

The one great rule
of composition is to
speak the truth.

—THOREAU

The Texas Observer

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.

An Independent-Liberal Weekly Newspaper

Vol. 51

TEXAS, JUNE 27, 1959

10c per copy

No. 12

ROY BEDICHEK

I The Natural Man

Nature is the complex of all complexities. One part of a man may be as simple and serene as the cow chewing her cud in the noonday shade of a tree a thousand miles and a hundred years away from any milking machine; and yet the whole of this same man may be as complex as the genius of Shakespeare—that is to say, the greatest genius in the world

—ever penetrated. It will be a great deal easier to show Roy Bedichek in the simplicities of naturalness than to express him in the naturalness of the highest intellectual and emotional complexities.

His going to bed with the chickens in summertime and not too much later in the wintertime and getting up with the morning star at all times made his friends smile. He favored several kinds of independence common to the country. It did him good, he said, to walk out and empty his blad-

der on the ground instead of having to go in the house and empty it into a mechanical contrivance. I've heard him say that sometimes in the obscurity of before-dawn he would dig a hole in the ground out in the yard near "the shack"—his study—and ex-

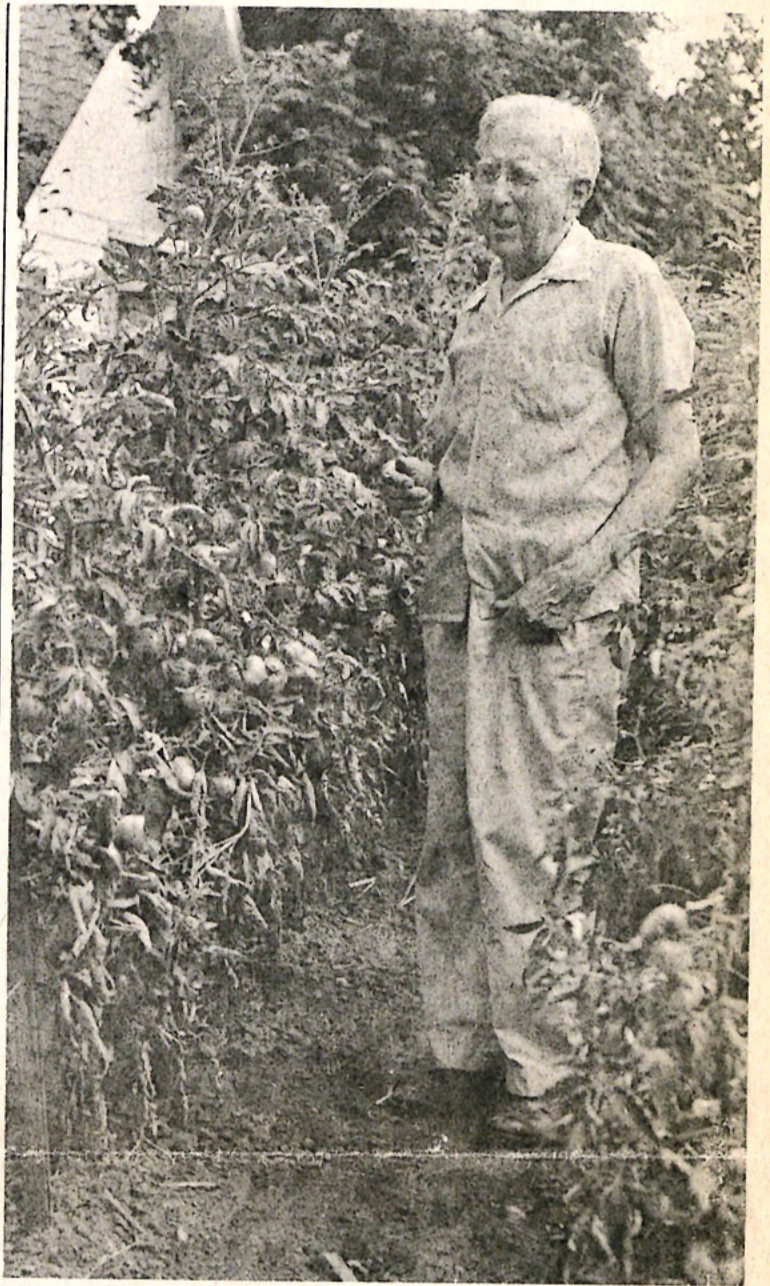
J. Frank Dobie

crete into it, covering the place with dirt like a cat. It gave him a satisfaction to fertilize the ground. He liked to cook outdoors, eat outdoors, sleep outdoors, look and listen outdoors, be at one with the unexplaining wind from the south, with the swing of the Great Dipper around the North Star, and with the first bob-whiting at dawn. He preferred camping on a hill so that he could watch the firmament, rather than down in a shady valley by water.

The last car he bought, in 1951, was a Dodge pickup truck in which he could carry enough water to make his camp on a hill comfortable for a day or two. This pickup was for camp purposes, but he used it to run about in also, his wife owning a sedan. He got an immense satisfaction out of trucking in cow manure, also occasionally chicken manure, for his compost pile, with which he annually fertilized his garden. He got a satisfaction out of hauling his own wood in from the country; he liked especially cedar stumps that he wouldn't have to cut for the fireplace. He had complete camp equipment, including a tent-fly to go with the truck. Part of the equipment was a field guide to the flora of the country and a field guide to the birds. He always took along something to read as well as to consult; above all, he took along the most richly and variously stored mind I have known. Not for him the dream of retiring to some primitive land and mating with "some savage woman" to rear his dusky race. For him back to nature was not back to the primitive, there to be saved from "poring over miserable books."

HIS FATHER, James Madison Bedichek, an ex-Confederate soldier, quoted philosophers and talked philosophy at the family dining table. He proved up on a quarter-section of land near the village of Eddy, not far from Waco in central Texas. Here he and his wife ran what they called the Eddy Scientific and Literary Institute, dubbed the Bedichek School by the public. Mrs. Bedichek boarded and roomed some of the pupils. Roy's aptitude for books was as congenial as that for milk. The atmosphere of literature and of thought was as natural to him as the atmosphere in which a lone buzzard soars over a cedar-covered hill or in which a coyote trots through the mesquite, sniffing for a woodrat's trail. I would not call his taste exactly austere. He took pleasure in witty limericks, even though bawdy; he could talk for hours with some cedar-chopper whose literary vocabulary was limited to the printing on a bottle of Levi Garrett's Snuff. I've heard him say a dozen times that he

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—Neal Douglass Photo

Bedichek in his Tomato Patch

'There is at least one full man'

Two things are inextricably mixed: Bedichek himself and Bedichek as a symbol.

Some of us who never spent much time with him still more or less realized ourselves in him. He was what we tried to be: Artist, scholar, and primitive all in one. He must have been well aware of this. There is a letter on the table from my old-time roommate and blood brother Ted Thompson—

Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;

They had been fou for weeks thegither!—

telling of a debate that he and Mr. Bedi were having on a familiar theme. Ted was contending that although there was a real Socrates—a stonemason who went barefoot in the streets of Athens and disputed philosophy with all comers and perhaps even drank all the others under the table at Agathon's banquet—the Socrates of the Dialogues is Plato's idealized image of man as the lover of wisdom.

But it does not really matter. Maybe Plato overidealized Socrates and maybe we have overidealized Mr. Bedi. Even so, we shall do better for loving the myth we ourselves have helped to make no less than the man himself.

I knew Mr. Bedi for years but because of time and chance I knew him better through Ted than by being with him myself. Only once did I spend a full day with him. That happened when I went to Austin to write a rather trivial newspaper story about Frank Dobie.

The three of us went out to a little ranch that Mr. Frank had in Burnet County. He had offered to bet that one of the wild cherry trees growing along the creek was at least a foot in diameter. For Dobie, the claim was astonishingly modest. The three of us measured his tree and found that it was more than two feet in diameter. We hunted for flint chips on the creek flat—one bunch of Indians or another left flakes on nearly every creek flat in the whole Edwards Plateau country—but we found only two chips of flint and one spent .30-30 bullet.

We watched two birds having a fight. Mr. Frank and I knew that one of them was a scissor-tailed flycatcher but Mr. Bedi had to explain that the other one was a cowbird and she was trying to lay an egg in the flycatcher's nest. And I blew a dog-calling horn that was hanging on the back porch of the house, just to see if it would really blow. It would.

But the thing I remember best is watching Mr. Bedi wash the dishes after we ate dinner and took a nap. This is a simple act. Millions of people, mostly women, wash the dishes every day. But it is not often that you see an artist, a scholar, a naturalist, and a teacher of young men wash the dishes.

Knowing how to do the simple things has got to be a sort of desperate, lost-soul cult with me in the past few years: How to use an axe, a shovel, and a hoe; how to call the dogs with blowing horn; how to climb the tree and kick the coon out; how to build a fire with one match in the middle of a thunderstorm.

So I watched Mr. Bedi wash the dishes and I thought, without ever saying so: There is at least one full man left in the world. He writes books, he reads Plato, he can name all the birds without a gun, he loves poetry, and he loves the woods, the prairies, the seashore; the hawk in the wind; the blue, blue gentians blooming at the foot of the slope; the Pointers and the Pole Star and Orion, that have shown the way at night for so many thousands of hunters and seafarers; the campfire, with its light flickering on the leaves of the trees.

"For we are lovers of the beautiful," Pericles said in the most famous of funeral speeches, "and yet with no loss of manliness."

HUBERT MEWHINNEY

'The respect of intelligent men'

This is a special issue on Roy Bedichek, who died May 21 at the age of 80.

He was born in Illinois in 1878 and brought to Texas at five by his teacher parents, who tutored him until he entered the University of Texas.

For 15 years after college he bummed around the country and the world. He picked cotton in the South, peeled potatoes on a river boat, picked berries in New Jersey, washed dishes in a Chinese cafe in New York City, tramped over the English, French and German countryside, assisted a fake divine in Boston, dug coal and scouted rivers in West Virginia, cut off hogs' heads in a Chicago slaughterhouse, and homesteaded a dugout in Oklahoma.

Mrs. Bedichek says he had "lots of yella hair, and green eyes with lots of spots in them." With a wife and children, he worked as editor of a newspaper in Deming, New Mexico, secretary of the Deming chamber of commerce, and city editor of the San Antonio Express.

Then as the director of the University Interscholastic League of Texas he began to affect the lives of millions of Texas children. Hold before the young, he said, "the same great theme of superior performance and the vi-

sion of greatness it inspires." To the league's competitions in sports, speech, music, and writing he gave most of his life.

Along the way he became a naturalist, a camper, a gardener, and an intellectual steeped in the classics. With \$5,000 from the Texas Historical Society and sanctuary at Walter Webb's Friday Mountain camp in his late sixties he began to write his books. In the last dozen years of his life he completed four of them: *Adventures with a Texas Naturalist* (Doubleday 1947), *Karankaway Country* (Doubleday 1950), *Educational Competition* (University of Texas 1956), and a book on smells, publication pending.

About 11:30 on the Thursday morning of May 21 he asked Mrs. Bedichek for his lunch a little early as he was excursioning into the country. "I've got some corn bread almost done, you want to wait?" she asked. "O I'll wait," he said, sitting on a stool. "I need Southern corn bread."

"Six breaths it was over," Mrs. Bedichek says. "How could he die in seconds when he had been so strong?"

The Texas Senate resolved that he was "known and loved by thousands of Texas children and had the respect of intelligent men."

'His ideal of a balanced life was Greek'

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could no longer read American fiction because it is so pallid and insipid compared to the great Russian fiction rammed to the breech with vitality: Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy. He admitted Balzac into their company. During a long span of his life he read the greater part of Shakespeare about once every two years.

THE WALT WHITMAN that he knew by heart and had absorbed into his very marrow was not the sentimentalized "good grey poet" but the tough poet of democracy. "He is our greatest exponent of Democracy among the poets," Bedi wrote me in a letter. "The reached hand, bringing up the laggards—could there be a more expressive phrase of the true inwardness of Democracy than that?" Along with Whitman, his favorite American writer was Thoreau, acid, with the wild taste, a rebel. Bedichek gloried in the influence that Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" had on Gandhi and India and is still having over the world.

While he was writing *Adventures with a Texas Naturalist*, or maybe it was *Karankaway Country*, he made a habit of reading pages of Plato with his pre-dawn coffee. Plato helped start the day for him on a noble plane and put him into a creative mood. At this time he would not wilt the freshest part of the day with the littlenesses and banalities of a morning newspaper. For no man writing a book has morning ever been, to quote a 1945 note from Bedichek, a time to "stoke the furnace of indignation against numerous manifestations of Fascism in this country." He never learned the Greek language, but his ideal of a balanced life, of a just proportion of the elements that make up a human being, was essentially Greek. In reading Homer, he compared several translations. As hundreds of quo-

tations and allusions in his books and letters would show, the immortal essence of the Greeks was in his veins.

It seemed to me that the philosophy of Henry George had a more determining effect upon his economic views than any other writing. Henry George advocated a single tax and did not consider it just that an individual owner of real estate should collect the unearned increment given to it by population and labor. Bedichek believed in the single tax but would justify buying a piece of land by saying, "It's better to run with the hounds for your dinner than with the hare for your life."

Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative was his golden rule: Do only as you would have others do; or, act only as if you would have the act become universal law. The categorical imperative is contrary to the ways of greed and lust; so was Bedichek. He was as unenvying and as free from greed and jealousy as any man could be.

IN THE EARLY 1920's he suffered from a rash caused, he was told, from eating too much of high proteins, especially eggs. He became for the rest of his life what Sam Houston called "a damned vegetarian." He was not too rigid, however, to enjoy latitude upon occasion. As a guest he ate of the meat set before him. He took the lead many a time in getting a few men friends to go out in the country for a meal and talk. There was always a steak, and Bedi always insisted on cooking the steak over coals. Nobody could cook it better, and he was no slacker in eating his part of it. Cooking meat over an open fire mitigated in his mind any "protein poison" it might have; at a hotel table I've seen him dispose of an untouched steak to somebody else who could eat a double one. He

had a theory that the deeper down into the earth a plant puts its roots, the richer its fruit is. He positively gloated in dilating on the mineral and other virtues of pecans. He loved to mix a green or a fruit salad and would linger long and lovingly in detailing his recipe for such.

In theory he was against doctors; I think he wrote considerably on a book intended to expose at least several sides of the medical profession—though he be-

'Along with Whitman, his favorite American author was Thoreau, acid, with the wild taste, a rebel.'

lieved very much in his doctor daughter, Mary Virginia Carroll. He would quote an old proverb: "A man's either a fool or his own physician after 40." He said that a sick man should have as much sense as a sick cow: she quits eating and goes off and lies down.

Sometimes it didn't seem at all natural to me that Bedi should be practical. He was a productive gardener, as his table, his deep freeze, and many a mess of vegetables he gave to friends showed. Yet he put a kind of ritualism into gardening that farmer folks wouldn't and couldn't bother with. When I drove with him in his pickup I constantly wondered how he made it through the streets—but he always made it.

He liked raw milk, believed in its virtues for himself and his family. He had a contempt for boiled and chemically treated milk, something taken out and something else put in. For years he milked his own cow. There were vacant lots not far distant from the Bedichek home on East 23rd Street in Austin, where a cow could graze. The last cow he had, about 1932 or 1933, was a four-gallon milker. She was very gentle and very much devoted to the Bedicheks, but keeping a cow and milking her became too much of a burden, and Bedi sold her to a man out near Deep Eddy on West Sixth Street. This man saw the cow being milked. Bedi told him that she wouldn't give milk unless she were treated gently and fed well. He got up at 2 o'clock in the morning to lead her to the purchaser, thus avoiding the traffic. The purchaser hadn't had her more than two or three days before he complained that the cow wasn't giving the milk claimed for her. He wanted his money back. Bedi went out there. The cow was shrunken and showed abuse. While the man was away for a minute, his wife told Bedi that her husband had beaten the cow. Bedi felt like beating the man but he left. He didn't give him his money back either. Anybody who knew him would as soon expect apples to fall up instead of down as for him to misrepresent a fact.

IN THE VIGOR of early manhood Bedi drank some whiskey—maybe not too much—although after he married any drinking was bad economically. I don't think he ever loved any man quite so much as he loved his college friend Harry Steger, with whom he went to Europe and who died young. He cried all day long, so Mrs. Bedichek has told me, after receiving word of Steger's death. One of his favorite anecdotes was of meeting Steger on Congress Avenue in Austin one day. They both wanted a drink but before entering a saloon swore to each other that they would take only

one and then get out. They took the drink, and it was good. "Well, let's go," said Bedi. "That drink makes me feel like a new man," Steger said, and "now the new man has to have a drink." I never did ask Bedi if he joined the new man.

By the time I got to know him, he wasn't smoking the pipe or cigar he had once smoked. He took real solace in a bottle of beer along in the evening or with a Mexican meal—but virtually never more than one. Along about 1954 or 1955 in the middle of a terrible drouth devastating much of Texas, I brought back about a dozen cases of Carta Blanca beer from Monterrey, Mexico. I had a devil of a time getting them past the customs ignoramuses at Laredo. I had to prove my right to pay duty on beer just as beer dealers pay it. I hadn't more than got to Austin and got a few bottles cooled than I called up Bedi. For awhile I shared that Carta Blanca beer with other people, especially when Bedi was around. When only two cases were left, I cut off everybody, including myself, and saved it especially for Bedichek. Occasionally there might be two or three or half a dozen other men; I'd offer them what they wanted to drink, and if they wanted beer they had to take Schlitz (Bedi's second choice) or something else. Then I'd bring out Bedi's bottle of Carta Blanca. He enjoyed that sort of petting.

II Talker and Storyteller

As newspaperman, chamber of commerce exponent, and director of the Interscholastic League of Texas, Bedichek had done a vast amount of hack work. Anybody who works for a living spends the majority of his energies in hack work. But though he was a university man, specializing in the humanities, he had never been deflected by the Ph. D. system into the inferiorities of literature. He had spent a lifetime reading the best before he turned author with seventy just over the hill for him. While H. Y. Benedict was President of the University of Texas, I heard him say that Bedichek should be teaching literature. "Why not put him to teaching it?" I asked. "Because every Ph. D. professor of English would have a colt if I did," he replied. That was the truth! Sawdust never yearns toward vitality.

We all learn with wonder of the feats in memory performed by the Macaulays of history, but I've never known anyone else in the flesh who held in memory so precisely so much of what he had read as Roy Bedichek. He could have produced a magnificent anthology of English poetry solely out of his memory—as rich as Lord Wavell drew from his memory in *Other Men's Flowers*. He

had the added faculty, perhaps of a higher order, of always being able to draw from memory anything related to a subject brought up by conversation or in his own flow of thought. Sometimes he had to restrain himself from clogging his writing with allusions and "decisions that had from the time of King William come down."

Early in the summer of 1953 Jess Akin of Austin decided to paint the portraits of Bedichek, Walter Webb, and myself. He had painted mine unsatisfactorily and wanted to make another attempt. If a person is being portrayed for his significance, every effort should be made to make that significance appear on his countenance while he is sitting for the painter. I volunteered to do my best to keep Bedi's features illuminated while he was being painted. I knew that he would do more talking than I, for he was just naturally a better talker. I illuminated him for four half-days. After Akin was through with Bedi, he took me on, and Bedi came to brighten me. We had eight conversations amounting to perhaps 30 hours in less than two weeks. I can say of Bedichek as Johnson said of Burke: "That man draws out all my powers." Neither he nor I was empty or exhausted when the sittings came to an end. Sitting and talking had become a kind of occupation with us. Several times I thought I would make notes on the subjects of our talk. I did not. Naturally, we recurred occasionally to the same themes—but without repeating. Now I cannot recall a hundredth part of what either said; if I could recall all, a book would be required to hold it. Little of it was trivial. It interested us, and that was sufficient.

Will Burges, lawyer of El Paso, John Lomax, of cowboy song fame, and Roy Bedichek were the pithiest and vividest relators of anecdotes about human beings they had encountered that I have known. Despite his rich stores out of books, Bedichek in the course of conversations with his peers drew more often from actual experience. He could make any character that interested him fascinating.

He told few stories except to reveal character, to bring out some point, or to complement something else. Lots of times one merry tale would call up another.

Boswell's life of Johnson is the greatest biography in the world because it records the best talk that has ever been recorded. Bedichek often talked as well as Johnson talked—but he had no Boswell to record more than a few snatches of his talk.

AS PRESIDENT of the Texas Institute of Letters, I had notice from judges of books published (Continued on Page 3)

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'His kindly nature'

Those of us who saw Mr. Bedichek often knew his opinions, independently formed and independently expressed, on a great variety of subjects. The futility of trying to recapture his words or the curves of his extraordinarily mobile mouth as he spoke is downright humiliating. I recall very few instances of which I can report, "Bedi said . . ."

It could never be judged of Mr. Bedichek that "he wrote like an angel but talked like poor Poll." He wrote well; he talked as well over a wide expanse of reading, experience, and reflection. One time he admitted us to a secret of his good talk. "I always try," he said, "to turn a conversation to a subject I know something about." I can see now just how he looked when he said that. Afterward it was fun to watch him turn a conversation gently and adroitly, to a subject that interested him—to bulldozing trees out of sites they had held for centuries; to the superiority in appeal of wild flowers over cultivated ones, all except roses; to the importance to health of food grown with organic fertilizer; to the martins living in a box he put up for them; to the arrival and departure times of the swifts that fill our summer skies with sound and movement; to the advantages of a vegetable diet; to the dull ordeal of watching home movies; to Voltaire, some of whose ideas he cherished in a little Haldeman-Julius blue book; to the letters exchanged

between George Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell; to Thucydides; to getting up at three in the morning; to friends whose humor or gaiety he enjoyed; to the shallow or the profound over the range of human intercourse.

He was as often called philosopher as naturalist. "Philosopher of life," I think when I remember these words: "Many things that are true should never be said." His philosophy had a homely quality, as in this, recollected by Edgar Kincaid: "There is hope for a nation that eats corn on the cob and thereby exercises its teeth."

When Mr. Bedichek was to be along on a picnic I always made potato salad. Always, that is, after the first time, when he told me, "All you need to do to get into Heaven is to take along a bowl of potato salad and then when Saint Peter opens the gate hold out a spoonful for him to sample and promise him the whole bowl if he lets you in." Next to the last time I saw Mr. Bedichek was at the Town and Gown spring picnic. From down one of the long tables a scrap of talk drifted up to me. Someone said of the caterer's potato salad, "It's very good." "Nothing like so good as Mrs. Dobie's," Mr. Bedichek assured her. Actually my potato salad is only "pretty good." But it suited Mr. Bedichek, and it suited his kindly nature to bestow praise.

BERTHA MCKEE DOBIE

'The old Greeks were not ashamed of tears'

(Continued from Page 2)
lished during the year 1956 that Bedichek had won the Carr P. Collins \$1,000 award, to be presented at the Institute's annual dinner in Dallas February 1, 1957. On the evening of January 20, I went to his home, finding him alone. I had telephoned him that I had a letter to confront him with. He was eating a salad of tomatoes, lettuce, cheese, and a little mayonnaise, moistening it down with a glass of buttermilk. He thought I should take a little something and spooned out yogurt into a bowl and put honey on it. We were both honey hounds, honey being the highest form of sweetness—natural. I could not remember having tasted yogurt before. He told me how monks in a Hungarian monastery had cultivated the yogurt germ hundreds of years ago, keeping it secret; how one escaped with the process to Canada, whence it came to California, where yogurt is now made and sold. "I get the yeast in a container every three weeks by air mail," Bedi said, "and make six quarts." He described in detail the sanitary processes for making yogurt and its bodily virtues. "Not the same thing at all," he said, "that you buy in grocery stores." I found it delicious.

After the yogurt, I confronted him with the letter. He read it aloud slowly. When he came to the point—the \$1000 award to Roy Bedichek for his book *Educational Competition*, he stopped, joy on his face. We talked a little and then he said, "Dobie, you'll go away and I'll think that I dreamed you were here with this announcement.

"About three thousand years ago a disciple of one of the Chinese philosophers came to him one morning and said, 'Master, I dreamed last night that I was a butterfly.' The philosopher looked at him hard and said, 'Sir, are you sure now that you are not a butterfly dreaming that you are a man?'

"That word *confront* you used over the telephone had me puzzled," Bedi continued. "You are somewhat of a precisionist, and *confront* bears the connotation of something unpleasant. I was wondering what sort of blackguard had been denouncing me and what you could have against me."

Thousands of words had special connotations for him. About the time I carried the good news of the thousand-dollar prize, the secretary of the Town and Gown Club, to which we both belonged, sent out an announcement of a paper to be read by Bedichek at the fortnightly dinner. His subject was "Water and Soil Conservation in Texas." I noticed the use of that word "confront" in a quotation from Bedi on what he was going to say:

"That which I shall write will be down—I fear far down—on the lay level. The authorities bristle with statistics which I only vaguely understand and speak in a jargon that I don't savvy except in spots. Hence my modesty may be compared to that of the Negro in the folk rime who was confronted with a medical emergency:

"Ah ain't no doctor nor no doctor's son
But Ah kin hol' de patient till
de doctor come."

One time at Conversation Rock, Fred Thompson was with us when I set out anathematizing the pasteurized, homogenized,

vitaminized and otherwise bowdlerized milk now sold in pasteboard cartons, this stuff having driven natural (raw) milk out of the market. I knew Bedi would respond.

When his children were young, he said, and Austin was still just a town, he kept two cows, staking them out on vacant lots and milking them in a pen on his own premises. He "wanted the children to have clean, wholesome, natural milk." Now with gusto he demonstrated holding his head in a cow's flank while he milked, so that she could barely kick at all and could not go to pissing without conveying a warning through muscular contraction.

Bedichek never was the kind of person to think all virtue resides in the past and that the world is going to hell. However, the loss of natural things was a frequent theme with him. He was

whereby a higher percentage is charged on income made by a joint furnishing entertainment with beer than from one that does not. Anyhow, a Swedish woman opened up a beer tavern in Minnesota and it was soon notorious for the patronage it drew. A tax man went to inspect it.

"He saw the place crowded with men. There were other beer places not far away with only small crowds. All sold the same beer. What was the attraction here? The inspector could see no dance girls, no entertainer of any kind, not even a television set. Then he saw the proprietress emerging from behind the counter carrying four bottles of beer. She had one in each hand and one sitting on each breast, where they stood steady while she moved with energy and did not touch them. Was this entertainment?"

I keep referring to talk at Barton Springs. One day while we

"But the speaker was adding emphasis by reading them out in a loud voice. Up at the top were so many millions and billions spent each year in America for food, so many for clothes, so many on churches, so many on education, and on through the catalogue. The figures were soaring and the speaker's voice soared to a climax as he read out the billions and millions spent on whiskey."

"And, by God, it's worth it," a mighty voice rang out. It was the voice of Buttermilk Jones. The announcement of his sense of values came in a way that absolutely killed the speaker's facts and figures."

"Why," Wilson Hudson now asked, "did they call him Buttermilk Jones?"

"Because he never drank buttermilk, I guess," Bedi answered.

"This putting a high value on whiskey makes me think of an

"A chiel's amang ye takin' notes,
And, faith, he'll prent it."

I despair at getting into print the felicity and fitness with which Bedichek was forever drawing out of his storehouse. Many writers, perhaps most, read in order to suck in something that they can feed out. During most of his life Bedi read to delight and enlarge his own mind. Now how in the devil had he come to remember those lines from Burns's "On Captain Grose's Peregrinations through Scotland"? (He had to tell me the source.) And how in the devil could they lie down there in the cellar of his memory for a generation or two and then, just as occasion arose for their application, jump to the surface like an empty corked bottle released at the bottom of a pool?

III

My Friend

On Feb. 24, 1957, I paid Bedi a visit in his shack, taking with me for him a paperbound copy of A. E. Taylor's *Socrates, the Man and His Thought*. On the fly leaf I had written:

"Dear Bedi, I give you this book because I would be as bereft if you went away as Crito and the others were when Socrates went. As one of them said of him, I can say of you, my friend, 'the wisest and justest and best man that I have ever known.'—Dobie, 24 February 1957."

Two days later I received this letter.

Dear, dear Dobie—

After I had been about an hour at work this morning, I glanced up and saw the volume "Socrates" you gave me yesterday. I remembered that I had seen some writing on the fly-leaf which I didn't take time to read while you were here. I had dismissed it momentarily as a "good wishes" inscription and so had let it escape my attention.

I reached up and got the volume in my hand "just to see." I was affected to tears, and I don't mean metaphorical tears but a real secretion from the lachrymose glands. One got loose from the inner corner of my left eye and it felt wet and warm, so I know they were real.

The old Greeks (bless them) were not ashamed of tears. That shame was a part of the sentimentalism and masculine assumption of superiority of that romanticism which assigned tears to women. I am profoundly affected, (stirred emotionally in that nervous plexus situated in the abdomen) by your placing me in a unique position in your affections. Truly, I have felt towards you a friendship I never felt for anyone else except for Harry Steger, who died 44 years ago.

Bless you for recording this where I can turn to it when sometimes: "the world is dark and I a wanderer who has lost his way."

Yours,

Bedi

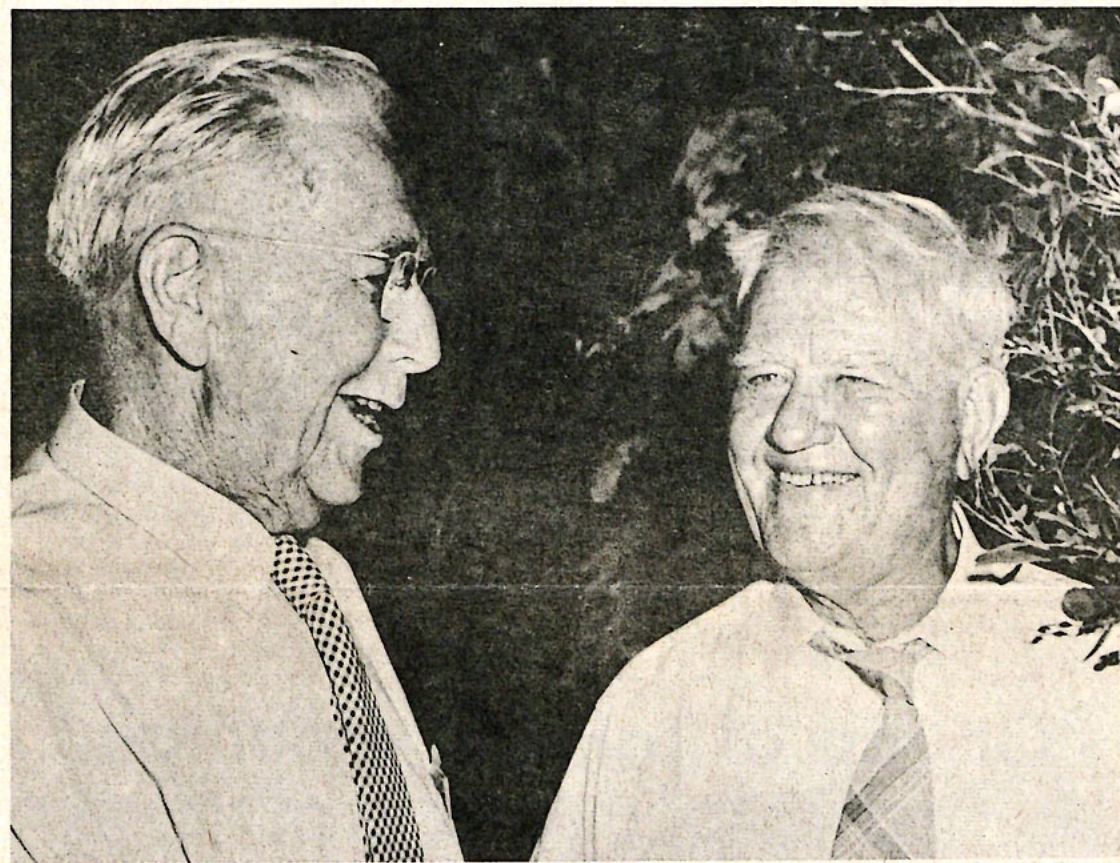
February 25, 1957

Two or three years before this, standing in a group of friends, I said to Bedi, "You are as good as grass."

"Don Quixote," he said, "once told Sancho Panza, 'You are as good as bread. Nothing but the sexton and his spade will ever part us.'"

Now the sexton and his spade have come. Something has been sheared off of me.

J. FRANK DOBIE



Bedichek and Dobie at an Austin Party

a confirmed believer in the country way of squatting to defecate. The squatting position presses up muscles to aid ejection, he held.

Squatting on the rim of a commode will not do. The rim is too slippery, and a squatter could fall and break a hip. I remarked on how high the seats of old-time privies were. Yes, Bedi said, he had sat on them so high that his feet could hardly touch the ground. But he could, without danger of falling, squat on the plank in which the holes were cut—and squat he did.

SHALL DIE REGRETTING that I did not set down on paper a thousand passages of Bedichek talk before they faded from my mind. Here is a brief note I typed on the night of September 6, 1957. It illustrates the mobility, and homeliness too, characteristic of Bedichek's mind.

"Bill Owens, writer and teacher in Columbia College, New York, and Bedichek's friend, came to town and this evening after a swim we sat down under the big elm in our back yard to drink beer and talk. When I brought out three cans in two hands, Bedi told this story, which, he said, came to him from an income-tax man.

"In Minnesota, it seems, there is some kind of income-tax law

were sunning after a dip in the cold water, Bedi remarked that a "farm-type of woman" he had encountered that morning reminded him of a wise old mare.

"After an old mare has had eight to ten colts," he said, "she gets a look of wisdom hardly seen in the eyes of the wisest philosopher."

On August 7, 1957, after a cold, cold swim in Barton Springs, we sat down about dusk to double hotness in a Mexican restaurant. This is one of the few uses of the word "Mexican" remaining active. Mexican restaurants in Texas are no longer run by Mexicans but by Latin-Americans. With Bedichek and me was our younger friend Wilson Hudson.

After much good talk, Bedichek told this story:

"One time out in Amarillo they were having a prohibition election. The pros imported a high-powered speaker to convert the heathen and packed the biggest gathering place in town with an audience. This speaker quoted poetry and displayed all sorts of diagrams showing the effects of alcohol on the human organs. Then he unrolled a long linen chart and hung it up on the wall to demonstrate the waste of money on alcohol. The figures and letters on this chart were box-car size so that they could be read half a block away.

incident during prohibition days," I said. "Not long after the end of World War I, an Englishman and a Texan were partners trading in oil leases and royalties out in the Burkburnett field. Some bootleggers were making more than owners of oil wells. One day a big well came in on land controlled by the partners; within fifteen minutes they cleared a hundred thousand dollars by selling just a fraction of what they owned, and they decided right there to celebrate the occasion.

"The Englishman rustled around and found a fifth of Canadian Club whiskey for sale at \$50. He bought it and took it to their room. He opened it and poured the contents over ice. Raising his glass, he said, 'Here's to whiskey!—the only time in my life I ever paid what it's worth.'"

TWO EVENINGS after this—and a lot of other—talk, we three met again, this time on a shady lawn. I read aloud what I had written, received a few corrections, and saw about three dozen words, sentence structures, and idea combinations to work on. Two evenings later we met again, in a darkening, air-conditioned room, fresh again from Barton Springs with fresh thirst. As we were raising our beer cans, Bedi quoted:

'Today is life-- the rest, nothing'

That Roy Bedichek remained my devoted friend for more than 60 years was always a mystery to me—he a scholarly person, I having little contact with literature except in dry law tomes and “political literature”—he a poet in thinking and living, I always engrossed in material things of this practical world. That he found something in my life that gave me his affection and interest has made me think more of myself.

We came to know each other in our late teens in the little town of Eddy. I attended the public schools; Roy went to his parents' private school.

We went from there to Waco in the fall of 1896 to work as stenographers and study law. A year later we decided to go to college before taking up any profession. We both joined Phi Delta Theta Fraternity at the University of Texas on recommendation of our boyhood friend, Tom Connally, who had joined the previous year. We continued for a good portion of our college life as roommates.

During our college days Roy and his and my fraternity pal, the well known Harry Peyton Steger, took an excursion pleasure trip to New Orleans. When they discovered that besides their return tickets they had only 50 cents between them, they invested this in a stalk of bananas and boarded their trains for Austin and lived on these bananas enroute. In those days such trips took much longer than now, but the bananas lasted them. We both earned our way through the University of Texas, Roy always as a part time secretary for somebody, and I by selling advertising in publications, getting roomers for boarding houses, etc.

After finishing our respective academic courses our lives became separated for around 15 years, during which time Roy was quite a wanderer. I think he tramped over Europe one summer with Steger, and I have a recollection of them reaching Montreal on their return, stranded, and financing trips (Roy to Texas, Harry to New York) by drawing several small drafts on mutual friends in Texas, of whom I was one.

When I became a member of the Texas Senate in 1918, I found Roy with the University Interscholastic League and with a wife and two charming girl children, Sarah and Mary, to whom I became “Uncle Edgar.” From 1918 until the day of his passing we remained in constant communication. It was always a “feast of soul” for me to have conversation or correspondence with him. His mind was richly stored with literature, and his memory was extraordinary, so that an “illiterate” like myself felt like he was sitting at the feet of a Socrates or a Solomon. He interspersed his talk with profanity not only without giving offense but in a way that made the profane words beautiful. He held demagogues and stuffed shirts in contempt but would not hurt anyone with the stroke of a feather.

Only recently, after receiving from me a letter telling him that neither of us would likely be here much longer, he wrote me:

I note your dismal prognosti-

cation concerning the imminence of our demise, and I think the less said about this the better for both of us. George Santayana, the famous philosopher who was given a sad view of life on account of living through two expatriations—one when he came to America at 8 years of age and another when he returned to Italy 40 years later—tried to live with his old age reducing his comprehension of time to one day. Once you get this psychology, he advises, things are brighter; The charm I find in old age—for I was never happier than I am now—comes of having learned to live in the moment, and thereby in eternity; and this means recovering a perpetual youth, since nothing can be fresher than each day as it dawns and changes. Of course, Santayana thieves this from the Bible, although he was all his life an uncompromising unbeliever, and infidel. He often said “The material world is a fiction, and any other world is a nightmare.” But nevertheless he swipes the thought of Jesus: ‘Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof; and take no thought of the morrow,’ etc. I have tried for a long time to do this very thing. It is hope, or looking forwards, and reminiscence, or looking backward, that brings on the gloomy days. Maundering over the ‘dear dead days gone beyond recall,’ or Tennyson’s cry-baby stuff: ‘Tears, Idle Tears.’

Better turn to Whitman, as I often do, repeating to myself, ‘This then is life,
Here is what has come to the surface after so many throes and convulsions.
How curious, how real!
Underfoot the divine soil, overhead the sun.’

Paul said: ‘I die daily.’ And the inference is that he feels that he has a daily resurrection. When one comes out of sleep (temporary death) and experiences a resurrection, he should ask nothing of dead yesterdays or of unborn tomorrows. Today is life—the rest is nothing.

The world will never be the same to me without my lifelong friend, Roy Bedichek.

EDGAR E. WITT

THE WRITERS THIS ISSUE

J. Frank Dobie is the writer and folklorist. Hubert Mewhinney is the writer and a member of the staff of the Houston Post. Bertha McKee Dobie is an Austin housewife and Frank Dobie's wife. Edgar Witt is chief commissioner, Indian Claims Commission, Washington, and a former lieutenant governor of Texas. B. C. Tharp is professor emeritus of botany, University of Texas. William A. Owens is a novelist, director of the summer school at Columbia University, and Roy Bedichek's literary executor. Rodney Kidd is director of the University Interscholastic League of Texas. T. H. Shelby is dean emeritus, division of extension, University of Texas. John Haller is an Austin writer and tree surgeon. Wilson Hudson is associate professor of English, University of Texas. Edgar Kincaid, the Austin ornithologist, granted the Observer permission to excerpt his article for the newsletter of the Texas Ornithological Society. John Henry Faulk is the former CBS raconteur now living in Austin. Charles Ramsdell is a San Antonio writer who recently moved to Austin. Gilbert MacAllister is professor of anthropology, University of Texas. Eugene George, Jr., is an assistant professor of architecture at the University of Texas. Fred Thompson is an Austin writer and journalist. Walter Prescott Webb is the writer and historian.

The Observer is indebted to all these contributors, and to others whom space prevented us from including. Especially are we and our readers indebted to Mr. Dobie, not only for his article but for his counsel and help, and to Mrs. Roy Bedichek for her most gracious consent that so many of Bedichek's letters be printed here.

'This group of three about an evening fire'

My first contact with Roy Bedichek came in the early twenties when I was put on the executive committee of the University Interscholastic League, of which he was the director. Our common interest in the out-of-doors drew us together; he had an omnivorous, insatiable appetite for anything natural, and I was fortunate enough to be able to contribute to his diet some vegetational crumbs now and then.

There was a third—and potent—personality involved: H. Y. Benedict. After he was made president of the University of Texas, he allowed himself no real vacation, but occasionally he did take off for a few days' trip to the coast to indulge his hobby of watching shore birds and collecting their eggs.

Our camping equipment was simple. The only “luxury-piece” was a folding grill which, in use, stood on four legs pressed into the ground. Bedi was Chief Cook. Concerning this he brooked no argument—nor, after the first camp, was there any effort to give him any! He was justly proud of his cooking prowess. Other members of the party could gather fire wood, peel potatoes or onions, wash dishes, or set up cots, but Bedi bossed the cooking.

Benny and Bedi ranged up and down the beach environs armed only with binoculars. There was never a gun in the outfit, and I am quite certain neither of them ever shot a bird, though Benny robbed their nests. In this he was assisted on occasion by the others, but B. C. mostly engaged in “weed-chasing.” His “catch” was put to dry in a plant press in preparation for incorporation in

the University of Texas Herbarium.

We usually came back to camp in the evening in time to finish supper and dishwashing well before sunset. This gave time for Bedi and B. C. to take lessons in egg-blowing while assisting Benny in performing this messy but meticulous chore. The reader may wish to visualize this group of three, seated about the evening fire, each with a pan in which to catch the omelet, assiduously blowing the contents from eggs.

WE BEDDED DOWN for the night on folding cots that were equipped, if necessary, with mosquito bars. Benny, whose professional training had been in mathematics and astronomy, would point out whatever constellations and galaxies were visible, explaining differences between them and suggesting the comparative magnitude, temperature, and density of red, white, and blue stars, the infinity of interstellar space, and the incredible speed with which the whole known Universe is hurtling through the infinity of space—and has been since the Beginning—without the prospect of a foreseeable end. In these matters B. C.'s knowledge was limited to recognition of the Big Dipper, the North Star, the Milky Way, and a few others, including Orion; Bedi's, while much broader, was by no means profound. Of magnitude, one of the most impressive revelations, to B. C., was the diameter of Betelgeuse. The largest (dull red) star in the constellation of Orion, it is approximately 350,000,000 miles wide—almost twice the diameter of the orbit of the earth around the sun! From such contemplations it was but a logical step to the philosophical implications of the vastness and the orderly arrangement of the physical universe. While the facts do not lend themselves readily to the support of a concept of the Deity anthropomorphic in attributes, neither do they support an attitude of atheism. That was the reasoning, at least, of Benny. With its logical soundness, Bedi was in agreement—and so was B.C.

WITHIN RECENT years Bedi's interest in nature included plants more and more. He learned by name all those with which he was commonly associated and equipped himself to key out a great many unfamiliar ones, particularly those that invaded his lawn and garden. Two years ago it was a brome grass newcomer; this year it was a thistle, *Silybum marianum*, with leaves 18 inches long—the last plant, I think, to attract his attention. When his friend B. C. was unusually (and inexcusably) slow in rendering his customary “consulting service” about it, Bedi apparently suspected ignorance. He called our mutual friend, Lorraine Barnes, and implied as much. When Miss Barnes called B. C. and asked him how about it, she was given the name followed by some facetious patter. She wrote it up in her column, but what I said (as correctly quoted by her) didn't look to me like it sounded to me when I said it. Seeing it in print gave me an immediate feeling of shame; when Bedi died a week later, the feeling mounted.

Fortunately, Bedi, having decided I wasn't going to keep a promise to visit his garden and make a color photograph of it, had brought a whole plant over to my house, and I had gotten a good color-likeness. I am calling it “Bedi's Thistle.”

B. C. THARP

'On top of Tallman Mountain'

When I first saw Roy Bedichek, in January, 1941, I was reporting to him at the Interscholastic League office on the Little Campus at the University of Texas. I had been appointed to do research in folklore and to direct folk festivals. He was to supervise my work because of his work with the Interscholastic League and, as I learned later, his wide knowledge of Texas life and lore.

From where I stood I could see him bent over his typewriter, intent on whatever he was putting down on the yellow copy paper. When Miss Willie Thompson took me in and announced me, he stood up and leaned forward to greet me. His old brown suit did not declare the man, but his face and manner did. So did the clutter of books, files, and mementoes of an avid collector of all kinds of information. I felt that I was being brought into the openness of his life and mind, and that at the same time I was being tested on my right to be there.

He put aside the copy for the issue of “Interscholastic Leaguer” he was working on and together we tried to define the job I had. But talk about work kept getting lost in talk about bird lore and folklore and English poetry. At one point he leaned back with his hands clasped behind his head and recited William Morris's “Defence of Guenevere.”

IN THE NINE MONTHS I was on the job, Roy Bedichek put me through an education that was superior to anything I had ever encountered, in college or out. The course covered the

whole range of human experience. His mind never failed him when he needed a quotation from literature or philosophy to expand an idea or support an argument. For variety he turned to anecdotes about birds and animals, and occasionally to Texas ballads and songs. The intensity of our discussions, the depths of my feelings brought me closer and closer to the day when I would drop everything, including my work in folklore, and enlist as a private in the army.

The education never stopped. When we were on hikes, or on long trips to Interscholastic League meetings, he always had something new to bring up. Whatever we heard or saw brought forth at least a lively comment, and at times a synthesis that was illuminating because it was unexpected. He was a lecturer, a talker rather, who never ran dry because of this ability to relate. When we went through the Carlsbad Caverns the guide gave statistics of heights and depths and the number of bats that lived in the caverns. Bedi listened to his facts and, in asides to me, enriched them with rare gleanings from his mind.

Over the years after I left Texas, in letters and in whatever meetings we could arrange, the discussions went on. One of the rarest of these occasions for me was a trip to the Big Thicket in 1956. I went to collect historical information about the oil fields, and learned a great deal. I learned much more listening to Roy Bedichek and Lance Rosier talk about the ways of birds and snakes and alligators. For three days we were completely re-

moved from consciousness of the foibles of people.

THE LAST TIME I say Bedi stayed overnight at my home, which is on top of Tallman Mountain, the last of the Palisades. This time he broadened his audience enough to include my two children. He kept us entertained all evening with talk of birds he had seen on walks in Westchester and Central Park. We were up at dawn for a walk along the Palisades. At seventy-nine, he set a pace difficult to keep up with. Though it was April and a cold wind was blowing from the north, he stood for an hour on a high bluff, determined to get a glimpse of an American eagle.

He set down the names of other birds he saw, but the eagle was uppermost in his mind. When we could no longer stand the cold we came back to the house and warmed ourselves with hot coffee before the livingroom fire. As if driven, away we went again, this time into the woods along the rim of the mountain, where I knew the eagle had nested the year before.

This time we were more fortunate. Through an opening in the branches overhead we saw a great bird soaring high against the blue sky. I was sure it was an eagle. He had to be convinced. We observed what characteristics we could and rushed back to the fireplace to study the bird books. I will never forget the pleasure he showed when he wrote in his notebook that on that day he had seen an American eagle on Tallman Mountain.

WILLIAM A. OWENS

'Our out-of-doors hotel'

1
Mr. Bedichek had many friends and varied interests, from cultural circles to the ranks of the skilled worker and the laborer. He wanted to know individuals; he could and did talk to the farmer or the rancher in the field, the worker in the garage, the high school coach on the diamond, the school children on the campus, the academician in the halls of learning.

In his frequent and extensive travels throughout the state, he always sounded out opinions of people on politics and national or international issues, on stories that are the folklore, on the names the people gave certain flowers, trees, or animals. He was never without a notebook and made prodigious notes on all these subjects.

I knew Mr. Bedichek as few had the opportunity to know him, for we camped together for days and weeks at a time over a period of twenty years. We camped on the banks of the Rio Grande and the Sabine. We slept by Caddo Lake, and roamed the plains of West Texas. We explored the sand dunes around Big Spring and the big thicket of East Texas. We travelled in the Fort Davis Mountains and through the brush and fields of Central, South and East Texas. We always preferred campsites to hotels, streams and lakes to bath tubs, and Dutch ovens to the finest restaurants.

When it was necessary for us to make an overnight business trip to any area in the state, he knew exactly where to go, for he had camping spots located all through the state. After the night's camping we were always in the office of the superintendent or the principal early the next morning.

During the years of my association with Mr. Bedichek, we perfected this "catch-as-catch-can" camping to a science—an outdoor ritual that became second nature to both of us. We removed the back seat from the car and substituted two small mattresses. (Mr. Bedichek had an air-mattress.) We had cook-

ing equipment, a nature library, and other items we found essential for "our out-of-doors hotel." One was a five-gallon can of water, for bathing and shaving, and cooking; this was filled at the close of each working day.

After finding the camp site, we had a regular routine worked out. Mr. Bedichek gathered the firewood and cooked the evening meal, which he liked to do. My job was to get out the cots, put up the beds and the mosquito bars, and unload the car. Our meals were good. Sleeping was better than in an air-conditioned hotel. Mr. Bedichek was a terrific snorer, a fact which forced me to set up my cot some distance from his.

After the evening meal, we would lie on our cots and watch the birds through field glasses until dark. Then Mr. Bedichek would look for the evening star, and try to estimate where the morning star would be at four a.m.

Sounds at night are varied and fascinating. Often birds in season were taking their long flights from north to south, from south to north, to nest or spend a season in another part of the world. Bedichek would expound on these and how they all fit into the beautiful pattern of life; how man often disturbed the balance that Nature had provided; how humanity wasted its great natural resources. Many were privileged to hear these discourses on natural resources, and I heard them under ideal surroundings—under open skies, with all the things he loved about him. To Bedichek, the world was a miracle; even the rotting leaf in his compost bed which, crumbling, brought forth new life to his growing tomato plants and other garden vegetables.

2
Shortly before Mr. Bedichek retired as director of the Interscholastic League, we decided to make one more attempt to see the "crazy quail" of the Davis Mountains. We went to our usual campspot, near Bloy's camp meeting grounds. We followed our established routine; Mr.

Bedichek got up at his usual hour of four a.m. and made coffee and, after he had had his first cup, I got up. I always waited until he had had that first cup of coffee, because until then he was not in too good a humor. One cup started the conversation, which lasted from about four-thirty until daylight. The topic for the day could be almost anything: the "New Deal," Republicans, educational theories, church projects, government problems.

At that time of year, the quail, if any were around, would be on top of the mountains. After breakfast Mr. Bedichek said I should go to the top of the mountain to find the "crazy quail." "I don't think I can make it," he said. "My mountain-climbing days are over." Our camp elevation was about 5000 feet and, with exercise, breathing was a little difficult. So I prepared a small lunch, (as the trip to the top would take all day,) put on my jacket, and started the climb to the 7000-foot-high plateau where Mr. Bedichek said I would find the birds.

It was a fine day, and I drifted along. After a slow and easy climb, I finally reached the top. I "jumped" several large mule deer, which momentarily held my attention. In a few minutes up jumped the "crazy quail." I watched the bird perform the antics from which it gets its name and are partly responsible for its near-extinction. It was the thrill of a lifetime to a bird-lover.

Suddenly the bird flew over and down the mountain.

Behind me, shattering the stillness of the mountain heights, a voice said, "You will never forget that demonstration, will you?" Here Bedichek was on top of the mountain, though he was about seventy years old. You could never think of him as an "old man."

3
Every trip we took was an educational adventure. He always carried his notebook for recording observations on nature and remarks people made on folklore, on soil conditions, on the weather. When he was alone he was either writing or reading some book that was a hundred years old or more. (He thought it was a waste of time to read a book which had not stood the test of time.)

The will to survive, the competition for living, helped shape a philosophy he carried over from his observations of the natural world to the field of education. His philosophy formed the backbone of the Texas Interscholastic League and gave the League a meaning that extended beyond local "entertaining," "county meets," and "end-of-school" meets. This understanding, this belief that life was basically a matter of survival, enabled him to withstand the attacks of those who opposed competition.

Mr. Bedichek told me he was sure many people would be disappointed in his history of the League, because they would be expecting case stories about League champions, about people who made specific rules, about incidents that resulted in the adoption of certain regulations. "That is not what I am interested in," he said. "I want to write about this basic philosophy of learning, of achievement. I want to show the advantage of directing this competitive urge, this impulse to win, this instinct to excel."

Mr. Bedichek personified one of the things that he gloried in observing: he was a rare breed.

RODNEY J. KIDD

'Worse... football'

The first time I met Roy Bedichek I was working on the trees at Dr. Walter Prescott Webb's Friday Mountain Ranch, and the first subject we talked about was birds. Bedichek was then over seventy and I was not yet thirty, but he seemed the younger.

At more or less regular intervals he would emerge from the house, stroll over to the place we were working, and chat with us about the trees and the birds. Being new to Austin and to Texas, I knew nothing of him. No reputation intervened to distort my judgment, and I was left free to respond to him on merit and merit alone. At first I thought he was the caretaker; after we had exchanged a few words I began to think he was a retired professor. As we continued to talk through the four or five days of our work there, I came to see in him the simplicity and vigor of a Cincinnatus and the mental acuity of a George Bernard Shaw.

"You boys chisel away at those trees like woodpeckers," were his first words.

"We are after the same thing," I replied. "Borers. Some of these have burrowed so far into the wood that I don't believe the woodpeckers could find them."

"You know it's remarkable how far into the tunnels the birds can penetrate. The woodpecker's tongue is hinged at the front, instead of at the back like ours. It lies in his mouth pointing backwards and is so long that its tip is kept rolled up in a special cavity formed in the

'Nobody comes around to bother me at 3:00 a.m. It's the only way I can get any work done.'

bone of the head. When he wants to dig out a borer, he uncoils that long tongue, shoots it out of his bill, and impales its barbed point in the insect, like an Indian throwing a lance," he said.

Only a year or so later did I learn that Bedichek was being held in benignant captivity at Friday Mountain Ranch by Webb and others of his friends so that he might write *Adventures with a Texas Naturalist*. His chats with us and his strolls about the place were rests from his task.

LATER BEDICHEK called me to work on the trees at his home on Oldham Street. This time we became better acquainted, and as I rested between trees, he took me into his study and showed me his library. His interest at this moment was centered on a book someone had written about the human digestive processes.

"The thesis is that meat is digested in one part of the intestine and vegetables and fruit in another part and that the two things should not be eaten together. By drawing on anatomy, physiology, and evolution, the author makes a good case for his beliefs. Whether you agree with him or not, it's a good book to read."

Several times afterward I was called back to his house in a professional capacity. Many other times I went by for a social visit. Always I found the man with the same vitality, the same alertness, the same wide-ranging interests, and the same progressive outlook. Frequently I found him in his garden, and each time the memory of Cincinnatus at his plow returned to my fancy.

One summer I left Austin to tour Canada and, having no place to leave my car, took the liberty

of asking Bedichek if I might leave it in his side yard.

"Of course you can!" he said. "Going to Canada? Don't be in a hurry to come back. Take your time. When I was a young man, I traveled all over this country like a hobo, tramping and working my way. Those were the best times of all! Will they ever come again?"

The book I took with me across Canada was Balzac's *Droll Stories*. When I returned to Austin 40 days later and went by Oldham Street to pick up my car, Bedichek and I talked for about an hour about Balzac. "The greatest of writers," he said. "None better anywhere." It turned out that he knew the *Droll Stories* intimately. He quoted long passages from memory almost verbatim. "The Succubus" had impressed him in particular. He called it the world's greatest short story, and I was inclined to agree with him.

ONE TIME when I called on him he was working in the garden with a handkerchief tied over both ears.

"Earache?" I asked.

"Worse," he said, shaking his fist passionately at the University. "Football." The speakers at the stadium were going at full blast.

"Did you ever read Schopenhauer's essay 'On Noise?'" he asked. "Nobody has ever stated the case against it more strongly. But the din then couldn't have been half what it is now. You know, I think I'll sit down and bring that essay up to date." And his lip curled with scorn as he began to name off all the intrusions on his privacy: the loudspeakers, the automobiles that raced screaming by, the honking, the shouting, and the general raucousness of modern life.

"I go to bed at 8:00 at night and get up at 3:00 in the morning. Nobody comes around to bother me at 3:00 a.m. It's the only way I can get any work done."

Bedichek's capacity for satire was pronounced. I think he could have been a kind of minor Swift, and I've always been sorry that he did not devote more time to the development of that characteristic.

HIS LEARNING was immense; he was very broadly read in the literature of all nations. He had a strong feeling for nature, a marked talent for close observation of her, and a gift that was frequently almost poetic for her delineation. He had a penetrating and original way of looking at life and men and books; he was fettered by no tradition, bound by no conventions. His mind worked acutely over a broad range of subjects. He was one of the most broadly cultured and luminously intellectual of modern Texans. How shall we replace him?

JOHN HALLER

'He brooded hours'

"Bedichek was proud of his powers of observation. Once, while on a walking trip with him in a rough area in Hays County, I spotted a rattlesnake coiled on a big rock. He reluctantly agreed we should kill it. Then he brooded for hours, and stopped speaking to me. Finally, that night, I found out why. He burst out: 'You! You saw that snake before I did! Incredible. I just can't understand it.'"

—STANLEY WALKER
in the N. Y. Herald-Tribune

'The desire to excel'

Bedichek distinguished himself after retirement as a writer, a philosopher, and a naturalist, but his most important and distinguished service was as administrator of the University Interscholastic League. He enlarged the scale of the league contests year after year with particular reference to the needs of the pupils in the rural and small town schools, and especially in literary and academic contests. He constantly endeavored to guarantee fair and honest competition. He believed with the ancient Greeks that competitive activities stimulate one to his best effort, if they are honestly and fairly conducted. In an effort to meet the needs of all the pupils in the public schools, he increased the number of contests to more than fifty different events, counting divisions and classes. Every type of school, from the one-room rural to the largest city school, had a place in the program. The public school faculties and the faculties of colleges and universities were drawn into the ever-growing plan.

The fundamental honesty of the director of the program and his insistence on the contestants' own efforts, unassisted, has shown up in the results of the league over

a period of nearly fifty years. Literally thousands, yea hundreds of thousands of young people have profited by this insistence on honest and effective effort, motivated by the desire to excel. The leaders of the state who have thus been discovered and developed can be counted by the thousands.

Bedichek's interest in the program was entirely educational. In athletic activities, as such, he had little or no interest, and he seldom attended games or other contests to enjoy the spectacle.

In dealing with those who broke rules, whether contestants or school officials, Bedichek never wavered in applying the rules of the league. He might be sympathetic with those who received penalties for rule infractions, but he was never "soft."

His book, *Educational Competition, The Story of the University Interscholastic League*, answers completely the criticisms of those educators who fear competitions as a motivating influence in learning and in character development.

The University Interscholastic League as it approaches its fiftieth anniversary is indeed the lengthening shadow of Roy Bedichek and associates.

T. H. SHELBY

'Bedichek's Rock'

"These boys are having such a devil of a good time that I hate to get them out." These were the last words that I heard him speak. Mr. Bedichek was watching his grandson John and a friend of his dive into the deep, clear water of Barton Springs. With his grandfather's help John was practicing getting his head down and straightening his body out. It was six o'clock and Mr. Bedichek was afraid that Mrs. Bedichek would be worried; he had told her he would be home at about five.

My wife and I had come out at about four-thirty. We had been much surprised to see Mr. Bedichek sitting on the concrete across the creek. It was too early in the season for him—May 20—and he was not in his usual place. Once he had begun coming out in July, he would be at Barton's every day until the first norther had struck. He was in the habit of sitting on a rock down by the big spring that comes out of the fissure in the limestone. Just behind this rock was a small sycamore tree that had managed to get a start and hold on by thrusting its roots between the layers of stone. Mr. Bedichek did not sit under the tree for shade. It was the sun that he wanted, and he got plenty of it directly as it slanted to the west and indirectly as its rays were reflected from the water. When he had had enough he had to take but a few steps in shallow water to enter what he called the "bathtub," a spot about two feet deep just where the cold water rushes out through the fault. He had a special way of getting into the bathtub, which is overhung by the slanting fault face on one side and bounded on the other by sharp rocks just under the water. He would stand with the overhang on his right and then let himself fall backwards into the spring. I have seen him do this

many times, but whenever I tried to do it myself, I grazed the rocks on the way down. He would sit in the spring and throw a double handful of water over his head, each time exclaiming, "Woof! woof!" This "woof, woof" was a part of the ceremony.

During July and August from 3:30 till 5:30 every day Mr. Bedichek would sit on his rock and talk to his friends. When he felt himself getting too hot he would interrupt the conversation for a quick dip in the bathtub. In a big flood of two years ago the sycamore tree was snapped off. Its upper branches became filled with driftwood and the force of the water was too much for it. Mr. Bedichek had hopes that the tree would grow out again, and it has sent out new shoots. He thought that if all the shoots but one were trimmed away, the tree might make a comeback.

Once I said to him, "Mr. Bedichek, when you and I are dead and gone, this rock will still be thought of as Bedichek's rock." Everyone seemed to regard the rock as his, and only a stranger would take his place while he was cooling in the bathtub.

In *King Lear* there is an allusion to an old rhyme, "Pillcock sat on Pillcock hill." Taking a hint from this, I made up a couplet for Mr. Bedichek's amusement.

Bedichek sat on Bedichek's rock,

The water was cold but Bedichek was hot.

ONE OF THE MOST regular visitors to Bedichek's rock was Mr. Dobie. He did not alternate between the rock and the bathtub; he had his own way of cooling off. He would swim around in the deep water until he felt chilled; then he would go up on the hot cement and lie down. He said the heat of the sun above and of the cement below would

drive the cold deep down into his bones.

In the course of an afternoon ten or fifteen of Mr. Bedichek's friends might come over at different times for a chat. If there ever was such a thing as a literary salon in Austin, its location was Bedichek's rock. This is not to say, though, that the conversation was limited to literary matters; it ranged far and wide, for Mr. Bedichek was ready to talk to anybody about anything. He had a very large store of information on a great variety of topics and he was willing to acquire more by listening. Every day Virginia Conkle would swim up to Bedichek's rock and sit there awhile. Fred Thompson would always come out too, though he was sometimes rather late. One summer Mary Lasswell was on hand every day. It would not be possible for me to name all those who counted on a visit with Mr. Bedichek at Barton's, because I do not know all of them. Judge James Hart and his wife, old friends of Mr. Bedichek's who were in the University when he was, had a habit of swimming every day too. Mrs. Hart liked to cool off in the bathtub; I have heard her say jokingly, "I wish Mr. Bedichek would get out of the bathtub so that I could use it." On his visits from Houston George Fuermann always knew where to find Mr. Bedichek and Mr. Dobie.

Almost every afternoon someone was sure to ask Mr. Bedichek a question about birds. "I saw a bird the other day that I've never seen before. It was smaller than a redbird and larger than a wren. It was gray all over and had a topknot. What was it?" Then Mr. Bedichek would consider all the possibilities and arrive at what he thought the best answer. "The only small gray-backed bird with a crest is a titmouse. Yes, it must have been a titmouse." So he told me on that last afternoon. I am only beginning to try to learn something about birds. Fred Thompson, T. P. Harrison, Mary Anne McClendon, and Virginia Conkle—they are all swimmers who compared notes about birds with Mr. Bedichek.

MR. BEDICHEK surprised me again and again by how much poetry he knew by heart. He quoted freely from the nineteenth century English poets and also from Shakespeare. Browning was one of his favorites; when he first learned that my wife was a student of Browning, he quoted from the middle of "Sordello," an early poem of Browning's remembered today mostly because of the quips about its obscurity. Mr. Bedichek had been a great reader of the Russian novelists, and he knew Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky very well. He said they opened his mind and led him on as no English novelists had ever done. He thought that only Thomas Mann among the Germans was comparable to the Russians; I have heard him say that *The Magic Mountain* is one of the greatest modern novels. What he liked about it was its philosophical cast and its ironic playfulness in the realm of ideas. Once we talked what must have been an hour about the great debate between Settembrini and Naphta.

There was hardly a subject that Mr. Bedichek did not touch upon, and it was always evident that he possessed both information and insight. On the shelves of his study at home he had a fine collection of scientific and literary books including all of



—Bill Brammer

Talk on the Rock by the Spring at Barton's

Darwin and Jeffrey, most of W. H. Hudson, and many others. One of the last books that I borrowed from him, which I still have, is a copy of Gorky's *Reminiscences* of Tolstoy, Chekhov, Andreyev, and Blok. We were in the habit of lending each other books. Mr. Bedichek did not confine himself to established classics but regularly read a national newspaper, a news magazine, and several scientific periodicals, so that whoever talked to him about current affairs had to be sure of his facts.

MANY are the conversations that I have heard between Mr. Bedichek and Mr. Dobie at Barton Springs. With acute, truth-seeking minds, they would throw themselves wholeheartedly into whatever was being discussed at the moment. For the most part they agreed with each other, but when a difference arose they would make no effort to turn aside. They were the best of friends, but sometimes idea would clash with idea or attitude with attitude. Once Mr. Dobie remarked that when traveling in the back country of Mexico he liked to have a *mozo* sleeping at the door. This offended Mr. Bedichek, who immediately took Mr. Dobie up and accused him of reducing a human being to the status of a watchdog. Mr. Dobie tried to explain that it was *la costumbre del pais* and that the relation between a *mozo* and the man he served could be a very fine one, but Mr. Bedichek was not to be convinced. Sometimes the deadlock could be broken only by Mr. Bedichek's dipping himself in the bathtub or Mr. Dobie's toasting himself on the concrete; but in a few minutes the two would be back together talking about something else.

Sometimes the talk would be so good that they couldn't let the sinking of the sun bring it to an end. One evening I remember in particular. After the sun had begun to weaken, the three of us went to a Mexican restaurant on East First Street, drank ice cold beer, and continued the conversation. We told stories, mostly true ones, each suggesting another in unbroken rotation. Such an evening of perfect conversation doesn't come along very often; that night I was aware of a feeling of joyousness even as I slept, and this feeling stayed with me all the next day. A week later Mr. Dobie said to us when it was time to leave Barton's, "Boys, come home with me and have a cold beer. I've got something I want to show you." We had no idea of what to expect, for he would tell us nothing more. In his back yard he read us our conversation at the restaurant as transcribed from memory. He later published this transcription in the Sunday paper, but it was so bowdlerized that the point of almost every story was spoiled. Whoever read it must have thought that we did not know how to tell a story or that we were foolish enough to laugh at nothing at all.

LATER in the same summer, 1957, we planned to have a picnic down Barton Creek after our swim. We went below the bridge not very far from where the creek runs into the Colorado and there we built a fire on the clay bank (later washed away by the same flood that took Mr. Bedichek's tree). Walter Prescott Webb and Mody Boatright joined us. While Mr. Bedichek mixed a huge bowl of salad and I broiled a steak, the other three sat on a tarpaulin and began to talk. At first they spoke of Tom Lea's book on the King Ranch, which was about to appear, and then they began to talk about other things.

After supper Mr. Bedichek told a very fine story about how he had helped one of his daughters, then studying anatomy in the University, find a tomcat for dissection. One afternoon he and his daughter had struck out in the direction of Bastrop for a leisurely ride and had wandered around on the back roads and through the post oaks until they happened on a shack in a clearing. When they caught sight of some cats around the place they decided to stop and see what they could do. A man in faded blue overalls was sitting on the front porch. After passing the time of day with him Mr. Bedichek began to work towards his object. He said something like this, "I see you've got some very fine cats around here. I need a cat and I'd like to get one from you." The farmer at once began to praise his cats for their marvelous rat- and mouse-catching abilities. Mr. Bedichek heard him out and at last indicated that he wanted a particularly large tomcat sleeping under a bush. The farmer said, "Yes, sir, that's a very fine cat. One of the best on the place. He really will keep your place cleaned out of rats and mice." Mr. Bedichek then asked how it would be possible to get the cat back to Austin. The farmer said he could get a tow sack and put the cat in it. He caught the cat, put him in the sack, and tied up the mouth. When he handed Mr. Bedichek the sack, he said, "Now just shut him up in the barn and let him get at those rats and mice. Keep him there three or four days before you let him out, and I'll guarantee you he never will run off from your place." Then Mr. Bedichek asked the farmer how much he wanted for the cat. The farmer said he reckoned four bits would be about right. Not having expected to buy a cat, Mr. Bedichek had come off with only a little change in his pocket. He told the farmer that he would give him all he had, thirty-five cents, and bring the rest the next time he was down that way. The farmer agreed, evidently thinking that he had been bargained out of fifteen cents but glad to get thirty-five. Mr. Bedichek and his daughter took the cat back to Austin, where he yielded up his

(Continued on Page 7)

'Look ye also while life lasts'

Mr. Bedichek did not favor the present fashionable practice of birding in large groups, because such thundering herds trample down wild flowers and scare birds away. Usually his maximum number of hiking companions was two. Nevertheless, he took so many bird walks that by 1940 virtually every interested person in Texas and many from other states had been in the field with him.

Mr. Bedichek believed in identifying all the birds without a gun. In a letter to a professor Brandis, now of North Carolina, he wrote:

So, it's a 4-page job to distinguish these two species (House and Purple Finches), whereas with a gun it's no job at all. The gunman doesn't get the very flower of nature experiences, that is, dealing with natural objects in their proper environment with life in them, but with the husks and leavings of life. I much prefer the 4-page method.

He had a way with known or suspected specimen collectors. To those who came to Austin looking for the Golden-cheeked Warbler, whose world nesting range is confined to the eastern Edwards Plateau, he would say: "Well, I'll tell you. There used to be lots of Golden-cheeks around here, but the collectors and cedar cutters have pretty well cleaned them out. I don't think you'll have much luck find-

ing them." But to anyone who just wanted to enjoy these beautiful birds alive, he would say: "I'll be happy to show you some. When can you go?"

Mr. Bedichek showed me my first Golden-cheeks. He took me out to a cedar brake that was alive with them. Thin clouds raced by that early morning, so that the sun seemed a great ball rolling along just above the horizon. In memory it seems that almost every other cedar was crowned by a singing male, each with his brilliant black, white, and golden plumage in the perfection of early morning and early spring.

It seems incredible that his fellow naturalists will no longer hear Mr. Bedichek relating his experiences with Whooping Cranes, Attwater's Prairie Chickens, Golden Eagles, Vermillion Flycatchers, Golden-cheeked Warblers, cedars, cedar cutters, Mexican Primroses, Cenizas after a rain, water, soil, Rusty Lizards, frogs, and almost every other natural thing under the Texas sun. He practiced the inscription placed beside the fireplace of another naturalist, Olaus Murie:

The wonder of the world, the beauty and the power, the shapes of things, their colors, lights, and shades; these I saw. Look ye also while life lasts.

EDGAR KINCAID

'Such an evening of perfect conversation'

(Continued from Page 6)
life to the cause of science.

There was more to the story. Later Mr. Bedichek happened to be down in the same neck of the woods, and he thought he would stop and pay the farmer the fifteen cents that was owing to him. The farmer recognized Mr. Bedichek and immediately began to suspect that something was wrong. He said, "If you're looking for that big tomcat, he ain't come back here. You must not have kept him locked up in the barn like I told you to." Mr. Bedichek said he had no cause at all for complaint but had simply stopped to pay the fifteen cents. The farmer's mouth dropped open and then he said, "I shore thank you. If you need any more cats like that 'un, you know where to come. Yes, sir, I've got one of the finest breeds of rat-catchers in Bastrop County."

Of course I have not done justice to Mr. Bedichek's story. He spent about fifteen minutes in the telling. This is only one of several stories that he told that night, and I have heard him tell many others on Bedichek's rock or at picnics — always where there was no electricity for a tape recorder. Once I tried to get him on tape indoors; I got his voice and his marvelous laugh at someone else's story, but he wouldn't tell a story of his own.

On another afternoon we adjourned from Barton Springs to my house, where we sat in an air-conditioned room and had our beer. We talked and talked; it grew dark but no one thought of turning on the lights. Mr. Dobie said, "Bedi, why in the world don't you write your autobiography? You've known a lot of people, you've done a great many different things, you've thought many thoughts, you know how to tell a good story, and you have copies of all the letters you have written." Mr. Bedichek said he didn't want to sit down and begin with his boyhood and go through the whole history of his life; besides, at the moment he was more interested in the problem of water conservation, and he thought the public at large would receive more benefit if he published a book on this problem rather than on himself. Then he turned the tables on Mr. Dobie, urging him to write the story of his own life. Eventually he put aside the water problem and began to write about another subject that he had often held forth on at Barton Springs, smells and the sense of smell in both human beings and animals. About two months ago he showed me the completed manuscript for a full-length book, which he was tentatively calling *Speaking of Noses*.

MANY of the conversations on Bedichek's rock had to do with scientific and philosophic problems. Once when we were talking about the kind of ethics founded on the Darwinian concept of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest, I happened to mention Kropotkin's attempt to combat this ethical theory by attacking its biological foundation. I said that Kropotkin has written *Mutual Aid* to establish the thesis that the chief factor in the progressive evolution of both animals and men is mutual aid rather than the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. Do you have a copy of *Mutual Aid*?" asked Mr. Bedichek. "The library does not have a copy of this in book form; I am having to read *Mutual Aid* as it was originally published in a magazine. Would

you lend me your copy?" He was working on *Karankaway County* at the time and he wanted to review *Mutual Aid*, which he had read years before and which he thought a valuable contribution to biological and ethical theory. He kept my book for a year and then returned it. He was always very careful about returning the books that he had borrowed, and he wanted his own books returned too, though he didn't care how long I kept them.

One afternoon while we were sitting on Bedichek's rock I spoke of an essay by Einstein on science and religion. He was impressed by the clarity of Einstein's demarcation between the spheres of science and religion and his statement of what he considered to be the chief present course of conflict between religion and science, the concept of a

personal God. In Einstein's view such a conflict need not exist. Mr. Bedichek asked to borrow this book; he liked the essay so well that he read the whole book and kept it by him to look into from time to time. Two years later he came to my office to return it. Not finding me in, he wrote a note and slipped the book in my letter drop: "Dear Wilson—Credit me with returning this book. Sorry you are not in. Am in a jawing mood. Bedi."

IN THESE TWO YEARS we had of course spoken many times about anthropomorphism. Once I asked him whether, in his own mind, he did not personify nature and think about nature as an all-wise, all-beneficent power that had planned all forms of being, both animate and inanimate, with a purpose. We were with Mr. Dobie at his place in the

country, Cherry Springs this time, not Barton Springs. At first Mr. Bedichek was not willing to grant that the imputation had any element of truth in it, but after a while he said, "But there is purpose!" I tried to argue that after a form of animal life has adapted itself to an existing environment it seems to have been made purposely for that environment, but Mr. Bedichek held that though this was true it did not rule out purpose. Then I cited an explanation given by a French writer in the eighteenth century of why the limbs of fruit trees bend towards the earth when the fruit is ripe; the reason for this, said the Frenchman, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, is that it was all planned so in the beginning for the convenience of mankind when he comes to pick the fruit. "That is all foolishness!" Mr. Bedichek replied. "That is silly! It doesn't explain why as each

apple is picked the limb moves just a little farther from the ground until it is out of reach. It ought to stay down until all fruit is picked!" This was not the end of the discussion; it continued for some time, but Mr. Bedichek remained firm in his conviction that purpose does exist, though Mr. Dobie sided with me.

DID NOT GO to Barton's for a week after Mr. Bedichek's passing. When I did go, I swam over to Bedichek's rock and stood in the water before it. How many hours had he sat there over the years with his friends, talking about birds, quoting poetry, telling anecdotes, recalling passages in his life, analyzing politics, and speculating on the questions of existence! Let Bedichek's rock remain, unaltered in any way, unmarked by a bronze inscription.

WILSON M. HUDSON

LEGALS

NOTICE OF SALE
THE STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF TRAVIS
BY VIRTUE OF AN ORDER OF SALE dated and issued pursuant to a judgment decree of the 53rd Judicial District Court of Travis County, Texas, by the Clerk of said Court on said date in a certain suit, No. 109,387, styled Gibb Jeff, et al and to me directed and delivered as Sheriff of said County, I have on May 25, 1959, seized, levied upon, and will, on the First Tuesday in July, 1959, the same being the 7th day of said month, at the Courthouse door of said County, in the City of Austin between the hours of 10 o'clock A.M. and 4 o'clock P.M. on said day, proceed to sell for cash to the highest bidder all the right, title and interest of the defendants in such suit in and to the following described real estate levied upon as the property of said defendants, the same lying and being situated in the County of Travis and the State of Texas, to wit:

Tract No. 1 All that certain lot, tract or parcel of land lying and being situated in the County of Travis, State of Texas, known and described as follows: Being a tract of land Seventy-five (75) feet by One hundred Forty-five (145) feet off of the West end of the South one-half of Block Thirteen (13), in the subdivision of Outlot Fifty-seven (57), Division "B" of the government outlots of the City of Austin according to the map or plat of said subdivision recorded in Volume 1, page 3 of the Plat Records of Travis County, Texas, such tract being enclosed within the following metes and bounds: Beginning at the Southwest corner of said Block Thirteen (13). Thence in a Northerly direction with the West line of said Block Thirteen (13) One hundred Forty-five (145) feet to a Twenty (20) foot alley; Thence easterly with the South line of said alley Seventy-five (75) feet; Thence Southerly One hundred Forty-Five (145) feet to the North line of New York Avenue. Thence Westerly Seventy-five (75) feet along the North line of New York Avenue to the place of beginning, together with all improvements thereon situated.

Second Tract: All that certain lot, tract or parcel of land lying and being situated in the County of Travis, State of Texas, known and described as follows: Being the West Sixty (60) feet of Lot Eight (8), Block Twelve (12) in the subdivision of Outlot Fifty-seven (57) in Division "B" of the government outlots adjoining the original City of Austin, according to the map or plat of said subdivision recorded in Plat Book 1, page 3 of the Plat Records of Travis County, Texas, together with all improvements thereon situated.

Third Tract: All that certain lot, tract or parcel of land lying and being situated in Austin, Travis County, Texas known and described as follows: Being the West Thirty-five (35) feet of Lot Seven (7) and the East Five (5) feet of Lot Eight (8), Block Twelve (12) in the subdivision of Outlot Fifty-seven (57) in Division "B" of the government outlots adjoining the original City of Austin, according to the map or plat of said subdivision recorded in Plat Book 1, page 3 of the Plat Records of Travis County, Texas, together with all improvements thereon situated. or upon the written request of said defendants or their attorney, penalties and costs, subject, however, to the right of redemption,

of the defendants or any person having an interest therein, to redeem the said property, or their interest, therein, at any time a sufficient portion thereof to satisfy said judgment, interest, within two years from the date of sale in the manner provided by law and subject to any other and further rights to which the defendants or anyone having an interest therein may be entitled, under the provisions of law. Said sale to be made by me to satisfy the judgment rendered in the above styled and numbered cause, together with interest, penalties and costs of suit, and the proceeds of said sale to be applied to the satisfaction thereof, and the remainder, if any, to be applied as the law directs.

Dated at Austin, Texas, this the 28th day of May, 1959.
T. O. LANG, Sheriff,
Travis County, Texas
by HENRY KLUGE, Deputy

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO INCORPORATE WITHOUT CHANGE OF NAME TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:
Notice is hereby given that George J. Christy, doing business under the name of SOUTHERN ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION COMPANY, at Houston, Texas, will qualify a corporation and continue to do business as a corporation under the name of Southern Engineering & Construction Company, and in compliance with Article 1307, Revised Civil Statutes of the State of Texas, will post this notice one day each week for four (4) consecutive weeks in a newspaper in Austin, Texas, and in a newspaper in Harris County, Texas.
GEORGE J. CHRISTY, dba
Southern Engineering & Construction Company.

THE STATE OF TEXAS
To any Sheriff or any Constable within the State of Texas—
GREETING:

You are hereby commanded to cause to be published, ONCE, not less than ten days before the return day thereof, exclusive of the date of publication, in a newspaper printed in Travis County, Texas, the accompanying citation, of which the herein below following is a true copy— (but if there be no newspaper so printed in said county, then that you cause the said citation to be posted for at least TEN days before the return term thereof as required by law.)

CITATION BY PUBLICATION
THE STATE OF TEXAS
TO all persons interested in the estate of E. May Johnston, Deceased. No. 19,639, County Court, Travis County, Texas, Arthur L. Johnston, Executor in the above numbered and entitled estate, filed on the 18th day of June, 1959 his verified account for final settlement of said estate and requests that said estate be settled and closed, and said applicant be discharged from his trust. Said application will be heard and acted on by said Court at 10 o'clock A.M. on the first Monday next after the expiration of ten days from date of publication of this citation, the same being the 13th day of July, 1959, at the County Courthouse in Austin, Texas.

All persons interested in said estate are hereby cited to appear before said Honorable Court at said above mentioned time and place by filing a written answer contesting such application should they desire to do so. The officer executing this writ shall promptly serve the same according to requirements of law and the mandates hereof, and make due return as the law directs.

Given under my hand and the seal of said court at office in Austin, Texas, this the 22nd day of June, A.D. 1959.

EMILIE LIMBERG
Clerk of the County Court,
Travis County, Texas
By M. EPHRAIM, Deputy

CITATION BY PUBLICATION

THE STATE OF TEXAS
TO Jose Bracamontes Defendant, in the hereinafter styled and numbered cause:

You (and each of you) are hereby commanded to appear before the 126th District Court of Travis County, Texas, to be held at the courthouse of said county in the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas, at or before 10 o'clock A.M. of the first Monday after the expiration of 42 days from the date of issuance hereof; that is to say, at or before, 10 o'clock A.M. of Monday the 3rd day of August, 1959, and answer the petition of plaintiff in Cause Number 114,364, in which Frances Z. Bracamontes is Plaintiff and Jose Bracamontes is defendant, filed in said Court on the 15th day of June, 1959, and the nature of which said suit is as follows:

Being an action and prayer for judgment in favor of Plaintiff and against Defendant for decree of divorce dissolving the bonds of matrimony heretofore and now existing between said parties: Plaintiff alleges that defendant, shortly after marriage, began a course of unkind, harsh, and cruel treatment toward the plaintiff that continued until they separated in February, 1958. Plaintiff's petition alleges that plaintiff was not guilty of any act bringing about or causing herein described acts, omissions and conditions of defendant's part. There were no children born of this marriage, and there is no community property in issue. Plaintiff prays that her maiden name, Mosqueda Zapata, be restored to her;

All of which more fully appears from Plaintiff's Original Petition of file in this office, and to which reference is here made for all intents and purposes;

If this citation is not served within 90 days after date of its issuance, it shall be returned unserved. WITNESS, O. T. MARTIN, JR., Clerk of the District Courts of Travis County, Texas.

Issued and given under my hand and the seal of said Court at office in the City of Austin, this the 15th day of June, 1959.
O. T. MARTIN, JR.
Clerk of the District Courts,
Travis County, Texas.
By A. E. JONES, Deputy.

CITATION BY PUBLICATION

THE STATE OF TEXAS
TO Betty Valmai Pettit, Defendant, in the hereinafter styled and numbered cause:

You (and each of you) are hereby commanded to appear before the 126th District Court of Travis County, Texas, to be held at the courthouse of said county in the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas, at or before 10 o'clock A.M. of the first Monday after expiration of 42 days from the date of issuance hereof; that is to say, at or before 10 o'clock A.M. of Monday the 20th day of July, 1959, and answer the petition of plaintiff in Cause Number 113,065, in which Rowland Pettit is Plaintiff and Betty Valmai Pettit is defendant, filed in said Court on the 6th day of February, 1959, and the nature of which said suit is as follows:

Being an action and prayer for judgment in favor of Plaintiff and against Defendant for decree

of divorce dissolving the bonds of matrimony heretofore and now existing between said parties; Plaintiff alleges that defendant left the bed and board of Plaintiff voluntarily, with no intentions of returning, on or about January 15, 1955. There were no children born of this marriage, and there is no community property; Plaintiff further prays for relief, general and special;

All of which more fully appears from Plaintiff's Original Petition on file in this office, and which reference is here made for all intents and purposes; If this citation is not served within 90 days after date of its issuance, it shall be returned unserved.

WITNESS, O. T. MARTIN, JR., Clerk of the District Courts of Travis County, Texas.

Issued and given under my hand and the seal of said Court at office in the City of Austin, this the 1st day of June, 1959.

O. T. MARTIN, JR.
Clerk of the District Courts,
Travis County, Texas.
By A. E. Jones, Deputy.

CITATION BY PUBLICATION

THE STATE OF TEXAS
TO Jerlean Hattie Lee Banks McCloud Defendant, in the hereinafter styled and numbered cause:

You are hereby commanded to appear before the 126th Judicial District Court of Travis County, Texas, to be held at the courthouse of said county in the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas, at or before 10 o'clock A.M. of the first Monday after the expiration of 42 days from the date of issuance hereof; that is to say, at or before, 10 o'clock A.M. of Monday the 20th day of July, 1959, and answer the petition of Plaintiff in Cause Number 114,216, in which Cornelius McCloud is Plaintiff and Jerlean Hattie Lee Banks McCloud is defendant, filed in said Court on the 1st day of June, 1959, and the nature of which said suit is as follows:

Being an action and prayer for judgment in favor of Plaintiff and against Defendant for decree of divorce dissolving the bonds of matrimony heretofore and now existing between said parties. Plaintiff alleges abandonment by defendant of him for a period of more than three years, with the intention on the part of Defendant of making such abandonment permanent. Plaintiff further alleges

that two children were born as issue of said marriage, to-wit: Cornelius McCloud, Jr., age 18, and Virginia Ruth McCloud, age 16 and that Plaintiff has had custody of the said Cornelius McCloud, Jr., and the defendant has had custody of Virginia Ruth McCloud since the date of separation. Plaintiff asks that custody of Cornelius McCloud, Jr., be awarded to him and that custody of Virginia Ruth McCloud be awarded to defendant. No community property was accumulated during said marriage.

Plaintiff prays for costs of suit and relief, general and special; all of which more fully appears from Plaintiff's original petition on file in this office, and to which reference is here made.

If this citation is not served within 90 days after date of its issuance, it shall be returned unserved.

Witness, O. T. Martin, Jr., Clerk of the District Courts, Travis County, Texas
By ELI GREER, Deputy.

'Authentic tidings of invisible things'

Those who have much to remember about Roy Bedichek are more fortunate than I, who am like a fool youth who might have feasted his mind on the talk of Socrates but spent his time instead in zealous plotting for a better Athens. Still, intermittently the last four years of his life I was one of the younger men whose intrusions Bedichek humored. He took pleasure in youth, perhaps because we illuminated his memories, and meant to him life that would go on after him, shaped by his ways; for he was an emulable man.

I have tried to emulate the way he timed his work and rest to "the rhythm of the natural day." Rising at three or four, he began with an hour or two of reading "while slowly sipping a cup of weak coffee." Then he stepped out of his house and trundling down the alley to his private place took counsel with the stars.

"My hideout," his workshed, was a room and garage half a block down the alley from the house. At once on cold mornings he started his wood fire in the pot-bellied iron stove in the center of the room. He sat in a hard-back wood chair at his table; his guest took the rocker beside the stove. On his aged typewriter the keys looped up and landed on the cylinder like overhand haymakers. The walls were books, from the floor to the ceiling. I did not keep notes on the gifts he gave me there those few mornings — recitations of verse, ideas from the past, his ideas, his enrichment of my ideas — but had there been nothing but his telling me, "The most important thing a young man who needs solitude must do is get a place physically apart from his family, a place altogether his own. If only I had realized that sooner!" still he would have strengthened my life.

One morning we greeted on the southwest corner of the University of Texas campus. The grass in the sun was bright green; we sat beneath a venerable oak, on a cement bench there, and talked first of style among writers, toward which I, reluctantly aware that I had none, was vigorously venting my contempt. "Style," I enunciated, "is the man." He warmly agreed, and a little later in the conversation he advised me who had said so first. (Memory accommodating ego, I have forgotten who it was.)

I asked him his opinion on something I was doing that was troubling me. When I came across words I liked the sound of but either did not know or did not have, I was writing them down for going back to. Bedichek at once warned me that words consciously learned pop up later when they're not appropriate and tempt you to twist your meaning to fit them in. I defended myself, though uneasily, by telling him about an image I had read of Dylan Thomas gathering in words new to him like a butterfly collector, and by describing my standards for accepting or rejecting words. In my notes I find an injunction, "Don't use a word for its own sake." Mr. Bedichek had the last but not the least laugh when, in a review of his *Educational Competition*, I disastrously misused a butterfly word I had collected. He wrote me a two-page letter appreciating the review, never mentioning the mistake (which came to my attention in a nightmare I had); when I went over to apologize,

he hardly let me finish and said laughing: "Don't admit it—blame it on the printer! All printers are liars anyway. Whenever I made a mistake on my paper in New Mexico, it was always a typographical error." He knew that tension about mistakes meant tension about life. Once he wrote to defend me against my self-criticism for neglecting, in part by failing to publish, a gifted but eccentric Austin writer: "I have more cause for conscience concerning this man than you have, but I don't let my derelictions, real or fancied, dog me around."

II

The last summer of the drouth he took me into the hills and taught me how to camp. I still have my notes on his instructions (I knew nothing, and he had to start at the beginning):

"Camp List"

"Coffee Pot; Plates (tin); Pots (for water boiling); Pans (for cooking); Skillet; Tin cups (diff. colors); Long handled Grill; Flashlight; Spotlight; Refrigerator; Binoculars; 2 Pans—1 Dishes, 1 hands; Water Buckets; Detergent; Paper Towels; Bathing Towels; Knives, forks, & spoons; Butcher knife, big spoon; Chuck wagon with essentials; Beer, Sardines, & Lettuce; Axe; Pick (point & blade); 2 Camp Chairs; Card Table (with brown paper covers); Cots; Blankets; Pillows; Sheets; Tarpaulins (2 at least; waterproof; stakes); Charcoal for Steaks; Chuck box; Back pack; Fishing Equipment; Look for desirable plants—Grubbing hoe and spade—Get all root & dirt—Put in Stiff Pasteboard Boxes (Replant box); Against Rain; Rope (for tarp between trees); List: Breadboard; Compass; Books on Stars, Birds, Plants; Insect Repellent; Wind Break; Burn big log if rains; Rattlesnake Kit (Stay Calm, Tourniquet heart/bite)."

We camped in a small grove of oak trees on a broken meadow. Across a clearing there was an abandoned one-room log cabin, 50 or 60 years old, with whose former inhabitants we commiserated; beyond, down an incline, were mysteries Bedichek reserved for the morning. He dug a trench in the ground a foot wide and several long and built therein a strong fire. After we set up the bedding he began methodically preparing supper (he said he liked to linger over "scaring up a good meal of vittles"). This was my introduction to sardines on lettuce with a cold beer, to his celery soup, and to potatoes and apples wrapped in wet brown paper, then in wet tinfoil, dipped in the water, and steamed in the coals. He washed the fruit first, and he completely soaked the paper before wrapping it around; he put the brown paper on first because he believed tinfoil might impart harmful chemicals to the food in the baking. In just such details as these, and with patience as natural as the alternating sounds and silences

'A valuable part of Texas literature'

William A. Owens, Bedichek's literary executor, suggests that persons who hold Bedichek letters deposit them, or copies of them, in the archives library of the University of Texas. "They are a valuable part of Texas literature and should not be lost," he states.

of camp talk, he unanswerably reproached the clocks, traffic, agendas, vibrating appliances, fancy fishing lures, expensive boats—all the assorted urgencies of work and rest by which we mostly live.

As the night became firm around us and the stars appeared we settled into steady talk across the fire. Women; the struggle for existence; psychiatry, in which he had a deliberately naive curiosity; public men; the contamination of vegetables by sprays in the fields and on the supermarket counters; literature; his early days—his subjects mostly. Sometime before we went to bed we walked out into the clearing and he named many of the stars. I remember us, an old man and a young man, standing together on that balded clearing, looking at the full heavens and wondering on the vanities and illusions of mortal life.

In the morning we began a routine we repeated the two or three days we were there. He took me around a stone field wall, past some kitchen middens (grown over since the scientists had been there), to a ravine

'Every man has and must have contacts, but there are some areas, there are sacred places; "in what concerns you much" you are alone.'

where a spring rose. He had brought us here because of this spring, the only fresh water for many miles around, and therefore an attraction for birds and animals as well as us. The rancher who owned the land had built a small water tank, about eight feet across and chest-high, in which to capture the flow. Bedichek said the spring had once been strong, and the ravine a flowing creek, but our visit, at the end of the drouth, there was only a timid run of water from an inset in the bank, some of it trickling over ground it blackened and disappeared in, the rest replacing the evaporation from the tank. He showed me the tracks of deer and squirrels in the mud from the night before, and then stationed us behind brush and trees across the ravine. We waited, the birds came, we looked at them through binoculars. Taking a tree census this trip for the rancher, he showed me how to tell the walnut from the pecan before the nuts appear, and some of the species of oak, and the like. We went down the ravine to a dry pebbled creekbed and, walking up one side, down the other, a lizard or two scurrying underfoot, we looked at every living thing. Spots of color I would have passed as weed-flowers, bloomless plants with dramatic futures, Bedichek named and noted. When a plant stumped him, he tested its characteristics against his key-books and usually figured out what it was but not always. During these forays I was overwhelmed by my ignorance of nature, but at least my resulting silence spared him its full catalogue.

The heat rising, we would return about noon to the pond, strip, and dip ourselves into the cold, leafy water. Again we would talk: of Sam Houston, ancient Greece, sources of art, the question of beauty—all the marvels, and women. I remember his old naked body, and his wet white mane. We would lie out to dry on the cement rim of the tank, an elm one side, a young sycamore the other, shading us. Once some birds came into the

trees across the ravine, and then into the sycamore over my head, as we lay still in the shade, the only sounds the whirring of their wings. I had never been happier than lying there, a stone's flip from an Indians' campsite, and a life from the world as I had thought it had to be.

III

From our talks on this trip ensued an active correspondence of a month and a half. I sent him, on a point we had discussed, a remark by Thoreau in a letter in 1848: "In what concerns you much do not think that you have companions: know that you are alone in the world." He replied on October 20, 1956:

Set the Thoreau quotation beside the verses I quoted to you from the Persian poet: 'Do as thy manhood bids thee do,' etc. You see both indicate the isolation of the person who means to amount to something in the world. Your man, Donne said 'no man is an island'—quite so—every man has and must have contacts, but there are some areas, there are sacred places; 'in what concerns you much' you are alone.

The Persian's verses he had quoted from memory, and then repeated that I might set them down:

Do as thy manhood bids thee do, from none but self expect applause,
He noblest lives and noblest dies who makes and keeps his selfmade laws.
All other life is living death, a realm where none but phantoms dwell—
A mind, a breath, a sign, a voice, a tinkling of a camel's bell.

In a postscript Nov. 10, 1956, he wrote: "The star that chased Venus up the sky & finally passed her is her dad, Jupiter." And Nov. 29 (after quoting Goethe on Beranger as "a nature most happily endowed, firmly grounded in himself") Bedichek added, in another postscript:

The eastern heaven has been, (during the past week 5:30 to sunup,) the scene of fantastic tricks since the dying moon has entered the marathon with Venus and Jupiter up the sky. Sometime ago Jupiter passed Venus and has been gaining every morning until now (apparently) he is quarter way up the heavens ahead. The dying moon appeared side by side with Jupiter earlier (a week ago) in the morning and gradually fell behind until she was midway between the two planets. Venus kept (apparently) gaining until this morning about 6 Jupiter was still far in the lead, and the lean crescent of the moon, out of breath, (she is old and can't climb steps) shone side by side with Venus, blazing undaunted in the accustomed glory of her eternal youth.

IV

"As to camping, Ronnie," ran the note from him the Christmas season of 1957, "I have selected a summit with a positively Pisgah lookout from which with night closing in and the stars bobbing up over the horizon we might gain authentic tidings of invisible things." Like a youth summoned by Socrates I prepared at once to go. He was 78 then, and I was 27.

"Mount Pisgah" was a gradually rising hill, plateau'd at the top, from which we could survey the hills and valleys of the region, which was about 20 miles southwest of Austin. We camped down the hill, at a place where it splayed out onto a level area. Our fire was enclosed (but not closely) by oak mottes on two sides, Bedichek's Dodge pickup on a third, and on the fourth, a distance off, a windmill and water tank.

The first afternoon a steel bar which extended forehead-high from the tank malignantly

knocked me flat on my back. Bedichek was solicitously alarmed, and I confessed a pain on my forehead. When, the next morning as we walked toward the camp from our cots, the same bar smote Bedi and he fell to his back as violently as had I, he cursed, laughed, and did not confess a pain.

A drizzle set in and all night and the next day soaked us unobtrusively. We were obliged to hug the fire, toasting towels and wrapping them around our heads, structuring the wood against the morning wind, making the best of life under the unfriendly grey sky. What we lost in nature-study we gained in what Bedichek has called "animal enjoyment," the smell and warmth of the fire, the comradeship against the inhospitable weather, and the steady alternation of talk and hot food.

I shall always remember the large pot of celery and potato soup he made that night, for it kept us warm and full deliciously, which is all a soup can do. I still have his recipe: "Chip potatoes, slice up the onion, slice up the celery, cook thoroughly. Thicken with a little flour and milk. Drop in a little oleo—then remove from heat when boiling and put in two beaten eggs. S&P." Serving it up, he said, "Well, boy, if you don't like this mess, you can at least know it's perfectly good for you."

The oak, mesquite, and cedar we were burning were pungent in the fresh washed air, and he said, "I love these smokes. That's a choice smoke." All night and the next day the wind agitated the windmill, and her soft creaking and whining kept our minds stirred. We shared our enthusiasms for the Russian novelists. He instructed me in Matthew Arnold and demanded I read George Meredith's *The Egoist*. With the same skeptical naivete he felt for psychiatry he pressed out of me my limited understandings of existentialism. He spoke sympathetically of all living things: he said of animals, "We are associates in this brief adventure of life, and we should feel for them, as we do our kind."

For lunch in the drizzle we had celery soup, dry barbecued beef, toast, and beer. He said to the fire, to me, to the place we were: "O life is so wonderful if you just look at it right. How wonderful to be able to sit out in the open and eat a wholesome meal." With sureness and lyric feeling he recited:

"Ah! my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears
Today of past Regrets and future Fears—
To-morrow?—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.

"Lo, some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before
And one by one crept silently to Rest.

"And we, that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new Bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend, ourselves to make a Couch—for whom?"

RONNIE DUGGER

'NATURE PURGES LIKE GREAT DRAMA'

'Better garden and read Gandhi, dine on vegetables, sup on yogurt and black bread, and sleep anights.'

Mr. Bedichek's unusual mind had as many sparkling facets as a well-cut diamond. And there is one thing sure, nothing very comprehensive can be said about him in a few pages. I attempt no more than a few impressions from conversations with him and letters from him.

There was a near-mysticism about his devotion to Nature. He wrote to me ten years ago,

Only Nature is normal, no matter how eloquently Oscar Wilde and his aesthetes argue the contrary. The aseptic sea cleanses all the filth the land dumps into it from ten thousand gorged and retching rivers. Nature does the same for those souls who understand and practice the occult rite of immersion in her. But no Methodist sprinkling will do. It must be a thorough-going Baptist immersion. It purges, in the Aristotelean sense, like great drama.

When I went to live in New York City after World War II, nearly every letter that he wrote to me contained a warning against what he called "the city's fetid atmosphere" and an admonition never to accept its values. Then, while he was visiting with us a couple of years ago in New York, I remarked to him that I had been having a series of dreams involving sights and sounds of my youth in Travis County; swimming naked up on Barton Creek, roosters crowing, whip-poor-wills calling in the woods. He nodded eagerly and psychoanalyzed me on the spot. "Why those dreams are simple, Johnny. It is nothing more than your body and soul crying out against the unnatural environment of this terrible city. Your body is an animal's body, my boy, and your organs, every fiber in you, must have contact with Nature. Your skin needs the natural heat of summer, the natural cold of winter; your ears need to hear the natural sounds of the earth; your eyes must behold the natural beauty of the land; your soul must have exposure to the eternal drama of the changing seasons." Then followed a resounding denunciation of air-conditioning and central heating as creators of unnatural environment that would have panicked our appliance manufacturers. In the garage study where he spent so much time, Mr. Bedichek had only a wood stove for heat in the winter (fueled by wood he fetched in from pastures and sawed himself) and shaded windows for coolness in the summer. It was a comfortable place any season.

HE DELIGHTED in observing all the flora and fauna of the earth, though the behavior of some of Nature's creatures and plants distressed him. Not long ago he acted out, with grimaces and hostile gestures, the aggressive nature of a certain thistle, explaining how the species choked out and destroyed all plant life in its vicinity. Some years ago, in answer to a letter that I had written him observing that the bluejay was the bully-boy of the bird world, he wrote,

Yes, the jay is really a terrible bird. He is an Ishmaelite, his bill is against every bird. The other morning I started across the back yard and a headless Inca dove fell at my feet, the dove that really summarizes all the gentleness and peace-lovingness attributed in our folklore to the species. Following the headless dove and reaching the ground almost at the same time was a ravenous bluejay. I had to kick him off his prey. But after I had identified the specimen, I put it up in the tree so that he

might have it back again. Jays assault my-fig trees, ruining half a dozen figs at each visit of one, for they peck a bite out of one and then another, too impatient to sit down and eat one fig clear up. The devils do me a lot of damage, but I wouldn't kill one. I would sorely miss him if he were gone. He is the most colorful permanent resident on my little hill of Post Oaks, and while his scream is raucous, his love-note I find quite musical. So far as his own species is concerned, he is a very generous bird. If he finds something good to eat, he calls in all his fellows at once.

With the species Homo Sapiens Mr. Bedichek took greatest delight, and, at times, found severest fault. His enlightened, searching mind had roamed freely through history, and he had achieved a position of wisdom and insight from which to observe the behavior of his own species. On matters political and social he had firm and liberal convictions, but when friends of his, men he had known in his younger years, became opposed to him in their opinions, he maintained a warm affection for them. Politicians and public servants who betrayed the faith of the people most infuriated him. He once wrote me that he was preparing a paper comparing Homo Sapiens with Rhattus Norveingus — mankind with the brown rat, 'the most imperialistic of his species.' In 1951 he wrote,

Don't get too discouraged over the state of the nation and of the world. We are launching out on an imperialist policy ... that is the state of the public mind, or rather the public's passion. To reason with it at present would be like petting a mad dog.

And further on in the letter he commented,

Men, my boy, are demons in disguise ... ay, and women, too ... more so, and more demoniacal than men. Our breed, among all the animals in the world, is most cursed ... and still, I would not, if I could, do as Whitman wanted to do—go and live with the animals; they are so placid and uncontained. These terrible contradictions in the soul of a decent man will run him crazy if he dwells too much upon them. Better garden and read Gandhi, dine on vegetables, sup on yogurt and black bread, and sleep anights.

Of a politician who had sacrificed principle for political expediency, and who, in Mr. Bedichek's opinion, was power-drunk, he wrote me: "Did you ever notice that Homo Sonuvabichicus is one species that can never disguise itself?" Last year he wrote to me: "My wife and I simply choke up when we get to talking about the inarticulate inbecilities of Eisenhower."

MR. BEDICHEK'S gray hairs were testament to his many days here on earth. In spite of this, the atmosphere of youth hovered about him always, even to the moment he came to 'shuffle off this cortical coil.' This phenomenon is best expressed in a letter he wrote me a few years ago:

I go to Barton's every afternoon and have a delightful cooling off. What a poem that place is! Do you not sometimes dream of its great towering pecan trees over sparkling waters? The Apaches knew a good thing. Did you know that the whole south bank of Barton Creek from springs to mouth is one solid kitchen-midden built up through ages of occupation by Apaches and their predecessors? I used to get relics by digging almost anywhere along the bank. In a former incarnation I was an Apache, living on pecans and deer meat, working the excellent flint that protrudes here and there from the limestone ledges, and chasing my fleet-footed love over cliffs and down creek-beds. Her voice was ventriloquial and often led me like an echo far astray where I

The one great rule of composition is to speak the truth.

—THOREAU

The Texas Observer

An Independent-Liberal Weekly Newspaper

Vol. 51

TEXAS, JUNE 27, 1959

10c per copy

No. 12

'Freedom from pretense'

When the subject is Roy Bedichek, there is a temptation to write about the man rather than his work. Even for me, who can not claim to have been a close friend (although my father was his close friend), the temptation is strong. I had hoped to know him better. I last saw him when he stopped the light truck he was driving near his home, seeing me afoot (I was going only a few paces); he put out his hand, gave me a hearty clasp, said he was glad I had moved to Austin. That was like him: no questions; no "why had I moved; what did I propose to do." He was simply glad. A little later I passed by his house and saw how green his garden was, with a row of tall corn in it. And I commenced to spin a scheme. "He must work certain hours in his garden," I thought. "I could ask him to let me come then: I would not be encroaching on his time and en-



—By Ward Lockwood
—Courtesy, Mrs. Roy Bedichek

A Woodcut

From Bedichek's First Book

ergy. He loves to talk, and this way he could talk without the interruptions that are always forthcoming in a group of people."

The scheme was never more than half spun. I console myself with the reflection that Bedichek did, after all, succeed in conveying his rich and spacious mind on the printed page, where it is more eloquent than it could ever have been in talk. For he was not merely (among other things) a minute observer and a large thinker, he was, I think, the finest artist in prose that has written in Texas, about Texas.

By the restriction "in Texas, about Texas" I mean to limit the field so as to exclude a very few stylists who, like Katherine Anne Porter, have not been especially concerned with the region. Miss Porter said, in a recent interview in Austin (Observer, Oct. 31, 1958), that she is the only "serious" writer to come out of Texas. What she should have said, I believe, is that she is the only serious writer of imaginative works to come out of Texas. There could be no cavil against that statement.

found many flowers and forgot all about the little vixen. I know all this must have happened or I wouldn't have such a longing to get back into living in the wild. My next incarnation is impending, and I'm hoping.

JOHN HENRY FAULK

'He seemed to me to be a star of the first magnitude.'

ADVENTURES with a Texas Naturalist, written when Bedichek was 70, is a work of art, if there ever was one. It is also what I would call "a classic of Texas literature," if such a tired and tarnished word as "classic" did not seem more incongruous than usual when applied to writing as fresh and unstilted as Bedichek's. Teachers of English, who, of course, do not generally know good English when they see it, should prescribe the **Adventures** to all young people with ambition to write. There are not many books in which the language is treated so lovingly, and yet with respect.

Karankaway Country is another book of the same kind, but perhaps a little less profound, being, as I remember, largely concerned with the problem of water conservation. (I do not own a copy, having given mine to a friend in a fit of missionary zeal, and the Austin Public Library does not own a copy!) It is a damning indictment of "culture" on Fifth Avenue that a New York publisher should have had the stupidity to put both the **Adventures** and **Karankaway Country** on the out-of-print shelf, when customers are crying for them at bookstores in Texas. And it is no credit to culture in Texas that nothing has been done to put them back in print.

Educational Competition, the history of the Interscholastic League, in whose development Bedichek spent the major part of his life, is full of wit and wisdom, despite its specialized interest. And then, there is a work in manuscript, just finished at his death.

RETURNING to the Adventures, let us dwell for a moment on the theme of Bedichek as Artist. The difficulty here will be to refrain from quoting.

Bedichek's style is a reflection of his character, in that there is an absolute freedom from pretense. There is not a pompous or a parroted phrase in all his work. There is an easy naturalness, the buoyancy of an open but positive mind, that enabled him to pass without self-consciousness from the most glowing descriptive color to the thin grey abstraction. Like one of his beloved birds, he could look very close at the life about him, savoring every bit of it, caressing the texture, or he could soar far above it and generalize.

In the chapters on "Fields and Fences" he gives us the feel of the Texas hill country, something more than just a picture, without ever resorting to the deadly method commonly known as description. Elsewhere, by subtle suggestion, he contrives to give us the feel of the egret's courting dance. And here we must insist on a quotation for this is the substance of the whole Bedichek philosophy, of his Yea to life:

"I come to the conviction that some eighteen-million centuries after the nebula cohered into an orb, something new entered, not at all controlled but destined eventually to dominate physical laws or at least to adapt and use them for its own purposes. Under this seaside spell I repudiate mechanism and all its thin and

shivering conceptions."

And then, there is the chapter on the mockingbird's song, which is also a chapter on the appreciation of Walt Whitman, "the most contemptible old hog that ever rooted in the mire of his own imagination,"—so the professors dismissed him when Bedichek was a boy. Bedichek formed his own opinion.

And there is the last chapter, which deals with the theme of time, in much the same manner that Johann Sebastian Bach deals with a theme, taking it through modulations and changes of pace, coming back to it at the end. We start with the shadow an ancient oak; we come to the ancient cedar-chopper on the hillside; suddenly we are in ancient Rome and on islands in the Pacific; then we are back in the Texas hills with the cedar-chopper again.

HAVE PASSED BY the garden, and it is withered and streaked with yellow, a sad reminder of mortality and of schemes that come to nothing.

I console myself by remembering the words that we have, that are the essence of a rich life, and think of the vermilion flycatcher: "Poised high in the crystal-clear air that morning, he seemed to me to be a star of the first magnitude which the vanishing darkness had failed to take with it from the daylight sky."

CHARLES RAMSDELL

'No affectation, no defense ...'

Among Bedichek's many admirable characteristics I remember primarily his unpretentiousness, his humility, his unaffectedness.

I recall a visit last summer when he was over at my house checking data pertaining to physical anthropology for his new book. While showing him around the yard before he left, I thought of the cristate rainbow cactus my wife and I had found on a hike earlier in the spring. To my surprise these monstrous forms were new to him.

"And you pass yourself off as a naturalist," I said, "and have never heard of these? Texas naturalist? You don't even know cactus."

"Listen," he said, "hear that call? It's a cuckoo. You see, I know birds."

"Then call yourself an ornithologist and not a naturalist. Texas naturalist! I believe you're a fake."

Seriously and very quietly he said. "Don't tell anybody. I've got by for a long time and few know I'm a fraud."

Whereupon we both had a good laugh.

This is so typical of his sense of humor, his delight in teasing. With all of his tremendous knowledge there was no affectation, no defense of this ignorance, if it could be called that. Immediately his mind became alert. Why do these forms get this way? Is their genetic mechanism changed; does it go haywire? How commonly do they occur? And a dozen other questions I couldn't answer.

GILBERT MacALLISTER

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.

'... for each individual, it is a lonely world'

(Selections from Bedichek's letters to architecture professor Eugene George, Jr.—Ed.)

1951

Dear Mr. George:

... I am still a widower, an independence I don't especially care for. My wife is having such a fine time in New York that she will probably stay another month. Meantime, I am gardening and having, also, a hell of a fine time. I'm even preserving some of my garden-truck in a deep freeze I purchased the other day. Also some cocktail parties at which I drink only fruit punch, but find quite enjoyable, even though a friend or so gets a little loud now and then. I sympathize with and greatly admire the French poet, who, reproached for not participating in a drinking bout, and asked how he could get the inspiration to write poetry without stimulants, replied, "A bowl of soup intoxicates me sufficiently." That is, to live is to be sufficiently stimulated.

Don't fail to give me a ring whenever you happen to be in Austin, and maybe we can arrange another little stroll in the woods.

Yours truly,

Roy Bedichek

May 30, 1951

P.S.—Likely the bird that looks like a scissor tail but without the tail is really a scissortail without a tail—Young birds are now coming off, and don't get their tails for some little time after leaving the nest. **Walden** is one of the great books of the world, "driving life into a corner" as it proposes to do, and **does do**. Did you ever read Thoreau's "The Duty of Civil Disobedience?" R. B.

(In a letter to Eugene George June 29, 1951, Bedichek said that a letter from George had moved him to write a paragraph into a speech on the "non-fiction book." Bedichek then quoted from this writing of his, including this portion.)

"In a certain sense, the publication of a book is the grain leaving the sower's hand—seed scattered to the four winds, on a venture. And, like in the sacred parable, the great reward comes from that which falls into good ground and brings forth the divine fruit of sympathy and good will and appreciative understanding, 'some an hundredfold, some sixty fold, some thirty-fold.' ...

"This surely is not to belittle monetary rewards, but to point out the source of inspiration which is responsible for nine-tenths of all creative writing; and, for that matter, for nine-tenths of all worthwhile artistic endeavor. From this source comes the comforting assurance that the strange world lying beyond one's everyday associations is not an unfriendly world. The same Greek word stands for **stranger** and for **enemy**. Other human beings are traveling the same paths though out of sight ...

"The world is full of people, often massed and driven together by the requirements of institutional and social order, but for each individual, it is a lonely world. We are all lonely, with a loneliness which mere physical proximity does not satisfy. We yearn for that deeper, more fundamental association with our own species. Our souls are gregarious, like seeking like, forever and always ..."

Dear Gene:

... Do you suppose Condorcet would have been so optimistic had he lived ten years longer?

Russia of 1917 was full of optimism. So was our own American Revolution. The 18th century was a wonderful century, more wonderful, in my opinion, than the 19th, which Alfred Russell Wallace calls "The Wonderful Century." The human spirit really went forward and up in those hundred years. Only in 500-400 b.c. in Athens did man come nearer become man than in the 18th century. Condorcet's life span lay inside it. He witnessed the ascent but did not live to experience the fall. Naturally, he was optimistic. Living my whole life side by side with Voltaire would have been enough to make me optimistic. Diderot and Rousseau would have helped me, too. Alas! mechanization was just taking command in good earnest the year I was born. In 1878 the "mechanization of murder" in the meat industry was just coming into its evil flower.

My generation is daubed with blood.

But let's talk it over.

Bedichek.

Sept. 20, 1951



—University Studio
Bedichek

Dear Gene:

... The rage for wholesale slaughter of all life, including our own, possesses like a demon this generation. It is an age of devastation, senseless devastation in which we live, and this terrible possession will finally give our age its name in history, if, indeed, any language on earth can supply a sufficiently sinister word or phrase. The gentle gardener poisons his soil to kill pill bugs and in so doing annihilates great numbers of beneficent creatures, including the lowly and lovely earthworm. An airplane spreads the deadly DDT over a square mile of cotton field to kill worms or weevils and in so doing kills honey-bees which fertilize the cotton, and birds which have been attracted there to feed on these very pests ...

A month ago a leaf-eater attacked my lima beans, the most luxuriant growth of them I ever saw. They were cutting the leaf-surface into lacework and my neighbors were urging me to spray. The vines hadn't until that time produced a single bean-pod the whole summer. They supported leaves and blooms and nothing more. Shortly after this insect had trimmed the vines of their excess foliage, the beans began to put on, and now they're loaded. It may have been the cool weather that started them to fruiting, and it may have been that they were getting thru an extravagant leaf-surface a daily overdose of sunlight. I don't know. Anyway I refused to spray, the insects continued to devour the leaves, and now I have more beans than we can eat ...

Yours,

Bedichek

October 26, 1951

November 6, 1951

Dear Gene: Thanks for your paragraph on the chair. You say

something there that is worth repeating. "One problem in this world is to try to keep manmade ugliness from spreading." That has widespread application. Advertising, of which America is so proud, would be something really to be proud of if it were held within the limits your statement so admirably sets. As I listen to radio, glance through newspapers and magazines, glimpse ghastly billboards as I motor along highways—indeed, nearly every waking moment that I am not shut up in my study with my nose in a good book or hammering this type-writer—nearly every waking moment I am subjected to the Hitlerian repetitions of advertising perhaps 75 percent of which spreads ugliness either of material things corrupting taste or, far worse, disseminating and lodging in the minds of millions ugly thoughts and emotions,—more's the pity in the souls of the young. The old and even the middle-aged are already corrupted.

The best end to attack the Big Thicket is near Liberty, that is the south end. That is about 5 hours away, as you drive, about six as I drive. The next place is north and near Livingston, about the same driving-time away. Next, the heart of it at or near Silsbee. Here I have a standing invitation to occupy a comfortable camp-house with all equipment which might be just what one would like in dead of winter. It is on railroad right-of-way, an old section-house.

Perhaps the most educative period would be early spring, when birds are busy mating and nesting, flowers are blooming, and the swamp-creatures are awakening to new life. I can imagine a fine outing in any one of these locations for two observant and appreciative individuals with about a week to spare.

Maybe we'd better let this idea incubate ...

(Not signed)

December 12, 1951

Dear Gene:

I am working fairly well but am lonesome for the woods. Got another nature book from News to review—more than I bargained for, but guess I'll do it, as it seems to be a pretty good book by Edwin Way Teale. He gave me quite a boost in New York Herald-Tribune and one good turn deserves another; but, if I find I have to say anything harsh, I'll return book to News to get another reviewer for it. Much hypocrisy about reviewing books and I don't like it a bit.

Yours,

Bedichek

1952

January 6, 1952—Head of Bull Cheek, Travis County.

Observers: B. G. Bedichek, Eugene George, Jr., Roy Bedichek

Weather: still, cold (35 degrees) sunny

- Robins—thousands
- Cardinal—several
- Bluebird—hundreds
- Lark Sparrow—few
- Slate-colored junco—dozens
- Arctic towhee—several
- Phoebe
- Carolina wren—four
- House finch—several
- Chipping sparrow
- Arkansas Goldfinch—several
- Turkey Vulture
- Ruby-crowned kinglet
- Golden-crowned kinglet
- Cactus Woodpecker
- Chickadee—several

- Western Mourning Dove—several
- Mockingbird
- Myrtle Warbler
- Flicker
- Black Vulture

amateur

Dear Gene:

Yesterday I got what you say I deserve for living a long and virtuous life—viz., a pair of B&L 9x35's. Ever since taking this magic contrivance into my hands yesterday about noon, my heart has warmly nursed a secret joy. And besides, I'm about ready to take off to the mountains!

Yours,

Roy

May 22, 1952

Dear Gene:

I hail the good news as only cheering item in my news-budget in some time, except birth of another granddaughter, which gives me (undeserving oaf that I am) five beautiful girls and five splendid boys—ten in all.

Am just returned from two months camping. Not a night in a house nor a meal in a commercial eating house the whole time. Don't you envy me, you bug, nosing around under chips you call houses?

Expecting you, I am Sincerely,
R.B.

July 29, 1952

1954

Dear Eugene—

If indeed you do go up Cimmaron Canyon, over the divide at Eagle Nest's Lake and on down into the Red River Valley, I want you and your chosen one to do me a favor. Select some morning, bright and early to visit Costillo Canyon and there look for and find the water ouzel. If Costillo is closed, any other canyon around there with running and plunging water will do as well. But before you make this excursion read "The Water Ouzel" in John Muir's **The Mountains of California**, for it is the most glorious biography of a bird in the English language. I see a volume of Muir is coming out edited by Edwin Way Teale on September 21, copy of which I mean to give you and the lady as a wedding gift, but not in time to take with you. **The Mountains of California** is in the Library. Please read the chapter on the WO before you leave.

R. B.

September 5, 1954

1956

Dear Eugene:

I have run on to an excellent key to the flora of the country east of here but it is a key based on internal characters. So I have a project for us to start on—that is the insides of flowers. You being an architect will be interested in structure and stresses and strains which nature devises, and I being curious about the ways of God will take much delight in unravelling the ingenuity of these devices. We shall need magnifiers and I have it in mind to buy a microscope but maybe we can get along with less high-powered and high-priced equipment. We shall see ...

R. B.

March 19, 1956

Roy Bedichek
801 East 23rd St.

THE TEXAS OBSERVER

Page 10 June 27, 1959

Austin 5, Texas

April 14, 1959

Dear Eugene:

Remembering (seems years ago) your professional interest in, as well as your aesthetic enjoyment of, patterns in Nature, I want to call your attention to a design and the wondrous harmonious coloration of a strange thistle which has made its appearance this spring on the vacant lot just north of the old garage in which I have my "study," so-called.

I first noticed this growth on account of its ravenous demand for space. From the root-crown it sent out menacing leaves all 'round the compass until a circular area about a yard in diameter was preempted. Every spring (sprig?—Ed.) of rival vegetation in this circle was promptly smothered. Having thus assured itself of lebensraum, the stalk rose about an inch above the root-crown and threw out a second tier of magnificent, threatening, long-spear shaped leaves in every direction. As if aware that something very precious was soon to appear at its center, a third round of terrific leaves was projected from the slowly growing central stalk; not as the others in the plane of the ground, this tier was tilted up a bit. Then another higher tier, also up-tilted came out, so that the plant now presents from above such a phalanx of needle-like daggers that hardly an insect can thread the mazes of its leaves. No tough-lipped goat or other browser could manage a nip or a nibble from it without severe punishment, and certainly no bird could alight among its barbarous thorns and prickles. Finally, a rather insignificant fourth round of leaves appeared. No, I've already counted this one. Truly, this plant must have evolved in a habitat simply swarming with deadly enemies; for, armed cap-a-pie, there's not a loose or neglected point or joint anywhere.

Having completed these elaborate preparations, swelling buds as big as guinea-eggs appear in the top of the defensive cone, carefully nested in a forest of thorns, while the buds themselves, as if mistrusting the fortifications so 'thoughtfully' prepared for them, have armed themselves each with three tiers of the most fearsome prickles of them all. Three mornings ago I discovered that the central bud had opened a little, but it has proceeded so cautiously that even now it shows a spot of glorious reddish purple no bigger than a bean.

From the first I knew that this plant was something new in thistles for this area, so I called my friend, Tharp, who is supposed to know the vegetation of Texas better than anyone else. It stumped him and he said he would have to wait until the bloom came before the plant could be identified. I am going to call him over as soon as the bloom is unfolded. (See Dr. Tharp's piece, page 4, for more comment on the intruder.—Ed.)

Meantime I am telling you that there is awaiting your inspection a perfectly ravishing pattern of leaves; broken lines of dingy white on a background of ashy green. I believe you would like to see the coloration, the defensive devices, and most of all, perhaps, the leaf-pattern, so complicated and yet so seemingly simple that I get lost in trying to trace it.

Selah.

Bedichek

'Whitman constantly exposed his soul'

(When a teacher sent Bedichek her paper on Walt Whitman, Bedichek was moved to write her a letter on Whitman. He also gave a copy of the letter to Dobie.—Ed.)

Box H, University Station
Austin, Texas
December 4, 1945

Dear Miss Hildebrand:

Your letter and the Whitman paper have interested and pleased me very much. I think you did a good job with the Whitman material, and I thank you sincerely for letting me see the finished product.

I note that you make considerable use of Holloway, and quite properly, since no one can deny that his is a scholarly work. I never met him although he was here at the University for several years. I get the impression from reading his book that he is a prude and I am therefore puzzled that he was interested in Whitman at all. His two- or three-page disquisition on the poet's New Orleans love-affair resolves itself into a sort of apology, setting forth that if the woman was a prostitute she was not of the lowest order of prostitutes; and that if she was dark, she was not so very dark. This is what one may call a hair-line, color-line defense, and an appeal for clemency on the grounds of degrees of prostitution, neither of which, I think, Whitman himself would have undertaken to plead in any court of morals to which he might have been summoned.

Whitman constantly exposed his soul, while carefully concealing and even lying about the ordinary details of his life with which the biographer has to do. Where he went and when; how many trips he made and in what directions; what women he loved and where, and whether black, white, or chocolate-colored or to what degrees of prostitution they were severally addicted; how many, if any, children he had (he once boasted of having five);—all are disputed points and no one has yet dug up authentic records in any way conclusive concerning them. As to his private life he has given us, indeed, "only

a few faint hints and indirections."

What he stood for, however, in the great world of thought, how he reacted emotionally and intellectually to the art, music, politics, morals, social organization, economics, events and contacts of the stirring times in which he lived are all set down with great clarity in his poems and elaborated in his prose.

I have never myself accepted as valid the European interpretations of Calamus. In my opinion he speaks there of pure brotherly affection, the Damon-and-Pythias relationship, comradeship, "manly" love, which he called curiously "athletic love," a term apparently of his own coining, since it cannot be found anywhere else in literature. I am familiar with the passages hard to reconcile with this view; but, on the other hand, there are ten times as many passages which cannot be reconciled with any other view.

The companion piece, *Children of Adam*, dealing with love between the sexes, represents a revolt against the really ridiculous reticences of the Victorians, and is certainly quite beyond anything in English in giving uninhibited but, nevertheless, idealized expression to this phase of human experience. We feel here that Nature speaks "without check and with original energy."

I am returning your excellent paper herewith, and thanks very much for dispensing my regards around the college.

Yours truly,

Roy Bedichek

Miss Oneita Hildebrand,
No. 1205 West Mulberry,
Denton, Texas

P.S. Since you are an English teacher, I shall have to apologize for the typing of this letter. Since none of our stenographic force is inured to the language of literary criticism, and since help is too scarce to risk any resignations, I have had to do this letter with my own fair hands on my 30-year-old old Oliver typewriter. R.B.

'One day at the Springs'

Every now and then he would say he was egotistical and anti-social. But Roy Bedichek simply couldn't put on the act.

Af course, he was a paradox—as who is not? But he was of the chosen few who merit evaluation.

Several years ago Rev. Edmund Heinsohn, sitting on the rocks at Barton Springs, said that Bedichek "has so much to give." The other day at the services he concluded by saying that the spirit that was in Bedichek has "survival value."

There are many revealing "Bedi" stories, but mostly they should be told by those in the intimate circle. Two will suffice here:

He invited criticism of his works. One day at the Springs I took him up on that. I had found one of his sentences objectionable for a purely technical reason. He made a calm reply which I have forgotten, and I thought the matter ended. Far from it. Two days later I received a well-documented letter stating that he was right and I was wrong.

We fired letters back and forth

on this subject for about eight years.

Bedichek had a way of making people want to confide in him. Soon he knew all about my problems as a professional writer and editor. He didn't believe that writing for a living soiled the soul.

One afternoon at the Springs I told him I was disgusted with an onerous writing job I had undertaken and was going to ditch it. He advised against it. "Give that man the best that's in you," he said.

In like manner I have heard him smooth out the thinking of disturbed insurance salesmen, university professors, tailors, lawyers, barbers, and assorted Doctors of Philosophy—all kinds of people who happened to get in conversation with him on the creek bank.

Whenever Bedichek started telling me how self-centered and anti-social he was, I would remind him of this.

He would again try to put on the act. And fail.

FRED THOMPSON

'The days of dizzy raptures gone'

(Bedichek wrote his friends J. Frank Dobie and Clara Lewis on old age.—Ed.)

I

September 27, 1951

Dear Dobie:

Yes, in comparison with the microscopic lapse of time taken up by one's adult years, man's 'progress' or 'retrogression' can only be framed in geologic time.

I have just learned from reading a scholarly and immensely documented history of furniture that from about 400 a.d. to about 1500 a.d. the chair was completely lost. The easy, relaxed postures we see seated on Greek vases of, say, Persephone & Palamedes, with the figure of the Goddess molded into the chair completely reposed, serene and tranquil, is general throughout the Greek and Roman empires for at least a thousand years.

Then man literally forgets how to sit down, and it is a thousand years before he discovers a genuine chair and how to make one. From the Fall of Rome to the Discovery of America man had not where to rest his buttocks, and then it took him nearly three hundred years to fashion a piece in which the relaxed sitting posture of the human body was possible.

So, if it takes a millenium or so—no one knows how long, to make a simple piece of furniture one can sit on—and then after forgetting how another millenium (we) only re-learn by accidental survival of representations, think how the more complicated things of civilization, not only mechanical but 'ways of life' (the genuine essences of civilization)—consider how much is lost in the monstrous churnings about of wars and migrations to which our species is subjected. Truly "we little note nor long remember."

This occurs to me in the context of your 'geologic time' remark the other afternoon, and tends to confirm your suggestion. It is also in line with the 'no-progress' theory I mentioned. I think it must have been some such staggering discovery as mine of the chair that caused our most robust of optimists, Walt Whitman, to rub his eyes and exclaim, "I know the amplitude of time." How much more philosophic is that remark than Tennyson's "I the heir to all the ages in the foremost files of Time." Is he the heir to all the ages? Not by a damnsite. He inherits only a microscopic fraction, and that little will be wiped out and forgotten in the World Hurricane in which we shall shortly be engulfed.

Yours,

Bedi.

P.S. An old barber who has cut my hair for forty years confided to my right ear as he was trimming the hairs out of it yesterday afternoon that he can no longer sit down camp-style out in the open—he can no longer naturally answer Nature's call, but must seek a rest of some sort. R.B.

P.P.S. One of the real tragedies of Old Age lies in its decreasing ability to squat.

ccEugene George, Jr.
This is a young man with whom I sometimes have philosophic discussions. R.B.

II

801 E 23
Austin 5, Texas
March 13, 1955

Dear Clara:

Finally, I found your note of March 3 and note that in an-

'Fortunately, we have poetry for childhood, and poetry a little more realistic for youth, still nearer the truth for middle age, but finally we must take to prose.'

swering from memory the other day, I forgot all about the quaternary stuck down in the lower lefthand corner.

As a general policy Age should let Youth have its illusions. Maybe you should be permitted to believe that Moore is right, and that, in the darkening years, Memory will serve as their comforter if not their delight. I believed this until I got old. I believed, also, the opening lines of "Rabbi Ben Ezra."

But Moore and Browning were indulging in wishful thinking. The last of life is by no means the best of life. Memory does not half renew our pleasures. On the other hand, Memory makes us more miserable by presenting former joys in contrast with the aches and pains of a worn-out physical machine, and, on the emotional plain, with the mere ghosts or shadows of pleasures once experienced with an overwhelming sense of their reality.

Tennyson comes nearer my experience: "a sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things . . ."

"Drug thy memory lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof

In the dead, unhappy night when the rain is on the roof."

(italics supplied)

And, again, he is so mortally right in that immortal unrhymed lyric, finest in the language, "Tears, Idle Tears." Repetition of it renews even now the flow of tears from my dried-up, drouthy eyes.

Once in the beginning of my old age, I drove alone down the beautiful Bosque Valley in the fall of the year. I began repeating that poem looking out upon "the happy autumn fields" and thinking of the days in that very valley when it was the scene, years previously, of one of the great emotional experiences of my life. Tears blinded me and I drove off on the side of the road until I regained my vision.

Fortunately, we have poetry for childhood, and poetry a little more realistic for youth, still nearer the truth for middle age,

but finally we must take to prose. Even Browning succumbed to this truth when he admitted into "By the Fireside," "Not verse now, only prose," as evidence that all the days of dizzy raptures were really and finally gone.

All this should not repress the aspiration to be happy in old age. Witness that heroic spirit whose funeral we are attending today.* I gathered great strength from occasional associations with her, of which the last at your home was to me the most inspiring of all. Dobie and I, both doubters, rarely felicitate each other, but we did this very thing right after that memorable dinner. Bless her dear heart, there she sat smiling, dominating completely her terrible physical infirmities. It is hard for me to believe that she ever surrendered, even "in the dead, unhappy night," to the sick fancies I have (under a most mysterious compulsion) been sharing with you. Did she ever indulge "tears, idle tears?" I doubt it. But if she did, she was in her contacts with us, always and indisputably captain of her soul.

Well, I'm afraid it will take another compost-party to dissipate the gloom into which this correspondence has fallen. Until then, I am

Yours as cheerfully as possible,
Bedi

*Mrs. Morgan Smith

III

Dear Dobie:

I believe that you and I reached our conclusion concerning helpless old age independently of each other and perhaps independently of our reading, or of our listening to the wise. Anyway, it takes a Greek to put it into words that seem to me to leave nothing unsaid:

Only the base will long for length of life that never turns another way from evil.

What joy is there in day that follows day, now swift, now slow, and death the only goal. I count as nothing him who feels within the glow of empty hopes.

Yours for a long life as long as it is a merry one, or as you say, as long as one can stay "lit up with life."

R.B.

October 10, 1957

THE TEXAS OBSERVER
Page 11 June 27, 1959

'As I begin my devotional'

801 East 23rd Street
Austin 5, Texas
August 31, 1956

Dear Clara (Lewis):

From long habit I never throw away an unfaded rose, but stick it in a little water, not from any sentimental association it may happen to have with an event or personality, but simply because in my religion a trash can is no place for a rose with any life left in it.

Hence, the little rose you pinned on my lapel the other night was thus bestowed as I was disrobing for bed, and it is still there in its berth as fresh as when it was ravished from its bush. Each morning since as I begin my devotional, which consists of merely reading a good book, I see it across the table above the

edge of its peanut-butter glass.

So, for my small trouble in extending ever so briefly this little flower's little lease on life, I am rewarded by being reminded of you, your graciousness, of your consideration for others, of your zest in life, your vivacity and ceaseless activity all richly seasoned with what Wordsworth nominates "that best portion of a good man's life, his little nameless unremembered acts of kindness and of love."

And even yet in this dawn nearly a week later, this flower still faces me over the edge of the glass, performing untaught its self-imposed task of reminding.

And thus reminded I am and must remain

Always Sincerely yours
Roy Bedichek



—Neal Douglass Photo

UT Press Director Frank Wardlaw, Bedichek, Dobie, and Webb
A Texas Naturalist Tells a Story to Some Friends in an Austin Evening

'I hear "Time's winged chariot"'

(At the suggestion of the editor Dr. Webb extracted from his file of Bedichek letters the one that follows. It shows how Bedichek's mind worked, how a literary suggestion nagged him, and maybe something of his sardonic view of fame.—Ed.)

Dear Webb:

The lines you quote are impressive:

"But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near."

Your comment is deeply philosophic. Instead of being an historian, you should have been a philosopher. You have genuine philosophic insight, but not a professionally cultivated one. But maybe the professional philosophers would have sealed up the outlets of your intuitive wisdom. I have always contended that you are somewhat of a psychic.

A couplet you quote started me digging into my capacious memory for a couplet or two from a poem by some early American rhymster, maybe Bret Harte, Maybe John Hay, maybe someone else—no matter. My digging, as usual, exhumed only the concluding lines which run

"A few swift years and who
can show

Which dust was Bill and which
was Joe."

A few more days of digging and the digger brought up another fragment,

"... Ah, pensive scholar, what
is fame?"

This, you see, is a query and
must have an answer. So search-

ing the cubby-holes of deposits jumbled and overlaid with dust I uncovered the title of a poem,

"Lines to a Dying Athlete" but nothing came of it for a day or two, and then while I was taking a bath and thinking of what a mess of a winter-garden I have, this couplet popped up uncalled:

"Silence sounds no worse than
cheers
After the earth has stopped his
ears."

Do you notice that the rime of this is almost identical with the rime of your couplet. What strange alchemy goes on in the memory!

Still I knew this was a wrong scent—true it is in the same vein, but I knew that it didn't answer, except by indirection, the query, "Ah, pensive scholar, what is fame?"

Then I decided to give it up and write to the "memory" column of the NY Times and get the answer. But I was busy and put off writing. It kept ding-donging in my memory: "what is the rime for fame?" Finally "flame" came. It must be flame, but get the line, I could not, so I decided to build up a line of my own, but with the figure the poet used clearly before me, that is a comparison of "fame" to "flame." "A sudden lift of leaping flame" and I repeated it aloud with dissatisfaction:

Ah, pensive scholar, what is
fame?

A sudden lift of leaping flame.

Mighty sorry! No poet of any tunefulness would use it, but I knew the comparison was right. Then since the last couplet of the poem first dug up mentions "dust" another comparison of fame to dust must be next, and it came without much trouble:

"A giddy whirlwind's fickle
gust
That lifts a pinch of mortal
dust."

So I think I have it, that is the concluding three couplets. There is leading up to these three couplets a short life history of Bill and one of Joe. One a "pensive scholar" and the other a hail fellow well-met who takes life and life's joys and sorrows in his healthy stride.

Ah, pensive scholar, what is
fame?

A slender tongue of leaping
flame,

A giddy whirlwind's fickle
gust

That lifts a pinch of mortal
dust—

A few swift years and who can
show

Which dust was Bill and which
was Joe.

You can see what a burden and what superhuman exertion your suggestion put upon me that we are no longer friendly in the mails, or even neighborly, because

Always at our backs we hear
"Time's winged chariot hurrying
near."

I am afraid Toynbee is too much for me. I have read your review in the Dallas News. It makes a stimulating introduction to the great man's work, but I hear "Time's winged chariot." I must stick to my humble knitting, and try to understand simpler things than the reasons for the fall, rise, endurance and diseases of twenty-five or thirty civilizations since they began recording themselves in enduring and legible form. What does Toynbee say of the Minoan civilization whose record recently discovered has not yet been deciphered?

Don't give yourself any more concern over my arrogance. It is definitely on its way out.

As ever, affectionately

Bedi.

Dear Bedi:

'You left my life richer as I am sure you did the lives of many others.'

Dear Bedi:

Ronnie Dugger asked me to send him something to include in his special edition of *The Observer*, which I understand he is making into a sort of Bedichek symposium to commemorate your departure on a long journey. Those of us who knew you would just as soon have had you postpone it, though we all know that such a journey is inevitable.

You will be interested, and perhaps amused, to learn that you took a good deal of the sting out of your going by the manner of it. Those of us who had listened to your vociferous comments on this subject know that you went exactly the way you wanted, as if you had designed it with the skill and determination you used in designing your own life. Few people are able to call their own shots as you did, right up to the end.

After the service by Dr. Heinsohn, which I thought very appropriate for you, three of us went out for lunch where we had a pretty good time retelling the delightful stories which our total association of not less than 100 years had provided us. (Frank Dobie and I knew you for forty years, and Glen Evans must have known you for twenty or more, and that makes the 100 years.) I know you would have been pleased to be the subject of such animated conversation, and the center of so many good stories. We were particularly delighted that you had finished your fourth book, all of them written after you were seventy, and that you had got your publisher's signature on the line, and maybe even a nice advance, only a week earlier.

The first time I remember seeing you was during the impeachment trial of a Texas governor when I as a student was in the gallery of the House of Representatives and you as a reporter for the *San Antonio Express* were on the floor. You were supposed to be making impartial reports, but I suspect you may have slanted them just a little in the direction of your sentiment, which is exactly what I would have done had I been in your place. Incidentally that trial is the most dramatic event I have ever witnessed. Later you became an editor on the *Express* and held this position when I decided to quit teaching in the San Antonio schools because I had had a row with the superintendent. I applied to you for a job as a reporter. You not only turned me down, but you gave me a lengthy and not wholly convincing lecture as to why I should not take this step. I didn't take it because nobody would give me a job.

My memory is not very clear as to when or how our friendship developed at the University of Texas. I spent a five-year stretch on your Interscholastic League Council and was struck by the savage intensity with which you enforced the rules made (by you, I suspect) in an effort to preserve some morality in school athletics.

We really got acquainted, I think, when we went to the Big Bend during the Christmas holidays and camped at the mouth of

Saint Helena Canyon, camped in a sandbed with a one-armed real silk stocking salesman who was trying to get away from civilization and had darn near done it. We cleaned up his camp, fed him good food, and paid him \$3.00 for showing us the canyon which was right there for all to see. He was a salesman. It was from him that you learned about a special breed of rabbits, which he called knee rabbits, found only, according to our informant, in the Rio Grande Valley. I'll never forget the expression on your face when, in response to your question, our host told you the origin of knee rabbits. Coming back from the Big Bend we decided that what we had done was foolish and that we liked it; we entered into an agreement to do at least one foolish thing each year. I think I have lived up to that agreement, but I am not sure that you did. Your innate caution seemed to get in the way.

In 1942 I did what turned out to be a wise thing. I bought the Old Johnson Institute in the hills southwest of Austin and changed its name to Friday Mountain Ranch because a hill there is named Friday Mountain and I liked the name. You used the old stone building as a hideout to write your first book, *Adventures with a Texas Naturalist*. You spent a year and a day there, but you came out with the finished manuscript. Your picture hangs in the room upstairs where you did your writing, sleeping and eating. You cooked your own food in the open fireplace or on a hot plate; occasionally you insisted on my eating things you had cooked in the ashes. The potatoes and eggs were all right, but I drew the line on brussels sprouts and spinach, which I don't care for when cooked proper. There was not even running water in the house, but you made out. We still have the big round table you used, one that Captain Ernest Best of the Texas Rangers took out of a gambling house.

Another thing you did was to suggest that Rodney Kidd and I should set up a boys' camp at Friday Mountain. In response to your suggestion we met one rainy day and set up Friday Mountain Boys' Camp, now in its thirteenth year. You had a chapter in your book entitled "The Tree and the Rock." It was the story of how a hackberry tree found root in a giant rock, broke the rock into several pieces and became a big tree. You were explaining how soil is made. The tree died during the drought, only the stump and the broken rocks are left. It is possible that you have conferred immortality on Friday Mountain and that in the future students and curious tourists in search of culture will make pilgrimages there to see where the *Texas Naturalist* wrote his first book.

Ah well, Bedi, this could go on for a long time if I recounted all the memories of a long association. Perhaps I can sum it up by saying that you made my life richer as I am sure you did the lives of many others. You left Texas a better place than you found it and no Texan should wish for more.

Yours,

Walter Prescott Webb

'A sense of the flow of time'

Whether or not this book is any good, I am already compensated by having regained a sense of the flow of time. There are now few moments mutilated with flurried haste. The incubus of some neglected task has loosened its hold, and I feel no longer the internal disquietude of something hanging fire which it was my duty to straighten out a week or two ago. Rhythm comes of timing the items of one's routine to conform to those of the natural day.

Whence comes the deliberation and aplomb of out-of-door people the world over, savage as well as civilized? The American Indian is recorded as grave, slow, measured in speech and manner. The frontier Texan figures in fiction and in factual descriptions with a "drawl" and as a man of few words. Of course, now, with a generation of urbanization, as

much chatter falls from the composite mouth of Texas as from that of any other state, excluding only those of disproportionate metropolitan populations. Outdoor living not only softens speech but slows its tempo, reflecting quieter nerves and mental reactions surer if somewhat slower on the trigger.

It is because Nature herself is deliberate. Ninety-nine per cent of her performance is gradual. To take a single instance out of those hundreds ready at hand: what a large percentage of urbanized populations miss beginning the day under the spell of the silent, pervasive, leisurely preparations of the heavens to receive the sun!

Roy Bedichek
in the Introduction to *Adventures with a Texas Naturalist*

December 6, 1954.

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June 27, 1959

Mr. Roy Bedichek