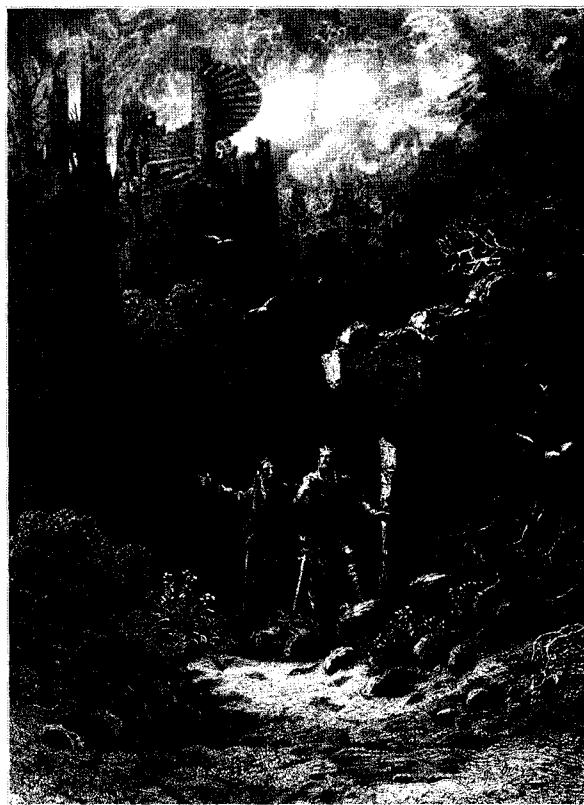


Gone to Earth

***Nothing that was worthy in
the past departs; no truth or
goodness ever realized by
man ever dies, or can die.***

- Thomas Carlyle



King Arthur, guided by Merlin, in Gustave Doré's illustration

Late May brought the terrible news of the death of Georg Bernhard Tennyson, known to California Political Review readers since 1989 as "Criticus," his every-issue column supplying a light-hearted break in the often difficult and all-too-serious politics that is this journal's primary concern. His "Arts & Culture" entries, for all their humor, often touched the deeper, more decisive human issues CPR's straightforward political journalism could only hint about. Their overall optimism was certainly of conservatism's essence, registering our knowledge that, with God in His Heaven, all would eventually be right with the world (even if later rather than sooner) for those that keep the faith, poor stumbling humanity's best efforts to end us all over a cliff notwithstanding.

As a tribute, we publish three reminiscences of Georg by colleagues who knew him through his work with CPR, followed by a reprint of one of the earliest Criticus columns.

Tennyson Reads Tennyson

Andrew W. Zepeda

Georg Tennyson was one of the last of the truly literate academics and just a pleasure to be with. I first encountered Georg when I was a student at Thomas Aquinas College in the Pleistocene Epoch when that school was located in Ma-

libu Canyon. Georg was invited to the Friday night lecture series (which were usually quite philosophical or theological). His performance was entitled "Tennyson Reads Tennyson." There was no lecture. Georg simply read from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, continuing for well over two hours.

These lectures, typically, lasted 90 minutes, and were followed by a break for coffee and cookies and, finally, the lecturer would face a philosophical interrogation during question and answer. Also typically, these second sessions were the province of the diehards, with the tutors often staying along with a few students while everyone else slipped off campus for beer and whatever. Not so when Georg read Tennyson. He had everyone spellbound. It was a popular act and he was invited back a second time during my matriculation to an identical reception. He was onto something. We had forgotten poetry and, when exposed to it, we found ourselves fascinated.

Years later I met Georg for the first time at a Christmas Party for *California Political Review* writers and editors. By then I had become a fan of his back-of-the-volume critical musings. He covered whatever he wanted to cover. He gave battle to political correctness by

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ridiculing it with his wit. How he found some of these bizarre stories always intrigued me. Where does one have to go to pick up all these cultural oddities? How many obituaries must one read? I had become a Constant Reader (as Georg referred to his fan base) and I would tell *CPR*'s editor that, to sell subscriptions, simply hand out copies of Georg's columns because they alone were worth the subscription price.

More recently, I asked Georg to consider reading poetry to high school students at St. Monica Academy in Pasadena, a school formed by several like-minded parents to provide their children a more traditional, classical education. He graciously accepted and motored out to Pasadena in late April of this year.

I never spoke to him afterwards although I meant to thank him. But I learned from the headmistress that he thoroughly enjoyed reading poetry to the young people. He commented that that school and its students were like those he remembered in the schools of his childhood. He offered to return for the fall semester to read again. While we were scheduling his visit, he asked whether it would be appropriate to read some humorous verse as well as more serious poems. I told him that would be fine. And my children said they got a kick out of his selections, which included Dorothy Parker. What showed through it all was his sincere desire to interest these children in poetry, something he really loved. And he succeeded. Those students will be praying for him at their morning assembly. *Requiescat in pacem.*

Ask Georg

William E. Saracino

In his magnificent biography of Winston Churchill, author William Manchester writes that "men who consider themselves indispensable almost never are." Georg Bernhard Tennyson never considered himself indispensable, but in many ways and to many people he was just that.

California Political Review will, I suspect, eventually find a quality writer to fill the space once occupied by Georg's column. But that writer won't be Georg Tennyson, the turn of phrase and rapier wit won't be Georg Tennyson's, and to those of us who knew, read, and appreciated him the difference will be stark.

I have lived almost five full decades now, and to resort to an over-used phrase, Georg was one of a kind. He was a true Renaissance man: educated, cultured, entertaining, and kind. Whenever I came across a ques-

William E. Saracino is a member of California Political Review's Editorial Board.

tion to which I didn't know the answer, the first thought that almost always came to mind was, "Call Georg; he'll know." He usually knew the answer off the top of his head, and if he didn't it normally took him no longer than 10 minutes of research to find it.

But Georg's encyclopedic knowledge was the frosting on the cake, at least for me. What made Georg so special was his wit, conviviality, and kindness. Many times over the past years, *CPR* editor John Kurzweil and I would meet at Georg's house in the evening of the day that the newest issue of the magazine was delivered unto the tender mercies of the post office.

Georg was the perfect host, having a stellar array of cheeses, dips, crackers, and munchies out to complement the Bombay gin (I think he got especially for me), and the scotch and beer he and the editor imbibed.

The conversation there was rarely about the magazine. Rather it covered topics from the Italian postal service and railway system to arcane British authors (Georg, after all was said and done, was a brilliant professor of English), to various aspects of the USC vs. UCLA rivalry to every topic under the sun. But even when Georg was showering insults on my Trojans or anything Italian, there was always a twinkle in his eye, a muted laugh in his delivery, and you knew it was all in great fun. How I treasure and shall miss those evenings.

"Great fun" is how I will most remember him. One of the smartest, kindest, and most entertaining characters it's been my pleasure to know. When my time comes to shuffle off this mortal coil (Georg will approve of my use of this phrase instead of something mundane like "my time to die"), I will know I've reached home safely when I hear, in perfectly accented British, "My dear Saracen, would you like lemon or lime in your gin and tonic?" God bless you Georg. Keep the gin well chilled please.

Too short a time

John Kurzweil

This July/August *California Political Review* marks only the second *CPR* issue since this journal's founding that does not include an original "Arts & Culture" column by Georg Bernhard Tennyson. He and Bill Saracino were the only writers to be with *CPR* from its first (prototype) issue, cobbled together in the fall of 1989. And Georg was the only writer (including the editor) to contribute original copy to every issue (save one) from that first number to May/June of this year — 97 Criticus col-

John Kurzweil is CPR's editor.

umns in all. The notion of putting the book together without him is, for me, just simply unimaginable.

I met Georg in 1989 after inquiring at the old *Claremont Review*, in which I had seen his articles, about how to contact him. I was looking for writers for the political periodical I was trying to get off the ground and was especially interested in adding literary/cultural coverage and commentary to contrast with the journal's primary content, hard-hitting politics. In addition, I wanted a substantial (some readers thought — some still think — too substantial) participation by *CPR* in cultural controversies. I have long suspected that the real battles are fought within the culture, and only later, after the issue is decided, are the results publicly posted, so to speak, in the form of political trends this way or that.

A little to my surprise, given the wobbliness of the not even yet begun venture, Georg proved not only highly accessible but eager to be part of the new *California Review* (to which name we soon added *Political* to avoid conflict with an existing publication).

I envisioned a grand scheme for *CPR*, re-creating the conservative intellectual movement's thought- and controversy-provoking three-way alliance/tension of traditional conservatives, libertarians, and anti-communists — the intellectual triad that had propelled *National Review* at its founding in the 1950s. At various times, I spoke with libertarians and former leftists now fighting their old allies, searching for a new generation's James Burnham and Frank Meyer. In my mind, Georg Tennyson was to be our Russell Kirk.

Of course, fortunately for *CPR*, all the people I spoke with and who were kind enough to contribute to the magazine resolutely ignored all my talk of constructing an ersatz California *NR* 30 years, 3,000 miles, and an eon of political developments removed from the original Bill Buckley enterprise. G.B. Tennyson, especially, with his characteristic cheerfulness and kindness toward me, set about being himself, contributing a natural flow of inspiration and cognition entirely his own. Not a hint of Mr. Kirk (unless it was in Georg's own seemingly inexhaustible store of knowledge) but, instead, nearly 100 columns of purely Critical wit and wisdom. If George recalls anyone from the old *NR*, I would nominate Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, about whom Buckley once remarked: "He is equipped to lecture on everything from aardvarks to zymurgy, and will

be glad to talk to groups in German, Russian, French, Spanish, Italian, or Japanese. By special arrangement, he will learn any other language. However, for that he needs two weeks' notice."

The title of these recollections, "Gone to Earth," reprises a heading Georg chose for one of his periodic "necrology" columns covering, as he put it, "the odd, the offbeat, the eccentric." (He led that column with an "Inscription on a tombstone: 'I told you I was ill.'")

He liked remarkable people, not surprisingly, being one himself. "Requiem for a Fräulein," the Criticus reprint on the

next page following, was one of my favorites, and featured an illustration by Mrs. Criticus, his beloved Elizabeth Tennyson, whose death in the mid-1990s Georg never quite got over — well, honestly, that he never got over at all. Finally, we reprise one of his "Watched Words" sidebars, featuring another drawing by Elizabeth T., happily skewering political

correctness, Georg's all-time favorite target.

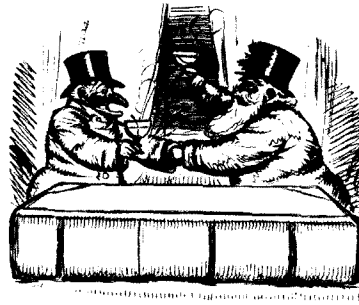
G. B. TENNYSON appreciated the aesthetic richness of life in all its variety of peoples, languages, histories, politics, cultures, religions, literatures, quirks, enthusiasm, ideas — the opposite of the cowardly, yet lustily boastful conformism of Dan Rather's "correct side of history." With Western elites in headlong retreat from life, Georg Tennyson reveled in the human spirit through all the ages of man. Some especially fortunate UCLA students were privileged to attend his classes in a time when too many undergraduate intellectuals are hammered into Procrustean beds of dead-headed sameness and "progressive" posturing. Georg was never bitter, finding, rather, inexhaustible comedy in the embrace of the drab that he railed against. He took to controversy like a sporting dog hearing the call of the chase, and anyone might suddenly find himself in a jolly good public donnybrook with Criticus. (I once made the mistake of suggesting privately to Georg that his beloved antebellum South had perhaps contributed tragically to its own demise, and found myself — being a son of Richmond, Virginia — tagged "Editor Scalawag" in print for the better part of a year.)

After the many years (nearly 18) of collaboration I was privileged to share with him, I hate to say goodbye, and will instead simply thank God for the too short time He blessed us with Criticus.

CPR



ARTS & CULTURE



C R I T I C U S

Pearblossom II:

Requiem for a Fräulein

BY G. B. TENNYSON

ALAS, MY fears have been realized: "Fraulein's" is no more. For more than a year the signs still stood as you approached Pearblossom from the west: "German Food — One-Half Mile — FRAULEIN'S." (No umlaut over the A to confuse the monolingual, though I shall use it hereafter when referring to the person.) The writing was in black on a yellow background, all edged in red, a foretaste of the restaurant itself. This structure was apparently designed to look like a chalet, a sharply peak-roofed building, with overhanging scalloped edges on the front of the gables, a cross between Zermatt and Hänsel and Gretel, but all of it exceedingly small and merely the front extension or add-on of a larger structure in the back that evidently served as dwelling house for the proprietress.

The gables, scallops, and the wooden edging round the building were in the same solid red that outlined the road signs. And the rest of the cottage was in the same vivid yellow that formed the basic color, while

This column, originally published in the Summer 1992 CPR, was the second in a Criticus travelogue series on California Route 138 — known as the Pearblossom Highway — an east-west route Georg often drove along the San Gabriel Mountains' northern foothills. G. B. Tennyson, it said, is professor of English at U.C.L.A. and co-editor of Nineteenth Century Literature.

the name was in stark black. Perhaps Fräulein was seeking to capture the mustard, red, and black of the German flag, a gesture that would surely be lost on most passers-by in the Mojave. Nor would they be likely to fall into the trap of thinking it the colors of the Belgian flag, which, absurdly, they also are (why couldn't a resurgent Germany have had the guts to go for the good old red, white, and black of more uncompromising memory, which was after all nothing more than the ancient colors of the German merchant marine?). Moreover, in the desert landscape, yellow, red, and black looked even more bi-zarre than the De-Zert Bi-Zarre back down the road which constant readers will recall from the previous installment as the gateway to Littlerock.

BUT YELLOW and red with touches of black Fraulein's was and remained, even during the more than a year that the "CLOSED" sign stood in the window at all hours. What had happened, one wondered. Perhaps Fräulein was on an extended trip back to the Fatherland, though surely not for any gastronomic purpose, judging from the fare she served in the past.

Now, truth to tell, I was only in Fraulein's once, but it was a revelation, albeit one having little to do with