

Balancing the Books

The Face, but the Facts?

By Father John S. Kennedy

Edward Rice has written, and provided the many photographs for, "The Man in the Sycamore Tree," which deals, in Mr. Rice's words, with "the good times and hard life of Thomas Merton" (Doubleday, \$7.95).

Mr. Rice, a free-lance photographer and writer, met Merton when both were students at Columbia University in the 1930s, and evidently kept in touch with him until Merton's death. In a reference to his student days, Mr. Rice speaks of himself as then a Catholic, "sort of." Later he styles himself "a modern skeptic."

He gives us a sketch of Merton's life, some of it drawn from Merton's own writings, such as "The Seven Storey Mountain," some from his association with Merton, some from letters and the observations of others.

What is new to the reader is Mr. Rice's recollections of Merton in the Columbia years and the interval before Merton's entering the Trappist monastery at Gethsemani.

Then came the conversion to Christian conviction, but not immediately to Christian discipline. When finally the latter was accepted, Merton sought acceptance by the Franciscans, was rejected, and turned to the Trappists.

One would hardly expect that Merton would find the Trappist life easy, but at first he knew great happiness. Later came illnesses, criticism of what he regarded as the incorrect application of the Trappist rule, and difficulties with the Trappist censors over his writings.

Eventually Merton was permitted to construct a hermitage on the monastery grounds to live a largely solitary life. He became increasingly interested in oriental religions, especially Buddhism. He was allowed to go to the Far East to consult with experts on the religions of that part of the world, and it was there that he died.

Despite plain evidence to the contrary, Mr. Rice holds that Merton had determined never to return to the monastery, and that he intended to plunge into Buddhist mysticism.

The author, bizarrely, quotes two American mediums who say that Merton came to them after his death. The latter's revelations included one to the effect that Merton is in the Eighth Initiation in Shigatze, Tibet, and, in a previous incarnation, had been a Presbyterian minister in Sweden.

This is a curious and controversial book about Merton, and one cannot help concluding that he would deplore much of it. The photographs, however, are interesting, many of them new and revealing. And say what Mr. Rice will about the unsympathetic treatment of Merton at Gethsemani, even he would have to admit that the extraordinary Merton was not held to the ordinary rule of that house.

The dust wrapper on Edward R. F. Sheehan's "The Governor" (World, \$6.95) is decorated with pictures of a bright red biretta and a sombre black silk hat. It is the latter, presumably, which belongs to the governor.

The fictitious governor in question is Emmett Shannon. His state is Massachusetts. And the biretta signals a prelate known as the archbishop of Massachusetts. He has no other name. But not a few will think that they recognize him.

In the spotlight here are the Irish Catholics, in politics and in the Church. Mr. Sheehan knows quite a bit about the species, none of it very flattering. He also has picked up and, after a bit of cookery, dished out a great deal of gossip. It is not exactly a savory serving.

Courier-Journal

Gallery Displays Jurors Show

Work by Philip Morsberger, painter, and Ronald Hayes Pearson, craftsman in metal, will be presented at the Memorial Art Gallery in the 1970 Jurors Award Show through Feb. 7.

Pearson, whose workshop is on Turk Hill Rd., Perinton, is perhaps best known locally for his silver and gold jewelry pieces sold at Shop One (of which he is a co-owner) and at other shops across the country. The varied collection of Pearson objects in the Gallery show includes jewelry, sculptural pieces in bronze, copper, nickel, silver, and iron, and prototypes of some of his designs for industry.

Philip Morsberger, art professor at Rosary Hill College, taught until last fall at Rochester Institute of Technology. His most recent previous one-man show was last spring at Nazareth College. His work in the Jurors Award Show includes some 40 paintings and a number of prints and drawings.

Nureyev to Dance Here

Rudolf Nureyev, often described as the greatest and most exciting dancer in the world today, will appear in person with the Australian Ballet Company on Tuesday and Wednesday, Feb. 16 and 17, at 8:15 p.m. in the Eastman Theatre.

Nureyev made world headlines in the summer of 1961 when he eluded Russian security men in Le Bourget airport by jumping over a railway to sanctuary with the French police.

He had been on tour with the dancers of Russia's Kirov Ballet, and was awaiting departure for London.

While waiting he learned that he was not to accompany them but was to be sent back to Moscow presumably to be disciplined for "insubordination, nonassimilation, and dangerous individualism." At that instant he decided to seek asylum in Paris. His jump to freedom was front page news throughout the world.

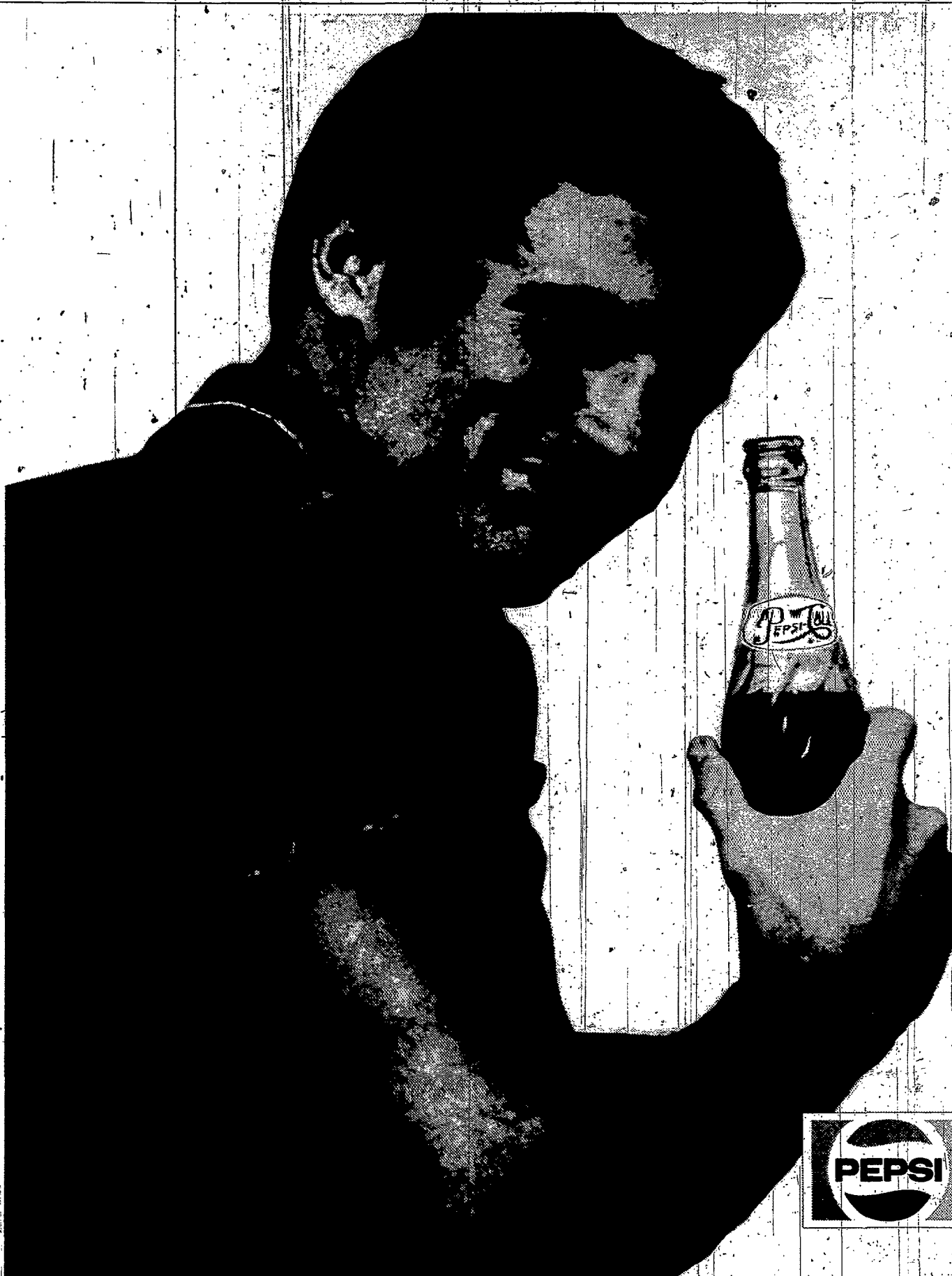
Although this marks the Aus-



NUREYEV

tralian Ballet Company's first tour of the United States, it has already been acclaimed in more than fifty capitals of Europe, Asia and South America.

The Australian Ballet is a "young" company, the average age being 22, with ninety per cent of its 100-member troupe graduates of the ballet's own school. Nevertheless it boasts that its principals have danced with most of the great ballet companies of the world and have international reputations.



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