

Prairieland Talk

Humble Reverence in Marion

By ROMAINE SAUNDERS, Retired, Former Editor The Frontier

MARION, IND.—A community that has housed Hoosiers for more than a century would seem to be not too good a place for the lumber business. But son and I were at a lumber yard this Sunday morning to get just one thing and found a dozen or more cars and trucks there ahead of us. To secure what son was in need of, we spent more than an hour to get waited on. The yard is owned by a patriot who attaches sacred significance to the seventh day of the week instead of the first but is not a Jew, hence closes his business on the seventh day and is open the first and is swamped with business. Marion seems to have a population of churchgoers where human dignity and humble reverence inspire each group to respect the sacred rights of the others.



Romaine Saunders

Most communities have their traditions. A community notable cannot escape the devotion of admirers who would clothe him in the gorgeous mantle of the heroes. Marion has its traditions involving such a guy as James Whitcomb Riley, the Hoosier poet. They tell here that he was also a sign painter and until recent years his masterpieces with paint and brush were to be seen on barns about the neighborhood. As the story tells have it, Riley was the Indiana Advertising Co., and came from his home at Greenfield to Marion where he sold his advertising ideas to druggists and others and then went about from farm to farm and got the consent of the farmer to paint a sign advertising Hostler's Bitters on his barn. He is said to have been "one of the boys" where ever he went. And among other accomplishments he was an actor, later in life taking to the lecture platform.

The car came to a stop at the curb. A gallant young Hoosier stepped out from behind the steering wheel, walked around and opened the car door to let his companion out, a charming young woman; escorted her across the street to a store. When the two came back chivalry was still inspiring the youth as he opened the car door and helped his lady to her seat, then went to the driver's seat — and the car rolled away, leaving the spectator with a smile of approval.

Less than 200 miles to the northwest, crowding the shore of Lake Michigan and extending far inland, is the great city of Chicago, Ill., where is to be found the world's worst and the world's best—a strange combination of human depravity and human grandeur, of man's achievements and man's degradation. Yesterday there was a killing, just another killing. And yesterday there were babies born and human life saved through medical science. The man killed with which we take note was an outlaw, had himself been a killer. His last victim had been a member of the great city's great police system. His fellow officers vowed retribution. A woman, the outlaw's sister-in-law, set the trap. A rifle bullet fired by an officer dropped the desperado after he had fired at the officer. Another woman was brought into the tragic picture, one with whom the outlaw had been living. What mysterious emotions forge these human ties? What lays an irresistible hand upon man and woman, saint and sinner alike, and binds them together in a star-lighted world? Capable of human love, why not susceptible to human nobility? "Noble natures, and such as are capable of goodness, are railed into vice, that might as easily be admonished into virtue."

Most people say they want to be better informed, but keep on reading trash, which is the tip-off on their determination.

Editorial

Rail Problems to Be Aired

The Association of American Railroads reported that the country's roads had suffered a drop in income, in the first eight months of 1954, which amounted to 32.8 percent below the same period of 1953. This drop is a heavy one and is reflected in purchases of new equipment by the roads.

J. L. Monroe, AAR vice-president, recently told the annual meeting of the Railway Tie association that the railroads were faced with increasingly tough competition — much of it subsidized by the government. Monroe warned that the country could not afford to let its railroads get into an unhealthy state because of the vital role the railroads play in times of national emergency.

Monroe is, of course, right in his contention that railroads are a most vital part of any country's defense system. It is also true that there is no time to build sufficient cars and other rolling stock once a national emergency arises. While it is no doubt true that antiquated methods, and operations which should have been streamlined 20 years ago, are costing the railroads through the nose, it is also true that the time may be fast approaching when the government will have to think seriously about maintaining the nation's railroads in a healthy state.

It may eventually work out that the government will have to drastically change some of its regulatory provisions which prevent competition and thereby encourage antiquated and backward methods. Such methods cannot easily compete with those of other transportation mediums, which are improving their services steadily.

Better business conditions may help the railroads, but the final solution lies in modernized railroad services and facilities, and, eventually, a re-designed government program to eliminate overlapping, produce efficiency and keep the nation's railroads strong.

Many of these factors will be discussed at length next Thursday, November 18, when interested citizens and civic groups meet with Vice-President J. E. Goodwin of the Chicago & North Western Railway company and members of his staff at Valentine.

We predict many persons attending that meeting will be confronted with some cold facts concerning the dilemma of the rails—all because this region is about to lose its last remaining passenger-mail-express trains on the Omaha-Chadron line and because, all of a sudden, some of the thinking people have become concerned over these dim prospects.

The Frontier holds to the belief, as stated in these columns three weeks ago, the government had better subsidize the rails a bit with mail contracts to discourage the confounded congestion on the highways rather than contribute to the decline of the rails by snatching away business and increasing the highway burdens.

It simply doesn't jell why the postoffice de-

It has been a gloomy day—wind and wet and chill. How strikingly the course of nature speaks of its indifference to human hopes and the follies of life. The political spasms are at an end for another year. This section of the Hoosier state seems to be in the grip of the GOP. A candidate of that political group after a seat in the state legislature had for his platform the promise of lower real estate taxes with personal property not to be taxed at all. But he did not explain where the funds were to come from for all the service the public demands. But the boosters of the political group that we have as a heritage of the late new deal have been doing their best to swing the election.

About all the Indiana spellbinders had to offer in their appeal was to remember your job, your farm, and vote democrat. I think Nebraska's democratic committeewoman had it all over the spellbinders of her party in the Hoosier state. In one address she shouted to the skies that "the Midwest had been betrayed." It was all there, when I left a month ago and out beyond the "middle" I never saw it looking better or prairieland patriots better fixed.

When the fathers and mothers of prairieland went to the voting booth, they doubtless had in mind that the drumbeat of battle has been stilled by the present national administration and their sons lie not dead or wounded on a far off battle field. Ten million more workers know that they will get social security benefits and those marching toward the gathering shadows of life's sunset are receiving increased payments. Patriots today, as I am at the typewriter, mark their ballots with an X for the candidates they are for and if they don't know whether the gent who offers himself as a sacrifice on the altar of public service is for or against "broadening the tax base" the best they could do was vote their party ticket.

Forty-one million bushels of wheat have been shipped abroad from our shores within the year, two million bushels during one week in October, destined for India, where, it is reported, Americans are cordially hated.

A few blocks down Wharton Drive from where I am staying for the present, flowing along a tree-shaded course, is the majestic Mississinewa river, which holds a lure for one who has known the thrill of catching five-pounders that in the long ago swam the crystal waters of the Elkhorn before that stream was defiled with the city wastes, and when friendly Sioux still pitched their tepees near its fast-flowing waters. I have not and may not yield to the lure of the Mississinewa to "cast in" and probably soon will see the juvenile element of the community heading that way with their skates to see if the ice is ready for them.

Wilbur Shaw, three times winner of the 500-mile auto race, promoter of the Indianapolis, Ind., speedway and something of a daredevil, toying with death as he whirled over the race track at maddening speed, will not compete in another race. He plunged to his death in an airplane with three companions. If you would travel life's highway for four full score years or more, go slowly.

Legends and repudiated military theories die hard when there is an abundance of writers selling books about "mysterious" behind-the-scenes conspiracies.

The names of Indiana towns remind me of home, such as Atkinson, Arthur, Bloomfield, Spencer, Rushville, St. Paul. But no O'Neill.

Not every fellow in a newspaper office, behind a typewriter, is a journalist.

News, Views

and Gossip

BY THE EDITOR

An Irish Wit, He Is

We were privileged to have two backstage chats with James Melton during his Friday evening showing at the O'Neill public school auditorium. A tape-recorded interview (broadcast on the Saturday "Voice of The Frontier" program, WJAG, 9:45 a.m.) was informal and breezy.

When not speaking for the benefit of the microphone, Mr. Melton triggered some rapid-fire wisecracks which doubtless have had something to do with his enormous popularity. Of course, nobody questions his musical ability, as evidenced by his successes in opera, concert, radio, television and screen.

I didn't expect to encounter an Irish wit during the backstage interludes.

The first chat came about two hours before concert time. Wearing a charcoal grey suit, Jimmy was hunched over the grand piano with one hand buried in his mass of dark hair. With his other hand, Melton was fingering the scale and his tenor voice reverberated in the empty auditorium.

President Frank Parkins of the O'Neill Community Concerts association stated in a quiet way that Jimmy was simply getting the "feel" of the auditorium. I accepted that at face value, knowing nothing about Melton's problems.

"Want to meet him?" asked Parkins. "Of course," I replied. Melton wheeled around, extended his right hand and turned loose the personality.

A sample of the voice and personality instantly assured me the concert was going to be a wow.

"Hey, twelve-thumbs!" Melton boomed, summoning Richard Hankinson, his pianist who has been a constant concert assistant for the past several years. "Take over your piano," admonished the ponderous big tenor (6'1", 200 pounds). "I'm going to talk to these two farmers awhile."

(What Parkins and Stewart know about farming you can

print in something less than one paragraph.) However, we thanked him for the compliment and settled down for a visit.

Provincial Himself

Melton said he loves provincial people. "Lots of folks in this world are cold and stuffy," he explained, "but I find these folks out this way and these farther west very friendly, nothing stand-offish, just good, 100 percent people."

"I was born and reared in a town in Georgia of 284 — including the mules and one of the mules was mine," he continued. "I love provincial people!"

Melton had kind things to say for O'Neill and for Nebraska. He offered a few constructive criticisms, too—nothing vital.

He touched on his collection of ancient steam engines and antique cars.

Asking how many miles O'Neill was separated from Minden, Melton said he would have invited the Pioneer Village people from Minden had he known the towns were so relatively close. The Warp family has established a historical exhibit there in which some auto and steam relics are displayed.

Simply because I toted a camera and popped a bulb or two, Melton began calling me "Rembrandt — you're always making pictures!"

I said there must be easier ways of making a living than snapping pictures.

"Yes," he countered, "concert work is a lot easier, pays better, but you seldom see your family."

Pianist a Find

Hankinson, who after intermission drew three successive encores at the piano, was discovered by Melton in a South Carolina music school.

"The chap has it, I knew it, and he's been with me ever since."

Melton's mark of re- engagements in the large music centers has established some sellout records.

Melton indicated he'd like to return to O'Neill at a later date when the concert audience here "is a little more mature. I'll really give you a show!"

We didn't touch on the delicate subject of Melton's age, realizing concert tenors are confronted with an acute timetable. Usually when they attain the age of 50

or 55 their voices deteriorate and they no longer have the wide range. Closest we came to discussing the time element was this: "Maybe we'll be seeing you again in a couple of years."

For the present, Mr. Melton has an irresistible combination of talent and personal warmth. First night concert — goes at O'Neill sold out right now to the big bulk of tenor from down Georgia way a guy with sparkling charm, an idol of the world's music-lovers, a handsome big bruiser with a button nose and a magnificent voice.

Great guy, Melton—and a superb entertainer! —CAL STEWART

Letters to Editor

Amelia, Nebr. October 29, 1954

Gentlemen: It was quite a shock and a disappointment when I read in The Frontier of the dance given for the young people on Sunday evening. You probably are saying "But Halloween comes on Sunday and we must to prevent . . . etc." Listen, I've enough faith in the young people of the O'Neill community and every other, that if you would say, "Kids, Halloween is on Sunday, so let's observe Saturday or Monday," they would be with you 95 percent, and the other five percent won't be at the dance either.

Or, has your town gotten so far from the commandments of God that your kids don't know that time after time in the Bible — Catholic or Protestant — we are commanded to keep the sabbath day holy? I'm sure that no one can say from an honest heart that dances are of God or a worship of God.

I notice it started at 8 o'clock. Why don't you as members of the Chamber of Commerce plan to be in your church at that hour — taking your young people with you?

Driving through, and seeing closed churches at night on Sunday, makes one wonder where the people who own the cars line in the streets are if not in church.

How long is God going to withhold His anger at us as a community or nation where sabbath desecration is so common, towns ablaze with liquor signs? Those places, too, open on Sunday and at hours when other business places are closed.

How can we have the nerve to ask God's protection from communism when we are living ourselves and raising up a generation in a way that ignores God? We can't blame the kids—talk about "delinquent youth and youth problems"—shame on us! Let's clean up the delinquent parents and Chamber of Commerce first. It's too late to do anything about the dance, but I am praying that almighty God will convict you of the sin of sabbath desecration that it will make you literally ill at your stomachs.

MRS. GLENN WHITE P.S.: I'd like to know if anyone else feels as I do.

JUSTICE COURT

October 21: Robert L. Bowles, no reciprocity, \$10, Shorney. October 21: Charles D. Banks, no reciprocity, \$10, Shorney. Harlen C. Todd, for General Wholesale, over on axle, pending, Crouch.

Harlen C. Todd, for General Wholesale, over on capacity plates, pending, Crouch, scale police.

October 25: Leonard Lemke, for Herman Bruhn, over on capacity plates, Donald Richardson, scale police.

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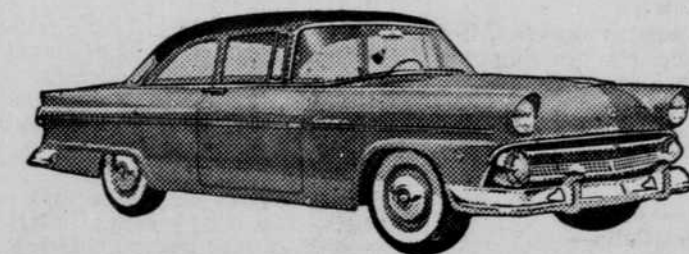
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