



EVERETT RUESS

YOUTH IS FOR ADVENTURE

By JEAN BAKER

This one has done the thing that all men dream
When youth flows through the veins in liquid fire:
Left numbered highways, marked by wheel and tire,
For luring trails, followed his own star's gleam,
Surely as birds fly southward. So, 'the scheme
Of things remolded to his heart's desire,'
He walked with beauty to the singing lyre
Of wind in pine trees by a friendly stream,
Alone, with loveliness, his own sweet will
His only guide for that slow timeless while
Of perfect union with the soul of things.
If it is ended now, his blithe voice still,
He has had more of life than those who file
In lockstep, driven, through dull scores of Springs.

THE EVERETT RUESS POETRY AWARDS

To Los Angeles High School Students
1937-38 and 1938-39

A "kit of tools" for creative craftsmen in verse-writing will be given each of the four semesters of 1937-38 and 1938-39. These awards will be made, each semester, to the two students then attending "L.A. H. S." who submit the best original poems of not over thirty lines on themes of their own choice. This "kit of tools" will consist of approximately five dollars worth of books from the list below, or similar volumes. "Honorable mention" may be given to one or more additional poems.

Poems are to be delivered to the Principal of the Los Angeles High School for the Judges on or before the following dates: January 3, 1938, June 1, 1938, January 3, 1939 and June 1, 1939. They must be unsigned and preferably typed. Poems are to be accompanied by a sealed envelope containing the author's name and home room. A given person may win an award of books but once.

Judges for the Awards on each occasion shall be first, a person named by the Principal of the Los Angeles High School, second, the mother of Everett Ruess, herself a verse-writer, and third, a person chosen by these two.

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR AWARDS

List by Mrs. Snow Longley Housh, Teacher of Modern Poetry and Creative Writing in the Los Angeles High School.

The Hollow Reed—Mary J. Wrinn, \$2.00, text book edition.

Creative Youth—Hughes Mearns, \$2.50.

Younger Singers—Nellie B. Sergent, \$2.50.

Thesaurus—Roget, \$1.00, Thomas Arnold, pub.

Rhyming Dictionary of the English Language — J. Walker, \$1.75, Dutton & Co., Revised Edition.

Oxford Book of English Verse — Arthur Quiller-Couch, \$1.49, Blue Ribbon Edition.

Modern British and American Poetry—Untermeyer, \$3.50, College Edition.

Twentieth Century Poetry — Drinkwater, Canby and Benet, \$2.25, Student Edition.

NOTES

Everett Ruess, then fifteen, was a member of Mrs. Snow Longley Housh's creative poetry class of 1929. His mother, Stella Knight Ruess, graduated in Winter '98, his father, Christopher G. Ruess, in Summer '97 from the red brick Los Angeles High School "on the hill." Everett himself graduated from the Hollywood High School in Winter '31, and later for a time attended U.C.L.A.

By nature and application he was an artist and adventurer. He traveled by horse and by burro in Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado during the years 1931, 1932 and 1934. He spent the summers of 1930 and 1934 in Yosemite Park and Sequoia Park and in the High Sierras. As he wandered in the canyons and desert spaces he would sing remembered themes from the great operas and symphonies. By his campfire he often chanted poetry. He read and thought and grew and was developing a philosophy of life.

As a child in New York and Chicago Everett did woodcarving, clay-modeling and sketching. Later he gave himself to painting, photography and blockprinting. He wrote verse, enjoyed keeping a literary diary, expressed himself in essays. In Arizona he learned to brand calves and ride wild broncos. He explored high cliff dwellings, and in the summer of 1934 worked with U. C. archaeologists near Kayenta, Arizona. He was the only white man to be painted by the Hopi Indians that year for their Antelope Dance. He spoke Navajo and chanted Navajo songs,—once with an Indian at the bedside of a sick woman up a desert canyon. As he journeyed, he sold or traded his block-prints and watercolors of the desert, the mountains and the sea. He endured hardship stoically like a good Indian.

Everett set out from Escalante, Utah, November 11, 1934, to explore and paint among the cliff dwellings in southeastern Utah. This is perhaps the most remote, uninhabited and unvisited part of the United States. He did not expect to be able to communicate with his parents or friends for about ten weeks. When no letter came, one searching party after another covered the country. Everett had last been seen by a sheep man on November 19 near where Escalante Creek flows into the bridgeless Colorado River. His two burros were found in Davis Canyon, left in a natural corral as though he had expected to return.

Numerous theories have been offered as to what became of Everett. His Boy Scout camping motto, seems fulfilled: "When I go, I leave no trace." However, he had lived intensely. On November 11, 1934, he wrote to his brother Waldo: "This has been a full rich year. I have left no strange or delightful thing undone that I wanted to do."

* * *

A small insurance policy on Everett's life has been turned into an annuity. As long as either of his parents live, each year or so boys and girls of the southwestern states that Everett traversed will be invited to excel in one or another of the arts that Everett loved. So in his silence he will live on creatively. His parents hope that more fathers and mothers will establish similar living memorials to sons and daughters whose life songs break off after a stanza.

PLEDGE TO THE WIND

Onward from vast uncharted spaces,
Forward through timeless voids,
Into all of us surges and races
The measureless might of the wind.

Strongly sweeping from open plains,
Keen and pure from mountain heights,
Freshly blowing after rains,
It welds itself into our souls.

In the steep silence of thin blue air,
High on a lonely cliff-ledge,
Where the air has a clear, clean rarity,
I give to the wind . . . my pledge:

"By the strength of my arm, by the sight of my eye,
By the skill of my fingers, I swear,
As long as life dwells in me, never will I
Follow any way but the sweeping way of the wind.

"I will feel the wind's buoyance until I die;
I will work with the wind's exhilaration;
I will search for its purity; and never will I
Follow any way but the sweeping way of the wind."

Here in the utter stillness,
High on a lonely cliff-ledge,
Where the air is trembling with lightning,
I have given the wind my pledge.

—1929

MORNING IN LOS ANGELES HARBOR

It is morning, and the ships again are stirring,
Moving slowly from the harbor to the sea;
I can hear a distant tug boat's muffled purring,
As it pulls a silent steamship on toward me.

It is morning, and the fog is slowly lifting
From the misty docks and piers across the bay;
There is peace for me in barges slowly drifting
And the silver stillness of awakening day.

—1929

MY LIFE SHALL BE A LITTLE CURLING WAVE

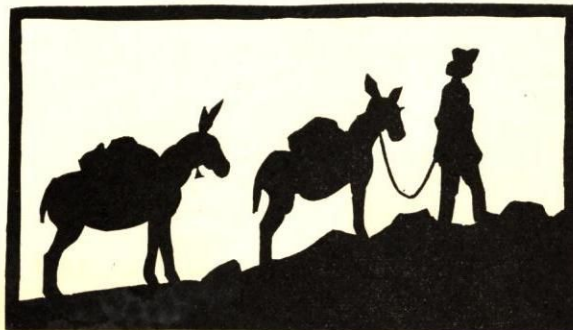
My life shall be a little curling wave,
Gaily racing forth from the great blue sea.
A moment it will sparkle in the sun;
Jewelled and scintillating it will flash,
Then with a little tinkling tune
It will shatter on the cool brown sand
And turn to bubbling, milk white foam.
So, broken, slowly it will retreat,
Leaving the beach a little smoother
For the other waves that come.

—1930

THE INDIAN COUNCIL CAVE

Wandering among the painted rocks one day,
I saw some ancient, moss-grown boulders there,
That leaned together in a friendly way
And formed a cave that might have housed a bear.
But on the high-arched ceiling were designs
And symbols that some Indian had drawn,—
A rising sun, marked out in faint red lines,
A row of running wolves, a deer and fawn.
Bones from forgotten feasts were on the floor,
Picked clean by men who sat around a fire,
Discussing and deciding peace or war,
Or dancing solemnly in gay attire.
The cave is empty now; the paintings fade;
The dim and silent centuries invade.

—Published in "The American Indian"
April, 1929



HAPPY JOURNEYS

(EVERETT'S CHRISTMAS GREETING, 1933)

WILDERNESS SONG

I have been one who loved the wilderness:
Swaggered and softly crept between the mountain
peaks;
I listened long to the sea's brave music;
I sang my songs above the shriek of desert winds.

On canyon trails when warm night winds were
blowing,
Blowing, and sighing gently through the star-tipped
pines,
Musing, I walked behind my placid burro,
While water rushed and broke on pointed rocks
below.

I have known a green sea's heaving; I have loved
Red rocks and twisted trees and cloudless turquoise
skies,
Slow sunny clouds, and red sand blowing.
I have felt the rain and slept behind the waterfall.

In cool sweet grasses I have lain and heard
The ghostly murmur of regretful winds
In aspen glades, where rustling silver leaves
Whisper wild sorrows to the green-gold solitudes.

I have watched the shadowed clouds pile high;
Singing I rode to meet the splendid, shouting storm
And fought its fury till the hidden sun
Foundered in darkness, and the lightning heard my
song.

Say that I starved; that I was lost and weary;
That I was burned and blinded by the desert sun;
Footsore, thirsty, sick with strange diseases;
Lonely and wet and cold, but that I kept my dream!

Always I shall be one who loves the wilderness:
Swaggers and softly creeps between the mountain
peaks;
I shall listen long to the sea's brave music;
I shall sing my song above the shriek of desert winds.

—1933

—Published in L. A. Daily News, May 10, 1935

AFTER 5 DAYS, RETURN TO

YAKIMA, WASH.



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Yakima, Wash.

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