



ALISTAIR COOKE Photo by Dave Witbeck

Some Alistairisms On American Religion

By JOHN DASH

One day, we hope, the rich language of Alistair Cooke will accompany a television program pitting two of his favorite people in American history: H. L. Mencken with his "blatant atheism" and Father Junipero Serra, "the classic example of the men who walked the great arc of the West, whose sole interest was the conversion of the Indian, whose only aim was to live out their Faith in the fearful innocence of its Founder."

Cooke, who professes agnosticism, ("yet should I become religious, I would become Catholic.") has already prepared such a segment; but, because of one technical difficulty or another, it has never been aired.

The Britain-born American citizen was in Rochester last week promoting his book, *America*, a hefty and handsome volume covering the nation's history along the lines of his immensely popular television series of the same title.

With his inimitable urbanity, his conversation with this reporter traversed the course of both the glories and shames of the role of missionaries to this country, somehow always settling back on his admiration for Father Serra.

As a token of that admiration, "while I very seldom take on projects," he has agreed to aid a California-based group raising funds to preserve Father Serra's birthplace at Petra, on Majorca.

Cooke also confesses he is aware of procedures under way for the Franciscan missionary's canonization. He wonders if one of the requisite miracles for formal sainthood might be the fact that the priest had an infected foot "which he refused to treat, yet he walked through that terrible dusty scrub carrying bells."

Cooke guesses that the priest's affliction may have been ulcerated varicose veins whose only treatment was bandaging. The miracle, Cooke proposes, is that the priest carried on his missionary activities and died at the age of 70.

His feeling for Father Serra, however, does not spill over into what the Spaniards call their "black myth."

Cooke told this reporter the story of an Indian chieftain who was "very pious in his own religion" and who refused to convert. The early evangelists tied the man to a stake, Cooke says, asked him one last time if he would convert and set him afire.

The great chief "as the flames were licking over his body, said, 'I will refuse to convert because I fear I should go to heaven and meet there only Christians,'" Cooke relates, suppressing a shudder which rippled the shoulders of his audience.

Nor does his feeling for Serra cover some Catholic clergy he sees promoting religion on a "very crude level, a religion of bigotry and the tavern."

He, nevertheless, is very aware of some "brave modern priests, who, in a world of the bomb that has profoundly influenced two generations of children, ask profound questions on the meaning of life."

The remainder of Cooke's religious sensibility seems literary. He is appalled at what he calls "the vulgarization of Catholicism," and is disgusted by certain popular conceptions of Christ, especially that of the "superstar."

His affection for the King James Version of the Bible rests on his idea that "if it is splendid as literature, it says it all." He feels contemporary translations have "absolutely no cadence; and the King James is a monument of Elizabethan Prose."

Somehow, the new book, *America*, became lost in the interview and as Alistair Cooke bade this reporter goodby, he put in the pitch, "let's do something for Father Serra's birthplace."

But, a brief word: *America*, published by Knopf, is a delightful story told by a subtle and witty man. It is the sort of book that will grace any library shelf, whose text and pictures will grace any soul.

Many Report 'Mystical' Experiences

San Francisco [RNS] — Father Andrew Greeley, the noted sociologist, reported here that more than one third of the American people have had some type of mystical experience.

In a presentation on "The Sociology of Mystical Ecstasy" at the joint meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Religious Research Association, the University of Chicago sociologist stated that "36 per cent of the American population say that they have at some time in their lives felt as though they were very close to a powerful force that seemed to lift them out of themselves."

Listing the findings of a Spring 1972 national sample, the Catholic priest said that 61 per cent reported "deja vu" experiences — that they thought they were somewhere they had been before but did not know exactly when, and that 30 per cent reported having had contact with the dead.

Another data breakdown, Father Greeley reported, indicated that Protestants are almost twice as likely as Catholics to have had "mystical ecstasy" experiences.

Irish Americans, whether Catholic or Protestant, are the most likely to be mystically inclined of any ethnic group, he said.

A composite profile of the most likely type of person to report a mystical experience indicates that such an individual would be a black Protestant male over 40 with high income and college education, according to the survey's findings.

Charismatics List Meetings

The following is a list of meetings and Masses sponsored by area Catholics in the Charismatic Renewal.

Pentecostal meetings are held on Mondays at the homes of: Mr. and Mrs. Robert Dunning, 159 Chestnut Ridge Rd., Chili Center; Mr. and Mrs. Klaus Schulz, 156 N. Greece Rd., N. Greece.

On Tuesdays, Mr. and Mrs. William Buechel, 3681 Lake Avenue, Rochester; Mrs. John Sherry, 15 Starlite Dr., Rochester; Mr. and Mrs. Warren Lynch, Hamlin-Clarkson Town Line Rd., Hamlin.

On Wednesdays, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Mahaney, 479 Covewood Blvd., W. Webster.

On Thursdays, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Hauser, 1570 Culver Rd., Rochester; St. Charles Borromeo Church, Rochester.

On Saturday evening, Mr. and Mrs. John Donnelly, 9 Ellicot St., Rochester; Mr. and Mrs. James Reid, 113 Amity St., Spencerport; Mr. and Mrs. Donald Wollschleger, 350 N. Winton Rd., Rochester.

FILM ACCOMPANIST

Pianist-lecturer Terry Waldo will present a lecture-demonstration on silent film accompaniment at the Memorial Art Gallery, Saturday, Dec. 1, at 7:30 p.m. He will be showing old films and playing live music to illustrate his points.

GALLERY SHOW

Rochester sculptor Mort Goldblatt is showing sculpture in limestone at the Muggleton Gallery in Auburn through Nov. 30. Also displayed at the showing are original prints by painter Edna Hibel.

Weekly prayer meetings are held at St. Peter and Paul Church at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays and at St. Theodore Church at 8 p.m. on Mondays.

Mass is celebrated at 8 p.m. every First Friday at St. Lawrence Church and at 7:30 p.m. on the last Thursday of the month at St. Charles Borromeo Church.

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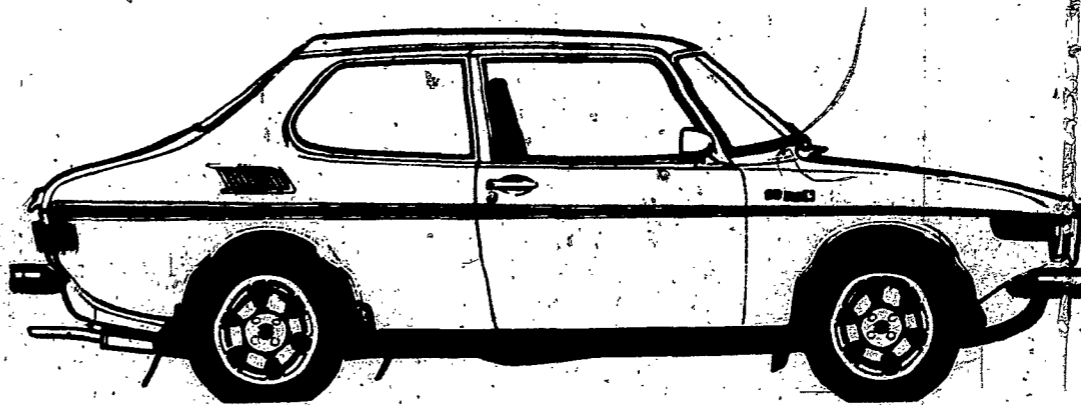
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