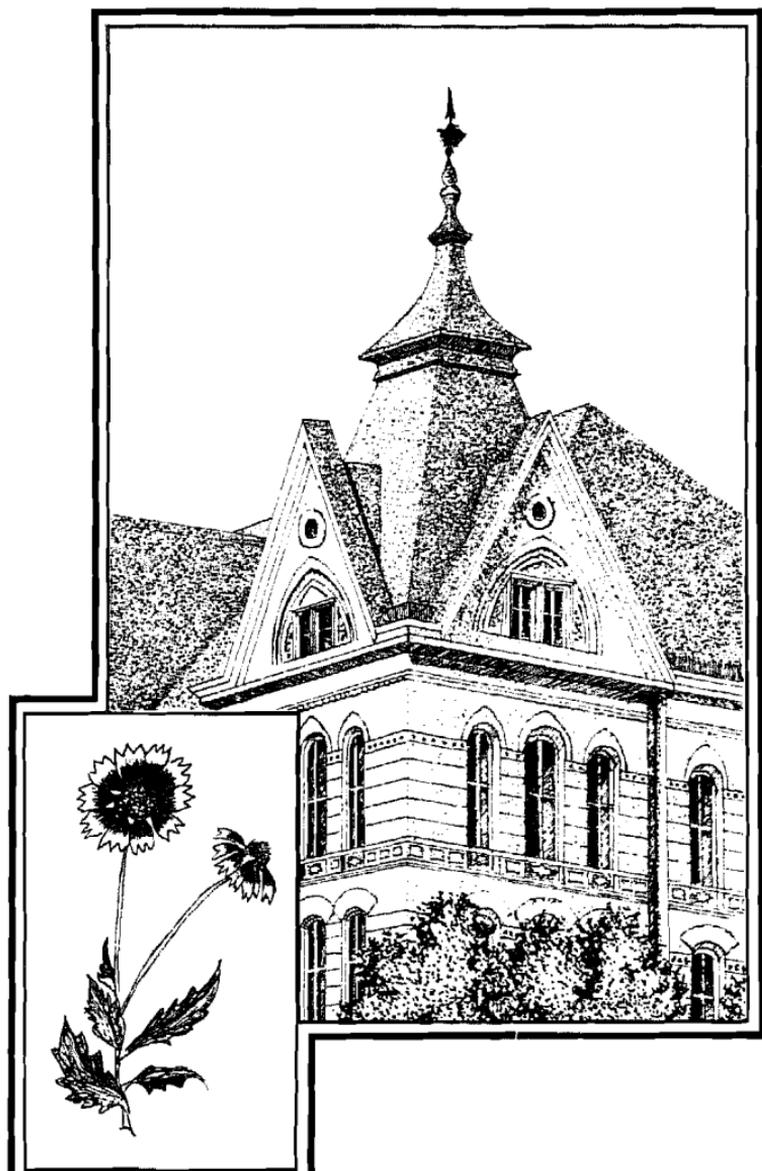


THE MUSE AND DEACON WRIGHT

A Collection of Verse by L.N. Wright



Ralph H. Houston

Walter H. Ricketts

This edition is limited to 200 books, of which this book is number 95.



LEONARD N. WRIGHT
(1898 - 1975)

THE MUSE AND DEACON WRIGHT



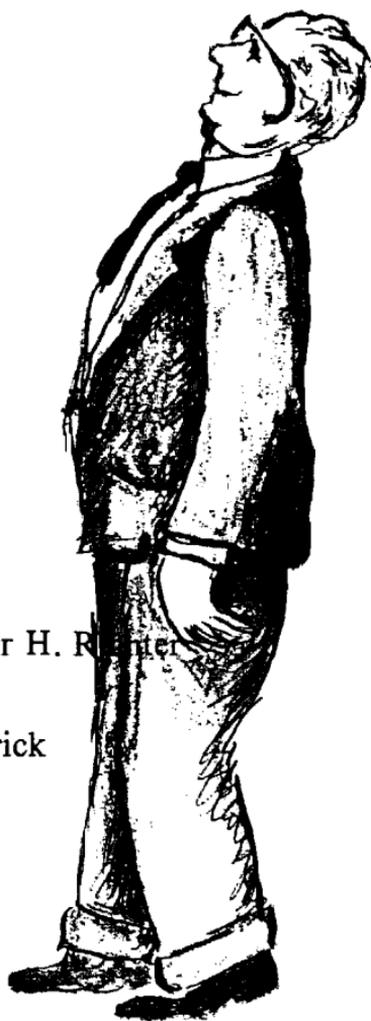
THE MUSE AND
A Collection of



Southwest Texas State University Press

DEACON WRIGHT

Verse by L. N. Wright



Edited by
Ralph H. Houston and Walter H. Rorer

Art by
Merry Kone FitzPatrick

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TO ELIZABETH
WHO KNEW HIM BEST
AND LOVED HIM MOST

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The biographical notes and personal anecdotes included in Appendices B and D serve as a brief introduction to the author for readers who did not know him. Most of the appended material will be seen to relate more nearly to the book we did not write than to the verse selections collected here.

We express our thanks to all who have assisted in the preparation of this volume. First and foremost we are indebted to Elizabeth Wright for free access to manuscripts in her possession, including some "courtship" letters never before shared with anyone; to Marion Strahan for permission to include three of her poems addressed to Deacon; to John O. Rosenbalm, Professor of English and Editor of *Studies in American Humor*, who has worked closely with us in preparation of the manuscript and development of plans for publication; to Merry Kone FitzPatrick, Associate Professor of History, for contributing the cover design and drawings; to Lenore Abboud for helping with the design and for working carefully with typesetting and layout; and to Lee Hudman, Executive Director for Development, for making it possible to coordinate the Dr. Leonard Wright Scholarship for Future Teachers of English with a subsidy for this publication available for no other purpose.

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August, 1986

San Marcos, Texas

PREFACE

We read and re-read Deacon Wright's poetry because it makes us feel good and we have come to regard some of what he wrote as superior examples of light verse in English.

Though we believe that Deacon wrote principally for the joy of writing, certainly not for posterity, we think it a service to his muse and to the SWT tradition to try to preserve examples of his art.

A few explanations will anticipate questions some may want to ask. In the headnotes to the poems, all references to Southwest Texas State University are given as "SWT"—a familiar designation in all periods of the institutional history, whatever the official name at the time.

The consistent use of "Deacon" for naming the author arises from the general acceptance of his nickname through most of his professional life, his own satisfaction with it, and the desire of the editors to avoid the formality which the use of "Wright" had in life or of "Leonard," employed to the exclusion of "Deacon" only by his wife Elizabeth and otherwise by only a few close friends, usually in private conversation.

We have chosen not to condescend to our readers by including extensive editorial comments. The headnotes and a few footnotes ascribed to "Eds." are the only additions to the texts.

Another motivation for beginning our collaboration we would acknowledge here, one that is somewhat personal and perhaps a bit whimsical. It relates to circumstances arising in the political tensions of the summer of 1954 when Deacon felt "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" so sharply that he chose to resign his professorship at SWT and accept employment elsewhere. Regarding the episode as bizarre almost beyond description and the trauma of its impact on Deacon, his family, and the College as much greater than warranted, we both have long held a resolution to do what we could to secure for him the place of eminence in the collective memory to which his 29 years of distinguished service to SWT entitled him.

It may be only our own feelings we attempt to assuage by presenting here a representative collection of his light verse with a few selections from his other writings and from anecdotal material to which others have contributed, but one assurance we can give our readers is that these poems mirror with great clarity the personality and character we knew and honored.

Men do establish monuments reflecting respect and love for a fellow being. This is our monument to a good man, our friend, Dr. L. N. "Deacon" Wright.

RHH and WHR

CAMPUS POET LAUREATE



. . . Of INFINITE JEST

**An Irresistible Force Meets
An Impenetrable Object**

R. H. Perry, once a member of the Department of Education at SWT, was a recipient of Deacon's teasing, which probably echoes in part Goldsmith's poem in which a man bitten by a dog does well but the dog dies.

Ah, what avails the raven lock,
Ah, what the smile serene?
Some wicked villain bounced a rock
Off poor old Perry's bean.

But luckily the flying stone
Fell on his curly pate;
For had it struck another zone
Sad would have been his fate.

But as it was it is a fact—
At which we greatly wonder—
That while the prof's head stayed intact
The pebble flew asunder.

The Doleful Dirge of A Disgruntled Doc

Spurgeon Smith, the "disgruntled Doc," was Chairman of the Department of Biology and, in an organizational structure that pertained for some years, Director of the Division of Science. He and Deacon were long-time hunting and fishing companions.

The editors do not know the details of Spurgeon's encounter with a panther while on a deer hunt, but clearly Deacon saw an opportunity in the incident to keep a new University of Chicago Ph.D. humble with some good-natured ribbing.

Away down on the salt grass flats
Where winds the calm Nueces,
A panther eyed her hungry brats
And licked their wistful faces,
When thru the chaparral there stalked
And to their lair¹ neared,
A Ph.D. who, as he walked,
Was mumbling in his beard.

"No glory be to me," says he,
"I still ain't got no buck."²
I've sat for hours in a tree,
I've walked for days with aching knee,
And tho I've shot at two or three
I've missed them, darn the luck.

"And now or ere the season's o'er
But one more day remains.
If I maintain my perfect score
I'll have to use my brains.
This bunch of horns I've brought along
Together I will smite—
And when I strike them prong on prong,
'Twill sound like bucks in fight.

"Then glory'll be to me," says he,
"Whene'er they hear this sound,
The bucks will come from east and west,
The large and small, and all the rest;
But I will single out the best
And lay him on the ground."

The Doctor smote with might and main,
The sound it traveled far;
And to the panther's troubled brain
It seemed like bucks at war.
She dreamed soft dreams of venison
To feed her hungry brood
And to the bush went on the run
From which the sound issued.³

"Now glory be to me," says she,
"I'll still their hunger's gnaw;
No more shall they their breakfast lack;
No more their empty stomachs rack;
I'll jump on yonder buck's back
And kill him with my paw."

Now to the bush she swiftly hies
And leaps it easily;
But lo! instead of buck she spies
An arrant Ph.D.!
Then on her brakes she swiftly throws,
And shifts into reverse,
Disdain upon her wrinkled nose,
Disdain—or something worse.

"No glory'd be to me," says she,
"They couldn't stand the shock,
I've fed 'em fowl, I've fed 'em fish,
E'en bugs and bats they all relish,⁴
They've dined on many a curious dish,
But never on a Doc."

In haste the panther to her lair
Returned with shame bowed down,
The Doctor likewise took the air
And sifted back to town.

And when he reached a tranquil spot
And breathing was restored,
He thought, "Although I've fired no shot,
A smashing hit I've scored.

“All glory be to me,” says he,
“I’ve got a bully tale;
And when a contest doth arise
O’er who can tell the biggest lies
I’ll tell this yarn and take the prize
And walk off with the kale.”

¹ Pronounced “la-er.”

² Typical language of a Ph.D.

³ Even Homer had his weak moments.

⁴ Shakespeare does this occasionally.

To A Parotitic Parnassian

Deacon's muse was titillated by a serious case of mumps which felled Walter Richter during his term as editor of the SWT student newspaper, The College Star, in 1937. Accordingly, the following poem, graphically illustrated, appeared on the front page of the next Star. "Barney," mentioned in the second stanza, is a reference to Barney Vaughn, business manager of the college yearbook, with whom Richter was engaged in a mock feud. "El Toro" was the title of Richter's weekly editorial column. "Periscopic" is a reference to "The Periscope," the paper's gab and gossip column.

Ye Editor Richter,
El Toro concoctor,
The Pride and the boast of the Press,
Has vamoosed, departed,
"Because," said the doctor,
"At home you'll be safer, I guess."

Is Editor Richter,
Purveyor of blarney,
Afflicted with measles or pip?
Has Editor Richter
Been frightened by Barney
And alibied thus for his trip?

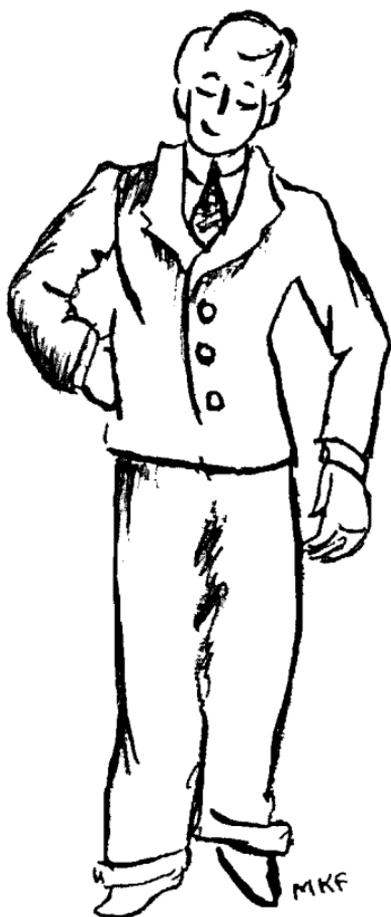
Was Editor Richter
For pun Periscopic
Assailed by subscriber irate,
Who sought when incensed by
A scandalous topic
To bounce a big brick off his pate?

Was Editor Richter,
That handsome Apollo,
By female designing ensnared,
And fled from her, frightened,
Where she dared not follow,
Like a deer that by hunter was scared?

Did Editor Richter
(That great intellectual)
Flunk a course, or abscond with some dough?
Did he find that his line
Was a bit ineffectual
With the ladies? The answer is: No!

No, Editor Richter,
The smiling, the sunny,
The ace, when news-writing is trumps,
No, Editor Richter
(Oh, gosh, this is funny)
Is all swollen up with the mumps!

—Darner Hyde



To a Friend Who Is a Milne Addict

This poem is addressed to Sue Taylor, a friend and colleague in the Department of English. A distinguished teacher of children's literature, Sue probably found many opportunities to share her enthusiasm with her faculty friends.

We sadly fear, my dearest Sue,
You quote too much from Milne's Pooh;
And so we warn you on this score,
Lest, aping Bear, you prove a Bore.



Chorus To Bore Us

On college campuses between the two World Wars, deans of women had to supervise the social conduct of women students without the full support of college faculties. Mary Catherine Brogdon, the "dainty dean" of this poem, was no exception. Under the circumstances Deacon's satire is rather gentle with Dean Brogdon and more implied than explicit concerning the code of conduct she would impose. The title and the nom de plume are necessary indicators of the ironic mode intended.

Lovely lady, dainty Dean,
How could students be so mean
All their moral codes to trample
When they have you as example?

Hands as soft as April showers;
Lips as lovely as her flowers;
Cheeks as rosy as the dawn's;
Gait as graceful as the fawn's;
Perfect manners, perfect taste,
Perfect English, perfect waist,
Perfect feet and perfect toes,
Perfect ears and perfect nose.
Sober wisdom keeps her train
Always in your ample brain,
Whence flows comfort for the sad,
Kindly warning to the bad,
Absolution for the sinner,
Fulsome praises for the winner.

Lovely lady, dainty Dean,
How could students be so mean
All their moral codes to trample
When they have you as example?

—Percy Noel Keats



On the Decline of the Poetic Powers of Walter Hoppe Richter

Long after his college days, Richter again incited Deacon's muse, this time by declaring he would discontinue his practice of writing his Christmas greetings in verse. In its place he would simply send a New Year's letter. Deacon reacted.

Now that our Rick's deserted verse
And turned to prose—or something worse—
All we whose muse delights in rhymes
Are fallen upon evil times.

Time was, with Yuletide drawing nigh—
Heart high with hope and eager eye—
We'd meet the postman on the run
To read the rhymes our Rick had done.

But now, alas, the sky is dark,
The song is gone from out the lark;
Our greatest gift we stand to lose
Since Walter has divorced the muse.

Oh, would some power reinspire
Old Rick to tune again his lyre,
To weave again the winsome phrase
That so adorned his Christmas lays.

But should he leave his lyre unstrung,
His lute still rifted, songs unsung,
Perhaps Old Deac might fill the gap
And ride his spavined Peg a lap.

Although the brew his spigot spouts
Will not remove all woes and doubts,
Remember, as the tang you test,
Old ale, old rhymes, old friends are best.¹

—Darner Hyde

¹Duly chastised, Richter recanted and reasserted his allegiance to the muse in verse. See p. 100 . [Eds.]

MIXING IT WITH MARION

The pressures of the moment were never too great to keep Deacon from seeking recreation in playful sallies of wit in poetry or correspondence with friends, many of whom had been his students.

Deserving of fullest representation here are the give-and-take of such exchanges with Marion Strahan, wife of O. W. "Oskie" Strahan, long time coach, athletic director, and Chairman of the Department of Men's Physical Education at SWT.

*The first of these selections may be Deacon's most fully developed imitation of a single model. Again and again throughout the poem one discovers counterparts to sections of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. The situations that prompted both poems were also similar: minor crises in personal relationships that should be rendered less virulent through satiric representation.*

*Marion's reply, *L'Allegro*, calls up Milton only in the title and the first and last couplets. Withal, it reflects a vivacity, a liveliness of spirit, beyond the reach of Milton, one not to be daunted by a bridge club contretemps nor to be deterred from the candor of expression in her *Reflections of a Sweet Girl Graduate*.*

The Fate Of The Friday Bridge Club

Canto One

What dire effects a luncheon club hath wrought,
How foxy Marion Strahan asleep was caught,
How Amy Lou¹ was left out in the cold—
Two gals whose bosoms carry hearts of gold—
I sing. But first I must invoke my muse
That she the proper spirit may infuse
In me, who if this theme do hope to sing
Successfully, must shale a wicked wing.
Poor muse, that once her vigor did inhale
From potent fumes of good domestic ale,
Who now, alack the day, must find content
In a paltry, thin (by volume) four percent!
Say Muse, for what misdeed or venial sin
Did they, who erewhile gladly took them in,
Expel them forth, with cunning smooth and sly,
And leave these two dames stranded high and dry?
Were they at fault, or were these gals who munch



With gay hauteur their dainty Wednesday lunch?
Did Envy bring about their deadly breach?
Pray tell the cause, dear Muse, I do beseech.
Whate'er the cause, this coterie of dames
Once played in harmony their Friday games
Of bridge. But now the two that got the air
Must play at home the game called solitaire.
Then life ran gaily as the sparkling stream
And naught was said (out loud) to sour the cream
Of comradeship, the while they played and ate.
Our heroines, the ones who got the gate,
Played well, and oft they took away the prize—
Too oft! perhaps therein the trouble lies;
For she who wins and takes the prize away
Must let another win next time they play,
Or else—A moral here inscribes my pen:
The women hate the gals who always win.
However, if they hated Amy Lou
And Marion, they gave no sign or clue
That they were hatching up their fell design,
Or that the girls were getting out of line;
But smiled, and talked in complimentary vein,
And cooed, and gushed, and hoped it wouldn't rain,
The idle chatter of an empty brain.

Came then the summer, as it always comes;
And Friday afternoon no longer hums
With ceaseless chatter as they serve collation—
The Friday Bridge Club's taking its vacation,
The decks of cards, the score-pads, one and all
Are laid away t'wait the coming fall.
The girls now turn their minds to this and that:
What they should eat to keep from getting fat;
How best withstand the summer's torrid heat;
How best persuade their husbands not to eat;
In other words, how could they take their ease
In peace, till Autumn's truly cooling breeze.

When Fall's first norther whistled o'er the ridge
Our heroines began to think of bridge.
They hunted up the latest book of rules,
Read Culbertson, and all the other schools
Of bridge instructors. One could plainly see
These two were out to capture every prix,

But let us leave our heroines awhile,
 And seek the inner shrine, where cunning guile
 Was practiced. Conferees in Hell
 Did never plan so wisely and so well
 When they for man's destruction made their scheme—
 Ah, Muse, you'll have to help me with this theme!—
 Though they succeeded with their base device
 In driving Adam out of Paradise.
 The consequences gave Adam no great grief,
 And gave to Eve a wider choice of leaf.
 These dames in secret conclave schemed a scheme
 Whereby they, so to speak, just took the cream
 And let the common milk remain behind.
 They ate the fruit and threw away the rind.
 To change the figure, as our Gates² would say,
 These scheming matrons likewise changed the day
 Of meeting to late Wednesday afternoon.
 When armed with cup, and knife, and fork, and spoon
 They meet at K—gs³ and hold a barbeque;—
 So runs the story as 'tis told by S—,⁴
 While Marion and Amy Lou drive by
 And do some tall old sniffing on the sly.
 So runs the tale! And when our girls awoke,
 The Friday Bridge Club had gone up in smoke.
 Then friends were parted, bitter words were said;
 Harsh names were called, and even tears were shed;
 'Tis said that former friends won't even speak.
 But now, I fear, my muse is growing weak.
 Perhaps if she could find a stronger brew
 She might sometime indite a Canto Two.

—John Milton Pope

¹Mrs. Billy Bass. [Eds.]

²Gates Thomas, Chairman of the Department of English. [Eds.]

³The home of Mary Emily King. [Eds.]

⁴Suc Taylor, colleague of Deacon. [Eds.]

L'Allegro

The foregoing poem inspired the following reply by Marion Strahan.

Let malt and Milton now be pals
To justify two worthy gals.

'Twas your delight to warble neatly
Of two young gals snubbed quite completely,
But let me tell you this, young bard,
You'll find the second canto hard.

These girls you cant of so ironic
By rhyming Pope to strains Miltonic
Are not the type to moan and groan
Nor twiddle thumb at home alone.

'Tis true they have no Friday games
Of bridge to play with stuffy dames,
But indoor games there are aplenty
For gals who still look eight and twenty.

Those fat old hens who lunch together
Are in for lots of stormy weather.
You ask me what I think the cause—
Perchance, it is the menopause.

Now we prefer a high-heeled bunch
To those old hens who meet at lunch.
We want to kick our heels up high
And bid the lid clear off the sky.

We're not content to chit and chat
Of this one's age, of that one's hat.
We gambol with a faster set
Who chew and smoke and take a bet.

Now, Lenny Wright, do not bemoan
The fact that we the gate were shown.
For those old gals we hold no ire,
They took the coals but left the fire.

L'Envoi

And then they gathered up their winning's due;
Tomorrow to fresh fields, and pastures new.

—M.S.



Ballade Against Fair Women

Since Deacon has commented elsewhere on the difficulty of writing in some of the French poetic forms, one may assume that he undertakes this poem and brings it to a successful conclusion in part at least to demonstrate his mastery of his craft.

I'm done with the damsels with dizzy domes;
I'm off of the frails with form divine.
I swear by the names of the nymphs and gnomes
That none of these dames will e'er be mine.
The woman I choose to wine and dine
Will never be one of those jittery Janes.
Thus for refrain I'll use this line:
Give me a gal that's got some brains.

The cherry lip and the dimpled chin,
The pearly teeth and the starry eyes,
Will never suffice my heart to win,
For each of these on the surface lies.
The frivolous flapper my heart decries;
The sinuous sweetie my soul disdains;
The woman I wed must needs be wise;
Give me a gal that's got some brains.

Many men yearn for a wife with wealth,
And some for the sister that cooks and sews;
While most of them want 'em with youth and health
And all of them for the Mae West pose;
But be they as fair as the morning rose,
Or blessed with the wealth of Eastern fanes,
I greet them all with an upturned nose:
Give me a gal that's got some brains.

L'Envoi

This is my prayerful plea, O Lord:
If you would pay me for all my pains,
If you your worshippers would reward,
Give me a gal that's got some brains.

De Gustibus

Marion has no interest in developing intricate poetic patterns, but here in characteristically spirited lines she responds to his expression of approval and disapproval of certain qualities in women.

I've read your lines to a dark-haired gal,
And your lines to a gal with brains,
But thoughts that rise when I've read them through
Are where, oh Lord, do I rate with you?

You're through with the gal with ashen locks,
You're through with the dizzy blondes,
You now prefer a darker hue—
Ye Gods! Where do I rate with you?

You're off the gals who are inane,
You're off of sex appeal,
You want a gal with a high I.Q.—
Mein Gott! Where do I rate with you?

I'm not a blonde, nor yet brunette,
I'm neither dark nor dizzy,
My looks are drab, my eyes off blue—
Oh Heck! Where do I rate with you?

My brain—it rattles in *vacue*,
My I.Q.'s nil or nothing,
But what's a poor old gal to do—
Oh Hell! She just don't rate with you.

—M.S.

To a Friend on Her Making The Scholarship Society

This quatrain is in effect Deacon's flippant assurance that Marion herself has not been rejected in the ballade. The Nolle Scholarship Society, named for Dean A. H. Nolle, was the local chapter of Scholarship Societies of the South, precursor of Alpha Chi.

The term "Ikin" in the second line, which also appears in a similar context in the poem "To a Brother," has proved baffling to the editors and some of their more learned friends.

We lift aloft the clinking can—
Ikin to Mistress Marion Strahan.
For why? Because the little snip
Has made the Nolle Scholarship.

—Darner Hyde

Reflections of a Sweet Girl Graduate

The expression "I likes" of line three is a clue to help the reader separate the author from the persona of the poem. Marion here assumes the voice of a campus sex-pot in a way that warrants the conclusion that she herself approves of Deacon's expressed preference for intellectual types.

I like my profs a wee bit naughty
To them what's cold, and still more haughty.
I likes to have 'em ogle me,
And think about adultery.

—M.S.



Index to an Appendix

For Marion to have felt no pride in the petite, virtually perfect figure that she maintained through the years would have been against the order of nature. Thus it is that in presenting the possibility of a rapid increase in weight as an inevitable result of her surgery, the author is inviting his subject to laugh away what would have been for her a major catastrophe.

The drawings used here appeared with an early manuscript of the poem. Neither Marion Strahan nor Elizabeth Wright recalls the name of the artist.

The "Burky" referred to was E. C. Burkholder who taught economics and sociology, and "Ryan" was Gladys Ryan, a student from Runge, who stayed on as a member of the administrative staff, serving for many years as secretary to Dean Nolle.

Marion Strahan
Has lost her
Appendix!
Now what do you
Think
Will ensue?
If Burky
And Ryan
May serve as an
Index,
Results
She will
Rue.



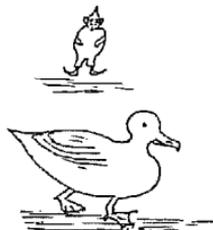
While Marion once was
Decidedly
Slender,
Now that her
Appendix
Is out,
I'm afraid that her
Poundage
Will go on the mend; her
Whole contour
Will tend to the
Stout.



For Ryan was
Slim
As a lass
from Killarney,
And Burky a
Slip
Of a lad,
Till they lost their
Appendices—
This isn't
Blarney—
But True as
Statistics,
Egad!



And poor
Mar-i-on,
Who
Tripped like a fairy,
And made us
All think her a
Puck,
No longer will
Trip it,
So light and so airy,
But waddle
Along like a duck.



And she,
So petite,
Who was once wont to
Snuggle
In the crook of
Her hubby's
Strong
Arm
Can then be
Encompassed
Nur nach einen!
Struggle—
A prospect
He views with
Alarm.





With an increase in
Poundage,
Food, clothing, and
Shelter
Will likewise
Increase
In expense.
Her food she'll
Consume,
As is ore by a
Smelter;²
As for dresses,
She'll have to wear
Tents.

But still,
Though the outlook is
Not very
Cheery
For poor little
Marion
Strahan,
'Tis well to
Remember
The fat are the
Merry;
So just laugh
This off,
If you can.

¹We must have rhythm.

²i.e., by shovelfuls.

THE SAGA OF BERTA AND BEN

Hail Holy Wedlock; or, Hymen, YooHoo Hymen

Deacon was undoubtedly functioning as poet laureate of the College in writing the following poem commemorating the marriage of Berta Lowman, a member of the SWT faculty, and Ben Baines, reporter for the San Antonio Light. The sense of the institutional loss in Berta's resignation expressed here was more than conventional.

Echoes of a contemporary musical and of Scott, Milton, Pope, and Byron reverberate by turns.

Of thee I sing, Berta,
Of thee I sing!
You've done the unexpected thing.
My muse maun cower
Her bashfu' wing
Ere she can sing
Of thy wedding.



II

I've sung of all sorts of occasions,
Like panthers and people and Pooh.
I've even discussed operations,
But never have sung about you.
I've ridden old Peg willy-nilly
O'er many a boisterous ride;
But now he must go both stately and slow
To the rhythm of "Here Comes the Bride."

III

Here comes the bride,
Alma Mammy's pride.
"How did we lose her?"
Her weeping pupils cried.

IV

O Young Benjamin Baines is come from the South,
 And his charger is snorting and foaming at mouth.
 He has finished his stint on the *Evening Light*,
 And has lit out to northward with all of his might
 For to rescue his Berta from all other swains—
 O there never was knight like your Benjamin Baines.

V

He stayed not for cactus, he stayed not for thistle,
 Nor stopped at New Braunfels to moisten his whistle.
 He made it to Hunter with nary a spill,
 And was still going strong at the foot of the hill.
 With a last burst of speed he arrived at the crest,
 Where, instructing the youth, sat the one he loved best.

VI

He stayed not for Prexy, he stayed not for Dean,
 But forthwith disrupted the whole busy scene.
 He grabbed up her papers, he dismissed her class;
 And ere many moments had managed to pass,
 He had gained her consent, her affirmative nod,
 And went away feeling as if he were God.

VII

Alas, what boots it with incessant care
 To educate a woman for this trade;
 For just when we are thinking we have made
 A teacher who will stand the wear and tear,
 There comes a gallant youth with one fell swoop,
 And marries her and leaves us in the soup.
 And she who erewhile taught the thirsting youth to drink
 At the Pierian Spring, now rules the kitchen sink.

VIII

Ah, what avails the clever pate,
That's crammed chock full of sense?
If she remains not celibate
She might as well be dense.

IX

Blow on our noses, noses,
And wipe all the tears from our eye;
For soon she will wear wedding roses,
And it is not fitting we cry.

X

Fill high the bowl with Mulligan stew!
We will not keep this frame of mind.
We still have Cora, Mac, and Sue,¹
Which same (we hope) are not inclined
To follow Hymen to the church
And leave their students in the lurch.

XI

Fill high the bowl with Mulligan stew,
And celebrate the coming rite.
Though we should have a brisker brew,
'Twill serve to pledge the bride tonight.
We hope her wedded life will have no pains,
And pray she'll never prove the bane of Baines.

¹Cora Lay in Home Economics, Marian McDowell in Women's Physical Education, and Sue Taylor in English. [Eds.]

POETIC CORSAGES

From Gaillardian Presentations

For generations a highlight of each school year at SWT has been the gala presentation of campus favorites chosen by fellow students and known as Gaillardians. In the Bert Parks tradition of continuity, Deacon was the perennial choice to do the emcee honors, and he always responded with aplomb and verve. His light verse presentation lines expressing awed admiration for the beauty, wit, and charm of the winners were received with general acclaim.

A portion of the script he used in 1950 is typical of his offerings on these occasions. In his introductory remarks, he explains his role in the proceedings.

The occasion seems to call for a bit of verse as a sort of poetic corsage which these young ladies can wear along with their more fragrant flowers. You can hardly blame me, I should think, if I fail to wax eloquent over these young men, who are really very like a groom at a wedding, a sort of necessary adjunct. Of course the young ladies in the audience may heave a wistful sigh as these young handsome heroes escort these beauties into the spotlight, but the cynosure of all males will no doubt be these same beauties.

Then, a bit of prefatory verse leads into the presentation.

When autumn leaves begin to fall
And football is the favored game,
Then love, not learning, gets the call,
And beauty is preferred to fame.

Then we choose the fairest wights
Among the girls who grace the quad
And bring them out before the lights
To show them off to man and God.

Six girls, their alma mater's boast,
Six boys, their alma mater's pride;
The loveliest from coast to coast,
The handsomest from far and wide.

Now let the silver trumpets blow
And let the lights their brightest blaze;
And while our hearts with gladness glow
Let's lift our voices loud with praise.

The first to grace tonight Gaillardia's stage
Is Rita Curry, toast of every age.
Unrazored freshman lips her praises speak,
The sophomores all place her at the peak,
And even profs, bowed down with cares and worry,
Renew their youth when teaching Rita Curry.
The KLK's¹ thought Rita supreme,
And we agree that she's a lovely dream.
Adoring hearts we lay at Rita's feet,
And say with one accord, "Now ain't she sweet?"
That handsome lad there with the friendly smile
Is Tommy Hollon, out in front a mile,
Tonight he's reached the pinnacle of fame
In squiring Alma Mater's choicest flame.

The next to add new glamor to the scene
Is the pride of all the Cutshalls, lovely Gene.
This lissome lass has loads of what it takes
To win success, whatever move she makes.
As Aquamaid she makes the fishes drool;
As editor she is the best in school.
In scholarship she rates an Alpha Chi,
And as a person she's a "sweetie pie."
A thousand ships were launched by Helen's face,
And Cleopatra led a merry chase,
But one sweet smile from lovely Genie's lips,
Did I command, would launch a million ships.
Old Lucky Bookey Brymer standing there
Is privileged to breathe the neighboring air,
His heart elate can scarce contain its joy.
Escort her down, you lucky, lucky boy.

Lift high the loud acclaim from hill and dell,
Next comes our queen of beauty, lovely Nell,
The toast of all the Edwards, far and nigh,
This Nell is sweeter far than Nelly Bly.
Were I an eager, callow youth again

A hundred sonnets to her eyes I'd pen;
I'd fill a volume with poetic praise,
And spend each moment in a purple haze.
The Jeffersonians all deserve a cheer
For picking Nell, whose beauty has no peer.
That noble youth beside her, straight and tall,
Is Prexy Cheyney, envy of us all.
Be careful, Trent, or else that head will swell
For having stood beside our lovely Nell.

Be still my heart, stop struggling to escape,
And, Oh ye eyes! resume your normal shape;
Yon lovely vision is a mortal maid;
'Tis Carolyn Sands, who led the cavalcade
Of Bobcat beauties and was named our queen,
When last we held our court of love and grace.
For lovely form and beauty sweet, serene,
So fair her hair, so beauteous her face,
So callipygous is our Carolyn,
We dare affirm all contests she will win.
That handsome hero palpitating there
Is Old George Hinkle, tall and debonair.
Say, Gorgeous George, in all your past career,
Was ever beauty by your side as here?

Now put your blinkers on, me lads, to dim
Your eyes before you look at Jackie Timm;
Such shining beauty may your sight impair—
At least, so counsels every Harris Blair.
My muse, who's wont to answer each behest,
Can only murmur, "She is loveliest!"
This rosy Runge beauty's winning ways
Are such to merit everybody's praise.
And so in letters large we'll write the name
Of Jackie Timm within our book of fame.
What lucky lad has won such charming pelf?
Who but that handsome hero, Melvin Selph?
The poet says the brave deserve the prize,
And to that thought we vote a thousand "ayes!"

One more fair couple we present to you,
The Lovely Wallis, Charming Betty Lou,
And Arthur Nelson, chief of Harris Hall.
When I see Betty Lou, I wish that all
The adjectives in Webster would be mine,
Like *beautiful*, and *marvelous*, *divine*,
Adorable and *exquisite*. The list
Could reach a hundred ere I must desist.
Her friendly charm a magic power doth wield
But yet Sweet Betty Lou just plays the field.
So Arthur, may we congratulate
For having drawn La Wallis as your date.
We rate you as the luckiest of men.
Pip, pip, my boy! Good luck! Go in and win!

So there they are, my friends, Gaillardians all,
The best we boast who travel learning's hall.
Six lovely lasses, beauty's choicest flowers,
A sight to dream on in our pensive hours.
Six handsome lads who won the envied right
To squire to beauty's throne each damsel bright.
Let's make the rafters ring with loud hurrahs
Till all the woods shall echo with applause.

¹Kappa Lambda Kappa, a club for women with a major interest in home economics.



Lines to Be Back Inn

For many years after the legalizing of the sale of alcoholic beverages on a local option basis, Fritz Moeller's Be Back Inn across the county line on the Seguin Highway (San Marcos was bone dry at the time) was the favorite tavern for San Marcos people.

Deacon's poem, echoing in both meter and theme Keats's "Lines on the Mermaid Tavern," became well known through a framed copy done by Prof. C. E. Chamberlin in his fine Spencerian script and exhibited at the Inn. Now this copy adorns a wall of the Victoria, Texas, law office of Mr. Moeller's son, Bill.

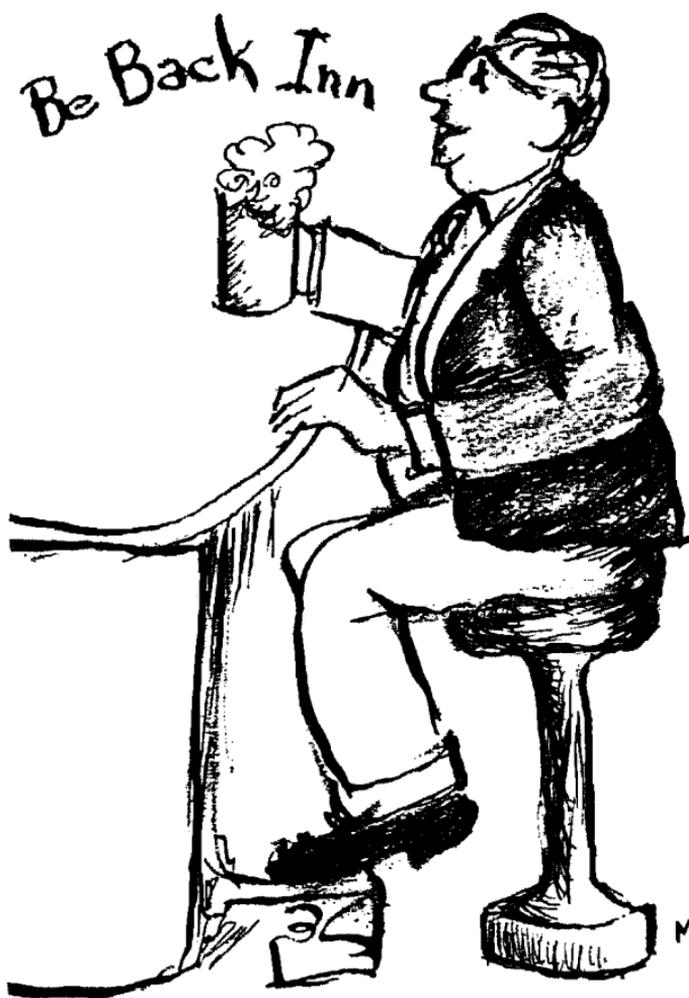
Tell me, tipplers, tell me true,
Ye who quaff and know your brew,
In what bibbing place you've been
Better than the Be Back Inn;
Where ye'll find so smooth an ale
As Fritz Moeller has for sale;
What so soothing to the soul
As a brimming gold-fish bowl;
What so restful to the eyes
As a bottle of Grand Prize;
What will make your whiskers curl
Quicker than a mug of Pearl.

When my soul's consumed with thirst
And my head is like to burst
With the traffic's noisy din,
Then I hie me to the Inn, '
Rest my elbow on the bar,
And am soon restored to par.
When mine host has served his brew
Life takes on a rosy hue,
And I call him to his face
"Benefactor of the race."

Tell me, tipplers, tell me true,
Ye who quaff and know your brew,
In what bibbing place you've been
Better than the Be Back Inn.

—Ruby Ott

Be Back Inn



MKF

To Bryan and Doris

This selection was addressed to Bryan Wildenthal, long-time business manager at SWT, and his wife, Doris, on the occasion of their departure for San Angelo where he would assume the presidency of San Angelo College, an appointment he held briefly before becoming President of Sul Ross State Teachers College. Deacon was responsible for presenting a gift at the going-away dinner.

When friends depart and go their way
To bigger fields and better pay,
We all rejoice at their success
E'en though we sense the emptiness
Their exodus will leave behind.
With sad but philosophic mind
We bid you both a fond adieu;
Our secret hope is that the new,
The wide perspective of the West,
The better job and all the rest
Will only add a brighter gleam
To mutual friendship and esteem.

And we would give you, ere you go
Upon your way to Angelo
Some little gift, some token small,
To let you know our wishes all
Go with you to your future home.
If we should ever westward roam
We'll stop and sip a friendly cup
And call a hundred happenings up
From out the mystic, golden haze
Of memories of former days.

—Deacon

OGDEN MEETS DEACON, POETICALLY SPEAKIN'

Introduction of Ogden Nash

The applause given to the introducer equaled or exceeded that given the speaker when in February, 1942, Deacon, in presenting Ogden Nash to an SWT audience, demonstrated convincingly that he could write in the Nash style with a skill no whit inferior to that of the author himself.

The point was not lost on Nash, who graciously acknowledged his equal more than once in the course of the evening.

Ladies and gentlemen! Standing before you is the most
unhappy of mortals!

Without being unduly modest, I think I may say that on
various public occasions my sallies of wit quite often
provoke giggles and chortles;

And, when I'm in specially good form, you'll even hear gusts
of vociferous laughter;

Tonight, however, it is not your chuckles, but your sympathy
that I'm after.

It's enough to make one want to join the Marines and ask to
be sent to Siam,

For the stranger you see sitting there is supposed to be
funnier than I am.

O why didn't the powers that be who asked me to serve as
tonight's introducer

Let me have a pretty soprano like Lily Pons? and it might be
that I could--er--induce her

To sing my favorite aria—the one from "Il Trovatore."

But, alas, what I'm faced with tonight is an altogether
different story.

The stranger you see before you, if we can believe his press
agent and the lecture bureau, is excruciatingly funny;

But what cuts me to the core is the fact that he is funny for
money,

While I never get a cent for jests that would put a
gravedigger in stitches,

Or cause ditchdiggers to lie down and roll in—provided they
were big enough to roll in—their ditches.

I am sure my quips are sprightly as his, and of much greater
profundity.

In fact, the only thing I envy him for, other than the cash
consideration, is his relative lack of rotundity.
It must be pretty obvious from looking at us that if we were
both thrown into the ocean of fun that I would make a
much bigger splash
Than the gentleman sitting there, whom by now you must have
recognized as being Ogden Nash.
So I wish that instead of me they had called on someone like
Hugh Seabury or Donald Streeter;¹
But since I must introduce him, here goes! if you'll allow me
to change my meter.

My friends, if you are feeling glum
By now, and wish you hadn't come;
Or if you reckon Ogden Nash
Is hardly worth your hard-earned cash,
Much less your tires and gasoline,
Cheer up! There have been times, I ween,
Your dough has drawn less dividends.
So lend your ears, my gentle friends,
And let our speaker do his best
To entertain you with a jest.
It you sit there like Edgon Heath
You'll make poor Ogden Nash his teeth;
But if you lend a willing ear
He'll fill your hearts with mickle cheer
And send you home with soul serene
Without a thought of gasoline.

—L. N. Wright²

¹Seabury and Streeter were professors in the Speech Department. [Eds.]

²This is a rare instance in which Deacon did not use one of his *norms de plume*, and one may surmise he himself felt, with justifiable pride, that he had "risen to the occasion." [Eds.]

THE PLAY'S THE THING

Ka Leo Pahu; or, Who's Hula in Hawaii

Just as the presentation of Gaillardians each fall was dependent on Deacon's muse, the Water Pageants sponsored by the Aquatic Club each spring for many years were developed in dramatic scripts with Deacon as author and narrator. Played to large audiences gathered along the San Marcos River in Sewell Park, they provided a relaxed sort of entertainment while creating settings for music, dances, and aquatic events which comprised the pageantry. Mythical gods of the sea, nymphs of the forests and streams, Hawaiian dancers, beauties of Venice, and even the devil himself (who really was "nobody but Curly Doyle, as tender hearted a politician as ever kissed a baby")—these and many others were evoked in one or another of the dramatic scenes.

Turning out such fantasies seemed a less rigid discipline for Deacon than the writing of poetry, and his pleasure in the undertaking reveals a creative mind at play in a carnival mood.

Ka Leo Pahu; or Who's Hula in Hawaii is included here as representative of these scripts, for one does not reject a play featuring a hula dancer named Oola Wu-Wu, daughter of Chief Wata Tumi and his dancing wife Oboi-Oboi.

We take you now to the Mystic Isles of the South Seas—to Hawaii, the land of the Lei, the Tabu, and the Hula Hula. The scene of our little drama is in the valley of Waipio, exotic spot in the vicinity of Mauna Loa, home of the volcano goddess, Pele. The time is before the advent of the white man, during the reign of the great King, Kamahameha I. Living in this beautiful valley in a state of idyllic happiness is a tribe of Hawaiians, ruled over by the big chief Wata Tumi, who in turn is ruled by his wife, Oboi-Oboi. During her youth Oboi-Oboi was undoubtedly the chief exponent of the art of Hula in the valley, and is said to have been given her name by the men of the tribe on the occasion of an especially snazzy exhibition of hip waving. Now the weight of the cares of state and an expanding horizon prohibit her from indulging in some of the more violent forms of the Hula, but she is still justly celebrated for her Jello dance. In this classic bit she sits flat on the grass and imitates all six delicious flavors.

Daughter of this famous pair is our heroine, Oola Wu-Wu, breath of the sea breeze, perfume of the flame-flower, who surpasses even her

mother in the art of sinuosity, a creature so beautiful and enticing that she is capable of changing the destiny of a nation by a flip of the hip. On one occasion, when Oola was weaving an especially ecstatic pattern of parabolas and circles in honor of Laka, the goddess of the Hula, there was an earthquake on the island, and an explosion in the crater of Mauna Loa.

But we must pass on to the other characters of our drama. From the neighboring village of Kealekekua comes our hero, Leo Hua, or, as some pronounce it, Leo Hooey, big flower and hay dealer—in other words, a clothing merchant. The villain of our piece is Puka-Puka, so named because he is a nauseating individual. Puka-Puka is the Kumu, or Hula master for chief Wata Tumi, and has an unwelcome eye on Oola Wu-Wu, our heroine, who has been forced to take her dancing lessons from him. Minor characters are Karo and Hupi, servants in the chief's household, and Toodle Ama-Ama, Oola Wu-Wu's girlfriend.

The scene is in front of the Halau, or dancing school, which is located on the beach at the termination of the valley of Waipio. The occasion is the graduation exercises of the Hula school. Naturally Oola Wu-Wu is the valedictorian of her class, with a straight A in all her courses, including the three "R's" of Hula dancing—Reeling, Writhing, and Wriggling. All the inhabitants of the valley have come to witness these exercises, and I do mean exercises. Proudest of them all are Wata Tumi and Oboi-Oboi, parents of the highest ranking scholar. Special invitations have been sent out to the aristocracy of the neighboring villages, which accounts for the presence of our hero, Leo Hua, from Kealekekua.

As the scene opens, the two servants, Karo and Hupi, enter and begin preparing seats for the spectators. I might explain that the dialogue was originally written in Hawaiian, but has been translated freely by that famous ethnologist, Doktor Heinrich Eulenspiegel, familiarly known as "Deacon."

KARO. Son of a fat pig, bestir thy lazy bones and help me prepare a place for the celestial presence of our chief and his fair consort.

HUPI. Have a care of thy language, thou bundle of tripe, or I will bash thee over the head with a calabash which contains the chief's awa.

KARO. Thinkest thou, O Hupi, that we mightest snitch a snifter of that celestial liquor before the chief comes?

HUPI. Thou knowest, O chicken thief, that the chief keeps a measuring rod by him with which he measures the contents of this same

calabash. Let there be a fraction of an inch missing, and I am beaten to a pulp.

KARO. We could fill it up with water.

HUPI. Nay, I have tried that too often before. The chief told me tonight that if his awa didn't have a kick, he'd see that I got one—right where the grass is shortest. He really means to celebrate tonight, because, as thou knowest, his daughter Oola graduates at the head of her class. Some gal, that Oola.

KARO. You said it, Hupi. But here come the spectators. (*Enter Wata Tumi, Oboi-Oboi, Leo Hua, Toodle Ama-Ama, and various spectators*)

WATA TUMI. (*To Oboi-Oboi*) Sit here, my little buttercup. (*To Leo Hua*) And, you, my friend, who have come from afar to see our daughter honored, sit here at my right. Toodle Ama-Ama, you may sit next to Oboi-Oboi.

OBOI-OBOI. Tell me, noble son of the morning, what is the latest fashion news from Honolulu?

LEO HUA. Daughter of heaven, rumor hath it that skirts will be shorter next year on account of the scarcity of rainfall.

WATA TUMI. Oh Boy! Oh Boy! (*Sub voce*)

OBOI-OBOI. Didst thou speak to me, O mighty one?

WATA TUMI. Nay, my little sunflower; I was only talking to my awa boy. Varlet, fetch me the calabash!

HUPI. Here it is, O mighty great chief.

WATA TUMI. (*Takes swig, then measures contents with measuring rod. Roars at Hupi*) Son of a Dog! You have been drinking my awa again. It is two inches below the mark. You shall be beaten soundly for this.

HUPI. But, great king, thou thyself didst drink before measuring.

WATA TUMI. So I did. But let this be a warning to you. (*Enter Puka Puka*)

PUKA PUKA. (*Advances and addresses Wata Tumi*) Mighty Prince and most celestial princess, I, Puka Puka, royal kumu of the sacred halau, consecrated priest of the goddess Laka, present for your entertainment, and for the honor of Laka, great patroness of the hula hula, the class of 1739 in a little number of my own creation entitled "The Hula Hotcha." (*To musicians*) Take it, boys.

WATA TUMI. (*Watching the dance*) Say Leo, that cute little number on the end can help me with my trigonometry any time she feels like it.

OBOI-OBOI. Now don't get any ideas, big boy. Remember that I do all the figuring in our house.

PUKA PUKA. (*After the dance has been finished, with applause from the spectators*) And now, most royal one, I give you the princess Oola Wu-Wu, in her valedictory undress as she does the hula haikiki.

SPECTATORS. Oo la la. WOO, WOO! (*Oola does her stuff*)

PUKA PUKA. We come now to the conferring of degrees. The class of 1739 will please stand up. Most royal chief, it gives me great pleasure to certify to you that the students who stand before you have completed all the required courses in the school of the Hula, and are now eligible to receive the degree of P.H.D., Practicer of Hula Dancing.

WATA TUMI. By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Board of Regents of the Waipio Halau, I now confer on each of you the degree of P.H.D., with all rights, privileges and responsibilities thereunto belonging.

PUKA PUKA. There will now be a short intermission, during which time the tabus will not be lifted.

OBOI-OBOI. Oola, come over here; I want you to meet a friend. (*Introducing Leo*) Oola, this is Leo Hua from Kealekekua. He is the son of an old friend of your father's. You have often heard him speak of Bali-Hua, the famous politician.

LEO HUA. Fairest flower of the Waipio, the sight of you has given me a permanent case of insomnia. Sleep shall not visit these eyes again until I can rest assured that you will be mine. Your presence is like a shower of rain to a parched land, and the sound of your voice is like the murmuring of bees or the moan of doves in immemorial elms. Your breath is as fragrant as the rose acacia, and the touch of your hand like the fall of dew at evening.

OOLA WU-WU. Say, you certainly are a fast worker. But I like it. Come over here and sit down. I'm under tabu for tonight, but tomorrow if you want to pitch woo at Oola Wu-Wu it will be O.K. For the present you must confine your remarks to the price of hay skirts, since I am not permitted to think or talk of love until after the tabu is lifted. If I should be caught kissing a boy, I would be thrown to the shark and nothing could save me.

LEO HUA. It's a date for tomorrow. But let's take a little walk before the second half of the dance begins. A breath of fresh air will do you good. *(They go out)*

PUKA PUKA. *(Approaching Wata Tumi)* O great chief, I like not the way thy daughter looks at yon visiting swain. Thou knowest that thou hast promised her to me as soon as she graduated from the Halau.

WATA TUMI. Er-a-er, I believe that I did say something like that. But the last time we were in Kealekekua her mother met this young man and invited him over for a visit. So it looks like our little deal is all off. I'll scrape up the cash some way and pay you for her dancing lessons. Maybe I can wrangle a government loan from Kamahameha. Here, have a drink, and forget about the whole thing. *(Offers jug. Puka Puka drinks, and goes away muttering to himself. He exits thru the same door as Leo and Oola)* He doesn't seem any too well pleased about it. Well, he'll just have to lump it. Anyway he's getting old enough to forget about women and settle down to the real essentials of life. *(Takes long drink)*

OBOI-OBOI. Hold it, big boy, or you'll be out doing the Hula Walla. This is a commencement, not an awa drinking contest.

WATA TUMI. All right, my little pineapple. But say, where is Oola? It's about time for the second part of the dance to begin. I hope she makes that hayseed you invited over from Kealekekua behave himself. I'd hate to have to pitch her to the shark, like I did that brunette at the last commencement.

OBOI-OBOI. Don't worry. Oola can take care of herself.

PUKA PUKA. (*Rushing in*) O great chief, one of the dancers has violated the tabu. Laka will be angry and will tell her sister Pele. (*Sound of rumbling thunder in the distance. A glare begins to glow*) See, she has already told her, and Pele is angry. Unless the miscreant is thrown to the shark, Pele will send her stream of red-hot lava down on the village and overwhelm us all.

WATA TUMI. Bring the girl in. (*Oola is dragged in by two ruffians*) Come, come, this is not the girl. This is my daughter, the princess.

RUFFIAN. This is she, great one. We saw her in the arms of a man and seized her.

WATA TUMI. Well, the tabu does not apply to the daughter of a chief. Set her free. (*Violent explosion in the distance*)

PUKA PUKA. Pele is angry and will not be appeased until the girl is thrown. (*Rumbling grows louder*) See, the stream of lava has already started down the side of Mauna Loa. Do your duty, before it is too late.

WATA TUMI. (*Frightened*) I must obey. Bind the girl's hands behind her. (*They do so*) Now sound the sacred horn to summon the shark. (*Priest brings out conch and blows three dolorous blasts on the shell. A shark's fin is seen, slowly approaching. When the shark is about twenty yards away, the ruffians throw Oola into the water. As the shark draws near her struggling form, a figure suddenly shoots out of the darkness with a long knife. It is Leo. He plunges into the water, dives as the shark approaches, and comes up underneath, ripping the shark open as he does so. A dark stain spreads through the water, and the shark, after thrashing violently about, floats away. Leo carries Oola, who has fainted, to the shore. The rumbling stops. Audience applauds loudly*)

OBOI-OBOI. Pele is satisfied, and is no longer angry. See, she has stopped her fires. The tabu no longer applies and Oola is saved.

OOLA WU-WU. (*Looks up at Leo*) My hero. (*Kisses him*)

LEO HUA. My angel.

WATA TUMI. *(Waving jug)* On with the dance. And after that, I hereby decree a carnival of water sports to celebrate the marriage tomorrow of my daughter Princess Oola Wu-Wu, to Leo Hua from Kealekekua. Let joy be unrefined! *(Hula dance concludes the play, and the chief's announcer takes over)*

So ends our little passion play of the South Seas. And now while our Hawaiian friends seat themselves comfortably on the shore, the chief swimmers and divers of the tribe will disport themselves in the water, now free from sharks, and will amuse them and you, kind and long-suffering audience, with their many stunts. As each event is staged I shall announce the appropriate title and the names of the participants.



A SPECIAL BENEDICTION

In presenting the following poem at the retirement dinner for Joe H. Wilson, his former colleague at SWT, Deacon was making his first appearance on campus in almost twenty years. Hence, acceptance of the invitation had a symbolic significance for him and for many of those there assembled. Further, he had given his best effort to the writing, preparing a well-edited text for those who would like a copy.

The signature "R. S. Tottle"—"Aristotle" to a punster—was a familiar nom de plume from earlier years, used here doubtless for its greater dignity than "Darner Hyde" or "Helen Pokeroot," both of which had been used frequently. Moreover, the copies prepared for distribution in a final note—as reproduced below—explained that R. S. Tottle was, in fact, Dr. L. N. Wright. Deacon had come home, clearly with a sense of personal satisfaction and, likely, vindication.

Frater, Ave Atque Vale

Free translation: "Brother Joe, You've Gotta Go"

I. Exordium

This section is in the form of an interview of a retired college professor by one of the local journalism students. Lewis Carroll addicts will recognize the prototype.

"You're too old, Father Deacon, for fun and for games,
And you can't skip around like the rabbits;
Yet you hug all the girls and you kiss all the dames.
Pray, where did you learn such good habits?"

"In my youth," he replied, "I took to my books,
And studied with care all the sages;
And the wisdom I learned about women and cooks
Has lasted me down through the ages."

"You are old, Father Deacon, yet the verse you indite
Is smoother than sorghum molasses;
If you'd tell me the secret of learning to write,
I would soon be ahead of my classes."

“In my youth I was constantly strumming my lyre
And plucking the strings of my plectrum,
And the practice so filled me with poetic fire
That I took the whole world for my spectrum.”

“You are old, Father Deacon; you’re retired, you’re an Ex,
And you never do nothing but piddle.¹
Don’t you ever get bored from just cashing your checks?
Don’t you think you should work just a liddle?”²

“I have answered two questions and that must suffice;
So button your lip and keep still, son.
For I came here tonight just to dish out advice
To our honored retiree, Joe Wilson.”

¹Young writers, I have observed, are somewhat addicted to the double negative.

²The speaker is doubtless of German extraction.



II. Commendatio

A change in subject-matter necessitates a change in verse pattern.

Now friends, before my muse proceeds
To sow the row with Wisdom's seeds,
I first propose a solemn toast
To him I've always thought "the most."
I sometimes think I'll never know
As fine a friend as good old Joe.
And thus I hoist a brimming can
To Joe the neighbor, Joe the Man;
Not Joe the Dean, or Joe the Veep—
Magnific titles are but cheap
And gaudy coverings that hide
The real person deep inside.
Long life to him and perfect health;
Also a modicum of wealth,
A future of always "feeling free,"
And may he live to an hundred and three.

III. Prescriptions

Those of you musically inclined might wish me to sing the following section, somewhat loosely adapted to the tune, "Deep in the Heart of Texas." However, the pollution, both ecological and political, has so damaged the timbre of my singing voice that I must stick to the recitative.

Before we head for home and bed, and the sodium bicarbonate,¹
There's a word or two I must say to you to counsel your future
state.

When you are retired you can't be fired, but your life-style will
undergo changes.

You will stay more at home, never widely to roam, restricted to
narrower ranges.

Help your wife with the chores, such as waxing the floors, and
checking expenses and bills.

If this makes you depressed and you need a good rest, grab your
gear and take out for the hills;

Or else seek the shade with some cool lemonade, lightly favored
with juniper juice;

And as you sit there in your favorite chair, just remember this
maxim, "Hang loose!"
Keep a bottle of gin for one bibulous frien', some bourbon and
wine for the others;
And the first thing you know, they will all get a glow, and be
acting like sisters and brothers.
This could go on all night, but don't you take fright; just be
calm and remain at your station,
Just one more little chore, and I promise no more; I must issue a
brief invitation.

¹Sodium bicarbonate: the poor man's Alka Seltzer.

IV. Invitatio

It is free. Bring no coin. We invite you to join what is known
as the "Grasshopper Gang";
For we fiddle and sing, and we do our own thing, and bid all our
worries, "Go hang!"
When we all get together in foul or fair weather, the mirth and
the merriment waxes.
We all feel united, with none of us slighted, and everyone there
just relaxes.

—R. S. Tottle

*Presented by Dr. L. N. Wright to Dr. Joe H. Wilson, May 3, 1974, at
the dinner to celebrate his retirement from Vice President for Academic
Affairs, Southwest Texas State University.*

ALL IN THE FAMILY



GEMS FROM GRANDWHACKER

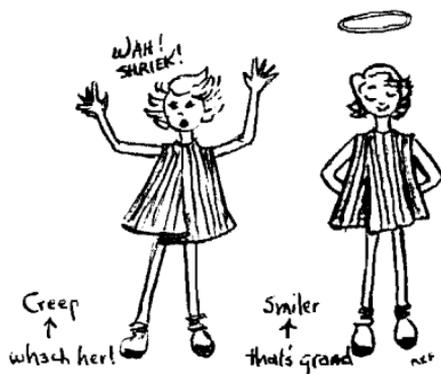
When the Wrights came to Victoria for retirement in 1971, they could not have anticipated fully the joy in store for them through close association with their eight-year-old granddaughter Molly, daughter of Bob and Maxine Wright. Deacon was equally fond of Bill, Sandra, and John, his other grandchildren, but Molly had the obvious advantage of an almost daily relationship with her grandparents.

Always with time for children, he was quick to find some grounds on which he could play in their world. His courtship of Molly was to continue the remainder of his life. In the first valentine included here with its accompanying cartoon, he makes a witty joke on the pseudonym "Grandwhacker"—occasionally appearing as "G. W." It would have been enjoyed thoroughly by the recipient, just as "Wally Doodle," "Doody Doodlebug," and even "Vaseline Vaporub" no doubt amused her in their turn. One may also assume a favorable response by John Madison, son of Jack and Ruth Wright, whose special interest in language would have been stimulated by a valentine from "Ethyl Mercaptan," a name echoing the name of the company with which his father was associated.

Both he and his sister Sandra Wynn would receive timely consolation in poems by Deacon commemorating their deceased pets.

"Always smile . . ."

Always smile and never whine
And you can be my Valentine.
But
If you start acting like a creep,
I'll throw you on the garbage heap.



“Your knees are knobby . . .”

Your knees are knobby and your feet too big,
Your mouth like a funnel and you eat like a pig;
Your ears stick out and your nose has a shine,
But I want you to be my Sweet Valentine.

You're sly as a Monkey and stubborn as a Mule,
And you'll never know nothin' if you don't go to skule.
But you're still my sweet patootie, the best one on the vine,
And I've just got to have you for my Sweet Valentine.

—Doody Doodlebug

“When you were seven . . .”

When you were seven or eight or nine
I was sure that you were my Valentine,

But now you're eleven and growing up fast,
I'm afraid Old Gramps will soon be out-classed

By some freckled-faced boy with a slick hair-do—
Alas and alack, and BOO HOO HOO!

It will crack my heart, it will sear my soul,
And I'll feel like crawling in a deep, dark hole.

But until that happens, everything is fine,
And I want you again for my Sweet Valentine.

—G.W.

“Dear Molly Beth . . .”

Dear Molly Beth,
 My bleeding heart
Is deeply pierced by Cupid's dart.
Each night I see you in my sleep
Just after counting forty sheep.
Those ruby lips, that shiny nose,
Those dancing feet, those twinkling toes,
Combine to drive me nearly nuts.
Please cure my heart of nicks and cuts
By saying, “Yes, I will be thine,
Your very own Sweet Valentine.”
If you do this, I'll kiss your hand
And shout “Hurrah,” to all the land.
 Yours, with undying Love,
 Vaseline Vaporub
 1973 Lavoris Lane
 Noxema, New York.

“The tomato worm loves the tomato . . .”

The tomato worm loves the tomato,
The tobacco worm loveth his chew;
The potato bug loves the potato,
And that is the way I love you.

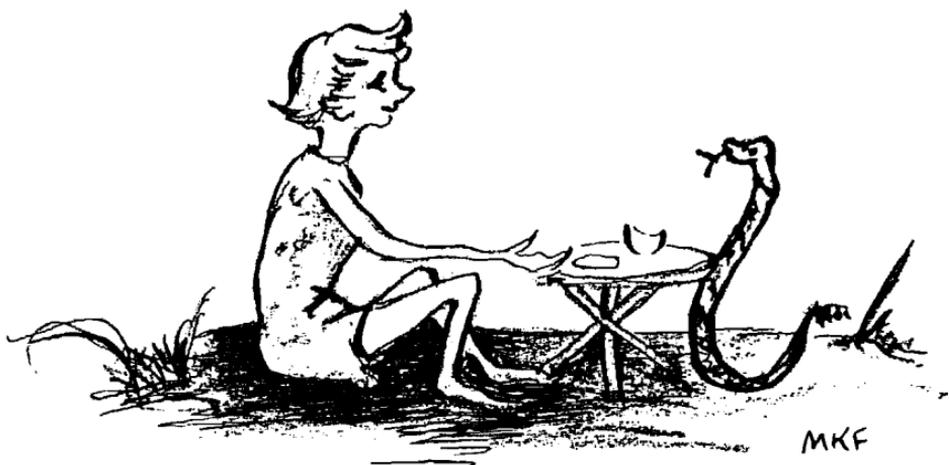
The rabbit's nose wriggles at clover,
The puppy's tail wiggles delight;
But for you I will wriggle all over,
And I'll wiggle all day and all night.

For I love you in winter or summer,
I love you in shadow or shine.
John Madison, you are a hummer!
So please be my Sweet Valentine.
Eternally yours,
Ethyl Mercaptan
33 Aromatic Boulevard
Skunk Hollow, Arkansas

Molly And The Snake Named Myrt

There once was a little girl named Molly Wright.
She was playing in the dirt and her clothes were a sight.
There was mud on her hands and mud on her skirt,
When out from the grass crawled a snake named Myrt.
She had two beady eyes and a red forked tongue,
And she loved to nip people who were juicy and young.
But Molly said, "Myrt, if you won't bite me,
I'll feed you mud cake and a cup of mud tea."
Now Myrt drank the tea, and Myrt ate the cake,
And soon she was writhing with a big belly ache.
The moral is plain for all snakes named Myrt:
Try to bite Molly Wright and you may get hurt.
Don't eat mud cake or drink mud tea,
For they're known to give snakes stomach misery.
If you ever see Molly again some day,
Just turn yourself 'round and slither away.

—By Grandwhacker



A Visit to Molly's Room

Hip, hip, hooray, and bah, siss boom!!
I've been to visit Molly's room.

The girls were perfect little dears;
The boys were clean behind their ears.

Not one of them had grubby hands;
They all obeyed teacher's commands.

And WORK! They were a busy bunch.
I stayed with them till time for lunch.

And when I left I said it plain,
"I'll hope they'll ask me back again."

—Wally Doodle

Elegy for Mr. T Cat¹

This elegiac tear is shed
For Mr. Cat, who now is dead.
But really there's no cause for tears,
For Mr. Cat lived eighteen years.
He now is chasing bugs and mice
In fields of feline paradise.
On beds of catnip ankle deep
He takes his fill of dewy sleep.
With food his never-empty bowl
Is filled, to satisfy his soul.
No dogs to chase him there abide
Nor insect pests to sear his hide.
His fellow cats are gentle wights,
No tomcats there engage in fights,
But they, in tuneful chorus, croon
A solemn concert to the moon.
Or serenade the saintly cats
With subtle sounds in sharps and flats.

For eighteen years he lived with us,
Vale, Felix domesticus!

¹Sandra Wynn Wright's pet. [Eds.]

An Epitaph on Gray Tail¹

Here beneath this blooming bed
Lies a Rabbit that is dead.
Gray Tail his name, wide his renown,
The smartest rabbit in our town.
So full of fun and winsome tricks
Like running leaps and sideways kicks.

He loved his food and nest of hay,
Where he would sleep both night and day.
He loved his Master and his mate,
Who deeply mourn his cruel fate.

Now that his earthly cares are over,
He's basking in celestial clover.
No longer caged, he's free to roam
The meadows of his heavenly home,
Surrounded by all kinds of food
To suit his appetite and mood.

For old G. T. let's shed a tear;
We'll miss him, for at least a year.
A handsome mate, a loving sire,—
In fact, a rabbit to admire.

Light lie the earth upon his chest,
And long and peaceful be his rest.

—Helen Pokeroot

¹John Wright's pet. [Eds.]

CELEBRATIONS

Prothalamion— A Symphony in Four Movements

This poem celebrates the approaching marriage of Beadle Moore, a colleague on the faculty of Arkansas A&M. Use of division headings identifying parts of the poem with movements in a symphony justifies the dignity of the title for an exuberant expression of good will and joy in the event.

I. The Prelude: Announcement of Theme

Beadle and Blanche have announced their intention:

To wit, having wooed, now they'll wed.
Since Love is Old Nature's most happy invention,
We'll rejoice when the vows are all said.

II. Meditation and Prophecy

For Blanche is as sweet as a bundle of heather,
And Beadle a handsome gossoon.
We are sure they'll be happy in all sorts of weather,
In August, December, and June.

III. The Conventicle

Let's all get together, and all bring a bottle—
A bottle for Beadle, a gadget for Blanche.
A mixer, a masher, a pestle, or pottle,
To settle them snug on their marital ranch.

IV. The Bacchic Phrenzy: Maenads and All That

Let's toot on the tuba and thump the tympani,
Let's whang on the banjo and tootle the fife;
Let's dance the fandango with Grandpa and Granny:
In short, let us all have the time of our life.

V. Recapitulation and Resolution

For Blanche is as sweet as a bundle of heather,
And Beadle a handsome gossoon.
We are sure they'll be happy in all sorts of weather,
In August, December, and June.

—Helen Pockeroot

A Rose for Nancy—Not Emily

The "Nancy" of the poem was the secretary in Deacon's office at the time of her marriage.

When as to wed our Nancy goes
I'll shed a tear and blow my nose,
And sympathize with her old beaux.

The one she's chosen for her mate
I'll envy and congratulate,
But Nancy I'll felicitate.

May all her hours be days of bliss,
All kisses like the nuptial kiss,
Her troubles easy to dismiss.

For Nancy is my secret love,
My red, red, rose, my turtle dove,
Five golden rings, a silken glove.

Alas! 'tis but an empty dream,
A withered rose, a shrunken stream—
I think I'll go somewhere and scream.

—Darner Hyde

To a Brother¹

*On receiving the news of the birth
of a niece*

I lift aloft the festive mug;
I tilt with glee the gurgling jug;
I hoist on high the clinking can—
I kin for little Nevin Ann.
I drink the blushful Hippocrene
To her appearance on the scene;
I traffic with the jocund grape
In honor of her tiny shape;
With rum that's from the Barbadoes
I toast tonight her tiny toes.

From what I've said it should appear
I'm glad the little darling's here;
And frankly, though I must admit
That we were not expecting it,
We're grateful for the news release
Announcing that we have a niece.
Would I were there, that I might see
The cunning dimples in her knee;
To hear her funny gurgling coo,
And watch her daddy "change" her, too.

Would God grant to me the boon
To hear her daddy try to croon
A simple, soothing, baby lay,
To make her sleep erè break of day.
I'd forfeit all my chance of grace
To see the look upon his face
When, dandled by her dapper dad,
She saturates him through the pad.
I'd shout with laughter when I saw
Him pass her quickly to her ma.

Such scenes as these, each parent knows,
Are but a prologue to the woes
She'll cause when'er the colic comes,
Or aching toofies pain her gums.
But scenes like these may cause dismay,
And make them rue her natal day.
So of my song I'll make an end.
But this brief sentiment I'll send:
Though her arrival was quite late,
Her parents I congratulate.

¹To Robert O. Wright. [Eds.]

"I hoist a can . . ."

The parents addressed here have not been identified with certainty.

I hoist a can of Ballantyne
To the latest of the Williams line;
A snifter of the brew that's red
I drink to honor Papa Ed.
But Mama M., my favorite gal,
My secret love, my singing pal,
To her I'll drink no paltry snort,
For she deserves at least a quart.

That babe of which she now is mother,
Unless, perchance, she has another,
Will smarter be than other babies.
Should this prove false, may I have rabies.

I'll bet his papa's in a dither
To hie him hence and hasten hither
And hold young _____ in his lappy
With proper pride that he's his pappy.¹

But Ed, before you bust a button,
Do Highland Fling, or cut the mutton,
Remember this, nor be dismayed,
That there will be some changes made.
—Darner Hyde

¹I suggest the following as possible names for the son and heir: Jethro, Laban, Zacchias, Nebo, or Matthias.

Hymen, Io Hymen

Declining an invitation to the celebration of the fiftieth wedding anniversary of his brother Robert O. Wright of Ottumwa, Iowa, Deacon seems to demonstrate that his muse is less inspiring for writing of parties he will miss than for those he expects to attend. The appended list of presents by "Darner Hyde" recaptures some of his characteristic zest.

From the shores of Guadalupe to the banks of Ottumwa
Is a long and tiring journey of a thousand miles or so.
And if I could have my druthers, I would try and make it some way,
But old age and "arthuritis" tell me sternly "You can't go!"
For tonight in old Ottumwa kith and kin are come together
For to celebrate with gusto fifty years of wedded bliss.
Hand in hand through toil and trouble and through every kind of
weather
They have travelled down life's highway and have never skipped a
kiss.
And although I can't be present, I can see the scene in fancy—
The festive board heaped high with food and eek a brimming bowl.¹
I envision Bob and Ethel, Nevin Ann and little Nancy,
And this picture panorama satisfies my thirsty soul.
So tonight in distant Texas, land of sunshine, fun and flowers,
As I sit here in my study and survey the passing years,
I'll uncork my choicest flagon which I've kept for happy hours,
And if you listen closely, you can hear me shouting, "Cheers!"

—Ruby Ott

¹I mean Methodist punch—all punch and no kick.

Partial List of Presents

A Bulova watch, or maybe a Gruen,
A volume of verse by Rod McKuen.
For Papa Bear a rod and reel,
For Mama Bear, a coat of seal.
A sack of bulbs to produce spring tulips
And a clutch of mint to be used in juleps.
A rake and a hoe and a golden crock,
An electric skillet, an electric clock.
A blanket, electric, for chilly feet
And other devices to furnish heat.
The list grows longer; it'll never stop,
So finish it off yourself, Old Top.

—Darner Hyde

Opus #77901

When Susan Houston Reid and husband Bill were feted on the occasion of their tenth wedding anniversary, a vintage Deacon Wright performance lifted the proceedings considerably above the mundane. The souvenir script is presented in toto because it shows the author at his zestful, pixieish best. He uses the nom de plume of "Uncle Innard," reflecting a warm personal relationship with Suzy, the little gal from next door who called him "Leonard" and was a surrogate for the daughter the Wrights never had.

As the lights dim slightly, the Poet [i.e., Deacon] enters uncertainly from the Left. Obviously he has been drinking something a bit stronger than honeydew or the Milk of Paradise, but he is still in pretty good control of his wits, such as they are. He is carrying a magician's wand tipped with the scrotum of a wild mountain goat, a fertility symbol if there ever was one. Wambling over to Front Center, he recites the following folk-rhyme in a lugubrious tone:

Hogamus, higamus, men are polygamous;
Higamus, hogamus, women monogamous,

at the same time waving his hand over the assembled throng. Then apparently satisfied with the evil he has wrought, he retires to Center stage and, striking the conventional pose of the poet about to recite some lines (See Karl Shapiro's "The Poet"), he begins in a loud clear voice.

Post Thalamium Annos X For Bill and Suzy Reid

Yet once again I mount my winged steed
To chant a lay¹ for Bill and Suzy Reid.

No chorus hymeneal prompts my song—
Sweet Colorado, gently roll along—
No babe's nativity attunes my lyre—
Such themes demand at least a full-voiced quire.

Nay, rather love continuous makes me sing
So loud the woods will answer and the echoes ring.
For ten long years—how few can say the same—
This happy pair has played the nuptial game
Through happy hours; through days of dole and teen
Their love retained its pure untarnished sheen.
We wish them many more such happy years,
Good fortune and a minimum of tears.
Let's wake the echoes on the neighboring hill
With loud applause for Suzy and for Bill.

The crowd responds with generous applause. The Poet, well pleased with the response, stands there drinking it all in. At the height of the applause, however, the refectory table, piled high with tasty food, catches his eye. Immediately his mood changes. He does a buck and wing over to a plate of ham, muttering,

Jigety jog, jigety jog,
Hand me a hunk of hickory-cured hog.

He double shuffles down the table, picking up various dainties on his way. This is called Buckdancer's Choice. In front of another platter of ham, he utters a second magical rhyme,

Jigety jog, joety jig,
Pass me a parcel of barbecued pig.

Then he sees the cold keg of Budweiser on a neighboring stand. This time he utters a loud whoop of joy and hurriedly recites,

Pickles and onions, tomatoes and spuds,
Draw me a seidel of St. Louis suds.

He piles his loot on a small table, drops into a chair beside it and starts gourmandizing. Between bites he is heard muttering,

If malt does more than Milton can
To justify God's ways to man,
Then a good thick slice of Virginia ham
Can help a man pass his bar exam.

—Uncle Innard

¹ Archaic term for "song." Forget the modern connotation.

Y'ALL COME

The Wright household always reflected the warmth and conviviality that characterized both Deacon and Elizabeth, and when they elected to entertain their friends, their hospitality was abundantly demonstrated. For several years in Monticello, they sent out invitations to their annual parties in versified extravaganzas. The one from 105 Hollywood is for a party in Victoria which they gave with the Bob Wrights. The last selection in this group is an invitation to old San Marcos friends to a summer party at a Woodcreek condominium in Wimberley.

Io, Euphrosyne! or, Ogden Nash Rides Again

Apologia

If my rhythm
Heats your rear,
Cool it with a
Can of beer.

Invitatio

Now that Spring has officially sprung, I think we should all get
together and have us a big celebration,
And for an hour or so try to ignore or forget the problems that
bother both us and the nation.
There's nothing like friends and a noggin or two of some
well-mixed and well-flavored potion
To rid one of the megrims, mullygrubs, obsessions, and any other
ill-mannered, unsocial emotion.
Since you are a person, or persons, for whom we entertain only
the warmest and deepest affection,
I suggest that you read carefully the following, which I hope is
an easily understood direction.
Turning south at the post office, you cross the tracks of a
railroad which I think is the Missouri Pacific;
At the old picture show you bear right. I might mention here that
the scenery is something short of terrific.
You follow the paved street around the corner to where it starts
climbing up over the mound,
And stop at the second house on the left. If you are physically
and mentally sound,
Or even if you are the picture of a person who looks and feels
disgustingly healthy,
After drinking a posset or two, made by my own recipe, you'll
not only feel healthy but wealthy.

The date? How about March Twenty-Two, which in my little book
is twice times March Eleven?
The hour? Well, let's suggest the usual time for cocktails,
namely from five p.m. until seven.
The dress? Whatever is appropriate for the occasion, the season,
and the weather. In fact, any costume will do, except maybe the
tout ensemble,
"The Altogether." *Repondez s'il vous plait*; that is, let us know
whether you are coming or not,
So I'll know how many portions of posset I'll need to put in the potion
pot.

Tea and crumpets

Hors D'Oeuvres

THE WRIGHTS

Tiens, Mes Amis!

C'est l'hiver et la neige est champs. Les petite oiseaux ne chantent pas depuis longtemps, et nous sommes bien loin des fleurs du printemps. Ainsi nous nous conduisons comme le bon poète Horace dit:

Dissolve frigus ligna super fovea
Large reponens; atque benignius
Deprome quadrimum Sabina
O Thaliarche, merum diota.

Mon Dieu! C'est une idée magnifique! Pourquoi ne vous rendez vous pas chez nous le après-midi de 12 Fevrier à cinq heures pour un peu de causerie, des potables, et quelques hors d'oeuvres assortis?

201 Boyd Street

5:00-7:00 p.m.

The Wrights

Texas Translation

Whoa thar, Pardner!

The weather has been as cold as a cow critter's rump in a blue norther; I ain't heard a bird sing in a coon's age, and it will be a helluva long time before there'll be any bloom on the sage. So why don't we do like that old Roman hombre Horace said on a similar occasion—and he was about as cagey a guy as ever plucked a plectrum?

Get shed of that cold. Throw another log on the fire, and break out that four-gallon jug of Mustang wine you've got stashed away in the basement.

By golly, that's a swell idea! So why don't you all just lope over to our house and we'll see what we can do about it. Drop in Saturday around five for a session of chin music with a little panther sweat on the side to liven up the talk. There'll be some deer chitlins and a few salted goobers on the table, and if you don't like cough medicine, we can always dig up a bottle of Mountain Dew.

El Rancho 201 Boyd The Wrights Park where you can make a quick get-away

"If you're beset . . ."

If you're beset with mullygrubs
And view the future with dismay,
Don't let the prospect blow your mind—
Come by our house on New Year's Day.

We'll serve you Mrs. Olsen's best;
It's mountain-grown, the r-r-richest blend.
'Twill ease your woes and soothe your soul,
And serve to make the world your friend.

We'll chat a while and tell old tales
And sit and watch the firelight shine.
An hour with friends 'mid scenes like this
Restores the glow of "Auld Lang Syne."

The Wrights 11:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M. 105 Hollywood
Hors D'Oeuvres

Deer Chitlins Goobergrabber Crunch
Chomper's Choice Dipper's Delight
Knick-Knacks Tit-Bits

Free Ice-Bag Re-Fills

Park where you can make a quick get-away in case we are raided.

Invitation to an Afternoon Tea?

Some have sagging waist-lines,
And some have bulbous nose,
And some a floating kidney,
And some have hammer toes.
Some have tennis elbows,
And some have housemaid's knee;
And some I know have B.O.,
But you're my cup of tea.

Some like a dry Martini,
And some a whiskey sour;
Still others think old-fashioned
Best bet for cocktail hour.

Some love gay Margarita;
Some like their liquor straight;
But on my lot YOU call the shot;
So hurry! Don't be late.

Rocket Fuel Presbyterian Punch
THE WRIGHTS Friday, Feb. 24
5:00 to 7:00 P.M.

Goober Gravy
201 S. Boyd

Not responsible for slipped discs or *lapsi linguae*.

Bid to a Bucolic Bash

If you love the smells of the bosky dells,
The murmur of rippling rills,
The deer at play near the close of day,
The cattle on distant hills;

If you like to stand with a glass in hand
And ogle the Fabulous Pair,
Then you're our Friend. Please come and spend
Some time at our woodland lair.

We suggest Tuesday evening, July 23. Townhouse No. 11, Woodcreek. Disembark in the vicinity of our cottage, and park in front of the Lodge. Bar opens at 6 p.m.

Hors D'Oeuvres

Goober-grabber Gourmandizer
Dapper Dippers' Delight
Crunchy Crunchies
Potted Armadillo
Hog Jowls and Turnip Greens

Potables

Juniper Juice
Corn Squeezin's
Kiltie Drippings
Vin du Jour
Jacob's Well-Water

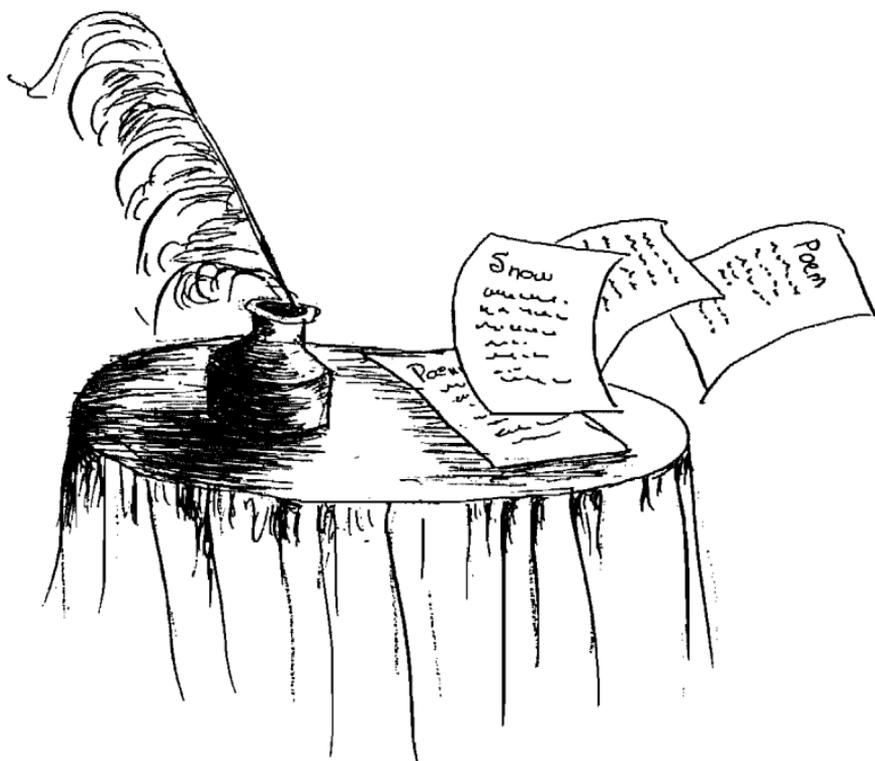
Liz and Deacon assisted by:

Bob, the Bartender
Maxine, the Hostess
with the mostest

R.S.V.P: Regrets Only

Informal Wear

OTHER POEMS



Beehaviorism

A Biological Poem

In both the title and the name of the imputed author, Deacon in the following poem is indulging his skill in punning. Part of the fun is that for the first seven lines the reader may well feel that he is hearing something straight out of Emily Dickinson.

How happy is the little bee
When vernal blossoms thrive;
He makes his honey every day—
And stores it in his hive.

He lifts about from bush to brake
With happy, heedless hum,
And pollinates the little flowers—
The naughty, lucky bum!

His conscience never bothers him;
From all restraints he's free;
He's drunk on nectar all day long.
I wish I were a bee!

—A.P. Erry

Hic Jacet Sue

"I have attached two poems at the end of this selection of material—one of a character whom I have been longing to dispose of ever since he was created and the other by a real pro, perhaps the greatest epitaph in the English language, 'Requiem,' by Robert Louis Stevenson."

The foregoing note is Deacon's explanation of his juxtaposing his epitaph and Stevenson's "Requiem" on the back cover of a mimeographed publication comprised of epitaphs written by his students in an honors class at Arkansas A&M. He apparently was enjoying a symbolic burial of Johnny Cash's "A Boy Named Sue."

Buried on the banks of the old Sabine
Lie the bones of a boy who grew up mean.
His speech was rough and his ways were wild;
He would even take candy from an innocent child.
He knew no pity, and he knew no fear;
He would gouge out an eye or chew off an ear.
He fought and he cussed and he drank bad booze;
He was always singing "The Jail-House Blues."
A pure sweet maiden named Muckle Mouth Min
He led on the downward path of sin.
He never had heard of the Golden Rule,
And he never was seen at Sunday School.
To his poor old parents a source of shame.
Now I'll bet you a buck that you can't guess his name,
But I'll tellin' you straight and I'm tellin' you true,
These remains are the bones of a boy named Sue.

—Darner Hyde

Translation No. 10,001
of Horace's "Quem Gracilis Puer"

John Milton, whose works Deacon studied intensively, was one of several English writers who had made earlier translations of this ode by Horace (Book I,v). The Milton rendition has received high commendation for its fidelity to the language of the original and its considerable success in exemplifying Latin prosody. Even so, modern readers with minimal knowledge of Latin literature are likely to prefer Deacon's image of Pyrrha as a huntress proudly exhibiting on the walls of her trophy room the hides of her male conquests.

What slender, suave and well-groomed swain
Now comes to court at Pyrrha's door?—
The golden Pyrrha, in whose train
Eight lusty lads have learned the lore
That "false" and "female" mean the same.

Yes, P., I know your little game!
And how? Within your trophy room
There hangs a hide which in the bloom
Of youthful innocence I wore.

He, too, like me, shall know the pain,
The sleepless nights, the black despair.
He too, like me, will rive his hair
And curse his fate; but all in vain.

The fickle Pyrrha will, by then,
Have turned to victim number ten.

“Three years she was . . .”

Three years she was our secretary,
And then she said, “I’m gonna marry.”
We thought, “We’ll have her help no more;
She’s left us in the lurch, for shore.”
But when she said, “I’d like to stay
At least until this coming May,”
The gloom dispersed, the sun shone bright,
Our hearts grew wonderfully light.
The reason why we felt no distress,
We’d lost a Miss but gained a Mrs.¹

—Helen Pokeroot

¹No double entendre intended.

Alma Mater: A Parody

The following stanzas are from the school song of SWT, where the main building is indeed "set upon" a considerable elevation, occasioning many a wisecrack by campus wits about an untoward commitment to "higher" education.

O, Alma Mater, set upon the green hills
With turrets pointing upwards to the sky;
We yield to thee our love and our devotion,
Mother of hopes and aspirations high.

Thy feet are laved by pure and limpid waters,
Fair rivers flowing gently to the sea;
Thy hills are crowned with ancient oak and laurel,
Fit emblems they of strength and victory.

It is hardly surprising that the lofty elegance of these lyrics would inspire Deacon Wright to produce an appropriate, if somewhat irreverent, parody.

O, Alma Mater, parked upon a mountain,
Why did they place you up so very high?
We climb a mile from courthouse square to fountain,
And we arrive with aching leg and thigh.

O, Legislature, why this high location?
Why didst not build it out upon the plain?
Then we who come to get an education
Wouldn't waste our energy in needless strain.

XVIII: A Parody

With the substitution of "a quart of rye" for "a summer's day," Deacon launches a parody of Shakespeare's sonnet 18 which probably would have been more amusing to the Bard himself than it may be to Bard worshippers.

Shall I compare thee to a quart of rye?
Perhaps I might if I should meditate.
A quart of rye these days comes mighty high,
But, for that matter, so does every date.
Sometimes the rye is mainly fusel oil,
And he who drinks thereof may lose his sight,
Full many a man now rests beneath the soil
Who looked upon the hybrid¹ that is white.
But thou hast never made my coco ache,
Altho thy charms have kept it in a whirl.
'Tis thus I've sworn the liquor to forsake—
I get the same effects from thee, my girl.
 And so, as long as I can stand or see,
 So long, my dear, shall I be drunk with thee.

¹Hybrid—mule; hence, "white mule."

Triolet To a Sweet Brunette

I attended a blonde,
 Till I met a brunette.
And I had to abscond.
 I attended a blonde—
I am no vagabond
 With the women—and yet
I attended a blonde
 Till I met a brunette.

Triolet

I intended to hook
 But it turned to a slice.
I followed the book
 And intended to hook
But it went in the brook,
 Which wasn't so nice.
I intended to hook
 But it turned to a slice.

Hic Jacet Cantor, An Epitaph

Although the following poem was ascribed to "Helen Pokeroot" when it appeared in "The Muse," a literary column in The Advance-Monticellonian, it is clear that Deacon was presenting the most personal poem he had ever written—his own epitaph.

Nothing could be more characteristic of the man than his avoidance of sentimentality by couching reference to his death in a sparkling metaphor.

Underneath this slab of marble
Lies a man who loved to warble;
But as the years went by, his tenor,
Alas, grew whiskeyer and thinner.
And when 'twas naught but squeaks and quavers
His choir director gave him waivers.
Now that his notes no longer bore us
He's singing in the Heavenly Chorus.

—Helen Pokeroot, Ark. A&M



APPENDICES

Appendix A

"I've Got a Little List": A Lay Sermon

No one who knew Deacon Wright more than casually doubted his strength of character, his innate moral fiber, and his clear perspective of what constitutes a rich, fulfilling, wholesome life experience, but it was not widely known that he had an abiding scholarly interest in religion.

Deacon's doctoral dissertation, for example, concerned mortality of the soul, a subject he continued to explore, and much later his paper entitled "Christian Mortalism" appeared as part of a collection of scholarly essays published as a tribute to the late Reginald Harvey Griffith, distinguished University of Texas teacher and scholar. In it he traced the history of the idea of mortalism from its beginning in the early stages of Christianity to the present.

Perhaps of more general interest is a lay sermon delivered in 1969 to the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Monticello, Arkansas, of which Deacon was a member. Entitled "I've Got a Little List," this discourse reflects Deacon's familiarity with many historic guideposts to joyful and moral living as well as his own ethical insights and values. He was offering, he said, "a do-it-yourself package of materials from which you can set up your own principles to guide your life as a Christian."

Here the reader hears the voice of Deacon as teacher, skillfully avoiding an appearance of excessive formality in developing a formal discourse.

In the Gilbert and Sullivan opera, "The Mikado," there is a character named Ko-Ko, who is the Lord High Executioner in the Mikado's court. Ko-Ko is accused of boondoggling by the Prime Minister, Poobah, because up to that time he hadn't executed a single person. As a matter of fact, he was really a very tender-hearted man, who couldn't stand the sight of blood. Poobah, however, told him that he must execute somebody within the next month or lose his job, which was a good one in that it paid well and offered various fringe benefits such as the guardianship of the luscious Yum-Yum. Ko-Ko, in the endeavor to persuade Poobah that he was working hard to locate material for the forthcoming beheading job, sings the well-known song, "I've Got a Little List," which turns out to be a catalogue of the various kinds of people to

whom he wouldn't mind applying the axe. No names were mentioned, however, because Ko-Ko had not yet gotten around to spotting a particular victim. Now this is a very common type of list, which most of us, including me, have made up from time to time. In my case, like Ko-Ko, I can't stand the sight of blood, so I called mine "A List of People I Would Like to Drop-kick over the Courthouse." Nothing has ever come of this—and the list is always changing. Sometimes some very prominent people were included, but they never knew; so no harm was done.

There are many other kinds of lists, some of them much more commendable than the one I have just described; for instance, Julie Andrews in the "Sound of Music" sings a ballad called "These Are a Few of My Favorite Things." This is a kind of list I just love to make, especially in the dead of night, when I have insomnia. Favorite people, favorite dishes, favorite poems, favorite songs, favorite books, and even favorite preachers I have known through the years. At least five stand out very prominently in my memory—three Presbyterians and two Methodists.

By now it should be pretty obvious that list-making is one of the more important thought activities which human beings engage in. There are, of course, others of equal importance—classification of objects and ideas, comparison, planning, and James Harvey Robinson's famous four, namely, day-dreaming, self-justification (generally called rationalization), decision making, and creative thinking. However, I must confine myself to my real topic, which is the application of our habit of list-making to the business of living the good life. This is something which both Christian and pagan, believer and unbeliever, are vitally interested in, and always have been.

Two questions are involved here: one, what is the good life, and two, what are the best means of attaining the good life? The answer to the second question depends largely on our conception of what the good life is.

The moral philosophers, both pagan and Christian, and most of the great religious leaders of the world have sought to solve these problems, and each has given us an answer. Looked at from the standpoint of ethics, there are four different life styles recommended, each with its own means of attaining the goal.

First the hedonists, the fun people. People like Epicurus, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and many of our contemporaries tell us that the goal of life is pleasure.

Then there are the self-realizationists. They by no means ignore pleasure, but reduce it to a secondary level, calling it a by-product,

rather than a primary goal. The goal of life according to this school is to realize as far as possible all your potentialities for good. The greater your self-development, the greater your satisfaction in life. But the primary goal is the well-rounded personality. The Greeks—Plato, and especially Aristotle—were very high on this idea.

The third group was called the formalists, who generally are Christians. They aren't much on list making, usually reducing their guidelines down to one principle. Milton, for example, stated that the aim of the good citizen should be to make justice and the will of God prevail. Immanuel Kant thought that a moral law was implanted in every human heart by the Creator and should be obeyed without question. He called it the categorical imperative, meaning that it was a command and that no exception could be taken to it. "So act that you can will your actions to be universal," he said. In other words, don't do anything you wouldn't want everyone else to do under the same same circumstances.

Finally there are the evolutionists, who insist that the chief aim of existence is to survive, both as an individual and as a species, and that all conduct should be aimed in that direction. When you look at the present threats to the ecology, you may think that we might do well to lend these boys some encouragement, even though we do not agree with some of their ideas.

We have time to look at only two of these schools for their lists of principles, the hedonists and the self-realizationists. The other two aren't much on list-making, anyway. The hedonists preach the doctrine of "eat, drink, and be merry." Some of them, however, also insist on moderation—Epicurus, for example, who argues that you will live longer and have more fun in the long run if you use restraint instead of burning the candle at both ends. Bentham advocated "the greatest good [meaning pleasure] for the greatest number," a good democratic principle, and set up a list of seven standards by which we could judge the results of an act in terms of pleasure. Mill recommended that we concentrate our effort on the higher pleasures, like music, art, literature, and philosophy, thereby seeking to free the utilitarians, as they were called, from the charge of practicing a "pig" morality.

Perhaps our biggest and best list for principles of living is to be found in the self-realizationist school. Plato, who pictured the first Great Society in his dialogue, "The Republic," made courage, temperance, wisdom and justice the cardinal virtues for the citizens of the ideal state to practice. Aristotle, who is really the strongest advocate of self-realizationism, added eight more virtues to Plato's

four to make the famous twelve.

He thought that the true virtue was always the mean between two extremes. Courage, for example, was the mean between cowardice on the one hand, and foolhardiness on the other. The eight added were liberality, magnificence (the principle that every man should live in the style his income would justify, especially a rich man), proper pride, ambition, good temper, friendliness, truthfulness (particularly about yourself), and ready wit (sense of humor).

We move now to the main point of my talk: What do the Bible and the Church have to say about the goals of life, and what principles do they offer to guide us? I think that both the Old and New Testaments make it abundantly clear that the life goal of a Christian is to serve God by serving one's fellow man. In my opinion, this is the only reasonable interpretation of the two commands of Christ. For the Old Testament there is an equally clear statement in the Book of Isaiah, where Jehovah tells the Jews that the way to worship him is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the poor.

If I should attempt to mention all the guidelines which the Scripture lays down for the good life, we, or rather I, would be here for a week or more. Consequently, I shall limit myself to two lists of principles, since the two together pretty well sum up the whole matter—one from the Old Testament and the other from the New; one by Moses and the other by Christ. Then from the early Church I shall borrow my final set, the Seven Deadly Sins, a negative list.

From the Old Testament, the greatest and best guidelist is the Ten Commandments. All except two of these commands are stated negatively, probably because Moses thought that a "Thou Shalt Not" would be more effective than a "Thou Shalt." The first four are concerned, either directly, or indirectly, with the worship of God, while the other six deal with man's relationship with others, including his parents. The two commandments of Christ, both stated positively, sum up beautifully and clearly the earlier ten.

The New Testament list is found in Matthew 7, in what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. This list we call the "beatitudes," from the Latin *beatus*, blessed. All are stated positively. This passage of Scripture is, in effect, a list of the qualities which a Christian should have if he is to attain a state of blessedness, which should be distinguished from happiness. The qualities are humility (the poor in spirit), sorrow (which engenders character, Paul says), meekness (which I interpret to mean self-control), mercy, purity in heart, a hunger and thirst after righteousness (justice), and willingness to

endure slander and evil treatment for Christ's sake. The two last make this a really tough list for the Christian to follow. Very few of us are willing to get involved in our religion to the extent of taking this kind of punishment.

These two lists, the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes, offer us the best guidelines for Christian conduct which we can find in the Bible. For my final list I shall turn to the theologians and scholars of the early Church. The Church Fathers, as they are called, were vitally interested in formulating a clear-cut doctrine of sin. They could have done this quite easily by listing the negative commandments as sins to be avoided, and by adding the obverse of the Beatitudes, plus any other rather special types found in other sections of the Bible. But they wanted to go a bit further and work up a list of sins that were especially dangerous. They started by classifying sins into two groups: the venial, which are excusable slips; and mortal sins, which are pretty deadly and take some serious doing by both priest and penitent before they can be forgiven. Obviously, the latter needed more attention, if they could be identified. Through the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, a list was devised which was called the Seven Deadly Sins. Though not a Catholic, I am inclined to agree that these represent some of the more un-Christian acts which men are guilty of. Here is the list: pride, envy, anger, lust, gluttony, avarice, and sloth. Any one or a combination of several of these, the Catholics say, is a sure ticket to Hell. Milton states that pride was the cause of Satan's fall, and adds envy and wrath to make him a complete drop-out from Heaven. Lionel Trilling, on the other hand, makes sloth, which he calls *inertia*—that is, the unwillingness to get involved—the besetting sin of the modern generation. I am inclined to agree with him, though Senator Fulbright might prefer pride, the "Arrogance of Power."

Augustine was also interested in setting up the Seven Cardinal Virtues to offset the deadly sins. Being a Platonist, he chose courage, temperance, wisdom and justice as the first four, flirted briefly with Aristotle's liberality (the early Christians were famous for their generosity, even to strangers), and finally settled on St. Paul's faith, hope, and love for the other three. It is a good list, which somehow, never caught on, but the Seven Deadly Sins have a wide vogue in both Catholic and Protestant literature.

Well, there it is, as the British say—some of my favorite lists from song, philosophy, and religion. If I have any purpose as far as you are concerned, it is to offer you a do-it-yourself package of materials from which you can set up your own principles to guide

your life as a Christian. I am not offering you some easy plan, a way to Instant Salvation. To get that you would have to go to California and join one of the Communes. I am doing this as a sincere Protestant, one who believes that the essence of Protestantism lies in making one's own decision on religious matters. Nor am I gnawing at the foundations of the Church, because I also believe that a basic element in religion is the feeling of togetherness, of belonging. Besides, we all need help—we need to help others and we need others to help us. We need especially a pastor, a man thoroughly versed in religion and the Bible, to help us understand the meaning of many of the terms which I have mentioned.

A church, a congregation, is the only place where all of these elements can be found together. AMEN.

Appendix B

Selected Notes in Biography

1

The Courtship of Elizabeth

Early in life Deacon must have decided that in matters of importance to him he was to trust his pen rather than his speech. This preference was certainly well-defined when in 1919 he began his courtship of the beautiful Elizabeth Coil, who like him was an addition to the faculty of the Kennett, Missouri, Public Schools.

His first letter undoubtedly reflects the wisdom of his choice of written communication:

Dear Miss Coil:

I have been elected chaperon for a party of young people who are going on a hay ride tonight, and feeling my own inadequacy for the task that has been imposed upon me, I must needs look to someone for assistance. In reviewing my acquaintances in this town better qualified, [there is] none whose assistance in this arduous task I would value more highly than your own, and so it is that I ask this favor of you, with the understanding, however, that you are not inconvenienced in any way by the same.

Kindly remit your reply through the medium of my gallant roommate.

Sincerely yours,
L.N.W.

Deciding that she would not be "inconvenienced," Miss Coil accepted the invitation. Rain necessitated cancellation of the hay-ride, but the evening was saved by a game of cards with friends.

Presumably at the appropriate time in their developing relationship, Miss Coil was the recipient of a poem titled "A Brave Man Afraid." In each of the first two stanzas, L.N. Wright, the author, contrasts his courage as he contemplates physical danger with the timidity that keeps him from asking for a kiss he wants very much. The last stanza turns on a declaration of love she could hardly ignore. It reads as follows:

And I wonder why I am so fearful;
She always greets me with a smile,
And that one little kiss would furnish me bliss
Enough to last for a long while.
I'm practically certain she likes me
And I know I'm in love with the maid.
Though I'd give all I own to kiss her,
To ask her I'm somehow afraid.

Other poems followed expressing adoration of the beloved, and in 1921 this courtship grew into a marriage that could serve as prototype of many a fine marriage, one that at the time of his death had lasted 54 years, each a blessing not only to both of them but to their families and to the communities in which they lived.

Thinking of the manifold ways Deacon served his profession and community year after year, one comes to fullest appreciation of Elizabeth's contributions in her unqualified support. And it should be here recorded that by common consent she ranks with the best of cooks and the most gracious of hostesses, justifying these rankings with great frequency.

2

The San Marcos Years

Deacon came to the SWT faculty in 1925. The following characterization of his contributions to the life of the college and community appeared first in *Rosemary for Remembrance: A Memoir*, by Ralph Houston, written to commemorate the Department of English in the University's 75th anniversary year, 1978-79.

Leonard Wright—the "Deacon" nickname was to come later—brought a vitality to the faculty that would prove an activating agent throughout the college and community. He had studied at Westminster College and the University of Missouri and had taught in Missouri schools before coming to this appointment. Afternoon courses and some summer school enrollments at the University of Texas would earn him a doctorate in 1939. He was the best classical scholar on the English faculty and probably, with the exception of E.O. Tanner, the best on the faculty at large. But his strong intellectual interests were blended with a zest for life and a commitment to a variety of activities. He sponsored the Harris Blair men's social club, *The Star* and *The Pedagog*, wrote poetic scripts for the

annual water pageant at Sewell Park and the presentation of Gaillardians ceremonies, broadcast football games, helped conduct track meets and the various other Interscholastic League events occurring on campus each year, and lent full support to the College Players productions, which under the direction of Monroe Lippman had become outstanding examples of a new level of excellence in college theater.

It was Lippman who coined the nickname "Deacon" after an evangelist, in town for a religious revival, had taken occasion in a sermon to challenge the religious orthodoxy of Professor Wright and Professor Spurgeon Smith on the basis of their lectures, as reported to him by a student. The name stuck, and twenty years later people over a wide area who might have had difficulty identifying L.N. Wright knew the Deacon favorably.

In town Deacon sang in the Methodist choir—this probably an oblique commentary on the quality of music of the time at the Presbyterian Church, participated in a barber shop quartet which needed little persuasion to provide musical entertainment on any program, and in another quartet which Pennington's Funeral Home called into service from time to time. First in the Kiwanis Club and then in the Lions, he participated in the service club projects.¹ For a nine-year period he served on the Council and as Secretary of the Conference of College Teachers of English with only token help from a part-time student secretary for his work as Chairman of the Department of English, which office he assumed in 1945.

Even with his teaching, studies, and varied service roles, he and Mrs. Wright led an active social life, and he could always find time to hunt in deer season and to fish at Port Aransas, Rockport, or Port Lavaca on holidays. After he completed his doctorate, he became local correspondent for *The Austin American*, a role he enjoyed thoroughly both for the activities involved and for the opportunity to get the college and city better coverage in an area newspaper. In so many ways, he was our best example of a modern equivalent of the Renaissance man.

¹It should also be noted that Deacon was a member of the San Marcos Hospital Board for many years, part of the time as president, this when only the dedication and ingenuity of the Board kept hospital services available in San Marcos. [Eds.]

Deacon's Cross

This account of the "bizarre" episode alluded to in the Preface is also excerpted from *Rosemary for Remembrance: A Memoir*, written a quarter of a century after the events.

In the bitterly contested election campaign of 1954 when Ralph Yarborough was giving Governor Allan Shivers the greatest challenge of his political career, Deacon Wright inadvertently became the activator of the most explosive emotional flareup either town or gown had ever known.

Through the years, Deacon's light verse presentations of Gaillardians, expressing awed admiration for the beauty, wit, and charm of the winners—half tongue-in-cheek expressions of adulation for the queens of the evening—had been received with general acclaim. And on many a Valentine Day or birthday he had addressed acquaintances who seemed to enjoy his art and his spoofing, often signing his communication "Darner Hyde," a nom de plume appreciated as much as the poetry. Following an Austin party at which many ladies had an opportunity to meet Governor Shivers, Deacon was moved to memorialize the event in a "news-story that was never printed," which he mailed to several of his female friends who had been in attendance, twitting them for an alleged bobby-sox crush on the handsome governor while he was greeting them.

It was clear that he had never considered the possibility that the recipients would fail to recognize it for what it was or, indeed, on a moment's reflection, from whom it came; but he had sent it anonymously. Even Darner Hyde did not claim this one.

In the August heat and political tension, the first few hours after the postal delivery of the day unleashed passions that were not to be checked by any call to reason. Few recipients had been able to sense its playful mood. Receiving indignant reports about the mailing, the Governor came to the Hays County Courthouse square for a campaign speech in which he cried "foul, foul," a slander on the good names of good women, an example of the depths to which his opponents would stoop—or words to that effect.

Thus, judgment was entered by the highest state authority in a case which supposedly required no hearing, and Deacon's ready acknowledgement of authorship and apologies all around did little to quell the demons the incident had loosed. Virtually everyone in

town became host to uncharitable thoughts about someone or other.

At first, most of us at the college who felt greatest concern thought that when the election was over the situation would be contained. Along with L.E. Derrick and James Taylor, I believed then as I believe now that President Flowers was prepared to make every effort to see Deacon through the crisis, short of an act which would spell doom to his presidency. Even when he ordered Deacon's suspension without pay, pending a hearing before the Board of Regents, I was sure that he still had some hope of effecting an acceptable solution that would make a formal hearing unnecessary.

But events continued to force the resolution. No San Marcos person of any consequence politically chose to lead an attempt to redefine in moderate terms what had happened, the Governor won reelection, and the Board of Regents announced that it was designating its May meeting—eight months away—as the time at which it would hear such cases.

Whatever the possibilities for resolving the conflict may have been before, the future then promised nothing. Under the circumstances, Deacon chose to proceed without obligation to the college in planning his own future. He accepted appointment for the 1954-55 school year at Premont High School. Abandoning plans for the hearing, he remained in Premont until he joined the English faculty at Defiance College in Ohio. When an opportunity arose, he came south again, this time to Arkansas A&M, where in time he became Chairman of the Department of English.

I recount the incident with a happy ending for Deacon, and despite the scars, he and his wife, Elizabeth, did succeed in making it one. For his colleagues, friends, and former friends here, only some access of wisdom in a new appreciation of good humored tolerance as a restraint for naked passions seemed compensation for the experience.

Specific manifestations of the "happy ending" may be cited. On Deacon's retirement at Arkansas A & M in 1971, the Board of Trustees conferred upon him the title of Professor of English, Emeritus "with all the rights and honors accorded to that rank." Then, in 1985 the Dr. Leonard Wright Scholarship for Future Teachers of English was established at SWT by his family. Former students and other friends continue contributing to the endowment which sustains the award. The proceeds from the sale of *The Muse and Deacon Wright* will also go into this fund.

APPENDIX C

Emulating the Master

It is clear that Marion Strahan on several occasions responded lyrically to Deacon's playful versification of episodes that involved her. There is no way of knowing how many others of his associates and students were inspired on occasion to emulate his artistry, but Albert S. McGehee II, a 1938 SWT graduate, now San Marcos business man, and Walter H. Richter are to be included in that number. While they hardly matched his skills, his influence must be discernible in their efforts.

1

A Disciple's Portrait of Deacon

This poem is a McGehee tribute to Deacon himself in the Rudyard Kipling fashion.

You may talk of nouns and verbs, and other English blurbs
When you teach that Freshman English in our college.
Your language may be rough, but you really know your stuff
And you'll fill our vacuum-tops plumb full of knowledge.
Now in that English class that I never hope to pass
(For I cannot do the work that he assigns)
Be it essay, prose or verse—don't ask me which is worse—
I can see my grade points in a sharp decline.

It's Wright, Wright, Wright
You English-crammed professor, Deacon Wright,
You may be big and braw
And with humor rather raw,
But you're still tops with the students, Deacon Wright.

The old Palm Beach he wore was kinda tight before
And almost twice as much so in the rear;
And his old smoke-blackened pipe, with its odor rare and ripe
Was the way that we could tell that he was near.
When the frosh class had to stay for a mid-term quiz that day
Deacon entered like a schooner under sail;
He chalked those questions down and a groaning travelled 'round
As we pictured pink slips passing through the mail.

It's Wright, Wright, Wright,
These grades will be a sight,
And what will Doctah Nolle have to say?
If our grades you do not fix
It's for us back to the sticks,
Then it's papa and old Lucifer to pay.

He would sit and chat with one whene'er his work was done
And our usage of the English language grew;
If we had a heavy load, he would help us on the road
And he always had a friendly word or two;
His wit was rapier-keen, he had plenty in his bean.
Yes, we like him best of all that teaching crew!

It's Wright, Wright, Wright,
You paunchy, pun professor, Deacon Wright.
Though you've made me sleep in classes,
You've got lots behind your glasses,
And I really dig your lingo, Deacon Wright!

—Al McGehee

It Ain't Really So, Deacon

This is Walter Richter's response to Deacon's lamenting his having "deserted verse," p. 11.

How foolish of me to suppose
A rhyme could be replaced by prose!
Like water in the Wassail Bowl
In place of wine to soothe the soul.

You surely know I did not choose
Without due cause to slight the muse;
It was the callous cries of "Corn"
That greeted verse of Richter born

By dullards of the Dugat¹ type
Who live to jibe and sneer and snipe
Until one feels perhaps 'tis time
To send one's greeting *sans* the rhyme.

But now I'll court the muse anew
And quaff again iambic brew,
For words that come from Darner Hyde
Dispel my doubts, restore my pride.

And now I would I could withdraw
And wing my way to Arkansas
Where College Heights I'd gladly climb
To plant a prose and reap a rhyme.

We'd raise our cups of tangy wine
And drink to Deac for Auld Lang Syne,
To Mama, too, and through the night
We'd know that everything was Wright!

¹Jean Dugat, another former SWT student, with whom Richter exchanged "friendly" barbs over the years.

APPENDIX D

Remembering Deacon

Mention the name of Deacon Wright to former students, teaching colleagues, and other longtime acquaintances and you almost certainly trigger sincere plaudits and usually an anecdote or two. References to Elizabeth, his wife, are also invariably fond and favorable.

A report on a few such reminiscences and tributes follows.

I

MONROE LIPPMAN, Director of Dramatics and teaching colleague of Deacon's at SWT a half-century ago, observed that his memories were of the entire Wright family. "They lived down the hill from us and we used to go down there a lot. Elizabeth was a magnificent cook, and the whole Wright clan had hearts as big as anybody could have. So I guess we spent almost as much time at the Wrights' house as we did our own. And loved all of it."

Duke, as Lippman was known to his friends, described as one of his fondest memories of Deacon the time they both got promoted.

Deacon became a full professor and I an associate professor at the same time, and when we got the news we decided it was something to celebrate so we headed out for a place across the county line called Be Back Inn. We sat at a table, got bag after bag of Fritos and bottle after bottle of beer. Finally, we decided we had had about as much as we should, so we got up to go back to San Marcos, and Deacon patted himself on his ample belly and smiled broadly and said, "Well, I am a full professor!" Well, I was only an associate professor by rank, but believe me, physically I was a full professor at that time too.

On their arrival back in San Marcos, Duke recalled, he and Deacon decided a cooling off was needed. Accordingly, they jumped into their swim suits and then into the ever-cold waters of the San Marcos River. "So," he adds, "we got sobered up reasonably quickly."

Because of their close friendship, Duke on several occasions asked Deacon to perform in Lippman-produced College Players productions. One was a bit part which called for an old soldier who could sing; another was a major role in a play which called for "a mature guy for the lead." Duke's assessment: "He was very, very good in that role."

JEAN DUGAT, a former student, later a prize-winning journalism teacher in Beeville, Texas, recalled that Deacon was something of a taskmaster in the classroom.

“Deacon’s Milton course was noted rightfully for its difficulty. All of us dreaded making the required oral reports on materials from our term papers; even more, we were fearful of Deacon’s comments after each oral report. He pointed out errors in grammar, content, organization, and presentation. While criticizing my report, Deacon mentioned that I’d split two infinitives, adding, ‘I don’t want to see a split infinitive in your term paper.’”

Jean said that the comment elicited a sequel when Deacon asked if anyone else had something to add regarding her report.

“To everyone’s surprise, a woman who had not participated in class discussions to the point of not replying when Deacon asked her a direct question spoke up, ‘Dr. Wright, you may not be learning anything new in this class, but the rest of us learn a lot from each report. And I think Jean deserves a reward for daring to split an infinitive in your presence. Some of us are afraid to open our mouths after you come in the door.’”

Jean thought that this was the woman’s only time to speak up that semester, and she later learned that Deacon had permitted her to give her oral report in his office because she was too shy to tolerate his criticisms in class.

ALBERT S. MCGEHEE II, remains one of the most ardent Deacon Wright fans and he, probably more than any of Deacon’s other students, has continued to compose verse reflecting his tutor’s influence in form and style.

He delights in reminiscing about Deacon and freely recites couplets he attributes to Deacon’s humor and creativeness of decades past. For instance, he recalls the early days of Burma Shave—with the “marching billboards”—and radio jingles advertising many of the consumer products of the day. “Deacon out-jingled them all and came up with a set of rhymes which lumped a number of such

products into one poetic effort," he said, remembering them thus:

I've creamy skin on cheek and palm
Because I use Italian Balm . . .

Palmolive keeps my body clean.
Each night I gargle Listerine . . .

With Fitch's I shampoo my head.
I sleep upon a Simmon's bed . . .

Nothing makes my whiskers curl
Quicker than a mug of Pearl . . .

And, what so soothing to the eyes
As a bottle of Grand Prize . . .

In a warm tribute Albert has referred to Deacon as "the man who lit my literary fire," a process that continued during his four years on the Hill where he had arrived in 1934 "as a teen-age country boy eager to absorb everything possible." In summation, Albert has written: "Few of us are blessed with the gift that Deacon had and so joyously passed on to his friends and favorite students. We are indebted to him for caring about us, for teaching us so well, for helping us to see the humor in our day to day existence."

4

CLAUDE J. JUNGMAN, SWT alumnus and resident of Pre-mont, Texas, and his wife, Mary, became close friends of the Wrights during the time Deacon taught there. "Wright lived every minute of every day, whether he was teaching, barbecuing, eating and drinking, fishing and hunting, or playing bridge," Claude said, "and Elizabeth was a perfect helpmate for him."

Recalling that Deacon hunted and fished with more gusto than many of his younger companions, he vividly remembered one trip when Deacon had a close call. Claude was following him down a trail when Deacon stepped over what he thought was a cow pile. "By the time I got there," he said, "that cow pile had reared up and was ready to strike at me!" It turned out to be what Claude called a "standard four-foot rattler," which they promptly killed before proceeding to their fishing.

Claude Jungman spoke for legions of folks when he wrote: "Deacon and Elizabeth are the most genuine 100 percent good people with whom we have associated. They give wisdom, understanding, and unconditional friendship. Our lives have been affected positively in many ways as a result of having been their friends."

5

J. EDWIN SMITH, an SWT Alumnus and a respected Houston attorney, and his wife Virginia maintained a close personal relationship with Deacon and Elizabeth, who were responsible for bringing them together in the first place. In the later years of the friendship the men enjoyed a correspondence in which they shared thoughts on politics and literature, with occasional excerpts from their readings.

Smitty has shared a letter from Deacon typical of the exchange. Dated only "Sunday P.M.," it is in response to a request for help in identifying a poem. Deacon is confident that Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" is the one Smitty wants and has sent him a collection of poetry in which the poem appears. After expressing his own preference for "Fern Hill," he gives a full exposition on the villanelle, the French poetic form followed in "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night." He wants his reader to appreciate the technical achievement of the author in using this intricate pattern successfully. He observes that he himself has written ballades and triolets but has never attempted to write a villanelle. He prefers the sonnet so popular in English poetry.

Then it seems time to apologize for the extended "lecture." For compensation he quotes the following selection from "The Tempest" (II,ii), calling it "one of my favorite songs from Shakespeare."

The master, the swabber, the boatswain and I
The gunner, and his mate
Loved Susan and Nell and Margery,
But none of us cared for Kate.
For she had a tongue with a tang;
Would cry to a sailor, "Go hang!"
She liked not the savor of tar nor of pitch,
Yet a tailor could scratch her where'er she did itch.
Then to sea, boys, and let her go hang.

Though the drunken Stephano's song may not have been right at the top of Deacon's list of favorites from Shakespeare, no other

could have been so good a choice for this letter. Here one recognizes in the correspondent a youthful zest for language, so characteristic of Shakespeare himself.

6

HELEN (HOLCOMBE) ALLEN of San Marcos, attractive and popular campus personality and a 1937 graduate, commented recently on Deacon's penchant for teasing, recalling in particular one of his poetic "tributes" when he recognized her as Princess in the 1939 Water Pageant at Riverside. The opening lines, she recalled with a grin, went like this:

"Happy Helen, Princess pure,
I think you are but I'm not sure."

"Of course," she said, "at the time I was indignant and mortified—the reaction that Deacon had hoped for, I'm sure, but I soon realized it was his way of teasing a naive student. I think I became one of the favorite targets of his choice campus humor because I responded so beautifully!

"The Deacon I most cherish, however, is one who demonstrated loyalty, concern, and interest during our many years of friendship. His kindness to my first husband, Bill Barber, who had roomed at Elizabeth's and Deacon's home; his concern for me at the time of Bill's untimely death; and his support and reassurance in the ensuing years—these I cherish. Also, the understanding and counselling he gave to so many of us during our 'Quadrangling' sessions, the humorous twinkle in his eyes, and his infectious chuckle—all are parts of the character that remains special to me."