

arts/entertainment

Regionalistic writer describes bright childhood

By David Wood

Wright Morris, among the greatest regionalists writing today, was born in 1910 in the Platte Valley of Nebraska.

His mother died in his first week of life, and Morris' upbringing was in the chicken-plucking hands of his father, Will, a handsome, skirt-chasing fugitive from petty fraud. Over the years, they moved to Omaha and Chicago. With the finesse of a Judd family they made a shambling trek to the land of snowless winters, fruited groves and failed dreams, California.

book review

Morris remembers vividly these years that preceded college, and has artfully rendered them into a pleasant little book called *Will's Boy: A Memoir*.

It's breezy 200 pages of clean, precision prose are as well-skilled as stories by Barry Hannah, the terse, sardonic master regionalist of the South. Morris' Midwestern sentiments, however, are distinctly more optimistic. *Will's Boy* has as much good country flavor as a bowl of Corn Flakes.

The book ends so: "If growing up meant to abandon these sentiments, Will's boy would be slow to grow up."

It seems true. The 70-year-old author of more than 20 books has remarkably preserved his sense of youth, like some house of cards made of keen observation, despite the proverbial winds of time.

Nostalgic images

Whether looking backward at his own boyhood or at the young, maturing cities of the Midwest, a nostalgia is implicit in his images, a sunny feel of barefeet akin to the sentimentalism of Norman Rockwell, but nowhere as sappy.

The images Morris conjures are better compared with the regionalist paintings of Grant Wood or Edward Hopper — quiet tableaux that are flattened by neatly specified detail into artificially smooth, generalized, yet accurate reconstructions.

It is with these taut surfaces of objective recollection

that Morris builds the card house which defines the airy volume of youth.

He is one of those Merlin types who occasionally appears in the arts. Like Isaac Singer for example, Morris grows younger with age. Through years, his books gain hearty vigor, rather than lose it.

His last novel, *Plains Song*, was a finalist for the 1980 American Book Awards. His *The Field of Vision* won the National Book Award in 1956.

Will's Boy is the story of a charmed life, told charmingly. If his believable history is believed, Wright Morris' strong, decent character was born into more than thought. His father's string of failed dreams, his rakish ways and the various "new mother" he brings home to his "half-orphan kid" repel the boy, yet never daunt his admiration of his father, Will.

Philosophically Christian

Seemingly, moral fiber arises naturally from a Protestant Midwestern faith and work ethic. The card house is a stacked deck. *Will's Boy* is philosophically Christian. Yet Morris never preaches and recognizes "the foolishness of God compared with almighty mysteries of nature."

The book is subtly colored with an almost pantheist awe, yet does not soft-peddle realities or prettify harshness. Morris includes ugly shadows among his bright images. A gun-shot mobster lies in the snow near a Y in Chicago. Hogs are slit open and bleed for sausage. One of his "new mothers" becomes a shameless hula dancer on "lower Douglas Street" in Omaha.

"In spite of my experience," he writes, however, "I had never questioned that this world was good enough as it was, if not the best possible."

Morris' anecdotal history is pre-eminently of happiness. He remembers sledding the hills near Central High, or being a skating stock-boy with "Monkey Wards" in Chicago. He remembers bringing basketball and sin of rivalry to a Seventh-Day Adventist college in Boise, where he was expelled after four weeks.

Morris is gifted in his clear, clean writing. His rich scenes are at once short and spacious, his picturesque characters at once two-dimensional and recognizable. *Will's Boy* is wise, yet simple, abbreviated, and yet somehow complete.



Photo by Jim Alinder courtesy of Harper and Row Publishing

Wright Morris

Dan Fogelberg tickets continue to sell well

Plenty of tickets are still available for the Dan Fogelberg concert scheduled for Nov. 1 in the Bob Devaney Sports Center, Martin Wood of the University Program Council said.

"It's hard to tell how many we have sold," Wood said. Wood estimated they had sold 4,500 to 5,000 tickets as of Monday afternoon. He said they could not be sure how many tickets had been sold yet because they did not know how sales had gone at the Omaha outlets.

"We've been selling pretty steady," he said. "It hasn't slowed down yet."

Tickets are available at both unions and Brandeis.

Bogart flicks light up screen tonight, tomorrow

Four films starring Humphrey Bogart will be featured tonight and Wednesday night as a part of the University Program Council's Awareness Week.

Two films will be shown each night at 7 and 9:15 p.m. in the Nebraska Union. Admission is \$2 for students with a student ID card and \$3 for general admission.

The 7 p.m. film tonight is the film version of Herman Wouk's Pulitzer Prize win-

ning novel, *The Caine Mutiny*. Set on the combat ship "Caine," this Stanley Kramer production has Bogart starring as the ship captain who is slowly losing his marbles—and his strawberries.

To Have and Have Not is the second film tonight. It is the first film starring Bogart and Lauren Bacall, whom he later married.

Along with the fine direction of Howard

Hawks this film is remembered most for Bacall's sultry question of ... "You know how to whistle, don't you?"

Wednesday night's films include *The Treasure of The Sierra Madre* and *Casablanca*.

John Huston won Academy Awards for direction and writing for *Sierra Madre* which tells how the lure of wealth and greed changes the lives of three out-of-luck prospectors.

Bogart is unforgettable as Fred C. Dobbs

and is supported by an Academy Award winning performance from Walter Huston (John's father) and Tim Holt.

As Rick Blaine in *Casablanca*, Bogart plays the jilted lover whose life is disrupted by the sudden arrival of his former love in his Morocco bar.

Ingrid Bergman co-stars as the romantic crutch Bogart hesitates to fall back on. *Casablanca* also features performances by Claude Rains, Paul Henreid, and Dooley Wilson as piano playing Sam.



Photo courtesy of United Artists

Humphrey Bogart stars in *Casablanca*, one of the four films featured in UPC's Bogart Film Festival.

'Patriot Game' offers picture of Northern Ireland conflict

By Chuck Lieurance

Arthur MacCraig's film documentary *The Patriot Game* (playing at the Sheldon Film Theater this week) ranks among the finest documentaries ever made. The film deals with a subject about which most of the world is ignorant, the situation in Northern Ireland.

movie review

Obviously, *The Patriot Game* leans predominantly to the Nationalist IRA movement, trying to show that the IRA is not just an organization of brutal terrorists. Documentaries, though, are seldom objective and this film presents a strong case, if not for the methods of the revolution, at least for the long range goals.

This film depicts the IRA as the inevitable result of a nation backed into a corner by imperialist exploitation. It traces 300 years of ruthless colonization, servitude and degradation by the deaf, blind and apathetic Imperial England.

The Patriot Game portrays the British as a bunch of hard-headed capitalists doggedly hanging on to a country that will stop at nothing to attain its well-deserved freedom.

In a comparison of the press conference footage of the British bureaucrats and the footage of IRA members, one feels that this comparison is indeed fair and only slightly slanted. The documentary photography of Bloody Sunday, the first time the British army used live arms, and Bloody Friday show the British soldiers in a very bad light also.

These scenes and others show them to be far from the peacekeepers they are made out to be by the English government. They are accused of being robbers, vandals and murderers whose sole intent is to drive the Irish spirit of freedom to its knees.

The Patriot Game incorporates some of the best documentary hand-held photography seen in a long time. The film stock has created a bleak, black and white pall, and the filmwork gives a sometimes surreal, sometimes all too real, horror to the riot and bombing scenes.

The camera seems to be engulfed in the maelstrom of running soldiers, exploding Molotov cocktails, and flying rocks. One shot is filmed entirely through a mud and water splashed lens, adding to the grimness considerably.

Even in the intense confusion of death, beatings and explosions, the image remains steady and clear as if never to allow the audience to detach itself or shrink away to the comfort of distance.

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