

THE MAKING OF A WRITER

From the Poets in the Kitchen

By PAULE MARSHALL

SOME years ago, when I was teaching a graduate seminar in fiction at Columbia University, a well-known male novelist visited my class to speak on his development as a writer. In discussing his formative years, he didn't realize it but he seriously endangered his life by remarking that women writers are luckier than those of his sex because they usually spend so much time as children around their mothers and their mothers' friends in the kitchen.

What did he say that for? The women students immediately forgot about being in awe of him and began readying their attack for the question and answer period later on. Even I bristled. There again was that awful image of women locked away from the world in the kitchen with only each other to talk to, and their daughters locked in with them.

But my guest wasn't really being sexist or trying to be provocative or even spoiling for a fight. What he meant — when he got around to examining himself more fully — was that, given the way children are (or were) raised in our society, with little girls kept closer to home and their mothers, the woman writer stands a better chance of being exposed, while growing up, to the kind of talk that goes on among women, more often than not in the kitchen; and that this experience gives her an edge over her male counterpart by instilling in her an appreciation for ordinary speech.

It was clear that my guest lecturer attached great importance to this, which is understandable. Common speech and the plain, workaday words that make it up are, after all, the stock in trade of some of the best fiction writers. They are the principal means by which a character in a novel or story reveals himself and gives voice sometimes to profound feelings and complex ideas about himself and the world. Perhaps the proper measure of a writer's talent is his skill in rendering everyday speech — when it is appropriate to his story — as well as his ability to tap, to exploit, the beauty, poetry and wisdom it often contains.

"If you say what's on your mind in the language that comes to you from your parents and your street and friends you'll probably say something beautiful." Grace Paley tells this, she says, to her students at the beginning of every writing course.

It's all a matter of exposure and a training of the ear for the would-be writer in those early years of his or her apprenticeship. And, according to my guest lecturer, this training, the best of it, often takes place in an unglamorous setting as the kitchen.

He didn't know it, but he was essentially describing

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my experience as a little girl. I grew up among poets. Now they didn't look like poets — whatever that breed is supposed to look like. Nothing about them suggested that poetry was their calling. They were just a group of ordinary housewives and mothers, my mother included, who dressed in a way (shapeless house-dresses, dowdy felt hats and long, dark, solemn coats) that made it impossible for me to imagine they had ever been young.

Nor did they do what poets were supposed to do — spend their days in an attic room writing verses. They never put pen to paper except to write occasionally to their relatives in Barbados. "I take my pen in hand

pennies," they made their way back to our neighborhood, where they would sometimes stop off to have a cup of tea or cocoa together before going home to cook dinner for their husbands and children.

The basement kitchen of the brownstone house where my family lived was the usual gathering place. Once inside the warm safety of its walls the women threw off the drab coats and hats, seated themselves at the large center table, drank their cups of tea or cocoa, and talked. While my sister and I sat at a smaller table over in a corner doing our homework, they talked — endlessly, passionately, poetically, and with impressive range. No subject was beyond them.

True, they would indulge in the usual gossip: whose husband was running with whom, whose daughter looked slightly "in the way" (pregnant) under her bridal gown as she walked down the aisle. That sort of thing. But they also tackled the great issues of the time. They were always, for example, discussing the state of the economy. It was the mid and late 30's then, and the aftershock of the Depression, with its soup lines and suicides on Wall Street, was still being felt.

Some people, they declared, didn't know how to deal with adversity. They didn't know that you had to "tie up your belly" (hold in the pain, that is) when things got rough and go on with life. They took their image from the bellyband that is tied around the stomach of a newborn baby to keep the navel pressed in.

They talked politics. Roosevelt was their hero. He had come along and rescued the country with relief and jobs, and in gratitude they christened their sons Franklin and Delano and hoped they would live up to the names.

If F.D.R. was their hero, Marcus Garvey was their God. The name of the fiery, Jamaican-born black nationalist of the 20's was constantly invoked around the table. For he had been their leader when they first came to the United States from the West Indies shortly after World War I. They had contributed to his organization, the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), out of their meager salaries, bought shares in his ill-fated Black Star Shipping Line, and at the

height of the movement they had marched as members of his "nurses' brigade" in their white uniforms up Seventh Avenue in Harlem during the great Garvey Day parades. Garvey: He lived on through the power of their memories.

And their talk was of war and rumors of wars. They raged against World War II when it broke out in Europe, blaming it on the politicians. "It's these politicians. They're the ones always starting up all this lot of war. But what they care? It's the poor people got to suffer and mothers with their sons." If it was their sons, they swore they would keep them out of the Army by giving them soap to eat each day to make their hearts sound defective. Hitler? He was for them "the devil incarnate."

Then there was home. They reminisced often and at *Continued on Page 34*



Paule Marshall

hoping these few lines will find you in health as they leave me fair for the time being," was the way their letters invariably began. Rather, their day was spent "scrubbing floor," as they described the work they did.

Several mornings a week these unknown bards would put an apron and a pair of old house shoes in a shopping bag and take the train or streetcar from our section of Brooklyn out to Flatbush. There, those who didn't have steady jobs would wait on certain designated corners for the white housewives in the neighborhood to come along and bargain with them over pay for a day's work cleaning their houses. This was the ritual even in the winter.

Later, armed with the few dollars they had earned, which in their vocabulary became "a few raw-mouth

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The New York Times Book Review

January 9, 1983

NONFICTION

A BETTER WORLD: The Great Schism: Stalinism and the American Intellectuals. By William L. O'Neill.....	7
BOTH SIDES OF THE OCEAN: A Biography of Henry Adams: His First Life, 1838-1862. By Edward Chalfant.....	16
DRINKING IN AMERICA. By Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin.....	14
GREEK POETRY: From Homer to Seferis. By C. A. Trypanis.....	33
JPL AND THE AMERICAN SPACE PROGRAM: A History of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. By Clayton P. Koppes.....	11
LOST HONOR. By John W. Dean 3d.....	10
THE MIRACLE OF DUNKIRK. By Walter Lord.....	16
NEW YORK: Photographs 1850-1950. By Benjamin Blom.....	30
THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN MEDICINE. By Paul Starr.....	1
WAR IN THE FALKLANDS: The Full Story. By The Sunday Times of London Insight Team.....	10



WOMAN AND THE DEMON: The Life of a Victorian Myth.

By Nina Auerbach.....	8
WORKING WITH TRUMAN: A Personal Memoir of the White House Years. By Ken Hechler.....	18

FICTION AND POETRY

THE CASE OF THE HOOK-BILLED KITES. By J. S. Borthwick.....	41
THE CHINA OPTION. By Nancy Dall Milton.....	13
CREATURES IN AN ALPHABET. By Djuna Barnes.....	9
EASY MONEY. By Sam Koperwas.....	13
FOUL UP. By Ritchie Perry.....	41
THE INFINITE PASSION OF EXPECTATION: Twenty-five Stories. By Gina Berriault.....	8
MASTERWORKS OF CRIME & MYSTERY. Edited by Jack Tracy.....	41
A NEW HISTORY OF TORMENTS. By Zulfikar Ghose.....	12
NIGHT RITUALS. By Michael Jahn.....	41
OXHERDING TALE. By Charles Johnson.....	12
PRINCE OMBRA. By Roderick MacLeish.....	12
THE SHATTERED EYE. By Bill Granger.....	13
SMOKE: And Other Early Stories. By Djuna Barnes.....	9
SUN DOGS. By Robert Olen Butler.....	12
VANISHING POINT. By Victor Canning.....	13
WHY ME. By Donald E. Westlake.....	13

FEATURES

THE MAKING OF A WRITER. By Paule Marshall.....	3
------------------------------------------------	---

DEPARTMENTS

ABOUT BOOKS AND AUTHORS. By Edwin McDowell.....	38
AND BEAR IN MIND.....	36
BEST SELLERS.....	36
CHILDREN'S BOOKS.....	32
CRIME. By Newgate Callendar.....	41
LETTERS.....	35
NONFICTION IN BRIEF. By Ray Walters.....	14
PAPERBACK BEST SELLERS.....	40
PAPERBACKS: NEW AND NOTEWORTHY.....	39
PAPERBACK TALK. By Judith Appelbaum.....	39
READING AND WRITING. By Anatole Broyard.....	43

Paule Marshall

Continued from Page 3

length about home. The old country. Barbados — or Bimshire, as they affectionately called it. The little Caribbean island in the sun they loved but had to leave. "Poor — poor but sweet" was the way they remembered it.

And naturally they discussed their adopted home. America came in for both good and bad marks. They lashed out at it for the racism they encountered. They took to task some of the people they worked for, especially those who gave them only a hard-boiled egg and a few spoonfuls of cottage cheese for lunch. "As if anybody can scrub floor on an egg and some cheese that don't have no taste to it!"

Yet although they caught H in "this man country," as they called America, it was nonetheless a place where "you could at least see your way to make a dollar." That much they acknowledged. They might even one day accumulate enough dollars, with both them and their husbands working, to buy the brownstone houses which, like my family, they were only leasing at that period. This was their consuming ambition: to "buy house" and to see the children through.

HERE was no way for me to understand it at the time, but the talk that filled the kitchen those afternoons was highly functional. It served as therapy, the cheapest kind available to my mother and her friends. Not only did it help them recover from the long wait on the corner that morning and the bargaining over their labor, it restored them to a sense of themselves and reaffirmed their self-worth. Through language they were able to overcome the humiliations of the work-day.

But more than therapy, that freewheeling, wide-ranging, exuberant talk functioned as an outlet for the tremendous creative energy they possessed. They were women in whom the need for self-expression was strong, and since language was the only vehicle readily available to them they made of it an art form that — in keeping with the African tradition in which art and life are one — was an integral part of their lives.

And their talk was a refuge. They never really ceased being baffled and overwhelmed by

America — its vastness, complexity and power. Its strange customs and laws. At a level beyond words they remained fearful and in awe. Their uneasiness and fear were even reflected in their attitude toward the children they had given birth to in this country. They referred to those like myself, the little Brooklyn-born Bajans (Barbadians), as "these New York children" and complained that they couldn't discipline us properly because of the laws here. "You can't beat these children as you would like, you know, because the authorities in this place will dash you in jail for them. After all, these is New York children." Not only were we different, American, we had, as they saw it, escaped their ultimate authority.

Confronted therefore by a world they could not encompass, which even limited their rights as parents, and at the same time finding themselves permanently separated from the world they had known, they took refuge in language. "Language is the only homeland," Czeslaw Milosz, the emigré Polish writer and Nobel Laureate, has said. This is what it became for the women at the kitchen table.

It served another purpose also, I suspect. My mother and her friends were after all the female counterpart of Ralph Ellison's invisible man. Indeed, you might say they suffered a triple invisibility, being black, female and foreigners. They really didn't count in American society except as a source of cheap labor. But given the kind of women they were, they couldn't tolerate the fact of their invisibility, their powerlessness. And they fought back, using the only weapon at their command: the spoken word.

Those late afternoon conversations on a wide range of topics were a way for them to feel they exercised some measure of control over their lives and the events that shaped them. "Soully-gal, talk yuh talk!" they were always exhorting each other. "In this man world you got to take yuh mouth and make a gun!" They were in control, if only verbally and if only for the two hours or so that they remained in our house.

For me, sitting over in the corner, being seen but not heard, which was the rule for children



Marshall.

in those days, it wasn't only what the women talked about — the content — but the way they put things — their style. The insight, irony, wit and humor they brought to their stories and discussions and their poet's inventiveness and daring with language — which of course I could only sense but not define back then.

They had taken the standard English taught them in the primary schools of Barbados and transformed it into an idiom, an instrument that more adequately described them — changing around the syntax and imposing their own rhythm and accent so that the sentences were more pleasing to their ears. They added the few African sounds and words that had survived, such as the derisive suck-teeth sound and the word "yam," meaning to eat. And to make it more vivid, more in keeping with their expressive quality, they brought to bear a raft of metaphors, parables, Biblical quotations, sayings and the like:

"The sea ain' got no back door," they would say, meaning that it wasn't like a house where if there was a fire you could run out the back. Meaning that it was not to be trifled with. And meaning perhaps in a larger sense that man should treat all of nature with caution and respect.

"I has read hell by heart and called every generation blessed!" They sometimes went in for hyperbole.

A woman expecting a baby was never said to be pregnant. They never used that word. Rather, she was "in the way" or, better yet, "tumbling big." "Guess who I butt up on in the market the other day tumbling big again!"

And a woman with a reputation of being too free with her sexual favors was known in their book as a "thoroughfare" — the sense of men like a steady stream of cars moving up and down the road of her life. Or she might be dubbed "a free-bee,"

which was my favorite of the two. I liked the image it conjured up of a woman scandalous perhaps but independent, who flitted from one flower to another in a garden of male beauties, sampling their nectar, taking her pleasure at will, the roles reversed.

And nothing, no matter how beautiful, was ever described as simply beautiful. It was always "beautiful-ugly": the beautiful-ugly dress, the beautiful-ugly house, the beautiful-ugly car. Why the word "ugly," I used to wonder, when the thing they were referring to was beautiful, and they knew it. Why the antonym, the contradiction, the linking of opposites? It used to puzzle me greatly as a child.

There is the theory in linguistics which states that the idiom of a people, the way they use language, reflects not only the most fundamental views they hold of themselves and the world but their very conception of reality. Perhaps in using the term "beautiful-ugly" to describe nearly everything, my mother and her friends were expressing what they believed to be a fundamental dualism in life: the idea that a thing is at the same time its opposite, and that these opposites, these contradictions make up the whole. But theirs was not a Manichean brand of dualism that sees matter, flesh, the body, as inherently evil, because they constantly addressed each other as "souly-gal" — soul: spirit; gal: the body, flesh, the visible self. And it was clear from their tone that they gave one as much weight and importance as the other. They had never heard of the mind / body split.

As for God, they summed up His essential attitude in a phrase. "God," they would say, "don' love ugly and He ain' stuck on pretty."

Using everyday speech, the simple commonplace words — but always with imagination and skill — they gave voice to the most complex ideas. Flannery O'Connor would have approved of how they made ordinary language work, as she put it, "double-time," stretching, shading, deepening its meaning. Like Joseph Conrad they were always trying to infuse new life in the "old old words worn thin . . . by . . . careless usage." And the goals of their oral art were the same as his: "to make you hear, to make you feel . . . to make you see." This was their guiding esthetic.

By the time I was 8 or 9, I

The Longest Tradition

GREEK POETRY

From Homer To Seferis.

By C. A. Trypanis.

896 pp. Chicago:

The University of Chicago Press. \$50.

By MICHAEL GRANT

CONSTANTINE ATHANASIUS TRY PANIS was born on the Greek island of Chios and has held a number of important posts in other countries, including professorships at the Universities of Oxford (Byzantine and Modern Greek) and Chicago (classics) — which he left to become Minister of Culture and Science in the Greek Government of Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis from 1974 to 1977. The latest of his numerous books about poetry (he himself is a poet) is a massive and memorable work of original character. It covers the achievements of the ancient, medieval and modern Greeks in a single volume and as a single field of study.

Throughout the nearly three millennia that separate Homer and George Seferis, Mr. Trypanis reminds us, "every generation of Greeks has expressed its sorrows in verse — frequently in verse of outstanding originality and beauty. Poetry written in Greek not only constitutes the longest uninterrupted literary tradition of the Western world, but it has also provided the various forms in which Western man has voiced his emotions and many of his finest thoughts."

For all except a few readers this has to be taken on trust, since the original ancient and modern Greek languages are far from widely known. Prose translations are useful but inadequate, as he points out. Certain verse translations, however, have succeeded in authentically reproducing, to some extent, the breathtaking excitement that Greek poetry of many periods generates, often alloyed with a sadness about the inadequacy of mortal endeavor. But to understand what these poems are all about, what we have to rely upon above all, *faute de*

Michael Grant's books on ancient history and literature include "Greek and Latin Authors 800 B.C.-A.D. 1000" and "From Alexander to Cleopatra: The Hellenistic World."

mieux, is description and explanation; and in this book there is an abundance of both, judiciously selected and presented.

It is, of course, an astonishing fact that Greek poetry started straight off (as far as we can tell) with the greatest of all its masters, Homer — though Mr. Trypanis is one of those who would be inclined to attribute the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" to separate authors. He pays due tribute to the late American scholar Milman Parry, who developed the idea that the two works are oral poetry, in which formulaic recurrences are a means of protecting the singer from a breakdown in improvisation.

As for the lyric poets who followed Homer, what Mr. Trypanis says about Sappho and Corinna (of controversial dating) will be carefully studied in these days of interest in women's writings and social position — though when the ancient essay "On the Sublime," which he quotes, ascribed Sappho's success to her skill in "selecting and binding together the most striking and vehement circumstances of passion," its author was being a bit flat-footed. But the chief of all lyricists (according to the Roman critic Quintilian) is Pindar, whose idea of an aristocracy of race Mr. Trypanis rightly compares to those arresting Greek statues of the late Archaic and early Classical epochs.

His analysis of the eternally fascinating problems of Greek tragedy seems to me one of the best parts of the book. He is enlightening about those portentous tragic heroines. Yet he concludes that the best plays of Sophocles and Euripides, "Oedipus the King" and the "Bacchae," were both centered on males.

Mr. Trypanis sees the "Birds" of Aristophanes and the "Arbitration" of Menander as the masterpieces of the Old and New Comedy respectively, though not for the first time I found that the hearty, rumbustious (though also often lyrical) Old Comedy tends to elude even the most skillful attempts at sympathetic popularizing interpretation.

Similar difficulties are presented by the Alexandrian and other Hellenistic poets who followed, men such as Apollonius Rhodius and Callimachus —

about whom Mr. Trypanis has written with authority elsewhere — who composed for an elite ready and able (unlike ourselves) to pick up every learned, elaborate allusion. It is pleasing to read that "Theocritus is by far the greatest of the three major Alexandrian poets and unquestionably a key figure in the history of Greek — indeed, of Western — poetry." The very deep, partially concealed philosophical motives and patterns that some see in Theocritus' pastoral paradises do not seem to find favor with Mr. Trypanis, however, since he says nothing about them.

It has been argued that under the Roman Empire, Greek literature experienced a renaissance. But poetry did not play a distinguished part in this revival. Later, on the other hand, under Byzantine rule, there were one or two poets of the very highest order. One or two does not seem very many in the course of a whole millennium, but the Byzantines produced far more numerous and excellent visual artists than writers.

Romanus the Melode, in the early sixth century A.D. — classical scholars will have to adjust themselves to this unfamiliar fact — was a poet of enormous distinction. He specialized in the writing of hymns; and indeed, as Mr. Trypanis informs us, "Byzantine hymnography not only constituted the greatest literary achievement of the Greek Middle Ages but . . . kept Christian feeling and national consciousness alive in the face of the numerous barbarian invasions that ravaged the Empire, and during the long years of servitude under the Turks that followed."

For more than two centuries after the fateful capture of Constantinople in 1453, Crete remained outside the Turkish Empire, and that island's literary Golden Age — coinciding with the lifetime of Shakespeare — was notable for an outstanding dramatist in Georgios Chortatsis. It also produced Vitsentzos Kornaros, the author of a wonderful heroic verse romance, the "Erotokritos," more fluent and lyrical than anything that had been written in Greek since the end of the ancient world. Next, in the 18th century, on the mainland, the klephitic laments and panegyrics, those vivid, heartrending Greek folk songs,

reached their height, taking their name from the Klephit (Bandits) who led the fight against the occupying Turks.

In the Ionian islands, under British rule from 1815 to 1864, a distinctive school of poetry achieved fame under Dionysios Solomos, to whom Mr. Trypanis, significantly, allots a much space as he had devoted to Sophocles, though, outside Greece at least, Solomos' "The Free Besieged" is (to put it mildly) less known than the "Antigone." The major figure of the "Generation of the 80's," Kostis Palamas, is not any better known, even if his outward movement into the new, wider realms of international thinking was a milestone in modern Greek literature.

But one of "The Generation of 1904," Nikos Kazantzakis, wrote a vast work that made its mark all over the world, his "The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel" (1922), which mocks and celebrates all human action at once: "I do not love man. I love only the flame that devours him." And another sharp impact has been made by the Alexandrian Greek Constantine Cavafy. As some excellent translations show, he could be very amusing, in a wry sort of way. But above all, as Mr. Trypanis observes, "few poets have conveyed more clearly and more subtly the tragic isolation of modern man or the deadening effects of boredom; and he looks upon the human condition with a detached irony, accompanied by a deep sympathy and understanding for the victims of that blind power called Life or Fate, and especially for those who have the courage to see themselves and their hopeless circumstances for what they are."

Georgios Seferiades, writing under the name Seferis, was also frequently filled with gloom, which was scarcely surprising during the troubles of Greece in the 1920's and 40's. But his imagery is overwhelmingly potent, woven in a rhythmical language that is sensitive, pure and continually changing. In 1963, eight years before his death, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature. It is perhaps a sign of the continuing strength of Greek poetry that the same prize was later given to another Greek, Odysseus Elytis, though he comes outside the scope of this book. ■

graduated from the corner of the kitchen to the neighborhood library, and thus from the spoken to the written word. The Macon Street Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library was an imposing half block long edifice of heavy gray masonry, with glass-paneled doors at the front and two tall metal torches symbolizing the light that comes of learning flanking the wide steps outside.

The inside was just as impressive. More steps — of pale marble with gleaming brass railings at the center and sides — led up to the circulation desk, and a great pendulum clock gazed down from the balcony stacks that faced the entrance. Usually stationed at the top of the steps like the guards outside Buckingham Palace was the custodian, a stern-faced West Indian type who for years, until I was old enough to obtain an adult card, would immediately shoo me with one hand into the Children's Room and with the other threaten me into silence, a finger to his lips. You would have thought he was the chief librarian and not just someone whose job it was to keep the brass polished and the clock wound. I put him in a story called "Barbados" years later and had terri-

ble things happen to him at the end.

I was sheltered from the storm of adolescence in the Macon Street library, reading voraciously, indiscriminately, everything from Jane Austen to Zane Grey, but with a special passion for the long, full-blown, richly detailed 18th-and 19th-century picaresque tales: "Tom Jones," "Great Expectations," "Vanity Fair."

BUT although I loved nearly everything I read and would enter fully into the lives of the characters — indeed, would cease being myself and become them — I sensed a lack after a time. Something I couldn't quite define was missing. And then one day, browsing in the poetry section, I came across a book by someone called Paul Laurence Dunbar, and opening it I found the photograph of a wistful, sad-eyed poet who to my surprise was black. I turned to a poem at random. "Little brown-baby wif spa'klin' / eyes / Come to yo' pappy an' set on his knee." Although I had a little difficulty at first with the words in dialect, the poem spoke to me as nothing I had read before of the closeness, the special relationship I

had had with my father, who by then had become an ardent believer in Father Divine and gone to live in Father's "kingdom" in Harlem. Reading it helped to ease somewhat the tight knot of sorrow and longing I carried around in my chest that refused to go away. I read another poem. "Lias! Lias! Bless de Lawd! / Don' you know de day's / erbroad? / Ef you don' get up, you scamp / Dey'll be trouble in dis camp." I laughed. It reminded me of the way my mother sometimes yelled at my sister and me to get out of bed in the mornings.

And another: "Seen my lady home las' night / Jump back, honey, jump back. / Hel' huh han' an' sque'z it tight . . ." About love between a black man and a black woman. I had never seen that written about before and it roused in me all kinds of delicious feelings and hopes.

And I began to search then for books and stories and poems about "The Race" (as it was put back then), about my people. While not abandoning Thackeray, Fielding, Dickens and the others, I started asking the reference librarian, who was white, for books by Negro writers, although I must admit I did so at first with a feeling of

shame — the shame I and many others used to experience in those days whenever the word "Negro" or "colored" came up.

No grade school literature teacher of mine had ever mentioned Dunbar or James Weldon Johnson or Langston Hughes. I didn't know that Zora Neale Hurston existed and was busy writing and being published during those years. Nor was I made aware of people like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman — their spirit and example — or the great 19th-century abolitionist and feminist Sojourner Truth. There wasn't even Negro History Week when I attended P.S. 35 on Decatur Street!

What I needed, what all the kids — West Indian and native black American alike — with whom I grew up needed, was an equivalent of the Jewish shul, someplace where we could go after school — the schools that were shortchanging us — and read works by those like ourselves and learn about our history.

It was around that time also that I began harboring the dangerous thought of someday trying to write myself. Perhaps a poem about an apple tree, although I had never seen one. Or

the story of a girl who could magically transplant herself to wherever she wanted to be in the world — such as Father Divine's kingdom in Harlem. Dunbar — his dark, eloquent face, his large volume of poems — permitted me to dream that I might someday write, and with something of the power with words my mother and her friends possessed.

When people at readings and writers' conferences ask me who my major influences were, they are sometimes a little disappointed when I don't immediately name the usual literary giants. True, I am indebted to those writers, white and black, whom I read during my formative years and still read for instruction and pleasure. But they were preceded in my life by another set of giants whom I always acknowledge before all others: the group of women around the table long ago. They taught me my first lessons in the narrative art. They trained my ear. They set a standard of excellence. This is why the best of my work must be attributed to them; it stands as testimony to the rich legacy of language and culture they so freely passed on to me in the wordshop of the kitchen. ■

NATIONWIDE BESTSELLERS

Kurt
Vonnegut

"In mellow, splendid form."

—Library Journal

"A marvelous
entertainment."

—People Magazine.

Photo © Jill Krementz



DEADEYE DICK

Elizabeth
Forsythe
Hailey

"Exhilarating,
compelling."

San Francisco

Naomi Cary



January 9, 1983/The New York Times Book Review

Best Sellers

This
Week

FICTION

Last
Week Weeks
On List

- 1** **SPACE**, by James A. Michener. (Random House, \$17.95.) The story of the American space program told through fiction. **1** **15**
- 2** **2010: ODYSSEY TWO**, by Arthur C. Clarke. (Ballantine/Del Rey, \$14.95.) A continuation of the tale begun in "2001: A Space Odyssey." **2** **9**
- 3** **E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL STORYBOOK**, by William Kotzwinkle. (Putnam's, \$6.95.) Abridged, profusely illustrated version of the novelization of the current film. **3** **20**
- 4** **FOUNDATION'S EDGE**, by Isaac Asimov. (Doubleday, \$14.95.) The struggle to keep civilization alive in a crumbling empire: science fiction. **6** **13**
- 5** **THE VALLEY OF HORSES**, by Jean M. Auel. (Crown, \$15.95.) A continuation of the saga of human survival at the dawn of civilization begun in "The Clan of the Cave Bear." **4** **19**
- 6** **MISTRAL'S DAUGHTER**, by Judith Krantz. (Crown, \$15.95.) The art world of the 20's and the fashion industry of the 80's. **5** **9**
- 7** **MASTER OF THE GAME**, by Sidney Sheldon. (Morrow, \$15.95.) The hidden truth behind a woman business tycoon's rise to power. **7** **19**
- 8** **DIFFERENT SEASONS**, by Stephen King. (Viking, \$16.95.) Four novellas with mainly nonhorror themes by a modern master of horror. **8** **23**
- 9** **CROSSINGS**, by Danielle Steel. (Delacorte, \$15.95.) A clandestine trans-Atlantic romance survives the stresses and strains of World War II. **11** **16**
- 10** **LIFE, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING**, by Douglas Adams. (Harmony, \$9.95.) On a journey through space, two men find answers to all their questions about existence: science fiction-fantasy. **9** **10**
- 11** **DEADEYE DICK**, by Kurt Vonnegut. (Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence, \$14.95.) Comments on contemporary life made through the story of a youthful criminal who grows up to be a playwright. **10** **9**

This
Week

NONFICTION

Last
Week Weeks
On List

- 1** **AND MORE BY ANDY ROONEY**, by Andrew A. Rooney. (Atheneum, \$12.95.) A new collection of essays by the journalist and television commentator. **1** **12**
- 2** **LIVING, LOVING & LEARNING**, by Leo Buscaglia. (Holt/Slack, \$13.50.) Inspirational talks by a University of Southern California professor. **2** **38**
- 3** **JANE FONDA'S WORKOUT BOOK**, by Jane Fonda. (Simon & Schuster, \$18.95.) An exercise book for women, seasoned with the film star's philosophy of physical well-being. **3** **51**
- 4** **MEGATRENDS**, by John Naisbitt. (Warner, \$15.50.) Predictions about America in the next decade based on an analysis of conditions today. **4** **9**
- 5** **A LIGHT IN THE ATTIC**, by Shel Silverstein. (Harper & Row, \$12.45.) Humor in cartoons and verse. **7** **60**
- 6** **KEEPING FAITH**, by Jimmy Carter. (Bantam, \$22.50.) The 39th President recalls his four years in office. **6** **10**
- 7** **WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE**, by Harold S. Kushner. (Schocken, \$10.95.) Comforting thoughts from a rabbi. **8** **48**
- 8** **GROWING UP**, by Russell Baker. (Congdon & Weed, \$15.) The New York Times columnist recalls his boyhood and youth. **5** **9**
- 9** **LIFE EXTENSION**, by Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw. (Warner, \$22.50.) Ways to add years to your life and life to your years: a popularly written medical-science book. **11** **24**
- 10** **THE FALL OF FREDDIE THE LEAF**, by Leo Buscaglia. (Holt/Slack, \$7.95.) The seasons of life as experienced by a leaf and its companions: a parable. **9** **8**
- 11** **THE PATH TO POWER: The Years of Lyndon Johnson**, by Robert A. Caro. (Knopf, \$19.95.) The first 33 years of the life of the 36th President. **12** **4**

Editorial: Charles W. Drago

13

4

WSJ Nov. 20 '03

The Rev. Al Green Loosens Up

By Ashley Kahn

Memphis, Tenn.

The Rev. Al Green is slightly restless and visibly moved. The 57-year-old soul singer turned church leader is seated in a corner of Royal, this city's oldest active recording studio and a former 1920s movie theater.

Mr. Green, casually dressed in gray running pants, a tiger-pattern jacket and a white T-shirt, a large six-pointed gold star around his neck, points to a battered RCA microphone still reserved for his use only. "There's the old mike No. 9. There's a certain something about this old mike. It's probably haunted!"

The entire garage-sized room has a preserved, spirit-laden air about it: clean, yet with exposed, age-old insulation hanging above; an ancient organ and well-trodden carpet below. Mr. Green looks up and laughs. "He don't want nobody to tear the damn padding off the walls, or take off the old spider webs. He says, 'No, that makes the sound.'"

"He" is producer Willie Mitchell, the man who helped shape Mr. Green's classic soul sound in the early '70s and still runs Royal Studio. Only a few months ago, the two reunited to record Mr. Green's new album, "I Can't Stop," their first collaboration in almost 20 years. That in itself is news. That Mr. Green traced his own footsteps to the site where, over 30 years ago, he first alchemized his enduring, sugar-and-satin formula can be startling. Even for him.

"I would pick any spot in the studio [to

AL GREEN

I Can't Stop

Blue Note Records

Tonight Show With Jay Leno
NBC, 11:35 p.m. EST, tonight

stand] except the very same spot where we sang 'Let's Stay Together' and 'Tired of Being Alone' and 'I'm Still in Love With You.' But here I am, and this is it!"

Some historical context: Before Barry White or Marvin Gaye recorded their own takes on bedroom soul, Al Green was already in place as the voice of seduction for an unbuttoned decade. He posed bare-chested on his album covers. His falsetto moan—straight from the church—was filled with a longing all could grasp. He put the afro into aphrodisiac, writing songs ("Love and Happiness," "Here I Am," those above) that inspired a generation—and helped create another.

"I mean, people still show me pictures of a beautiful little kid. I say, OK, what's that about? 'Well, it's because of one of your songs . . .'"

Mr. Green's fans weren't the only ones influenced by the music's sexual charge, the reverend himself confesses. "In my 20s, I was running to the Holiday Inn, kissing and naughty little things. The sins of our youth, OK?" But as the '70s drew to a close, all that changed—the escapades, the music—as the singer gradually yielded to a higher calling.

Mr. Green was raised by strict church-

goers. His religious awakening was first triggered in 1973 by what is best described as a late-night visitation. His concerts soon took on a Sunday morning feel as he began preaching between performances of his romantic hits. Mishaps and misfortune deepened his devotion: the suicide of a girlfriend after she tossed boiling grits on him in '74; falling off a stage in '79.

It was also in '79 that "the new Al Green" (as he dubbed himself) became a minister, founded a Memphis church and chose to sing only gospel music. Despite a few pop dalliances over the next two decades (duets with Annie Lennox and Lyle Lovett; a less-than-stellar secular album in '95), he generally held to the line that a true servant of the

Lord should be singing neither of romantic love nor physical passion. "If I'm gonna sing blues, then come on sing the blues. If I ain't, let me sing the gospel . . . but don't try to fool the Lord and the Devil," he preached in the 1983 documentary "The Gospel According to Al Green."

When that line is read back to him today, Mr. Green sighs and offers an explanation born of experience.

"At that time, I was wrestling with my conversion. I couldn't help the way I felt! The balance I've come to now is the wisdom that spiritual things are spiritual things and carnal things are carnal things, but God made both of them."

The tempering of Mr. Green's zeal, and a recent street-corner encounter with a few fans, helped return the reverend to songs of love and Royal Studio. "I was in Baltimore dressed incognito—big hat, glasses—and there were four of them just trying to act like they didn't know me. But one of them kind of just went off. 'Oh Al, you know everybody waitin' on the music.' And that, verbatim, inspired me to go to Willie Mitchell and say, 'Let's do the music.'"

"I Can't Stop" is no mere reunion, nor simple updating; the album artfully weaves the old (same studio and most of his studio musicians from the '70s) and the new (freshly minted ballads and blues) into a satisfying portrait of the singer in middle age. Mr. Green's voice is more robust now, yet ably delivers the emotive squeal of his youth. One critic describes the collection as "a whole new dish for a feast, a lot more than just reheated leftovers." Mr. Green is more humble. "I heard it a couple of times—sounds pretty good."

The 12 tunes render familiar sensual-



Everybody's been waiting on the music. Al Green's new album, 'I Can't Stop,' is a return to his secular side. 'I've got to reach the people,' he says.

ity with nary a mention of Jesus. The title track is a declaration of perseverance with disco-era flourishes. "My Problem Is You" is an unhurried blues that conjures the best of Bobby Bland, Little Milton and others ("The blues is what makes Memphis; Memphis, what makes B.B. King, B.B. King.") "Rainin' In My Heart" is a slow-as-molasses heart-dangler, while the upbeat "I'd Still Choose You" is Mr. Green's admitted favorite. He dismisses a request to identify the tune's inspiration: "That's my business. I tell you my business, I won't have none."

Nonetheless, the refrain—"If I had to do it all over/I'd still choose you"—reveals much of the reverend's present-day philosophy, answering the God-fearing who might have trouble with lyrics addressing "girl" and "baby" rather than the Lord. But Mr. Green, it seems, has divine support. "I asked God about 'baby.' God said, 'Don't get too carried away with the baby part. If you mean what you say, then do it.' So I did it."

"I've got to reach the people. They want to hear 'Baby I love you,' 'I'll never choose another.' That whole lifestyle, the family, the husband, the wife, the kids, the staying together, is what I promote."

With a look, Mr. Green lets on that he's done. He adds one last point.

"I was having to answer a question for the churches. They said to me, 'Well, Reverend? How should we receive this secular album that you've put out here?' I would say everybody in this room got here some kind of way and it wasn't all just holding hands."

Mr. Kahn is an independent journalist and author of "A Love Supreme: The Story of John Coltrane's Signature Album."

vestment of dividends, were steady at 0.52%. Thirty-day simple and compound yields stayed at 0.52%.

Average maturity of the investments in taxable funds, which include commercial paper and Treasury bills, is still 58 days.

Tax-free funds saw net inflows of \$632.10 million, bringing total tax-free assets to \$294.135 billion. Highest seven-day compound yield among retail tax-free money-market funds belonged to Alpine Municipal Money Market Fund at 1.14%.

high-profile fund manager who runs the flagship Legg Mason Value Trust, sometimes strays into growth-stock territory with his investment picks.

At 4 p.m. in composite Big Board trading, Legg Mason was down \$2.50 a share, or 3.2%, at \$75.95.

UND	NAV	NET CHG	YTD %RET	3-YR %RET	FUND	NAV	NET CHG	YTD %RET	3-YR %RET	FUND	NAV	NET CHG	YTD %RET	3-YR %RET	FUND	NAV	NET CHG	YTD %RET	3-YR %RET	FUND	NAV	NET CHG	YTD %RET	3-YR %RET					
GvSect	9.91 -0.2	1.0	6.2		OppOp	36.22	0.11	27.7	-2.7	GlobAllt	11.50 -0.01	19.4	7.9		CmstBt	14.77	0.06	20.1	0.2	NULT	12.27 -0.01	4.1	7.5		SmCapAp	12.24	0.05	28.4	-0.6
HlncBt	6.89 0.01	22.8	3.5		SmCapAlp	25.52	0.12	34.9	NS	GlobEqBt	6.72 -0.02	7.6	7.3		CpBd&Bt	11.57 ...	4.3	7.7		SmCapAp	12.38	0.05	29.1	-0.1					
IngvBt	12.91 -0.07	3.9	4.6		SmCapAlp	24.98	0.11	33.9	NS	EmGrBt	30.14 0.20	22.3	-20.7		EmGrBt	10.46	0.08	18.9	-15.2	OHLT	12.44 -0.01	4.2	7.9		ValueA p	10.45	0.05	15.1	NS
LgCapGr	19.82 0.22	38.7	-5.0		SmCapAlp	25.02	0.11	33.9	NS	EntBt	11.74 ...	4.6	7.8		EqlnCt	7.35 0.01	14.0	4.2		PALT	16.53 0.11	51.8	39.7		Wasatch	11.74 ...	4.6	7.8	
LgCapCoB	15.01 0.12	15.3	-2.3		UltStnc	9.33 ...	2.1	2.4		FocusEqBt	13.99 0.14	16.7	-14.4		PrecMts	16.53 0.11	51.8	39.7		Princip	50.52 0.34	30.7	-5.7		CoreGr	35.62	0.27	33.5	13.4
MdcPcoB	18.60 0.05	22.4	-4.2		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		GlobeEqBt	10.50 -0.03	16.7	6.4		GEAAlBt	10.50 -0.03	16.7	6.4		CoreCap	7.04 0.05	45.2	25.5		ReIT r	14.83 -0.04	30.2	18.0	
MgMuBt	15.86 0.04	4.5	6.3		Strong Inst Fds	10.98 -0.04	4.5	7.1		GlobFranch	18.28 -0.03	16.2	9.2		ReIT r	14.83 -0.04	30.2	18.0		SmCapGr	35.26	0.24	36.1	9.8					
MUNVb	13.79 0.04	3.8	6.4		GovSec	11.08 -0.03	2.6	8.6		GlobeEqBt	9.22 -0.05	16.9	-2.6		STAR	16.67 0.01	17.3	3.0		SmCapAp	4.99	0.04	45.5	18.7					
PslgCap t	7.78 0.06	20.1	-12.5		Growth	17.21 0.11	27.7	-15.3		TctAlp	23.06 0.18	18.6	-8.2		GlobeEqBt	10.79 -0.01	3.7	6.3		UltraGr	27.31 0.23	39.7	12.2						
SBCapInB	14.61 0.05	27.4	1.7		UltStnc	9.33 ...	2.8	3.2		TctAlp	11.34 -0.02	0.1	6.0		STCFd	10.59 -0.01	1.6	6.7		Wayne Hummer Funds	36.49	0.20	22.3	-2.3					
SmpCapVal	18.92 0.12	21.6	11.9		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Strategic	17.79 0.06	35.8	8.0		Growth	36.49	0.20	22.3	-2.3					
SocAwB	20.40 0.10	15.8	-4.8		Summit ApEx Fds	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Weis Peck Greer	10.60 -0.04	4.1	9.2		CoreBd	10.60 -0.04	4.1	9.2						
Smith Barney L	9.64 ...	0.4	3.2		SEPF500Idx	35.18	0.28	19.8	-7.6	USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		WellFunds					Hickory	25.21	0.19	37.3	0.7					
AdjInCp	7.24 0.72	25.0	-7.9		Summa	11.08 -0.03	2.6	8.6		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		PartVal	20.41 0.14	19.1	3.2		Value	34.12	0.21	22.5	4.6					
Appr t	12.78 0.08	16.6	-2.7		FocusEqBt	11.08 -0.03	2.6	8.6		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Wells Fargo	Cl A				USGvt	14.08 -0.02	0.5	5.6						
CapPres	11.44 -0.01	1.4	NS		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		AstaAll	18.15	0.11	15.5	-2.5	CoreGr	35.62	0.27	33.5	13.4					
CpPresII	11.60 -0.01	1.5	NS		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		CA TF A	11.42 ...	3.7	6.3		MacCap	7.04 0.05	45.2	25.5						
Dspl	6.75 -0.01	9.4	5.1		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		EqIdx	46.71 0.37	19.7	-7.8		SmCapGr	35.26	0.24	36.1	9.8					
FdVal	12.41 0.08	28.3	-4.4		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Equinc	33.04 0.22	17.5	-2.7		StbdInc	11.17 0.07	17.3	-12.6						
HlncL	6.90 0.01	22.9	3.6		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		IntGvtP	11.29 -0.02	1.2	6.8		Ultral	27.31 0.23	39.7	12.2						
LgCapGr	19.81 0.22	38.6	-5.0		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Wasatch	11.29 -0.02	1.2	6.8		UltraGr	27.31 0.23	39.7	12.2						
MdcPco	18.60 0.04	22.4	-4.2		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Wayne Hummer Funds	36.49	0.20	22.3	-2.3	Wells Peck Greer	10.60 -0.04	4.1	9.2						
MgMu	15.85 0.04	4.5	6.2		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		WellFunds					Hickory	25.21	0.19	37.3	0.7					
MultdL	6.64 0.01	3.9	3.9		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		PartVal	20.41 0.14	19.1	3.2		Value	34.12	0.21	22.5	4.6					
PsAlpGr	7.54 0.05	27.4	-10.3		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Wells Fargo	Cl A				USGvt	14.08 -0.02	0.5	5.6						
SmpCapVal	18.92 0.12	21.6	11.9		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		AstaAll	18.15	0.11	15.5	-2.5	CoreGr	35.62	0.27	33.5	13.4					
Smith Barney Y					USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		CA TF A	11.42 ...	3.7	6.3		MacCap	7.04 0.05	45.2	25.5						
AdjInCp	9.68 -0.01	1.0	NS		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		EqIdx	46.71 0.37	19.7	-7.8		SmCapGr	35.26	0.24	36.1	9.8					
AggGrowt	81.66 0.81	26.3	-6.9		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Equinc	33.04 0.22	17.5	-2.7		StbdInc	11.17 0.07	17.3	-12.6						
Appr	13.05 0.08	17.9	-1.6		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		IntGvtP	11.29 -0.02	1.2	6.8		Ultral	27.31 0.23	39.7	12.2						
GrowIncy	13.43 0.11	22.5	NS		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Wasatch	11.29 -0.02	1.2	6.8		UltraGr	27.31 0.23	39.7	12.2						
HansBgr	18.85 -0.05	26.3	-2.2		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Wayne Hummer Funds	36.49	0.20	22.3	-2.3	Wells Peck Greer	10.60 -0.04	4.1	9.2						
Hlnc	6.90 0.01	23.7	3.4		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		WellFunds					Hickory	25.21	0.19	37.3	0.7					
InvGr	12.93 -0.07	4.7	10.5		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		PartVal	20.41 0.14	19.1	3.2		Value	34.12	0.21	22.5	4.6					
LgCapGr	21.24 0.24	40.1	-3.9		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Wells Fargo	Cl A				USGvt	14.08 -0.02	0.5	5.6						
MgGv	12.71 -0.02	2.1	1.2		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		AstaAll	18.15	0.11	15.5	-2.5	CoreGr	35.62	0.27	33.5	13.4					
SmpCapVal	18.87 0.09	33.1	2.6		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		CA TF A	11.42 ...	3.7	6.3		MacCap	7.04 0.05	45.2	25.5						
STIngrdY	4.25 -0.01	2.2	6.4		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		EqIdx	46.71 0.37	19.7	-7.8		SmCapGr	35.26	0.24	36.1	9.8					
SoundSh	31.24 0.20	21.1	2.7		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		SpecTech	4.07 0.02	64.8	-19.9		StbdInc	11.17 0.07	17.3	-12.6						
SouthTrust					USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		IntGvtP	11.29 -0.02	1.2	6.8		Ultral	27.31 0.23	39.7	12.2						
Bond	10.32 -0.04	2.6	6.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Wasatch	11.29 -0.02	1.2	6.8		UltraGr	27.31 0.23	39.7	12.2						
Value p	14.76 0.08	24.7	-0.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Wayne Hummer Funds	36.49	0.20	22.3	-2.3	Wells Peck Greer	10.60 -0.04	4.1	9.2						
SpAlmPval	11.16 0.01	27.9	22.2		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		WellFunds					Hickory	25.21	0.19	37.3	0.7					
SpectraFund	5.76 0.06	28.9	-14.5		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		PartVal	20.41 0.14	19.1	3.2		Value	34.12	0.21	22.5	4.6					
State Farm Associate					USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		USVal	16.45 0.09	20.2	-3.8		Wells Fargo	Cl A				USGvt	14.08 -0.02	0.5	5.6						
Balan	9.44 0.19	13.8	-0.2		USVal	16.45 0.09	20																						

CAB CALLOWAY

Hepster

1907-1994 The trademark hit of Cab Calloway's big band was serendipitous: in 1931, during a broadcast from the Cotton Club in Harlem, he forgot the lyrics to "Minnie the Moocher" and scatted: "Hi-de-hi-de-hi-de-bo. Ho-de-ho-de-ho-de-hee." The audience went crazy. The following excerpt is from his "Hepster's Dictionary," described in his 1944 introduction as "the general patois employed by musicians and entertainers in New York's teeming Harlem."

barbecue (n.): the girlfriend, a beauty.
chime (n.): hour (I got in at six *chimes*).
cogs (n.): sunglasses.
crumb crushers (n.): teeth.
cups (n.): sleep (I gotta catch some *cups*).
dig (v.): 1. meet (I'll plant you now and *dig* you later). 2. look, see (*dig* the chick on your left duke). 3. comprehend, understand (do you *dig* this jive?).
doghouse (n.): bass fiddle.
early black (n.): evening.
early bright (n.): morning.
fine dinner (n.): a good-looking girl.

frisking the whiskers (v.): what the cats do when they are warming up for a swing session.
gimme some skin (v.): shake hands.
got your boots on: you know what it is all about, you are a hep cat, you are wise.
got your glasses on: you are ritzy or snooty, you fail to recognize your friends.
groovy (adj.): fine (I feel *groovy*).
hard (adj.): fine, good (that's a *hard* tie you're wearing).
jive (n.): Harlemitese speech.
kopasetic (adj.): absolutely O.K., the tops.

lay some iron (v.): to tap-dance. (Jack, you really *laid some iron* that last show!).

Sam got you: you've been drafted into the Army.

set of seven brights (n.): one week.

signify (v.): to declare yourself, to brag, to boast.

sky piece (n.): hat.

the man (n.): the law.

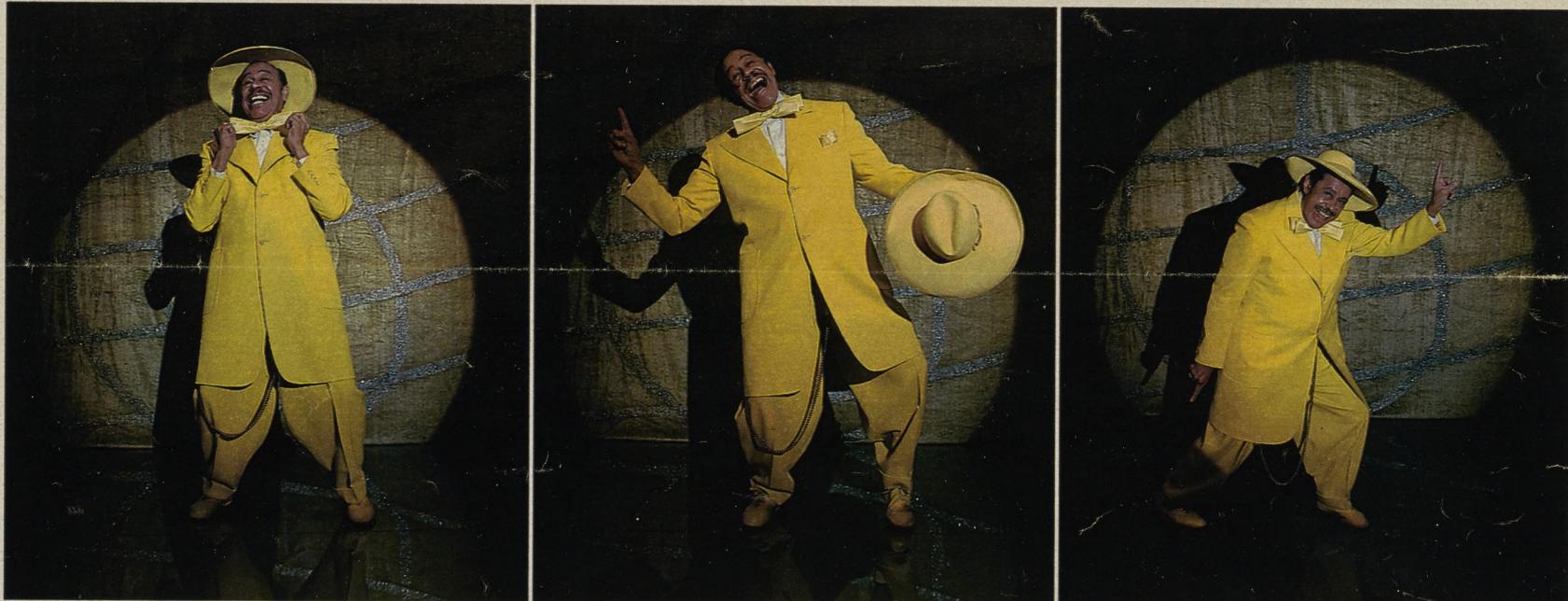
twister to the slammer (n.): the key to the door.

vine (n.): a suit of clothes.

zoot suit (n.): overexaggerated clothes. ■

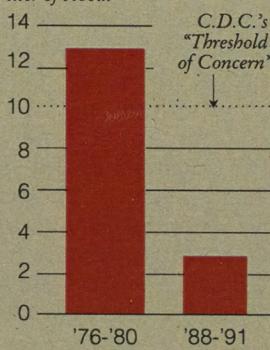
LIVES WELL LIVED

Gadzoots! A 1974 reprise of the "Stormy Weather" suit.



BLOOD LEAD LEVELS DROP...

Micrograms of lead per tenth of a liter of blood.



...THANKS TO HOUK'S EFFORT

1972 Named director of C.D.C.'s Environmental Services Division.

1976 Orders first major study of blood lead levels in the United States.

1978 Government bans lead-based paint for residential use.

1982 Government begins phase-out of leaded gasoline.

1988 Orders follow-up study of blood lead levels.

1994 Dies in Atlanta at age 64.

VERNON HOUK

A Measure of His Impact

1929-1994 Dr. Vernon Houk was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal in 1985 for his research on lead poisoning in the blood. He rose to become Assistant Surgeon General, the second-highest-ranking official in the Public Health Service. Despite the success of his efforts to ban lead-based products from the home and workplace, Dr. Houk was deeply concerned that inner-city children were still being exposed to dangerous amounts of lead, and compared them to canaries in a coal mine: "Let us not let the next generation be so cursed."

Eve in the Garden of Aspen

1902-1994 The Chicago philanthropist Elizabeth Paepcke helped transform Aspen into a world-famous resort, but her vision was more idealistic than commercial. With her husband, Walter, Paepcke founded the Aspen Institute and the Aspen Music Festival, which attracted legions of writers, composers, scientists and intellectuals to share their work. But Aspen had changed by the end of Paepcke's life and become a Hollywood playground; her next-door neighbor was Jack Nicholson. **By Ted Conover**

DESPERATE TO DIVERT A HOUSEFUL OF GUESTS after a plumbing disaster at her Colorado ranch in 1939, Elizabeth Paepcke acted on a tip and led her friends on a ski outing to the lapsed silver-mining town of Aspen. They hitched a ride partway up Aspen Mountain in the back of a truck filled with the area's last mining crew, pulled sealskins over their skis for traction and proceeded to herringbone uphill for five hours.

"At the top, we halted in frozen admiration," Paepcke (pronounced PEP-key) wrote in a memoir. "In all that landscape of rock, snow and ice, there was neither print of animal nor track of man. We were alone as though the world had just been created and we its first inhabitants."

Today, the residents of a reborn Aspen cherish a creation story that begins with Elizabeth Paepcke on that frozen peak. Upon returning in 1945 with her husband, Walter, a Chicago industrialist, the two saw in Aspen's superb setting and shuttered Victorian houses the possibility of a new Chautauqua. Assisted by her brother, the arms-control adviser Paul Nitze, and friends like Robert Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago, and the philosopher Mortimer Adler, the Paepckes soon laid the foundation for a ski town with a highbrow cultural life—an "Athens of the West," Adler liked to call it.

The Aspen idea, in Walter's words, was to create a place "for man's complete life... where he can profit by healthy, physical recreation, with facilities at hand for his enjoyment of art, music, and education." The purity of their original vision and the continuing despoliation of the garden by developers and pleasure-seekers make the Paepckes seem, to present-day Aspenites, a lot like Adam and Eve.

Elizabeth, who had studied painting at the Art Institute of Chicago, was a pillar of that city's cultural life and worked as a

decorator and theater designer—and teacher to her husband. When Walter was contemplating an advertising campaign for the Container Corporation, Elizabeth pushed him to use distinguished designers instead of commercial artists. The resulting "Great Ideas of Western Man" campaign became an advertising milestone. The two combined culture and commerce again in Adler's first Great Books group (the "fat man's group" it was called, for all the prominent business members) and later in the Aspen Institute.

"In Aspen, I met this beautiful lady in her 80's who looked like Katharine Hepburn," Andy Warhol wrote in 1985. Her beauty—she had cobalt blue eyes and a dazzling smile—was the first thing people noticed about Elizabeth, but references to it vexed her. "She thought it was shallow," said Merrill Ford, a longtime friend.

Instead, Elizabeth Paepcke—or Pussy, as her grandmother and then everyone else called her—loved ideas and art and those who cared about them. And though she was known as the consummate gracious lady, she was equally willful. "Her style was to hold strong opinions and to raise expectations to her standard," wrote David McLaughlin, the Aspen Institute chairman, in a tribute last summer. Even leisure was held to the highest standard. "It should concern itself with those things we do to replenish the spirit, such as listening to music, watching good films or theater, taking part in discussions of politics and ideas," she wrote. "It is the opposite of killing time."

The Paepckes's high-minded circle followed European intellectual trends and the couple soon became important American promoters of the Bauhaus design movement. Walter engaged as a consultant the architect Walter Gropius, helped bring Laszlo Moholy-Nagy to the Institute of Design in Chicago and installed the artist and designer Herbert Bayer as Aspen town manager.

Elizabeth's father, William A. Nitze, was for many years chairman of romance languages at the University of Chicago; Walter was the son of a prominent German business family. The couple spoke German at home; their daughter, Antonia, says she was at a disadvantage for not knowing English when she started school. After World War II, the Paepckes tried to revive an appreciation of German culture by staging a bicentennial celebration of the birth of Goethe—in, of all places, Aspen. Working with Hutchins and Adler, they attracted such figures as Thornton Wilder, the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset and, on his only visit to the United States, Albert Schweitzer.

As the historian James Sloan Allen has written, the Paepckes believed in moral discipline, social responsibility, hard work and restraint. Aspen, which they came to regard as their child, thrived on these values during the 50's but later rebelled. After Walter's death in 1960, Elizabeth reigned alone during a decade that brought to Aspen drugs, free love and Hunter S. Thompson. Elizabeth's disenchantment increased in the



Picnicking by Hunter Creek in Aspen in the early 1960's.

Prairie
Lingo

Making Your Own Music, Kenneth Koch: p. 273, Melvin B. Tolson,
from "The Harlem Gallery"

- Zebra Club
- house snake
- Snakeships
- Indigo Cambo
- general tone & word usage