

DREAMSTREETS#79

SPRING 2024



In Sacramento Pit, 1923, William D. White

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Steven Leech



Boysie's Horn



The History of Jazz in Wilmington
in the 20th Century
Steven Leech
with Afterword by Larry Williams

Fully Illustrated
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Boysie's Horn: The History of Jazz in Wilmington in the 20th Century, by radio host and journalist Steven Leech, is a well-indexed and enlightening social history of how a small city like Wilmington, Delaware, spawned jazz greats like trumpet legend Clifford Brown, vibraphonist Lem Winchester, and vocalist Betty Roché.

With afterword
by Wilmington
Jazz legend Larry Williams

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Dreamstreets #79

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Cover: *In Sacramento Pit, 1923*, by William D. White
from ‘*plein air*’ sketches of Mt. Etna, Sicily, in 2017 on p. 45 is by Jonathan Bragdon

The Catalogue

We've all received them in the mail. Often they're an element that defines, or illustrates, a major portion of our personal worlds, perhaps because we bought something that plays some part, big or small, in our lifestyle and how we likely view the world. Usually catalogues include clothes for sale that we like, or house wares or items of personal interest, items that enrich our lives and defines our individuality. Catalogues provide an avenue for defining who we choose to be.

For myself, because of my interests that might otherwise define me, most of the catalogues I receive are for books, music, periodicals, and specialty foods that I like, for example like fruitcake, which otherwise is nowhere to be found.

About a week before beginning to write this, I stopped at *Dreamstreets'* P.O. Box, which barely gets any mail thanks largely to the internet, in order to pay the semi-annual rent. Aside from the brochures from Pat's Pizza, and maybe other food joints, or junk mail on a variety of subjects that I usually recycle, I received one addressed to me and "CURRENT RESIDENT" from another world, yet one that's quite familiar to us.

On the front cover of this catalogue was the declaration that, "Exotic New Laser Weapons of the NWO (*the New World Order*) Can Vaporize Whole Neighborhoods in Minutes." I knew I was in for it. It was a doorway to the trappings of that other world. I'm always curious so I leafed through its pages.

From page one I was introduced to videos and books for sale with titles like, *Ways to Detox from the COVID shot,*" and *"What to Do if You're Forced-Vaccinated"* and, *"How to Make an Anti-Nano Device to Rid your Body of Nanobots,"* along with others that claim to cure hair loss, sciatica, and cancer.

There were three major sections on the catalogue, the first of which is recounted above. Next was a section on the topic of "sovereignty," after offering videos and books on "free energy," "money making idea," "Higher Consciousness" (based largely upon "cleansing and opening" the pineal gland), and "Emergency Preparedness."

"Sovereignty" is a hot topic among those who perceive a different reality than that of those who might instead be curious about what's in *Dreamstreets'* pages, and who know better what is actually real . . . or at least with a near consensus.

"Sovereignty" is an extreme form of individualism. As a sovereign individual there is no need to be governed if one's essentially a moral person who minds his own business. The videos and books have titles like: *The Global Sovereign's Handbook,*" *The American Sovereign — How To Live Free from Government Regulation,*" *"Credible Legal Remedy to Get Any Case Dismissed in Court,"* and *"Redemption Manual: A Guide to Reclaiming Your Personal Freedom."*

And let's not forget the subject of conspiracy. There's plenty of that. To begin there are a couple of the earliest major conspiracies plausible enough that we might share: the one regarding the Kennedy assassination and the other regarding our relationship with extraterrestrials. After that it'd be too easy to fall into an alternative parallel conspiracy-riven world.

The conspiratorial narrative characterized by the offerings begins with Watergate and the claim of an emerging "new world order," accompanied by the clandestine efforts by the "luciferian" Freemasons, pedophiles in Hollywood and in the government, "chemtrails" (which are really contrails from aircraft exhaust at high altitude), and nanobots injected into those who received vaccinations, perpetuating the hoax that the COVID pandemic was a nefarious means of population control purported to be waged by an ideology called "Communitarianism." This new bogeyman threatens to regulate human behavior leading to a "reset," under the aegis of the NWO, using something called "Agenda 21," and even President Biden's "Build Back Better" program, which will lead to a "reset" in the year 2030.

If all this is true, we're all in big trouble and don't realize it. There are large numbers of people who DO believe these assertions, enough to dominate whole geopolitical jurisdictions; just look who's been elected to the Congress of the United States. Either many are going to be disappointed when 2030 rolls around, or we're in for some deep and frightening shit.

Regardless, this is the battleground for what has been commonly called the "Culture War."

It turns out that *Dreamstreets* has, perhaps unintentionally, been involved in "The Culture War," only because we're involved in culture. We could've played it safe by adopting an attitude of a kind of "art for art's sake" position, but sooner or later we'd have to avoid, as artists who would want to survive in a possible strictly controlled totalitarian environment, making waves and concentrate on "non-threatening" or what might be called "non-degenerate" content, and stick to stuff upon which we can all agree: flowers in spring, butterflies and heartbreak, which are, of course, part of the legitimate poetic lexicon but not exclusively so. We've chosen to talk and write about and show the real, and complex, and beautiful world around us, as well as to include elements of our culture before we came along. We've done it with what we've seen, read, or heard from all over, all within the purview of our own visions. Our only object has been to expand reality so we all can see it better, and with greater truth. Art, literature, and music do that, and with a conscientious study of history comprise the language of the Soul.

It is often said that history is written by the winners. Winners at what? Winners of wars mostly. Considering all the wars over millennia, all the empires that have crumbled among the ruins, there have been more losers than winners, and because there are more winners than losers in history, can we conclude that

there are many lost histories, therefore? How many lost histories are out there, languishing on the edge of amnesia, under blacklists, in concentration camps, or stranded where cultural amnesia has already encroached.

To a certain extent, I believe I've demonstrated this local encroachment in reference to Delaware's cultural history. There is debris still out there waiting to lead to more hidden stories, and we will, as hopefully already have done, swept up the debris of hidden and obfuscated history to help stem the slow seepage of cultural amnesia and rediscover who we are and where we've been.

. . . and now the real world within our pages

We look again at the life and work of Delaware artist William D. White, who might have been largely forgotten if not for the diligent research and work of Nancy Carol Willis, who has served up more about this important and progressive past Delaware artist. A few years back Nancy curated an exhibit of White's artworks at the Biggs Museum in Dover, many of them gathered from far corners. (see <https://www.williamdwhite.com/public-relations/exhibition-walking-tour/>). The cover for this issue of *Dreamstreets* is an artwork from White that was chosen for us by Nancy Carol Willis. We balance the story of artist Willam D. White with a contemporaneous series of events in Wilmington involving F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Another local artist who played a pivotal role in our local cultural environment during the late 1970s and 1980s is Tom Watkins, who died a year or so ago. You'll be hearing more about Tom in future issues, but herein is the lowdown on his life and career as well as rare examples of his surviving artwork. Also making an infrequent appearance in these pages is the work of slam poet Rich Boucher, who had made a splash in the not too distant past within the local literary community before moving to Albuquerque, New Mexico.

— *Steven Leech*

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES (Please have the courtesy to comply with these carefully. They are simple and make our job much easier.)

We accept literary submissions in any genre, including criticism, reporting, and commentary from and of concern to Delawareans and those in the Delaware Diaspora. We solicit our own visual art. Generally, we do not reprint previously published contemporary work although one previously published poem in a sequence of un-published poems might be permissible; just make sure we know, so we can give credit. Our reading periods are year-round. We sometimes publish a summer issue curated without submissions.

Send up to 5 poems of no more than 5 pages, not including your cover page. For prose, 15 pages is roughly the limit although more may be acceptable if the

work is exceptional. For criticism and commentary, it's wise to query first. Begin no more than one poem on each page and make your stanza breaks clear.

Please send your work to: dreamstreets(dot)press(at)gmail (dot) com AS A SINGLE ATTACHED DOCUMENT in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx). PLEASE, DO NOT MAKE US OPEN AND KEEP TRACK OF SEVERAL DOCUMENTS. Write "Sub-mission" in the email subject heading. IN YOUR SINGLE DOCUMENT, include a cover page with name, address, phone number, email, and a short bio of 50 words or less, and indicate your connection to Delaware. Those who need to use snail mail may address a hard copy of their submission to Dreamstreets Press, P. O. Box 4593, Newark, DE 19715. Double space prose, single space poetry as your standard, use 12 pt Times New Roman font, and remove extra space between paragraphs. Align text left, except for special or unusual typography, in which case, we may have to work with you to render it faithfully. DON'T CAPITALIZE TITLES unless that is your intention.

Simultaneous submissions are fine, but please let us know in your cover letter if you are courting another and inform us immediately if your work becomes elsewhere engaged. We reserve first serial rights until publication, when all rights revert to the author. Our rights include electronic as well as print publication and magazine reprints. Please give *Dreamstreets* credit if you republish your work. Our editorial committee will review your work and get back to you before the next issue.

Ken Segal

Silence

Would you shut me up forever,
Or forever and a day?
If I died all of a sudden,
Would you shush me, anyway?
Now, you think "Silence is Golden,"
Is it ever so for you?
Should I just give up on talking?
And cease gesturing to you ?
Now one day I might be absent,
And the bed would be a tomb.
You would miss the sense and nonsense,
You would miss each crash and boom.
So I beg you, have some mercy,
I am not a cold robot.
And one day you'll have some silence,
In the space wherein I'm not.

William D. White: America's Preeminent Painter of Miners

Nancy Carol Willis

William D. White was born in Wilmington, Delaware on July 22, 1896 and died on December 3, 1971. He witnessed a transformational era, from horse-drawn wagons to the moon landing. A unique confluence of national and local circumstances shaped and informed William D. White, the artist, and the art he created.

White came of age during the Progressive Era in America, a time of unparalleled economic growth and innovation. Everyday living improved with the inventions of electric lights and telephone. New processes generated advances in steel mills, coal mines, automobiles, and railroads. By 1900, 195,000 miles of rail track had been laid, connecting cities across America.

The Progressive Era also pioneered social activism, calling for government protections and reforms. Muckraking articles published in magazines like McClure's exposed horrific conditions for children as young as seven working twelve-hour days in coal mines and textile mills. Upton Sinclair's 1906 book, *The Jungle*, exposed the dangerous and unsanitary environment of Chicago meat packing plants. In 1913, the Women's Suffrage Movement organized over 5,000 suffragists nationwide to march on Washington in support of women's right to vote.

During this time period, similar changes were underway in William D. White's hometown of Wilmington, Delaware. In the late 1880s homes were lit with gas lighting and heated by coal or wood stoves. By 1920, thirty-five percent of homes were wired for electricity. The leading industries along the Christina River included twelve leather tanning and manufacturing companies. Harlan & Hollingsworth (H&H) produced ships and railcars. H&H, along with Pusey and Jones, Lobdell, and Jackson and Sharp, built trolley cars for the Wilmington City Railway Company. Pusey and Jones also constructed river steamers.

Upstream on the Brandywine River, the Bancroft Mills fabricated textiles, and the DuPont black powder mills, founded in 1802, produced forty percent of the smokeless gunpowder used by allies in World War I. The Christina and Brandywine Rivers converged at Wilmington's waterfront, along with all of the pollution from tanning and other heavy industries, sewage, and farm runoff. The drinking water supply was contaminated, prompting the construction of a new reservoir and forty-six

miles of sewer line laid before the turn of the century. West Front Street along the Christina River was being paved by hand with granite blocks. Market Street was lined with trees, and the Street Cleaning Brigade regularly removed trash and manure.

By William D. White's birth in 1896, Wilmington boasted a new Delaware Hospital and twenty-eight public schools teaching 10,749 students.

* * * * *

William D. White was heir to two prominent Wilmington families. His paternal grandfather, Dr. William Henry White, set up a surgery on 6th and King Streets. He was an ardent abolitionist and ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 1857. White served as Brigade Surgeon for the 2nd Regiment, Delaware infantry for the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War. He was captured and imprisoned in the notorious Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia, where he suffered illness that required granting him an early honorable discharge from service. William Henry White never regained his health and died on April 9, 1867 at the age of 41. He left behind a wife and three sons. The oldest son, Robert, studied medicine and continued his father's surgery for a time. The middle son, and William D. White's father, Delaware Meigs White, became a druggist and opened a pharmacy at the northeast corner of 7th and Washington Street around 1892.

On December 20, 1893, Delaware Meigs White married Florence Davidson at St. Andrews Church two blocks from his pharmacy. Florence's father, William Davidson, owned a thriving granite and marble works at 5th and King Streets, one block south of William Henry's surgery.

William Davidson White was born on July 22, 1896 in his parent's apartment above the pharmacy, with his Uncle Robert serving as attending physician. An only child named for both of his grandfathers, it is reasonable to infer that White was destined for a career in medicine or construction; but certainly not in art and illustration. (*White around age 10*)



White never had to fight that battle because within the year preceding his 18th birthday, both of his grandfathers died. William

Davidson died at age 75 in July 29 of 1913, leaving the granite business to his two sons and several residential properties to his two daughters. White's father died from cerebral meningitis in February of 1914 at the age of 56. Soon afterward, White and his

mother moved into an impressive three-story home at 414 Marsh Road near Penny Hill that she inherited from her father.

With his mother enjoying financial prosperity, William D. White was free to follow his heart and pursue a career in illustration. It turned out that he was living in the right place and at the right time.

* * * * *

From roughly 1880 to 1925 the American art world was dominated by the Gilded Age for fine art and the Golden Age of American Illustration. Dubbed the Gilded Age by Mark Twain for its glittering surface but corrupt inner core, this art movement paralleled the Progressive Era of rapid economic growth and social change. New millionaire owners of factories, mines, and railroads sought to purchase beautiful landscape paintings and portraits to decorate their sumptuous mansions.

Leading Gilded Age artists included realist and Philadelphia native Thomas Eakins, an expert in anatomy learned from dissecting cadavers. Eakins served as director of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, but was fired in 1886 over his extensive use of nude models in co-ed life drawing classes. Other prominent Gilded Age artists included renowned portraitist and landscape painter John Singer Sargent, celebrated teacher and painter William Merritt Chase, and Philadelphia native and portraitist Cecelia Beaux, the first woman instructor at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

During this same time period, the Golden Age of American Illustration flourished. Advancements in offset lithography printing techniques and paper production allowed color images in books and magazines to be produced more economically. Thousands of miles of railroad construction connecting increasing numbers of post offices enabled a wider and quicker distribution of printed materials. Two of the most prolific Golden Age illustrators included J. C. Leyendecker, who completed 322 illustrations for the Saturday Evening Post, and Norman Rockwell, who painted 323 covers for the popular magazine.

However, the “Father of American Illustration” was Howard Pyle (1853-1911). In 1894 Pyle founded the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, America’s first illustration school. In 1898 he began teaching students in Chadds Ford during the summers. By 1900, when William D. White was four years old, Pyle left the Drexel Institute to open the Howard Pyle School of Illustration in Wilmington, Delaware.

Legendary Pyle students included N. C. Wyeth, Frank E. Schoonover, Gayle Porter Hoskins, and Jessie Wilcox Smith. Pyle's teaching methodology emphasized creating empathy with the subjects of their illustrations and their circumstances. Before a paintbrush ever touched the canvas, students researched their scenes and made dozens of sketches of costumed models complete with props. In 1910, Howard Pyle left for Florence, Italy, where he died one year later.

Several Brandywine School of Illustration artists continued working in the Wilmington area. N. C. Wyeth (1882-1945) built a huge studio in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania to accommodate his large-scale paintings and murals. Wyeth produced over 3,000 paintings and illustrated 112 books. Twenty-five classics, like *Treasure Island* and *The Last of the Mohicans*, were published by Charles Scribner's Classics. Frank E. Schoonover (1877-1972) and Gayle Porter Hoskins (1887-1962) remained in Wilmington, working from studios located at 1616 Rodney Street. Schoonover created 2,200 illustrations for 130 books and magazines. Hoskins was best known for illustrating pulp fiction and covers depicting cowboys in the American west, drawn from his time living in Denver.

Following the death of Howard Pyle in 1911, his friends, including Frank Schoonover, founded the Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts, with the goal of preserving and showing Pyle's paintings and drawings. Donations from generous patrons allowed the Society to purchase almost 100 works of art. This collection became the foundation of what was to become the Delaware Art Museum.

* * * * *

After graduating from high school, William D. White sought Gayle Hoskins as a teacher. White went to Hoskin's home at 1305 Franklin Street, and when his first wife, Helen, opened the door, White asked her to tell Mr. Hoskins he had stopped by to inquire whether Hoskins would take him on as a student. Mrs. Hoskins was no fan of Howard Pyle, and replied that White should do himself a favor and go to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where he could learn to become a real artist.

White did exactly that, enrolling in the fall 1914 classes at the Academy. Over the next three years, White learned life drawing, painting, composition, design and decoration, and illustration from the leading teachers and artists of the day, including Hugh Breckenridge, Henry McCarter, Daniel Garber and, possibly, Violet Oakley. William D. White was also immersed in the works of America's best known painters and sculptors who participated in the annual juried Exhibitions of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Roughly 800 artworks were exhibited

by Impressionists \ Mary Cassatt and William Merritt Chase, realist Thomas Eakins, Portraitists Cecilia Beaux and John Singer Sargent, landscape painter George Bellows, and many others. Also represented were Ashcan painters whose urban themes pioneered American realism: Robert Henri, John Sloan, William Glackens, and George Luks.

From 1914 to 1917, while White was attending the Academy, World War I was raging in Europe. In May of 1917, the United States declared war on Germany, and on June 5, 1918, William D. White, almost age 22, registered for the draft. Private White served with Company B, 73rd Engineers until January of 1919. He was shipped to France to help with post-war cleanup efforts. It can be inferred



(White in France, right)

from White's subsequent illustrations that he learned much about how machines (lifts, hoists), explosives (drilling, detonation), and structures (bridges, skyscrapers, subways, mines) functioned from his brief time with the army engineers.

* * * * *

Returning stateside, William D. White lived and worked in his mother's home. He studied with Gayle Hoskins, knew Frank Schoonover, and hung out with local fine artists, including Bayard Berndt and Edward Grant, and a larger circle of artist models, frame makers, and writers from the utopian village of Arden. One friend

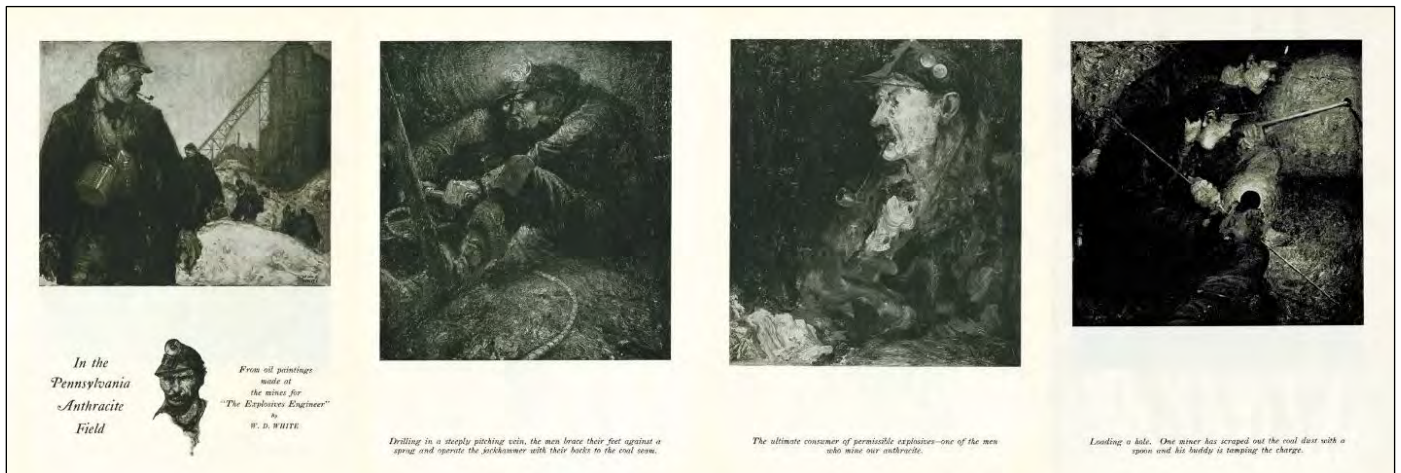


described the young White as a "dandy" who dressed in a white suit and Panama hat. Another friend said he was a "likable mister nice guy who never drank alcohol and was often taken advantage of." He stood only five foot, seven inches and shaved his head to hide his baldness. (*Saturday Evening Post*, June 12, 1920)

William D. White's first published illustrations appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1920. After completing drawings to decorate articles in the June, September, October, and November issues and in the January 1921 issue of the magazine, White decided he'd had enough of working on deadline.

Shortly thereafter White presented his art portfolio at the Hercules Powder Company, located near Rodney Square in downtown Wilmington. Hercules came into existence in 1912 as a result of an antitrust lawsuit against E. I. DuPont de Nemours & Company, also based in Wilmington, Delaware. DuPont controlled two-thirds of the production of explosives nationwide and monopolized the sale and shipment of gunpowder and high explosives. An economic boom in the first two decades of the twentieth century fueled the construction and mining industries. The building of roads, bridges, tunnels, and railroads created the infrastructure to market American products nationwide and abroad. The mining industry supplied iron ore for steel production, coal for fuel, and copper for wiring. All of this mining, quarrying, and construction activity required the use of explosives.

World War I created an unprecedented demand for explosives. DuPont held exclusive contracts to supply explosives to the United States Military; so, Hercules secured sales with Great Britain and Russia. After the war, Hercules launched an employee magazine, *The Hercules Mixer*, to encourage camaraderie among its numerous plants and offices. From the start, Gayle Porter Hoskins created full page pencil illustrations of hunting scenes promoting Infallible smokeless gunpowder. It's likely that Hoskins introduced White to the Hercules art director. William D. White's first illustration appeared in March of 1922, and he created twelve black-and-white paintings to decorate articles and editorials that year.



(*In the Anthracite Field, The Explosives Engineer, March 1923*)

Sometime in 1922, Hercules sent William D. White to the Scranton and Pottsville area of Pennsylvania to document work in the anthracite coal mines. White made sketches of the miners clothed in sooty overalls trudging from crowded, company-owned patch towns over heaps of slate toward the mine entrance. These mustached men from varying European origins clenched long-stemmed pipes in their teeth. Round tin lunchpails and copper water canteens hung from cords around their necks, clanging with every step. As the miners boarded tramcars for the descent underground, headlamps on their cloth caps shown eerily diffused shallow yellow light on their weathered faces.

William D. White also descended into the depths of the mine. White demonstrated a keen eye for detail, a straightforward approach to visual storytelling, and a depth of knowledge about mining equipment, processes, and scenes. He was once quoted as saying that “the drama of the miners’ lives and of the country greatly impressed him, and that he returned to the area many times over his career.” (*Drilling in a steeply pitching vein, c. 1922*)



White’s series of paintings of anthracite miners was published as the lead picture essay, titled *In the Anthracite Field*, for the inaugural issue of *The Explosives Engineer* magazine in March of 1923. *The Explosives Engineer* was circulated to owners, managers, foremen, manufacturers, and distributors in the mining, construction, and quarrying industries. White’s energetic brush strokes of thickly applied paint depicting cramped workspaces, shallow lighting, and roughly hewn mine walls captured the attention of Percy Gordon Beckett, General Manager for western operations of the Phelps Dodge Corporation. Whishing to decorate his home in Arizona with images of Phelps Dodge miners, Beckett commissioned White to execute a series of paintings.

The story that follows attempts to imagine what it might have been like for the twenty-seven year old artist to travel from his hometown in Wilmington, Delaware to Bisbee, Arizona in the summer of 1923.

* * * * *

Following the publication of the coal mining pictures in March of 1923, William D. White walked from his mother's home near Penny Hill to collect mail at the Edgemoor post office. What greeted him was a curious envelope postmarked, "Douglas, Arizona." White tore open the envelope and read the following letter.

Dear Mr. White,

I was pleased to receive the premiere issue of The Explosives Engineer magazine from the Hercules Powder Company. Your realistic illustrations of anthracite coal miners greatly impressed me. I would like to have some paintings of our copper mines to decorate my office and home. Would you be willing to come to Bisbee, Arizona this summer to document our mines and miners?

Sincerely,

P. G. Beckett, General Manager for Western Operations

Phelps Dodge Corporation

Douglas, Arizona

What an opportunity! White purchased a sheet of stationery, envelope, and a two-cent stamp from the postmaster to write his response. He walked quickly back to Penny Hill and boarded the trolley downtown. It was hard to conceal his excitement at the prospect of traveling to the wild, wild, west: home to cowboys and Indians – and copper miners! White hopped off the trolley at Tenth and King Streets, Rodney Square. Workers were preparing the foundation for the July 4th installation of a new bronze statue of Caesar Rodney. White knew his Delaware history. Rodney was famous for a midnight ride to Independence Hall in Philadelphia, where he cast Delaware's deciding vote for Independence. Local scuttlebutt also held that Rodney had been rousted out of a brothel to make his famous ride.

White headed to the Wilmington Public Library on Tenth Street facing the Square. It had been built the previous year from taupe-colored sandstone, with four substantial Doric columns flanking carved lettering such as, "painting, architecture, sculpture." A border of gryphons paraded across the façade at top of the building. White opened the door set within a monumental main door. His goal was to investigate the Phelps Dodge Corporation and the town of Bisbee, Arizona. After an hour's research, White was satisfied that Phelps Dodge was a major mining company. He penned this response to P.G. Beckett:

Dear Mr. Beckett,

I would be pleased to travel to Douglas this summer to create paintings of the Phelps Dodge copper mines. I look forward to meeting you. Please reply with travel instructions and relevant information.

Yours truly, W. D. White.

Next, White walked around the corner to the Hercules building. He had just completed one year working for the company and loved the freelance assignments he'd been given. But the Arizona commission was too enticing to pass up. He mulled over in his mind the best way to present leaving town for a while without losing his freelance job. Perhaps Phelps Dodge would permit Hercules to publish the copper mining art. It was the negotiating card that White played, and it worked. Hercules allowed White one month to complete his commission.

William D. White took a mental inventory of his art supplies as he walked to Harry Yerger's Art Shop at 419 Shipley Street, one block west of Market Street. Harry displayed paintings, prints, and posters that he would custom frame, and he sold artist materials and supplies. Harry had been ill going on two years, and the shop needed a good cleaning. White placed an order for Winsor & Newton oil paints and a roll of linen canvas.

By mid-July the plans had been finalized. Beckett ailed a handful of prepaid train tickets and wired some cash which White collected through the Western Union. He packed one bag with clothing and shaving kit, another with his art materials, and a satchel with a newspaper and sandwich. Then, he put on his neatly pressed (thanks to his mother) white linen suit and carefully knotted a tie around his neck, even though the temperature was pushing ninety degrees. A cream-colored Panama hat completed the outfit.



On the afternoon of July 22, his twenty-seventh birthday, William D. White grabbed his bags and boarded the trolley for the Pennsylvania Station at Front and French streets near the Wilmington waterfront (left). Built in 1907, it was designed by architect, Frank Furness, who conceived over six-hundred buildings during his career. White admired everything about the

train station: it's bright red brick construction with rounded window tops and terra cotta roof and detailing. Rising above the roofline stood a four-faced clocktower. Good! White was right on time. He entered the station and took the grand staircase to the second floor waiting room and train tracks.

White didn't have to wait long for the local train that would take him past Edgemoor, Claymont, Marcus Hook, Chester, and into the Broad Street Station, known as "America's grandest railway terminal." White had time to kill; so he took in the sights of people bustling through the terminal. Like the much smaller station in Wilmington, Philadelphia native and renowned architect Frank Furness designed the ten-story office building and clock tower using red brick with terra cotta ornamentation. (Right)



At 1:37 AM William D. White settled into his seat on Pennsylvania Railroad night train #859 for the seven-and-a-half hour ride Pittsburgh. Yard workers hooked the coal car behind the steel-framed steam locomotive. While the other passengers read their newspapers or dozed, White retrieved some blank index cards and a drawing pencil from his satchel. He sketched a woman trying to quiet a fussy child and a man lighting his pipe. After a while, White headed for the saloon car with its mahogany paneling, richly upholstered arm chairs, and geometric-shaped Art Deco lamps. A porter came to ask what he would like, and White ordered a cup of black coffee. He lighted a Pall Mall unfiltered cigarette and inhaled deeply. The car was otherwise unoccupied; so, White struck up a conversation with the man. Because the porters were universally African, passengers generally dismissed or ignored them, unless there was a complaint to be aired. Almost all porters were called "George" by racially insensitive patrons. By contrast, White found these men had fascinating stories and gossip to tell about their lives on the rails, and he believed American passenger trains ran on their impeccable service.

At 9:00 AM, PRR train #859 pulled into Union Station, Pittsburgh. White's next connection was scheduled to depart at 1:30 AM. He had all day to explore the "steel city," known for producing half of the nation's steel. He walked along the riverfront, where the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers met to form the Ohio River, flowing toward the great Mississippi River. White sat at an outdoor café and ordered a ham and cheese sandwich and black coffee. He lighted a Pall Mall and

listened to music wafting through the café's open door. Three years ago the country's first broadcast came from Pittsburgh on election day, announcing that Warren Harding had won the presidential race – before people had read about it in the newspaper!

The St. Louis Express departed Pittsburgh on time at 1:30 AM. Thankfully, P. G. Beckett had purchased White room in an open section sleeping car for the one thousand-mile, twelve-hour leg from Pittsburgh to St. Louis. A porter made ready the beds, but before turning in, White opened his copy of *The Worker* and scanned the headline: *Build the Federated Party!* The new party slogan was recently announced at the Federated Farmer-Labor Party conference held in Chicago. The article stated that workers in steel mills were “held in abject slavery of the inhuman 12-Hour Day.” White sympathized with the powerless working man's plight against powerful owners and bosses. He drifted to sleep thinking about the men he'd sketched in the Scranton coal mines.

Early the following morning White made his way to the dining car for a hearty breakfast. The tables were covered with white linen tablecloths and set with cream-colored china. A silver vase with fresh flowers decorated every table. An immaculately clad waiter took White's order of country ham and eggs, toast with jam, and black coffee. He gazed out the window at America's heartland. Miles after miles of corn- and wheat-fields stretched as far as the eye could see. Clapboard farmhouses with horse barns, silos, and large oak trees dotted the landscape. Occasionally, a Ford Model T bounced along a dirt road sprayed with oily tack to hold down the dust.

Soon after lunch the train pulled into St. Louis Union Station. After three days of railway travel and layovers, William D. White was halfway to Bisbee, Arizona. He was astonished at the beauty and scale of this train station. When it opened in 1894, the station was the largest and busiest in the world. The Headhouse was built from pale gray limestone, and the clock tower rose 230 feet. The interior featured a gold-leafed Grand Hall with Romanesque arches, a sixty-five foot barrel-vaulted ceiling, and stained glass windows. White exited the station and strolled leisurely along Market Street until he stumbled upon a movie theater showing, “The Covered Wagon,” an epic saga of life along the Oregon Trail. Well, he did have time to kill!

At 8:30 the next morning, William D. White boarded the Southern Pacific, Golden State Ltd., Train #1 for Tucson. He would spend the next forty-eight hours on this train. As the train rolled southwestward, the landscape transformed from farmland to rolling prairies, and then to flat, sandy desert scrub. Grasslands gave way to saguaro and

prickly pear cactus. Bison that once roamed freely by the millions were long gone from their home range.

In Tucson, William D. White claimed his baggage and caught the spur line to Bisbee. As the train rocked gently along the rails, White lighted a cigarette and gazed out the window. Ahead lay the Mule Mountains, their reddish hillsides dotted with green scrubby shrubs. At an elevation of 5,300 feet, Bisbee filled the basin at the bottom of the Mule Mountains and was surrounded by one of the richest mineral sites in the world. White's research back at the Wilmington Public Library revealed that the Phelps Dodge Corporation began mining copper and other minerals in the Mule Mountains in the 1880s. The town of Bisbee was incorporated in 1902. By 1923 Bisbee was the largest town between St. Louis and San Francisco, with 25,000 inhabitants. White noted that the cloudless sky was a brilliant cobalt – nothing like the pale grayish blue of his Delaware sky. He could see homes finished in green, rose, or cream-colored stucco rising in layers up the hillsides.

The steam train whistle announced the arrival in Bisbee. William D. White, dressed in a short-sleeved white shirt with bowtie, white linen pants, and his Panama hat, stepped onto the platform. He was greeted by an amiable fellow who introduced himself as "Joe, mine foreman for Phelps Dodge." Joe grabbed one of White's bags and ushered him along Main Street and past the impressive four-story, tile-roofed Copper Queen Hotel, opened in 1902 and reserved for investors and note-worthy guests of Phelps Dodge. Joe turned onto the street above Main and up the steps to a small but tidy boarding house, run by a red-cheeked Mrs. Murphy. She led the way



Copper Queen of Glory Hole, c1924

upstairs to a small room with flowered wallpaper, a single bed, chair, dresser, and wardrobe. "Bathroom at the end of the hall. Breakfast from 5:00 to 6:30," she explained.

White dropped his bag on the bed and opened the curtains. What he beheld was a gigantic hole in the mountainside with men and burros carrying supplies along narrow paths. "That's the entrance to the Copper Queen mine," stated Joe. "P. G. wants you to paint some pictures of it for him. I'm to show you around."

"P. G." stood for Percy Gordon Beckett, age 41, a Canadian-born, British-educated mining engineer. In 1920 he took over as General Manager for Western Operations of the Phelps Dodge Corporation. Joe described him as a large, ruddy-faced, fair-haired man who was very polite, but you'd better never, ever show up late for an appointment. "Would you like to see the Glory Hole?" asked Joe.

Say no more! William D. White grabbed his bag with sketchbook and pencils and followed Joe inside the gigantic mouth of the mine. The searing Arizona sun gave way to dark, rough-hewn, purple-brown rock walls braced by rows of heavy timbers set in the shape of trapezoids. Electric lights strung along the ceiling illuminated the tramway tracks. Two bare-chested miners, with cigarette hanging



Miners Descending Underground (top), Tramming Ore Underground (left), Driving a Drift, c1924

from their lips, wearing western style felt hats and Levis, and carrying their lunch pails and lanterns, stepped into the hoist that would take them into the depths of the mine. White and Joe followed them into the hoist.

As they descended into the darkness they were met with the bellowing sounds of the steam hoist, pneumatic drills, pickaxes, and dynamite blasts. In a moment of relative quiet, Joe explained that the highest paid Welsh and Cornish miners drilled the holes that would set the explosives. Then, unskilled laborers, called muckers, had the back-breaking task of splitting the rock with pickaxes and shoveling it into tramcars. Trammers then pushed loaded cars weighing up to two tons to the nearest shaft to be hoisted upwards. These men appeared to be of southern or eastern European descent.

Everywhere they went, William D. White made gesture sketches of the men working, capturing the sinewy arms, muscular shoulders, and tattered clothing of the miners. He memorized every detail of their weathered faces and bushy moustaches, the way they bent to lift shovelfuls of rock or braced the drill on a bended knee. Despite the long hours of hard work, these men were friendly and kidded each other about the sketches White made of "Jacko" or "Shorty." White would visit the mine several more times, sketching individuals that caught his attention and making conversation with the easy-going men. Then, he began making preliminary oil sketches to show P. G. Beckett

Next, Joe escorted White to the Sacramento Pit mine, opened in 1917. By July of 1923, seven steam shovels and fifteen locomotives had stripped away millions of tons of rock, so that the actual mining could begin. The searing summer sun bathed the pink and lavender-tiered walls. White observed mostly unskilled Mexicans working in the



In Sacramento Pit, c1924

pit because they were barred from working underground by a racially driven, dual wage system. Their skin was burned brown, and their work clothes were often little more than tatters. Day after day White sketched them as they hauled equipment and water buckets, or broke and shoveled rocks. These miners were not unionized, in part because Phelps Dodge had a good safety

record, paid their employees better than the other area mining companies, and had built English and Spanish schools and a hospital for their benefit. White's sketches demonstrated not only his empathy for these men, but also his attitude that they were in fact the unsung heroes of America's industrial might. He portrayed them with reverence and power as both individuals and as iconic figures worthy of admiration.



Blaster Men, c. 1924

Epilog

One story goes that after a month in Arizona, William D. White had not contacted the

Hercules Powder Company, so they sent a letter asking when he planned to return to Wilmington, Delaware. When another month passed with no reply, Hercules sent someone to Bisbee to bring their illustrator home. That person found White living with an Indian woman whose children were playing with his paints!

William D. White also visited the open pit Pilares de Nacozari mine in northern Mexico. In total he presented P. G. Beckett with twenty subjects, from which he selected seventeen. It is likely that White returned to Delaware to execute the 20 x 24-inch finished paintings, and that Hercules photographed them for reproduction before the artworks were shipped to Beckett's office in Douglas, on the Arizona/Mexico border. Hercules published picture essays of all of White's paintings in five issues of *The Explosives Engineer* magazine: February, July, November, and December of 1924, and July of 1925. These images benefitted both Hercules and Phelps Dodge. The paintings are currently on display at the Alfie Norville Gem & Mineral Museum, Tucson, AZ.

Around 1930 Louis Shattuck Cates, the new president of the Phelps Dodge Corporation, commissioned White to create six new larger paintings of miners wearing cleaner clothing and updated safety equipment. Those paintings were discovered in Jerome, Arizona in the 1950s and remain on display at the Jerome Mine Museum.

Rich Boucher

Upon a Discovery of Inherited Candles

To open up a forgotten cupboard
and see, in the back, a plastic-wrapped pack
of short white votives, like children,
still fresh, still unburned, still ready for a storm
or a sudden loss of power in this house
feels like a message with some kind of meaning.
Maybe a prayer's response, nonsensical though it is,
finally making its way back to you after a bad decade or two.
Or maybe that is not how any of this feels at all;
maybe finding those kinds of candles
causes one to wonder who bought them
and who in Christ's name brought them home,
and if they lit them to pray, then *why?*
Why light them? *Why pray?* What sense does *that* make?
Perhaps it's some gift you can't recall,
just the dust motes that follow the forgetting.
Maybe these were inherited from another;
maybe some someone who is not you
is actually the only person on the Earth
who should have the right to light them
and the privilege to see their glow in the dark.
Maybe this feeling has the right not to be defined,
could be the feeling is akin to wonder,
as in you wonder which candle will be the one
that will not light readily for you, if at all,
and then also which candle
will be the surprising answer, the lovely shock,
the one that won't go out in the wind.

I Have to Kill Shang Tsung

I have to kill Shang Tsung again.
I already beat him twice in this game,
but the random opponents
in this survival mode
have brought him
face to face with me once more.
I'm lying in bed with the old-school
cobalt blue Gameboy Advance in my hands
and ready to take the sorcerer down;
there really is nothing like
blood and martial arts
and death-match fatalities
rendered in 32-bits, 240×160 pixels
on a three-inch-by-three-inch screen
to bring the heart rate down
call up the song of my inner peace
and grant me some relaxation;
my love is beside me in the bed
playing her little game too;
it's about to be midnight
and we hear two loud bangs
outside the bedroom window,
then a third and separate bang
somewhere right on the street.
I press the small blue start button
to pause my game in progress
and look over to Leann.

Did you hear that, I ask.
Don't go outside, she says.
And yes, I heard that, she says.

When the game I'm playing
is paused, the system still plays
the tinny background music
as it waits for me to return to the fight,
a hollow and repetitive yet ominous
synth melody meant to conjure

images of some Far East underground
battle arena in some desolate and illegal Hell.
Shots were fired at the house we live in
some months ago; shots are fired all the time
somewhere, but this was at our home.
What is the difference between gunfire
in a neighborhood you never enter
and the gunfire that visits your doorstep?
Is it a difference in wage per hour
or social status or philosophy or upbringing?
Is it nature or is it nurture, or is that difference
really no actual difference at all?
It's the year that it is, so we look at each other
and don't say anything or make a sound
for a handful of seconds, maybe ten or fifteen
as we verify that we are both still alive,
then she turns back to her game
and I turn back to mine.
So much worry to think about,
so much that is pointless to give voice to,
and we will go to sleep tonight
waiting for the next loud bang.

For now, I press the small blue start button
again, taking the game off of pause.
My opponent advances towards me.
It's the year that it is, and I need to be ready.
I have to kill Shang Tsung again.

Shocked & Awed: Tom Watkins and the Wilmington Art Scene of the 1970s

Geo. Stewart

After stretching out my college career past its breaking point, I found myself in Wilmington, part of a very limited and unsuccessful attempt by the City of Wilmington to revitalize the decaying mini-opolis. Tom Watkins, Joyce Brabner, Craig Dawson and I were the founding four of an Arts collective centered around the Rondo Center whose various parts included

Tom Watkins's studio and apartment, an adjacent cinematic and a comic book store named aptly enough Xanadu, run by Craig. The 4-story brick building sat on the corner of 5th and Shipley streets and used to house one of the nine newspapers that kept Wilmington's population so well informed (mostly about sports and murders) as the 19th century drifted invisibly into the 20th. The building was designed to be functional, with large windows for light and rugged floors





of roughly hewn planks, stained by printer's ink and burned by the splattering of melted lead used to make type. It was on the very top floor that once housed the linotype machines, which had been hung on iron hooks bolted to a series of mammoth beams that ran across the ceiling.

Like so many of us over-educated, under-qualified baby boomers, Tom had started out hustling for any sort of job he could get. It led him to being a dockworker, unloading ships from faraway lands. Tall, rail-thin and looking decidedly different, he was not well accepted in the brotherhood of stevedores who finally expressed their dis-

dain by dropping a crate of bananas on him. It landed him not only in the hospital but with a modest cash settlement, seed money that grew into the Rondo Center.

The studio that also was his living quarters overlooked Market Street at one end and Shipley Street at the other, only barely perceptible through the two huge grimy windows. The second-floor theater space was dressed up with a few mismatched chairs, a grimy couch that would have been rejected by Warhol's Factory and well-worn pillows

scattered like detritus along the uneven floor. All had been unsuspectingly donated by the Wilmington Sanitation Department.

Tom and I booked most of the events at The Rondo Center, a casually-scheduled series of programs that was eclectic in the extreme. The Rondo Center was named after an obscure 1940s character actor Rondo Hatton who suffered from acromegaly, a rare disease that progressively disfigures its victims, distending limbs and swelling facial features into a grotesque simulacrum of our Neanderthal ancestors. The once handsome actor found a sad sort of stardom as a horror actor employed by a studio pleased to be able to save a fortune on monster makeup in their rot-gut horror films.

Tom felt in him something of a father figure and so Rondo became the honorary mascot for the center's biggest undertaking, The First Annual Sleaze Convention (and so far, the ONLY edition of Sleaze Convention). Over a three-day weekend, it brought the nascent New York Punk Scene to Wilmington. John Holstrom and Legs McNeil, the publishers of Punk Magazine came down. Whether it was too much cheap beer or a well-reasoned editorial comment, upon arrival Legs immediately vomited all over the studio floor.

Soon-to-be super star Debbie Harry also came, having just left The Stilettoes for a new band, Blondie. She gave me one of the first pressings of their debut 45, "Sex Offender", which became a staple on Side Two for months before Blondie's first album came out with the song, now re-recorded and retitled to a more acceptable "X Offender."

Sparing much expense, Tom booked all the guests in the fleabag Terminal Hotel, a name never more apt, given its location near the train station and the health of most of its habitués.

The centerpiece of the weekend was the Delaware premiere of John Waters' masterpiece of bad taste, "Desperate Living," for which Tom had provided a key prop, a rubber prosthetic penis that got mutilated in the movie. John was there for the opening night celebration and joined us in one of Tom's organic buffet dinners that always came with the \$2 admission.

For the Sleaze Convention, Rob Jones' gallery displayed a broad selection of outsider art. In a mock-up of a porno booth, I displayed a rich collage of detritus that I had collected over the years, including a Dennys face mask, a plastic ice cube with a fly in it, and various penny toys and candies from a time when such things were actually purchasable at such a meager pricepoint. It was a feast for the eyes served to the sounds of an endless loop of crass commercials from local radio stations. "If corns, calluses and bunions bother you..." "If you have a passion for fashion..." "If you didn't buy your suite from Krass Brothers..." If, If, If...

Later that spring Edie "The Egg Lady" Massey, John Waters' second most famous star, came to town for a visit. Tom somehow convinced the city fathers that such a famous personage was a natural to lead the Wilmington Easter Parade down Market Street. It even made the papers: Edie dressed regally carrying a basket of spring flowers and promenading arm-in-arm with a giant bunny.

The most financially successful film ever shown at the Rondo Center, was a double

bill of the TAMI Show and The T.N.T Show underwritten by I Like It Like That Records, a legend among local cognoscenti of Newark for its eclectic tastes and low, low prices. Some of the earliest films to be shot on high-def video (by Steve Allen's crew) and then transferred to celluloid, they are seminal documents, unseen for years, featuring many of the most important Top Forty acts of 1964, including the likes of Chuck Berry, Gerry & The Pacemakers, Smokey Robinson and The Miracles, Lesley Gore, The Beach Boys, James Brown, and the Rolling Stones. The house was packed by people who really did like it like that.

Over its 18-month existence, The Rondo Center exposed film buffs and those of that ilk to a mixed bag of delights. I was behind the booking of a potpourri film from 1938 called "The Goldwyn Follies," featuring many of my favorite – and very obscure – refugees from vaudeville, including the Ritz Brothers, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy. The music was by headbanger George Gershwin and proved to be his last film score before his premature death. Each show was augmented by an assortment of classic cartoons and musical shorts long forgotten and nearly impossible to see until YouTube made nearly everything available. We live in amazing times.

Sharing a philosophy with another artist better known than I, that everyone should be famous for fifteen minutes, I was very excited when a patron of the arts down in Maryland somewhere lent the Rondo Center his tabletop



half-inch reel-to-"real" video deck. That first night I immediately began to explore its potential, carefully threading it up and dragging the camera over to the studio's tiny balcony

that looked out on the corner of 5th & Shipley. Framing the neighborhood bar to the right and the storefront apartment next to it for no apparent reason, I began to roll tape on the quiet summer's night. After a half hour Tom became bored but not I, though I gave in when he said to turn it off and stop wasting tape. I did so reluctantly and unfortunately because just then a drunk staggered from the corner bar and made his way down the cracked and cluttered sidewalk supporting himself by leaning on the buildings. He was doing alright until he reached the storefront apartment, whose picture window was unable to support his weight. With a shattering crash, it gave way, dropping a huge sheet of glass across his torso like the blade of a guillotine. As he tumbled half-way inside, the elderly woman who called the place home began a long series of deafening screeches, which seemed to awaken the drunk sufficiently from his stupor so that he was able to crawl out and toddle on his way. Why he had not been bifurcated horizontally by the glass is a mystery for the ages that baffles me still. But they say "God protects fools, drunks and children," though I could never figure out why the first two would get such preferential treatment.

Like most golden ages it was brief but influential. Tom's art was years ahead of its time and migrated north to NYC without him, thanks to Tom's studio assistant, Julia Gordon, who would soon make the move to the Rotting Apple. There she and one Rick Brown



produced a true music fanzine, one of the first to celebrate the Punk scene, a long overdue reaction to the excesses of progressive rock. Called "Beat It", it was four-to-six hand-stapled Xeroxed pages with large hand-colored picture and a bare minimum hand-lettered copy. Once when she was returning from a trip to London, she smuggled into an unsuspecting America the Sex Pistols debut 45, "Anarchy in the U.K.," which she shared on my radio show, Side Two later that day. It was loud, vulgar and in-your-face, with all the prog-rock pretense stripped out of it, the first warning shot that would spread quickly and kill off a lot of Early 70s sellouts, like some sort of cacophonous coronavirus culling the "heard."

By 1978 I had also moved on, heading back to Newark. I was hired by Barry Solan who had just begun to revitalize this sleepy college town when he turned the State Theater into a Rep House. It wasn't long before the Wilmington experiment died a failure and I lost touch with Tom. Most of us did. I didn't see him again until 2016 when the Delaware Art Museum had a major exhibition dedicated to the Art scene in Wilmington and Newark from the late Seventies and Early Eighties. Tom looked healthy and happy, but as Gregg Kirk reported in his insightful obit on June 24, 2021 published in his Big Shout magazine, things had become very weird for Tom, even by his standards.

Seems he had begun working in films in various capacities, first in Delaware for the "Dead Poets Society," later in Philadelphia, New Jersey and finally New York.

In the 1970s being polymorphously perverse was looked on as something shocking; by the 1990s it just seemed tired. But it led Tom to try matrimony, which not surprisingly, didn't take. Kirk tells of Tom pleading "with his wife not to divorce him by saying to her, 'You PROMISED you wouldn't leave me ... through thick and thin...In front of people!' It was about at that time that he lost interest in pursuing his artwork and commercial interests with the same fervor as he had once embraced it. Instead, he took to selling his spinal fluid to experimental labs that caused him week-long headaches."

I have been told by one in a position to know better than I that "to live outside the law you must be honest" and Tom always was that, even when it wasn't in his best interest to do so. Another friend, reliable to a degree, told me about going to a party at Tom's tiny Philadelphia apartment only to discover the main course on the evening's entertainment menu was a series of S&M performances. Light refreshments were also served. When the Corona virus shut down almost all film shoots, Tom was left out of work. Most of his artwork was left to decompose in an \$18 a month storage locker that he couldn't afford to reclaim. The last article I read about him tells about a decrepit old man in Rittenhouse Square selling the final dregs of his artwork to indifferent tourists. At some point he got a cut on his foot that soon bloomed into septicemia, which was left untreated due to his lack of money and our nation's lack of interest in the desperately poor. He died consumed from the inside like a victim in some 50s sci-fi movie. Given the choice, he would have loved that.

Geo. Stewart is a writer, film maker, artist and radio host. His film criticisms, interviews and reviews have appeared over the years in FilmFax/Outre Magazine, Cool & Strange Music Magazine, The TLA Film & Video Guide, Rewind Magazine, and the critically acclaimed book "Images In The Dark." He is currently working on his autobiography: It Was Fun While It Lasted and annotating the poetry of Geetz Romo.

We'd also like to send a hearty thank you to Audrey Pittman for holding onto and providing rare examples of Tom Watkins' art work. We're given to understand that the major part of his surviving art work has been in receivership for decades, whereabouts unknown.

OPENING NIGHT AT THE SLEAZE CONVENTION

Debbie Harry was just one of the many castoffed cognoscenti to come down to Wilmington. Some became famous. Some not. All had a certain kind of Bacchanalian fun, fueled with cheap wine and bad food. Others who joined our raucous roundelay of depravity was Debbie's band mate -- and soul mate -- Chris Stine, who, it later turned out, was covering the event for Al Goldstein's Screw magazine. It has often been said that any publicity is good publicity And since it was doubtful that the *New York Times Weekend* section was going to cover it, well, here's a pencil ...)

Anya Phillips, late of the Mudd Club, and soon to be late herself, was also there with her assortment of leather whips and stinging quips. Marty Thau was there, quietly unattractive, welcomed for being the one who a few years earlier had unknowingly started the whole Punk scene by bringing us New York Dolls and then held open the door of the asylum for the many



others who were to follow in their musical wake.

Years later Stine tried to recall that shallow dream of a weekend but with little success. "There was a lot of stuff that went on in some big indoor space [it was the Rondo Center loft] with booths and various weird art-ish exhibits...About a thousand people showed up... It was the first time we met the John Waters contingent, I think ... Edith Massey had a booth that was kind of an extension of her thrift store in Baltimore [Edith's Shopping Bag on Fell's Point]..."

I must say he remembers a lot more about that weekend than I do.

I do remember the opening night party. Well, some of it... It was held upstairs at one of Wilmington's few after-hours gay clubs. Many of our invited locals wouldn't sign the guest book. Others used aliases. The room was dark; the music loud. A disco ball supplied the only illumination, sending spots of light on the walls and on the faces of everyone, even those who clung to the walls and stared. The rest of us were having such a great time that we hoped it would never end. But, of course, it did.

At dawn when it was clear that it was well past the time to leave, I headed out the back fire door. The burning morning light smacked me hard in the face. I felt like a vampire in a tanning salon, blinded with the rude reality that I would get nothing done that day. Sleep a little. Eat a little. And feel like shit for twenty-four hours.

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DON'T MISS IT!

Ray Greenblatt

AT YOSHI'S

In refined silence
we stitched the delicacies
on our plates
with curved chopsticks,
each bite an exquisite gift.
Ruth and Sue bowed over
the teapot as Jeff
lifted a serene toast,
the pale blue porcelain
tiny in his clasp.

Five people in dark suits
took their positions
and the sounds began.
J.J. Johnson's trombone
oozed all over the hall
searching for one dull face.
Not Ruth's, not Sue's, not Jeff's
all enthralled smiles
in the candlelight.
Soon a battery of horns
opened up,
double-bass giving
underground support ,
the drummer starting to stir up
sauces and ragouts in his kettles
until hot to the touch.

A small quiet girl
sat at the piano
then burst into life
clutching the notes
chords by the fistful
runs up to the elbow,
energy pumped her into
a 300-pound person.
The crowd began the cheers
that like Pacific waves
would roll in all night.
Ruth boldly swung her glass of wine
over our heads declaring
"Welcome to Berkeley!"

ON THE EDGE OF COOL

On the sidewalk corner
guy in a pea-green zoot suit
sunglasses large as headlights
mop of red hair a high hat
hopping foot to foot
clutches a flashing horn
behind him outline of storefronts,
then as happens in life
a pause
the hipster freezes
background blackens into sidemen
as I read the jacket cover
on my shelf:
SWING AND SWAY
WITH SAMMY KAYE
1940

DON'T MESS WITH ME!

In a small dark room next door
we could buy cheap whiskey
for 30 cents a shot,
then we entered a long room
in the center a long oval bar
and inside it a platform,
up on that platform
three dark-suited sidemen
but all eyes were on the horn,
we could feel the heat
the electricity
I hung onto the barstool
like we were a ship-at-sea
pitching and tossing
in a hurricane of sound,
because Miles was blowing
Hell! I could reach over and touch
those small gleaming black loafers,
and in the floor-to-ceiling mirrors
a myriad of Miles
took us away to any place
we ever wanted to be.

Samm The Champagne Bunny

Tom Watkins

Little Billy sat awake in his bed, his beady eyes bright with expectation. He had two eyes. It was late Easter Eve, if that was the name for the night before Easter Sunday. He'd been awake all night hoping for a glimpse of The Easter Bunny. He was fairly determined to achieve this goal, which seemed very important to his fevered eight-year-old mind.

He had heard a series of quiet clinking sounds that spelled "**Easter Eggs!**" to his alert, albeit wax-laden ears. He was somewhat disappointed that this sound wasn't followed by a clang and rodent whimper. So much for the rabbit trap. He'd have to talk with his scoutmaster about them sometime.

Crawling out from under his **Charley Starkweather**-licensed design polyester quilt, he put on his slippers and crept out to the living room. His slippers were purple with fluorescent green bow tie patterns spaced in a precisely random post-Bauhaus pattern. Billy didn't know this. He thought they were some sort of dead insect, probably a butterfly.

His pajamas were a colorful montage of faces, flames, and haphazard-looking words. On closer examination it was a festive depiction of the burning of 61 homes in Philadelphia's Osage Avenue neighborhood. The faces were dead MOVE members caught in Smurf-like puckishness as the flames licked about their umber faces. Billy would have appreciated a pun about burnt umber if he had known that their color was something other than just brown. They were his favorite pajamas. He especially liked the picture of Frank Africa on his pants. This unfortunate location, due to poor toilet training in his early years, had given Frank a somewhat yellowed halo.

Blanche, his mother, frequently reminded him that he was damn lucky to have that pair of pajamas. She'd gone shopping for them at the Springfield Mall the day after a mass murderer had shot a lot of people there. The crazy woman in khaki had even killed a young kid. "He never even got a chance to shop..." she'd told Billy after fighting through the overflow crowds to buy his items at the counter of a major discount department store. All that week the crowds had been "thick as flies around shit." It was viciously rumored that some neighboring malls were reviewing resumes of several I.R.A. members, various cultists, recently released mental patients, and assorted terrorists for a Pre-Christmas sales boost of their own. The fact that one of the newly hired toy department Santas looked a lot like Ayahtollah Khomeini didn't help.

Billy was unaware of these odd bits of sartorial background at the moment. He was stealthily making his way across the colorful Guernica carpeting of the dining room. His fluorescent-shod feet obscured an exploding Picasso bull as he rounded the **Lime Jell-O Mold** motif dinette table. He moved aside a pile of **Watchtower** and **Plain Truth** magazines that had been dropped off regularly the past several weeks by Jehovah's Witnesses. Behind them was his **Rambo Junior Plastic Crossbow** (some assembly required). He wondered if four rabbit's feet would make him four times as lucky. There was also some sort of subconscious association

between rabbits and eggs in his mind. He was worried about getting his Easter eggs, of course, but was equally concerned about all eggs in general. He really liked Egg McMuffins for breakfast. "But," he thought, "I think Sister Ray at Saint Amphetamine School said something about chickens laying eggs. 100." He also thought that had something to do with Frank Perdue.

The 15/16th-inch soft rubber safety tips had long since been removed from the foot-long shafts that came with the toy crossbow. These he'd filed to fairly lethal points as he watched the **Mister T Show** on Saturday mornings. It helped burn off the excess energy created by his breakfast of **Cath'lik Crunch** cereal and filled milk. The sugarcoated communion wafers and marshmallow crucifixes were really neat.

Billy had gotten a small statue (suitable as an altar decoration or costume jewelry) in the last box. It was a Madonna, carved out of a piece of The True Cross. She looked a lot like plastic, but his mother said that maybe The True Cross was made out of plastic. If water into wine was a miracle, a plastic cross wasn't too hard to visualize, if you had faith. Blanche had a lot of faith in both God and plastic. After all, the Jesus on her dashboard was made of Bakelite.

The figure that was centered in his cross-hair site was about five feet, six inches tall. That The Easter Bunny was that big didn't really bother him as much as the Bunny's black and gold high-heeled pumps. The rabbit had short golden blonde fur all over, longer on the head. This was cut in a smart back-combed hairstyle around the delicate pink. Billy was scared when he realized it was a girl Bunny. The lithely, compact muscles of her arms and thighs were covered with a glistening black velvet jumpsuit. Her firm breasts were like those he'd seen last week on some statue in the park. It was of a naked girl with big hunting dogs. He thought she was a goddess. The breasts were pointed at him. So was her pink pearl-handled, chrome-plated forty-five caliber automatic. This was the moment when James Africa joined Frank in his incipient sainthood.

"You've wet yourself, young man," she said, pointing the big gun towards his midsection, "I don't think that's a very nice way to greet a Bunny, and I'd drop the hardware before you have to start shopping at the Eunuch Clothing Warehouse.

Billy didn't really have any major emotional investment in his budding glands, *per se*, but could appreciate the potential for pain the threat implied. "Yes Sir, Miss Bunny," he whimpered as his Commie-taming recreational device joined the growing yellow puddle on the carpet. He was unaware of his gender non-semanticism. Billy knew from his statistically average 61.3 hours of weekly TV viewing to always address anyone with a gun as "Sir."

Once Billy dropped the toy, the Bunny made the forty-five disappear. He thought it was tucked into a small purse she carried, or into the hot pink basket she sported. "Quick as a bunny" took on new depths of meaning to Billy.

"Well, that's better, Billy. Now, don't you think you'd better change out of those pants?"

Awkwardly aware of his situation for the first time, he blushed, stammered "Yes, Sir," and asked permission to be excused. The Bunny nodded agreement, adding: "No tricks, Billy . . ." This was enough to cause him to vigorously nod his reply and back away. Billy carefully retreated back to his bedroom to change,

He was confused. He could yell for his parents, but he wasn't sure how fast the Bunny could hop. He pictured her, gun in hand, making gigantic leaps down the hall. This really

scared him, he was also worried what his parents might say about the whole thing. When he lost a tooth two years ago, he'd gotten into a lot of trouble by mounting it on a large mouse trap under his pillow. He later explained to his mother that he wanted a new dirt bike and had planned to negotiate with the Tooth Fairy for her release. He'd gotten the idea from a hostage news broadcast on TV. Except for Blanche somehow breaking her finger as she came into his room to investigate the screams she said she heard, Billy would have gotten a beating on the spot. As it was, he remembered a lot of yelling that night. He never had seen the Tooth Fairy, but Billy knew she was a girl, too, She'd screamed just like Mom did. He was worried that maybe The Easter Bunny, Mom, and the Tooth Fairy were working together. He changed into dry bottoms.

His attention was fully focused on the Bunny. She was sorting through her basket. Instead of eggs, it held six or seven large bottle-shaped objects wrapped in foil of variegated patterns and colors. Curiosity overcame his fear as he timidly inquired, "Where are your eggs, Easter Bunny, Sir?" She looked up and smiled "Eggs? I don't have any eggs, Billy, I hate eggs. I'm not The Easter Bunny; I'm the Champagne Bunny."

She was now hiding the wrapped bottles around the house. The couch presented a challenge due to the clear vinyl slipcover. This cover reflected Blanche's sincere desire to protect the design. It was a paisley print made up of starving Ethiopian children. A Live-Aid guitar-shaped throw pillow accented the piece. The Bunny stashed a spritely decorated bottle under this. The wrapping featured puny naked pink and purple women floating around on bubbles.

The other bottles were carefully distributed behind plastic plants, the Laziboy Recliner, the linen closet, and the large brown plastic **Java The Hut Coffee Maker** in the dining room. She accomplished this with graceful energetic hops that made her jumpsuit ripple as she moved. Her large, fluffy white tail was visible as she hopped over the TV to put a bottle behind the **Born In The USA** curtains. These were polyester, in brilliant red, white, and blue. They did nice work in Taiwan.

Billy wasn't really scared of The Champagne Bunny anymore. He'd seen people drinking champagne on TV and breaking bottles of it on boats in cartoons. Usually, the boats sank. He was sitting on the couch watching her as she finished. A brief hop and she was beside him. "Miss Bunny," he asked, "how'd you know my name?"

"Billy, your name was on a big list I got from Bunny Land. . . . We've been watching you. There have been complaints. But, since you're still young, we thought we'd give you a chance."

While this sank in, she produced a fancy bottle and then began to pour champagne into a glass. Her hands were delicate but strong looking. Billy began to cry when he remembered he had wanted to use them as key chains. The golden Bunny comforted him and patted his head. He apologized and promised to give up attempting terrorist activities against mythological creatures. Santa was to be spared sharpened punji stakes in the chimney this Christmas. After he again addressed her as "Miss Bunny," she smiled and poured him a partial glass of champagne. "You can call me Samm, Billy, Two 'm's."

"Gee, thanks Samm!" he replied as they toasted.

Since the hour was late, Samm soon had to leave for other stops. Billy carried her basket outside. He was surprised to see she had a car. It was a big dark blue Grand Prix. The back was

filled with hundreds of wrapped bottles. In the passenger seat was another rabbit. He was taller, with shorter ears that looked half grown in. His fur was dark, and he had a long nose with whiskers. This Bunny was also drinking champagne. Samm introduced him as Tomm, an apprentice Champagne Bunny. She said he rode with her a lot, but got sick occasionally, He was still in training.

Billy got about half-way back to his door and turned around. He looked at the big car, then at his parent's ranch house. Picturing himself with large pink ears, he made a decision. No one said a word as the young boy climbed over the bottles into the back seat. He dug out the seat belt and smiled. As he pulled it on, a pile of sea shells clattered to the floor.

"Oh, I work overtime as The Oyster Bunny," Samm explained as she started up the Grand Prix. Billy and Tomm laughed.

Samm turfed the lawn as they drove away into the night.

Epilogue

Blanche tripped over a champagne bottle. It was several weeks since Easter. "Where the Hell do these things come from?" she asked herself. She was late for her AMWAY meeting. She opened the refrigerator door to place the bottle next to the others she'd been finding. She moved aside the eight cartons of **Hulk Hogan** milk. It suddenly dawned on her that only Billy drank milk. There was a several-week accumulation. Blanche checked the pantry: four boxes of **Cath'lik Crunch** cereal. She returned to the refrigerator to double check the milk. The last carton had Billy's picture and name on it as a missing child.

"No one ever tells me anything," she sighed as she poured a glass of champagne.

Good Friday

Across the planes of spring
into the spiral of the year
we all stand near to each other
we all stand by things
the stand by us.

It is the same stars that shine upon us.
We all live above the sign of the serpent
from which everything grows.

— *Steven Leech*

David P. Kozinski

Prescription(s)

To survive this scurvy era, this hour of slime,
you'll need a pianist's wrists and strong fingernails
to divert the inky rain from the swollen clouds
before it funnels down the back of your throat.
So, plenty of root veggies, carrots of iron,
beets and copper yams, then, half a lime
and rosin to keep the digits dry.

If you have those young blood blues
(and who hasn't, who couldn't?) you'll need
strawberry bubblegum and a flask of V.O.,
the flash of a dimpled bum, a meandering hum.
Against dyspepsia from willful ignorance,
take heart of newt and bile of flea, licorice strings
and strands of saffron; seek a spavined horse
to free and a skull with a rosy smile.

If what ails you is what's been ailing me
you'll sift out every stem and seed
and all the bland mendacity, load the dump truck,
set it to smolder and hold your nose,
whichever ramp you take.
As needles spin,
chains scream and hoses smoke,
there's only one script left to follow.

It's in no doctor's hand; it's clear and neat
and the directions chase you around the stage.
Dissolution comes with each curtain rise,
hypocrisy drips from plastic bags,
lines get clogged and lost
down every gulch and hollow.
All exits shut, you play the part;
chew and swallow every page.

Last Morning Of The Year

In this tentative, angled light
I recall heralds insisting
overnight that syntax
is the toll for tending the illusion
life can be ordered like notes
and tempi in a score

but a few stray
tones sprout in every great chord
and a composer, loving mutations,
invites them as blessed children
to the fronts of their files.
One may lead and fall,
followed onto barbed staves.
Another guides them all
through the crags, out the pass
into the breach of morning.

They may espy with blinking eyes
a glint of what is thirsted after
– love the way we want it and when.
Like rats at a big cheese, none can
hold the whole but strong legs
and pointed elbows win the soupçon
that starts momentum, builds appetites

that smear blood and clear land,
birth clans and purchase the leisure
to amass, to score grander orchestras,
to carve self-portraits in mesas, to desire.

Tim Hudenberg

camera obscura

sly Vermeer so silent
the light is coming from the left
a window closed to the hustle and bustle painted
Delft in silence

your mercantile, bourgeoisie world
a girl with a pearl
turns slightly towards us
pursed lips her opening

remark
the background
turns suddenly dark
suddenly so mischievous

Bunny, The Judge and *The Last Tycoon*

Steven Leech

Not only had Delaware author John Biggs, Jr. a lasting friendship with F. Scott Fitzgerald but he also had a long relationship with the American literary figure Edmund Wilson. The three were classmates at Princeton University while engaging in literary pursuits.

Wilson was the first to arrive at Princeton as a student in 1912. Biggs had entered Princeton in 1914. Between the two, Fitzgerald became a student in 1915. The three were joined by others interested in literary pursuits, most notably John Peale Bishop who acted as the model for Thomas Park D'Invilliers in Fitzgerald's first novel *This Side of Paradise*. The group immediately involved themselves with literary activity on campus by joining the *Nassau Literary Magazine* and the humor periodical *The Tiger*. Both publications had been languishing for many years, especially the *Nassau Literary Magazine* which had once found greater success during the editorship of the American author Booth Tarkington, who later wrote *The Magnificent Ambersons*, for which he earned a Pulitzer Prize 1919 and again in 1922 for Alice Adams.



Bunny, a name originally given Wilson by his mother and one his friends used, was born on May 8, 1895 in Red Bank, New Jersey. After his stint at Princeton he served in the United States Army during World War I and afterward joined the editorial staff of *Vanity Fair*, becoming the magazine's Managing Editor in 1922.

! After graduating from Princeton in 1918, Biggs attended Harvard Law School from 1919 to 1922 earning his law degree. During this period, Biggs continued to write fiction. His first success came with his short story "Corkran of the Clamstretch," published in the December 1921 edition of *Scribner's* and republished in *Dreamstreets* #49 in 2005. While practicing law in Wilmington, Biggs published two novels: *Demigods* in 1926 and *Seven Days Whipping* in 1928.

Of the three, Fitzgerald attained the greatest success, first with the publication of *This Side of Paradise* and *Flappers and Philosophers* in 1920, *The Beautiful and the Damned* in 1922, and *The Great Gatsby* in 1925. However, Fitzgerald's fast lifestyle had begun to take its toll and partly for that reason his friend and roommate from Princeton, John Biggs, arranged for Scott and his new wife Zelda to move into a palatial rented house near Bellefonte, just north of Wilmington, called Ellerslie in 1927.

! Edmund Wilson made a visit to Ellerslie as did other American literary and cultural luminaries. Wilson visited Ellerslie in November 1928. According to his essay, "A Weekend at Ellerslie," which was published in *The New Republic* as well as in his collection *The Shores of Light* (1952, Farrar, Straus & Young), he arrived at the Wilmington train station where he met novelist and playwright Thornton Wilder. On the way to Ellerslie in a cab the two, who had not met one another before, discussed Proust and other literary topics. Upon their arrival at Ellerslie the two were given a tour of the house by Scott after which the festivities began, during which time John Biggs and his wife Anna arrived. During these festivities, Wilson was persuaded to perform a parlor game that had been a favorite from the three's college days at Princeton. Wilson, from "A Weekend at Ellerslie" describes the scene:

In the atmosphere of exhilaration that the Fitzgeralds always generated on these occasions, I was called upon to give them an act that I had sometimes performed years before — after the summer of 1916 at Plattsburg — at convivial college gatherings. This was an impersonation of a Regular Army officer giving a hoarse-voiced lecture on Scouting and Patrolling. Major Waldron, red-faced and bespectacled, standing with his heels together and his arms stiff at his sides, would bark out, without a gesture or a flicker of expression, such instructions as: "Places of concealment: trees and roofs of houses. If you climb on roof of house, be sure to keep on side that's hidden — side that's away from enemy. Don't get on the side exposed to enemy. Scout that gets on side exposed to enemy can be seen by enemy and shot. Scout's no good if he's dead." I had completely forgotten this, but John Biggs fed it back to me, and I did my best to oblige, though I was not really up to it any more.

Even though John Biggs had encouraged and arranged for his old college roommate's move to Ellerslie in order to give some structure to his lifestyle in an environment more conducive to continuing his writing career, the Fitzgeralds continued their frantic ways even in the staid environs of Wilmington. Occasionally boredom would settle in at Ellerslie and Scott and Zelda would venture into Wilmington. Biggs described one such incident:

There was a bad area near Wilmington known as "Bloodfield" where all kinds of shootings and stabbings took place. The police wouldn't go in except in pairs.!

Sometimes Scotty and Zelda would go there and start drinking. They raised so much hell that residents would call police. The Wilmington police always considered them a lady and a gentleman and refused to place them in a cell. They kept them in the gymnasium until I arrived to get them.

But they were rough on Fitzgerald's bodyguard and manservant. He was a former Le Havre taxi driver and boxer whom Fitzgerald persuaded to come to the U. S. in 1927. The police always put him in a cell and removed his shoes and belt, much to his anger.

In spite of the Fitzgeralds' antics, Scott had devoted some time while at Ellerslie writing what would become his final complete novel *Tender is the Night*, published in 1934.

The Fitzgeralds left Ellerslie in 1929 and moved to Paris, France. The 1930s would be difficult years for both Scott and Zelda. Mental illness would take its toll on Zelda while she swung between bouts of hospitalization and long convalescence, primarily at her parents' home in Montgomery, Alabama. Scott would become less productive with his writing, publishing only *Tender is the Night* during the decade and eventually gravitating to Hollywood and becoming marginally successful as a screenwriter.

Edmund Wilson would have a successful decade of the 1930s during which he produced his finest literary works. In 1936 he married the American author Mary McCarthy, and in the meantime established his reputation as one of the United States' foremost literary critics.

John Biggs also had a successful career during the 1930s as a lawyer. He became involved with the Democratic Party on behalf of the New Deal policies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Shortly after Roosevelt's reelection in 1936, Biggs was rewarded with a Federal appointment to a bench on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

The separate careers of Edmund Wilson, John Biggs, Jr. and F. Scott Fitzgerald would converge once more in the years before the outbreak of World War II when Fitzgerald died suddenly on December 21, 1940, leaving his final unfinished novel *The Last Tycoon*.

In his will, Fitzgerald named his old Princeton friend, John Biggs, as executor of his estate. The task of caretaker for Zelda during her continuing mental illness also fell to Biggs, and less formally the welfare of their daughter Scotty who was a student at Vassar. The biggest problem faced by Biggs was the fact that Fitzgerald died nearly destitute. In the face of these difficulties Biggs did not let his late friend and struggling family down. First he was able to make some wise investments with remaining resources to create a cash flow to provide for Zelda and to keep Scotty in school. However, Fitzgerald left the potential for realizing that which would bolster his estate, what Fitzgerald had himself characterized as ". . . the fruits of my pen." Fitzgerald had left an unfinished novel and a number of other scattered manuscripts. It was here that the third old friend, Edmund Wilson, entered the picture once more.

In 1940, Edmund Wilson was at the height of his unique literary career. His magnum opus *To The Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History* had just been published. In this monumental work, Wilson demonstrated that beginning around the time of the French Revolution, a new understanding of how history acted as a social and

cultural force had emerged. Beginning with discoveries by French historian Jules Michelet, regarding how the affairs of human social interaction had played a greater role in human history than the edicts of the church or by kings and emperors, Wilson demonstrated the widening of this dynamic social force upon history up to the time of the First World War and the advent of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. From the mid 19th century, Wilson presented the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels as the prevalent interpretation of the historical force in the tradition of Michelet and other historians who had followed. Marx's analysis of capitalism, as a crucial economic and political ingredient, augmented this interpretation of history and the inevitability and necessity of the revolutionary process on behalf of human social and cultural progress. The title of *To The Finland Station* derives from the inheritors of that revolutionary process, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, who had continued viable revolution through their theoretical works and activities based on the social philosophy and observations of Marx and Engels. Lenin's return from years of exile, which occurred at the verge of revolution in Russia, began with his arrival at the Finland rail station in northwest Russia in 1917. This is where Wilson's book ends and history continues, suggesting that the dynamic force of history continues its process, that is until a new dynamic would enter the picture brought about by the onset of World War II and continuing throughout the Cold War to follow, a dynamic that would include those various ideological interpretations of the social and cultural forces influencing the historical process through manipulation, revisionism, reinterpretation and even through lies, distortion and omission of historical events. Even so, these later ideological aspects still served to affirm the veracity of Wilson's conclusions, and *To The Finland Station* remains a classic.

In many circles, Edmund Wilson became a darling of "left" or progressive political and social thought. Yet, even though Biggs, a dedicated New Dealer, and Wilson disagreed on many political points it did not deter them from coming together of behalf of their old friend F. Scott Fitzgerald. The decision was made by Biggs and Wilson to attempt to finish Fitzgerald's final unfinished novel, to which Wilson gave the title *The Last Tycoon*. Based roughly on the character of real life Hollywood producer Irving Thalberg, Fitzgerald's Monroe Stahr is the novel's central figure. Again, as in his previous novels, Fitzgerald had exhibited some rhetorical daring by writing his narrative through a crafty combination of a first person perspective from a kind of film community brat, Cecilia Brady, who is the daughter of one of Stahr's professional rivals, combined with an omniscient narrative perspective of events.

Stahr as the last tycoon is a hugely successful film producer who falls in love with a woman, Kathleen Moore, simply because she resembles his late movie star wife, Minna Davis. *The Last Tycoon* suggests how the illusory nature engendered by cinematic myth making and fantasy in Hollywood affects the lives of the novel's characters and, by association, how the behavior and social interactions of Americans is driven by delusion and fantasy which carries the potential to lead to tragic outcomes.

Wilson was up to the task of “finishing” Fitzgerald’s final novel even though he’d begun to become immersed in his next major work, a work of fiction, which would bare the title *Memoirs of Hecate County*.

The Last Tycoon was not the only work that Wilson and Biggs considered for resurrection to realize the posthumous fruits of Fitzgerald’s pen. There were remaining manuscripts that would be collected that would be compiled into a book entitled *The Crack-Up*. The realization and publication of both these works had their legal ramifications, especially if they were to benefit the ailing Zelda Fitzgerald and their daughter Scotty. This required a close working relationship between Edmund Wilson and John Biggs, including at least one important visit by Wilson to Biggs’ home of Woodale, just west of Wilmington.

In a collection of Wilson’s articles published in 1983 under the title *The Forties*, Wilson describes a visit that occurred on January 13, 1943, entitled “Wilmington.” Years later, John Biggs III, who was the 15 year old son of John Biggs, Jr., and who is cited in the article, described to me that visit:

The day my grandmother Biggs died Bunny Wilson showed up — Edmund Wilson — and as you probably know, Wilson had no driver’s license. The family, my mother and father, were dealing with the death of his mother and Wilson got dropped out here by a cab, and the problem was what did we do with Wilson. (. . .) I think I was about maybe fifteen years old and didn’t have a driver’s license (. . .) The problem was how to get Edmund Wilson from here up to Sedgely, so we walked. And he was sort of a fun guy to talk to because he then wrote about me.*

The Last Tycoon was published in 1941. In 1945 *The Crack-Up*, a collection of Fitzgerald’s essay which Biggs and Wilson compiled, was published by New Directions. In 1946, Wilson published arguably his greatest work of fiction, a collection of related short stories entitled *Memoirs of Hecate County*.

Among the subjects covered in *Memoirs of Hecate County* was a recounting of an affair between a man who’d been a member of the professional class and a working class woman of immigrant status, thus keeping in tune with Wilson leftist sentiments. *Memoirs of Hecate County* was also what the American author John Updike declared as an intention to bring, “. . . European sexual realism into American fiction at last.” Biggs, of course, read Wilson’s book and added that he, “. . . never read anything as fascinating and so completely adult . . .”

Nevertheless, *Memoirs of Hecate County* ran afoul of censorship standards, was banned in New York for a time, and hauled into court. Wilson asked his old friend to appear as a witness in the trial. Even though it’s likely Wilson received some informal legal advice from Biggs, he declined Wilson’s request to be a witness because there was a chance the case might reappear in the Appeals Court where Biggs had a connection.

Biggs and Wilson continued to succeed in their respective careers. Biggs remained active in the legal profession up to his death in Wilmington on April 15, 1979. Wilson’s success continued in spite of marital and tax problems. His greatest success during this latter part of his career was the book, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War* published in 1962.

Edmund Wilson died on June 12, 1973 while vacationing in Florida.

**Sedgely was the family home of Anna Biggs' mother, which was located west of Wilmington where the Tatnall School is currently located.*



From 'plein air' sketches of Mt. Etna, Sicily, in 2017.

Jonathan Bragdon

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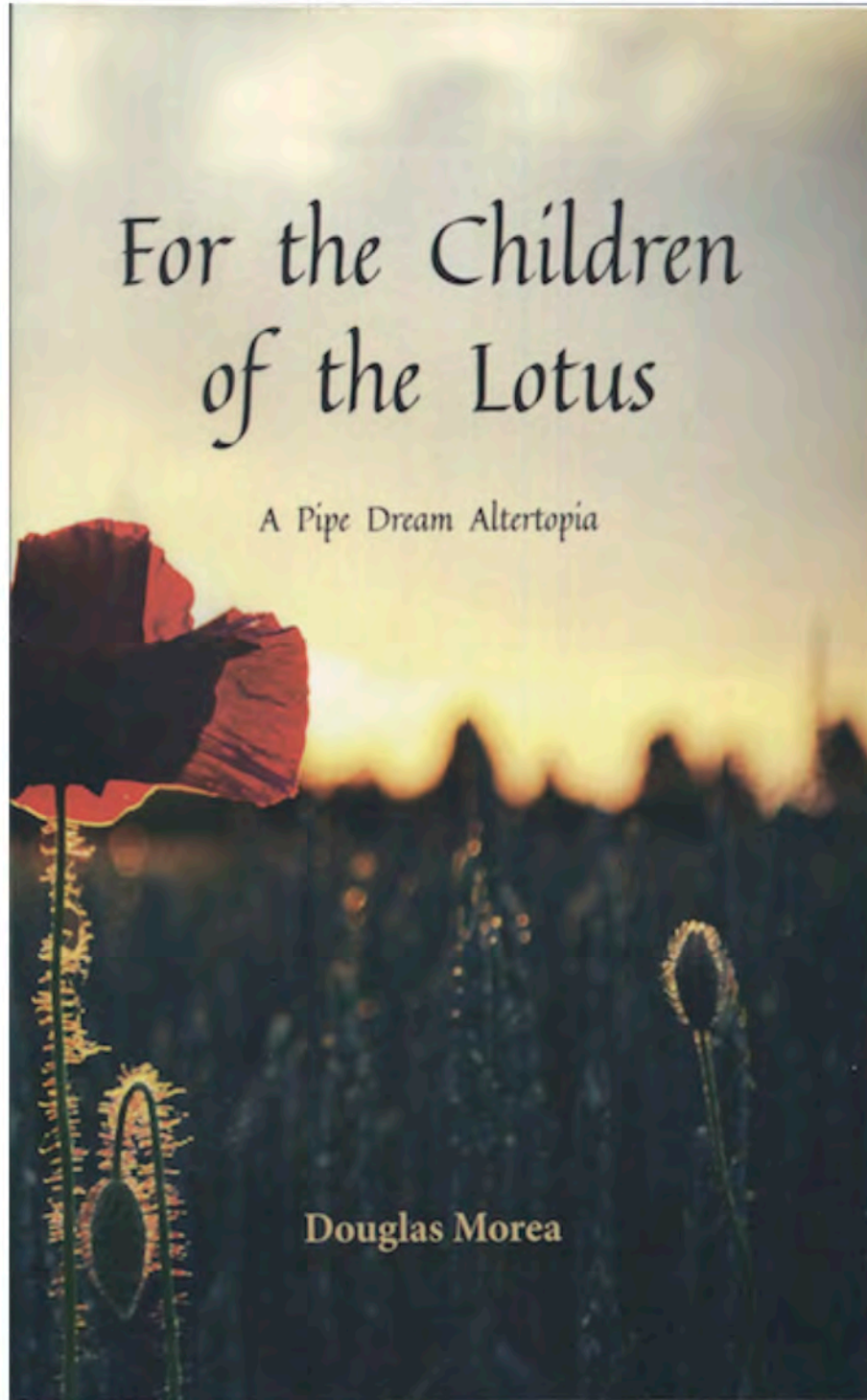
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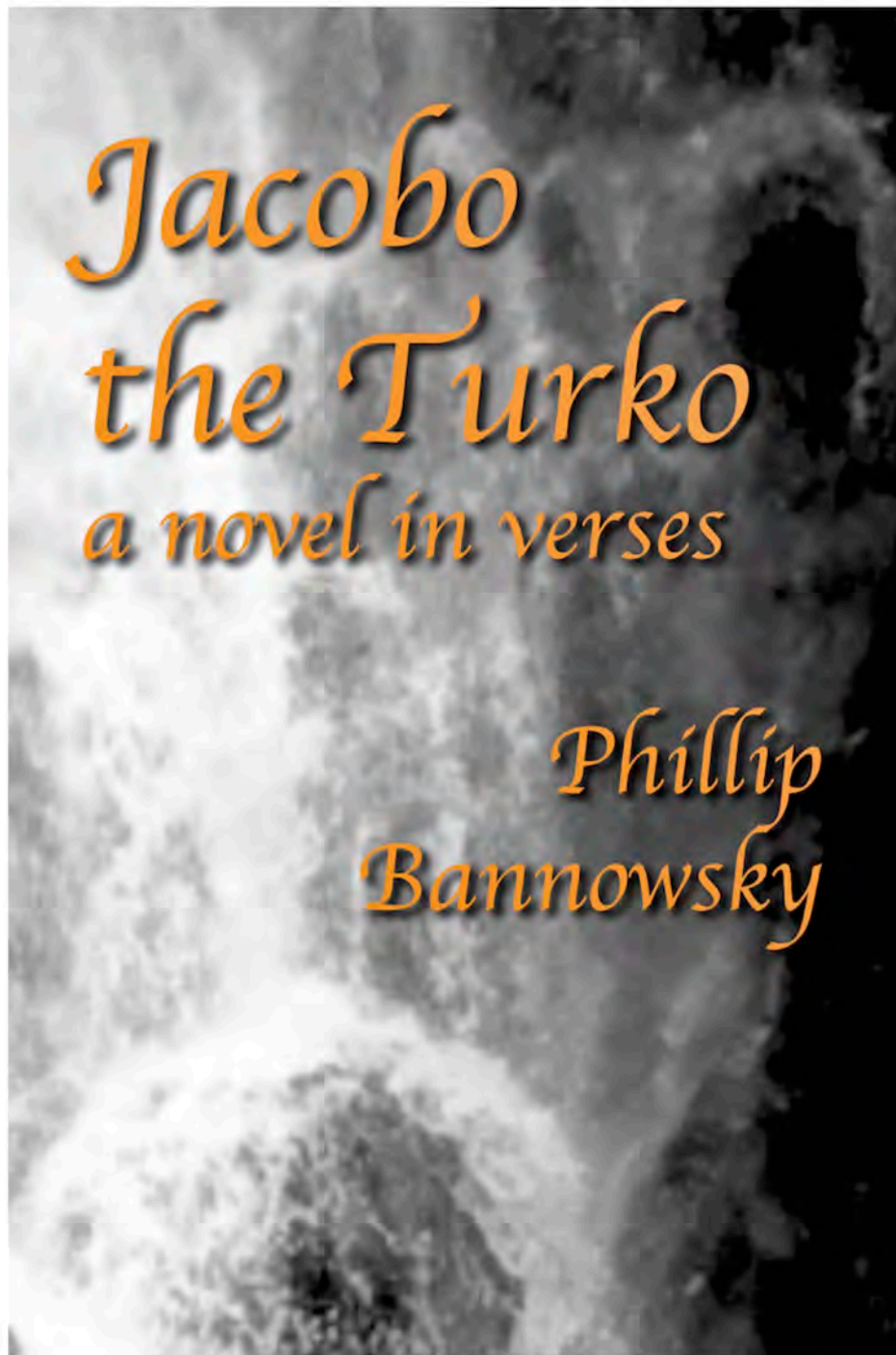
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