

**Poets' Corner**

Conducted by

**Arnold Eugene Jenny**

From "Gamsdell"

O happy they whose lives are linked  
In sympathy or mutual love,  
Whose hearts and thoughts and beings blend,  
Whose pledge on earth is sealed above.

—Akaki Tserelli

19th century Georgian poet (Russia)

\*From Anthology of Georgian Poetry, translated by Verna Urushadze; courtesy of Dr. Leonard B. Mayfield, Medford.

**Wild Blackberry Time**

Here is warm mid-summer joy,  
When a barefoot country boy  
With berry pail in either hand  
Hies for hills and berryland.  
Where the long and trailing vine,  
Weathered log and stump entwine,  
And under tall green bracken run  
With fruit of earth and rain and sun.

And here the culminating joy,  
A dusty, tired and happy boy  
Is homeward bound with pails a-brim  
For his Mom who worships him.

—George McDonald  
Dufur, Ore.

**Sleepy Town—1904**

Did you ever hear of Sleepy Town  
On the banks of the river Bear,  
Where they all go to bed when the sun goes down,  
For they have no street lights there.

The streets are paved with Mother Earth,  
The walks are boards nailed down,  
With nails sticking up like harrow teeth  
That tear the ladies' gowns.

Here they have a Slow and Easy street,  
And the business centers there;  
It runs past the sink holes to the west  
And east, o'er the river Bear.

Just here you will find Wait-a-Bit street  
Where behind-timers go,  
And then over there on the banks of the Bear  
Many soft "Go-Easys" grow.

Yes, Sleepy Town has a mayor  
And aldermen, it is true,  
Yet the streets are dark and gloomy  
When the trains are passing through.

But there is one thing they can boast,  
And it's quite a pretty sight:  
When the mayor gets out with his automobile  
And gives the streets a light.

Wake up, Mr. Mayor, wake up, wake up!  
Bring your aldermen up to the mark  
And make that lazy old rock crusher work  
And banish the mud and the dark.

—Eliza L. Palmer\*  
Medford

\*Composed by Mrs. Palmer when she was past 80; submitted by her only grand-child, Miss Henriette A. Medynski, Medford, herself past 85.

**Thoughts**

Thoughts are funny things that walk across your face:  
The bad ones come with dragging feet which leave  
an ugly trace;  
But good thoughts have such happy feet that smiles  
grow as they pass;  
And faces, where they come to play, look lovely  
in the glass.

—Anon.

(Submitted by Jerry Lou McWhorter, Talent, Ore.)

**The Age of Poets**

A study of more than 1,000 poets showed that 41 per cent of the best work was produced by those in their twenties, 28 per cent in their thirties, and 11 per cent in their forties. The other decades show smaller output, ranging down to 1 per cent in the seventies.

—Bruce Bliven, in New York Times Magazine, 5/6/62.

**Poetry Editor Finds Young People Here Active, Constructive, Worthy of Praise**

By **ARNOLD EUGENE JENNY**  
Mail Tribune Poetry Editor

One hears a lot of unfavorable criticism of our schools in this country, most of it uninformed and unwarranted, that it is a real pleasure to be able to report on some excellent things done in our schools, notably right here in Medford and Jackson county.

Most Valley residents are well aware of our public schools' outstanding achievements in various fields: by the Black Tornado, Theatians, choirs, orchestras, bands, debaters and orators, to cite only a few. Scholastically, too, Medford's schools enjoy

a high rating, comparing favorably with the nation's best. As a onetime teacher, sometime critic of American education, and relative newcomer to Medford, I have been especially interested and pleased to observe some of this activity and to join in praise of the superior performance witnessed.

**Theatians Praised**

As long ago as March 3, 1961, I had occasion to write in the Communications Department in appreciation of the Theatians' outstanding performance of Arthur Miller's play, "The Crucible," under the able coaching and direction of Mrs. Lenore Zapell of the Medford High School faculty. About the same time, invited by Mrs. Maxine Smith to give a talk to her German classes ("auf deutsch" to the seniors), I was impressed by the evidences of good instruction observed. Not long ago I was impressed similarly by the work on display at the senior high school's arts and crafts exhibition.

Especially gratifying was a recent experience resulting from a letter I had in Communications, refuting arguments in student at Hedrick Junior High. More pleasant than the somewhat emotional and irrelevant rejoinders by other citizens, was an invitation from John's English teacher, Jerry McDougall, to visit one of his classes to observe the work done by the students.

**Good 'Bull Session'**

I countered this gracious invitation with another for Mr. McDougall and several of his students, including John, to dinner with me at Rogue Valley Manor and a good "bull session" afterward. That proved a revealing and stimulating experience for me: as keen a group of young people as one could wish to meet anywhere — and I've known a lot of them in my time, in various parts of this and other countries. My sub-

sequent visits, on two successive days, to Mr. McDougall's special class in debating, in the summer session at McLoughlin Junior High, proved equally rewarding. My new young friends gave excellent account of themselves in one debate witnessed, and I was equally impressed by the high quality of Mr. McDougall's coaching.

Some months ago, in a conversation with James Backen, head of the Senior High School's English department, I suggested that students doing the best writing of verse submit some of their work to the Sunday Mail Tribune's Poets' Corner. Not long afterward, Mr. Backen sent me a batch of contributions by about a dozen students and I was delighted with the talent displayed. Most of those poems have since been published in our "Corner" or are scheduled for future issues. In some instances, works of real merit but in need of improvement achieved acceptance by following suggestions I made to the authors: in a poetry "bull session" at Mr. Backen's home, and by correspondence.

**Pleased by Column**

Commenting on this activity, Mrs. Rena D. Parks of Portland, a Poets' Corner contributor and Unit Chairman (for branches in various parts of the state) of the Oregon State Poetry Association, wrote some time ago: "I took your clippings of the Poets' Corner to the study group meeting of interested poets and I was amazed and pleased as I was that your column shows up to such advantage, and that so many around Medford write verse so well." And later, Mrs. Parks commented: "Your work with (Medford students) is the best news I have heard in a long time. It is just what our organization hopes will happen in all high schools in the state."

Mrs. J. Miriam Cole, also of Portland and 2d vice president of the Oregon Verseweavers' Poetry Society, wrote some months ago: "I wish to congratulate you upon the quality of the poems submitted to the Medford Mail Tribune; the paper itself is a fine advertisement for the

Rogue River valley. You, as editor of the Poets' Corner, have introduced a feature which may well contribute to the future cultural level of your community." Congratulations also have been received from Mrs. Thomas Curtis of Maywood, Ill., widow of the late poet and author of the only published book of poems on Lincoln, a number of whose poems have appeared in our "Corner."

Mary Boyd Wagner, of Klamath Falls pioneer stock now resident of New York City; poet, critic and teacher; author of "Roots," a collection of her poems, one of which, "Ancestral Home," appeared in the Poets' Corner on June 10 (others scheduled for later issues), also has had high praise for our column and particularly for the work of our high school students. Concerning the latter, she wrote on June 25:

**Up With The Best**

"Their poetry measures up with the best being done by young poets — that is, with those who have not achieved professional status. I was one of the judges of the last contest for senior high school pupils of greater New York. There were about 45 finalists, the winners in all of the schools. It was only these finalists which came to me, and the poems written by the Medford students (published in the Poets' Corner, copies of which had been sent Mrs. Wagner) compare favorably with the winners in the contests and are much better than those of most of the competing finalists. Won't you please tell them this."

So, again I salute Medford and all our contributors who

have made the Poets' Corner in the Sunday Mail Tribune possible — not least, the aspiring and promising poets in our high schools of Medford and Jackson county (some of the latter also having been accepted and scheduled for future issues).

I believe this account serves also as an effective refutation of the pessimistic assessments of present-day youth appearing in recent letters in Communications and such jeremiads as that in the "Oregonian" of July 1 by the gloomy Jenkin Lloyd Jones, editor of the Tulsa Tribune. As I stated in the June 12 issue of the Mail Tribune: "I believe today's youth gives every bit as good account of itself as any of us oldsters did when we were young — and in many respects, much better. Most of today's young people are busier than all-get-out in more worthwhile activities than any of us antediluvians knew in our youth: in our schools, churches, scouting, 4-H and FFA, the YMCA, and other like organizations and their equivalents on the college and university level, and in after-school employment."

**... Communications ...**

Letters to the Editor must bear the name and address of the writer, although under certain circumstances the use of a pen name or initial for publication is permissible. The Mail Tribune reserves the right to edit all letters with a view to clarification and condensation. Letters submitted for publication must not exceed 400 words. The letters printed in this column do not necessarily represent the views of the paper; in fact the contrary is often the case.

**Reapportionment**

To the Editor: Now that the so-called "East Oregon" reapportionment scheme has obtained enough signatures to assure it being on the ballot in the November general election, every voter should inform himself on the meaning of this plan and its relation to conditions at this time. More than half the states in the nation are engaged in a tremendous effort to bring antiquated reapportionment systems up to date in order to establish more democratic methods for both state legislature and Congress.

In comparison, Oregon has one of the most democratic systems in the Union, for both legislature and Congress. Oregon's constitution establishes an apportionment based in population and provides that it shall be reapportioned every ten years, following the federal census. For many years rural counties controlled the state legislature and ignored this provision of the Constitution. In 1952 we passed by referendum a constitutional amendment that took the power to reapportion out of the hands of the legislature and placed final determination with the State Supreme Court and set up machinery that makes such realignment mandatory.

This reapportionment did, in fact, shift a certain amount of the balance of power in the legislature to the more populous sections of the state, which is what it should have done if we are to maintain a democratic state. It has also given us, on the whole, a more liberal government than we had known for many years.

Another strong reason for rejecting the proposed amendment, at this time, is the fact that the 1961 legislature authorized a Constitutional Revision commission with

authority to rewrite the entire state constitution. It is understood this commission is now ready to report and that among other things it offers a new apportionment plan that, while increasing the number of representatives, thus reducing the size of the required district, follows closely the original constitution by making the apportionment entirely on a population basis. If this new constitution is accepted by the 1963 Legislature it will be offered to the people for referendum vote in 1964. Why muddy the water by trying now to adopt a plan that may become obsolete in two years?

D. Ivan Fritt,  
794 Fortner Lane  
Ontario, Ore.

**Pages of History**

To the Editor: Just this one more on the Modoc war series, if only to express gratitude for the editor's quest for space that is ever a problem to a newspaper make-up staff. Also appreciation for Dr. Stevenson and others of Southern Oregon college who arranged the field-study trip for their student body and the spare seats for wife and me. But best of all, it gave me chance to throw a little light from the "other side" on the dark pages of Indian history. For this light was from the torch Jeff Riddle handed me so long ago, to carry on the work he had so well done in his book, The Indian History of Modoc War, to be had only for study there in the reference research department of our local library.

The greatest problem, he reminded me, for his people, was water. For there was

none at the Stronghold. Strong-willed squaws snake-bellied down through the white enemy lines to fill a badgerskin water bottle at the lake, drink all they could get down so as to fill their mouth with water to be let into the parched mouths of their suffering little ones, as most of the water had to go to the fighting men.

But this was ended when an alert soldier caught a water seeking squaw and bashed her head in with a rifle butt. A welcomed skiff of April snow was welcome moisture for melting-drinking, though bringing suffering to poorly shod feet whose bloody prints were quite the same as those of Washington's men at Valley Forge.

Lack of water forced the Modocs to retreat to the ice caves. Here, at the third fight if memory serves, Ellen's Man was lost. But he died gloriously in Modoc thinking, as two Warm Spring Indian scout betrayers near by fell to his aim. This marked the end of the Modocs as a tribe, for each blaming the other for leaving their leader alone in such an advanced position, the tribe split into small parties and run down by their own Benedict Arnolds, some to be hung, others banished to the Indian's Siberia, the Indian territory.

Let me have a little space to thank the young lady whose name was not obtained, but her strong young hand helping my hurrying aged feet down the rock-strewn trail to the waiting bus will never be forgotten. Maybe she will pick up the torch when that time arrives.

F. J. Clifford  
Route 2, Box 200F  
Central Point, Ore.

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