

The Texas Observer

JULY 24, 1964

A Journal of Free Voices

A Window to The South

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Photograph by Russell Lee

J. Frank Dobie of Texas

FELLOW COUNTRYMAN

New Canaan, Conn.

When my sixteen-year-old daughter was a little girl she saw a picture of Frank Dobie on the back of the jacket of one of his books. It was a shot of him hunkered down by the fire of a hunting camp. That picture caught her imagination. Soon she had an inscribed glossy print of another favorite picture—"the one with the friendly, twinkly eyes" was the way she always referred to it. Frank Dobie had found another admirer. As she grew older she once asked me, "Why do you love him so much?" In a way this piece is an explanation for her.

I served as Frank Dobie's editor for five years when I was on the staff of Little, Brown & Company, his Boston publisher. While I had this privilege we published *The Longhorns*, *The Mustangs*, *A Texan in England*, *The Voice of the Coyote*, and *Ben Lilly*. Anyone who knows Frank Dobie and his works knows at once how much of an education that was for me, an ex-Hoosier sojourning in Boston. It has always seemed the truth of it was that Frank Dobie was my editor, for I know that I got more out of his unintentional revisions of me than he ever got out of my advices to him.

I have always looked back on a weekend spent high above the Devil's River as a time when the full rewards of friendship and professional relationship with Frank Dobie were most evident. Mister Frank was then writing *The Mustangs* and he had come to one of those periods, as writers and long distance runners always do, when the second wind was expected but had not quite arrived. He didn't really need advice; he needed someone interested in the same work to be around for a couple of days. He needed someone to talk to, to read what he had written, to have the same high expectations for the remainder that he had. He wrote me that he had taken a cottage at the invitation of a friend of his in the power business, one of those used in later months as weekend and vacation spots for the employees of the company. He drove me out there from Eagle Pass. When we arrived, I found a comfortable cottage in which he had arranged on tables and boards laid on saw horses the chapters of that fine, free book. He had said we'd batch it, but I didn't realize at first that we'd live off the land as well. The cottage was right at the brink of the high bluff; the dam was in sight, far below the Devil's

Angus Cameron is a senior editor at Alfred A. Knopf, publishers, in New York City.

Angus Cameron

River curled away from the foam at the bottom of the falls like a silver ribbon. It was February, winter in Boston, but the first edges of spring were showing in Rio Grande country. Later I came to understand fully what that spot meant to Frank Dobie—to any Texan for that matter. I came to realize how much that much water meant to a man who lived in a country that was dry. Back of the cottage lay the high dry country of South Texas. And Frank Dobie and his work were firmly imbedded in that piece of Texas nature.

For two and a half days we talked about mustangs, Cunninghame-Graham and Bedichek, Texas lore, world literature, politics, people of both cultures, animals and birds, cacti, and, later, fishing. There, surrounded with the colors, sounds, and life of Texas nature, I experienced all of those qualities that make this unique man. Whether we were frying white bass we caught in the river below (with the rods and invitation and even bait of the brothers Erwin who were supplying a fish fry out of those abundant waters), or collecting a delicious white, gardenia-like bloom of a

cactus which Mister Frank prepared as one would prepare green peas, or enjoying a pot of frijoles prepared by a Mexican friend, or finishing up a meal with guajillo honey, we seemed imbedded in local nature.

As a man close to nature, Frank Dobie is a sensualist. He likes good food and remembers vividly notable gustatory experiences such as those memorialized in his article in *The American Gun*. He doesn't like substitutes and claims "there's nothing feebler than a milk-fed chicken" or "as tasteless as baby beef." "They've got no strength to them," he claims. His fine relish of eating and drinking makes everything taste better in his presence. I know only one other man who can, by the mere act itself, endow the pouring of a drink of whiskey with so much promise of forthcoming pleasure and good fellowship.

To me this sense of being a part of nature is one of the first qualities of Frank Dobie. He knows he is a creature of nature; he feels its immanence at all times; he is not alienated from it. This seems to me one of his first and basic qualities as a man. From it stem, I think, his peculiar art and character. He showed me a painted bunting and a canyon wren; he talked about the pack rat; he named the cacti for me. All of this

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We will serve no group or party but will hew hard to the truth as we find it and the right as we see it. We are dedicated to the whole truth, to human values above all interests, to the rights of man as the foundation of democracy; we will take orders from none but our own conscience, and never will we overlook or misrepresent the truth to serve the interests of the powerful or cater to the ignoble in the human spirit.

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was a natural by-product of his universal interest in life.

His "editing" of me continued when we talked about the book. His conversation on that occasion was a good example of how literature has "civilized" him, as he is wont to put it. As we went about our chores or sat with a glass of Jack Daniels talking, he vented his frustration that he could not write about horses the way Cunninghame-Graham had written about them on the pampas of the Argentine. He quoted phrases and paragraphs from his mentor as I listened raptly to mine. I couldn't imagine that anyone could catch the spirit of the horse as he had in his own manuscript, but he could imagine it.

On that same occasion this editor-of-life added another revision to me. In speaking of a book he had tried to read as a young man, but had never finished, he said, "Hell, I learned one thing not too long ago that I should have learned when I was twenty. Never try to force a book. If it can't talk back to you, or better make you talk back to it, don't feel guilty about it—put it aside. If it's a great book you'll just have to grow up to it, and you will if you keep yourself in motion. A man has to have a dialogue with a good book and with a lot of such books you just don't become man enough to read them with profit until you've grown up to them."

HE ONCE TOLD ME that the only way a man could "get civilized" was to realize as early as he could that his chief purpose in life must be "to become a contemporary of himself." He explained that for a number of years he had not been such a contemporary, that he had been too much a folk loreist, not enough a modern man. "Yes, and I wasn't free," he said. "I was too much caught up with the olden times and not enough a man living in the present." He then explained to me how he had grown up, how he'd been foreman of his uncle's ranch, how he'd got a powerful interest in Texas folklore as a natural by-product of his life. "But I had got too narrow, too regional," he said. He explained how a man has to welcome change in life about him, change that may sometimes harshly conflict with his background, with his predilections. Of course, I was avid for more of that past and I got it as the years went by and in the process I learned something too about the relationship between regionalism and universality.

Like any good radical, Frank Dobie is a reluctant one. He values the past, but he has no use for those who worship it. He welcomes the future, however, and tries to influence it. As all know who have heard him make the air crackle with diatribe, both scornful and profane, or who have revelled in the cactus-thorny prose in the syndicated columns, he is a partisan, a tough in-fighter, and a great hater with a long memory. And his scorn can be heroic when it is directed against such good targets as a handful of ignoramuses trying to run a university as they would an oil drilling crew or a loud-mouthed demagogue like McCarthy trying to run the whole

country. He smites hip and thigh against purveyors of lies, vulgarity, ignorance, venality, bigotry, and injustice. He is a staunch champion of beleaguered non-conformists and delights in a man under fire who takes a "go-to-hell" attitude towards those who are trying to intimidate him.

As an integral part of his struggle to become contemporary with himself, there is the parallel struggle to develop universality out of regionalism, a subject he later developed in full in a notable essay. His editing of me continued as he revealed how his trip to London during the war, when he served as exchange professor from the University of Texas to Cambridge University, had advanced the struggle toward contemporaneity. He spoke of "civilized man" in a way that few people understand it. He combines for my taste the best of a man who has become universal to the marrow by being regional to the bone.

Frank Dobie admires scholarship as much as any man I know. At the same time he abhors narrow academic outlooks with as much contempt as any man I know. His own ideals were to be found in his friends Bedichek and Webb because they were both men first and scholars second. The three of them make a formidable trio of Americans who have reflected a universal wisdom by knowing more about their home region than anyone else knows.

MY OWN FRIENDSHIP with Frank Dobie began while I was the New York editor of his publisher. Through the later Raymond Everitt I had met him when assigned to do some editorial chore for him. The next time he came to New York he called me. "Angus," he said with that tone of half query he can get into his voice, "Charlie Everitt and I are having lunch tomorrow and we'd like you to join us." There began a number of these meetings. Charlie Everitt was friend, crony, and advisor of Mister Frank. "Hell, Charlie Everitt knows more about the sources of Western history than any professor I know." From his little bookshop on 57th Street Charlie Everitt dispensed bourbon and information to a host of grateful and admiring scholars of Americana. These meals together were a delight to me. The last one we had with Mr. Everitt was during the war. Mister Frank was on his way out of the country, his destination unknown to all but a few people. I had got them together at the old Murrayhill Hotel, where we had dinner and spent the evening until Mister Frank took, as we later learned, a plane to England. We knew about his exchange fellowship, and over drinks Mr. Everitt and I discovered that we had to convince Mister Frank that he could teach American history to British undergraduates. Mister Frank was doubtful, impressed as he was and as he should have been by the great scholarly tradition of the university whose faculty he was about to join. But Mister Frank's humility was a powerful thing. Finally, in a burst of impatience at our encouragement he said, "But, hell" ("hail" is the way it always sounds to me from Mr. D.), "what if one of those boys

asks me about the Webster-Ashburton Treaty?"

"Now I tell you what you do, Frank," Charlie Everitt said. "If you find yourself momentarily stumped by such a question, just remember that treaty had a clause in it about cod fishing rights on the Great Banks. This will remind you of water, which will remind you of liquids. Once you're there you can switch to anything liquid—bourbon, branch water: . . . Hell, just tell them the story about the railroad engineer who was spitting champion of the State of Arkansas."

As we all know, Frank Dobie's sojourn at Cambridge was a triumph. There he and his tall tales and his tall hat and his interpretation of the history of England's ally became a legend. The first real-for-sure Westerner these boys, who had themselves grown up on stories of "cowboys and Red Indians," had ever seen, Frank Dobie became not just a successful teacher but an ambassador at large. He says the trip helped to civilize him, but the editorials in the London papers when he left England proved that the Texan in England had added more to them than he'd got even from their hallowed halls.

When sensitive critics begin to write about Frank Dobie's work, someone not too far himself removed from the great tradition may discover that the artistry of the work lies in its sensitive blend of the overtones of the teller of tales with the phrasing of the stylist who admires the formal beauties of the English language. Somehow the urban life does not develop tale tellers and yarn spinners. You have to have solitude, quiet, and a small audience of friends who share your life and work to develop the story-teller's art.

A friend once said to me that poetry in our times suffered because the rural idiom, the idiom of nature, was disappearing from the language. The farther we get from nature the poorer the language becomes. I'll let experts argue that one, but I do know that alienation from nature is something we can't afford and still remain whole, and neither can the language afford it. Rural men, men who have handled stock, who have been close to the land or to the frontier or to the wilderness, develop a way of talking which you don't hear very often these days. (Frost retained it and maybe that is one reason Frank Dobie admired him so much.) Frank Dobie has retained it. The verbal echo runs through his writing. The formal phrase is made rich by it.

As a lover of literature he always took a bibliophile's interest in his own books long after they had left the author's hand. As reader and collector himself he had a sound feeling for how a book should be made. When it came time to find an illustrator for *The Voice of the Coyote* and he was asked for advice, he put his finger on precisely the right man. "Olaus Murie knows more about how coyotes really look than any formal animal artist I know of." As all Texans know *The Longhorns* was illustrated (one might say illuminated almost) at Mr. Dobie's request by the art

of Tom Lea, who could draw a longhorn bull or a picture of Bigfoot Wallace sitting on a rail fence with equal evocation of the real thing. Once we were horrified way off there in Boston to discover that we had almost bought sheepskin instead of cowhide for the cover of the de luxe edition of that same book. When we finally told Mr. Dobie how we had saved ourselves and him from such humiliation, he answered, "Romantics always *have* made too much of the rivalry between sheepmen and cow people, and besides I'll bet only an old bootmaker I know in Austin would have recognized the difference." I know he was glad we had discovered the mistake, but I realized how characteristic it was of him to poke fun at hackneyed notions about the West, perhaps in this case as much the result of Eastern fiction as Western fact.

INDEED HIS LOVE of the real West makes him impatient with the Wild West of romantics who have sopped up the "Western" notion from books and movies. Once while Mrs. Cameron and I visited Mrs. Dobie and him in Austin he received a phone call, I gathered from his end of the conversation that he was talking with a

newspaper man or journalist who wished to interview him. When I realized that he was about to turn them away because of our presence, I urged him to let them come on out. A research and photographic team from Life was doing a feature on The Real Cowboy. They wanted to get Frank Dobie's notions on this subject. He gently led them to more workaday ideas about the life of a modern cowhand. He joshed them a little when he discovered that they thought the cowboy worked more for the love of it than for the wages, and gave them a real steer when one of them queried, "Mr. Dobie, I understand that when you were a cowhand you stuffed your pants down into your boots . . . Do you think the modern cowhand wears his pants on the outside of his boots because he's learned that he can better keep the dust and grit out in that way?" Mr. Dobie grinned, ruffled his white hair with a gnarled hand and answered, "Well, no. I reckon these boys have noticed just like everybody else from all the Western moving pictures they see these days that their silhouette just naturally *looks* better with the pants outside the boot."

Always the teacher, the interpreter of the West and its lore, Mr. Frank gave a

kindly interview to these two men. Their story lost nothing of the flavor of the old west from having talked to J. Frank Dobie; it gained much of the reality of the present from his gentle humor and advice. He took them on a tour of his Charlie Russell prints and water colors. While he talked I noticed one of the visitors pick up a wood carving of a strange bird. He thought to ask about it but changed his mind. He should have followed his hunch, for the carving was that of a road-runner. Because I knew that Mr. Frank loved the road-runner so much and has named his place on Barton Creek *Paisano*, I had made it a point long before to learn more about this fine, free spirit of the brush country. I liked the fact that the Mexicans call this bird "Paisano," fellow countryman, and I felt that Frank Dobie's love of the road-runner epitomizes his fellow feeling of kinship with nature. I discovered that this bird has a four-toed foot and two of its toes point forward, two point backward—equally divided then in passage between the past and the future. Wherever Frank Dobie sets his foot down he is a contemporary of himself but his life points in two directions. Master of the finest traditions of our country's past, his spirit runs swiftly toward the future. □

Love of Life and Freedom

Wilson M. Hudson

Austin
In September of 1957 J. Frank Dobie was taken to Saint David's hospital in a serious condition. Just what was wrong we weren't told. Not much news came to us. Knowing that Roy Bedichek, if anybody, would have some information, I paid him a visit. He was working in his garden.

"Yes, he is doing as well as can be expected but is not out of danger. I've seen him. He's had to use an oxygen tent. He gave me that big smile of his and said, 'Hello, Bedi. I'm all lit up with life.' It's remarkable, just remarkable!"

Dobie had had a close call. For more than two weeks only Mrs. Dobie had been allowed to see him. Bedi was the first after her to go into his room. Dobie had been brought in from Cherry Springs, his place in the country, where he had spent two or three nights alone. Pneumonia had run up his pulse and put a strain on his heart. His strength had been low but his vital spark was strong. A month later he told the story himself in an essay called "Camping Beneath an Oxygen Tent." He spent many hours on the border of consciousness. "Down there in the deep well I saw hardly anything, heard hardly anything, remembered hardly anything that was not beautiful." One sound that he did hear was that

of roosters greeting the day; it took him back to "a simple and kindly world of a long time ago."

Dobie has always loved life; never has he doubted or mistrusted it. He has loved freedom, which encourages life to develop and reach its fullest possibilities. And he has hated whatever thwarts or strangles the life of man, a creature compounded of body and mind.

He has loved literature as "the essence of life." He has waged war on academicians who are afraid of life and would treat literature as a thing apart, a lifeless world on paper. He cares not for the puny or precious in literature. The kind of writing that he likes best has vitality and gusto.

In 1931 he said, in an essay written for the Literary Guild to send out in connection with *Coronado's Children*, that "the qualities most lacking in American literature are flavor and gusto" and that these qualities existed in the pioneer stock of the Southwest, which was relatively free of Puritannical restraint. His most general statement about the necessity of putting life into art was made in 1960: "The one thing needful to all scholarship, as to all literature and art, is vitality." One of his latest statements came after Walter Prescott Webb's death in 1963: "The one thing needful for a writer is vitality of mind. Webb had it."

And Dobie has it too. He has sought subjects crammed with life and has presented them with gusto. Dobie has made frequent use of the word "gusto," a favorite of

Hazlitt's in his critical essays. Dobie can forgive deficiency of form if vitality is present. In quoting N. A. Taylor's narrative of travels in Texas he said, "Taylor was young and in love with life. His writing is weedy, but it is full of gusto and honest sympathy for what he met."

DOBIE BECAME an English teacher because he fell in love with English poetry while a student at Southwestern University and wanted to communicate that love to others. After a boyhood on his father's ranch in Live Oak County he went to Alice to attend high school for two years so that he could go on to college. In his freshman year at Southwestern Professor Albert Shipp Pegues's survey course in English poetry "transmuted the world" for the young Dobie. There were other courses with Pegues later and other good intellectual influences at Georgetown.

Immediately after graduation in 1910 Dobie got a job as a reporter for the San Antonio Express at \$12 or \$14 a week. He had such a good time writing that he was reluctant to go to Alpine in the fall, where he was to be principal of a school and to teach also. He was back at Southwestern from 1911 to 1913 as a teacher of English and secretary to the president. Then he spent a year at Columbia and earned an M.A. degree. He came to the University of Texas as an instructor in 1914, and left in 1917 for two years in the field artillery. Back from France, he resumed teaching at the university; but he was dissatisfied and resigned in the spring of 1920.

While acting as Uncle Jim Dobie's majordomo on Los Olmos Ranch in La

Wilson Hudson is professor of English at the University of Texas. He is the author of Andy Adams: His Life and Writings (Southern Methodist University Press, 1964) and is editor for the Texas Folklore Society.

Salle County, Dobie would sometimes be visited at night by Santos Cortez, a vaquero who tired of his companions' unvarying talk about the work of the day. Santos told tales about deer, men, and ghosts. One night after Santos had gone it occurred to Dobie that he should collect "the tales of my folk and my land" as Lomax had collected cowboy songs. He now had a definite direction to take, and he has continued in this direction ever since, widening his horizon and gaining perspective as he went along.

"During the year I spent on Los Olmos Ranch while Santos talked, while Uncle Jim Dobie and other cowmen talked or stayed silent, while the coyotes sang their songs, and the sandhill cranes honked their lonely music, I seemed to be seeing a great painting of something I'd know all my life. I seemed to be listening to a great epic of something that had been commonplace in my youth but now took on meanings." In the fall of 1921 Dobie was again instructing at the University of Texas. He took over the editorship of the Texas Folklore Society, founded in 1909, and began to write down and to urge others to write down legends and tales about Texas.

The Legends of Texas was published in 1924; of the Society's books, as Dobie says, it has been "the most influential in opening the eyes of people to the richness of their own traditions." Bertha McKee Dobie, whom he had known at Southwestern and whom he married in 1916, assisted with the editing and contributed some legends also. She helped on all the other folklore publications that he edited. In later years she would sometimes teach for him while he was seeking material and writing. She has always been the first and most helpful reader of his books in manuscript.

Dobie's salary and rank were low, and since he did not intend to take a Ph.D. his prospects of advancement were not good. In the fall of 1923 he accepted the headship of the department of English at Oklahoma A. & M. in Stillwater. From Austin, Webb wrote in 1925, "We are both in a hole on this Ph.D. degree proposition." While at Oklahoma A. & M. Dobie had a stroke of luck, which he defines as being ready for the chance when it comes. E. H. Taylor of the Country Gentleman paid a visit to Stillwater and was introduced to Dobie by Ed Hadley, a teacher of journalism. Over a bottle of smuggled tequila they talked, with the result that Dobie began to contribute to the Country Gentleman. First there was an article on cowboy songs and then two articles on the Old Time Trail Drivers' meeting held at San Antonio in 1924. Many more followed.

Leonidas W. Payne and H. T. Parlin of the English department, along with Professor Eugene C. Barker in history, persuaded President Splawn to bring Dobie back to Austin in the fall of 1925 with the rank of adjunct professor. This was the year when I entered the university and came to know by sight the man with the Western hat and the perpetual pipe. The senior professors in the English department weren't pleased to have Dobie back.

Dr. Callaway was chairman; it was he who had advised Lomax years earlier to give up his interest in cowboy songs. Dobie had backing outside the department now, and he had a feeling of independence because he could earn money by writing what he wanted to. He began to stand up to Callaway, who had written treatises on the infinitive and participle in Old English and had a distaste for Dobie's articles. Dobie was not humble and meek, as he should have been. I have heard Dobie say this of Callaway: "Dr. Callaway thought everybody ought to have somebody to look up to and he was that somebody."

DOBIE ARGUED IN 1927 that the University of Texas should have a real relationship to the history and traditions of the state, that like all great universities it should blend the universal and the local. He complained, justly, that some departments had "no more sympathy for the life of the Southwest than they have for life in Patagonia."

In 1929 Dobie published *A Vaquero of the Brush Country*, which was about his part of Texas and had as its starting point the life of John Young, whom Dobie talked with in Alpine. With another book on the way, *Coronado's Children* (1930), Dobie proposed and obtained, against opposition in his department, an advanced course of his own, *Life and Literature of the Southwest*. When the senior professors objected that the Southwest had no literature, Dobie replied, "It has plenty of life. I'll teach that." He was "on fire with the idea that genuine literature in this part of the world could come about only from an understanding of its life, lore and history."

Dobie's new course became the most popular elective ever given in the university. He presented the subject matter with vitality and gusto, but did not maintain that the Southwest had produced great literature. He wanted Texans to become aware of the traditions and materials which were theirs and which they might put to literary use. There should be a connection between a literature and its land of origin, he maintained, but this alone does not assure greatness. Regionalism is not enough in itself; there must be something wider. "Great literature transcends its native land," he said in 1936, "but none that I know of ignores its own soil." In recent years he has spoken out emphatically against a narrow regionalism: "Good writing about any region is good only to the extent that it has universal appeal." This statement was made in 1950. Ten years later he said, "Unless the regional has elements of the universal it is county-minded and is, therefore, damned."

The treasure legends that Dobie had written down for *The Legends of Texas* put him on a track that led to *Coronado's Children*. The selection of this book by the Literary Guild in 1931 and the attendant publicity made Dobie a nationally known figure. The press presented him as a cowboy and treasure hunter who had become a college professor and writer. Since *Coronado's Children* he has published fourteen

books, and another, *Cow People*, is due to appear this fall. His magazine articles are numerous and he has written many prefaces to the books of others. For years he has provided weekly articles for certain Texas newspapers. In all of his books except *A Texan in England* (1945) he has dealt with the Southwest and the West, and also parts of northern Mexico. Even *A Texan in England* keeps coming back to the Southwest as W. H. Hudson's *A Hind in Richmond Park* returns again and again to the Argentine. Dobie has made the nation and the world conscious of the Southwest in tradition and story.

Dobie is not a folklorist or a historian but a storyteller. He has told hundreds of stories about pioneers, cowboys, cowmen, treasure seekers, longhorns, coyotes, mustangs, hunters, rattlesnakes, paisanos, and other indigenes of the land. A good story is a good story for him, whether it is reminiscence, anecdote, or folktale. He admits to having a "constructive memory"; that is, in recalling a tale he might improve it, make it better than it was originally. He loves to hear or tell a story. I have heard him say that he doesn't care how many times he hears the same story provided that it is good. On picnics he would say, "Bedi, tell us the story about the sow and the stalk of bananas" or something else, and listen in great enjoyment to what he already knew by heart.

AS A YOUNG WRITER Dobie was wrapped up in "the pageantry of the past," to use his phrase. Once his mother said to him, "Son, why are you always looking backwards? You are acting like an old man." At that time he was not interested in contemporary problems and referred to the present only occasionally for the sake of contrast with the past. World War II brought him face to face with the modern world. In 1943 he was quoted as saying, "After living in a kind of story-book way, allied to the past, for many years, I have been forced by this war at last to become a contemporary with myself." After a year of teaching American history at Cambridge University, 1943-44, and a year of lecturing to American soldiers at Shrivenham and in Germany and Austria at the close of the war, he said, "I have come to think that perspective on any segment of life is as important as knowledge of and sympathy for that life, that wise evaluation of any where depends on knowledge of other wheres."

A Texan in England tells the story of Dobie's year at Cambridge. Before the Japanese surrendered I happened to see a copy in the officer's club at an air base where I was stationed near Memphis. I had not even known of the book's existence. I sat down and read through it without stopping. In England Dobie experienced a greater feeling of harmony with his total environment than he ever had known with American "civilization." He said he had thought that "the greatest happiness possible to a man . . . is to become civilized, to

know the pageant of the past, to love the beautiful, to have just ideas of values and proportions, and then, retaining his animal spirits and appetites, to live in a wilderness where nature is congenial, with a few barbarians to afford picturesqueness and human relations." But such an ideal, he realized, was impractical in this shrinking world. He was in the midst of a real civilization and he liked it. The manners of the English, their attitude to life, their intellectual tolerance, all gave him serenity and a sense of freedom. And England gave him more—"a more critical attitude toward life."

The contrast was great when he returned to America with its noise, selling, self-trumpeting, and intolerance. The dark days of McCarthyism were upon us, and he found his own university in the hands of "a gang of fascist-minded regents." At a time when intellectuals and liberals were intimidated all through the land, Dobie was one of the few to speak out in this part of the world.

In an article entitled "Texans Need Brains," contributed to the *Texas Ranger*, a student magazine, Dobie made a notable statement. "I do not see," he said, "how anybody who cherishes liberty for others as well as for himself can be intolerant of ideas. I do not see how a vast country the life of which is bound up in vast complexities can be governed wisely except by intellectual ability. Liberty means liberty of mind as much as it means liberty to make a profit." The governor is reported to have said that Dobie should be "summarily dismissed" as a "disturbing influence." Dobie had been appointed a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; in the minds of some, this was enough to make him guilty of treason by association.

Dobie asked for leave of absence in the fall of 1947, but was notified that he must return to the classroom or be severed from the university. When September 15 arrived he did not sign in, and his official relationship with the university was terminated. Thus the university lost one of the brightest lights ever to shine forth from the Forty Acres. The students marched in protest. They loved Dobie and what he stood for. The *Daily Texan* and the *Texas Ranger* have asked for and received articles from him since his severance. In 1950 the Texan reported that a movement led by Walter Webb and Alton Burdine to restore Dobie to the faculty was under way, but it came to nothing. Mody Boatright was also one of the leaders in the effort to bring Dobie back.

"Any strong-willed and strong-minded individual who does not fit the moulds determined upon for its members by a conventional society will sooner or later have his character attacked," said Dobie in 1936. This proved true when he began to speak out in the days of the McCarthy oppression. In April 1951 the House Un-American Activities Committee listed him as a sponsor of the Mid-Century Conference

for Peace, said to be communist inspired. He defended himself by saying that he believed in peace and did not have time to investigate the membership of organizations backing causes which he approved of.

In these years Dobie spoke out with force and energy against the enemies of life and freedom. It was perfectly consistent for someone in love with life to hate whatever sought to stifle life. Once at Barton's I quoted Burke on the subject of hate as related to love: "They will never love where they ought to love, who do not hate where they ought to hate." This he thought was good and repeated in later conversations. In 1956 he wrote, "Positive zest for life and positive opposition to the strangling of life go together." He said he wanted "the stranglers of life strangled." It is true that "the best books and the best pictures infuse life, add to life, are life," and it is wrong to demand, for prudish or political reasons, that they be removed from libraries and museums. Because the love of life has always been dominant in him, hatred of the enemies of life has left no scars on Dobie. "I confess to having had feelings of hatred at times, though life has been too bright and good and energy too precious to spend in maintaining hatred."

For the coronation of Queen Elizabeth the BBC asked the Department of State to help prepare a salute from America. The only Texan invited to take part in this salute was J. Frank Dobie. He appeared in a short sound film telling three anecdotes to show similarities between Texans and Englishmen.

AFTER DOBIE had returned from abroad I was seeing him every day during the swimming season at Barton Springs. There was a period in the summer of 1951 when he was very tired. He had sent off the manuscript for *The Mustangs* and was feeling spent. He said he doubted that he would ever write another book treating the whole life of its subject. When the proofs began to come in, he cast off his fatigue and read them with satisfaction in the completion of a difficult task. Late one afternoon while we were drinking beer in his back yard after a swim, he said with a chuckle, "Wilson, I could get my Ph.D. with this book." He never did have a high opinion of degrees, because he had "seen so many sawdust brains with nothing else but degrees and so many active, well-informed, observing, witty, interesting brains without any degrees at all." In 1959 he wrote that the "Teutonic Ph.D. system" had "dehumanized the humanities in American colleges and universities."

Dobie is of course an intellectual with a wide range of knowledge and a great deal of wisdom. "First-class education is always intellectual," he has said. His count against Education spelled with a capital E is that it does not improve the mind. He wants no technicalities or pretenses mixed in with the training of the intellect.

The summer of 1957 was a fine one for swimming and talk at Barton Springs. Roy Bedichek would arrive at about three-thirty to take the heat of the sun on

Bedichek's rock, and Dobie and I would come out about an hour later. Sometimes we would talk until the sun went down and then go somewhere for a beer and more talk. Any subject at all would draw Bedi and Dobie out, perhaps on different sides but most often in agreement. They would sometimes lock horns and push hard, because each knew his own mind and did not express lightly formed views. When Bedi had the bit of conversation in his teeth and was running away, Dobie would plunge into the cold water for a moment and then return. Sometimes he would stretch himself out on the hot cement behind the diving board. He said that the heat drove the coldness inside, down to the bones.

We hated the juke box that would now and then blare out—another form of the "murder of silence" Dobie called it. We were incensed when the park department put up a sign reading "Zilker Springs." Why change the name of Barton Springs? Dobie told a story about a trial that he had attended in Georgetown while he was a student. Frank Taulbee was arguing a case against a man accused of moving a boundary marker to steal a strip of his neighbor's land. The lawyer for the defense quoted Plutarch several times in the course of his speech. Taulbee began thus: "Gentlemen of the jury, we have been hearing over and over what Plutarch says about this and what Plutarch says about that. Who is this man Plutarch, anyhow? I don't know. Perhaps some of you don't know. But I can cite you an authority that we all do know—the Good Book itself. Therein you'll find written these words: 'Cursed be he that removeth the ancient landmarks, for the buzzards of the air shall pluck out his eyes.'" That night Dobie found in his Bible a curse on the remover of ancient landmarks but it didn't correspond to Taulbee's version. Dobie tells this story in a fine autobiographical essay, "Prose and Poetry in Georgetown."

Towards the end of this same summer Walter Webb and Mody Boatright, non-swimmers, joined us in a picnic on Barton Creek below the bridge. There were other picnics for the five of us at other times and places, always with marvelous talk and hearty laughter. The conversation turned on serious matters too—the international situation, national and state politics, and the condition of the university.

After his bout with pneumonia in the fall of 1957 Dobie had to give up swimming at Barton's. There were too many steps to go up and down. Knowing how much he loved the spot, I gave him a color photograph taken from the high bank and showing the bottom through the transparent water.

I remember particularly well one trip to Cherry Springs, Dobie's place near Spice-wood Springs. I think it was in early June 1958; the day was beautiful and the mountain pinks were blooming in the clay and limestone along the highway. I was driving. As we approached Bee Creek Dobie said, "It's a beautiful world, isn't it?" Bedi was on the back seat and didn't catch Dobie's

remark. "Hunh? What's that?" he asked. "I said it's a beautiful world," Dobie repeated with some emphasis. "Oh, yes. Of course. I never doubted that," Bedi replied as if it were altogether unnecessary to tell him something that he had known well for a long time.

While Bedi fixed a green salad, I broiled a steak outside. Dobie, having to take things easy, stayed in the kitchen. I couldn't catch what they were saying, but I could tell that a good discussion was going on. Now and then I could hear Dobie say, "Now, Bedi, do you mean to tell me that—" And Bedi would say, "Dobie, you know there's not a thing in the world to that." At another time that day they had an energetic argument about the best way to prepare compost, Bedi standing up for his way and Frank for Bertha's, which she had learned from Lady Eve Balfour's *The Living Soil*.

After steak and salad we had a nap and then sat on the front gallery. Dobie's two horses had got into the yard and left their signs. He said, "Wilson, kick those droppings around so they'll do the grass some good." I kicked them around. This amused Bedi. "You don't have to do everything he says. I'd be durned if I'd kick manure around to fertilize his grass."

After a while we got in the car and drove to the springs. I wanted some of the little cherry trees to bring in to town. Dobie remained above while Bedi and I went down in the moist canyon with a shovel and a tow sack. Bedi pointed out the ones he thought easiest to dig up and even dug up one or two himself. He cupped damp earth around the roots and we put them in the wet sack.

Back at the house we sat on the porch again and rested with a can of beer in our hands. I remember very well two stories told by Bedi, both from life, and one by Dobie about the visit of a Yankee to a Rebel after the Civil War.

ON MAY 21, 1959, the three of us were to go out to Paisano, a place nearer Austin that Dobie had bought after selling Cherry Springs. At about noon the phone rang. It was Dobie. "Wilson, do you know that Bedi died this morning?" I was astounded. Only the day before, at six o'clock, I had seen him hale and hearty at Barton's.

Walter Webb's death came with great suddenness and shock too, on March 8, 1963.

Four of the little cherry trees that I brought home and transplanted have lived and grown to a height of six or eight feet now. One I named Roy, one Walter, and one Frank. The last one I have dared to name Wilson. It gives me great pleasure just to see them there, greening and blooming in the spring and gaily fluttering their leaves all summer.

"The wild flowers of a rainy spring and the grasses of a showery summer are good and beautiful and sufficient even though they vanish." This poetical sentence is

Dobie's. It belongs to a man whose prose was first nurtured by the King James Bible. Life is transient but it is good just the same.

Once at Barton's after we had spoken of death as the completion of the biological process I asked Bedi point-blank about his attitude to death. "I know it's coming," he said, and finished humorously, "but I can't say that I am looking forward to it with any pleasurable anticipation." At another time he told me he had received a letter from Webb containing a complaint about "this tag end of life." He had written Webb and taken him to task. For the Bedichek number of the *Observer* Webb addressed a letter to his old friend in which he said that Bedi had taken a good deal of the sting out of his going by its suddenness—the way Bedi had wanted.

Two days after Webb's passing Dobie wrote this for the *Texan*: "Any man who has seen life and been a part of life wants to leave it before decomposing into a senile vegetable. Webb died standing up . . ."

Time and again Dobie urged Bedi to write his autobiography, and Bedi in return urged Frank to write his. I have taken over this urging now. I have heard Dobie say, and I feel sure he has said it in print somewhere too, that a writer should be greater than all of his books put together. This is true of Dobie, as fine and as extensive as his literary achievement is. No one can tell of his life as he can. His greatest book is yet to come. In fact, since 1950 he has published autobiographical essays sufficient in number to make a large volume, but when I urge him to put them in a book as "Chapters in an Autobiography" he replies that there is more that should go in—"the rest isn't written yet." In 1957 he announced in the *New York Times Book Review* that he was thinking of an autobiography but foresaw a problem. He took pleasure in writing about his boyhood, youth, and early manhood (the far away and long ago, the pageant of life), but was not anxious to deal with the clashes and controversies (the critical side), nor did he want to omit them. "I have come to

value liberated minds as the supreme good of life on earth. The subject is very complex and proliferates into many areas of living. I should not be satisfied with an autobiography that did not bear witness to my passionate belief in freedom of thought."

Freedom of thought! The poem that closes *The Mustangs* is the finest poem on freedom in the language, an ever-living testimony to Dobie's devotion to freedom. This I knew when I heard it recited by Angus Springer at Southwestern on Dobie Day in 1952.

I see them running, running, running
From the Spanish caballadas to be free,
From the mustanger's rope and rifle, to
keep free,

Over seas of pristine grass, like fire-
dancers on a mountain,
Like lightning playing against the
unapproachable horizon.

I see them standing, standing, standing,
Sentinels of alertness in eye and nostril,
Every toss of maned neck a Grecian grace,
Every high snort bugling out the pride of
the free.

I see them vanishing, vanishing, vanished,
The seas of grass shriveled to pens of barb-
wired property,
The wind-racers and wind-drinkers bred
into property also.

But winds still blow free and grass still
greens,
And the core of that something which men
live on believing
Is always freedom.

So sometimes yet, in the realities of
silence and solitude,
For a few people unhampered a while by
things,
The mustangs walk out with dawn, stand
high, then
Sweep away, wild with sheer life, and free,
free, free—
Free of all confines of time and flesh.

Here's to life! Here's to freedom! And
here's to Dobie, who loves them both! □

We Came from the Same Range

Frank Dobie and I came from the same range. I have known him for many years. In fact, since our school days. His parents were the salt of the earth. They were the early settlers in Live Oak County and staunch Methodists.

I can but think of the spring I met a lone rider leading a horse packed with bedding and a coffee pot strapped on the side. It was Frank, on his way West to join the Jim Dobie outfit. They were to ship 6,000 aged steers to Oklahoma for summer grazing.

Rocky Reagan calls himself "just a cow man."

Then the afternoons we spent on my front porch or beside the evening fire, reliving those old range days, of a stampede, a fall, or some unusual camp cook.

Frank had it in his blood but was too smart to fight the game and chose the wiser course of recording, in his own rare style, for the future generations, those unusual legends.

J. Frank Dobie or "Pancho" is bone and sinew a frontiersman, a rare character, and I'm proud to say a friend of mine.

Rocky Reagan, George West, Texas.

July 24, 1964

A Writer Loyal to Real Experience

Dallas

Lon Tinkle

Frank Dobie himself started the style of finding a Homeric epithet for the subjects of the Observer memorial issues. The one Dobie chose for Roy Bedichek was "The Natural Man." Hubert Mewhinney supplied one for Walter Prescott Webb, "The Man of Massive Common Sense." No doubt many contributors to this Dobie issue will underscore this one for Mister Frank, "The Man of Integrity." Integrity, in the modern sense of existential authenticity and of creating one's own sense of self instead of borrowing or inheriting it, characterizes Dobie's fundamental modernity of mind.

He revealed it in a rather dramatic yet spontaneous way when he concluded his speech at the annual Texas Institute of Letters banquet in Dallas last February 15. He was taking the place, on short notice, of Katherine Anne Porter, who had arrived in Dallas with a 102-degree fever that sent her to the hospital. Dobie, who often concludes a talk by just abruptly stopping, was about to sit down; then he paused, presumably because he had thought of a good curtain line or maybe because he felt the occasion required a kind of personal testament. White-suited as usual with a red rose some lady had pinned to his lapel, he brushed back the white shock of hair with his left hand and with that familiar gesture of clearing the air in front of him, made an arc with his right arm.

"People," he said, "are always complaining nowadays that they don't know where to turn for answers to their problems. Well, they might turn to themselves. We all might turn to ourselves."

This got a standing ovation. Dobie had unconsciously and spontaneously defined the essence of himself: a courageous self-reliance and a courageous willingness to be responsible. More than any man I ever knew, Dobie is haunted by a sense of responsibility to reality.

I say reality instead of truth or fact or justice, because reality is a fusion of concrete things with powerful feelings and abstract ideas—and Dobie is a man powerfully magnetized by the concrete, the rich particularity. His writing is alive with details, with striking inventories of fact—

Lon Tinkle is book editor of the Dallas Morning News and teaches French literature at Southern Methodist University. He wrote 13 Days to Glory (McGraw-Hill, 1958), and with Allen Maxwell he edited The Cowboy Reader (Longmans, Green, 1959).

but it doesn't just "inventory." It is writing, like that of any true artist, that separates the real from the fake.

This is a harder thing to do than most people will admit; the tiring effort to make the distinction hurries most of us into dogmatic or doctrinaire thinking. The only dogma Frank Dobie respects, I believe, is the dogma to oppose all dogmatism.

Hence, his extraordinary anchoring in the concrete, the tangible, the specific example. He values the rich particularity over the empty universal, and in this sense he is a "regionalist." He is a relativist, not an absolutist. People in the East often suppose he is absorbed in the past, in the local. Far from it; but his instinctive wisdom does relate everything to time and to space. Time is history and space is region and you can have both anywhere. They constitute most of our daily experience. Dobie is a man loyal to real experience, whether of the past or present.

This, as we shall see, is what his work records, and with resonance. And not just his work, but his behavior as a man.

A DOZEN memories come to mind in verification. During the great drouth that ended in 1957, some of us were talking under the giant elm in his backyard. After a good deal of abstract discussion of economic effects and the future of Texas, Dobie suddenly said: "What makes me suffer the most is to go out to Cherry Springs [a country place he had then] and see the trees thirsting for a drink. I feel with them. I share their agony." He was making us see a concrete side of reality. He was vindicating, no doubt, the natural man's view, just as real, if not as important, as that of the social man.

As much as it fitted Bedichek, the epithet "Natural Man" fits Dobie. I think of the time he was in Brackettville to watch John Wayne's filming of a longhorn sequence in "The Alamo." Dobie was enchanted with a gnarled and magnificent old mesquite growing just outside the building used as commissary. After breakfast that morning, he communed a while with the mesquite. A photographer importuned him to hurry; John Wayne was waiting out on location to have some "still" shots made of the Duke and Dobie inspecting the Alamo "replica" on Happy Shahan's ranch.

"Here's the thing to photograph," Dobie rebuked him. "Get some pictures of that old mesquite. It has survived wind and

weather for, I guess, several hundred years. You never saw such a big trunk on a mesquite. Now there's something noble. And send me some of the pictures. I'll pay for them."

The mesquite was photographed, casual and natural in its pose. The drive out to location began, scriptwriter Jimmy Grant at the wheel. Dobie was identifying every thing that grew along the road. Suddenly he told Grant to stop. Dobie got out of the car and beckoned us all to follow. I thought of the thousand extras waiting for our arrival before shooting began, and tried to recall the figure I had heard about the hourly cost of this movie, not remembering whether it was thirty dollars or three hundred or even three thousand.

"Look, Jimmy," Dobie called, his face as bright as any wildcatter just bringing in a strike, "here's a guajillo bush. This explains that honey you liked so much at breakfast. It's the best honey in the world and all because the bees suck these 'wah-hee' bushes . . ."

A dozen cars back of us, carrying actors and crew, stopped to see the phenomenon. We started again and at last came to a rise where we looked down on Hollywood's re-creation of Old San Antonio. Parking there, Jimmy Grant proudly turned to Frank and began:

"How do you like that, Mr. Dobie? We got a Spanish architect who studied old documents and—"

Dobie had turned to lean over a bush beside the dirt road. He hadn't yet directed one glance to the counterfeit set.

"Look, Jimmy," he interrupted, "here's another guajillo bush."

John Wayne came over and Dobie was feted the rest of the day. The big scene to be filmed was the herding of longhorns into the Alamo by the Texans. Bill Daniel had assembled for Wayne, with much ingenuity, a magnificent herd of 200 longhorns, powerful monsters unlike the captives you see in Brackenridge Park.

Dobie was elated. To stars and extras and on-lookers he explained about the breed. Wayne put him in a director's chair, marked "The Duke." Ken Curtis and Chill Wills were summoned to sing for Mr. Dobie some of the songs Dimitri Tiomkin had composed for the movie. Frank seemed to listen, but on that brilliant sunlit morning he kept an eye on the movements of the longhorns as they milled around under the control of Bill Daniel and some Mexican riders.

Like the mesquite and the guajillo, the

longhorns were part of the real thing. The music wasn't.

"No, Duke," Frank told Wayne, "what you need is some of the songs the Mexicans really sang. I think you ought to make 'La Paloma' your theme song."

It was a typical Dobie performance, always bluntly battling for the real and the authentic and the natural, usually losing to the world of prefabricated images and emotions and ideas.

WHEN WE LEFT a day or so later, I saw him look with long affection at that old mesquite. He did not find the flora and fauna more interesting than the Hollywood people, just more real. But with his immense gusto and zest for living, with his ever-present curiosity about the new, he thoroughly enjoyed the experience of this alien world. He was full of reactions and steadily amused. He liked the warm friendliness and unpretentiousness of John Wayne; he understood, while spurning, the super-sophistication and incomparable cleverness of Jimmy Grant, who could not possibly have believed in the reality of the ideas or scenes he improvised with such commercial knowingness. Frank noted all the toadying, the struggle for power, the obviousness of starlets on the make, the Grand Panjandrum behavior of imperious director John Ford, legendary for his "westerns." Frank was even amused by the regal snubbings we got on several occasions from British actor Lawrence Harvey, who treated us in the way he thought fitting for the "natives." ("Damn-ed two-bit snob," muttered Dobie.)

In this storm of hectic and interesting activity, Frank's shelter of integrity was sure. We had been flown over by General Motors to take brief part in a TV "Spectacular" the company was making about the production. Frank was to be in an outdoor shot, seated on an old wagon in front of the herd of longhorns, whose history he was to suggest in three or four minutes. Hopefully, the TV men handed him a "suggested" script. He glanced at it, then said, "Give me a piece of paper. I couldn't possibly say this stuff." He thought and wrote. "This is what I'll say," he said. And he did.

We were shown, along with some big-shot financiers who had flown in for the weekend, "rushes" of the movie, perhaps three-fourths of the final film. Frank's running commentary, made in a low tone to me, was perhaps too audible. The film was not made for the likes of us and we could only say so, while supposing that experts spending twelve million dollars on a commercial entertainment knew what they were doing. We were not invited back for the Grand Finale, although hundreds of other Texans were.

★

WHEN DOBIE'S OWN achievements are assessed by that last arbiter, time, I imagine the scoreboard will look like this: 1) he will be judged the Great Mentor of Texans of all time, teaching them more about their time and space than

any other single mind; 2) he will be judged truly an exemplary "type of excellence" organic to his region but meaningful anywhere; 3) he will be judged as one of the three "durable" and unforgettable writers Texas has thus far contributed to the English language, the other two being Walter Prescott Webb and Katherine Anne Porter.

Personally, I think Dobie will rank as a memorable creative artist, though this word must be explained in this context.

Contrary to historical usage, the term "artist" in our century has come to be reserved for, or at least appropriated by, writers of "creative imagination." That is to say, only novelists and short story writers, poets and playwrights. This is perhaps due to the fact that both Flaubert and Edgar Allan Poe in the nineteenth century fixed an esthetic form for prose fiction. After Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, the art-novel was a separate genre. Such earlier "novels" as *Don Quixote* and *Gil Blas* and *Tristram Shandy* were excluded from the domain of the true novel. Similarly, Poe organized the poetics of the tale into the "short story," also an exclusive genre.

More importantly, perhaps, with the great development of printing and therefore journalism and article writing, artists of the "creative imagination" quite legitimately stressed the differences between their goals and those of mere reporting. This became all the more necessary when the mass audience, thanks to universal education, made commercial writing a profitable profession. A distinction had to be made between an "artist" and a "writer." For reasons of taste and critical integrity, "literature" had to be defined. It came to mean only the products of creative imagination.

In this limited sense, then, the famous interview that Katherine Anne Porter gave the Texas Observer in the autumn of 1958 was semantically correct. Miss Porter said, in essence, that she was the first and the only Texas-born writer to achieve international fame as an artist in the European sense of the term. Miss Porter, an eminently sensible woman, was careful to point out that she was not referring to herself as a "genius," as the careless would assume. She is a novelist and a short-story writer of flawless craft, admired and appreciated all over the world. Neither Dobie nor Webb is famous for "art-form" fiction.

Nonetheless, Dobie qualifies as an artist, and he is a great story teller. In the anthologies of "World Literature" that I teach at Southern Methodist University, the selections are by no means limited to the modern twentieth-century limited definition of the "artist." There are historians such as, inevitably, Herodotus and Thucydides, essayists such as Montaigne and Matthew Arnold, letter-writers such as Cicero and Mme. de Sevigne, autobiographical writers such as Saint Augustine and Rousseau, just as there are tale-tellers from the anonymous masters of "The Arabian Nights" on down, just as there are

thinkers and philosophers and literary critics and some impossible to classify, notably Voltaire. This larger meaning of "literature" is historically correct.

In this wide sense, Dobie has made literature. His main themes are the staples of Western writing: the enlargement of individual freedom, the celebration of life even in its tragedies, the love of nature, the courage to endure, the compulsion to discover the nature of reality and report it with fidelity.

All this he has done using the raw materials at hand. It isn't a literature made out of other literature, but out of authentic experience. And yet it has its mythic worth.

WHO CAN READ Dobie's masterpiece, *The Mustangs*, without seeing that he has made of their experience a mythic pattern of the human condition, without seeing that the book incorporates the Greek sense of evanescence (the short life of the individual measured against the long duration of the race) and the Vergilian sense of "tears in the nature of things," or without seeing that this work is the testament of a poet?

I often turn to it and recall Paul Valery's definition of art: "Art is whatever arouses your sense of despair . . . and gives you succour." (The three dots are Valery's.) On almost any page, Dobie's controlling intelligence makes points that metamorphose, that transmute, the news-reel of events and behavior into mythic meanings, into Songs of Mankind.

A few examples. Casually, after destroying the legend or "rumors" that "wild-running mustangs of the plains sprang from seed lost by the Coronado and De Soto expeditions," he notes reflectively: "Rumor delights in maligning good men while they are still alive and in romanticizing bad ones after they are dead." Everywhere in the book the artist's presence is felt, not only in chiseled sentences and structure but in the thought.

Thus, "Of all the notabilities of the True Faith who explored into the unknown vastnesses of America—to inform the natives of their fealty to Europe and Pope, to clarify their minds on the identity of the Holy Ghost, to sack their gold and silver, if they had any, and to make them dig for more if veins could be located—Hernando de Soto had the best horses and suffered the worst disasters." The irony continues for several more pages but becomes the irony of fate rather than the author's. Along the way, Dobie tells a little vignette, a love story of a conquistador and an Indian princess, that subtly and superlatively underlines the irony that governs the whole chapter. I sometimes wonder, in talking with friends, if they have ever really read Dobie with close attention. In his writing he does not semaphore his effects.

Consider the opening of the chapter, "Wild and Free": "No one who conceives him as only a potential servant to man can apprehend the mustang. The true con-

ceiver must be a lover of freedom—a person who yearns to extend freedom to all of life. Halted in animated expectancy or running in abandoned freedom, the mustang was the most beautiful, the most spirited and the most inspiring creature ever to print foot on the grasses of America . . . Only the spirited are beautiful.”

It could not be put better, or indeed more spiritedly. Dobie claims writing is difficult for him and he slaves over his sentences. In this regard, he demands of himself the most exacting craftsmanship. He doesn't stop at demanding it of himself. On many occasions, in print and in talk, he has paid tribute to Bertha Dobie for her critical scrutiny of his manuscripts. One suspects he urges her to make him do his best. My own suspicion is that he doesn't find writing difficult but fears facility.

It must have cost him something to compose the last page of *The Mustangs* in free-verse form. Every reader will be glad he did. It is a poem that will be often anthologized. I say “cost him” because he must have realized that he could have been doing this all his writing life. And no one, then, would have doubted that he is a myth-maker, an authentic poet.

THE PAINS DOBIE TAKES to carve his sentences into perfection have rarely been noticed. Bill Bedell, reviewing *I'll Tell You a Tale* for the Houston Post, gave an example of how fruitful such an investigation can be. Bedell was the first among reviewers to compare what changes from original versions Dobie had made in preparing the final form for this sort of “Dobie Reader.” Then, Margaret Hartley gave an ampler treatment in the Southwest Review. Their articles were a revelation of Dobie's dedication to craft.

Of course, anyone who heard Dobie's magnificent speech to the Texas Institute of Letters at the Houston meeting of 1959 should have been alerted to his concern for form and structure. He spoke memorably of pace and tempo in writing, above all of the importance of cadence, of rhythm. He said that often while riding horseback as a young man he made up sentences to shout aloud and to match his mount's movement. But he said his feeling for rhythm in prose came first of all from his reading of the King James version of the Bible. He said for him writing was a matter of re-writing, that he worried a manuscript up to the last minute of a deadline. (I knew that he had left a council meeting of the Institute that afternoon early in order to keep on polishing the text of his speech. He had the manuscript at the meeting; I saw pages on which the typed script was barely visible in all the re-shaping added with pen and ink.)

But if anyone else dares make a change in one of his manuscripts, Frank can have a fit. Having handled shorter Dobie articles for the past 35 years, first on the Southwest Review and then on the book

page of the Dallas News, I can report that in the early days many a hot letter greeted bungling editing. Frank is still capable of rage, and to cross him occasionally is still worth risking just for the pleasure of seeing such fighting rapture. I have never known any other writer who took his craft so seriously.

If you think Dobie is not dedicated to craft, compare his two versions of the best longhorn story ever told, “Sancho's Return.” Here is the first paragraph, given first in the 1941 form in *The Longhorns*, then in the revision for *I'll Tell You a Tale* (1960):

“To begin with, a man, by the name of Kerr had a little ranch on Esperanza Creek in Frio County, in the mesquite lands south of San Antonio. He owned several good cow ponies, a few cattle, and a little bunch of goats that a dog guarded by day. At night they were shut up in a brush corral near the house. Three or four acres of land, fenced in with brush and poles, grew corn, watermelons and 'kershaws'—except when the season was too drouthy. A hand-dug well equipped with pulley wheel, rope and bucket furnished water for the establishment.”

This is how he re-writes it:

“In the mesquite and whitebrush country southward from San Antonio, Kerr had a little ranch on Esperanza Creek. He owned several cow ponies and maybe forty cows and their offspring. His *pastor* (shepherd) dog, a mongrel, guarded a small flock of goats, bringing them about sundown to a brush corral near the house, where Kerr's wife barred them inside. Three or four acres of land, fenced with brush and poles, grew corn, frijoles, watermelons and calabazas—except when a drouth was on. A hand-dug well equipped with pulley wheel, rope and bucket furnished water for the establishment.”

The second version paints pictures, replaces the passive voice with active agents, enriches the detail, and stresses verbs. Above all, Dobie has varied the rhythm and made it prance. The thought groups match the needs of respiration. I am sure he tried that second version out loud. The entire story is a lesson for anybody interested in the architecture of prose.

Sometimes in this anthology of his work, *I'll Tell You a Tale*, Dobie seems content with the first minting. That little gem, “The Marques de Aguayo's Vengeance,” which seems to me one of the best short stories in the world, remains entirely unchanged.

DOBIE WAS THE FIRST first-rate writer to appear in Texas of the three generations now living. His *Vaquero of the Brush Country* (1929) was a revelation. All the university lads wanting to be writers saw that a man could keep on living in Texas and write about Texas material and still achieve national acclaim. When *Coronado's Children* was published the next year, this truth was evident. It was published by the Southwest Press in

Dallas (of which I became general handyman when it was founded in 1927) and two years later was published in New York as a Literary Guild selection.

This was an omen for young talents such as Fred Gipson and Tom Lea and Paul Crume; Dobie's career remained so for the next generation, too. Meantime, in 1930 Katherine Anne Porter had published her first volume, *Flowering Judas*, and in 1931 Walter Prescott Webb published *The Great Plains*. In New Mexico, Oliver LaFarge in 1929 had written “Laughing Boy,” which won the Pulitzer Prize. In Oklahoma, Stanley Vestal was producing his memorable biographies of Kit Carson and Sitting Bull. In 1933, Paul Horgan, then living in Roswell, won the Harper \$10,000 Novel Prize with his *The Fault of Angels*.

National magazines announced that a Southern and Southwestern Renaissance was in full swing, ending Mencken's slur on the South as a “Sahara of the Bozart.” Mary Austin and Witter Bynner came over from Santa Fe to visit the Texas writers centering around the Southwest Review, bringing recollections of D. H. Lawrence, who had written in 1929 that “I think New Mexico was the greatest experience from the outside world that I ever had.”

Dobie of course had been compiling Texas legends and editing the publications of the Texas Folklore Society ever since 1924. He was in the thick of this regional ferment and has remained the central figure in it ever since. But he was never narrowly provincial and always stoutly maintained that although a writer must be anchored in the concrete, in his own time and flesh and space, he must also view this realm or region with enlightened perspective. No wonder, however, that many critics still wrongly think of him as a mere “regionalist.” In the national context of this “renaissance” of the late twenties and the thirties, Dobie began his career. This lingering faulty “image” may explain what I, at least, regard as a scandal in the literary world, the fact that his *I'll Tell You a Tale* was the most neglected superior book published in 1960. (That was the year the Pulitzer fiction prize went to Allen Drury's second-rate novel *Advise and Consent*. Dobie's “tales,” of course, could not be classified in the fiction category.)

★

THIS MAN OF INTEGRITY, this artist, is also an exemplary type of excellence for our times. Frank Dobie is ferociously independent but he is not thorny or spiky. He probably has more loyal friends than any living Texan, and perhaps half of these disagree with his ideas. Anybody who has seen him in any large gathering has been struck by the variety of personalities eager to shake his hand and to enjoy a moment in his presence—from politicians who abominate his forthrightness to business moguls, from youngsters to old ladies, from booksellers to ranchers and newspapermen. Even his enemies, and a man with so many friends is bound to have plenty of enemies,

brighten in his presence and regard him with resigned affection.

I have had Dallas businessmen who met him by accident, in the Menger bar, say, or on a plane, speak to me time after time, savoring the recollection, of a moment of magic talk with Dobie.

I think this is because he is the easiest man in the world to be with. We once drove to Corpus Christi from Austin and after an hour of good talk relaxed into silence. An hour later, Frank started talking again. "There is a kind of silence that is a sign of friendship," he commented.

But he is not only easy, he does have a magic of presence. He is as good a listener as a talker. Somehow around Frank, everybody feels intelligent and life seems good. Many famous men leave you feeling diminished (a few of my own examples: William Faulkner, W. H. Auden, Thomas Mann), but Dobie leaves you feeling ampler than you are.

The amazing thing is that he has found time to keep alive literally hundreds of friendships. Perhaps this is because he is fundamentally a too generous man. His willingness to help other writers is legendary — writing forewords for books of friends, handing over long-accumulated documentations from his own files, reading manuscript for critical correction, helping find a publisher, simply lending moral support. Any annual meeting of the Texas Institute of Letters becomes a sort of Dobie Tribute, with principal speaker and prize-winners gratefully acknowledging some sort of debt to Mister Frank. On at least two occasions, afternoon speeches have consisted primarily of some Texas writer's reading aloud advice sent by Dobie in letters. From looking over files at the Southwest Review and at the News, I can testify that he has been joyfully promoting this sort of intellectual ferment since at least 1922. Unlike most writers, he is neither jealous-hearted nor egocentric.

An exemplary man is one whom it strengthens you to think upon. I am sure I speak with the voice of nearly every Texas writer alive today when I say that Dobie's work and his existence have been the most important source of strength that we have found outside ourselves in our time. In moments when it is hard to cope, the mere thought of that granite-like face on which experience has carved its map, that face whose muscles tense at folly or relax into that life-warming grin, is healing and salutary. He belongs to the life-enhancers.

"I WASTED MY GOLDEN YOUTH on lost causes," Dobie told a reporter in Dallas in 1960, no doubt speaking casually but perhaps going deeper than he had realized. It is true that he has made so many public appearances, is such a congenial defender of "underdogs," has been such profitable newspaper "copy" for most of his life, has given so much time to editing and helping other writers' work, he has become a "celebrity" these days more than a "writer" in the public mind. Dobie as a "character" has obscured Dobie the

artist. Too many Texans, listening to him, reading reports of his pronouncement on "politics" and "educationists" and "super-patriots" and "typical Texans," feel they know Dobie without having taken the trouble to read him. Too many who have read him have not read between the lines.

He is our Robert Frost; he is an institution.

If he lends his presence to an occasion, it takes on extra shine. But that same presence presides in his books; that same presence and his craft are what make them literature. Dobie is a whole man, giving proper proportion to literal fact, to scientific observation, to the transforming power of imagination, to human and individual meaning. What he ultimately stands for is the legitimacy and the value of poetic truth. His mustangs belong to verifiable fact, but they also symbolize a new breed in a new world, doomed to disappear but destined to endure in the ideal of freedom. His home-haunted longhorn Sancho bespeaks man's yearning for a life

that is not rootless, a loyalty to the sense of place. Without using modern techniques of introspection in his works, he nonetheless knows who he is. He has incorporated into his writing the self-knowledge of a wise man who believes that mere literal chronicle can not exhaust the amplitude of reality.

In short, Dobie is a man of creative imagination. Posterity will, I believe, take him much more seriously than he has been taken in his lifetime. It will keep his books alive as long as any written by Texans or about Texas since Cabeza de Vaca's *Relacion* of 1542, not alive just as history or folklore but as the work of a unique artist, bearing witness to reality. So long as individual sufficiency is reckoned a virtue in the understanding and the structuring of life, Frank Dobie will be proudly remembered. So long as story patterns convey meanings, as they have since the dawn of literature, in a way unlike that of other forms of expressing truth, Dobie will remain one of the few Texas "immortals." □

He Has Never Been An Exile

Hubert Mewhinney

Houston

The difference between Frank Dobie and most other authors who have written during our century is simply that Dobie is a full-grown man.

In our day one of two fates has almost inevitably befallen the artist.

He may exile himself and become an intellectual and emotional alien, even though he continues to live among his fellow-tribesmen and fellow-demesmen. And here we have all those oddball doctrinaires who are now writing in France, the Americans who write for the Nation with the full confidence of Job's comforters that wisdom shall die with them, the others who write those airy and graceful confections of nothing in particular for the New Yorker. The heartiness or even the vulgarity of Fielding or of Smollett is gone. Addison, and Steele, and Dr. Johnson were sure that they were conversing with their fellowmen and even instructing them. That confidence exists no longer, unless perhaps Walter Lippmann has a little of it.

Or the artist may discover how to please the audience and proceed to do just exactly that. Consider the unctuousness of the Saturday Evening Post or of the Reader's Digest. Consider the phoniness of the Cosmopolitan. Or, for that matter, consider even so accomplished a story-teller as John O'Hara. Somebody said that even the scullions in Balzac have genius. Well, even the most flamboyant and expensive harlots, even the most ponderous tycoons, that one

Hubert Mewhinney is a Houston newspaperman and columnist. He wrote *A Manual for Neanderthals* (University of Texas Press, 1957).

finds in the pages of O'Hara somehow manage to be deplorably dull.

Or take the tally a little farther. Consider Ernest Hemingway, who won a Nobel prize. Two things are chiefly notable. The first is the marvelous narrative technique. The physical event becomes extraordinarily vivid. And yet the skill is no greater than that of Kipling in such stories as "The Drums of the Fore and Aft" or "The Undertakers." Kipling was the man who had little sense enough to exhort us solemnly to take up the white man's burden. And similarly we at last discover that Hemingway's other notable quality is that his outlook is that of an uneasy eighteen-year-old boy, trying to put up a bold front after he has read Darwin, Spencer, and very likely Jack London. Or, when he hunts antelopes in Africa or tries to catch a big fish at sea, he is merely another trophy-seeking city dude, even though an accomplished one. There is even some resemblance to that other fighting man, Cassius Clay.

This is not saying much about Dobie, is it? Well, it is saying at least that Mr. Frank is real. That he has loved the out-of-doors without trying to impress himself upon it, without trying to see how big a moose or how big a bear he could shoot, and has still roped and saddled many a horse in the early morning and smelt the smoke of many a campfire at night.

He has never been an exile. He has been as ready to speak his mind about what was going on around him as Emerson or Lowell ever was. And quite a number of people have listened, in Texas and elsewhere, too. □

July 24, 1964

A Mustang in the Groves of Academe

So sometimes yet, in the realities of silence
and solitude

For a few people unhampered a while with
things,

The mustangs walk out with dawn, stand
high, then

Sweep away, wild with sheer life, free, free,
free—

Free of all confines of time and flesh.

—J. Frank Dobie, *The Mustangs*

Austin

In Texas Folklore Society Publication II (1923), the first of the series he edited, J. Frank Dobie identified himself this way in his notes on the contributors:

J. Frank Dobie, editor of the present volume, was born and reared on a ranch in the Texas border country, and although he is now an instructor in the University of Texas, he will always belong to the range.

There is no reason to assume that Dobie was unaware of the implications of this statement: that there was a conflict, not to say an incompatibility, between the range and the grove, or at least he had found it so in Texas, and that his primary loyalty was to the range: its history, its people, its myths and legends, and its traditions of freedom he was later to symbolize by the mustang. The statement was prophetic of a long career as teacher, scholar, writer, who, never provincial, never merely picturesque, was chiefly concerned with the matter of the Southwest.

Dobie had graduated from Southwestern University at Georgetown, had served a year as high school teacher in Alpine, and returned to Georgetown as secretary to the president. He received the M.A. from Columbia in the spring of 1914, and in the fall became instructor in English at the University of Texas. In 1917 he went to

Mody Boatright, a professor of English at the University of Texas and chairman of his department from 1952 to 1962, is author of Tall Tales from Texas (Southwest Press, 1934); Gib Morgan: Minstrel of the Oil Fields (Texas Folklore Society, 1945); Folk Laughter on the American Frontier (MacMillan, 1949); and Folklore of the Oil Industry (Southern Methodist University Press, 1963). A long-time member of the Texas Folklore Society, he has just resigned as its editor. He has edited or co-edited many of the society's books and publications, and he has been a prolific contributor to the other literature of his field and has written various textbooks.

Mody Boatright

war, and when he came back, he had a hard time deciding whether to be a teacher or a ranchman. The teacher won out, and he returned to the university. He admired John Lomax's collection of cowboy ballads and had set for himself the immediate goal of collecting the legends of Texas. Stith Thompson in 1916 had brought out the first annual publication of the Texas Folklore Society, which had been organized by Lomax and Professor L. W. Payne in 1909. Dobie had paid his dues and learned, not that he had been speaking prose all his life, but that he had been hearing folklore ever since he could remember. At that time the professor of English, in a laudable but mistakenly rigid attempt to improve the staff, required the Ph.D. as a condition for promotion above the rank of instructor. Dobie refused to take the degree.

It is doubtful whether any university at that time would have accepted a dissertation on such a subject as legends of Texas. Harvard might have. The ballad scholars there had given Lomax the moral and financial encouragement he needed to collect the cowboy songs and had approved a dissertation by Stith Thompson on folktales of the American Indians. But had even the liberalized doctoral programs typical of the best graduate schools of the present been available, my guess is that Dobie would not have been interested. He has said repeatedly that the usual procedure in writing a dissertation is taking bones out of one graveyard and putting them in another, a conclusion Dr. Johnson had come to many years before about the writing of books. Furthermore the doctoral program had been imported from Germany, and in Dobie's book anything imported from Germany was more than likely to be bad. Conversely, anything imported from England was more than likely to be good. His ideal of higher education is exemplified by the British universities, where the reading is more diversified, less emphasis is placed on formal research, and the terminal degree is the M.A. Also, he agreed with Emerson, his favorite American writer, that whoso would be man must be a non-conformist. He would get along without a badge in which he saw little honor.

TEMPORARILY HE PAID for his nonconformity. Still an instructor in 1923, he went to Oklahoma A. and M. College at Stillwater as head of the department. In 1925 he was called back to the

University of Texas as adjunct professor under conditions that indicated tenure and advancement, contingent, of course, upon his continued productivity. In approving Dobie's appointment the president of the university acted upon a minority report of the professors. I have only an outline of the debates and procedures as they were related to me many years later by some of the men who had participated.

The spokesman for the majority was senior Professor Morgan Callaway, who raised no personal objection to Dobie, but held that unless he took the degree he should not be promoted, and that unless promotion was open to him, he should not be recalled to the staff.

The opposition of R. H. Griffith was of a different sort. He once told me, I think for my own benefit, that Dobie was trying to perpetuate the very thing a university should educate its students away from. He seemed to think that an interest in Texas longhorns was somehow incompatible with an interest in *Paradise Lost*; or that before one could properly appreciate *The Rape of the Lock*, he must be refined beyond any serious interest in vernacular culture. At one time he must have had a plan for Dobie's redemption. He stopped him on the campus one day and said, "Dobie, I'll tell you what you ought to do." But Dobie never learned what he ought to do. With a minimum of reverence for age and baldness, he indicated that he was capable of running his own life.

The academic honors that have come to him since he became adjunct professor in 1923 have amply vindicated his independence and his determination to devote his time and his talents to the matter of the Southwest. He became professor in 1933. He has lectured widely on American university campuses. He has held Rockefeller, Guggenheim, and Huntington fellowships. Perhaps his highest academic acclaim came in 1943, when he was invited to Cambridge University as visiting professor of history and awarded an M.A. degree, the citation of which reads in part, "*De bobus longicornibus quod ille non cognovit, inutile est illis cognoscere*" (What he does not know about longhorns is not worth knowing.). In so far as I know, Dobie was not displeased with the words *bobus longicornibus*. Only a minority of the trail drivers of Texas would have understood their significance, but the animal they knew. He was of the matter of the Southwest.

That Dobie went to Cambridge as professor of history is not surprising. If the matter of the Southwest did not fall into

conventional forms and categorical disciplines, so much the worse for the forms and disciplines. He would follow themes. His range was unfenced.

HE HAS ALWAYS INSISTED that "the University of Texas should be of Texas as well as in Texas; that it should express the genius of the land, reflect its traditions and interpret its life," even in its physical setting. That is the reason he has found much that displeased him on the campus. The landscapists seemed determined to get rid of all native plants along with the natural contour of the land. "They planted undeviating lines of prostrate junipers, but thank God, some mesquite trees came up anyway." They also decorated the entrance to the mall with a Coppini fountain, "a conglomerate of a woman standing up, with arms and hands that look like stalks of Spanish dagger; of horses with wings on their feet, aimlessly ridden by some sad figures of the male sex, and various other inane paraphernalia. What it symbolizes probably neither God nor Coppini knows." On the other hand, the Proctor mustangs descending the hill in front of the museum delight the soul. They belong. The cattle brands that decorate Garrison Hall also belong, but not the signs of Zodiac on the old library building. No structure on the campus reflected the genius of the land better than the Home Economics building. Its architecture "suits the purposes of the building, the climate of Austin, the ground on which it is erected, and the traditions of the state." The Tower, on the other hand, "would fit any university 'of the first class' anywhere in America, that aspired to be a huge and huger factory for turning out degrees." He suggested that the tower be laid on its side. His suggestion was not acted upon, and he refused to move in along with the rest of the English department. Old B Hall remained his headquarters as long as he was on the staff.

A University of Texas and not merely in Texas would show proper respect for Texas books. It would not only acquire them, it would house them appropriately. In 1938 Dobie protested that the Texas Collection was housed and administered as an appendage to the Latin American Collection. He thought that the university should care "at least as much" for the Texas Collection "as it cares for the books of the Queen Anne reign . . . or the books on Mexico and South America." He proposed "a corner furnished in native woods, and decorated with pictures by Russell, Remington, Dunton, and other western artists. A corner eloquent, beautiful, interesting—a corner belonging to the land and expressive of it—a corner that would through its influence pervade the whole university and the whole state—a corner forever Texas." The Texas Collection is now adequately housed in the old library building, rechristened the Barker History Center. It contains collections of range paintings by Frank Raugh and a Remington sculpture. Dobie's private collection of some 7,000 volumes is being acquired by the university and is being moved to the Southwestern Rooms of the New

Humanities Center. But the Corner Forever Texas has not materialized.

He saw and still sees no place in a University of Texas or of anywhere else for professors of Education (written with a big E). His ingenuity in finding ways to bring these "unctuous elaborators of the obvious" into a discussion of any subject is remarkable. His experience as a high school teacher reminds him that he had to take a course in education in order to get a license to teach. All he can recall being taught in the course is that if the room is too hot, raise the windows; if it is too cold, put them down.

A UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS and not merely in Texas would in its courses give some attention to books pertaining to the state and region. Dobie's conviction on this point was no doubt strengthened by the fact that some time he had had to read from the works of Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards, and in these worthy theologians, he had found little of literary merit and little pertinent to life as he had known it. There were more significant writers of our own region. He proposed to offer a course in the literature of the Southwest. When the proposal was rejected on the grounds that there was no literature of the Southwest, he amended the title to read "Life and Literature of the Southwest." The course was approved and first offered in the spring of 1930. In regular and summer sessions he gave it seventeen times to a total of 1596 students in classes ranging in enrollment from 54 to 196. He had to have help in reading his papers, and I was his helper in 1930 and I think again in 1932. His students came from all departments, but especially from English, history, and journalism. He welcomed the journalists, among whom he found some excellent students, but he often scolded them for their fragmentary paragraphs, and he let them know that he thought taking a multiplicity of courses in journalism was a waste of time that could better be spent on more substantial subjects.

He was not a generous giver out of A's and B's. He read every final examination paper himself. When he had read one, he would ponder a moment and put down a number expressing his judgment on the performance. The gradations were minute. He might put down 76 for one student and 77 for another.

The students who took the course were attracted by the subject and the man, one of the few great teachers I have known. I attended many but not all his lectures. He would come into the classroom with a battered briefcase stuffed with books. The class would be reading, let's say, Andy Adams' *The Log of a Cowboy*, and Dobie would be prepared to talk about stampedes. He would give accounts from oral sources, retelling incidents he had heard from George Saunders, Ab Blocker, and Sug Robertson. He would read from *Trail Drivers of Texas*, from James Cook's *Lonehorn Cowboy*, and so on until all aspects of the subject had been illustrated: why the cat-

tle stampeded, the way they ran, the way they were controlled, and the qualities and emotions of the men who followed them through thunder, lightning, hail, and rain. He talked and read with unaffected animation, making no effort to conceal his pleasure, which was enhanced by the pleasure obvious in the faces of the students.

It used to be said that the students were not taking a course in the Life and Literature of the Southwest: they were taking a course in Frank Dobie. I suppose that any course is in some sense a course in the instructor. Otherwise an impersonal teaching machine had just as well replace him. But this was true of Dobie's course to a greater extent than of some of the other popular courses. He justified the course partly on the ground that every student was entitled to his own heritage, but how deeply he considered the heritage of a student born and reared in Dallas is open to question. He selected those parts of the Texas and Southwestern heritage that he found most interesting and valuable. He paid little attention to the traditions of the Old South, either tidewater or upland, and popular urban culture bored him. He once said he regretted that automobiles had been invented. Automobiles, however, are a necessity in present-day life. Jukeboxes are wholly without justification. Once on our way to El Paso he, Frank Goodwyn, and I stopped in Sonora to eat. It is goat country, and he had his heart set on a dinner of *cabrito*. At several restaurants we found no *cabrito*. Then we drove across the tracks to a Mexican place and gave our order. We were the only Anglos in the place. Before our plates arrived, a customer put a coin in a slot, and out came not "El Toro Moro," not "El Corrido de Kansas," not even "Home on the Range," but some such thing as "Pistol Packing Mama," or "Mr. Mississippi." I was glad that Dobie wasn't armed.

In preparation of the course Dobie mimeographed a thematically arranged reading list, for which he was soon receiving so many requests that he published it as a thin book titled *A Guide to the Life and Literature of the Southwest*. He enlarged it from time to time by adding new titles and expanding his comments until it reached two hundred pages in the edition of 1956. The book sold in stores to the public who read, but one reason for the demand was that courses modeled on Dobie's were being introduced in other institutions. They are now given in practically all the senior colleges in Texas and in the universities of New Mexico and Arizona. I have no figures on the enrollment past and present in these courses, but I suspect the number would exceed ten thousand. I further suspect that the interest aroused in these students has had something to do with what Edward Weeks of the Atlantic Monthly has called the Texas Renaissance. When Henry Nash Smith went to Harvard to take a Ph.D. in the newly inaugurated interdisciplinary program in American studies, he reported that the only course faintly resembling the Harvard programs was Dobie's course initiated many years earlier

at Texas. In each theme were pursued through whatever forms and disciplines could illuminate them.

DOBIE BECAME EDITOR of the Texas Folklore Society in 1922 and remained in that position until 1942. He edited fifteen numbered publications and four books in the Society's Range Life Series. During his twenty years as editor he, more than any other man, shaped the policies of the Society. His interest in folklore is humanistic. Upon his retirement from the editorship in 1942 he said, "I care next to nothing for the science of folklore, which some scholars reverence and which seems to consist of the tedious process of finding out, through comparisons and analogies, that nothing new exists under the sun." He did, however, publish a number of analytical articles. Perhaps I have published more than he did, but throughout the series there is what one reviewer called "a middle course between the cold bare bones of scientific investigation sometimes identified as folklore, and the outcroppings of sentiment offered by the amateur members of folklore organizations." Undoubtedly the Texas Folklore Society is the leading state society in America, and has made its influence felt nationally. In 1962, MacEdward Leach, retiring president of the American Folklore Society, took the members to task for writing only for each other and suggested that they could profitably emulate the Texans.

But the qualities that drew praise from the humanists drew condemnation from a few of the "scientists," who found Dobie deficient in "scholarship." He himself once remarked that he did not know why he took an M.A. degree. "I was just drifting," he said. "I certainly was not inclined to be what academicians call 'scholarly.'" In this context "academicians" does not include every member of the academic community, only those, a majority no doubt, whose scholarship he found dull or insignificant, particularly those who, he thought, murdered to dissect. As early as 1925 he expressed a creed from which he never deviated when he suggested that the Texas Folklore Society adopt for "a constitutional bedrock" a statement of William Butler Yeats:

The various collectors of Irish folklore have, from our point of view, one great merit, and from the point of view of others, one great fault. They have made their work literature rather than science, and told us of the Irish peasantry rather than of the primitive religion of mankind, or whatever else the folklorists are on the mad after. To be considered scientists they should have tabulated their tales in forms like grocers' bills—item the fairy king, item the queen. Instead of this they have caught the very voice of the people, the very pulse of life.

Dobie thought that "Of all forms of human expression, folklore is the most sensitive to environment. It reflects the tempera-

ment, the ideals in heroes and clowns, the occupations and the ways of life of the folk who weave their lore and transmit it. It is, indeed, the autobiography, unsigned and unconscious, of a people."

There are many approaches to the study of folklore, but they all boil down essentially to two. One is to consider the lore in relation to its local cultural context. The other is to extract the item under consideration from its social setting and treat it in one of several ways—as a metaphysical entity, as a psychological phenomenon, or as a variant of an item common to several times and places.

The latter method was the one employed by L. W. Payne in an article which Dobie published in 1930, with this editorial comment: "He seems to be saying that the collections should lead to monographic disquisitions on the historical and ethnographic evolution of each particular song with particular attention to its borrowing from other songs. Doctor Payne's point of view certainly has its rights. . . . But, personally, I had rather hear Doctor Payne sing his famous song about 'the bust-up down in Bell [County]' than read his disquisition." He wanted the Society "not only to gather and record the folklore of the region, but to make the people of the region comprehend and enjoy it." The presentation of folklore, then, is an art and not a science.

These statements were made with special reference to folklore, but they apply equally to all of Dobie's writing. And in all the books he has written, as distinguished from those he edited, folklore is only a part. They contain among other things history, biography, natural history, descriptions of nature, and vivid sketches of character, addressed to all intelligent readers, not merely to scholars. Dobie has never written a novel. Nevertheless Carl Van Doren felt that he should be mentioned in his book *The American Novel*. "Dobie hunted not the treasure," he says, "but the treasure-hunters, traveling anywhere to hear their fanatic proofs that legendary hoards must exist, their agile explanations why they had not come to light. Stories about buried treasure are always magical. The magic of Dobie's stories gains more than it loses from the shrewd, humorous, reasonable telling."

There is no lack of scholarship back of this art. In a buried treasure story a reader would not find motif and tale-type numbers or a discussion of the story in relation to similar stories from other times and places. He would find it related to its own cultural setting. Back of this were hours in libraries and archives, interviews with oral informants, and a look at the terrain. And the sources would be there for anybody who wanted to look them up.

WHEN THE REGENTS of the university, all appointees of W. Lee O'Daniel and Coke Stevenson, attempted to purge the department of economics for departing from the "true" economics and initiated a

series of events that led to the firing of President Rainey on November 1, 1944, the immediate resignation of three regents and the subsequent resignation of three more, and the retirement of Coke Stevenson from politics, Dobie was in England, and for this reason played a less conspicuous role in the fight for academic freedom than he would have had he been in Texas. Like Thomas Jefferson, one of his heroes, he had declared war on every form of tyranny over the human mind. Censorship of the student newspaper, the *Daily Texan*, had been a recurrent issue. If left free, student journalists are likely to publish something offensive to somebody in the power structure, and when they do, presidents and regents show concern. On every occasion Dobie spoke out in behalf of the students. He seldom wrote out-and-out political articles, but in writing about rattlesnakes he could by indirection link them in an unflattering way with the governor. He could take to task a member of the legislature who proposed to introduce a bill closing the university to students from other states, on the grounds that they occupy housing needed for Texans and "in the more important place, they bring new ideas." "Yet," said Dobie, "there are few people who need ideas more than Texans do." As he was about to leave for England in 1943, he said, "When I get ready to explain homemade fascism in America, I can take my examples from the State Capitol of Texas. A politician like John Lee Smith [the lieutenant governor] is what I mean by a homemade fascist." Coke Stevenson had said that Dobie was a trouble maker and that he should be summarily dismissed. By the spring of 1947 Stevenson was no longer governor, and there had been changes in the board of regents. Factual records do not specify motives, and I do not know whether or not the regents were out to get Dobie. The rule under which his connection with the university was terminated is often called the Dobie Rule, but chronology does not indicate that it was passed specifically to dismiss him without overt violation of the tenure rule. The "Dobie Rule," the gist of which is that "except in very unusual circumstances, such as military service or prolonged illness, a leave of absence . . . will not be extended beyond two academic years," passed the first reading at a meeting of the board on November 16, 1946, and its final reading on January 10, 1947. Dobie, who had been on leave for two years, in April, 1947, applied for an extension of his leave through the fall semester of 1947-1948, giving as his reasons that he was committed to complete a book-length manuscript and that he was suffering from cedar fever which he could relieve only by a temporary residence away from Austin. The professors of English recommended that the leave be granted for reasons of health, and Dean H. T. Parlin concurred in the recommendation. On September 18 Professor L. L. Click wrote President Painter that the professors of English saw no reason to change their recommendation of April 28. On the same day, apparently after a conference with Presi-

dent Painter, Professor Click wrote that Dobie was unwilling to return to duty with his teaching assignment reduced to give him more time for work on his book. On September 23, Click again wrote the president, saying that Dobie had not returned to duty and that he had no intention of doing so. His name was deleted from the budget and the deletion was confirmed by the regents on October 24. He had not reached the age of retirement, and hence under a rule drafted not by the regents but by a committee of the general faculty, he

is ineligible for the status of professor emeritus. A recommendation of the professors of English that an exception be made was not approved.

HIS ACHIEVEMENTS since 1947 have been gratifying. Although long concerned with the matter of the Southwest, he had never been any more provincial than any writer who writes about the environment he knows best. I once said that a good regional writer deals with the universal as it is modified by the culture of

a region. Dobie has done this, and those of us who have known him for a long time have noted a gradual increase in the emphasis on the universal.

At seventy-five he is still a fighter, though not an indiscriminate one. His particular enemies are self-appointed censors of textbooks and libraries and officials who listen to them; university officials who suppress plays; news media that suppress and distort the news—in short anybody whom he suspects of trying to exercise tyranny over the human mind. □

An Enemy of Reactionary Demagogues

Berkeley, Calif.

Henry Nash Smith

Frank Dobie has two widely different public personalities. One of them is a personification of the Old West, a picturesque and harmless figure out of the past. The other, belonging very much to the present, is a powerful controversialist with a zest for speaking his mind on economic and political issues. The two roles seem contradictory because the Old West as it figures in popular culture is a kind of icon of conservatism. Like the Old South of moonlight and magnolias, the legendary frontier of Santa Fe trail and cattle range offers an imaginary escape from the machines and regulations and red tape that envelop us. We like to dream of a big country with no fences where a man had room to breathe; and by some accident or alchemy of public-relations engineering, the glamor and nostalgia of this dream of the past have become linked in the public mind with the economic individualism of big business and the hatred of the federal government that is the one unifying emotion of right-wing radicals. Thus according to the stereotypes, Dobie ought to be either a non-political antiquarian or a super-patriotic defender of big business.

The truth is notoriously otherwise. For thirty years he has been a highly vocal enemy of reactionary demagogues and a defender of labor unions and of many unpopular causes. What the Western tradition means to him is totally different from

what it is taken to mean in popular culture. The freedom he associates with early days in Texas and the Southwest is the freedom of men and women to resist all coercive forces, including the pressures exerted by rich men and the demagogues who serve them. The kind of freedom he has celebrated, directly or indirectly, in a dozen books is not the kind of abstraction processed into slogans by public-relations experts but a quality of the experience of actual human beings in immediate contact with a sun-parched earth—its dust and heat and relentless distances, its austere plants and lean animals. This world—historical or fictive, as you will—has little place for the profit motive or the imperatives of getting ahead. Again and again Dobie's characters remind one of Whitman's lines about animals: "not one is demented with the mania of owning things." Even the obsession with buried treasure that is the unifying thread of *Coronado's Children* is curiously non-commercial. Dobie's desert dreamers wear out their lives in bondage to visions of gold and silver, minted into archaic coins or cropping out in ledges of almost pure metal, but the treasure they lust for could never be converted into digits entered on the books of a national bank in a forty-story skyscraper.

Nor does Dobie's recreation of the Old West validate the visual symbols of the past that are current in our day. His cowboys—some of them—wear ten-gallon hats and high-heeled boots, but this equipment has only a tenuous connection with the Stetsons in the checkrooms of expense-account restaurants or the ornate footwear resting on the accelerator pedals of air-conditioned sedans. It is particularly instructive to think of a book like *The Longhorns* in connection with two recent movies that draw upon vestiges of the cattle culture in contemporary life. "Hud" presents the transition from the West of saddle-horse and Winchester to the West of oil leases and Cadillac convertibles in terms almost too simple and direct, but the film brings a telling indictment against a set of attitudes often linked with the West in present-day folklore. The insolvent physical grace and masculine swagger of the pro-

tagonist in his cow-country garb are fully congruous with his indifference to all values except his own crude desires. In the memorable last scene he has in effect killed his father (representative of the integrity of older ways) and has come into possession of the ranch. But the diseased cattle are dead and buried, and Hud himself is cut off from relations with any human being. In this fable individualism, with a Western coloring, is identified with neurosis.

The other film I have in mind—"Dr. Strangelove"—makes an equally pointed but more ambiguous use of Western symbols. The pilot and commander of an eight-engine jet plane armed with an arsenal of nuclear bombs wears cowboy boots and has a vividly Southwestern accent. When he receives his radio orders to bomb a Russian missile installation, he performs a ritual act like that of a Japanese Samurai donning the white robe in preparation for hara-kiri. He takes his Stetson from the safe containing the code books and puts it on his head before issuing the orders that prepare the crew for their final mission. The film ends with the pilot riding a bomb down through the opened doors of the bomb bay, waving his hat like a bronc-buster in a rodeo. Whatever else this disturbing final sequence may mean, it makes the cowboy pilot represent a whole set of American attitudes toward the Cold War, and suggests that, wrenched from his historical contest, the protagonist of the Saga of the Saddle can become an agent executing with elan the orders of an insane general of the Strategic Air Command.

Dobie's West has as little relation to this cold-war hysteria as it has to "private enterprise" and influence-peddling. His vision of the past is permeated by a concern for human beings that has been leached out of the fossilized Western symbols preserved in contemporary popular culture. Let me say it again: Dobie affirms the concrete experience of human beings in physical contact with the earth and air, and with other human beings. The tradition he celebrates has nothing to contribute to contemporary ideologies of the business system. If his two public personalities conflict, the paradox lies not in his attitudes, but in the perversion of the tradition of the Old West by contemporary society. □

Henry Nash Smith left the University of Texas after President Homer P. Rainey was cast out. Born in Dallas, Smith taught English at Southern Methodist University 1927-'41 and the University of Texas 1941-'47, whereupon he joined the faculty at the University of Minnesota four years. He then moved to the University of California at Berkeley, where he has been chairman of the English Department three years and continues to hold forth. He has edited many published volumes, including four having to do with Mark Twain, and he has written Virgin Land: the American West as Symbol and Myth (1950), which was awarded the Dunning prize in American history by the American Historical Assn. and the Bancroft award by Columbia University, and Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer (1962).

DOBIE REVISITED

Charles Ramsdell

San Antonio

The yellow daffodils, in an arc following the bend of the creek, glowed in the shade and burst into glory where a shaft of late sunlight struck them as they curved with an effect of infinity beyond the trees and the house.

Frank and Bertha Dobie had led me and the young student who had come with me to the bridge over the creek by their house to show us the most pleasing view of her daffodils. And the vision seemed to me a good sign, coming at the start of the quest I had set out on, which was, for one thing, an attempt to renew old satisfactions. We all know how disappointing such an attempt can be, but, weepy poetizing to the contrary, there are times when you can come home again, if you want to. On this short visit to a place that awakened long memories, I found what I was seeking, and something else besides.

Bertha Dobie's flowers — ranunculus, candytuft, and others that made harmony with them—looked as exultant this spring as I could remember they ever looked in any spring of my youth. And at last I got up the nerve to ask her, "Is it true, what envious female gardeners used to say: that you plant one bulb or one seed on top of another, so as to keep your garden in continuous bloom?" Her reply was an amused and enigmatic smile.

Frank Dobie had lost none of his pervasive warmth. He entertained me and the half dozen university students I had invited—when they finally showed up—with anecdotes from his new book on cattlemen and with salty remarks on all sorts of matters, as he used to do with other young people, and these kids too were plainly enchanted. They were also plainly a little bit high on beer. But the Dobies, if they noticed, never let on. They didn't even appear to notice the resounding clatter in the kitchen when the poet among us, a big shambling bear-like blond, who had gone in there on the absurd pretext of setting his highball glass down, dropped or bumped into some utensil, making his friends acutely aware that he was filching a few extra swallows of Scotch.

Charles Ramsdell wrote San Antonio: A Historical and Pictorial Guide (University of Texas, 1949) and is at present working, in the library at the Alamo, on a book on Texas history. He is a contributing editor of the Observer. He has written many stories and articles.

The idea of bringing these youngsters here had been mine, and I was just a trifle nervous about them. I had discovered, quite casually, that admirers of Dobie's work are a whole lot more frequent in this new generation of students than in the previous ones I had known, and several of these youthful admirers, when they found out I had been acquainted with him nearly all my life, asked me for an introduction. So I called him on the phone.

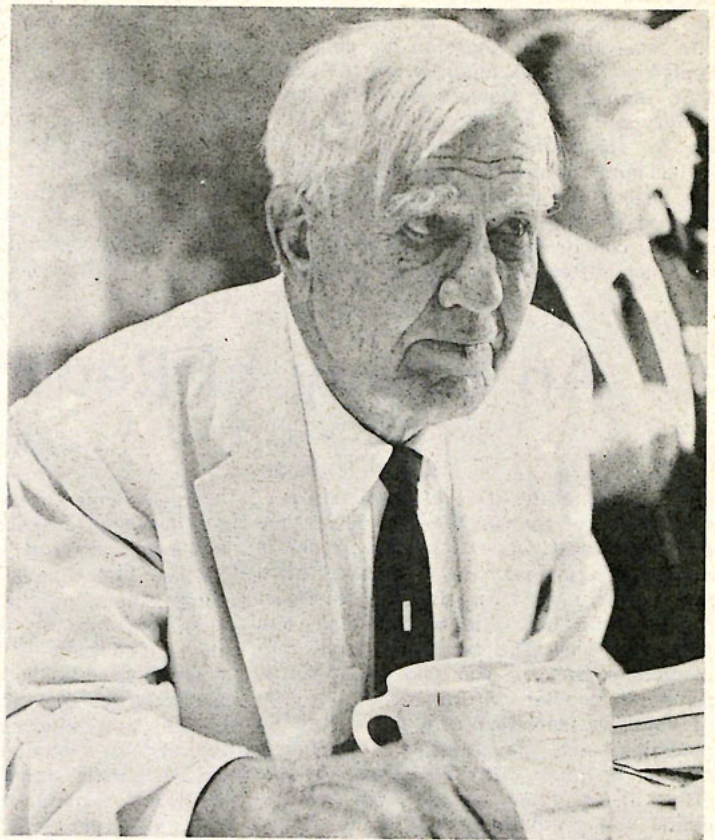
"Bring them over," Frank said. "When I was young I preferred to be around old people, because I felt I could learn most from them. But now I feel I can learn most from the young."

That Dobie learned anything from these crew-cut, beshorted boys and one handsome, be-shorted girl, I doubt. They were overflowing with enthusiasm, among other things—at one moment they begged, almost in chorus, to be shown the "restroom"—but they were not very coherent. For a while before they finally got there I didn't think any of them (except the solitary youth who happened to come with me and saw the daffodils) would ever make it to the Dobies' on a lovely festive Saturday afternoon in early spring. Already half an hour late, they phoned to report, amidst bubbling laughter, that they were on the lake-side, and had left their car keys on the opposite shore, and would have to go back for them in a motorboat, but they were coming. And they came.

That they appreciated and, each according to his capacity, understood Frank Dobie, I am certain.

"What I liked best," said one boy as we drove off, "was the way his eyes lighted up when he told a story. The way he loves all of life, everything about it."

"What impressed me," said the big blond bear, poet, and whiskey-snitcher, "was the way his wife took pleasure in talking about him and his work. Marriage is a sacred institution! When I get married, believe it or not, I'm going to be faithful to my wife. [Cheers.] How wonderful to



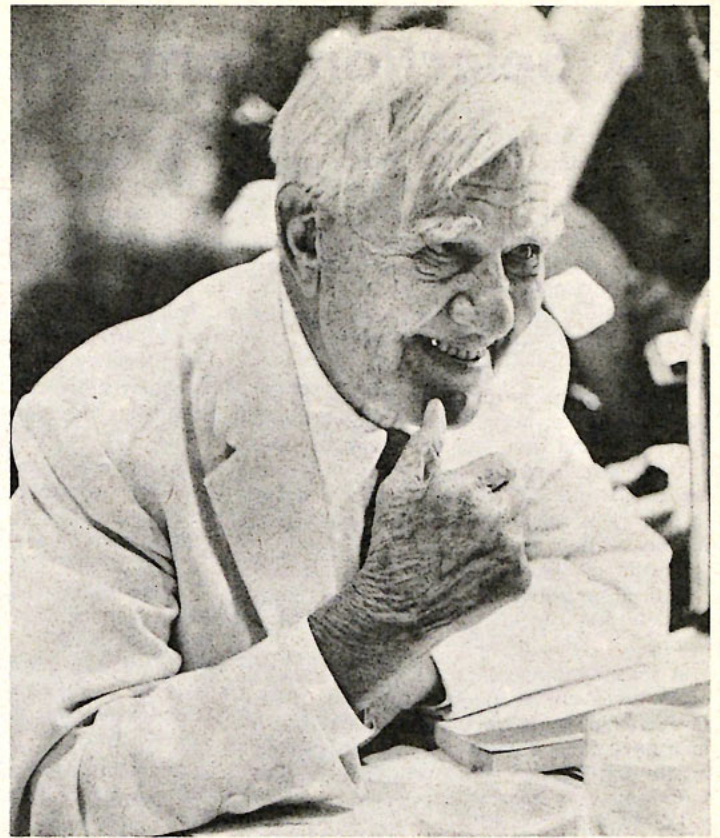
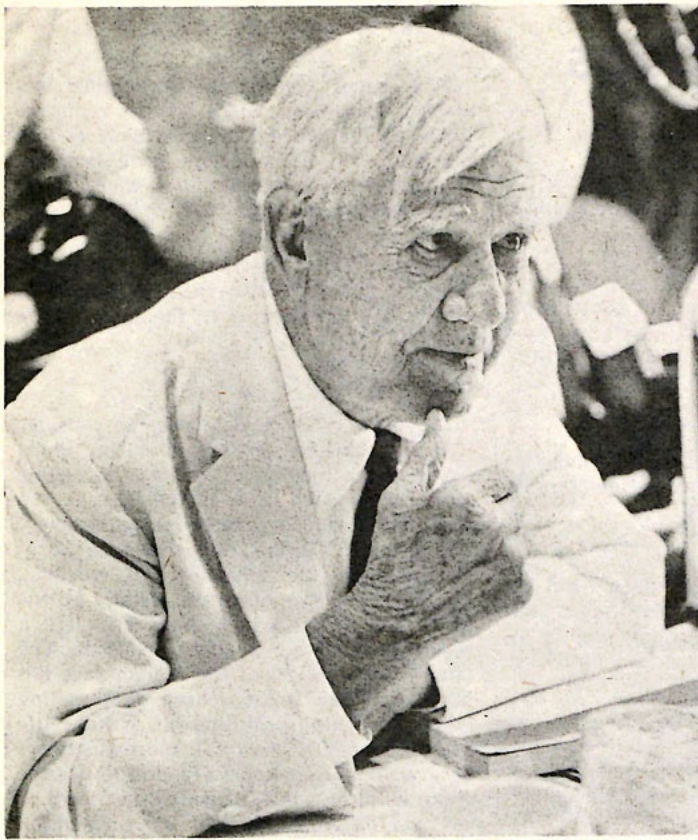
Dobie Listens to a Story . . .

have a wife so loyal and devoted! Marriage is a sacred institution!"

"You tell Mr. Dobie for me," said a third youth a little later, while soaking up a clearly superfluous beer, "I think he's the most wonderful son of a bitch in the world." He had tears of deep feeling in his eyes when he said it. But, reading this statement back in his mind, and deciding it was not a message that elder generations would understand, unaccustomed as we are to the modern college boy's transmutation of fighting words into highest praise, he said, "Pardon me. I don't know how to express myself." And then went on to express himself so eloquently, in such torrents of words, it would be impossible for me to set them down. But his essential thought was this: by interpreting the background of life in Texas and the whole region of the Southwest in terms of literature, he has given us dignity, something solid underfoot that was not there before, the foundations of a culture.

From where I stood it seemed to me the golden arc was infinite.

THE VISIT to the Dobies and the experiment on the younger generation concluded a phase of my quest entirely to my satisfaction. But I still wanted to renew my acquaintance with the Dobie books, not having read some of them for many years. I read them, and then remembered I had written reviews of several when they first came out. But I have been able to dig up only one of these pieces. It appeared in the



... During a Writers' Round-up in Austin -- Photographs by Russell Lee

Southwest Review for October, 1935, and I was twenty-four at the time. I am astonished to find that it sums up nearly perfectly my final judgment, not on this particular book alone, but on Dobie's work as a whole.

The book was *Tongues of the Monte*, which has been re-issued lately as *The Mexico I Like*, and here is what I said about it:

"I feel that Mr. Dobie has found his richest vein in this book. He writes about Mexican ranching-folk, how they live and what they believe. But the whole account, a personal narrative, owes its real distinction to his warm understanding of people and their ways. It is written with a zest and a freedom that only now and then were apparent in *Coronado's Children* and his other work. And though he is rigorously classified by the academic as a gatherer of folklore, and even called himself, at least once, a 'social historian,' it is when he lets himself go and refuses to behave like any sort of professor at all that his writing is often as pungent and fresh as the smell of brush country early some morning in April.

"This book, so far as I know, is the first full-length description of life on the cattle ranges in that vast rugged desert of Northern Mexico, a land as ruthless and magnificent as its cougars or its rattlesnakes. Mr. Dobie is careful with his details, but he also paints vividly. I doubt

if any reader of this book will ever feel again that the Mexican and his customs are entirely alien to him. And surely it will be good for us to have this much solid truth—solid earth, I started to say: the stories, the songs, and the people are all so close to the soil—after so many stacks of volumes by ladies who have had breathless adventures in some of the better-class hotels.

"And still, the best parts of the book are not merely faithful descriptions. They are rather avowals of Mr. Dobie's affection for simple people and robust ways: for straightforward men, warm-hearted women, and fine horses; for comradeship and easy, footloose living. And when he writes about such things, his prose, which at times is deliberate and factual, takes on a glow, becomes elated, and sings.

"The rare power of sympathy, which raises the best of Mr. Dobie's writing to a dignity far above any that the treatises of other specialists in Southwestern culture have attained to, is more abundantly revealed in this new book than in his others. Surely no reader of *Coronado's Children* has forgotten the picture of the 'second sorriest white man in Sabinal,' the town scavenger, seated on his goatskin in a patio bright with zinnias and morning glories, and dreaming of treasure buried in a certain place he knew of, where he would go and dig it up some day. Perhaps there is nothing in *Tongues of the Monte* better

than that epitome of all human desire, but there is still Inocencio, the author's outspoken companion, and Toribio, the goat-herd, who, employed in the rudest of occupations, turns out to be anything but a fool. I do not know another writer whose sympathy has less of the egocentric in it, less of pity or of patronizing. Mr. Dobie is not moved to commiseration by the goat-herd's deplorable standard of living, nor is he indignant at meeting with an almost naked victim of the System. He seems, rather, to think that there may be something in the fellow worth finding out. What is more, he actually takes a liking to him, smell and all. And one suspects that he envies him a little.

"The book is a rendering of simple—and sometimes opulent—natures, as seen by a very generous one."

AMEN. I am not sure that this book is better than all the rest. I happen to be a Mexico buff, and I know there are other readers who are more interested than I am in longhorns, mustangs, even Englishmen. I still think "Midas on a Goat-skin" is a short masterpiece. But the point is, the same golden generosity flows through all of Dobie's best work, giving it warm life and making us return to it with pleasure again and again. □

July 24, 1964

A Selection from His Ideas

There's nothing duller than praise.
There's nothing more stupid than eulogy.
Texas Ranger, 1961

I think that what people want to believe affects their lives more than what they actually do believe.

Proceedings of The Southwest Conference, Occidental College, 1956

Censorship is never to let people know but always to keep them in ignorance; never to bring light but always to darken. . . . A censor is always a tool—as Churchill called Mussolini, a "utensil." Not one censor in history is respected by enlightened men of any nation.

Testimony before Textbook Investigating Committee of the 57th Texas Legislature, Jan. 31, 1962

A long time ago I found that a man is often given credit for knowing more than he knows and for having done what other men have done, but that he seldom is given credit for having whatever disinterested motive he may have.

Letter, 1954

An ignorant person attaches more importance to the chatter of small voices around him than to the noble language of remote individuals. The more he listens to the small, the smaller he grows.

Life and Literature of the Southwest, 1952

Any person who imagines he has a corner on the definition or conception of Americanism and wants to suppress all conceptions to the contrary is a bigot and an enemy to the free world.

Textbook hearing

I feel no resentment so strongly as that against forces which make men and women afraid to speak out forthrightly.

Essay in *This I Believe*, 1952

I have come to value liberated minds as the supreme good of life on earth.

On Autobiography, manuscript

No man who in his heart limits freedom to those who think as he thinks is a true lover of freedom.

"Wild and Free," 1952

I make no pretense to having rid myself of all prejudices, but at times when I have discovered myself freed from certain pre-

Isabel Gaddis of Cotulla, who studied under J. Frank Dobie at the University of Texas and worked with him in editing I'll Tell You a Tale, made these selections from Dobie for this issue.

judices, I have felt rare exhilaration.

This I Believe

It is hard to bottle up the human mind; it is harder to expand it.

Southwest Review, 1951

The one thing needful to all scholarship, as to all literature and art, is vitality. Viva the university press that demands vitality in scholarly books!

Saturday Review, 1960

Making sheep and Christians synonyms has never seemed to me complimentary to the latter.

Southwest Review, 1961

I can scarcely remember when I did not have a distrust of what Robert Burns calls "the unco guid," or the rigidly righteous, the priggishly pure, the self-anointed in the name of holiness.

Sunday column, 1958

I never have felt as sufficient as Dorothy Dix, or a father confessor, or Dear Abby in advising people how to conduct their private lives. On the other hand, I never have felt so insufficient that I wanted to turn my life over to some myth, some Billy Graham form of sensationalist, some ecclesiastical corporation.

Texas Folklore Society Publication, 1961

Television, picture shows, and Western fiction have betrayed the cow people by overemphasizing violence. I have tried to bring out the sincerity, decency, and loyalty that went with their work.

Up the Trail from Texas, 1955

Newspaper reporters not infrequently label me "folklorist." I am not a scientific folklorist at all, for after I have heard a tale, I do all I can to improve it.

I'll Tell You a Tale, 1960

Two kinds of people of this world have each with their kind deep kinships, no matter what language they speak or in what latitude they live: people with cultivated minds and people of the soil.

Southwest Review, 1950

Now, in places where it has rained, far from where I reside, is "the hour of splendor in the grass." The grasses have seeded, and the tall plumes of the tall grasses stand as splendid in the sun as a fancied prairie of burning candles would be on a still night.

Sunday column, 1954

We have many interesting and delightful fellow-countrymen, but not another, it seems to me, so picturesque, companion-

able, useful, entertaining and various as the paisano.

Texas Parade, 1953.

The easiest tag for the lax-minded has always been color, and from the remotest times to the present, superstitious beliefs pertaining to horse colors have been as common as those pertaining to man colors.

The Mustangs, 1952

I think that the rewriting by half-baked authors of legitimate writing is damnable and that it is debasing to the taste of the country.

Letter, 1961

Of course, some people seem to consider that the chief reason for advocating libraries and the reading of books is to enable America to catch up with the Russians on sputniks. I consider such reasoning puny and lopsided. Books, and therefore libraries, contain the inherited wit, wisdom, humor, life, cream of all the jests of all the centuries during which man has left a record of what he's thought and done. The "immortal residue" of the human race lies in books. The great reason for reading books and valuing libraries is to have life more abundantly, to think more justly, to be in love more delightfully, and to use the sputniks more wisely when we get them.

Cover on American Library Association Bulletin, 1961

Luck is being ready for the chance.

J. E. Reynolds Catalogue, 1960

I've been looking for a first-class mind among students who volunteered to take an education course and I haven't found one in 51 years.

Texas Ranger, 1961

All normal children are Alices in Wonderland. They recognize instantly the difference between a work of imagination and a piece of manufactured pretense supposed to be on "their level." They would rather have the real thing in rags than, after about five minutes of gazing, have the sawdust thing dressed up in all sorts of garish colors.

Southwest Review, 1951

If you are going to ask God to bless anything—and very few of us are popes so that we can be sure he is going to follow directions—I'd say bless what Mark Twain called "the dammed human race."

"Accent," CBS-TV, Jan. 13, 1962

Here's to the honest and just earth, which has generally been treated more kindly by earthworms than by the worms who boast of having been made in "His image"—not that the earth cares for anything that is said or done to it. Here's to Christmas—not that Christmas cares either; just the same it's good for us to care. Here's to good hearts and fair minds everywhere. And here's to you!

"A Plot of Earth," Christmas, 1953. □

Listening With the Third Ear

Houston

Several years ago a psychiatrist named Theodore Reik wrote a book he called *Listening with the Third Ear*. It didn't exactly set the psychiatric world afire, but it did put down in moderately good English (for a social scientist) the thesis that listening should be more than a momentary pause while waiting for your turn to talk again.

Psychiatrists must listen with the third ear in order to fill in the personality gaps left out, deliberately or subconsciously, by the patient. Most people don't even listen with the first two ears, much less the third. And for that reason anyone who really listens is almost an oddball.

Well, J. Frank Dobie listens.

And during the countless hours that I have watched him in the process of listening, I was forced to conclude that all the talk about the lost art of conversation is bunk—what we have lost is the art of listening.

For quite a few years I lived within two blocks of Pancho Dobie's home. It was real nice dropping by in the afternoon and shading (as he put it) under the big trees in his back yard and drinking his fine red whiskey and taking part in a conversational—and listening—binge.

Quite often the triumvirate was there—Dobie and Bedi and Webb.

Webb listened—or at least remained silent—to a fault. One of my many regrets is that I did not prod him into talking more rather than doing the talking myself. He would talk only when there was a spell of quiet and it became obvious that he would not have to compete for the platform.

Bedi was much more of a talker—and, of course, his talk was always good to hear.

Dobie has always been in between. He will not fight for the floor, but he will not wait for an unspoken invitation to move in.

Above all he listens—certainly with two ears, sometimes with the third ear, also.

When he talks he frames his sentences slowly and carefully—probably a habit acquired while wallowing in academic freedom—and the sentences always have a sort of magic in that they convey a touch of personality, that of Dobie and that of the person he talks about.

There are dozens of people in Texas who are far better craftsmen than Frank Dobie when it comes to putting down one word after another in the construction of a piece of writing. There are few who can get the touch, the flavor, the mood that Pancho can.

And when you shift from what he writes to what he says, and watch the play

Hart Stilwell is a free-lance writer who lives in Houston.

Hart Stilwell

of emotions as reflected by his face, then the impact is far greater.

The manner in which Dobie listens may be more restricted than that of the professional listening of a psychiatrist, for Dobie, when he listens, is not probing for the abnormal, the hidden traumas, the suppressed hostilities which the psychiatrist must search out and then analyze. But Dobie catches the flavor of what is said—the personality of the talker as that individual wants to present his personality.

And, of course, we all have a dual personality, one built for public presentation, one reserved for ourselves, so that it can contribute to our confusion and misunderstanding.

I have seen the results of this careful listening by Pancho in many charming little things he has written.

Many years ago, out at Joe Small's cottage on Lake Travis, I introduced an old friend of mine, the late Capt. Billy Molesworth, to Dobie.

Capt. Billy was a truly great talker. In all the years I hunted and fished with him, not once did he tell a really corny story—and the air we breathe is full of corny stories.

Handling the 'Insult Approach'

Joe C. Goulden

Los Angeles, Cal.

Somebody once said, and I'll agree of my own experience, that a good measure of a man is how he deals with a brash, unlearned cub reporter. Mrs. Richard Nixon once frowned at me when I warned her she was about to step in a cow paddy at a Dallas fair grounds stock barn. It's ridiculous, of course, but of such trivialities are opinions made, even of presidential candidates.

As a general assignments reporter for the Dallas News I often used an "insult approach" in interviews with visiting celebrities. A nasty question at the outset provokes spirited replies; a mad subject is more apt to speak freely. So we come to Mr. Dobie, who in the fall of 1960 was in town for a book and author luncheon.

On the phone the night before Mr. Dobie said yes indeed he'd be happy to meet me in his room, and yes indeed I could bring along my father, a Dobie admirer.

Joe Goulden is a reporter from Marshall, Texas. He started out on the Dallas Morning News and has since worked on the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Los Angeles Times.

At that little gathering Capt. Billy told a story he had told me before—about the preacher out in the Uvalde country who prayed for rain and brought forth a gully-washer.

Well, not long ago I saw that story in print, as told by Pancho. It seemed that Capt. Billy was telling it to me. I caught the rich flavor of the old man's personality in reading Dobie's account of what he said.

Dobie was listening with two ears—but with only part of the third ear. It was clear that he wanted to take Cap as Cap presented himself—not as a sort of skeleton that would be left after a pack of psychiatrists picked all that was good out of the way and left only the bones.

So I got the feel of Cap again. And I realized that Pancho Dobie had done what I never could do in the dozens of stories I wrote about Cap—get the real flavor.

So I wonder if Pancho isn't a whole lot more valuable to us than people who listen with the third ear and lay bare our souls—a procedure not many are strong enough to accept.

Sure, Pancho Dobie listens—but he hears the music and the poetry and the beauty. His is a selective third ear.

I hear the H-Bomb and corruption in office and viciousness. □

He was alone, in house shoes and shirt sleeves; Mrs. Dobie, he said, was shopping.

"Mr. Dobie," I said as he played with his pipe, "last night I read all the clips about you in the Dallas News morgue. During the 1940's you had something to say about everything, and strong things. Then you disappear, there are no more stories, no more fire. Whatever happened to Dobie the Iconoclast?"

(Translated: Whatever happened to you, old man? Lost your spirit?)

Dobie got interested in the pipe, and his eyes crinkled and I think maybe he chuckled. He grinned at my dad. "I tell you what I'll do," he said. "I'll be happy to start writing a column again, like I did for the News before Ted Dealey stopped it. You get them to agree to publish it, and I'll put some fire back in that newspaper."

We all laughed, and I told Mr. Dobie I'd write Ted Dealey a note (I did, he didn't answer), and after that, it wasn't a newspaper interview, it was mostly a conversation between Mr. Dobie and my dad. When Mr. Dobie saw me writing a note he'd slow

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down, and here are some of the things he said during the next hour:

Progress.—"My definition of progress is 'a state in which nobody in particular wants to run, but everybody has to run to keep from being run over.'"

Public Life.—"I wasted my golden youth on causes. The only salvation for the human race is for people to arrive at a just sense of values. And a just sense of values is not implanted by a political victory in an election. The mob might be right once in awhile. But if the majority always had a just sense of values, we'd always elect

a good man, a wise man, a strong man, and turn things over to him. If you work for causes, you've got to be leading society around every two or four years. Enlightenment is the only answer."

The Press.—"The press, like everything else in Texas, is conformist. I don't think the newspaper owners are eager for divergence, and they call the tunes. They, like the magazines, want brightness, but in a vacuum. You can't have that and thinking, too. You can get brightness in a vacuum in a lightbulb, but not in a human."

Charity.—"I'd rather give my dollars to

the liberation of the human mind than for curing sore eyes in poor people who are going to maintain closed minds."

Dobie.—"I consider myself something of an artist, a conscious craftsman. I have tried to write well. My idea of life is not to win an argument, an election; it's producing something useful and interesting."

I apologized in print again the next morning: "If J. Frank Dobie has mellowed with age, it is an aging like that of whiskey, not of an apple stored in a cellar for the winter. The fruit loses its crispness. J. Frank Dobie has lost none of his." □

The Best Name I Know

In 1953, when my son was born, I wanted to give him the best name I knew. The best name that I knew then was Frank Dobie. It belonged to a good and honest man, in fact, one of the best and most honest men I had ever met. I figured that the man who had made it such a good name should have some say-so about its use. So I called Mr. Dobie down in Austin (I was living in New York at the time) and asked him if he minded sharing his name with my son. He said that he didn't mind in the least. Thus it was that there came to be a Frank Dobie Faulk.

A couple of months later I brought Frank Dobie Faulk down to Austin to show him off to my family. A pious old sister, a member of my mother's quilting circle who had taught me in Sunday school years ago, in the Methodist church, called me up at my mother's home. Ostensibly she called to tell me how glad she was that I was back home, that she hoped to see me in church next Sunday, and that it rejoiced her old heart to hear that I was doing so well with my radio and television career. She covered those matters in less than five seconds. Then she launched into the real purpose of her call.

"Jist wondered, honey, why on earth you would saddle that pore little baby of yours with sich a name as Frank Dobie. Seems sich a pity when there's so many good *Christian* names around."

"It was the best name I could think of," I replied. Her voice took on that quavery

John Henry Faulk is the well-known radio and television entertainer, and lately he has been playing character roles in Hollywood movies. He is a Democratic precinct chairman in Austin; he won reelection after a campaign in which a smear sheet was circulated against him. His book on his blacklisting in the entertainment industry because of charges having to do with his politics, and his subsequent victory in a \$3.5 million libel judgment against his accusers, will be issued Nov. 15 by Simon and Schuster as Fear on Trial.

John Henry Faulk

whine, condescending and selfrighteous, which characterizes her particular brand of religiosity.

"Johnny, you've jist been way from Austin too long. That ol' Frank Dobie has got to where he's a outright disgrace. When he ain't blessin' out the gov'mint, he's ridiculin' religeon an' pokin' fun at preachers. Jist disgraceful the way he goes on. I've heered and don't doubt fer a minute it's so—" —here her tone became conspiratorial—"that the old sinner never put foot inside a church in his life." I could have told her that as a matter of fact, Mr. Dobie as a boy had been watered at the same spiritual spring from which she drank, the Methodist church. But I told her goodbye instead.

Mama, when I told her of the call, commented a bit apologetically, "Pay her no mind, Johnny. She's a simple-minded old ignoramus who has nothing to do but sit around and feed her prejudices with misinformation. If she knew Mr. Dobie a little better, she would love and respect him as much as you do."

Mama was right about ignoring the old lady's remark. Her kind of criticism of Dobie had long since ceased even to anger me. I knew that Dobie pays it no mind at all. But mama was wrong about the old lady liking Dobie if she knew him better. If she had known Dobie better, what he really believes, she would have liked him even less. There is not a religious or political fraud in Texas who can stand J. Frank Dobie. He makes them too uncomfortable. Hypocrites and humbugs offend him and he says so with a cheerful directness.

Dobie got the way he is, I think, by being a prospector in the world of ideas. He started prospecting in the Southwest a long time ago, and he has widened his territory steadily ever since. He wasn't prospecting for gold and lost treasure, but for the rich stores of folklore, for the tales and the songs of the people who lived close to the earth, people who bore the authentic

stamp of the land in their hearts and their faces. He leaned his ear close to the earth and caught its subtle sounds and rhythms. He listened and he absorbed. Listened and absorbed, not with just his ears, but with his heart and his mind. And his intellect and his emotional field expanded, his horizons grew ever wider. He was always a thinking man. But he became more than that. He evolved into what Emerson called 'man thinking'. As a 'man thinking' prospector, he has become an unflinching expert on the real gold in the limitless world of ideas; he can smell the difference between real gold and fool's gold.

Dobie's mind continues to explore, to expand. If he has any god, it is what he calls the Liberated Mind. He is not a denouncer, either by nature or by inclination. But he has prospected and mined out so much that is of real value, he has little time or use for dross or synthetics. This, coupled with the hearty readiness with which he will affirm ideas and facts, regardless of their popularity, has earned him the enmity of the timid and the prejudiced, but it has endeared him to a great number of informed and civilized minds.

Two persons who possess such minds are Edward R. Murrow and Carl Sandburg. Both have known Mr. Dobie for a number of years. Ed Murrow became very fond of him over in England during World War II, when Dobie was a guest professor at Cambridge and Murrow was broadcasting from London for CBS. Ed told me, "Mr. Frank moved around England and talked to the people and he listened to them. They got to know him. He did more to win British respect and affection for Americans than our entire diplomatic corps and propaganda program combined." Mr. Carl Sandburg told me, "*Whatever's* the matter with America, Frank Dobie ain't."

In 1953, the best name I knew to give my son was Frank Dobie. It's still the best name I know. □

Many of His Books Will Endure

Hanover, N.H.

When I was asked to write a short piece on J. Frank Dobie by Ronnie Dugger for the *Texas Observer*; I decided that I must see my old friend once again before I tried to put anything on paper.

When I flew the necessary nineteen hundred miles I had not been in Texas for three years. Since my last visit Frank had had a serious automobile accident that had incapacitated and weakened him for some months. However, I had been told by friends he was in fine fettle.

Actually when I saw him, on March 18th of this year, I found him somewhat frailer than before, but still with a lot of his old fire, and with his sense of humor unimpaired. He said he had less energy than he once had and that he tired easily. Nonetheless, he had just sent off another book to his Boston publisher; he was the same indomitable person he's always been.

He still flashed his warm and famous smile and spoke with the wisdom of a sage raised on the plains and hills of Texas. This time his barbs were directed against crooked politicians, unintellectual regents, and people who love only money. I had a feeling that the Dallas episode, if such a word may be used for the killing of a president, had really shaken him.

It seemed a little curious to me that while I was in Texas, mainly in Austin and San Antonio, no one brought up the subject of Dallas. Nor did I mention it.

I have always liked Texas and found its vast plains, hills, and lakes truly lovely in their own peculiar way. The various shades of green, reminiscent of Spain, the blue-bonnets in bloom (marvelously painted by Salinas), the mesquite, give Texas a kind of beauty that I find in no other state.

Whatever may be the facts about a segment of Dallas opinion, no one can fail to believe in the greatness of Texas after he knows and talks with Frank Dobie, who has always, to this New Englander, represented the best that is the Lone Star State.

As a child I thrilled at the stories of the Alamo, San Jacinto, and Goliad, and years later when I first met Mr. Dobie I was still conscious of the vastness of Texas and of its fascinating history. No one has recorded its various facets as well as he. In a somewhat shoddy world he stands out like a

Herbert Faulkner West has been a teacher of comparative literature at Dartmouth College for nearly 40 years. For 26 years he has run the Friends of the Dartmouth Library, which he founded; he is a professional book seller and has reviewed books for the New York Times. He has also written several books of his own, including Rebel Thought (Beacon Press, 1953).

Herbert Faulkner West

beacon, a man of great intelligence, forthrightness, candor, honesty, a vision of the best always before him.

He is most happy, it seems to me, when he is on his ranch. The first one I visited with him was on Cherry Creek, and being a Yankee used to the lush greens of the New Hampshire hills, I was amazed by the bareness, the aridity, the dead trees of the country around Llano. As a matter of fact there had been a couple of years of drouth, and the time was early spring. To me it was like a landscape on the moon; the rivers had dried up and it looked as if very little could survive. But to Frank, who had known the state since birth, it was Texas, and it was a refuge where he could relax and work on his writing.

Soon after this visit he sold this ranch and bought one nearer Austin which he calls Paisano; I have visited him there a couple of times. He grew up on a ranch, and the academic life, although congenial, was never his proper environment. Within it he inspired many students and wrote many books, but I think he was happier when he was riding over his acres and supervising his Mexican help keeping the ranch in good order.

When I saw him two weeks ago as I write, he had just completed, after a determined effort, his latest book, *Cow People*, which is now in the hands of the printer. While at 702 Park Place he gave me the first chapter used as his 1963 Christmas card, called "Hunting Cousin Sally," a reminiscence of his youth on a ranch. He never forgot characters like Colonel Ike, who believed in Providence, or luck, or chance—whatever it is outside of man which directs his destiny. I suspect that while living on Waller Creek in Austin his thoughts often turn back to Cousin Sally and Colonel Ike, his father and mother, Ben Lilly, Duval, Bigfoot Wallace, and all the rest of the great Texans he has known.

Wherever he is, Frank is obviously happy only when he working on a book, and he has written a couple of dozen. He works hard and conscientiously at his writing and revises a great deal. In his later years he sometimes talks in a tape recorder; at other times he writes in longhand or uses the typewriter. In any case, he is a painstaking craftsman, and many of his books, I feel confident, will endure. When R. B. Cunningham Graham wrote of W. H. Hudson that he was a man of the plains, simple and direct, with a natural style "as the green grass grows," he might have also been writing about J. Frank Dobie. There is in all of his books a kind of massive simplicity.

They are saturated with honesty, with facts, and with a complete understanding of what he is writing about.

ONE OF MY JOBS at Dartmouth College as director of the Friends of the Library has been to get rare books for the Dartmouth Library. We have a reasonably good Dobie collection, and we hope as time goes on to make it better.

I remember *Coronado's Children*, though I do not own a copy. It was a Literary Guild selection and up to that time was his most successful book. In it he presented stories of the Southwest, the legendary and real lost mines, the cowboys and the open range, and buried treasure.

In my copy of *Apache Gold and Yaqui Silver*, which is handsomely illustrated by Tom Lea, Mr. Dobie wrote in June 1951: "These people had nothing but hope. They were rich in it. As I grow older I wonder if any other form of wealth is more enriching to lives. At the same time I grow stronger against blindfolds. Damned if I know what I believe, but always I believe in fairies. And I hope will always have hope."

Somewhere in the Sierra Madre is a silver mine from which heavily laden mules carried bullion to Mexico City. Then suddenly they brought no more. Did the vein run out? That is not what the legend says. Remember it is Apache gold and Yaqui silver. If anyone knows the truth, it is Professor Dobie who has spent his life prospecting exhaustively into the histories and legends of the Southwest. The book leaves the reader not only with admiration for him, but also with awe at the huge areas of land on both sides of our southern border. They are almost as little known today and as hard to penetrate as they were 400 years ago, but their magic penetrates Mr. Dobie's books.

Another book of his, which I suspect he likes as much as any, is the one he has called *Tongues of the Monte*. After we had toured the hill country together in March, 1957, he wrote in my copy: "I think there were two printings of this book by Doubleday, this being the first. I went to Little Brown and Company and Doubleday let the book die, transferring the plates to me. I thought it might sell better if tagged by the title; I wrote an introduction to it and let the Southern Methodist University Press (then called University Press in Dallas) have it for nothing under the title *The Mexico I Like*. After a printing of only one thousand copies had been sold—this was during World War II—this press could get no more paper. After the war ended, Little

Brown took it and still has it in print under original title. It has more of strangeness than any other book I have written. I mean to read it someday." If you read this book you will see that Mr. Dobie knows as much of Mexico as he does of Texas.

Another book I would recommend to anyone wanting to know something about the true Texas would be Mr. Dobie's *Tales of Old-Time Texas*. These stories, such as "The Panther's Scream," "Not a Drouth Crack," "Guarded by Rattlesnakes," "Jim Bowie's Knife," seem to spring from the very soil of the state. No one seems to know the heart of the Texas people as does my friend Frank. Those who have lived on a Texas ranch, even those who have driven across this enormous state, will understand this book better for having done so. As someone has well written, the stories have "the tempo of growing grass, of a solitary buzzard sailing over a valley, of the wind from the south in April, of the lengthening of a tree's shadow on a summer afternoon, of the rise and fall of flames on a fireplace on a winter's night." No one can understand the real Texas it seems to me without reading about Bigfoot Wallace. Jim Bowie, Sam Bass, Colonel Abercrombie, Davy Crockett and his bear, and the famous life of Sam Houston and the San Jacinto corn.

Of his book *On the Open Range* (my edition is the Dallas one of 1940), he has written: "This is a reprint by offset process and is supposed to be for children although material first used in adult books and magazines is in it. Here the reader will find stories of mustangs, cow ponies, long-horns, and the wildlife of the range. There are also chapters on Indians, cattle branding, lost mines, the predicament of Uncle Dick the fiddler beset by music loving wolves, and other stories which make the range come alive."

I HAVE THREE Dobie books which are favorites of mine because no one else could have written them and because they reflect best the real life of Texas. The first is *The Voice of the Coyote* (1949). Mr. Dobie has always been sympathetic to the coyote. Thirty years of research, thousands of miles of travel, and talking to hundreds of men produced this truly great book.

Mr. Dobie maintains that the voice of the coyote not only is strong in the land, but carries "away and away out beyond." Long before the white man came, the coyote had made his ancient mark on the cultures of Mexico, but not until 1805 in the journals of Lewis and Clark was he mentioned. No encyclopedia tells about his living habits; if you want to know much about him you must read Mr. Dobie's book. Written with great sympathy and understanding of wild-life, it gives an unforgettable picture of this resourceful and adaptable animal. "The coyote," Dobie says, "is extraordinary as a character, quite aside from economic, political and like importances. He has something in common with Abraham Lincoln, Robin Hood, Joan of Arc, Br'er Rabbit and other personalities — something that

sets popular imagination to creating."

I have known for many years that Mr. Dobie is a profound admirer of W. H. Hudson, who wrote so knowingly of the gauchos and horses of the pampas. In this book Mr. Dobie equals the best writing of Mr. Hudson, which is saying a great deal. The book is dedicated to his wife who, Mr. Dobie says, "is the most incisive and the most concretely constructive critic" he has ever known.

With the coyote, Mr. Dobie has immortalized in *The Longhorns* the famous Texas steer—"gaunt, wiry, intractable . . . pioneers in a hard, strange land." This book, illustrated with photographs and magnificent drawings by Tom Lea, really tells all there is to be told about this famous animal of the Spanish conquistadores, the terrible excitement of the stampede, the tremendous bull fights on the range, and "ghost" steers.

Recently I gave to Paul Sample, the American painter who loves horses and also rides them, a copy of Mr. Dobie's *The Mustangs*. This is a book which would have delighted my old friend Don Roberto Cunningham Graham, who rode like a centaur and who loved horses sometimes more than he loved humans. Mr. Dobie has told with great artistry and myriads of facts the old stories of the mustangs, once the glory of the Western range. "Well, the wild ones—the coyote duns, the smokes, the blues, the blue roans, the snip-nosed pintos, the flea-bitten grays and blue-skinned whites, the shining blacks and rusty browns, the red roans, the toasted sorrels and the stockinged bays, the spotted appaloosas and the cream-maned palominos, and all the others in shadings of color as various as the hues that show and fade on the clouds at sunset—they are all gone now, gone as completely as the free grass they vivified." A magnificent book!

I WANT TO MENTION before I finish two or three further books by Mr. Dobie. In my copy of *A Texan in England* Mr. Dobie has written: "To the shadows in the cloisters, to the sunshine on the river, to free minds everywhere, and to Herbert

West." This brings up several points, one of which is that Frank's passion all his life has been for a person freely speaking what he thinks, regardless of whether this does or does not bring him favor. Even in March of 1964, talking with Glen L. Evans, a Texas geologist, and me, he reiterated again the necessity, not only in Texas but everywhere, of honest men who are not afraid to say what they think.

When Henry Steele Commager, another free spirit and personality, returned after a professorship in American history at Cambridge University, he nominated Mr. Dobie to take his place. Naturally Frank had to write a book about a Texan professorship at Cambridge, but he has never been an academic type. As he himself says, "Only a fraction has ever homed in academic halls; only a fraction of this book will smell of them." He achieved immortality concerning academic matters when he said: "The average Ph.D. thesis is nothing but a transfer of bones from one graveyard to another." I have never heard him called "doctor," although he may be one for all I know, but, I am sure he was a great teacher.

Finally, to speak of one more book, partly because of the inscription written in my copy and partly because it refers to one of Frank's favorite men; this is *John C. Duval, First Texas Man of Letters*, published in 1939 by the Southwest Review and illustrated by Tom Lea. In my copy Mr. Dobie has written: "I want to give you this book which you might find trouble in locating. I have always liked it for the printing and Tom Lea's delicious illustrations, especially of old Bigfoot Wallace and John C. Duval, who lived in permanent relaxation. It is tonic to me to remember him. Neither Tom Lea or me got a *centavo* out of the book, but we got a lot of fun. There is only one other copy where this comes from. With a good heart towards you."

I can only hope that J. Frank Dobie has many years ahead of him to write more about the state he has loved and written wondrously about these many years. I salute him as a great writer and a great Texan. □

Our Mozos Held Him in Great Esteem

When I think of J. Frank Dobie I think of a man.

Here we have a man whom I admire above all others I have ever known. I learned most about Frank Dobie on a horseback trip over the Sierra Madre in Old Mexico. Before long our *mozos* held him in great esteem; and soon in sincere affection.

This white haired gentleman with the musical Spanish, and the slow smile, was a combination of rawhide and steel—and yet he was gentle. Frank Dobie is a trooper in the true sense of the word. Seasoned

W. John Stiteler, Jr., is a banker, farmer, horseman. He has ridden extensively in Britain, this country, and old Mexico, where he and Dobie rode together over the Sierra Madre.

ranchers in Mexico wanted him to stay on, and in Durango people flocked to Mack Howard's ranch to ask Dobie to autograph books for them.

At the Hacienda of the fabulous Don Raimondo Bell it was obvious that old friend of Pancho Villa regarded Frank Dobie as *more than* an equal.

We will not see the like of Francisco Dobie again. I am thankful that his wonderful books and stories will survive for countless years. Only a truly great and good man could have written *Tongues of the Monte*.

In 68 years of living I have learned to know men—and to me Frank Dobie is the man I most admire.

W. John Stiteler, Jr., Middlecreek Farm, Rockwood, Pennsylvania.

A Question of Implications

Edmund Heinsohn

Austin

A mutual friend asked, "Is there any feeling of constraint when Frank Dobie and a man of the cloth are together?" Not when Dr. Dobie and this man of the cloth are together. With the consent of Dr. Dobie the following two conversations are recalled. While he was suffering from a heart attack and pneumonia, I found him in an oxygen tent at St. David's Hospital. To the question, "What in the world are you doing here?" he replied: "Not a thing, just lying here, no ambition, no aspirations, no anything, just reflecting." After he left the hospital, I visited him at his home. As I was about to take my leave, he said: "You seem to be a pretty intelligent sort of fellow. That being the case, how can you preach the kind of stuff you preach?" To this question I made answer in thiswise: "Dr. Dobie, there isn't much difference between the two of us. The principal difference is that I think more highly of Frank Dobie than he does himself, and that I simply cannot believe that an oxygen tent is big enough to hold Frank Dobie." He enjoyed the compliment, but did not accede to the implications.

The only constraint I feel in his presence is the constraint to be courteous to a great person. He is so thoroughly alive that I must confess that when I want to loaf intellectually I do not feel comfortable in his presence. I don't want to be around him except when I am at my best. Friends seeing Bedichek and Dobie thawing out on the hot rocks at Barton Springs may have thought that these two men were relaxing. So they were, but only physically, for on some of those occasions these two gladiators were engaged in animated conversation.

Harry Peyton Steger used to enjoy saying and doing things that would make his friends gasp. He and several of his fraternity brothers were in his room in a bull session one day when the postman came with the mail. A letter from home Steger opened, and when he saw that it contained no check, he, without reading the letter, threw it into the wastepaper basket. Naturally his friends thought this was awful. After they had left the room one peeped through the keyhole of the door and saw Steger fish this letter out of the wastepaper basket and read it very carefully. Frank Dobie is like that. He will stay up late trying to figure out how to say and do something that will shock the natives. His bite isn't nearly as bad as his bark.

It is possible to stretch an umbrella so large that the man who disagrees with you is forced to get under the umbrella with you. In like manner, religious terms can be so defined that the man who makes no profession of religion is made to appear as

Dr. Edmund Heinsohn is minister emeritus, University Methodist Church in Austin.

a man of religion. I am trying to avoid doing this to Frank Dobie. Some concepts of God he has made the targets of his barbs, and in some instances his shots have been devastating. But the Frank Dobie whom I know in the presence of life has a sense of awe and reverence and mystery and wonder and meaning and purpose. In my book he is a religious man.

In the presence of human injustices he has the passion of the Old Testament prophets. He is a man of great ethical concerns, and these are not without their religious roots. A few years ago Southwestern University at Georgetown, Texas, celebrated "Frank Dobie Day." Southwestern University chorus was giving a program in his honor, and he was seated on the plat-

form with the chorus. When asked if he had any special preferences he suggested that some of the old revival hymns be sung. One of the most beautiful passages to come from his pen was the description of Gonzales, the newsboy, on his knees at the foot of Dobie's bed in St. David's Hospital, praying for him. Soon after the assassination of President Kennedy Dr. Dobie wrote with appreciation of the way in which his father always closed his evening prayer: "Lord, bless all who are in authority over us."

In the presence of injustice, a great passion for justice; and in the presence of human need, a great compassion. Because of his spirit of compassion I sometimes wonder if he has not unwittingly embraced the flower and fruit of the Old Testament as portrayed in the New Testament.

I have enjoyed chiseling around on Frank Dobie, but I have not tried to trim him down to size. To me he remains my dear friend, a man of great stature and one of God's obstreperous sons.

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Advertisement

Swine!

"If the book be false in its facts, refute them. If it be false in its reasoning, disprove it. But, for God's sake, let us freely hear both sides!" These words by Thomas Jefferson are the motto of a new national magazine called FACT. FACT is published in the conviction that an unbiased and utterly fearless magazine can survive in modern America. FACT bows down before neither Big Business, Church, State, nor even before the prejudices of some of its own readers.

The first issue of FACT contains articles on "Catholic Plunder of the U.S. Treasury," "America's First Negro President" (he has already been elected; FACT reveals who he was), and on "Time: The Weekly Fiction Magazine." In the latter feature, at FACT's invitation, the following celebrities give first hand knowledge of inaccuracies by Time: Irwin Shaw, Sloan Wilson, Tallulah Bankhead, Sen. Ernest Gruening, Bertrand Russell, Mary McCarthy, P. G. Wodehouse, Eugene Burdick, Conrad Aiken, John Osborne, Vincent Price, Burgess Meredith, Ralph Ingersoll, H. Allen Smith, Taylor Caldwell and Dwight Macdonald.

The second issue of FACT contains the story of how—and why—the American press hid the truth about cigarettes and cancer for 25 years; a report on millionaires who do not pay a cent in taxes; a hitherto-banned manuscript by Mark Twain; a psychological analysis of anti-Negro jokes; and more.

Scheduled for publication in future issues of FACT are: "American Cars Are Death-

traps" (FACT reveals which makes are most dangerous of all), "Wife-Swapping in California," "Coca-Cola as a Menace to Health," "Bobby Kennedy: Savior or Fanatic," "The World's Fair Is a Money-Grubbing House of Horrors," "Suicide Among College Students," "Should the Government Break Up AT&T," "How the Post Office Snoops Into Private Mail," "San Francisco: Sanctuary for the Homosexual," "The Rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan," "The Social Utility of Pornography," "Why the Negro Revolution Must Lead to Violence," "Is Cancer Psychosomatic?," and other articles which most magazines wouldn't dare to print.

The response to FACT so far has been electrifying. Bertrand Russell describes FACT as "well prepared, irreverent and serious." California's Governor Pat Brown says FACT "pulls no punches." The New York Post says FACT is "lively, unconventional, handsome." The San Francisco Chronicle, labeling FACT "audacious," says it may become "Mencken's American Mercury of our day." And a John Bircher wrote in calling us "Swine!"

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Glimpses Through the Years

Rupert Richardson

Abilene

My first recollections of J. Frank Dobie go back to times when we sat together in bathing suits in the shade of the tall pecans at Barton Springs nearly forty years ago. The waters of that well-known pool register in summer a little under seventy degrees, so a little swimming calls for a great deal of sitting on the rocks in the shade, where you are soon warmed by the breeze.

It was fun to talk with Dobie. Sometimes Roy Bedichek was there—in later years he was more likely to be and they would be together—and the conversation was always interesting and sometimes informative. Dobie's range of observations and anecdotes was limitless. He could talk about coyotes, rattlesnakes, and roadrunners; he could talk politics. I frequently differed with him, but I rarely interrupted him; it was more fun to hear him talk than to argue with him. In these conversations I was impressed with his high sense of honor, his humor, his sympathy with the

Rupert N. Richardson, senior professor in history, Hardin-Simmons University, is the author of several books, perhaps the best known of which is Texas, the Lone Star State (Prentice-Hall, 1943, 1958). His Colonel Edward M. House: the Texas Years, 1858-1912 will be published in a few weeks.

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unfortunate, his bent for taking the side of the underdog.

His prejudices are as pronounced as his enthusiasm for the things he loves and cherishes, and you learn to take one along with the other. For instance, I think he would agree that there are some good oil men, but oil men as a class—Well, let's stay off the subject. He might admit that there were some bad early-day cattlemen, but cattlemen as a class he would pronounce great.

I recall one evening with Dobie when he was at his best. After dinner some twenty people engaged him in conversation, and he seemed to be talking with every one of them rather than making a speech that they would be called on to hear. They inquired especially of his experiences in gathering material for his books, his methods of organizing his material and of writing—of almost every phase of his life and career. The range of his mind is remarkable; no subject is too great or too small to appeal to him if it pertains to nature or to interesting people. Indeed this has made him popular with millions of readers: his love of nature linked with his keen interest in people, and his ability to take the reader with him wherever he goes.

On another occasion, when I was in his home, he showed me his collection of materials, rows of filing cases containing tens of thousands of items. Many collectors gather materials, keep and cherish them, but never use them; Dobie makes use of his

collection and can locate just about any manuscript, clipping, book, or leaflet in seconds or a very few minutes.

I think it was the late Dean V. I. Moore who related to me this revealing incident about Dobie. Moore, or a friend of his, was out with Dobie one afternoon in the hill country around San Saba. Moore, let's say it was, opened a wire gate for their own car and held it open for a car that had come up after they had stopped. As Moore passed by the second car, the driver whom he had accommodated spoke to him and said, "I am looking for the lost Bowie mine," whereupon Moore introduced the stranger to Dobie. At first the man was a little incredulous. It was just too good to be true. Surely while on his search for such a hidden treasure it was not possible that he would meet the prophet of treasure hunters! Dobie told him all he knew of the lore of the lost Bowie mine, and the stranger went his way. Then to Moore, Dobie made a remark that I have heard him make in substance: "I never discourage people such as that. Hope may be about all that they have; so why should we take that away from them?"

I recall vividly another evening spent with Dobie, Walter Webb, Roy Bedichek, and Robert Cotner. We took our dinner to the hills west of Austin: this was before the days of Webb's Friday Mountain Ranch that became the place for such outings. We built a fire, although it was summer, and spent the evening talking. Then, as always, Bedichek was interested in birds. I recall that he branded as fiction the notion that the mockingbird, if imprisoned, will kill its young. Webb was drawn on occasionally on the subject of Rangers and the frontier; Dobie drew on his matchless store of anecdotes of the open spaces.

They made some inquiry of me on the subject of bees, which has been my lifetime hobby. Bedichek said that he set out to make a hobby of insects but gave it up for birds. Insect life was too complex, he said, to make a suitable hobby. There was so much of the inexplicable in it, there were so many mysteries. Dobie said that was the reason he could not be an atheist; he could not conceive of a world and a universe without a God. "No," said Bedichek reflectively, "it just depends on what you call it." He didn't say what he would call it; we did not pursue the conversation further. □

'Intelligent, Old-Fashioned, In-the-Grain'

Some recent references to the Observer in other periodicals:

"The Texas Observer has stood . . . as a compliment and a rebuke to Texas. It is a compliment in that Texas is big enough for a publication devoted entirely to state issues, and a rebuke in that Texas is small enough to need such a publication. . . . The Texas Observer well serves the state of mind known as Texas. . . ." St. Louis Post Dispatch, an editorial, November 16, 1962.

" . . . the Texas Observer, an intelligent, old-fashioned, in-the-grain political journal. . . . For many liberals, the Observer gave more than the news, it was written proof of their very existence, and its office served as a social nucleus for this group." Barbara Probst Solomon in Harper's Magazine, November, 1963.

"The state's leading liberal newspaper, the biweekly Texas Observer. . . ." Sam Kinch, reporter, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, March 6, 1964.

"The Observer . . . is recognized as the leading liberal organ in Texas," A United

Press International report, as published in the Dallas Morning News, March 6, 1964.

"The Texas Observer, the Bible of the real Texas Democrat." Archer Fullingim, editor, The Kountze News, April 23, 1964.

The Observer "has long been the standard-bearer of the fight for liberalism in Texas." William V. Shannon, columnist, in the New York Post, May 12, 1964.

" . . . an influential, controversial periodical." Houston Chronicle, news story, June 14, 1964.

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Death of a thousand cows in drouth
Ought to wear out the restless drover,
But the lonely man straightens his
mouth:
"I'll head out west a while—ride south—
Eat later—look the country over."
—tom sutherland

Poetry in an Earthy Growl

Al Melinger

Baytown, Tex.

Back in the late Twenties J. Frank Dobie would light up each fall with the most picturesque case of hayfever in Travis County. Probably he still does. Some of the finest polemics ever printed in Austin were his diatribes against the male cedars whose pollinating he blamed for his agonies. Once he offered publicly to axe every offending tree in the area, but property owners ignored the proposition. Only one other subject inspired him to such rancor—the patriotic doggerel penned by one W. Lee O'Daniel during his gubernatorial career.

I shall not forget my original experience with the Dobie catarrhal affliction when, as a sophomore, I watched him snorting and blinking red-eyed and runny of nose through the introductory moments of a lecture. He had forgotten his handkerchief. Finally, his sturdy figure bolted from the room, rounded the corner to the men's room in Garrison Hall, and returned a moment later trailing several yards of toilet paper. He wadded it into a basketball-sized mass and snorted lustily into it.

"A damn fool would have swallowed that," he commented, sniffing contentedly as he thrust the remaining yardage into his pocket.

Years later I discovered that the remark was a derivative of a statement attributed to Sam Houston after he had expelled a mouthful of hot sweet potato during a state dinner. It was only then that I began resenting Mr. Dobie's criticism that my own ideas in English themes were all "derived." Now, in relative maturity, I recognize ruefully that had I understood what he meant, I might have saved myself several bales of rejection slips.

BY SOME CURIOUS maladjustment of University programming I had found myself, an English and journalism major, in an engineering English class. Because my sole academic strength was in the field of literature, I promptly presumed that I was slated for a leading role in that roomful of slide rule dummies. I had not figured on Dobie's standards.

Up to that point in an otherwise distinguished academic career, I was a solid A student in English, a source of massive satisfaction to me in rationalizing the occasional F's which decorated my papers in such inhuman disciplines as mathematics and chemistry. My genius was lost on Professor Dobie. Under him I learned to cherish even a B-minus. His hasty scrawl pulled no punches as to why he thought my efforts were mediocre, so I probably learned more from him than from any of the other several remarkable educators who sowed their seeds so hopefully into

Al Melinger is a businessman in Baytown, Texas, and keeps an oar in as a journalist.

the fallow soil of my teen-age intellect.

He was a rumped, solid man with sun-baked skin, and in those days that shaggy mop, now white as Carl Sandburg's, was iron-grey. He would stride vigorously into Garrison Hall, bearing an armload of papers and exuding a truculent disdain for whatever popular vanity was in current ascendancy.

On a particularly hayfevered morning he drew attention to a football team which preceded each game with a full-squad prayer for victory. "Who believes," he snorted, "that God cares whether one bunch of young apes or another one has the most success with an inflated pig bladder?"

Then, his scalding mood tempered by appreciative laughter, Dobie's blunt, brown fingers would open the Snyder and Martin textbook and he would plunge with catholic enthusiasm into Romanticism, Classicism, or the Age of Victoria. He liked to read poetic passages aloud, and when he did in that earthy growl which no amount of culture could rob of its cow country qualities, something vital happened to Words-

A Quatrain Forty Years Ago

Austin

Of course everyone knows J. Frank Dobie as the peerless spinner of yarns, the master teller of tales, the welder of folklore and reminiscence into unforgettable stories. But perhaps it is not so widely known that he has versified on occasion. For forty years I have treasured a quatrain of his in heroic couplets, his comment on a paper I handed in for one of his courses at the University of Texas.

It must have been the spring of 1924. At any rate, it was the time of flappers and jelly beans. We were all very modern—in dress, in hair styles, in make-up; we had "new" ways of being and of acting, "new" approaches to all circumstances and to all personal matters.

In Mr. Dobie's course we had read Milton and Alexander Pope, in particular *Paradise Lost* and *The Rape of the Lock*. Then we had to write a "theme," a paper of some 1000 words. We must have been given a good deal of liberty in the choice of subject, though evidently it had to have some relation to what we had read. I do not remember the title of my essay, but my subject was my sad discovery that there is nothing new under the sun. There had been

The recent work of Eloise Roach of Austin includes her translation of Juan Ramón Jiménez' Platero y Yo (Platero and I, University of Texas Press, 1957, now in its sixth printing) and of her selection of his poetry, Juan Ramón Jiménez: 300 Poems (University of Texas Press, 1962, also published in Spanish by Plaza and Janes, Barcelona).

worth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats. No one who heard him snarl through Brown-ing's hate-filled Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister could ever again think that poetry is sissy stuff.

He left at midterm to engage in one of those sabbaticals—either to lecture at Cambridge or exploit *Coronado's Children* which was then filling bookstore windows or maybe just to help round up stock on the home place. Anyway, Mrs. Dobie took over and finished the year, and I didn't get many A papers back from her either.

Mr. Dobie was back on the Forty Acres in the late Spring and had been made chairman of a Dad's Day barbecue during the annual Roundup. As undergraduate publicity chairman for the event, I was in officious evidence, glamorous in big black Stetson, genuine leather chaps, and flowing orange neckerchief which bespoke my membership in the Texas Cowboys. I bore a platter of barbecue to my former mentor. He nodded acknowledgment and then, narrowly eyeing my cowpoke trappings, grunted:

"My God, MeLInGer (he always pronounced it that way), I didn't know you was one of THEM."

Four decades later my soul still shrivels at the way he rasped the word "them." I never did enjoy wearing my cowboy uniform much after that. □

flappers and jelly beans in the 18th century, though they were called belles or Nymphs and beaux or fops or witlings. And all our "new" approaches had been practiced two hundred years ago!

Imitating Pope, I wrote my paper in heroic couplets and freely paraphrased both Milton and Pope. I have forgotten how my essay began, but the ending said something like

"Weep, earthly Muse, with sorrow we are smitten:

Even our themes are old before they're written."

To which Mr. Dobie affixed the comment "This one is not!" and added:

"If I so well could write heroic rhyme, I'd lecture in the pentametric line.

But positively, all that I can say Is, with my thanks, Here, take your A."

ELOISE ROACH

July 24, 1964

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SPLIT RAIL INN

217 South Lamar

Where Union

Men Meet

Down a Bytrail

Austin

In May, 1960, I admired a photograph of Boris Pasternak in Mr. Dobie's downstairs work room. The Russian is sitting at a table by a cup of something hot and a bottle and cut-glass wine glasses; he is gazing out from his face as though utterly alone, lost in loneliness, thinking on something tired and terrible. Dobie sent it to me "in the name of one of the holiest of the holy ghosts—a man who saw into things and would not fool himself—Pasternak of *Dr. Zhivago*."

I seldom see Mr. Dobie—he might be working, over there in the white house on Park Place by the creek, and I would have presumed very much if I had gone over there more than rarely. Once, though, along in the late fifties, I told him I wished he had written more about these very times and about himself, perhaps in novels. I mentioned his *Tongues of the Monte*, which appeared in 1935. I don't remember what he said, I have instead a memory of his regret as he agreed with my regret.

During the time of *Tongues of the Monte*, Dobie said in his introduction to it, he made various trips on horse and mule with pack and *mozo*, "wandering through the vast, unpopulated mountains of Mexico, lingering at ranches and mining camps, living the freest times of my life." In the book itself he said, "I was a free being, absolutely untethered." In mysterious ways this book disembodied itself from his chronicling of stories of the past on the frontier.

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The Texas Observer

A Set of Four

Extra copies of this double-length special issue on J. Frank Dobie can be had for 50 cents each.

This number completes the Observer's project to publish special issues on each of Texas' three senior men of letters, the late Roy Bedichek, the late Walter Prescott Webb, and Mr. Dobie. Our next special issue on a writer from Texas will be concerned with Katherine Anne Porter.

We have a limited number of the Bedichek issue (June 27, 1959) still in stock, and a sufficient number of the Webb issues (July 26 and August 9, 1963; the articles on Webb lapped over into the August 9 issue). A set of these four issues, on Bedichek, Webb, and Dobie, can be had for \$1.50, postage paid.

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Tongues of the Monte expressed or suggested a spectrum of possibilities in him that had been lying unplied and signified directions his work might have taken if he had not returned to the University of Texas and the course he had set for himself. This, then, is a bytrail.

Neither novel nor folktale, fiction nor fact, *Tongues of the Monte* is a blend of these that draws body from its loyalty to the truth about the people and mystery from the fictions Dobie worked into this truth, and it charms most subtly through the shifting, indeterminable difference between these two, interenchancing each other. Which part is true, which made up? In this work of original idea, Dobie never said. "The characters are inventions, patched up from realities," he explained seven years after it appeared. "I invented a slight string of experiences on which to thread tales and people. I tried to weave the life of the Mexican earth into a pattern. It is truer, I think, than a literal chronicle of what I saw, whom I heard, and where I rode or slept would have been." He let the tongues of the book play softly back and forth between recounting and imagining, between the truth that is true and the truth that is made up, just as Hawthorne did in his novel more or less about Brook Farm or as one supposes Pasternak did in the novel about his own life in Russia torn. In *Safe Conduct* and *I Remember*, Pasternak's experiments in the idea of autobiography, he was not concerned with sequential truth, with representational recollection. Life happens in unnumberable and inseparable levels no sequence can cope with, and the truth is not located anywhere exactly. It is one of the charms of Turgenev's *Hunting Sketches* that while surely it was mostly true, there was too much magic in it for all those things really to have happened in the obvious sense to this literary lord, striding the Russian countryside in search of game and life. Almost the same it is with *Tongues of the Monte*, for Dobie was a kind of literary lord—a professor in a college, whose *mozo* told him that after God, he was next—and he was wandering the *monte* in search of stories of the life of the people, but also in search of his own. As *Hunting Sketches* was Turgenev's preparation for his novels, so, I think, would *Tongues of the Monte* have been Dobie's, but for his turn in the road.

AS WELL, in Dobie's book, as much concise and some magical storytelling, there is a kind of writing that surprises one's idea of him.

"At this instant" [he wrote] "I happened to glance towards the mountains to the east and, although dusk was approaching,

the sun having disappeared, I saw one of them aglow with a soft yet brilliant blanket of light, rose and amethyst and golden, misty like a veil and at the same time pellucid, surpassing in beauty and strangeness and effect upon the imagination any light my eyes have ever beheld. . . . The light kept shifting and changing with unbelievable rapidity. Now it was a spectral red, like the lips of the woman-mate to Death in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"; now a smouldering luster of copper like the un-natured and ominous hue of a full moon in midnight eclipse; now, again, all misty loveliness, and at the last a dying blush as soft as the half-caught aroma of honey-suckle hidden in the dusk."

This was at the Hacienda of the Five Wounds. So was this:

"As I learned upon arising, it was Dolores's saint's day, and according to custom, it had been inaugurated with the dawn serenade. She was seventeen years old, and now somehow she suddenly appeared to me as fresh and lovely as the morning of the first day. It is not often that in a Mexican home a strange man more than glimpses the unmarried daughters, except at meals. I was ceasing to be a stranger in the house. Anyhow, on the evening of this day Dolores was present when somebody told a story of a young lover who rescued a girl from the Comanches and carried her to safety on his horse. That made me remember a story I once heard in Chihuahua, and as I told it I could feel Dolores listening. Through it I meant—partly meant at least—to tell her how fateful it is for a maiden to fall in love; at the same time I know now that I was conscious of the 'mighty magic' almost any tale of love and fierceness would have upon this maiden, a solitary rosebud that, whether she knew it or not, all the winds and sunshine in a garden yet pristine to her were calling, pulling, drawing to open into a flower with petals as red as the blood of the heart and stamens lush with golden pollen."

Snaking slowly across the desert of Northern Mexico:

"And so we rode. If not in time, then in distance covered, the *jornadas* had to be short, for with pack mule and without grain or other forage travelers cannot rush barrenness that stretches away and away into other barrenness. It was as if I had never known any other land, any other life, any other beings but Inocencio, the mule, and the two horses. . . ."

If he imagined that he was beloved in Dolores at the Hacienda of the Five Wounds, or if he really was, and if his *mozo* told him, I am yours, and crossed his hand

with his blood, as it's my guess he did, why this is something like the love of now, finding its book as the maker finds its form.

ALTHOUGH I think one finds, down this bytrail, intimations of meaning and value for this region's writers in Dobie that have generally been missed, it is down the main trail of his life and work whereon we can follow his main value to us young ones—that he has been our fiercely honest elder, making of the earlier people's tales and travail here a library of written-down life that is therefore saved for us. He has been personal proof of the possibility of a writer working here where things of this kind seemed strange and beyond us. Bill Brammer said the other day, in Austin where he is writing again, "It never occurred to me—*ever*—until I read Frank Dobie, that I could be a writer. There simply were no writers in Texas." Dobie, and Bedichek and Webb also, have been our frontiersmen of letters, not only holding before us the idea that culture is wherever it occurs, but also themselves being models who prove that enlightenment can bear here.

And that integrity can last here. Dobie's irascibility against sentimentality is one expression of this. Now and again he has apprised me of his wearying with what he sees to be an attitude of charity toward the underprivileged, and of unrealistic egalitarianism, rather than intellectual en-

lightenment, in the Observer. Once, speaking of the movie about the Alamo, I believe he was, he said, "You can't have intellectual integrity and slop—appeal to slop!—conscious appeal to slop!" He has been stronger and more honest than the state university has, and the irony of the institution buying his library that spurned having him living and working within itself is not lost upon us, nor is the university's failure, for all its glomming onto the celebrations of him, to make personal amends to him commensurate to the wrong it did him and continues in force against him.

Last February he spoke to the Texas Institute of Letters banquet in Dallas. "I was more of a Texan in 1936 than I am now," he said. "I almost am as much a not-regionalist as Katherine Anne Porter told Lon Tinkle that she isn't. But when I write I have to write about something that I know something about.

"But increasingly I wonder what the Texas Institute of Letters stands for. I don't think it needs to stand for anything but quality. . . . I became aware of its standing for something only about ten years ago when it adopted the resolution condemning, opposing, and damning the censorship of John Howard Griffin's novel, *The Devil Rides Outside*." If, he said, a gentleman is one who never gives offense, "Well, I've seen lots of mesquite posts that fit that definition. I'm in favor of rebels, I always have been."

He also said that evening, "After I became grey headed, my mother said, 'Frank, why are you always trying to learn about the past? You make me think about an old man, this interest in the past.' Well, at that time, I guess I was thinking about the pageantry of the past and not trying to relate it to the pageantry of the present. But I can see times changing. . . . Life gets more complex—judgments of people get more complicated."

BEFORE THE WINTER became spring but near enough to warmth that the Dobies thought to turn on their air conditioning so they could enjoy their front room fires for longer, they were indulging me a little while before the fire when suddenly Mrs. Dobie thought of something from long ago.

"You know, a long time ago, Frank Dobie, when you were very drunk—I didn't know it, though, I was still innocent—"

He turned from her face and looked over to me with a wide-open smile—

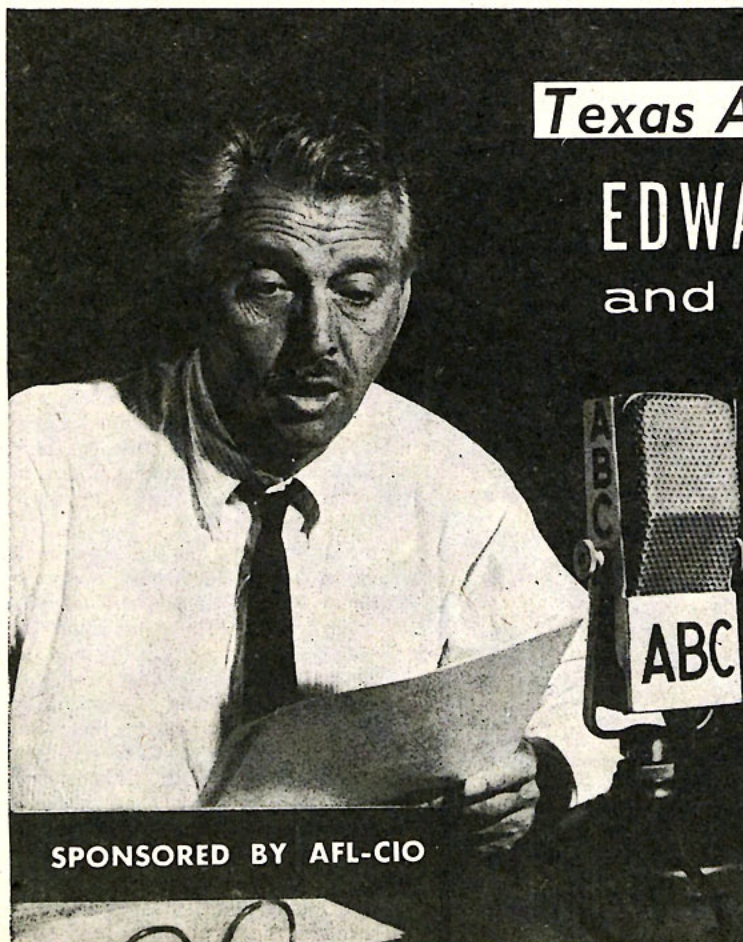
"—You said," Mrs. Dobie went on, "*From nothing, I am as various as Shakespeare!*"

He laughed heartily, and he turned to the window, and looked out.

"You see," she said, "I've remembered that all these years, Frank Dobie." R.D.

July 24, 1964

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Roy Bedichek

The late Roy Bedichek, the naturalist, made a rare public speech on his friend Frank Dobie at a dinner honoring Dobie in connection with the Texas Folklore Society meeting April 23, 1955, in the Driskill Hotel in Austin. Bedichek said:

In the five to seven minutes which the totalitarian dictator of this otherwise pleasant occasion has allowed me, I must undertake the compression of an inconveniently expansive subject.

I have wanted for a long time to try to clarify in my own mind the personality which provides the theme for this gathering of folklore folks. I have been associated with him a good deal since 1914. I have observed him at long-range addressing the public in speech and in print, and at short-range in man-to-man conversation. For twenty-five years we have both attended a bi-weekly discussion club where opinions are kicked about in free-for-all and sometimes more or less heated disputation.

Again, I have listened as he has turned on the charm with audiences, retailing the folkways, folk-wisdom, or the folk-tales of an environment in which we were both brought up. I have been received time and again into the tree-shaded, flower-bordered home, nested in a crook of Waller Creek, and experienced, as many of you have, the lift which genuine hospitality gives the flagging spirits of man.

Moreover, I have read his books and magazine and newspaper articles and have been surprised now and then into guttural gurgles by a pregnant phrase or turn of homely wit, or by the quaint humor of situation, pleasantly contrived. I have envied the ingenuity with which he extracts considerations of startling significance from the ordinary and the commonplace. I have talked often with his friends about him and occasionally with his enemies.

Surely I should know something worth telling about Dobie.

Therefore, when commissioned by the aforesaid dictator, I lost no time in taking to my typewriter to do up in a seven-minute package the quintessence of Dobieism. Presently, I had 12 pages. Then it occurred to me that I was not the only person on the program. My egotism had undertaken an unnecessary responsibility. Others will have their say. Had we gotten together beforehand and parceled out the victim, there would be less duplication, better coverage, and more thorough dissection. Realizing at last that I was not to sit in solitary grandeur at the speaker's table, I crossed out all except what's left on the next two pages. I find that it deals with only one characteristic; but at that, one which more than any other seems to me to illumine what is dark in Dobie while perhaps rationalizing actions and pronouncements often misunderstood by his nearest friends.

DOBIE IS SINCERE. His well-known, because outspoken, abomination of pretense in life and art is only the reverse side of his passion for sincerity in his own life, personal and public, and in his own art.

The other day a charming woman, a famed hostess, was inviting Dobie and me to dinner, after which she engagingly promised to show us some slides she had made of her trip last summer. "I'd like to come for the company but I sure as hell hate pictures," drawled Dobie in reply. Later this lady with a lovely tolerance said to me, "Now wasn't that just like Dobie."

To an invitation to join a literary club, Dobie replied, "Dear Bill, I can't work up any enthusiasm about a literary club. I wouldn't want to hear *anyone* read his writing for an hour or two." Just like that—no weasel-words, no cushioning phrases. Still, I suppose in the last 30 years, he has

read sympathetically and criticized with the patience and tenderness of a skilled surgeon doing an operation hundreds of manuscripts of young, unpracticed, but aspiring writers. This comes of his sincerity as a teacher. Many forget that Dobie is first and last a teacher, and one who takes his teaching seriously.

They say he is a rebel, at least, a non-conformist. He is a "controversial figure," which means during the present hysteria to keep your mouth shut or else if that which you think is in any way critical of the status quo. A few years ago a managing editor told me that the Big Boss made him drop Dobie's column because he continually flouted the policy of the paper. Yet he has the art, should he choose to exercise it, of glossing over his real convictions and exhibiting them in a diorama of protective coloring. But again his sincerity interferes. I heard an old friend of his boyhood apply an epithet to him which signified the worst of the worst, the damndest of the damned, in those circles where the bigotry of race-prejudice reaches fanatical intensity. Dobie knows how his freely expressed opinions on race-relations are received among some of his oldest and dearest friends. But he disdains compromise and camouflage. Dobie is sincere. His refusal to conform has deprived him not only of friends and position, but has affected deleteriously the market for his literary output. We shall all have to admit it. He is a "controversial" figure, and *homo gregarius* loves conformity because it provides pleasant dozing in comfortable inertia.

But, I ask you, do we sufficiently realize the blight put upon art by this present-day mania for orthodoxy? Does even a culture-group such as this realize keenly enough the importance to the maintenance of our traditionally American way of life of an individual whose sincerity forces him to speak out in defense of it?

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO John Stuart Mill saw the paralyzing strictures which an industrialized society was throwing about the individual to restrain in him every impulse of a spiritual nature likely to thwart the so-called "march of industrial progress." Listen to the words of England's greatest social philosopher of the last century, addressing himself to this very theme:

"In our times from the highest class of society down to the lowest, everyone lives as under the eye of a hostile and dreaded censorship. . . . Thus the mind itself is bowed to the yoke. . . . In this age the very example of non-conformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee of custom, is itself a service. Precisely because the tyranny of opinion is such as to make eccentricity a reproach, it is desirable, in order to break through that tyranny, that people should be eccentric. . . . That so few now dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of the time."

And, I may add, a danger grown vastly more menacing in our own land and time.

Unusual Books, Rare Books, Used Books, Book World News



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Walter Webb

On the same occasion, the late Walter Prescott Webb spoke of his friend:

I have know Frank Dobie for about 35 years, maybe a little longer. There are many sides to him, more facets than I know, and I suspect more than he knows or suspects. He can not be confined, and is not subject to definition. All I can do is to describe some of his attributes as I have known them. Some of them may surprise you, but if they do that will only illustrate how impossible it is to understand him.

The first thing to which I call your attention is that Frank Dobie dislikes Texas. He is never happy when he is here; he is never miserable when he is away. The happiest years of his life he spent in an Oklahoma agricultural college where he said he felt completely at home. The thing he likes best about Texans is their boastfulness. He said that the only thing he disliked about Oklahomans was their modesty. He never quite got used to it.

A second characteristic is his unflinching spirit of obedience, his submissiveness to authority. He likes all the people in high places, and he is especially fond of regents. He is always anxious to please them, and they never gave an order that he did not obey with alacrity. There is not any instance where they said come, that he did not come running. He can anticipate their wishes. He was never known to keep galloping around on the prairie when he was ordered in to the campus. The regents often cite him as an example of what a university would be like made up entirely of Dobies. A thing of undisturbed beauty and a joy forever. A very quiet place it would be.

Mr. Dobie is a great defender of architects and sculptors. He is particularly fond of the architects who designed the University buildings, those who put all the windows on the west side so as to incubate the heat, make life in them intolerable for seven months in the year, and make expensive air conditioning imperative. He once expressed his unstinted admiration for the Tower on the Main Building. Dobie said that Texas had plenty of length and breadth, and that it should also have height in proportion. No sense in spreading out over all this space, with shaded

walks to fend off the sun. What we need, he said, is buildings imported from other regions, and that are comfortable only when they have snow on the roof. Dobie said you did not need a porch, that the only use for a porch was to put saddles on and provide shade for the dogs. He is not the critic who said of the University Tower that it would look better laid down on its side with a porch around it. That was another fellow who is to Dobie as Bacon to the English Bard.

His admiration of Texas sculptors surpasses that for the architects. He thinks the cenotaph on Alamo Plaza in San Antonio is the very embodiment of the artistic spirit of Texas, and that the sculptor who made it should be proclaimed an honorary Texas Ranger. He might add a few horses, but otherwise he approves of all the best Texas art.

Dobie is the best camp cook I know, excepting one. He does not want any of the conveniences. He would prefer to build the fire out of cow chips, but since the drouth has burned them up, he will compromise with green brush, and the harder it is to gather the better he likes it. He will grudgingly use wood that others have gathered, but I have never known him to set the woodpile on fire rather than drag off a few chunks. He will not use a griddle to broil a steak. He wants a green stick with the steak speared on it. He likes the fire so hot that he can burn the steak up on the outside and have it raw on the inside. If he can drop it a time or two in the

ashes, he considers the flavor improved. Some of his customers have said it didn't hurt.

Dobie is a total abstainer. He never drinks whiskey except on social occasions, and Dobie is really socially inclined. He does not know the difference between good whiskey and bad whiskey, and really shows a strong preference for the more vicious brands. He can not tolerate Jack Daniels or Old Forrester.

Dobie is quite fastidious in his tastes. He believes that everybody ought to dress for dinner, and he never misses a chance to put on tails or a dinner jacket. This is the influence of a year in England. You can tell by his stiff formality that he has departed far from his Texas heritage.

Dobie is one of the famous gardeners of Austin. His home on Waller Creek is set in grounds that are the envy of all his many visitors. He does all the planning himself, and any time you go there after five o'clock you will find him working near a table that is well equipped with what it takes to stimulate the artistic imagination of a gardener. It is generally assumed that Mrs. Dobie contributes something to this beautiful garden, but this is an error. Frank does it all.

There he is, ladies and gentlemen, and with all those simple virtues it is no wonder that we love him as much as we misunderstand him. □

July 24, 1964

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Paisano

What shall I say about my friend Frank Dobie?

It is an assignment fraught with danger, for I tend to be sentimental about people with whom my affections are deeply engaged, and Frank regards sentimentalists almost as highly as he does Professors of Education.

I should be able to write about him easily today, for I am sitting on the gallery of his ranch house at Paisano looking across the dry bed where Barton Creek ought to be flowing toward the rugged bluffs and the tree-studded hills beyond. A fresh wind is whipping across the gallery and there are no noises except the sounds of the country. I spent last evening in Frank's room, with longhorns and mustangs and paisanos and coyotes and skunks and a ragged old buzzard peering down at me from the walls. In the corner was a beat-up pair of handmade shoes from England, each with a 30-degree inward angle; Frank's feet are non-conformists too.

I cooked a steak last night over an open fire outdoors, and while I was eating it three deer ran lightly and without fear across the rock-strewn hillside above the house, an armadillo rustled here and there through the yard poking his snout into anything that seemed promising, and a skunk passed within five feet of me (I remained quite still) and made his leisurely way around the house.

The doctors have got Frank Dobie hobbled in town right now, but this isn't the first time and he will soon be back at Paisano. In the meantime his friends Tomás and Gomez are taking good care of the place. Yesterday afternoon they were here setting out trees along the creek bank. When they finished they came up to the house to put away their tools and joined me in the kitchen in a glass of *cerveza*. Tomás had just seen a large snake and, while he was looking for something to kill it with, encountered a bobcat, which caused him to forget all about the snake. Tomás and Gomez said they would have to watch "Meester Dobie" very carefully when first he comes back to Paisano. "Last time after he was so sick," Tomás said, "we would bring him up to the house and leave him in his room and go to our work, and then we would see him way over yonder across the creek or coming over the hill back of the house."

Frank H. Wardlaw is the director of the University of Texas Press.

Frank H. Wardlaw

They told me to tell him that all of the little trees which he had planted early this year were responding well to constant watering and looked as if they would live, and that the copper he had prescribed for the ailing pear tree beside the shed apparently had been exactly what it needed.

AT PAISANO I have spent some of the truly memorable evenings of my life—good food, good drinks, good talk. Usually there were just a few men there—Walter Webb, Roy Bedichek, Mody Boatright, Wilson Hudson, and (when we were lucky) Glen Evans or Johnny Faulk. Sometimes there would be other friends from Austin or visitors from other parts—men like George Fuermann, Lon Tinkle, Walter Whitehill, Lyman Butterfield, Alfred Knopf, Bertram Rota, and J. B. Priestley (the "beeg hombre," Gomez called him). The night before Priestley was here he attended a dinner with a number of young faculty members from the university and he was in a jaundiced, overbearing mood, but at Paisano he mellowed and added richly to the good talk which flowed through the evening.

Webb and Bedichek and Dobie wrangled endlessly on those occasions about all sorts of things—religion, politics, education, history, literature, grass, the habits of wild animals and cattle, everything under the sun and beyond it. A favorite topic was death, which they discussed with great geniality, and funerals, concerning which each had strikingly non-conformist views. Dobie and Bedichek had a compact that whenever either should detect signs of senility in the other he would let him know immediately. In the heat of argument this privilege was sometimes invoked.

Bedichek and Webb still attend our occasional sessions at Paisano. Bedi was planning to go to Paisano with Frank Dobie and Wilson Hudson to grub up stumps for firewood the afternoon of the day when he died in the kitchen while waiting for the cornbread to get done, and Walter Webb was on his way back to Austin to have dinner with some of us (not at Paisano) when he was killed instantly in an automobile wreck. They left us so suddenly

that it still doesn't seem that they are gone; and whenever we sit on the gallery at Paisano or around the "philosopher fire" inside they still enter into the conversation as naturally as though they were present, and their opinions are invoked on all topics. Soon after Bedi's death Frank called for a party at Paisano "at which we shall pour a libation to his ghost." He predicted that we would eat sometime before midnight. No more cheerful memorial service was ever held. It rained hard that night and Barton Creek roared out of its banks. Dobie and George Fuermann drove out the next morning with Glen Evans walking ahead of the car over the low-water bridge to make sure that the creek wasn't high enough to drown the engine. The rain added to the cheerfulness of the occasion. Frank's spirits soar every time Paisano gets a good rain. He loves Paisano more than any place on earth and he suffers when it suffers.

EVERY PLACE, every institution, every man in whom Frank Dobie has invested his affections—from Tomás and Gomez to the President of the United States, from Paisano to Cambridge University—has never been quite the same again. I visited Cambridge ten years after Frank Dobie spent a year there talking about American history and loosely related subjects. Nearly everybody I met, when they learned that I was from Texas, asked me immediately and with affection about Frank Dobie (one man came up to me and asked me about him on the strength of my hat alone). They all said that no American who has visited Cambridge had left behind him such good feeling for the United States, such understanding.

The University of Texas is a prime example of the lasting quality of Frank Dobie's influence. It was seventeen years ago that the Board of Regents ended his official connection with the university, but during all of these years he has remained a vital force on the campus. The regents could remove him from the payroll, but they could no more extirpate his influence than one can kill an idea by removing a book from a library. By insisting on his right to say what he damned please on any topic no matter how sensitive, Frank Dobie strengthened for all time the hand of every Texas professor who believes in liberty of thought and of every administrator and regent who seeks to protect that liberty for the faculty. Many people have contributed to the present firm dedication of the University of Texas to the principle



of academic freedom, but none more importantly than Frank Dobie.

The day may come when people forget that Frank Dobie went to jail rather than pay a parking fine (it seemed like a good idea at the time), but the Dobie legend and the Dobie spirit will live on at the University of Texas, not only in his fine library with thousands of pages enlivened and illuminated by his pithy marginal comments, but in the principles of enlightened non-conformity and uncompromising courage and amplitude of spirit.

That word "amplitude," a favorite of Dobie's, possibly sums up more accurately than any other the principle which has guided his career as a writer, particularly in recent years. It explains how a man most of whose writing has been devoted to regional topics has at the same time been the most effective foe of provincialism in thought that this region has yet produced—and God knows Texas has needed him. In his *Guide to Life and Literature of the Southwest*, first published in 1942, Frank Dobie wrote:

"I have never had any idea of writing about my section of country merely as a patriotic duty. . . . I would interpret it because I love it, because it interests me, talks to me, appeals to my imagination, warms my emotions."

To a later edition of this same book, Dobie added "A Preface with Some Revised Ideas." In it he said:

"It has been ten years since I wrote the prefatory 'Declaration' to this enlarged and altered book. Not to my generation alone have many things receded during that decade. To the intelligent young as well as the intelligent elderly, efforts in the present atmosphere to opiate a public with mere pictures of frontier enterprise have a ghastly unreality. The Texas Rangers have come to seem as remote as the Foreign Legion in France fighting against the Kaiser. . . . If during a decade a man does not change his mind on some things and develop new points of view, it is a pretty good sign that his mind is petrified and that he need no longer be counted among the living."

Frank Dobie cares about as much for consistency as Emerson did, and he is constantly changing his mind about people and issues. He told me once that the reason he didn't get further along with the autobiography which everyone was pressuring him to write was that "it is depressing to me to think about what a damned fool I have been in the past." The record of his life—whether or not he ever gets around to writing it up—and of his writing is that of ever increasing amplitude, ever-increasing awareness of the oneness of the world, of the subservience which all lesser loyalties must bear to those which are due to "the damned human race," a phrase of Mark Twain's which he has often quoted.

"There are no substitutes for nobility, beauty, and wisdom," he wrote. "One of the chief impediments to amplitude and intellectual freedom is provincial inbreeding. . . . I'd like to make a book on *Emanci-*

pators of the Human Mind—Emerson, Jefferson, Thoreau, Tom Paine, Voltaire, Arnold, Goethe. . . . When I reflect how few writings connected with the wide open spaces of the West and the Southwest are wide enough to enter into such a volume, I realize acutely how desirable is perspective in patriotism."

Not only has Frank Dobie's thought grown in amplitude throughout the years but his skill in the craft of writing has likewise grown. His last major book *The Mustangs* is likewise his finest, to my way of thinking; his autobiography, of course, may exceed it.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to estimate what Frank Dobie has meant to the literature and to the writers of the Southwest, or to calculate the thousands of hours which he has spent talking to and reading the writing of would-be authors. But as he has grown older his standards have grown more rigorous and he has become increasingly impatient with writing which reveals the limited mind, the restricted outlook.

He has read many manuscripts for the University of Texas Press. All of his comments on them bristle with his insistence on integrity and breadth of view. Witness the following:

"I don't regard this manuscript as worthy of your imprint. The writer maintains a provincial point of view. As you perhaps know, one of my later tenets is that no matter how provincial the subject, a modern writer must transcend the provincial point of view. This writer doesn't have enough outlook. . . . He is too concerned about himself. We do not give half a damn when and where he drank a Coca Cola or if he drank one at all. His car, on which he spends so many words, is less than consequential. He seems to have an idea that his personal experiences illuminate the subject.

"He uses far too many adjectives. If all the 'olds' in his manuscript were cut out, it would be shortened by several pages. He speaks of 'the world-famous 6666 Ranch' and 'the world-famous Pitchfork Ranch.' His world is no bigger than the Texas Panhandle. He shows consciousness of something that happened before 1876, but a very dim consciousness. His time limit for antiquity is too meagre for a historian. He does not know the meaning of words and is wordy throughout. 'The unique little village of Guthrie, Texas' is an illustration. Guthrie is not unique and 'little' is redundant.

"The style is juvenile. The writer lacks maturity of mind. . . . Going back to diction, I don't see anything 'mysterious' about a cow and her calf knowing each other. If they didn't know each other, anybody who knows b from bullfoot would be puzzled. There is no at easeness with either cattle or men."

About another book, Dobie commented: "The author is a damned egotistic Philistine."

About another: "The opening chapter is inane. Some of the writing is interesting,

but most of it concerns events that just happened to happen in the Big Bend. . . . Every statement in the first paragraph page 3 is a lie."

About a book concerning a certain section of West Texas: "Chamber of Commerce baloney. . . . The author dares not bring up the dearth of water; he never mentions wind and sand."

On manuscripts which he reads for us, Frank Dobie can seldom refrain from writing marginal comments in his unmistakable scrawl. Once before returning a manuscript to its author I had to erase from the margins three times a certain earthy expression, first cousin to the one which Hemingway's "Author" had to explain to the Old Lady in *Death in the Afternoon* (just substitute "horse" for "bull" and the terms will be identical). "Madam," the Author said, "we apply that term now to describe unsoundness in abstract conversation or, indeed, any over-metaphysical tendency in speech." If there is any tendency in speech or in writing which Frank Dobie detests it is an over-metaphysical tendency.

I don't mean to imply that Frank Dobie is always harsh in his criticism of others. Nothing excites or pleases him more than to encounter unexpectedly genuine quality in writing. The first book which he recommended to the University of Texas Press was J. Mason Brewer's manuscript, to which the author had given the impossible title "Negro Preacher Tales from the Brazos Bottoms of Texas." Frank not only recommended it unequivocally but he wrote a discerning preface to it and re-christened it in a moment of inspiration *The Word on the Brazos*.

One day Frank called and told me about an unusual book which had just been brought to him—for forty-odd years Texans have been thrusting their manuscripts on him to read. This was the work of a 17-year-old high school senior from Beaumont who for two years had been engaged in editing his grandfather's memoirs without the knowledge of his parents. "Most Ph.D. dissertations aren't nearly so good," he told me. And so we published Johnny Jenkins' *Recollections of Early Texas*.

And then there was the time when he called and told me flatly that "I've got a book here that you are going to publish." The late Ralph Jackson of Beeville, who had recorded the story of his family for his children without thought of publication, had sent a copy to Frank Dobie because he thought it might interest him. The result was that gem of a book *Home on the Double Bayou*.

Frank's judgment is not, of course, infallible, and he has blind spots where certain kinds of books are concerned (haven't we all?), but his mind separates the genuine from the spurious almost unerringly and he never hesitates to express his opinions forthrightly. "Hell," he said in a letter once, "when I want to say anything I say it out, and I don't go around behind tree stumps to get it suggested."

A whole article could be written about
July 24, 1964

Frank Dobie's contempt for censors. He will take up the cudgels against them anywhere, any time. It is largely because of him that the Texas Institute of Letters has in the past made its influence felt powerfully in support of freedom to write and to read—and will again some day. "I rate censors as low as I rate character assassins," he wrote once; "they often run together."

ONCE I DROVE to Fort Worth with Frank Dobie to attend an autographing party for *The Mustangs*. I fell into conversation with a well-dressed man who had brought over a number of books for Frank to autograph. He explained to me rather apologetically that he liked Frank Dobie's books although he didn't like his politics. "However," he said, "when my friends tell me he is a communist, I tell them that I don't really believe it." And then he asked, "Are you a friend of Mr. Dobie's?"

"I have that honor," I replied instinctively.

Jane and I had met Frank Dobie through his books long before we came to Texas in 1950, and I met him in person at the Southwest Writers' Conference in Corpus Christi a month before we loaded our family and livestock in the Chevrolet and headed out for the great adventure of organizing a new press at the University of Texas. We arrived hot and tired and a bit dispirited (few motels and fewer cars were air-conditioned in 1950 and traveling with four young children isn't exactly recreational at best). In our mailbox when we arrived was an invitation from the Dobies to have dinner two nights later in their backyard with the Bedicheks and with Tom and Sarah Lea from El Paso. It was the finest

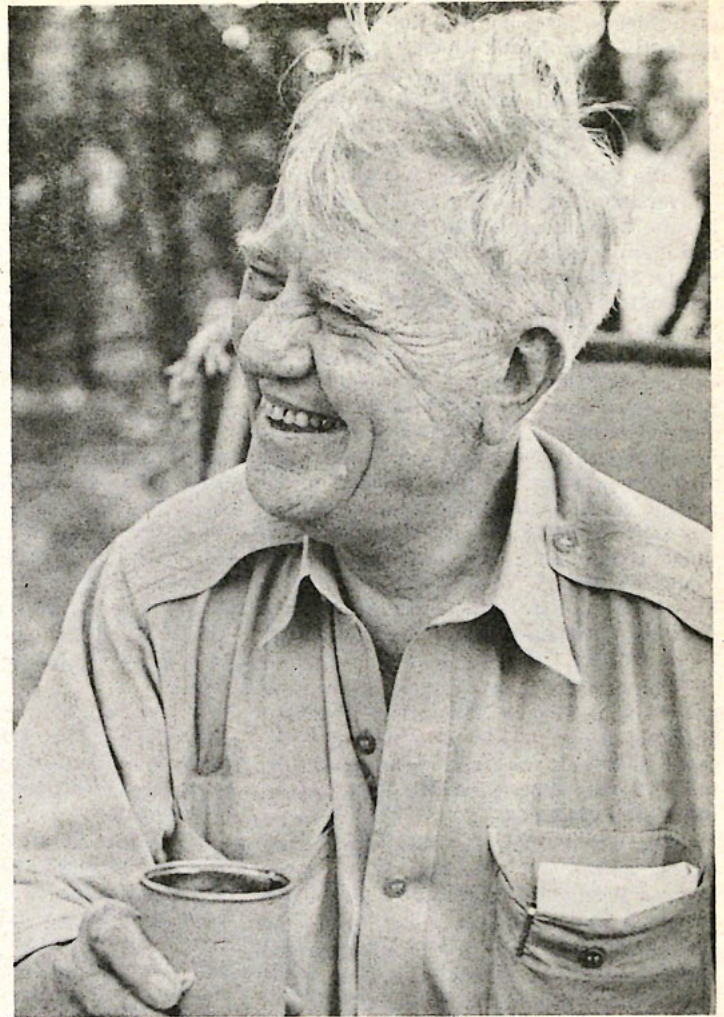
introduction to Texas which any couple could have received. We have had the honor of the Dobies' friendship ever since, as have our children.

Every now and then Frank calls me at the office and suggests that I come by to see him — "but make it the right time of day" — and every now and then I invite myself. We sit out in the backyard by Waller Creek, Frank with his shoes off and his hat on, surrounded by Bertha's wonderful flowers, and talk about everything under the sun, usually in the company of our mutual friend Jack Daniel. We differ sharply on many issues (I am a shade more conservative than he is, and still have some formal religion, and believe that the public schools our children attend are much better than those I went to), but Frank has never exacted agreement from anyone as a price of friendship or respect. He is as good a listener as he is a talker.

Once George Fuermann sent to Austin by me a remarkable pint bottle of rye whiskey which had been twenty-two years old when it was bottled during Prohibition "for medicinal use only." He instructed me to share it equally with Frank Dobie, Walter Webb, and Jim Hart. Roy Bedichek, who never drank anything stronger than beer, was to do the pouring. Miraculously I made it back to Austin with the bottle unopened, and so one evening before the Town and Gown meeting the elect gathered by Waller Creek to claim their portions of this noble rye. Bedi figured out that there would be four ounces apiece for the toppers and we decided to take our shares in two two-ounce drinks. We had just about finished the first drink when a young man with a pack on his back—a birder friend of Bertha's nephew Edgar Kincaid—came around the side of the house in search of Edgar. Frank introduced us and invited the boy to sit. Then he leaned forward and peered keenly at the stranger from beneath bushy brows. "You don't drink, do you, young man?" he asked.

"No, sir," the boy replied.

"Thank God!" Frank said fervently.



--Photograph by Russell Lee

JANE SAYS that she wishes there were room enough in this piece for me to talk about Bertha, whom we both specially admire, and not just because she has had the simple courage to go through life as Mrs. J. Frank Dobie. But there isn't room, and anyhow she deserves a piece of her own. A woman of intelligence, humor, great good sense, and quiet loveliness, she is as remarkable a person in her own right as Frank is in his.

AS YOU CAN SEE, this has turned out to be a rather personal piece about my relationship with Frank Dobie, and I am afraid that I haven't been altogether successful in avoiding a display of sentiment. Today I asked myself what his friendship has meant to me personally. It has, of course, meant the best of comradeship, and stimulation of ideas, and broadening of horizons. But, perhaps most of all, it has brought heightened courage to me, just as it has to the University of Texas—not as much as his own, of course, but some anyhow. And I know that if I ever do something which I know I shouldn't or fail to do something which I know that I should simply because I am afraid, I will no longer "have that honor." □