

West. Calm, firm, with ultimate courage, they stood against the Persian host — and won though they lost.

"Our situation is no more desperate, our enemies no more powerful, than the situations our spiritual ancestors faced, than the enemies they conquered. The great tradition of the West is rising again in idea and belief and image. The weapons with which to fight are in our hands. The future lies in our determination, in our firmness of principle, in the courage with which we gird our will to rise to our destiny.

"And, God willing, we will have the victory."

If there is to be that clear-cut victory about which Frank Meyer spoke with such passion at *National Review's* fifth anniversary, it will be said of him — and those other men of the West who passed the torch to a younger generation in the last third of the twentieth century — that he "won though he lost." The hundreds of thousands who served in Young Americans for Freedom, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, the Conservative Party of New York, the American Conservative Union, the Philadelphia Society and those readers of *National Review*, *Modern Age* and *The Exchange* who also felt his direct influence, will eventually have to be the makers of that victory. The responsibility for this victory is an acutely felt obligation for many of them, what "the conservative movement" is all about. Eliseo Vivas remarked several weeks after Frank's death, "You young fellows won't have Frank around to give you orders any more. You are going to have to start giving them yourselves." Time passes, young men must grow up. The legacy of Frank Meyer, "God willing, will have the victory."

He was a leading American Communist until his mid-thirties, a cadre Communist responsible for shaping and forever testing Communist elite. His *The Moulding of Communists* shows how the Communist everywhere is made and in so doing illuminates "his essence from within, so that he may be conceived in his true being, with an understanding that neither underestimates his strength nor ignores his total enmity, his challenge a *outrance* to our civilization." Further, he demonstrates with a relentless logic, that against the Communist enterprise "there is no recourse in compromise, reasonableness, peaceful coexistence. Only a greater determination can avail, for Communist man poses two stark alternatives for us: victory or defeat." The day this book or its equivalent is programmed into the CIA Cold War Computer will mark the day, however desperate the objective situation, when the tide turns against the Communist attack on our civilization. It is that important.

The Moulding of Communists was followed a year later, in 1962, by *In Defense of Freedom*, written to foster our understanding of the tradition of

Western civilization and the American Republic, our devotion to freedom and to truth, the strength of our will and of our determination to live as free and virtuous men." If ever there was a book that deserved a rebirth, it is this one: in a mere 172 pages, he winnows the essence of the conservative position from the minutiae of our long history, of the West and of America, stating it with a precision and power of dramatic effect. The book, and the subsequent debate it provoked, had the effect of fusing the disparate, warring strands of conservatism at a critical time in the conservative revival. (Today, it could serve as a centripetal agent in a conservative movement grown large and often lacking a center.)

Frank Meyer was no ideologue. He was indeed sensitive to the infinite nuances of Being. Because, however, he was self-consciously a battlefield commander in a war of ideas, he simplified, clarified, reduced, often with a stark result — if also the desired pragmatic effect.

Nor was he a deadly serious scold, a Cato or Cassandra. His raucous good humor and occasional tipling made him a member in highest standing of the Moon Mullins Study Group and

the Indiana Iron Guard (he pestered the keepers of that un-organization for years for initiation, even though he had never resided in Indiana as a conservative — only as a Communist!) He demanded much of his charges, America's next generation of conservative leadership, but did so with the kindness and subtlety of a Socrates.

"He was not a respectable man," Eliseo Vivas writes in a forthcoming obituary in *Modern Age* — a poignant, brilliant picture of Frank Meyer. No. He was too dedicated to God and country for that. The gnawing question keeps intruding: what of the rest of us? Has Frank Meyer transmitted his toughness of character along with his wisdom to the many who travelled to sit in front of the fireplace at Woodstock?

There will be a hiatus, while we adjust to his loss. For the sake of everything he stood for, let us pray that it will be brief.

Jameson G. Campaigne, Jr.

Jameson G. Campaigne, Jr., a journalist and businessman residing in Chicago, is an associate of The Alternative.

The Voice We'll Always Hear In in Our Minds

John R. Coyne, Jr.

Many conservative writers have experienced that awful moment of truth.

It's around 9 p.m., EST. You're working on your fourth or fifth drink.

You're feeling comfortably fuzzy, and you're finally able to rationalize away your failure to produce a decent piece of writing for the past several weeks.

Then it happens. The phone rings, cutting sharply through that fuzzy, complacent cocoon.

You know who it is, and your mind races wildly through a catalogue of respectable excuses.

Flu? Sick children? A nervous breakdown? A broken collar bone?

Finally, you pick up the phone, and as expected it's that voice, slightly hoarse, the phrases clipped and quick.

"Frank Meyer here. You owe me a review."

And the next morning, full of remorse, you'd write in one hour a good review of that book you hadn't been able to make sense of for a month.

No matter to which obscure corner of the continent you fled, Frank's phone calls sought you out relentlessly. His phone bill was rumored to be just a bit smaller than the national debt.

But it was worth it. The book section of *National Review*, which Frank edited, is considered in the literary world to be consistently one of the nation's finest.

One of the few remaining bookmen

who understood the very real relationship between literature and life, Frank Meyer was a great editor. But he was also much more than that. The books he wrote stand as giants of contemporary conservative thought.

My own favorite, *In Defense of Freedom*, probably had more to do with converting members of my generation to conservatism than any other single work.

Were not the intellectual establishment in our country monolithically liberal, Frank would have been recognized as one of the foremost men of American letters and would long ago have been rewarded with a chair at an important university.

Frank was a teacher, especially effective at calming and guiding the younger, often hot-headed members of the American right.

And whenever one of his colleagues showed signs of straying from the path of individualistic, humane conservatism that Frank followed, down from Woodstock, New York, where he made his home, would speed like an ideological arrow one of those short, barbed columns that regularly appeared in *National Review* under the heading "Principles and Heresies."

Guy Davenport, reviewing for the *New York Times* a collection of Frank's columns published in 1969 under the

title, *The Conservative Mainstream*, describes Frank at work on a column.

"Once a fortnight promptly after sunset, Frank Meyer rises from his breakfast and prepares to defend the West."

Frank slept by day and worked by night, a habit acquired during the years after his break with the Communist Party when he sat up all night with a gun. The American Communist Party in the '40s was not the joke it is today, and defectors routinely met with fatal accidents.

He didn't always work, however, and conservatives, especially younger conservatives, looked forward to invitations to one of Frank's "evenings."

You arrived around 8 p.m., had drinks, ate a magnificent dinner, much of which was produced in Elsie Meyer's vegetable garden, and then drank and talked until the sun came up. The drinks were good, the talk better.

Frank could talk about anything — war, peace, politics, Jane Austen, Dorothy Sayers (Frank was especially fond of Lord Peter Wimsey, Miss Sayers' detective, because Wimsey, like Frank, took his degree at Balliol College, Oxford), Plato, Gibbon, pro football, baseball.

Frank had a way of coaxing the best out of you, so that at the end of the "evening," when the sun came up, you felt you never before had been quite so brilliant.

The atmosphere was exhilarating, intellectual. But it was a joyous intellectuality that springs from pure love of ideas, the sort of intellectuality that probably once characterized our best

universities, before they became factories.

The Meyers were an unusually close and happy family. Elsie, one of the world's most gracious ladies, doubled as Frank's business manager and the teacher of their two sons, Gene and John, both of whom received their grammar school and high school educations at home.

And when it came time to go off to college — one to Columbia, the other to Princeton — both boys, neither of whom had ever sat in a classroom, scored brilliantly on their entrance examinations.

Last week Frank Meyer died of lung cancer in his own bedroom at Woodstock, where he insisted on meeting death.

His family has suffered an immeasurable loss, as have his friends, his colleagues and the whole conservative movement.

And those of us who are procrastinators, as most writers tend to be, will continue to procrastinate. But whenever the phone rings around 9 p.m. EST, we'll still experience that quick pang of guilt, and the next morning we'll be back at our typewriters, the voice we'll always be able to hear in our minds encouraging us to give our very best. □

John R. Coyne, Jr. is an associate of The Alternative and is presently teaching mass communications at Arizona State University. His most recent book is The Impudent Snobs: Agnew vs. The Intellectual Establishment (Arlington House, 1972).

dazzling order and were it not for the diversion of the game, would have been recognized as one of the extravaganzas of the decade. But what exactly was crazy about it? Not football; only one team was playing. Not patriotism, although the particular show of patriotism was garish and ridiculous. The allusion to Vietnam was certainly grotesque enough: an idiotic demonstration of fire power, the underlying assumption of which being that people who like contact sports like war. But that wasn't it either. Nor was it the cheer leaders and children, who were harmless, nor even Carol Channing's tasteless ride in the name of Broadway, jazz and race relations. The madness of the event rested in the indiscriminate and superficial lumping together of disparate items in an effort to stuff America into two hours of commercial television. The method behind this effort rested in the principle that if you assault the public taste with enough pizzazz enough of the time, you will eventually destroy it, after which people will buy what you tell them to buy.

I come to the matter at hand: five freshman readers, made up primarily of expository prose, largely indistinguishable from each other and from dozens of such anthologies published every year. If you teach freshman English or any college writing course, these books hit your desk on the average of two times a week. Their ways are prepared by trade book representatives who always seem to start out asking if you would like a free copy of their new text on how to write English with pink-ing shears and conclude by inviting you to become president of their company. I open all the packages, usually from the wrong end, because I cannot resist a gift. When the grey puffs of packing material clear, I hold in my hands the brightest colors and the catchiest titles in the western world, and a genuine United States phenomenon.

What the publishers have in mind for these books is that they must vie with each other like fictional chorus girls for the one big break, which is adoption by a large, and preferably state university. Evidently the rewards in this system are so huge that it is worth the publishers' while to turn out fifty misses for a single hit. Certainly little energy is required. If one has a thematic brainstorm, as is the case with our five books here, all one needs is an editor with a couple of months free time. The material is ready made, and so is the market. The trick is simply to remember to be new and first, as these books have, to claim relevance and urgency, as these books do, and to imply to the college freshman that without the following collection of essays and interviews, he will not only forfeit instruction in the written word, but that he will be out of things generally, a would-be suicide.

These are the seventies, so the subject of the readers is radicalism, contemporary America, contemporary living or any combination. *Munching on Existence*, which announces that its pur-

The Greatest Show on Paper

Grooving the Symbol

Edited by Richard W. Lid.
The Free Press. 604 pp.

The Uses of the Present. Edited by Leonard Wolf. McGraw-Hill. 397 pp.

Munching on Existence: Contemporary American Society Through Literature. Edited by Robert Gliner and R.A. Raines. The Free Press. 465 pp.

The American Experience: A Radical Reader. Edited by Harold Jaffe and John Tytell. Harper and Row. 460 pp.

The Radical Vision: Essays for the Seventies. Edited by Leo Hamalian and Frederick R. Karl. Thomas Y. Crowell Company. 625 pp.

IN A COUNTRY where every action is labeled a national tendency, every product is bound to be conceived of as an answer to national desires. For the moment I am thinking of last year's Superbowl — the show more than the game — and a national product of enormous proportions. The program began with a military Honor Guard carrying a colossal American flag, flanked by little American flags, on to the field. Simultaneously a group of Phantom Jets boomed in formation over Tulane Stadium and viewers were asked to say a silent prayer for our P.O.W.s in Southeast Asia. At half

time there was a "tribute" to Louis Armstrong, with Carol Channing, bright as alabaster, riding a float which circled the playing area to the tune of "Hello Dolly," or as it was, "Hello Louis." In another ceremony, boys age 7-11 engaged in the finals of a national punt and pass competition, indicating by their presence that the show would always go on. There were girls galore. There were brass bands, and commercials for ecology and Fords. The President phoned, offering congratulations, condolences and strategy for the future. The Cowboys won.

It was, of course, insanity of the most