

MEMORANDUM

To: Senator Robert C. Byrd
From: David A. Corbin
Re: "Poetry and Politics: Why Words Shape the Nation", edited Robert C. Byrd.

Tuesday afternoon, I had long, and I believe productive, discussion with Mr. Leo Wiegman, director of productions for W.W. Norton. He remains very interested in a book on your poetry.

He did want to make clear that he is not the final authority for a publication of this kind at Norton. That publishing company does have poetry anthology division which must approve. (This is actually good news, because it means they are committed to publishing poetry anthologies). And, as with any major publisher, there is a thorough review process for publication. But Mr. Wiegman also pointed out: 1) as director of productions he will carry a lot of weight. 2) he is willing and anxious to work with you to move the project toward publication, 3) your time in this project will not be wasted; even if Norton does not publish it, he is certain that someone else will certainly be interested doing so.

In our conversation, I discussed with him the type of poetry in your collection and how you have used it on the Senate floor, and the fact that you have documented when you used the poems. As I did so, he became even more interested.

The way he sees the anthology developing is not simply as a collection of poems, but how these poems were actually used to influence the Senate, the effect public policy, and how they helped make history. In other words, he is not as interested in the poems *per se*, but in the usage of the poems -- that is, the application of poetry to politics.

I should point out at this stage also that I mentioned to him that you have a few favorite, classical type stories, like Ol' Drum, which I told him about, that you used in the animal cruelty speech. He definitely felt that a few of these type stories should also be included. Not too many of them, but certainly a few of them that have been used very effectively, like Ol' Drum.

From our discussion, he suggested that the proposal should stress the following:

1. The rationale for the book. This would be your view of the impact of poetry upon policies and politics, and to what political purposes you have used poems. How and why you have used poetry in floor speeches, in floor debates, and to support or oppose particular issues. Mr. Wiegman is fascinated with, and says there is a strong interest in, how words make history, and the enduring power of words, even in a digital age, to inspire, to uplift, and to motivate: hence the purpose of the book, and its working title, "Poetry and Politics: Why Words Shape the Nation."

This section might also include a discussion on how poetry has constituted a part of your morality and style, as well as politics. That is, what poetry means to you and how you

have used it. (I mentioned that you have given several talks in which you discussed the meaning of poetry to yourself, and he felt these would provide an excellent basis for this section.)

2. Table of Contents. Mr. Wiegman suggested a list of 100-150 poems and authors that would form the basis of the book. Ideally, he said, the list would be a mixture of well known (national) poems and lesser known poems. He said to be sure to include obscure poems that you like and use.

3. Texts of some sample poems to be included. This should include texts of 20-30 lesser known and obscure poems.

As for how he sees the book developing.

Mechanics

We discussed some mechanics for guidelines. (Please bear in mind that these are all ballpark estimates; they are intended as possible guidelines in putting the book together.)

The book should consist of:

200 -250 book length pages.

100-150 poems

50 pages of annotation

A "prologue": this could discuss what poetry means to you, how you came to commit certain poems to memory, etc. (This would be taken from the rationale for the book discussed above.)

An "epilogue": he liked the idea of discussing how your use of poetry may influenced other member of Congress.

The heart of the book is the poems and how they were used. Based on our discussion, he strongly urged that the poems be categorized into sections based on their usage, not on the topics of their contents. For example, he would not want to see a sections on "Patriotic Poetry," "West Virginia Poetry," etc., but sections on the theme and occasion of the poems you used. Within each section, poems could be deftly introduced and placed into context.

Some suggested some categories based on the usage of poem included:

1. Why certain poems were used in particular circumstances.
2. How you came to use particular poems, and what significance you see in these particular pieces.
3. Your use of particular poems at particular moments of a public policy battle. When faced

with a particular theme or issue, how did you choose what particular poem to use.

4. Poems used in context. He thought it might be useful to show a few examples of your use of poetry in context, that is, excerpts from the *Congressional Record*..

5. Reaction, especially unanticipated responses, that your poetry has generated.

Bridge Builder

Little Chap Who Followed Me

Pinch of This,. Pinch of That

Of Drum

Canterbury Tales