

JOHN WILLIAM CORRINGTON

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John William Corrington was born in 1932 and moved with his family to Shreveport, Louisiana at age ten. It was growing up in Shreveport that he developed a great love for that city and for the South, a love which figures prominently in his life and his writing. Corrington stayed on in Shreveport during his college years to attend Centenary College where he met a small group of teachers who he revered and honored throughout his life.

After his undergraduate days at Centenary, Corrington did graduate work in English at Rice University from 1956 to 1960, obtained his Master's degree in 1960, and took up his first teaching position in the English Department at Louisiana State University. On leave from LSU, Corrington obtained his D.Phil. in 1965 from the University of Sussex (England) and then, in 1966, moved to Loyola University-New Orleans as Associate Professor of English, where he also served as chair of the English Department.

During the 1960s, Corrington taught English literature, wrote poetry, published academic papers, and wrote his first novels. His first poetry was published in 1957 and his first collection of poetry, *Where We Are*, appeared in 1962. Three more collections would follow: *The Anatomy of Love and Other Poems* (1964); *Mr. Clean and Other Poems* (1964); and *Lines to the South and Other Poems* (1965), all published while Corrington was teaching English at LSU, working on his doctorate, and getting his first novel underway. During his early years as a poet, Corrington discovered the work of Charles Bukowski, a poet whose work still receives attention. Corrington and Bukowski carried on an extensive correspondence spanning the 1960s.

Corrington may well have become an acclaimed poet if he had stayed the course, but he realized early on that poetry was a way to develop his skills as a novelist. Corrington's impressive first novel, *And Wait for the Night*, was published in 1964, and after he joined the faculty at Loyola-New Orleans, he published two additional novels, *The Upper Hand* (1967) and *The Bombardiers* (1970), as the decade ended.

In the late 60s, Corrington's fiction came to the attention of film director/producer Roger Corman. Corman approached Corrington about doing a screenplay about the German WW I pilot, Manfred von Richthofen ("The Red Baron") and Corrington, never one to say no to a new writing venture, talked his wife, Joyce, a chemistry professor, into

* Editor, *Legal Studies Forum*. An earlier, expanded version of this introduction was published as the introduction to an issue of the *Legal Studies Forum*, Vol. 26 (2), 2002, devoted to the life and work of John William Corrington.

working on the script with him. Working together they wrote *Von Richthofen and Brown* (retitled *The Red Baron*) and delivered the finished script to Corman in 1969. The film was released by United Artists in 1971.

In addition to his 1960s novels, the new screenwriting venture with Joyce, and his four published collections of poetry, Corrington published his first collection of short stories, *The Lonesome Traveler and Other Stories* in 1968 and continued to write short fiction throughout his life. During his years as an English professor, Corrington also published a steady output of academic articles and essays (and wrote, but left unpublished, a significant number of theoretical and philosophical writings).

The work with Roger Corman continued in the early 1970s, and the Corringtons—working together as they did on all of Corrington's film script writing—followed up the film script for *Von Richthofen and Brown* (1971) with: *The Omega Man* (1970), *Boxcar Bertha* (1971), and *The Arena* (1972).

Corrington, who had never developed any great passion for teaching, growing increasingly disaffected with the situation at Loyola-New Orleans where he was battling with the Jesuits over tenure decisions in his English Department, decided to take up the study of law. Corrington's father had graduated from law school but never practiced, but it was, according to Corrington, his reading of the political philosopher Eric Voegelin that prompted his interest in the study of law.

Bill Corrington was not the typical first year law student. When he started Tulane Law School in 1972, he was forty years old, a well-published poet and novelist, a screenwriter, accomplished scholar, chair of an English department. Attending law school seems not to have left Corrington short of time and energy for his other writing pursuits. During his first year of law school, he and Joyce wrote the film script for *The Battle for the Planet of the Apes* (1973), and then, in his second year at Tulane, they finished work on *The Killer Bees* (1974).

Corrington graduated from Tulane Law School in 1975, joined a small New Orleans personal injury law firm, Plotkin & Bradley, and spend the next three years practicing law. He would never return to teaching, although he sometimes considered the possibility, thinking he might make his way back to Shreveport, or to settle somewhere in the South.

After taking up the study of law, Corrington began to make lawyers and judges (and the law) a part of his fiction. "The Actes and Monuments," Corrington's first lawyer story, was published in *Sewanee Review* in 1975, the year he finished law school. A second lawyer story, "Pleadings," was published in 1976 in the *Southern Review*, appearing

during Corrington's first year as a practicing lawyer. A third story, "Every Act Whatever of Man," followed in the *Southern Review* in 1978, this one in the final year of his law practice. Corrington continued, throughout the 1980s, until his death in 1988, to make the lives of lawyers and judges a part of his fiction.

Corrington gave up the practice of law in 1978, and working with Joyce, they became head writers for the TV daytime drama, *Search for Tomorrow* (CBS). From 1978 to 1988, the Corringtons wrote scripts for *Search for Tomorrow* (CBS) (1978-80)(477 episodes); *Another World* (1980)(NBC)(23 episodes); *Texas*, a series they created and wrote, 1980-82 (NBC)(147 episodes); *General Hospital* (1982)(ABC)(54 episodes); *Capitol* (1982-83)(CBS)(167 episodes); *One Life to Live* (1984)(ABC)(98 episodes); and finally, *Superior Court*, a syndicated series (1986-89)(238 episodes).

During the final decade of his life, the decade he worked as a writer of daytime TV dramas, Corrington published his last major novel, *Shad Sentell* (1984), a collection of short stories, *The Southern Reporter* (1981), and two magnificent novellas featuring lawyers, published as *All My Trials* (1987).

Corrington, always in search of a new venture as a writer, eventually turned to the detective genre. With a contract from Viking Press, Corrington, in partnership with Joyce, begin a series of books which featured a New Orleans police detective—Ralph "Rat" Trapp—a reporter named Wesley Colvin, and a love interest for Colvin, named Denise Lemoyne, who begins as an relatively insignificant character, but becomes Colvin's lover and, finally, an Assistant District Attorney. The first of the Corringtons' police detective, mystery novels, *So Small a Carnival* appeared in 1986, with *A Project Named Desire* and *A Civil Death* following in 1987. The fourth and final of book in the series, *The White Zone*, was published in 1990, after Bill Corrington's death in 1988.

In 2002, the *Legal Studies Forum*, with the permission and assistance of Joyce Corrington, republished Bill Corrington's lawyer stories, a selection of his published and unpublished essays, and commentaries about his work and his life. In this issue of the *Legal Studies Forum*, we present a selection of Corrington's poetry, a reminiscence and a note on Corrington's poetry by Jo LeCoeur, an essay on the writing of Corrington's last novel, *Shad Sentell* by Lloyd Halliburton, who was a childhood friend of Corrington's, and a bibliography of Corrington's published poetry compiled by Joyce Corrington.

Our thanks to Joyce Corrington for her permission to publish Bill Corrington's poetry, and for her continued assistance to those who have undertaken the study of her husband's life as a writer.

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