

there was one ethnic group Maurras distrusted *more* than the Jews, it was the Germans. He moved his newspaper to a nonoccupied zone of France and continually criticized the Nazis throughout the war. And his political dream, based on decentralized, autonomous regional governments with a benevolent monarchical head in Paris, had nothing in common with the totalitarianism of Hitler's henchmen. Although history proved him wrong, he sincerely believed that De Gaulle's rebels would bring a Communist takeover in France. Certainly, with the high percentage of Communists in the Resistance in the South of France, where the memory of the war between Catholics and Communists in Spain was very vivid, there was some justification for his fears. Most Americans—having never lost a war on our home ground and believing the French cowardly lost theirs with Germany after four days and not, as is more accurate, after 70 years of bloodletting—will never understand the tragedy of those years of civil war in France, symbolized so vividly by De Gaulle's painful decision to wage war against the name-sake and godfather of his own son, Marshal Pétain. Nor will we see the analogy of Pétain to Robert E. Lee. Would not Lee have condemned the resurgent Ku Klux Klan as anarchists the way Maurras condemned the Resistance as Communists? Even those less forgiving towards Maurras must admit the strong parallels of his decentralizing policies with those of a Southern statesman like John C. Calhoun. For that matter, were not Maurras' Provençal *félibres* somehow akin to our own homespun Southern agrarians? Is there not a certain parallel between the patriotic, populist writings of a *camelot du roi* like Bernanos and the writings of a man like Donald Davidson, both trying desperately to keep alive the best of the old world and the new? Witness the youthful Bernanos' indictment of the pacifist philosopher Alain, "When the blood of young Frenchmen is flowing everywhere, it is not to an obscure sophist like yourself that the mothers will hold up their immolated sons." Or the older Bernanos' honest efforts at expunging the taint of anti-Semitism from French traditionalism, "I am only 'racist' in the manner in which I affirm that

there *are* races . . . that racism of the German Nazis or the American KKK has always been, for a Frenchman, a disgusting monstrosity."

Robert Speaight, Bernanos' biographer, hits a visionary cue when he says, "Bernanos, like Brückberger, was more an antique Trojan than a Greek." Following the example of the courtly, chivalric tradition of Aeneas on through to France's gift of Roman traditions and civil law might prove useful to a country like ours, sweating and struggling beneath the excesses of a precedent-ridden Anglo-Saxon legal system. "The weakness and frailty of a constitution are in exact proportion to the number of constitutional provisions that are written" (Joseph de Maistre). Who knows? Perhaps the French kings had the right idea in calling their legislative body only in emergencies, wars, famines, and the like—instead of paying a bunch of full-time politicians/lawyers year-in and year-out to think up more and more unnecessary laws. "The state will never leave go of what it once has taken" (Bernanos).

Russell Desmond writes from New Orleans.

Letter From Hollywood

by *Father Andrew L.J. James*

Take 'Em to Court!

Americans are said to be a litigious people. So powerful is our desire to justify ourselves that there is even a man who was willing to let himself be called a thief and a liar in front of millions of people, rather than pay me \$60 for an article he had pirated.

It started this way: I read through *Writer's Market*, 1984, and found the name of a religious publication which claims it wants "exposés," and not any "All's well with Christ" manuscripts. Since they seemed to want to be trendier than thou, I decided theirs would be a good magazine to send an article about the establishment of an Eastern Orthodox ministry at Chillicothe Correctional Institute, in central Ohio. They seemed to like the article too;

they published it, but as a letter to the editor!

Since I have routinely placed the words "Copyright, date, all rights reserved" on material which I have submitted for publication for pay—which would protect the matter in question, until such time a magazine would offer "First North American serial rights" payment—the editor had not just been ethically unconscionable but had broken the law.

I wrote him to say, "If you thought my material was worthy of publication, you should have paid me. If you thought it unworthy, you should have rejected it. You did neither."

He lamely responded: "We gave you credit for it." He would make the same remark (with the editorial addition of the adjective "full" in an appropriate place) to Judge Wapner at the hearing: "We gave him full credit for it," meaning they published my name as the author.

I demanded payment. The editor refused. I took up the matter with the California Attorney General's Office. They contacted the editor, who indicated to them he would make amends. He did nothing.

I sued the gentleman in the small claims court, in Fullerton, California. Before long, I received a telephone call from one of the producers of *The People's Court*, who invited me to appear on the show. "I would be willing," I said, "to call them thieves and liars in front of millions of other people, but I expect they will not want that."

But they did. I flew to California, where Tim Owen (an aspiring actor from Ohio who works as a production assistant for Ralph Edwards Productions) picked me up at Burbank and hustled me into Hollywood to the studio.

The plane was an hour and a half late; they were already filming one segment when we arrived. The defendant peeked at me from behind a screen. One of the producers said: "Keep talking. Talkers tend to win." No matter what Judge Wapner decided, I had won. I had brought the miscreants to "justice," even if it was the sort only Hollywood can provide.

The Judge heard both sides, then went out for the commercial break saying: "I'll be back and give you my

decision." The decision was for the plaintiff. Things have come so far in America that the editors of a magazine were content to be publicly disgraced for an appearance fee.

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Letter From the Heartland

by Jane Greer

Beginnings Past All Remembering

The Knights of Columbus Club is just beginning to buzz as we pull up at 7:45, 15 minutes fashionably late. Our cars hold two families of three people each; the two small boys—cousins, one in each car, for sanity's sake—love each other madly and can't bear the five-minute drive from our dinner at Bonanza. My husband's aunt and uncle have been married for 48 years, and their children are throwing them a party.

The club manager directs us into the room. To the left as we enter is the guest book, presided over by my husband's cousin's wife and their infant son. To the right is a long table with old and new family pictures. Wearing a corsage and boutonniere, Milly and Joe greet their guests.

My husband and I, and his sister and her husband, sit next to my mother-in-law at a table full of family. The little boys and their three younger cousins whiz off, playing tag as far from us as possible. They use the punchbowl as home base, and I worry. (I worry about it all, actually, and if I had my way our seven-year-old son would sit politely next to me and converse intelligently with his elders.) My husband tells me to relax: This is all *de rigueur* at dances, has been since Adam. I did it, too, in different ways, when I was a child, but wanting my son to be better than I am, I remain unconvinced. "Look how well I turned out," my husband adds. I force a smile. My sister-in-law grows soft-eyed reminiscing about going to dances as a little girl and then the long car ride home, sleepy in the backseat. "I could still hear the music as if it was in

the car with us," she says. Eyeing the accordions on the stage, I fear it might be true.

About 8:30 the band comes in: Reiny and Burt on guitar and accordion, their names embroidered on their caps, and a third man on the drums. One of the children of the honored couple gets on the mike and says that the party is for them because they've been such wonderful parents. They're going to cut the cake now, he adds, and would everyone please stand up for a moment and gather around it? We hear him, but no one wants to be the first to walk across the empty dance floor, and after a second request they cut the cake attended only by five boys under eight years old, all in their Sunday best, greed in their eyes.

The first dance belongs to Milly and Joe, and now I know how they looked at each other at their wedding. Then there's a two-step, three waltzes, another two-step, then a couple of polkas and a schottische to which we polka. The only real deviation in rhythm during the evening is "Blue Spanish Eyes," performed without conviction. There's something comforting about participating in a dance whose beginnings lie past all remembering. I look around and guess that the percentage of divorces in this room must be nearly as low as in a pondful of Canada geese. These ranch and small-town couples of all shapes and sizes dance together as if they were breathing or pulling a calf or rolling over together in their sleep. I'd like to dance like that some day. "One flesh" takes on new meaning when one watches plain long-married folks doing a plain immemorial dance (which can, hours later, cramp up the legs of the immoderate).

The five small cousins, in groups of two and three according to age, discover Paradise. They sit on the dance-waxed floor and spin around. They swing each other by the hands as hard as they can and then let go, fall, and slide; drink waitresses dodge them deftly, used to it. My son is wearing a pair of white pants his grandmother gave him, and our table decides I'll need a whole bottle of Shout to get them clean. I tell my mother-in-law no, I'm just going to send them to her.

There are three extraordinarily pretty girls, cousins and friends, all quivering on the brink of teendom. They

have asked the band to play what in my youth was called a bunny hop, and the band obliges gallantly. The girls form a line, each with her hands lightly, self-consciously on the hips of the girl before her, and they start their sedate, charming circle of little kicks and hops. A hitch: They have the floor to themselves. They tough it out, smiling bravely and trying to make nonchalant small talk among themselves as they move under the lights, although it's obvious they'd like the earth to swallow them up. The adults are not the only ones watching: I see my young son and his six-year-old cousin lying at the dark end of the dance floor, heads propped up on elbows, mouths wide open but motionless for once, entranced at the pretty sight. I grow firmer in my resolve to lock him in the basement during his teens.

At 9:30 the food is brought in, much of it prepared by Milly herself: anniversary cake, nuts, mints, dips and crackers and cold cuts, hot meatballs and chicken wings and french fried cauliflower in chafing dishes, relish trays, tropical fruit punch, and coffee. The boys are dancing on their toes now, too wound up to eat. My husband makes our son drink a Sprite, suspicious that the boys are innocently commandeering whatever beverage is handy when they get thirsty. I start to ask him if he did that, too, when he was a kid, but someone we haven't seen for a while bends over us and the thought gets lost. I know the answer, anyway.



There are more than a hundred people in the room, more family than I'll ever be able to meet or remember. Some are not family but friends, which amounts to almost the same thing. By 10:00—11:00 in the time zone we came from, just 90 miles east—we've all danced with each other if we're so inclined, caught up on the gossip, our son is rubbing his eyes as he hops up and down to the music, and I'm beginning to feel that way myself. My husband drives us to his sister's house, where we'll spend the night. I look at him and out at the clear sky, listen to the boys chattering tiredly, and it comes into my mind that a family is like a galaxy, whirling