

Two Famed Authors, 85 and 84, Reminisce a Bit



Poet Relaxes With Shawl and Cigar

By JOHN C. DILLS
Asheville Citizen-Times
Written for Associated Press
FLAT ROCK, N.C. — Eighty-five years lie lightly on his shoulders, this white-thatched literary giant who is an adopted son of North Carolina.

While his vigor cannot match that of many a 20-year-old, it puts to shame the inactivity of many of his juniors.

A few days before marking the 85th anniversary of his birth Sunday Carl Sandburg, who came to Flat Rock the last week of 1945 to settle in the home of C. G. Memminger, Confederate treasury secretary, had just finished a stroll up a steep rise from his little lake a hundred or so yards from the sprawling house on the hill.

Then he and Mrs. Sandburg busied themselves preparing for a plane flight to New York. There, on his birthday, a dinner party in the Waldorf Astoria marked publication of a new volume of Sandburg poems entitled "Honey and Salt."

Interviewed before his departure, the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and Lincoln biographer settled into a chair in his study and tossed a shawl across his knees to

muse about the state of the world and some of the men in it. He prefers that to talk about poetry.

Sandburg apparently has changed his mind about John F. Kennedy since 1960, when he called the then Senator Kennedy a "high-powered high school boy."

"Considerable Vision" Of the President today, Sandburg had this to say: "He hasn't made a miss-step yet, and he has shown considerable vision. He trained for that job in a way that Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover never did."

"Kennedy," continued the poet-philosopher, "knew the United States of America somewhat better than most presidents on taking office. That is, in the past 30 or 40 years."

He compared the President favorably with another young President—Theodore Roosevelt, and with an older, and

(in Sandburg's eyes) better one—Franklin D. Roosevelt.

"Kennedy," Sandburg mused, "has shown at times an awareness in an immediate situation and immediate problems that parallels FDR's. But more interesting would be the parallel of Kennedy with Teddy Roosevelt—neither of them was a creature of special interests. Both have proven to be strong presidents."

Sandburg's prolific literary output is not yet at an end. The volume brought out on his 85th birthday by Harcourt Brace and Co., includes 77 new poems which show the vigor and affirmation which long have marked his work.

Right now he's going over books of his poems and children's stories and laying down the plot for "a long, comendous novel," but he didn't say what the theme of the novel would be.

Sandburg said that he planned "nothing special" to mark his 85th anniversary—

"just quiet, silent thanks that I have health and that I haven't lost a leg, an arm, a hand or an ear in the past year."

"I'm a little surprised that I'm alive and have health," he said, "and no rheumatism."

Nevertheless, he will attend a gala birthday party Sunday in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, given by his publishers.

"Honey and Salt," will be the 35th of Sandburg's works the company has published since 1919. He has had a total of 40 works published to date.

The occasion will not go unnoticed elsewhere: Gov. Terry Sanford of North Carolina and Gov. Otto Kerner of his native state of Illinois have proclaimed Jan. 6 to be Carl Sandburg Day in those states. And officials of Galesburg, Ill., high school later will confer his long-delayed high school diploma. He was admitted to, and graduated from college without a high school diploma.

Sandburg believes the possibility for nuclear war is remote—because of the deadliness of the weapons.

"Kennedy," he said, "may be the first President to use the new nuclear weapons."

Of the possibility of such a horrendous war, Sandburg declared: "If it comes, it will be harder to look at than our Civil War."

The problems are, he implied, something similar to those facing Lincoln when the dissolution of the Union was threatened.

Awful Responsibility "Lincoln," he said, "had to face an immense and torturous problem no other President has had to face," and he then remarked that Kennedy might have to be the first President to have the awful responsibility of making nuclear warfare.

Sandburg knows something of battle—he was, at the age of 20, a member of the 8th Illinois Volunteers during the Spanish-American war, the first outfit to step on foreign soil. He didn't go to Cuba, but went to Puerto Rico, an island, he said, which "will be well-behaved."

"Cuba is going to have trouble for quite a while," he predicted. "The big landowners

there are going to be a problem for some time to come."

On the status of the Negro in the South, Sandburg pointed out that "the Emancipation Proclamation still holds." But as to the Negro's raising his status from what it is at present, the white-haired poet said, "Let's see, there are now about 16 million in the United States." He paused, and added, "When they get to be 30 or 40 million, there will be some slight changes made."

Of James Meredith: "He had what you might term a decent hankering for an education at a state university."

Reminiscing a bit, Sandburg recalled, "In Galesburg the grade schools and grammar schools all had one, two or three Negroes in every class and there never was any trouble."

He shook his head sadly that "there should be such a hullabaloo over one innocent little Negro wanting to enter the university."

"We had a bloody war once that had to do with the status of the Negro," he said, and deplored the conditions on the Mississippi campus that threatened to erupt into almost a small war.

On youth: "There have been wild boys in every generation in America," he said. "Lincoln, when he was running for the legislature and for Congress, always kept close to the wild boys."

Sandburg said he was "a little surprised that I'm alive and have good health. You know, I like numbers divisible by 11—I'll die when I'm 88 or 99."

He said he doesn't expect to live to be 110—but those who know him, and can yet see his blue eyes twinkle, wouldn't be surprised if he made it.

Upton Sinclair

EDITOR'S NOTE — Few writers have had such an impact on their times as Upton Sinclair—and few have been so reviled. But, looking back at 84, Sinclair claims credit for changing the "morals and manners" of three giant industrial empires.

By BOB THOMAS
Of the Associated Press
MONROVIA, Calif. — The wispy-haired author was chuckling over a newspaper review of his 82nd book, "The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair."

"Sinclair Lewis Writes Own Story"

"Oh, my!" said Upton Sinclair, now 84. "Poor Lewis and I were always getting mixed up when he was alive, and it's still going on."

Sinclair Lewis won the Nobel Prize for literature! Upton Sinclair did not.

"Bernard Shaw started the movement to put me up for it in 1932," the author recalled. "But I didn't get it. (John Galsworthy won.) I guess I was a little disreputable. You see, it is chosen by academicians, and they get their authority from authority. So they are inclined to be conservative."

A new campaign is being organized by literary figures to win Sinclair the belated Nobel honor. It would mark the climax of a 71-year writing career that has been as stormy as any in American letters.

Lifetime of Fuss

Upton Sinclair is a mild man to have created such a lifetime fuss. His voice is soft and slightly accented with his native Baltimore. His face is placid, and his overhanging upper lip gives the



Stormy Survivor of Social Protest Era

suggestion of a smile when he speaks.

The eyes behind the spectacles are clear, his step is

sure and his carriage erect. His only concession to age is the inability to dredge an occasional name from his past

—"The same thing will happen to you when you're 84."

The author lives in the Sierra Madre foothills with the former Mary Elizabeth Willis, a sprightly 80-year-old he married a year ago. His second wife, to whom he was wedded for 48 years, died in 1961. An earlier marriage ended in divorce.

The Sinclairs live servantless in a venerable, slightly Spanish house which he bought from a banker for \$12,500 in 1943.

"I remember the date because after we moved in the local editor called to say I had just won the Pulitzer Prize for 'Dragon's Teeth.' 'The banker had wanted \$50,000 for the house at first,' added Sinclair with a Socialist's glee.

Socialist Zeal

He remains a Socialist—"A Democratic Socialist; I never advocated revolution." In his time he has seen a quiet revolution as the causes he championed in the early 1900s—pure food laws, the right of labor to organize, etc.—become the law of the land.

But that hasn't dampened his Socialist zeal. Nor has an era of apparent prosperity.

"I have been all my life studying poverty in the midst of plenty," he said. "We can produce unlimited goods, but we lack the facilities to distribute them. The result is that we over-produce and then production stops until the goods can be used up. That's when people are thrown out of work."

Sinclair's economic ideas got their most dramatic airing in the California gubernatorial campaign of 1934. He was asked how it compared to this year's hot race between Richard M. Nixon and Gov. Edmund G. Brown.

"It was a love feast compared to the one I was in,"

said Sinclair. "They pinned horns and a tail on me."

Running as a Democrat, he lost to Republican Frank Merriam by nearly the same margin as in the 1962 race—260,000. Sinclair attracted national attention—and wide vituperation—with his End Poverty in California campaign.

"The EPIC race was the 'Then I won the primary and I was stuck, much against my wife's wishes... I didn't expect to win, but I wanted most vivid experience of my life,' he recalled. 'I really didn't expect to get into it; I had merely outlined a program to be presented in the primary.'"

to. When you're lied about as much as I was, naturally you want to lick those fellows."

If He'd Won?

And what if he had won out over Merriam?

"I wouldn't be alive to tell the story today. I'm not anything of a giant; I've always overworked, and I've had to spare my energies. Being constantly in the crowd would have killed me."

"Or else someone would have. I heard after the election of a businessman who had made out his will and told his family that if I had been elected he was going to take a gun and shoot me."

Sinclair has led a quiet life of writing and reading since

his plunge into politics. He reads four daily newspapers and 50 magazines. He has written almost constantly, though he is without a project right now.

"I am trying to put some 'social' in the Socialist," said his cheery wife. "He considers himself a recluse, but he really likes to be out among people. Like many men, he complains about going to parties; but he had a good time when he gets there."

3 Giants Changed

His next book? It won't be a Lanny Budd. He has written 11 novels about the political adventurer, spanning the years from the early 1900s to after World War II. That's enough, he thinks.

"I've written a novel which I haven't published yet," he said. "I won't let it go out until I've had a chance to do some more work on it."

Sinclair belonged to a school of American novelists who wrote of social protest; Theodore Dreiser, Jack London and Frank Norris were his contemporaries. He claims that his writings altered the policies of three industrial empires—Armour, Rockefeller and Ford. "They all changed their manners and morals after we gave 'em hell," said he.

Will he ever stop writing? "Yes," he said soberly. "When I'm dead."

Bulldozers Raise Angry Cries

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Part of Stockholm is being rebuilt, and some cultural leaders are up in arms over what they call the "bulldozer philosophy" of the civic planners.

Reconstruction of the central districts of this 700-year-old capital city—in the name of air, light and motor traffic—has caused severe criticism for more than a decade. But the bulldozers, authorized by the city council, continue to eat away block after block of century-old buildings. In their place will be new concrete and glass office buildings, traffic freeways, and automobile parking palaces.

Just now the criticism against the "civic renewal" program is more violent than ever.

"I have never seen such ravages as in this city," said author Sigfrid Siwertz. "Not even the cities ravaged by the war have changed their character more than Stockholm. The traditions

of the city are being wrecked by dynamite, bulldozer and straight-edge."

An open letter of protest has gone out over the signatures of 29 persons, including Ingmar Bergman, the motion picture director, and five members of the 81-member Swedish Academy, the group that awards Nobel prizes.

The letter said: "The elimination of existing construction and terrain has been greater and more violent than anyone had expected. It seems obvious to us that future plans must not be drafted after the same pattern."

The plans for further development of the city appear to be "mainly concerned with the admission of motorized traffic into the city," the letter continued. "We doubt that the city planners have chosen the correct point of departure and the cor-

rect aims for their continued work."

Rallied behind the letter writers is most of the city's press. Two councilmen in charge say they will welcome debate on the subject although they consider the opposition "too conservative."

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