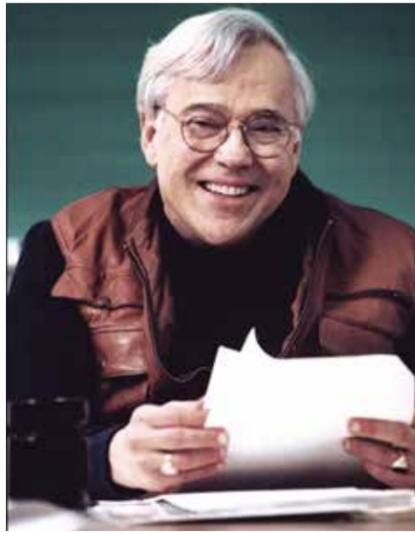


The Price of Pain and the Betts Syndrome

was in the final week (marketing) of the second Carolina Publishing Institute at UNC-Chapel Hill. The highlight of the three weeks was Reynolds Price on “Book Marketing and Promotion from An Author’s Perspective.” One of the most successfully published “literary” writers in America, he was nonetheless angry at the industry. Given the millions of readers in this country and the fact that Americans were the best “sellers” (my pun intended) in the world, he railed at the ridiculousness of considering 5,000 copies of a book a good sale. His edge was sharpened, doubtless, by the fact that his principal publisher, Atheneum, was dying as he spoke. American publishers could sell, Price insisted; they just did not or would not. From the days of the “Great Publishing Houses with their Gentleman Owners Who Would Never Stoop to Advertising or Selling to the Money-Grabbers Operating in the Same Old Ways,” publishers made little attempt to reach the apt public. His latest book, *A Whole New Life: An Illness and a Healing* (1994), about his struggle with cancer, was a case in point. Every woman who thinks about breast cancer, every man who worries about prostate cancer, every person beset by fears of any kind of cancer should read this book. Yet publishers remained idle, content to pass their works to standard wholesalers and distributors. If anyone grappled with and



REYNOLDS PRICE

reached the real public, it must be he.

Price shared other complaints. His first 4–5 books received hundreds of separate reviews from small papers in small places often written by housewives with great appreciation for and understanding of good literature. Like so many newspapers, these had almost disappeared. We had only the obligatory review carried over the wire services. A count of 30 separate reviews would be remarkable. Answering a related question, Price stated that the problem was not bad reviews driving off purchasers (e.g., Waller’s *The Bridges of Madison County*), whose habits had not changed very much. Rather, a bad review in the *New York Times* “killed” the book with the publishing house itself.

I tentatively raised my hand, though I had co-edited the only book-length critical assessment of Price and his work to date and was permitted to read and write the first article about *Good Hearts* in galley proofs, and we had both worked extensively on Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*. When he nodded at me, I ventured, more forcefully than I felt: “The word is getting out. My husband is in Pain Management and heard you quoted on bio feedback at a medical conference in Southern Pines last weekend.”

Price looked intently at me as if realizing he should recognize me (and not recognizing me, of course). “Admiral Nelson, one of the most afflicted of all humans, is going to be the icon of Pain Management.”

“You’ll join him if I have my way,” I thought



DORIS BETTS

to myself. I was distracted by my temerity (and the flashing before my eyes of laying all this at my husband’s feet), but I could swear Price reacted instantly, his own eyes a-flash à la William F. Buckley, Jr. He was staring at me so intently I could hardly focus on what he was saying—“What were Nelson’s last words?”

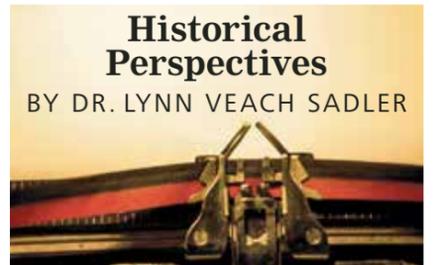
“Beg pardon?”

“What-were-Nelson’s-last-words?” Price rushed the words this time, made them sound brutal.

I well knew those words—my husband Emory had quoted them often enough. Nelson was his favorite of favorites.

Price was impatient. He did not want me—or anybody in the audience—to answer. I knew that; so did the rest. We were all straining forward and relaxed only when Reynolds relaxed and came out, good-naturedly, with “Kiss me, Hardy!” Nelson’s last words were “Kiss me, Hardy.” His coda followed more slowly: “Hardy was the great-uncle of Thomas Hardy.” He smiled beneficently as we took this in. “Thomas Hardy the novelist.”

I wished I could tell Reynolds Price that I didn’t know this genealogy of Nelson’s Hardy and would carry it carefully home to share with Emory. I wished I dared ask Price if he knew that earlier episode when Captain/Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy lowered a boat from Nelson’s frigate, the *Minerve*, and rowed after the seaman who had fallen over the side as the Spanish battleships were in fast pursuit. As



Historical Perspectives

BY DR. LYNN VEACH SADLER

usual, Nelson (like Reynolds Price) did not hesitate: “By God, I’ll not lose Hardy! Back the mizzen topsail.” He laid to until Hardy could reach them. The Spanish, thinking a trick afoot, followed suit, and the British escaped.

I thought to myself that Emory must fight to get a life-sized replica of Reynolds Price in his wheelchair alongside Admiral [Half] Nelson in my husband’s Pain Management Clinic. They both deserved the shibboleth: “Pain is not a disability.”

THE BETTS SYNDROME

Life, like literature, seeks closure but lusts after irony. At the final luncheon of the Carolina Publishing Institute, writer Doris Betts (who once lived in Chatham County), the Faculty Director, rose to give its (“figurative”) benediction. She had spoken the evening before to a Friends of the Library group. During the question session, a doctor congratulated her for not, like Reynolds Price, taking pot shots at doctors in her newest novel, *Souls Raised from the Dead* (1994), which included a dying child. Before she could respond, another doctor interjected: “She’s not out of the woods yet! We have a patient who recently recovered from a kidney transplant. We sent her home. She read *Souls Raised from the Dead* and had a relapse. We’ve written ‘Betts Syndrome’ on her chart!”

I have published and spoken extensively on Price and Betts, and each was a focus of the Southern Writers’ Symposium at Methodist College (now University) in Fayetteville, where I was Academic Dean and Vice President. Price died in 1989; Betts, in 1991. Despite his bout with cancer, he died of a heart attack (2011); Betts (2012), of lung cancer. I am ashamed to say that I have never read *A Whole New Life*, but I wrote an article about my double mastectomy (2017) and the fact that I still have cancer.

Dr. Lynn Veach Sadler, of Burlington’s The Village at Brookwood, a former college president, is widely published in academics and creative writing and works as a writer and an editor.



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BEHAVIORS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

calls usually turn out to be cases of mental illness. The dogs are not interpreting the world correctly. They see ordinary situations as threats and will violently lash out, seemingly unprovoked.

Boston Terriers are another breed that are typically very sweet dogs but when they need help it is usually for extreme aggression. Unlike the mental illness in the Golden Retrievers, only one of the Boston Terrier aggression cases I’ve worked with was mental illness. Most

of the cases with this breed that I’ve seen were puppy mill survivors. They had lived lives of severe trauma, neglect, and under-socialization. The longer they lived in the puppy mill the worse their mental state. Thankfully, they were able to be helped and went on to live safe and happy lives.

Chihuahua and **Dachshund** calls are typically about too much barking and the dogs not liking people outside of their immediate family. A protocol of super-socialization can bring these breeds around to being comfortable around. However, even with help, more than the average amount of barking comes with the territory with these two breeds.

There are many other breeds and mixes I have had the great pleasure of working with. One of the privileges of being a dog behavior specialist is the opportunity to interact with so many different types of dogs. It is extra exciting to meet unusual breeds and super cute puppies. What I find universally is that most people think their dog is the best dog in the world, even if they have a few quirks to work out.

I love that!

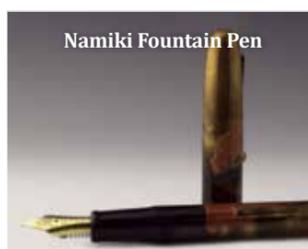
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