

TRADE Winds

I HAVE JUST RETURNED from the funeral services for Harold Ross, creator, editor, and heart and soul of *The New Yorker* magazine for 26 years. Like everyone else in the overcrowded chapel, I felt that I was witnessing the final episode in a whole era of American humor—an era of which Ross was the apostle and guiding spirit. The services, conducted by the Chaplain of Yale, were brief and polite, but strangely impersonal. Most of the old friends and admirers who filled the chapel to overflowing a full hour before the ceremony was scheduled to begin had expected one of Ross's old stalwarts on the staff to speak: White or Thurber or Gibbs. All of them, however, sat mutely in the audience, too stricken to voice their grief publicly, too conscious of the void that suddenly had been left in their scheme of things. *The New Yorker's* lead piece on its lost editor will appear after this issue of SRL has gone to press, but considering the fact that it is being written by E. B. White, it is safe to assume that it will approximate perfection.

The New Yorker undoubtedly can and will prosper without Ross, but it will never be quite the same. Some departments may even improve. Motion pictures, for instance, bored him to distraction, and the page devoted to them each week was, as a result, almost unbelievably inadequate. The book section, too, has been suffering from lack of directive since Fadiman stepped out. Ross had a grievance against all Hollywoodites and book publishers, was fond of declaiming that they made fortunes by "picking his brains all the time." There was considerable evidence, it must be admitted, to support his point of view. But the sparkle of the front section of *The New Yorker*, the marvelous clarity and accuracy of its articles, and the originality, conciseness, and wit of its special features—these were the reflections of Harold Ross—Ross and the amazing little group of temperamental, supersensitive, and pernickety geniuses whom first he discovered, then transformed into his dedicated slaves. For all his crochettiness and personal idiosyncracies, Ross was without question the best damn magazine editor in the past fifty years.

The sudden death of Harold Ross, of course, will make readers view Dale Kramer's just-published "Ross and *The New Yorker*" in a different light.

On the whole, it is an affectionate and painstaking job, though the author, like so many who tried before him, never quite succeeds in pinning his subject's unique personality down on paper. Had he known that Ross would be dead within a month of the book's publication, I'm sure that Kramer, an amiable and unprejudiced critic, would have tempered some of his anecdotes and conclusions. As it stands, however, it is the best available collection of the multitude of fantastic and often apocryphal legends that people have been telling, and will continue to tell for years to come, about one of the most colorful and refreshing personalities of our time.

NOT MANY BOSSES, FORTUNATELY, possess the peculiar knack Harold Ross had for turning a serene office force into pandemonium merely by sauntering through the premises—shifting managing editors and desk space as he progressed. There does exist a whole



army of executives, however, who never have learned the vital secret for keeping their private secretaries contented. Hell hath no fury like a secretary who nurses a grievance—be it real or imaginary. Take heed, therefore, of the results of a survey conducted by the personnel manager of a big woolen company to determine what kind of bosses irritate their secretaries most. Here are the "winners"—and very much disputed champions:

1. The boss who keeps his secretary overtime without previous notice.
2. The boss who dawdles around until five P.M. and then begins the day's dictation.
3. The boss who refers to his secre-



tary as his "stenographer" and makes bad jokes about her in front of visitors.

4. The boss who marks up work that

could be corrected, and slashes a line through a four-page letter because one word is incorrectly spelled.

5. The boss who interrupts his secretary during her lunch hour, if she has stayed to eat in her office.

6. The boss who hovers over her while she is typing a letter, pointing out errors before she has a chance to notice them herself.

7. The boss who has seen too many Grade-B movies and cheap cartoons,



and believes in the motto, "Hands Across the Knee."

8. The boss who never voluntarily says, "Gosh, your letters have been immaculate lately—and done so quickly, too," or "By the way, Miss Jones, isn't this your birthday?"

9. The boss who only gives a raise after the secretary has gone through countless humiliating sessions to wangle one. This type boss is usually the one who is most apt to flash a hefty bankroll continuously before his secretary's eyes.

10. The boss who regards his secretary as general errand girl for his entire family. She is expected to devote her lunch hour—particularly when it is raining heavily—to exchanging nylon stockings for his wife, picking up theatre tickets for his mother-in-law, and going to a repair shop clear across the city to find out why his brother's 1939 Buick is still out of commission.

Do you recognize yourself in any of these categories? Me, I've got a special problem on my hands with my secretary Jezebel. Due to her unfortunate fondness for listening to television programs, she heard me assert on a "What's My Line?" session that my secretary owned "the most beautiful mink coat on Madison Avenue." Now she's trying to bludgeon me into buying her one. As Jimmy Durante would say, "What a perdicument!"...

TWO WEEKS AFTER HE HAD turned in the completed manuscript of "The Panama Canal," for the Landmark Series, author Bob Considine had an opportunity to visit the "Big Ditch" in person. After his inspection he called the officer in charge aside and said, "General, I'm afraid you'll have to make a few changes in your canal down here." "What do you mean?" bridled the General. "There are several details," explained Bob. "that don't quite jibe with the descriptions in my book."...



"Yes, I did say that about you, Marge—but I didn't say it was true!"

Apprised of the fact, by the way, that "The Panama Canal" was intended primarily for fifth-graders, Considine promptly suggested changing the title to "The Elementary Canal." . . . A new comedy act recorded a half-hour show recently for submission to a big sponsor. "But there's no audience in the studio," complained one of the comedians. "How are we gonna get laughs?" The agent said, "Don't worry. We'll tape in laughs from a Groucho Marx recording." "But won't Groucho get sore?" persisted the comic. "Nah," the agent assured him. "He doesn't know it, but we taped in his laughs from Jack Benny!" . . . Songstress Kay Carrington (wife of Composer Arthur Schwartz) computes her day-to-day check book balance with meticulous care, but for some strange reason, her end-of-the-month figures rarely agree with that of the bank. Kay had a ready explanation for her December discrepancy, however: "I just forgot to deduct last month's mistake." . . .

STUART BRENT HAS INTRODUCED a new feature in his bookshop at 670 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, that is paying big dividends. Doubtlessly spurred by the fact that his wife has played the piano with several major orchestras, and that her partner is a former student of Schnabel, he has built a room fifty by thirteen at the rear of his shop and instituted a series of concerts and recitals that invariably are

Standing Room Only. On its way in—and out—the audience buys plenty of books and records. When the Fine Arts Quartet played at Brent's shop he sold forty of their long-playing records plus \$200 worth of books. There is still plenty of business around for the bookseller who has the will and brains to go out and get it!

MEYER WAGMAN, THE TYPOGRAPHER, has a nine-year-old son, Michael, who is another near-prodigy at the piano, with a general I.Q. to match. At a party the other evening at the Wagmans the conversation drifted around to Gertrude Stein, and one guest thought he'd test young Michael's knowledge. "Mike," he demanded, "when I say a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose, what does it mean to you?" Michael promptly answered "Whiskey."

—BENNETT CERF.

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The Saturday Review of Literature

The Faith of An Historian

JAMES T. SHOTWELL



—Conway Studios.
James T. Shotwell

EDITOR'S NOTE: In these columns last week Edgar Ansel Mowrer, Pulitzer Prize-winning foreign correspondent, stated a journalist's faith in the future of the human race ("A Good Time to Be Alive"). As a companion piece

SRL this week presents the credo of one of America's most distinguished historians, James T. Shotwell, president-emeritus of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Bruce professor-emeritus of the history of international relations at Columbia University. Dr. Shotwell's books include "The History of History" and "War As An Instrument of National Policy."

WHEN I compare the world of today—its desperate confusion, the fears that mock its hopes, its sense of powerlessness in the possession of power—with the quiet, isolated world of the nineteenth century in which I grew up, the perspective of the years takes on incredible dimensions of distance. Although the signs of coming change were all about us, most of our lives still followed the pattern set for us by the past. Progress was made with increasing tempo in the arts and sciences, but only at such speed as to enrich without unduly disrupting the heritage of the past. Life was still dominated, as it had been from the beginning, by the iron law of repetition forced upon it by the tyranny of the calendar, so long

as each one had to meet his recurrent needs by his own effort. Life on the farm still followed the routine of ancient times as set forth in Hesiod's "Works and Days" or Cato's directions for good farming. Town life, except in the few big cities, responded to much the same rhythm and kept largely to old, established ways.

It was a world of familiar things; upon the whole a friendly one, in spite of the fact that most people worked hard and long. For church and school taught that the pursuit of happiness lay in the performance of duty, a comfortable doctrine as long as duty consisted in doing the things that brought immediate rewards in the good opinion of one's neighbors. When the whistle blew at six o'clock for the twelve-hour day at the mill, the workman knew that the farmer was already at his chores, and the level of life was kept even for town and farm. The accepted things were done in the accepted way.

We are now so far from that repetitive, static world that it is almost impossible to realize how near in time to it we still are—not merely where time has stood still in isolated, backward parts of the country, but where it has moved most swiftly. My own grandparents hewed their farms from the wilderness. Every hundred acres, the unit of pioneer farming, was a self-contained economy, using the word as Aristotle used it, to describe household management. Only, Aristotle had in mind a much more complicated, more highly developed so-

ciety than that of this simple way of living—the kind of estate, for example, that George Washington owned at Mount Vernon, with all the complications of slavery and access to more than local markets. The range of market towns for the early settlers was not over a dozen miles, and each settlement lived a life apart. Politics intruded only a little into it, because it dealt only with a limited range of questions, leaving the most pressing ones to the local community. Party loyalties were inherited, embodying past outlooks or prejudices and only changing when the structure of society was shaken by crises. The Founding Fathers held a place alongside the Major Prophets; there could be differences in interpreting them but no difference in attitude towards them, for orthodoxy was sound politics.

THE reminder of these things, so near and yet so far off, is not a mere excursion from realities today, however it may stir nostalgic memories. For it is against that background that the central fact in contemporary civilization becomes clear, the change from a static to a dynamic world. Greater than all the achievements of science in discovery and invention is the difference in the nature of its processes from those of the pre-scientific ages. They have broken in upon the endless rhythm that repeated age-old ways of doing things, and created a world that is forever new. For every advance in science causes a displacement in society, which in turn calls for new in-

ventions and discoveries with further displacements. The process is one of geometric progression. This



BOLT