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ANTHONY BOUCHER DEAD OF CANCER

Anthony Boucher Dies on Coast; Mystery Story Writer and Critic

OAKLAND, Calif., April 30 —William Anthony Parker White, the mystery story writer and critic known as Anthony Boucher, died here yesterday of lung cancer at the Kaiser Foundation Hospital. He was 56 years old and lived in nearby Berkeley.

He leaves his wife, the former Phyllis Mary Price, and two sons, Lawrence of San Jose and James of San Bernardino.

A Prolific Reviewer

In the special world of writers and readers of mystery and science-fiction books and stories, Anthony Boucher occupied a pre-eminent place, for his encyclopedic knowledge of those genres and for his ability to express his learning with pithy wit.

"In his chosen field Tony was a Renaissance man, a complete man—writer, critic and historian," Fred Dannay, who, with Manfred Lee, is Ellery Queen, said yesterday. Echoing the opinion of other mystery writers, Mr. Dannay described his close friend of 30 years as "conscientious" and "a fine craftsman."

Mr. Boucher was best known as a critic and as an editor and anthologist. For 17 years, starting in 1951, he conducted the "Criminals at Large" column for the Sunday Book Review of The New York Times. He wrote 852 columns, each reviewing succinctly about six books.

Mr. Boucher's style was jaunty, even chatty, and devoid of malice. Reviewing one book



Anthony Boucher in photograph made some years ago.

he didn't much care for, he wrote:

"Surprisingly, George Bagby is something of a bore in 'Another Day — Another Death.' The telling is crisp and amusing, as always. But this time Inspector Schmidt faces a weak plot, resolved largely by happenstance; Bagby keeps acting as foolishly as any Idiot Heroine of a bad crime-romance; and pivotal characters are kept almost entirely offstage. (We are given less than 3,000 words to become acquainted with the murderer.) Unexpected performance from one of the (I

had thought) most reliable Old Pros."

Beginning in 1943 Mr. Boucher (rhymes with voucher) compiled and edited a number of popular crime and fantasy anthologies. His first was "The Pocket Book of True Crime Stories." He was editor of the last six "Best Detective Stories of the Year," published annually by Dutton.

At his death Mr. Boucher had just completed work on the 1967 edition. For this, as well as for his other anthologies, he scrutinized hundreds of stories "from every possible source," according to Jeanne Bernkopf, his editor.

Mr. Boucher adopted his pseudonym about 30 years ago, and the adoption was so complete that few persons knew his real name. Explaining why he chose a second name, he wrote in The Times last February:

"There are numerous good reasons, such as to unify a collaboration ('Ellery Queen'), to appear on different publishers' lists simultaneously (John Dickson Carr/'Carter Dickson'), or my own reason for being 'Boucher'—that the Library of Congress lists 75 book authors named William White, which is what appears on my baptismal certificate."

Mr. Boucher was also a distinguished opera enthusiast. For a number of years he contributed analysis and reviews of the San Francisco Opera to "Opera News," the organ of the Metropolitan Opera Guild.

He also conducted a radio program called "Golden Voices" that was broadcast by

Pacifica Foundation stations on the West Coast and by WBAL-FM in New York. On these programs Mr. Boucher played recordings from his own collection, and commented on opera singing generally.

Mr. Boucher's energy in diverse fields belied his quiet, reflective, pipe-smoking appearance. He found time, for instance, to attend virtually every University of California home football and basketball game. And he served as an unpaid talent scout by observing high school players. He is credited with the "discovery" of Craig Morton, who was an All-American quarterback and who now plays for the Dallas Cowboys.

In his evening leisure hours, according to friends, Mr. Boucher delighted in marathon poker sessions with his fellow mystery writers. He was said to have been an exceptionally talented player.

Although Mr. Boucher was based on the West Coast, he

made occasional trips to New York and to Paris, where he indulged his gourmet tastes at leading restaurants.

Mr. Boucher was born in Oakland on Aug. 21, 1911, the son of James and Mary Ellen Parker White. An intellectually gifted youth, he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Southern California in 1932, a Phi Beta Kappa and a master's degree in German from the University of California in 1934. He later acquired fluency in French, Spanish and Portuguese, and translated mysteries in these languages into English.

Ambitious to be a writer, he abandoned a plan to become a language teacher. His first writing had to do with the stage, as theater editor, from 1935 to 1937, of The United Progressive News in Los Angeles. At the same time he became caught up in mystery story writing and in 1937 his

first book—"The Case of The Seven at Calvary"—was published.

Over the next five years he turned out a book a year, including one under the pseudonym H. H. Holmes—"Nine Times Nine." He employed the same name as reviewer in later years for The Chicago Sun-Times and The New York Herald Tribune.

Although his books were modest triumphs, they were not such successes as to dissuade him from the regular pay checks provided by magazines and newspapers. Thus, in 1948 Mr. Boucher went to work for Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, and two years later he became fantasy book reviewer for The Sun-Times.

From 1951 to 1963 he was, as H. H. Holmes, science-fantasy reviewer for The Herald Tribune. Simultaneously, as Anthony Boucher, he reviewed mysteries and crime novels for The Times. Also, between 1952

and 1958, he edited annually "The Best From Fantasy and Science Fiction." For a couple of years he also edited True Crime Detective and The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction.

For his criticism of mysteries, Mr. Boucher won Edgar awards (named for Edgar Allan Poe) in 1946, 1950 and 1953 from the Mystery Writers of America, whose national president he was in 1951.

Mr. Boucher was convinced that mystery stories could be works of art. Reviewing "The Annotated Sherlock Holmes" for The Times this year, he phrased his convictions this way:

"Good detective stories are, as I have often quoted Hamlet's phrase about the players, 'the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time,' ever-valuable in retrospect as indirect but vivid pictures of the society from which they spring."

OVER 200 ATTEND THIRDMANCON: Steve Stiles, winner of this year's TAFF race and US fandom's representative at the British National SF Convention, reports that over 200 attended the convention, held Easter weekend at St. Ann's Hotel, Buxton. Also in attendance was Donald A. Wollheim of Ace Books, who flew back to New York in time to be Guest of Honor at the LunaCon, held at the Park-Sheraton hotel in New York City. Steve reports that, contrary to current traditions, he will soon begin working on his TAFF report, with hopes that it will be published late this summer. We had a con report from Ethel Lindsay, but it seems to have gotten lost. Maybe we'll find it in time for next issue... (Source: Steve Stiles)

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ROBERT SILVERBERG TO BE DISCLAVE GUEST OF HONOR: Robert Silverberg will be the Guest of Honor at the 1968 Disclave, to be held May 10, 11, and 12th at the Regency Congress Inn, 600 New York Avenue, NE, Washington, DC. Events scheduled for the con include an all evening party Friday night, a program Saturday afternoon including a pro panel, a speech by the guest of honor, and a slide show by Jay Kay Klein called "The Decline And Fall Of Practically Everybody." Another party will end the day's activities. Sunday is set aside for another party, or perhaps for rest and recovery. The registration for the con will be \$1.50, or \$2.00 at the door. This is the second year that the Disclave is being held at the same hotel. Rates are \$14/single, \$18/double; when reserving a room please enclose one night's fee, as May is a heavy tourist time in Washington and rooms will not be held otherwise. To pre-register, or for further information, write: Jack C Haldeman II, 1244 Woodbourne Ave., Baltimore, Md. 21212. (Source: The Haldeman's)

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SFWEEKLY IN CRISIS: We missed an issue last week; we are well aware of that. This issue has been done up very fast, simply not to miss another week in our schedule. The following steps to into effect with this issue, and will continue until otherwise noted: 1. No more new subscriptions will be taken. Those who have subscribed in the past several weeks will have their money refunded when they receive this issue. 2. We will not stop any subscriptions that have lapsed, nor will we accept money for further issues. This means that many people will receive SFW free, at the moment. The mailing list is now frozen, pending the future of this newszine. Stay tuned until next week.

--- Andrew Porter