A TIME TO LISTEN: Improving Listening Skills Between Patrons & Staff

By Jane Rhoads

A Presentation of the Public Libraries Division at the OLA 77th Annual Conference

A large portion of our working day is spent listening to others: to persons in positions of authority, to persons who work for us, or to persons who are served by us. But, studies show that the average person listens with only 25% efficiency.

Over the years, most of us have developed poor listening habits. We listen with sporadic attention, letting our minds wander to personal problems or to anticipated pleasures. Too often, we accept what is being said without ever investing the mental energy to evaluate the validity of the material being presented. And, thanks to television, we somehow fail to understand the immediacy of the listening situation. We are conditioned to re-runs and re-plays. There is always a second or even a third chance to hear something.

We have lost the ability to invest ourselves in the listening process. We are passive rather than active listeners. And because of this, we miss opportunities. We waste our own time and and the time of others. We fail to utilize to the fullest, this valuable source of information acquisition, listening.

The ability to listen attentively, to remember what has been said, and to comprehend the material presented is an asset in every aspect of a person's life, but nowhere are the benefits of listening more apparent than in a person's work environment.

One of the professions where the need for good listening skills is obvious is that of business. Four types of listening are involved in business situations: within the various levels of management, between different levels of management, between management and line employees, and between sales or service personnel and the public.

Studies have shown that listening comprehension is fairly high within any one group. For instance, middle management personnel listen fairly accurately to those in other middle management positions, but they listen with less comprehension to persons who are either above them or below them administratively. One author estimated that only 20% of any message can come down through five levels of authority and get to its ultimate recipient, the line worker.

Teaching and the traditional helping professions such as social workers, counselors and ministers are other examples of occupations where the payoffs of good listening skills are obvious. You must first listen to your students or to your clients before you can effectively meet their needs.

Sales is yet another profession where good listening skills pay large dividends. It doesn't matter whether you are selling sophisticated computer hardware or simple gardening equipment, the effective salesperson must first listen to the needs of the customer and then suggest a service or a product to meet those needs.

Efficient listening skills are subtle investments in career success in a number of other areas or careers. Probably the most important of these is in the decision making process. Listening to others' ideas is one of our primary sources of information and opinions. This listening can occur formally in the meeting setting (business persons spend on an average of 51% of their working time in meetings) or informally over dinner or over a cup of coffee. But the results are the same. The more information you acquire by being a skillful listener, the more information you will have on which to base your decisions.

(Continued on page 46)
Another area where the benefits of good listening skills are great but are not always obvious, can be found in technical professions. Employees are constantly being given instructions. Unfortunately, every year businesses lose a great deal of money due to errors caused by people who did not listen carefully to the instructions which were given. In addition, many employees work in professions where constant changes in technology cause new procedures, new techniques or new equipment to be introduced at a frustratingly rapid pace. The ability to learn these procedures or to adapt to new equipment quickly and efficiently demands good listening skills.

Being a skillful listener is a tremendous investment in your career success. Whether you are at the managerial level or are a line worker, whether you are a social worker or a secretary, whether you work with people or with machines. Being a skillful listener will greatly enhance your job performance. Invest yourself in the listening process.

INVESTMENT LISTENING TECHNIQUES

I. INVEST YOURSELF

INVEST YOURSELF IN THE LISTENING PROCESS. Approach every situation with the conscious decision to invest yourself in the listening process. Good listening is hard work. You will never be able to control what a speaker says or the way in which the speaker presents the message, but you can accept the responsibility of working to listen to and to understand the message. Be an active listener.

II. INVEST IN IMMEDIACY

INVEST IN THE IMMEDIACY OF LISTENING. You only get one opportunity to listen.

III. INVEST IN ATMOSPHERE

INVEST IN AN ATMOSPHERE WHICH WILL ENHANCE LISTENING.

*Look at the person who is speaking. Don't interrupt the person, be distracted by what is going on around you, or change the subject. Ask questions which will help the speaker get his or her ideas across. Some persons have difficulty expressing themselves, and through your questions you can be a more receptive listener. Be an open listener. Don't let your own personal biases and prejudices get in the way of your listening comprehension. We all have areas where we have strong opinions or where we have emotional reactions to what is being said. These opinions or emotions can be either positive or negative, but in either case, they can interfere with critical listening.

Create a time frame for good listening. If you enter every meeting wondering how long it will be until you can leave, or if every time a person speaks to you, you wish that you could ignore them and get on with what you are doing, then you will be creating the conditions within yourself which are not favorable to good listening. Take time to listen.

IV. INVEST INTELLIGENCE

INVEST YOUR INTELLIGENCE IN THE LISTENING PROCESS. As you are listening, evaluate what the persons is saying. Are their opinions, experiences and references valid, are they fairly typical, or are they personally biased? How does what you are hearing relate to what you already know about the subject? We are all able to think several times more rapidly than people are able to speak. Use these extra seconds for the evaluation on of materials being presented rather than for thinking about some other facet of your career or of your personal life.

V. INVEST IN NOTE TAKING

INVEST IN NOTE TAKING. Even the best listeners cannot remember everything they hear. Make taking good notes a habit. If you are in a meeting, take notes on what is being discussed. You may wish to review them later. An idea may seem much more valuable several months later than it did at the time it was presented. If you are being taught a new process, take notes as it is being explained to you. Explanations which seem very simple as they are being given may turn out to be far more complex when you try to follow them on your own.

*Jane H. Rhoads is a Development Specialist, Reading Development & Skills Center, Wichita State University.

A CASE OF LABELS

By Oliver Delaney

In answer to a knock on my door early one recent Saturday morning, I found my next-door neighbor standing there with a box under his arm. He handed the box to me and told me to look inside. Inside were a few loose issues of American Psychologist and an odd lot of Music Education. (I say "loose" since the box was oversized for its contents and had no packing.) I looked at my neighbor in wonder. He says, "My sentiments too," and muttered something indistinctive about the label. Sure enough, the box was addressed to him and sent by Miss Jackson's of Tulsa, but why, I thought, would Miss Jackson (of all people) be sending my neighbor a lot of odd magazines. "No," says my neighbor, "the other label." There was another address label on the opposite side. It seemed very "official only" and was addressed to a college library in California. "Whoever" sent it had used a meter to California, but that I had failed to cross out his old address label. The post office saw only one label (my neighbor's) and delivered it (back) to that address. When he learned that the State Library had not, in fact, sent these materials, he was baffled. We both wondered how far this old box from Miss Jackson's had travelled and now found its way back to my neighbor.
The additional space added on to the north side of the Civic Center allowed Winn to oversee the development of an art lending library, a Self-Development Center, a Fine Arts Room, Reading Lounge, and Current Information Center.

Probably the most noteworthy accomplishment of the library under Winn’s administration was the development of the History Room, which was recently renamed the Bartlesville Area History Museum and Archives. Here the library collects, preservers, and displays the history and historical artifacts of Bartlesville and the surrounding area of Washington, Osage, and Nowata counties.

After such a long, busy career, one might wonder how Gene Winn will fill the long hours of his retirement days. One won’t find Winn watching the sunrise and set in a rocking chair. He operates the Three Bees Company, a firm that handles drip irrigation. He and librarian-wife, Sarah, have recently formed Media Futures, a professional consulting firm for libraries, museums, and appraisals. Further, he has been retained by the City of Bartlesville as a consultant to the building program for the Bartlesville Public Library. So for Gene Winn, retirement doesn’t mean the end; it simply means a change of direction.

Laura N. Gasaway has been chosen to receive the H. W. Wilson Company Award given for the best article to appear in Special Libraries during 1983: Ms. Gasaway was recognized for two articles: “Nonprint Works and Copyright in Special Libraries,” April issue; and “Audiovisual Material and Copyright in Special Libraries,” July issue. She is Director, Law Library, and law professor, University of Oklahoma and is a frequent contributor to professional journals and monographs. The award was presented to Ms. Gasaway at the 75th Annual Conference of Special Libraries Association held in New York, June 13, 1984.

FREEDOM OF (AND) INFORMATION

“It’s my impression after a life lived half and half between this country and others that the greatest contribution the U.S. has made is in library service and its libraries. Not just its great libraries like the Library of Congress, but the town and village libraries across the breadth and length of this land that quietly serve. The modesty and integrity of the people who carry on this work has always moved me greatly.”

— James Kennan, former Ambassador

The Library of Congress has never cut its ties with any nation regardless of the political decisions made by administrations. The materials of all nations are at all times available for research in our library of over 80 million items. . . the Library of Congress maintains agreements with over 150 countries and maintains overseas field offices to ensure knowledge of and acquisition of . . . 590,000 items a year at a cost of over $3 million.”

— Carol Nemeyer, Library of Congress

**people and places**

**GENE WINN**

On April 8, 1901, the first Library and free Reading Room was opened in Bartlesville. When Hergert E. “Gene” Winn was hired September 1, 1953, he was the first male librarian to take charge of the Public Library. After thirty years of dedicated service, Winn retired on December 13, 1983.

Winn brought to his position in Bartlesville a variety of experience. After graduating from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn., his hometown, he entered the U.S. Merchant Marines for a period of four years. He served as a Justice of the Peace in Franklin County, Tenn., and was an assistant to a business manager and commissioner of buildings and land for the U. of the South. A self-proclaimed movie buff, Winn managed the student Union Center and Theater for the U. of the South. A booking agent for the Crescent Amusement Co., he realized that the coming of television was causing a drop in movie receipts and pursued a new career. The direction he chose was to secure a Master’s Degree in Library Science, at Peabody.

As any librarian knows, bond issues are not always popular. Winn witnessed both failure and success in the passage of a bond issue in an attempt to enlarge and improve the Bartlesville Public Library. In July, 1959, a bond issue failed by only 31 votes. In May of 1960, voters agreed to a $265,000 bond proposal to expand the library. Winn and his staff undertook the enormous task of moving the library to the ballroom in the basement of the Bartlesville Community Center and back again, once construction was completed a year later.
Do you know that zoo tenders are paid more than child care personnel? The nation pays predominantly male caretakers of animals more than it pays predominantly female caretakers of children. "Comparable worth" is a new and catchy phrase to describe jobs requiring comparable abilities, and provides a means of analyzing pay differences for men and women in different jobs. We will be hearing a lot on this issue in the next few years. Characteristically, ALA is playing dodge. Librarians, take note. Considering the requirements of education, responsibility and experience often demanded of the librarian, few are getting rich on the salary (see: Oklahoma Librarian, May/June, 1983, p. 28 "Librarians Not Rich"). On July 3, 1984, Governor Deukmejian of California agreed with the California State Employees’ Association to grant more than 75,000 state employees an immediate ten percent raise for women that was described as the first step in "comparable worth" pay equity (Source: San Diego Union, July 4, 1984, p. A-3). The agreement calls for an eight percent general pay increase for state workers, but requires a ten percent increase for about 23,000 female secretarial and clerical workers (about $150.00 more per month per worker). In addition, there is another three percent increase on January 1, 1985, scheduled for "most secretarial, clerical, medical workers and LIBRARIANS."

A twenty-five percent pay gap has been identified to exist in comparable jobs and these steps are described as a "first step" in the implementation of a comparable worth pay policy. Under comparable worth, workers receive similar pay for performing jobs that require comparable skill, training, education and ability. Labor groups and women’s organizations have been in the forefront in the effort to raise unfairly low wages in female-dominated job categories. More on this subject in later issues.

by Oliver Delaney

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**LETTERS**

**June 1, 1984**

You have never heard of me, of course, but I have heard a great deal about you — all of it good! You have had letters from C T with a modest "ka" in the lefthand corner. Our manager here in San Francisco, James W. Dacey, who is a great person, thinks the world of you, as does everyone here who has any dealing whatsoever with you.

All of which is to explain why I chose to write to you about this matter. As we all know too well, Mother Nature has been on a rampage for too many years now. But suddenly it seems to me she has been picking on Oklahoma — and she should be ashamed of herself.

The enclosed check for $50.00 is a small contribution towards whatever relief cause you favor. I would appreciate your endorsing it over to such organization — or to an individual, if you know someone who especially needs this pittance.

Normally, I have no desire to be Rich — but when the need is so great, it would be wonderful to be Filthy Rich! You got as far as Sacramento — why not make it all the way to San Francisco? We would all love to wine & dine you and show you the sights, etc., etc.

Sincerely,

Katharine H. Adams

C T Corporation System

325 Montgomery St.,

San Francisco, CA 94104

(The above letter and check for $50.00 was sent to the Secretary of State after the disastrous flood destroyed parts of Tulsa. — Editor)
HIGHLIGHTS OF OLA'S 1984 LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

President Norman Nelson:
Goals and Objectives for 1984-85:
- Evaluation of the Association by an Ad Hoc Committee, chaired by Mary Sherman.
- Expand membership through aggressive recruitment.
- Increase opportunities for input and participation by the membership.
- Identify potential members and encourage them to join OLA.
- Assure retention of members.
- Increase membership to provide funding for worthwhile projects and activities.
- Increased activity by Divisions, Roundtables and Committees.

Kay Boles, Executive Secretary
Meeting deadlines, as outlined in calendar is important to assure business occurs on a timely basis.

Workshop Procedures:
- All workshops must be approved by the Executive Board at least 60 days prior to the workshop.
- A summary of activities and expenses of workshops shall be submitted to the Executive Secretary within 30 days after the workshop is held for submission to the Executive Board.
- A camera-ready announcement and registration form for all workshops must be submitted to the Executive Secretary at least three weeks prior to the date of the workshop for distribution to the membership. A new policy, adopted by the 1983-84 Executive Board states that all workshop registration will be processed by the Executive Secretary.
- The deadline for submission of articles to the OKLAHOMA LIBRARIAN is the first of each odd month. Division, Roundtable and Committee chairs are encouraged to submit articles to OLA.
- OLA must pay State sales tax for all purchases.

Delaney, Editor of the OKLAHOMA LIBRARIAN, to keep the membership informed of activities.
- Four elections will be held soon after the first of July: The new special Collections and Archives and Support Staff roundtables will elect a Chair, Chair-Elect and Secretary.

The Library Educators Division and Technical Services Roundtable will elect new Chairs-Elect for 1984-85. (Elizabeth Max, the elected Chair-Elect of Library Educators has assumed the position of chair following the resignation of Ruby Ewing. Jean Mackey, the elected Chair-Elect of the Technical Services Roundtable, has assumed the position of chair following the resignation of Coy Harmon.)
- Division, Roundtable and Committee Chairs should notify the Executive Secretary of all meetings scheduled.

Marilyn Vesely, Treasurer:
Financial Forms included in Handbook:
- The Treasurer's Authorization for Payment (Appendix G) should be submitted directly to President Norman Nelson.
- The General Budget Request Form for Divisions, Roundtables, and Committees (Appendix G-1) should be submitted to Norman Nelson by July 11, 1984.
- Workshop Budget Request Forms (Appendix G-2) must be submitted to Norman Nelson for approval of the Executive Board at least 60 days prior to the date of the Workshop.
- The Treasurer’s Deposit Slip (Appendix G-3) is to be used when submitting checks or cash collected to the Treasurer.

Linda Jordan, Continuing Education Chair:
Procedures in Scheduling Workshops:
- Contact the Continuing Education Committee in the beginning when planning workshops. The committee will help to define the purpose, set goals and objectives of the workshop, not the content. CE Committee Members will help to identify the target audience, design the format and agenda and will help design the evaluation tool.

SRRT — PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE
In the years since its inception the Social Responsibilities Roundtable has sponsored the Citation of Merit recognizing programs which bring library service to those not normally served within a community and, maintained a library resource file. Additionally the group has sponsored OLA conference programs and/or booths devoted to such areas as survival skills for the poor, community health programs, barrier-free access, services to the deaf, user fees, children’s services, I&R systems, jail/prison services, service to minorities, service to disadvantaged, outreach in Oklahoma, Vietnamese materials, and censorship.

In the last few years the Roundtable has been relatively inactive, until this year when both the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Handicapped and the recognition of literacy as a social need both come to the fore. However, because the nature of this organization tends to be one of periods of great activity followed by inactivity, the membership tends to also fluctuate. Just as we are in need of a growing membership we find that we are at an all-time low in that area. Therefore, those interested in the area of social responsibility — especially as concerns the above two possible projects — please mark your membership application for SRRT. Further information may be acquired from Judy Johnson, Ponca City Library, (405) 762-6311 after 1:00 p.m.
NEW PUBLICATION ON LITERACY

An increasing number of adults are finding the courage to admit to the invisible handicap of functional illiteracy and actively seek assistance. Consequently, many communities throughout North America are attempting to address the literacy issue by establishing adult reading programmes. The Owen Sound Public Library's adult literacy programme, "Leading to Reading for Adults," now in its second year of operation, has published a 106-page manual to assist others — especially public libraries — in setting up or continuing to operate adult literacy programmes. Adult Literacy: A Manual for the Establishment of a Literacy Programme (ISBN: 0-9691850-1-3), written by experienced literacy teachers Lorna Campbell and Marie Prout, addresses a wide range of literacy concerns.

The manual includes chapters describing project administration, promotion and funding; how to recruit, interview and assess students; and a detailed section on the recruitment and training of volunteer tutors. The authors encourage literacy tutors to use the teaching method that works with each individual student, and provide many suggestions for the teaching of the alphabet, phonics, and syllabication; sample student assignments and lesson plans are also included.

Citations are given for the print and non-print resources which were most helpful in the establishment of the authors' reading programme and which they recommend for background study of the literacy field.

The comprehensive bibliography of new adult reading material available from Canadian sources is especially useful, particularly since each entry is listed with its assigned readability level. The bibliography of current resources for literacy tutors is also helpful.

Copies of Adult Literacy: A Manual for the Establishment of a Literacy Programme may be ordered, prepaid, from the Owen Sound Public Library, 824 First Avenue West, Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada, N4K 4K4. Orders shipped within Canada: $10.00 per copy (includes postage & handling); orders shipped outside Canada $12.00 (in Canadian funds) per copy (includes postage & handling). For more information contact: Judy Beth Armstrong, Community Services Librarian, Owen Sound Public Library.

COST FINDING MANUAL

The Public Library Association's (PLA) Cost Analysis Task Force is developing a Cost Finding Manual for public libraries. The manual is designed to offer librarians a tool that enables them to make better management decisions. The Cost Finding Manual will be available in spring, 1985.

The PLA Cost Finding Manual is a guidebook that describes the applicability and management uses of cost information within the public library. The library manager with limited exposure to cost concepts and cost finding or accounting techniques is the primary audience for this document.

The guidebook incorporates a practical, step-by-step procedure to determine the cost of library services. There are many approaches to allocating central services. The manual provides a listing of allocation methodologies. A chapter treats the management uses of cost information: contracting out, inter-departmental chargebacks, marginal analysis, program output, comparisons to national standards, budget preparation, etc.

The manual includes a cost finding exercise that is applicable to both manual and automated systems.

A number of library systems have already undertaken cost studies of various library services. The manual will include some examples of these studies.

Philip Rosenberg, author of Costing and Pricing Municipal Services, has been selected to develop the cost finding handbook for PLA.

The PLA Cost Analysis Task Force was formed in 1982 "to develop a plan leading to the creation of procedures allowing libraries of various sizes to analyze their costs of common services and operations in a consistent and efficient manner."

Bill Wallace has published his second book, entitled Trapped in Death Cave (Holiday House, $10.95). Set at Medicine Park, near Lawton, Oklahoma, it involves the adventurous suspenseful story of two close friends.

Mr. Wallace not only teaches pupils at West Elementary School (he is a physical education instructor) in Chickasha, but also writes books for them. His first novel, A Dog Called Kitty, won last year's (1983) Sequoyah Award and the 1983 Texas Bluebonnet Award.

Many are familiar with Brad Steiger's numerous books on the strange and unknown world of UFO's and supernatural powers. His latest venture into the genre of biography may at first seem a little unusual to his readers, but consider his subject: Jim Thorpe. Mr. Steiger has written Thorpe's Gold, described as "the complete story of legendary Indian athlete Jim Thorpe, tragedy and triumph," told by his daughter, Charlotte Thorpe. It was published by Dell/Quicksilver ($1.95 pa.).

Change of Address Notice

Name ____________________________

New Mailing Address ____________________________

New Telephone No. ____________________________

Mail to Kay Boles, Executive Secretary 300 Hardy Drive, Edmond, OK 73034 Phone: (405) 348-0506
LADIES and GENTLEMEN:

I am a writer, for a livelihood and a life. I was a teacher once, as I expect will be abundantly obvious. And teaching turns out to be a job you never really quit. You just go on and one, trying to turn LIFE into LESSON PLANS.

Today, I call my lesson plans NOVELS. And I can't imagine how anybody can be a writer of anything without having been a teacher. I know it's PERFECTLY POSSIBLE, but I wouldn't have been possible for me.

American youth are not at their best as STUDENTS. They are far better as INSTRUCTORS. Young people in the 7th and 8th grades taught me invaluable lessons.

They taught me that a novel's FIRST OBLIGATION is to ENTERAIN before it can do anything else. This is not the sort of thing you learn by MAJORING IN ENGLISH.

You learn too that the characters in novels had better not be ORDINARY PEOPLE living ORDINARY LIVES. No READER wants much REALISM. We have that WITHOUT reading. The character in a novel had better be the kind of person the reader wants to be:

more resourceful
more articulate
more outrageous
more brave.

Young readers all but demand another INGREDIENT in their book heroes and heroines. They are great champions of UNDERDOGS, of OUTCASTS, of people downtrodden and coming from behind. In short, young readers identify most closely with precisely the kind of people they SNUB, and PUNISH in real life. It's no coincidence that one of the most successful young adult novels ever written is entitled: THE OUTSIDERS.

And finally, the young never want anything new. They want the same thing over and over. I have a high stack of letters at home that say, "I've just read your novel; do you have another EXACTLY like it?" If there's anything the young despise it's NOVELTY. I suppose the changes going on in their minds and bodies and emotions are change enough for them.

They want every day and every class and every teacher and every party and every LIBRARIAN to be the same. To a young reader, the BEST and SAFEST kind of book is a SEQUEL.

THE DREADFUL FUTURE OF BLOSSOM CULP

And so like any writer who ever was, I am anxious to introduce to you today my NEWEST NOVEL. It's called THE DREADFUL FUTURE OF BLOSSOM CULP.

— It is an ENTERTAINMENT.
— It is about a young girl more ARTICULATE and OUTRAGEOUS than almost anybody.
— She is an ETERNAL and PE-RENNIAL outcast.
— And the book is a SEQUEL, actually the third in a series.

BLOSSOM

I expect it happens to almost anybody who writes more than a couple of novels. A character, possibly a minor one, rises up and goes into BUSINESS FOR HERSELF.

That happened to me — it's still happening to me — with a character named BLOSSOM CULP.

She came to pass originally in a book called THE GHOST BELONGED TO ME. Her only function was as a FOIL for the main character, a boy named ALEXANDER ARMSWORTH, who is 13 years old in the year 1913.

THE GHOST BELONGED TO ME is Alexander's story to tell. I PLANNED it that way. After all, he was the one who saw the ghost in the barn loft and had to dabble in a little REMEDIAL EXORCISM.

But as I was writing the book, his sidekick, BLOSSOM CULP, became as UNMANAGEABLE as a 1ST-GRADE FRESH OUT OF A MONTESORI KINDERGARTEN. She spent the entire book SUCCESSFULLY elbowing Alexander out of the limelight.

ALEXANDER & BLOSSOM

Like all paired characters, in and out of books, Alexander and Blossom are OPPOSITES:

* Alexander is the SPRUCE SON of new money; Blossom is the bedraggled daughter of perpetual poverty.
* Alexander, the conformist, lives in the DEAD center of the youth culture of the town of Bluff City. Blossom is an outcast of that youth culture, epitomized by a club of girls called "THE SUNNY THOUGHTS AND BUSY FINGERS SISTERHOOD", run by a little tyrant named LETTY SHAMBAUGH and her yes-woman, a LARGE girl named MAISIE MARKHAM. Blossom is not included in the club, and so she is free — TO INVENT HER OWN LIFE.

GHOSTS I HAVE BEEN

When Blossom began to get letters from readers, letters that I did NOT get, I knew she had to tell a story of her own. That novel became GHOSTS I HAVE BEEN, in which, not so surprisingly, Blossom DISCOVERS OCCULT POWERS within herself.

Alexander can see GHOSTS, but Blossom finds she can do what every adolescent longs to do: she can leave her UNPROMISING SURROUNDINGS and her even more unpromising body and travel through TIME-WARPS into other eras.

In GHOSTS I HAVE BEEN Blossom leaves her body and Bluff City and finds herself at sea indeed. She finds herself aboard the TITANIC at a particularly awkward moment in its voyage.

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Blossom is a great talker, and that book is called THE DREADFUL FUTURE OF BLOSSOM CULP. Blossom and Alexander are growing up. In this new book, they graduate from grade school, and take that awesome step up to the high school across the road:

Page 1: "Unless you never got out of grade school... and I am her."

The first day of high school, of any new school, is enough to STRIKE TERROR in the heart of any new student. She finds the PEER GROUP still in Letty Shambaugh's strong hands:

Page 8: "The high school was larger than I remembered... which are 3 of your bad habits."

And so on this UNPROMISING NOTE, Blossom's high-school career begins. Blossom is not greatly impressed with high school. She cares nothing for wearing a FRESHMAN BEANIE, and she notices that the teachers are CAPABLE of teaching only single subjects, so you spend half the day TRAIPSING from classroom to classroom, herded along like HOGS IN A CHUTE.

From the first, Blossom looks for a way of GETTING HERSELF NOTICED. Her opportunity arises in HISTORY CLASS:

Page 11: "From Girls Gym we went daily to the study of history... Maisie doesn't have the stomach for a good story."

Stories and story-telling are our EARLIEST needs. You can always tell people who did not have their FAIR SHARE of stories early in their CHILDHOODS. They are LIMITED FOR LIFE.

My mother read to me before I went to school, making me HUNGRY for reading and books and the world.

A television set would have dulled me. AFTER ALL, TELEVISION IS WHAT YOU DO WITH YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO LIVE IT. Fortunately, there was no television then. It was the age, the Golden Age of RADIO: of LUX HOLLYWOOD THEATER and THE SHADOW and LET'S PRETEND. And radio used words:

to create characters to weave plot to invite the imagination.

I lay in front of a Philco radio listening to EDWARD R. MURROW and a weekly drama called GRAND CENTRAL STATION. Edward R. Murrow made me hungry for LONDON, and Grand Central Station made me hungry for New York. In time, I became a student at the University of London and a writer in New York. You want to be very careful what you wish for...

When I was a kid, I wanted to travel everywhere and see everybody. Today I do. I travel 70,000 miles a year, a quarter of the time, for 2 reasons:

* to find readers for the books I've already written.
* to find ideas from those readers for books I haven't written yet.

DECATUR

But the farther I get in time and distance from my own beginnings in Decatur, Illinois, the more clearly I hear VOICES LONG STILLED. The voice, for example, of my great-uncle, MILES PECK. He was the town character, an octogenarian rogue and carpenter who terrorized the town in a Model A Ford fitted out with a carpentry box where the rumbleseat had been.

At 85 Uncle Miles had an eye for a pretty woman, a keen nose for scandal, and inconvenient memories about other people's pasts. Grown-ups dreaded him. I stopped up his every work and all his old stories. Then when I thought Uncle Miles long dead, he marched right into a novel of mine called THE GHOST BELONGED TO ME; and took complete charge of it.

My father, his nephew, was no less colorful. I though he was the most popular man in town, and he may have been. This fueled my plans for escape. I could never have competed with him on his own TURF.

In a neighborhood where other people's fathers went off every morning to offices in white collars and Plymouth sedans, my father roared away astride a HARLEY-DAVIDSON. He ran a Phillips 66 gas station like a club where elderly men less mobile than Uncle Miles hung out, telling old stories of old times. In my novels, I'm still telling those stories in novels called THE GHOST BELONGED TO ME; GHOSTS I HAVE BEEN; THE DREADFUL FUTURE OF BLOSSOM CULP.

Large, 12-year-old boys rolled their newspaper at the station too, and so when I was WAY too young to be hearing it, I began to learn VOCABULARY.

FATHER FIGURE

My father was the most popular man in town; I still believe it, yet he was always there for me. Long after, I looked around at a different generation of young people, struggling to come of age without fathers.

The heirs and heireeses of the broken home, the SINGLE PARENT family in which the single parent is rarely the father. So I wrote a novel about a boy who OVERCOMPENSATES for his missing father. A boy whose defenses crumble cruelly when at least he must confront his Dad. The book and its movie version are called FATHER FIGURE, and it means the most to me perhaps because I did not have to live it.

I came from a town now BADLY BLURRED by change and my NOSTALGIA. A town of front porches and church suppers. A town where, when you were out of sight of your PARENTS, you were well within the sight of people who KNEW your parents. A town with all the generations jumbled together, to learn from. A town of elders: wise and eccentric and strong — people worth growing up to be.

These are the people I came from, and the place. They offered the RUDIMENTS: the 3 V's of a WRITER'S CRAFT: VOICES, VOCABULARY, VIEWPOINT.

(continued)
MISS FRANKLIN

I learned from my elders. There was nothing to be learned from my PEERS—except CONFORMITY, and that's of no value to a writer. I got my start as a writer from an elder, a woman NOW GROWN HISTORIC in more minds than mine. She was a teacher, of course. She taught English at the high school, SENIOR-YEAR ENGLISH TO THE COLLEGE BOUND, and her name was MISS FRANKLIN. We'd all heard of her, but if you aspire to college, there was NO AVOIDING HER.

On the first day of class, 30 September ago, she drew herself up tall and spoke these fatal words: I CAN GET ALL OF YOU IN THIS ROOM INTO THE COLLEGES OF YOUR CHOICES.

OR I CAN KEEP YOU OUT.

There wasn't a non-believer in the bunch, certainly not me. But I had more to learn from Miss Franklin. I'd fallen into BAD HABITS as a student. I'd grown accustomed to receiving A's on my English compositions. And A's as we now know from the sad experiences of our children, are the END of education, not the beginning. Nobody ever learned anything from an A.

When I got my first paper back from Miss Franklin, it had no grade on it of any sort. Instead, written across the page were these words: NEVER EXPRESS YOURSELF AGAIN ON MY TIME. FIND A MORE INTERESTING TOPIC.

Well, I was 17 years old. I didn't know what a more interesting topic than me would be.

I actually went to the woman and said, "What would a more interesting topic be?"

And she said, "Almost anything."

That led me to the library, a place I'd successfully avoided up till then, in search of subject matter that was not me.

All these years later, I'm still in search of it.

Though I wasn't to write a line of fiction until I was 37 years old, Miss Franklin set me on my course. She had the CLOUT to teach us that writing is COMMUNICATION, not SELF-EXPRESSION.

NOBODY WANTS TO READ YOUR DIARY EXCEPT YOUR MOTHER.

Of course Miss Franklin didn't teach "CREATIVE WRITING." She knew that INSPIRATION had better NOT PRECEDE GRAMMAR. She knew that without the FRAMEWORK for SHARING, IDEAS ARE NOTHING.

TEACHING

When I was a kid, adults ran the world. When I became an adult, the kids were running it. On my worst days, I figure I lost out twice.

Because of people like MISS FRANKLIN, I became a teacher, an ENGLISH TEACHER, of course. And it was teaching that finally made a writer out of me. After all, teaching is:

* the craft of communicating with strangers in their language.
* the craft of meeting absolute deadlines.
* the craft of trying to give time a shape.

These are the needs of the novelist.

I quit teaching one day in the midst of life, though I'd be a teacher yet if I'd been allowed to teach as I'd been taught.

I quit when the school system discovered that every American parent MUST have a GIFTED child, and so we lowered the standards until every child was.

I quit teaching when the English teacher's best colleague, the LATIN TEACHER, was thrown out into the street by an angry, anti-intellectual mob composed of children and school administrators, and permissive parents.

YA

I went home one day, divesting myself of TENURE and PENSION PLAN to write a novel, first one and now eleven, to some of the young people I'd come to know in the classroom.

I wanted to write for them because they were the people I knew best. I knew things about them their PARENTS will never know, or care to know.

Novels on the COMING-OF-AGE theme are the longest American tradition. MARK TWAIN, perhaps our FIRST TRULY AMERICAN VOICE who wrote of Huckleberry and Jim floating down the Great American River.

At the turn of the century a series of stories appeared starring RANK MERRIWELL, captain and hero of the Yale University football squad. In those days a youth hero was no one STRUGGLING through PUBERTY. It was a college man, and not just any college either.

Frank Merriwell was memorable enough to be recycled forty years after his time as a RADIO SERIAL of my BOYHOOD, to vie with that other ATHLETIC GOD, JACK ARMSTRONG, THE ALL-AMERICAN BOY.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

INFORMATION VIDEOTAPE PREMIERE AT SLA CONFERENCE


The videotape is designed as a communication tool to show clients what is available in special libraries and information resource centers and how information resources can be tapped by using the services of librarians and information professionals. It establishes the information professional as the expert who can produce needed; valuable, timely information efficiently and economically.

The Special Libraries Association is made up of nearly 12,000 information managers and specialists who work in business, government, education, finance, science and the arts. The SLA is produced by Mass Productions, Westport, CT, the videotape features David R. Bender, Executive Director of Special Libraries Association, as narrator. It was filmed on location in the Library of the Perkin-Elmer Corporation.
PUBLIC LIBRARY MARKETING CONFERENCE

"Marketing Public Library Services: New Strategies" will be the theme of the first Frontiers Conference, jointly sponsored by the Public Library Association, and by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Communication Programs/Library and Information Science. The five-day conference will take place on August 19-23, 1984, at the Yahara Center in Madison, Wisconsin.

This invitational conference is designed to identify major components in marketing strategy and to apply them both theoretically and practically to public library management. Designed especially for libraries serving populations of 50,000 or less, the conference will bring together as participants one public librarian and one library trustee from each state. The conference's goal is to develop management documents and procedures to help public libraries become central community resources in the information society.

Major speakers at the Frontiers Conference will be Charles Leonard, Julie Carroll Virgo, and Judith R. Ross.

During the conference, participants will analyze marketing methods and identify their application to public libraries, will develop a manual of marketing procedures for use in any size public library, and will plan future secondary conferences to be hosted in each state, by designated conference participants, in order to further disseminate the results of this conference.

Although the conference is by invitation only, a waiting list of interested people will be established on a space available basis. For further information, please contact Dr. Darlene E. Weingard or Barbara J. Arnold, University of Wisconsin-Extension Communication Programs/Library and Information Science, 220 Lowell Hall, 610 Langdon St., Madison, WI 53703; (608) 262-4354.

AASL CHALLENGES THE STATES FOR ATLANTA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has announced a state challenge contest to promote attendance at its third national conference.

The Challenge '84: Mission Possible National Conference will take place October 31 - November 4, 1984, in Atlanta, Georgia. "To encourage school librarians from all over the United States to attend, we are sponsoring the Mission Possible Contest," explained Atlanta Conference Chair Theresa Fredericka. "We want state leaders to encourage not only their AASL members to attend, but also all school library media specialists in their state."

For the Mission Possible Contest, all states are automatically registered. Through the use of a formula, the state with the most persons enrolled for the conference through the close of advanced registration (as compared with the number of AASL members and the number of school library media specialists in the state) will be the winning delegation.

Announcement of the winning state will be made in Atlanta as the conference opens. The winning delegation will receive not only a prize, but national recognition as well. AASL's last national conference in Houston, Texas, in 1982 was successful in attracting 2,824 school library media specialists from 46 states and four foreign countries.

In the spirit of friendly competition, state leaders are encouraged to challenge their neighboring states, organize travel-together delegations, and show their state pride. Materials to promote conference attendance are available from the AASL Office. Packages for advance registration will be available from AASL in April.

For more information on the Mission Possible Contest, contact Theresa M. Fredericka, Atlanta Conference Chair, at 337 E. Beck Street, Columbus, OH 43206, or 614/466-2761. For promotional materials for the conference, write AASL, Challenge '84: Mission Possible, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611, or call 312/944-6780, extension 307.

For more information Contact: Theresa Fredericka, Atlanta Conference Chair, (614) 466-2671; Gall Piernas-Davenport, AASL Administrative Assistant (312) 944-6780, x305.

Special Libraries Association celebrated its 75th Anniversary during the SLA Annual Conference held at the New York Hilton, June 9-14, 1984.

More than 5,000 special librarians and information professionals attended.

The gala 75th Anniversary Celebration June 10 featured greetings, reminiscences, and recognitions as well as awards and music by the All-City Chorus.

SLA Hall of Fame awards were presented by President Pat Molholt to: Mark Baer, William Budington, Vivian D. Hewitt and Robert G. Krupp in recognition of their outstanding contributions to "the growth and development of Special Libraries Association as a whole over a period of years."

The celebration concluded with an Anniversary Party, music, toasts, salutes and audio visual presentations.

Don't take the First Amendment for granted!
Briefly Stated

- The "attractive appealing design" makes Colorado Libraries "a publication of which the Colorado Library Association can justly be proud," says the citation for The Fl. W. Wilson Library Periodical Award.

- ALA President E. J. Josey intends to appoint an ALA Commission on Pay Equity. The commission will assess ALA activities and policies on pay equity, review the literature, develop specific activities for ALA conferences, and recommend ALA action.

- The Oklahoma Tax Limitation Committee is dead. With an avowed purpose of passing a constitutional amendment limiting state property values to one-half of one percent of 1982 property values (visions of California's Proposition 13), the committee failed to gather sufficient signatures on its petition. If the committee had succeeded in passing such an amendment, Oklahoma could have returned to the Dark Ages. Library finances would have been cut $4.1 million.

- What does it cost to run your library? According to figures published by Publishers Weekly, the average (conservative) cost of a book is $20.00. Nuts. The way I always figured the cost was divide the year's expenditures for books by the number of volumes purchased in that year. That book trade figure of PW's includes more specialized and technical materials.

- The State of Marland is considering the regulation of videocassettes. Under consideration is a bill that would require videocassettes to be "rated for content."

- ALA has presented the prestigious John Cotton Dana Award to ODL "for a thoughtfully planned, fully articulated and well executed program to convey information about library materials and services to Oklahoma's three major minority groups: Black, Native American, and Spanish-speaking peoples." The campaign, "Libraries . . . for all of us" centered around ODL's rotating minority collection of over 3,000 books. Marilyn Vesely and Gretchen Boose prepared the prize winning entry and Marilyn was lead officer for the project. It is ODL's sixth John Cotton Dana Award. Also awarded a special John Cotton Dana Award was Eufaula Memorial Library for that library's successful financial campaign.

- By January 1984 the OU library was the 53rd largest research library in the United States. OU has been striving to qualify for membership in the prestigious American Association of Universities. But the state's short sighted economic policy has turned Oklahoma's pinch-penny financing of education into an embarrassment nationally. Our two major university libraries are suffering. Cutbacks have been ordered, wages have been frozen and numerous vacancies exist in key positions. If 1982/83 was awful, 1983/84 has been a disaster and 1984/85 offers no hope at all. In May articles were published in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa newspapers about the OSU Library. According to the Gourman Report on Overall Academic Ratings (Appendix P) the graduate schools at OU are rated 3.51 out of 5.0 ("acceptable plus" which is one notch above "adequate"). OSU is rated 3.25 and Oral Roberts University is rated 2.49 ("marginal").

- The Legislature passed Concurrent Resolution 44 expressing intent that Ex-Welfare, Director Lloyd Rader's files be transferred to Central State University. The CSU library is not part of the Oklahoma archives. The Oklahoma Department of Libraries is the state archives.

- In the final days of the session, the legislature reinstated a $100,000 appropriation to ODL for the renovation of public libraries to provide access for the handicapped.

- The newly formed Support Staff Roundtable met at Rose State College and elected Elizabeth Edison as temporary chairman of the steering committee.

- Stated the Daily Oklahoman editorial of July 13, 1984, "state and county officials should not interpret the failure of an initiative petition drive (SQ 577) to limit property tax assessments as an endorsement of the present system . . . that the failure of the petition drive is not a lost cause . . ." ("Tax Revolt Still Useful"). Now I know what we mean by Friday, the 13th.

MOVIE / TAPE REVIEWS

"Oklahoma: A Past Preserved" 15 minutes ($150.00 16mm) ($50.00 tape)
A short history of Oklahoma, told through the preserved remnants of our physical heritage. Stresses the importance and educational value of historic preservation. Includes visuals of historic sites, buildings, and landmarks from all sections of the state.

"Land of the Red Man" 12 minutes ($100.00 16mm) ($35.00 tape)
Focuses on Oklahoma's Indian heritage, using contemporary Indians to introduce historical montages expressing that rich past. Stresses Oklahoma's multi-cultural society.

"Time Train" 9 minutes ($100.00 16mm) ($35.00 tape)
A fast paced treatment of Oklahoma's pioneer heritage, with all the excitement, sacrifice, and accomplishments of land runs and settlement.

"Spirit of the Oklahoma Oil Field" 15 minutes ($150.00 16mm) ($50.00 tape)
A dramatized look at Oklahoma's legacy of oil exploration. Through light-hearted dialogue, it captures the spirit of wildcatters and their successes and failures.

NB. Allow six weeks for delivery. Contact: Bruce Joseph, Oklahoma Historical Society, Wiley Post Building, Oklahoma City, OK 73105 (405) 521-2491.
BANNED BOOKS WEEK

The themes of this year's week center around George Orwell's 1984 and the National Security Decision Directive 84 (NSDD 84) that echoes Big Brother's thought control. The NSDD 84 would mandate massive lifetime pre-publication review of every public statement of present and former government employees with access to classified information. According to the U.S. General Accounting Office, the directive—which applies to books, articles, lectures, and fiction—currently could affect at least 113,000 people nationwide, and untold numbers in the future. In addition, the directive would permit the head of any federal agency to require all his employees holding security clearances to submit to lie detector tests on a random basis, whenever unauthorized disclosures of classified information were being investigated.

Librarians need to work with their local bookstores on exhibits and programs to generate public and press attention for First Amendment concerns. A kit of useful material is available for $8.00 from ALA. It includes three posters, camera-ready art for ads and bookmarks, display ideas, sample news releases, suggested activities, an annotated "List of Books Some People Consider Dangerous," and annotated "List of Books Challenged or Banned in the U.S. in the Last Year" and a "List of Books Affected by the National Security Decision Directive 84."

Banned Books Week '84 is co-sponsored by the American Library Association, the American Booksellers Association, the American Society of Journalists and Authors, the Association of American Publishers and the National Association of College Stores.

OKLAHOMA STUDENT LIBRARIANS ASSOCIATION

The Oklahoma Student Librarians Association Fall Leadership Conference will be at Rose State College, 6420 S.E. 15th Street, Midwest City, OK 73110, October 12, 1984, 9:00 to 3:00. This meeting is planned especially for student officers of library clubs.

31st Annual OSLA State Convention will be at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 200 N.E. 18th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73105, April 12, 1985, 9:00 to 12:30. This meeting is open to all student assistants in school libraries.

For more information contact: Dr. F. L. Carroll, State Sponsor, Professor, School of Library Science, University of Oklahoma, 401 West Brooks, Norman, OK 73019.