

Among Those of Un-Measured Merriment

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Yes, "...the wagon (was) swaying through forest and swamp of the Ohio wilderness... (and) striking with fever on the floor of the wagon-box, ...the sick man quavered, ...ye better turn down towards Cincinnati."

While referring to our good city, those fetching lines light up the opening page of a celebrated novel by a storied American writer. It will be reasoned here that this novel nurtured collegiality in our community between some of our best institutions, institutions inextricably tied to a time-honored and noble profession.

History resounds with fiction carrying the power and persuasion to transform policy, effect public patterns and stir man's spirit. One to mind is Uncle Tom's Cabin, indelibly linked to Cincinnati, and oh, what freedoms those pages caused. A tantalizing trivia question for local parlors could be...what novel propelled its author to international fame and the coveted Nobel Prize in Literature, and also mentions Cincinnati in its opening paragraph? Let this teasing question be short-lived, and not risk this assembly of literary stewards shouting the answer back at me. Yet for a moment more, it should be noted, there have been ten American-born winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature, the most recent- Ms Toni Morrison, the Princeton essayist, whose prose was described as having "the luster of poetry." In 1993 Professor Morrison became the first African-American to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, and first American-born winner since John Steinbeck in 1962.

Now... let us hasten back to our trivia question. The Nobel Laureate, who authored the novel with page-one Cincinnati reference, was, indeed, the very first American writer to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature.

In accordance with the last Will and Testament of Alfred B. Nobel, the Swedish inventor and philanthropist, prizes for greatest contribution toward the progress of the world and welfare of mankind will be awarded annually in fields of physics, medicine, chemistry, peace, and literature.

Embraced by the royal court's grand ceremony, and shortly behind mid-day on December 11, 1930, King Gustaf of Sweden conferred upon Mr. Sinclair Lewis an engraved check for \$46,350, along with the Nobel Medal. The formal Citation observed

simply... "for his. powerful and vivid art of description and his ability to use wit and humor in creation of original characters."

It was a watershed moment in American literature. The old order was cast unsettled by comments in Lewis's acceptance speech, but the unbridling of young American writers was immediate and refreshing. Most importantly, it expanded American readership to an emerging middle class. That audience was ripe for gaining an expanded sense of right and wrong.

At a far distance from Scandinavia, yet a mere fourteen days after all that pomp and circumstances in Stockholm, a modest farming family gathered at their Homeplace in eastern North Carolina for celebration of Christmas. At the break of dawn on Christmas mom, coffee was on the stove, new logs were re-kindling the fire, and bright-eyed thirteen year old Katherine, the youngest of six, was crossing her fingers hoping for a new bike. About an hour later, notwithstanding Katherine's impatience, all family members were together around the tree. Katherine's mother, Panthea, began distributing the gifts in her customary and deliberate manner. The loot, as it was, always seemed more abundant than it actually was. Panthea knew just how to lengthen the process. Food stuffs and home-made clothing were dispensed between the more anticipated items, most likely acquired in Norlina at Traylor's Sundry Store or at Roses over in Henderson.

Panthea's third oldest, twenty-two year old Frank, had arrived home the night before. It was winter break from his senior year in med-school. Frank with impish grin was un-wrapping his package very slowly. It was always something special from Mama. She was special. Oh my goodness, a handsomely bound book.. .one by the author, Sinclair Lewis! Frank had recently read about Mr. Lewis in the Richmond Times. The book title was Arrowsmith, published in 1925. Journalists had given it collective credit for Mr. Lewis's Nobel Prize selection. Panthea embraced her son with an especially warm hug, and whispered "there is wisdom within." A moment later she accorded a kindred link, exclaiming, "Sinclair Lewis's father is a family doctor in Minnesota, just like Dr. Holtz is in Norlina." Dr. Holtz had partnered with 'Mama' Mayfield in influencing young Frank to attend The Medical College of Virginia after completing his undergraduate studies at University of North Carolina when only nineteen.

That afternoon an extended Mayfield family assembled at the Homeplace for a feast of plenty. The table spread included roasted duck, pan fried potatoes, corn pudding, and cucumber salad. Aunts, uncles, and cousins were not in short supply. Tall

tales of the duck hunt down on Pamlico Sound show-cased the teasing and infectious good humor, always a part of a Mayfield gathering. For the most part, the remainder of the holiday week proceeded uneventful and was proving a good one. Most of the busy-ness was finished on the Saturday afternoon before New Year's. Panthea and her sister-in-law were sharing quiet-time on the front porch. Panthea excused herself to recline. From that nap she failed to awake, lapsing into a coma, and sadly passing away the following evening on December 31st. Her six children were at the bedside.

Panthea suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, a neurological accident, virtually irreparable in her day. Katherine promotes the idea that the nature of her Mother's death prompted her brother into neurosurgery.

Katherine, the last surviving other siblings, links that theory to her brother's invention of the "Mayfield Clip," a fascinating little gadget used in operating rooms worldwide for repairing intra-cranial aneurysms, the pre-condition to a cerebral hemorrhage. It was a scientific breakthrough in brain surgery. The Clip has saved countless thousands of lives since its creation in 1952, including two members of the Mayfield family.

The Christmas gift, Arrowsmith, is one of several recognizable novels by Sinclair Lewis beginning with Main Street, published in 1920, re-enforcing the words on the Nobel Citation- "his ability...in creation of original characters." Acclaimed as Dickens of America, Harry Lewis, as he was first known, was the product of a prairie town in rural Minnesota. His father, the village physician, funded the town's first library. In that library Lewis spent a goodly amount of time. He declared, "there were no Robin Hoods and Round Tables in my home town," but on those book shelves he found many, and few literary characters escaped his voracious appetite for the written word.

Harry studied Greek and Latin, but especially loved the improprieties of the French language and its literature, where his vicarious nature escaped the un-cultured vacuum of little ole Sank Center, Minnesota, its provincial population only 2,500.

Lewis attended Ohio's Oberlin Academy in preparation for Yale. In New Haven, he rebelled against the cast-out social structure, but his selection as Editor of the Yale Literary Magazine provided a constituency, a coterie more fitting of his non-conforming nature. During those free-lancing years, he took the first name Sinclair, after Upton Sinclair, the socialist, adopted like a tattoo, while spending a few months in his brother's Utopian colony in New Jersey. It was a healthy thirst for multiple exposures, like the

summer in the gas-house district in Manhattan, and working the cattle boats in Panama. That huge curiosity proved the prodder, the prologue, his seedbed of passion. It produced a brilliant student of society and perhaps 20th century's most erudite social critic.

In 1914 he married a Vogue Magazine editor. Grace Livingston Hegger. Grace and Sinclair traversed the country for three years. They reportedly journeyed to every state laying-over in hundreds of boroughs and villages. He became intimate with depots, feed mills, court houses and mid-town hotels. Sinclair's sense for capturing the minutest detail in American life proved worthy. Readers soon bonded with his publication of *Main Street* in 1920, a satirical story of small town life in early twentieth century. The protagonist character, Carol Kennicott, an emancipated, gifted young girl, married to a less than imaginative older town doctor, finds bringing culture to her new home town simply futile.

Sinclair Lewis spent nearly a month in Cincinnati in March 1921 completing a dramatization of *Main Street* for theater. The Queen City Club was his place of residence. The evening before his departure, he wrote a friend saying, "In the room next, with bottle and bowl of ice on the table, are two older gentlemen from Kentucky getting beautifully stewed." Giovanni, is checking the archival records. Were the two any of our Literary Club boys staying over...the spring floods, you know?

Lewis's celebrity soon caused his escape to Europe, where he wrote *Babbitt*, published in 1922, a satire of modern city life about joiners, service clubs, and publicity-makers corralling a growing class of seemingly feather-weight followers. Noteworthy it is, Cincinnati was the scene for researching the fictional city in *Babbitt*, the one called Zenith, wherein Lewis described Zenith with "its great machine tool and soap factories." His character, George F. Babbitt, became an American characterization. Readers could readily feel the question... if there must be sheep, where were the good shepherds.

In 1925 *Arrowsmith* was published, Grafted in form similar to *Main Street*, portraying young Dr. Martin Arrowsmith by his struggle to maintain integrity in a world of pettiness, dishonesty, and commercialism in medicine.

Sinclair Lewis was on a role. In 1926 *Man Trap* was published, followed a year later with *Elmer Gantry*, and 1928 *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*. *Elmer Gantry* would cause an uproar among conventional clergy. Lewis's attack on religious-fundamentalism produced a less than well-purposed *Elmer Gantry*, a hypocritical charlatan, evangelizing with pretty-boy looks and refined theatrical skills. Lewis left little under wraps, letting

his readers know clearly the right and wrong of it all.

A few years prior in 1920, the Pulitzer Prize jury chose Main Street as best novel of the year. The jury's decision was surprisingly reversed by the Pulitzer Trustees in favor of Edith Wharton's Age of Innocence. However, four years later, those same Trustees confirmed the jury's selection of Arrowsmith as best novel. Lewis refused the prize, taking exception to the qualifying terms of the award, declaring publicly, "it emphasized purpose, and not art." The requirement, that the winning novel must first represent "the wholesome atmosphere of American life...", Lewis viewed with indignation.

Sinclair Lewis threw the door wide open four years later when giving his Nobel Acceptance Speech on that fine December day in 1930. Without equivocation, he said, "In America most of us...are still afraid of any literature which is not glorification of everything America...yet, I have every hope...we are coming out of incredibly dull provincialism. The restless press corp, itching for a confrontation between the modernists and traditionalists, found exactly that in a Dayton, Tennessee Courtroom. The Scopes Monkey Trial, Clarence Darrow representing the value of evolution versus William Jennings Bryan standing for divine creation, the fundamentalists and the State of Tennessee.

In the meantime, despite little governance and regulation, investors on a path of excessive optimism, fueled by the radio, automobile and telephone were blindly infatuated by the investment trust instrument, the mutual fund of its day. The roaring came to a crashing end October, 1929.

What do I know about my father and Arrowsmith, aside from it being a sensitive final gift from his mother Christmas 1930. Over the last five decades of Dad's life, the place where he appeared most relaxed was in his home study. His four children (and grandchildren I should add) spent a goodly amount of time with him there. The bookshelves housed a limited library, but at least, every book was important and he knew their exact location. Behind his head on the first shelf were five books standing between well-weighted ivory bookends. They were always the same books. He easily accessed them by turning in his chair. One was the Christmas gift, Arrowsmith. For sixty years that book made the whole career journey with him. He referred to it often preparing a paper for a medical conference or a lecture at a medical school. Next to Arrowsmith on the shelf was The Brothers Mayo, a story of the clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, an organization Dad

admired. He visited there on a number of occasions, once in 1950 with all of his children in tow. I remember it well.

He was particularly inspired by the conception of the famous medical center in Rochester, a tri-partite formation of the Mayo Clinic, Saint Mary's Hospital and Rochester Methodist Hospital. Following a crippling tornado in 1883, a storm that left Rochester in shambles and stretched the previously un-connected medical practitioners to a breaking point, Mother Alfred of the Sisters of St Francis paid a visit to Dr. Will Mayo. Dr. Mayo was one of two protestant brothers, both physicians, who had distinguished themselves in the aftermath of the tornado. In its simplest form, Mother Alfred suggested-you do what you do best and we do what we do best, and together we can do good things. From that emerged a community hospital network partnering with the Mayo brothers' yearning for a teaching and research complex, to evolve as one of the elite medical centers in the world.

Dad completed his residency in neurosurgery in 1935, married the very pretty chief operating room nurse, and departed Richmond for a two-year post graduate fellowship at the University of Louisville. Following the devastating 1937 spring flood in Louisville and Cincinnati, which severely challenged the health facilities in both cities, an invitation from Sister Theodore of the Sisters of Charity, brought Dad to Cincinnati that summer to develop a neurosurgery service at Good Samaritan Hospital. With the encouragement of the good Sister, he readily established similar services at The Christ Hospital, Jewish, Bethesda and the hospitals across the river. Soon there appeared a friendly rivalry between Jewish and Good Samaritan, both wanting to be the first craniotomy in Cincinnati by the new boy on the block. On July 3, 1937, Dad removed a brain tumor at Jewish, assisted by Dr. Louie Ransohoff, Chief of Surgery. The operation attracted a large audience. Dad learned afterwards all were distinguished members of the community, the hospital's Executive Committee. Several became Dad's lasting friends. Another significant development in Cincinnati's neurosurgical history was arrival of Dr. Joseph Evans in 1938 to open the Division of Neurosurgery at the University. In one of his Literary Club papers Dad observed of Dr. Evans, "no man ever exemplified the ideals of medicine and the physician better than Joe. We shared problems, covered for each other with never a thought of sending a bill. When one needed additional skilled hands at the table, the other came." Hospital affiliation made no difference and whether a patient was private or indigent had no bearing on either man. Later that year Joe Evans and Frank Mayfield joined with a small group of neurosurgeons around the country, including Dr.

George Baker of The Mayo Clinic, and founded the American Academy of Neurological Surgery. At the 50th Anniversary of that Academy, two members of this Club, Stewart Dunsker and John Tew, hosted the celebration in Cincinnati. Incidentally, in 1964, when Dad was President of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons, it was the Mayfield Proclamation which made it the official voice of neurosurgery in America, with other neurosurgical societies giving their unconditional blessings.

Prior to my membership in this Club, I was privileged to be Dad's guest in October, 1977. It was the evening of his President's Paper. In that Paper he referred to "verbal history" and linked it to the Club's traditions and how verbal history reflects the mind and the wishes of the teller, and how it is thereafter modified by the human experiences of the hearers. With that in mind, the teller tonight modifies what he has heard from his father. Subject to frailties of interpretation, and my more limited experiences, I seek your indulgence. The bastardized title of this evening's Paper, Among Those of Un-Measured Merriment, derives from a wonderful phrase in Arrowsmith, an alliteration... "Men of measured merriment." It is the expressed view of Lewis's hero, Dr. Martin Arrowsmith, that there are such men in the medical world whose happiness is measured by the social successes from profits reaped, the antithetical mindset against truth seeking, discovery of cure, and loyalty to oath. These men are mostly proper and correct, but be them in profession or business, it is during periods of public in-attention, when these men of measured merriment will be most diluting in society's yearning for the truth. Those are "the men of measured merriment, oh damn their measured merriment and damn their careful smiles!"

That sense of things and Sinclair Lewis's spirit awakened in a prayer offered by Dr. Arrowsmith... "God give me quiet and restlessness against all pretenses...whereby I may (not) accept praise til my observed results equal my calculated results... or in pious glee I discover and assault my error. God give me strength not to trust to God."

Sinclair Lewis was first inspired to write Arrowsmith one evening while attending a debate on medical teaching and ethics. The money-brokers, who viewed medicine a commercial opportunity, were wrestling with the faithful idealists, the medical clinicians, the researchers, for the soul of American medicine. Lewis was alarmed. A young bacteriologist, Dr. Paul de Kruif, from the University of Michigan, and later from the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research, became Lewis's kindred spirit, providing the science, the medical technique and verbiage, while Lewis did the story-line and

characters. The writer's passion for detail and exactness mirrored in his character of Dr. Arrowsmith. To some extent this was as close to a biographical novel as there was in Lewis's twenty-two novels, spanning four decades.

While reflecting on my father in the sunlight of Arrowsmith, I think of the Mayfield Clip and two other neurosurgical instruments that bear his name. Of the significant royalties realized from their worldwide sale (and I am told every surgical table has one), Dad channeled every single cent to the neurological education and research funds serving our community hospitals and the University. Dad was always faithful to the Arrowsmith message and his mother's evaluation "there is wisdom within." Following the Paper he last delivered to this Club in 1988, I gave him a bear hug and said "Dad, you are one of those of un-measured merriment and I am proud to be your son." His eyes moistened.

In 1950 Mayor Albert Cash, a Democrat, appointed Dad to the U.C. Board. The Mayor's charge was to try to involve the community hospitals in the educational process of the University. Dr. Joe Evans and Dad had gained approval and accreditation for a graduate training program including the University, Christ, and Good Sam for neurosurgery. The other specialties were resistant for several years.

In the late fifties, Walter Langsam was chosen President of U.C. and Bud Grulee became the new Dean of the Med School. Both, Walter and Bud, were Literary Club members. In concert with Dad, they formed an Umbrella Agreement between the University and the community hospitals for expanded medical education. The trappings were in place to nourish a network and to allow an opportunity for a medical complex to become world elite.

Students of Sinclair Lewis could well suggest similarity with present time, early 21st Century, and that era of his most potent pen, the early 1900's. Easily imagined is Elmer Gantry in full bloom, mega cathedral and a TV channel. Would Lewis look askance at today's persons and parties of politics? Probably so, he was un-impressed with the un-watchful eye of Harding and Coolidge and wondered where their loyalties were founded. His students might suggest that toleration of the huge money vats in today's political system, under the veil of free speech, Lewis would view as ignorant. Those disciples may save his highest contempt for the Department of Justice, artfully and sharply targeted by our David Black two weeks ago. David's remarks sounded like an echo. Only a year ago, the President of the Ohio State Bar, our fellow Cincinnati, Mr.

Jack Stith, in a widely circulated article, raised high alarm for disturbing disregard of Constitutional principles by the Executive Branch through mind-set and mis-direction of the Department of Justice. Jack went so far to warn "the consequences of complacency and inattention (may be) the collapse of our constitutional democracy." Yes, it is a fertile time for the likes of another Sinclair Lewis. The only good voice may be 58 year old Bruce Springsteen fretting through tune and lyric about struggles of Main Street and the shame of others. "It's Going To Be A Long Walk Home", by Springsteen, causes me to think of a line in Arrowsmith. Lewis, wishing to be very clear about reality, he used a simile, likening the leadership deficit to the "reality of a steaming manure-pile."

Sinclair Lewis liked Cincinnati very much. How would he view The Health Alliance of Greater Cincinnati versus The Christ Hospital? I suspect with the same alarm he experienced that evening listening to the debate on medical teaching and ethics.

The Court of Appeals this past Thursday, affirmed the Court of Common Pleas, Judge Fred Nelson's opinion and order of April 16, 2007. Twenty million dollars in legal fees later, the Judge found The Health Alliance had breached its fiduciary duty and that Christ and St. Luke had established their right to resume their original charitable mission independent of the Alliance. Fundamental differences in perception by the parties, as to what should be driving the region's health care delivery, was center to this unfortunate dispute. In Arrowsmith, one reads of similar differences in perception. In Rochester, Minnesota the community hospitals and Mayo Clinic never got it confused.

From the trial evidence the intentions of the parties appear in stark contrast. An alliance is the sum of its parts, and the strength is in the diverse constituency, specialties and culture of its parts. The uniqueness of those parts must be preserved, or the alliance fails, virtually by definition. The United States is an alliance. Its strength remains in the genius of the parts. The Christ Hospital mission, first formed by habited Methodist nuns, and its century long service in Mt. Auburn, appeared in jeopardy by the Alliance's attempted subordination of Christ Hospital's mission for that of the University's. Of the clinics and hospitals in sixty communities in southern Minnesota, northern Iowa, and western Wisconsin, never one has fallen victim to a "university-centric" approach. Dr. Mayo and Sister Alfred grasped the genius was in the parts.

As Bruce Springsteen bellows "Here everybody has a neighbor, everybody has a friend, everybody has a reason to begin again," those of us chagrined by what occurred have reason to look forward with happier face.

On my way in preparing this paper a remarkable thing happened. Perhaps remarkable in the sense, this one happened to me. Honestly, I don't recall situations in life being particularly remarkable or being remarkable myself.

Judy and I were in eastern North Carolina this past April, visiting the old Homeplace where Grandmother gave Dad that Christmas present seventy-eight years ago. Without any advanced indications, my capacity to swallow and breathe was hindered. Judy also noticed my voice was changing. We decided to shorten the visit and return to Cincinnati. A day later I was seeing the physicians at Cincinnati Head & Neck, known best to me as the ENT boys. The initial diagnosis was problematic. The throat camera viewed for doctor and patient a tumor the size of a deflated tennis ball. "Mr. Mayfield, this is a life altering condition, the tumor's position may make it in-operable, let me try to arrange a fast-track biopsy with my associate at Christ Hospital." The highly regarded surgeon, Dr. Ernie Manders performed the procedure at Christ the next day. When meeting with Dr. Manders two days later, he advised the tumor malignant and requested permission to show the films at a Conference of specialists from various medical affiliations around the city.

I have learned the Conference is weekly, attended by those concerned with head and neck issues. Their meeting is not sponsored by any institution. It is strictly a physician-driven happening, a voluntary gathering of those less concerned with institutional affiliations or who will get the fee, but always concerned how best to get the patient well. This weekly Conference was initiated by Cincinnati's distinguished otolaryngologist. Dr. Jack Gluckman, a few years back. My un-measured guests this evening are stewards of its continuation.

Ernie Manders was soft-mannered, professional, and candid. There was no doubt, the condition was serious. The surgery option would compromise the vocal cords and the ability to ingest food. A day after the Conference, Ernie called advising there was one man in Cincinnati, who possessed the skills to give me a reasonable chance at recovery. "He is over at the University Hospital.. would you mind going to the University?" "Of course not" I replied, "what's his name?" "Dr. Bill Barrett, he is very able," was his short answer.

Ernie couldn't have imagined the questions flashing. Could this be the brother of Fran and son of Charles Barrett, my fellow Club member and seat-mate during the eighties, whose letter in praise of my maiden paper to the Club, I still hold as a prized

possession? No, I didn't say that to Ernie Manders, but he will recall, I asked "is Dr. Barrett the son of the famous doctor who founded the Barrett Center."

That night the son of the famous doctor called me at home. A clinical visit was scheduled the next day. No time was wasted. Dr. John Pancoast, the distinguished hematology oncologist was rallied to plan a regimen of weekly chemo. Bill Barrett crafted a two month course of hard-hitting daily radiation.

I spoke with Bill about one over-riding concern. My affairs were in order, my Scottish spear-holding spouse had her belly button tied on, and the cows had been fed. My concern was a scheduled Paper to the Literary Club in October. In my hand was a letter prepared for the Club's clerk. It was notice of my likely inability to present the Paper due to infirmity. "Bill, should I mail it?" I asked. He reflected for a moment. "Frank, don't waste the stamp, I think we can cure you." You know the Scottish gal, she was sitting next to me. Throughout a tenured delightful marriage, up til then, I had never seen her lips quiver.

An anecdote should be shared. Bill did not alert me that on the twenty-seventh day of radiation, I would be transferred to "Big Boy." That's the name his radiation therapists call the machine with the super shots. Upon arriving home after treatment, I was sexually aroused. My wife became alarmed by my insistence she join me in the shower. She debated whether to call Dr. Barrett. She chose to call the Sheriff.

Bill Barrett and I have become friends. As you might imagine we have shared family stories. Our fathers were friends. Both had been selected Great Living Cincinnatians. They were honored posthumously in 1992 by the University. Chairs at the Medical School were named in their respective honor.

Being spared to read another night is the least of what I feel this evening, but knowing the truth of things is important... a good city, a good father, good literature, good medicine, and the benefit of being among those of fun-measured merriment.