stories; *A Shroud For A Journey*, *The Shallow Grass*, *Hannah Jackson* are the sort of first novels that seem to promise development. All that one can say is that it hasn't happened.

The only book by the one-bookers that still enjoys any currency is *The Gay Place*. Bill Brammer is not the first writer to lose control of his life before gaining full control of his art, but his loss is one Texas readers might justly lament the most. He brought to our letters an easy and natural urbanity then almost unknown in these parts. Also, he was fortunate in his moment: the flea-circus of state politics as it existed in Johnsonian Austin was the perfect feeding ground for his talent. He was alert, curious, and witty, happy to use the absurdities which lay so abundantly to hand; and, in the end, just romantic enough to make it all seem more charming and less destructive than it really was. But *The Gay Place* is material searching for design. Brammer had the talents and disposition of a Silver Poet — our Catullus, not our Balzac — and the big novel demanded by the age was the wrong form for him. He could neither resist nor control his material and so buried an elegant small novel about capitol debaucheries and the pathos of ambition in a large confused book about a little bit of everything. Still, of all our beginnings that turned out to be endings, it remains the most appealing.

A word, now, about the journalists. A great many Texas writers have come out

of journalism, in particular sportswriting. Brammer came out of it, for example, and fairly far out. The classic analysis of the dangers of journalism to a writer who aspires to move beyond it was made by Leonard Woolf, in *Beginning Again*, pp. 132-35. It is too long to quote: suffice to say that it is very brilliant and very accurate. The journalist trains to write something which will be read once and thrown away. Moreover, the writing will generally have to compete with eggs and bacon and the chatter of the domestic breakfast table. To do such writing successfully requires no mean skill — but it does need skills different from those required if one is competing with Shakespeare and Tolstoy, or Hemingway and Faulkner, or — to come on home — William Humphrey and John Graves.

In reading through the books of our several journalist-novelists, I have come to think that a crucial problem has to do with an attitude toward readers. The journalists are usually smart and quite often write excellent prose, but all are insecure in relation to readers. Trained to write columns that can be read in a few seconds, or articles that take at a most a few minutes, in their novels they seem desperate to *affect* the reader every few seconds, or at least every minute or two.

But, obviously, novels aren't columns, their rhythms are often extremely long ones, and the reader's attention — if it is to be held — must be allowed varying levels of intensity. A rat-a-tat-tat effect, with a joke, an *aperçu*, or a dazzling rhetorical move every few lines, quickly becomes intolerable in a novel.

This tendency is particularly noticeable in the work of Edwin Shrake, in my view the best of our journalist-novelists. Shrake has always been an intriguing talent, far superior to most of his drinking buddies. He has energy, skill, imagination, and persistence. Not many writers start out with a paper-back Western (*Blood Reckoning*) and go on to up-date *The Satyricon*, as he does in *Peter Arbitrator*. All of his books begin well, and yet all are difficult to finish, in my view because Shrake can't resist the constant hit. He is a genuinely funny writer with no sense of how to space effects — being funny too often in the same vein is as bad as not being funny at all. Perhaps I'm wrong, but this seems to be a hold-over from sportswriting, since much the same thing happens in the (to me) much less interesting fiction of Dan Jenkins and Gary Cartwright. In a novel, trying to keep the reader alert every single second is the one sure way to insure that the reader will go to sleep.

Larry King's prose suffers a little from this same tendency, but since the basic unit of his work is the magazine article

he frequently gets away with it. He has a strong, vivid style that works well when one considers his pieces in isolation, in the magazines where most of them appeared. When these pieces are then gathered into collections it is evident that he tends to splash the same colors and repeat certain characteristic verbal devices a good deal too often.

He has written an acute piece about playing cowboy, without perhaps noting that he constantly does just that in his prose — though he *has* written ruefully and perceptively of the effects of writing everything to a dead-line. As his career advanced, he began to make himself a character in his own reportage, sometimes too self-consciously, in the manner of Mailer. Perhaps naturally, he is more of a presence in these pieces than many of the people he was sent to report on. Read from start to finish, his collected journalism is a kind of reverse *Pilgrim's Progress*, with Larry being the rather aggressive pilgrim, at large in contemporary life.

Unfortunately, very little of this work has made any demands on his emotions. Consequently, when his emotions are tapped, as in the brief, beautiful essay on his father called "The Old Man," the effect is wonderful and makes us wish it weren't so uncommon. "The Old Man" puts everything else he has written in the deep shade. Now that *The Best Little Whorehouse* has freed him from journalism one hopes more of that kind of work will result.

SOMETHING ought to be said, I suppose, not merely about *The Best Little Whorehouse* but also about the second most popular Texas drama, Preston Jones' *Texas Trilogy*. What I can say is that I found the latter obnoxious on almost every level, but principally on the level of dialogue and attitude. The dialogue, with its numerous adjectival "By-gods," is collegiate-suburban County-Western, as affected as Tom McGuane's ghastly dialogue in *The Missouri Breaks*. The three plays are simply little strings of weakly dramatized anecdote, appealing mainly to those who like to think sweet thoughts about Texas small towns. Both the musical and the *Trilogy* succeed to the extent that they do by sentimentalizing small-town life, though the article from which Larry King derived the musical is by no means sentimental.

THERE ARE, so far as I know, only four Texas writers who have been able to reverse the tendency toward nostalgia, sentiment, and small-town mythicization. These are Terry

**Crumley, Crawford, and Irsfeld
are to our fiction what Willie and
Waylon were to our music before
they got popular.**



Southern, Max Crawford, James Crumley, and John Irsfeld.

The first, Terry Southern, escaped quickly and devoted only a few stories to Texas, but these few have an edge that at the time was rare. *The Magic Christian* and *Red Dirt Marijuana* are good enough to make one regret that Southern seems to have left fiction for screenwriting. Slowing down just when they should be speeding up is too common a pattern with our writers.

Crumley, Crawford, and Irsfeld are to our fiction what Willie and Waylon were to our music before they got popular. In a state that over-rates almost every writer who publishes a book, they have managed the rare feat of being not only under-rated, but almost unknown. *One to Count Cadence* and *The Last Good Kiss* (Crumley), *The Backslider* and *Waltz Across Texas* (Crawford), and *Lit-*

tle Kingdoms and *Coming Through* (Irsfeld) are our Outlaw books, critical, hardbitten, disrespectful to the point of contempt. Instead of having a love-hate relationship with the old state, these writers mostly just hate it. When they look at the small town, they look at it as critically as Samuel Butler looked at the Victorian family. In contemplating Texas life they are unawed, almost to the point of savagery, and the fact that they enjoy complete neglect is not making them any tamer. The folksy satire of the *Texas Trilogy* or *The Best Little Whorehouse* is like sugar candy in comparison to the Swiftian acids of *Waltz Across Texas* or *The Backslider*.

All three men are smart, tough, skilled, and educated; also, they are geared to fiction as naturally as the writers of an earlier generation were geared to journalism or reminiscence, or both. Unfortunately a literary climate poisonous to

fiction and favorable to journalism has already to some extent retarded their development, and may stop it altogether, unless they're lucky. I hope they survive — our fiction needs the critical element as badly as the trans-Pecos needs rain.

AND WHAT of that odd trio of writers who are alike in nothing except that they inhabit the trans-Pecos: Tom Lea, John Rechy, and Elroy Bode?

If Tom Lea reaches the next generation of Texans it will likely be as an artist. He has a good eye but a poor ear; the more his characters talk the less convincing his fiction becomes. He is more interesting visually than verbally. Both *The Wonderful Country* and *The Hands of Cantu* contain excellent descriptive writing but fail to create characters of much depth or much interest.

Ear, on the other hand, was John Rechy's major strength. *City of Night* remains a readable first book precisely because he rendered what he had heard and seen so perfectly, with such fine attention to costume, expression, and idiom. But he wrote it in practically the last moment before the description of sexual life-styles became clichéd and then passé. Though certainly aware of this development, Rechy has not been inventive enough to side-step it, and has basically repeated himself, with ever-diminishing returns.

Elroy Bode is our minimalist, a confirmed nostalgic who has pinned his hopes on prose style. Fortunately for him, his is attractive, at least in the short sketches in which he exposes it. Like planes that fly under radar, the sketch slides under criticism. You either like them or you don't. Quite a few of Bode's are very appealing, though an equal number seem mannered and precious. Come upon individually, in magazines, the sketches often delight; reading them in the aggregate, in books, is not so pleasing. One gets tired of his taking every little Texas thing he bumps into quite so seriously. A really good book will seem to be more than the sum of its parts, but a collection of sketches only adds up to the sum of the very best sketches, which may constitute only 20 percent of the book. One admires Bode's individualism, while wishing he weren't so locked into a form whose resources he has long since exhausted.

IT IS HARD to say much about the reminiscers, of whom there have been a great many. It all depends upon the quality of the mind that's doing the reminiscing, and down here the quality has been, if not pedestrian, at least quite conventional. An intellectual autobiography on the order of *The Education of Henry*

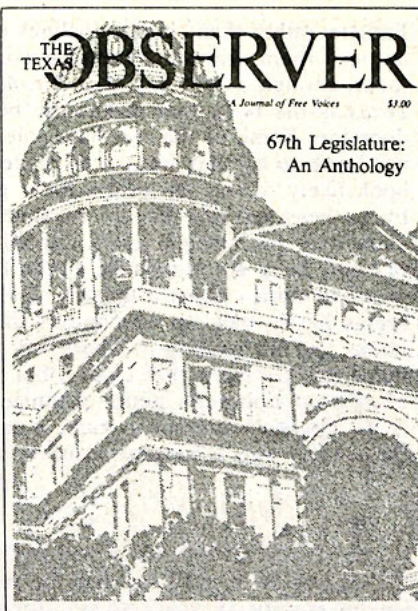
Adams would be nice to have, but we don't have one. Our reminiscers tend to be nostalgic and simplistic, interested mainly in paying tribute to colorful ancestors and vanished life styles. A few charm, most bore. They are valuable insofar as they provide grist for the historian, pernicious to the extent that they encourage reaction and ruralism.

Texas consists of dozens of sub-regions, many of which have prompted a novel or two. I am partial, for example, to Jack Sheridan's *Thunderclap* (1952), largely because it happens to be set in the much-neglected Wichita Falls-Vernon area. Natives of other sub-regions can doubtless name similar books, most of which do little more than provide field-notes to the sub-region. I once had the misfortune to see a list of some 350 books about Texas — novels, mostly — compiled by an earnest but misguided researcher. It consisted of 345 dead books and four or five whose vital signs were growing ever more faint.

For that matter, six of my own eight books seem to have stopped breathing in the last few years. I am not surprised. It took me until around 1972 to write a book that an intelligent reader might want to read twice, and by 1976 I had once again lost the knack. There is nothing very remarkable in this: writing novels is not a progressive endeavor. One might get better, one might get worse. If I'm lucky and industrious I might recover the knack, or then again I might be very industrious and never recover it. There is always that gamble involved, in writing. Too many writers, in Texas and out, have been coddled into believing that art is a more acceptable, less obdurate thing than it actually is. It is quite difficult to write a book that an intelligent reader will want to read twice, and near and not-so-near misses are the rule, rather than the exception.

Some misses trouble one more than others. The flubbed Texas book that bothers me the most is Robert Flynn's *North to Yesterday*. Flynn had a world-class idea — Cervantes' idea; a *Don Quixote* of the trail drives — but it was his first book and his powers weren't adequate to the visionary tragi-comedy that would have done justice to it. He had the right material, but at the wrong time.

There are at least a couple of dozen Texas writers I haven't considered in this essay. There is the late Ben K. Green, hopefully the last and certainly the most pretentious of the yarners. Then there are Robert Flynn and Al Dewlen, Benjamin Capps and C. W. Smith, Shelby Hearon, Warren Leslie, Marshall Terry, Dillon Anderson, Nolan Porterfield, Allan Weir, Leonard Sanders, Suzanne Morris, Madison Cooper, Peter Gent and a host of others.



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Fatigue, rather than charity, inclines me to pass them without extensive comment, though I will say that *Sironia, Texas* is the book that makes the best doorstep. Some of the rest have talent, but none so far has used it to write a book likely to last ten years. Most get by, to the extent that they do, on modest capacities for straight-grain narrative realism. They are story-tellers who tell ordinary stories rather ordinarily. If this seems harsh, pick up any one of their books and try reading it. There will be numerous passages that charm, but no book that compells acute attention. A. C. Greene's attempt to make a case for *I and Claudie* is so much mouthwash.

THE OTHER DAY it occurred to me, apropos of nothing, that the millennium is only 18 years away. Horses routinely live 18 years, but books don't. It is quite possible that no book written in Texas in the last two or three decades will still seem worth reading 18 years hence.

The problem is not so much shallow talent as shallow commitment. Our best writers' approach to art is tentative and intermittent: half-assed, to put it bluntly. Instead of an infinite capacity for taking pains they develop an infinite capacity for avoiding work, and employ their

creativity mainly to convince themselves that they are working well when in fact they are hardly working at all. The majority of our most talented writers have not yet produced even one book with a real chance of lasting. Forget second acts, in Texas literature: so far we have only a bare handful of credible first acts.

Meanwhile, as the cities boom and the state changes, a great period is being wasted. Fiction in particular thrives on transitions, on the destruction of one life style by another. Houston and Dallas have sucked in thousands of Rubempres, but where are the books about them? These cities are dripping experience, but instead of sopping up the drippings and converting them into literature our writers mainly seem to be devoting themselves to an ever more self-conscious countrification.

There is no point in belaboring the obvious. Until Texas writers are willing to work harder, inform themselves more broadly, and stop looking only backward, we won't have a literature of any interest.

THAT SAID, I want to reverse my thrust and pay tribute in closing to the one Texas writer for whose work I have

The following is a selected list of titles mentioned by McMurtry in his essay. "OP" stands for out of print.

- Dillon Anderson. *I and Claudie*, Little Brown, 1951. OP.
Edward Anderson. *Thieves Like Us*, Stokes, 1937; Avon, 1974. Both are OP.
Donald Barthelme. *Sixty Stories*, Putnam's Sons, 1981.
Roy Bedichek. *Adventures With a Texas Naturalist*, University of Texas, 1961. (Originally published by Doubleday, 1947.)
Karankaway County, University of Texas, 1974. (Originally published by Doubleday, 1950.)
Elroy Bode. *Elroy Bode's Texas Sketchbook*, Texas Western, 1967.
Elroy Bode's Sketchbook II, Texas Western, 1972.
Billy Lee Brammer. *The Gay Place*, Texas Monthly, 1978. (Originally published by Houghton Mifflin, 1961.)
William Casey. *A Shroud for a Journey*, Houghton Mifflin, 1961. OP.
Walter Clemons. *The Poison Tree and Other Stories*, Houghton Mifflin, 1959. OP.
Madison Cooper. *Sironia, Texas*, Houghton Mifflin, 1952. OP.
Max Crawford. *Backslider*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976; Avon, 1978.
Waltz Across Texas, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975; Avon, 1978.
James Crumley. *Last Good Kiss*, Random, 1978.
One Count to Cadence, Random, 1969. OP.
Robert Flynn. *North to Yesterday*, Knopf, 1967. OP.
William Goyen. *The House of Breath*, Random, 1975. (Originally published in 1949.)
John Graves. *Goodbye to a River*, Knopf, 1960; University of Nebraska, 1977.

John Howard Griffin. *Black Like Me*, Houghton Mifflin, 1962.

The Devil Rides Outside, Smith's, 1952. OP.
Nuni, Houghton Mifflin, 1956. OP.
Tom Horn. *Shallow Grass*, Macmillan, 1968.
William Humphrey. *Home from the Hill*, Knopf, 1958.

The Last Husband and Other Stories, Knopf, 1953.

The Oraways, Knopf, 1965. OP.
The Spawning Run, Delacorte, 1971.

Tom Lea. *The Hands of Cantu*, Little Brown, 1964. OP.

The Wonderful Country, Gregg, 1979. (Originally published by Little Brown, 1952.)

John Irsfield. *Coming Through*, Putnam's Sons, 1976. OP.

Little Kingdoms, Putnam's Sons, 1975. OP.

Preston Jones. *Texas Trilogy*, Hill and Wang, 1976.

Sherry Kafka. *Hannah Jackson*, Morrow, 1966. OP.
Edith Summers Kelley. *Weeds*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1923. OP.

Larry L. King. *Of Outlaws, Con Men, Whores, Politicians and Other Artists*, Viking, 1980.

Larry McMurtry. *Horseman, Pass By*, Penguin, 1979. (Originally published by Harper and Row, 1961.)

In a Narrow Grave, Simon and Schuster, 1968.
Leaving Cheyenne, Popular Library, 1963; Penguin, 1979.

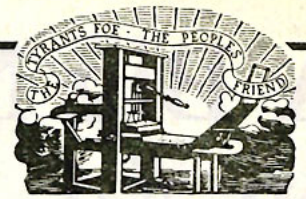
Terms of Endearment, Simon and Schuster, 1975.

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My Bones Being Wiser, Wesleyan U. Press, 1960.

an unequivocal admiration: that is, Vassar Miller. *Adam's Footprint* was published in 1956, and from that time until rather recently Miller has been the one poet of genuine distinction in the state. I think it no hyperbole to suggest that her dozen best poems will outlast all the books mentioned in this essay, plus the 50 on A. C. Greene's list as well. That she is to this day little-known, read, or praised in Texas is the most damning comment possible on our literary culture. She works in the hardest form — the lyric poem, the form where the percentage of failure is inevitably highest. Many of hers do fail, of course, but the ones which succeed come as close as any writing dote in Texas to achieving what can fairly be called excellence: the product of a high gift wedded to long-sustained and exceedingly rigorous application.

I am not seeking to sanctify her, but merely to point out that we do have one very gifted writer who has continued for some 30 years to do what a writer is supposed to do: write. *Adam's Footprint* and the volumes which succeed it are among the very few Texas books to which one can, with confidence, always return. There is definitely a there there: hard-won, high, intelligent, felt, finished, profound. To Vassar Miller, if to anyone we have, belongs the laurel. □



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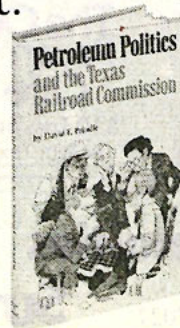
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A Big No on #4 . . . from page 3

tions where property taxes have been paid for at least 50 years, but there are land title problems. This seems OK.

Proposition 3: No

Under this scheme, the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the House, and the lieutenant governor's chairpersons of the Senate appropriations and state affairs committees and the speaker's chairpersons of the House appropriations and ways-and-means committees would "manage" the state's spending when the legislature is not in session.

The argument is that decisions need to be made responsive to federal and other changes during the year the legislature doesn't meet. The correct answer is annual sessions, to which the business

lobby is opposed. As we explained Sept. 11, it will be better to trust the legislature than this super-conservative committee of seven, as of now composed entirely of the Clements-Hobby-Clayton power structure in state government. The person in charge of the campaign for this amendment is Don Cavness, the lobbyist for the Texas Bankers Assn. Five of the proposed seven super-budgeteers are not elected statewide.

No.

Proposition 4: No!

This is the big one.

In the *Observer* Aug. 28, to which we refer our readers, we contended at length that this scheme should be defeated, saying:

"This plan, if adopted, will jeopardize the funding for every program and activity of the state government except water and will therefore dramatically increase the pressure for new taxes. . . . In essence the Clayton Plan is a tax bill faked as a water bill. . . . The state already

criminally underfunds aid and services for dependent children, the deaf, and the blind — what are we doing, dedicating billions to a still-secret plan?"

The League of Women Voters opposes the plan. President Diana Clark of Dallas said, "This amendment would siphon off half of the so-called 'excess' state tax revenues in each biennium for water projects. These drains on the state treasury can lead to cuts in state funding for schools, human services, the justice system, and other state needs — or these drains can lead to new taxes.

"What is incredible," said the spokesperson for the nonpartisan League, "is that this plan is really no plan at all. It gives an elusive amount of money to the Texas Water Development Board to do something equally elusive about Texas water problems. . . . It denies future legislatures the flexibility needed to meet changing water needs. Texas deserves a better plan for managing its water resources than this pig-in-the-poke amendment."

Speaker Clayton tours the state speaking for the plan, denying it's mainly for West Texas, but the opponents are right in their slogan — "Your taxes — their water!"

The committee for the plan has collected \$500,000 for a high-powered media campaign. The finance co-chairmen are Jim Keay, CEO of Republic of Texas Corp., Ben Love, CEO of Texas Commerce Bankshares, and Glenn Biggs, CEO of the First National Bank of San Antonio. Naturally the bankers are interested in the profit to be made from up to a billion dollars in state-guaranteed water bonds. The committee's treasurer is the CEO of Capital National Bank of Austin, Robert T. Present. Area co-chairmen include Jeff Austin, president, First National Bank of Jacksonville; ex-Gov. Dolph Briscoe, chairman of Alamo National Bank of San Antonio; ex-Gov. John Connally, a member of Vinson & Elkins, which represents First City Bankcorporation; and T. C. Frost, chairman of Cullen/Frost Bankshares.

Sen. Kent Caperton, Bryan, says the water fund plan would "line the pockets of the water developers." Sen. Lloyd Doggett, Austin, says:

"The State of Texas has never before done anything like this. Proposition 4 would commit us for the first time to a guarantee that the state will bear the re-

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A Look at Water Inc.

Lubbock

"We wear the white hats," claims Duncan Ellison; and he smiles. He has Billy Clayton's old job, executive director of Water, Inc.

Water, Inc., was formed in 1967 as a non-profit corporation with 1,000 charter members. The membership peaked in 1973 during the energy "crisis" with 2,600 members, but has leveled off to about 1,900 now.

The original members, Ellison asserts, were "civic leaders throughout West Texas and New Mexico who were concerned about the High Plains region and the Texas Water Plan. . . . They recognized that unless the people in this area banded together, we'd end up just like the tentative plan said. You know, they drew a circle around the Plains and said these people are going to have some real problems, but there's not a hell of a lot that can be done about it."

Water, Inc., works "To promote the economic and social well-being of the inhabitants of the area now or hereafter served by this corporation by supporting programs for the acquisition of a sufficient water supply for present and future needs of agriculture, ranching, industry, municipalities, and inhabitants therein." Their pamphlet explains, "That is where Water, Inc., comes in as the only area-wide organization working full time toward water importation." The pamphlet continues, "By joining Water, Inc., you will assure the High Plains of West Texas and Eastern New Mexico of a unified voice strong enough to demand action and get results.

The pamphlet optimistically describes importation planning:

- Importation is receiving its fair share of consideration as the Texas Water Development Board continues to update the Texas Water Plan.
- An importation office has been set up within the Texas Department of Water Resources.
- Members of the Texas Water Development Board, including two former Water, Inc. presidents, are committed to seeing the area's waters needs are met.

Behind all the benevolent concern for water is money. "Water is the economics

of this area," emphasizes Ellison. "The whole economy out in this area is built on irrigated agriculture." And the West Texas economy is not hurting; the area has 8% of the residents of the state who pay 20% of the taxes (in other words, there are some rich West Texans).

Speaker Clayton was the paid executive director of Water, Inc., from 1969-1973, while he was also in the Texas House. Members of the current advisory board include Clayton, Rep. Tom Craddock of Midland, Cong. Kent Hance of Lubbock, Rep. Bill Heatly of Paducah, Cong. Jack Hightower of Vernon, Rep. Pete Laney of Hale Center, Rep. Nolan "Buzz" Robnett of Lubbock, Rep. Jim Rudd of Brownfield, Rep. Froy Salinas of Lubbock, Sen. Bill Sarpalius of Amarillo, Rep. Bob Simpson of Amarillo, Rep. Larry Don Shaw of Big Spring, Sen. E. L. Short of Tahoka, Rep. Chip Staniswalis of Amarillo, Cong. Charles Stenholm of Stamford, Rep. Foster Whaley of Pampa, and many others who are not legislators.

Water, Inc., has the university researchers, the government bureaucrats, the politicians, and even the construction company for the up-to-\$26 billion importation project. They are examining water sources in Arkansas, Louisiana, even Canada.

Amy Johnson

sponsibility for one-half of one-billion dollars of public debt for future water projects. And the proposal would allow

local debt to far exceed this figure by applying a leveraging principle . . . and multiplying the actual bond issues. . . .

In the parlance of bond hustlers this is a typical pyramid financing scheme, and in more common terms is known to many

classified

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as funny money."

Ordinarily you'd think bankers would oppose what Proposition 4 also does — as Doggett says, it "effectively repeals the limit on state spending that we have written into our state constitution." Apparently it's all right to have a welfare ceiling, but not a bankers' ceiling.

The *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, doubting Gov. Clements' statement to it that the plan is not primarily for the West Texas farmers, added: "It also looks like some sloppy thinking has gone into it. With Bill Clayton in the picture, it is hard to have a lot of confidence in what is going to be done anyhow."

Republican Rep. Frank Gaston of Dallas, please step forward to have the last word:

"There is nothing conservative in spending billions on one state need while other needs — including education, programs for the aged, public safety, and health care — will be excluded from access to these funds. . . .

"There is nothing conservative about giving more money to a water board

whose past record clearly shows a predisposition toward more irrigation farming projects, less conservation, little flood control and a disinterest in urban water needs. . . .

"There is nothing conservative in breaking two promises to the people of Texas. In 1979 the people spoke when they passed a constitutional state spending limit. In 1978 the people asked for tax relief and were promised a return of surplus state funds. Three years later, the legislature responded with this proposal which circumvents the spending limit and steals the state surplus instead of returning it to the people. . . .

"I repeat, there is nothing conservative in a water plan which will raise our school taxes and tie the hands of the people of Texas for years to come.

"The people of Texas should not stand by and let a few West Texas special interest groups, with their gold-plated divining rods tapping East Texas rivers, claim that the Water Fund is a conservative plan."

Proposition 5: Yes

This would exempt livestock and poul-

try from property taxes. Field crops and farm equipment are exempt now. According to Rep. Susan McBee of Del Rio, leader of the fight for this, livestock and poultry taxes amount to less than a fourth of one percent of all Texas property tax receipts, about \$6 million.

With Reagan killing federal aid to education as fast as he can, we are in general opposed to lowering property taxes except for very good causes. Repairing urban blight (Proposition 1) may be one such cause. McBee raises the point consumers should consider about livestock and poultry: No other food products are taxed in Texas. Also, under Reagan farmers and ranchers are going to need all the help they can get.

We are of two minds here, but on balance, Yes.

Proposition 6: No

This would allow local governments to exempt from property taxes up to 40% of the market value of owner-occupied homes in 1982-'84, 30% in 1985-'87, and 20% after 1987. Clearly this would sharply reduce the property tax base, which



Photo by Alan Pogue

The Social Cause Calendar

Notices on upcoming events must reach the *Observer* at least three weeks in advance.

WHEATSVILLE GRAND OPENING

Wheatville food co-op in Austin will celebrate the opening of its new store at 3101 Guadalupe on Oct. 25, 1:30-9 p.m. Music, entertainment, booths, and speakers including Texas Agriculture Commissioner candidate Jim Hightower.

HOUSTON FICTION FESTIVAL

The Texas Arts & Cultural Organization is sponsoring a giant fiction festival in Houston on Oct. 28-29. Participants include Mary McCarthy, Muriel Spark, Toni Morrison, and P. D. James. Contact TACO, 4601 Univ. Oaks, Houston 77004.

NUCLEAR CONFERENCE

A weekend conference on "The Nuclear Question — Who Has the Answer?" will be held at Dunfey's Motor Inn, Nov. 6-8. John Henry Faulk, Dr. Helen Caldicott, David Cortright of SANE, and other

speakers will focus on the nuclear problem from various perspectives. The conference is sponsored by the Gulf Coast Council on Foreign Affairs; call 713-938-1211 x296 for more information.

ACLU BENEFITS

Two annual fall fundraisers for the ACLU have been announced for Nov. 7: San Antonio, at 3102 Valley View Place, 8 p.m., with speaker Jim Harrington, no admission, cash bar. Houston, 8 p.m., with speakers Bob Eckhardt and Larry King, location to be announced, call 713-524-5925.

FAMILY ON EXHIBIT

Women and Their Work, an Austin-based arts group, is presenting a new photographic exhibit entitled *The Ties That Bind* on Nov. 7-Dec. 6 at the Dougherty Cultural Arts Center, Barton Springs Rd., Austin. The exhibit includes the work of eight Texas photographers who portray different aspects of contemporary family life and relationships. Plans are for the show to travel throughout Texas after this opening.

Progressive Organizations

In no hurry, the *Observer* is building up lists of the political organizations we regard as progressive, their meeting evenings where that is applicable, and a phone number for each, in Texas cities. The editor invites communications recommending organizations for inclusion, by city.

AUSTIN

ACORN, 8-neighborhood groups, 442-8321; Amnesty Intl., Group 107, Cindy Torrance, POBx. 4951, Aus. 78765; Austinites for Public Transportation, 3rd Tue., 441-2651; Aus. Lesbian-Gay Political Caucus, 4th Tue., & also Lesbian-Gay Demos. of Tx., 478-8653; Aus. Neighborhood, Ccl., 4th Wed., 442-8411; Aus. Neighborhood Fund, 3rd Mon., 451-2347; Aus. Tenants' Ccl., 4th Tue., 474-1961; Aus. Women's Political Caucus, 1st & 3rd Tues., 472-3606 or 447-4409; Black Aus. Demos., 3rd or 4th Thu., 478-6576;

Center for Maximum Potential Buildg. Systems (appropriate technology), 1st Sat., 928-4786; Central Aus. Demos., 3rd Wed., 477-6587; Central Tx. ACLU, 477-4335; Citizens' Coalition for an Economical Energy Policy, 474-4738; Demo. Socialist Organizing Cmte., 2nd Wed., 453-2556; Gray Panthers, 4th Thu., 345-1869; Lignite Group, 479-

finances our schools. If the base is reduced, either the schools suffer or the tax-rate percentages go up. With Reagan cutting federal education spending, this proposal makes no sense.

Secondly: the Senate killed a House provision that would have limited the total exemption on a house to \$40,000. Some data suggest that in Dallas, 53% of the total tax break would go to people with homes valued at \$70,000 or more. "It benefits the rich," said June Karp, legislative director of the Texas Federation of Teachers.

As the teachers' union president, John Cole, says, "Billy Clayton's West Texas Water Works," Proposition 4, "is bad news for schools, school children, and school teachers," and if Proposition 6 passes along with it, "we can see no way for local schools to survive without large increases in the local tax rates, and we know how popular that would be."

Proposition 7: Yes

This would authorize an additional \$250 million in general obligation bonds for the veterans' land fund at an interest

rate of up to 10% (instead of the presently impracticable 6%). This is a good program that has helped veterans buy land. Yes.

R.D.

No on Nuke

In the Nov. 3 election, the voters of Austin certainly should withdraw the city from its 16% of the South Texas Nuclear Project.

STNP has been one calamity after another. Had it not been for the critics

led by Lanny Sinkin and Peggy Buchhorn, the public would be in the dark; indeed, things might be going on as usual. Instead, after the critics exposed Houston Lighting & Power criticism of Brown & Root's role as project engineers, HL&P bit the bullet on Sept. 24 and removed B&R from the job. Now, prodded again by the critics' whistleblowing to the press, HL&P releases a devastating report that it ordered from Quadrex Corp., an independent consulting firm.

Quadrex found six generic or general design engineering problems at STNP that "pose a serious threat to plant licenseability." Quadrex also found four other generic defects that "may have a serious impact on plant licenseability." Now, mind, this is the report *the company* ordered.

The Quadrex report suggests two outcomes. Perhaps the STNP plant is so basically mis-designed, it will not be licensed. In that case, the investment is a total waste of money. More likely, however, the Reagan Administration is so

0678 & 512-321-5250 (Bastrop); LULAC, 2nd Wed., 451-3219;

Magnet Coalition, (managed growth), 441-2651; Mxn.-Amn. Demos., 1st Mon., 444-7668 or 472-9211; New Amn. Movement, every other Sun., 454-2888 or 478-2096; Nurses' Environmental Health Watch, 454-3932; Northeast Aus. Demos., 2nd Tue., Dr. Gary Witt, 8512 Grayledge; Phogg Foundation, POBx. 13549, Ax.; Save Barton Creek, every Tue., 472-4104; Sierra Club, 1st Tue., 478-1264; Socialist Party of Tx., 2nd Tue., 452-3722; South Aus. Demos., 3rd Tue. or 3rd Thu., 447-4091;

Tx. Consumer Assn., 477-1882; Tx. Mobilization for Survival, Sun., wkly., 474-5877; Travis Audubon Socy., 3rd Thu., 447-7155 or 477-6282; Travis Cty. Demo. Women, every Fri., 453-3243; Travis Cty. YD's, 453-3796; Univ. Mobilization for Survival, wkly., 476-4503; UT YD's, 452-8516; West Aus. Demos., 2nd Thu., 454-1291; Zilker Park Posse, 472-1053.

SAN ANTONIO

ACLU, 224-6791; Amnesty Int'l., U.S. Group 127, Julia Powell, 828-4141; Women's Political Caucus, 2nd Tues., 655-3724; Civil Rights Litigation Center, 224-1061; Citizens Concerned About Nuclear Power, 1st & 3rd Weds., 655-0543; Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS), 2nd Th., 222-2367; Demos for Action, Research & Education (DARE), rsch. volunteers needed, 4th Wed., 674-0351; Latin-American Assistance, alternate Sats., 732-0960; Mxn.-Amn. Demos., 3rd Mon., Walter Martinez, 227-1341; NAACP, 4th Fri., 224-7636; Organizations United for East Side Development, last Tue., 824-4422; People for Peace, 2nd Th., 822-3089; Physicians for Social Responsibility, 1st Mon., Dr. Martin Batiere, 691-0375; Poor People's Coalition for Human Services, 923-3037; Residents Organized for Better and Beautiful Environmental Development (ROBBED), 3rd Tue., 226-3973; S. A. Demo. League, 1st Thu., 344-1497; S. A. Gay Alliance, last Wed., Metropolitan Commty. Church, 102 S. Pine; Sierra Club, 3rd Tue., 341-5990; United Citizens Project Planning and Operating Corp. (federal funding), 3rd Mon., 224-4278.

DALLAS

ACLU, 2001 McKinney, Suite 330; ACORN, 823-4580; Amn. Friends Service Cmte., 321-8643;

Amnesty Intl., U.S. Group 189, Renee Berta, 915-584-4869, and Group 205, William H. Winn, 214-361-4690; Armadillo Coalition, 1st Wed., 349-1970; AMIGOS, 339-9461; Bois d'Arc Patriots, 827-2632; Brown Berets, 337-4135; Bread for the World, state, Joe Haag, 741-1991 x298, and 495-1494 (Dist. 3); Citizens' Assn. for Sound Energy (CASE), 946-9446; Clean Air Coalition, 387-2785; Comanche Peak Life Force, Wed. wkly, 337-5885;

Cmte in Solidarity with the People in El Salvador (CISPES), 375-3715; Dallas Gay Alliance, 2nd Mon., 528-4233; Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), 1-370-3805; E. Dal. Neighborhood Assn., 3rd Mon., 827-1181; Frederick Douglass Voting League, 428-2407; Nghborhood Info. & Action Service, 827-2632; NOW (Dallas Cty.), 1st Mon., 742-6918; NOW (North Dal.) 3rd Tue., 690-8971; No. Lake College Solar Club, 659-5254;

Progressive Voters League, 372-8168; Sierra Club, 2nd Wed., 369-5543; Txns. for Handgun Control, 528-3985; Tx. Cmte. on Natural Resources, 352-8370; Tx. Tenants Union, 823-2733; Dallas UN Assn. (DUNA), 526-1853, 387-2785; UN Children's Fund (UNICEF cards), 241-7807; War Resisters League, 337-5885.

FORT WORTH

ACLU, 534-6883; ACORN, (11 nghbrhd. groups), 924-1401, board meets mthly; Armadillo Coalition, 927-0808; Bread for the World, 924-1440 (Dist. 12), 923-4290 (Dist. 6); Citizens for Fair Utility Regulation, 478-6372; Coalition of Labor Union Women, 469-1202. Dist. 10 Demos., 2nd Sat., 535-7803; First Friday, 1st Fri., 927-0808; F.W. Tenants' Cel., 923-5071; IMPACT, (telephone chain, works largely through progressive Protestant churches), 923-4506, meets on call; Mental Health Assn., 2nd & 4th Tue., 335-5405; NOW, 3rd Th., 336-3943; Precinct Workers Cl., 3rd Th., 429-2706; Senatorial Dist. 12 Demos., 2nd Sat. or 2nd Wed., 457-1560; Sierra Club, 3rd Wed., 923-9718; Students Against the Draft (UTA), 261-1935; Tarrant Cty. Demo Women's Club, 2nd Sat., 451-8133, 927-5169; Tx. Coalition of Black Demos (F. W. chap.), 1st Tues., 534-7737; Women's Political Caucus, 1st Wed., 336-8700.

GREATER TEXAS

Amarillo: Panhandle Environmental Awareness Committee, 376-8903; Northwest Tx. Clergy and Laity Concerned, 2nd Tues., 373-8668.

HOUSTON

ACLU, 524-5925; ACORN, 523-6989; Americans for Demo. Action, 522-9544; Amnesty Intl., Group 23, Anne Chastang, 6006 Saxon, Houston 77092, and Eileen at 869-5021 x42; Citizens' Anti-Nuclear Info. Team (CAN IT), 522-3343; Concilio de Organizaciones Chicanos, P.O. Box 9, Houston 77001; Demo. Socialist Organizing Cmte., 921-6906; Gay Political Caucus, 1st and 3rd Weds., 521-1000; Harris Cty. Concerned Women, 674-6798; Harris Cty. Demos., quarterly, 528-2057; Houston Area Women's Center, 528-6798; Lesbian and Gay Demos. of Texas, 521-1000; Mxn.-Amn. Demos., 6944 Navigation, Houston 77011; Mockingbird Alliance, 747-1837; NAACP, 1018 Clebourne, Houston 77001; PASO, 6716 Fairfield, Houston 77023; Senate Dist. 15 Demo. Coalition, 862-8431; Tx. Coalition of Black Demos., 674-0968; Tx. Demos., 667-6194; UofH YD's, 749-7347; Westside Demos., 464-2536.

THE ACLU

American Civil Liberties Union chapters, not listed elsewhere: Denton, 387-5126; El Paso, 545-2990; High Plains (Amarillo), 806-373-7200; Houston, 524-5925; Lubbock, 806-765-8393; Rio Grande Valley, Bill Fulcher, 541-4874 (Brownsville); Sabine area, 713-898-0743; South Texas Project, Jim Harrington, 787-8171 (San Juan); Waco; Prof. Frank Newton, 755-3611. (At present there are no active chapters in Corpus Christi or East Texas.)

LONE STAR ALLIANCE

The Alliance is made up of member groups opposed to nuclear power. The groups, not listed elsewhere:

Bryan: Brazos Society for Alternatives to Nuclear Energy, 822-1882.

Nacogdoches: Pineywoods Coalition, 218 W. Austin St.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Contact persons for Amnesty International in Texas, not elsewhere listed:

Beaumont, Group 221, Karen Dweyer, 420 Longmeadow, Beaumont 77707; Regional membership coordinator, Rita Williamson, 512-441-8078 (weekends).

pro-nuclear, it will license STNP whether it's basically safe or not. In that case, the voters of Austin (and San Antonio, too) might plausibly wind up being liable for another Three Mile Island.

Astonishingly, the Reagan Administration is now advocating that plutonium, which is produced as a waste by-product of nuclear power plants, be recovered from those plants and used for nuclear bombs. If this happens, because of the U.S. example, nuclear weapons will proliferate much faster around the world than they would otherwise. Do the taxpayers of Austin want to be responsible for accelerating the proliferation of nuclear weapons in foreign countries? No wonder the nuclear power industry regards this new Reagan "initiative" as "a public relations disaster." It's a *policy* disaster.

Permit us, on the virtual eve of the critical Austin vote, to repeat from the *Observer's* Position of the April 17th issue: "Nuclear power is dirty and costly, radioactive and reactionary. It requires the production of uranium — even of plutonium — that is also the basis of the nuclear psychosis that has the human race on the brink of extinction in a nuclear war. Nuclear power is the oil and utility companies' way of killing off solar power, which is clean and on its way to being cheap. Killing off nuclear power is the same thing as championing sun-power; they are the no and the yes of the same two questions, Shall we survive and Shall we stop making our posterity

hostage to our corporations' profits?"

"Radioactive wastes from nuclear power plants, nuclear weapons production, and the production of the uranium to sustain them (much of which comes from South Texas) cannot be decontaminated. The claim that they can be stored safely has yet to be established despite expenditures of billions of industry and government money trying to do it. . . . Once a large nuclear power plant is used up — after, say, 40 years — what's to be done with it? Decommissioning is so expensive, these tombs of the human spirit may have to be sealed up and placed under perpetual guard while the hot cores decay for centuries. For aeons? Some of these deadly wastes can kill for tens of thousands of years. How dare we assume our society will last long enough to stay responsible for such consequences?"

"We are not supposed to ask these questions, we are supposed to be good little Germans and take the power we're given. But . . . if we contaminate this earth we will have to answer for it through all time.

"So let's draw the conclusion: Kill nuclear power — stop it — end it — finish it."

The Austin election is an opportunity to deliver a message to the country and the world: Hey, a majority of the ordinary citizens of this ordinary middle-America city are fed up with the mess of nuclear power and want out. □

DIALOGUE

I write in reference to a short item in your publication's "The World from Texas" feature (TO 9/11/81).

You credit the *Beaumont Enterprise* for reporting that Arab investors had purchased three oil refineries on the Texas Coast. The *Port Arthur News* first published an article on this subject June 21. We released the story to Cox News Service and United Press International. Other stories on the same subject appeared in the *News* June 28, June 29, and July 19.

It was after the story first appeared in the *Port Arthur News* and was released

through the two news services that the Beaumont paper published a piece on the subject.

Thank you for clarification on this item.

Scott McElhaney, Managing Editor, *Port Arthur News*, P.O. Box 789, Port Arthur, Tx. 77640

Items of Advice

I enclose a small check to give encouragement. Texas without the *Observer*, even at its lowest of ebbs, would be depressing. . . .

Don't waste money trying to go 'slick.' . . . Leaven your Austin focus a bit. . . . Deal seriously and authoritatively with Texas books, drama, dance. . . .

Bill Martin, 1205 Frey St., Stephenville, Tx. 76401.

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