



The ALUMNI NEWS

Spring 1966

THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA

at GREENSBORO

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BY LARRY RIBBELL



RANDALL JARRELL

1914-1965

Randall Jarrell's death in October, 1965, was untimely in every sense. On May 6 he would have been fifty-two, and the pace of his creativity, rather than slackening, was developing in deepening clarity and force. Because of what he meant to many alumni and to the University at Greensboro for nearly two decades, this issue of *The Alumni News* is dedicated to his memory. Randall Jarrell as remembered by colleagues, friends and students was not one man but many.



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THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

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Randall Jarrell's warmth and love for animals is captured in the cover sketch by Gilbert Carpenter, head of the University's Art Department.

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Robert Penn Warren, Pulitzer Prize winner in both fiction and poetry, and Yale Professor Norman Holmes Pearson assembled a galaxy of literary figures at Yale University February 28 to honor the late Randall Jarrell. "The Alumni News" received permission to include many of the tributes in this memorial issue. Pictured here are, left to right: seated, John Berryman, Adrienne Rich, Mrs. Randall Jarrell, Peter Taylor; standing, Stanley Kunitz, Richard Eberhart, Robert Lowell, Richard Wilbur, John Hollander, William Meredith and Robert Penn Warren.

TRIBUTE AT YALE



Peter Taylor,
novelist, critic, editor and professor of English on the Greensboro campus, was Randall Jarrell's close friend from student days at Vanderbilt.

THE first I ever heard of Randall was that he was a boy who knew a lot and that he had posed for the figure of Ganymede in the frieze of the Parthenon — our Parthenon, that is, in Centennial Park, Nashville, a full-sized model of the original with the exact Athenian dimensions. A sculptor who was making copies of some of the figures from the original for the frieze — Belle Kinney, I believe it was — asked Randall to pose as Cup Bearer to the gods. That was in 1922. The child Randall is there in Centennial Park today, perhaps as good a justification as you could ask for the existence of our Parthenon.

Anyway, the first I ever heard of Randall was that

he was a boy who knew a lot. I heard it from one of my childhood friends in Nashville, Avery Handley. But I really didn't know Randall until I was living in Memphis and came back to Vanderbilt as a freshman in 1936. The gods of the literary undergraduates of Vanderbilt in those days were, of course, the Fugitives, the Agrarians. Not all of the group were teaching there then, but Nashville was still the gathering place. The atmosphere was made to order for aspiring young southern writers who as restless young men longed to leave home, but who as restless young writers had the feeling that they ought to remain in their own country.

Among the literary students of Vanderbilt there were two parties. Each had taken for its master a brilliant graduate student. One of these was George Marion O'Donnell. The other was Randall. The two graduate students were not congenial. They lived very different kinds of lives. They addressed each other as Mr. O'Donnell and Mr. Jarrell. O'Donnell and his followers met by night in a beer joint called Melfi's. Randall held sway, held court, held class — that's the word for it — on a grassy plot outside the student union building either at mid-morning or in the early afternoon. His would-be disciples — for he only tolerated us — met there not to drink beer but to play touch football with the master. By temperament some present were much better suited to the life at Melfi's, but we gave up all that and tried instead to play "touch." It was Randall's talk we wanted of course, and his talk on the sidelines and even while the game was in progress was electrifying. It was there that I first heard anyone analyze a Chekhov story. I have never since heard anything to equal it. Even then Randall could talk about a story you had read, and make you feel, make you realize that you had never really read it before.

Although O'Donnell's thinking was much closer to the Agrarians than Randall's (O'Donnell had already published an essay in *Who Owns America*), Randall's admiration for their literary productions and for the men themselves was surely no less than O'Donnell's. He constituted a sort of loyal opposition on campus. His loyalty was such, in fact, that when Mr. Ransom was hired away by Kenyon, it was Randall who headed the student group petitioning the administration to keep him at Vanderbilt. The morning we went to present our petition to Chancellor Kirkland, Randall was spokesman. The old chancellor sat at his desk and read through the letter which had been largely composed by Randall. Finally he looked up and said, "Boys, I'll have to have a signature on this letter." Randall, bursting into gleeful laughter and bouncing around the desk to stand beside the old chancellor, replied, "Oh sir, we have signatures," and he began turning over the pages and pages of student signatures that were underneath the letter.

DURING the next two years, of course, Randall himself was teaching at Kenyon. Mr. Ransom had brought him along as his loyal friend, if also as the kind of loyal him along as his loyal friend, if also as the kind of loyal

opposition Mr. Ransom enjoys. Both men admired Robert Frost's poetry. Eventually both were to become Frost's good friends. It was something to have those three poets, as we sometimes did at Kenyon, in the same room talking poetry. It is not what they said I can remember — I frequently didn't understand what they were saying — but I recognized and remember the intense feeling. One night in a rather large gathering, Randall made some reference to sprung rhythm, whatever that is. Frost stood shaking his jowl angrily. Finally there came from Frost's corner a deep growl. "Loose iambic, Jarrell, it's just loose iambic."

In addition to persuading Mrs. Ransom to remodel an old fur coat of his mother's for him, Randall set a good number of other ladies and young girls on the campus and on Gambier Hill to sewing for him. I remember seeing him one night in Mt. Vernon, with one of the high school teachers he dated over there. The two of them were looking in a shop window, and Randall was pointing out a sweater he admired. Already you could practically see the knitting needles flying in the girl's hands. And in the Kokosing Restaurant in Gambier, a grimy little store building like something out of a western movie and next door to the house where we all lived, the girls, the sisters who waited tables there and their old mother too, who tossed hamburgers, were somehow persuaded to darn Randall's socks. They may even have done his laundry. I can see him stopping by there in the morning to deliver a handful of socks and to ask what kind of pies were there for lunch. They were crazy about him — called him Randall — whereas they called the rest of us by our last names. When I went back to Kenyon to teach a dozen years later, it was Randall, of all my contemporaries, that the villagers wanted news of. Among his friends at Kenyon were the tennis players. There was Don McNeil, and there was Maury Lewis, with whom he most often played tennis. Maury was a boy from Arkansas with a high southern voice who, when they had a tennis engagement, would come to the foot of the stairs in Douglas House and call out, "Randy, are you ready?" I never knew anyone else who presumed to call him Randy. But by the end of the second year, you would see members of Kenyon's champion tennis team sitting about the soda shop reading Auden and Chekhov and Proust. Apparently he was as able to teach literature on the tennis courts as well as on the touch field.

I enrolled in an eight o'clock class in American literature which he taught at Kenyon. It was held on the third floor of Ascension Hall. Since it was an eight o'clock, Randall was frequently late meeting it. We would look out the third floor windows and see him sprinting down the middle path, often eating his breakfast as he ran. The rule at Kenyon was that the class had to wait on a professor only until the second bell. The boys would cup their hands and shout to Randall how many minutes or seconds he had, and he kept coming. Sometimes the bell would ring when he was already on the stairs, but regardless of that, when the bell rang, the class, most of it, would stampede down the stairs. I don't know how many

times this happened – more than once or twice. Anyhow, I see him standing on the stairs when the stampeding students were gone, smiling and shrugging his shoulders. The good part, though, was that there were a half-dozen students who would remain, and those sessions with the devoted half-dozen were, of course, the best sessions. It was more like a literary club than a class. To Randall's friends there was always the feeling that he was their teacher. To Randall's students, there was always the feeling that he was their friend. And with good reason in both cases.

AFTER the war I saw Randall again in Nashville, and then he and I migrated with our wives to New York. We lived there for only a short time, but it was then that we became really close friends. I doubt I could have ever got started again after the war if I had not had Randall to talk to or listen to. He was wonderful, of course, about reading what you had written and wonderful about telling you the truth about it – often the terrible truth. His talk was about literature, painting, music, about your own work, seldom about his. I remember once at Kenyon there was a student who had done a painting, a landscape, and had it proudly displayed in his room. When Randall came in and saw it there, he exclaimed, "Gosh, that's good." He pointed out all the fine qualities. The painter sat soaking up the praise. They talked of other things for a while, and when Randall got up to leave he said, putting his fist on his hip and frowning, "You know, I've changed my mind about that picture. There's something wrong, awfully wrong, about the light in it. You ought to work on it some more, or maybe you really ought to just throw this one away and do another." As usual, of course, he was right about it.

He was that way about stories and poems too – never hesitated to tell you what he thought about something you had written, never hesitated to change his mind about what he thought. If you published something he didn't like, he behaved as though you had been disloyal to him in some way – or not that so much – more as if you had been disloyal to some other friend of his – your other self, that is. And that he would not tolerate. He might avoid seeing you for days afterward. But oh, if you published something he liked! One winter when I was staying in London, I had two ten-page letters from him about two stories of mine he had seen in print. And if one were on the same side of the Atlantic with him, there would be long distance telephone calls that went on and on. Or if there were no call or letter when you published something, the silence was awful and seemed bound to reach out to you wherever you were.



Randall and Mary Jarrell in Italy.

After New York, we were together in many places. In Greensboro we once bought a duplex apartment together, financed mostly by our GI loans and our working wives. We had summers together in the Tennessee mountains, and one summer we took our families to the Italian Riviera and rented places near each other. By that time, my wife and I had two small children and weren't able to make many excursions away from home base. But when Randall and Mary would go off to Florence for a few days, they would return with presents for us. It would be a Uccello reproduction for my wife or toys for the children or a hat for me like the one Randall had bought himself on their last trip and which I had admired. On the occasion of the hat, we were down at the little station to meet them when they came in on the afternoon train, and there was Randall – he had his beard then – leaning out the train window, grinning and waving the little green hat at me. I'd earned the hat by having recently done a story he approved of. What he always let one know was that he cared about how one's writing was going, and there is no better friend than that.

Once when I was living in the country in North Carolina, Randall came out to spend the day, and when he got out of his car, he was carrying a brief case. He didn't often carry a brief case in those days. My wife and I eyed it without comment until at last he said, "Guess what, I've written a novel."

"You're kidding," I said.

He burst out at me, "Are you crazy? You know I don't kid about things like that." And, of course, he was right. He didn't. It was *Pictures from an Institution*.

He found gossip tedious and boring, yet it was worth it making him endure it occasionally just to hear the final word he would come up with, once and for all settling the hash of the subject. And, of course, the whole method of *Pictures from an Institution* is that of letting us hear

what the characters in the book have to say about each other. It is mainly a book of Randall's witty talk, and in it we see to what serious places his witty talk could take us. And since I have never done what I always said I intended to do, that is, to write down the things he said, I'd like to conclude with two passages from *Pictures* that will make us hear his voice as nothing else can. I have chosen one of the subjects that he was best on: important people and their fondness for important people.

"Ordinary people think that very important people get along badly with one another – and this is true; but they often get along worse with you and me. They find it difficult not simply to get along with, but to care about getting along with, ordinary people, who do not seem to them fully human. They make exceptions, real or seeming, for school friends, people who flatter them enough, relatives, mistresses, children, and dogs: they try not to bite the hand that lets them stroke it . . . but all power irritates – it is hard for them to contain themselves within themselves, and not to roast the peasants on their slopes. But they eye one another with half-contemptuous, half-respectful dislike: after all, each of them *is* important, and importance, God knows, covers a multitude of sins.

"This earth carries abroad it many ordinary passengers; and it carries, also, a few very important ones. It is hard to know which people are, or were, or will be which. Great men may come to the door in carpet-slippers, their faces like those of kindly or fretful old dogs, and not even know that they are better than you; a friend meets you after fifteen years and the Nobel Prize, and he is sadder and fatter and all the flesh in his face has slumped an inch nearer the grave, but otherwise he is as of old. They are not very important people. On the other hand, the president of your bank, the vice-chancellor of the – no, not the Reich, but of the School of Agriculture of the University of Wyoming; these, and many Princes and Powers and Dominions, are very important people; the quality of their voices has changed, and they speak more distinctly from the mounds upon which they stand, making sure that their voices come down to you.

"The very important are different from us. Yes, they have more everything. They are spirits whom that medium, the world, has summoned up just as she has the rest of us, but there is in them more soul-stuff, more ego – the spirit of Gog and Magog has been summoned. There is *too much* ectoplasm: it covers the table, moves on toward the laps of the rest of us, already here, sitting around the table in straight chairs, holding one another's hands in uneasy trust. We push back our chairs, our kinship breaks up like a dream: it is as if there were no longer Mankind, but *only* men." □

Adrienne Rich,

poet and author, is a resident of Cambridge, Massachusetts. She participated in the Writing Forum on the Greensboro campus in 1963.



I SUPPOSE I am one of the latest of Randall's friends, unless you count his students; and I am just going to speak briefly of what it was like, years back, before I knew him, when he reviewed an early book of mine. Reading that review was like getting a letter from Randall, a letter of love and exhortation, drenched, like all his criticism, with concern for unfulfilled possibilities, for the life of those poems and all future poems by the same hand. One felt that this brilliant, caustic, affectionate stranger had suddenly involved himself in one's fate – not for his own reputation, or for the sake of purveying a personal influence, but because he was a kind of conscience of poetry. Behind all Randall's joy in particular poems, and his insistence that the best be sifted from the merely good, lay, I think, a moralist's realization that virtue exists only in an accretion of particular acts, one of which makes possible the next; and that if the poems of his own generation were not exemplary and profoundly truthful, the future of poetics and language itself was in question. Sensing all this, I was too shy to write and tell him, then, how much his dissatisfaction with my book exhilarated me.

When, several years later, we met, I knew that one of the important friendships of my life had begun. I was unconsciously counting on years of those meetings, those infrequent, thick irresistible letters, the sense that he was there to write for. "What a strange thing you and I are, if we are, when we are!" he once wrote. "To have written one good poem – good used seriously – is an unlikely and marvelous thing that only a couple of hundred writers of English, at the most, have ever done. It's like sitting out in the yard in the evening and having a meteorite fall in one's lap; and yet one can't believe that, and tries so hard, by willing and working and wanting, to have the mailman deliver them – and feels disappointed, even, when he doesn't." The fact is, I will always go on writing for Randall. His influence on the poetry of his time has yet to be fathomed; it acted through his own poems, his critical writings, his teaching, his involvement with the work of his friends. But it also came simply from the fact that for many of us, asked, "To what or whom do you address your poems?" the truthful answer would be: "To the mind of Randall Jarrell." □



John Berryman,
poet, critic and professor at the University of Minnesota, won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1965 for "77 Dream Songs."

JARRELL'S death hit me very hard. We were seldom together, but we were friends for a very long time. Our correspondence began in 1939. James Laughlin, editor of *New Directions*, was anxious to get five young poets together, and among them he wanted a woman—sales value, you see. So Jarrell and I, who were not the two stupidest people in the book, had a long correspondence about these women whom Laughlin was always turning up in all parts of the country. And Laughlin would write to us and say, "Tell me what you think of her 'Deathless, ah, deathless' verses, because I'm very eager to know her better." So that Jarrell and I began as a sort of team of two to produce standards in James Laughlin, and we may say that anything that *New Directions* has accomplished since then was influenced by Jarrell and me.

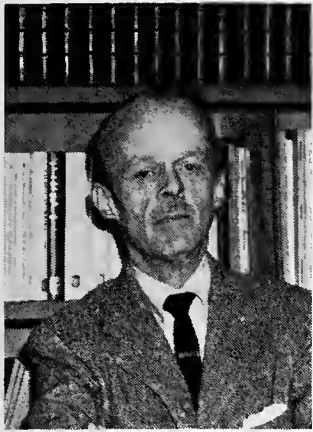
My favorite recollection of this amazing man was one time when he came to visit me in Princeton, New Jersey, and he came down from New York for dinner with Robert Lowell. And he had a hangover, and that was very amazing because Jarrell did not drink. He's the only poet that I've ever known in the universe who simply did not drink. He was simply spectacular. So how did he get the hangover? Well, he'd been to a cocktail party the day before in New York and had eaten a poisoned canape. So here's Jarrell walking up and down in my living room, miserable and witty. And very malicious, as he could certainly be, making up a brand-new Lowell poem full of characteristic Lowell properties, Lowell's grandfather and Charon, and the man who did not find this funny at all was Lowell. There was a complete want of humor at that point. At last we calmed Randall down, and he stopped making up this wonderful apocryphal poem by Lowell; we stationed him on the couch, and I gave him a book of photographs of the Russian ballet (he was very keen on ballet). While the rest of us had dinner, he lay there and made witty remarks about the photographs of the Russian ballet.

He was a terror as a reviewer. My own feeling would be that we're going to witness during the months to come an unusual spate of publication of really bad poetry. That is, let's say, people who have been holding their books

up for years while they waited for Fate to come and deal with that terrible person, Randall Jarrell. He was immensely cruel, and the extraordinary thing about it is that he didn't know he was cruel.

ONE time his cruelty was made public. That rather sweet-souled man, Conrad Aiken, wrote a letter to, I think, the *New Republic* or some other respectable journal saying that Jarrell's reviews went beyond decency—that he was a sadist. I was very fond of both Conrad and Randall. Jarrell's reviews did go beyond the limit; they were unbelievably cruel, that's true. Conrad was quite right. But, on the other hand, Jarrell then wrote a letter in a rather aggrieved tone—and the word aggrieved handles a lot of Jarrell's tone, both in prose and verse. He himself hated bad poetry with such vehemence and so vigorously that it didn't occur to him that in the course of taking apart, where he'd take a book of poems and squeeze, like that, twist, that in the course of doing that, there was a human being also being squeezed. Well, he wrote in to the journal, saying that he couldn't understand why Mr. Aiken thought that his reviews were cruel, whereas they really were remarkably cruel. However, it is to be said, as Mr. Lowell said in his piece, a beautiful piece, in the *New York Review of Books*, that the real point of Jarrell's criticism is not destructive, but, well, I'm not too keen on the word constructive, but that his criticism of praise was what mattered—sometimes overpraise—Jarrell overrated William Carlos Williams, for example, I think considerably. I'm very fond of Bill Williams' poetry, but not as fond as Jarrell was. And Jarrell sort of lost heart over this, over the years, as I think he finally came to see that he had over-praised Williams. But the essays on Marianne Moore and on Frost and on Whitman, above all on Whitman, are sort of paeans of joy with nothing of the black wit that characterizes the rest of his criticism.

Then, I'll tell you one other story about Jarrell. This is second-hand, and it comes from Jean Stafford, a woman so witty that you can't trust her stories. You mustn't be that witty, but this is apparently a true story. I'll tell it to you, and then I'll comment on it. Randall was staying one time at the house of one of Jean Stafford's best friends, and he played croquet with the children in the afternoon and lost. He didn't like that at all. He was very grumpy at dinner and went to bed early. Next morning, Jean's friend woke very early and went downstairs to put on coffee or something, and she was going down her spiral staircase with the window that faced on the front lawn where the wickets were, and she found Randall out there. (This is about five o'clock in the morning.) Randall was studying the ground—changing the wickets. It's a good thing that he had a very successful career, as he did, because he was a hard loser. He wasn't a man who liked to lose at all. □



Allen Tate,

writer, poet and editor, now a University of Minnesota professor, returns to Greensboro in September as visiting professor. He taught on campus in 1938-39.

IT WAS in 1931, I believe, when Randall was a Freshman at Vanderbilt, that I first met him. Red Warren was then teaching there; at his house one Sunday afternoon I saw a tall, languid boy of eighteen rise to acknowledge the introduction to my wife and me, and then sit down, ignoring my extended hand. It was shyness, or the kind of awkwardness that comes of one's not knowing who one is. He must even, at that early time, have been conscious of his superior gifts and chafing under the restraints imposed by youth. I remember Red leading me into another room and showing me some of the boy's poems. There was one beginning "The cow in the bare field" which struck me as prodigious; I still think it one of his best poems. I gathered from people who knew him better than I did, or ever came to know him, that he was a proud and difficult young man who studied all the time and had few or perhaps none of the purposeless diversions of the undergraduate. Although he seemed as an undergraduate to have read all English poetry — John Ransom once said to me that Randall knew more than he did — he was I believe a psychology major almost to the time of his graduation; this interest continued in a less formal way and is discernible in his later as well as in his youthful poems. It struck all his older friends at that time that his technical knowledge of verse must have come to him without labor: an early poem, "A Description of Some Confederate Soldiers," had a formal mastery that I, nearly fifteen years older, could not have equaled. In those days I lived about forty miles from Nashville, and I saw him only at intervals when I came to the city for parties at the houses of the old Fugitives, to which he would be invited. But he would have none of the Fugitive tradition: from the beginning he was his own man. Nor would he allow himself to be a Southerner. He was of Tennessee parentage brought up, I believe, in California. If he ever looked at the writings of the Agrarians, he would have thought it all nonsense, or at any rate an irrelevant excursion into history without value to a poet. The other prominent literary undergraduate of Randall's time was the late George Marion O'Donnell. We, the elder retired statesmen, marvelled that these young men did not form a post-Fugitive group, or a col-

laboration modelled on Wordsworth and Coleridge. Our rather high-faluting talk about the Southern tradition left Randall cold. When he came to see us in Tennessee, and later in Princeton, he would leave the company to play with my small daughter and her friends, which he enjoyed more than he did us. For an inscrutable reason — I never understood Randall — he liked me very much for some years around 1940, but not much later on. He dedicated to me his first book, *Blood for a Stranger*; he had previously asked me to go over the manuscript and arrange the order of the poems; this I did; but he then gave them his own order, writing me a letter in which I appeared to be a little obtuse. This is not the time to appraise Randall Jarrell's entire work. It is enough to say that he was one of the best poets of his generation, along with Lowell, Schwartz, Berryman, Wilbur, and Roethke, and that his work will last. As a critic, he had, like most of us, his poet-heroes in whom no fault could be found. His prose was powerful and impeccable. If this were an *ad interim* report, I should sum it up by saying that he was a fine poet and a great prose-stylist. □

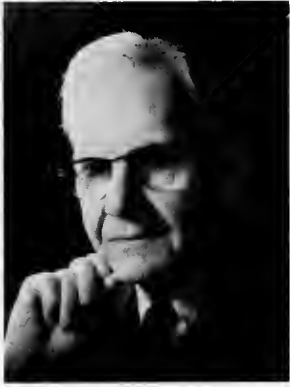


Marianne Moore,

whose poems Randall Jarrell described as having "the lacy, mathematical extravagance of snowflakes," was one of the women poets he most admired.

RANDALL Jarrell, at first meeting and always to me, was the embodiment of triumphant anticipation, gratitude to life, naturalness. He said, "At a distance, friends — and now we exchange books. Can I believe it!" He wrote about me what was claiming much more for me than I deserved, but he never embarrassed me! Always when parting, he had some confident word about "next time." Abounding in nutritive allusions, always growing, with no revenges. □

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The tributes by Allen Tate and Marianne Moore, which appear on this page, and by John Crowe Ransom on the next page were read in their absence by Dr. Norman Holmes Pearson who presided over the program. Richard Eberhart, Richard Wilbur, John Hollander and William Meredith read from Jarrell's works.*



John Crowe Ransom,
poet, teacher and editor,
knew Randall Jarrell at
Vanderbilt and at Kenyon
College. He addressed the
Friends of the Library
meeting on campus last
April.

JARRELL and Lowell, and I and my family, descended upon Kenyon at the same time, and for the first year they lived in the cold upstairs of our old farmhouse on the campus. They took to each other at once, and made everlasting compact of friendship. No fear that they might be competitors, though we all knew they were destined to be writers; these were God's own originals. Lowell had acquired as much familiarity with English literature in his two years at Harvard as the average graduate with an English major, and elected to study at Kenyon three years in the classics, under two professionals who were themselves of Harvard. Jarrell had already graduated from Vanderbilt, and came to Gambier without portfolio. He read more books from the library than any student we had, and they were of wider range than any professor would have chosen. We could not appoint so good a man to take charge of one of the Freshman squads, and in the second of his two years to give a populous course in American Literature, and assist in the tennis organization, — tennis being the only sport in which the College recruited its athletes.

At Vanderbilt Randall had been the star of my advanced course in writing, and he was often in my office-library. I guessed that he had had an unhappy childhood and was bent on identifying himself as a man. He was belligerent in argument, and always put his adversary down by virtue of a quicker intelligence and a wit which scathed. Marion O'Donnell frequented my office too. He was the gentle forlorn boy from Mississippi who was destined to be a first-rate teacher at Harvard in the old course called "English A," and to write the essay on "Faulkner's Mythology," about the carpet-bagger Snopeses of the novels, which Malcolm Cowley said was the first introduction of Faulkner to Northern readers and critics. But if Randall came in when O'Donnell was already there, argument developed quickly, and O'Donnell would slink away. Randall was like those brow-beating Sophists in the *Dialogues*, who went about inflicting their wisdom upon any victims within reach; except that he was wiser than they in everything but his aggressiveness, and that was his necessity.

But how gentle and good he became at his maturity. The domineering self which exults in its power is absent from his masterpieces, though very often the author

appears in the first person. It was absent completely in his talk with his students at Greensboro (for I have heard his exchanges with them), and in his relations with his colleagues and all his neighbors, whom he coveted and won as his friends. He lost nothing but his enemies, if he had any in Greensboro; though there would be distant people of that breed of critics who think it professional to be disparaging.

I regret exceedingly that our meetings during the past fifteen years have been very few, and our correspondence, usually initiated in haste by myself as an editor asking him for contributions to our *Kenyon Review*, has been only perfunctory. We published, in the way of his prose, Parts I and III of his astonishing *Pictures from an Institution*, the wittiest and kindest novel imaginable, and essays including the "Walt Whitman: He Had His Nerve." And twenty poems, in as many different issues of the magazine; five of them appeared in the *Selected Poems* in 1955. The book exhilarated me; the poems were perfectly chosen and presented him to an attentive reader as one of our most important poets; but I did not write a good letter to tell him so, and there I was at fault. I hope that without my telling him I valued the "tribute" he had written in honor of my own old (and old-fashioned) poems, in the special edition of the *Sewanee Review* honoring my sixtieth birthday. I find that I cannot keep up with my oldest friends after sixty, and I am sorry.

But finally he published *The Lost World*, in 1965; and almost immediately his health broke down, while his fame towered high. He had worked too hard, I think. When I went to Greensboro last spring to make a speech I could not see him. But later the report was that he was mending; which I believe held good until that fatal accident in the dark lane where he walked at night. *The Lost World* exhibits the same wit he always had, but over a very sombre kind of narrative of the terrors of childhood. There is not a weak poem in it, and the title-poem is the peak. On the back-jacket of the book several valuable notices of his stature as a poet appear, including one of Karl Shapiro which mentions his likeness to Rilke. What Rilke and Jarrell had in common was their obsession with their remembered childhoods, beset with terrors as they were; a thing I confess is not at all the picture of my own childhood, so safe and commonplace. But one must acknowledge it; for poetry's sake one may well envy it. The dreams of children, and the stories by the Brothers Grimm which told them of evil; of such as these is the burden of Jarrell's last book from which I quote the last lines:

"I have found that Lost World in the Lost and Found
Columns whose gray illegible advertisements
My soul has memorized world after world:
LOST - NOTHING. STRAYED FROM NOWHERE. NO REWARD.
I hold in my own hands, in happiness,
Nothing: the nothing for which there's no reward." □

Stanley Kunitz,

poet, editor and lecturer at Columbia, received the Pulitzer Prize in poetry in 1959. He participated in the Writing Forum on campus in April, 1966.



I WISH I had known Randall Jarrell earlier. We met in the mid-fifties, when he called to discuss an abortive publishing project. There were others in my Village apartment, but his was the presence that filled and disturbed the room. He was bearded, formidable, bristling, with a high-pitched nervous voice and the wariness of a porcupine. That was my dominant image of him for a decade, until the turn of '65 when he came north for a visit from Greensboro, with his beard deleted, and I saw at dinner for the first and last time the naked vulnerability of his countenance. A few months later he was dead.

One of the most revealing poems that he ever wrote, and one of his best, was "The Woman at the Washington Zoo." The speaker is, of course, the woman of the title, one of the many female voices to whom he gave, in his poetry, a language.

The Woman at the Washington Zoo

The saris go by me from the embassies.

Cloth from the moon. Cloth from another planet.
They look back at the leopard like the leopard.

And I . . .

this print of mine, that has kept its color
Alive through so many cleanings; this dull null
Navy I wear to work, and wear from work, and so
To my bed, so to my grave, with no
Complaints, no comment: neither from my chief,
The Deputy Chief Assistant, nor his chief —
Only I complain. . . . this serviceable
Body that no sunlight dyes, no hand suffuses
But, dome-shadowed, withering among columns,
Wavy beneath fountains — small, far-off, shining
In the eyes of animals, these beings trapped
As I am trapped but not, themselves, the trap,
Aging, but without knowledge of their age,
Kept safe here, knowing not of death, for death —
Oh, bars of my own body, open, open!

With a dramatic single stroke in the opening line — "The saris go by me from the embassies" — a colorful and cosmopolitan world is evoked. The next movement is toward the dark, for the speaker who stands before the cages, this government clerk in her "dull null navy," knows that the colors and the possibility of colors have been washed out of her life. She senses her kinship with and yet her difference from the animals.

The world goes by my cage and never sees me.
And there come not to me, as come to these,
The wild beasts, sparrows pecking the llamas' grain,
Pigeons settling on the bears' bread, buzzards
Tearing the meat the flies have clouded. . . .

Trapped in her lonely and defeated flesh, she is worse off than the captive beasts, for "the world goes by my cage and never sees me." Nor is she visited, as are the beasts, by those who feed on their leavings: sparrows, pigeons, buzzards. Her life is too starved for leavings. What a gray world! What a bleakness! And just when we are ready to turn away, Jarrell does something magical and triumphant with his woman at the zoo. He has her cry out, addressing the predatory bird who is the figure of lover-death, such words of shameless agony that the despair is transmuted into a fierce exaltation, as the true colors of the world, terrible though they may be, pour back into the poem:

Vulture,

When you come for the white rat that the foxes left,

Take off the red helmet of your head, the black
Wings that have shadowed me, and step to me as man:
The wild brother at whose feet the white wolves fawn,
To whose hand of power the great lioness
Stalks, purring. . . .

You know what I was,
You see what I am: change me, change me!

All the voices in all of Jarrell's poems are crying, "Change me!" The young yearn to be old in order to escape from their nocturnal fears; the old long for the time of their youth, no matter how poor and miserable it was, for "in those days everything was better"; life is moving toward the death; the dead are moving back into life, and wherever they come, they come in disguises. It is a world of shifts and changes, as in a fairy tale, and the only reason you suspect it is more is that Cinderella and the Dwarfs and the Frog Prince have had a curse put on them: they have real memories and real fears. Karl Shapiro once acutely observed that Jarrell's "almost obsessive return to the great childhood myths is sometimes as painful as psychoanalysis," and that the subtitle of his work might well be "Hansel and Gretel in

America." What Hansel and Gretel tells us is that the woods are dark and that the creatures who inhabit them change their skins. In the mythic imagination metamorphosis is the great theme underlying all others. "Self-transformation," said Rilke, whom Jarrell revered and translated, "is precisely what life is." □



Robert Lowell,

poet, winner of the Academy of Arts and Letters Prize, the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, was Randall Jarrell's fellow student and roommate at Kenyon College.

WHEN I first met Randall, he was twenty-three or four, and upsettingly brilliant, precocious, knowing, naive, and vexing. He seemed to make no distinction between what he would say in our hearing and what he would say behind our backs. If anything, absence made him more discreet. Woe to the acquaintance who liked the wrong writer, the wrong poem by the right writer, or the wrong lines in the right poem! And how those who loved him enjoyed admiring, complaining, and gossiping about the last outrageous thing he had done or, more often, said. It brought us together—whispering about Randall. In 1937, we both roomed at the house of John Crowe Ransom in Gambier, Ohio. Ransom and Jarrell had each separately spent the preceding summer studying Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, and had emerged with unorthodox and widely differing theories. Roughly, Ransom thought that Shakespeare was continually going off the rails into illogical incoherence. Jarrell believed that no one, not even William Empson, had done justice to the rich, significant ambiguity of Shakespeare's intelligence and images. I can see and hear Ransom and Jarrell now, seated on one sofa, as though on one love-seat, the sacred texts open on their laps, one fifty, the other just out of college, and each expounding to the other's deaf ears his own inspired and irreconcilable interpretation.

Robert Lowell: Reprinted from *The New York Review of Books*. Copyright ©1965 The New York Review.

Gordon Chalmers, the President of Kenyon College and a disciple of the somber anti-Romantic Humanists, once went skiing with Randall, and was shocked to hear him exclaiming, "I feel just like an angel." Randall *did* somehow give off an angelic impression, despite his love for tennis, singular mufflers knitted by a girl-friend, and disturbing improvements of his own on the latest dance steps. His mind, unearthly in its quickness, was a little boyish, disembodied, and brittle. His body was a little ghostly in its immunity to soil, entanglements, and rebellion. As one sat with him in oblivious absorption at the campus bar, sucking a fifteen-cent chocolate milk-shake and talking eternal things, one felt, beside him, too corrupt and companionable. He had the harsh luminosity of Shelley—like Shelley, every inch a poet, and like Shelley, imperilled perhaps by an arid, abstracting precocity. Not really! Somewhere inside him, a breezy, untouchable spirit had even then made its youthful and sightless promise to accept—to accept and never to accept the bulk, confusion, and defeat of mortal flesh . . . all that blithe and blood-torn dolor!

Randall Jarrell had his own peculiar and important excellence as a poet, and out-distanced all others in the things he could do well. His gifts, both by nature and by a lifetime of hard dedication and growth, were wit, pathos, and brilliance of intelligence. These qualities, dazzling in themselves, were often so well employed that he became, I think, the most heart-breaking English poet of his generation.

Most good poets are also good critics on occasion, but Jarrell was much more than this. He was a critic of genius, a poet-critic of genius at a time when, as he wrote, most criticism was "astonishingly graceless, joyless, humorless, long-winded, niggling, blinkered, methodical, self-important, cliché-ridden, prestige-obsessed, and almost autonomous."

HE HAD a deadly hand for killing what he despised. He described a murky verbal poet as "writing poems that might have been written *by* a typewriter *on* a typewriter." The flashing reviews he wrote in his twenties are full of such witticisms and barbs, and hundreds more were tossed off in casual conversation, and never preserved, or even repeated. Speaking of a famous scholar, he said, "What can be more tedious than a man whose every sentence is a balanced epigram without wit, profundity, or taste?" He himself, though often fierce, was incapable of vulgarity, self seeking, or meanness. He could be very tender and gracious, but often he seemed tone-deaf to the amenities and dishonesties that make human relations tolerable. Both his likes and dislikes were a terror to everyone, that is to everyone who either saw himself as important or wished to see himself as important. Although

he was almost without vices, heads of colleges and English departments found his frankness more unsettling and unpredictable than the drunken explosions of some divine *enfant terrible*, such as Dylan Thomas. Usually his wit was austere pure, but sometimes he could jolt the more cynical. Once we were looking at a furnished apartment that one of our friends had just rented. It was overbearingly eccentric. Lifesize clay lamps like flowerpots remodeled into Matisse nudes by a spastic child. Paintings made from a palette of mud by a blind painter. About the paintings Randall said, "Ectoplasm sprinkled with zinc." About the apartment, "All that's missing are Mrs. X's illegitimate children in bottles of formaldehyde." His first reviews were described as "symbolic murders," but even then his most destructive judgments had a patient, intuitive, unworldly certainty.

Yet eulogy was the glory of Randall's criticism. Eulogies that not only impressed readers with his own enthusiasms, but which also, time and again, changed and improved opinions and values. He left many reputations permanently altered and exalted. I think particularly of his famous Frost and Whitman essays, and one on the last poems of Wallace Stevens, which was a dramatic reversal of his own earlier evaluation. His mind kept moving and groping more deeply. His prejudices were never the established and fashionable prejudices of the world around him. One could never say of one of his new admirations, "Oh, I knew *you* would like that." His progress was not the usual youthful critic's progress from callow severity to lax benevolence. With wrinkled brow and cool fresh eye, he was forever musing, discovering, and chipping away at his own misconceptions. Getting out on a limb was a daily occurrence for him, and when he found words for what he had intuited, his judgments were bold and unlikely. Randall was so often right, that sometimes we said he was always right. He could enjoy discarded writers whom it was a scandal to like, praise young, unknown writers as if he were praising and describing Shakespeare's *Tragedies*, and read Shakespeare's *Tragedies* with the uncertainty and wonder of their first discoverers.

HE ONCE said, "If I were a rich man, I would pay money for the privilege of being able to teach." Probably there was no better teacher of literature in the country, and yet he was curiously unworldly about it, and welcomed teaching for almost twenty years in the shade or heat of his little known Southern college for girls in Greensboro, North Carolina. There his own community gave him a compact, tangible, personal reverence that was incomparably more substantial and poignant than the empty, numerical long-distance blaze of national publicity. He grieved over the coarseness, unkindness,



"... I see the white sporting Mercedes-Benz..."

and corruption of our society, and said that "the poet has a peculiar relation to this public. It is unaware of his existence." He said bitterly and light-heartedly that "the gods who had taken away the poet's audience had given him students." Yet he gloried in being a teacher, never apologized for it, and related it to his most serious criticism. Writing of three long poems by Robert Frost, poems too long to include in his essay, he breaks off and says, "I have used rather an odd tone about these poems because I felt so much frustration at not being able to quote and go over them, as I have so often done with friends and classes." Few critics could so gracefully descend from the grand manner or be so off-hand about their dignity. His essays are never encrusted with the hardness of a professor. They have the raciness and artistic gaiety of his own hypnotic voice.

Randall was the only man I have ever met who could make other writers feel that their work was more important to him than his own. I don't mean that he was in the habit of saying to people he admired, "This is much better than anything I could do." Such confessions, though charming, cost little effort. What he did was to make others feel that their realizing themselves was as close to him as his own self-realization, and that he cared as much about making the nature and goodness of some one else's work understood, as he cared about making his own understood. I have never known anyone who so connected what his friends wrote with their lives, or their lives with what they wrote. This could be trying: when ever we turned out something Randall felt was unworthy or a falling off, there was a coolness in all one's relations with him. You felt that even your choice in neckties wounded him. Yet he always veered and returned, for he knew as well as anyone that the spark from heaven is beyond man's call and control. Good will he demanded, but in the end was lenient to honest sterility and failure.

Jarrell was the most readable and generous of critics of contemporary poetry. His novel, *Pictures from an Institution*, whatever its fictional oddities, is a unique and serious joke-book. How often I've met people who keep it

(Continued on Page 30)

A Friend Remembered

by Eleanor Ross Taylor '40

SUPPOSE a Southern college for women, a secondary adjunct to the state university, scarcely known outside the state, in creating a writing post, should also create the person to fill it: let him be one of the handful of best poets of his country and day; in scholarship fortified as well as the best of colleagues; the first critic of his generation, an arbiter of taste in his time; let him have an especial affinity for students and for girls — a gentleman in every way (since it is a state school, it would be convenient if by a quirk he happens not to drink or smoke, has an aversion to profanity and vulgarity) yet this will not reflect narrowness or caution. He will be an intrepid literary man: outspoken, careless of enemies; let him be one who can give a brilliant lecture or speak brilliantly in an informal interview, reflecting glory on the college, yet happy after going afield to come back to us, a stronger attraction to the Literary World than it is to him.

A hopeless dream? Yet such a college has lost such a man. And this poet loved and valued his college as it did him. Nobody would have pointed out more quickly and accurately than he all that was left out in the description just given of our college. I can imagine his saying in the affectionate tone he used for it, "Gee, I don't know of another place in the country where they (the administration) leave you (the writer) alone and treat you so well." It is impossible not to be aghast and bitter at this separation. Mrs. Hussey wrote us at Christmas: "I think of him most as he sat for hours in the Recreational Reading Room of the library, completely absorbed, so I'm sure he never noticed occasional buzz of student chatter. *We are so fortunate to have known him.*" This is what we must repeat. We are so fortunate to have known him.

MY FIRST memory of Randall's face is animated, laughing, talking — a face dominated by intense dark eyes — in the car that drove up to Allen Tate's house in Sewanee one spring afternoon in 1946. I had heard of Randall Jarrell — had admired him — while an undergraduate at Woman's College; I had read with excitement his poems in *The Partisan Review*, his brilliant reviews of poetry; had dug up his master's thesis on Housman at the Vanderbilt library, and delighted in Fanny Cheney's story of how he had come running at her across the Vanderbilt campus on his hands and knees, saying, "I'm a saber-toothed tiger!" I had heard stories of his Kenyon days from Peter. I felt well prepared for what he would be like. I now added to it tallness, an impression of

strength and coordination, juxtaposed with a certain remoteness and quiet intensity.

I had my first opportunity that afternoon to offend him with one of his obsessions — I served them instant coffee. Mackie had said in the kitchen, "Just don't tell Randall," but after I had extracted his approval I did tell him, and he laughed, "I have to stand on my judgment!" As he was seldom "polite," it may be instant coffee was better in those early days, but years later when I used to discuss with Mary chocolate recipes to which I added "just a spoon of instant Sanka," he would intone between sadness and contempt, "Instant — Sankal"

Once he admired some particularly pretty yellow pears in our apartment; when I admitted I had added

the blush with lipstick, he was obviously repelled, yet impressed that he had been taken in. Nobody was more concerned with distinguishing between artifice and art.

We — Jarrells and Taylors — bought a duplex at 1924 Spring Garden Street in 1947. Randall was customarily ensconced on the couch in their living room with an afghan over his legs, looking out the window behind the couch (where Kitten was often perched), a coal fire going in the grate, with his writing in his lap — the athlete in invalid's trappings — or, perhaps, the wolf in grandmother's nightgown. His voice could express more affection and welcome than anybody's. Peter and I were there often and long. If we made as if to go, saying, "You're working on your writing" — for he did write down things in the course of our visit — he would always insist he could write and talk at the same time — *liked* to. He was usually listening to Mahler or Hindemith or Bartok — mostly Mahler, that era — while we talked and he also wrote. I said little in sessions with the Jarrells (I would have been an idiot to chatter when it was possible to listen to Randall) — applied to him occasionally for an interpretation of something, once, I remember, Katherine Ann Porter's *The Leaning Tower*. No matter how elementary my questions, he answered them patiently and brilliantly. I often felt the secret of my success with Randall was that he preferred honest ignorance to superficial knowledge!

He had no use for work in the sense of *toil* or *duty*. And while he had boundless energy for tennis and didn't know what it was not to find time to write, he must have had some hard moments that spring as we got the duplex into shape. Once we found them painting a room, and Randall said almost tearfully, "I don't *like* it. I just happen to be good at it!" We persuaded the Jarrells to join us in planting rye grass over the whole yard, telling him — I'm not sure whether in good faith or by deliberate deceit — it didn't have to be cut. It grew especially rank on "their side" of the yard, and he held us to our statement that it didn't have to be cut.

SHORTLY after the Jarrells arrived in Greensboro in 1947, we all spent an afternoon with Clara May and Marc Friedlaender (one of many wonderful gatherings with them) on their pier beside the lake. We were talking about survival and over-refinement. Marc said he didn't like to feel that, if his survival depended on being able to kill and dress an animal, for instance, he couldn't do it. The rest of us agreed we felt ashamed of our squeamishness, but Randall disagreed. "I consider myself the ornament of civilization!" he declared. "When it perishes, let me perish!"

Another time we were talking about the Orson Welles invasion-from-Mars program that made such a stir in 1938. Randall refused to see anything upsetting in such an idea: "I'd like nothing better than for some creature from outer space to come and make me its pet!"



As Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress.

He found small talk deadly. Once when Mackie and I were discussing the price of stockings, or brands of coffee, he burst out histrionically, "Oh, what a petty, ignoble conversation!" He talked about serious things simply and about simple things with a wit that elevated them. "These cinders taste almost like toast."

He did not gossip (though he could characterize each of us in the most murderously comic aphorisms) and half-listened in boredom when we did. He found our pattern laughable. At one point, he said, somebody always asked, "Is he the one who —" or "Is that the one with —" in pursuit of even peripheral subjects for gossip.

I was sometimes sassy to Randall, but I remember only one occasion when I was sarcastic to him and I don't, fortunately, remember what I said — some poor "But isn't it a strange thing that if thus-and-so — then thus-and-so" — sort of remark. He was on that couch in the Spring Garden living room and looked at me quickly, taken aback, then looked out the window and said with a lofty smile, "This isn't the Eleanor I know." I think I felt the way the television interviewer must have who reportedly made a reference to "highbrow" matters and turned to Randall with a sardonic smile, "You don't mind being called 'highbrow,' do you, Mr. Jarrell?" and who was answered instantly, coolly, simply, without a flicker of apology or qualification, "No, not at all."

He liked to give presents, too. Once he took down from their wall and gave to Peter a picture Peter had admired once too often. In Levanto, where Mary and Randall and Beatrice were in the summer of 1958 (and

we Taylors were in nearby Bonassola), he could never ignore a beggar and seemed to feel real pain that he had more than they did. When I suggested that some who begged were probably better off than others who worked, he replied that if they could bring themselves to ask us for money their poverty was too great to refuse.

I sometimes suspected he had a nearly superstitious belief that your insight and vision would be taken away from you in proportion to the extent you lied, that as you sought the truth, you would find it. He was most awfully honest. His highest regard (next talent) was for the "disinterested" person who had swept away prejudice and self-deceit, and he seemed to me to have succeeded in being that person. His busy, expert separation of the sheep from the goats made you pretty uncomfortable when you were among the goats, and nobody was ever assigned an unquestioned char on the side of grace. This obligation to be honest was coupled with his belief in one's obligation to talent. When I used to reply to him, no, I had no new poems, he would taunt, "You'll be sorry — in heaven!"

His honesty was related to his generosity to students, to me, and, I think, to people like Christina Stead and Corbiere. We were likely to do nothing for him in return, as people not on committees, not writing recommendations, not mentioning things to powerful people, not promoting, arranging, appearing. He battled for the survival of such people. After Peter led me across the hall that day and made me show Randall those first poems, I never made another request of him. It was always a gratuitous act on his part that asked to see my poems, consoled my rejections, asked to send them out, asked to write a preface, read them to groups.

He never modified his opinion of a book for a politic or expedient reason, though he sometimes changed his mind, when he saw the pear's blush was lipstick. He called names in his reviews, the names of the obtuse and the vicious. He had bitter enemies in the casualties of his honesty, but he never seemed to feel this price too much for self-honor, though I think he suffered sometimes, in rare moments, at certain worldly honors appropriate to him he never got. Such considerations were really beneath his notice. The important thing was that your work was good and that you did it. We all believe this, but who else lives by it?

The natural shore at Levanto was pebbles. Sand had been brought in for the beach, but to get into the water you had to cross an excruciating length of marble-sized fragments, usually set at frying temperature and bound to incapacitate your arches by halfway out. Randall found a way around this. He sat down and slid out. The rest of us pretended not to know the bearded American who went through this ceremony, but Randall was not abashed. He smiled a lofty smile when other people nursed their bruised insteps.

RANDALL and I sat under one of the bench umbrellas at Levanto to go over my poems. I think he was wearing

a tennis cap with a green eyeshade. The trains skittered by just behind us, and beside us an Italian family who came to their umbrella every day with a wicker trunk full of lunch, china, silver, and serving dishes, ran out and held their plates into the breakers to be rinsed. Nothing could interfere with Randall's concentration, but I will never forget my agitation, in spite of the privacy speaking English gave us, at the distractions, the shame of exposing my poems to Randall (I knew him so well that his gentleness could not conceal his real outrage at a bad line or a bad poem), of having to explain myself here and there, and at his praise. When he said my poems were almost more like natural beauties than works of art, that the poems taken as a body seemed better than any single poem, when he commented on my obsessions and compulsions, I felt these attributes more enviable than their opposites! When Randall set out to praise you, you felt permanently Praised.

Altogether, we had three sessions going over my poems. The last in Levanto in 1958, when the book was ready to be sent to the publisher; the first in their apartment in 1949, when I had about half a dozen poems; the other in his office, about 1951, when I was going over to Greensboro on the bus once a week, from Hillsborough, to sit in on his class for a semester. The astonishing thing about his criticism (other friends who profited by it say the same thing) was that he so keenly respected your own individuality, could see what you were trying to do, and so could help you to help yourself. No re-writing, just a long finger unhappily indicating certain lines, "I think you might make this better," "I believe I'd just throw this one away — it's sort of cooked-up" and — just when you were rock-bottom — a dazzling smile, "Gee, this is magical!" We talked about punctuation and the breaking of lines. He disliked lines broken unnaturally — against syntax — and would press for a reason if an unrhymed line were broken in the middle of a clause or phrase.

All the wonderful things he said, so indelibly, I thought, seem to evaporate now. They were spontaneous and meant for the moment, but Peter and I can't help wishing we had remembered better, even had written things down. He wrote us few letters. We once talked about that, with Randall saying letter-writing was part of self-discovery when you were young, and after that it was just agony, the sort of work he found sinful. The two I have are addressed not to "Mrs. Peter Taylor," but to "Mrs. Eleanor Taylor," as Lucy Hooke's more plentiful ones are addressed "Mrs. Lucy Hooke" (of Lucy and Malcolm, in whose house and confidence Randall was, during the twenty years he was in Greensboro, more than anybody else's in the world). Randall characteristically insisted on giving woman her individuality apart from her husband, no matter how fond he was of the husband.

It is useless to dwell on the twenty years he might have had, the poems he might have explicated for our daughters and sons, and the other poems he might have written, the other wonderful things he might have turned to. How lucky we are to have known him! □

A Gentle Power

by L. Richardson Preyer

A Greensboro lawyer, husband of alumna Emily Harris Preyer '39, recalls Jarrell as a teacher, a tennis opponent and a man.

THE CUTTING off of a gifted life before it has run its course has a special poignancy. This ruthlessness of fate is softened in the case of a poet and artist who, though his life is cut short, lives on through his poems. But the heritage he leaves is not only that of the poet. As a teacher and friend he means more life for all of those whose lives he touched, if only in passing.

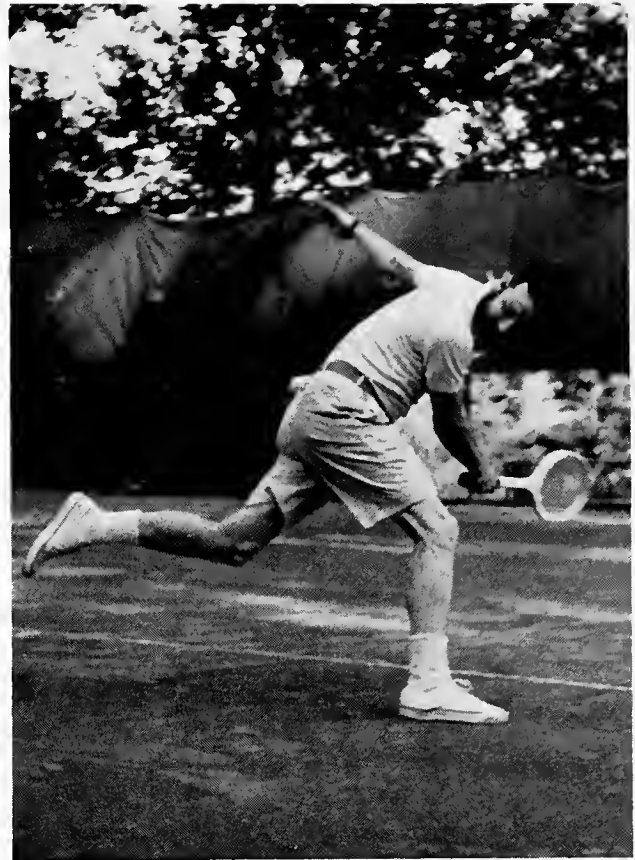
He had all the gentler qualities — loyalty, modesty, high courtesy, compassion, regard for the tender places in life — but these gifts of gentleness were united with sterner qualities. He was a man of real goodness. But such goodness too often fails of the impact that it made because it is not combined with his extraordinary intellectual qualities.

This combination of gentleness with a powerful intellect was most obvious in his classroom. When I was a lawyer just out of law school and starting practice on my own (and so with plenty of spare time), I took his course on “Modern Poetry” at Woman’s College. It was fascinating.

I’m not sure that many of the girls in the class knew any more about modern poetry than I did, but Randall never let the slightest trace of scorn or condescension color his teaching. He tried to lead us to love poetry and not just tell us we should love it. I recall only one instance in which he expressed disappointment in us. He was trying to give us the proper appreciation of the word “sinister” in a poem by getting us to recall its root meaning (“left-handed”). He tried us out on “bend sinister” in a family shield (meaning an illegitimate); but finally led us to it through its opposite, the word “dexterity” (from the Latin word meaning “right-handed”).

The fact that I recall this little instance after all of these years is a measure of the kind of teacher he was — the finest I have ever known.

His range of reference was staggering. On one page of the book we used in his course, I find I had scribbled in the margin Randall’s comments concerning Hardy’s poem, *Waiting Both* from the following sources: Mark (*Heart of a Heartless World*); the Chicago Bears professional football team; a story about the Cumaen Sibyl; and a joke (marooned traveler saw St. Bernard dog coming over hill with brandy key under chin: “Ah,” he says, “man’s best friend. And with a dog, too!”) What a teacher!



He loved Greensboro, and it was interesting to find references to our town in his work. He wrote a wonderful poem on a *Greensboro Daily News* newsboy, Nestus Gurley. Nestus is the real-life son of the much loved superintendent of grounds at Woman’s College. And he begins *A Street Off Sunset*.

*Sometimes as I drive by the factory
That manufactures, after so long, Vicks
Vaporub Ointment, there rises over me
A eucalyptus tree.*

Many of us have driven by there without being inspired to a long poem. In the hilarious dialogue, *The Schools of Yesteryear*, the character Alvin tells us that “We live on a road named the Friendly Road because it goes to a Quaker Church.”

There must be few men who have had so many interests and knew so much about so many things. He loved music and sculpture, tennis and professional football. (He introduced the learned philosopher Hannah Arendt at a lecture by quoting what Johnny Unitas had said to him when he found himself seated next to him on a plane trip. He admired a craftsman.) He threw himself into each of his interests with all he had, as anyone who felt the impact of his fiercely competitive tennis appreciated. He always felt the passion of life to its top.

Randall Jarrell is someone to think back upon, to measure one’s self by, to cherish in death as in life. We bid an affectionate farewell to that tender, gay, and brilliant spirit. □

The Students Remember

Jean Farley White, Charlotte Court House, Va.

Dr. Ineko Kondo, Tokyo, Japan

MR. JARRELL was frequently an alarming man, at times so painfully, so infectiously reticent that one could hardly bear to utter a word near him, much less to him. At other times he might be so extravagantly moved by a poem, a piece of music, an unexpected bit of wit, an instant of excellence in ballet or tennis, an animal or bird momentarily seen as never before, that his words, expression, voice, would take off in an arc of astonishment and delight.

A student could be tied in knots by an unpredictable succession of such moments, and yet — for those and many other reasons, what a marvelous teacher he was. His classes were entirely devoted to the way particular poems worked, the way the language arose within them; there was no theory. I never heard of the category named New Criticism (or Freudian criticism, biographical criticism, history of ideas, etc.) until several years after I graduated.

He somehow managed to welcome one to poetry — reading, hearing, writing poems — but he whetted no appetite for the literary world. (Again, it wasn't until later that I really became aware that such a nexus existed.) There were occasional anecdotes about other writers. I remember best his delight in Marianne Moore's elephant hair bracelet: when one strand worked loose, she attempted to replace it by going to the circus armed with fingernail scissors, was thwarted by a horrified and suspicious keeper who trailed her all evening.

There was, of course, an inconsolable appetite to write good poems. I remember his saying that each completed poem was to its writer like a solid chunk of money to a miser; that every poet must repeatedly feel the panic that his latest poem would be his last: it couldn't happen again.

Few things seemed to have a mild, steady, everyday effect on him — though mildness, steadiness, ordinariness were qualities which could astonish and move him. He once mentioned looking closely at the food a keeper was giving the camel in a zoo: slices of ordinary bread! Again at the zoo, he happened to look away from the caged animals, to glance at the person next to him: it was Garbo! Something once made him recall that he had practiced broken-field running as a boy — headlong down a sidewalk full of pedestrians.

His death was a terrible waste of spirit. □

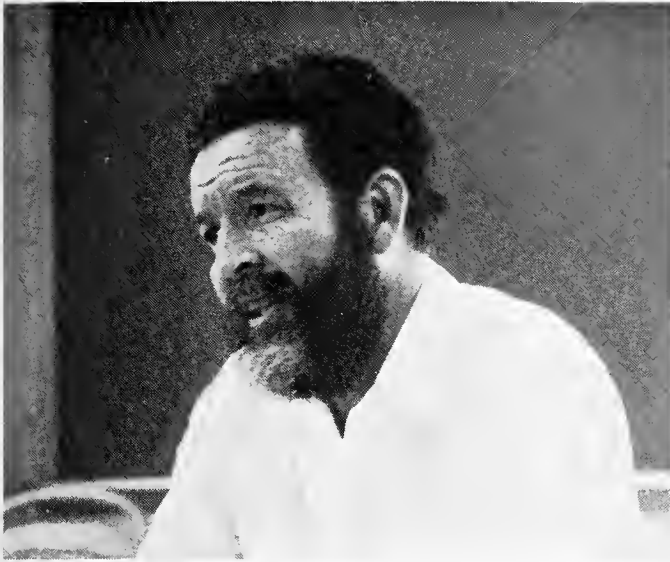
I ATTENDED Randall Jarrell's classes for less than five months during the first semester of the year 1964-5 when I was myself a Whitney-Fulbright lecturer at the University. However, he has left such strong impressions on my mind that I shall never be able to forget him.

It was in his Russian Novels in Translation class that I sat for the first half of the semester. How vividly I remember his lectures on Gogol, in which he traced the writer's life till the very end. On such occasions he brought papers on which he had written down what he wanted to say in huge handwriting and read them. I especially remember the accounts of Gogol's last days which were conveyed so powerfully that we were made almost breathless with excitement and sympathy. Was Jarrell himself weeping, silently in his mind, with Gogol? So I wondered. On receiving the news of Jarrell's death, I could not help remembering that strangely fascinating sympathy he showed for the tragedy of Gogol's last days.

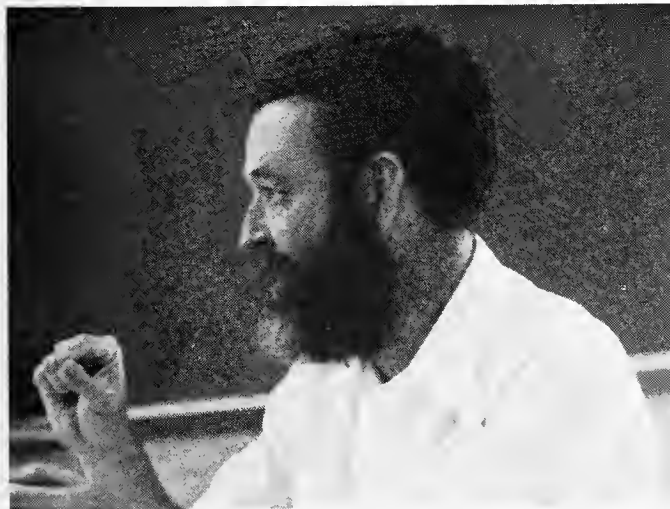
Jarrell could always inspire his students with his infinite love of human-beings — the human-beings with all their idiosyncrasies and tragi-comedies. His approach to prose writings (though I only participated in his readings of *The Government Inspector* and his discussion of *The Overcoat*) was decidedly that of a poet who attracts the attention to a moment in life or to a character's gesture, and by doing so makes them realize that the moment is eternity and the gesture a revelation of life and man. It was this approach that tempted me to enroll in his poetry class and made me change over to his Yeats' class in the second half of the semester.

And I was right, and I enjoyed his readings and appreciation of Yeats even more than I had enjoyed his Gogol. In this class he sometimes attempted minute analyses of poems, making the students see what the poet was trying to say, but other times he asked the students about their own reactions. On the latter occasion, how sympathetic he was with every student, and how magically he could make each one talk! I think in this respect also he was a creator — a creator who instinctively knows how to create something out of his class through the joint contribution of himself and his students.

I shall never forget the way he ended his classes. He always said "Thank you very much" to his students before he stood up and left the room. It was extremely characteristic of him — so revealing of the innate charm and the very goodness of his heart. □



“... Other ages, other places have venerated wisdom. The philosopher, Diogenes, lived in a tub in the market place of Athens but was visited by Alexander the Great. When Alexander was about to leave, he asked Diogenes if there was anything he could do for him. ‘Yes,’ Diogenes said, ‘You can get out of my light.’”



“The public has an unusual relationship to the poet. It doesn’t even know that he is there” . . . “Perhaps instead of recommending poetry as a virtue, poets should warn you against it as a vice. We say that virtue is its own reward, but we all know that vice is its own reward and know it too well ever to need to say so.”

Pamela Pfaff, London, England

RANDALL JARRELL’S class in Russian literature was like a literary salon with a constant and brilliant dialogue between Jarrell and his eminent Russian guests – Tolstoi, Turgenev, Dostoevski, Chekhov, Gogol. Our role was usually that of admiring observers, but occasional sallies from the hardier ones among us would shift Jarrell’s repartee to his audience. At that point, the widest steppes of Russia were fair game for discussion, and whether Jarrell spoke of Tolstoi’s paternal love for his Russian peasants in their magnificent beards, while fingering his own newly-bared chin, or the fashionable literary circles frequented by Turgenev, the conversation was alive, sparkling with hidden analogies, and rich with Jarrell’s own wide-flung experiences and acquaintances.

His initial, and I think favorite, topic was Gogol. I will contend bitterly with any of his modern poetry students who may claim that Jarrell’s reading of a Yeats or Frost poem was any more brilliant or beautiful than his storytelling of Gogol’s “Old World Landowners.” It was more than an intellectual experience, rather we were obliged to abandon any such pretensions and listen with the simplicity of children. Gogol and Jarrell assumed the same voice during that reading to produce one of the finest pieces of narration I have ever heard. We emerged from our months with Gogol reluctantly, for Jarrell had made that particular Russian genius come alive in many ways. And yet it was the same with every Russian author we encountered in that course; no matter how long or short a time we spent with them, Jarrell made them *his* friends and consequently ours. The salon was a booming success.

Robert Lowell has said that Jarrell loved to teach. His skillful mediation between the Russian greats and his audience of amateur students is fitting proof of that fact. His careful appreciative attention to the style and essence of Russian literature and his genuine enthusiasm for the personalities of the men who created it gave Jarrell a special intimacy with what the Russians call their own “sklad uma” or mentality, soul, state of mind. He assumed briefly their personalities – be it the troubled introspection of Dostoevski, the aristocratic refinement of Tolstoi and Turgenev, or the beautiful, pitiable pettiness of Gogol – and then stepped back and surveyed them with a critical Jarrellian eye as if to say, “Now that you’ve preened yourselves, let’s put you to work.” He was charming, inspiring, instructive, but most of all, gently, brilliantly master and man. □



"If you tell people you want to be a poet, your mother is distressed, your father is appalled, the government is suspicious, the neighbors want to send you to Siberia, and your maiden aunt wants you off to a nunnery."

Angela Davis, Tokyo, Japan

GOGOL describes Hlestakov, his hero of *The Government Inspector*, as having "eyes like little animals." That seemed to delight Jarrell when he pointed it out to our Russian Novels in Translation class. I thought then that it was a nice description of Jarrell's eyes, but perhaps they were more like the eyes of one little animal, a squirrel or a chipmunk.

I first knew Randall Jarrell when I was a child, and for a while I thought of him partly as a wonderfully friendly chipmunk, partly as another child. I knew he was, in a shadowy other-world, a famous poet and critic, but that didn't bother me as it might have in someone else. At that time I liked the dashing way he drove his car, his rather angry grace on the tennis court, his gentle smile and voice, but best I liked his eyes. They saw things, any child would realize, not seen by any ordinary adult. (Of course they saw things, as any adult knew, not seen by any child.) His eyes were honest, bright, beautifully alert to the slightest movement and detail; later I knew what I had sensed then, that the seeing was so strong and creative as to be Vision.

I remember my first visit to Jarrell's house in the country. He, his wife, her daughters, their cat and porch-bats seemed a sort of collective poet because of what happened to the world around them. That day we ate avocado sandwiches while sitting on brown leaves in the woods near the house. There were more squirrels, more tanagers, more interesting shadow patterns, more last yellow leaves hanging opossum-like from branches, there was even more sun and sky than at ordinary houses, because of the way the inhabitants were aware of

these things. It was a thicker world and so vivid as to seem newly created. Being there seemed being allowed to come inside a poem, which was the world re-seen. In such a way Jarrell could be a poet and teacher even when he was not composing lines or lecturing; his awareness of the world transformed it for some around him as it did for his readers and students. The special exhilaration of being a student was that you were encouraged to feel responsibility for the creation of the poems which were his classes.

Jarrell seemed always to take it for granted that he need not go over the basic elements of a novel or poem in an introductory way; he trusted, or seemed to, that his students were on his level. In a typical treatment of a work of literature, he would give some breathtaking lectures or reading with commentary and then call on the class to contribute. He sometimes called on everyone in turn, in his gentle interested voice, almost as if he were at a friendly picnic asking some other intellectual people for their opinions. "Please comment on anything queer or interesting you noticed in *Anna Karenina*," he would say, "or raise any questions about it, anything at all." Although the method was quite informal there was remarkable intensity in it because he appeared to be so interested in every forthcoming student utterance. The student comments on *Anna Karenina* were like queerly-colored and shaped jewels, and they seemed highly original and apt; I think it was a sort of electricity in response to Jarrell's awareness to the novel and his response to student opinions. In those classes there was genuine communication. □

Heather Ross Miller, Elizabethtown, N. C.

YOU CANNOT write of Randall Jarrell as if he were really and truly dead. His words, ideas, gestures, poems: they all come crowding back, glowing, full of the heat of living, breathless, falling over themselves in their eagerness.

I did not believe in his death until I saw the pall in Holy Trinity Church. I kept thinking I *would sit* in Randall's class one more time, I would hear him read again, I would feel his deviltry, his merriment, his extreme anguish. And perhaps I felt something of an anger, a selfishness over his death. For now I know that as much as we loved Randall Jarrell, we also took him for granted.

Randall read his students everything: plays, novels, short stories, proverbs, poems. He read us everything and not just selections from approved English survey courses (approved for sophomores taking studies directed toward a degree in personnel management, etc.). He read us Frost, Chekhov, Hopkins and Eliot, Rilke, Fitzgerald, Turgenev, Welty and Yeats, Grimms, Blake, Kafka, Faulkner and Stevens, and countless, countless others.

At first his enthusiasm embarrassed us. We twisted, straightened our socks, looked out the window. But then

it grew on us. We listened. We turned from the window and looked. We looked and we loved looking. We loved listening. We even loved it when he stuttered.

Once, as he sat on the corner of the desk reading "The Witch of Coös" to us, he became so enthused that as he turned the page, he tore the page out of the book. He paused a moment, looked at us (sitting mesmerized in our chairs), then he looked back to the torn-out page, continued reading down that side of it and turned it over and finished reading the other side.

Randall was surely a diehard champion of any works that displayed a surprising, natural growth, either poetic or narrative. He particularly liked to find imagination coupled with experience and illusion coupled with reality. He said to us over and over, in the writing workshop as well as in the poetry classes, "the good is the enemy of the best." As an often bloody but unbowed defender of works of art, he stubbornly insisted those "works of art are able to give you more about the world and the way it really is than scientific generalizations, because they are true imitative forms."

Randall could make the most resistant of us break down and respond to those true imitative forms. And he did not tell us every poem was wonderful, every story was good. He wanted us to see it for ourselves, to read well. Good readers, as well as good writers, were important to him. He labored mightily, often with cunning, to make us read well.

While reading in Eliot's *Preludes* a part that made use of *sparrows*, Randall could get no girl in the class to venture forth a comment. We all knew what he wanted us to tell him. We had taken the basic course in Shakespeare and were familiar with the Elizabethan use of the term. But no one would speak. He became mildly annoyed and chided us, "Come, come, ladies, you *know* about sparrows. They eat unmentionable things. None of them get married, yet they lay dozens of eggs!" To this moment, I cannot read about Eliot's old used-up prostitute without hearing Randall taunt us over the sparrows.

When we came, later in the course, to *The Waste Land* and Mrs. Porter and her daughter were washing their feet in soda water, Randall suddenly sprang from his chair and exclaimed, "Oh, how I want to give them *champagne!*"

I could, perhaps, go on like this, uninterrupted, forever. A great portion of the things his students will remember most about Randall Jarrell will be those things unwritten, unread; those things that once remembered by the heart will then be committed to the soul. Perhaps the perfect thing we will share will be the remembrance that for one brief and shining moment we were students of his.

In his last letter to me, written last June, Randall said, "I've much enjoyed everything you've written and sent me. As *Oliver Twist* says, 'More, more!'"

I did not send him more and now I never will. □

June Cope Bencivenni, New York City

WHAT DO I remember most about Randall Jarrell? You are asked this and suddenly you find yourself unable to answer. There are so many, many things that come crowding into the mind that you have to stop and take time to sift through them before replying.

I remember his warmth, his flashing wit, his brilliant mind, his unerring and intuitive critical ability, his exuberant enthusiasm, his sudden flights into a gay and spontaneous joy in a sudden unusual turn of a story, or a really good poem, or an unexpected or humorous incident. His zest for enjoying the sudden delightful moments in life was contagious. Everyone with him at such times found themselves caught up in whatever it was he was delighted with or excited about at the moment.

Once, at one of the Arts Festivals, he and the rest of the visiting writers on the panel were throwing witty stories and comments back and forth during the discussion, bouncing up and down to comment like jacks-in-the-box. At one point he told a delightful tale about the time he was in college, and not having the then-necessary raccoon coat of his own, his mother had given him hers to wear on campus. So there he was trotting around in



With Poet X. J. Kennedy, left, and Novelist Peter Taylor in 1963.

his mother's old hand-me-down raccoon coat, book of poems in one hand, and tennis racket in the other. One night the weather was so cold that his thin blanket was not enough to keep him warm, so he slept under the raccoon coat. He was awakened in the middle of the night by an inquisitive mouse sitting upright on his chest, staring him earnestly in the face as if to say: "What kind of creature is this anyway — half-raccoon and half-man?" The panel and the audience roared with laughter.

The year I graduated he was drafted along with other faculty members to attend graduation exercises. I shall never forget the sight of him sitting up front with the other professors. They looked so dignified in their caps and gowns, and Mr. Jarrell looked like a friendly raccoon who had just come along for the ride. He sat there, his cap tilted back, peering at us from behind the tassel that kept getting in the way, smiling at us from behind his beard — a friendly conspirator's smile.

About the Students . . .

Jean Farley White '50 has continued to write poetry which appears in such magazines as Poetry, The New Yorker, and The Kenyon Review. She and her husband, who teaches English at Hollins, have three children.

Dr. Ienko Kondo, professor at Tsuda College, Tokyo, was one of Randall Jarrell's most distinguished students. She enrolled in several classes while on campus in 1964-65 as Visiting Whitney-Fulbright Professor.

Pamela Pfaff '65 is in England on a Fulbright grant, attending the University of London School of Slavonic and East European Studies.

Angela Davis 'MFA 65 is teaching at Tsuda College in Tokyo. A Duke University graduate, Angela is the daughter of Novelist Burke Davis who briefly attended the University at Greensboro as one of the "first coeds" in 1932.

Heather Ross Miller '61 has a second novel, *Tenants of the House*, which was published in February of this year, and another book of verse, tentatively titled *The Wind Southerly*, scheduled for publication in 1967. She lives at Singletary Lake near Elizabethtown with her husband and two small children.

June Cope Bencivenni '56 is Promotion Assistant for Dramatists Play Service in New York City. Her actor-husband is training for opera under the professional name of Victor Monaco.

Jo Gillikin '56 is a candidate for a Ph.D. degree in English at New York University and teaches at New York City Community College.

Alma Graham '58 is a graduate student at Columbia and an editor in the dictionary department of Funk & Wagnalls Company.

Bertha Harris Wyland '59, the mother of a two-year old daughter, is completing work on her first novel.

He was always bringing us delightful stories. One of these involved a little boy on his street who referred to him and his beard as "The Man From The Days of Christ." I believe it was this same little boy who one day stopped him and asked him if he was born with the beard or if he had got it somewhere. His face lit up with laughter as he told us this story, and he remarked: "Wouldn't it be a marvelous world if all little boys were born with beards?" Visions of little boys in beards wearing diapers, little boys in beards pushing scooters, little boys in beards with tricycles, when through our heads, and we all collapsed in laughter. Later on he would stop reading for a moment, his eyes alight with that "earth-shine," and he would smile a kind of "I-just-can't-help-it" smile. We would all burst into laughter again as we recalled the prospects of such a delightful universe. He didn't have to say a word. It was spontaneous ESP.

His influence still colors everything I see: a beautiful sunset; an odd or touching incident; a child discovering something new; the playfulness of kittens; the touching faces of some old people that look like deeply etched roadmaps of where their lives have been; the sudden tilt of a puppy's head; the sleep-walker's faces of those who grieve. And in our minds, he still lives; the funny

times, and the exciting, illuminating classes still live on as vividly as if they had just happened, and I can hear his voice in memory as clearly as if he had just spoken. Recently, while reading *The Animal Family*, I wondered to myself why he had chosen a Mermaid "of all people" as his heroine. To my astonished delight I heard his voice in my mind exclaiming with merry mischief, "A Mermaid is a fish out of water!" □

Jo Gillikin, New York City

DEPARTURES coincided in the spring of 1956: Randall Jarrell's appointment as poetry consultant called him to Washington, and graduation and transferrals scattered his students—but not before we held a farewell party at his home to wish him well in his new position. The unofficial, but ubiquitous, photographer, Alma Graham, snared us smiling, sitting at his feet, happy and at ease for the last time in Zion.

By chance one spring forenoon as I was going back to New Guilford Dorm, Randall Jarrell called to me, asking if these photographs had been developed. Fortunately they had been and were in my possession. Eager to be of service to him, I offered to run and get them while he waited for me. But, ever gracious, he said, "No, let me drive you to the dorm to get them." His Mercedes-Benz was parked over near McIver at that time and took us much out of the way. On the way to the car, he commented that we were walking further to get to the car so that he could drive me than if we had just walked on to the dorm. But what was walking compared to a ride in the Mercedes-Benz with him? He drove me to the dorm; and while I ran up to my room to get the pictures, he waited outside near the blossoming cherry trees. As I ran up the stairs to the third floor, I looked out at the landing. I saw him waiting patiently. □



Spring of 1956: with June Cope Bencivenni, Alma Graham and Jo Gillikin at party at Jarrell home prior to his departure for Washington.

Alma Graham, New York City

I REMEMBER little things about Randall Jarrell. Sometimes when he called the roll near the start of a new semester, he would look right at a student questioningly, as though waiting for her to reassure him that she hadn't changed her name. At other times, when he smiled and his teeth gleamed through his beard, he looked like a mischievous rabbit.

No one who heard Mr. Jarrell's reading voice is likely ever to forget it. I can never read Kafka's "A Fratricide" without hearing every word and every accent in Jarrellian tones, "Not all we want comes true. Not all the dreams that blossomed have borne fruit." The truth was that Mr. Jarrell brought us great figures from world literature, as well as noted English and American writers such as Kipling, Eliot, Forster, Frost. And he was always making marvelous discoveries off the beaten track. He read us Frost's "The Witch of Coös," Kafka's "A Country Doctor," Chekhov's "Gusev," Forster's "The Story of the Siren," "Fair Eckbert" by Ludwig Tieck, and many more. By having us read for ourselves three different versions of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Fir Tree," he showed us just how crucial the quality of a translation could be.

Mr. Jarrell's reverence for God was real and went deep. What he hated was the shallow thinking that led to meaningless abstractions and clichés. He wanted every student to find her own, unique way of saying things. Good writing, he said, was like Beethoven's "Grosse Fugue": "Either state things at bottom, as they are, or go very high to your own original way. Avoid the common-place middle."

Mr. Jarrell wanted his students to be good. He would read each of our stories aloud once and each poem twice — then subject each work to a close or line-by-line analysis. If everything else was bad and one section was good, he would stress the one section that was good. But if everything else was good and a few words or phrases seemed out of place, he would point out the offending parts and tell why they didn't work. Mr. Jarrell felt it his duty to discourage those few in any class who clearly had no talent and should not be writing at all. But while he was capable of devastating wit as a literary critic, toward his students he was understanding and kind. I remember one period when I found myself unable to write. I had only unfinished poems — fragments — to turn in to Mr. Jarrell and went to him about it, very worried and upset. "You mustn't worry about it," he told me. "That happens sometimes. It has happened to me, too. Poets are like that."

There were many stories about his beard. One of his favorite had as its setting the Moravian Church where he and Mrs. Jarrell had gone to attend a special service. They were sitting on the front row of the balcony, and the minister was preaching about the Second Coming of Christ. "What if Christ were to come back now?" he asked. "Would we know him? In his own day he came as one of the common people. Today, then, might he not return in a business suit? Suppose he were among us now? Suppose he were sitting next to you? Suppose . . ." The clergyman lifted his eyes upwards, toward heaven, and his gaze fell upon the bearded Jarrell in the balcony. The heads of the congregation swiveled. For a time the minister was unable to speak another word. □



Randall Jarrell and Violinist Leonard Samuels, right, who was a member of the music faculty for several years, were elected to the ranks of the faculty's most appealing men in the spring of 1955.

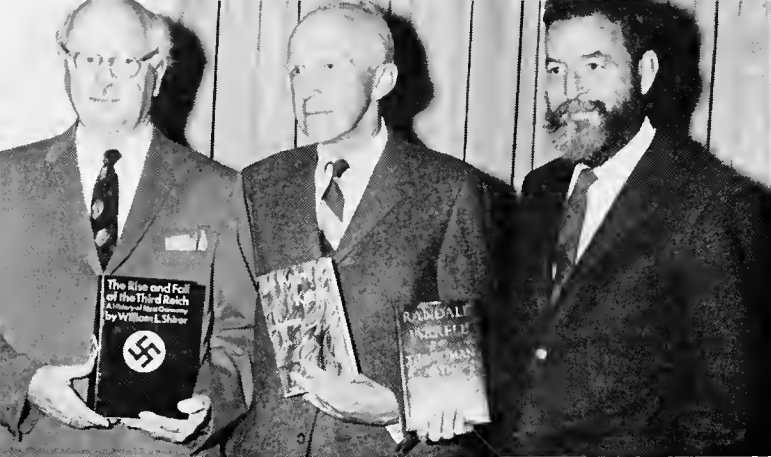
Bertha Harris Wyland, New York City

IN NEW YORK on October 15 it was a fine day. New Yorkers love their Autumns and Springs. During these short seasons we pat each other on the back for choosing to be New Yorkers, and we go to Central Park to hang around the trees. On this October 15 my little girl and I were in Central Park, hanging around the trees, congratulating ourselves on the dead leaves to sit in, the dirt to dig, the strange dogs to chase, the new bucket for her, the new newspaper for me. I saw his photograph first, not the words and I said, "A new book by Randall Jarrell is here!" Then I said, no, and no many times that day — to the *New York Times* obituary, to the car that killed him, to the fall weather that had trapped me into happiness before I had learned that Randall Jarrell was dead.

I was his student for just a short time, only a year. My experience with him was not unique: we all felt when we were with him, when we were writing for him, when we watched his jubilation over our poems on the blackboard, that we were each extraordinary, gifted, special. He could convince us that the poem we wrote the night before was as good as anything in a book, as good — and we almost believed it — as anything by Randall Jarrell. If we had left it up to him to tell us, we would never have known he was the poet he was, that he was a poet at all. He made a little world, an enormous world, in his classroom, a world in which he controlled the climate and pointed out the sights.

. . . . We are moving.
I shall never again sing
Good morning, Dear Teacher, to my own dear teacher.
Never again
Will Augusta be the capital of Maine.

(from "Moving by Randall Jarrell, from his book, *Losses*)



Jarrell, who won the National Book Award in 1961, with two other National Book Award winners, William L. Shirer, left, and Conrad Richter.

The Woman at the Washington Zoo is my eighth book. I feel like the man in the joke: he fell out of an eighth-story window and was lying on the asphalt, when a policeman came running up and said, "What's going on here?" The man said, "I don't know. I just got here myself."

You can't help hoping about yourself that you were here all the time, and that the others just got here. But, mostly, I feel grateful to them for getting here at all. I feel — but I don't need to tell you how I feel; *you* know how I feel; how would you feel? And just as you would, I want to thank people: Hiram Haydn, whom I followed to his new firm; Mike Bessie, whom I met there; Pat Knopf, an old friend re-encountered; and Harry Ford, my favorite book-designer and one of my favorite readers.

Sometimes I read, in reviews by men whose sleep I have troubled, that I'm one of those poets who've never learned to write poetry. This is true: I never have learned. Sometimes a poem comes to me — I do what I can to it when it comes — and sometimes for years not one comes. During these times the only person who helps much is my wife: she always acts as if I'd written the last poem yesterday and were about to write the next one tomorrow. While I'm writing poems or translating "Faust" I read what I have out loud, and my wife listens to me. Homer used to be led around by a little boy, who would listen to him; all I can say is, if Homer had ever had my wife listen to his poems, he would never again have been satisfied with that little boy.

On an occasion like this, when some readers and writers are gathered together in the name of literature, I'd like — as one of the many Americans who love literature — to thank someone else. I think all of us are grateful that, for the first time in the history of the Republic, a great poet was invited to help inaugurate the President of the United States. The President made his invitation not as a friend, not as a politician, but as a reader: any of us who heard the President talk about Frost and read some lines of Frost's poetry, on television a month after the inauguration, will remember that he spoke as only a real reader of Frost could speak, and read the lines

New York

National Book Award

*Randall Jarrell's acceptance speech
as winner of poetry award.*

almost as Frost himself would have read them. It's good to have Frost and Balanchine around the White House. It is good to have Fred Waring in the juke-boxes, but it was sad to have Fred Waring, nothing but Fred Waring, in the White House too. It is a pleasure to think that for the next four or eight years our art and our government won't be complete strangers.

We say that a painter feels about his paintings, a poet feels about his poems, as if they were his children. The point about your children is that, though they happened because of you, they're not you. What this award really means to me is that some poems in this book (in my other books, even) will be read by people who might not have read them otherwise. And ten of the poems in the book are Rilke's, not mine. That incomparable poet needs no recommendation of mine; he has readers everywhere in the world. But if because of these translations a few more Americans read Rilke — learn a little German so as to read without the translations — I will be happy.

I cannot help feeling unhappy about the fact that, because this award was given to "The Woman at the Washington Zoo," Eleanor Taylor's "A Wilderness of Ladies" will not be read by people who might have read it if it had been given the award. I assure you that, in heaven or hell or wherever it is that good poets go, Hardy and Emily Dickinson are saying to all the new arrivals: "Did you really get to see Eleanor Taylor?" — just as Blake and Wordsworth used to say: "Did you really get to see Hardy and Dickinson?" If you would like to read a true, a unique American poet, read Eleanor Taylor's "A Wilderness of Ladies."

It is customary for poets, in conclusion, to recommend poetry to you, and to beg you to read it as much as you ought instead of as little as you do. The poet says this because of the time he lives in — "a time," writes Douglas Bush, "in which most people assume that, as an eminent social scientist once said to me, 'Poetry is on the way out.'" Now poetry — if by poetry we mean what Frost and Dostoevski and Freud and Ingmar Bergman share — isn't on the way out, unless humanity is on the way out; when

(Continued on Page 30)

University Tribute

Robert Penn Warren's introductory remarks on occasion of University Press-Historical Book Club tribute.

THIRTY years ago this month I came to teach at Vanderbilt University. Among my classes was the old standard Sophomore survey – Beowulf to Thomas Hardy – the A-section – the top section – the thing being that, since the best students didn't need much teaching, they should be given the most inexperienced and incompetent instructors – a very good thing. And among my students in that sophomore section was a tall, skinny young man, just getting acquainted with the art of the razor, an art he has now neglected. He was a freshman, but since he had read everything, and remembered everything, he clearly didn't belong in Freshman English. In fact, he didn't belong anywhere. But they put him in the Sophomore Survey, Section A.

He was a very gentle and polite young man, though sometimes, in the innocence of youth, overwhelmed by the spectacle of human dumbness. At such times he might cover his face and moan aloud. But such pity and despair might quickly pass as some flash of intelligence and perception, however rudimentary, appeared before him. Then his face would light up with generous appreciation and deep impersonal joy.

It quickly became apparent that the members of Sophomore Survey, Section A, did not care much about the marks on their papers. They watched the face of the tall, skinny young man to see how they were doing. So did the instructor, and on days when the hour passed with not once that certain expression of glazed pity on the skinny young man's face, the instructor took a deep breath and hurried out to light a cigarette. The instructor learned a lot in Sophomore Survey. He had to.

Time passed and the skinny young man was not quite so young. His excellent tennis game slowed a little, only a little. The severe passion for high standards of intelligence and reason turned more and more inward into a self-demanding scrupulosity seasoned by humor and untainted by self-importance. The genuine appreciation and joy at achievement with an undertone of pity for human failing and pity for human feeling.

The tall, skinny young man was, even at the time of the Sophomore Survey, a poet. I have a poem here which he wrote when he was, I think, a Sophomore – a poem published, along with many others of his in a green-folks magazine, when he was a junior.



"He was a teacher of teachers" was Robert Penn Warren's description of Randall Jarrell, one-time student and long-time friend.

The cow wandering in the bare field,
Her chain dangling, aimless, –
The Negro sitting in the ashes,
Staring, humming to the cat, –

Their greyed figures, muffled in snow,
Perhaps, outside the starred window,
At that hour when the sun has rusted away,
Range themselves in the only order they know –

These are the inhabitants of the country of the mind,
Or only the marching motion of the mind,
But still, this is what the mind gives the mind.
Standing there, familiar, brutal, and resigned,

A few trees, gelatinous, evergreen,
Powdered and leaden, creaking in one's age's snow,
That is, the mind's aging, the sky's covering snow,
Speak, bend, so vacantly as to seem

The thirsty images of a dream.
I summon them then once more from memory
Into this wooden room, dripping and warm,
To chorus for you their bad charm,

Because I knew their true living forms.
And how shall I make you, mossy, bearded, mournful,
A stuffed father on a Christmas night,
Cry out in pride and blessedness, O children!

May 1934

I remember the delight and admiration with which I first read this poem, in manuscript. I read it now with delight and admiration. And now with the years, I see that it pictured the way, a way of pity, warmth, and appreciation, in which his poem would round the world – and his poems cry out in blessedness O children! They are poems that will, I think, speak in this special voice for years to come. □

The Animal Family

Reviewed by Mrs. Randall Jarrell

THE ANIMAL FAMILY. By Randall Jarrell. Illustrated by Maurice Sendak. Pantheon. 160 pages. \$3.50.

With *The Animal Family* Randall Jarrell has once again gotten around another of the world's clichés: that you cannot choose your family, but you can choose your friends. Mr. Jarrell founds his family with a bearded, brave man who wears furs, and carves and hews a house for himself with his own hands. As in some of the best stories from olden times where the hero is called simply The Knight or The Pilgrim or The Magician, this man is called The Hunter. In the beginning he is all alone.

"In spring the meadow that ran down from the cliff to the beach was all foam-white and sea-blue with flowers; the hunter looked at it and it was beautiful. But when he came home there was no one to tell what he had seen — and if he picked the flowers and brought them home in his hands, there was no one to give them to. And when at evening, past the dark blue shape of the far-off island, the sun sank under the edge of the sea like a red world vanishing, the hunter saw it all, but there was no one to tell what he had seen."

After awhile the author creates for him — a helpmeet, I suppose you might call her. She is not a woman, and not a wife; in a word, she is a mermaid. They meet by moonlight on the seal rocks where she is singing. At first, when he answers her song she dives into the water and swims away but later her curiosity gets the better of her. One night after he sings her song back to her there is a soft little laugh before she leaves.

"And the next night, and the next, and the next, and the next, she was there. She came closer, now; sitting in the shallow water, the waves not up to her waist, she talked to the hunter in a voice like the water." When she learns to speak his language and when he teaches her to love the land they become inseparable. "Mistake or not, the mermaid

made it: that fall she went into the house with the table and the bed, and from then on the sea people saw her only as a visitor from the land that was 'so— so—' whatever it was." And, "The hunter and the mermaid were so different from each other that it seemed to them, finally, that they were exactly alike; and they lived together and were happy."

When he finishes this book the first thing a reader is apt to do is ask his parents or himself, "Is this a true story?" Most of it, if you ask me, is intangibly true and the rest of it, I guarantee, is true as true can be. The locale, for instance, "where the forest runs down to the ocean" is on the Pacific coast and may be seen in any number of beautiful wilderness places from Coös Bay, Oregon, to Big Sur, California. When you read "over the fireplace hung a big brass hunting horn he had found in a wreck the waves had washed ashore" I can show you in his own house over the fireplace where Mr. Jarrell hung an identical big brass hunting horn that he found in Gucci's Italian leather and saddle shop in Florence.

Then you come upon the poetic description of a certain gift the mermaid brought him from the bottom of the sea: "The best thing she brought them was a ship's figurehead they put up over the door. . . . It was a woman with bare breasts and fair hair, who clasped her hands behind her head; she wore a necklace of tiny blue flowers, and had a garland of big flowers around her thighs. But her legs and feet weren't a woman's at all, but the furry, delicate, sharp-hooved legs of a deer or goat and they were crossed at the ankles. . . . Her eyes stared out past you at something far away."

This figure, as real as it is odd, is three feet high and was discovered and purchased in Amsterdam from an English-speaking antique dealer who entertained us for more than an hour on his pet interest, the American Civil War.

That somewhat fantastic window-seat in the hunter's house (all that



Pat Alspaugh

*Randall and Mary Jarrell with Elfi to whom *The Animal Family* was dedicated.*

glass that had to be washed up!) is a replica of one added to our house a few years ago. And the bows and arrows; the wooden bowls and cups and spoons; and the deerskins and bearskins, all, ALL have always been required necessities among Mr. Jarrell's personal belongings.

The Lynx was — is, I hope — the lynx at the Washington Zoo where the Jarrell family photographed him and fed him and often coaxed him to come padding out of his den when they called, "Beautiful. Beautiful. Come see us, Beautiful."

If the Elfi name seems familiar to readers of *Pictures from an Institution* by Randall Jarrell they may recall an Elfi that was Miss Batterson's father's dear brown cow who was destroyed by Union soldiers in a true story the author "borrowed" (along with the sweetest traits for Miss Batterson) from our close friend, Mildred Gould. The Elfi of the dedication was our tortoise-shell Persian cat.

So it is, that out of the illusions that Mr. Jarrell makes real for us



James Wommack

Randall Jarrell with the ship's figure-head described in *The Animal Family*.

and the realities he makes enchanted we get "our impression of idyllic happiness" that Mr. Alan Pryce-Jones mentions in his *Book Week* review. He goes on to say, "It is not sentimental happiness . . . each of the characters in the fable knows the meaning of pain and sadness and fear. But the happiness is there all the same, though it has to be won."

With *The Animal Family* the author succeeds as Defoe and Barrie succeed in that rare writing that feels like fact based on fantasy, and this book, like *Swiss Family Robinson* and *Peter Pan*, can enthrall anyone any age for a little while that he may then remember for a long while.

Mr. Sendak's unique illustrations are a kind of music you hear while you read. It is strange music made of pines and shells and misshapen cliffs and it comes from moonlight and ocean waves and deserted places. They belong with the book as much as the book belongs with the sentence of Gogol's that my husband quotes for the preface: "Say what you like, but such things do happen — not often, but they do happen."

A Last Unpublished Poem

Mrs. Randall Jarrell gave *The Alumni News* permission to print "The Player Piano," one of her husband's last unpublished poems. This was the selection she read at Yale University on February 28, introducing it briefly as follows:

"We were in Blowing Rock in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and my mother was visiting us. She is a dear little lady of eighty-one years. After she heard the poem, her first words were: 'Why, Randall, I understand it all? This pleased him.'"

The Player Piano

I ate pancakes one night in a Pancake House
Run by a lady my age. She was gay.
When I told her that I came from Pasadena
She laughed and said, "I lived in Pasadena
When Fatty Arbuckle drove the El Molino bus."

I felt that I had met someone from home.
No, not Pasadena, Fatty Arbuckle.
Who's that? Oh, something that we had in common
Like — like — the false armistice. Piano rolls.
She told me her house was the first Pancake House

East of the Mississippi, and I showed her
A picture of my grandson. Going home —
Home to the hotel — I began to hum,
"Smile a while, I bid you sad adieu,
When the clouds roll back I'll come to you."

Let's brush our hair before we go to bed,
I say to the old friend who lives in my mirror.
I remember how I'd brush my mother's hair
Before she bobbed it. How long has it been
Since I hit my funnybone? had a scab on my knee?

Here are Mother and Father in a photograph,
Father's holding me . . . They both look so young.
I'm so much older than they are. Look at them,
Two babies with their baby. I don't blame you,
You weren't old enough to know any better;

If I could I'd go back, sit down by you both,
And sign our true armistice: you weren't to blame.
I shut my eyes and there's our living room,
The piano's playing something by Chopin,
And Mother and Father and their little girl

Listen. Look, the keys go down by themselves!
I go over, hold my hands out, play I play —
If only, somehow, I had learned to live!
The three of us sit watching, as my waltz
Plays itself out a half-inch from my fingers.

Dear Marie and Chuck.

When Ramble got your Father's Day card it made him so happy that he went out in the yard and rolled over and over in the grass and said "Huray! Huray!" He said it so loud that it scared a bluebird sitting in its nest in a pecan tree. The bluebird flapped its wings so hard, as it flew away, that it knocked a big green leaf down from the tree — no, two big green

leaves, and Ramble reached out and caught them before they hit the ground and guess what? — they weren't pecan leaves, they were dollar bills! One said Chuck and the other said Marie. Then the bluebird flew back over Ramble's head and sang him a song and the words of the song were:

ONE IS FOR CHUCK AND ONE'S FOR MARIE
AND THEY BOTH CAME OUT OF THE NEST
IN THE TREE.

And it was so — when Ramble climbed up in the tree and

From Ramble

To MARIE and CHUCK

Randall Jarrell felt a special way about children, and children responded to him, whether gaily waving at a distance and calling, "Hello, Santa Claus," or sitting at his feet in Alumnae House while he read from *The Gingerbread Rabbit* or *The Bat-Poet*. Two special children in his life were Marie and Chuck whose mother, Alleyne, is Mary Jarrell's daughter. Alleyne lived with the Jarrells for many years before her marriage to Dr. Charles Boyette, a physician in Belhaven on the North Carolina coast. Marie was three and a half and Chuck was two when they received this letter in June 1965 from "Ramble," their own version of "Randall."

looked at the nest, it was a nest of dollar bills, just the way the bluebird said. So if you ever need another dollar bill just tell Ramble and he will climb up in the tree and get you one. BUT these two in the envelope are for you to take to the store and buy something extra nice with, to go with a big hug and a big kiss
now
RAMBLE



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

In September 1956 Randall Jarrell began a two-year term as Consultant in Poetry in English at the Library of Congress. His duties were varied, but a specific project was supervision of the Library's program of recording 20th century poets reading their own works. His rapport with students was notable, and L. Quincy Mumford, Librarian of Congress, noted his enduring contribution in the following tribute which was recorded by telephone by WWDC-AM-FM on October 15, 1965, the day following the poet's death.

RANDALL JARRELL was not only a gifted poet but a literary critic and a writer of great perception and analytic talent; but he was more to those of us at the Library of Congress who had the privilege of working with him. He was a personal friend of very fine qualities, and the rich resources of his mind and his wit were shared generously with us. During his two-year term as Consultant in Poetry, from 1956 to 1958, he contributed much to the Library and to the appreciation of poetry. His penetrating lectures and his sensitive poetry readings stimulated public interest in the literary arts both here and outside Washington. He was especially generous in his work with students, and as Consultant he devoted a great deal of time and energy to working with other poets in tape-recording their poetry for the Library's archives of contemporary literature. In 1962 he took a very active part in the first National Poetry Festival at the Library of Congress – in reading his own poetry, in contributing to the discussions, and delivering a formal lecture that was entitled "Fifty Years of American Poetry."

I say that he has left his mark not only in the Library of Congress but that he made an enduring contribution to American letters as well.

The ~~Death~~ Death of the Ball Turret Gunner

(Escaped from my mother's sleep)
 From my mother's sleep I fell into the State
 And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze;
 dream gasped ^{my} ^{nightmare}
 swarmed gasped among ^{black} ^{flakes} and ^{fighters}
 no air gasped among black flakes, and the nightmare fighters
 I woke to
 I gasped a dream of warmth and air of life,
 I gasped for my life, and made a dream of ^{air} ^{school}
 gasping for life, made a dream of warmth and
 and I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters
 When I died they washed me out of the
 turret with a hose.

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State
 And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze;
 30,000 ft from the earth, I kept the dream of life
 And woke to black flak and the nightmare
 Seven miles from earth, I — its dream of nightmare fighters.
 ? Six
 When I died they washed me out of the
 turret with a hose.

I gasped through ^{unlearned} ^{their dream}
 learned better than ^{of life}

The Death Of The Ball Turret Gunner

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,
 And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
 Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
 I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
 When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

Collecting Randall Jarrell

by Charles M. Adams

IN ORDER to collect Randall Jarrell one cannot concentrate on first editions of his poetry and criticism. His *Pictures From an Institution* (1954) was a best selling novel. He published several children's books. His works were translated into foreign languages and published abroad. His writing appeared not only in books, but in pamphlets, magazines, on television video tape and tape recordings, and even in ephemera such as keepsakes issued for dinners. There are also his letters, typescripts, and proof sheets.

Randall Jarrell was not an easy man to keep up with. Articles and poems would appear in many unexpected places. It was easy enough to identify and acquire copies of his work in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Poetry*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Mademoiselle*, and other obvious and well indexed sources. But it was more difficult to locate his work in *Analects*, *Choix*, *Accent*, *Botteghe Oscure*, *Le Figaro Littéraire*, *Prairie Schooner*, or *Transition*. His years as Consultant in Poetry in English at the Library of Congress (1956-58) made for many more lectures, recorded programs and interviews on tape. Each adds a bit more to the understanding of the wide range of his interests, as do the published essays (many of which were first given as lectures) in *Poetry and the Age* (1953).

He was a man who lived fully in his generation, making his contribution to the Southern Renaissance as a true Renaissance man. It was in *Vogue* (September 1954) that he wrote of his interest in sports cars. He played an expert's game of badminton, as well as tennis, and there is an excellent picture of him playing in a badminton match, as well as the poem it inspired, in *New Poems 1942*. His interest in art is revealed in the cover which he selected for the paperback, *The Anchor Book of Stories* (1958), which shows the statue of Uta in the Naumburg Cathedral, and also in the poem, "The Bronze David of Donatello" which appeared in the October 1957, issue of *Art News*. His interest in Russian literature is evidenced

The creative process is well illustrated in the manuscripts of poems, reviews and essays which Randall Jarrell turned over to the University Library for advanced research. On the facing page is one of the first drafts of what became the famous five-line verse, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," the final version of which is included at the bottom of the manuscript.

Mr. Adams, who writes about "Collecting Randall Jarrell," is Librarian at the Walter Clinton Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro and official Jarrell bibliographer.

in the paperback collection, *Six Russian Short Stories* (1963), as well as in the course which he taught here at the University, English 507, 508, "Russian Literature in Translation: A survey of Russian fiction. . . discussed as individual works of art, not as a part of literary history." In 1965 he translated Chekov's *Three Sisters*, which was mimeographed for use by the cast and director when it was first produced in Aycock Auditorium. It was later produced at Willims College and, finally, in New York City by Nu Actor's Studio with Kim Stanley, Geraldine Page and Shirley Knight under the direction of Lee Strasberg. (The Collection at the University here does not have programs or reviews of either of these two productions.)

The Library here was the only one to which he gave any of his manuscripts, and it is hoped that many others still at his home in Guilford County, stuffed in pillow cases, according to rumor, will ultimately find their home beside the early ones now here. Among the manuscripts, for example, is his address as guest speaker at the National Book Award: the original manuscript draft, and the mimeographed news copy marked "Hold for Release, 6 p.m., March 11, 1958." Two years later he won the National Book Award for his book, *The Woman at the Washington Zoo, Poems and Translations* (1960). The University in 1962 presented him with the Oliver Max Gardner Award and for the occasion a handsome booklet was published with a portrait and a biographical essay on the "Poet, Teacher, Poet Teaching . . .", now in the Library Collection.

The picture of Randall Jarrell, in uniform, seated in the Celestial Navigation Tower which appears on page 41 in this issue, is on the back of the jacket of the first edition of *Losses* (1948), his third volume of poetry. His two earlier volumes were *Little Friend*, *Little Friend* (1945) and *Blood for a Stranger* (1942). New Directions had included him in their *Five Young American Poets* (1940). The copy in the Jarrell Collection is inscribed, "To Mother from Randall with lots and lots and lots of love. Let Topsy (their dog) smell it, or eat the cover. But make everyone else buy copies! It is (to quote the *Congressional Record*) 'the Only Perfect Present.'" (As yet no one has located the quotation in the *Congressional Record*.) For one year he was editor of the *Vanderbilt Masquerader* (1934-35), which included at least one serial by Randall Jarrell, called "The Rover Boys at Vanderbilt." Actually five of his poems had already been published during his Junior year in the Poetry Supplement, edited by Allen Tate, of the *American Review* (May 1934), also in the Library Collection, along with two of his poems published in the student magazine, *Hika* (June 1939) while he was teaching at Kenyon College. □

Jarrell Address - National Book Award

(Continued from Page 22)

poetry "goes out of a place it is not the first to go, nor the second or third to go, / It waits for all the rest to go, it is the last." Poetry doesn't need poets' recommendations. And perhaps it is a mistake to keep telling people that poetry is a good thing after all, one they really ought to like better; tell them that about money, even, and they will finally start thinking that there's something wrong with it. Perhaps instead of recommending poetry as a virtue poets should warn you against it as a vice, an old drug like love or dreams. We say that virtue is its own reward, but we all *know* that vice is its own reward — know it too well ever to need to say so. Let me conclude by saying, about poetry, my favorite sentences about vice. They come out of *Crime and Punishment*. The murderer Raskolnikov is shocked at Svidrigaylov's saying that he has come to St. Petersburg "mainly for the sake of the women." Raskolnikov twice expresses his disgust at Svidrigaylov's love of "vice." Finally Svidrigaylov says with candid good-humor: "It seems to me that you have vice on the brain. . . . Well, what about it? Let's say it is vice. There is something permanent about this vice; something that is founded on nature and not subject to the whims of fancy; something that is always there in your blood, like a piece of red-hot coal; something that sets it on fire, that you won't perhaps be able to put out for a long time, not even with years. You must agree it's an occupation of a sort."

Poetry, art — these too are occupations of a sort; and I do not recommend them to you any more than I recommend to you that, tonight, you go home to bed, and go to sleep, and dream.

Tribute at Yale - Robert Lowell

(Continued from Page 11)

by their beds or somewhere handy, and read random pages aloud to lighten their hearts. His book, *A Sad Heart at the Supermarket*, had a condescending press. When one listened to these social essays, they were like *dies irae* sermons, strange ones that cauterized the soul, and yet made us weep with laughter. A banal world found them banal. But what Jarrell's inner life really was in all its wonder, variety, and subtlety is best told in his poetry. To the end, he was writing with deepening force, clarity, and frankness. For some twenty-five years he wrote excellent poems. Here I only want to emphasize two of his peaks: what he wrote about the War, and what he completed in the last years of his life.

IN THE first months of the War, Jarrell became a pilot. He was rather old for a beginner, and soon "washed out," and spent the remaining war years as an aviation instructor. Even earlier, he had an expert's knowledge. I remember sitting with him in 1938 on the hill of Kenyon College and listening to him analyze in cool technical detail the various rather minute ways in which the latest



With Novelist Jean Stafford during the 1960 Arts Festival.

British planes were superior to their German equivalents. He then jokingly sketched out how a bombing raid might be made against the college. Nine-tenths of his war poems are air force poems, and are about planes and their personnel, the flyers, crews, and mechanics who attended them. No other imaginative writer had his precise knowledge of aviation, or knew so well how to draw inspiration from his knowledge.

*In the turret's great glass dome,
the apparition death,
Framed in the glass of the gunsight,
a fighter's blinking wing,
Flares softly, a vacant fire. If the
flak's inked blurs —
Distributed, statistical — the bomb's
lost patterning
Are death, they are death under
glass, a chance
For someone yesterday, someone
tomorrow; and the fire
That streams from the fighter
which is there, not there,
Does not warm you, has not burned
them, though they die.*

More important still, the soldiers he wrote about were men much like his own pilot-students. He knew them well, and not only that, peculiarly sympathized with them. For Jarrell, the war careers of these young men had the freshness, wonder and magical brevity of childhood. In his poetry, they are murderers, and yet innocents. They destroyed cities and men that had only the nominal reality of names studied in elementary geography classes.

*In bombers named for girls, we burned
The cities we had learned about in school —
Till our lives wore out . . .*

Or

*In this year of our warfare, indispensable
In general, and in particular dispensible . . .*

Finally, the pilot goes home for good, forever mutilated and wounded, "the slow flesh failing, the terrible flesh sloughed off at last . . . stumbling to the toilet on one clever leg of leather, wire, and willow . . ." There, knowledge has at last come to him:

*And it is different, different — you
have understood
Your world at last: you have
tasted your own blood.*

Jarrell's portraits of his pilots have been down-graded sometimes as unheroic, naive, and even sentimental. Well, he was writing beyond the War, and turning the full visionary powers of his mind on the War to probe into and expose the horror, pathos, and charm he found in life. Always behind the sharpened edge of his lines, there is the merciful vision, *his* vision, partial like all others, but an illumination of life, too sad and radiant for us to stay with long — or forget.

IN HIS last and best book, *The Lost World*, he used subjects and methods he had been developing and improving for almost twenty years. Most of the poems are dramatic monologues. Their speakers, though mostly women, are intentionally, and unlike Browning's, very close to the author. Their themes, repeated with endless variations, are solitude, the solitude of the unmarried, the solitude of the married, the love, strife, dependency, and indifference of man and woman — how mortals age, and brood over their lost and raw childhood, only recapturable in memory and imagination. Above all, childhood! This subject for many a careless and tarnished cliché was for him what it was for his two favorite poets, Rilke and Wordsworth, a governing and transcendent vision. For shallower creatures, recollections of childhood and youth are drenched in a mist of plaintive pathos, or even bathos, but for Jarrell this was the divine glimpse, life-long to be lived with, painfully and tenderly relieved, transformed, matured — man with and against woman, child with and against adult.

One of his aging women says,

*When I was young and miserable and pretty
And poor, I'd wish
What all girls wish: to have a husband . . .*

But later, thinking of the withering present, she says,

*How young I seem; I am exceptional;
I think of all I have.
But really no one is exceptional,
No one has anything, I'm anybody,
I stand beside my grave
Confused with my life that is commonplace
and solitary.*

In so reflecting, she is a particular woman — one sad, particular woman reaching into Jarrell's universal Everyman, poor or triumphant. Speaking in his own person and of his own childhood, he says,

*. . . As I run by the chicken coops
With lettuce for my rabbit, real remorse
Hurts me, here, now: the little girl is crying
Because I didn't write. Because — of course,
I was a child, I missed them so, But justifying
Hurts too . . .*

Then in a poem called "Woman," the speaker a man, addresses the woman next to him in bed:

*Let me sleep beside you, each night, like a spoon;
When starting from my dreams, I groan to you,
May your I love you send me back to sleep.
At morning bring me, grayer for its mirroring,
The heaven's sun perfected in your eyes.*

IT ALL comes back to me now — the just under thirty years of our friendship, mostly meetings in transit, mostly in Greensboro, North Carolina, the South he loved and stayed with, though no Agrarian, but a radical liberal. Poor modern-minded exile from the forests of Grimm, I see him unbearded, slightly South American-looking, then later bearded, with a beard we at first wished to reach out our hands to and pluck off, but which later became him, like Walter Bagehot's, or some Symbolist's in France's *fin-de-siècle* Third Republic. Then unbearded again. I see the bright, petty, pretty sacred objects he accumulated for his joy and solace: Vermeer's red-hatted girl, the Piero and Donatello reproductions, the photographs of his bruised, merciful heroes: Chekhov, Rilke, Marcel Proust. I see the white sporting Mercedes Benz, the ever better cut and more deliberately jaunty clothes, the television with its long afternoons of professional football, those matches he thought miraculously more graceful than college football . . . Randall had an uncanny clairvoyance for helping friends in subtle precarious moments — almost always as only he could help, with something written: critical sentences in a letter, or an unanticipated published book review. Twice or thrice, I think, he must have thrown me a life-line. In his own life, he had much public acclaim and more private. The public, at least, fell cruelly short of what he deserved. Now that he is gone, I see clearly that the spark from heaven really struck and irradiated the lines and being of my dear old friend — his noble, difficult, and beautiful soul. □



Randall Jarrell had positive taste in music as well as in art and writing and spent hours with his stereo at his Guilford College home.

Critical Comment on Randall Jarrell's Poems



RANDALL JARRELL

"Mr. Jarrell is extraordinarily gifted. . . . This is an intelligent, tragic, witty, profoundly tender book." DUDLEY FITTS, *Partisan Review*.

"The motives of honesty, courage, and inconsolable love of life are here submitted to the conditions of poetry and fulfilled in them." DELMORE SCHWARTZ, *The Nation*.

"Randall Jarrell's *Little Friend*, *Little Friend* ranks with Karl Shapiro's *V-Letter* as one of the two best books of poems by American soldier-poets." ALAN SWALLOW.

"Some of the lyrics in *Blood for a Stranger* register the pain of human guilt as it has seldom been registered in American poetry." *Time*.

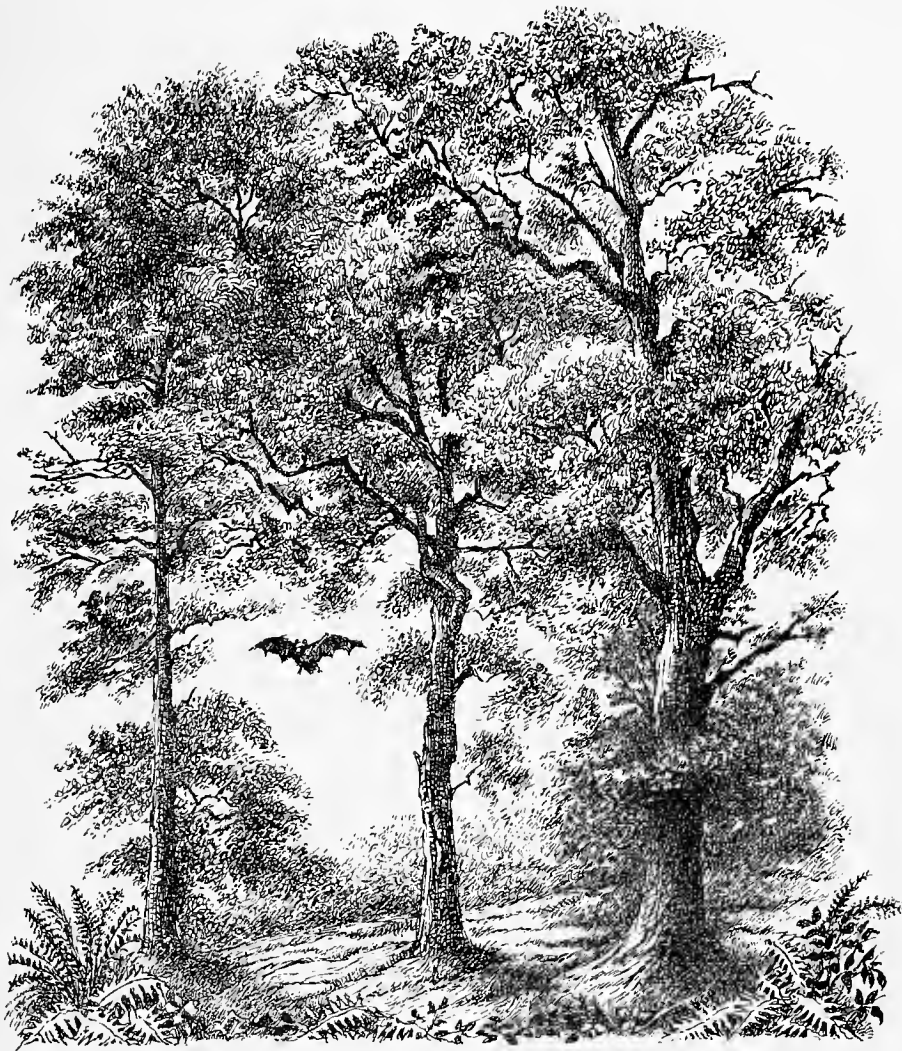
"He has an angel's velocity and range with language." JOHN CROWE RANSOM.

"These smouldering dark poems . . . have energy, satiric bitterness, and weight; they prove that Mr. Jarrell is one of the most interesting poets of his generation." THEODORE SPENCER, *Saturday Review of Literature*.

"What strikes one is the intensity of experience everywhere urgent; what delights is that Jarrell, compelling himself to plunge into the volcano, should have survived to present it and its human consequence (*continued on back flap*)

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Randall Jarrell entered the United States Army Air Force in 1942 as a flying cadet but washed out and was assigned as Celestial Navigation Tower Operator, a designation he recalls as the Air Force's most poetic title. He was pictured in this role on this dust jacket of his third book, *Losses* (1948) which is reproduced here with some of the critical comment of the day about his work.



THE BAT-POET

By Randall Jarrell

Pictures by Maurice Sendak



and other Selections
from the works of Randall Jarrell

THE BAT-POET

... about a bat who heard and saw the sounds and shapes of the sparkling world about him and made poems to create a sort of bat's view of poem-makers and the craft.

ONCE upon a time there was a bat — a little light brown bat, the color of coffee with cream in it. He looked like a furry mouse with wings. When I'd go in and out my front door, in the daytime, I'd look up over my head and see him hanging upside down from the roof of the porch. He and the others hung there in a bunch, all snuggled together with their wings folded, fast asleep. Sometimes one of them would wake up for a minute and get in a more comfortable position, and then the others would wriggle around in their sleep till they'd got more comfortable too; when they all moved it looked as if a fur wave went over them. At night they'd fly up and down, around and around, and catch insects and eat them; on a rainy night, though, they'd stay snuggled together just as though it were still day. If you pointed a flashlight at them you'd see them screw up their faces to keep the light out of their eyes.

Toward the end of summer all the bats except the little brown one began sleeping in the barn. He missed them, and tried to get them to come back and sleep on the porch with him. "What do you want to sleep in the barn for?" he asked them.

"We don't know," the others said. "What do you want to sleep on the porch for?"

"It's where we always sleep," he said. "If I slept in the barn I'd be homesick. Do come back and sleep with me!" But they wouldn't.

So he had to sleep all alone. He missed the others. They had always felt so warm and furry against him; whenever he'd waked, he'd pushed himself up into the middle of them and gone right back to sleep. Now he'd wake up and, instead of snuggling against the others and going back to sleep, he would just hang there and think. Sometimes he would open his eyes a little and look out into the sunlight. It gave him a queer feeling for it to be daytime and for him to be hanging there looking; he felt the way you would feel if you woke up

and went to the window and stayed there for hours, looking out into the moonlight.

It was different in the daytime. The squirrels and the chipmunk, that he had never seen before — at night they were curled up in their nests or holes, fast asleep — ate nuts and acorns and seeds, and ran after each other, playing. And all the birds hopped and sang and flew; at night they had been asleep, except for the mockingbird. The bat had always heard the mockingbird. The mockingbird would sit on the highest branch of a tree, in the moonlight, and sing half the night. The bat loved to listen to him. He could imitate all the other birds — he'd even imitate the way the squirrels chattered when they were angry, like two rocks being knocked together; and he could imitate the milk bottles being put down on the porch and the barn door closing, a long rusty squeak. And he made up songs and words all his own, that nobody else had ever said or sung.

The bat told the other bats about all the things you could see and hear in the daytime. "You'd love them," he said. "The next time you wake up in the daytime, just keep your eyes open for a while and don't go back to sleep."

The other bats were sure they wouldn't like that. "We wish we didn't wake up at all," they said. "When you wake up in the daytime the light hurts your eyes — the thing to do is to close them and go right back to sleep. Day's to sleep in; as soon as it's night we'll open our eyes."

"But won't you even try it?" the little brown bat said. "Just for once, try it."

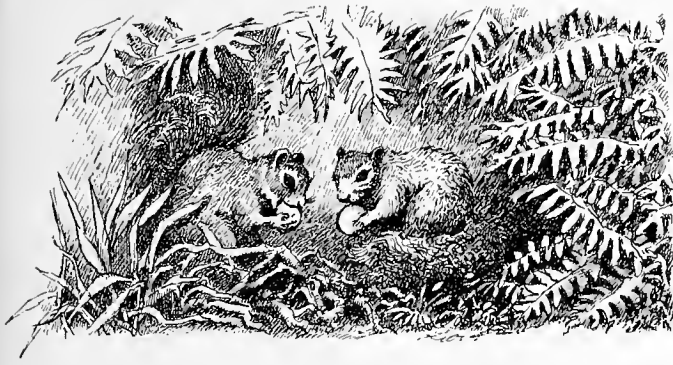
The bats all said: No."

"But why not?" asked the little brown bat.

The bats said: "We don't know. We just don't want to."

"At least listen to the mockingbird. When you hear him it's just like the daytime."

The other bats said: "He sounds so queer. If only he squeaked or twittered — but he keeps shouting in that



bass voice of his." They said this because the mockingbird's voice sounded terribly loud and deep to them; they always made little high twittering sounds themselves.

"Once you get used to it you'll like it," the little bat said. "Once you get used to it, it sounds wonderful."

"All right," said the others, "we'll try." But they were just being polite; they didn't try.

The little brown bat kept waking up in the daytime, and kept listening to the mockingbird, until one day he thought: "I could make up a song like the mockingbird's." But when he tried, his high notes were all high and his low notes were all high and the notes in between were all high; he couldn't make a tune. So he imitated the mockingbird's words instead. At first his words didn't go together — even the bat could see that they didn't sound a bit like the mockingbird's. But after a while some of them began to sound beautiful, so that the bat said to himself: "If you get the words right you don't need a tune."

The bat went over and over his words till he could say them off by heart. That night he said them to the other bats. "I've made the words like the mockingbird's," he told them, "so you can tell what it's like in the daytime." Then he said to them in a deep voice — he couldn't help imitating the mockingbird — his words about the daytime:

At dawn, the sun shines like a million moons
And all the shadows are as bright as moonlight.
The birds begin to sing with all their might.
The world awakens and forgets the night.

The black-and-gray turns green-and-gold-and-blue.
The squirrels begin to —

But when he'd got this far the other bats just couldn't keep quiet any longer.

"The sun *hurts*," said one. "It hurts like getting something in your eyes."

"That's right," said another. "And shadows are black — how can a shadow be bright?"

Another one said: "What's green-and-gold-and-blue? When you say things like that we don't know what you mean."

"And it's just not real," the first one said. "When the sun rises the world goes to sleep."

"But go on," said one of the others. "We didn't mean to interrupt you."

"No, we're sorry we interrupted you," all the others said. "Say us the rest."

But when the bat tried to say them the rest he couldn't remember a word. It was hard to say anything at all, but finally he said: "I — I — tomorrow I'll say you the rest." Then he flew back to the porch. There were lots of insects flying around the light, but he didn't catch a one; instead he flew to his rafter, hung there upside down with his wings folded, and after a while went to sleep.

But he kept on making poems like the mockingbird's — only now he didn't say them to the bats. One night he saw a mother possum, with all her little white baby possums holding tight to her, eating the fallen apples under the apple tree; one night an owl swooped down on him and came so close he'd have caught him if the bat hadn't flown into a hole in the old oak by the side of the house; and another time four squirrels spent the whole morning chasing each other up and down trees, across the lawn, and over the roof. He made up poems about them all. Sometimes the poem would make him think: "It's like the mockingbird. This time it's really like the mockingbird!" But sometimes the poem would seem so bad to him that he'd get discouraged and stop in the middle, and by the next day he'd have forgotten it.

When he would wake up in the daytime and hang there looking out at the colors of the world, he would say the poems over to himself. He wanted to say them to the other bats, but then he would remember what had happened when he'd said them before. There was nobody for him to say the poems to.

One day he thought: "I could say them to the mockingbird." It got to be a regular thought of his. It was a long time, though, before he really went to the mockingbird.

The mockingbird had bad days when he would try to drive everything out of the yard, no matter what it was. He always had a peremptory, authoritative look, as if he were more alive than anything else and wanted everything else to know it; on his bad days he'd dive on everything that came into the yard — on cats and dogs, even — and strike at them with his little sharp beak and sharp claws. On his good days he didn't pay so much attention to the world, but just sang.

The day the bat went to him the mockingbird was perched on the highest branch of the big willow by the porch, singing with all his might. He was a clear gray, with white bars across his wings that flashed when he flew; every part of him had a clear, quick, decided look about it. He was standing on tiptoe, singing and singing and singing; sometimes he'd spring up into the air. This time he was singing a song about mockingbirds.

The bat fluttered to the nearest branch, hung upside

down from it, and listened; finally when the mockingbird stopped for a moment he said in his little high voice: "It's beautiful, just beautiful!"

"You like poetry?" asked the mockingbird. You could tell from the way he said it that he was surprised.

"I love it," said the bat. "I listen to you every night. Every day too. I—I—"

"It's the last poem I've composed," said the mockingbird. "It's called 'To a Mockingbird.'"

"It's wonderful," the bat said. "Wonderful! Of all the songs I ever heard you sing, it's the best."

This pleased the mockingbird — mockingbirds love to be told that their last song is the best. "I'll sing it for you again," the mockingbird offered.

"Oh, please do sing it again," said the bat. "I'd love to hear it again. Just love to! Only when you've finished could I—"



But the mockingbird had already started. He not only sang it again, he made up new parts, and sang them over and over and over; they were so beautiful that the bat forgot about his own poem and just listened. When the mockingbird had finished, the bat thought: "No, I just can't say him mine. Still, though —" He said to the mockingbird: "It's wonderful to get to hear you. I could listen to you forever."

"It's a pleasure to sing to such a responsive audience," said the mockingbird. "Any time you'd like to hear it again just tell me."

The bat said: "Could — could —"

"Yes?" said the mockingbird.

The bat went on in a shy voice: "Do you suppose that I — that I could —"

The mockingbird said warmly: "That you could hear

it again? Of course you can. I'll be delighted." And he sang it all over again. This time it was the best of all.

The bat told him so, and the mockingbird looked pleased but modest; it was easy for him to look pleased but hard for him to look modest, he was so full of himself. The bat asked him: "Do you suppose a bat could make poems like yours?"

"A bat?" the mockingbird said. But then he went on politely, "Well, I don't see why not. He couldn't sing them, of course — he simply doesn't have the range; but that's no reason he couldn't make them up. Why, I suppose for bats a bat's poems would be ideal."

The bat said: "Sometimes when I wake up in the daytime I make up poems. Could I—I wonder whether I could say you one of *my* poems?"

A queer look came over the mockingbird's face, but he said cordially: "I'd be delighted to hear one. Go right ahead." He settled himself on his branch with a listening expression.

The bat said:

A shadow is floating through the moonlight.
Its wings don't make a sound.
Its claws are long, its beak is bright.
Its eyes try all the corners of the night.

It calls and calls: all the air swells and heaves
And washes up and down like water.
The ear that listens to the owl believes
In death. The bat beneath the eaves,

The mouse beside the stone are still as death —
The owl's air washes them like water.
The owl goes back and forth inside the night,
And the night holds its breath.

When he'd finished his poem the bat waited for the mockingbird to say something; he didn't know it, but he was holding his breath.

"Why, I like it," said the mockingbird. "Technically it's quite accomplished. The way to change the rhyme-scheme's particularly effective."

The bat said: "It is?"

"Oh yes," said the mockingbird. "And it was clever of you to have the last line two feet short."

The bat said blankly: "Two feet short?"

"It's two feet short," said the mockingbird a little impatiently. "The next-to-the-last line's iambic pentameter, and the last line's iambic trimeter."

The bat looked so bewildered that the mockingbird said in a kind voice: "An iambic foot has one weak syllable and one strong syllable; the weak one comes first. That last line of yours has six syllables and the one before it has ten: when you shorten the last line like that

it gets the effect of the night holding its breath."

"I didn't know that," the bat said. "I just made it like holding your breath."

"To be sure, to be sure!" said the mockingbird. "I enjoyed your poem very much. When you've made up some more do come round and say me another."

The bat said that he would, and fluttered home to his rafter. Partly he felt very good — the mockingbird had liked his poem — and partly he felt just terrible. He thought: "Why, I might as well have said it to the bats. What do I care how many feet it has? The owl nearly kills me, and he says he likes the rhyme-scheme!" He hung there upside down, thinking bitterly. After a while he said to himself: "The trouble isn't making poems, the trouble's finding somebody that will listen to them."

Before he went to sleep he said his owl-poem over to himself, and it seemed to him that it was exactly like the owl. "The owl would like it," he thought. "If only I could say it to the owl!"

And then he thought: "That's it! I can't say it to the owl, I don't dare get that near him; but if I made up a poem about the chipmunk I could say it to the chipmunk — *he'd* be interested." The bat got so excited his fur stood up straight and he felt warm all over. He thought: "I'll go to the chipmunk and say, 'If you'll give me six crickets I'll make a poem about you.' Really I'd do it for nothing; but they don't respect something if they get it for nothing. I'll say: 'For six crickets I'll do your portrait in verse.'"

The next day, at twilight, the bat flew to the chipmunk's hole. The chipmunk had dozens of holes, but the bat had noticed that there was one he liked best and always slept in. Before long the chipmunk ran up, his cheeks bulging. "Hello," said the bat.

The instant he heard the bat the chipmunk froze; then he dived into his hole. "Wait! Wait!" the bat cried. But the chipmunk had disappeared. "Come back," the bat called. "I won't hurt you." But he had to talk for a long time before the chipmunk came back, and even then he just stuck the tip of his nose out of the hole.

The bat hardly knew how to begin, but he timidly said to the chipmunk, who listened timidly: "I thought of making this offer to — to the animals of the vicinity. You're the first one I've made it to."

The chipmunk didn't say anything. The bat gulped, and said quickly: "For only six crickets I'll do your portrait in verse."

The chipmunk said: "What are crickets?"

The bat felt discouraged. "I knew I might have to tell him about poems," he thought, "but I never thought I'd have to tell him about *crickets*." He explained: "They're little black things you see on the porch at night, by the light. They're awfully good. But that's all right about them; instead of crickets you could give me — well, this time you don't have to give me anything. It's a — an introductory offer."

The chipmunk said in a friendly voice: "I don't understand."

"I'll make you a poem about yourself," said the bat. "One just about you." He saw from the look in the chipmunk's eyes that the chipmunk didn't understand. The bat said: "I'll say you a poem about the owl, and then you'll see what it's like."

He said his poem and the chipmunk listened intently; when the poem was over the chipmunk gave a big shiver and said, "It's terrible, just terrible! Is there really something like that at night?"

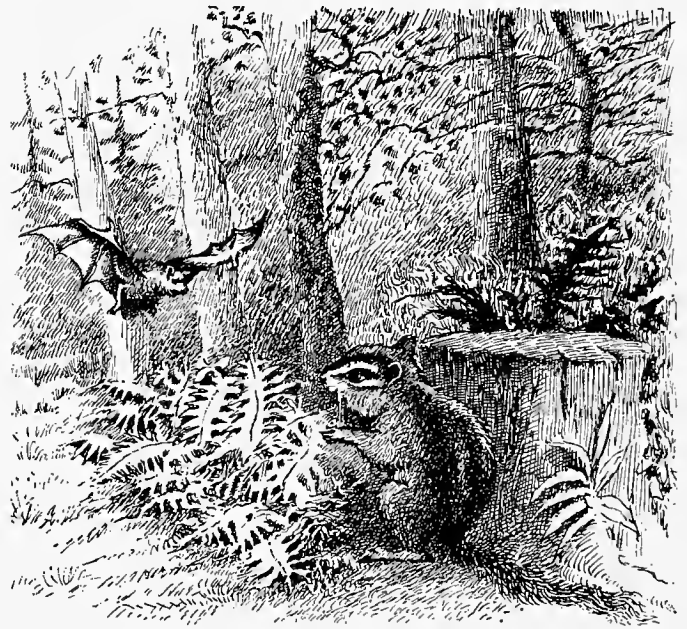
The bat said: "If it weren't for the hole in the oak he'd have got *me*."

The chipmunk said in a determined voice: "I'm going to bed earlier. Sometimes when there're lots of nuts I stay out till it's pretty dark; but believe me, I'm never going to again."

The bat said: "It's a pleasure to say a poem to — to such a responsive audience. Do you want me to start on the poem about you?"

The chipmunk said thoughtfully: "I don't have enough holes. It'd be awfully easy to dig some more holes."

"Shall I start on the poem about you?" asked the bat.



"All right," said the chipmunk. "But could you put in lots of holes? The first thing in the morning I'm going to dig myself another."

"I'll put in a lot," the bat promised. "Is there anything else you'd like to have in it?"

The chipmunk thought for a minute and said, "Well, nuts. And seeds — those big fat seeds they have in the feeder."

"All right," said the bat. "Tomorrow afternoon I'll be back. Or day after tomorrow — I don't really know how long it will take." He and the chipmunk said good-by to

each other and he fluttered home to the porch. As soon as he got comfortably settled he started to work on the poem about the chipmunk. But somehow he kept coming back to the poem about the owl, and what the chipmunk had said, and how he'd looked. "He didn't say any of that two-feet-short stuff," the bat thought triumphantly; "he was scared!" The bat hung there upside down, trying to work on his new poem. He was happy.

When at last he'd finished the poem — it took him longer than he'd thought — he went looking for the chipmunk. It was a bright afternoon, and the sun blazed in the bat's eyes, so that everything looked blurred and golden. When he met the chipmunk hurrying down the path that ran past the old stump, he thought: "What a beautiful color he is! Why, the fur back by his tail's rosy, almost. And those lovely black and white stripes on his back!"

"Hello," he said.

"Hello," said the chipmunk. "Is it done yet?"

"All done," said the bat happily. "I'll say it to you. It's named 'The Chipmunk's Day.'"

The chipmunk said in a pleased voice: "My day." He sat there and listened while the bat said:

IN and out the bushes, up the ivy,
 Into the hole
 By the old oak stump, the chipmunk flashes.
 Up the pole
 To the feeder full of seeds he dashes,
 Stuffs he cheeks,
 The chickadee and titmouse scold him.
 Down he streaks.
 Red as the leaves the wind blows off the maple,
 Red as a fox,
 Striped like a skunk, the chipmunk whistles
 Past the love seat, past the mailbox,
 Down the path,
 Home to his warm hole stuffed with sweet
 Things to eat.
 Neat and slight and shining, his front feet
 Curled at his breast, he sits there while the sun
 Stripes the red west
 With its last light: the chipmunk
 Dives to his rest.

When he'd finished the bat asked: "Do you like it?"

For a moment the chipmunk didn't say anything, then he said in a surprised, pleased voice: "Say it again." The bat said it again. When he'd finished, the chipmunk said: "Oh, it's *nice*. It all goes in and out, doesn't it?"

The bat was so pleased he didn't know what to say. "Am I really as red as that?" asked the chipmunk.

"Oh yes," the bat said.

"You put in the seeds and the hole and everything," exclaimed the chipmunk. "I didn't think you could. I thought you'd make me more like the owl." Then he said: "Say me the one about the owl."



The bat did. The chipmunk said: "It makes me shiver. Why do I like it if it makes me shiver?"

"I don't know. I see why the owl would like it, but I don't see why we like it."

"Who are you going to do now?" asked the chipmunk.

The bat said: "I don't know. I haven't thought about anybody but you. Maybe I could do a bird."

"Why don't you do the cardinal? He's red and black like me, and he eats seeds at the feeder like me — you'd be in practice."

The bat said doubtfully: "I've watched him, but I don't know him."

"I'll ask him," said the chipmunk. "I'll tell him what it's like, and then he's sure to want to."

"That's awfully nice of you," said the bat. "I'd love to do one about him. I like to watch him feed his babies."

The next day, while the bat was hanging from his rafter fast asleep, the chipmunk ran up the ivy to the porch and called to the bat: "He wants you to." The bat stirred a little and blinked his eyes, and the chipmunk said: "The cardinal wants you to. I had a hard time telling him what a poem was like, but after I did he wanted you to."

"All right," said the bat sleepily. "I'll start it tonight."

The chipmunk said: "What did you say I was as red as? I don't mean a fox, I remember that."

"As maple leaves. As leaves the wind blows off the maple."

"Oh yes, I remember now," the chipmunk said; he ran off contentedly. □

The Other FROST

An essay from Randall Jarrell's

Poetry and the Age

a collection of essays considered by many the most comprehensive and most detailed of all studies of modern poetry.

BESIDES the Frost that everybody knows there is one whom no one even talks about. Everybody knows what the regular Frost is: the one living poet who has written *good* poems that ordinary readers like without any trouble and understand without any trouble; the conservative editorialist and self-made apothegm-joiner, full of dry wisdom and free, complacent, Yankee enterprise, the Farmer-Poet — this is an imposing private role perfected for public use, a sort of Olympian Will Rogers out of *Tanglewood Tales*; and, last or first of all, Frost is the standing, speaking reproach to any other good modern poet: "If Frost can write poetry that's just as easy as Longfellow you can too — you do too." It is this "easy" side of Frost that is most attractive to academic readers, who are eager to canonize any modern poet who condemns in example the modern poetry which they condemn in precept; and it is this side that has helped to get him neglected or depreciated by intellectuals — the reader of Eliot or Auden usually dismisses Frost as something inconsequentially good that *he* knew all about long ago. Ordinary readers think Frost the greatest poet alive and love some of his best poems almost as much as they love some of his worst ones. He seems to them a sensible, tender, humorous poet who knows all about trees and farms and folks in New England, and still has managed to get an individualistic, fairly optimistic, thoroughly American philosophy out of what he knows; there's something reassuring about his poetry, they feel — almost like prose. Certainly there's nothing hard or odd or gloomy about it.

These views of Frost, it seems to me, come either from not knowing his poems well enough or from knowing the wrong poems too well. Frost's best-known poems, with a few exceptions, are not his best poems at all; when you read (say) the selections in Untermeyer, you are getting a good synopsis of the ordinary idea of Frost and a bad misrepresentation of the real Frost. It would be hard to make a novel list of Eliot's best poems, but one can make a list of ten or twelve of Frost's best poems that is likely to seem to anybody too new to be true. Here it is:

"The Witch of Coös," "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep," "Directive," "Design," "A Servant to Servants," "Provide Provide," "Home-Burial," "Acquainted with the Night," "The Pauper Witch of Grafton" (mainly for its ending), "An Old Man's Winter Night," "The Gift Outright," "After Apple-Picking," "Desert Places," and "The Fear."

Nothing I say about these poems can make you see what they are like, or what the Frost that matters most is like; if you read them you will see. "The Witch of Coös" is the best thing of its kind since Chaucer. "Home-Burial" and "A Servant to Servants" are two of the most moving and appalling dramatic poems ever written; and how could lyrics be more ingeniously and conclusively merciless than "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep" or "Design"? or more grotesquely and subtly and mercilessly disenchanting than the tender "An Old Man's Winter Night"? or more unsparingly truthful than "Provide Provide"? And so far from being obvious, optimistic, orthodox, many of these poems are extraordinarily subtle and strange, poems which express an attitude that, at its most extreme, makes pessimism seem a hopeful evasion; they begin with a flat and terrible reproduction of the evil in the world and end by saying: It's so; and there's nothing you can do about it; and if there were, would *you* ever do it? The limits which existence approaches and falls back from have seldom been stated with such bare composure.

Frost's virtues are extraordinary. No other living poet has written so well about the actions of ordinary men: his wonderful dramatic monologues or dramatic scenes come out of a knowledge of people that few poets have had, and they are written in a verse that uses, sometimes with absolute mastery, the rhythms of actual speech. Particularly in his blank verse there is a movement so characteristic, so unmistakably and over-whelmingly Frost's, that one feels about it almost as Madame de Guermantes felt about those Frans Halses at Haarlem: that if you caught just a glimpse of them, going by in the streetcar, you would be able to tell they were something pretty unusual. It is easy to underestimate the effect

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jarrell considered Frost foremost among American poets long before it was professionally popular to do so and devoted a considerable portion of his *Modern Poetry* class to Frost poetry. Frost must have approved of Jarrell, the teacher, for he often commented during frequent visits to the Greensboro campus (five times between 1955 and 1960) that he could always tell when he got to a campus "where they understand my poetry." Also it was understood that Frost was pleased with Jarrell's estimation of his work in such essays as "The Other Frost" which is printed in its entirety on these pages.

of this exact, spaced-out, prosaic rhythm, whose objects have the tremendous strength — you find it in Hardy's best poems — of things merely put down and left to speak for themselves. (Though Frost has little of Hardy's self-effacement, his matter-of-fact humility; Frost's tenderness, sadness, and humor are adulterated with vanity and a hard complacency.) Frost's seriousness and honesty; the bare sorrow with which, sometimes, things are accepted as they are, neither exaggerated nor explained away; the many, many poems in which there are real people with their real speech and real thoughts and real emotions — all this, in conjunction with so much subtlety and exactness, such classical understatement and restraint, makes the reader feel that he is not in a book but in a world, and a world that has in common with his own some of the things that are most important in both. I don't need to praise anything so justly famous as Frost's observation of and empathy with everything in Nature from a hornet to a hillside; and he has observed his own nature, one person's random or consequential chains of thoughts and feelings and perceptions, quite as well. (And this person, in the poems, is not the "alienated artist" cut off from everybody who isn't, yum-yum, another alienated artist; he is someone like normal people only more so — a normal person in the less common and more important sense of *normal*.) The least crevice of the good poems is saturated with imagination, an imagination that expresses itself in the continual wit and humor and particularly of what is said, in the hand-hewn or hand-polished texture of its saying. The responsibility and seriousness of Frost's best work — his worst work has an irresponsible conceit, an indifference to everything but himself, that appalls one — are nowhere better manifested than in the organization of these poems: an organization that, in its concern for any involution or ramification that really belongs to its subject, and in its severity toward anything else, expresses that absorption



Robert Frost: A Study.

A. A. Wilkinson

into a subject that is prior even to affection. The organization of Frost's poems is often rather simple or — as people say — "old-fashioned." But, as people ought to know, very complicated organizations are excessively rare in poetry, although in our time a very complicated disorganization has been excessively common; there is more successful organization in "Home-Burial" or "The Witch of Coös" — one feels like saying, in indignant exaggeration — than in the *Cantos* and *The Bridge* put together. These titles will remind anyone of what is scarcest in Frost: rhetoric and romance, hypnotic verbal excitement, Original Hart Crane. Frost's word-magic is generally of a quiet, sober, bewitching sort, though the contrasts he gets from his greyed or unsaturated shades are often more satisfying to a thoughtful rhetorician than some dazzling arrangements of prismatic colors. Yet there are dazzling passages of Frost.

Frost has written, as everybody knows: "I never dared be radical when young / For fear it would make me conservative when old." This is about as truthful as it is metrical: Frost *was* radical when young — he was a very odd and very radical radical, a much more interesting sort than the standard *New Republic* brand — and now that he's old he's sometimes callously and unimaginatively conservative. Take his poems about the atomic bomb in *Steeple Bush*; these amount, almost, to a very old and a very successful man saying: "I've had my life — why should you worry about yours?" The man who called himself "the author / Of several books against the world in general"; who said that he had learned from Marlowe's Mephistopheles to say his prayers, "Why this is Hell, nor am I out of it"; who said to Henry Hudson, drowned or

“. . . If Frost had come in the nineteenth century when people still read poetry a great deal more, I think he would be our national poet, and as a public figure he is. People are intensely interested in everything Frost has to say. . . . Unfortunately, we read poetry so little that we cannot have a poet who seems great to us in the way that Goethe seems great to Germany.”

(Jarrell in 1961)

frozen somewhere in Hudson's Bay: "You and I am the Great Auk"; who could be annoyed at a hornet for not recognizing him as "the exception I like to think I am in everything"; who in poems like "A Servant to Servants," "Home-Burial," and "The Witch of Coös" had a final identifying knowledge of the deprived and dispossessed, the insulted and injured, that one matches in modern poetry only in Hardy — this poet is now, most of the time, an elder statesman like Baruch or Smuts, full of complacent wisdom and cast-iron whimsy. But of course there was always a good deal of this in the official role that Frost created for himself; one imagines Yeats saying about Frost, as Sarah Bernhardt said about Nijinsky: "I fear, I greatly fear, that I have just seen the greatest actor in the world."

Sometimes it is this public figure, this official role — the Only Genuine Robert Frost in Captivity — that writes the poems, and not the poet himself; and then one gets a self-made man's political editorials, full of cracker-box philosophizing, almanac joke-cracking — of a snake-oil salesman's mysticism; one gets the public figure's relishing consciousness of himself, an astonishing constriction of imagination and sympathy; one gets sentimentality and whimsicality, an arch complacency, a complacent archness; and one gets Homely Wisdom till the cows come home. Often the later Frost makes demands on himself that are minimal: he uses a little wit and a little observation and a little sentiment to stuff — not very tight — a little sonnet; and it's not bad, but not good enough to matter, either. The extremely rare, extremely wonderful dramatic and narrative element that is more important than anything else in his early poetry almost disappears from his later poetry; in his later work the best poems are usually special-case, rather than all-out, full-scale affairs. The younger Frost is surrounded by his characters, living beings he has known or created; the older Frost is alone. But it is this loneliness that is responsible for the cold finality of poems like "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep" or "Design."

Frost's latest books deserve little more than a footnote, since they have had few of his virtues, most of his vices, and all of his tricks; the heathen who would be converted to Frost by them is hard to construct. *Steeple Bush* has one wonderful poem, "Directive"; a fairly good,

dazzlingly heartless one, "The Ingenuities of Debt" and nothing else that is not done better somewhere else in Frost. Most of the poems merely remind you, by their persistence in the mannerisms of someone who once, and somewhere else, was a great poet. But one stops for a long time at "Directive."

A Masque of Mercy, though no great shakes — as you see, its style is catching — is a great improvement on the earlier *A Masque of Reason*, which is a frivolous, trivial, and bewilderingly corny affair, full of jokes inexplicable except as the contemptuous patter of an old magician certain that *he* can get away with anything in the world: *What fools these readers be!* Besides, Frost has long ago divorced reason for common sense, and is basking complacently in his bargain; consequently, when common sense has God justify His ways to Job by saying, "I was just showing off to Satan," the performance has the bleak wisdom of Calvin Coolidge telling you what life comes to at 2½%.

The plot of *A Masque of Mercy* is as simple as that of *Merope*, but it is a plot that is more likely to get Frost recognized as one more precursor of surrealism than it is to get him looked askance at as one of Arnold's Greeks. A bookstore-keeper named My Brother's Keeper has a wife named Jesse Bel; one night Jonah — who, having forgotten both his gourd and what God taught him by it, is feeling for New York City all the hatred that he used to feel for Nineveh — seeks refuge in the bookstore; after a little talk from Saint Paul (Jesse Bel's psychiatrist) and a lot of talk from Keeper (a character who develops so much that he finally develops into Robert Frost), Jonah comes to realize that "justice doesn't really matter."

Frost lavishes some care and a good deal more self-indulgence on this congenial subject. He has a thorough skepticism about that tame revenge, justice, and a cold certainty that nothing but mercy will do for *us*. What he really warms to is a rejection beyond either justice or mercy, and the most felt and moving part of his poem is the "unshaken recognition" — that is to say, the willing assertion — that

Our sacrifice, the best we have to offer,
And not our worst nor second best, our best,
Our very best, our lives laid down like Jonah's,
Our lives laid down in war and peace, may not
Be found acceptable in Heaven's sight.

To feel this Fear of God and to go ahead in spite of it, Frost says, is man's principal virtue, courage. He treats Paul very sympathetically, but gives him speeches that are ineffectual echoes of what he really said; and Frost makes about him that sorry old joke which finds that he "theologized Christ out of Christianity." Paul ends in jokes like this, Columbus in chains; these are the rewards of discovery. □



Randall Jarrell was four in 1918 when this picture was taken. He was born May 6, 1914, the son of Owen and Anna Campbell Jarrell, in Nashville, Tennessee, where his mother still lives. He spent much of his childhood in California but returned to Nashville to attend Hume-Fogg High School from 1928-31 and Vanderbilt University where he graduated in 1935 with a B.S. degree, later received an M.A. degree in 1939. A microfilm of his thesis, "Implicit Generalization in Housman," is in the Walter Clinton Jackson Library on the Greensboro campus.



*This picture of the young poet was made in Texas where he was an instructor in English at the University of Texas following two years as instructor at Kenyon College. In the summer of 1939 the poem at right, *A Story*, appeared in the *Partisan Review*, later was included in *Blood for a Stranger* (1942) and *Selected Poems*. John Berryman read this as one of his favorite poems during the tribute at Yale February 28.*

A Story

Even from the train the hill looked empty.
When I unpacked I heard my mother say:
"Remember to change your stockings every day —
Socks, I mean." I went on walking past their
Buildings gloomy with no lights or boys
Into the country where the roads were lost.

But when I woke I thought: The roads aren't lost.
That night the buildings were no longer empty
But packed and blazing with unpacking boys.
Up by the trestle I heard someone say:
"Then they haven't heard of it." I strained to hear their
Quiet funny voices, but it turned to day.

What do the students talk about all day?
Today the dean said: "There's a new boy lost."
He said it to the matron, I could hear their
Footsteps in the corridor, but it was empty.
I must tell them what I heard those people say.
When I get up I'll tell the other boys.

I liked home better, I don't like these boys.
When I wake up I think: "It's dark today."

When I go out these people hardly say
A word to me, I wrote home I had lost
My fountain pen, my mail-box is still empty
Because they've all forgotten me, they love their

New friends better — if I don't get their
Letters ever I don't care, I like these boys
Better than them, I'll write them. "We've still one room
empty,"

The matron told the man who came today.
How *could* she lie like that? When the roads leave here
they're lost,
The signs in the country can't think of what to say.

Someone must know. The people here all say
"I don't," I dream I ask them, and I see their
Thoughts don't either, all of them are lost.
Don't signs, don't roads know any more than boys?
When I feel better, they'll wake up one day
And find *my* bed's the one that's empty.

“. . . I was hypnotically interested in the war. I couldn't help writing about it.” (Randall Jarrell)

Losses

It was not dying: everybody died.
It was not dying: we had died before
In the routine crashes — and our fields
Called up the papers, wrote home to our folks,
And the rates rose, all because of us.
We died on the wrong page of the almanac,
Scattered on mountains fifty miles away;
Diving on haystacks, fighting with a friend,
We blazed up on the lines we never saw.
We died like aunts or pets or foreigners.
(When we left high school nothing else had died
For us to figure we had died like.)

In our new planes, with our new crews, we bombed
The ranges by the desert or the shore,
Fired at towed targets, waited for our scores —
And turned into replacements and woke up
One morning, over England, operational.
It wasn't different: but if we died
It was not an accident but a mistake
(But an easy one for anyone to make.)
We read our mail and counted up our missions —
In bombers named for girls, we burned
The cities we had learned about in school —
Till our lives wore out; our bodies lay among
The people we had killed and never seen.
When we lasted long enough they gave us medals;
When we died they said, “Our casualties were low.”
They said, “Here are the maps”; we burned the cities.

It was not dying — no, not ever dying;
But the night I died I dreamed that I was dead,
And the cities said to me: “Why are you dying?
We are satisfied, if you are; but why did I die?”

The Dead Wingman

Seen on the sea, no sign; no sign, no sign
In the black firs and terraces of hills
Ragged in mist. The cone narrows, snow
Glares from the bleak walls of a crater. No.
Again the houses jerk like paper, turn,
And the surf streams by: a port of toys
Is starred with its fires and faces; but no sign.

In the level light, over the fiery shores,
The plane circles stubbornly: the eyes distending
With hatred and misery and longing, stare
Over the blackening ocean for a corpse.
The fires are guttering; the dials fall,
A long dry shudder climbs along his spine,
His fingers tremble; but his hard unchanging stare
Moves unacceptingly: *I have a friend.*

The fires are grey; no star, no sign
Winks from the breathing darkness of the carrier
Where the pilot circles for his wingman; where,
Gliding above the cities' shells, a stubborn eye
Among the embers of the nations, aching
Tracing the circles of that worn, unchanging *No* —
The lives' long war, lost war — the pilot sleeps.

A Camp In The Prussian Forest

I walk beside the prisoners to the road.
Load on puffed load,
Their corpses, stacked like sodden wood,
Lie barred or galled with blood

By the charred warehouse. No one comes today
In the old way
To knock the fillings from their teeth;
The dark, coned, common wreath

Is plaited for their grave — a kind of grief.
The living leaf
Clings to the planted profitable
Pine if it is able;

The boughs sigh, mile on green, calm, breathing mile,
From this dead file
The planners ruled for them. . . . One year
They sent a million here:

Here men were drunk like water, burnt like wood.
The fat of good
And evil, the breast's star of hope
Were rendered into soap.

I paint the star I sawed from yellow pine —
And plant the sign
In soil that does not yet refuse
Its usual Jews

Their first asylum. But the white, dwarfed star —
This dead white star —
Hides nothing, pays for nothing, smoke
Fouls it, a yellow joke,

The needles of the wreath are chalked with ash,
A filmy trash
Litters the black woods with the death
Of men; and one last breath

Curls from the monstrous chimney. . . . I laugh aloud
Again and again;
The star laughs from its rotting shroud
Of flesh. O star of men!

Deutsch Durch Freud

I believe my favorite country's German.

I wander in a calm folk-colored daze; the infant
Looks down upon me from his mother's arms
And says—oh, God knows what he says!
It's baby-talk? he's sick? or is it German?
That *Nachtigallenchor*: does it sing German?
Yoh, yoh: here mice, rats, tables, chairs,
Grossmütter, Kinder, der Herrgott im Himmel,
All, all but I —
 all, all but I —
 speak German.

Have you too sometimes, by the fire, at evening,
Wished that you were — whatever you once were?
It is ignorance alone that is enchanting,
Dearer to me than all the treasures of the earth
Is something living, said old Rumpelstiltskin
And hopped home. Charcoal-burners heard him singing
And spoiled it all. . . . And all because —
If only he hadn't known his name!

In German I don't know my name.
 I am the log
The fairies left one morning in my place.
— In German I believe in them, in everything:
The world is everything that is the case.
How clever people are! I look on open-mouthed
As Kant reels down the road *im Morgenrot*
Humming *Mir ist so bang, so bang, mein Schatz* —
All the nixies set their watches by him

Two hours too fast. . . .
 I think, *My calendar's*
Two centuries too fast, and give a sigh
Of trust. I reach out for the world and ask
The price; it answers, *One touch of your finger*.

In all *my* Germany there's no *Gesellschaft*
But one between *eine Katze* and *ein Maus*.
What's business? what's a teaspoon? what's a sidewalk?
Schweig stille, meine Seele! Such things are not for thee.
It is by Trust, and Love, and reading Rilke
Without *ein Wörterbuch*, that man learns German.
The Word rains in upon his blessed head
As glistening as from the hand of God
And means — what does it mean? Ah well, it's German.
Glaube, mein Herz! A Feeling in the Dark
Brings worlds, brings words that hard-eyed Industry
And all the schools' dark Learning never knew.

And yet it's hard sometimes, I won't deny it.
Take for example my own favorite daemon,
Dear good great Goethe: *ach*, what German!
Very idiomatic, very noble; very like a sibyl.
My favorite style is Leupold von Lerchenau's.
I've memorized his *da und da und da und da*
And whisper it when Life is dark and Death is dark.

There was someone who knew how to speak
To us poor *Kinder* here *im Fremde*.
And Heine! At the ninety-sixth *mir träumte*
I sigh as a poet, but dimple as *ein Schuler*.
And yet — if it's easy is it German?
And yet, that *wunderschöne Lindenbaum*
Im Mondenscheine! What if it is in Schilda?

It's moonlight, isn't it? *Mund, Mond, Herz*, and *Schmerz*
Sing round my head, in *Zeit* and *Ewigkeit*,
And my heart lightens at each *Sorge*, each *Angst*:
I know them well. And *Schicksal!* *Ach*, you Norms,
As I read I hear your — what's the word for scissors?
And *Katzen* have *Tatzen* — why can't I call someone
Kind?
What a speech for Poetry (especially Folk —)!

And yet when, in my dreams, *eine schwarzbraune Hexe*
(Who mows on the Neckar, reaps upon the Rhine)
Riffles my yellow ringlets through her fingers,
She only asks me questions: *What is soap?*
I don't know. *A suitcase?* I don't know. *A visit?*
I laugh with joy, and try to say like Lehmann:
“*Quin-quin, es ist ein Besuch!*”

 Ah, German!
Till the day I die I'll be in love with German
— If only I don't learn German. . . . I can hear my
 broken
Voice murmuring to *der Arzt*: “*Ich — sterber?*”
He answers sympathetically: “*Nein — sterbe.*”

If God gave me the choice — but I stole this from
 Lessing —
Of German and learning German, I'd say: Keep your
 German!

The thought of *knowing* German terrifies me.
— But surely, this way, no one could learn German?
and yet. . . .

 It's difficult; is it impossible?
I'm hopeful that it is, but I can't say
For certain: I don't know enough German.

Following his discharge from the service in 1946, he taught a year at Sarah Lawrence College, then joined the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 1947. The next summer he spent in Austria where he taught at the Salzburg Seminar in American Civilization. He learned to read German and wrote many poems influenced by this period. One of them was “Deutsch Durch Freud” which first appeared in Poetry in December 1950.

In 1947 a beardless Jarrell arrived on the Greensboro campus. Years later when he received North Carolina's top teaching honor, the O. Max Gardner Award, he recalled his first day on campus when he asked a workman where McIver building was. ". . . and he said, 'Right over there, son.' But for the last two years there's been a family of children on the street who, whenever I drive by, run out and wave and call: 'Santa Claus! Santa Claus! Hello, Santa Claus!' You can see how long I have been here."



The Mockingbird



Look one way and the sun is going down,
 Look the other and the moon is rising.
 The sparrow's shadow's longer than the lawn.
 The bats squeak: "Night is here"; the birds cheep:
 "Day is gone."

On the willow's highest branch, monopolizing
 Day and night, cheeping, squeaking, soaring,
 The mockingbird is imitating life.

All day the mockingbird has owned the yard.
 As light first woke the world, the sparrows trooped
 Onto the seedy lawn: the mockingbird
 Chased them off shrieking. Hour by hour, fighting hard
 To make the world his own, he swooped
 On thrushes, thrashers, jays, and chickadees —
 At noon he drove away a big black cat.

Now, in the moonlight, he sits here and sings.
 A thrush is singing, then a thrasher, then a jay —
 Then, all at once, a cat begins meowing.
 A mockingbird can sound like anything.
 He imitates the world he drove away
 So well that for a minute, in the moonlight,
 Which one's the mockingbird? which one's the
 world?

In 1960 his work brought him membership in the exclusive Department of Literature of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. That same year "The Woman at the Washington Zoo" was published, his sixth volume of poetry, which won him the National Book Award in 1961. At left he is shown at June 1963 commencement with Chancellor and Mrs. Otis A. Singletary.



Next Day

Moving from Cheer to Joy, from Joy to All,
I take a box
And add it to my wild rice, my Cornish game hens.
The slacked or shorted, basketed, identical
Food-gathering flocks
Are selves I overlook. Wisdom, said William James,

Is learning what to overlook. And I am wise
If that is wisdom.
Yet somehow, as I buy All from these shelves
And the boy takes it to my station wagon,
What I've become
Troubles me even if I shut my eyes.

When I was young and miserable and pretty
And poor, I'd wish
What all girls wish: to have a husband,
A house and children. Now that I'm old, my wish
Is womanish:
That the boy putting groceries in my car

See me. It bewilders me he doesn't see me.
For so many years
I was good enough to eat: the world looked at me
And its mouth watered. How often they have
undressed me,
The eyes of strangers!
And, holding their flesh within my flesh, their vile

Imaginings within my imagining,
I too have taken

The chance of life. Now the boy pats my dog
And we start home. Now I am good.
The last mistaken,
Ecstatic, accidental bliss, the blind

Happiness that, bursting, leaves upon the palm
Some soap and water —
It was so long ago, back in some Gay
Twenties, Nineties, I don't know . . . Today I miss
My lovely daughter
Away at school, my sons away at school,

My husband away at work — I wish for them.
The dog, the maid,
And I go through the sure unvarying days
At home in them. As I look at my life,
I am afraid
Only that it will change, as I am changing:

I am afraid, this morning of my face.
It looks at me
From the rear-view mirror, with the eyes I hate,
The smile I hate. Its plain, lined look
Of gray discovery
Repeats to me: "You're old." That's all, I'm old.

And yet I'm afraid, as I was at the funeral
I went to yesterday.
My friend's cold made-up face, granite among its
flowers,
Her undressed, operated-on, dressed body
Were my face and body.
As I think of her I hear her telling me

How young I seem; I *am* exceptional;
I think of all I have.
But really no one is exceptional,
No one has anything, I'm anybody,
I stand beside my grave
Confused with my life, that is commonplace and
solitary.

The Lost Children

Two little girls, one fair, one dark,
One alive, one dead, are running hand in hand
Through a sunny house. The two are dressed
In red and white gingham, with puffed sleeves and sashes.
They run away from me . . . But I am happy;
When I wake I feel no sadness, only delight.
I've seen them again, and I am comforted
That, somewhere, they still are.

It is strange
To carry inside you someone else's body;
To know it before it's born;
To see at last that it's a boy or girl, and perfect;
To bathe it and dress it; to watch it
Nurse at your breast, till you almost know it
Better than you know yourself — better than it knows itself.
You own it as you made it.
You are the authority upon it.

But as the child learns
To take care of herself, you know her less.
Her accidents, adventures are her own,
You lose track of them. Still, you know more
About her than anyone *except* her.

Little by little the child in her dies.
You say, "I have lost a child, but gained a friend."
You feel yourself gradually discarded.
She argues with you or ignores you
Or is kind to you. She who begged to follow you
Anywhere, just so long as it was you,
Finds follow the leader no more fun.
She makes few demands; you are grateful for the few.

The young person who writes once a week
Is the authority upon herself.
She sits in my living room and shows her husband
My albums of her as a child. He enjoys them
And makes fun of them. I look too
And I realize the girl in the matching blue
Mother-and-daughter dress, the fair one carrying
The tin lunch box with the half-pint thermos bottle
Or training her pet duck to go down the slide
Is lost just as the dark one, who is dead, is lost.
But the world in which the two wear their flared coats
And the hats that match, exists so uncannily
That, after I've seen its pictures for an hour,
I believe in it: the bandage coming loose

One has in the picture of the other's birthday,
The castles they are building, at the beach for asthma.
I look at them and all the old sure knowledge
Floods over me, when I put the album down
I keep saying inside: "I *did* know those children.
I braided those braids. I was driving the car
The day that she stepped in the can of grease
We were taking to the butcher for our ration points.
I *know* those children. I know all about them.
Where are they?"

I stare at her and try to see some sign
Of the child she was. I can't believe there isn't any.

I tell her foolishly, pointing at the picture,
That I keep wondering where she is.
She tells me, "Here I am."

Yes, and the other
Isn't dead, but has everlasting life . . .

The girl from next door, the borrowed child,
Said to me the other day, "You like children so much,
Don't you want to have some of your own?"
I couldn't believe that she could say it.
I thought: "Surely you can look at me and see them."

When I see them in my dreams I feel such joy.
If I could dream of them every night!

When I think of my dream of the little girls
It's as if we were playing hide-and-seek.
The dark one
Looks at me longingly, and disappears;
The fair one stays in sight, just out of reach
No matter where I reach. I am tired
As a mother who's played all day, some rainy day.
I don't want to play it any more, I don't want to,
But the child keeps on playing, so I play.

A Memorial Reading

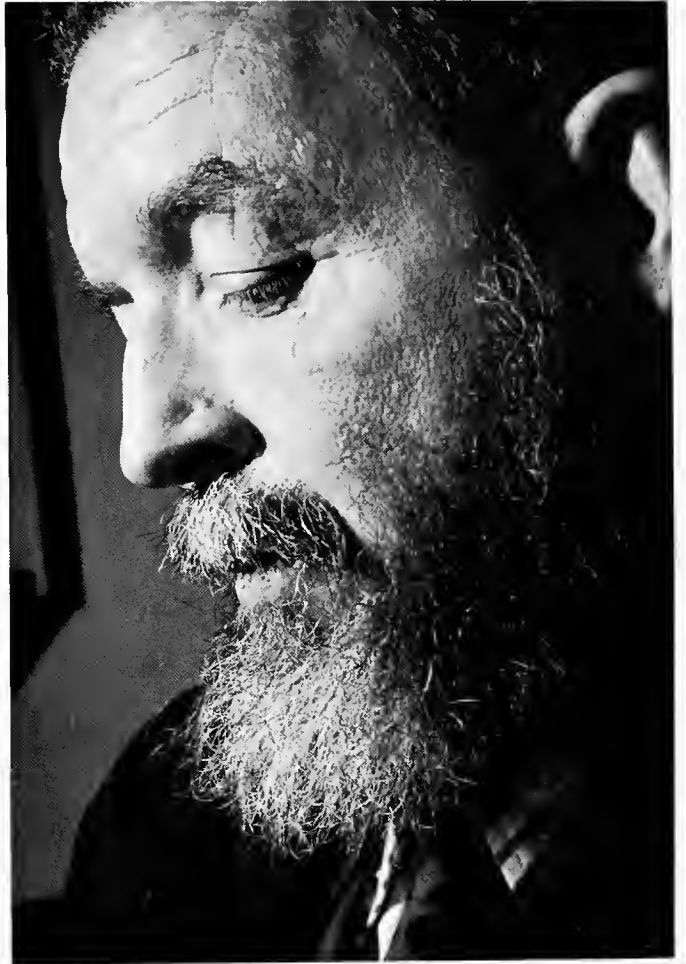
Alumni will have an opportunity to hear Mrs. Randall Jarrell read many of the poems on these pages and other favorite selections from her husband's work on Friday, June 3, at 8:30 p.m. in Cone Ballroom. Proceeds from the benefit will be contributed to the Randall Jarrell Writing Scholarship Fund. Nearly one thousand dollars had been received by mid-April toward the minimum \$2,500 goal.

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Book Review: *The Animal Family* by Mrs. Randall Jarrell, *Greensboro Daily News*.
Article by L. Richardson Preyer, *Greensboro Daily News*.
Article by Heather Ross Miller, *Raleigh News and Observer*.

A Memorial in the Making

Of all the honors Randall Jarrell received, the one that probably would have pleased him more than any other is the Randall Jarrell Writing Scholarship, established in January through the efforts of four alumni, June Cope Bencivenni, Jo Gillikin, Alma Graham and Bertha Wyland Harris, whose tributes appear on pages 20 through 22 in this issue. Part of a letter these former students composed which was mailed to a limited number of alumni is presented on this page.



RANDALL JARRELL could have described his death. He knew what dying was like: the sudden, nightmare deaths of war; the slow, terrible losses of “just living.” Like a flier in his war poem “Losses,” he died at night and “on the wrong page of the almanac” — struck down by a car while walking alone along a road.

But it is the man who lived, not the man who died, that we remember. The world remembers Randall Jarrell the writer. It remembers the sensitive insight of the poet, the wit and wisdom of the novelist and critic, the storyteller’s magic art. And Randall Jarrell the writer remains, a living presence in his work, where the amazing story hasn’t ended yet, and he may still “go on in breathless joy.” He is a part of our literature. But he was also a part of our lives. We remember Mr. Jarrell, the man.

We were students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He was the poet in residence, and he was famous. But he never acted famous. And he was never merely “in residence” either. He lived there. He was tall, and for many years he wore a beard. He played an expert’s game of tennis, and he drove a Mercedes-Benz. He had a childlike sense of wonder about the world, a

boyish eagerness in discovery. And most of all, he loved to teach. “I’m crazy about teaching!” he once exclaimed. “If I were a rich man, I would pay money to teach.”

Randall Jarrell did teach — both in the classroom and outside it. As a Professor in the English Department, he taught courses in creative writing and in literature. His students were convinced that he had read everything ever written at least twice — including their own poems and stories. And they were amazed at how a man so frighteningly intelligent could be so kind. They came to his campus lectures and his poetry readings. They heard him read his new poems before the poems appeared in print. They could talk with him during coffee hours, ask him questions. He was accessible to everyone. And things would happen where he was. Other writers came to visit and to speak — Robert Frost and Robert Lowell, Peter Taylor, Flannery O’Connor, Karl Shapiro, William Goyen, John Crowe Ransom.

Randall Jarrell the writer left his own memorial — his work. Randall Jarrell the teacher left a different legacy — his students. When the students are gone, what of the teacher will be left?

THE LIBRARY