

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Newsletter



Newsletter No. 23

emrsociety.com

May 2022

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 2022

DANIEL PIZAPPI

My friends and fellow Robertsons, I have to say that delivering a message as President to the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society in 2022 feels like no easy task. When I agreed to take on the position of 2nd Vice President in 2019, I could've never predicted how different both our Society and our world would look by the time I assumed the Presidency. Then again, no one could have predicted the losses and changes of the past two years.

I'm sure I don't need to remind anyone reading this of the Roberts Society's most significant loss, but it won't go unsaid. In December 2021 we said goodbye to our beloved friend, founder, and Honorary President H.R. Stoneback. It would be hard to overstate the hole Stoney's absence has left in our organization. From his founding of the Society more or less on a whim, holding its first meeting at the historic Beaumont Inn in Harrodsburg, Kentucky in April of 1999 on the way to a meeting of the Robert Penn Warren Circle, to his unwavering devotion to growing and maintaining the Society in years since, Stoney was—for more than two decades—the foremost evangelist for Roberts and her work. Moving forward, I suspect we should not be surprised to find it will take half a dozen of us to complete the vital behind-the-scenes tasks Stoney accomplished on his own, year in and year out.

But we'll carry on.

Despite the circumstances around the time of the funeral (*Cont. pg. 2*)

The XXIV Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference: July 10-12, 2022



St. Catharine Motherhouse—
Springfield, Kentucky

We welcome papers that explore Roberts' works through a wide variety of perspectives and lenses. Including papers that deal intertextually with Roberts and other writers: especially Roberts and Modernists; Roberts in the context of European and Trans-Atlantic literature; Roberts and other southern writers; Roberts in the context of the Southern Renaissance, regional and historical perspectives; Roberts and Religion; etc. First-time reader response papers or essays of discovery and celebration from new readers of Roberts are strongly encouraged. We also welcome papers on recently published works by Roberts, see Society website for details.

Papers should be no more than 15 minutes in oral presentation.

Paper sessions will be held at the St. Catharine Motherhouse in Springfield. Please submit abstracts no later than May 16.

Email title and abstract to Program Coordinators:

Daniel Pizappi (University of Tennessee) dpizappi@vols.utk.edu

Alex Pennisi (Independent Scholar) apennisi2@gmail.com

Direct all other conference inquiries to Conference Coordinators: James Stamant (Agnes Scott College) jstamant@agnesscott.edu Eleanor Hough (University of Kentucky) hough.eleanor@gmail.com

Check the Society website emrsociety.com for conference updates and more information.

in late December, I appreciated the opportunity to speak with many Society members and alumni, some of whom I had not spoken to in years. If there was one theme that emerged from these conversations it was a common question: How? How will we carry on without the beating heart of our society?

Often a corresponding desire, a directive, followed along with this question: that, come what may, we find a way to keep the wheels on at least through this next year and on to the 25th Anniversary Conference in 2023 that Stoney was so looking forward to.

And so, we'll carry on.

After his passing, I spent some time reading old emails from Stoney. Of the lines that stuck with me, one from our correspondence following the death of his dear friend Jerry Jeff Walker in October of 2020 keeps springing to mind. In that email, Stoney told me about the long memorial essay he had recently written for another friend, Alex Harvey, songwriter of "Delta Dawn" fame, and how it had grown so long. He predicted that one day he'd write something for Jerry Jeff but that it would probably be "novel length" (I don't know if he ever started on it), and then he wrote "JJ and I were much closer . . . I loved him. Rest in Peace. being free, dear friend." A sentiment I, and I suspect many of you, could easily echo to its author.

Though our loss is still fresh, I do want to leave this message on a more hopeful note.

Over these past months I have been honored to have such a capable set of officers in this Society to work alongside. I want to extend my collegial respect and gratitude to our Vice President Amanda Capelli, Past President James Stamant, Treasurer Goretti Vianney-Benca, and Kentucky Liaison Eleanor Hough for their diligent work during this period.

I'm happy to report that not only have we worked toward carrying on, but we have also begun the important and necessary tasks to prepare the Society to continue well into the future—if we members will make it so.

The first such task has been the recovery and revision of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society bylaws, which had long faded into near-mythical obscurity. These revised bylaws will soon be distributed to the membership at large and will be raised for a vote of approval at our annual business meeting in Springfield this summer.

Until then, I'll repeat once more, we'll carry on. Carry on reading, teaching, and spreading the word of Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Carry on working toward not only the next year and a half but toward building a future for the Society itself. Carry on, as Stoney would have, singing *Hallelujah Anyway*.

23rd Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Report

ELEANOR HOUGH

The 23rd Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference was held in Springfield July 17-19, 2021. The conference began on Saturday evening with the society attending the Central Kentucky Theatre's performance of *Hometown Heroes: Stories and Silhouettes*, which told the stories of distinguished Kentuckians Abraham Lincoln, James and Jacob Sedowski, and of course Elizabeth Madox Roberts. The play was put on outside, on the grounds of the Lincoln Homestead Park.

On Sunday we had a lovely reception at Roncevaux Farm, where we also held a memorial for David N. Stoneback (1937-2021), long-time friend and supporter of the society, and we christened the new bridge across the Little South Rolling Fork River to the farm with a toast of *Veuve Clicquot* while pondering widowhood.

After leaving the farm we participated in the Jeanne Penn Lane Celebration of Kentucky Writers, with members sharing readings of Roberts and Robert Penn Warren. At Penn's Store, Stoney also played a gospel medley with Dawn Lane Osborn, and held the inaugural Jerry Jeff Walker Memorial Songwriting Contest. Songs shared by society members were:

- Phil Hazen Westcott, "Hard Tack"
- Alex Pennisi, "If I Had a Country Store"
- Joe Curra, "Before They're All Gone"
- Chris Paolini, "Country Store Song"
- Daniel Pizappi, "Country Store Song"
- Gregg Neikirk, "Pritchard's Country Store"

Following this we returned to Springfield where we were honored by Springfield Main Street and Mayor Debbie Wakefield at the annual Sunday Supper held at Mordecai's.

We then visited Elizabeth Madox Roberts' house, Elenores, where we were graciously welcomed with refreshments by Joan Hamilton.

On Monday we held paper sessions at St. Catherine Motherhouse (see page 4 for more details and pictures), where we heard from Springfield Main Street and local elementary school students about a program teaching Roberts in local schools (more details on the next page of this newsletter).

Monday evening we visited the local cemetery for the annual visit to Roberts' grave and finished the weekend with our business meeting and a meal of grilled local fare courtesy of Joshua Briggs and Steven Siegelski.

(Cont. on pg. 4).

Report on Elizabeth Madox Roberts in Kentucky Elementary Schools

LAURA HAYDON

In 2019, former Springfield Main Street Director, Nell Haydon and her assistant (now current Director) Laura Haydon an Elizabeth Madox Roberts lesson plan in three elementary schools. This lesson focused on teaching students about poetry, by using Roberts' literature. The students learned how to write a poem and each wrote their own poem similar to Roberts' work. Students also studied Roberts' work to be able to recite it. On July 19, 2021, four St. Dominic students were able to attend the 23rd Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference. Cate Coulter, Anna Leigh Mattingly, Kate Smith and Connor Mulholland each presented a poem they wrote or recited one of Roberts' poems.





EMR 22 Conference Schedule

Monday, July 19 2021

Welcome, Presentation of Awards & Introduction of Keynote Speaker: James Stamant (President EMRS)

Keynote Address: H. R. Stoneback (Honorary President EMRS): The “Clear Pattern” of the Mystery (and History): Hemingway and Roberts Juxtaposed Again--and Again

Special Presentation of Lesson Plans on Roberts used in Springfield Schools: Laura Smith (Director of Springfield Main Street), and Readings from Springfield’s Elementary Students

Session 1: Chair: Daniel Pizappi

James Stamant (Agnes Scott College): “Science is right put upon to find a cure”: Modernity and Medicine in *Jingling in the Wind*

Amanda Capelli (NYU): “Odd Woman Out”: Disruptive Women in Elizabeth Madox Roberts’ Short Fiction
Gisèle Sigal (Université de Pau, France – Bayonne Campus): Leaving Home and Longing for a Home, an Odyssey through rhizomatic space in Elizabeth Madox Roberts’ “The Mountainside” and James Still’s “The Nest”

Session 2: Chair: Eleanor Hough

Daniel Pizappi (Univ. of TN): Teaching *The Time of Man* in The Time of Pandemic

Jane Dionne (Independent Scholar): Teaching Elizabeth Madox Roberts’ Poetry

Nate Lee (Univ. La Lafayette): Report on Roberts and the Digital Humanities

Alex Pennisi (Independent Scholar): The Shape of the House of God: Holy Imagery in “The Haunted Palace” and *Not by Strange Gods*

Session 3: Chair: Alex Pennisi

Eleanor Hough (Univ. of KY): Oraliture as Form in *Jingling in the Wind*

Steven Siegelski (SUNY-New Paltz): Intuition Cultivated through the Agrarian Life: A Close Look at *The Haunted Mirror*’s “The Scarecrow”

Chris Paolini (Independent Scholar): “A Most Exciting Subject”: Roberts on Film & the Prospect of “Cinematic Writing”

Gregg Neikirk (Westfield State Univ.): “As Much Mine as Any Man’s”: The Beggar Class in “Children of the Earth”

Session 4: Chair: Amanda Capelli

Joshua Briggs (Pace University School of Law, incoming class of 24): “No More Snow in Kentucky” Sense of Place in a Changing Climate

Greg Bruno (Pace University School of Law): Gender Identity in *My Heart and My Flesh*

Joe Curra (Independent Scholar): Connecting Tenets of Modernism: A Reading of Elizabeth Madox Roberts Via Virginia Woolf

Adam Neikirk (Univ. of Essex): Coleridgean Romanticism in *Under the Tree*



From *Chicken Soup for the Soul* to Old Radio Play Aficionados, Earl Hamner Jr. Attracts New Roberts' Fans

AUTUMN HOLLADAY

After reading H. R. Stoneback's *Travels with Elizabeth Madox Robert: Argentina & The Seven Seas*, I started to think about how people discovered Roberts. For many of us in the EMR Society, it was through taking an American literature class with Stoneback. After a few years of attending EMR conferences with most of us being SUNY New Paltz Alumni, I began to realize my view of Roberts was rather narrow.

In *Travels with Elizabeth Madox Roberts*, Stoneback argues against the myth that Roberts is a forgotten great American writer. This seems to be a hard myth to debunk, especially, when you tell people every year you're attending the Elizabeth Madox Roberts' Society Conference and people respond with the question *Who's that?* To explore the myth myself, I tried to answer the simplest question: who, besides us, reads Roberts today?

I went to Amazon and Goodreads and scrolled through customer reviews of Roberts' most well-known books: *The Time of Man* and *The Great Meadow*. I was struck with how recent some of the reviews were. Some even dated as recently as 2021.

There were some who were scholars and mentioned Warren and reiterated the myth of Roberts in their review. Then there was one review by Cynthia Cooks, author of the cookbook *Pork Chops and Applesauce*, who read the book "on recommendation by Earl Hamner."

Now I was born in 1994, two years after President George H. W. Bush announced to the public, "We are going to keep on trying to strengthen the American family, to make American families a lot more like the Waltons and a lot less like the Simpsons." From what I remember, there were no reruns of *The Waltons* on the air while I was growing up (plenty of *The Simpsons* though). If there were, it would be on at my house because when I mentioned the show to my mom, she instantly gushed how that was her favorite show growing up.

I also joined the EMR Society in 2016 and missed the 2013 newsletter where Stoneback wrote three articles about Hamner and Roberts. So I had no idea who Hamner was and why he was recommending Roberts.

For readers who also don't know...

Earl Hamner is the writer of the very popular and 13 time Emmy Award Winning TV series, *The Waltons* which ran from 1972 to 1981. The TV series is based on his novels *Spencer's Mountain* and *The Homecoming* which are about a family in Virginia during the Great Depression

who despite many struggles are able to keep their values and spirits high.

In 2006 the co-creator of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, Jack Canfield, released an anthology titled *You've Got To Read This Book!*. Included is an essay by Hamner in which he named Roberts as the most important influence of his career.

When Hamner was just starting his career as a radio playwright for NBC, he was assigned to adapt *The Time of Man* into a one hour radio play for *NBC University Theater*. The play aired on July 9, 1950 and was delayed by a Korean War news bulletin. The *NBC University Theater* was a special educational program which reenacted great works of literature for college students. Some colleges, including the University of Louisville, used the program as a supplement for their English courses.

It was Hamner's first time reading Roberts. He described how he "felt an immediate kinship with her" (*YGTRTB* 159). He goes on to say: "*The Time of Man* simply delighted me. It embodied the nobility I had always perceived in so-called common, ordinary people. I was elated by this newfound style and deep connection with another Southern writer. Roberts gave me permission to write in my own vernacular. Finally, I had my voice— and my subject matter" (160).

On Goodreads and Amazon you can find a number of reviews of *TOM* with #chickensouporthesoul listed. Not only that, there are comments along with them. People are discussing Roberts. Not just scholars or students studying English, but everyday people are reading and discussing Roberts.

When I spoke with some of the reviewers on how they heard about Roberts, some said they decided to read it after reading Hamner's essay. Others said Goodreads recommended Roberts to them because they read other books like *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. In that case, a computer algorithm recommended Roberts to them.

Then I talked to one reviewer (username: Classic reverie) who was inspired to read the book after they heard Hamner's radio play adaptation. The radio adaptation is now featured on a few different Old Time Radio websites and is available to listen to on youtube. On July 18, 2021 this reviewer described *TOM* as one of their favorite novels.

Although how the internet has made information and old media more accessible is nothing new, it is interesting to see how the recent accessibility of Hamner's work has attracted new readers of Roberts. From *Chicken Soup for the Soul* readers to old radio play aficionados, it's remarkable how one person's voice can create such a ripple effect.

CALL FOR: SONGS & POEMS for Roberts & Kentucky

Poets and Songwriters!
Grab a pen! Grab a pick!
We need your talent! Quick!



Elizabeth Madox Roberts
on the campus of
University of Kentucky, 1913

2023 is around the corner and with it the EMR Society's 25th Anniversary Conference. To celebrate we would like to release a book and CD compilation of *Songs & Poems for Roberts & Kentucky*.

If you would like your song or poem featured...Please email a Word Doc of poems and lyrics to Autumn Holladay at autumnholladay@gmail.com

NO LATER THAN JULY 9th 2022

**ALL SONGS & POEMS WILL BE RECORDED AT
THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE**

JULY 10th - 12th 2022 in SPRINGFIELD, KENTUCKY*

*If you are unable to attend this year's conference and will still like to contribute, please email Autumn

Roberts Society at SSAWW 2021

JAMES STAMANT

Members of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society presented their work on Roberts at the 2021 Society for the Study of American Women Writers Conference, held in Baltimore in November of 2021. The panel was titled “Charting Survival in the Works of Elizabeth Madox Roberts,” and it included three presenters: Amanda Capelli, Jamie Stament, and Michael Beilfuss. Amanda’s paper, “A Roberts Ecology: Mapping Roberts Contributions and Influence,” looked at the differences in how American authors have been recognized in space and geography. Jamie’s paper, “Survival and Transformation in Elizabeth Madox Roberts’ ‘The Scarecrow,’” examined disability and power in Roberts’ short story. Michael’s paper, “‘Our Own Land Sometime’: Eco-poetics and the Environmentalism of the Poor in *The Time of Man*,” explored the ways that Roberts used eco-poetics to communicate the harms of the sharecropping system. The panel was the second one the Roberts Society has held at the triennial conference, and we hope to maintain a presence at SSAWW when the next conference is held in 2024.

Roberts at SAMLA 2021

ELEANOR HOUGH

Once again, SAMLA 93 was held online from the comfort of our home offices and living rooms in early November of 2021. Chaired by Eleanor Hough (University of Kentucky), the EMRS panel featured papers by Daniel Pizappi, (University of Tennessee [Knoxville]): “Teaching *The Time of Man* in the Time of the Pandemic” in which Daniel reflected on his students’ responses to Roberts’ first novel which he taught over Zoom; Steven Siegelski, (SUNY New Paltz): “Voices Within and Voices Without in ‘On the Mountainside’” which responded to Roberts’ short stories; and Phil Westcott, (Independent Scholar): “Where is my mind?: Social Dissociation in *My Heart and My Flesh*,” which examined Roberts’ strange second novel and the ways that Roberts presents fractured community.



“Hallelujah Anyway”



Remembrances of and tributes for our beloved co-founder, mentor, friend, and everything else too,
DR. H.R. STONEBACK

On the Road with Stoney

JAMIE STAMANT

When I think of Stoney I think of movement. I think of the road—even when that road might be plowing through the clouds in a jet. When you were with Stoney you were either going somewhere, planning to go somewhere, or reminiscing about somewhere you had gone. My earliest trips with Stoney and Sparrow were on the road from New York to Kentucky. We had walkie talkies for our convoy, then, and Stoney would pepper us with questions from time to time. As we got closer to Kentucky he would call over the walkies when he spotted red bud, a revelation of the spring, and then he pointed out the places that had meaning for him, bottomland and churches where he'd played music, churches that practiced snake handling. Years later, after traversing parts of Europe with him, Stoney and I took a road trip to Georgia and Alabama. This trip required no walkie talkies, since it was just the two of us, but like those early trips he had plenty of questions for me. The roots of my book were planted on that road trip, from our discussions about books and authors and music. The van became a classroom. Stoney was always teaching, wanting to show you something that was important to him, something that he hoped would become important to you, too. He wanted you to see the importance, and he felt strongly that you could better see it if you physically went to the place. I went to a lot of places with Stoney, and I try to remember as much as I can from what I saw and experienced in all of those spaces.

One time, a group of us spent the afternoon picnicking

where Jake and Bill fished in *The Sun Also Rises*, experiencing the coolness of the water and the spring where the friends stored their wine. We had read about it all in Hemingway's novel, but there was another level of understanding and appreciation when you were there, in the place. In Kentucky, we listened to poetry and song at Penn's Store in the freezing cold as a devil dog danced around us. In Strathmere, the ocean flooded the road and stymied our attempt to recover furniture from an ancestral home. In Alabama we visited his old friend and ate mustard greens in a neighbor's garden; Stoney played hymns on an old F-hole guitar. In Ronda, we drank cocktails on his balcony that looked out over the gorge which served as the model for the one in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In the Alps, we held our breath as motorcyclists passed us on switchbacks, and we had a snowball fight when we stopped for a break and realized that we wouldn't make an opening reception. The reception wouldn't have been nearly as memorable as the snowball fight. We ate salads with fresh vegetables and lardons in Saint-Chély du Tarn. Driving home from Kentucky one April, as we were crossing the tops of the mountains in Pennsylvania, it started to snow. Stoney wrote a song about it, though that song is about more than that one time on the road. There are so many places I went with Stoney and too many memories from those trips to recount here, but each time on the road with Stoney left me with experiences that I hadn't previously had and feeling rejuvenated in my work to better understand the written word and to better understand the world. I am glad that I went to all of those places with him, and I am grateful that he wanted to take me to see all of those things, to show me what he loved and to help me recognize the beauty.



MICHAEL J. BEILFUSS

I first ran into Stoney ... well, I didn't actually "run" into him; like so many of us, I first clapped eyes on Stoney in a non-descript classroom in the Humanities building at SUNY New Paltz. It was the spring 1999, and I'd just returned from a trip to Europe. The way I remember it Stoney sauntered into the room just a minute or two after class was supposed to start, looking like a friendly, trickster giant. He insisted that his printed course schedule had him teaching in a room number that didn't exist, one number higher than the room we were all in. He suggested that meant we should have class outside somewhere on that iconic mountain overlooking town. He wore one of those light-colored boonie hats he loved so much. That curly nest of white hair barely contained beneath the hat. He was tan, and he said something about just returning from some tropical locale, laughing off the New York winter, with his bearded cherub cheeks. There was a mischievous sparkle in those blue eyes. Like so many of us, I was quickly hooked.

The class was American Lit III and I was still buzzing from my trip to Europe: the museums, and cathedrals, the parks and city squares, that distinct quality of life in Europe that is so easy to settle in to – long dinners with friends and family, short train rides between cities, the push and pull of ancient traditions. Still buzzing with that life, I was primed to learn about the expatriates, about the value of artistic endeavor, about the necessity of literature. Like so many of us, I already had a passion for writing, for literature, but Stoney taught me how to tend that passion. He showed me the secret of getting to know the values, and living them well. Those years at New

Paltz, I signed up for every class I could that was taught by Stoney. American Novel, Sense of Place, Hemingway and Faulkner. I held a position in the outer orbit of Stoney's posse, but I always felt the pull of his gravity. Those Tuesday nights in Highland. Literary criticism that illuminates and praises. Poetry and prose that goes in fear of abstractions. The Southern Renaissance. Numinous landscapes. Wearing the armor and taking up the swords of those valiant warriors of the truth that came before. Tending the fires, keeping the sacred values. Trying not to talk about it all too much, but always ready and willing to sing a song.

Like so many of us, my fondest memories of Stoney feature a gathering of friends, with food and wine, maybe a game of Pétanque, but most importantly poetry, stories, and music, with Stoney and his guitar at the center, leading us in a rousing rendition of one of Hank's songs. Those nights really do carry on in my soul. Stoney's stories and songs really do help us get through the lean times, as Jerry Jeff said. There is no question that I would not be where I am today if it weren't for Stoney. How can anyone read Hemingway and not think of him? Every semester I still teach Pound, Eliot, Roberts, Faulkner, Warren. I try to give my students some modicum of all the things Stoney gave me. So we didn't really lose a giant. Being in Stoney's orbit, even for a short time, so many of us gained so much. More than we can hold. The only thing to do is keep sharing it with our families and friends, and keep passing it on to the next generation. Tell that story again, make it new, and if you have to, make it up. That's the only thing to keep us going when the road gets rough.



MAYOR DEBORAH M. WAKEFIELD

To the Members of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society,

I wish to express my sincere sympathy to all of you on the loss of Dr. H.R. Stoneback. I know that Stoney was a very significant person in your lives. He will be missed by so many.

A Distinguished Professor of English at SUNY-New Paltz, Presidents of the Hemingway Society, prominent Hemingway and Faulkner Scholar at the University of Peking, poet, singer, writer—so many prestigious positions Stoney has held! I will forever remember him as the biggest fan of Springfield's most famous poet and

novelist, Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

And, as I express sympathy to the Society, I also hope you will continue the mission of the Society as Stoney would want you too. We are preparing for the Society's 25th Anniversary in 2023! The City of Springfield looks forward to working with you on this celebration and other conferences for many years to come!

Yes, we will miss Stoney! But we can continue his love of Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Kentucky.

Sincerely,
Mayor Deborah M. Wakefield

JAMIE STAMANT

“Arrested Time Harmonic”

for HRS

Did you walk the floor in two-thousand and four?
I don't recall seeing you at breakfast then
when Kentucky biscuits swam in
gravy and cheese-laced grits reminded me that this
was not just another oatmeal morning.
We lifted you and you carried us.

On the Beaumont porch we spoke of time and my watch
stopped,
some trick of eleccentricity in Madox-land.
“I've been known to do that,” you told me then.
“Sparrow won't even wear a watch around me now.”
You stopped them all.

In the time since, timeless, I've seen you stand,
I've watched you stand and sing.
You wrote a song while I drove the van
that carried weary pilgrims home.
Another one in Alabam'
after walking the forest of the past.

What if Hank were alive?
What if he could stop his watch and play and sing?

Tears flowed when we all watched you stand and play
To make us understand poetry.
Again, that spring, a word of words,
You walked 'cross the creek onto your farm,
restored both with much sweat and toil,
the water healing all the harm and
bottomland of such good rich soil.

And yet my watch remains unchanged;
The hands unmoving, straight, and still
though the years have passed since our friend Bill
had named me Rookie; now Marcel.

Still, let's not yet say farewell, farewell
Until we sing again; not yet.
Instead a glass of wine and hymns
Round smoke-lit tables of those who share
and love the world and words with care.
Keep the promise of books so far away;
Let the hands not move until you say.

A version of this poem was originally printed in
*Knowledge Carried to the Heart: A Festschrift for H.R.
Stoneback.*

STEVE SIEGELSKI

See ya beneath the pines down in Jersey, Stoney.

ELEANOR HOUGH

Kentucky Spring

For H.R.S, born July 1941, died winter 2021

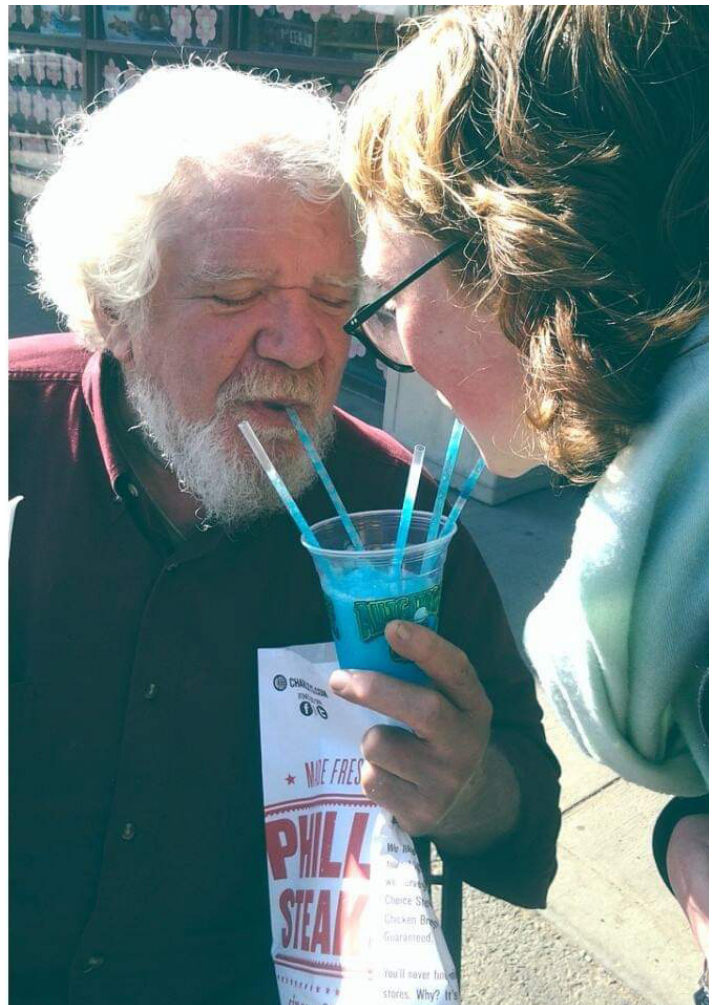
It is spring in Kentucky and I
Write under a tree you'd know the name of
White petals nothing like eyes.
It is Spring. I am tired of being brave.

The slant rhyme and the recognition
In form is not where I excel,
A poetry exam with every single
Stress mark incorrect.

Last night in tornado-warning-thunderstorm
I found a triple photocopied packet of
The unfinished, never published Songbook,
I do not know how to play the piano, and was never
Strong on treble clef.

Is there a truth the dead know? In wooden boxes,
Along those crystal streams do they find the fire and
feast?

Or are they dreaming of the sung world at
A closed, no longer cheerful, front door?



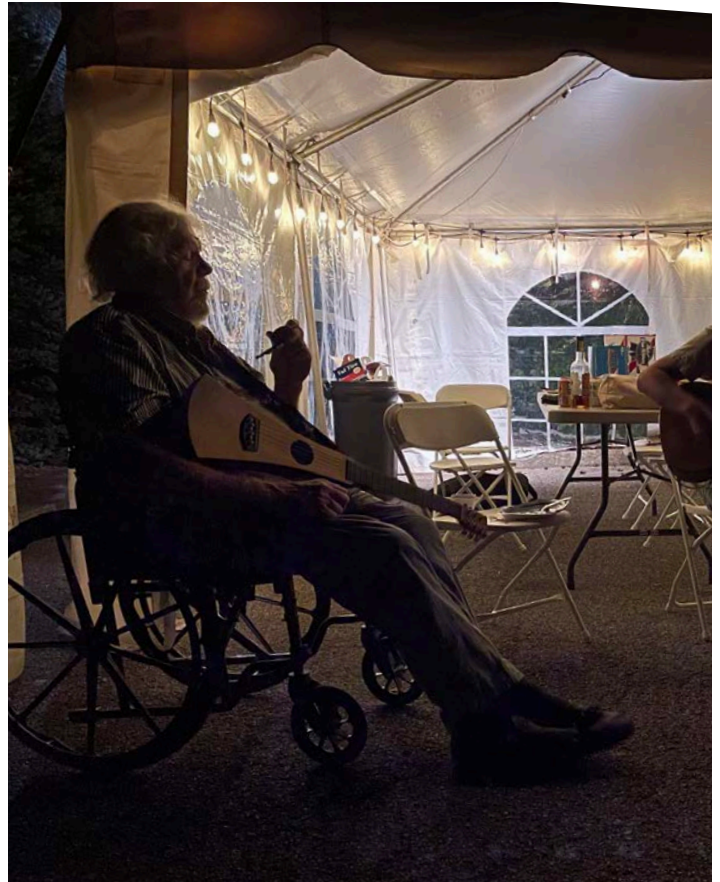
On Peanut Butter and Onion Sandwiches and Veuve Clicquot Flung into the Creek: A Memorial of Recent Recurrent Images for H.R. Stoneback

AMANDA M. CAPELLI

The recurrent images of our lives tell the Truth.

I read this sentence in 2019, out loud, into a microphone in the center of the Great Hall at The Players in Gramercy Park during Stoney's retirement party. Many of you were there and took the mic yourselves, Stoney right behind us, listening and smiling, always moving a little bit, rolling back and forth in his wheelchair with his pouch of tobacco strung across his chest.

The line, "the recurrent images of our lives tell the truth," was from my American Literature notes from Stoney's graduate course at New Paltz back in 2010. Registering for that class then, despite having already completed my degree requirements and working full time, utterly and profoundly changed the trajectory of my life. The change was two-fold: First, Stoneback's passion and reverence for the material was contagious, and I soon grew obsessed with sense of place and Yoknapatawpha County, and Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, and the Camino de Santiago. Second, the invitation to go to a literary conference in Kentucky introduced me to a world I never knew existed. I was just a kid from the suburbs—my dad worked in construction and my mom left the restaurant business to raise us all—"Academia" wasn't even a word in my lexicon. In 2013, I left my tenured position at a Westchester middle school for a PhD program in the South.



Completely and utterly changed.

It was impossible to cross paths with Stoneback and not find your orbit pulled towards his. In my notes, "TRUTH" is in all-caps. I was trying to understand something then I'd never heard before, but I've understood it for some time now. When we see things again and again, those dominant image patterns in text and experience, it tells us something about the values, and, if we are good, and sometimes even if we are not, we listen.

...

Braided garlic and tomato plants. Some fresh soil added to new hanging planters for the porch. Peanut butter and onion on white bread. In the backseat of the mini-van: an amp, three guitars, perhaps a Gato Negro box filled with manila folders. A second serving of peanut butter and onion sandwiches! The view of the gas station from the second story balcony at Sutton Lane Motel. Red wine in a hotel glass. The shimmer of Veuve Clicquot flung into the creek at Roncevaux Farm. A circle of plastic folding chairs. Moonlight in the parking lot.

I could go on. There are so many tiny patterns that make even the most basic memory. Remembering each one just brings me closer to another. Those are some of the last images I have of Stoney, at the last EMR conference in July 2021, and writing them down here might make them last a little longer.



The truth, my TRUTH, is this: Stoneback was, at first, my hero. I'd never met anyone like him. This is still true, but now it is one truth of many. When you get to know your heroes, you realize they are also human. This isn't a bad thing; it's a gift. It means that you got to be around a person long enough that they let you in, that they let you see the them they are without a microphone or a crowd, without a stage, without the performance.

I went to Highland last May and planted some herbs with him for his porch. He'd just bought new hanging baskets. I'd started everything from seed. I left him some tomato plants to put in the garden when the weather warmed up, but the herbs could go in the baskets that day. We alternated pouring in potting mix and fertilizer. We worked together, bent over pots and plants and soil, on the sunken-in side porch of his house. Later, he made me a peanut butter and onion sandwich and a coffee. We ate outside, separated by a few feet since it was still a pandemic, and a neighbor came up the driveway with Stoney's mail. "This guy," he said to me, "this guy knows so many things. Isn't it just amazing the things he knows?" Stoney looked on from his parapet at the top of the ramp and just smoked his pipe.

And that's it. It's not the last memory I have of Stoneback, but it's the one I keep returning to. It's so vivid I feel like he's sitting there still, listening to his neighbor, puffing on his pipe, smiling as he recounted a time when he was in Belize and a woman fell in love with him and and and. I've made it a fiction now, but it was real and I'll hold on to it for longer than I would have if I never wrote it down.

I ended the toast in 2019 with another reflection from that class, notes that Stoney had written on a beloved handout (if you took his course, you probably have a copy as well): Faulkner's Nobel Prize Speech. One particular passage is heavily annotated: "For a true writer each book should be a new beginning where he tries again for something that is beyond attainment. He should always try for something that has never been done or that others have tried and failed." My toast was this: "To Stoney: To your new beginning, to something that has never been done, and to that which others have tried and failed. We all look forward to following you on this next adventure."

I read that now, in 2022, after two years of pandemic and feel a deep, selfish sense of loss, that those adventures didn't get to happen. But the universe needs balance, and so with loss, with anything, is always its opposite. And so, even as we mourn for the irreplaceable, I am struck by the hope and joy and love of the community he left behind. The adventure isn't over; it was always what Stoney inspired us to do, what we did and where we went because of him. There is grief and sadness, yes, but also and always hope and love.

ALEX SHAKESPEARE

Someone who lived as many lives (and yet they were all particles of one life), and who told as many stories (and yet they were all episodes of the same story), as H.R. Stoneback makes a single anecdote seem insufficient. For the moment, I cannot even muster an anecdote. All I can manage is an image. This is of him late one April night, after the long drive north from Kentucky, pulling up to the round kitchen table under the lamplight in Highland and patting his shirt pocket, where he discovered a hard-boiled egg he'd tucked in there that morning at the Beaumont Inn. "I knew I put that there for a reason," he said (or something like that), and he began to peel it. We opened another bottle of Gato Negro. It is a small moment, and certainly I can remember grander ones, far-flung and even far-fetched; but that egg seems to sum up something about Stoney, who knew the road and loved home, who relished the finer things but wasn't above eating an egg that looked, after its eighteen-plus-hour journey, somewhat the worse for wear. Besides, the truth of the matter is the whole pocket-patting discovery was an act. He knew perfectly well that egg was there. Songs, places, lines of poems, edible ovoid objects: there wasn't much he forgot. He brought it all back home.



To Stoney: Be Thou my Vision

DARLENE FRANKLIN-CAMPBELL

When Bob Dylan rocked the music world and Hemingway rocked Paris, H.R. Stoneback played a role in their impact, but when I first encountered him, I knew none of those things. It was the spring of 2009 in the tiny community of Gravel Switch, Kentucky. I, an unknown country poet, had just gotten my first novel published and simply wanted an audience, but before my turn on the stage, I listened as a group from New York, the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society, led by a white-haired man in a wheelchair called Stoney, took to the microphone.

I was impressed as young people from all over the world, even as far away as Bayonne, France, read Madox's works. I came back to the festival year after year, each time, learning to value, appreciate and respect this man and his life's work immensely. This incredible intellect, this Hemingway scholar, this amazing musician, and above all, this kind and giving human being, "Stoney," encouraged me, believed in me, and told me that he liked my poetry. With the likes of H.R. Stoneback telling me that I had talent, how could I not pursue my passion for writing? When someone with that much insight into literature likes your work, it does something incredible to your self-confidence.



I became a member of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society, fell in love with Robert's work, fell in love with Hemingway and fell in love with Paris. I even went to Paris and plan to go back again. Once Stoney told me that he loved the old Irish hymn, *Be Thou my Vision*. Now, I will never see Paris again without seeing Stoney, but even more than Paris, there is that place, a quaint little store without indoor plumbing in a snug valley, nestled on the banks of the rolling South Fork in Gravel Switch, Kentucky, Penn's Store, that will forever grant me visions of Stoney, rolling his chair up to the porch and standing for a photo with a friend or fan. I will, for the rest of my life, hear him singing there and laughing and reading and sharing his brilliant thoughts.

Stoney loved this place. He made a yearly trip there. He never saw it as quaint or undeserving. He saw it as beautiful, as the birthplace of scholars, poets, and musicians. I've seen tears in Stoney's eyes and heard joy in his voice as he sang there with the descendants of Robert Penn Warren, as he sat around the stove where the great Chet Atkins sat, where he spoke with many a poet laureate and treated everyone he met as if they were a priceless treasure, making them feel valuable and worthy. When I look up information on H.R. Stoneback, I read all about his accomplishments, his credentials, his Hemingway's Paris and the wonderful society of which I am a member, the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society, but the truth is that none of these articles and tributes truly touch the Stoney I knew, the one who loved Kentucky, who loved music, who loved literature, and above all, loved life. Thank you, Stoney, for impacting me as a writer and as a spiritual being.



In Memoriam of Stoney

EVAN HULICK

I remember when I first met Stoney. He rolled into HUM-108 in the Spring 2010 semester with that glorious smile and sense of humor. He spoke of his adventures as a world-famous Professor, and the wonder and the awe and the love and the joy cannot receive adequate expression. He taught me in his poetic voice that *The Sun Also Rises* in the wellspring of luminous-numinous rejuvenating sense-of-place-deus-loci as his jump-shot-basketball-singing-hymns of grace, of *Amazing Grace*, and he took out that guitar and taught us true meter in the rhythms of poetry and song – folk-song – ballad stanza, always enshrouding those mystery guests with glee and letting those songs sing clean-through the LC.

I write this piece in Memoriam of Stoney, and yet I cannot think of a better way to honor his memory than to remind of what he taught: that life is worth living all the way up through love, as per his lyrics: “There’s a little bit of time left / There’s a little bit of time left / Gonna live it for all it’s worth, / Take it on down the road, ro-ad, / Gonna give what I have to give / Try to lighten somebody’s load” (Stoney, “There’s a Little Bit of Time Left,” refrain). He taught how to live and value each day, to live life “all the way up,” and the meaning of the Count’s mysterious words in *SAR* on the need to restore and live the values. He taught how to read closely. He taught how to find life’s true joy in both grand and ordinary things and in the special, precious gift that life is. He lived it all the way up and was an exemplar of what he taught, all the way through, and somewhere, he’s still smiling and singin’ hymns in the lap of Jesus. He believed it, and so do I: the light of Easter morning beyond *The Waste Land*. *The Sun Also Rises*.



EVAN HULICK

Stoney: An Elegy

“Farewell, farewell, until we sing again,”
You sang at the end of every sing-along,
From Penn’s Store porch to Paris and beyond
To places beyond recounting, from Saintes-Maries
To Stresa to Strasbourg to China, back in the Peking
days,
From Antarctica through the Seychelles, and those pirates
in the Suez
Never got him, nor those KGB villains straight out of
James Bond and
Indiana Jones chasing him down and off the cliff in Cuba.

“Farewell, farewell, until we sing again.”
You once told me of how the great Billy Graham
Once put his hand on your shoulder in an elevator
At the PA Radio in Philly and said: “Remember, son,
That God has called you.” You told me of how you
rescued
Sparrow and went on the long journey on the trails, met
Jerry Jeff Walker,
The three troubadours on the road.

“Farewell, farewell, until we sing again,”
You sang of just about every song in the 50’s and 60’s
And all singing hymns, from Elvis to P.P. Bliss,
And how you once rang Christmas bells
For the Salvation Army dressed as Santa Claus,
And how you once stood on the Great Wall of China,
With all manner of society, greeting dawn on Easter.

“Farewell, farewell, until we sing again” from France to
Spain,
To Italy to Cuba to Key West, and there, in the place, in
the rolling
Green hills of Kaintuck where Ellen Chesser feeds her
chickens
And milks her cows to the tolling of the bells of St. Lucy.
You sang the rising sun to the harmonics of *Amazing
Grace*,
You taught of the values, that life is worth living,
You endured every ounce of suffering, and still, all the
while,
Lifting your mighty voice, steady, and ever singing.

“Farewell, farewell, . . . ,”
I know you won’t mind that I borrowed your line,
But I shall not say “farewell” in the sense of “goodbye”:
I’ll reread your own song, and place an emphasis,
A not-so-final gesture of pure synthesis:
“Until we sing again” at home beyond our world.
Innyhow, until that day beyond the sun,
no matter what life throws its hardest,
As you taught, before all is said and done,
Ever loving, always in service,
To live life always to the fullest.

NATHAN LEE

“He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again.”—Hamlet

Well, folks, the unthinkable has happened. I do not mean to come off flippant. I never thought that it would happen, especially not like this. I’ve turned over in my mind how to commemorate this man, this scholar, this beloved singing poet-professor, this troubadour out of time, our giant and our friend, H.R. Stoneback. There are no answers, at least none that I’ve found, for how to cope with the incalculable loss. I am not here to make suggestions anyway. Each of us will mourn in their own way, and perhaps give thanks he is ours to mourn, at the end of the day.

I apologize for thinking that somehow, despite everything, that such a big man who lived such a grand life so hard would choose. That somehow, somehow he had the grip on life to choose his deathbed. That is how I looked at him, how I looked to him, for the beliefs, for whatever the trick of getting to know the values was, to navigate this world that he still saw the good in. I often tell people that if it were not for you, Stoneback, I would have lost God long ago. It is still true. The croix never leaves my neck, Stoney, and one day I will walk the chemin-de-St-Jacques. Did you want us all to do that? Is that part of the trick?

All questions out of time now, turning and turning in the widening gyre.

Ave atque vale, you master, you reading Roland, you pilgrim on the road to forever. Without you, the world feels like it has finished cracking in half here from the house I named for the sword drawn alongside your Durendale *Ah que ce cor* I hope when the Oliphant blows for each of us we can say “I knew him, I have striven to mark in the world the inscription of value that he marked in me, whatever it was he saw” *que ce cor ha longue* That one day we’ll meet again throwing boules in that great court beyond, streaming the skies over Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer *ce cor* where you will live forever now, where you may travel across the firmament to monitor the progress after the ekpyrosis of Notre Dame de Paris that you wanted so badly to see in life, and my brother, my captain, my friend, we will carry you from now until we too must lay down our swords for our shrouds. Excelsior, my Mentor, and adieu, monsieur. The sun still ariseth bright on our old Kentucky home. I will look for you at the source of all waters.

Ah que ce cor ha longue haleine



AUTUMN HOLLADAY

To My Mentor Stoney

I want to walk along the cobblestones
and sip the springs and hear your voice
singing gospels and hymns
and feel your hand touch my arm—
a question and confirmation,
before you continue your story.

I want to listen and quit assuming
and pretend it's my first time hearing the story.
Because now I have so many questions...
Where was the log cabin you built?
And the spring by your house?
And your favorite fishing spot?
You told me you painted watercolors.
If done right, they could look like oils.
Where are these paintings?
What were your subjects?

I always saw you in the spring
when the magnolias, cherry blossoms, azaleas bloomed
in New Orleans, Springfield, Highland...
out in your garden, fertilizing leeks—
they did not do well that year. Nothing did well that year.
I did not tell you, I spent all summer worried about it.

You always said I was tough. You said it first outside JFT.
It was 20 degrees and I was 20 and still shy of you.
I clung to the brick wall, clung to my cigarette;
hiding from the wind, hiding from you. You saw me,
wheeled over, tapped your pipe clean.
“You know it's a lot warmer in the sun,” you said.
I shivered. “I'm embracing the cold today.”
(My first words to you)
“You're tough.” You smiled
then wheeled to where it was warm.

It's been eight years and now
I don't want to be just tough, but warm and gentle too.
I want to share as you have shared,
something of value and risk.
Of course, you knew this. You knew it in all of us.
You took such care with your bottles of wine
opened and left to breathe for an hour
then poured into glasses for us to taste.



ALEXANDRIA WOJCIK

A Villanelle for Stoney

Lord let me die by the Hudson, this whole valley's gone
to hell;
We don't sing the springs anymore, not since the cats all
drowned.
Poetry won't buy us pretty houses, and villanelles don't
sell.

When I heard the news, I thought it just as well —
I yearn to fill my pockets with rocks, tie books to my feet,
and drown.
Lord let me die by the Hudson, this whole valley's gone
to hell.

It's time to hit the road, pack your pillowcase with
Durrell.
Hell is empty and all the devils moved to town.
Poetry won't buy us pretty houses, and villanelles don't
sell.

New Paltz has grown tired, downtown is but a shell.
No one sings river songs anymore, I'll miss seeing you
around.
Lord let me die by the Hudson, this whole valley's gone
to hell;

Seven feet tall, no match for the tales you'd tell —
I swear I can still hear you singing hymns six feet
underground.
Poetry won't buy us pretty houses, and villanelles don't
sell.

But when I walk by the river, my heart can't help but
swell.
May the circle be unbroken; hallelujah innyhow.
Lord let me love by the Hudson, this whole valley's gone
to hell;
Poetry may build us more than houses, my villanelle's
not for sale.

[April 2022, New Paltz and elsewhere]

GREGORY BRUNO

Towards the end of his life, Hemingway reflected on Paris: “If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast.” When I read that line the first time I wished like most people that I had been in Paris then too, but, now, I am aware of the possibility that I may have gotten something better: when I was young, I had a seat in Stoney’s class.

Walking through the door that first day, I did not know what a seat in Stoney’s class was nor how lucky I was to have one. When I signed up for Stoney’s class, I thought I was just going to read some books and write some papers—you know, do the whole undergrad English major thing you do when you are “figuring yourself out” or whatever that means.

I did not know Stoney’s classroom wasn’t only in the Humanities Building, let alone confined to New Paltz, it was in the dirt in the yard at Durendale planting garlic, by the beach singing songs in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, or at a country store Sunday service in Kentucky—among other places.

I did not know Stoney taught more than just an “English” class, and that beyond learning to write, I would learn from him to (actually) play guitar and sing songs, teach literature on my own, trout fish the Catskills, drive cross-country, or plan a reception in the Eiffel Tower (I can only hope to replicate that one day)—among other things.

As my life now takes me in new directions away from the classroom, as I begin to figure a few things out, my character as a husband, father, friend, and (future) lawyer is shaped from the time I spent in Stoney’s classroom, listening to his songs, reading his poems, and following him on his journey to live life all the way up.

And now I see that I, too, had some luck like Hemingway; that when you are young and you are lucky enough to have a seat in Stoney’s class, wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you.



JOE CURRA

I don’t know how else to share about Stoney, right now, or how to commemorate him here appropriately and fully. Here is a letter, written rather earnestly, that I wish could be shared with him as well. This will surely be the first of many written endeavors to memorialize the most magnetic and impressing of forces we all share in our lives. All of my thanks and love to everyone collected here, in the newsletter, and to everyone reading this—it is an honor to be part of such a deeply and vastly rooted family.

Stoney,

It’s nearing four months, at the time of writing this, since your passing away, since Alex called to tell me the unexpected and unimaginable news, since rushing to Durendale to be with Alex and Ed, since making phone calls in your driveway with Alex to share, with everyone we could, the news of your passing. This would be the first time Alex and I were together, at Durendale, without the third, and largest, part of what felt like, and what we considered, one of our smaller families within a larger, spread out family.

It doesn’t—it didn’t—feel real, Stoney. It doesn’t feel fair, not to you, not to all of the lives you touched, or the lives you had yet to touch. Whatever will be will always be though. Still, there’s no amount of language that will ever truly capture the profundity of your life or the impressions you’ve left behind, Stoney. At least there is language, language you helped to endow us all with, that we might mine forever, and sift through, to remind us all the truths and memories you’ve left within us—between all of us—so that we may forever continue to give shape to you and carry further into the channels of our lives all you’ve taught and instilled in us.

Do you remember sitting in your kitchen, just the week before you passed away, talking over a couple cans of Busch (they still use good water) and through breaths of smoke, about *Hemingway’s Paris: Our Paris*? I had reread it, and much of *The Sun Also Rises*, over the two days before seeing you. At a time in my life where I felt growingly more untethered to some of the most important parts of my identity, rereading *Hemingway’s Paris* that weekend brought me uniquely closer to those things. It brought to the center of my mind the vividness of Paris, surely, but more importantly the vividness of being in Paris with you in 2018.

I don’t know if you remember meeting me but I remember when I first met you. Fiona Paton directed me to approach you regarding allowance into your graduate 20th Century American Literature course. I came to New Paltz as a transfer student, I had never taken a class with you and I only knew you by reputation. Everyone but Fiona told me that your course might be one to avoid,

especially as an undergrad, if I had any concern for my GPA. While I was concerned for my GPA (and it certainly did take something of a hit my first semester with you), I loved reading Hemingway and Faulkner so much in Fiona's class that I *needed* to have more access to literature like theirs. I remember being mesmerized by "Big Two-Hearted River," the steadiness and clarity of its language that seemed almost put together like a magic trick where the most impressive movements of the story were being wrought behind the curtain of what may seem otherwise like a great fishing story—and it is a great fishing story. I met you in your office, after you came back from a trip to Kentucky, for a quick introduction and so I could say thank you, in person, for admitting me into your class for the following semester. I didn't know that moment would look like, in retrospect, the opening of a door into a great infinity. The following semester, I would take your course, write my first paper for the next Roberts conference, and hear for the first time of the grand conference you were planning in Paris, where you were going to "throw a party in the Eiffel Tower," you know, in order to properly celebrate Hemingway.

Not a full two years later, I would meet you and many of the people now dearest to me in France, in another country, at the start of what continues to be the most important and most bookmarked chapter of my life. I reread much of that chapter rereading *Hemingway's Paris*. Sitting in your kitchen, I told you primarily about how much I loved your writing, the poetic cadence of your prose and how you blend song and story in all facets of your work. I reminded you the accuracy of your writing, how reading *Hemingway's Paris* put me back in Paris and made clearer the image of Jake's steps throughout *The Sun Also Rises*. While we talked you

reached over to your right, hammered your pipe into an ashtray, filling the kitchen with a metallic waltz, and gently packed your pipe again, smiling behind every drag as I talked too much. Being brought back to Paris, three years later, while reading these works in tandem brought me closer to myself and farther outside of myself simultaneously. It served as an effervescent reminder of the things I value most in my life and how to come closer to them, and why it is important to do so.

This isn't exclusive only to your "song," Stoney, seeing you every week came always with the feeling of being recentered in a world, in a time, where the past seemed to be glowing duller and the future shrouded in the darkness of uncertainty and limitation. Naturally, you always reinforced and gave example to the value of doing what one loves to do, against all uncertainty, doing it as well as possible, and sharing that love with other people. This could be evidenced in the litany of your life infinitely: in fifty years of teaching, in over fifty countries toured, in the hundreds of papers, books, poems, and songs written, in the beautiful family you've left behind, in your gardens, in all of us. If one believes in what they do, if they love it and can share it, one can be a beacon, as you always were, of some of the fundamental tenets of life: **grace, love, compassion, sacrifice**, and thus live more fully, all the way up, and in ways that are more transcendent than life alone. Being lucky enough to see you every week kept the illumination of these things bright and tangible. Being lucky enough to know you for what feels like my entire lifetime, though only seven years, kept the illumination of these things bright and tangible. You stoked these things on purpose, for everyone. You stoked them, even more often, probably without knowing.



Thank you for keeping so much light alive in the world, Stoney. Thank you for being family. Thank you for the families you've given me—for all of the people I know and cherish through having known you. Thank you for all of the love of life, literature, and music you shared with me and pushed me always to share with others. Thank you for being my friend, a mentor, a fellow pilgrim, a guide. Thank you for everything, always.

Hallelujah anyway, be cool, be blessed, with song, with love,
Joe

“Where I’ll Be and When”

ALEX PENNISI

The last time I hung out with Stoney we made a trip to NYC to attend a dinner with the French Vice-Consul at the National Arts Gallery. In typical Stoney fashion, our brief, overnight trip had its own itinerary, and on it were things like: head down to St. Patrick’s for afternoon Mass; stop by Rockefeller Center to see the tree and the ice skaters; get to The Players to salute their famous pool table and Mark Twain’s pool cue (he was sure to point out that Clemens called it a “billiard stick”); make our way through the Central Park Zoo where we could pause by the “legendary” Delacorte Clock and catch the animal carousel; and finally relax in the Grand Library of the Lotos Club at their Holiday Open House where we were to enjoy good champagne, great oysters, and even better company before catching the train back to Poughkeepsie. The itinerary was filled with literary allusions, flirtatious

notes about french women, and the histories of the places we were making time to see; it had time stamps, reservations for rooms, dinners etc. Despite so much of that time being filled with things to do and places to be, there was somehow still room for surprises: like meeting a fellow Kentucky Colonel on the street outside the Players (why did that even come up?), or being photographed outside St. Thomas Episcopal Church on 5th Avenue (he claimed this was not the first but second time this happened—same photographer, same place, same time of year). He always did have a way of making the most of whatever time he was given. And even though it sometimes felt like magic followed him—it was never that his life was blessed, but that he blessed his life.

On that train ride down to NYC, Stoney and I were discussing article ideas for the EMR newsletter. One thing Stoney had in mind was for me to submit a piece on our pilgrimage, that favorite word of his, to Texas and back that summer where Stoney would read at



the graveside service and perform at the memorial concert for his dear friend and legendary songwriter Jerry Jeff Walker. This trip was far more complicated than our overnight stay in NYC, and, naturally, so was the itinerary. Sparing the details, it was as precise as a train schedule, which was appropriate and necessary considering it co-ordinated four train rides—totalling well over 60 hours—multiple walking tours of New Orleans and the French Quarter, a rental car to transport us directly from Louisiana to Texas, and finally a tentative plan to securely deliver his fellow pilgrims (who had no tickets for the sold-out event) into the show (a pilgrim outside the cathedral has not yet arrived). With or without him, the itinerary was our guide, our passport, and even our shame (when we failed to follow it), but ultimately it was a token of how he moved through time: always with the grace and joy he somehow managed to maintain every second of every day, year after year.

Sharing with his disciples and family and friends the secrets and joys of life was one of Stoney's great virtues. He wasn't shy, of course, about letting his fellow pilgrims know that he could and would have performed his "Memorial Duty" alone, but that was just his way of prefacing what he really wanted to say: how *the journey would have been mere endurance without the road-and-train companionship of beloved brothers-sons-colleagues-fellow-pilgrims-vagabond-troubadours*. His fellow pilgrims, on the other hand, could never have made the journey without him. There would have never been a "Crescent" ride from New York to New Orleans, no midnight brawls on coach, or private-cabin scotch-fueled singalongs; no Mass at Saint Louis Cathedral, no muffulettas at Napoleon's house, no Voodoo Daiquiris at Lafitte's; no Bourbon Street the way he saw it, or night-clubs with the name "Stoney" listed regularly; Ramblin' Jack Elliott never would have stopped to talk with us at breakfast the morning after the show; no, we never would have understood why adults don't skip (don't ask), or what color underwear Steve Earle wore to a grave-side service (don't ask), or how thick our wallets would have had to have been to cover the entirety of that mammoth Hertz rental bill (please don't ask); all of this, though, and still the most obvious example of our debt, the glaring fact that we would never have had any shot of getting into Luckenbach without having the distinct privilege of traveling with one of the star performers of the show. But these opportunities, pleasures, and experiences were never meant to be enjoyed by one person, which was always part of what drove Stoney: to create unique and memorable moments not just for himself, but for everyone he loved. He took us everywhere he went, and when we didn't have the funds or the time to travel with him, he took us there anyway in his writing.

When Stoney asked me to write about our Texas Pilgrimage for the newsletter, I wondered what Jerry Jeff and Country Music had to do with EMR or the Society. (So what if one of two books I was reading during the

trip was Roberts' *Not By Strange Gods*? Or the fact that I submitted my abstract proposal for that year's conference the morning of our departure to New Orleans. Those were just coincidences.) But he assured me that it was a "long-standing" tradition of submitting for articles non-EMRS related activities as long as they were ones involving members of the society. This was a tradition I was not aware of, nor was it one I was eager to take part in. But he assured me, insisting that our pilgrimage involved not just a handful of EMRS members, but many. Whether by road or by train, through television or computer, we were all with him in his moment, as he was with us. And this is true of everywhere we go and everything we do every time we wish to share the experience.

On one of the itineraries Stoney printed for me while I had the privilege (it was always a privilege) of watching his house, he had written at the top in red pen: "Where I'll Be and When". The phrase has always stuck with me, and, aside from being a good title for an album of traveling songs, it seems to capture something of the spirit with which Stoney always moved through space and time. He lived life all the way up, and studying him taught me more about exemplars than reading Hemingway ever could. No matter how he traveled—by train, plane, ship (never cruise), wheel-chair, Ford Expedition, Honda Pacifica—or where he was—Durendale, Roncevaux, Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, Springfield, Flatwoods, Luckenbach, Camden, South Jersey, Paris, SUNY New Paltz, Notre Dame—he moved with grace and dignity and his motion was always onward. Whether you've heard it in his poems or songs or lectures, or read it in his emails or grocery lists or itineraries—the spark in his voice and the fire in his words have guided our classrooms, planted our gardens, and filled our homes with the love that he was always ready to share. When we carry his light, we know that where he'll be is right beside us, now and always.

This testimonial is not the trip log either of us had intended for me to write. It was always meant to be a tribute to Stoney, just not like this. But it was my "Memorial Duty" to honor his final request of me.

To conclude, on that train back from dinner in NYC we did not discuss EMR, the Newsletter, or the Texas Pilgrimage. We were tired from the short but busy trip, and so we sat in silence as I read Eliot's *Four Quartets*. We spoke little, but when we had nearly arrived, he looked down at the book, closed his eyes and said:

You are here to kneel / Where prayer has been valid.

Every journey for him was a pilgrimage, every destination had a shrine, and so every place he kneeled was made valid through his prayer. To travel with Stoney was to feel like you were always in the right place at the right time. And it will always be my greatest honor that I was able to kneel beside him along the way.

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