

## Fred Tackitt Collection

A collection of pictures from dramatic performances, together with writings and artwork, by Fred Tackitt, an exceptionally accomplished and multi-talented student who attended Manchester College from mid-1964 until his tragic death in late 1966 at the age of 24.

*A Legend Is Born*

Manchester College student personalities have traversed and enriched our community scene for three quarters of a century. It is doubtful if any have challenged the imagination nor so delighted the hearts and minds of as many as did Fred Tackitt during his abbreviated encounter with that ever growing host of people who thoroughly enjoyed being his audience.

His stature increased with each portrayal of a John Wortling, Henry Drummond, Thomas Beckett, Conrad Birdie or Abe Lincoln, even as each character was enhanced by his perception, projection and sensitivity. Probably few of his many admirers really knew him, for in the minds of his collective audience, the name Fred Tackitt had become synonymous with those of his superb characterizations.

Each production blessed with his presence became his personal triumph, with all other performances being measured against his. It seems inevitable that in the minds of all who knew him thus, all future Tri Alpha thespians will be evaluated against the standard he has established.

In his passing, the greatest loss of all is that experienced by his audience who are left with the feeling that the show closed after Act 1, Scene 1.

Fred Tackitt is dead, but in his dying, the Fred Tackitt Legend is born!  
— John M. Storer

***The News-Journal (N. Manchester, IN) November 14, 1966***

## About this Collection



Fred as Thomas Becket in  
*Murder in the Cathedral*

“Fred wasn’t like any of the rest of us,” according to one of Fred’s six brothers. “Since early elementary school, he read and wrote constantly while the rest of us were outside playing like typical kids who lived in the country.”

By the time of his death, Fred had written extensively—poetry, short stories, letters, journals and college papers. He was also a talented sketch artist. On the Manchester College campus, he was best known for his extraordinary acting, playing leads in many plays presented by the Drama Department.

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**ACTOR**



## Abe Lincoln in Illinois



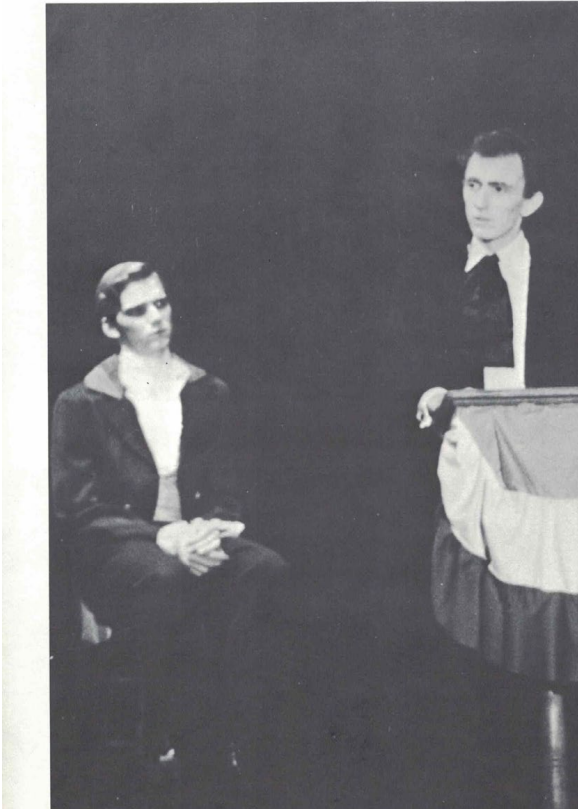
The lead role in *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, the Homecoming play of Fall 1966, was acclaimed by many as being Fred's finest performance. The notes Fred left behind show the depth of his commitment to acting and give us a glimpse of how he prepared for the role of Abe Lincoln. From his pen Fred wrote: "I have started work on *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*. The first day is very difficult. I have been working on my voice and the rhythm of Lincoln's speeches. I see my mistake. Foolishly, I have depended on 'one thing.' Once the voice comes, then all else follows. Is it a mistake to imitate the real man? In this case it is impossible since the 'real' man has been dead for over a hundred years. I am trying to present a picture, a composite of all that I have read. I must read the play again to determine its effect on me."

*Abe Lincoln in Illinois* covers the life of President Abraham Lincoln from early adulthood through his final speech in Illinois before he left for Washington in 1861 as President Elect. Following the death of his betrothed, Ann Rutledge, Abe courts and eventually marries Mary Todd. It was a difficult marriage, albeit Mary Todd Lincoln would later become First Lady of the United States.

From the stage Fred spoke: "There's one thing I've learned here in politics: that ignorance is no obstacle to advancement. In fact, in some cases, it's quite an advantage."

"... and it was hard to find my way in the darkness ..."





LEFT: Portraying Abraham Lincoln giving his farewell speech before leaving for Washington as President Elect, with his controversial brother-in-law Ninian Edwards looking on.



RIGHT: Fred as Abe in a moment of private reflection.

Conversation from the play when Lincoln was a youth:

"Snow all winter, cloudbursts all spring. Food just about gone. There's nothing in the ground coming up. If we stay here much longer, we'll starve."

"They're always saying the same thing Tom, no matter where we go. Pull up stakes and get gone, is all you think about."

"We got nothing to worry about, Pa. Rain don't last forever."

"Even if it stopped, you wouldn't notice it. Being as how you've everlasting got your nose stuck in some book. What you reading now?"

" . . . It's called Shakespeare."

## Similarities Between the Lives of Abraham Lincoln and Fred Tackitt

- Both were born into poverty in Kentucky.
- Both the Lincoln and Tackitt families moved to Indiana when the boys were quite young.
- Both Abe and Fred were largely self-educated by reading everything they could get their hands on.
- Both were great communicators and exceptionally gifted writers.
- Both struggled with the meaning of life and where they felt they belonged.
- Both grieved the loss of great romantic loves. Abe's Ann Rutledge died and Fred's fiancée broke their engagement.
- Both Abe and Fred served their country in the Washington, D.C., area—Fred in the military, Abe as President.
- Both died early: Abe at the age of 54, Fred at 24.

## Kudos for Fred

Letters and cards Fred received after his final Manchester College Tri Alpha performance, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*:

“Dear Fred, I’ve never been one to write fan letters but after seeing last night’s Tri Alpha play I had to let you know what a tremendous performance you gave. I am more certain than ever you will one day be a well-known and respected actor. Someday I’ll be able to say, ‘I know him; he’s Fred Tackitt of Luther, Indiana.’”

-- Mary Brandeberry of Tontogany, Ohio

“Fred, I can’t think of any adjectives big enough to describe my awe at your acting ability. You gave your best and that was the best that could be given. You became Abraham Lincoln and made him a beautiful man. You couldn’t have done that unless you had talent and were beautiful yourself, too.”

-- Lois (Manchester College student)

“Well, Fred—You done good. In my delirium I can’t not say it was ‘particularly fine.’ My right to write comes from your letting us begin to know you—perhaps because you’re the only one among us brave enough to do so. ‘Mono communication’ sounds like one of your I-don’t-have-anything-to-say-so-I’ll-just type-Oak-Leaves-masterpieces.”

-- another cast member

“Dear Fred, Congratulations for an excellent performance in Abe Lincoln. Your work is continuously superb.”

-- Genita Speicher, Music Faculty

“Dear Mr. Tackitt: Our thanks to the entire cast and production staff for a very meaningful presentation of ‘Abe Lincoln in Illinois’ last Saturday night. And our very special thanks to you for so effectively playing the role of Abe Lincoln.”

-- Pastor and Mrs. Olden D. Mitchell, Lincolnshire Church of the Brethren, Fort Wayne, Indiana

### Manchester College Memorandum

To: Fred Tackitt

From: R.V. Bollinger, Dean of Students

Re: Abe Lincoln

Date: October 29, 1966

“You continue to excite my admiration by your work in dramatics. Your Abe Lincoln was superb.”

## Inherit the Wind



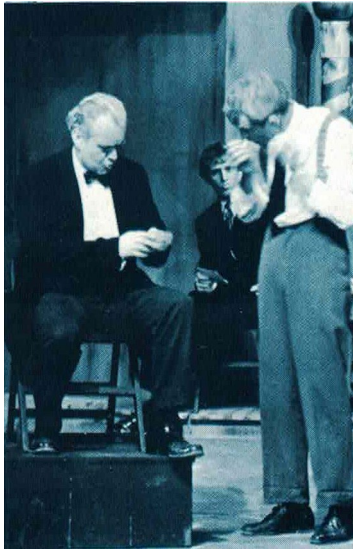
*Inherit the Wind* is a fictional version of the 1925 Scopes trial. Scopes was convicted for teaching evolution to a high school class.

From the stage Fred spoke: “He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise in heart.”

--Proverbs 11:29

“You never pushed a noun against a verb except to blow up something.”

“Matt Brady got lost, because he was looking for God too high up and too far away.”





## Murder in the Cathedral



*Murder in the Cathedral* is a verse drama by T.S. Eliot that portrays the assassination of Archbishop Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral during the reign of Henry II in 1170. The central theme of the play is martyrdom.

Fred noted and copied with his own hand the following quote from the play:  
“They know and do not know that action is suffering and suffering is action.”

And from the stage Fred spoke:

“Neither does the agent suffer,  
Nor the patient act. But both are fixed  
In an eternal action, an external patience  
To which all must consent that it may be willed  
And which all must suffer that they may will it  
That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is action  
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still  
Be forever still.”



## The Importance of Being Earnest



*The Importance of Being Earnest* is a comic play by Oscar Wilde that engages themes such as marriage, class, social expectations, and the lifestyles of the English upper class.

Quotes from the play: “Oh! It is absurd to have a hard-and-fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn’t. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn’t read.”

“Long engagements give people the opportunity of finding out each other’s character before marriage, which is never advisable.”

From the stage Fred spoke: “I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever nowadays.”

## Bye Bye Birdie



### Swallowing raw eggs

When asked how it was possible for him to swallow raw eggs for his part as Conrad Birdie, Fred answered nonchalantly, "Oh, you get used to it."

*Bye Bye Birdie* was inspired by the phenomenon of singer Elvis Presley being drafted into the United States Army in 1957. Fred greatly admired Elvis.

### Fred's favorite song from *Bye Bye Birdie*:

#### **You Gotta Be Sincere**

You gotta be sincere.  
You gotta feel it here,  
'Cause if you feel it here  
Well then you're gonna be honestly sincere  
Man you've gotta be sincere  
If what you feel is true, really feel it  
You make them feel it too.  
Write this down now.  
You gotta be sincere, honestly sincere Man  
you've gotta be sincere!  
If you're really sincere  
If you're really sincere  
If you feel it in here,  
Then it's gotta be right!



## Rhinoceros



*Rhinoceros* was Eugene Ionesco's most popular anti-logical play about totalitarianism.

Quote from the play: "The cat has four paws. Isidore and Fricot have four paws. Therefore, Isidore and Fricot are cats."

Critic's interpretation: "The logic of this reasoning would allow any conclusion to be true based on two premises, the first of which contains the term that is the predicate of the conclusion and the second of which contains the term that is the subject of the conclusion."

Without doubt, Fred agreed enthusiastically with two themes in *Rhinoceros*:

- the deadening futility of most human conversation
- the meaninglessness of social conventions

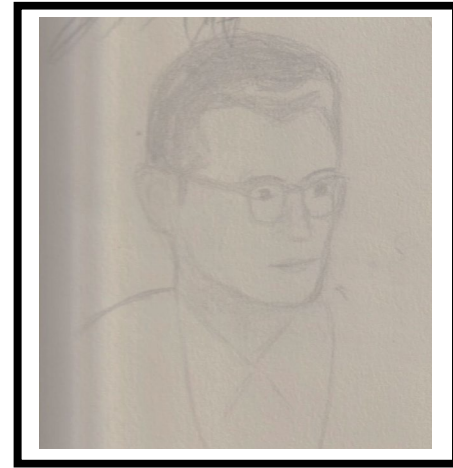
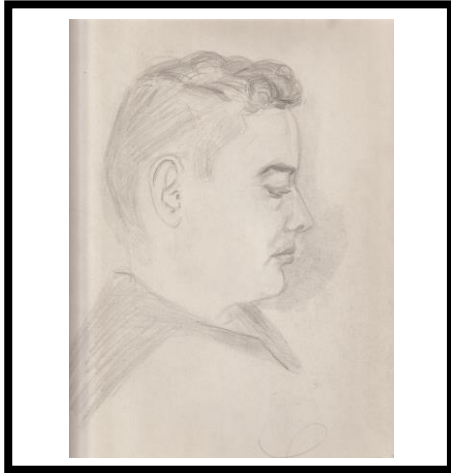
From his pen Fred wrote:

"Why be afraid of using clumsy words?  
All words are ungainly, unseemly, superficial  
— All together too much like plastic flowers,  
Cheap perfume and the love from neurotics."



**ARTIST**

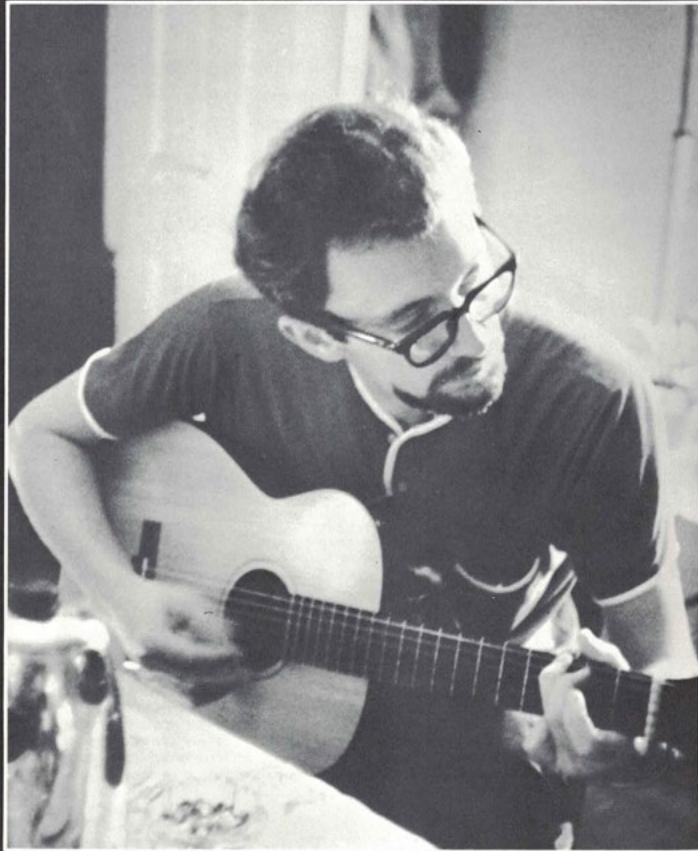
## SKETCHES



From Fred's Journal, June 30, 1962, while in the military:

"Have been in the hospital a full 34 days. Am confident that I shall be discharged from the Navy within the next month or two. During this period, I have drawn three portraits which grossed \$12. Big deal! With increasing practice and intensive concentration I could possibly grow to be a fair artist."

**MUSICIAN**



Fred Tackitt  
Nov. 12, 1966

This photo from the 1967 *Aurora* memorialized a well-known student who had died during that school year.

Fred had an incredible singing voice with a wide vocal range and sang bass in various choirs. He participated in the folk music sing-alongs that were common at Manchester.

During the hippie generation, multitudes of young people learned to play the guitar, and Fred **loved** to play his guitar. He encouraged others to play and commented in a letter that a friend's "finger work is greatly improving."

He looked forward to a trip to Washington, D.C., where he would be able to find a decent set of new strings for his instrument.

In letters to his youngest brother, Fred expressed his hope that the younger sibling was continuing to play his guitar as a part of rounding out his talents.

**DANCER**



Although there are no known images of Fred dancing, there are a couple anecdotes about his interest in and pursuit of dance. Following his discharge from the Navy in 1962, Fred was in the Washington, D.C., area trying to figure out what he wanted to do next. He enrolled as a student at the Arthur Murray Dance Center there. Within a short time, he was offered and accepted a job at Arthur Murray as an instructor.

After leaving this job, Fred commented: “The dancing kick became just a little too emotionally, morally and intellectually expensive. For the price of an automobile a person is asked to be satisfied with such wonderful products as friendship, warmth, social congeniality and the dubious ability to dance. In other words, the dance business thrives on selling human warmth and vanity; the former should be given, the latter should be destroyed . . . Being the conscientious person that I am, I decided to give it up and pursue something of a more lasting value, i.e., college.”

A Manchester College student found herself enrolled in a ballroom dance class that Fred taught at Manchester College. She was terrified that she would be expected to dance with him—terrified, because he was a BMOC, and she felt he would be disappointed in her dance skills.

**CREATIVE WRITER**



## A Quiet Withdrawal

Short story by Fred Tackitt

They were sitting on the couch. She had a handkerchief in her hands which she tugged now and then and twisted into temporary knots. Her back was straight; her legs, pressed tightly against each other, were crossed at the ankles and she concentrated on the handkerchief. He slouched against the back of the couch with his legs stretched out in front of him. Now and then he looked at her, but mostly he concentrated on his crumpled shoes.

“You’re not the gentle, kind person I fell in love with,” she said. “You’ve changed into something I hardly recognize. You don’t call me anymore. You don’t seem to want to talk to me. We used to be very close, but lately, I don’t know.” She paused. “We have to do something, Owen.”

“Yes, I suppose we should talk now.”

“It’s just that I’m getting tired of my friends telling me that they saw you looking like a bum or that they saw you in some bar with those people from the studio. And I’m tired of waiting for you somewhere and having you arrive late with liquor on your breath. Even your best friend told me he was sorry he had introduced us because of the way you are now. You said you were going to pull yourself away from people and concentrate on doing just what suited you best, what you supposedly were born for, but I don’t think you’ve pulled yourself away from anyone except me, and the only thing that really suits you is playing some kind of horrible game with people’s feelings. You don’t seem to care for anything anymore.”

He scratched his head and was conscious of the humidity and the way his suit didn’t fit. The pants were too short. You could see past the tops of his socks. His hair was too long and the heat made his eyelids feel sticky, so that he blinked continually and awkwardly tugged at the long hairs on the back of his neck. And the way she was talking added to his discomfort:

she sounds as though she’s memorized her speech, given a lot of thought to what she’s saying . . . and she’s determined to say what she’s memorized and things are going to turn out just as she’s planned them . . . you have to plan things, Owen, and those things have to turn out just as you planned . . . people who plan things are intelligent and know how to live in good society.

She had her argument planned and was moving from premise to premise to logical conclusion, which would be that he had mistreated her and that it was best for them to part.

“You used me, Owen, for your own . . .” She stopped, twisted the handkerchief, bit her lip, blinked her eyes, and with forced determination began categorizing all the indelicacies he had committed against her.

that’s good. pile up the accusations. point out my stupidities. wait for me to get angry then very coolly suggest that if i were better educated i might be able to cope with myself and we might have a better chance of making something out of our relationship. we might be able to debate objectively our slight differences. we might be able to better understand each other’s position. position, position, position. i don’t even have a position anymore. but keep talking anyway. it may do you some good at least.

“And I asked you so many times to pick up that umbrella at the bus depot’s Lost & Found but you couldn’t do something so simple as that. I don’t know what kind of person you are, Owen, but I do know that I can’t stand for this kind of treatment any longer.”

and where were you last November when i couldn’t stand the way you were treating me? where was that deep understanding you had of me that couldn’t be expressed? why was i so difficult to understand that day we sat on the park bench and i tried to tell you that i needed your patience, that we couldn’t possibly get married as long as you kept dreaming of the wonderful nights we would spend together and how we would finally be one person and all our differences would seem trivial and you would work hard to help me be what i wanted to be and we would raise a family and not worry about your parents because they would come to understand that a steady income was not the most important thing to us—Christ! right out of the movies. where were you that night i told you i didn’t know what i wanted and that until i did, it would be mutual suicide to get married? where was your empathy, your love? where were all your flowers and nightingales when we talked of our simple differences? there might have been a chance if you had stopped dreaming in that theatre you call a heart just long enough to see that i was not the owen bryant you had couched in your imagination somewhere; that we had very real, very big differences; that we had to talk about those differences;

that marriage would not suddenly erase them; that love was a little bit more than a shared hope; that two people never became one except maybe in the goddamned movies and that if we couldn't even begin to talk about the small differences then how could we ever hope to talk about things like houses and jobs and babies and grocery bills and not having enough money to buy a much better stereo and all the other small things a man and his wife talk about—not to mention the fact that i was having trouble trying to persuade myself that I wanted to get married so that we could talk about all those wonderful things. It didn't matter to you. You didn't care about the differences. The similarities were the important things. The differences would work themselves out after we were married. You didn't care about the differences and it was the differences that made up our day-to-day relationship. You didn't care then and I stand accused of not caring now. Well, you're right, sweetheart, I don't care enough to answer you in any way, shape or form.

But the silence was embarrassing and there was something nervous and frightened in the way she played with her handkerchief, so Owen answered.

“I'm sorry. I didn't want it to happen this way. I thought maybe something good would come if I stopped, if I stopped pushing myself into your life so much of the time.”

He blinked his eyes, tugged at the long hairs on the back of his neck and felt his face grow slightly warm.

“Is that all you can say?”

i don't love you, i don't love you, i don't love you. but maybe if we tried once more. maybe if i were a bit more loving and less critical . . . NO . . . she might say the same thing again: “You make the slightest thing sound so tragic when there really isn't that much difference between us.” NO! i don't think i want to hear that again.

“Yes. I guess. That's about all I can say.”

And then she cried. In quiet, little-girl whimpers she cried and put her head against his chest and he put his arm around her and they sat that way for a while.

## Ghost in the Cornfield

Short story by Fred Tackitt

There is a ghost in my neighbor's cornfield. I discovered him last night when I walked to the little cemetery that borders our garden. I suspected him of hiding there when I saw his tears on the cornstalks two mornings ago. At first I thought it might be his blood, but I think now that he left that in one of the two pine trees that guard the cemetery. You see, before I went away I used to go to "my" cemetery to think. I would sit under the taller of the two trees and direct all my questions to it. Some of the questions it would answer, but I usually left the cemetery as confused as when I entered it. The smaller of the trees never seemed to be aware of me, but I always felt confident that the other one knew why I came there so often. My most frequent visits were always in the spring. The ground would be moist, the wind usually chilly, and the moon appeared to be a silver golf ball ready to be stroked into the cemetery where the tall pine pennant marked the last green.

After I had been home several days, I suddenly felt it necessary to visit the cemetery. I had not been there in two years and I yearned to renew my friendship with the trees. In the clear autumnal moonlight I could easily see that I would converse no longer with the tall tree. No pine cones adorned its limbs. No birds rustled drowsily in its upper berths. Only the silent spiders found refuge in the brown lifeless needles. I looked toward the other tree with remorse and disgust. It stood vibrantly alive in its refusal to acknowledge me and its dead brother. I turned then, angry with the universe, and started to leave. In turning, I faced my neighbor's cornfield and saw that something was responsive to my wish to communicate. Long I stood there wondering—fearing, as old Edgar Poe might have said. After stating emphatically that I knew he was there, I left the cemetery and proceeded home.

Realizing that the recorded activities might easily be misconstrued to indicate insanity, I find it necessary to relate to you the event that preceded my discovery. It is very important, as you will discover, that you recognize the necessity of this ghost in the cornfield. If you do not, then I have failed and in failing I shall have destroyed the ghost's very reason for being there.

I left home over two years ago in order to discover exactly where home was. At the time I was very displeased with the general scheme of things entire and wanted to find a more pleasant method of existence. My discontent grew out of the unholy soil of the disillusion I suffered when one of my best friends was sentenced to prison for being a habitual criminal though the crimes were petty and primarily of a rebellious nature. After much consideration I came to the conclusion that, had it not been for my lack

of persistence and selfish inclination toward recognition, I might have been beneficial to his maturity and aided in some way his realization of logical values. I have discovered, since returning, that his values were much more logical than any that the citizens of South Jordan attempted to impose upon him. He sought freedom as we sought money. When no one would recognize his sincere efforts, he spat in their faces by stealing their precious material possessions, thus exposing their weak sense of values. His crime was not that of theft. It was in his complete disregard of human vengeance and pride that his crime dwelt. In his obsession for freedom he grew blind to every other value. His expression of freedom had to be readily obvious. His contempt for convention had to manifest itself in a contemptuous manner. His honesty he wore where everyone could see it. Perhaps that is why we resented him so much. We could never hope to attain the honesty which he had. To look upon him was to be witness to the overpowering weakness to which we so easily succumbed. We labeled him thief because he stole our prefabricated illusions of goodness and truth. Therein lie the fragments whence the ghost in the cornfield was born.

Out of the bitter tears of regret and the certitude of a lost brother, the ghost arose like the phoenix. From the haunting memory of a passed moment in which self-preservation had extinguished love and fear for my own social status had blasphemed freedom, the ghost was born and shall ever walk the cornfields. This is a tribute, a requiem and an epitaph for the living death that was born out of a town's and a person's infidelity to the human kindness that rested in both.

"They don't help you in prison. There's no form of rehabilitation. They just teach you better methods. That's all." Jim Craiton spoke disinterestedly to the tall boy sitting across the table from him.

"That's what I tried to tell our English class, but they firmly insisted that what we need is stricter laws and longer confinement." Dave Jacobs was hopefully drawing his friend into a discussion of crime and punishment and the present insufficient method of combating both. For five months he had tried to reveal Jim's feelings toward this particular subject and finally, he thought, he was achieving some sign of progress. "I tried to tell them that if society really wants to change someone for the better instead of vindicating their own weaknesses, the present system would have to be altered greatly." No sooner had he finished than he knew he had spoken too quickly and had let that damnable word "change" slip past his usually well-guarded tongue. He winced at Jim's short laugh and sighed unnoticeably when he changed the topic to speculation of the oncoming night's activities.

"You going home?" Jim asked bluntly.

"Yes," Dave mumbled, "I've got a lot of studying to do."

“Well, hell, I think I’ll go down to the pool hall and cheat somebody out of a game or two, then.” Jim slid out of the booth, stood up slowly, adjusted his tightly pegged pants so that the unfastened belt rested just below his hip line, lit a cigarette, dropped the lighter into his coat pocket, tossed the coat loosely over his thin shoulders, grunted an evasive “see ya” and shuffled out of the restaurant toward the pool hall.

“Sonovabitch!” Dave mumbled to himself, “just when I thought I had him, I jump the gun and blow five months of intensive sabotage. Dammit! I’ve got to be much more careful.” Then he lapsed into silent debate. Always the same arguments—for and against his efforts to rehabilitate this young criminal. Had he not told himself many times that it was just an attempt to erect a monument to his ability in undermining people’s supposed characters? Had he not assured himself of the futility in trying to change Jim? Was it not true that even as he discussed the problem with himself he noticed a marked propensity toward arguing against the effort? Why should he continue? What gain was there in risking so much for such a slight probability? Had he not his own life to pursue? Did he not already resent Jim for the embarrassment he had caused? “Aw, to hell with it,” he exclaimed bitterly. Had he not said that before? “This time I mean it,” he answered himself. To prove that he meant it, he slammed his book shut, crumpled his outline on crime and punishment, threw it underneath the table, gathered his books and papers in one arm, threw his coat over his shoulder with the other and stamped out of the restaurant and into the wet November snow.

## Teddy Bear

Short story by Fred Tackitt

What I did was pull up an old rotten log and sat right next to the dam so I couldn't hear anything but the roar of the falling water. I could concentrate much better that way and right then I really needed to concentrate.

Whenever I really thought, I always remembered this old raggedy Teddy Bear I used to have. I know it sounds crazy and kinda immature but you see, the only thing I had to play with when I was a small kid was my old beat up Teddy Bear and I used to talk to it like crazy. Even after I started grade school and all, I still would confide only in my Teddy Bear. I used to take him out to the apple orchard, climb way up in this old gnarled tree, and sit there and pretend he and I were pilots. We were always bombing the enemy.

After we would complete a successful mission and land safely with both wings on fire, I would discover that old Teddy had gotten wounded pretty badly and I'd rush him to the hospital. I never could save him though. I mean, he'd lay there mutely in his tree limb bed and slowly die from loss of blood. He always managed to mutter some philosophy before he died and never failed to ask me to take him up in the plane when he died and drop him reverently somewhere out over the ocean because that's how he had lived and that's how he wanted to be buried. For chrissake, I used to practically cry when I'd drop old Teddy mournfully out of the tree. I really had an imagination when I was a kid. What I remembered most about my adventures with Teddy was how he finally passed away.

## Multiple Personalities

Short story by Fred Tackitt

For some reason I am rather averse to greetings, typewriters and pens this evening. The sketch pencil I'm using is heavy and full of meaning and seems to be sympathetic toward expression. I hope it serves a useful purpose.

Brother Silas, or Henry, is asleep at the moment so he'll not mind if we perform an autopsy on his deplorable character. He is an irresponsible bum given to outlandish euphemisms and rationalization. He laughs too much and cares too little of the embarrassment he inflicts on those nearest him. He is a poet of the absurd, the Messiah of idiocy, the Buddha of evasion. He is so blind that, to him, there is no difference between sunlight and darkness. Everything is love, faith and God, yet he convulses at the thought of church and denies that love is responsible for so much cruelty. For him there is no tomorrow. Today he lives, that is enough. Were it not for Henry, I, Edgar, would have long been settled and secure, safe in the protective custody of society. A useful member of a unity. Now I find it difficult to exert any influence on Fred Tackitt. He is no longer, if ever he was, a person. He is simply an empty house wherein Henry and I live and fight each other. Now and then he attempts to assert himself, but it's quite vain actually.

Now then, this is an attempt to assert myself. Frankly, I find Henry a much better companion. I suppose that's why I've given him most of the rooms in the house. He's devious though, and rather slovenly. But much easier to live with. Of course, I'm the only one who can tolerate him with any consistency.

God, I've really gone off the deep end! But I am a schizophrenic and the only change I've made is in recognizing the two characters. I wish I hadn't. It's rather frustrating at times. Of course, they are not completely developed yet. When they do become fully grown, I shall be committed to the local funny farm. There is the hope that these oppositions will be resolved. Regardless, it is late and all three of us are quite sleepy.



**POET**

### **Several Parts of Me\***

Between the several parts of me,  
I stand and watch them move,  
And wonder with the coming on  
Of night what sounds will prove  
To be the greatest ease to sleep:  
The thunder of a union  
Or the crash of separation  
Or the quiet pensive tension  
That pervades the preservation  
Of the lone and lonely, individual  
Several parts of me.

Undated

### **Dreams of You\***

When in thoughts of graver doubts  
I feel my soul turn round in fear,  
I run the night of graveyard bouts  
And tear a hole in the coming year.

And dreams of you,  
Come late in the turning twilight,  
Twist a new thought toward  
The fading phantasmal night  
Wherein my graver bouts are buried.

February 6, 1966

### **My Quiet Girl\***

She is a quiet girl  
Who talks a lot  
About other things  
And never stays long  
On the "I's" and "me's"  
Enough to draw a song  
Of what she is or not  
So I think of her  
As having been  
And that past-tense thought  
Keeps a good distance between  
Me and my quiet girl  
Who talks a lot  
About other things.

January 19, 1966

### **Force of Dreaming\***

I have sat long and thought,  
But the force of my dreaming  
Never moved shovels nor fought  
Wars of penitence, but seeming  
Rather to build towers of steel  
It danced and juggled beams  
On the edge of faith where it reeled  
And collapsed into its self-esteem.

January 21, 1966

### **Walk the Stairs Down\***

Now as I walk the stairs down,  
Night cascading around and below me,  
I drop on the first landing my coat  
Of actions done that crown me  
With direction from those who stand above me.

And at the second stop, my scarf  
Of knitted smiles and woolen yases,  
From those I have loved with words,  
I drop and clear my soul of guesses.

But the third stop is a darkness,  
And the landing's disappeared,  
And the sound of something flowing,  
Darkly gushing in the blackness,  
Pounds a rhythmic anguish laughing  
Howling, bleeding in my temple,  
And I cry into the whirling  
Where the landing should have been.

February 15, 1966

### **Behind Schedule\***

Spring had come  
And was kind.  
I cleaned my desk  
And dusted old books  
Vowing to read them some time.

I read old letters  
And notes and poems  
That I had thought better  
To leave hidden.

And while I was smiling,  
On some forgotten hill  
I suddenly saw the leaves  
From my window fall  
Crumpled and crisp and brown and still.

Spring had gone,  
And I was behind  
Schedule again.

Undated

### **Fear of Loneliness\***

The fear of loneliness before God,  
The memory of emptiness among crowds,  
A desire for distinction and a dread of that desire  
Kept the nights crowded with phantom memories  
Of good days long parted.

Undated

### **My Closet\***

Perhaps I should have cleaned my closet.  
There is a bag of dirty linen in one corner  
Whose contents breathe their foul breaths  
On suits and shirts left hanging  
Dirty and unpressed from last summer.

I look for something clean and unused,  
But that fouled breath has permeated  
Even the walls it seems, and to clean  
My closet now, I shall have to  
Tear down the whole house.

Undated

### **Solitude\***

There is no beginning –  
In this empirical life –  
I have always been alone  
And to forsake loneliness  
Is to wither and die.  
I have known no other way.  
Can you hate me for returning  
To the terrible security  
Of solitude?

Undated

### **Butterfly\***

We walked in April woods  
Feeling the sun  
Watching small rivulets  
Gather and run into rivers.

We talked, yes,  
And as we brushed  
Last year's leaves from our eyes,  
A butterfly kissed our held hands.

We grabbed for it,  
Oh, its wings were beautiful,  
And we did not miss,  
For I left the woods with one wing  
And you the other.

May 4, 1964

### **In My Soul\***

This day is in my soul  
Like the downing snow  
Gliding in curls upon the street  
While the people I meet whirl  
And pass to either side  
Riding the wake of the beat  
Of my rhythmic heart.

February 27, 1966

### **I Was an Arab\***

I was an Arab then,  
Watching a Caravan  
Move like a river  
Of disinherited shadows  
Across the sand.

I saw dimly,  
Beyond that flow of phantoms,  
My own mirage,  
And something of an effort  
Blossomed in the heat.

I had ridden the desert  
Mountains of sand,  
Built my fire  
In the ghostly dunes  
Of inscrutable night,  
And kept watch  
With camels passing  
In the darkness.

October 6, 1964

### **The Word Is God\***

The word is not the thing implied,  
For the word is God, or so cried  
The prophets in their desert caves.  
And God is love, prayed the slaves  
On the auction block.  
And love, I've found,  
Is just a map of time-bound man,  
Encrusted with shells and salt  
Like a treasureless chest at the bottom  
Of time-passing sea from which  
Now and then floats a single cell  
Of something trembling green;  
  
Floats to the surface to be washed  
Ashore and picked apart and  
Dried in the sand  
By the sun burning  
Late-evening leaves of something lost.

Undated

## Empty Hopes\*

Have you listened to the empty hopes that fall upon the floor  
Of an unemployment office and its cold unopening door?  
Have you walked throughout a city just to find some work to do,  
But there never seems an opening—at least not for you?  
And everyone around you seems contented with their lot,  
And smile and say they're sorry for the job you haven't got.  
They're so happy to be working and paying their lawful due,  
Their "frost is on their pumpkin" and their chicken's in the stew.

There's no kicks I got, man, about this moving race—  
Though some cats put me down like there's sunlight on my face.

January 22, 1963  
Bethesda, MD

## Graveyard Corner\*

There is a song I sang once to something  
. . . or someone,  
Of leaves and mornings when sunlight dropped  
Tinkling notes on flower blossom petals.

I had forgotten that something song  
Until now when a friend . . .  
. . . come soon into a graveyard corner . . .  
Smiled and touched my hand.

October 15, 1964  
South Whitley, IN

## Algonquin Requiem

oh, he was young  
in the emery evening  
and fought and sang  
his soul in wide gliding arcs  
danced the mountains  
in rhyme to the sea  
and caught the sky  
in a rising swoop  
and touched the sun  
with a feathered cry.

but morning caught him  
in an autumn drop of cloud,  
and from the ancient vine  
of Grecian ruin  
he saw the sun rise.

and now he sits and sways,  
and sometimes prays and draws  
in the sand now and then  
small circles.

Undated

## **Prove to Me\***

Prove to me that God exists,  
A stranger challenged strong.  
Show, too, that man resists  
Heaven and is wrong.  
Let me know that prayers aren't lies  
By which we gauge ourselves  
And that which dies is like the flies,  
Dead on the winter shelves.

Tell me love is not desire  
Of body more than soul,  
An aimless fire that does conspire  
To vindicate the whole.  
Show me wrong that love is not  
A promise to the soul,  
A contract hot that is forgot  
And sold to the baser mold.

Show me sure where heaven is found,  
And I will pay thee well.  
For old I am and ever round,  
I pace the horn of hell.

How could I answer age's tears  
And justify my own?  
No timely proverb chases fears  
But hides them from March dawn.  
Where went those eager probing lies  
That consummate poor youth,  
Then vanish when the burning eyes  
Cry lava tears for truth.

Who wrought me thus to think that I  
Could, with singular breath,  
Sing loud of love in thunder-sky  
And scream with laughing Death?  
To what foul mist owe I this chill  
And who myself beguiled?  
Is it not love that holds me still  
And love that beckons wild?

This mist of love that holds me still  
Has prisoned the stranger too,  
Till now, when Death provokes the will,  
His misty walls eschew.

Undated

## Suspended Action\*

I think of Washington, D.C.,  
And wonder what has  
Put me here in this land  
Of cornfields and wood patches.

Here in this land  
Of suspended action  
I try not to think too long  
Of past things  
That seemed more real;  
Days spent alone in a foreign city  
Riding green buses  
Through cobbled and hilly streets,  
Evenings spent walking  
Under cherry trees  
Blooming in early April  
Amid solemn statues,  
The faraway hum and drone  
Of downtown traffic at midnight  
And the endless passing  
Of cars and trucks and buses  
In the mid-day heat of August.  
I was alive then,  
I keep saying to myself,  
As if the flow of traffic  
Was only the echo  
Of the rush of fresh blood in my veins,  
And the tall monuments were just moments  
When I stood alone just looking at  
Or just believing in something.  
And I stood often then.

Now I sit and supposedly learn  
Why men should stand on or for something,  
But mostly I learn that those  
Who talk longest on why men should stand  
Are those who sit longest  
And seldom if ever  
Stand on or for anything.  
In Washington, D.C.,  
I was spread out like the city  
And I thought and believed in many directions.  
There were no walls to keep me  
From stumbling into holy battlefields  
And no walls to confine me  
To a cemetery of Christian purpose.  
I was alive and flowing like a multi-streamed river.  
I discovered many deserts  
And mountains and forests  
Impenetrable—imponderable landmarks of human  
endeavor! And I paid in blood and anguish for those  
discoveries.  
But in each new land I buried what I was  
And rose like a floundering phoenix  
To flow and stumble  
Into darker lands and greater uncertainties.  
Now in this land,  
Where FAITH is the greater uncertainty,  
And LEARNING is darkness in  
Four-cornered rooms,  
I sit and think often  
Of Washington, D.C.



## Five-Paned Window

First the Spring  
When latent fears blossomed  
High on a single hill  
And I walked in evening sounds  
Of night coming and looked  
For a small tree  
I had named mine.  
But only its stump—  
Reaching from the ground  
Like a black thumb—  
Remained with axe-edge scars  
In silent requiem  
And from the small hill  
I watched shadows creep in  
And slowly cover the valley below  
With night.

And then Summer  
When mornings exploded  
Through the window  
And highways clogged and dripped  
With motion and sweat.  
I stood on the bank of a small stream  
That gurgled and bubbled  
And I named it mine  
And it ran stagnant.

And then Autumn  
When noon was a kaleidoscope  
Of park-bench whispers  
And hope drooped  
In heavy shadows  
Of lurid forms seen dimly  
Through veils of dying colors.  
I saw a shape whisper to me,  
“We are substance among  
shadows,” And I felt a nearness  
But Autumn vanished.

And then Winter came  
And in the cold greyness  
Of afternoon lethargy  
I carried a plastic carnation,  
Bought in the rush  
Of Christmas despair  
With a salvation penny  
To an alien graveyard.

And now seasons  
In this Spring, come together  
When the weather is you  
And the earth moves  
In a silence seen fleeting  
Through a five-paned window.

May 16, 1965  
Luther Corners

**Note:** The phrase “substance among shadows” from this poem was selected by the 1967 *Aurora* yearbook editors to caption a photo memorializing Fred as a prominent Manchester student who had died in an accident during that school year.

George Andrew Atzerodt was a German American repairman, Confederate sympathizer, and conspirator with John Wilkes Booth in the assassination of US President Abraham Lincoln. He was assigned to assassinate Vice President Andrew Johnson, but lost his nerve and made no attempt. -- Wikipedia. Fred wrote the following poem years before he played the lead in *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*.

### George Atzerodt

His face was stone,  
His hands like ice,  
His eyes as black as nite.  
He drank alone  
His gin and rye  
In the dingy tavern light.

The hour was one,  
One, cold and lonely,  
And the minutes ticked by like years.  
His friends were gone  
And he was the only  
One left to drink of the tears,

Of the flowing tears  
That a nation shed  
For its captain plain and great  
Who had fought great fears  
While his country bled,  
And died for a madman's hate.

The heart of Judas  
Beat strong once more  
In this lonely, drunken man.

The sorrow which Brutus  
And Cassius bore  
Was being born again.

His mission of death  
Had been for naught  
And happy he was that it failed.  
Still never a breath  
That had ever fought  
For life, was harder exhaled.

The liquor he drank  
Could not quite quell  
The burning fear inside,  
And his blind hopes sank  
Into the bottomless well  
Where faith and courage hide.

A friendly hand  
Can be a fist  
When a heart it doth control.  
The face so grand  
Was death, he kissed  
Booth's favor, George paid with his soul.

Undated

## **The Graveyard**

The stars were quiet,  
No secret they gave,  
The moon kept counsel alone.  
The pine trees gave riot  
To the breeze, their slave,  
And the sky was hard as the stone.

The tombstones stood  
In stolid defense  
Of the secret I longed to know.  
Strong men and good  
From dawning and since  
Smiled wryly, wisely below.

Undated

## **Life Is Truth\***

We laughed with joy  
We knew no strife  
Each girl, each boy  
Seemed happy with life.  
Our biggest problems seem ridiculous  
now And life is something new.  
Life is a man with a troubled brow  
That is facing me and you.

It's here. It's true as the sun that shines.  
It's real. It's here to touch,  
An oak in a forest of shabby pines,  
A man who needs no crutch.  
Life is truth, and truth is life,  
And never the twain shall part,  
A palm to a hand, a blade to a knife,  
A heartbeat to a heart.

We look back now to our childhood  
days And wonder why they went,  
A look past, a misty haze,  
At the wonderful moments we spent.  
We wonder why they must be past And  
why they can't be now,  
Why carefree, happy days can't last,  
Why truth must be our now.

Undated

## **Oh, My Soul\***

Here now again  
In this room,  
Years gone mistily,  
Mistily past summer,  
I think of you  
And your name  
Like a bell from  
Some mist-morning hill  
Drops leaves of sunlight  
On my sleeping heart,  
And there is a Great Hole  
Where you smiled and loved me.

Oh, my soul  
What sweetness  
Awaits me there  
Where we walked  
In Autumn evening shadows!

Oh, my soul,  
Come again soon!

Undated

## **Secret World\***

Into this secret world  
Where words are flesh  
And blood is only thoughts  
Premature out of the abstraction man;

Where sounds are bodies  
Dancing on air  
And light, the explosion  
Of countless beliefs;

Where love is being  
Alive in the center  
Of a god just  
Dead enough to  
Give me life enough  
To know that only  
I can say yes or no  
To this or any other world.

Undated

## Invocation

Death is coming  
Up the stairs  
Strange!  
I would have thought  
He might have waited  
In the living room  
But no.  
Just as I throw myself  
Into a seating posture  
On the edge of the bed,  
Hair disheveled, breath bad,  
Eyelids puffily open,  
He creaks the stairs  
And grins, "Good morning."

Undated

**Note:** Fred wrote frequently about a sense he had that his life would be short, that he didn't have much time left. *Invocation* was read at his memorial service.

## Dark Brother\*

To you, dark Brother,  
After much time, this—  
. . . I have wept  
in time's full passing,  
dropped flowers as I walked  
through days of wondering.  
. . . I have kept  
but few reminders—  
evenings drifting while we talked  
and heard only ourselves  
weeping for effort spent,  
a song of lost purpose,  
a moment gone in  
    which we waited,  
a drink of night,  
a last, snow-covered look  
at our huddled village—  
and in days' wondering  
you will walk and remember  
and in remembering, weep  
and in weeping you will walk on  
as I have walked on.

September 1, 1964  
South Whitley, IN

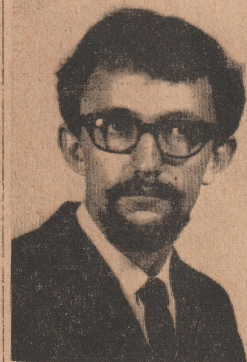
# JOURNAL

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1966

VOL. 93, NO. 91

## Car Misses S Curve

# South Whitley Youth Killed in Accident



FRED TACKITT

Manchester College Student Freddie L. Tackitt, 24, South Whitley, was killed at 2:30 a.m. Saturday in a grinding, single car smashup a mile east and .10 mile north of North Manchester.

The Wabash County Sheriff's department reports Tackitt, a junior at Manchester College, was riding in the back seat of a car driven by Richard C. Tyler, Jr., Hammond, Ind., with Karen Crain, 21, Peru. In the front seat with Tyler was Susan Matusak, 24, an instructor.

It was reported that the car, which was smashed up at an estimated \$900, negotiated the right hand turn of an S curve, but careened off the blacktop on the left turn, skidding 86 feet on the road, shooting off and sliding 23 feet more before crunching broadside into a telephone pole.

The vehicle shot another 6½ feet before coming to rest headed west.

Tackitt reportedly died of a compound skull fracture. Miss Crain suffered head injuries, lacerations behind her right ear, right wrist, leg and knee and a fractured knee cap. She was listed in critical condition.

Miss Matusak suffered leg and jaw abrasions and possible head injury and Tyler, head lacerations and contusions.

All three of the injured were taken to the Wabash County hospital.

Funeral services for Tackitt are being handled by Miller Funeral Home at South Whitley.

Tackitt was an outstanding actor at Manchester College during the preceding three years. He had just played the lead part role in the college homecoming play, "Abe Lincoln in Illinois."

Since many of his acting parts called for long hair and a beard, he had adopted that style of wearing his hair. A beard had become his trademark.

Funeral services for Tackitt were held at 2 p.m. Monday, Nov. 14 at the South Whitley High school gymnasium with Dr. Kenneth Brown, of the College Religion and Philosophy Department, delivering the memorial address.

A memorial service was held at the Manchester College Chapel at 10:30 a.m. Monday. Dr. Brown and Tom Roland, theatre director and speech and dramatics instructor, delivered eulogies.

He is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tackitt, Rt. 1, South Whitley; his grandmother, Mrs. Hulda Little, Kentucky; six brothers, Maurice, LaOtto; Charles, Ligonier; Ben, Huntington; Larry, Fort Wayne; Dan, Elgin Air Force Base, Fla. and Quenton, North Manchester.

He was born Feb. 15, 1942 at Wales, Ky., and graduated from South Whitley High School in 1960. He attended George Washington University at Washington, D.C., had served two years in the U. S. Navy and was a member of the junior class at Manchester College.

**SCHOLAR**

THOUGHTS ON  
THE BHAGAVAD-GITA  
by  
Fred Tackitt

*Class for which this was written and date written are unknown.*



## **Bhagavad-Gita**

It is my belief that the greatest contribution of this work lies in the edification, and thus the dignification, of man. I shall not take issue with other religious works in an attempt to prove the validity of my belief. I shall, in effect, assume that this work is the only work of its kind in existence. Thus it stands alone and must be proved in the field of human experience.

The timelessness of this work can be attributed to its utilization of the perennial plan; man becomes aware of his actual role as opposed to that which he believes, cries out against God, God answers soothingly, and man is resigned happily to his fate.

In the place of Job, we have Arjuna, a mighty warrior about to do battle with his own kinsmen. He was born a warrior, son of a god, lived a warrior's life, and now when the moment of supreme glory presents itself to him, he suddenly hesitates, trembles, and in submission refuses to carry out his assigned role.

God appears to him in the form of his charioteer Krishna, lifts the human cloud from Arjuna's eyes so that he may witness the multifarious manifestations of the Supreme God, convinces Arjuna that man's comprehension is finite and cannot aid him in attaining paradise, and urges Arjuna to fulfill his assigned task on peril of eternal rebirth.

Arjuna cries, questions, cajoles, but in the end prostrates himself before the God and returns happily to his task of murder—judicial murder, mind you.

### The Despair of Arjuna

Is the despair of Arjuna unusual? Let us review his life up to that point in order to discover as nearly as possible the effect that the realization visited upon him.

For all that I can gather, he was a strong willed, active, extremely devoted individual. His prowess as a warrior appeared uncanny, and he was undoubtedly proud of his position, though never arrogant. Up to this particular point in his life, it seems he was never given to verbalizing, so one might draw a picture of Arjuna that is closely akin to quiet, strong generals in our own history. Robert E. Lee comes first to mind. He was never afraid of defeat and in every battle demonstrated such soldierly characteristics as earned him the various titles of Foe Consumer, etc., etc.

It seems superfluous to note that in all his life he had never encountered a truly adverse situation, that never had he had to ask the gods for anything. His whole life seemed destined to be a remarkably successful one. He seems almost to have lived completely objectively, never giving way to any show of emotionalism. So we have a successful, confident, strong, objective soldier weeping for those who need no mourning. This is indeed unusual especially at this particular point, when Arjuna is to fully realize his potentialities as a human being and fulfill his earthly duty.

But when we consider that the enemy had always been a certain amount of people and not individuals, that Arjuna had never really felt the horror of what his life meant and, most important, that he was a social hero, then perhaps we can understand his horror at finally awakening to his own acts. His renunciation is completely acceptable when we realize that he had never believed that what he did was wrong. He had always had society on his side, religion to back him and his own indignation at being robbed to fully convince him that what he did was right.

Now, however, he sees that he is about to kill those for whom he could enjoy the rewards of victory, and the ghastly stupidity of it all "quite o'ergrows his spirit." He is caught in the eternal paradox, "To be or not to be." He chooses not to be and sits down in his chariot and weeps.

Now exactly why does he weep? For the enemy? No, evidently not because he has chosen not to fight, and without him his army will be defeated. Does he then weep for his own army because of the fate they will suffer as a result of his decision not to fight? No, because he believes that defeat would be better than victory in view of the sin incurred in the killing of kinsmen. Why then does he weep? I believe that he recognizes the inseparability of man. He sees the universal irony inherent in all men's struggle, and he weeps for all concerned in this "tale told by an idiot." There is no doubt in my mind that he is wholly sincere when he weeps. That is to say, I do not feel that behind all his altruistic reasons he secretly weeps for his own dilemma. It cannot be denied that he does weep for himself, but it must be noticed that he weeps for himself only because he is also a part of this horrible madness and not because he feels singled out for pain.

In short, Arjuna does indeed despair and, as is evident in true despair, it is universal and the circumstances leading up to his despair prove that it is by no means unusual.

In the beginning paragraphs of this work, I heartily cheer Arjuna onward in his condemnation of this hideous, grotesque tale that, at this stage, has obviously been "told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." For indeed, Arjuna has discovered

that he and his followers are no less guilty of the same motivations that prompted him to believe that the enemy was evil. He is both eloquent and wise, no mean feat, when he says, “. . . for whose sake empire, enjoyment and pleasures are desired, they themselves stand here in battle, forsaking life and wealth. What avail then is kingdom, enjoyment, or even Life, O Govinda?” And he goes on to denounce the alluring possession of the three worlds as nothing in comparison to that which is asked of him. He is indeed the great warrior for man at the very moment he stops being a warrior. He feels pity for the whole of mankind and is justifiably depressed with the “scheme of things entire.”

It is to his everlasting credit that he does not give way to an arrogant demand for reason as some of his Western contemporaries are wont to do. Nor does he lapse into “weeping and moaning and gnashing of teeth.” He implores the god Krishna to show him the way and says, in effect, that until the way is shown, he will not fight.

We have, at this point, not a denial of self but an overwhelming recognition of the universal self, that every self is not unlike any other self. Arjuna then is on the verge of becoming a catholic man, and were it not for the motivation (i.e., that which retains his individuality, his own sorrow, his own pity, his own depression), he might attain the universal condition. The very fact that he asserts “I shall not fight” keeps him narrowly individualistic. It remains to rid him of this last feeble remnant of will in order that he might safely pass into the universal.

In the beginning, we have man, Arjuna, living his life, fulfilling his “duty.” That he is a warrior is of little significance. Were he a ditch digger, a street sweeper or an advertising executive or, for that matter, a priest, the ultimate message would not be altered. Indeed it is this point on which the dignity of the Bhagavad-Gita rests: that the position of man in relation to man is of little consequence. And we learn that even the position of man in relation to God is of equal insignificance, but we shall come to that in time.

At the moment of glory, the culmination of the manifestation of his ultimate human being, Arjuna shrinks from what he is. Through that peculiar faculty of the human mind, reflection, he sees that what he is about to do in no way conforms to what he believes to be good. He cannot face the reality of himself, and so he casts his bow aside and refuses to fight.

Here we have the classic human condition: Man becomes aware of himself in relation to man and cries out against his fate. It is interesting to note that Arjuna, in his refusal to fight, displays more soldierly characteristics than in any previous battle, thus giving rise to the thought that his position as a warrior demanded of him the rebellion that begins the Bhagavad-Gita.

Arjuna cries out and, for seventeen chapters thereafter, is answered in every conceivable manner by his charioteer, the human manifestation of God, Krishna. And in no way, throughout the entire dialogue, does Krishna ask of Arjuna that which Arjuna cannot do. In fact, he seems always to be saying, “Be yourself.”

This, of course is not an original theme. Indeed, it is my belief that this “be yourself” message is the underlying message of all works. I cannot hope to convince an unbeliever of the existence of this idea. To quote indicative passages from the world’s masterpieces seems to me a rather febrile attempt, an almost political attempt at gaining support. Let it suffice to say that this is what I have gleaned from life and from all great works to which I have been exposed: Live what you are.

Progressing then from this relative certitude, we are taken by Krishna through many paths all of which lead to Rome. The prevailing, almost ominous exhortation, however, is still “Stand up, Arjuna, and fight.” Though many ways are presented, it becomes clear that for Arjuna there is but one. “Better is one’s own duty, although imperfect, than that of another well performed.” And Arjuna’s duty is to kill his kin. By what decree is this Arjuna’s duty? By his own nature, we are told. And his own nature is part of God. “Thou pervades all, therefore Thou art All.” Now we are trapped in a metaphysical bog if we remain in the realm of thought. The exit comes in *experiencing the Self*, which appears to be the Christian rebirth.

But let me not stray too far from my main conviction: that the Bhagavad-Gita, more than any work with which I am familiar, gives to man his rightful sense of dignity—dignity born of knowing that, feeling that and living that he is part of the all-pervading vitality, the eternal mobility of life. That there is an indestructible vitality and that man is a part of this is nowhere clearer than in this work, and that to be cognizant of this reality is to be, far from the doleful picture painted by pseudo religions and celluloid philosophies, joyfully, exuberantly alive!

## Fred's Notes

Christian: "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there will be that find it."

Hindu: "Among thousands of men scarce one striveth for perfection; of the successful strivers scarce one knoweth me in essence."

Christian: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Hindu: "Surrendering all action to Me and fixing the mind on the Self, devoid of hope and egoism, and free from the fever of grief, fight, O Arjuna."

Hindu: "A man of perfect wisdom should not unsettle the people of small understanding, who are deluded by the qualities of Nature and are attached to the function of the senses."

Mathnawi: ". . . So far as thou canst, do not set foot in separation."

Hindu: "To work alone thou hast the right, but never to the fruits thereof. Be thou neither actuated by the fruits of action, nor be thou attached to inaction."

Christian: "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

REFLECTIONS ON A PERSIAN IMAGE

by

Fred Tackitt

PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS

February 14, 1966

Herein contained is a long, rather difficult poem of sorts which concerns itself with my reflections on “The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam” as translated by Edward Fitzgerald. To justify the use of poetry where a more expository means of expression might be more desirable, I suppose I should begin by asserting that my own particular idiom is and has always been literature, particularly that branch of literature which calls itself poetry. So then it is a rather simple step to conclude that, if I want to get to the heart of my thought with the least amount of difficulty, I use the means most familiar to me, poetry. The question raised is the following: “Is this means the least difficult for the reader to understand?” My first impulse is to say no, but upon further thought I am bound to conclude yes, because the understanding gained, though perhaps slight, seems to me to be a much deeper one in that a poem, for me at any rate, involves much more of, and is much closer to, the thought of the person writing than is a research paper. Following this line of thought, one easily comes to the conclusion that “truth is subjective,” assuming of course that truth is the goal of our endeavors. Therein you have my basic assumption toward life, that truth is in fact subjective.

Starting from that point, the subjectivity of truth, and given a certain problem, one begins one’s efforts toward approaching the truth of the problem by working inwardly. To move in that direction I have had to limit myself to, first of all, one particular image: that image evoked in many, many readings of “The Rubaiyat” over the past five years, the image of a man caught in time and unable to arrive at a lifestyle whereby he might reconcile himself to his own awareness of the transitory nature of life and the mystery therein encountered—a man who chooses, in effect, to wait out his time by following the line of greatest pleasure as opposed to, teleologically speaking, the line of greatest advantage. And that line, in short, involves a process by which time is forgotten, a process leading to a state of euphoria. In a word, Wine.

Since my first reading of “The Rubaiyat” some five years ago, I have held fairly close to that philosophy, interpreting the symbol Wine to mean any activity that gave me the greatest pleasure. And since my greatest pains come from an awareness of time, my greatest pleasure would come from an activity that negated that awareness. I have not yet found such an activity. And knowing that I have not has given rise to a reevaluation of that philosophy. And that reevaluation has left me with the peculiar certainty espoused in the concluding postscript of the aforementioned poem. It is, in the Kierkegaardian sense, a movement from the aesthetic to the religious. Where time was something to forget, it now becomes something forgotten and transcended. And that forgetting and transcending has come not from a desire to escape but from a desire to understand, a desire to identify. It is not altogether unlike a certain process in acting where the self is important only as long as it relays with full integrity the spirit of the character as presented by the playwright. And it is at this point that the real wine of experience comes into being, the point at which

Omar's "Wine that clears today of past regrets and future fears" is left behind. For if he had been writing of the kind of wine that I choose to call real experience, he would not have ended on so gloomy a note but would have been jubilant in his praise of that life that turned him down like an empty cup.

I have played the actor in writing this poem. I have taken the image of Omar, accepted it as my own identity and followed that image through to its concluding remarks—and after stepping out of character, so to speak, have added what I believe to be my own particular truth as I have found it in twenty-four years.



I have waited  
I have waited long  
I have waited too long  
For something to come  
From the turbulent darkness  
That is this, my world.  
But where and how if now  
That this something should come?  
A tightness wells in and over me  
And while I say now and yes,  
There is that constriction  
Which says wait, wait, wait.  
There is a better time,  
A better inspiration, a better word.  
And the struggle is a bloody  
Wail of damnation to God,  
To man, a howl amid the filth  
Of a world incomplete and gasping  
In a horrible crawl toward a whole roundness.

Wait, wait, wait.  
There is a better now . . . hereafter.  
Wait, wait, wait.  
Turbulence is only a marker  
Of something in maturity to come.  
Your words now have a youth  
Out of time wrapped about them.  
Think first of what you will say.  
Be careful not to take a wrong step.  
There is loneliness behind an error.

There is separation  
Behind the embarrassment of folly  
And disclosing the soul  
Is a public, damning thing.

Turbulent, twisting, turning  
Time covers my thought, burning  
Out the core of my waiting,  
Casting on the sky  
Of unremembered, unfinished hope  
A canopy of growling smoke,  
Smothering movement  
With its varied smiles  
Of predictability.  
And where in the predictability  
Of my emberless fire  
Lies that something to which  
I might surrender my motionless acts?  
How in this time's unmolding  
When days' unfolding  
Wraps action in folds  
Of thought-turned-selfward  
Can I move toward a hope of motion?

In the hours spent talking,  
We walked worlds of thought  
And somewhere, sometime  
I was left in one world

Beyond yours where words  
Dangled, danced and dropped  
On the hardwood floor  
Of my own incommunicability  
And I am tired, tired, tired,  
Weary of wringing the cloth  
Of my separateness  
And beating it against that floor  
And watching what liquid,  
So, so little liquid,  
That is therefrom wrung  
Dribble, disseminate and dry  
Into nothing,  
And in that weariness  
Still here hangs an emblem,  
A medal for cupidity, and duration,  
On which I carve primitive signs  
That point toward,  
In the final judgment,  
Nothing, nothing, nothing at all.  
And how, in this time  
When we cry out for a something,  
Can I point toward nothing?  
How, when I see around me  
The horrible necessity  
Of commitment, involvement, action;  
How, in the whirling despair  
Of my nothingness,  
The total apartness of being,  
The mad anguish of effort,  
How, in the knowledge  
Of the horror of nothingness,  
In knowing the agony that pointing  
Toward nothingness brings,

Can I point and say yes?  
In the face of immeasurable choice  
How is it possible to say no?  
For the saying of yes to nothingness  
Is the denial of decision,  
And what hangs heavier over this sky  
Than the voiceless imperative  
To decide?

I see the same sky that Omar saw,  
The backdrop of man's necessity,  
And past that sky, the stars  
Chirp and twinkle of the same reality  
Then as now . . . nothing.

I have tried in this time  
To wring an action from my thought,  
To do a something,  
To feel a something,  
To think a something,  
To believe a something,  
To be a something for you  
But all my efforts still  
Point immovably toward nothing.  
But the pointing, you say, is something.  
No. For in the pointing,  
I am quite obliterated.

Though I am as time-bound as you,  
It is out of time that I point.  
The same drivel that wastes  
And spends the better part of your life,

The getting-up of morning,  
The rat-drugged sleep of night,  
The digesting of tasteless food,  
The heat of releasing anger,  
All these circles of heated movement,  
Even the heat of denying movement,  
The lie of betraying a covenant,  
Wraps a winding sheet around my life  
And I choke in the narrowness of meaning.

So I point,  
And I point toward nothing  
With a hollow cry  
That runs the circle round  
Of echoed time  
While timelessness paints  
On the backdrop of man's necessity  
The primitive sign.

My words in time  
Fall like tinkling steps  
In a night of slight rain  
When the dripping of an eave  
Echoes the faraway fall  
Of footsteps passing  
Out of the darkness.

And in this time,  
This rhyme of passing matter,  
I think of when  
My rhyme shall cease  
And in its place a constant line  
Of placelessness devoid of time  
Quivering forever in nothingness.

This world set apart from me,  
How it hovers against my soul  
And presses the brain  
To relinquish its constant strain  
Toward entirety  
For a smaller, discontinuous strain  
That is its lot and empire;  
How it whispers,  
Something flowing, continuity  
Wrapped in dexterous ambiguity,  
Whispering gently in the embers  
Where the sentinel Reason  
Blows his fingers and waters the fire.

In time this sentinel moves  
And guards the locks of the disapproved  
Senses fallen from some higher grace  
Where birth was a laugh in the face

And death a poor phase of the unmoved  
Mover toward ghostly spires  
Seen dimly in this mire  
Of slightly disavowed symbols,  
And he moves in a slowness dying  
For his circles diminishing;  
Crying his certainty to time,  
His extinction goes unnoticed.

And I weep that such a circle-maker  
Of my life weaves a carpet  
Upon which my senses sit penitent.

For in this time, this cluttered womb  
Of shifting pleasures, Reason, though  
It alone brings hand to mouth  
And waters the tomb  
Of forgotten seasons,  
Its eyes grow dim, its speech is muttered  
When the “wholly other” is encountered.

It is clear in this dog-dayed night  
Of purposed action  
That reasoned movement,  
Though inward and outward,  
Is in time a relayed flight  
Between no and no.

And in that flight,  
While time turns me down  
Like an “empty cup” on this “couch of earth,”  
I see the nothingness  
That provokes my frenzied flight  
And I cry out to Reason  
To build a structure,  
A world in which I might  
Talk and believe that my words  
Have meaning and carry with them  
A shade of truth.  
But while I cry out,  
I see that the truth I would lean on  
Lies certainly not in reasoned structure  
But in that nothingness  
From which I fly.

So then the truth  
Is to hang motionless  
Between no and no;  
To know that motion  
Toward either pole,  
Though credible in time  
And worthy of praise,  
Is just small circles  
Of nights and days.



## POSTSCRIPT

But it is not complete,  
For in that motionless truth  
When I mirror the nothingness  
Of the “wholly other,”  
I move in a speed that youth  
With all its passions  
Could never compete.  
I move in the atoms then  
And with my friends,  
The earth and death,  
Hold such kinship  
As birth with breath  
And see the seasons come and go  
With little heed to no and no  
“Where name of sultan and slave is forgot”  
But the up and down  
And left and right  
Of the hanging emblem is not  
And the primitive sign I carve  
Points now as then toward nothing  
But rests as it is as “Love.”

THE CYMBAL CRASHER

by

Fred Tackitt

*Class for which this was written and date written are unknown.*

*Fred received an A for the paper.*

“Do you know what she wanted me to do?” Owen asked. “Do you know what she wanted me to do? She wanted—get this now, you won’t believe it—she wanted me to be a, she actually wanted me to be a Mormon. Yes! For four years, just four years. Then if I found out I didn’t particularly care for her religion, I could go back to whatever belief I had had before. Can you imagine it? Can you actually imagine it? For four years. You know, just a little open-minded experiment. I can’t believe it. And the crazy part of the whole stupid business was that, ooh, I can’t believe I was real then, I actually considered it. Yes! Don’t laugh. I actually thought she was being considerate. You know, what the hell is four years. Hell, anyone can spare just four years of their life. Sure! I mean, you know, for a favor, a little favor, you just plunk four years down on the counter and later, later, if you find out that you’ve made a bad deal all you have to do is to ask for a refund and blapp there’s your four years given back to you. Jesus! Tell me, Jerry, tell me if I wasn’t an ass then?”

"Well, I wouldn't exactly say that that was the most reasonable request she could have—"

“And another thing. She used to send me these reports from—oh, I don’t know what the hell, reports from, oh hell, they were written by psychoanalysts for these different conferences. You know what I’m talking about. You know, pamphlets or something to explain whatever the hell they were researching. Anyway, there was this one that dealt with letting people know what you are, self-disclosure. And in it she had these different places underlined with bright red pencil marks. Very subtle hints. And one of them, let me see if I can remember it. It said something like ‘And the person who can’t disclose himself to another significant human being seldom has a sincere relationship with anyone.’ Or something like that. The gist of her underlining was clear enough. The fact was, for her anyway, that I was much too silent. That I should open up myself to her. You know, talk to her. Tell her my fears and hopes and all the ridiculous rot that goes into those first-encounter conversations. But the truth was that I didn’t feel like talking to her. I mean, sure, I was probably much too quiet. I hardly ever opened my mouth. Hell, every time I did she would always counter with some very motherly advice. She was five years older than I in the first place and she figured that those five years gave her some kind of great insight into my soul. I mean, hell, she was undoubtedly right as far as complaining about my talking to her. I feel like a bastard sometimes just thinking about the way she must have felt. I mean, we would drive around, she would drive around, I didn’t have a car or license, and she would talk for hours. Not a steady flow or anything like that, just spotty sort of talk. Like she was trying to find some topic of conversation that might interest me. And all the time I would be grunting yeses and noes and smoking cigarettes and watching cars go by and not paying any attention to her. But the truth was, Jerry, I really had nothing to say to her. I always felt that I was along for the ride and that she was baiting me into some kind of soul-searching confidence or something.

Christ! I never could relax around her. I always felt like I had been, how can I say it? I always felt like, like I was a sinner. Yes! That's it. A sinner. I felt dirty, you know. Like I was in the presence of a saint or something. But the fact was that she was a hell of a lot dirtier than I was. I mean of course not in the physical sense of the word but dirty in the, uh, well, I really don't know how to say it. She made me feel dirty not because she was saintly and pure or anything like that but because she was giving me this pitch about God and religion and she was playing the pious role and doing whatever anyone asked of her and giving the proverbial shirt off her back to you but all the time there was this feeling that somewhere deep in her, um, deep inside her, she was all twisted around and wasn't really hep to what was going on around her on the outside. Jesus, it's hard to say. I was a bastard, yes, hell, I'll admit that right now. I had done nothing but whore around. That's really not the truth. I mean, I don't want you to think that I was romping around the bedrooms of countless wives and widows and playing the stud. I wasn't, man. I was being miserable as hell. They, the women, were chasing me. Can you imagine? I'm no great shakes and I can't play the word game worth a damn with women, yet I was actually running from them. It must have been my deep understanding and my sympathetic nature. HA! Anyway, when I was around her I felt as though I needed to get clean. You know, make a clean sweep of my life and start over. That's what had me fooled. I thought I felt that way because of her good influence and a certain love I had for her. And, thinking that way, I asked her to marry me. Yes! I really did." He paused long enough to light a cigarette. "Jesus, this is really a good view from here, you know. You can see all the way to the river."

"Yes," mumbled Jerry. They were sitting on a porch of an old cabin that had once been used by Owen's uncle. It now served as a refuge for hunters caught in a storm or wishing to spend the night in eastern Kentucky hills. Jerry and Owen had come on a weekend visit from Ohio. The object had been squirrels, but the rain had quickly changed their minds and for the most part they had spent their time on the old porch swing talking. This particular afternoon had belonged to Owen. It had been his turn to relate whatever experience he cared to. He had chosen as his topic a relationship he had had several years previously with a woman five years his senior.

"Well, anyway," Owen continued, "we got engaged. Not formally with a ring and all, but the understanding that in a month or two we would get married. I was out of my mind. It took me about a month and a half to get hep to my own act. It was the craziest thing I have ever done. I didn't love the girl. In fact, after I got to know her, I couldn't stand her goodness, or what I had thought was her goodness. What it really was, I think, was some kind of weird need to believe she was doing and saying the right thing. I don't know. She pestered me. Not openly but very subtly. She was always talking about what was good and the right thing

to do. I mean it was her own kind of private kick. She was religious I guess, but God! was she dull. She seemed to be always afraid of breaking some sacred covenant she had made with God. You know, like she had signed her name in blood to a contract. And, get this, this really bugged me—I went to church with her one Sunday afternoon. It was right after we had—No, by God it wasn't. We didn't make it all the way until after that church scene. We had tried but she had been nervous as hell and I hadn't really wanted to anyway. In fact, I never really enjoyed having sex with her. We only did it three times I think and every time I felt as though I was being used. And I hated myself for feeling that way. I mean, I couldn't come to believe that she, being of such pure motives, could in any possible way contrive to use anyone. I was way off base then." He dragged on his cigarette and went on. "We went to church and when they passed the thing with the bread and water on it, they don't use wine or grape juice, she didn't even let me touch it. Yes! She reached across me, I was sitting next to the aisle, and took it before I could raise my hand. And then she wouldn't take any herself because she felt she was defiled and wasn't fit to drink the water or eat the little slice of Holsum bread. I couldn't believe how hung up on symbols she was. I tried to explain to her that symbols were not alive, that by touching a pitcher of water she would not incur the wrath of some three-headed God. I guess I'm exaggerating a little but she was definitely hung up on symbols. I think that's what really bugged me the most. I had just gotten away from a relationship with Barbara that had been so saturated with symbols that when I got a clear look at what was happening between Louise and me, I almost cracked up. Well, no, I didn't get that far removed. I guess I came closer to vomiting than to going nuts." He took one last drag on his cigarette, then flipped it out into the wet grass. "When she wrote me and presented me with that bit about joining the church for four years, I really blew up. I had left New York and had gone back home, and the few weeks I had spent away from her had given my head a chance to clear. I told her in a lengthy, venomous letter that she was a child, that she was positively out of her mind if she thought that my taking on the symbol of her church for the impossible length of four years would make me a good Christian and that her pious condemnation of my decadent life—she was in the habit of pointing out my more unseemly side—was just a whole lot of self-righteous bunk and that she was as responsible as I for the loss of her virginity. I raved on for about seven pages and concluded that she was going to have to grow a little if she seriously intended to become a wife. I also said, and I am sorry I did, that I was tired of her motherly concern and that the five years she had over me didn't amount to a damn if all it had brought her was a misconception of living and a childish, whimpering, hypocritical regret for the loss of a strangulating chastity belt. You can imagine what her reaction was. Keep in mind that she had never been hung up on by anyone before. I was the first person of the opposite sex toward which she felt anything like love. I mean in the physical sense. You know, sensual attraction. I don't mean to imply that she was a lesbian. No, it was just that she was so steeped in the symbols of her religion that the reality of the street, so to speak, completely passed over her head. She was real hep to taking care of a house. She could cook. She could work longer hours than I. She could take care of

any domestic problem. She was very practical, very kind, very humble, very resourceful, efficient, dutiful and all the other good biblical virtues. The only trouble was that she wasn't human. I mean, she couldn't understand how she could say one thing and turn around and do the exact opposite. I guess she was just used to an orderly world in which one did exactly as one said one was going to do and what one said one was going to do was to serve God and one forthwith set about that task. And so her reaction to my disgusting display of temper, even though there was a great deal of truth to what I said to her, was a very understanding "Thank you for the constructive criticism." Yes! In a telephone call to Ohio from New York she said that to me. Right in the middle of the conversation she said, "Oh, I got your letter today. It was very well written. Thank you for the constructive criticism." You know, like she had read it, digested it and decided that the Christian thing to do was to look at it from a very objective point and thank the kind man for offering to build her a more provident, Christian personality. I almost barfed on the goddamned phone. You can't imagine how dirty I felt and how utterly baffled. Like I was standing in front of a newly whitewashed wall on which I had just thrown a tremendous blob of snot and the owner had come out to congratulate me on the great style I had exhibited in throwing. And the owner was a monk and he had bowed humbly, wiped the mess off and had gone quietly back into the monastery. And I stood there, in front of her whitewashed wall, and cried. I just couldn't understand."

"What finally happened?" Jerry asked when he saw that Owen was near the end of his afternoon and needed only that pinch to tie things up.

"Oh, I don't know. She came to see me on Labor Day weekend and we talked and decided to see what would happen. What happened was that about a week after she left I wrote her a long confessional apologizing for the way I had treated her and more or less told her that it was impossible for us to go on believing that we could get married. I thanked her for helping me to understand myself and told her to take care of herself and be happy. I haven't heard from her or seen her since."

The rain had stopped. Afternoon was now evening and a stillness was settling in the hollow below them. They sat and looked into the coming darkness.

THE SICKNESS UNTO FAILURE:

AN APOLOGY FOR SUBJECTIVITY

by

Fred Tackitt

HISTORY AND THOUGHT OF CHRISTIANITY

May 23, 1966

I have for some months debated whether or not to follow my original impulse and submit the following apology. After much consideration I find that the conviction which prompted my writing is not to be shaken. At the expense of scholarly achievement, I must submit what I have found to be true for me in relation to and as a result of studying Kierkegaard.

I hope you will not think me too brash and insolent a young man by pursuing this course. I really cannot do otherwise. Perhaps I should quote Luther at this point and say, "I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me, Amen."

I do honestly believe what I have written. If I have failed in grasping the History part of your course you may take consolation that I have at least approached in my own small way the Thought of Christianity's psychopathic saint. And for one who suffers a decided inclination toward atheism, that is no small achievement.

At any rate, herein contained is an indication of the direction my thought is taking in relation to Søren Kierkegaard.

Perhaps you have wondered why I have taken so long in submitting this paper. It is after all just another term paper and certainly not so valuable an investigation to warrant the expenditure of so many months. It is perhaps due to the slowness of my intellect or the extreme laxity of my Southern nature that I have been unable to offer any indication of progress in my study. I choose rather to believe that that which has prevented me from offering a paper at the designated time is not the above forces but the subject of the paper itself. I am sure that you are quite aware of the difficulty encountered in approaching an understanding of Kierkegaard. Think then how difficult it is for one who lacks experience in the scholastic arena. Couple that inexperience with a proclivity to subjectivity and reflection and you begin to visualize the obstacles I face. It is as though one must first act out a thought in order to understand it. Imagine the kind of acting required by Kierkegaardian thoughts!

The truth of the matter is that I cannot write a term paper on Kierkegaard. I have been acquainted with some of his thoughts for at least five years. I have experienced some of the degrees of despair of which he writes. I have glimpsed the reality of his anguish. I have seen myself falter and give way to "the despair at willing despairingly to be oneself." I can see, sometimes with surprising lucidity, the basis of his division of experience into the levels of the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. I can think, feel and believe many of the things he writes but for the life of me I cannot communicate these things. Nor can I objectively draw a historical picture of Kierkegaard and place him in a particular slot so as to understand him in relation to those thinkers and believers in history comparable to him. I'm not sure that Kierkegaard can be understood by any effort of the intellect. I believe that an understanding of him must come from an actual experience with the concepts he posits, an experience involving much more than



just the intellect. And since a term paper evidently, at least I have been taught this, must be part and parcel of an objective temperament, there is really very little I can do. And since, in my experience, term papers are the most angelically dull pieces of writing, I should think it rather inconsiderate of me to add to what must be a tedious job on your part: reading and grading them.

Perhaps the difficulty lies in my concept of learning. I very much agree with this unidentified adage: "The object of education is not to know, but to live." I do not believe that the process of learning can be judged so easily as the writing of a term paper presupposes. Something is learned when it changes the way a person thinks, feels and believes and manifests this change in the person's acts. You cannot possibly know whether or not I have learned anything from my study of Kierkegaard simply by my submitting a term paper. Indeed, if I have learned anything from my study, then I must conclude that submitting a term paper with the aim of acquiring a suitable grade which would help me acquire a degree which would help me acquire more money which would help me live better aesthetically, would be an act against my belief that an act, if it cannot be done on the religious level, must be done on the ethical but never on the aesthetical alone. Such an act would indicate that I have learned nothing from my study of Kierkegaard. For what would grate more viciously against a Kierkegaardian nerve than an attempt to prove objectively (by means of a term paper) that which is subjective (learning)? Such an attempt seems analogous to proving the rationality of faith or the existence of God by means of the intellect.

And what, after all, is judged when a professor assigns a grade to a term paper? Nothing more than the student's ability to use his own language. For if the student can communicate in a clear and coherent idiom what he has learned, then he is assured of a just opinion from the professor. (It is inconceivable that a professor could be unjust if he understood clearly what the student was talking about.) But what happens if the student lacks sufficient eloquence to communicate? He is judged as a poor student and is told that his rate of learning is subnormal. And what of the student who possesses the eloquence but lacks the desire to learn? Can he not, very easily, persuade the professor, by virtue of his speech, that he has progressed in his study at a rate that deserves the highest regard when in fact he has not progressed at all? Seen in this light the term paper, far from being an indication of a student's progress in learning, simply becomes a means by which the student's verbal persuasion procures for him a high opinion by which he gains aesthetically.

In the final analysis all I can say is that I have learned. I have been profoundly affected by Kierkegaard. Whether or not you believe that I have learned sufficiently to earn a high opinion is entirely up to you. I cannot spend my time or verbal ability in persuading you that I have. There are more important things to do and think about.

**PHILOSOPHER**

Fred had strong beliefs about what he hoped the experience of life could be. Much of Fred’s writing was undated; even so, during the final four years of his existence covered here, an evolution in his thinking is clearly evident. Following are examples of his perspectives and personal philosophy, at some point during those years.

### **Sensitivity**

“The world is peopled with bipeds equipped with the sensitivity of a patch of carrots.”

### **Mindfulness**

“We must always be aware of the instant. Be aware of it and take charge of it. To be rid of something, its presence must be known. Be ever watchful. You will confront yourself at any instant.”

### **Creativity**

“Assumption: Man is a creative being. Whether or not the result of that creation is, in fact, destruction is irrelevant. He does create out of his own resources. The extent of his developmental creativity is governed by his freedom of choice, conscious choice. If he has the freedom of choice, the resources for creativity and an intellect to guide his form of productivity and does not create, he risks the endless consequences of being ‘neurotic.’”

### **Education and Religion**

“It is my belief that the human race shall survive as a result of intensified education. It is also my belief that the human race would have perished long ago if religion had been more intensified. If the Crusaders had believed more fervently they would have wiped out several civilizations. If the Hindus had believed more fervently they would not have endured one generation. If the various Inquisitors had possessed more conviction in their religion—what a glorious, divine holocaust they might have produced. History is pregnant with the accomplishments of religion. Our races have survived not because of religion but in spite of it!”

### **Christianity**

“It is not that I find fault with the Christian doctrine, quite the contrary. I simply reserve the right to interpret that doctrine in the light of my own discoveries, my own experience, my own life. Just as you reserve the right to believe as your church dictates, I reserve the right to believe as my total life dictates.”

## Love

“Love is not a covenant of misery under which two people are free to commit emotional atrocities.”

“The only valid ‘thing’ I believe that I have in recognizable quantities is love.”

“Love is the death of human logic.”

“Love does not come from need; need comes from love.”

## Marriage

“Marriages are reputed to be holy, at least I feel that they should be. Marriage is the union of two people—idealistically so that each comes to know the other as themselves. To introduce a possibility of resistance to this union would, I believe, be contrary to the concept of universal unity, to which I wish to adhere.”

“The purpose of marriage is fortification of individual purposes.”

## Anger

“As a motivational factor, anger often serves as a murderer to excess verbiage, but when given full reign in words, anger picks those best suited to destroy the opposition and never those best suited for clarification.”

## Violence

“My topic is war, or rather, violence. Everyone nowadays speaks of the Viet Nam War, but few if any come to grips with the basic fundamentals that produce such wars. It is my belief that there is in the basic psychology of man a core of violence that cannot be removed without removing much of what man is. It is what Nietzsche called the Will to Power. This will may easily be seen in the routine affairs of all of us, in our desire for better grades, better clothes, better company, better automobiles—even the desire to understand can be seen as a desire to have power over ignorance. And this desire for power is a good thing, for without it civilization would have become extinct a million years ago. It is a good thing but it is very sad that a good thing—the will to power—cannot be kept from growing into a terrible evil—the will to war—except by complete destruction either of the will or of man as a species. Perhaps the Viet Nam War will lead to man’s salvation—total destruction.”

### **Killing**

“I cannot believe that I am capable of defending God—how preposterous! And defending him by killing other equally incapable mortals! If that is the manifestation of ‘Christ coming into my life’ then I prefer to remain a bearded, unbathed protester rather than a convert to the insanity that still insists upon carrying the cross against the ‘heathen Saracen.’”

### **Strong Men**

“Women seem to think that, for men, strength means objectivity, that a strong man is one who surveys life from his solitary post, protects his loved ones all the while but ever remains at his post—alone.”

## Advice to a Younger Brother

“I am several term papers behind and there seems to be no way in which I might move myself to do the required work. Procrastination is an ugly, cowardly, vicious cycle in which I hide. How stupidly wasteful. Somehow you must learn to discipline yourself while you still have time left in the service. That is the greatest aid you will ever give yourself. What is more bitter to a person than knowing that he has wasted his time and therefore his life and his death? Believe me, if I could relive those two years I spent in the service with just a little of what I now know, I would, above all, try to instill in myself some sort of discipline. It is unbearable to feel that one’s life is being wasted over something so trivial, so tragically stupid as lack of discipline. ‘All of religion is simply a way by which man attempts to deal with time.’ So sayeth my religion professor, and it is probably true.

“Above all, teach yourself to use your time and not simply to abuse it like most of us do. All the stupid neuroses that eat away at one’s personality can be avoided if one adjusts himself to time, adjusts to, masters and then forgets time altogether. To me that is the only way to really live: to be aware of one’s slavery to time, to use that slavery in the most creative way and by that very creativity, transcend and forget time, to link oneself with eternity. If it takes a Herculean effort, discipline yourself. Learn to concentrate on one thing. Learn to sharpen your faculty of recall. Broaden your vocabulary. Read—and I don’t mean textbooks. Read Philosophy, Poetry, Theology, Drama (though Drama can no more be read than can a fire or a baseball game be read). Write—poetry, letters, short stories, diaries. Write anything but write. Learn to communicate. That alone can save you an inestimable amount of pain and work.

“If you seriously plan to go to college then I suggest you start your collection of books now. Make an outline of the major fields of study, i.e., Art, Biology, Philosophy, Music, and start reading systematically in these fields. Probably the most important aid to you—and to anyone in any position in life—is **CURIOSITY**. The difference between the genius and the mediocre man is not in the ability to know but in the ability to wonder why. Seek always to find out why! ‘The unexamined life is not worth living,’ said Socrates.

“Before I die—I have a weird feeling that it may be soon—let me exhort you not to do the following: Do not look for happiness. Do not look for pleasure. Do not look for any kind of wealth. Do not deceive yourself into believing that you can possess something. Do not cherish life so much that you come to fear it. Do not run from yourself.

“Do only this: look for the truth; the truth of your feelings; the truth of your thoughts; the truth of your beliefs; the truth of your actions. Through these truths you may come to glimpse the truth of living—faith, which after all, is what I am lamenting the loss of.

“To most of us faith is simply a word on which we hang our ‘cynical commonplaces.’ When you come to realize—when you come face to face with the reality of life without faith—when you realize the immeasurable darkness in which you live, in which all men live, then the loss of that empty word is unspeakable horror. It is the loneliness of a man whose God has forsaken him. It is the deepest, deepest, deepest despair. Do not do as I have done. ‘Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light.’ (Dylan Thomas)”

Love,

Fred

March 29, 1966

# **BROTHER and SON**





### The Seven Tackitt Brothers

Front row (seated, l to r)	Brother	Year born	Year died	Age at Death
	Quentin	1937	1996	59 years
	Ben	1935	2013	77 years
	Charles	1928	1977	48 years
	Maurice	1925	2013	88 years
Back row (standing, l to r)				
	Larry	1940		
	Fred	1942	1966	24 years
	Dan	1945		

### Parents

	Year born	Year died	Year married	Age at Death
Robert L. Tackitt	1902	1988	1922	86 years
Mellie Little Tackitt	1907	1998	1922	90 years

## The Tackitt Family

### Tackitt/Tackett

Louis Tacquett was a Huguenot whose family was persecuted over religious differences with the French Catholic government, and the Tacquetts migrated to England in the 1600s. In 1700, King George gave Tacquett, whose name had been changed by the British to Tackett, a land grant for a parcel in Virginia. According to the most recent U.S. Census, more Tackitts and Tacketts live in Kentucky than in any other state. "Tackett" is the more common spelling of the surname.

Fred's family lived in Wales, Kentucky, where six of the seven brothers were born. Fred was six weeks old when the family moved to northeastern Indiana at the suggestion of Fred's father's sister who thought there might be farm work there.

Fred began his acting "career" at South Whitley High School where he played leads in school productions. He was known as an excellent student as well as someone who marched to a different drummer. For a time he wore a beret to school, and his mind was always at work creating, constantly creating. In either his junior or senior year of high school, the high school administration invited the community to a night of student skits and comedy. There was scaffolding in the cafeteria from which lights were hung to give exactly the right atmosphere. Fred took the microphone on stage and began crooning a Frank Sinatra hit, "Blue Moon." Three of his best buddies were hidden in the dark on top of the scaffolding. After Fred finished the first line or two and had the audience mesmerized, the three scaffolding perchers emitted guffaws of raucous laughter. Fred stopped singing long enough to glare up at the scaffolding; then he began to sing again. The same thing happened a couple more times. As Fred stopped singing the third time, he pulled a pistol loaded with blanks out of his pocket, aimed it in the direction of the guys on the scaffolding, and shot off a couple of rounds. That was the cue for the three to throw a dummy off the scaffolding into the crowd below. At first there was complete silence until the audience realized they had been had and exploded in laughter.

Six of the seven Tackitt brothers joined the service following high school graduation. Fred enlisted in the Navy in 1960 and became a Navy Corpsman stationed in Bethesda, Maryland. He was given a medical discharge after two years.

In 1964, Fred enrolled at Manchester College, where he began to discover who he was. From his pen he wrote: "In short the scent in the wind has a tinge of newness in its ticklings. The phenomenon of change on the Manchester campus will not stop at the social level but will, I believe, creep into the more vital areas of faith and learning in the form of enlightened attitudes . . . so that there will gradually come into being a feeling of collective effort toward truth . . .

“Too many young people seem to think they have to do something for or to the world as quickly as they can. They conduct themselves like squirrels in revolving cages. What they don’t realize is that the world, whatever that world may symbolize for them, is in no hurry to be impressed by them and seldom, if ever, pays one little bit of attention to their hurried hysterics. I say that not as an exhortation to you but simply as an observation on the antics of most of the students at Manchester.

“Let’s face it. I am very happy at Manchester College. I have very good friends. I have the opportunity to learn and create.”

# **AFTERWORD**

Manchester College, now Manchester University, has had many outstanding alumni with long lives and important, productive, memorable careers. Fred Tackitt was unusual in that, because of his early death, his finest work was while he was yet a student.

An informal Fred Tackit Fan Club was organized in late 2021 by three Manchester College graduates who lived in North Manchester and were students at the college in the mid-1960s when Fred was there too. During his three years at Manchester, Fred's presence, acting, writings, and thinking had a great impact on the campus and in the surrounding community. An Internet search revealed two surviving Tackitt brothers, Larry and Dan, both of whom had tried for decades to find a way to share Fred's large volume of writing. Delighted to find interest in honoring Fred, they offered their full support and loaned Fred's original writings spanning roughly 1962-1966. Larry and Dan also shared their memories and impressions of what Fred was like as a person: a true anomaly in their family or in any family, with his multiple extraordinary talents and his solitary penchants, deep reflections, avid reading, penetrating thoughts, and poignant ways of expression in personal journals and in writing to share with others. Since Fred had not released most of his writing for publication, great care was given to respecting confidentiality of his extensive private journaling on the one hand, and to discerning what excerpts or other writings—academic, reflective, or creative—might be most suitable for publication on the other.

This archive serves several purposes: (1) to publish the best of Fred's philosophical writing, fiction, and poetry for others who may find them moving, thought-provoking or otherwise worthy, (2) to honor Fred's remarkable acting for those who were profoundly affected by it, (3) to memorialize Fred as an individual for family members and others who knew him personally, and (4) to reflect and celebrate the interactive and reflective college community that nurtured his growth, stimulated his thinking, and facilitated his creativity.

## SELECTED QUOTES

About his acting: "I had to let you know what a tremendous performance you gave. I am more certain than ever you will one day be a well-known and respected actor. Someday I'll be able to say, 'I know him; he's Fred Tackitt of Luther, Indiana.'" (from letter to Fred after *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*)

About his personal sharing: "My right to write comes from your letting us begin to know you—perhaps because you're the only one among us brave enough to do so." (note from a fellow student)

From his poetry: ". . . Give me life enough/To know that only/I can say yes or no/To this or any other world." (from the poem *Secret World*)

From his philosophical reflection: “. . . gives to man his rightful sense of dignity—dignity born of knowing that, feeling that and living that he is part of the all-pervading vitality, the eternal mobility of life. That there is an indestructible vitality and that man is a part of this is nowhere clearer than in this work, and that to be cognizant of this reality is to be, far from the doleful picture painted by pseudo religions and celluloid philosophies, joyfully, exuberantly alive!” (from a paper on the Bhagavad-Gita)

About his experience at Manchester College: “. . . so that there will gradually come into being a feeling of collective effort toward truth . . . Let’s face it. I am very happy at Manchester College. I have very good friends. I have the opportunity to learn and create.”

From the founders of the Fred Tackitt Fan Club: Fifty-six years after his death, Fred has afforded three old friends the opportunity to reunite through weekly Zoom calls to plan and execute this offering for publication. We extend our sincere thanks to Manchester University for technical help and for hosting a Fred Tackitt section on their website. Thank you also to Fred’s friends and fellow students for contributing their recollections of Fred. Most of all, thanks to Dan and Larry Tackitt for their faithful support and encouragement as we worked through this rewarding project.

David Deardorff, MC class of 1970

Susan (Storer) Ramírez, MC class of 1970  
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Karl Schrock, MC class of 1975