

# Novelist Characterizes Writer's Life

**By EVELINE ORN**  
**Art Editor**

For Birmingham novelist Sylvia Cooper, an interview was a slightly uncomfortable experience — she felt she was on the wrong side of the notepad.

The situation seemed to remind her of the days when she did feature-writing for three New York newspapers: The New York Journal and The New York American (before they merged) and The New York Daily News.

THEY WERE hard years for her—she had three children to raise and support, and it was during the depression.

Partly because she needed money, partly because she had an almost compulsive need to write, she began her first novel, "Prelude to Departure," which was followed by two more, "Set Free" and "Attention: Miss Wells."

Her other two books, "Thunderstone" and "The Self-Made Man," were written after she came to Birmingham.

TALKING WITH Mrs. Cooper seemed to be a conversational tug-of-war: you wondered who was finding out more about whom as she lazed her way through a myriad of subjects with one eye always sharply focused on the reactions of the person listening to her.

One matter Mrs. Cooper discussed was her "sour" theory of personality or character.

"THERE IS an inner core to a

person which stays the same—but the symptoms of what that core is can change... The adult is the boy plus all sorts of encrustations," she said.

"I had an early passion for words," she said. "...I decided I was going to write when I was about 12. It's a great advantage if you can make up your mind when you're young."

MRS. COOPER (whose maiden name was Sylvia Grace) was graduated from Brearley School in New York and began three years of study at Radcliffe College when she was 15 years old.

She married, had three children (her fourth is by a later marriage), left her husband, took the children and went to New York, where—for about 11 years—she did newspaper and magazine writing and public relations work, besides which she wrote her first three novels.

"I loved it. I adored it! I'm accurate and careful—and I have a passion for animals," she said.

"I'm sure I could leap up against a tiger and it wouldn't knowingly hurt me... I wouldn't think of wearing a fur coat!"

"ARTISTS ARE abnormal," noted Mrs. Cooper.

"They can't be good neighbors or members of the community," she said. "They can't help out on a picnic—they have to turn their back on these things in order to do their work."

Mrs. Cooper's current project is Joel Greenberg of Farmington. He is 20 years old and a student at the University of Michigan. She

has several of his poems thumbtacked to the bulletin board in her upstairs "office" where she does her writing.

"PEOPLE JUST sort of swim into and out of your life because you have something to offer them at that point, a cup of coffee—or silence," she observed.

Another of her favorite writers is Birmingham's S. L. A. Marshall.

"I think he has written the best book in the English language which I have ever read, 'The River and the Gauntlet,'" she said.

"That book has such architecture, such tremendous architecture!"

THE NOVEL is her favorite form of literature, both to read (See NOVELIST, 3-D)

THE BIRMINGHAM ECCENTRIC, BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN  
April 25, 1963 SEC. D



Novelist Sylvia Cooper writes first in longhand, using a lapboard, and then types what she has written. Behind her in her "office" is a bulletin board on which she posts poems, pictures and clippings. The office is also a favorite napping place for a smoke-colored Angora cat named Gordie Howe Cooper. The Coopers live at 383 Elgrim, Birmingham.

## Workshop On Opera To Begin

The Birmingham - Bloomfield Committee of the Detroit Grand Opera Association is ready again for the second year to present the "Anatomy of Opera Mark II" workshop series at the Baldwin Public Library.

The series will be five morning sessions April 29 and 30 and May 1, 2 and 3 plus an evening lecture on April 30 on the opening night opera "Otello".

Registration has been taking place at Grinnell Opera Table.

THE AREA chairman for the Committee will introduce the lecturers.

On Monday, "Tosca" with Mrs. Robert Leggett, chairman of Royal Oak Grand Opera Committee, a lecturer will be introduced by Mrs. John French of Bloomfield Hills.

On Tuesday, "La Traviata" with Lloyd Murphy, Detroit Conservatory of Music and Marygrove College, will be introduced by Mrs. Raymond Perry, chairman of the Birmingham-Bloomfield committee.

On Tuesday evening, "Otello," with Marvin Fossenkemper, Detroit Conservatory of Music and Merry College, will be introduced by Mrs. Theodore Yntema, chairman of the women's committee of the Detroit Grand Opera Association.

On Wednesday, "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg," with Bertha Seifert, head of music department, Kingswood School, will be introduced by Mrs. Carl Sundberg, Bloomfield Hills.

Next Thursday, "Caravaria" (See OPERA, 3-D)

## Exhibit Committee For Arts Festival Begins on Tasks

The challenge of keeping tabs on more than 2,000 paintings and art objects does not face Mrs. Robert B. Bender.

As head of activities at the Birmingham Art Center during the 1963 Birmingham Arts Festival, June 10-23, this is the number of entries she anticipates in response to the festival's juried exhibition and artists' market.

Mrs. Bender, who lives in Bloomfield Township, hopes to have 3,000 copies of the prospectus mailed to Southeastern Michigan artists within the next two weeks.

MEANWHILE, chairman for specific festival events to take place at the Art Center, 1616 S. Cranbrook Road, were announced by Mrs. Bender.

Co-chairmen for the exhibition and jury committee are Mrs. Eliot Robinson, 672 Linden and Herbert H. Gardner, Jr., 4368 West Orchard Hill Drive, both of Birmingham.

The informal artists' market — which last year handled 1400 items

## Local Film Firm's Movies to Be Shown At Film Festival

Three motion pictures produced by Paragon Productions, Bloomfield Hills, have been nominated for showing at the fifth annual American Film Festival to be held in New York City next week.

The Bloomfield Hills firm specializes in the production of industrial, public relations and educational films.

The three selected for the contest are "Meeting the Challenge," done for Fisher Body Co., "This is God's World," done for the National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church and "The Dancer of the Americas," done for Both News-papers, Inc.

## Canticle's Premiere

The world premiere of "The Canticle of the Sun," composed by Noel LeMay, music director at Our Lady Queen of Marys and an instructor at the Birmingham Conservatory of Music, will take place at 8:30 p.m. Sunday in the Grosse Pointe War Memorial auditorium. The work will be performed by the Madrigal Club of Detroit.

## Franklin Library's Past Has Its Storybook Turns

Editor's Note: This week is National Library Week, and libraries large and small throughout the nation have as their slogan, "Reading Is The Fifth Freedom—Enjoy It!"

**By NITA HARD**  
**Special Writer**

The private life of the Franklin library is a real love story. In a quarter of a century it has

had a whole bevy of lovely heroines, several breath-taking rescues from the brink of disaster and though nobody knows yet quite how the story will go, it could have a lively happily-ever-after ending. A few new heroes are beginning to emerge as the plot thickens.

ONCE UPON a time (not so very long ago) it was just a modest, little-noticed book tucked on the rear of a real estate office.

It shivered in the winter-time and huddled its books around a small oil heater, smiling bravely to the few who furtively out on its nearly secret entrance.

A timid, gentle young thing, the library had a kind and generous "owner," George Wallington Smith. Under his protective wing, the library always had a roof over its head and a place to stay.

Well-bred, and well-read it was reared with dignity and determined discretion. Poor but proud, it kept itself neatly patched, well-scrubbed and sweetly grateful to a few dozen benign families who supported it annually and passively.

THE LIBRARY occasionally summoned up enough audacity to have a bridge party or pink tea in order to buy a gallon of paint, or a few new books—but not very often. A delicate creature, it blushed easily and learned to live frugally, even fearfully.

The frail little reject grew inconspicuously. It gradually began to burst at the seams with tired old volumes, reluctant to throw them away for fear of offending, desperately scraping together pennies for a nominal number of new books.

Shyly, it kept a watchful eye on the increasing numbers of new families and fervently prayed that somehow they'd discover the small doorway shielded by overgrown bushes.

Then, one day, the library stirred from its day-dreams. The old Franklin church was up for sale. This brought rushing to its head. Maybe, oh maybe. With inspired vigor, the library marshalled its full strength to persuade the village fathers to consider its purchase. The proposition was placed on the ballot and defeated.

(See LIBRARY, 7-D)

## A Swingin' Play

Every hear of a carnival without a merry-go-round? "Nope!," said Village Players' set designer, Russ Dunbar (on left). "Build them!" And so they did—not one merry-go-round, but three (of the turntable variety) for Players' production of "Thurber Carnival" to be presented May 3, 4, 5, 10 and 11 at their Chestnut Street playhouse. Built under the supervision of Stage Manager John Hall, the three, seven-foot diameter turntables have enabled the Players to emulate the staging techniques used in the original Broadway production and to pull some surprise backstage antics, as Barbara Harned is about to learn. Thirty-two different sets will whirl into view while the nine-member cast, directed by Bill McCall, explores James Thurber's mad, merry world of words and music. This will be Village Players' final production of the season as they close out their 40th anniversary year.

## FROM THE BOOKCASE:

# 'Compass' Points to Delightful

POINTS OF MY COMPASS, by E. B. White; Harper, 1962; New York; 240 pp., \$4.

Reviewed by MARY McSHERRY MARKER

In a better world, the publication of a book by E. B. White would be the sign of dancing in the streets and cheering on every corner.

Even in the pedestrian world we must inhabit, his words are celebrated according to our less colorful moods: they always make the best seller list, and they always stay there for a good, long time.

To anyone who has read even one of White's essays, there is no puzzle in his popularity. To his readers, White is far more than a writer. He is their mentor and their sharpest, clearest eyes. He is the perceptive voice that nudges them into an acknowledgment of human absurdity and an enthusiasm for human dignity.

He is the glorious master of genteel nonsense. He is the unabashed wearer of his heart on his pen. And, of course, he is the greatest stylist in American letters.

"THE POINTS of My Compass," E. B. White's latest book—and now there be many more—brings to the receptive reader all the gifts of White's previous writing.

Subtitled "Letters for the East, the West, the North, the South," it brings the reader glimpses from White's small world and musings about his—and our—large one. But principally it gives what White always gives: the honest picture of a man trying to come to terms with the complexity that we call life.

LIKE ALL imaginative persons, White finds even the minor aspects of life complex. Or perhaps it is that he realizes that there are no minor aspects of life. So Freddy the dachshund—who used to lie on White's bed—leads naturally and easily to a consideration of political bedfellows.

The paucity of nesting places for doves in today's city suggests to him our need to cultivate the symbolic dove that there may be tomorrow's city.

The purchase of a puppy starts his inquiry into beginnings, and before we know it—almost, it

seems, before White knows it—he is mulling over Spring and the memory of other Springs and the realization that each Spring—and its viewers—must pass.

SO IT GOES—musing on one thing, White finds himself musing on another and another. And the reader moves along, musing, too, smiling when White smiles, looking where White looks—and sometimes seeing so clearly at second hand that the view almost breaks the heart.

This sharing of self with reader is, of course, the key stone of the personal essay. It may also be the clue to why this literary form, once so widely practiced, is sadly neglected today. Contemporary writers generally hide behind the third person, perhaps fearing to reveal themselves in the big I, perhaps wisely suspecting that they have too little to reveal.

E. B. White, a man of parts and a man of heart, has never had to entertain such fears. His essays have the reader's voice through a man's inquiring spirit. He points out the landscape with phrases as wry as cocked eyebrows. And though the reader finds himself thinking time and again, "I wish I'd said that," he finishes the trip not in envy, but in admiration and puts down the book, a happier and richer man. Who can ask for more than that?

## Save To Buy Your Family The Home They Want!

Lots of folks are saving for the down payment on a home in a savings account with us. They know that's the safest, fastest way to accumulate the cash they need. It's easy too. Just set aside whatever you can regularly. We give big dividends regularly too. Our mortgage rates and terms are always tailored to fit your budget. We invite you to come in soon and talk to one of our helpful officers.

### Capitol SAVINGS & LOAN ASSOCIATION

EL 6-7770 27215 Southfield Rd. at 11 Mile Rd. KE 7-6125

Detroit office, 234 State St., WO 2-1078

Compounded Paid Quarterly On Savings

CURRENT RATE (Per Annum)

# 4 1/4 %