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THE BASIC PATTERNS OF PLOT

— by Mike McCarville

Foster-Harris is to the fiction writer as water is to the desert. Thus, it is with genuine joy we learn of a sixth edition of *THE BASIC PATTERNS OF PLOT*, a Foster-Harris classroom-between-covers volume first issued by the University of Oklahoma Press in 1959.

In the 23 years since that first edition was published, the wisdom of the professor's grasp of "fictioneering" has become dominant among those who studied with him, heard of him, learned of the myriad successes of his students, and admired his gumption. Like his father, to whom the book is dedicated, Foster-Harris "never quit trying," and therein lies a valuable lesson for the writer and the non-writer alike, to wit: Determination often overcomes all else.

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FAMILY TRADITIONS

— Leroy Thomas

Blackjack Eleven is out! The title of it is *FAMILY TRADITIONS*, and Editor-Publisher Art Cuelho has done his usual excellent work. *FAMILY TRADITIONS* is billed as "Writing from Rural America," the prose and poetry coming from a wide variety of writers — including Diane Glancy, Sheryl L. Nelms, and Dorothy Rose, all writers with Oklahoma connections.

It's interesting just to browse through the sections of the book: The Ozarks, Grandfathers, Okies and Oklahoma, The Dakotas, and Family Traditions.

"Some of the joys, heartbreaks, and triumphs of the cycle of life are found in these family portraits," according to Cuelho. The poems and stories range from the smell of fresh bread baking in the oven to going to church by mulecart. They are unadorned portraits of everyday life.

And those who are interested may get the book by sending \$4.35 to Seven Buffaloes Press (P.O. Box 249 — Big Timber, MT 59011).

Evening Comes Slow To A Fieldhand

— Donita Lucas Shields

In his *EVENING COMES SLOW TO A FIELDHAND*, Artie Cuelho's introductory poem "You Can Go Home Again" exemplifies that anyone having a rural origin seldom breaks his rural ties throughout his life. Time proves that no urban concrete jungle ever destroys man's basic love of nature.

Artie Cuelho's heritage springs from his childhood in San Joaquin Valley. His past provides memories of difficult dryland tilling with horses as well as with modern, mechanized irrigated vineyards, truck farming, and grain production. The rural setting of his California Heartland could as easily be in western Oklahoma.

The poet wears no rose-colored glasses as he portrays recollections of blazing sun, caked sweat and mud, and dust devils. With honesty he recognizes hardships and heartbreaks of those who struggle with alkali soils and prolonged droughts. Cuelho recalls "hardpan. . . dry as an antelope's bones" where ". . . the will of dust rules every rut of a cookshack home."

To make the land of sagebrush and coyotes a productive agricultural region, Mr. Cuelho describes diesel Cats and farmers' calloused, cracked hands toiling from sun to sun. He shows pride that his father blazed the trail "to rule the ways of water" by cultivating "furrows essential to dark green shining. . . from Clovis to Crow's Landing."

Nor does Mr. Cuelho look askance at those hard-working, hard-drinking toilers who struggle to conquer fertile San Joaquin Valley. He portrays women, those like Rhyming Fast Lil and Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel with their private endeavors, as being fully as important to the Valley as field workers. Kind-hearted, understanding women are as vital and necessary to the region as canals, syphoning pipes, and Caterpillars.

Mr. Cuelho recalls his youthful years, filled with daring escapades that temporarily erased the stains and strains of barley fields and irrigation ditches. His adventures at Tiny's Bar and Saturday night parties are re-created with rollicking nostalgia. Mr. Cuelho's memories are saddened only by thoughts of friends who were killed during the war or as results of wild, drunken driving sprees.

Many of Artie Cuelho's reminiscences are not pretty recollections. They are rugged interpretations of rural life and its universal struggles. The poet communicates through simple, powerful, compelling language of the land. He embellishes nothing; he is a realist. To him and to all who have rural backgrounds, realism is beauty.

Mr. Cuelho projects his observations with a rustic passion. Without condemnation or criticism, he is attuned to his heritage with affection and pride, fully at peace with himself and his environment.

EVENING COMES SLOW TO A FIELDHAND is available through Seven Buffaloes Press (Box 249, Big Timber, MT 59011). It's a bargain for \$4.35.