

ROBINSON JEFFERS NEWSLETTER

Number 4

Robinson Jeffers Committee  
Occidental College  
February, 1964

Dear Members:

Donnan Jeffers has sent in the following items to be included in this month's newsletter:

In January on the B.B.C. School Series program called "Listening and Writing" Robinson Jeffers' poem HURT HAWKS was read. This poem also appeared on an Australian broadcasting program. Last February John Hall Wheelock read seventeen of Robinson Jeffers' poems on a program devoted to Jeffers.

On a recent broadcast of the South African Broadcasting System five of Robinson Jeffers' poems were presented on their programme "The Poet's World."

The Canadian Broadcasting System has permission for an hour's broadcast of THE CRETAN WOMAN before June 1964.

Just published in Beirut, Lebanon in Arabic, FIFTY POEMS FROM CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETRY, including two poems by Robinson Jeffers: I SHALL LAUGH PURELY and FOR UNA. (Donnan says: "Not only is Arabic written from right to left, but the entire book is designed to read from back to front.")

Permission has been granted for Robinson Jeffers' poems to appear in several anthologies published in England. Also to be translated for anthologies in Persian, Hindu, Siamese and other languages.

Donnan has spent the past year on building a passageway to connect his house with Tor House, and remodeling the kitchen. He and Lee plan to take their four children to Ireland in July to spend a year and hope to rent the Carmel house during their absence.

H. Arthur Klein writes from Malibu, California about an article he has written on POET OF OUR ATOMIC AGE. In his letter he says: "It is truly extraordinary how many of the major insights of modern physics, cosmology, physiology, and biochemistry are comprehended in Jeffers' works -- and integrated into the emotional pattern of his poetry." He also says: "I believe that Jeffers' extraordinary mastery of modern science will be recognized before very long by such scholars as have an understanding of quantum and relativity theories...." Mr. Klein urges our committee to make our major objective the publication of Jeffers' out-of-print works in inexpensive paperback editions.

On that same subject, we understand that James Hart of the University

of California at Berkeley has had to drop the study of ROAN STALLION from his English class because the book is out of print and unavailable to students. Such discouraging bits of news are always coming to us. Please, everyone who has a specific need for out-of-print books, write to Donald Klopfer at Random House, 157 Madison Avenue, New York, 22. Urge him to get Robinson Jeffers' works into paperbacks.

Robert Kirsch, Book Editor of the Los Angeles Times, in a review of Radcliffe Squires' book says: ... "the reader is given direct access to fragments of both poetry and prose. Maybe that will motivate him to get to the poems themselves. Perhaps it will suggest to paperback publishers that an extensive reprinting of Jeffers would be worthwhile commercially. Artistically, there is no doubt."

I want to thank all the members who sent in their short poems suggestions. I am sorry the time was so limited because the holidays at Occidental delayed the newsletter getting printed and mailed to you earlier. Any frustrated members may still send their lists to Mr. Klopfer at Random House.

We did not receive the grant from the Bollingen Foundation for the financing of a Robinson Jeffers Bibliography -- a disappointment, but perhaps someone will come up with an even better idea.

We have further news on the Sierra Club book. Lewis Ellingham, its editor, writes that the text will be drawn entirely from Jeffers' work, to be accompanied by photographs of Weston, Adams, and many other distinguished photographers. I am greatly impressed by Editor Ellingham's plans for the de-luxe edition. He writes: "Since we want this book to be as full as possible, but since this cannot by its nature be a comprehensive edition of Jeffers' work, I at least wish to offer adequate and interesting information to the reader to lead one to where more understanding of Jeffers' life and work can be found..." The book will include a biographical sketch and a brief bibliography. No publication date was given.

Each rung placed in the ladder leads us closer to the top. Since membership in the National Council was chosen not only for past interest in Jeffers, but also for brains, we're looking for ideas on not so much what we can do (dozens of good suggestions) but how we can accomplish our goals. We have less than a thousand dollars with which to work our wonders. The newsletter is being underwritten or we wouldn't even have a means of getting information to you. How would you suggest getting Random House to get out a series of reprints? To underwrite a Lectureship? To finance a bibliography? Brains, please! Jim Rorty has sent us the most practical suggestion we've received so far: "Call out the Marines!"

Father Robert Brophy, S.J. who is writing his doctorate on Robinson Jeffers at Chapel Hill has tapped every source of information on both the east and west coasts and has been generous in keeping us informed. His experience at different Libraries is worth passing on: "I found the Whitney

Jeffers Collection in that amazing new library building at Yale, the Beinecke Manuscript Library. The manuscripts are beautifully kept. I had hoped to see the Luhan Memoir chapter ROBIN AND UNA, but this is under very tight restriction. I had to get permission from donors before I could have access to some other material (Ficke letters, e.g.). The opposite happened at Brooklyn Public Library: the contrast would have been laughable if the situation were not at the same time so criminal. I had to see four librarians before they even could discover a Jeffers collection (there is no card catalogue, only a typed sheet of paper in the files somewhere.) Evidently Mr. de Casseres gave some twenty-eight letters, almost all from Robinson in those early days when he would comment himself and not leave the job to Una. They were interesting enough for me to spend parts of two days there. When finally found, they were produced in a bundle of envelopes tied with an old piece of kitchen string, and tossed onto a table. Inside the first envelope I found the battered, (creased and chipping) penciled-manuscript of NIGHT which I photostated (they seemed surprised that I should ask permission). There was a typescript two-page manuscript of WINTER SUNDOWN also stuffed into an envelope, and an assortment of pictures, most of which I had seen before. I gave the staff a little impromptu admonition on the value and fragility of manuscript material (the packet must have been worth at least a couple of thousand dollars); which was probably unfair since they simply don't have the time to pay attention to such things. It's just a shame that they were given to a Library so utterly unequipped (yet superb in many other ways.)

"The American Academy of Arts and Letters was closed so I will have to survey their holdings through a friend in studies at Columbia. However, I did get to spend a very enjoyable afternoon with Mr. Clapp and exchanged greetings with William Levy by phone. The New York Public Library was another flop. They lay claim to a 'very large collection without specific count.' After two days of trying, I got to see their sole two items: a poem copied from a printed volume by Jeffers and a letter to Edgar Lee Masters saying: 'you must come out and visit us some time.'

"The Library of Congress was much more fruitful. A new U.N.C. professor in American Lit., formerly head manuscript librarian, gave me a letter of introduction and some hints on odd places to look. The most valuable papers were in one of those ubiquitous Albert Bender gifts."

Again, thanks for your many interesting letters. I only wish I could answer each of you personally.

Faithfully yours,

Melba Berry Bennett