

POETS ' CORNER

Our President has suggested that there be a poetry page featuring '33 poets and has asked that I be its curator. Why me? Probably to mis-direct responsibility for any clunkers that may appear here from his head to mine. Certainly not because of any talent I might have either as a critic or, as you will presently see, as a poet.

And why a poetry page? Well, we have some known talent in the class, and bearing in mind the innate modesty of our classmates, a likely hidden wealth of bashful poets may have been waiting all these years to say, "I thought you'd never ask". So send us your best and at the same time snitch on any other '33'ers known to be dragging their metric feet.

To me, poetry, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. If it rings a bell—because I like its rhythm, rhyming, imagery, thought or emotional charge—it's poetry, even though it's prose. If I dislike its stiff form, contrived rhyming, remote allusions or obscure meaning—it ain't! For example, if I happen to like Ogden Nash:

"The Lord in his wisdom made the fly
and then forgot to tell us why."

or "The cow is of the bovine ilk;
One end is moo, the other milk."

To me it's poetry; to you, perhaps, Nash trash.

Classmate **Lew Thomas**, whose introduction appears with an essay elsewhere in this issue, in addition to his many other talents, is well known as a poet. (See Profiles, *The New Yorker*-1/2/78). The following poem was published previously in that magazine.

—*Curly Marsh*

ON INSECTS

As they pass in the labyrinthine buried walks
Of their interminable nests beneath the mounds
Of farfetched twigs, the earnest ants
Stop jerkily, confront each other, and then touch.
Touch, touch, they say, here is myself
And that is you, or, put it in another way,
Here's you, and that encased in your black carapace
Is me. Touch. Touch.

The bees

Fill up their time with similar small talk.
It is epiphany to dance the route
To Sunday morning's aster levulose,
But this is seldom. Most of what the hive
Contains is vibratory small talk. Touch.
It is in contact that we maintain
And pass along our life.
Touch.
Live again.

—*Lewis Thomas*

Our classmate, **Philip C. Horton** spent most of his life in various literary activities (see Memorials, PAW 1/24/90), including an early stint as curator at the Widener Library, Harvard. At Princeton he was editor of the Nassau Lit and contributed many poems and short stories. Strangely, after he left Princeton he wrote no more poetry, at least not for publication.

The sonnet below appeared in the Nassau Lit in January 1930, and reveals Phil's love of nature, so evident in many of his poems. The subject here, the sadness in the loss of a friend—long gone, is a more familiar emotion for us today, long past our teens.

TO

My friend, I'm coming back again to you,
 Who lie beneath the cedars in the sun
 With lids half-closed to see the bright light spun
 In shimmering webs of color; or with two
 Dark eyes alight to feel the breathless blue
 Immensity of sky and sea possess
 Your grasping soul in vast deep loveliness—
 Oh, friend, I'm coming back to you !
 And shall we take the old remembered way
 Down through the shady quarry where the pale
 White birches gleam with lissome forms of grace,
 Like weary wood-nymphs resting from their play;
 Then up the crumbling side of dusty shale
 To clamber to a high and windy place.

And will you lead me to the seat of stone
 Whence drops the cliff down to the water's edge,
 And fragrant cedars point their dark brusque wedge
 Against the limpid sky; where all alone
 The sea gull cries and high flung waves are blown
 Against the rocks below? Oh say no word !
 For I will understand as if I heard
 You say: this is my sacredest—my own.
 But we shall sit in silence at your shrine,
 So much of us a part of sea and sky
 We need not ask the other's heart to know.
 Break not my dream and lay your hand on mine,
 Else I shall leave you with a broken cry.
 Oh friend, friend, you died so long ago.

—*Philip C. Horton*

The following is included to encourage you amateur poets to take advantage of this platform. Its author may be characterized as a versifier, a rhymers, or, perish the thought, as a poetaster.

But then again, somebody may like it. If so, at least to him, it's poetry—and I'm a poet.

BERLIN WALL

Monument to a faulty creed,
It stood to rupture natural ties,
To celebrate a godless breed
Whose dream of freedom slowly dies.

Daring the lie that might makes right,
Unhappy masses come awake,
And human spirits flaming bright,
Smash the wall—for freedom's sake !

Can any doubt that human kind,
Despite its tragedy and strife,
Moves ever on and up to find
A better way to better life?

—*Theron L. Marsh*

Also published in the Nassau Lit in 1930 was a poem by classmate **George Arms**. I talked to George, whose poetic output, like Phil Horton's, ceased with graduation. But his literary career has continued as an author, professor of English and department head at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

"NOBLE NUMBER"

I kissed a woman, thirty-one;
She pinched my cheek and tweaked my ear.
It seemed to me the greatest fun
Until I had kissed you, my dear.
How little knew you what you'd done
By loving in your sixteenth year!