

# The French Review

## *From the Editor's Desk*

The lead article in this month's issue is appropriately entitled "Homage to *Village in the Vaucluse*." Its author is Richard Goodman, himself author of *French Dirt: the Story of a Garden in the South of France*, who was influenced by Laurence Wylie. In fact, this essay might just as easily have been called "Homage to Laurence Wylie," although he always preferred to be called "Larry." The homage is long overdue in our pages since Laurence Wylie died over ten years ago.

I first came across his books, *Village in the Vaucluse*, *Chanzeaux*, *A Village in Anjou* (written by Laurence Wylie's students), and *Les Français* in 1971 when I began my teaching career and was pressed into service to teach a course that summer on contemporary France to high school teachers of French. Laurence Wylie's books opened up a whole new world for me and made understanding the French (I am of French origin) and teaching about them one of my life's passions. Last spring (2005), after a long hiatus, I was privileged to teach *Les Français* (co-authored in 1995 and 2001 by Jean-François Brière) again in its 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Although this remarkable textbook could use some updating, it holds up extremely well. My students reacted positively to Wylie's contrastive approach, although at times they were stung or put off by comments about American and French behavioral patterns. Ultimately they came to better understand both cultures and some were ready to actually go to France to test what they had learned. The contrastive approach was enhanced because we had two Moroccan students (one female, one male), a Tunisian, a Palestinian, and a Frenchman in the class as well.

I met Larry Wylie in 1978 as a participant in his first NEH Summer Seminar, "Patterns of French Behavior Today." It was held at Harvard University where he was Douglas Dillon Professor of the Civilization of France. Larry Wylie was approachable and friendly from the start (some weekends we played *pétanque*), although a number of us could not fathom why he would not tell us what we needed to do or how we should organize the seminar. Finally, we asked him. His response was that it was our responsibility to organize ourselves in the seminar and get on with our research projects. So we did and learned about direction through indirection among many other things. We also learned of Wylie's and others' work on non-verbal communication. What a fine teacher he was! His combination of Socratic methods and silence (Laurence Wylie was a Quaker) persuaded us to articulate what we were thinking and writing and work cooperatively. I continued to see Larry Wylie until his death in 1994 and always learned more from him. He was supportive of everyone around him and made people feel that they could accomplish what he had. That, of course, was a pretty tall order!

Many people from many places, myself included, attended the Quaker memorial service that was held for Larry Wylie in Cambridge. What is important is that his spirit lives on and that his books, analyses, and ideas are still alive and part of intellectual discussion today. Larry Wylie put a human face on France. Richard Goodman's article reminds us how he did it.

I can not close this nostalgic editorial without paying tribute to Gervais E. Reed who, for fifteen years, has served as Assistant Editor for Creative Works. Under his imaginative leadership we have profited from reviews of the most recent and groundbreaking fiction of

the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first as well as that of new and promising authors. His yearly visits to big and small publishers alike in Paris have yielded fruit that has nourished all our intellectual lives. In the recent past Gerry also added many francophone titles to the offerings made available to you, our readers. Gerry revealed an unerring eye for editing. As Managing Editor I relished reading his editorial changes to reviews. They always enhanced the review in question and served as models for anyone learning to become an editor. In 2002 I was pleased to publish Gerry's essay, "Ten Years of Reviewing 'Creative Works,'" in our seventy-fifth anniversary issue. I recommend it to you.

I am happy to say that although Gerry's name will no longer appear on our masthead, he will continue to write reviews for his old rubric. We are very fortunate that Gervais E. Reed is succeeded by Edward Ousselin, no stranger to the pages of the *French Review*, where he has published a number of articles on cinema. He has a very keen editorial eye and will be a worthy successor.

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