

County Jail Prisoner Becomes Writer, Seeks Reason to Life

By GARTH FANNING
Staff Writer, The Statesman

Author



Walter Harris Edmonds, Marion County jail prisoner, who has completed a novel which he hopes "will lend some meaning to my life."

A Marion County jail prisoner, serving time for larceny, has written a 50,000-word novel in long-hand in approximately two months.

The novel deals with a psychopathic hero who overcomes the problem of his disordered personality.

The prisoner, Walter Harris Edmonds, hopes to have the book published and "somewhere out of the chaos of my life find a reason for living." The novel is being prepared now for submission to a New York agent.

Edmonds' formal education extends to the freshman level of high school. But he has received a high school diploma—through extension courses he took while a prisoner at the Oregon State Penitentiary, where he also taught school.

Highest Score

He was told that his scores on the extension tests were the highest ever received by a convict at the penitentiary. He also took a six-hour correspondence course in journalism, taught by a Portland Oregonian copy editor.

"I got a B for my work," mused Edmonds. "But the instructor raised my grade to an 'A' when I gave him a news tip that a convict serving a life term was soon to be freed."

Pen Meant Home

Edmonds, 31, was sentenced to a year in the county jail last September after stealing a car "so I could be returned to the penitentiary." He explained that the pen had meant a home to him, that the outside world went at too fast a pace—"I could never seem to get started and I just couldn't adjust to the situation."

The man was sentenced to a five-year term in the penitentiary in 1950, and as in the case of his present sentence it was for stealing a car. Under penal rules, and even though he once "walked away," he was eligible for release in April of 1954. While in the penitentiary, he was a cell mate of Dupree Poe, serving a life for the murder of a Silverton policeman in 1932.

INTEREST TREATED

He credits Poe for much of his interest in writing. "Dupree wrote many short stories which were pub-

lished in pulp magazines some years ago," said Edmonds, a short, nervous man, quick-witted and a fluent conversationalist. "We would sit around the cell swapping ideas for stories. Dupree doesn't write much anymore, though," added Edmonds.

Edmonds' novel is dedicated to the Rev. Lena Mae Hart, whom Edmonds identifies as his ex-sister-in-law. Her help, encouragement and "just plain listening" have made the book possible, he says. The Rev. Mrs. Hart lives in Butler, Mo., adds Edmonds, and is an ordained minister.

The title of the novel, "A Whip for the Horse," is taken from Proverbs 26:3. It is a symbolical title, explain Edmonds, with the "whip" referring to the hero's knowledge that he is a psychopath, and the "horse" referring to the hero.

Hero Attempts Suicide

As the story begins, the hero has just been freed from jail. He marries, even though he realizes the marriage won't succeed, and loses all identity with the world around him, associating only with his wife.

He attempts suicide, goes berserk and lives in a fairy-tale world. He is jailed again for larceny and as the book ends learns that his novel, which he has been writing while in jail, has been accepted by a publisher. He realizes, too, that it lies only within himself to resolve his problem.

Edmonds says that he has drawn heavily on his own experiences in writing the novel. "Every great writer does that," he says. "But my book is an attempt to create a living man and a solution to his particular torment." He lists his chief writing influences as James Farrell and Thomas Wolfe.

Meanwhile, Edmonds, born in Ballinger, Tex., has already started another novel. Some 3,000 words of it have been written. "A Whip for the Horse" was finished two weeks ago.

A veteran of the U. S. Marine Corps in World War II, he wants out of jail now and doesn't want to return to the penitentiary. He thinks he "can make it on the outside" if he can just keep writing. Writing means very much to him, even when he writes letters in Spanish to his nephew, which he says "is good for both of us; it keeps our minds alert."

Idaho House Split on Car License Fees

BOISE (U. S. — The chairman of the House Revenue and Taxation Committee said Sunday night there is a chance his group may not go along with the wishes of Gov. Robert E. Smylie Monday when it reports on a bill to raise auto license fees.

"We're split down the middle — and not on party lines," Rep. Ralph H. Wickberg (R-Shoshone) said.

Wickberg's committee is considering a bill that would do away with the state's \$5 registration fee and replace it with a scale ranging from \$5 for seven-year-old cars up to \$25 for autos one year old or less.

GOP Official Protests U.S. Judge Action

PORTLAND (U. S. — The recommendation of Oregon members of the Republican National Committee in the matter of Oregon's vacant federal judgeship is not being followed, a member of the Multnomah County GOP committee reported Sunday.

Henry A. Buehner, Portland attorney, a member of the county executive committee, said a protest was sent to President Eisenhower last week criticizing Atty. Gen. Brownell for what Buehner said was delaying the appointment of Circuit Judge Ralph M. Holman of Oregon City to the post.

Jess Gard, Oregon's national committeeman; Mrs. Marshall E. Cornett, national committeewoman; and Ed Boehnke, state chairman, all have endorsed Holman for the post which has been vacant nine months since the elevation of Judge James Alger Fee to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

Buehner also reported that the protest was intended as a criticism of what he said was the influence of John C. Higgins in the matter. Higgins, a Portland and Vancouver, Wash., attorney, is a friend of Thomas E. Dewey, former New York governor, who is close to Brownell.

Higgins could not be reached for comment Sunday but earlier he had affirmed his opposition to Holman.

"The question in my mind," Buehner said, "is whether Oregon Republican affairs are run by a citizen of Vancouver, or by Oregon Republican leaders."

It was learned last week that the Federal Bureau of Investigation was running a routine check on Circuit Judge William G. East of Eugene, who apparently is being considered in some quarters for the post.

Similar investigations were made of Holman some time ago after he received the endorsement of former Sen. Guy Cordon. Cordon was defeated by Democratic Sen. Richard L. Neuberger in the November election.

The Wright brothers' first man-carrying glider weighed 52 pounds.

Octagonal Home Serves 66 Years

COVET, Mich. (U. S. — The Charles Robinson family lives in an octagonal home which has been a landmark here for 66 years. The barn is also eight-sided.

No one is quite sure why it was built that way, but Mrs. John Sepiman, whose uncle, Orlo Shattuck, built the house, says that "Uncle Orlo had a theory that there was

FARM PROJECT

HOUSTON, Tex. (U. S. — Thirty-eight years ago, James C. Short graduated from Texas A&M College as a civil engineer. Now he's back taking an agricultural course, after retiring as a colonel in the Army with 37 years' service. He plans to operate a ranch.

less wall space in a round-shaped than a rectangular house."

Therefore, she reasons, he might have figured it was cheaper to heat.

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Italian, Turkey Ministers Meet

ROME (U. S. — Premier Adnan Menderes and Foreign Minister Fuad Koprulu of Turkey arrived by air from Istanbul Sunday to confer with Italian officials on Mediterranean defense measures.

Diplomatic sources said the Turkish leaders are expected to seek Italian support for Turkish membership in the projected Western European Union (WEU) and sound out officials on whether Italy eventually might be willing to join the Balkan Pact, the defensive grouping of Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia.

A commercial agreement between Turkey and Italy also may be signed during the visit.

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| Cream Corn | Gardenside Brand | No. 303 can | 10¢ |
| Chee-Zip | New Tasty Cheese Spread | 16-oz. Jar | 42¢ |
| Bathroom Tissue | Zee Brand | 4-Roll Pack | 29¢ |
| Shredded Wheat | NBC Brand | 2 pkgs. | 29¢ |
| Fleet Mix | For Perfect Light Fluffy Biscuits | 40-oz. Pkg. | 29¢ |
| Baby Food | Gerber's Strained Fruits-Vegetables | 12 Reg. cans | 79¢ |

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|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|-----|
| Kleenex Tissue | 300 Count | Pkg. | 15c |
| Cherub Milk | Tall can | | 10c |
| Tomato Juice | Libby Brand | 4 46-oz. cans | 99c |
| Cream Corn | Country Home | 2 No. 303 cans | 23c |
| CORN | Del Monte Cream Style | 2 No. 303 cans | 25c |
| Cane Sugar | Victorias Brand | 10-lb. Bag | 83c |
| Enriched Flour | Harvest Blossom | 10-lb. Bag | 69c |
| Gold Medal | Enriched Flour | 10-lb. Bag | 79c |
| Sperry Flour | Drifted Snow | 10-lb. Bag | 79c |
| Back Pepper | Crown Colony | 4-oz. can | 29c |
| Royal Satin | All-Purpose Shortening | 3-lb. can | 69c |
| Jell-O Gelatin | Dessert | Pkg. | 5c |
| Jell-Well Gelatin | | Pkg. | 4c |
| Tomato Soup | Campbell Brand | 3 Reg. cans | 25c |
| Krispy Crackers | | 1-lb. Pkg. | 19c |
| Hydrox Cookies | | 12-oz. Pkg. | 39c |

- CAKE MIXES**
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| Swansdown, Duncan Hines, Betty Crocker, Pillsbury | PKG. | 25¢ |
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- Angel Cake Mixes**
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| Swansdown, Duncan Hines, Betty Crocker, Pillsbury | 4 pkg. | 99¢ |
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| | | | | Sliced Variety |
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