

Herald and News Book Reviews

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
NABOKOV'S DOZEN, Doubleday, \$3.50.

The title promises us a dozen, but like any good author, Vladimir Nabokov is always better than his word, and here are 13 stories.

"Stories" of course implies fiction, and in a man with this Russian emigre's irrepressible compound of surging memory and imagination, there are probably no facts that he can really keep his hands off entirely, he must fust them up and change and alter—

though in a couple of cases he claims he has been completely true to his memory. We must doubt it. He glosses, embellishes, magnifies: like a magician, he works with a scarf but you think it's a rabbit, he begins with spades or diamonds and comes out with clubs or hearts.

Apparently all these stories have been available in magazines or books, but they are of a caliber to require rereading—the woman so casual and open hearted with the gift of love; the fantastic first-

persons reflections of half a Siamese twin; the nonconformist; the ultimate flight; the very ring of the telephone; the man who can see his wife, and cannot, can hear her, and cannot; the poet who didn't stay dead.

There was an American flavor to Nabokov's "Lolita" not only in the setting but in the vital and subtle interweaving of the Edgar Allan Poe story. This is pure exotic, not only Old World but other-worldly, done dispassionately and from that exalted point of view that has led so many reviewers to laugh and so many to weep at the mystic land of Nabokovia.

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AKU-AKU, by Thor Heyerdahl. Rand McNally, \$6.95.

The Kon-Tiki man, Thor Heyerdahl, has done it again.

Crossing the Pacific on a raft in 1947, he convinced himself and half the rest of us that Polynesians reached the South Sea Isles from South America rather than from Asia, as generally supposed.

Now he has written another fascinating book about a 1955 expedition, by modern trawler this time, to solve the mysteries of Easter Island. Not only has he settled, to his own satisfaction, the question of who erected Easter Island's 50-ton statues and how, but he has dug up a whole new series of mysteries, and provided the solutions for them too.

The island's Polynesian natives gave few tips on the statues to the first explorers more than 200 years ago. Magazine writers have been speculating about them ever since. Heyerdahl brought with him to the task a crew of trained archaeologists who did more actual spadework on the island than had ever been done before. Patching together excavated evidence with that of old tradition, Heyerdahl decided that long-eared white men sailed to Easter Island from Peru early in the Christian era and constructed there the same type of technically astounding stone walls that they had built in Peru before they were driven out by the Incas.

Centuries afterwards, a later generation repaired the walls clumsily and erected on them the giant statues with curious, elongated heads that may be seen to this day.

Finally, tribes of Polynesians sailed in, came at last to blows with the long ears, and exterminated them with the exception of one man.

From the red-haired descendants of this lone survivor, Thor Dahl learned much more. Under their gaze of civilization, he found, they carried racial memories of how the statues were chipped out of solid rock, how they were dragged along the ground for miles by plain strength, and how they were tilted upright by the use of levers and little stones. In fact they demonstrated the procedures and sang the appropriate songs.

Even more surprising, under the goad of Heyerdahl's soothing tongue, they disclosed to him a number of secret caves containing bones and statuettes hidden there by their ancestors. The statuettes, of a type never before seen on Easter Island, were relics of paganism and the old life.

Aku-aku, incidentally, is the name of a special spirit guardian. Heyerdahl came up with one, it seems, and was dubbed by the Easter Islanders a Norwegian long ears. Lots of the things he found out were told to him as from one long ear to another.

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SIDE DOOR TO HEAVEN, By Alan Gillies. Holt, \$4.95.

Harley Freeman is nine when this fine first novel opens, and married, a veteran, a father and a reasonably settled man when it closes. In between, he has wonderfully grown up, fallen in love, been frustrated, learned to hate, confronted tragedy, understood his own lacks, and arrived at a workable compromise with the unpredictable adventure called life.

As a child he has a club foot and by a course of treatments it is at last corrected. But that man have been even less of a hand-

cap than his family — a supercilious mother who would drive a man to drink, a father who has in fact been driven and seems unlikely ever to find his way back, a brother Claude who will be his unworthy rival all his years, and a tragic sister Violet.

Regarding the mother as being as unbearable as she finds him, the father has a friend named Maybelle, and one closer, Miss Lily, right across the side-yard hedge. The boy senses disturbances at the older age level though without ever understanding much about them till the family finally breaks up and he and Claude move to the country to live with relatives, among them young cousin Irene. Independent original and entirely lovable as a girl and an adult, she remains the central figure opposite Harley, and unhappily opposite Claude, too, for the rest of the story, though the hero will take Catherine for wife.

The jealousies that split the Harley - Claude brotherhood so savagely, the petty feelings that sour Catherine and Harley's mother, the love remembered so dearly by Harley and the uneasy awareness of it that disturbs both his wife and Irene's husband, the rich, well meaning and interfering Grecca — all these attributes, emotions and personages come smash together in some final climactic pages that give this novel more scenes of action than it has had in the first four-fifths of its long course.

But this is not a novel to be cherished for action, climax, sex or any of the conventionally spectacular qualities supposed to go into the make-up of best sellers. This is, rather, an uncommonly beautiful story of steady, rich, fruitful, simple, daily living, told with heartfelt warmth. Instead of the flashy surface attractions, this has the central essential substance — the dreams, the family talk, the picnic, the swim, the choir practice, the roominghouse, the parting, the loving reunion.

THE BRAMBLE BUSH, By Charles Mergendahl. G. P. Putnam's Sons, \$3.95.

This is an inspired novel — inspired by the phenomenal sales of Peyton Place and the prospect of another sex-ridden movie about a New England town.

The sale has already been made to Hollywood for a "major production," and the promotional machine has been in high gear for weeks, getting ready to give it a big push into the best seller class.

Like Peyton Place, this one has a doctor who commits a crime to spare other human beings suffering and goes to trial for it. It also has a gallery of

sexual weirdies to garnish the central story. Exhibit A is the repulsive editor of the local weekly paper who blackmails girls into posing in the altogether for his polaroid camera. There is, too, the fetching blonde nurse who accompanies her offers of love and understanding with a semi-strip. Her boy-friend through much of the book is an Adonis of a lawyer whose first experience with sex was incestuous. As a result, he is unable to take the initiative in subsequent love affairs. But the blonde nurse helps him over that hurdle.

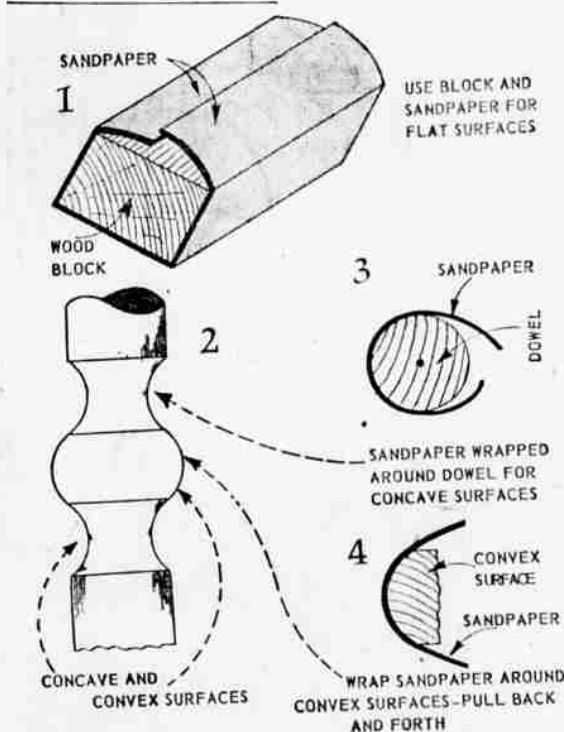
The main story concerns Dr. Guy Montford and his uncontrollable passion for the wife of his hopelessly ill best friend. He dispatches the suffering invalid with an overdose of morphine, believing it an act of mercy. Later, he has doubts. He also has a wretched experience when, thrown into jail on a charge of homicide, he finds himself in the same cell with the alcoholic town bum — and learns that the bum is his real father.

This must surely rank as one of the rankest scenes in recent fiction and brings the whole story close to absurdity. The characters for the most part are drawn broadly and superficially, good enough for movie casting. If you're not interested in sincerity, artistic quality or freshness of vision, but can go along with a concocted story held together with a generous assortment of sex—this is your book.

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DO-IT-YOURSELF



By J. RALPH DALZIELL

This column recently presented an article on natural finishes for new, unpainted furniture. It attracted considerable reader attention and demands for a story on painting previously finished woodwork such as furniture, cabinets, paneling, ceiling beams, trim and the like.

The first step in the refinishing of any wood item is to remove the old paint or other finish. This is a most important part of the work. In the past, this step was tedious, messy and costly. Now, however, a new paint remover known as Flush-Off is simply brushed on, left for a few minutes, and then flushed off with water. The remover contains no acid or caustic, does not injure the hands or wood and is non-flammable. Generally, one application removes oil paints, varnish, enamel, shellac, rubber base paint or lacquer.

Make sure that all old finish is completely removed. Use a putty knife and cloth to remove all traces of old finish in concave surfaces (see picture 2) as the remover is being flushed off.

To produce smoother and more attractive refinished surfaces, take time to carefully sandpaper the surfaces before applying the new finish. Use 3-0 aluminum oxide or garnet finishing paper. If sanding by hand, wrap the sandpaper (see picture 1) around a block of wood and always sand in the direction of the grain in the wood. A Cummins electric sander will quickly cut away any rough spots in the surfaces with an orbital motion, and then the super motion to produce an extra fine, rubbed surface. For a concave surface (see pictures 2 and 3) wrap the paper around an old pencil. For convex surfaces (see pictures 2 and 4) wrap the sandpaper around the surfaces and pull it back and forth around the curved areas.

Before the sanding is completed, see that the wood to be refinished is in good condition, tightly nailed and firmly glued.

If the wood has an attractive grain pattern the homeowner may

want to apply a natural finish. Fill all nail holes and cracks with putty or plastic wood, stained the color of the wood. Leave a small ridge in the putty to avoid shrinkage. When the putty is hard, sand the ridge flush with the surrounding wood. Apply prime and final coats of a natural finish.

Apply a coat of sealer paint first for a painted or enameled new finish. If the wood has been previously stained, use aluminum paint as a sealer, then fill nail holes and cracks with putty. Apply two coats of flat paint, and sand lightly between coats, or one coat of half flat paint and half enamel first, and then a coat of pure enamel. Sand lightly between coats.

Special Service to Readers. Readers are invited to write for free information and help on any paint or other finish removal problem. Write to the author, Suite 605, 10 De Sablo Road, San Mateo, California.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q.—Do any woods have natural resistance to decay?

A.—Yes, western red cedar (heartwood), cypress and redwood all have the natural ability to resist rotting even when exposed to unfavorable conditions.

Q.—Is it true that aluminum foil, or other shiny metals, when placed back of a radiator will make the radiator heat better?

A.—Yes, the heat from the radiator is reflected out into the room instead of being absorbed by the wall back of the radiator.

Q.—In our brand new house we have much more trouble with condensation than we did in our old house that was 50 years old.

A.—The new house was built much "tighter" than the old house, so water vapor in the air cannot escape through cracks. In such a case more condensation is bound to occur unless venting is frequently carried on.

TOUGHEST TASK

OKLAHOMA CITY (UPI) — What is the hardest task a governor has? "Saying 'No,'" says Oklahoma's Gov. Raymond Gary.

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