

Remarks by Elvis J. Stahr  
Indiana Authors' Day Awards Luncheon  
Frangipani Room

Sunday, May 7, 1967 - 12:30 p.m. (Reception in East Lounge followed  
by luncheon)

Thank you, Professor Mitchner. May I add a brief but warm word of personal welcome to all of you and especially to those of you who have travelled some miles to get here for the Eighteenth Annual Indiana Authors' Day Awards Luncheon.

(As Bob has told you) or (As you probably know) Indiana Authors' Day is usually scheduled to coincide with the beginning of National Library Week in honor of you librarians who help authors get their books into readers' hands. Since it was impossible to manage such a nice arrangement this year, I checked the calendar to see if there were a propriety in this substitute date. The fact that today is Mother-in-Law Day didn't seem particularly pertinent, and I passed over National Disc Jockey Week and National Insect Electrocutor Week. However, recalling Goethe's ideal of the cultural life, I rather liked the association with today's start of National Music Week. You remember Goethe's words: "One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and, if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words."

Two recent events of special interest to Hoosier authors and librarians should be mentioned, lest you missed them. Mrs. Jeannette Covert Nolan, twice an Authors' Day Award-winner and five times a member of the Indiana Writers' Conference staff, is now Dr. Nolan by virtue of the Doctor of Letters degree conferred on her at our Founders' Day ceremony last Wednesday. (If Mrs. Nolan is present, ask her to stand.)

Also, the March, 1967, issue of The Indiana University Bookman, a copy of which just came to my desk, is devoted to "Studies in the Bobbs-Merrill Papers," edited by Professor Edwin Cady. What with our flurry of activities



at this time of year, I haven't had an opportunity to do more than glance at the tempting titles of the essays--among them, I noted, one by Professor Mitchner, "The Virgin Archive." That should send you scurrying to the periodical shelf!

The essayist La Bruyère observed: "It is the glory and merit of some men to write well, and of others not to write at all." As mine is the second claim and you have come here to learn about those who can lay claim to the first, I hurry now to the announcement of this year's awards.

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I. During the year just past, the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of Indiana's statehood inspired numerous forms of observance, and to many authors it gave occasion for books about the Hoosier scene. From this category of books published in 1966 the judges have chosen Just Us Hoosiers and How We Got That Way by Dale Burgess for its top award. Mr. Burgess is probably familiar to you as an Associated Press reporter of twenty-five years' standing, and writer of fiction and feature articles for magazines. Descended from a pioneer Hoosier family, he has a deep affection for his ancestral state.

Another thorough-Hoosier, Governor Roger D. Branigin, says in his Preface to the book: "Within these covers is Indiana--from Pokagon to New Harmony, from the mouth of the Great Miami to the Calumet River. Here, in delightful combination, you will find an almanac, a genealogy, an immigrant's guide and a tourist's handbook to Hoosierland. . . . Just Us Hoosiers is colorful and concise, as becomes an author trained in authentic Associated Press fashion. It may never ascend to the Hoosier literary heaven because of the exclusion of politics and sassafras--both close to the heart of a Hoosier. Notwithstanding errors of this magnitude, this volume will long be tenderly dealt with by those of us who love the land northwest of the River Ohio."



I might add that to non-natives such as I the Burgess book reveals the Hoosier connections of a host of familiar names, from Cannon Ball Baker, Sam Bass, Don Larsen and Gil Hodges to General Ambrose Burnside and Dr. William Mayo, father of the Mayo Brothers.

Unfortunately, Mr. Burgess couldn't be with us today but Professor John Stempel, Chairman of the I.U. Department of Journalism, will accept the award for him. Will you come forward, please, John, and, if you wish, say a few words. While he is coming up here, I will read the citation to give you an idea of what represents the blue ribbon in the authors' winning circle. (Read citation. Wait for John to say a few words.)

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Ia. Honorable mention in this category of Sesquicentennial books goes to The Nineteenth State, Indiana, by Edward A. Leary. This brief, highly readable history was published as a souvenir of the Indiana Sesquicentennial celebration after review and approval of the text by Hubert Hawkins, Director of the Indiana Historical Bureau, who served as a member of the Indiana Sesquicentennial Commission. The booklet is attractively printed, with simple but vivid illustrations which depict stages in the development of Indiana. The appendixes provide useful factual information. Mr. Leary, will you step up here to receive your certificate, please, and say a word or two. (Pause)

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II. In the category of Children's Literature--young children, that is, the award goes to Cappyboppy by Bill Peet. Mr. Peet, though a native of Grandview, grew up in Indianapolis and attended John Herron Art Institute. For 25 years now he has worked in the Walt Disney Studios. Cappyboppy, Mr. Peet's tenth book for young children, is an engagingly illustrated account of the Peet family's experiences with a capybara, a giant grass-loving South American rodent. Cappyboppy, who resembles a stout guinea pig,



terrorizes the family cats, develops a taste for graham crackers, and makes the Peet garden into a mud wallow and the swimming pool into a bathtub. It is a tribute to Mr. Peet's skill as an illustrator that even the most ardent rodent-hater could conceive of giving house-room to a capybara. Although the language is simple enough for a young reader, its wonderful illustrations would attract older children and adults. Capyboppy is a rare addition to Mr. Peet's large menagerie.

Mr. Peet writes, "Capyboppy was my first storybook dealing with a true experience. All my other books are fantasies. Yet I imagined many of these stories as happening in a real place and in a real time, the Indiana of my boyhood years. The rolling farm land, the rustic old barns and covered bridges often appear in the illustrations. Also the bigtop circuses that travelled around the state in those days provide subject matter for three of the books. So my memories of Indiana are not only sentimental but useful as well. The citation is a great honor and I am sorry I cannot be with all of you to express my appreciation in person."

Since Mr. Peet was unable to come for Indiana Authors' Day, his citation will be accepted in his behalf by his longtime friend and former classmate at John Herron, Mr. Paul A. Wehr. Mr. Wehr, will you come up here for the citation, please, and if you wish, for a few words about Mr. Peet.

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IIa. Honorable mention in this category has been awarded to White Elephant for Sale by Miss Edna Beiler of Elkhart. Her little book is composed of three short stories with common themes: making-do and attaining adolescence in the midst of poverty and adversity, and the significance of friendship and cooperation in these processes. Neither didactic nor



"written down," these stories present the social problems of an Indian family, a Mexican family, and a family in Detroit in a realistic, straightforward manner.

Miss Beiler, will you come up here to get your certificate and say a word or so if you like. (Pause)

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III. The next category, for a somewhat older readership, is Fiction for Young Adults. The judges selected To Survive We Must Be Clever by Gertrude E. Finney as the winner. Mrs. Finney is a transplanted Hoosier, originally from Morocco, Indiana, but living now in Spokane, Washington. The judges wrote of her book: "To come of age in any culture is a process filled with hazard and doubt, but to do so in the dangerous and icy Aleutian Islands is even more difficult. Kaa-Ling-A, the young hero, sets out on a journey to find a missing relative and in its course gains self-knowledge and maturity. This carefully researched and detailed account of life in the Aleutian Islands in the early 1900's is a story filled with exciting hunting adventures, whaling trips, Indian legends, and a terror-filled night in the mummy caves. Because the story is so well told, Mrs. Finney's factual information never intrudes or overwhelms the plot."

Mrs. Finney, we are delighted that you could be with us to receive your award. Will you come forward, please, to accept the citation and add your comments. (She will probably introduce Professor Laughlin, University of Wisconsin, anthropologist (and her son-in-law) who helped with the research-- if he is here.)

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IIIa. Runner-up in the Young Adult category is Andy's Dan'l Boone Rifle by Dorothy Fay Arbuckle of Lake Village. In writing this book, Mrs. Arbuckle contributed not only to the fiction for this particular age group but to the literature associated with the Sesquicentennial observance as well. Many interesting details of frontier life in northern Indiana complement her story of Andy's growing-up in the early days of our state, and throughout are numerous reflections of the author's Hoosier background.

Mrs. Arbuckle, who won the Children's Literature citation in 1956 for After-Harvest Festival, is here today, I believe. Will you please come up to get your honorable mention certificate, Mrs. Arbuckle, and say a few words. (Pause)

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IV. We come now to the Fiction category, won this year by In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash, by Jean Shepherd. Mr. Shepherd is best known to an enormous and devoted audience as the cool wit who tells what the world is all about late each night over radio stations in New York, Boston, Miami, and other major cities. It was he who introduced the term, "night people," into the language. In addition to being a prolific writer, he is also an accomplished actor. In God We Trust, his first novel, is almost entirely made up of reminiscences of boyhood in Indiana during the Depression years. The narrator, Ralph, a New York free-lance writer returns to Indiana to collect material for a magazine article. He compares notes with an old schoolfriend who is now the owner of a tavern. As Maurice Dolbier points out in The New York Times, "It's not the clean, neat, middle class Penrod country, but northwestern Indiana, where the town of Hohman 'clings to the underbody of Chicago like a barnacle clings to the rotting hulk of a tramp steamer. . . a world of belching furnaces, fragrant petroleum distillation plants, and freight yards.' But apart from the physical setting, it's a world that other



boys grown up will remember, wherever, in this land, they spent their youth-- of schoolyard bullies and favorite English teachers, penny candies and fireworks, Bonus Nights at the movie house, BB guns and fishing trips and radio serials, high school bands and used cars and blind dates. In each incident Mr. Shepherd perceives a world in microcosm; each represents a fall from innocent grace, an indelible lesson in life."

I am happy to report that Mr. Shepherd returned to Hoosierland for this occasion. Will you come up here for your citation, please, Mr. Shepherd, and give us "day people" a few of your remarks.

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IVa. There are two honorable mention awards in Fiction. One goes to Esther Kellner, a former award winner, for Cry to the Hills, which she wrote in collaboration with Clarence Lewis. The incidents are based on the experiences of Mr. Lewis, born in the Kentucky hills in a poverty-stricken mining camp, whose first job was "lookout" for a moonshine still. The artistry and effectiveness of the writing are Mrs. Kellner's--and part of that artistry is revealed by the fact that it is obvious that this is exactly the book Mr. Lewis wanted to write but could not. Its insight, compassion and honesty of purpose win sympathy for the plight of those caught in a vise of coal-company abuses, lack of education and training, inexperience with urban ways, and the scorn and suspicion of city folk. Mrs. Kellner was made a Kentucky colonel in recognition of her part in writing this book. Mrs. Kellner was unable to come today but I'm sure Bob will see that she gets her certificate.

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IVb. The second honorable mention goes to William Gass, Professor of Philosophy at Purdue, for Omensetter's Luck, his first novel, a dense, provoking, and vastly rewarding book, full of incident and echo. The setting



of the novel is a rural American town, into which, accompanied by wife, family, and all earthly belongings, comes Brackett Omensetter. Omensetter seems at first a simple man of goodwill and abundant vitality. That he is someone out of the ordinary swiftly becomes apparent. His entrance into the once-tranquil community sets off a ground swell of violent emotions, engulfing all who come in contact with him. A quote from the New York Times Book Review says, "The world with which Mr. Gass works here has long been exhausted, you would think, not only by Sinclair Lewis but by the likes of Sherwood Anderson and Edgar Lee Master. . . . And yet, while the costumes of the book may be historical, its import is compellingly modern." Time said of Mr. Gass that "in this fable he enlivens the weary old war between good and evil with curt communiques and rakingly comic crossfire." And the reviewer for the New Republic flatly stated, "I have no hesitation in calling Omensetter's Luck the most important work of fiction by an American in this literary generation." Unfortunately, Mr. Gass also could not arrange to be here but his certificate will be delivered to him.

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V. The award in the Biography category goes to Bret Harte by Richard O'Connor. Thoroughly knowledgeable about his subject, Mr. O'Connor characterizes him as "a foppish man, buffeted by success so suddenly and intensely that he lost his way in the world." In the first full-drawn study of Bret Harte for a number of years, the biographer shows why Harte's contemporaries despised him as a person--Mark Twain is quoted as having said, "Bret Harte was one of the pleasantest men I have ever known. He was also one of the unpleasantest men I have ever known." Mr. O'Connor, while portraying Bret Harte objectively, reveals the human failings of the man whose place in



American literary history was made secure by a single short story, "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," but whose character became distorted by that story's widespread acclaim. Mr. O'Connor has succeeded in tempering the traditionally unsympathetic portrait of one of our most undervalued and enigmatic men of letters.

Mr. O'Connor could not come today. Miss Elfrieda Lang, Curator of Mss., Lilly Library and Member of the Awards Committee, will accept the citation in his behalf.

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Va. The judges have selected for an honorable mention award a book they thought admirable, though difficult to categorize. Since The Land, The People by Rachel Peden seemed in a clear sense a biography of a land and of the family who lived on it, her award has been made in the biographical field. In this volume Mrs. Peden traces the history of her husband's family, whose ancestors migrated to Owen County the year Indiana became a state. The account is enhanced by descriptions of her childhood days on an Indiana farm, of her years on the farm since her marriage, of her father as the learned orchardist, and of her mother and numerous other members of her family. Mrs. Peden concentrates, however, on the character of Walter Peden, her husband's father. Her observations about farms and farm life are an especially interesting feature of her book.

Mrs. Peden, an Indiana University alumna, farm wife, and columnist for both The Indianapolis Star and The Muncie Press, won the award for a book on the Indiana scene with her first publication, Rural Free. I want to share with you the sidelight that Mrs. Peden was made an honorary member of the Indiana University chapter of Phi Beta Kappa last Wednesday evening, a day which began with the ceremony in which her sister, Mrs. Pulliam, was honored



along with Mrs. Nolan and four other distinguished ladies. The six bluestockings in the Mason family, three of whom we proudly claim as alumnae, have made a collective assault upon the Austen and Bronkë family fame.

Mrs. Peden, I am pleased to call you forward to receive your certificate and, incidentally, to have you reveal the secret of the Mason family formula.

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VI. After a lapse of a year or so, we again have awards in the field of International Affairs. The selection committee chose Overtaken by Events by His Excellency John Bartlow Martin, former Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, as the winning entry in this category. An Ohio native, educated at Indianapolis Arsenal Technical High School and DePauw University, Mr. Martin was for a time journalist and free-lance writer before service on Adlai Stevenson's staff introduced him to the political and then to the diplomatic arena.

Ambassador Martin's journalistic skills and general background, and his five years in the Dominican Republic--as United States Ambassador from 1962 to 1964 and as Presidential Envoy in 1961 and 1965--are all reflected in his account of the Juan Bosch election, tenure in office, and downfall. Written in a lively, fast-moving and readable style, Overtaken by Events offers a short history of the Republic and of the Trujillo era, followed by a semi-biographical view of the who's, why's, and how's of the post-Trujillo democracy. His portrayal of events leading up to the military coup and the accompanying moves within the U.S. Embassy, along with his report of his own involvement in the free elections, provide important insights into this area of hemispheric concern.



We are honored that Ambassador Martin, who yesterday gave a real-life performance of "Father of the Bride," in Washington, D.C., could jet here to receive his award, and that he has brought his rightfully proud mother with him. Your Excellency, will you come to the podium for your award, please, and to add a few remarks, while your mother stands to receive our greeting.

Via. Honorable mention in this category has been awarded to International Communism and American Policy by Indiana University Professor of Government, Bernard S. Morris. A former Intelligence Specialist in the Department of State, Professor Morris is an authority on political theory, Soviet foreign policy and Communism. His own words best describe his book: "This volume represents an attempt to place in perspective the schism in the International communist movement and in some measure to relate American policy to this historic world event. Justification for yet another book on communism rests on the impression that while the Sino-Soviet dispute has been expertly chronicled and analyzed, relatively little has been written to place the schism in historical and institutional perspective or to examine the United States position in critical terms. Part I presents a schema of the changes that have occurred in the structure of authority and control of the communist movement over the decades and, hopefully, suggests some of the factors affecting both its unity and its polycentric drift. Part II deals with the American reception of the split in international communism and of Khrushchev's policy of accommodation with the United States, which figured as a major factor in the Soviet-Chinese split." Lucid and clear, International Communism and American Policy represents a significant contribution to a subject of vital interest to all of us.

Professor Morris, will you come up here to get your certificate, please, and to comment briefly. (Pause)

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VII. Finally, a Very Special Award, the first of its kind. There is one living Indiana Writer, whose dedication to being an Indiana writer is so complete that it seems almost that he has placed himself above competition. That writer, of course, is William E. Wilson, Professor of English here at I.U. He has already won Indiana Authors' Day awards in two different categories: in 1959 he won the first award given in the category, The Indiana Scene, and in 1965 he won the award in History for his The Angel and the Serpents. Last year the Indiana University Press brought out his Indiana: A History. Unquestionably, this fine book deserves recognition on an occasion like this, but it is the feeling of the committee--and the other people with whom they have consulted--that Professor Wilson should be honored, this year, for more than that one book. His entire writing career, which will certainly continue for many more years, deserves special commendation. Bill Wilson is not only a fine writer who was born in Indiana and who has always claimed it as his home; he is also a fine writer who writes about Indiana. His first book was The Wabash, for the Rivers of America series. He has written novels about historical events in Indiana and about the men who helped to build Indiana. He has written about Abe Lincoln's boyhood in this state--and about his own boyhood in Evansville. Because no contemporary writer has better reason to be called a Hoosier author, this special award is being made "to William E. Wilson, in recognition of his continuing contributions of distinguished quality to the literature of and about Indiana."

I am pleased and proud, as a Hoosier and as his colleague, to present this award which I invite Bill to come up here to receive. Your remarks, Bill, will bring to a close this part of the program. My congratulations to all of you! And many thanks to the Awards Committee which appears to have fulfilled its assignment to the satisfaction of us all.