

## THE FOSSIL

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### A LEGACY INTACT President's Report

**Guy Miller**

Some of you might recall the publication *Fossilbed* which I published occasionally between November 1994 and February 2001. You might also recall the series of cartoon commentaries entitled "A Fos-Sil Dialogue" which featured two humanoid brachiopods, Foster and Silvia Brachio. One of the scenes depicts Fos reacting to a remark by a member of another ajay group insisting that the Fossils as an organization was "moribund." Says Fos to Sil: "I hear that we are moribund," to which Sil replies: "Big deal—Who the heck isn't?"

That conversation took place more than a decade ago; and, if moribund, nevertheless we're still here. Of course, we're much changed—and in some ways for the better. For, while some ajay groups are stagnating in an outmoded political structure which they are struggling to perpetuate, the Fossils have more than just tinkered with their structure—we have done some serious streamlining over the years both in our mission statement as well as in our way of doing business. Our latest step has been a drastic one affecting our entire governing structure, and time will tell whether it will succeed.

By now you are aware that, although July has always been election time, this year you have received no ballot. The reason is that at last election you voted that all officers would hold their positions for two years instead of one, thereby scheduling our next election in 2008 and from there on in even-numbered years. You also approved the proposal that in 2008 we will be voting for only three candidates who will compose a new Board of Trustees charged with the task of

appointing all other officers and committees necessary for the operation of Fossils business. The plan should give us more flexibility for future adjustments as we go along to continue to find answers to what we really need to do in order to operate a group which proudly calls itself the "Historians of Amateur Journalism."

In the meantime, the number one responsibility for the Trustees over the years has been satisfactorily discharged, and that has been the care of our Library of Amateur Journalism. News from Ms. Robin Rider, Curator of Special Collections of the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where the LAJ now resides, is heartening in that we are informed that work on the collection is progressing. We look for further good news in the coming days now that we have learned that Ms. Yvonne Schofer, recently retired from her position at the Memorial Library, has volunteered to assist in organizing and creating finding aids for the LAJ and its comprehensive British counterpart, the Ralph A. L. Breed Collection.

So, whether our new political structure strengthens us or not is yet to be seen. But, more important, the welfare of our Library of Amateur Journalism is assured into the foreseeable future. And we maintain that, no matter what becomes of the Fossils as an organization, we will leave behind a legacy which glorifies the entire world of amateur journalism. Few groups can emulate that achievement.

### NAPA CONVENTION REPORT

**Guy Miller**

The 132nd Convention of the NAPA was held on July 5,6,7 in the Hampton Hotel in Massillon OH with 20 members and 7 guests answering roll call. Present were four Fossil members: convention host Gary Bossler, Louise Lincoln, Guy Miller, and Tom

Whitbread.

Sadly missed were Harold and Gussie Segal. Convention delegates received daily updates on Gussie's progress from Leah Warner and were relieved to learn that a pacemaker was providing the necessary stabilization for her eventual recovery.

Also missed were Fossils OE Ken Faig and wife Carol because of car trouble which occurred early on in their travels. After Stan Oliner's report on the disposition of Victor Moitoret's immense library—part of which [material dated 1900 and prior] will reside in the collections of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester MA and the remainder [material dated 1901 and later] scheduled for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign IL—Fossils Whitbread and Miller did their best to fill in for Ken in answering questions about the state of the Library of Amateur Journalism Collection at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. In addition, the two emphasized the importance of the various collections now residing at the American Antiquarian Society, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Southern Florida, and elsewhere.

A highlight of the convention was the appearance of Fossil Louise Lincoln who refuses to allow lameness nor her 95 years to slow her down. Not only was she active in discussions during the business meetings but also as Resolutions Chairman she, along with cohort Tom Whitbread, presented another rare “you had to be there” performance, once more upending any traditional run-of-the-mill Resolutions report.

Another highlight was the commemorative book *NAPA: 1977-2007*, a copy of which was presented to all members present and which will be mailed to those who contributed to its pages but were not present at the convention. Cost of the book, which amounted to a little over \$900, was partly covered by The Fossils in the amount of \$500 (\$250 from our treasury; \$250 from donations).

Although attendees had ample time to socialize, presentations and trips also offered pleasurable and informative experiences. Cincinnati member Bill Volkart presented a seminar on writing for profit as well as regaling us with stories of his and wife Gigi's activities on their duck rescue farm. Jeff Schroff, manager of The Main Street Free Press Museum in Fredericktown, explained the objectives of the museum and described the state of the various presses which he is working to restore and place back into operation.

Trips included visits to the National First

Ladies Library in downtown Canton and the Stark County McKinley Museum which features among its attractions an 84-foot long HO train layout that models the 1950's era of Canton and surrounding communities. To add to the events of our busy days, Massillon offered a spectacular program of fireworks and concerts within walking distance of our hotel. Finally we bade adieu after a buffet banquet feast and a visit from President William McKinley (Jerry Sandifer of the William McKinley Presidential Library).

#### **FROM UNDER A BUSHEL**

#### **Poems by Edna Hyde McDonald**

*(Selected from the volume of the same title published by C. A. A. Parker from Saugus, Massachusetts in 1925.)*

#### **Before the Fall of Babylon**

How strange and old the city looks tonight  
Wrapt close in darkness and so deathly still;  
And yet there is the brilliant gleam of light  
With all the revel and the passion-thrill!

The dancers flitter to the self-same notes  
Of careless gayety and swaying rhyme,  
Across the dark their shrilling laughter floats  
And swiftly course the hours of useless time.

And yet how old, how old and strangely still  
The city closed in brooding darkness lies,  
As if the cloud of some impending ill  
Hung low to break a-sudden from the skies.

#### **The Life where I Belong**

I love the rushing crowdedness of things!  
The hurried passing of the restless throng,  
The eagerness, the ceaselessness it brings,  
That countless thousand pressing all day long!

I love the cry of vendors in the street,  
The shouting of the little ones at play,  
The babble of the many tongues I meet,  
The clanging of the cars upon their way.

I love the clamor of this busy life,  
The free outbursts of its prisoned joys!  
The wild impatience of its surging strife:—

The crowdedness, the restlessness, the noise.

### Black Sheep

Black Sheep we called him, just because he strayed

From out our fold of proper things,—the things  
That we called proper,—sought new ways and found

Them tracking over hills and through wide fields  
Full-grown with tanglewood and underbrush.

Black Sheep! Because he was not ever bound  
By fetters of convention, held by chains  
That linked him to a little narrow world  
He could not call his own; because he broke  
His bonds and wandered where he would at will.

—Four years upon the sea, and five beyond  
In ways of questioning, in paths that led  
Each to a tangled end; in hope that yearned.  
In faith that kindled, and in love that died—  
And then the war and all its bitterness!

We knew that he should join the Escadrille.  
“To brave new ventures in the skies of France,”  
We said among ourselves, and talked of him,  
A reckless aviator over there,  
Foolhardy, daring, fearless unto death,  
For death was but a game of chance with him,  
He had already died a dozen deaths.

But when the little word came home today  
Which told us he had made the sacrifice  
Not in the skies of France, but on a field  
That bore no name and was not battle-seared,  
We talked of him and sorrowed, and we thought  
The Black Sheep was the whitest of the fold.

### Mist

An eerie whistle in the fog tonight  
Brought it all back—that one last time you came

Limping to port. I heard you making light  
Of all the danger you had struggled through  
With your gay laugh, and call me by a name

That was a sort of secret with us two.

I almost felt that you would come again.  
There were so many reasons why you should.  
Spring has come back and with her freshening rain

The violets in every greening wood.

But suddenly it all was very plain:  
“Believe me, Kid,” you said. “I wouldn't miss  
This war for anything.” And with a kiss  
Blown carelessly you sauntered off again.

It took that whistle in the fog tonight  
To mark your words and tell me you were right:  
Dear Heart of Mine, you did not miss the war,  
But I—I never missed you so before.

### You Are Here

Before you came the springtime was to me  
A time for trees to bloom, for birds to mate;  
But now I stand on tiptoe, hope and wait,  
And thrill with all its glad expectancy.

Before you came the warm hours tarried long;  
But now each golden day is all too brief;  
I tremble at each early-turning leaf,  
And listen breathless for each failing song.

And feel the passionate throb of autumning  
In every burnished meadow, hushed and still,  
In every wood, on every vivid hill  
Flush bronze and crimson with their summering.

For you are flaring sky and burning plain  
And all the breathless passion of the year;  
And with the flaming presence of you here  
I know that winter will not come again.

### Warning

I would not have you know I love you dear  
By any little softly spoken word,—  
Such idle words as careless loves have heard  
From my own lips and treasured half a year.

Nor would I have my touch mean more to you  
Than that I love your nearness. I would dare  
To run cool fingers through the ruffled hair

Of any likely lad I scarcely knew.

But O my love, some time the words will come  
Unbidden to my lips and you shall guess  
The meaning of my intimate caress;—  
Shield well your heart! I shall not long be  
dumb.

### Desire

I would be to you  
The burning desert,  
Intense with a fierce white heat,  
Parching your throat,  
Searing your eyes,  
Scorching through your body  
Like a flaming torch  
Branding you.

I would be to you  
The cooling fountain,  
Slake for your ravishing thirst;  
Bubbling and sparkling  
With liquid laughter,  
Luring you  
To deep clear pools  
Where you might drink  
And drink  
Long satisfying draughts  
And go away refreshed.

### Highway

When this brief summer time is spent  
I shall come here to sit  
And dream how happily it went  
And ponder over it.

For I shall love this tangled hill  
Of underbrush and pine  
And feel your arms about me still  
Your lips pressed close to mine.

And though our paths wind far apart  
On other highways then  
The fevered throbbing of my heart  
Shall call you back again.

### Possession

What other wistful eyes your eyes have sought,  
And when and where it matters not to me;  
Enough that when they seek mine hunger-  
frought,  
They burn with kindled fire eagerly.

What hands have fluttered through your ruffled  
hair  
And trembled in such childish petfulness,  
It matters not, so my own hands still bear  
Their subtle power to sooth your fretfulness.

Why need I care for that, or grieve for this,  
Or heed old loves or new when mine you are  
Since I have known the passion of your kiss  
And you have borne me to the farthest star?

### Quest

He runs his restless fingers through my hair  
And looks into my restless eyes to see  
If he can find within them anywhere  
A hint of ecstasy,  
And he does not know that he is reading there  
Longing for other fingers in my hair.

### PLANET VONDY

**Tom Whitbread and L. Verle Heljeson**

*(Reprinted from Lee Hawes's The Gator Growl (whole no. 68) for April 1959.)*

On a winter's night, in a chic Washington salon, a group of adults, otherwise sane, was talking a strange lingo studded with neologisms. An intrigued novice, ears flared, caught one recurrent term in the web of verbiage, like the equivalent of the letter E in a Grand Naval Code. He suddenly boomed, "Who or what is Vondy?" Incredulous laughter issued from initiates present, for it was unbelievable that anyone in the amateur world did not know who Vondy was.

Had the questioner attended a NAPA convention, he would have known that even in Tasmania Edna Hyde McDonald is known automatically as Vondy. Had he been to *many* conventions, he would have heard Mrs. McDonald edify banquetees by reciting the Genesis of her trademark (from von der Heide, her original family

name). Only the late great Edkins was permitted to call her Edna.

Vondy has been a planet in the amateur solar system, principally in a National-Fossil orbit, since 1909. She is loaded with laureates, has held most of the National's offices one or more times, and is a veteran convention attendee. Occasionally she tells close friends she is not going to the convention. She doesn't like the city, or the hotel (ask her some day about the bathtubs in Boston's Hotel Essex). Or she is impatient with the antics of amateur journalism's motley herd. But she is always there. As a friend has observed, "Wild dogs couldn't keep her away."

At any convention she is dominant but not domineering. She need not seek center stage because she has met or corresponded with more amateur journalists than anyone else—except Willametta. For years the willing prey of visitors to Manhattan, she has collected many anecdotes. One of these glows with the patina of many tellings: When a young, bearded Shakespearean actor escorted her—a reluctant Juliet—to her Brooklyn home, the fatherly conductor, knowing her as a commuter, said nothing. The next morning he asked, "Where'd you find Jesus?"

She has seen the National in its peaks and valleys. The four-person Niagara Falls convention of 1928. The Smith-Haggerty renaissance of the early '30's. An empty treasury in 1949, when Ralph Babcock printed an issue of *The National Amateur* on a proof press in a Kansas rooming house. The current years of treasury funds in three figures and an interest-bearing Life Members Fund.

She has seen its captains and kings arrive—and depart: Truman Spencer, Tim Thrift, Ernest Edkins, Edwin Hadley Smith, Vincent Haggerty. She has seen Ralph Babcock and Harold Segal, boy printers and bad boys of earlier days, turn into dignified ranch householders and fine printing craftsmen, and Helm Spink change from an elderly adolescent to a young elder statesman. She saw the era of "Boss Cheeseburger" Lindberg come and go, and has been publicly patient with a raucous Heins.

Throughout these years she has acquired a sense of mission and an imperturbability reassuring to many, maddening to some. When National members met to plan the 1949 Brooklyn convention, she said, "I am the most prominent amateur journalist in metropolitan New York." Her remark stemmed from conviction, not from braggadocio: her clear-sightedness seldom stops short of herself. When Jean Harler wrote

her now famous attack on the Inner Circle, Vondy was sure she was the prime target.

Publicly she meets slings and arrows with aplomb if not with indifference. In 1952, when Earle Cornwall was appointed historian, and then jettisoned by a president afraid of openly opinionated originality, Vondy sleekly accepted the post. The next year she sat quietly at Jackson while the outgoing president, in an extraordinary performance, took the floor to criticize the work of her historian. When Vondy's history of the 18-vote, fourth ballot administration was printed, only the ultra-knowing detected the arrowheads dipped in whipped cream. At another time, when criticized for omitting quotation marks from a portion of Scripture used in a poem, Vondy said nothing publicly. Privately she observed, "Everyone should know the Bible is in the public domain."

She once said of a friend, "She considers plainness a virtue." Vondy herself is neither plain nor flamboyant. She dresses well, not ostentatiously. Her tailored suits and dresses run principally to shades of tan, rust, and brown. Accents are always carefully chosen costume jewelry and a capacious purse of good leather. She is a chain-smoker, drinks sparingly.

She is at home with anyone, anywhere—on a flooded subway, in a plush hotel, in the Michigan pines, or in a Mexican restaurant. Her unruffled composure in all circumstances suggests the words cosmopolite and sophisticate. But they imply a veneer she does not possess. Warmly human, she is a woman of the world who tolerates codes of conduct in others that she would not adopt for herself. She never tries to reform Babcocks or crackpots, or to assume a "Mother-knows-best" attitude toward younger amateurs.

Vondy has written for the professional as well as for the amateur press. She collaborates with her husband in writing for house-organs, and has written fiction for a Canadian syndicate. As a result of dealings with hard-to-please editors, her eyes stay dry when do-gooders wail that our literary novices must be kept in cocoons, safe from critics. Ironically, she is not an incisive critic herself.

She has written both prose and poetry for the amateur press; her many laureates were won in numerous classifications, living and dead. A collection of her poems, "From Under a Bushel," was printed in 1925 by C. A. A. Parker. As the introduction says, this volume is "a marvel of tender and epitomized lyricism," in the first-person-singular, drink-life-to-the-bitterest-dregs, I-have-loved-and-lost-and-loved-again,

chins-up-against-the-shifting-gales mode of Edna St. Vincent Millay. Her frequent poetry in later years has reflected the pressing events and eventful pressures of the modern world. "Question," 1957 laureate winner, glooms with the shadows of concentration and slave labor camps.

Vondy has published journals under seven different titles. She is best remembered for *Bellette*, a mimeographed periodical packed with the chattiness and informality of her personal letters. When Ernest Edkins joined her in its pages to bring informed criticism to the National, some members, always hostile to anything less than full approval, agonized. *Bellette* has been in drydock for years.

For Vondy good citizenship in the amateur world is more than paying dues, reading journals, attending conventions, publishing, or winning laureates. It is quietly taking over the Secretary-Treasurer job in 1954 when there was talk of super deluxe official organs, association-financed mailings, and other Cadillac uses of a Chevrolet treasury. It is providing life memberships, without fanfare, for some overseas members who had difficulty in paying dues because of currency restrictions. It is nurturing the idea of a Life Members Fund, started by Cleveland's Harry Martin in 1950, into a fiscal silo should the lean years come again.

Amateur Journalism has not been all of Vondy's life. She has many other interests and friends. For many years she was secretary to a prominent lawyer-philanthropist in New York. And she had the responsibilities of a faculty wife when her husband, now retired, was a professor of English at New York University. Mr. McDonald, once a National member, now views his wife's *ajay* activities with ironically amused indifference.

Vondy, however, is unlikely to give up these activities, even though the amateur world she knows today is not that of a few decades ago. Gone are the early days of the association, when conventions were more boy-meets-girl affairs than they are now. Gone too are the parliamentary maneuverings of the Edwin Hadley Smiths, the Edward H. Coles, the Ed Suhres. But she has neither gone into sullen retirement nor cried havoc. Nowadays she occupies herself at conventions with minute keeping or just keeping quiet while free-versifiers and other Philistines murder Robert's rules of order and the traditions of the National.

It is in the evening, at the prebanquet inner

circling in someone's hotel room, that in the words of Pope, "At every word a reputation dies." Attired in a well-fitting evening or cocktail dress (she wishes more women would dress for the banquets as she does), Vondy talks volubly and epigrammatically of amateur affairs in which she has figured, and announces that she will publish another *Bellette*.

This same quiet verve extends into other after-hours sessions, particularly at those American conventions where attendance by sensation-seeking Nationalites has become a vogue in recent years. You will find her wherever there is relaxed, informal talk and an audience for her rich, anecdotal experiences in *ajay*. An outstanding example of her adaptability is her affinity with the Beat Generation as exemplified in the younger members of the American, whose conventions are usually a long night's journey into day. If the good companions of the halcyon days, the Burton Cranes, the Tony Moitoretts, are gone, they can be replaced, if vicariously, by a Jim Lemon, an Ed Kenney, a Wes Wise.

Basically, however, her heart is with the National. At a United Convention in New York the late Joseph Lynch attacked National policies, particularly those of its official editors. When Vondy rose to speak, she scrapped whatever she was going to say and in a rich voice, slightly raked with emotion, presented a spirited, moving defense of the National and its traditions. It is a paradox that this devotion has not brought her the National presidency. At Roanoke in 1952 she could have been elected almost by acclamation; in any year she could have it for the asking. Perhaps she declines it because of memories of losing it more than 35 years ago, when campaigns were bitter and personal. Or perhaps she feels that after her many years as an amateur journalist the presidency would be anti-climactic, the unwanted beginning of an unwarranted end. To Vondy this would be unthinkable, for to her the National, though not necessarily a *way* of life, is an important *part* of her life—from 1909 to eternity.

## VONDY: TWO SCORE AND TEN

James Guinane

(Reprinted from *The Fossil* (whole no. 164), January 1960.)

The important milestones of amateur

journalism are those achieved by its individual members rather than by the hobby as a whole. This is because amateur journalism is more than an institution and less than an art: it is predominantly an adventure in human relations. As such, it imposes demands and offers rewards on the basis of personal achievement—which is why amateur journalism has its golden ages and its periods of aridity: times when there is an abundance of striking personalities and others when there are none.

In these terms, quite the most important event of 1959 was the jubilee of Mrs. Edna Hyde McDonald in the hobby. Fifty years of Vondy is a proper occasion for jubilation, best appreciated if one thinks instead of the cheerless prospect of 50 years without Vondy! Just the cancellation of her volumes of *The Fossil* from the file of this august journal would be a dolorous loss. To remove all trace of her *Bellette*—that piquant ma'moiselle who followed a period of literary dowagers and elegant litterateurs—would be to torture history beyond recognition.

And these perhaps have been the least of her contributions. A loss I personally could not sustain would be the obliteration of all memory of her poetry. In her poetry—the quintessence of thought and feeling in a rarely perceptive woman—Vondy has enriched the lives of all of us. Her poetry reaches up from the profundity of the soul into the simplest forms of expression, which is the accomplishment of all true art.

But the literary achievements of Edna McDonald, high as they go, are not the only, and perhaps not the most remarkable, aspect of her influence on amateur journalism. It is the presence of Vondy herself in the amateur scene—a tireless matriarch to whom youngsters take problems as delicate as their sex life and elders the enigmas of living—that has enriched the experience of amateur journalism for so many.

To out-of-town amateurs, for more than one generation, Vondy has symbolised New York itself, where she has presided over the amateur scene for at least 30 years. A trip to that city of thin, sublime bridges, and tall, aspiring buildings has meant for the amateur journalist a visit to Vondy, either in her apartment on University Avenue with its ghost of an academician or in the nooks where noisy New York keeps its few silences for talk and romance. Vondy is the presiding spirit in either of these scenes, for her quiet, captivating personality shines naturally against the big-city background. She is not a girl of the

greenwoods to take start at the intrusion of strangers or strange ideas; and she is not a woman of Main Street bounded by the implacable Main Street morality and convention. She is essentially a free citizen of the world—of the world of ideas and spiritual concepts; and New York is her home because New York is as much of the world as she can have without a life of travel.

It seemed peculiarly appropriate to me that Vondy recently should have had a job with the United Nations, for Vondy has always represented in amateur journalism the “one world” concept—the one world of ideas, hopes and dreams in which men live when the shovel, the spanner or the ledger can be put aside. The bearded actor, the cub reporters, the cocktail-clinking sophisticate, the aging printer and gardener, the rooted housewife dreaming of the empyrean: all these are of Vondy's world if they only have sapience beneath even the dullest exterior.

Vondy in a sense is a timeless woman—almost an ageless woman. And this is because she has never lived on the surface where time commits its parodies, its inevitable theft of youth. She admits to having been “rearranged somewhat” by the years; but this simply an outward change. The woman within the physical body has resisted time with an elixir that purifies the perceptions and keeps mentality at the vigorous pitch of potboil. She even desires the wonderful and foolish things of youth but with the discretion of one who now stands at one remove from their urgency.

Characteristic of the essential Vondy is her one intense dislike, her one intolerance perhaps. She cannot abide stupidity and ignorance. Virtue is sufficient to the time and the occasion—and foibles are the endearments of human relations. So Vondy is the better for a prejudice or two; and in these at least she copies nature in rejecting the duds and the weak. Here she allows herself her one emotional extravagance and will sizzle with an excoriating wit at the expense of some dullard, especially if he has added the unpardonable sin of boorishness. Buffoonery, pettiness, mistakes and stubbornness she can accept; and envy and jealousy she can understand, for she has received them. But stupidity, and the rudeness it sometimes engenders, are beyond her comprehension.

The human being without wrath is lifeless; the woman without wrath has not been born. Vondy, in whom eternal woman dwells and flowers up in poetry, is wrathful for the best reasons, not the inconsequential ones that so often bemuse us men. It's an understandable reaction that flings away in anger from

the ignorant; for in our society they are the wilfully ignorant, rejecting every enticement that the hobby, that the modern world itself, offers to curiosity. This is what surpasses Vondy's understanding, and indeed the understanding of most of us: the desireless state of not knowing and not caring to find out. It's evidence of an alienness that goes far deeper than language, creed or custom; and alienness of mind, or an alienness of condition, which Vondy with the best of intentions cannot penetrate. These people would be among the few outcasts from Vondy's "one world."

To see her *in* her world one should view Vondy from several standpoints.

Ernest Edkins once remarked that one of Vondy's greatest accomplishments was to be loved by other women. I am inclined to doubt that, for women are constitutionally opposed to giving much love, faith or charity to their own sex. Their acquaintances among other women may be wide and often rewarding, but when it comes to the deep bonds in which love and friendship are intermixed women are essentially worshippers of the opposite sex. (Men, on the other hand, generally give their deepest respect to fellow men and are inclined to treat women shabbily.) So I do not see Vondy as more than superficially popular with other women. There are exceptions, of course; but if Vondy is to find her true assessment as an artist—as a being—it will be a man who gives it.

Beneath the exquisite femininity of her are many masculine traits, or traits that have appeal for the masculine mind. There is her essential mental quality which establishes her values—mind over matter and, in its place, spirit over intellect. There is an evident quality of fairness which prefers debate over doubtful issues to emotional appeal or denial.

Vondy is unusually tolerant, allowing a place in the sun to all but the most patent stupidities of attitude and belief. She has, also, the strength of heart to hold beliefs in suspension, neither affirming nor denying them. To resist an appealing dogma often requires more strength than to accept the convenient staff it offers; and Vondy can achieve this difficulty of eyeing what she might like to believe with equanimity.

Then there is vanity—another traditionally masculine trait. It appears just occasionally in her own recognition of her talent. Most men will be able to understand this because they are so susceptible to it themselves: but to a woman *in a woman* it is usually unforgivable.

During the war, Vondy remarked that life

without men would be hell. I can imagine Du Barry or Josephine saying the same thing, not because of what they were but because of what they wanted—life in a man's world. Vondy has no preference as such for men over women: she has preferences for certain people. And it is apparent that she has found more fellow spirits among men than among women. There is no doubt that she is welcome in a man's world. The impact Vondy makes through her letters and other writings is not primarily that of a woman. Except in her love poems, where necessarily she reflects the possessed rather than the possessor, she appears as a person first, as a woman second. The original allure is of a subtle and intelligent mind; whatever impression might come afterwards is relegated by this first and increasing awareness of the seeker, the debater, the seer. It is Eve certainly; but Eve in the maturity of her role as man's companion. Vondy could be, I imagine, that paradox in nature, the perfect *via-a-vis* in a Platonic friendship. For such a woman not to be an outcast among women is a tribute to her tact and fair play.

It is this quality of Eve that I would choose as (oddly enough) her Achilles' heel. "She thinks like a man, but alas! she feels like a woman" was Byron's comment on Madame de Staël, a person of many conquests and much influence in Napoleonic France. Byron's description, to some degree, explains Vondy. There is no figure more arresting than the woman who exercises a man's values and builds on to them the best of the feminine contribution. It is rather like having the best of two worlds and is a role no man could ever occupy. But for one fatal flaw it might achieve the sublime. Unfortunately, it requires a spread of effort in two directions at once, towards the masculine and towards the feminine, which essentially are poles apart. Perfection (as we incompletely understand it) is the result of desperate concentration on one goal only.

For the very fact of her versatility Vondy falls short of the ultimate. In her poetry she goes furthest, fixing sweetness on life's decay and endowing the simple act of observation with prophecy. But though her poetry may murmur urgently at the immemorial ear, it does not engulf the imagination entirely. It is suggestive, stimulating and beautiful; but it is never an exhaustion of all our faculties, which the richest in the artistic experience occasionally is.

There is the mark of Eve! And thus the justification of Byron's *alas!* for the earth-hugging emotions of woman. They are, it seems, the one last hurdle she can never quite leap to absolute freedom.

The foregoing is my attempt to see Vondy, in the last analysis, against the whole gallant progression of life—to give her her niche amongst the colossi. But to leave mention of her talent there is to leave the picture only a fraction filled in. Elsewhere recently I have dealt with the personal joy and deep admiration that her writings inspire in me; and these feelings need to be recalled here.

It has been said of genius that it has extra sensitivity, suffering and rejoicing more than other men. In her poetry, and in some of her short stories, is the evidence of one who drinks more deeply at the Cup than most. Love has been a thing of rapt emotion—and death the burial not just of Old Mortality but of part of the poet's own soul. So if Vondy has not genius she has talent oozing from the ears. All that she writes is a delight to read; even her letters convey these further intimations of one who extracts a richness far beyond the ordinary from living.

I am hoping that there has been of late, or will be soon, a statement by Vondy about poetry: She has much to teach a new generation of poets. Poetry is about our most expendable product in amateur journalism today, flowing out like toffee from neat, meaningless machines which keep us starved on a diet of surfeit. In Vondy a poem undergoes conception, gestation and birth: it is a child of joy and anguish, but most notably of *effort*. In this way she mothers on it the true and mysterious character a poem must have if it is to fetch us up in wonder.

In 50 years Vondy has written less poetry than many writers will produce in a year; in that time she has written more beautiful poetry than any other present member.

Half a century is a long time for continuous attachment to a hobby. Fortunately Vondy is not exposed to the sort of fate that makes the good die young. Her kindest biographer would never suggest she has led a blameless life; and if he did Vondy, wherever she might be, would laugh at his credulousness. Vondy is pure of heart; but like the rest of us a little sinful of action. I do not know which of the seven deadly sins she has to account for in her prayers; but I know that a woman so eager, vibrant, gifted and curious cannot avoid them all.

I think, too, that Vondy is not the sort to act on sermonising or accept borrowed experience: she would have to go and consult with temptation herself—a process which, except in the irrecoverably weak, usually leads to a more enduring virtue.

In her New York eyrie, itself a Hub Club of the Amateur spirit, Vondy has found a world largely made to order. It has given her all classes of people and all blends of experience. Above all, it has given her friends, and enough friends so that none may possess her too much or limit her horizons. From this world she makes periodic excursions into the hinterland to discover other amateurs of whom she has a vast acquaintance: she once confessed to knowing personally about 200 of the National's membership of 350. But mostly they seek her out in her own environment.

There are the Edward Coles who drive down from Massachusetts and take her to lunch “somewhere out in the countryside.” There was the late Maurice Moe who used to come to town once every two years or so; and then he and Vondy would sit on the steps of the New York Public Library at 42nd and Fifth and recount tale after tale until the tears rolled down their cheeks—a strange sight for even New York's hardened citizens. All would be explained, however, if only they knew that this distinguished-looking woman and her companion were amateur journalists—queer fish with the ability to create and re-create their own world in bus or den, Brooklyn or Roanoke—or even Front Room Sundays.

The desiccated atmosphere of the Front Room, a hallowed symbol of the Victorian Era, was still surviving when Vondy entered amateur journalism. The Boston Ladies—likely enough to hold a Tea Party of their own!—were a force to inhibit the brasher young folk of today's conventions. Their names are still a little awe-inspiring: Edith Minter, Ethel May Johnston Myers, Laurie Sawyer. Vondy went to her first convention (Bridgeport 1914) chaperoned by a maiden aunt and fell in love with them. And not with them alone if the trace of lavender which the reader still can catch in musty journals is to be trusted. Some of the boys with whom she joked and wisecracked and walked home through the late lamented evenings of that era were soon to face death. On the other side of the world the sublime era was ending in the as yet muffled roar of the Great War. Vondy in those days was living the moments which later she was to make imperishable in her poetry. Even then there were Vincent Haggerty and Edward Cole, stalwarts with whom Vondy was to grow and harvest moments unredeemable among the spendthrift pleasures of life.

She was then Edna von der Heide, exotic of name and already sufficiently accomplished as writer to

be carrying off the Laureates or winning Honorable Mentions for poetry and short story.

Almost from the outset she plunged into the excitements of politics. Joining the National in November 1912, she was appointed the following January by Edward Cole to the vacant post of Second Vice President. The convention of 1913 elected her Treasurer and thrust upon her the herculean task of assembling all her own records, for none had been passed on to her. The next year she was almost an official board by herself. The membership elected her Secretary; immediately after the convention she inherited the duties of Treasurer when Rheinhart Kleiner resigned the office; and halfway through the year she became Official Editor on the resignation of Hubert Reading. For a comparative newcomer it was a rigorous call to duty; and in loyalty and skill Vondy was not found wanting.

Of that year 1914-15 Vondy writes: "This was a period when the NAPA was perhaps at its very lowest ebb. There was absolutely no money in the treasury: there was no official record of membership. Leston Ayres (President) and I worked nights, Sundays and holidays in an effort to untangle the mess, and we only partially succeeded. The Official Organ for the period in which I was Editor is a sorry disgrace; but I did the best I could what with my inexperience and total lack of data and money."

At the convention of 1915 she sought the reward of her workhorse years: the presidency. But an influence like Tammany Hall defeated her and she went down, a victim to the campaign of George Julian Houtain. The presidency she could have at any time now with affection and acclamation. But I agree with the conclusion of Verle Heljeson and Tom Whitbread that she probably regards it as an anti-climax.

Although in recent years Vondy has served the National again for half a year as Official Editor and has been its Secretary-Treasurer for a term, she has largely stood clear of the political activities by which lesser men leave their mark. The political mark is on material change; and all the great visionaries of human society seek to affect man in his thought and his life-work.

This, I believe, is the great advantage of Vondy: that she is a visionary. In moments of clear perception she can stand aside and view people, things and her own fleshly experience without any confusion of The Dream with its momentary failures and asides. People walk a little nakedly before her gaze. She can

understand the little Bads that go to make the ultimate Good and not be greatly concerned over them. Such is the proper structure of tolerance. In so much of her literary product is this slightly remote and comforting impression of one who, while enjoying the immediate experience, enjoys it not too much but remains aware of higher goals and underlying motives.

Applied to amateur journalism, this attitude makes Vondy a willing participant in our conventions and even an apparently sly plotter at the caucus sessions. For some, these *are* amateur journalism. For Vondy they are but a facet, an amusing aside within the Dream she cherishes. That dream—that vision of a healthy, enthusiastic, creative hobby which she hopes to realize—is implicit in almost every utterance. She wants to effect for amateur journalism not the enactment of new laws or the enthronement of new leaders but the development within its ranks of a new *climate* to encourage the growth of our flowers.

She knows that magazines like *Far Afield*, *The Scarlet Cockerel*, *Siamese Standpipe*, and in their time *The Aonian* and *Go-Ahead*, do not issue out to an audience of lazy and unappreciative souls: they are encouraged only by the prospect of thoughtful and sympathetic reception.

Writers like Ernest Edkins, Clifford Laube, Rheinhart Kleiner, Michael White—all, Vondy's friends or intimates—are not attracted to the amateur press unless they can feel an atmosphere of delight and opinion, conducive to their mental occupation. One person active in creating these conditions influences many others about her and, though her position as the pivot on which a great deal of activity turns may not be apparent, it is no less real.

When circumstances (not her own desires) propelled her into the editorship of *The Fossil* in 1948, Vondy, on one of the rare occasions she has let it happen, mounted a pulpit. And, rarer still for the pulpiter, she had a grateful congregation. The editorials of *The Fossil* through those volumes bristle with the exhortations of a cleric to her errant flock. At times there is hellfire, often appeal; but mostly there is exemplary practice of what she so ardently preaches. Many were caught up by this refurbishing of ideals for the hobby; and the work of Edward Cole, the saviour of The Fossils, was spread farther, and even more thankfully, abroad. It is in such work as this that Vondy nowadays most nearly fulfills herself.

Every woman of whom the epithet "fascinating" has been liberally used is a woman of

many parts, for this is man's way of proclaiming his enslavement to the constant variety of her—the many charms and skills and spheres of knowledge she reveals in the ripening of acquaintance. There is so much variety in Vondy that she probably has been, as the Bible says, all things to all men. It's impossible to account for her wholly by dealing with her in separate parts: as sure as a number are contrived into an outline of her another will be discovered standing apart, yet looming up like a complete image of the woman, to mock the creation one has just drawn. The only way to produce a semblance of Vondy is to see her in totality. And sought in that perspective she appears most explicably as an amateur journalist.

I mean an amateur journalist in the rare sense of one who is dedicated to the cause. For most, amateur journalism is an affair of the heart in which they are inclined to be fickle: for Vondy it has been a marriage of the deepest constancy. And like a successful marriage it forms a background to living, not limiting one's activities or interests but enlarging them with a sense of shared and enlivened purpose.

In this larger role of the amateur journalist, Vondy merges the activities that flow variously out of her occupations as writer, thinker, publisher and friend. There is even a case to be argued that the amateur journalist in her has hampered the development of the writer. Possessed of high talent, she works less for the expression of talent than for the promotion of the well-being of amateur journalism. Her head bubbles with schemes for its advancement:—books that would anthologize the best of our writings, magazines that would awaken us to our more significant literary purpose, investments that would lay for ever the spectre of financial beggary. For the truth is that Vondy is grateful to amateur journalism and the influence it has had upon her life.

“The secret (she says) is that I have thoroughly enjoyed amateur journalism all through the years since 1912 when I entered the National Amateur Press Association. I have found many, sundry and diversified friends. I have come out of a shell of shyness and aloofness, and I have found love and friendship and much understanding among my contemporaries and fellow journalists. It has been a unique and educating experience that I would not trade for all the tea in China—and I do like tea.”

Vondy now is in danger of becoming enmeshed in a myth, a myth to which she has not consciously contributed herself. One of its main

ingredients in the nickname “Vondy” which she has worn as a unique distinction for the 40-odd years since Anthony Moitoret first dubbed her with it. Yet of this title she writes: “It should be thrown into the ash-heap. It seems inordinately silly for a mid-aged woman, particularly a staid and proper, bespectacled creature like me.” She shows no desire to develop her own legend. I have enough respect for the common man to know that myths do not grow in the lifetime of their subjects without good cause. There is obviously some quality about Vondy which captures the popular imagination.

It is as hard, in trying to separate the myth from the individual, to look sideways through the mists of distance as it is to peer backwards through the mists of time. If I have confused Vondy with the mythical image of her, I plead the same difficulty as the historian who tries to disentangle Shakespeare from the Shakespeare Legend. Only the contemporaries—by which I mean in this case her physical companions—can have final possession of the truth. And they, too, will have to be of a specially discerning character.

But much of Vondy, and I should think her more genuine parts, do reach out through the distortions of distance, conveyed by her letters and published writings. For she has the happy property of being able to record herself on paper. She does not draw on the mask, as she takes up the role, of writer. She merely continues to act as herself. Her thought, skipping across the written or printed page, may delineate a fragment of philosophy or an incident from a conversation; but underlying every syllable is the personality of the woman herself. So it always seems to me that her writings are a good starting point for discovering Vondy.

I am now aware, too, of the reasons why the best appraisals of a writer's work and personality must wait on his passage out of this ephemeral existence. It takes a little more than human fortitude can stand to face the possibility of the subject him—or herself rising up like an angry ogre to confound the deductions and judgements the biographer has rashly attempted, and usually attempted out of incomplete knowledge. Thus, the remarks of the living about the living are usually exaggerated, slanted or for subjective reasons distorted in some way.

Vondy herself is aware of this position and has commented privately on the absence of any shrewd article about her, weighted with some contrary points of view to “refute all this florid display of fascination.”

Anyone who is essentially honest is dissatisfied with heaped-up praise. Such a person wants most earnestly to get at the truthful opinion in which he is held; for he knows that it is rarely given the human being to impress everyone always in a favorable light. I guess that what he—and Vondy—really want is a summing up of all their characteristics in which, it's to be hoped, the good will outweigh the bad.

Now, whether I have managed herein such a beautiful sum or not I do not know. But of this I am certain: that the nicest calculation of the parts we relish and disrelish in Vondy always comes out most heavily in favor of the good and the desirable.

### A VONDY CHECKLIST

#### Stan Oliner

Vondy produced amateur journals, 1910-1959, under three different names as listed in the Moitoret Family Index of Amateur Journals:

Edna von der Heide:

- Gothamite*, 1910
- Inspiration* (with Donald G. Barnett), 8 issues 1914-1915
- The National Amateur*, 3 issues 1915
- The National Official* (with Edward H. Cole)
- The Recruiting Feminine* (with Coaralle Austin and others)
- The Trail* (with Alfred L. Hutchinson)
- The Trumpeter* (with George H. Conger)
- The Inspiration* ("Tribute Number"), Apr. 1917

Edna Hyde:

- The Boston Blade* (with W. Alvin Cook), Nov. 1924
- The Campaigner* (with James F. Morton, Jr. and others)
- The Convention Mirror* (with Hazel Pratt Adams, Vera Dollman Gonder and Lucie Schneider), Sept. 1923
- The Giddy Gazette* (with Joseph Thalheimer, Jr.), Dec. 1920
- Inspiration*, Nov. 1919 and Dec. 1920, 2 issues

Edna Hyde McDonald:

- Bellette*, June 15, 1937-1959 (3 issues in 1938 with Ernest A. Edkins)

- The Fossil*, 1948-1951, 12 issues
- Manuscript Bureau*, 1958-1959, 2 issues
- The National Amateur*, 1945, 2 issues completing Burton Crane's term after he went to war
- Odium*, 1958-1959, 2 issues
- Once Over* (with Edward H. Cole)
- The Wag*, 1936, 1937, 1944, 1945 (with Helm C. Spink), 6 issues

### THE CHRISTMAS OF DELSATO'S MARIA

Edna von der Heide

(Reprinted from Alfred L. Hutchinson's *The Trail* [whole no. 2], summer 1915.)

(NOTE—The following story won for its author the laureateship in both the National and United Associations for 1914, the award being made by two sets of professional critics acting independently of each other. It appeared in *The Blarney Stone* for Nov.-Dec. 1914.)

He was a fruit and vegetable dealer by trade, and according to the latest census, but nobody knew just where Delsato had his place of business. In fact, as time went on, and one thing and another happened, people began to doubt if really there was any place at all. And Delsato lived—well, most of the time he lived in a little narrow stone-room on Centre Street, a little room that had one window in it, and *that* crossed with strong, iron bars. But when Delsato was "out" he stayed where Maria was and where the men came to "render unto their Caesar" the tribute which was his.

For a long time now he had been "out." For a long time he did not leave the place where Maria stayed. For a long time the men did not come at all. Only once Delsato went to meet them; in the big room over Tony's wine cellar. But he came back quickly and sat long by Maria and the little thing she held in her arms that night. On Saturday the men came again. There was much talking; talking that woke the baby and made Maria cry "Sh-h-h!"

"Out of my house," Delsato commanded, "out of my house, you crooks, you thieves. Leave me alone, I tell you, leave me alone." And he pushed the slinking ruffians out into the chilly night and the dark. And they went, like guilty men, who were responsible for what was happening in Caesar's house that night. And the baby died.

Maria wrung her hands under the yellow lamplight. Delsato went out. Down through the dim and deserted street he passed, head low, hands plunged deep in his pockets. Down past First Avenue, Second, Third, where the buildings grow tall and stand like spectres in the glimmer of street lamps. He turned uptown and wound his way still farther across the avenue. When the spectres loomed largest and ghastliest and the street lamps turned low and musty flickers upon them, he stopped. Anxiously, cautiously, he peered up, then down, the narrow street. Then, fearlessly, he let himself in, climbed up stairs that wound round and round in an almost perpetual circle, reached at last the perpendicular ladder to the roof, scaled it, came out on top. From his pocket he took the slender, tough rope always ready there. Quickly he fastened it round his waist and around the iron support of the cornice. Noiselessly he crept to the edge of the roof and let himself down, easily, lightly, as a monkey in the tropics swings from the tree limbs. And the lonely man in uniform, like a tiny spot down below, turned the corner unsuspectingly. Carefully the man sought and found the topmost window ledge, dexterously he unfastened the window and crawled in. With cunning stiffness he moved about and found what it was he wanted—the cashier's window. And then, slipping the rope from his waist, he went out by the door, closing first and fastening the window; closing too, the drawer from which he had plundered. Up the ladder he crept, unfastened the rope from the cornice, tucked it in his pocket and came away. The lonely man in uniform down below saw him pass quietly up the street. Back east he tramped, head low, hands plunged in his pockets, back to the room where Maria was and where the baby lay dead.

In the morning he and Maria carried it to "Brookleen." In a few days the men came again and many nights afterward all of them went out and stayed out long hours. Always, on these nights, Maria was alone—and afraid.

"Why you don't stay with me?" once she asked him.

"Shut up," was his answer.

Then there came a time when Delsato did not return. For many nights he did not come. And the men, too, stayed away. Maria did not know, but Delsato was "in" again—in the little stone-room on Centre Street. And Delsato, this time, was "caught with the goods" and "sent up."

It was nearing the Christmas season. Delsato

had been nearly six months "on the Island." During that time the men had slipped, every week, his portion of their spoiling under the door of the place where Maria lived. And Maria never questioned.

The little stores on the Avenue were filled with Christmassy things. Artificial trees that glistened and shone at night; impossible toy animals and painted dolls with sawdust bodies. Right on the corner luscious cakes in green and spicy trimmings lay unsanitarily in array. Up farther, along the line of pushcarts, the big trees were already for sale. On the corner of Fourteenth a man stood, jumping toy monkeys up and down on strings. Maria stood by and watched him. She laughed at the animal's tactics. She bought one for ten cents.

Coming back to her own street again she passed by a tiny shop where, in the window, a glittering tree spun round and round on its axle. Maria went in and bought one that would not turn round. In tinsel and glistening ornaments she decked it. Under the eyes of Ave Maria she placed it. Then, with her toy animal in her hands, she sat down to glow over it. The Mother Mary looked down with sad and wondering eyes. In her arms the Baby seemed to nestle closer. Delsato's Maria stretched out her arms. "My bambina," she implored.

The door of the room was flung open. Delsato stood there. In his arms he held a bundle, soft and light. He thrust it out to Maria. "My bambina," her words were smothered in the baby's dress; her kisses rained on its tiny face. She raised her eyes to the Mother Mary in thankfulness of Her gift—the little dead baby restored to her.

Delsato stood immovably by the window, looking steadily out upon the crowded street below. A dishevelled woman, on the opposite side, was seeking vainly and frantically the baby whose carriage stood unguarded on the sidewalk.

*Next up we present three separate accounts of the May Day party hosted by young John Milton Heins on May 1, 1920. This party was the occasion for Vondy's first meeting of her future husband, Philip B. McDonald.*

## FACE TO FACE WITH AMATEUR JOURNALISTS

**John Milton Heins**

*(Reprinted from The American Amateur [vol. 1 no. 5] for July 1920.)*

When I was a small boy I liked to go to May parties, even if they wouldn't let me be king. As the ice cream was heavy to carry, I always volunteered, so when it was fished out, I had at least an excuse why I should be hanging around.

I have not attended a May party for several years, but I heard a rumor that W. Paul Cook, President of the National, would be in town to attend the Fossil banquet. Miss Gidlow was in from Montreal. Miss Hyde would have her first afternoon free in many moons, and then I got a sudden thought to run a May party of my own. Why not invite them all with another contributor. P. B. McDonald, whom also I had never met, but who has done me some favors, I thought would be best for my purpose, and so I dated them up to meet me at the Public Library art gallery, Saturday afternoon, May first at two o'clock, to meet a perfectly strange boy, whose business it was to make all acquainted and then suggest, if the day was fine, that we take a Fifth Avenue bus to Central park, and go "a-maying." (The Spring poets ought to like this), then have Mr. McDonald, President Cook or my father decide on a nice place to have dinner, and then take in the Blue Pencil Club meeting at the Denches, at Sheepshead Bay in a bungalow, on the water front, and as Pearl K. Merritt says, "Come early and go in swimming," and so here I am on a nice stone bench, duly described to everybody who is to meet me, and I wonder who will be the first. How they will look, what they will say, and really I'm getting afraid of what they might expect me to do.

I was standing in front of two pictures, painted by professor Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, (very few people know he was also a painter,) when things began to happen. A young pleasant person came up to me and said, "Are you Johnnie Heins?" and I thought it was Miss Hyde, because of course Miss Gidlow would be elderly and stern, maybe wearing glasses, and in a nice black dress. While here Miss Hyde, laughingly shaking my hand was saying, "Of course it's you. You couldn't be anybody but yourself, could you?" Then we sat down and she looked over the May *American Amateur* and discussed the contributions. We enjoyed little Betty Jane's story very much, and laughed over the girl whose legs ran away, and how easy a child can fix trouble like that.

Then my father came. He knew Edna Hyde at once. Hadn't he way back in 1915 talked for an hour and a half at a convention, so that Vincent Haggerty

and two Bridgeport delegates who had telegraphed they were on the way, could arrive before the vote for President could be taken, so Houtain, instead of Miss Hyde, could be elected. Something, as he told her afterward, of which he was not very proud. Although of course, he didn't regret it as he did not know her then.

P. B. McDonald had sent a photo of himself, also saying that he would wear a greenish suit and carry a raincoat over his arm. I noticed a fine looking man fitting that description, longingly looking our way, and so I went over and brought back my prize telling Miss Hyde, "Here's our professor." At first this instructor in the University of New York seemed rather shy when he talked to the ladies. I noticed when he answered Miss Gidlow and Miss Hyde and their big eyes were staring at him, he who towered over them, shifted his feet, stammered, and was almost lost for words, while he was able to scare me out of my boots, and did not seem to be at all fidgety when he talked to my father. I bet he studied hard to get to be where he is and didn't have much time to get to be a lady's man.

We were talking about almost everything when a most delightful young person, as my father afterward said: "a slip of a winsome schoolgirl," stepped up to him and said, "I believe I belong to this party," and he said, "I guess you do Miss Gidlow," and then I introduced her to her fellow contributors, who like I had expected to see a very staid and determined person.

We had a great laugh over *Les Mouches Fantastiques* which was enclosed in the current *American Amateur*. My father had explained at home that it meant fantastic art. Miss Hyde thought, too much fantastic and Mr. McDonald ventured fancy handkerchief as a translation until Miss Gidlow on being asked was surprised that we did not know, gayly explained it as the queer title "The Fantastic Flies," or as I understand it flights of fancy or humanity.

It was Miss Gidlow who brought us all back by asking if we were waiting for anybody else, and then I had to explain why President Cook whom I expected to be with the party, again refused to be captured, for while he was expecting to be at the Fossil's dinner that night, I had my star contributors and the Blue Pencil Club meeting to offer as a counter attraction, and I know that Cook would have been cooked by me all right had I got hold of him.

We watched the Boy Scout's parade for a little while and then after buying some flowers we went to the museum of Natural History, because the sky

threatened to spoil with rain our frolic in the open.

There were many things my witty contributors said to each other in the dark everglades of the Florida room, where Baber was not forgotten, though I heard some one say, looking at the toads and their relatives, "I wonder what we were a million years ago, when I was a toad and you a fish." It was in the South American room when we sat down in front of an array of Aztec idols, and we found there were just five facing us, which according to size then became our counter part since they couldn't be us for no one invited us to the Fossil's dinner that night. I hate to give away the one whom we selected as the one with the depressed face, though the smallest which was supposed to be myself was bad enough.

The sun had come out again so we went to the lake in Central Park, picked out an arbor right at the water, which seemed like a boat gliding away, and here we had cream and cake and "bon mots" one which Mr. McDonald wiggled out, when an odd tart was left over, to the suggestion that we toss up for it. He said, "Let only the ladies do it, and one will get the cake and the other will be considered prettiest," and then handed Miss Hyde the cake and let us tell Miss Gidlow what he didn't dare do himself.

It is funny how people who have never met before can get to like each other. Of course I liked them all without ever seeing them, but twice as much when I did, while McDonald seemed to take to Miss Gidlow like a flock of ducks to water. Miss Gidlow is supposed to be rather a cold person. Her poems prepare you for this, but the day was rather cold and this may account why McDonald had to take off his coat every little while and make Miss Gidlow wear it. Maybe we all helped him do it. You see, it wasn't our coat, and then Miss Gidlow might not have liked ours quite as much. Anyhow Miss Hyde said, "They are some nice couple," so it's too bad I didn't have Cook, or another McDonald to help make of her another nice couple, as my father was careful that I couldn't write the way Vincent Haggerty once wrote about him.

We rode on top of a bus down Fifth Avenue, to Greenwich Village, stopping in on the chance that Vincent Haggerty might be home in his studio. He wasn't, so we went to Gonfarone's for dinner. Where amidst laughter, gay faces and music by a lady trio, the violin of which when I had spoken to her of the last piece played, praising her real nice playing, wanted me to play "Traumerei" which was to be the next solo. I wanted to, but they were all waiting for me and so

maybe I may play it there sometime. When we checked our coats, the wardrobe check was number 57, at which all laughed, saying: "Sure they knew you were coming." Here we enjoyed a rather nice Italian meal. I know the hot soup would help to thaw out any coldness that may have staid with us from the winter. Being May first, everything was merry, and honest, I was sorry that now it was up to me to break up the party of merry makers and guide them on a long journey to "Muttonhead Bay" for a mutton is tougher than a sheep, and it was butting in that we were going to do on the Blue Pencil Club.

I have often thought what the spare wheel on the back of an auto thought, while the other four ran around. My party was over and I was the fifth wheel and I believe, I actually went to sleep, until a perfect stranger said, "Say Bub, yer past yer station!" and the laughter of our party brought me back. At Sheepshead Bay, a dark bus shook us like dice in a box at terrible speed, to the bungalow section, where instantly a raised shade and an open door took us in. The little room was crowded and the walls would have bulged out, had we pressed in only that someone (I believe it was my father) thought about throwing out furniture and the cat, and when the table got stuck in the door, it was my father again, who simply took the door down, of course refusing to put it back when we left. We had interrupted the meeting in all its glory, but we were a pleasant surprise, and I know again more positively, that my contributors made a big impression on their readers whom we met here.

The literary exercise, conducted by Otto P. Knack, was on "Pets," in which Adeline Evans Leiser, won the prize for prose and Jimmy Morton for poetry though Mrs. Lewis practically tied it, and those by A. M. and H. P. Adams, Edwin Reed and Alice Carson Lewis all received applause and were excellent contributions. Of course they called on my party, but I was prepared for them having written something on the subject on the way over. While my father took me for his "Pet-Subject," and Miss Hyde and Miss Gidlow played "artful dodgers."

Mr. McDonald gave a very fine talk on his impressions of amateurs he met, especially those for the first time that day. He said that they best revealed themselves by their writing for he had imagined them all older than they were. That I, at first had been nineteen, on writing to him had been fifteen, and to-day was only twelve and a half. (I wonder did I decrease in his estimation the same way.) He had been prepared to

find Miss Gidlow an old maid, instead—well, but I know he thinks her barely twenty. Miss Hyde he thought might be a light haired “vamp” and found her a serious, yet light hearted and impulsive young woman. The rest of us, well I noticed the women were giving little touches to their hair and smiling more pleasant, the men adjusting their collars, and I'm sure Jimmy Morton opened his vest, so I know that the professor whose voice quivered a bit early in the day, had them all at his mercy, with his even, praising and smooth remarks.

There was a fudge making contest. All the males were decorated with aprons and dresses. Sides were chosen by Chas. W. Heins and Eddie Reed. I knew Reed was in for it, the minute my father was on the opposing side. For though I watched him because I had to, being one of Reed's army cooks, still our directions disappeared very mysteriously, our supplies melted away and even in the midst of our candy cooking the pot was stirred five minutes, although someone had slyly turned the gas out. Afterwards when people to get square on these mysterious doings said, ours was the best, they even tried to disqualify us, saying, that as it had a slight burned taste, if they hadn't turned out the gas for us, it would have all been burned.

Then there were other games, making words out of abbreviations of States, which all said they could have won, only knowing that a juicy lemon awaited them, they allowed Mrs. Lewis to win. Then as someone spied the bus, a signal was given and my whole May party left the Blue Pencil Club to continue on the cake, cream, fruit, and fudge with which we could hardly budge. Though strange by some queer chance the new President, Morton, was found in the dark corner of the bus awaiting us, and then came the long ride home. On which I thought about the Denches, both Ernest and Iva and Pearl Merritt who had been such nice hostesses. Stuffing us with “goodies” and having so much, that maybe there'll be enough left to last a week. I hope that door, too can be put back aright.

Of course all things have an end, and so good-byes were said, and the ladies safely left at their doors, who were good enough to tell me my May party had been a success, that I was a “fixer” all right, but what pleased me most, was that I had coaxed some amateurs to go out a-Maying with me, and in spirit, made them as young as myself,—and yes I forgot,—Miss Gidlow gave away her flowers to some tiny street arabs, and so, maybe this helped to make someone happy too.

## SOME MAY DAY IMPRESSIONS

Charles W. Heins

*(Reprinted from The American Amateur [vol. 5 no. 1], July 1920.)*

One phase of Amateur Journalism would be meaningless, were it not that its members constitute a friendly audience; whose critical trend serves as a stimulus to our best effort. The professional author degenerates only too often into a hack, for he needs must do work assigned, or create “pot-boilers” and therefore rarely reveals a true self. For they lack the responsive coterie of our cult to spur on achievements, or to emphasize those milestones of success,—our failures.

It has been said in aftermath of a certain May Day get-together party, who expected Elsa Gidlow to be an older person,—(a compliment wherein matter was presumed to have kept pace with the quality of mind)—that plainly her work had forged ahead of her years. In one of her prose poems is a recital of a very young girl. Habit has a trick of treasuring memory. So when in childish spite, she throws the flowers of childhood into life's stream, and uncouth experience counsels against this wanton act,—one is prepared for considerable lapse of time, ere these could be merged into gilded pleasures and as sin thrown into God's face. When one verges on sacrilegious writing, it is either, that we have lost many illusions or time has exposed fallacies in faith, with which religions girds its creed. So when John, my son, whose reasoning often is more instinct than deduction, expected in Miss Gidlow a drab, elderly person, I for one was deliciously disappointed—while it knocked him dead.

For a brief second at the meeting I saw Miss Gidlow perched in the corner of a lounge. Her limbs were criss-crossed beneath her like a Turk, and our eyes met. In that instance she seemed to me a deeper enigma than my conception of a sphinx, whose silence at least could not be broken by a laugh—not even the one, “God died of...”

It is retribution sometime, to expiate a lingering regret by confession, though it be for an

inadvertent fault. "Vondy"—a brilliant Official Editor stood in line for presidency of the National. Keen rivals scurried our hurry calls, one of which, with all its blandishment of, "For Auld Lange Syne," found me, in battle array for this "menace to our institution"! "Vondy"—Miss Hyde, and President Ayres, whose entire board she seemed to be, both aided by absence, a most narrow victory for us. That night she was assigned a place next to me at the banquet table. Her banter was my grilling and somehow in her recent presence I seemed not to have quite gotten over it yet. Now in the retrospect all amateur politics have lost a good deal of their glamor. Memory sifts the few who fought for petty recognition—for to most who served—it was but unselfish service that carried its own reward. But it is merit and talent we cherish the longest, and who is not touched by the epics this gifted Miss Hyde has sent forth and recently sung anent the "Great Adventure" with its yearning and pathos. Whether it be the perfume of flowers or those of memory itself, the singer enshrines herself in our mind, despite an attractive personality, whose liaison combines to intensify the ever insolvable riddle—woman.

A poetess—be she Edna Hyde or an Elsa Gidlow—who carries one into intense realms of thought, with a gamut of feeling that leaves only room for open admiration, quite preclude any alternative except an endeavor to have them as good friends, and McDonald surely know show he succeeded in his laudable effort, to be as agreeable as a May Day Party would allow.

To us Philip B. McDonald, himself could not help being liked. A man's man always finds favor in a woman's eyes. Who knows why he rails at not being "able to cheat." Though seemingly quite matter of fact, romance lurks in his soul. He hardly would hobnob with poetesses were this not so. Neither could an impetuous boy rout him from his tomes. Scamper him through crowds so that the ladies might be decked with flowers, and quite stampede when innocently it is suggested that vendors give pins when you buy nosegays. Ah! if pins could but utter the words, some lips fail to convey. Mac, "Edna" avows she'll call you P.B. to your face—sometime. Has Elsa progressed also, and do you "Miss" her yet? I bet a certain coat you own is worth more to you than you paid its tailor—for values are on the rise. Too bad one can't crowd a row of such a day all into one, but one can thin of it,—always.

As to John, the irrepressible, there stands a full page of his "Face to Face" blue penciled to his credit. "To make room" (he condescendingly informs

me) so that I too at \$1.50 per, might voice my eulogy of his party. For one thing it wouldn't do to have him expose our very thoughts, besides he is getting too old with experience to write on the obvious; and so I console myself that time might soften his realism and teach him a few tricks of technique—instead of telling, "tales out of school."

## THE PUBLISHER'S MAY PARTY

Philip B. McDonald

(Reprinted from *The American Amateur* [vol. 1 no. 5], July 1920.)

On May first in New York Mr. John Milton Heins, publisher of the *American Amateur*, gave a party. His guests were his father (Mr. Chas. W. Heins needs no introduction to Amateur Journalists), Miss Edna Hyde (who made the day notably brighter), Miss Elsa Gidlow (a pretty poetess of 21, who has come to New York to do editorial work), and the writer (who is an assistant professor of English in New York University). The guests met in the art Gallery of the Public Library, where a boy of twelve, named John Milton Heins, introduced them to each other. This boy, by the way, is a remarkable publisher for his years; although he describes himself as "stupid looking," he is much too modest—as a matter of fact, he is a real little man, with big serious eyes.

What with walks and bus riders and strolls in museums and a May Day lunch by a lake in Central Park, the day went all too soon. With so many poets in the party, everyone had to cheer up and have a good time or the party would have broken up, for literary people are naturally temperamental, and must fight or be good friends. Anyway, things went beautifully, and New York seemed a wonderful city—a vista of blondes and brunettes and lakes and clouds and everything!

As evening approached, the party found itself in a dining room at Greenwich Village, where J.M.H. struck up an acquaintance with the lady who played the violin, and where one or two others wondered if they couldn't dance. After the meal and a chat, words were given to prepare for Brooklyn where an attempt would be made to surprise the famous Blue Pencil Club at one of its parties. The trip to the far corner of Brooklyn known as Sheepshead Bay, where the Club was holding forth that evening, passed as quickly as the other phantasmagorias of the day.

The Blue Pencil Club was found, lively and scintillating as usual, in a little box of a cottage on the edge of nowhere; at least so it seemed to strangers far from home. To make more room, Mr. Heins took a door off its hinges, lifted a table into the kitchen, and one or two other little things. The publisher's party then became absorbed into the circle of husbands, wives, sweethearts, and civilians, who make up the famous B.P.C.

Original essays and poems were read, games were played, and two kinds of fudge were made—good fudge and bad fudge. At least Mr. Heins called it fudge! As Mrs. Dooley of the Hub Club Quill might have remarked, a delightful toime was had by all. Regret was expressed that W. Paul Cook had not been able to get down from the Berkshires, and the faces of several “Fossils” such as Rhinehart Kleiner (who were holding a separate meeting) were missed. The Blue Pencil Club are charming hosts, and should be complimented for their good-natured spirit at receiving a wild crowd of stray A.J.'s and making them feel at home.

It was rather late, at least for unsophisticated young people, when the group tore themselves away and took the long series of busses and trains home. Over in Manhattan everyone saw everyone else home (so that there would be no cheating), and the grand day was over. However, one member of the party at least agrees with Rhinehart Kleiner that a good time isn't finished when it's over; the flavor lasts (like Spearmint) and, as the Hindoo philosopher says: “Man is a shadow upon a crumbling wall from a dying fire.” In American that means: One should have a good time when he can, because publisher's parties are not given every day.

*John Milton Heins's May Day party on May 1, 1920, marked the first meeting of Edna Hyde (1893-1962) and Professor Philip B. McDonald (1888-1959). Professor McDonald resigned both from NAPA and UAPA in 1921 as a result of the mudslinging in the NAPA presidential campaign that year. “Vondy,” however, remained a lifelong devotee of the hobby she first joined in 1909. She and Professor McDonald married in 1924.*

## MEMOIRS OF AMATEUR JOURNALISM

*Being fourteen years of my experience in  
your midst, with no apologies*

## Edna Hyde

*(Reprinted from Clyde G. Townsend's The Oracle [vol. 4 no. 2], August 1923.)*

### I

Well, why not? Margot Asquith has done it, and we have Lady Susan confessing indiscretions, and they haven't enjoyed life any more than I have. I am less adverse to giving you all away. Besides, as I remarked to someone only a few days ago, everything's been said about me already. So, out of a pure love of system, here are the facts, collected in categorical order and recorded in sequence. Take them or leave them, as you see fit.

I am obliged to chronicle some historic facts, because to build up actual memories requires a foundation, just like building anything else. If, therefore, you have heard all this initial part before, it is too bad, because it really is necessary. You will have to understand how I climbed up from nobody to somebody, and got into position to meet a lot of you and know you intimately and not so intimately, and why some of you amuse me and some of you don't, and why all this thusness anyway. So here goes:

I was recruited into Amateur Journalism—the United Amateur Press Association, to be exact—by Dorothy Barnes Loye of Baraboo, Wisconsin. Dot is now Mrs. Chandler Holmes of Milwaukee, she having relinquished a literary career for a woman's averred place in the home, but back in the old days she and I, together with Edna St. Vincent Millay, Beulah Amidon, Eleanor Barnhart, and somewhat lesser lights not yet arrived, were regular contributors to the pages of St. Nicholas League. And we certainly did vie with each other for honors.

Dot had heard of Amateur Journalism through Eddie Daas, I believe, but she didn't want to join up unless I did. Even in those days I had a venturesome spirit. So we took the plunge. My credential was poem entitled “To the Sun,” and ran like this:

O thou! Who spread'st thy golden rays  
Across the brilliant skies,  
And mak'st a mystery of hues  
When daylight dies—  
Apollo's burning orb of light,  
Beset us on our way,  
And let they light, so full, so clear,

Abide with us each day.

Thou symbol of God's love to man,  
His very eye to me,  
Whose blessings glow the world around,  
O'er land and sea!  
Give of thy light to moon and stars,  
That night may fairer be;  
Or token of thy western hue  
Leave here with me.

...Well, there have been a lot of credentials worse than that. I was accepted. I got a membership certificate, but nary a letter of welcome, and my credential was never set up in print until I sent it later to George Conger for *The Bobbin*. But it took more than that to discourage me. I stuck.

By and by I began to receive papers published by the members. In those days, back in 1909 it was, printing prices were lower than they are now, or youth was more enterprising, there was no radio, and papers were numerous. I knew nothing about the U.A.P.A., what it was or what it did. But I read all the papers, acknowledged those I liked by telling the editors I liked them, and began a correspondence with some amateurs that has lasted until now. Editors began to ask me for contributions. I never failed to send them something. I had a lot of stuff in cold storage, to be sure, but I was prolific in those days. The critics—Maurice Moe, John D. Christiansen, Paul Campbell, (God bless 'em)—were good to me. They said my work was meritorious, and other things like that. They made me feel good, though I realized all the time that my stuff was good only because so many other amateurs' stuff was rotten. Poets especially. They were particularly fierce. They had so little sense of rhyme, and no sense whatever of rhythm. Things like that annoyed me. I usually said so when I wrote to other amateurs. But they all took me good-naturedly, and I still wonder why.

There was scarcely a paper printed that did not have a bit of verse from my facile pen in it. Ernest Morris, Vincent Haggerty, Dora Hepner, George Conger, Roy Erford, Eddie Daas, Edgar and S. Parker Rowell, Chester Hoisington, Chester Sharp, George Macauley and every other popular editor clamored for my stuff. I certainly landed.

George Conger was publishing *The Bobbin* month after month without interruption. It was largely devoted to doings and sayings about the Singer Sewing Machine Shop in Bridgeport, where Mr. Conger did

something or other. But Mr. Conger got most of my stuff. Later *The Bobbin* was succeeded by *The Trumpeter*, which I helped edit until its demise.

Then there grew from somewhere the desire to see me.

The Brooklyn Club invited me to one of its meetings! I did not go. Why? Because I was shy. I did not like to meet people. They made me uncomfortable. Besides, I hadn't time to gad about. But I am sure the Brooklyn Club didn't understand this. They thought (and some of them have been decent enough to confess it frankly since) that I was a little snob; in fact, some of them had reason to believe that I was, I avoided them so successfully.

But—. One day in May, 1910, John D. Christiansen came to New York. He was to meet some of the Brooklyn Club members at Sixteenth Street and Irving Place, the stopping-place of the Misses McCulloch, whoever they were. I lived in Eighteenth Street, and John D. called for me there and took me to the rendezvous. I nearly died. And when the ordeal was over, I thanked God, and couldn't get home quickly enough. It was a year before I went near them again. And that was almost as bad.

It was a Club meeting held on Sunday afternoon somewhere in Brooklyn. I had no excuse to stay away. Of it, I remember only my inward quaking and some pictures taken on the roof—awful pictures that made us look like imbeciles—and Charlie Isaacson, who wanted to descend the ladder first and help the girls down, whom I thought exceedingly fresh!

But the ice was broken. I had met my first wild amateurs, and they had not bitten me. And the thing that pleased me most was the fact that so many of them, when they met me, expressed surprise that I was so young. In fact, some of them still feel that way. But a merry heart maketh a youthful countenance, to say nothing of figure, and whatever else I hadn't, I do possess a sense of humor. A sense of humor keeps you young and buoyant. But I digress.

In a year or so I had achieved a couple of laureateships. I had also achieved some offices, which I realize now I should have refused from the first, but we never know our luck. I enjoyed myself, and the critics were still featuring me in the headlines. I was corresponding regularly with forty-six amateur journalists in all parts of the country, and the correspondence with some of them was intensely interesting in a personal way, and certainly lively. No one who wrote me had to wait long for an answer. I

wrote constantly, and often didn't wait for a reply before I shot the second letter forth. I lived for the postman's whistle, and every day brought me stacks of letters. I had always been a lonely, thoughtful, book-reading, mopey kind of kid, and this was my outlet. I might have been inarticulate in public, but I was garrulous on paper. And I was having a wonderful time.

Then somebody invited me to join the N.A.P.A.—I forget who it was, but I forgive him.

## II

Eddie Cole was President of the National [1912-13 term—ed.]. Max Janes was Second Vice-President. Max Janes resigned. Eddie Cole, having seen my name so often in public print, I suppose, forgot that it was necessary to elect a person to membership before he could hold office, and appointed me Second Vice-President in Max Janes' place. I broiled in National politics from the beginning.

And then things began to happen. First, the Bridgeport Convention [1914—ed.]. I wrote it up in detail immediately afterwards, so that I should always have the impressions of it clearly and vividly as they were received. But I needn't have done that. The impressions are lasting. I remember that Bridgeport Convention as if it were yesterday.

I see Edith Minter, Laurie Sawyer and Ethel May Johnston-Myers sitting in their room at the Hotel Statler, trying hard to make me talk. The subject is cats. Edith Minter says, "Do you like cats?" I answer, "No." And immediately they all discuss cats. I am as silent as the Sphinx, not because I can think of nothing to say, but because I am shy and still find it difficult to talk to strangers. That is, woman strangers. Somehow the boys are easier. They are more easily understood; there is no mystery about them. Harry Scott gives me a box of chocolates. George Thomson says, "Come on down to the Beach." Herbert Darrow looks at me and says, "Laugh—I like to see you laugh, you have such pretty teeth." That is the language I can understand. But the Convention breaks up, with friendships made, and I have found the true worth of Amateur Journalism. I know now that I shall never be so much interested in what people write as I am in what they are themselves. I will not be afraid to meet them any more.

But O Lord, why do there have to be politics? I come now to the split in the United. My part in that happened like this:

My correspondence had brought me many friends in the Far and Middle West. There were a number of clubs on the Pacific Coast—Bellingham, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, La Grande—and the Bellingham Club proposed Harry Shepherd for the Presidency. The East nominated Helene Hoffman. I gave my support to the Pacific Coast, and boosted Harry Shepherd. The Convention was held out there, and something allegedly rotten developed in that Denmark. A telegram informed me of Harry Shepherd's election. A little later I learned that Helene Hoffman had been made President. In the months that followed, neither relinquished office, and they haven't done so yet. I found myself, loyal as I am to whatever cause I foster, on the far side of the fence, my heart with what the Easterners call the Rebel United. But nobody can serve a two-headed monster. I began to fall out of activity in the U.A.P.A., and to fix my affections on the National, which was beginning to have enough troubles of its own, goodness knows.

They made Leston Ayres President [1914-15 term—ed.]. I was Secretary. Hubert Reading was Official Editor, and Chicago was the next Convention Seat. Rheinhart Kleiner was Treasurer. Something happened, and one by one the officers resigned. Leston Ayres requested numerous people to accept appointments, but, like the men in the parable, they had all either bought a yoke of oxen or married a wife, and couldn't come. It was time for the March *National Amateur*, and the Official Editor had given up the ghost. Nobody wanted the job of Treasurer. So when Leston Ayres wrote me telling me his woes, I said to him in point: "Well, let them go; you've still got one officer left, and I'll do the Treasurer's job and get out your official organ until something else turns up." And so I did.

Of course there were, and still are in some circles, vicious remarks about my attempts to "run the organization." All I have to reply to such is this: The time to stop me was then. There was a chance at that time for any thorough-going amateur journalist to help out. He would have been welcomed heartily. Since none of you came forward to prevent my "running things," on your own heads be it. Selah!

And then came the logical sequence. I was proposed to the Presidency. And defeated by the effervescent Houtain [1915—ed.]. There is no need to go into detail. Suffice it to say I was dead tired of all the work I had done, and glad to be relieved; as a matter of fact, I practically withdrew at the last minute.

For a time afterwards, I was content to be literary and not political. I am, at heart, anyway. I think I was Historian after that, and perhaps held some other moribund office, but until my second nomination in 1920 and the glorious defeat which followed that, I was the lesser light.

Out of all this there is only one thing you can say for me. I am your William Jennings Bryan. But I can do better than that by the lot of you, in spite of all your shortcomings, faults and vices. I can look you straight in the eye and say, quoting Robert Hilyer, the Harvard poet,

I am recompensed with comradeships

The gods themselves would be content to share.

And in these pleasant memoirs, it is my purpose to tell you something of how I met certain amateurs and why I still cling to the root of the tree.

### POLITICAL ENDORSEMENTS

#### Miss von der Heide Most Deserving

##### Rheinart Kleiner

*(Reprinted from Leston M. Ayres's The NAPA Campaign, vol. 1 no. 1, for June 1915.)*

I am entirely in sympathy with Miss von der Heide's cause in the contest for the presidency of the National Association. Of the candidates now in the field, she is undoubtedly the one most deserving of election at the forthcoming election.

Her work as an officer, in several capacities, on the official board, and her activity as a publisher during the past year, are known to everyone at all conversant with recent amateur affairs.

Her residence in New York, one of the chief centres of amateur activity, and, in consequence, her almost daily contact with many of the minds and movements of present-day amateur journalism, would give her a peculiar advantage as the association's executive that comparative isolation in a small town could not afford.

Nor has she to contend with unfavorable prejudices against her, in any section of the 'dom, as the result, perhaps of unfortunate affiliations and regrettable misunderstandings in her past political life—if it may be called such—for she is not and never has been a politician.

Shrewd reasoning and more or less selfish

calculation do not lie at the bottom of her plans for the Brooklyn convention. She would have placed her name in nomination for the presidency had the city designated been Chicago or San Francisco, equally certain of the support of all who believe in rewarding service well performed, and in the superiority of proven executive ability to that which is at best problematical and with the same confidence in the result.

### A Deserving Candidate

#### Leston M. Ayres

*(Reprinted from John Milton Heins's The American Amateur, vol. 2 no. 5, for April 1921.)*

Take up the last number of the *National Amateur*, read the membership list carefully, investigate the worthiness (from an amateur journalistic standpoint) of each member whose name appears thereon, and you will surely come to the conclusion that there is no one better qualified for the presidency of the National Amateur Press Association during the coming term than Edna Hyde—"our own Vondy."

To her Amateur Journalism is not a mere plaything. It is vastly more than that. It is an actuality, hard to define, yet very real. To use her own words, "Amateur journalism is not a concrete thing. It is a feeling." But however we may attempt to define it, it is a many sided institution, and Miss Hyde does not neglect any of its varied activities. Whether it be in the field of publishing, campaigning, office holding, traveling, club organizing, convention attending or the making of prose or verse, she is never found wanting.

The amateur press has proven to be the outlet for many of her exquisitely wrought poems, which none of us can excel and but few can equal. Poems of tenderness, of pathos, of imagination; poems blending sunshine with shadow and tear-drops with laughter. Poems that prompted Samuel Loveman (himself a poet-laureate) to eulogize her as "the greatest writer of poetry in amateur journalism," and delightful verses that caused Edmund Vance Cooke to crown her poet laureate. Can we pass lightly over these things? Can we forget them when it comes time to cast our ballots?

But our claim for Miss Hyde's fitness as a presidential candidate does not rest only upon her literary achievements. During her years of loyalty to our hobby she has been entrusted with many official positions, including the official editorship, which has

become almost an essential stepping stone to the presidency. This office she assumed, by appointment, at a time when the association was in dire need of loyal supporters, and it was mainly because of her unbounded enthusiasm and many financial sacrifices that the fiscal year of that time was finally brought to a successful termination at the Brooklyn convention of 1915.

At present Miss Hyde is serving the Association faithfully as one of our three Executive Judges, whose recent quick and effectual disposal of Mr. Houtain's unwarranted criticism of Official Editor Miss Outwater and Secretary Jeffreys is worthy of commendation.

But Miss Hyde has still other qualifications. Her record as a publisher is an enviable one. The *Giddy Gazette* (her latest venture) is as "full o' pep" as a cabaret jazz orchestra on New Year's eve, and has the kick of "Maud" at her best.

It is, however, to the arrival of *Inspiration*, "Amateur Journalism's Friendliest Magazine" that we have learned to look forward with greatest pleasure. In it Miss Hyde says her say, and says it well. She is always entertaining in her remarks, yet she chides one for his faults as quickly as she praises his more worthy accomplishments. Perhaps it is the way she has of saying things that carries us right along with her and wins our admiration.

"Petty jealousies in amateur journalism," she writes in the December number, "are sometimes with us. We confess it is hard to battle with the green-eyed monster when somebody else wins the laureateship you coveted, or marries the fellow you vamped last convention. But isn't it all part of the game? You know you're not a real one after all unless you are a good sport."

This gives us a glimpse of the real Edna Hyde. Active, alert, ambitious, but willing to meet "the green-eyed monster" with a smiling face when he chances to come her way.

Frederick J. Rose, in the January *National Amateur* writes—"Let us be of that number who join with Edna Hyde with that

'Happy sort o'crew

From Galilee or some such other place'  
and bless the *American Amateur* for giving us that poem."

Yes, "Vondy" is earnest, sincere, strenuous, talented and capable. She is all of this and more. She is cheerful and believes in "smiling through."

I am especially pleased to second the nomination of Miss Edna Hyde for president of the National Amateur Press Association.

I understand that Wm. Dowdell will be the candidate for official editor on the ticket with Miss Hyde. Give him your support and assure the success of the *National Amateur* for another year. Miss Outwater must have a worthy successor to carry on the excellent work she has been doing during her tenure of office.

## INSPIRATION

Gladys E. Heins

(Reprinted from John Milton Heins's *The American Amateur*, vol. 2 no. 5, for April 1921.)

I have often wished to know a poet,  
One who metered lines and rhymed with zest.  
Who in "ripping" verse could throw-it,  
And "inspired" stand any test.

Well I saw him with the Laureate on Sunday,—  
Kleiner threw the "harpoon" in the rest.  
Though one poetess groaned a relay,  
Of "not prepared to do my best."

Vondy's "mushing" is a stunt of wonder,  
Kevern Sappho-ed her our first flight stair.  
While her "vamping" sounds of blood and  
thunder,  
My! Some Johnnys fall for empty air.

Edna Hyde may think herself a "killer."  
Knocks 'em dead with just a stare,  
If she only knew the bunk they "spilt" her,—  
She'd stop writing poems on "I don't care."

Breathes my mother to my father:  
"Listen 'Hon' go in and cheer up lonesome  
Joe,—

Vondy's very busy kissing in our arbor,  
He's her escort, and she treats him so!"

Late she came to Joe "gooseberry-ing,"  
artless,—

Smiled a sweet, "Now take me home at least."  
—Gee! It must be great to be a poetess,  
'Inspiring' men, in rows like geese!

*(That Vondy gravely offended Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Heins by her conduct at the Blue Pencil Club meeting at their home on October 17, 1920, is certainly made evident by the attacks on Miss Hyde launched by their children in son John Milton Heins's The American Amateur. Heins ran for official editor on the ticket of Miss Hyde's opponent for the presidency, E. Dorothy Houtain, although the two soon fell out after winning election. That young Edna Hyde skipped most of the official Blue Pencil Club meeting on October 17, 1920 and hung out with the younger generation on the stairs and in the grape arbor seems evident from the published accounts. Doubtless she considered some of the reigning elders of the Club "impossible"—just as she labelled Howard Lovecraft before meeting him in person. She contributed so richly to our hobby over fifty years of activity that surely no one would begrudge her a few youthful flings. Even such an admirer as James Guinane perceived clearly that she was not always an angel and that the breadth of her knowledge and experience formed an essential part of her. As far as I know none of the Heins family ever made any amends for their attacks on Vondy—but she never replied in kind. Despite the disappointment of being bested for the presidency by George Julian Houtain in 1915 and by his wife E. Dorothy Houtain in 1921, Vondy continued for forty more years to give the hobby her all.*

**YOURS TRULY, VONDY**  
**Selections from Bellette**

**Edna Hyde McDonald**  
**Selected by Ken Faig, Jr.**

**June 15, 1937 (no. 1)**

Criticism of the administration of Margaret Nickerson Martin [NAPA President (1936-37)] comes from various quarters. Some of it is justified we think. Mrs. Martin promised well last July, in spite of the fact that she was comparatively new to amateur journalism and should not have been elected so soon in her career. But she has not performed as well as she promised. We know nothing of the reasons but suspect a singular lack of cooperation on the part of her staff. A mailing

bureau with financial troubles, a secretary laboring under the difficulties of college and a girl, an official editor who won't answer letters, and a treasury depleted of funds are trouble enough—but, with cooperation on the part of officers, even boll weevils like that can be overcome.

I cite the situation, however, to prove the point that we need to exercise vastly more care and discrimination in our nomination of officers. We should select seasoned veterans, not recruits or mere rank and file. We should listen to no pleas but should seek to reward our faithful by giving them offices as awards. Doubtful compliments, maybe, but I have such faith in the faithful that I know they will deliver on that basis far better than do those who seek the offices for self-aggrandizement and then fall down because they find them hard work and unremunerative.

It has been said recently that the spending of money is necessary to the success of an office. To a true amateur journalist nothing is further from the truth. You can spend thousands if you have them, and a.j. will applaud your generosity, but it will, at the same time, tell you quite sincerely whether the output on which you spend your money is worth it or not and it will, also, love you just as much if you never spend a cent. No, my friends, the real McCoy needs no money; he needs the capacity for making friends and getting them to work with him. He needs time, born devotion, and a love of amateur journalism which comes only with the years.

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However, Curtis Johnson in *Much Ado* presents a few [ideas] deserving of argument:

We do not agree with him that the association of amateur journalism is no better today than it was sixty years ago. We think there is no comparison. For the very reason that Johnson himself gives: Times change; amateur journalism is as vital today as it ever was to that few who make amateur journalism exactly what it is. It is essentially an organization for a few; that is, for the hundreds rather than for the thousands; for we are individual rather than collective by the very nature of our hobby. Just as soon as we work ourselves into a mass we lose our individuality, become unwieldy, and that eventually results into a break-up which leaves us just where we were when we started. That is always the way with masses.

Being small in body we have room and scope for every one and plenty of room for interchange of ideas and individual imagination.

What Johnson and many others who think as he does lose sight of, or never had, is realization of the fact that we are a pure hobby, not a business organized for profit or for moral uplift like the Boy Scouts, or for "education" like the high school and other journalistic organizations.

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When Howard Lovecraft died [March 15, 1937], the editor of *Bellette* collected a number of tributes to his memory from his friends, with the idea of publishing a fitting memorial to him. Then came realization that such a memorial should be more than a mere outpouring of sentiment concerning one we loved. Therefore, we have temporarily held up the publication of such a memorial as that we had in mind with the hope that some of us, who knew, respected, and loved the man, might feel impelled to band together for such a tribute to his memory as would properly fit the occasion.

#### May 1938 (no. 2)

We like those little advertising pamphlets issued by George Macauley to boost our hobby. But is amateur journalism something you can boost like cigarettes? Do not people like me, and you, and a few others, really prove that it is only for the elect, for those who, once in it, bitten by the bug, stick no matter what? Where are the boosters of yesteryear?

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Howard Lovecraft might have liked all those nice things said to him rather than about him. But Howard enjoyed personal correspondence, too, and I have reason to believe knew a large number of amateur journalists better because of it. For he was a shy person and was not easy to know otherwise.

Nobody asked me for any remarks about H.P.L. yet I carried on a correspondence with him for years and probably one unique in that H.P.L. did not take casually to women. The thing I liked best about him was his humor. To look at him one would never have suspected he had any. He reminded me of nothing so much as an undertaker, until in the course of business I came to know that fraternity slightly better than by rumor. To experience Lovecraft's humor was to dispel that idea of him at once. Before I had ever met him, I remarked to A. M. Adams that "Lovecraft was impossible." Adams apparently relayed my conviction for, when I met Lovecraft for the first time, at the home of Ernest Dench in Sheepshead Bay, he said, holding

me with his glittering eye like the Ancient Mariner, "You now meet the Impossible Lovecraft." That, my dear friends, is humor.

A short time before his death I sent Lovecraft some convention snapshots. I had not seen him then since the war. He returned the pictures with this remark: "The pictures of you show a complete absence of chronology." And with this pleantry our contact ended forever.

Eddie Daas is responsible for a number of recruits in amateur journalism. And no few of them excellent material, too. He got me in! He recruited Howard Lovecraft. Rheinart Kleiner, also, I believe. And others of the same high caliber. Yet I never met Eddie Daas. Would it do him any good, I wonder, wherever he is to know that I bless his heart continuously nevertheless.

#### July 1938 (no. 3)

*(Notes on Cincinnati, Ohio NAPA convention, July 1938:)*

Sardonic note contributed by Entertainment Committee; delegates invited to meet their friends at the Zoo. With sublime courage, many accepted. It proved to be a swell idea. After a somewhat diffident survey of our imprisoned ancestors, who in turn surveyed us with obvious distaste, we left in chastened mood to discuss amateur affairs over our exiguous hamburgers; later, to hear the familiar strains of "Rigoletto" in a delightful out-door pavilion, under the twinkling lights of the fire-flies and stars. A memorable night.

Smart and pretty girl delegates enlivened the proceedings and kept the young men in a gentle dither; as for the oldsters, *they* fell for 'em like a ton of bricks. Startling discovery on the part of one old galoot; a convention without the girls would be an awful bust. Several times, when discussion was about to die on the vine, they saved the situation. Now, if they will only go home and write as cleverly as they talked.

#### September 1938 (no. 4)

The N.A.P.A. will be holding conventions long after we are dust and, I dare say, will handle them as well, if not better, than we do.

Cincinnati was one of the finest conventions ever staged, and those responsible were not even National members. I do not advocate repeating the

performance but I do believe in the spread of amateur journalism and I think one way of spreading is to go where the interest manifests itself.

So, California here we come.  
Oakland '39!

### June 1939 (no. 6)

(Co-editor Ernest A. Edkins had filled the December 1938 issue with criticism and Bellette's readers did not react favorably:)

"Why do you continue to give so much space to Edkins and his carping? He is just mean."

"We could do without Edkins. He came back into a.j. on the invitation of Lovecraft only to plague us it seems; now that Lovecraft is dead why not kill Edkins as well."

"Ditch Edkins, you're a better man than he is, Gunga Din."

"Just received *Bellette*, and if you'll pardon the jitterbug jargon, I think it's a killer-diller. Of course, it's your business if you want to devote more than ten pages of bellyaching of a moth-eaten old sand-crab, but it's still a mystery to me why you don't fill some of that space yourself. The old dodo will have the satisfaction of knowing that his beefing was of some avail when he sees my paper now in the making."

These are the milder of the comments—and, it must also be observed, the most literate. The depths of expression to which mediocrity can sink, when it is stirred, is always surprising and the gutter jargon which quite nice people can manage to pick up is also most astounding, particularly when with no more effort those same people could achieve niceties of expression much more effective for sarcasm.

We read them all with that temperance, tolerance, and intelligence which are essential to good editing. The letters revealed not so much what our readers thought (because most of them were too mad to think at all) but rather what they were, and the revelation was to us much more enlightening than hurtful. The result is that we still feel justified in all our previous remarks, since they are only strengthened by the inability of our readers to refute or argue our points.

*Some, however, proved to be more intelligent than others:*

"Young people are always hypersensitive. All of us tend to resent censure. We find it unpleasant to be reminded that our efforts could be improved. But adolescents in particular are self-conscious and over-

anxious to appear poised. Erudition embarrasses them and suggests snobbery.

"I remember how I felt about Lovecraft before I knew him. He represented to me a standard that was unattainable, too precise, too formal, and therefore dull. Of course, I found that Lovecraft was not that at all, but his use of unfamiliar words aroused that resentment at first. I actually was afraid of him, afraid he might laugh at my miserable prose, and always apologetic over the inadequacy of my vocabulary."

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"Amateur journalists have reached such low ebb that anything but laudatory criticism is bitterly resented even when their own withers are not wrung. They are not interested in honest criticism, nor in literature, good or bad, nor in competent editorial comment, nor in the reasoned discussion of any subject under the sun. These facts are so patent they stick out a mile. Edkins has at least presented rational arguments, plausible theories, and said his say in decent English but he seems to have nosed into the wrong pew."

"There is no place in amateur journalism for writers who have any respect for the art of writing. They are not understood because understanding is a minus quantity. They are not wanted. I think this is the explanation of why so many have dropped out of a.j. They could not stand the puerility; they could not function in the sterile air. That is the reason for the vanishing Kleiner, Cole, Loveman, Gidlow, Barlow, Crane, and dozens of others. Other causes have contributed to their retirement, of course, but if the spirit of a.j. was more definitely literary, if its practitioners were really devoted to self-improvement, they would have found some means to stay in the game."

The result:

*Open covenants, openly arrived at: [the following words written by co-editor Ernest A. Edkins:]*

"Perhaps I have been too harsh in my criticisms. I can only offer in extenuation the fact that I have never spoken unkindly of any writer who showed the least desire to improve his writing, or to make sure of the help freely offered by Kleiner, Moe, Lovecraft, and Cole. There are few who know, nor is it necessary that they should know, of the friendly advice, the textual revisions of badly-written copy and the technical comments on style and composition which have been given to a number of young writers, through private correspondence during the past four or five years. If it seems cruel to deal sharply with lazy

beginners who write rubbish and refuse to *try* to write better, we must equally condemn the foot-ball coach who lambasts the shirkers on his team who refuse to turn out for practice and who break all the training rules. I don't presume, of course, to compare myself to a trainer, but merely as a firm believer in trying to learn something about the game you are playing, merely as a fan eager to see the game made interesting. I confess that I *have* tried to pep up the bench-warmers. My method is condemned. I thought the method might be better than no method; but I was wrong."

"After giving the matter some thought, I cannot avoid the conclusion that my usefulness in amateur journalism is ended, if indeed it ever had a beginning. It is possible that if the stuff I have contributed to the amateur press and the views I have aired during the past four years had been met with honest discussion or detailed, factual criticism, or even any plausible sort of condemnation and abuse, I might continue to remain active, always ready to debate moot points, to admit proven errors and to welcome the most devastating examination of my faults and fallacies. But I now seem to have arrived at an impasse, or at least the point where unintelligent and hole-in-the-corner hostility begins to pall. When Babcock busted out in print with his forthright objections I could have embraced him; I was so grateful for any genuine attempt at discussion of the matters which I felt, rightly or wrongly, were vital. But who else has had a lucid word to say? It is all very well to pronounce simply lousy the Edkins theories about writing as the main concern of amateur journalism, his criticisms fair and unfair, the manner of writing ridiculous and his personality that of a sand-crab, but what amateur has taken the trouble to give logical *reasons* for his opinion? When I disagree with anyone, I always state my reasons, my grounds for the opinion; they may be punk, they may be demonstrably erroneous, but at least I state them as my honest conviction. I have been fighting a battle to invigorate a decaying institution whose members prefer its decadence and dumbly resent all attempts to put new life in the old hoss, or new purpose in the game."

"And it came to pass that Michel, the daughter of Saul, looking out at her window, saw David playing and dancing; and she despised him in her heart."

"If amateur journalism is not interested in the study of writing as an art, if it is smugly satisfied with its present lack of standards, if it doesn't even want to discuss the matter, I can see no reason for further effort.

Each side has a right to its own views, and since I am in such a hopeless minority, it would merely be ill-bred of me to continue. That is the reason, and the only reason, for my withdrawal from the field. Such jibes as we have received, even were they printed, could not by any stretch of the imagination be construed as discussable criticism, nor would I dream of discussing them. In fact, there is nothing further to discuss. If, instead of declaring that Edkins is a smarty who uses too many big words, and obscure quotations, and affected language, on top of all which he is an unfair critic, these objectors would take the trouble to get down to brass tacks and refute criticism with criticism, in an honest attempt to disprove my statements, how blithe I would be to stick around and return the compliment. But so far, no dice, so what the hell. Inevitably, I shall be branded as a quitter; the cry will go up 'He couldn't take it'; but whatever the imputations I shall not mind because I am no longer interested."

[Fortunately Edkins did not totally abandon the field after resigning as critic for Bellette; most notably, he served as co-editor of Tim Thrift's *The Aonian* (1942-45) and issued several more numbers of his own *Causerie*. But his contributions to Bellette ended with this issue—ed.]

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Ralph Babcock's *Scarlet Cockerel* is amateurdom's best paper. And reproducing that Rubricated Old Cloister *Torpedo* front page was pure inspiration. We like Ralph's sensation of the spiritual guidance of such outstanding amateurs as Frank Kendall [editor of *Torpedo*], and think there is some truth in it. But we ourselves have always thought Ralph himself endowed with the true spirit of amateur journalism and regard him as Genius No. 1 of the modern generation. We only wish he had been our recruit.

*The Friendly Quill* please us too. Will Bates Grant must love to get it out. His prize church story reminds us of one: The preacher was delivering a longish sermon on the text: "They are weighed in the balance and found wanting." His congregation, eager to be on the golf links and elsewhere, began to leave one by one. "That's right," said the preacher, "as soon as you're weighed, pass out."

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Parker Snapp says: "There are no cliques in the A.A.P.A., no sabotage, no grasping for and holding of power at all costs."

We suspected there was something wrong.

What a dull bunch they must be!

### May 1940 (no. 7)

The papers from our membership this year have been few and far between, pitifully meagre, dull as ditch-water, and even more uninteresting; for ditch-water is full of microbes that can be seen under a microscope and you can find nothing even with a microscope in some amateur papers. Our official organ is so late as to be practically extinct. Our President might as well be a pillar of salt; and the membership, including yours truly, has not until a few moments ago, given a hoot!

For three-quarters of the year we have all been content with this state of affairs, offering only mild protests to each other by way of correspondence; some few of us who are always ready and eager to “do something about it” have roused ourselves sufficiently to make inquiry of the fountain heads but we had no results UNTIL HADLEY SMITH HEAVED THE BRICK OF ‘CHARGES TO THE EXECUTIVE JUDGES’ against Miss Jorgensen [NAPA President (1939-40)] and Mr. Babcock [NAPA Official Editor (1939-40)] and brought us all to sitting posture. Otherwise, we might have slept quite soundly through even the 4th of July.

*Now, Why this Thusness?*

We asked Ralph Babcock, our Official Editor, and here is his reply: “My election last summer was a complete surprise; nevertheless, I decided to go through with the job. I tried hard for a solid month to get dope on the convention but it was like pulling teeth. There was practically no activity. Then I got a car and started week-ending; a.j. was not enticing. I became as indifferent as the rest of the members. T'hell! If they were so lazy as to get out no papers, why bother to break *my* neck over the N.A.? I had other things more interesting....I laid down on the job. Everybody's sore now and wants action. Well, if they want action, why don't they show some themselves?”

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Mr. Babcock, however, cannot hide behind ignorance. He has been a member long enough to know what it is all about; he has been chief executive himself [NAPA President (1934-35)] and knows the difficulties besetting that office; he has travelled over the United States and made the acquaintance of more amateur journalists than most of us; and he has natural cerebral equipment.

I still think he is the best all-around amateur journalist we have recruited in a decade. I think he could have given us perhaps the best *National Amateur* we ever had. He may still do so, for he says: “You may quote me as saying that I have every intention of getting out a total of four National Amateurs before the convention.”

But he has elected rather, as he himself puts it, “to act the perfect hell” and he has let us down.

It should be a lesson to us not to thrust office upon any one as a complete surprise, but instead to select our candidates carefully and consider their fitness for the offices to which we would elect them. THIS IS IMPORTANT.

*Miss Jorgensen* has been given an opportunity to square herself to the membership through the pages of *Bellette*, but she has not availed herself. We can, therefore, think what we will of her and we do think that, for one who sought the office last year and, what is more, indicated that her election would put SALT LAKE CITY on the map she has been pitifully ineffective. Lesson number two, therefore: Choose seasoned members for your candidates; leave the newer ones to acquire wisdom and experience. Experiments are too costly.

Miss Jorgensen has written that she placed all her confidence in Mr. Babcock and depended upon him to issue creditable official organs.

*[Despite an unsuccessful presidential year in 1939-40, Elaine Jorgensen Peck contributed to the amateur journalism hobby for many more years. The same was certainly true of 1939-40 official editor Ralph Babcock (1914-2003). I corresponded with Ralph for a number of years and I was honored to meet Elaine at the Canton, Ohio NAPA convention in 1996—ed.]*

### September 1940 (no. 8)

The liveliest of the conventioners [NAPA, Philadelphia, July 1940] was Willametta Turnepseed. Every moment was significant to Willametta, and sleep a waste of time. Willametta is one of our sturdiest recent recruits and the manner in which she has taken hold of the hobby, and of the membership's affections, is commendable. “What is the matter with amateur journalism?” “Nothing,” says Willametta, and she is right. Nothing is ever the matter with it to members like her, for she sees to it that that is a fact.

*Walk One Flight*, too, is getting better and

better. *Bellette* considers it one of our best papers in that it reveals not only the talent but the personality of the editor.

#### April 1941 (no. 9)

For no reason at all, there came to our mind the other day, the name of Gus Kiss, who once loomed large in a.j. Remembering Gus, we thought of the time he ran for Executive Judge with Frank Kendall and George Thomson. All the ballots, with scarcely an exception, read: "Kendall Kiss Thomson." Little incidents like that stick in our memory and take our mind off the war.

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A recent number of *Interesting Items* quoted a paragraph written by me many years ago and reminds me that I should definitely correct an impression made erroneously by that paragraph. I was speaking figuratively in using the word "immigrant" in that article but many have jumped to the conclusion that I landed at Ellis Island in my infancy. I did not. I have never been to Ellis Island for any purpose up to the present minute. To keep the record straight: I was born in New York City and my family, on both sides, has been in the United States for more than one hundred years.

[*Born Edna von der Heide, "Vondy," like many other Americans of German descent, anglicized her name (to Edna Hyde) during World War I—ed.*]

#### June 1941 (no. 10)

[*On the anonymous journal Gaucherie:*]

"Zounds, Mr. Zimmerman" was neat. Instead of counting senseless sheep, *Bellette* has been singing herself to sleep with parodies on that brilliant bleat. Cuckoo, Mr. Crane; Curses, Mr. Cole; Hell, Mr. Haggerty; Burp, Mr. Babcock; WOF, Willametta; Viola, Vondy. But *Gaucherie* certainly muffed one with "Zounds, Mr. Edkins." The thing to say was, of course, "Egad, Mr. Edkins!"

In *Causerie* Mr. Edkins mentions Babcock, Haggerty, Cole, Segal, Macauley, Moitoret, Morton, Hadley Smith, Spink, and McDonald as members he considers good material for office. The editor of *Gaucherie* (nameless wretch) says: "These are the finest lot of feeble ancient used-to-wases..."

Of course, that gentleman(?) could easily produce energetic young up-and-coming individuals to

match the activity and interest of those he so rudely consigns to the discard, or he would not suggest the challenge.

However, *Bellette* notes that Mr. Anonymous plays around with what he calls "dungforks" so perhaps he's only naturally dirty.

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*Politics:*

Nobody can call me lazy and get away with it. To be sure, I do not want to be President of the N.A.P.A., the United States, the Daughters of the Confederacy, Mount Holyoke, Commonwealth Edison, or Michigan Gas, but it is not laziness which is responsible for the inertia. It is simply that I do not qualify. My activity in the N.A.P.A. is sporadic rather than constant, inspirational rather than consistent. I am no longer able to devote to the hobby the full measure of my devotion. There are definitely days when I find it dull and dumb. Besides, "Vengeance is sweet." The N.A.P.A. passed up its chances of electing me President and, although the reprehensibles are no longer components of the N.A.P.A., I take a keen delight in having the last laugh.

[*Vondy was defeated for president by George Julian Houtain (1884-1945) in 1915 and by his wife E[lsie] Dorothy Grant McLaughlin Houtain (1889-1980) in 1921—ed.*]

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We greet young Mr. Albert Lee, who has now attended two A.P.C. meetings. Mr. Lee is Chinese. He found amateur journalism through the C. W. Smith Collection at the New York Public Library. He has borrowed a press and we suspect that he writes as excellent English as he speaks. His enthusiasm is high so let us give him encouragement.

#### September 1941 (no. 11)

*I've let myself in for a lot of trouble!*

It must have been the date. August 13th it was and George Trainer calls up on the phone and he says, says he: "I want you to be Chairman of the Bureau of Critics." Me! Can y' imagine! I know he asked B. Crane, A. Moitoret, and several others, all without success, and I should have said: "I'm engaged in National Defense," or "I have a low number in the draft." But I just couldn't think of anything bright like that. So I said: "O.K." And now, what? I do not know anything. I only know what I like. And I'm conscious of the fact that my taste is good. (I like to eat in

Longchamps and Rockefeller Center.) But does that make a critic? I think not. But in this instance it is going to. Like the Biblical character known as Zaccheus, I'm up a tree. And this year the Bureau of Critics is going to be good—is what I mean!

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The New York Public Library has issued a Bulletin entitled *Amateur Journalism* by Earnest Elmo Calkins (June 1941). It may be obtained for 15¢. Our purpose, however, is not to advertise this pamphlet, although it may be of interest to present amateur journalists. Our purpose is to tell off Earnest Elmo. Says he:

The National Amateur Press Association was organized in 1876 at the Philadelphia Centennial, and that accounts for many publications named 'Amateur' something or other in the years immediately following...A by-law required that a candidate for president should have published at least ten regular successive issues of his paper....Amateurism's great weakness is a tendency to rest satisfied with the achievement of Vol. 1, No. 1.

During the past 25 years effort has been made to keep alive the memory of a common experience by means of a loosely organized society known as 'The Fossils', an alumni of former of amateur editors. For some years an annual banquet was held but despite the enthusiasm of a few members that amiable function has lapsed.

thus indicating that we are all ready for decent burial. If Earnest were not so venerable, and our respect for him less than it is, we would smack him down hard; ask him where he has been all these years and other pertinent questions. But we were brought up to respect our elders and to be courteous to those who argue without possession of all the facts. Therefore, we suggest somebody go tell Mr. Calkins that we have been going on nicely without him for quite a while, thank you.

The Library's collection of amateur periodicals contains nearly 3,000 titles and probably between 7,000 and 8,000 pieces. The earliest group was acquired in 1906 when Bertram Adler gave the Library about 70 amateur publications. In 1914 a collection of 700 papers, mostly of the years 1875-1885, was purchased and in 1939-40 the largest collection came as a gift of Mr. Charles W. Smith (Tryout). The collection covers best the years 1872 to 1885 and the first decade of the twentieth century, although there are representative titles for the intervening and later years. Most of the States, Canada, the British Isles, and other parts of the British Empire

are represented. An exhibition entitled "Amateur Periodicals: Selections from the C. W. Smith and Other Collections" was on view from April 10th to May 11th 1941 in the small exhibition room (112) of the Central Building, Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street. Perhaps we may arrange an exhibit of these papers with the Library during the next convention.

On this subject of Collections: Now that Edwin Hadley Smith and Tryout Smith have made them and turned them over to institutions, it behooves B. J. Smith to start another for the midwest. Looks as if we'd die out completely except for the Smiths.

[*Edwin Hadley Smith's Library of Amateur Journalism—now the property of the University of Wisconsin at Madison—was housed at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia when Vondy wrote. The promising young amateur B. J. Smith, editor of Eisegesis and Literary Newszette, became engaged to Willametta Turnepseed in 1942 but was killed in action in World War II in 1944. Willametta continued Literary Newszette for many years—ed.*]

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*Gaudeamus Igitur: Or Mixing the Metaphors*

Says Frank E. Schermerhorn: "In your No. 10 issue you call me, inter alia, 'a crop of barnacles.' You are quite right. There is no good reason why my name should be printed free in the National Amateur, asterisk or none. Let it be omitted. Suits me perfectly...dead ones should not become active again merely to have you 'learn to forgive them.' There must be no excess baggage on our modern ship of state." [Vondy had commented unfavorably on the inactivity of life members including ex-presidents—ed.] Inter alia, we seem to have struck Achilles' heel. We are sorry. When we suggested that we unhorse the barnacles from our ship of state we did not mean him. All we ask is that occasionally the asterisks chirp a little. Might even get together and issue a mimeograph like this, called *The Chirping Asterisk*. Nice bird.

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Too frequently *The Fossil* reminds me of that rollicking old hymn: "Hark, from the tomb a mournful sound." I really think ye editor could do better. [Truman J. Spencer edited *The Fossil* from 1934 until his death in 1944—ed.] What if we are all goose-stepping into eternity faster than we like? Is any benefit to be derived from calling the mileage on us? I am duly regretful, of course, for the departure of so many who were near and dear, but even they I think would prefer from us some more lively reminder of that spirit which

dwells among us. They'd like, for instance, to be remembered for their wit, for ribaldry if any, for the merry quips and peccadillos which make each of us different from the others. *I'd* like lively stories told of me,—with the proper admixture of common sense and discretion, of course,—so that I might come alive again and sit among you in spirit at least, if no longer in the flesh.

The Fossils are too funereal. Collectively, they give me the creeps, although, occasionally, I admit, some of the shivers they induce are decidedly pleasant. I plead for reform while still the breath is in us. Let us laugh into our beers rather than cry over our biers. Fate is a humorist. If she were not, she would not remove a worthy President, and a Vice-President, just to make on particular Second Vice-President Chief-Number-One-Heaven-Talkie-Man. Of course, that is exactly the kind of thing that is always happening to Tony, as we told you in *Cubicle*, but it is also indicative of the fact that Life frequently carries his tongue in his cheek.

Incidentally, the latest number of *The Fossil* is interesting and not without liveliness. But what does Prexy [Anthony F. Moitoret, Fossil President (1941-42)] mean by addressing us as “Dear Brothers”? Has it escaped him that there are “Dear Sisters” among us now? Few enough to go round, to be sure, but certainly not to be slighted. Tony, my dear, we are surprised at you!

This number of *Bellette* is going to the Fossil list because we want them to keep abreast of the times, to know that amateur journalism is not dead. But also because some of them make derogatory remarks about this humble business of the mimeograph. *Bellette* contends that a good mimeo paper is a darned sight better than no paper at all; that in these days a mimeo gets around faster with the news. The chief blessing of amateur journalism is contact and the sole purpose of *Bellette* is contact. Take it or leave it.

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Meyer Perlmut, at Fort Bliss, writes us as follows about his visit with Edwin B. Hill. “Mr. Hill lives in a small town about twelve miles from El Paso. Every one in the town knows him. The house, white with blue window trim, is the southwest, one-story type. A small wooden sign on the lawn says simply: ‘Graygarth. Edwin B. Hill.’ Since he did not know me, my name meant nothing, but when I mentioned the magic words ‘National Amateur Press Association’ he asked me in. Then time flew. It was easier for me to let

him do the talking, and I did not mind being a listener. I heard about the first convention Mr. Hill attended in '83. Names of famous amateurs were mentioned along with comments and incidents involving them. Mr. Hill recalled his newspaper days in Michigan, Texas, Arizona and the Southwest, when a man's pistol was his best friend. He thinks amateur journalism the most wonderful hobby. (Don't we all?) If he did not expect to move very soon he would still be issuing *Spectator*. All his equipment is boxed, however, ready for moving day. But he still answers letters promptly. When I went away after our meeting both my hands were full of the plums from Mr. Hill's backyard. I enjoyed my visit with him. Many of the things he told me make the Rio Grande very much more interesting as I get around it more and more.”

Meyer also writes of Fort Bliss: “From what I hear of other posts I am led to believe Fort Bliss is one of the best. I'm lucky. We have stone barracks, swimming pools, tennis courts, an air-conditioned theatre, restaurants, clothing-store, shoe-store, barbers, tailor-shops, modern ice-cream parlors, large library, and plenty of grass, trees, and paved roads and a beautiful view of the mountains nearby. The people in El Paso are very nice and welcome us to their homes.”

It's a tough life!

#### November 1941 (no. 12)

*'Twas a fine day entirely*

But New York amateur journalists are certainly a lot of Free Frenchmen. With plans already made shortly after Labor Day for a junket to Boston on October 12th, the day arrived with nobody knowing anything five minutes before the train left.

Nevertheless, if you are one of those persons-who-enjoy-the-unexpected, a little thing like that will never daunt you. You will simply go ahead and make your own plans. These will include calling up everybody in the metropolitan area every day for a week before the day to start for Boston, and special deliveries every half hour from Michael White. This all adds to the confusion but also to the joy of life and you learn a great deal. Burton Crane doesn't know; Bob Telschow thinks he has to work; Segal can't make it; Anderson is moving; Jane will go if she can connect with Asbury Park; Bob Smith's mother won't trust him with anybody but the Haggertys; Wesson spent all his money in Cleveland [NAPA convention, July 1941]; Adams discovers an excursion at midnight for very

little money, which will get us all there at the same time, if we don't mind sitting up all night with each other; Trainer says the whole thing is a flop.

You tear your hair and curse the genus a.j. with that cheery expletive on which we now have priority rights—MASAKA. You go to bed counting all the money, time and effort you have saved, instead of sheep.

The next morning, Bob Telschow writes: "My wife doesn't like the idea at all, but if you are going..." Vincent Haggerty says: "If you and I and Adams are present, nothing can be a flop." Confidence is restored; the evening and the morning are another day, and finally on the morning of the 11th Felicitas phones: "Seven of us are here, all ready to start."

Franklin Delano Roosevelt has again saved the country....

But I boarded the one o'clock train for Boston by myself with considerable trepidation. The junket was my idea and now it was going to fall through. I do not like such sentiments. When I got to Boston to find the Hotel Statler unable to give me a room, because of a convention of bakers was moving in atop a convention of doctors, I knew that everything was going to turn out badly.

I had told people to meet me at the Statler. There was no way to change that now. I'd have to sleep in the lobby. But, as the Duke of Windsor once said, "at long last" the hotel reneged, said I could have bed till nine in the morning. I ensconced myself and called up everybody I knew in Boston—extra-curricular, that is, so that I will have some friends left me if amateur journalism fails. They came down and we had a quiet evening with all thought of sleep abandoned. At nine on Sunday morning the Statler rapped on my door politely to tell me the bakers wanted my bed. "Okay," said I, "don't like crumbs in it anyway...."

So I went to the Coles in Wollaston. There were gathered Bob Telschow, Vincent and Flisses, Jane McCarthy, Bob Smith, A. M. Adams, Bill Groveman, Ethel May Johnston Myers and Denys Peter, Mario Cole and Lionel La Rochelle....

Mrs. Cole served us dinner—a banquet, really. Vincent said: "Do we have to go to the White's?" and I wondered myself. But we did have to; it would never have done to stop where we were, however happy we might be.

So we piled into cars and trekked toward Woburn. South Boston, devoid of Sunday drivers, affords the easiest way and to my mind provides an

ideal area for some of Uncle Delano's promiscuous housing projects. It took about an hour to reach Woburn, where we were due at one o'clock. It was nearly four when we arrived.

Mike White was tearing his hair and swearing in Gaelic, but between whiles had collected the greatest aggregation of New England journalists it has ever been my good fortune to meet outside of a convention.

Tim Thrift was there, and if nobody else had been in the parlor, I'd have been satisfied with just that much. For Tim Thrift is to me one of the gods. There were also, however, Will Bates Grant, Charlie Parker, Albert Chapin, Joe Lynch, Art Weidner, about thirty people in all. My head began to swim, not from any concoction of spirits made by man.

Will Bates Grant kidnapped Vincent Haggerty and me and took us to The Hermitage at Greenwood, where he prints *The Friendly Quill*. It was very good to have Vincent along because Will didn't seem to know the way to his own place. He said I did it, but I was never less guilty. I would not have missed the trip for anything, and some time I want to devote an entire article to Will Grant's place. It is one of our shrines.

When we got back to Woburn, there had been a wiener-roast, Telschow had taken pictures, and Michael White had developed a brogue which Jane McCarthy said you could cut with a knife.

The time went all too quickly in talk and banter, in the exchange of pleasantries, in securing autographs, in consuming Mrs. White's good victuals.

Finally a meeting was called and The Hub Club tentatively reorganized with Ed Cole as Chairman and Joe Lynch as Secretary.

Tim Thrift made a splendid impromptu talk on the difficulties of amateur printing in his boyhood, a talk I would like to reproduce if possible in *Bellette*. It would settle for all, I think, the controversy about our best printers.

There was a little memorial minute to James F. Morton who will never be with us again. Bob Telschow had brought with him the eulogy delivered at James' funeral by Rabbi Raisin, one of James' friends. This was read to the gathering. It was a true picture of James as we knew him. Then we all stood a while in silent tribute to this man among us who had lived so well and so full a life.

Bob Telschow had to make a train and others had long distances to travel. A little before midnight, then, goodnights were said and we started off, stopping for a brief moment at Tim Thrift's where Telschow

took a picture which will go down in our annals as a classic, if it turns out.

The gathering was I think one of the finest ever held anywhere in amateur journalism. It will be difficult indeed to get such a group together again. For me it will stand out always as memorable. And if any one ever quotes to me that thing about the Cabots and the Lowells, I'll put on a brogue myself....

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We have not seen it, but we hear there is another anonymous paper in circulation. Something called *The Shenanigander*. We never could understand the mentality of one who would go to the time, trouble, and expense of putting out a paper anonymously. It certainly is love's labor completely lost. We bitterly decry the anonymous paper. It is mean, usually taking a smack at some one who has earnestly given our hobby affectionate interest; and it certainly detracts from the enthusiasm of our newer members. Fond mamas, seeing such sheets, are wont to keep their babies from association with people like that, and we can't blame them. And, worst of all, these anonymities are seldom clever. They are only sad imitations of the real thing. A bas, all of them.

#### January 1942 (no. 13)

*Library News* was interesting because it was full of the stuff we like to read about amateur journalists. To us the things which make people interesting or charming are the things one does not generally know about them. That Amanda Frees escaped Paul Campbell to fall into the arms of Tim Thrift, for instance.... The Lucky Dog!.... Apologies are still in order for what J. Heins once said about Vondy. But the only kind the gal would even consider should come wrapped in the product of Papa's 137 acre Pine Bush Mink Ranch....

#### May 1942 (no. 14)

We all know that, occasionally, in amateur journalism we suffer from what is known as the doldrums. These come, not because of wars, or bad times, or Acts of God, but because of inefficient, inexperienced, or inexpert leadership. However much certain individuals in our membership may be active, however many papers may be published, however good the official personnel of the board may be, the tempo of the administration is derived from the activity of the

Chief Executive; and if he is not a man of energy, competence, and experience, with a full knowledge of the workings of our organization and its membership, he cannot make a success of his office.

So we just elevate somebody who has been an Official Editor and let it go at that.

I am impressed by the fact that unseasoned members have, in the main, given us poor administrations. Look over the roster and judge for yourself. You will even have a difficult time recalling some of them and their claims to popularity among us. They may, for all we know, be the most efficient people in the world, full to the brim of energy, vim, and vigor, but they failed somehow to get this across to us while they were warming the executive high-chair. And we have them about our necks now like the Ancient Mariner his albatross.

We've done it before,  
And we'll do it again....  
But not if I can help it.

We are a hobby, of course. Not a business. Those we elect must devote the major portion of their time to earning their living. And we cannot hold it against a man who, after his election finds his job, his baby, his home, or his personal interests so much for him that his duty to the hobby suffers. But we can, and certainly should, take all these things into consideration BEFORE we nominate our candidates and really behave as if we were running an organization with some common sense.

[Citing their experience, Vondy supported Charles A. Parker for president and John B. Schlarb for official editor in the 1942 NAPA electoral contest. However, she was of two minds concerning Denver's bid for the 1943 convention:]

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Carl Halvarson, Patson Harris, and Bob Northrup enlist my vote for Denver, Colorado, as convention seat in 1943. Denver is to my mind the most beautiful city in the United States; and I have seen practically all of them. I am not sure, however, that it is wise to pick a place so far distant from our active centers at a time when travelling may be curtailed by the government—and, Denver, I think, should first give stronger evidence of interest and support. But if we do elect Denver it may be that interest and support will be forthcoming.

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Too bad James F. Guinane's *The Mishap* was so aptly named. The copy of this little journal which we

saw was snappy and clever. We hope it is revived and right soon. Friend of Leon Stone in Australia, this Guinane, and Burton Smith seems to have had a big hand in encouraging him. He makes interesting and lively comments on us and our papers, all of which *Bellette* found entertaining. He says he "wouldn't trust us alone at a bachelor's dinner," but we think he is prejudiced. Any numbers of bachelors are safe with us; we've got ours.

### August 1942 (no. 15)

The N.A.P.A. has some good pray-ers in its midst. They can head straight off into those vocatives which tell God all about it, and the laymen do almost as well as the preachers. Earl Bonnell was noble in New York. But if ever any one calls on me to pray at a convention, it'll be something like this: "God bless our little fraternity of letters. Make us happy in our dealings with one another. Give us tolerance, forbearance, kindness, patience, so that we may get through our little business with appreciation and affection for each other still intact. Be with us while we meet together, and help us to use our small talents to the glory of Thy Name."

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*And the Things That Happen to You!*

Every time you meet with the A.P.C. at Sheldon Wesson's something happens. On December 7th it was war; on June 7th it was flood.

It began to rain about six but by nine the streets of Forest Hills were little rivers and those same little rivers soon overflowed their banks and poured into basements. When Sheldon and his brother Jerry were ordered to bail out, the A.P.C. Meeting disbanded *sine die*.

Burton Crane toted me to the station because he said he could do it and I did not want to spoil my new gabardines. (I make this announcement boldly because Charley Heins was along and the last time this sort of thing happened Charley's hyperbole went haywire). [*Vondy refers to the Blue Pencil Club meeting of October 17, 1920, held at the Heins home in Ridgefield Park, New Jersey. Vondy and Dicky Kevern apparently engaged in some horseplay on the staircase which young John Milton Heins and his sister Gladys reported sensationally in The American Amateur—ed.*] It was only two or three blocks anyway and completely dark and nobody knows us in Forest Hills. Besides, when it rains like that, nobody ought to mind. Slushing along with us were Vincent and

Felicitas, hand in hand, Albert Lee, and Peter Wallach, loving the wet. We made the subway and got seats in the first car of a train. That ought to have been a warning, for there are never any seats on Sunday nights; nor on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, or Saturday nights either. Albert Lee and I sat together. Charley and Burton had some politics to peel and fry; and V. & F. were side by side in a comfortable corner. This left Peter Wallach pretty much to himself, so he went up front to ride with the motorman.

All went well for about half the distance to the next station. Then the train stalled. "There's a pipe burst up ahead," Wallach reported, jolting several passengers into the aisles with this scoop. We heard the rushing water which confirmed this and then the train moved on a few paces. Besides a power house, we stalled again, and looking out of the windows saw water rushing excitedly out of the power house, while men in rubber hip-boots and pants rolled to the mezzanines went wading around looking for the leak. Our first car got just beyond this scene of devastation and stalled again; this time for good. The power was shut off. And the water started to rise!

Vincent and Felicitas began instantly to derive great power from all the Missions and Novenas they've made to date. It actually showed. They were as cool and collected as the pair of doves in Noah's Ark, those he sent out finally on the scouting expedition. The water rose slowly to the level of the tracks, whereupon the car brakes were released. "Man the pumps!"

"We're all right," comforted Burton, "till the water reaches our necks and we begin to gurgle." This was excellent encouragement because Burton is six feet two. "Albert," said Vincent, to Lee, "The Japans have found out you're here," Albert being about four feet eleven. And Peter Wallach decided he'd made a grave mistake in not accepting the Wesson's invitation to spend the night.

All this time the people were very quiet, fearing the worst, wondering how long you could hang on to those ivory rings called straps with your chin up, if the darned things actually would support you at all. And all this time the train was stalled and the water rising. I had once seen a motion picture called "Men Without Women" by my friend, James Kevin McGuinness. It was a vivid portrayal of death in a submarine, rammed so that the torpedo tube was blocked. It was years since I had viewed it but it came back to me at this moment very vividly. "Would this

thing float?" I asked Charley Heins, who in the lapse of time had supplanted Albert Lee beside me. But Charley could only put arguments before me to show why the United ought to have an Alumni Association, so many having been sold out to the Big League.

And then, like a flash, I realized all the water we could still hear and see was rushing away from us, probably under all the cars behind ours, and we were OK only till they were flooded and their passengers came stampeding into ours. Bear with me yet a little for, under that circumstance, this article would never have been written.

### Chapter 2

At last the motorman received sealed orders to run us back to our port of entry. Power enough was supplied—by the Haggertys' prayers I have no doubt.

Now 63rd Drive, Forest Hills, is still No Man's Land. Sheldon Wesson has lived there only a little while. It is one vast stretch of flatland bearing one single landmark: the hut of the Lost Battalion. The hut had S.R.O. hanging on the doorknob. But Burton Crane, in his everlasting search for waffles as God made them, discerned a bar and grill somewhere across the plains. We were all wet anyway, what with only one umbrella among us, so it did not matter very much what our convictions were on the liquor traffic. We staggered toward the bar and grill. There we phoned our various kinfolks over the air that ancient but still dour ditty: "We won't be home until morning" and finally persuaded Peter and Albert to go back to Wesson's like good boys and go to sleep.

Relieved of our responsibilities in this masterful fashion the survivors filled themselves with lobster Newburg and onion soup, on top of Mrs. Wesson's delectable spaghetti, too; while I went out to scout for a means of conveyance to civilization.

"No, ma'am, the Lonkisland ain't runnin'; track's flooded." "No lady, I haven't gas enough." "The busses don't stop here. You have to go to Woodhaven Boulevard; eight blocks." "You could walk to the Queensboro Bridge; it's only eleven miles." Well, why not? 'Twas a long time since I'd walked home from a party. So we started off. It was then after midnight and half the population of Long Island was marooned somewhere. The houses were dark and deserted; neglected dogs howled within; rain continued to pour down without. It was lovely, walking along like that with such lively companions, and so long as we stayed outdoors our reputations were intact.

But suddenly there was a bus! I still suspect

the Haggertys can produce miracles because that bus certainly grew where none had grown before. And it was empty! "A bus!" we yelled and people sprang up like mushrooms all over the place. They filled the bus, and the driver pledging us all to profound secrecy took us clear across Long Island to Roosevelt Avenue station of the 'L'. From there it was easy.

And Mike White is writing a play on the theme!

### February 1943 (no. 16)

*"In Europe, the Price is Death:*

If you knew that the price of reading this paper was death, would you read it? If you wrote for it and knew the reward of being found out was death, would you continue to write? For death is the price thousands of readers of tiny news-sheets in occupied Europe risk paying with the papers they publish. Death is the reward scores of men have risked and received for printing these news sheets in hidden cellars by candlelight. The Gestapo, the ruthless gauleiters, have failed to stifle the underground free press. Copies come out irregularly, but they come out. If the editor and his staff are shot, others take their places. Before one editor's blood is dry, the ink is wet on a new issue in some dingy loft or cellar. After months of painstaking effort in one case the entire staff was arrested and condemned to death. The Governor watched the executions and stepped back into his office—and found, neatly folded on his desk, a new issue of the paper he had tried to suppress! Each copy handed from hand to hand has thousands of readers; some times it is baked into a loaf of bread; occasionally a Judas interrupts the chain of distribution and readers die, but almost never does anyone talk, so the paper can't be traced to its source. For its editors there are no rewards except death. The articles are unsigned. There are no salaries. Paper and presses are at a premium. 'La Libre Belgique' is the most famous but there are many others: *many are multigraphed sheets*; some duplicated typewritten pages; some not even that elaborate, just pieces of foolscap covered in longhand. In Holland 'Parool', and a dozen less consistent hand-printed papers, keep Netherlands spirits up. In Norway there is 'Royal Post'; in Czechoslovakia 'V Job'. In Poland 'Walka'. The Anti-Nazi Yugoslavian Partisans print their newspapers in the Yugoslav forests. And 'Internews' is published by the British and Americans interned by the Japanese in Santo Tomas University,

Manila. In France there are dozens of papers circulating from hand to hand." *Bellette* feels a singularly sympathetic kinship with these persistent editors. Their patriotic fervor, of course, is exceedingly commendable. But it is rather their innate love of the art which gets us. They write and print in the face of death because they MUST. They can't help it. "Before one editor's blood is dry the ink is wet on a new edition." So amateur journalism goes on,—the freest impulse in the world. You cannot black it out. You cannot asphyxiate it. You cannot still it, even with the biggest guns in the world.

*[The double quotes indicate that Vondy is quoting from a news article. Her expression of sympathy with the underground press in Europe seemed worth selecting despite the fact that most of the text is quoted from another, unspecified source—ed.]*

#### June 1943 (no. 17)

##### *Diths*

(For the uninitiated who won't know about Diths, we refer to Tim Thrift's *Aonian*.) These gremlins of the printing world bedevil the mimeographers, too. Their favorite sport is etoin shrdlu. Thus they make you write things you never intended. So, in our last issue, we had Sylvia Crane reporting no dependents when actually she said she had two.

There are diths and diths, but the worst possible is the dithyramb. That baby can put you on the spot, getting your readers to see between the lines things you never said at all, at all. One such engaging little dith wedged into the visibility of B. F. Moss the whilst he was reading *Bellette* 16. Says Mr. Moss: "I recognize the fact that *Bellette* is an impudent publication. [For many issues, Vondy carried this description in her byline—ed.] Nevertheless, there are remarks often made in jest which touch a subject in this world of ours today best left unsaid. The jive affects religion. The statement 'there is no god but gold and infinite is its profit' never was recognized by me. I am broadminded enough to condone any one's belief in any form of worship...Surely you do not believe that one can enjoy any of the bounties of this earth without religion and conscience?"

Now, I ask you? Of course, we hastened to assure Mr. Moss that our remarks had not the intent which he interpreted; that we care not one jot or tittle what a man's religion, nor whether he has any; that we

love all men, though some, naturally, a little more than others, and that, as a matter of fact, we liked his party last December, his house, his family, his pets, and his sacred honor. He says: "I did not leave amateur journalism because there is no money in it. It did consume considerable of my time and I was unable to do it justice. The reincarnation of my interest has been brought about by the fact that others with whom I am affiliated have made it possible for me to now devote a few hours to relaxation...I hope you will retract in your next issue."

We retract as above. But one sentence: "Surely you do not believe that one can enjoy the bounties of this earth without religion and conscience," is a challenge. For we do believe it. We even know people without religion and/or conscience who enjoy the bounties of this earth way up into the 80s and 90s. God seems awfully good to them, and we like them, too; they are gracious and charming. They are jaunty, chipper, perky people, with lightness of heart, blithe spirits, without priggishness, without affectation. They never want to reform the world. And, when we are reminded, as we frequently are these days, of the kind of people who shall inherit the earth, we leap to the French language of the Sermon on the Mount, which has it: "The debonair shall inherit the earth." That is O.K. with us. It really could be quite a lovely post-war world with the debonair running things, even if it was full of people without religion or conscience.

*[Vondy had described a visit to Moss's wealthy household and attributed his departure from amateur journalism to the pressures of business—ed.]*

#### June 1944 (no. 18)

##### *"Hells' Belle"*

....

Sure we need girdles on our consciences and uplift bras on our morals but savoir faire makes a swell sarong too. The trouble with the Cotton Mathers and Parsons Weems of this world is that they take themselves too seriously. Satire, we think, does not "sear the living tissues of sincerity and truth." It firms their contours like a two-way stretch. Satire with us is a form of righteous indignation. And we contend that righteous indignation is a sinew of the soul.

#### January 1945 (no. 19)

*Make the Punishment Fit the Crime:*

Burton Crane would not accept the nomination for official editor in Boston because he feared professional success as a playwright might force him to resign. With a rashness seldom exceeded even by me, I said I'd take over if that happened, for I thought Burton would become so engrossed in *The National Amateur* he'd have no time for plays.

Now, after producing two issues of the most magnificent volume we have had in years, he is assigned to an important mission in the Pacific and I am IT. Wars have a neat habit of dealing thus with me.

However, I would like it understood that I shall merely carry out Burton Crane's ideas, keeping *The National Amateur* as nearly as possible HIS official organ, continuing myself merely in the succorole. AND, it definitely does NOT mean that I shall be a candidate for the presidency by virtue of this office. It means only that I get another chance to slave for the good old N.A.P.A., the while I pile up fame as a modish figure in ha-snappy hats.

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*Hemoglobin:*

The Editor of *Tick Tock* holds to the notion that The Fossils are an order of ancients interested only in seeing who can live the longest. It was to dispel that concept that The Fossils admitted women to their ranks and then reduced the period of active interest to fifteen years as an entrance requirement. No woman, they figured, would ever be content merely to sit by and accumulate years; and the younger element was expected to provide albuminoid substance for the bloodstream of the organization. This they have done. We are no longer totterers-on-the-brink.

Another hoary concept is that amateur journalism is made up of persons in the tender years under twenty. We play up the teen-agers, wearing away on the theme that the boy with the printing press is the backbone of our hobby, when as a matter of cold fact he hasn't been for any period at all since I entered the ranks. The boys I have known have been ripe and mature, never much of the kid about them, even when they were in short pants. A.J. has never been a juvenile sport; it was always an adult recreation. You will find even the teen-agers among us, and the sub-teens, quite a bit older in the upper story than most of their contemporaries in the outside world. For that reason they should make good Fossils even if they are under thirty when they are eligible.

The whole idea, anyway, is to make The Fossils the Alumni Association of amateur journalism,

not to the exclusion of all other sporadic outfits of old-timers, but in addition to them to create one durable-outstanding body in which all those who wish to maintain interest if not activity may be incorporated. That is all.

*[Vondy's allegiance to The Fossils strengthened once the Spencer era—with its long rolls of decedent ancients—had passed in 1944. She probably also felt that The Fossils were a more worthy alumni association than the beloved child of Charley Heins's later years, the United Alumni Association—ed.]*

### May 1946 (no. 20)

August Derleth and Arkham House deserve a hand, perhaps, for bringing Howard P. Lovecraft to the attention of the public, but we can't help our feeling that H.P.L. should have enjoyed and perhaps benefitted financially by something like this while yet the breath of life was in him. Lovecraft lived a hermit's life, starved in a garret, for love of his art. Public acclaim would have made him happier. There is a bitter taste to all this after-death proclamation. We don't like it.

*[Arkham House publisher August Derleth (1909-1971) was a fellow Fossil and was doubtless stung by these words from Vondy. He argued strongly in print—I believe correctly—against the assertions that Lovecraft lived in a garret or starved himself. Vondy may have had an exaggerated concept of Lovecraft's asceticism—there is no denying that he denied himself luxuries—e.g., expensive hotel rooms when the Y.M.C.A. would do—in order to send postcards to dozens of friends when he travelled. More importantly, he was generous with the time he devoted to his correspondence with amateur journalists and others. If Vondy ever encountered Lovecraft in his own home while he resided in New York City it was probably in Sonia's ample apartment at 259 Parkside in Brooklyn rather than in his single room with alcove at 169 Clinton Street. To the best of my knowledge and belief, she never visited him in any of his residences in Providence. His single room at 10 Barnes Street (1926-33) was probably his most humble quarters after 169 Clinton Street although he did enjoy the company of his elder aunt Mrs. Clark (in another apartment) at 10 Barnes. By way of contrast, the final residence which he shared with his younger aunt Mrs. Gamwell at 66 College Street was an entire floor of a wonderful Federal period home (now at 65 Prospect Street), almost an apotheosis as far as living quarters were*

concerned—ed.]

**April 1948 (no. 22)**

And here we are again trying to wedge mimeos and offsets and miscellaneous trials-and-errors into the same category with printing. There are those who will stick it out on this line if it takes forever. No real printer will compete with these side-lines; he'd be ashamed. Mimeos and offsets are still step-children in the art world. Let's strive first to elevate them a little before we call them equal to even the lowliest printing. Our aim should be to encourage printing, not the contrary; and we will lose our printers if we lump them with the mimeos we have today. Of course I mimeo myself—but this paper is issued for its *contents* and desires no competition with printery. Our interest is writing, not mechanics.

**FOSSIL REVIEWS**

**Ken Faig, Jr.**

Thomas Whitbread, *The Structures Minds Erect*, San Antonio, Texas, Pecan Grove Press, 2007 (ISBN 978-1-931247-24-2, 57pp., \$15.00 + \$1.50 shipping, from the publisher, Box A1, Camino Santa Maria, San Antonio, TX 78228.

Tom Whitbread, a graduate of Amherst College (B.A., 1952) and Harvard University (Ph.D., 1959), has been a member of the English faculty at the University of Texas in Austin since 1959. His previous books of verse are *Four Infinitives* (Harper & Row, 1964) and *Whomp and Moonshiver* (BOA Editions, 1982). Since his teens, Tom has also been a member of the amateur journalism community and he has been a member of The Fossils for many years.

The amateur journalism hobby has produced many of poets—good and bad—over the years. Literally dozens of privately-printed editions of their verse have been produced, many by amateur presses. Tom is certainly not the only poet in our Fossil ranks. Louise Lincoln is a master of delightful humorous verse. Martha Shivers and Marion Fields Wyllie are poets whose best work is grounded in nature. Over the years, other poets have graced our ranks. Joseph Dana Miller was perhaps the most noted poet among the founding members of The Fossils. Edna Hyde and Elsa Gidlow were able amateur poets in the early years of the

twentieth century.

Tom Whitbread, however, is a significant poet whose readership extends well beyond the ranks of amateur journalism. The poems in *The Structures Minds Erect* are unrhymed free verse but nevertheless reflect the poet's studied choice of word and sense for rhythm. Like all successful poems, these works capture images that remain in our minds. The staying power of Whitbread's images, I think, is closely related to the intellectual rigor he practices in the construction of his poetry. Some of Tom's most moving poems relate to loss. In "My Mother's Dying" he writes that he

Heard her death rattle, saw the calm occur  
From inside her, outward...

—a stark depiction of the end of life which even includes her medical diagnosis (mesothelioma). Despite the "hideously distended belly" resulting from her cancer, Whitbread can appreciate his mother's remaining corporeality:

The smooth brown skin of her calves,...how firm  
They were, in what fine shape, how fully ready  
After supper to lead our brisk familiar walk

This poem brought back for me images of the passing of both of my own parents—my mother's loud death rattle (the death rattle is the source of the vulgar term "croak") and what fine shape my dying father was in except for the cancer in his colon.

Another poem of loss is "Comitatus Violated" in which Whitbread writes of the grief and shock produced by a depressed young man who takes his own life in the poet's home:

A house guest of this man, sad past himself,  
Finding himself unglad past enduring,  
Should misbehave so!  
[...] He

Must ask, how could a guest worse hurt his host?

He knows that the full realization of grief comes at unexpected times—witness "Grief":

When both loved parents die  
The consciousness of pain  
Can burrow underground.  
Work helps, and the routine,  
And driving many miles,  
Till one day, on the road,  
In the Wyoming space,  
On a hot humid day  
Under a high blue sky  
The sorrow geysers up  
In tears and mingles with

The sweat upon your face  
And then evaporates  
That is the way grief goes.

“Driving many miles” recalls the poet's penchant for long road trips—he is famous for arriving at amateur journalists' conventions in farflung locations by car. He is also an aficionado of trains, in recognition of which artist Joseph E. Slate has constructed a collage for the cover of *The Structures Minds Erect* based on railroading themes. “I am tired of articles against railroads and against Texas” the poet writes in his delightful poem “Argumentative Poem Against Certain Articles.” He continues:

“Well, railroads belong to another time.”  
That's true.

In that passenger service is not what it was,  
But I'll not have this writer tell me so.  
If there are to be obituaries, let them  
Be from elegiac people who can see  
With accuracy and report with sense.

We're here to enjoy this world, despite the pain, Whitbread's brighter verse tells us, but he will insist upon accuracy in reporting throughout. No sugar-coated missives for him. First and foremost, you need to have your facts straight in life. If it is mesothelioma that takes your mother's life, you call it mesothelioma, even in poetry.

One could go on and on about the many felicities in these carefully-chosen fifty some pages of poems—from the remarkable reflection upon human nature in the first “Four Corners, U.S.A.” to the meditation upon friendship in the last “To Three Friends.” There are, of course, many destinations worth visiting, many things worthy of careful and sensitive observation along the road. When your guide is that veteran traveler and poet Tom Whitbread, you can hardly fail to experience a journey which will recollect itself over and over.

Tom has collected these poems, written over many years, at the age of seventy-five. At this point, he is doubtless as beloved by his readers as the Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier, another master of the vivid image. Just as Whittier gave his readers “Songs At Sunset,” perhaps we may hope for yet another Whitbread poetry collection while he is yet among us, before the literary executors and scholars go about presenting us with a “Collected Works.” The great care which has been taken with selection by the poet is evident in such a slender collection as *The Structures Minds Erect* and we the readers benefit from the sharp

focus this selectivity provides.

## LINES FROM OUR ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

Allan Bula

I never actually spoke to Ralph Breed, but saw him at a BAPA Convention in London in the mid-1970s. In 1977, I arranged the Association's annual convention in Guildford, Surrey, where I was then living; but Ralph did not attend. Last spring, Yvonne Schofer, Bibliographer, Humanities-English, at UW-Madison, helpfully sent me a list of what's in the Breed Collection. She also sent me a photocopy of Ralph's article “British Ajay In My Time,” which he'd written when he was 51, that is, in about 1946. This photocopy is not perfect, but I'd be pleased to send you a laser photocopy of it, for possible use in *The Fossil*, if you can't easily get one from Madison.

The only other work by Ralph I've got is the autumn 1954 issue of *London Pride* (12 pages, including covers). Ralph edited it but didn't print it. In his editorial, he credits the April 1954 issue of *The Fossil* for Rowena Moitoret's article, “The Tortoise and the Hare” (‘Is amateur journalism in Great Britain almost dead?...’, etc.), which follows. An article by Vic Moitoret also appears. Going back to the editorial, Ralph wrote, “(Rowena's) comment on the high age-level of the present BAPA membership may well point to the reason for the rather fundamental change in its apparent aims and outlook of the years. When I joined in 1911, the majority were teenagers and few office holders were over twenty.”

This aging of the membership continued until the 1990s, when a young woman called Eunice Pearson joined. She lived in South Wales, where we still had a few elderly, but lively, members. Then, ten years ago, she reprinted Sheldon C. Wesson's Essay 4, *Viewpoint on Amateur Journalism*. Having watched BAPA, as a kind of concerned great-grandson might, since the 1960s, I was convinced Ms. Pearson was too good to be true. Thank goodness for my grip on reality (although nothing else), that when I offered her the indefinite care of the Association, convinced it would be her, me or no one, she didn't even answer my letter—and I've never heard of her since! But I've still got her reprint of Sheldon Wesson's essay.

You also asked about that legendary historian of ajay, Almon Horton. He was completely before my

time, but I've got his *The Hobby of Amateur Journalism, Part One* which Ross Chamberlin printed in 1955. *Part Two* never appeared. Roy Hearen, who seems to harbour the biggest British ajay collection outside Madison WI, told me Almon was sadly murdered by a young man he had befriended. This must have been a big event in Almon's home town, Manchester, at the time.

The only gems of ajay history I've been sent *unsolicited* came from William A. Downes in Dublin. Unfortunately, I can't put my hand on his material at present, but I've surely still got it somewhere, as I was impressed by getting my best historical nuggets from the Irish Republic.

...Further to my letter of April 16, I have now found, not the William A. Downes papers, but a half-dozen or so issues of *The British Amateur Journalist*, produced between April 1926 and May 1928. Ralph Breed was the Official Editor until the last date, by which time Ralph was BAPA Secretary-Treasurer, and William A. Downes, of Co. Dublin, Official Editor. What a fine example of Anglo-Irish co-operation! Almon Horton is not mentioned as an officer, or even a member, in any of the seven issues! Earlier pamphlets show Ralph as editor of *Excelsior*, an amateur magazine, in August 1912; secretary of the London Amateur Press Club in 1914; and chairman of the London Amateur Literary Club in September 1923. No wonder he felt qualified to write about "Ajay in My Time" in 1946.

Also now to hand are eight issues of Arthur Harris's *Interesting Items* (founded Mar. 5, 1904), from no. 612 in January 1936 to no. 726 in July 1947. The last, April 1964, issue is unnumbered. In Arthur Harris's review of 1946, published in March 1947 (43rd birthday number!), he wrote that "the chief items of the year" included, in January, Almon Horton's production of his *Amateur Journalism Survey* (nine years before Ross Chamberlin produced Part 1 of Almon's Ajay History), and Ralph Breed had revived his *South Eastern Amateur* (after 18 years) in November, 1946.

Arthur Harris claimed, in 1941, that his *Interesting Items* was founded on March 5, 1904, and was the oldest British amateur magazine. According to the January 1941 issue, "Amateurism is surely in a sore plight when there are no illustrations to liven up the pages of its publications...The greatest period of activity displayed by the British amateur artist was in 1910-11. In those days Wheeler Dryden's cartoons

were a prominent feature of the amateur magazines...Wheeler Dryden, now of Hollywood's film colony, had a part in the preparation of the making of Charlie Chaplin's latest picture, *The Great Dictator*, and is given this credit in the film's title announcements flashed on the screen. Wheeler was an active British amateur during the years 1910-1915."

Later, in July 1947, *Interesting Items* refers to Dryden again. "Wheeler Dryden, now of Hollywood, California, writes that he agrees with Albert Edward Barnard, editor of *The Fossil*, that this organisation of amateur journalists of the past, ought to change its name from The Fossils. He suggests calling it The Owls and tells us that the old name had a detrimental affect [on] him joining in spite of a number of invitations to do so."

...I note that Yvonne Schofer reports that Ralph's family still send her additional material for the Breed collection. Not for nothing have I always retained a picture of him, sitting silently, north-west of me, at BAPA's London convention in 1976! His family must have seen him as THE spirit of ajay, too. As a matter of fact, I seem to have only just missed Almon Horton as well. He was listed as a member in December 1974 and, in the two years 1974-75, had 11 contributions in the BAPA bundle. But he was not at the annual conventions in 1976 (London), 1977 (Guildford), 1978 (Brighton) and 1979 (Leamington Spa); and I don't remember anyone mentioning him. And, by February 1979, Almon was off the membership list. In the mid-1970s, the Association leaders were Ross Chamberlin, a hobby printer who had printed the first part of Almon's history, 20 years before; and Clifford Russell, a lifelong journalist by occupation and hobby. But I never felt Ross and Clifford agreed on much. Other leading lights were Dick Bowley, a chain-smoking non-writer (except of postcards about the current "interesting" weather, as he called it), who was treasurer; C. J. White, a retired man, from the South Wales coal-mining industry, who wrote thoughtful articles of a fairly non-denominational political character and talked copiously with Dick Bowley at the 1977 convention; and Olive Rhodes Teugels, whose almost full-time hobby was producing her duplicated non-BAPA journal, *Bedsitter*. I thought at the time it was noticeable ajay lacked a commercial publication, like the still-published *Amateur Gardening*, *Amateur Photograph* and *Amateur Stage*. Maybe professional journalists are so unpopular, few people think of becoming amateur ones!

## TWO POEMS

Martha E. Shivvers

### The Puzzle

I cried for the dreams I could not have  
the tears were shed in vain.  
They are in shambles now  
victim of wind and rain.  
I wept about the burdens of my life,  
why must I work and suffer so?  
Then a day was spent among some folk  
whose bodies and minds would never grow.

The material things I had wanted  
that I thought I couldn't do without  
became commonplace and ugly  
and I seriously began to doubt.

So, I looked for the sunshine,  
accepted the rain,  
thrilled at the smile on a loved  
one's face.  
Reaching out to help my fellow man  
the puzzle of Life came into place.

### Thy Will Be Done

When we feel empty, faith  
faltering,  
hopes unfilled, dreams shattered,  
We remember Your prayers in  
the Garden of Gethsemane.

When we need Your closeness,  
compassion, understanding  
And the ability to know  
the beauty that is around  
We pray for the Spirit to  
come to us  
Not Our will  
But Thine be done.  
Help us, dear God, to accept  
the Cup.

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### THE FOSSILS

<http://www.thefossils.org/>

This journal is the Official Organ of The Fossils, a non-profit organization whose purposes are to stimulate interest in and preserve the history of independent publishing, either separate from or organized in the hobby known as "Amateur Journalism" and to foster the practices of amateur journalism. To this end, The

Fossils preserved the Library of Amateur Journalism, a repository of amateur papers and memorabilia dating from the 1850s, acquired in 1916 and donated in 2004 to the Special Collections Department of the University of Wisconsin Library, Room 976, Memorial Library, 728 State Street, Madison, WI 53706. Individuals or institutions allied with our goals are invited to join The Fossils. Dues are \$15 annually—\$20 for joint membership of husband and wife. Annual subscription to *The Fossil* without privileges of membership is \$10. Make remittances payable to The Fossils, and mail to the Secretary-treasurer.