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Lyman Newlin
Book Trade Counsellor

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Papa Lyman Remembers

I Left My Heart in Minnesota — The Effect of the GI Bill on Publishing

by Lyman Newlin (Book Trade Counsellor)

Finally I am getting back to Minnesota. When I took over management of Follett's Minnesota Book Store in mid-1944 the enrollment of the University had shrunk from almost 22,000 in 1940 to under 6,000 for the academic year 1943-44. I should point out that whereas the 1940 enrollment was predominantly male, the 1943-44 enrollment was heavily in favor of the distaff side. That imbalance was short lived. Soon after the war's end, college campuses were flooded with veterans who were taking advantage of the GI Bill of Rights. This legislation, in addition to paying tuition and living costs, provided books and supplies.

Before I relate the effects of the GI Bill on publishing, bookselling and libraries, I must make mention of the changes in social life that it brought about. In my college days, which were in the decade before WWII, the standard age span for undergraduates was 18-22, and I doubt if one percent of them were married and practically zero percent living with a significant other. Many veterans had been married at the time they entered the service or were married during their course of service. Naturally, they were not going to live away from their spouses on their return, so many college dormitories soon became living quarters for married couples. Before long, existing dorms were stretched beyond capacity and "GI villages" appeared on campuses. The surplus of Quonset huts was a boon to college housing administrators.

I mention this to give background to what took place in the book world. Guys who had undergone military constrictions were not about to go to their college libraries for collateral reading. In a previous article I mentioned that during the Depression some college libraries purchased quantities of much sought after texts. But this method didn't go over with the veterans. They were not friendly to the notion of going to a library to look up collateral reading material. This was especially true in the case of courses in the

social sciences and in particular in the "humanities" courses which were tremendously popular with GIs. "Humanities" were not, to my recollection, in college catalog course listings prior to WWII. Hundreds of Minnesota GIs enrolled for the humanities courses promulgated by **Alburey Castell**, a professor of philosophy. At about the same time, **Tremaine McDowell**, an English Department professor and author of American literature anthologies, and his peers developed a "Program in American Studies." The humanities courses were intended to widen the students' knowledge of their heritage by the study of philosophy and history. The American Studies Program aimed to strengthen students' knowledge of and appreciation for their heritage through the study of American Literature.

Both Humanities and American Studies courses required considerable collateral reading. American classics such as **Charles Bockden's** *Wieland* had been out of print for years, and libraries had far too few copies to supply the demand. I have searched Wilson's *Cumulative Book Index 1938-52* and find no publication of *Wieland* yet I distinctly remember that parts of it were produced in anthologies. Said anthologies were often made at professors' requests by local booksellers using their Varityper. (Remember, this was before the days of Kinko's Copies).

Although a professor might assign only one chapter from **Kant** or **Hobbes** or **Schopenhauer** or **Dante** or "The Spectator", the GI was not about to trudge to the library for the assignment — he wanted his own copy. This sounded a wake-up call to publishers of *Everyman's Library* (Dutton), *Modern Library* (Random House), *World Classics* (Oxford), *Loeb Classical Library* (Heinemann/Harvard U. Press). They began banging out the classics in a frenzy. My 1943-48 *Cumulative Book Index* reports three reprints of Hobbes' *Leviathan*. I'm willing to wager there hadn't previously been that kind of simultaneous printing activity for *Leviathan* in its almost three hundred years of existence.

In the academic year of 1947-48 Minnesota's enrollment had climbed to

over 34,000; within about two thousand of its current population. A great majority of those '47-'48 students were GIs and their demand for each his own created a terrific boom in the publishing of reprints. Two or three reprinters blossomed overnight. I remember "Books, Inc." who began reprinting at a dollar each classic in demand by college courses. **John Willy** (this is not a misprint!), formerly the "Hotel Monthly", was another of the mushrooming publishers who suddenly began reprinting classics. Librarians of that era should have thanked their lucky stars for the GIs' determination not to stand in any more lines. Librarians: imagine a hundred men just back from having stood in line for their very existence patiently waiting to check out **Paine's** *Age of Reason*.

I cannot ever leave Minnesota in my mind nor in my heart. Although I have spent a total of less than a quarter of my years in that state I look back on its people, its university and its politics in a land of beautiful lakes, forests and rich farm land and consider them the best years next to those of being a parent of two fine sons. I hope you will forgive me for again mentioning some prominent names. During my four years in the Minnesota Book Store near the University, some regular customers from the English Department were: **Robert Penn Warren**, a steady user of our rental library; **Saul Bellow**, a young instructor who was cutting his eye teeth as a novelist and would enthusiastically recommend his latest piece in *Evergreen Review*; **Eric Bentley**, a specialist in drama and with whom I was briefly reunited during a recent performance of one of his plays in a Buffalo theater. **Henry Nash Smith** joined the department during my last year. Our trade department was handled by **Lucille (Bobby) Clark**, whose husband **John** was later chairman of the English Department and **Elizabeth Dunn**, whose husband William taught Shakespeare and the Bible as literature as well as being a pianist of concert quality. **Norman Sherman**, an English major, was our chief unpacker. He later became Vice President **Hubert Humphrey's** press secretary. **Many Alice Eggleston**, a parttime sales clerk married Ph.D. candidate **Enno**

Kraehe (who was to become chairman of the history department at the University of Kentucky and later at the University of Virginia) soon after graduating and leaving the store. She has recently retired as a staff member of the University of Virginia Libraries.

Sinclair Lewis was a special English Department lecturer during the summer of 1947. He had published earlier that year *Kingsblood Royal*, a novel about racial prejudice which I had advertised in a local newspaper with a money-back guarantee. **Bennett Cerf**, his publisher, whom I had known since Follett days when he personally sold us Modern Library titles, had told Lewis about my ad. The author of *Main Street* and *Babbitt* had never had a book guaranteed by a bookseller and invited me to have dinner with him. I still call that dinner the highlight of my retail career.

Through **Norman Sherman** I became acquainted with **Hubert Humphrey**. When Humphrey left Minneapolis, where he had been mayor, for Washington he had a small balance of under \$3.00. I instructed our bookkeeper not to send a bill. I thought it quite prestigious to have a US senator's name on our accounts receivable list. Political Science Faculty at that time included **Max Kampelman** who has had a distinguished career in US Government service and **Evron Kirkpatrick**, a foundation executive, author and scholar and the husband (later) of **Jeanne Kirkpatrick**. While on the subject of political science I must mention the strong influence of DFL on many of us young liberals at the time. DFL had recently become a very potent political party with the merger of the Farmer-Labor party with the Minnesota Democratic Party. During this time, **Walter F. Mondale** had not yet matriculated at the University but thanks to **Norm Sherman** we became friends soon after Fritz was appointed Minnesota's attorney general.

In my next chapter I'll try to recount my entrance into the summer resort business; more involvement, through the efforts of **Norm Sherman** and Minnesota's DFL political party, which included HHH, Mondale and Governor **Karl Rolvaag**. During that period I started **Broadwater Books** in the pine woods of Northern Minnesota, staged a book autographing party in connection with a Chippewa adoption ceremony, and would have become the county librarian if Governor Rolvaag could have had his way with the Minnesota Librarians Association. ☛

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