

The Birmingham Eccentric

BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN

Thursday, April 30, 1959

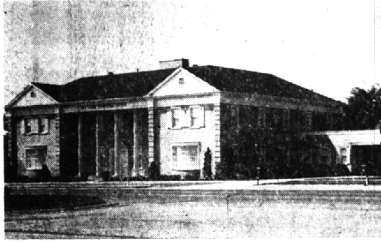
SECTION
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Thrill and industry, when coupled together, have been the basic foundation of success—whether it concern one individual or an entire nation. Without a willingness to work, one produces nothing of value; though one may work hard, unless he practices reasonable thrift, his compensation disappears through expenditures, some of which obviously include extravagance.

Airman in Norfolk

John Czarnowski, airman, USN, son of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Czarnowski of Fernleigh street, Birmingham, is serving with Fleet Airborne Electronics Training unit, Atlantic, at the naval air station, Norfolk, Va.

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BOOKS AND REVIEWS

Borstal Boy

By Brendan Behan, 365 pp. New York. Alfred A. Knopf, \$4.50.

Reviewed by HERBERT FISHER

With this autobiographical report of life in an English reform school for delinquents (called Borstal Institutions), another first-rate Irish writer thunders to the scene. Brendan Behan—robust, hard-drinking, hard-living child of the sod—explodes into prominence, inheritor of the tradition which produced Joyce, Spence, O'Casey and Yeats.

Behan was born 36 years ago in Dublin. At 13 he joined the I.R.A. At 16 he was captured by the Liverpool police, proud possessor of one of the I.R.A.'s death-dealing bombs. For the next ten years he was in and out of English Borstals. This is the story of that experience.

THE BOOK has two significant merits: First, as a tale of prison

life, it ranks along with E. E. Cummings' "The Enormous Room" in capturing the raw experience of life "inside." Second, as the expression of a bawdy, lusty, no-pulled-punches style, it brings a rich new talent to attention.

Behan makes no compromises in reporting the language of the Liverpool Borstal. As he puts it: "Sure I know the language is terrible, but that's the talk of the working classes in Liverpool, Belfast, Glasgow, Dublin—all over. It's good writing about working people in somebody else's language, is it not?"

There is no suggestion of the philosopher or moralist in Behan. Certainly he is a man with no regrets. He seeks neither to justify nor to explain his role as that of the I.R.A. He is not troubled by motivation, by the why of things. He is a short, an adventurer, a vigorous explorer of the sensuous life, uncomplicated by any brooding over the "condition of man."

HERE is unabashed reporting in the best tradition of Irish art and vitality.

Mine Enemy Grows Older

By Alexander King, 374 pp. New York. Simon & Schuster, \$4.50.

Reviewed by ROBIN BAHR

The ads for "Mine Enemy Grows Older" have been running "Who is Alexander King?" A good question. Few had heard of Alexander King, even fewer had read his autobiography, until his first appearance on the Jack Paar television show. Now "Mine Enemy Grows Older" is a best seller, Alexander King is a regular guest on Paar's show, and Alexander King is

launching his own television show. The surprising thing is not so much the overnight acclaim, but the fact that Alexander King has so long eluded public imagination.

He is a man who seems to have done just about everything, been everywhere and known everyone. At one time or another in his long and varied career he was a book illustrator, editor of the theatrical publication, "Stage," editor of "Life," editor-in-chief of "American," and author of movies, plays and television serials.

HE BECAME, when occasion demanded, an eminent Latin scholar with a translation of Ovid. He never knew any Latin. And he was once nine artists simultaneously, a feat necessitated when an ad agency threw a party for the nine artists who had turned in nine totally different works of art for a campaign.

He has worked all over the U. S., traveled throughout the world and speaks eight languages. His collection of friends (and enemies) is as remarkable and assorted as you might ever find—from Henry Luce, William Faulkner, and Eugene O'Neill to Nathan Garfein, a Jewish sexton from whom he learned something about faith.

KING chooses to tell his story in a light vein. He is completely honest, utterly frank, and always funny, but underneath his off-hand, quick-witted, sometimes biting commentary is a great deal of feeling, warmth and sensitivity.

He lampoons people and ideas, but because he still believes enough in the ideal to feel cheated when reality falls short. He is bitter at times because he is still vulnerable. He is particularly harsh and funny in describing himself. A serious kidney condition which led to drug addiction becomes, under his treatment, hilarious. The story of his treatment and fellow inmates at Lexington narcotics prison is also a riot, though you know in reality it was a horrible, nightmarish experience. There is never an ounce of self-pity and barely a mention of the fact that he broke this addiction.

THE MOST recognizable and recurring thing about King's life is its complete unorthodoxy. Of King himself, you can be sure of his unlimited curiosity, his immediate response to the moment and his passionate love of life. In spite

of the pain and grief, it is a wonderful life story—exciting, amusing, inspiring, and moving.

Supremanship

By Stephen Potter, 128 pp. New York. Random House, \$3.00.

Reviewed by FRED BAHR

Stephen Potter, at his not quite best, is still great. Stephen Potter. While "Supremanship" may not, as a whole measure, up to "Life-manship," "Gamesmanship," and other Potter books, there are certain portions sufficiently super-packed with "ploys" to satisfy any devotee.

Potter, for those not acquainted with prior books, is an Englishman who successfully proves 1) the British do have a sense of humor and 2) the British sense of humor

is funny. This book is the latest of his textbooks on how to be a colossal fraud. By writing in a straightforward, almost scientific, style about various kinds of trivia, Potter pokes fun that is dry and yet kind.

IT IS hard to say why "Supremanship" is "not quite." Potter is at his best when making the commonplace slightly ridiculous. Here, as in the section on "Town versus Country," he sometimes makes the slightly ridiculous slightly more ridiculous and out-plays himself.

However, most of the book, for example, "British Car Play" and the short paragraph on "First-name-manship," needs no apology. If Potter falls short, it is only in relation to his own previously established standards.

Looking for a pet for the children? See the Classified columns under "Pets for Sale."

Name Chairman, New Committee In C D Program

Emergency welfare services of the Civil Defense program have taken "a step forward" with the appointment of Dr. Leif Hougen, superintendent of West Bloomfield schools, as chairman of the lodging branch committee for Oakland county. A committee has been appointed to assist Dr. Hougen. Included are Cramer Partridge, president of the Pontiac Real Estate Board; Right Rev. Mgr. Eugene Paddock of Holy Name church, Birmingham; Mrs. Virginia Warren, coordinator of emergency welfare services for Oakland county, acting ex-officio on the committee; and Peter Tarapata of Smith-Tarapata-McMahon of Birmingham. The committee will study proper allocation of space in buildings of all types for shelter purposes.

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