

THE
WORKS
of
RON OLSON

Edited by
Marian L. Olson

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Golden, Colorado

Now before then,
I shall love you, and love you, and love you again.

Here and not there,
My love I shall affirm, state and declare.

You above and before
Others forsaken by troth evermore.

Ron Olson



Ronald K. Olson, 1933-1991

ABOUT RON OLSON

Ronald K. Olson was born in 1933, in Burlington, Colorado, the sixth of six children – four brothers and one sister. He died of a massive heart attack, in Brighton, Colorado, at age 57, May 19, 1991.

He lived his first six years in a sod house north of Bethune. He attended school in Burlington and, after graduating from high school in 1951, he enlisted in the United States Marines. He served in the Marines from 1951-1954, including a tour in Korea.

He earned a B.A. in Political Science (1958) and an M.A. in English (1962) from the University of Colorado. He received a J.D. in Law from the University of Tulsa (1969) and an L.L.M. in Law from George Washington University (1978).

He taught public school in Thermopolis, Wyoming, Buffalo, Wyoming, Lyons, Colorado, and Belgrade, Montana. He taught English at Eastern Montana College in Billings and Montana State University in Bozeman.

He was a member of the Colorado Bar Association, Montana Bar Association, Oklahoma Bar Association, District of Columbia Bar Association, American Bar Association, American Judicature Society, and the Association of Trial Lawyers of America.

He was admitted to practice in Colorado, Montana, Oklahoma, District of Columbia, United States District Court-Montana, United States Court of Appeals-District of Columbia and Fourth Circuit, and the United States Supreme Court.

Academic Honors included: Law School Dean's List, National Moot Court Team, Legislative Editor,-Law Journal

Professional Honors included many commendations and merit awards.

His work history included:

63-65 Instructor of English, Eastern Montana College

65-67 Asst. Professor of English, Montana State University

67-69 Law School, University of Tulsa

70-73 Law practice, Landoe & Gary, Bozeman, MT and Asst. Professor of Speech Communication, Montana State University

- 73-74 Legislative Counsel for Congressman Dick Shoup, Montana
- 74-75 Deputy County Attorney, Gallatin County, MT
- 75-75 Asst. Minority Counsel, Transportation Subcommittee of House Commerce Committee, U. S. Congress
- 75-83 Senior Attorney Advisor, U.S. Department of Energy
- 84-84 Land Law Examiner, U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- 84-85 Private law practice, Billings, MT
- 85-91 Deputy County Attorney, Adams County, Colorado

Publications

Coal Liquefaction: Issues Presented by a Developing Technology, 4 *Tulsa Law Journal* 657, Sp. 78.

Coalbed Methane: Legal Considerations Affecting It Development as an Energy Resource, 3 *Tulsa Law Journal* 377, W. 78.

Tinker and the Administrator, 100 *School & Society* 2339, February 1972, 86-89.

Ron signed his Last Will and Testament on April 30, 1991, just nineteen days before his death. He prepared it himself. Beyond the normal contents of such a document, he included ARTICLE VIII, which reads as follows:

Not for the purpose of disposition, devise or bequest, but rather by way of final testimony, I declare that I am eternally hostile to TIME and that I do not accept it as a dimension, as an element, or as being of any account whatever. Instead, in what I intend to be defiance of Time, I subscribe to the sentiments expressed in the final lines of a sonnet by John Keats. (I have modified the final line by the addition of two words – Keats would not object.)

When I have fears that I may cease to be

..... then on the shore
 Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
 Till love and fame – and Time- to nothingness
 do sink.

PREFACE

The writings in this collection of Ron Olson's works were created over a period of about thirty years. It has taken me over ten years, since his death in 1991, to get everything together and ready to print. I apologize, in advance, for any errors or omissions.

Back in the 1970's and early 1980's, I read my way through the eighty-some western novels written by Louis L'Amour. He then started the practice of writing only one novel a year. Complaining about this to Ron, who was not a reader of westerns, I said, "I read faster than that."

He responded, "I'll write you a story."

Thus, he embarked on writing Three for the Bobcat.

We had recently gotten an IBM computer, one of the early PC's. This made the process a little easier. There was an obstacle to overcome, however. The computer only had 64K of memory. That was just about enough to write a letter. Buying added memory would cost about \$300 at Computerland. I saw in a trade magazine that the board could be ordered for \$100. BUT, that meant you had to install it yourself or get help.

At the Bartlesville Energy Technology Center where we worked there was a man who had a Ph.D. in electrical engineering and who had a MacIntosh computer on his desk. I asked him if he would help me install the board, if I ordered it. He agreed to do so.

I ordered the board and, after what seemed forever, it arrived. But – my "helper" was out of town and would not return for two weeks. Frustration led me to read the installation directions. I discovered there was not much more to it than plugging an extension cord into a wall socket. I installed the board and was no longer intimidated by "computers."

With adequate computer memory, Ron began writing in earnest. Before long, Three for the Bobcat, was finished. I really liked it. I even thought it was as good as westerns I bought in the store. I decided I should publish it.

Back in those days there was no "desktop publishing." I had to learn to insert the typesetting codes in all the appropriate places – indents, end of paragraph, change of font, etc. The coded

document, including the names to go at the top of each page and the page numbers, was then sent by modem (there was no Internet) to a company in Virginia where it was converted into a long roll of printed paper. This had to be cut in page lengths and pasted onto pre-printed blue line paper to be used by the printer as camera ready copy. Then – each page had to have the title or author and a page number pasted at the top. Whew! Anyhow, Three for the Bobcat and Half Life got published that way.

“The Roundup,” published by the Western Writers of America, Inc., listed Three for the Bobcat in its monthly Western Ratings in 1984. One of seventeen books listed, it tied for third with two other books. The novel also ran as a serial in 1984 in “The Grit.”

The characters in Three for the Bobcat became almost real for me. It was with great enjoyment that I was able to follow them to Colorado in Long Drop at the Rusty Dime and back up to Montana in The Steamist. Even yet, whenever I drive up the canyon toward Gold Hill, I expect one of the wagons to come around the bend.

Inside the front cover of the “Bobcat,” it reads: This title is Number 1 In Bannack’s All-Family Western Series. That means the stories could be read by any members of the family, including children. That also tells you something about Ron. He didn’t think stories had to be laced with extreme material to be enjoyed. He declined to include it – just to make it “sell.”

The Forty Rod Court is another western. Ron’s experience as a lawyer helped with this one. Also, he enjoyed reading old cases in Montana law books. One of those old cases amused him enough to relate: There had been a shooting in the town and a woman bystander had been wounded. She was called as a witness and the judge spoke to her, “I understand you were shot in the fracas.”

She replied, “No, your Honor, I was shot between bellybutton and the fracas.”

Ron’s descriptions in Forty Rod Court, as in his other novels, enable you to really visualize the scenes and the people. You feel almost as though you were there. One reviewer felt they

slowed the pace of the stories. For me, with all my built in biases, of course, they just help bring the stories to life.

Half Life was a natural for Ron. He had worked in the Office of the General Counsel for the Energy Research and Development Administration and the Department of Energy. He had been involved in the litigation surrounding the Nevada Test Site cases. He had interviewed one of the physicists involved in developing the atomic bomb when the government tried to stop publication of the “recipe” for a hydrogen bomb. He had visited the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant. He used the Rocky Flats Environmental Impact Statement for background to make the setting as realistic as possible. He had worked for a congressman and a congressional committee. Politics, contractors, nuclear material, and terrorists all came together for a good story. The day Ron was trying to figure out how the terrorists could get access to the plant, we discussed the various options and concluded that by air was the only one possible. Within the hour, there was a TV news story reporting that the government was going to upgrade its security from the air at its nuclear weapons plants. That was in 1983.

When it came time for selection of a thesis topic for Ron’s master’s degree in English, his faculty advisor, Dr. Henry Pettit, suggested he look at the relationship between the authors Jonathan Swift and Tom Brown and Swift’s possible literary indebtedness to Brown. Now anyone who has heard of Gulliver’s Travels has heard of Jonathan Swift, but who has ever heard of Tom Brown?

Well, those who have, the English literature scholars, will tell you that Tom Brown was born at Newport in Shropshire and he was baptized January 1, 1663. The son of a tanner or a farmer, he attend Newport’s free grammar school and, later, Christ Church, Oxford. He has been variously described as “small beer” and a genius. Several scholars have discovered connections between his writings and those of Addison, Sterne, Fielding, Lamb and especially Swift.

Brown died June 16, 1704, and was buried at Westminster Abbey. I guess I wasn’t paying much attention to the “where he

was buried “ part. I sort of had it in my mind that he was probably buried in some small churchyard somewhere.

In the early 1970’s, we had occasion to be in London and visited Westminster Abbey. People are buried everywhere in Westminster Abbey. Ron was anxious to see “poets’ corner” where several of the great English poets are buried. With map in hand, we were walking along a stone sidewalk. We stopped to check directions. While Ron was looking at the map, I looked down at the stone we were standing on. You guessed it. “Thomas Brown, 1662-1704.” I asked Ron, “Is this our Tom Brown?” He assured me that it was. [Quite frankly, I found it a bit spooky.]

In the process of looking at the Swift/Brown relationship, Ron became convinced that Tom Brown, not Swift, was the author of Tale of a Tub, a work that was originally published anonymously. This prompted him to write Tom Brown’s Tale of a Tub and Selected Works of Brown. He had said that he wanted to go back and “clean it up” before publishing it. Unfortunately, he did not get that done, but his theory is well defended and should prompt some discussion in literature circles.

Re-election Obsession was written after Ron had worked in the congressional realm in Washington, D.C. After coming to an understanding of the mechanisms the congress had developed to enhance the likelihood of its members’ re-election, he concluded that the people would have to act to change the situation. To this end, he proposed a constitutional amendment limiting the terms of members of congress.

Working in the Washington environment can cause one to become at least a bit cynical. Ron used to say that if the people could, all at once, become aware of and understand what went on in our government, they would march upon the city and burn it to the ground. He also noted that some have suggested relocating the capital to the physical center of the United States. That might be a less violent approach.

The books included here include: Three for the Bobcat, Long Drop at the Rusty Dime, and The Steamist. These westerns form a trilogy. The Forty Rod Court is another western. Half Life is a story of a terrorist attack on the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons

plant in Colorado. The Hacker's Duplicate is an industrial espionage and murder mystery. Tom Brown's Tale of A Tub and Selected Writings of Brown and Jonathan Swift's Literary Indebtedness to Tom Brown are academic. The contention that Brown rather than Swift wrote Tale of a Tub may raise a few eyebrows. Re-election Obsession exposes many of the ways members of congress manage the system to enhance the likelihood of their re-election. It then proposes a constitutional amendment to limit the number terms an individual may serve in the congress.

The subjects of Ron's poems seem to cluster in about six groups. Some of them appear at the end of each volume.

Government: Sonnet on Major Milestones, Political Promise, Departmental, The Coffin Table of the Squabbling Commissioners
[not a poem, but an historical note.]

Nature: Daisies Around Me, Spring's A Place, Snow in the City, Wind, Idle Sun.

Time: Time, To Reproach, Time Without Dimension, Time's Curve

Observations: Cosmos, Our Song , Paper, The Future, Suddenly Something, Memory, Idle Rhymes, Cyclic, Music Channel, Lost Weekend

Miscellaneous: The Modern Metal Gordian Knot, A Collar, The Knob, Metric-I, Angles, Trinity, ER

Personal: From Here to There, Mud [the Australian Shepherd], Little Victories, The Brief, New Blue Truck

In 1987, I sent copies of Three for the Bobcat and Half Life, the two books I had published in paperback, to a few acquaintances around the country. I received numerous "thank you's," but one included some comments that I particularly enjoyed and that are shared here.

Now, you have created a dilemma for me. When I read "Half Life" I felt like Ron was Denver's answer to Tom Clancy; but when I read "Three For the Bobcat" I thought he could take Louis

L'Amour's place. I should tell you that I have a great resentment for talented people who can weave such fascinating stories, but to be able to work with such divergent subject matter is more than I can comprehend. Although I finally came to the conclusion that Pitkin Waay was Owen Bannack reincarnated and brought up to date.

All this shows Ron to have been an intelligent, observant, sensitive person, with a sense of humor, who could communicate his observations and "spin" good stories. By these volumes, his words and thoughts will live on for others to share. Sets of the books are being given to a significant number of college and public libraries to that end.

Marian Lahman Olson
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