

Neditorials

And Other Works

By Ned Cheever, Sr.

PREFACE

My father was a writer even as a child. He was encouraged by his father as he later encouraged me. If I have a gift, it was bestowed upon me by my Pop, though we seldom spent much time together. Now, realizing that I squandered many opportunities to learn from him and get to know him better, I can only reflect upon his work with a tear in my eye.

His favorite pastime was writing quatrains. He told an entire story in four lines, often the title being used as a poignant element. The quatrains in this collection are the few that have been salvaged of many that he wrote. This collection was self-published under the title, "Neditorials."

Most were published in either the Arkansas Gazette, the Arkansas Democrat, the North Little Rock Times, or the Memphis Commercial Appeal. Copyrights and credits have been scattered to the wind. He had rejection slips from many major publishers.

Some of the more heady poems are posted behind the lighter verse.

-Ned Cheever, Jr.

AMPLE PROOF

She's past sixteen, and lovely, too,
Yet she vows she's not been kissed,
Seems strange, still I believe it's true,
For I tried hard and missed.

TIME AND TIME AGAIN

My clock's a crafty wizard,
Else how is it to know
To run fast when I'm early,
And when I'm late, run slow?

PRESCRIPTION

If a life of ease
Is growing irksome,
The remedy's
Quite simple: work some.

DOT AND DASH

Our buses run ten minutes apart,
And are always on the dot,
So usually I have to wait –
Because I'm not.

DISADVANTAGE

"Two can live as cheap as one" . . .
The adage isn't wrong,
For if they try, it can be done;
But two can't live as long.

MISSING ITEM

The couple read 'installment' ads,
Bought home and car and raiment,
Got everything they bargained for
Except the easy payment.

RARE DAY IN JUNE

That school days are the happiest
I'm sure there's little doubt;
And of those happy ones the best
Is the day that school is out.

THE WEEK AFTER

Vacations will in that glad day
Be time for joy and laughter--
When some bright fellow finds a way
To skip the next week after.

VERSATILE

Often sleeps acts the part of an angel,
But beware, make no mistake –
It can also play the Devil,
When you're trying to stay awake.

METAMORPHOSIS

Milady loved her new chapeau.
So jaunty (also wacky),
But she saw one just like it, so
It now is downright tacky.

CORRECTION

Don't think that multi-bathrooms
Were designed for men of means;
They're for poor dads whose daughters
Are sweet things in their teens.

COMPENSATION

Though there isn't a tree
That borders my lawn, it
It seems that all the leaves
Will eventually get on it.

SUSPENSE

Although I hold my hands up high,
He takes dead aim; and the pistol snaps,
“Stand there,” he orders, “until I
Can find another roll of caps!”

WINTER RAIN

I like the winter's drowsy rain.
In it I like to stroll, or ride,
Yet even so I like it best
When I am by a warm fireside.

BOOK REVIEW

He had thought his pretty notes
Were merely transitory,
But today the jury votes
The notes are promissory.

PATTERN

If it's imitated
It'll likely stand the test,
For what is counterfeited
Is usually the best.

C'EST LA MODE

Raincoat manufacturers think,
Or so it seems to me,
That a man comes to an end
Just below the knee.

CAUSE FOR ALARM

I wake before my clock alarms,
So I don't really mind it;
But what irks me, I sleep to nine
When I forget to wind it.

CONFESSION

I told a little lie, but then
I'm very glad I did,
Because I saved a friendship when
I kept my temper hid.

PLAINT

Our phone's a total loss to me,
I dial until I'm dizzy,
But no one's there to answer, or
If so the line is busy.

PRIZE GADGET

The automobile accessory
That would easily set the pace—
And already a necessity—
Is a portable parking space.

RECALL

While you're lying awake from ten till four,
Don't cry out to high heaven,
Just think about how you'd recall those hours
When the alarm goes off at seven.

EVERYWOMAN

The rack may groan under strain and stress
From the garments hanging there,
Yet, she never, when she starts to dress,
Has anything to wear.

TONSILLECTOMY

That it is minor surgery
is a mere idea of his;
That all depends, of course upon
Whose child the patient is.

FEBRUARY

Definitely a problem child,
A varied role she plays;
Although second of the twelve
She boasts the fewest days.

ONE FEATURE MISSING

My new machine has won my affection
With it 's easy touch keys, shift and spacer,
But the one that'll be my next selection
Will have a key that's labeled ERASER .

IT'S PAPA WHO PAYS

I'd feel relieved when daughter went to work;
She'd help out on the bills and I'd relax;
But all, alas, that she's relieved me of
Is one dependent on my income tax.

MIGHT AS WELL

Figures do not lie, they say.
Even so, they shouldn't boast,
For my poor head is turning gray,
Because they do almost.

FLOWERS

I think God gave the flowers
To this old earth below
So a little bit of heaven
Might take root here and grow.

DEFERRED

Repartee
Appeals to me;
I think of just the thing to say--
Next day.

SINCERE

Your hostess smiles;
Her face is bright
When she sees
You travel light.

MY DOCTOR

He knows no way to cure a cold;
When asked, he merely shrugs--
And writes me out prescriptions
for ten dollars' worth of drugs.

YARDSTICK

The speaker's an artist--
Perhaps without peer,
Whose messages bring us
What we want to hear.

INDICATIVE MOOD

Perhaps the past is perfect,
And the present is immense,
Yet a threatening tomorrow
Can make the future tense.

TWICE TOLD TALES

He's rated tops at telling tales;
At getting laughs her never fails--
Till he springs one we've hear before;
Then the guy's a perfect bore.

NO QUITTERS

It's easy to spot my family,
For I know without a doubt,
Wherever they went. . . church, party, school,
They're the last ones coming out.

COMPROMISE

When my wife and I do not agree,
I tell her what I'm going to do;
She then takes over, and soon I see
The path we both will pursue.

THE TRUTH IS SHOWING

There's little more convincing than
Those bathers on parade;
They prove that clothes do make the man,
But not the pretty maid.

MAYBE PI

I think Chaucer as a lad,
Played hooky from his classes--
Or the printer that he had
Misplaced his reading glasses.

LARCENY NOTE

The sweetest stolen moments
To spend in Morpheus' arms;
Are early in the morning--
Just after the clock alarms.

WANDERER

The Mrs. likes to move things around;
Which can move me to wrath,
For sometimes in the dark I'd swear
This time she's moved the bath!

SOCIETY PAGE

The papers pictured the lovely bride
With all her attendants fair;
And then, there was some mention made
of the Groom, who too, was there.

RUNNER-UP

When women are seated on the bus,
It isn't as you reckoned;
It because man's chivalrous,
But because he got there second.

HABIT

Which shoe did you lace first this morning?
"No matter...either one," Do you say?
Even so I'll hazard a penny
It's the one you laced first yesterday.

SWEEPSTAKES

Keeping up with the Joneses
Isn't the goal, but instead,
Keeping up with is but showing,
Winning's keeping ahead.

SAGE

He's a gentlemen and a scholar;
That's very plain to see...
Have you not too been noticing
He always agrees with me?

DEALER'S CHOICE

Her salad seems to hit the spot;
Her guests say it's a winner.
And if I like it, or if not,
What's left will be my dinner.

SOMETIMES BLANKS ARE WINNERS

Authors of these memory courses
May build tidy fortunes, yet
Picture their untold resources
If they taught how to forget!

ANNUAL STORY

Vacation time's for rest, and yet I work the whole

time through--In trying to decide on what

Next year I'm going to do

.

SO PASSES AWAY THE GLORY

A lonely oak stands like a sentinel

Where through the years it grew beside a gate

That opened wide in welcome or farewell

To all - to both the lowly and the great.

I miss the courthouse, which became the school.

The stores with porches and soiled window panes,

The cotton gin and pond - our swimming pool -

Are gone. The white spired church alone remains.

The old town branch, a sleepy little stream,

Awakes to sing for me its welcome song

While I stand helpless, as if in a dream,

Amid a landscape that does not belong.

A lovely rose lies trampled in the sod -

Known but to hallowed memories and God.

From: ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT, Little Rock, Arkansas

BITTERSWEET

Our place is looking different;
Improved, I'm sure the neighbors say.
But I like it the way it was
Before the clean-up yesterday.
I miss each airplane, car and gun
That lay where it was left or thrown;
I like to watch the tractor work
And hear it squeak and wheeze and groan.
But now, although the toys are here -
As many as ever before -
The most of them are stored away,
And won't be used much any more.
You see, our son is going to school.
He has become a big boy now -
Though a babe in arms but yesterday . . .
Today I'm feeling sad, somehow.

From: THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL, Memphis, Tennessee

REGENERATION

Today fades quickly as the shades of night are drawn,
And with its memories, some sweet, some touched by sorrow,
It sleeps . . . to wake and tiptoe through the damask dawn
And live anew in God's own glorious tomorrow.

From: ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT, Little Rock, Arkansas

EDITION IN UTOPIA

If I were editor, I think I'd dream of putting into print
An issue with a special ink of my own blending -
A mixing of some merry hues into a magic rosy tint,
Giving every item - all the news - a happy ending.

From: ARKANSAS GAZETTE, Little Rock, Arkansas

SANCTUARY

A whippoorwill is calling from the lane
As shadows start to blanketing the west;
A mother hen tries, seemingly in vain,
To lure an errant chick back to her nest.
The katydids are singing raucous airs,
And frogs sing bass to still another tune;
A yearling mule stops drinking as it stares
At two hound puppies barking at the moon.
An old mare, grazing by the pasture stream,
Disturbs a tardy nightbird that comes out
To pierce the evening with its eerie scream,
And lazy cattle, sheep browse all about . . .
Here peace and rest and freedom come to dwell-
Where progress has not cast its fateful spell.

From: ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT, Little Rock, Ark.

This article appeared in the Arkansas Gazette, Sunday, February 7, 1965.

Arkansas's Ned Cheever: Poet and Philosopher

By Marguerite B. Palmer

FOR THE past several years, Arkansans have chuckled over the pithy verses of a gentleman who signs himself Ned Cheever. Some have wondered if this writer who says so much in a few words uses a pen name, so well-suited is his brief "byline" to the verse.

Not so. Cheever, whose quatrains and couplets appear in the Arkansas Gazette frequently, was christened Edwin Head Cheever and nicknamed "Ned." He was born in 1891 on Scott Street in Little Rock. He now lives at 301 North Walnut Street, but most of his childhood was spent in Richmond, in Little River County.

Although his father died when Ned was 13 years old, the poet has remembered him as an inspiration through the years. Shortly before the senior Cheever's death, he came in one day and found Ned writing a story. He sat down beside the boy, encouraged him, and even outlined his own version of the tale. The title of his father's story, Ned recalls, was "The Dragon Birthmark."

NED KEPT his interest in writing, but a number of years went by before he pursued it actively again. His family had moved back to Little Rock when Ned was about 10, and he attended the old Peabody School. After his father's death, his mother took Ned and his three sisters back to Richmond, her girlhood home, where he attended an ungraded country school for parts of three years. He was not robust, was small for his age, and, he remembers, timid as well. But he was a student; he undertook a study of Caesar and of algebra by himself and enrolled at



Cheever's pithy verses have often appeared in the Gazette

the University of Arkansas before he was 17.

He was unprepared, had trouble keeping up, and dropped out of school after two years to "dabble in farming," work extra in a country store, and later serve as cashier-clerk-janitor in the newly organized Richmond Bank at \$65 a month. When one of his sisters came home with her MA degree, "shame or envy" caused Ned to quit his job and go back to school.

AT LEAST two verses written in later years might have been inspired by the memory of those times:

Prerequisite

To know the full sweetness of winning;
To render the victory complete,
One must have, in some hour tasted
The cold, bitter dregs of defeat.
-*Arkansas Gazette.*

Perhaps

Perhaps a bit of envy is essential
In driving one on to his full potential.
-*Latchstrings, North
Little Rock Times.*

During World War I, Ned Cheever went to the first officers training camp at Fort Roots, the present site of the Veterans Hospital. He ended up in France and, on his return, held a variety of jobs in a variety of places. In 1924, he was married to the former Ethel Donham who is now employed in the business office at St. Vincent's Infirmary.

Mr. Cheever returned to Little Rock in 1940 and was an auditor until his retirement about three years ago.

OVER THE years, he had done a little writing in his spare time. About 1940, he began to write verse. "Every paper was filled with contests," he remembers. He never entered them, but he began "writing the last line." Soon he was engrossed in the challenge of "telling a story in four lines or less." He first broke into print in the *Arkansas Gazette* and in Paul Flowers' *Greenhouse* column in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*; and many of his witty and-or philosophical verses have appeared both places since.

He finds it satisfying to try to make a point in as few words as possible. and he is probably 'best-known to fellow Arkansans for his work along these lines. He does write a longer and different type of poem, however, sometimes rhymed and sometimes not.

One of his favorites was written about his son, Ned Jr., who is now a student at Little Rock University and who has tried his hand at writing by contributing to a nationally circulated drag-race weekly which has accepted all his submissions. The poem is:

Transition

We stood there on the platform
waiting for the midnight train
to bear our son away
a full half-thousand miles
to visit those back home . . .
The train came thundering in,
and as we neared the coach
I grasped his hand-as men shake
hands.
Then suddenly I felt impelled
to take him up into my arms
and hold him close. as I had done
so many times before,
but one quick look at him and I
restrained myself, for seemingly
he read my thought . . . and shook
my hand.
"Bye, Pop," he said. and smiled.
-*North Little Rock Times.*

Some of the poet's friends consider this one of his best efforts. "But," says Ned Cheever, "I don't think we ever write our very best. At least, we never seem exactly satisfied with the outcome. I wrote a quatrain once to the effect that the masterpiece remains within the writer's heart."

Ned Cheever, Sr.

1891-1969