

Persevere—advice for author's lonely art

By SUSAN TAUBER

Andrew Scott Berg, known as Scott, has a legacy from a former editor at Charles Scribner's Sons, Publishers and Booksellers that he's sharing with the world.

He traveled to Oakland University for a few days to talk about what he's learned from, and about, Max Perkins, to the 400 people who attended the Saturday Oct. 21 session of the 17th annual Craftsmanship of Creative Writing Conference co-sponsored by the Conference Department, Continuing Education and Detroit Women's Writers.

Berg, who will be 29 in December, held the audience spellbound as he described how he unleashed the history and personality of a man who shaped the literature of the early 1920s and the careers of authors such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and Thomas Wolfe.

Berg's fanaticism to learn all he could about Perkins, the man behind the scenes, wasn't a case of an author seeking a topic.

It occurred in an eerie way—a legacy left him by his mother and from a temperament given to him at birth, that Berg said, "matched temperaments with Perkins."

The son of Barbara and Richard Berg, formerly of Norwalk, Conn. and now living in Los Angeles, Berg was named Scott after F. Scott Fitzgerald because of his mother's love for the author's writings.

WHEN IN HIGH SCHOOL, Berg came home and announced to his family he needed to do a story on an American author and didn't know any.

His mother, he said, suggested Fitzgerald. His reply was, "F. Scott

who?" Mrs. Berg ran to the attic and retrieved the copy of "The Far Side of Paradise" by Fitzgerald and Berg's fascination with the author began.

"By the time I graduated from high school I had read everything by and about Fitzgerald. I even applied to his alma mater, Princeton in New Jersey, and put on the application that if they didn't accept me, I was coming anyway," said Berg, an avid swimmer, tennis player, piano player and singer of 20s and 30s music.

Accepted at Princeton, Berg never having seen the campus. He continued his study of Fitzgerald, reading anything he could find in libraries' rare books and manuscript rooms.

Throughout his research, Berg kept coming across references to Maxwell Perkins—always in the shadows.

Berg visited Carlos Baker at Princeton. Baker had spent seven years writing a book about Fitzgerald. He asked him about Perkins.

"I know as much about Perkins today as I did seven years ago," was Baker's reply. He encouraged Berg to search out the man and write his senior thesis on the unknown editor, a man who shaped the writings of so many authors other editors wouldn't handle.

THE PROJECT led to a dedication on Berg's part that lasted through his college days until July when his first book, "Max Perkins: Editor of Genius," was published by E. P. Dutton.

Berg became a member of what he said every writer belongs to, "The Lovely Arts Club."

He lived in libraries, reading thousands of letters between Perkins and authors covering a span of 20 years.

'I never wrote short stories or kept journals when I was young.'

—Scott Berg

He sorted through 50 boxes of letters on Fitzgerald, another 30 on Thomas Wolfe, and 100 handwritten letters hidden under the bed of Perkin's platonic love, Elizabeth Lerman.

Berg visited Perkin's ancestral home, Paradise, in Windsor, Vermont, once he was through researching. He had made a list of 100 people to visit and interview.



Scott Berg spent much of his speech giving advice editor Maxwell Perkins gave to the likes of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and Thomas Wolfe. (Photos by Randy Borst)

"I talked and talked for two days with the eldest of Perkin's five daughters. She said her daddy would be very upset if he knew someone was writing a biography about him—but that daddy liked new writers and she thought he'd be glad a young man was writing it."

"Mr. Berg, are you a writer?" she asked him after giving her blessing. Berg said no. It wasn't until after his book was published, after living with the growing image and personality of Perkins every day for seven years, did Berg acknowledge that he was a writer.

"I never wrote short stories or kept journals when I was young," he said.

During his efforts, Berg corresponded and met with people whom others consider unreachable. They included Sheila Graham, Katherine Hepburn, Theodore Roosevelt's daughter Alice Longworth, and author James Jones.

He has funny and emotional stories to tell from the research he did and the people he met.

But what the author tried to give to the potential writers at the conference

was the wisdom Perkins gave to each writer he worked with. The advice was always simple and gently made. And it came from a man who believed in the talents of his writers and who could draw the best out of them.

"Perkins found them into writers," said Berg. "I found advice from his letters to the likes of Hemingway that I want to pass on to you."

In his expressive way, Berg told how Perkins suggested to Marjorie Rawlings, author of "The Yearling," that a book must be written according to the writer.

"The publisher can't make a writer go along with the facts, was Perkin's philosophy. It must be 'Writer, Be Thyself!'"

DISCOURAGEMENT is a good sign for a writer, according to Perkins. And a writer must not put too much faith in the editor. Instead, he must believe in his own writings.

Perkins told writers to "make every person a character and every action an event," and to tell the reader not what you don't know but what you do know.

CITY OF FARMINGTON ELECTION NOTICE

LAST DAY TO OBTAIN APPLICATIONS FOR ABSENT VOTER BALLOTS FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION NOVEMBER 7, 1978 IS:

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1978 UNTIL 2:00 P.M.

CITY OF FARMINGTON VOTERS MAY APPLY AT THE CITY HALL, 23600 LIBERTY STREET, DURING REGULAR HOURS MONDAY THRU FRIDAY 8:30 A.M. — 5:00 P.M. AND ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1978 UNTIL 2:00 P.M.

NEDRA VIANE, CITY CLERK

Published November 2, 1978

GENERAL ELECTION

To the Qualified Electors:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, That a General Election will be held in the

City of Farmington, County of Oakland
State of Michigan

ON

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1978

AT THE PLACE OR PLACES OF HOLDING THE ELECTION IN SAID CITY AS INDICATED BELOW, VIZ:

- PRECINCT 1—Farmington City Hall, 23600 Liberty Street
- PRECINCT 2—American Legion Hall, 21775 Grand River Avenue
- PRECINCT 3—Farmington Senior High School, 20000 Shawwassee
- PRECINCT 4—Flanders Elementary School, 21600 Flanders Street
- PRECINCT 5—Langacre Elementary School, 34810 Arundel Street
- PRECINCT 6—Farmington Training Center, 33000 Thomas Street

FOR THE PURPOSE OF ELECTING THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS, VIZ:

STATE Governor & Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, 2 Members of State Board of Education, 2 Members of Board of Regents of the University of Michigan, 2 Members of Michigan State University Board of Trustees, 2 Members of Wayne State University Board of Governors.

CONGRESSIONAL United States Senator, Representative in Congress.
LEGISLATIVE State Senator, State Representative
COUNTY County Commissioner

AND ALSO ANY ADDITIONAL OFFICERS THAT MAY BE ON THE BALLOT

AND ALSO TO VOTE ON THE FOLLOWING NON-PARTISAN OFFICERS, VIZ:

Two Justices of the Supreme Court, Judge of the Court of Appeals, Judges of the Circuit Court, Judges of the District Court.

AND ALSO TO VOTE ON THE FOLLOWING STATE PROPOSALS:

- A. Proposal relating to holding of constitutional convention.
- B. Initiative of legislation proposing to require a person sentenced for a crime of violence to serve minimum term.
- C. Proposal relating to deposit of state funds in Savings and Loan Associations and Credit Unions as well as banks.
- D. Proposal relating to raising the drinking age to 21.
- E. Proposal relating to limit of taxes and spending.
- G. Proposal relating to allowing state troopers collective bargaining rights.
- H. Proposal relating to prohibition of property tax for financing education.
- J. Proposal relating to reducing and limiting property tax assessments and equalization and limiting state income tax.
- K. Proposal relating to allow refusal of bail to persons charged with crime of violence without convictions in 15 year period.
- M. P. Proposal relating to creating and funding state transportation authority.
- R. Prop. relating to creating Railroad Redevelopment Authority authorized to issue bonds and pledge full faith and credit of state.

ALSO ANY ADDITIONAL AMENDMENTS OR PROPOSITIONS THAT MAY BE SUBMITTED

THE POLLS of said election will be open at 7 o'clock a. m. and will remain open until 8 o'clock p. m. of said day of election.

NEDRA VIANE, City Clerk

Published: October 26 and November 2, 1978

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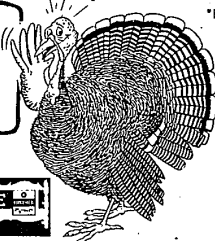
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