

Onion Tops

Number 12

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A Little History

Robert E. Howard was 17 years old in 1923 - 17 years old. Any one who's looked at Rusty Burke's Fiction and Verse Timeline can tell you that Howard hadn't published much at this time, but not for a lack of trying.

In 1921, "Bill Smalley and the Power of the Human Eye" was submitted to both *Adventure* and *Western Story* -- to no effect. The next two years brought more rejections: *Weird Tales* rejected both "The Mystery of Summerton Castle" and "The Phantom of Old Egypt" -- and lost the manuscripts. "Lal-Singh - Adventurer" was rejected by *Adventure*; "The Feminine of the Species" was rejected by *Argosy-Allstory*; "The Iron Terror" was rejected by *Cosmopolitan*, but Howard kept chipping away.

In December of 1922, Howard got his first writing paycheck, sort of. Two of his stories, "Golden Hope" Christmas" and "West Is West," won cash prizes when they were published in Brownwood High School's newspaper, *The Tattler*. "Golden Hope" scored him a ten-dollar gold piece, "West" a five-dollar coin. It is probably one of these stories that Howard refers to in a ca. February 1929 letter to Tevis Clyde Smith: "an Oklahoma paper once published 1 story, reprint from *The Tattler*."

The Commerce Journal.

COMMERCE, HUNT COUNTY, FRIDAY, MAY 25, 1923.

<p>DRINKING FOUNTAIN INSTALLED</p> <p>A long neglected need of the city has recently been supplied by the enterprising firm of Young Hardware Company, who installed a public drinking fountain in front of their business on Main street. Water flows from a well under the corner of the building, thence pure city water at being pumped out on to the fountain all basin in abundance and cold enough to please customers who have been accustomed heretofore to stand hot around on the streets drinking rather than feeling the furnace who turn a line on heavy days to the water coolers in the various business houses.</p>	<p>WORK HAS STARTED ON BANKHEAD ROAD</p> <p>Commissioner George Kelley was recently been supplied by the enterprising firm of Young Hardware Company, who installed a public drinking fountain in front of their business on Main street. Water flows from a well under the corner of the building, thence pure city water at being pumped out on to the fountain all basin in abundance and cold enough to please customers who have been accustomed heretofore to stand hot around on the streets drinking rather than feeling the furnace who turn a line on heavy days to the water coolers in the various business houses.</p>	<p>Neological</p> <p>From The East Texasian:</p> <p>For the fourth time in the history of the East Texas State Teachers' College since it has become a State institution the student body is called upon to witness the loss by death of one of its members. For the third time this loss has befallen the normal year class; for the first time it is a young woman, Miss Mary Lou Mathews, who has been called to rest the body of her sister, Mary Lou Mathews, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Mathews, of Mt. Pleasant, died Monday afternoon.</p>	<p>GIVES DISSERTATION ON EVOLUTION</p> <p>At both meetings, Monday night, May 21, and Sunday night, May 22, Mr. J. A. Old gave a large report on the dissertation which he has been working on, "The Evolution of the Christian View of God." His conclusion was that the Bible is not infallible.</p>	<p>Reci</p> <p>It cannot be said that a progress is with our country. An age of progress is with our country. An age of progress is with our country. An age of progress is with our country.</p>
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L. Sprague de Camp is not kind to these early attempts, calling the five-dollar winner "a mere three-page anecdote" and the gold winner "a sentimental trifle." He does, however, say that both stories are "literate and well above the standard of the usual high school theme." Thanks, Sprague.

Howard went on to contribute several more stories to *The Tattler*: "Unhand Me, Villain", "Aha! or The Mystery of the Queen's Necklace", "The Sheik", and other items that appeared after he'd graduated. At the same time these stories were being written, Howard was composing poetry.

Sometime in the spring of 1923, *The Baylor United Statement*, a publication of the Baylor College for Women, published "The Sea". Shortly after his first-published poem appeared, Howard won an essay contest with his "What the Nation Owes to the South." The essay was printed in the *Brownwood Bulletin*. Also, Howard collaborated with Clyde Smith on "Under the Great Tiger," an incomplete serial that Smith included in his "Lone Scout" publication, *The All-Around Magazine*, in the May-June and July issues. Having graduated from high school, Howard returned to Cross Plains. This may be the reason that the serial was never completed; although, Howard and Smith did begin a lively correspondence at this time.

It is because of this correspondence that we know, sort of, about another of Howard's poetic endeavors. In the June 22, 1923 letter to Smith, Howard says, "I got a letter from the assistant editor of 'The Campus,' S.M.U. He said he saw my poem 'The Sea' in 'The Baylor United Statements' and he asked me to contribute to 'The Campus.' I sent him a poem." Unfortunately, we don't know the title of the poem that he sent; at least, I don't know it.

Besides catching *The Campus* editor's eye, "The Sea" must have had a similar effect on an editor at *The Cross Plains Review*, where it was reprinted in the June 29, 1923 issue.

Which brings me to the point of this little History lesson. In the May 25, 1923 issue of *The Commerce Journal*, straight out of Commerce, Texas, appeared a little article entitled "High School Society Contest." This contest was apparently sponsored by the aforementioned Baylor College for Women, and announced its winners on

The Sea

The sea, the sea, the rooling seal—
 High flung, wide swinging, so wild
 and free,
 The leaping waves with their white-
 capped crest
 That plunge and lunge on the Ocean's
 breast
 Like wild, white horses racing free,
 With the swing of the rolling, surg-
 ing seal
 The white sea-cloud that drifts like
 a dream;
 The sea-gulls that skim o'er the
 waves, and scream;
 The dolphin's pludge and the pet-
 rel's nest,
 That is borne to land on the tide-
 race crest:
 And all that goes, from mid-ocean
 to lea,
 To make up the rolling, the surging
 seal
 Can ye stand on the peaceful, quiet
 lea,
 And gaze on the tumbling, tossing
 sea,
 Out o'er the surge and the white
 waves crest,
 Nor feel a longing within your breast?
 A drawing, a pull, be it day or night,
 That tempts ye to dare the ocean's
 might.
 I stood on the deck of a ship off-
 shore
 And harked to the awesome and
 deafening roar
 Of the ocean waves when they struck
 the reefs,
 High tossed on the tide like crested
 chiefs
 Whose plumes toss high 'bove the
 battling hordes,
 Where leap the lances and flash the
 swords.
 And the mighty waves rose high
 and steep
 To the hand of the winds that smote
 the deep.

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And my soul leaped wild, and my
 soul leaped free,
 To the leap and the swing of the
 rolling sea!
 And my soul was freed with that
 ocean leap,
 And it plumed the depths of the
 mighty deep!
 Down, down, down where the mer-
 maids ride,
 Down where the things of the deep
 sea glide.
 Down where the ships, long sunken,
 float,
 War-ship and galley and coracle
 boat;
 Down beyond reach of the storms
 or the tides,
 To the coral halls where old Triton
 hides!
 And I saw the mermaids and mer-
 men play,
 And the kraken and sea-serpent
 locked in fray.
 And all the ocean-marvels that be,
 And the wonderful monsters of the
 sea.
 I wandered 'mongst beautiful,
 sea flowers,
 Where the castle built by the polyp,
 towers,
 Where the waters glitter with strange
 sea-jad,
 And the sea-thing swim through the
 deep-sea glade.
 And then my soul came back to me,
 Back through the surge of swinging
 Sea.
 But still I gaze from the quiet lea,
 And long for the swing of the
 plunging sea.

—Robert Howard.

May 21st. Buried in the middle of the article is a little item of interest for folks like us: "Honorable mention was made of the poems submitted by Arrena Miller, Denison; Robert E. Howard, Brownwood . . ." and the list goes on.

The titles of the big winners' poems are included in the article, but not the honorable mentions. Was Howard's contribution "The Sea"? It was published in the Baylor paper right around the time of the contest, but I couldn't find any mention of Baylor's "High School Poetry Contest" anywhere. Oh well, this is probably old news. Can someone help me out?

At left, "The Sea" is from *Cross Plains Review*, Vol. XIV, No. 15 from June 29, 1923.

Pg. 4, "High School Society Contest" is from *The Commerce Journal*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 21 from May 25, 1923.

Onion Tops is brought to you by Rob Roehm: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] "The Sea" by Robert E. Howard is in the public domain, as is "High School Society Contest" author unknown; all other material Copyright © 2006 by Rob Roehm for Roehm's Room Press. This edition was produced for REHupa #201.

Clothes

the weather.

Comfort is only

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ACH, SPANISH
as, regular and
specifications to
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Haberdashery

rear, summer neckwear,
summer hosiery, the
in in town. They're our,

HIGH SCHOOL SOCIETY CONTEST

BELTON, Texas, May 21.—First place in the second annual High School Poetry Contest, conducted by Baylor College for Women of this place went to Miss Luella Maud Cneger of Waco High School. Miss Cneger won fourth place in last year's contest. The prize is a scholarship to Baylor College for one year and an autograph volume of contemporary poetry.

More than eighty poems were submitted from various high schools in the State. No high school was permitted to have more than two entries.

"Three Ironies" by Jake Zeitlin, Senior High School, Fort Worth, won second place. Miss Sue Frances Gilliam, Brownwood, won third place with her poem, "Frances." Marvin Davis, Wills Point, won fourth place and Ruth Blackwell, La Porte, fifth place.

Honorable mention was made of the poems submitted by Arrena Miller, Denison; Robert E. Howard, Brownwood; Mary Bruton, El Dorado Gwin Harris, San Angelo; Ruth Maxwell, Oak Cliss; John Edwin Canaday, Main Avenue High School, San Antonio.

Ten dollars in gold and a year's subscription to "Poetry" is the prize for the second place while those winning third, fourth and fifth places will be given a year's subscription to "Poetry."

Judges were: William Russell Clark, Secretary of the Poetry Society of Texas; Dr. A. J. Armstrong, Baylor University, and Dr. Jay B. Hubbell, Southern Methodist University.

Baylor College will conduct a similar contest every year. It will be open to any high school boy or girl in the State.

Miss Florence Bodenhamer, of Humble, won first place in the contest last year. She is now a member of the freshman class of Baylor College and has been admitted to the Poetry Society, a club composed of Baylor girls who write poetry.

"Treasure" was the title of the

prize winning poem this year. The first section of it is named "Night and Dawn," by its author, Miss Cneger. It is as follows:

NIGHT AND DAWN

My souls a sea gull
Flashing on foam-flecked pinions;
Rising on mountain waves;
Leaping out of the valleys,
Knowing the cold, wet winds
That rise from the sea;
Watching the phosphorous
Shaken from the silken shoulders of
seals;
Throwing a thread of song
into the night air
As fishermen cast their baited hooks
No walls save those of starlit sky—
Below, the darkened mysteries of
the sea—
That reaches up its white-tipped
fingers for the moon
And I along,
To taste the salt ambrosia from blue
cups.
My soul a sea gull.
Must Pearl-Gray: and Rosy Arms of
Dawn
Lifting drowsily the Silken Coverlet.

Odd Fellows

H. O. Cowan, W. P. Arrington, H. E. Roberts, W. C. Conder, A. Watson, G. T. Wiggs, W. B. Jackson, Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Estes were among the large number of persons from Commerce who attended a public joint meeting of Fred Ende Lodge I. O. O. F., Greenville Encampment No. 40, and Rebekah Lodge at Greenville Friday night. The musical program was furnished by the orchestra and glee club from the Odd Fellows Orphans Home at Corsicana.

Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Jones and baby, Mrs. S. A. Jones and Mrs. Myrtle Worley of Greenville and Mr. and Mrs. T. C. Jones of Lone Oak spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Jones at Commerce.

Mrs. Clifton Moody and baby of Greenville came over Monday to visit Grandmother DeJernett, mother of Dr. DeJernett, who is reported on the sick