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## Lorin Hollander's Accompanist

much muddied, both here and abroad, by some indications that two men were using Ray's aliases. Ray's arrest at Heathrow Airport in London on June 8, 1968, resulted in vast confusion. Scotland Yard announced that the arrest was made at 11:15 A.M., as Ray was transferring from an incoming Lisbon flight to one bound for Brussels. But subsequent investigation had Ray leaving a London rooming house at 9:30 A.M. to go directly to the airport to catch a Brussels flight. Had two men, using the same unusual Canadian alias, Ramon George Sneyd, been picked up? Frank brushes off the question, ignoring the fact that Scotland Yard six months later (as Harold Weisberg demonstrated by reproducing the correspondence) was insisting on the accuracy of its original Lisbon-transfer announcement.

Frank concludes there just never were two men in London using the Sneyd alias. Yet Bernard Fensterwald, Jr., former counsel to U.S. Senate committees and head of the Committee to Investigate Assassinations, had obtained from London landladies through on-the-spot interviews descriptions of two Ramon George Sneyds. One of them, according to his landlady, had left behind the paraphernalia of a drug addict—and James Earl Ray was not an addict. The landlady added that when she told official investigators of this discovery they warned her quite crossly never to speak about it.

Gerold Frank's book, then, while a fascinatingly written tale, is something less than the whole "true story" about the murder of Dr. King.

Fred J. Cook is a free-lance who has written frequently on criminal topics.

### REPORT FROM ENGINE CO. 82

by Dennis Smith

Saturday Review Press, 215 pp., \$5.95

Reviewed by David W. McCullough

■ Those little boys who dream of becoming firemen when they grow up don't know what they may be getting into. In the South Bronx, where Smith's Engine Company 82 is located, the neighbors, mostly non-English-speaking Puerto Ricans, know that all they need to do to summon help is to pull the handle of the corner fire alarm. As a result, Fireman First Grade Dennis Smith and his colleagues in the New York Fire Department are called in to care for drug O.D.s, to settle marital spats, to break up brawls, or simply to relieve the tedium of a hot summer night. One day Company 82 races off, first, to treat the

victim of a hit-and-run accident, then to rescue the guilty driver when an angry mob decides to teach him a lesson; on another day it encounters a naked madman wielding a carriage whip; and time and again it is called to alarm box 2743 on the corner of Charlotte and 170th Street, where the Company finds nothing but a handful of men drinking beer from cans wrapped in brown paper bags. Smith says that his firehouse responds to more false alarms than does any other in the city. "In the city of New York last year, firemen responded to 72,060 false alarms," he writes, "an average of 197 daily."

There are, of course, also fires to be put out. In the course of an average day Company 82 douses the flames in four or five automobiles abandoned by owners or car thieves. Frequently the men find themselves fighting fires in deserted buildings where blazes have occurred in the past. (I suspect that the Company must be tempted to let these firetraps burn to the ground so as to be done with them once and for all.) Then, too, there are the serious fires: apartment fires with life and property to be saved.

In the intervals between true and false alarms, a number of mundane details must be attended to: sweeping the firehouse, cooking meals, studying for advancement exams, holding meetings to decide such questions as how much should be set aside from each man's paycheck to buy a dishwasher for the Company's kitchen.

Able to describe routine matters without making them seem dull and equally capable of chronicling moments of high drama, Smith is an author who hardly seems typecast for the role. Indeed, he often comes across as a character out of an old Pat O'Brien movie. He plays a bagpipe in the Emerald Society band, is married to an understanding wife named Pat, and has three young sons, Brendan, Dennis, and Sean. Raised in a midtown Manhattan slum, Smith quit school at fifteen; now, like many New York policemen and firemen, he lives in the suburbs and feels a deep distrust for the city. Thirty-one years old ("at times I feel fifty"), Smith earns about \$11,000 a year and regards himself as "a professional fire fighter."

On the other hand, stashed away in his locker at the firehouse, along with copies of *Playboy* and *Saturday Review*, is a well-thumbed edition of the poems of Yeats—echoes of which turn up in unexpected places in his book. For example, in an account of the early stirrings of a bar-room brawl, Smith remarks that time "is a circling tower."

There is something about Dennis Smith and his fellow firemen at Engine Company 82—Irishmen almost to a man

—that brings to mind the British raj in India. They are highly skilled outsiders in a region they don't quite trust, and they are surrounded by a darker-skinned people whose language they cannot understand and whose safety often depends on their vigilance. One almost expects to hear a passing reference to the white man's burden.

Dennis Smith's memorable "report" is dramatic, highly readable, sometimes funny, and on occasion even eloquent. It should be read by anyone whose pulse has ever quickened at the sound of a fire siren.

David W. McCullough is an editor for a New York-based book club.

**MIGRANTS, SHARECROPPERS, MOUNTAINEERS:**  
Volume II of Children of Crisis

**THE SOUTH GOES NORTH:**  
Volume III of Children of Crisis

by Robert Coles

Atlantic-Little, Brown,  
653 pp., 687 pp., \$12.50 each

Reviewed by H. L. Van Brunt

■ The initial volume of *Children of Crisis* appeared in 1967. Subtitled *A Study of Courage and Fear*, it focused on more than twenty whites and blacks who were directly involved in the civil rights struggle in the South. The author, Robert Coles, is a white psychiatrist who worked with these "cases"—interviewing, testing, counseling but, above all, listening to them. For *Children of Crisis* is a storehouse of "oral history," as are the two latest volumes in the series, which have been simultaneously published.

Volume II studies three related categories of the rural poor in America—migrants, sharecroppers, and mountaineers. Coles's purpose in working with these people was both therapeutic and experimental: he wanted to help them with their problems and to study their reactions to the social conditions that caused so many of those problems. His subjects, he emphasizes, are "ordinary" rather than "sick" people. And, as Coles made clear in his first volume, it is one thing to treat and study the mentally ill in hospitals—quite another to apply psychiatric concepts to so-called normal people "... to find out how individual minds (with all their past history) engage with contemporary change as it makes future history."

In *Migrants, Sharecroppers, Mountaineers*, Coles follows the fortunes of ten families in each of the three categories over a number of years. As in

**WIT TWISTER #265**

Edited by ARTHUR SWAN

*The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each dash within a blank corresponds to a letter of the word.*

She — — — — that gardening has  
kept her young—

That when what she has  
— — — — has newly sprung,

And leaves uncurl in every gar-  
den bed,

The — — — — of age lies lightly  
on her head.

—A.S.

(Answer on page 74)

**FRASER YOUNG  
LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1499**

*A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1499 will be found in the next issue.*

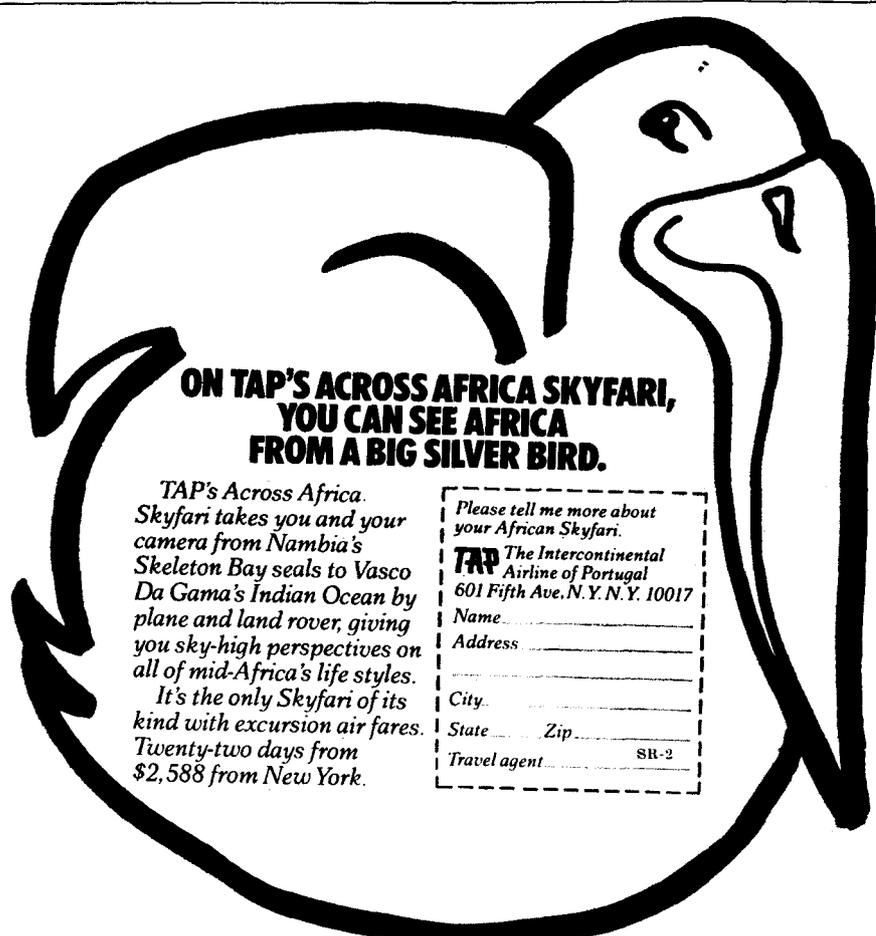
ZM LJM TDJYJATMR LIR RM-  
OAWNPMR ZNMI ZM RATFSKMJ  
L ILPDJLO TPEOM SG ZJAP-  
AIW, GSJ ZM MUYMFPMPR LI  
LDPNSJ, LIR GSDIR L BLI.

—YLTFL0

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1498

*Some people's faults are becoming, while other people's virtues prove drawbacks.*

—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD



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