



Fence and forest

This rustic scene can be seen almost anywhere in rural Ontario including here in

North Simcoe where it was "snapped." Wooden cedar rails and a green forest provided our photographer the ideal setting for this "still." Soon this fence and forest will

be covered in snow providing yet another subject for our ever alert cameraman.

Anon Y. Mous---the people's poet

Shirley Whittington

That venerable - and durable - poet of the people, Anon Y. Mous, was in town recently to talk about his newly published book, which has been released just in time for the Christmas trade.

I asked Mous if he would describe his volume as a coffee table book. "No", he said. "It's what I'd call a trivet book. The paperback is just the right size to rest a cup of coffee on, and the hard cover is big enough for a tuna casserole."

Anon Y. Mous is a universally unrecognized poet whose fame rests on works like "Fools' names like fools' faces, often appear in public places," and the immortal "Roses are red, violets are blue. Sugar is sweet, and so are you." I asked the distinguished old geezer how he got started writing poetry.

"Once when I was a kid, somebody said to me. 'You're a poet, and you don't know it. But your big feet show it. They're Longfellows.' There seemed no other vocation for me. I got my poetic licence and I've never looked back."

I asked him which of his many works seemed the most popular.

"When you get married and have twins; don't come to me for safety pins' was always a big favourite with the young crowd," said Mous. "But the biggest commercial successes were 'I before E, except after C' and 'No more pencils, nor more books; no more teacher's dirty looks.'"

What about "Thirty days hath September, April, June and November?" I asked. "I always thought that was one of your best verses."

"That's not mine!" snorted the old gent. "I'd never write anything with such a weak ending 'Except for February, which has 28...' That's terrible poetry, and I won't be blamed for it. I like a last line with a lot of punch, like 'I see England, I see France; I see Nancy's underpants.' Now there's a popular favourite especially with the younger set."

I asked him if he found composing his famous poems difficult. "Some of them - like 'Liar, liar, pants on fire' just come in a sudden flash of inspiration," he said. "Others, like the ever-popular 'Spring is here, the grass is riz: I wonder where the birdies is' took many days of concentration before they were perfected."

"You are getting on in years, Mr. Mous," said I. "but I notice that you are still able to address contemporary issues. Only last week I found myself re-reading a favourite: 'If at home you do not find us; leave a note that will remind us. And who can forget the immortal, 'Lovely to look at, delightful to hold; but if you break it consider it sold.'?"

The old gentleman stroked his beard and admitted that he made an effort to keep up with the times.

In fact, few Canadians realize that several recent Hollywood movies have been based on Anon Y. Mous verses. "They've stolen dozens of ideas from my lavatory wall series," he told me. "And now, some of those ideas are even being used on prime time television." "Do you make a lot of money from your poetry?" I asked.

None," said Mous. "In fact I have to work part time as a cowboy to make ends meet." "But," I said. "Aren't you a little old for that line of work?"

"Yep," he said, slipping into character. "You could say I'm an old cowhand, from the Rio Grand." And then the kindly old gent clapped his hat on his head and trudged off into the sunset, twirling a rope above his head as he went.

You've seen those ropes before. They're called poets' lariats.

Successful buddies where they are now

Bill Smiley

I sometimes wonder if my college contemporaries are as happy as I, or happier, or less happy and just walking the old treadmill until they reach the end of the road and the dust to dust business.

My wonder was triggered by a recent letter from no less a body than Sandy Cameron, the Ambassador to Poland.

He seems happy, but that's only on paper. We used to kick a football around when we were 10 or 12 until we were summoned home in the gathering dusk.

He's since returned to Ottawa, after three years in Yugo-Slavia and two in Warsaw, and has invited us to drop around.

I shudder at the cost of that, if my old lady thought she was going into ambassadorial regions. Can you rent a mink coat for an evening?

Another guy I knew at college has emerged into a fairly huge job, much in the public eye. He is Jan (now John) Meisel, a former Queen's professor who has been appointed head of the CRTS and is determined to move that moribund body. Jan is, as I recall, a Czech, gentle, brilliant, fairly frail but strong in spirit.

Let's namedrop some more. Jamie Reaney is a playwright, poet, novelist and professor of English at Western. Two Governor-

General's Awards for literature, but he's just the same sweet, kooky guy he was at nineteen, a real scholar, absorbed in children's games, yet a first-rate teacher and writer.

Alan Brown has been a dilettante with the CBC, producing unusual radio programs from faraway places, and lately emerging as a translator of French novels. He came from Millbrook, a hamlet near Peterborough. How we small-town boys made the city slickers look sick, when it came to intellect.

George McCowan was a brilliant English and Philosophy student who was kicked out of school for writing an exam for a dummy who happened to live around the corner from me when I was a kid.

He went off to Stratford as an actor and director, and suddenly disappeared to Hollywood, after marrying and being divorced from Frances Hyland. He is now on his third or fourth wife, has an ulcer, and directs Grade B movies.

I knew Don Harron casually. His first wife was a classmate of mine, who later married that Hungarian guy who wrote *In Praise of Older Women*, made into a movie. Harron, with lots of talent, energy and ambition, has parlayed his Charley Farquarson into a mint, and is still producing a lot of creative stuff.

Another of the drifting mob was Ralph Hicklin, a dwarfish kid with rotten teeth, and a wit with the bite of an asp. He still owes me \$65 because he had no scruples about borrowing money. He became a movie and ballet critic, and a good one, but died in his late forties.

There were other drifters in and out of the gang, including my kid brother, who was mainly there for the girls. And boy, I'd better not start on the girls, or I'm in trouble.

I was the only one who was about half jock, that sweaty and anomalous name that is pinned on Phys. Ed teachers today. I played football, and my intellectual friends had nothing but scorn for this. I loved it.

And I made some friends among the jocks, or the hangers-on, the sportswriters. Notable among them was Dave McIntosh, who still writes a mean letter to the editor from Ottawa, and spent most of his adult life working for The Canadian Press and newspapers.

I also had other friends in the college newspaper. I was a couple of years behind the bumptious Wayne and Shuster, but knew Neil Simon and others whose names appeared as bylines from all over the world.

What I wonder is whether I would trade places with these bright guys I used to hang around with. I think not.

I doubt if three of us are still married to the same woman, not that that is any big deal. I don't have the ego to hustle myself as

some of them have done, nor the brilliance that many of them had.

When I go up and shout at my noisy Grade 10's, or try to coax my four-year elevens into some sort of intellectual movement, I simply haven't time to wish I was the Ambassador to Poland, a director of B's in Hollywood, a translator of rather obscure French novels, or the head of the CRTS.

I haven't time. Tomorrow night I have to drive 140 miles and give a speech about "honor" to the Honor students of another school.

Tomorrow I have to go to a Department Heads' meeting where we will, for the fourth time this year, discuss "Smoking" in the school. Tonight, I have to call my old lady in Moosonee, tell her I've been a model bachelor and have only burned six holes in the rug. Thursday night, I have a Parents' Night, at which the parents of bright kids will come to have me praise them and the other parents will stay away.

I bought the paint for the back stoop, but it's been too wet to paint.

Yesterday, I had two young lady visitors, who caught me in my pyjamas, bare feet, and dirty dishes all over the kitchen.

No. There's no way. I just haven't time to be an intellectual, a success, a good father, or a good husband.

But I'm going to keep an eye on all those old friends of mine, and if they stutter or stammer or stagger under the load, I'll be laughing.