

Professor Wolford Discusses New Book

The reporter enters Professor Chet Wolford's office, only one among the countless thousands who go there each day. Many go seeking wisdom, advice, or counsel for their personal affairs. Others for a five-spot to secure a six-pack of beer. This reporter went seeking for the reasons behind Professor Wolford's new book.

Chet Wolford is at his desk as I enter, sweat dripping off his brow, sizzling on the old-fashioned radiator in front of him. My first question concerns how he got the idea to write the book in the first place.

"I was fishing on the lean, green banks of the Cuyahoga one morning, when I saw a book of matches floating down the stream," Wolford says, his eyes rolling back in their sockets, as if to visualize a greener past, a childhood lost in the vast plains of Ohio.

"I plucked the matchbook from the stream, and reading the printed message inside, I was seized by a flashing epiphany," he says. "Right before me was the opportunity - for \$2.98 - to write a magnus opus in 10 days, or by evenings and over weekends, in only 8½ years. So I did it."

Q: And your book is the result?

A: No, because I hooked an 8½-lb. catfish. The matchbook dropped in the stream again, resulting in an inevitable explosion, enabling me to eat the boiled catfish on the spot.

Q: So you wrote the book later?

A: No, I wrote it earlier.

Q: Well, I suppose I ought to ask you what your book is about.

A: Go ahead.

Q: What's your book about?

A: As nearly as I can remember, it's about Stephen Crane.

Q: An interesting name. How did he get it?

A: That's not easy, but after much research, I concluded that he spent a lot of time on sand hills hearing all sorts of messages from the sea and shouting until he was blue in the face. In fact, he did that so much that he became quite a martyr to it.

Q: Did that influence the kind of books Crane wrote?

A: No.

Q: Oh, well, what did influence Crane?

A: Good beer and some of the classical Greek writers like Eric Segal, Ron Larson and Bob Hostetler, the famous writers of such Broadway hits as "The Calculating Bag Lady" and "Mathematics of the World Unite!" Seriously, though, Ernest Hemingway was a significant influence.

Q: I thought Hemingway came after Crane. Wasn't Hemingway born in 1898 and didn't Crane die in 1900?

A: Quite true, but Ezra Pound, another influence on Crane, once said that "Poets are the antennae of the race." It's my belief that Crane was one of these, so incredibly precocious that "The Red Badge of Courage", published in 1895, was directly influenced by "A Farewell to Arms", first published in 1929. I do my best, and I think successfully, to document Hemingway's influence on Crane in my book. Not to blow my own horn, but my book is the first, to my knowledge, to make extensive use for literary criticism of psychic research.

Q: Well, could you predict for our readers about how much money you expect to make from your book?

A: Depends.

Q: Depends on what?

A: Depends on the film rights,

how much of a percentage of the profits my agent can get for me, free commuter service to Burbank, that sort of thing.

Q: What do you ex ...

A: And then, of course, when the movie's done making money, the publisher's overstocks can be sold to woodstove companies for marketing as fire starters. Things used to be good for bird cage bottoms, but the cost of fertilizers and thus birdfeed has resulted in the bottom dropping out of that market.

Q: Any other ideas?

A: Oh, yes. There's lots more to it than just the money and the beach house in Malibu that I'll probably get as a perk. For example, the aesthetics of casting has always interested me. Right now, I'm leaning toward Sally Field as a former labor organizer who becomes a bubbling and ever-cheerful typist suffering from cataracts. You know, a sort of Rosemary Woods' type. And then, either Nancy Culp or Mean Joe Green would be superb as the acerbic, recalcitrant, pale-faced Research Assistant who moonlights as a cocktail waitress. John Houseman as the publisher and editor, John Lille as THE DEAN, Bryant Gumball as the jealous, liver-gnawing colleague who resents the book's success, and either Robert Redford or Chief Dan George as me. But I'm probably jumping the gun a little bit here. Some of these people will be playing in the Andy Williams San Diego Open at Torre Pines when the film is being shot.

Q: Clearly, you have thought much about the book's potential after publication. Have you also been thinking about a sequel?

A: As a matter of fact, I have been. Stephen Crane's brother Hart, you know, was something of a genius in his own right; after all, he spent a lot of time brooding on bridges, and my research has shown that a lot of geniuses who live short lives brood on bridges. In fact, that's a primary criterion for both.

Q: Both what?

A: Being a genius and living a short life. The problem with a book about Hart, however, would be its length. I'd have to pad it a lot, rather like a Freshman who stretches a hundred words of information into a five hundred word essay. Anyway, Hart got off the track rather young and never really got himself back together after that.

Q: What happened?

A: He stepped off the back of a moving train.

Q: That's a shame.

A: Quite.

Q: Do you expect your book - the one on Stephen Crane - to have any impact on the literary world?

A: Nothing has an impact on the literary world except the price of food stamps. On the other hand, it should have a modest effect on the military-industrial complex.

Q: How so?

A: Simplify things a bit. Imagine the result, for example, of the book's lyric resonance being visited upon SAC majors sitting around their missile silos tapping their toes and fingers near all those buttons.

Q: Could have a resounding effect. What first interested you in Crane?

A: That's a long story; so I can only tell part of it. It all started when I was about eight or nine, or maybe I was ten. No. Now I remember. I was twenty-three. Anyway, when I was twenty-three, my parents gave me one for Christmas ... But I don't want

Clubs Clobber Cudas 56-16, Buckeyes Blind Walleyes 86-2, Badgers Bash Babies 34-0

The Behrend Clubs remain on the top-most branch of the NIAA tree-fencing league after a splintering 56-16 victory over the short-sticked Cambridge Cudas this past weekend. Behrend clobbered their way to a 42-4 halftime lead, smashing their opponents as if they wielded balsa wood against a buzz saw. Chip Bark was Club leader with 13 stabs, while Pete Maus fought a classic rear-guard battle, scoring 9 stabs against a hemophiliac who was eventually sidelined with a severe plasma disorder.

"We used oak this time," boasted Coach Brute Simmons. "We kept to a basic "mob" strategy, pounding their defenders whenever one would stray, looking for water. The boys showed good stickmanship and stumped the Cudas whenever they raised a white flag."

Elsewhere in the league, the Bethel Buckeyes jabbed and pok-

ed their way to an eye-opening 86-2 finish over the myopic Wootton Walleyes. Buckeye strategy was gouge and maim as they tore apart the hapless Walleyes, something for the Clubs to consider before next week's match. Buckeye Coach Red Wranglesore promised his team will "come out swinging" as the Clubs and them tear the turf at Bethel Coliseum. The Buckeyes are a half-game behind the Clubs, thirsting for revenge after a blistering 62-61 loss last year at Behrend.

Lashed, but not least, the Bradford Babies took it on the chin in a 24-0 spanking against the Boomtown Badgers. The Badgers clawed their way to this non-conference victory by soaking their stocks in poison beetle dung. The Babies have filed a protest, asking that the rematch include crossbow competition.

poor little rich kid runs away from home to live on a houseboat at a pond in New England only to discover that it's already occupied by a very large white whale. He ends up in Death Valley shouting "The Horror! The Horror!" to Francis Ford Coppola because he (the kid) is handcuffed to the whale and left the key in his other pants.

Q: I thought the white whale was from "Moby Dick."

A: That's my second favorite work of Crane's.

Q: Why?

A: Two reasons. First, Crane didn't write any other good yarns.

Q: What's the second?

A: I like to fish. And "Moby Dick" is much longer than "The Pennsylvania Angler" and only slightly less interesting.

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