

KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

The time of the Autumnal Equinox through Indian summer is a time of *sectioning*. The days are as nearly equal in length with the nights. The sun is setting midway between the points of Summer Solstice and Winter Solstice. The North Temperate Zone is settling down from procreation to hibernation, and we have these "golden days" as the song so aptly puts it. The days are *sectionized* weather-wise, too. The prevailing wind remains southwest, so more days than not will follow this mellow pattern. The mornings present a heavy dew; all cool surfaces are saturated with the beading precipitation which built in the moving air and through the day.

All the grasses, weeds, flowers, and garden plants look as though they were just watered. Mushrooms thrive on this moisture method. A good rainstorm starts them, and the morning dew coaxes them along. Buildings, cars, and streets are all wet, but the benefits of dew escape them. As the sun slowly rises, the dew evaporates. By the time the sun is equal to all, only dense and sheltered spots remain wet. All that is exposed has dried. The afternoons usually have a calm period, and as the sun starts to dip to the west, the wind picks up. The air is hazy and yellow, a "smoky sou'wester" it is called. This is burgeoning precipitation, not heavy enough for rain, but with the absence of the sun, the moisture will steadily descend, and through the dark of night will become the dew of the next morning.

You hear fewer and fewer calls of the red-winged blackbirds. The hollow "chuck" and shrill whistle are being swapped for the nasal "peent" of the nuthatches, both white-breasted and red-breasted. The openness of the blackbirds water habitat is swapped for sturdy tree trunks and the foraging, not on the wing, but a steady downward climb for insects tunnelled under the bark.

The seasons change, and all changes with the seasons. The other character I saw getting ready for winter's chill was a red squirrel; what a handsome and clever little animal of electric energy and ingenuity. This one was struggling with a large *amanita muscaria*, a poisonous mushroom. As I appeared, it had just bitten the stem at

the base. More concerned for its mushroom than for me, it continued. The mushroom was half his size and an awkwardly shaped. Seeing the need to hurry, it bit the stem off completely before it climbed the trunk. Smart, quick, and decided, up the trunk it went with its booty. The size, shape, and the pine needles slowed the squirrel's movements. It looked more like an ant struggling with a crumb of bread as it pushed carefully through the needles from branch to branch. When it found a suitable "V" of two branches, it settled the mushroom there. The squirrel will let that dry until it was ready to carry to the nest. Don't worry about the poisonous part. For you and I it would be sickly, maybe even fatal; but for these small woodland animals, it is mildly hallucinogenic. I have seen box turtles unable to move at my approach as they slowly munched the edges of the mushroom cap. But the red squirrel is the clever one, picking, cleaning, setting out to dry, and storing: woodlands housekeeping.

Castle Hill Center for the Arts in Truro has a new publication. It is *Ten Years of Poems*. This volume is the result of Alan Dugan's Poetry Workshop: a prized, hard-working, and successful group interested in improving their artistic skills. They have the best of opportunities to do so with the expert guidance of poet Alan Dugan.

Alan Dugan is a brilliant and recognized poet. He is the recipient of the Yale Younger Poets' Award, the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Prix de Rome, the Levinson Prize, the Shelly Memorial, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Rockefeller Fellowship. He enlisted in the Air Force in World War II, was a student at Queen's College in Brooklyn, and is a graduate of Mexico City College. Dugan has taught at Connecticut College, Sarah Lawrence College, and the University of Colorado at Boulder. He and his wife, artist Judy Shahn, live in Truro.

The members of the poetry workshop feel most fortunate to have a leader the calibre of Alan Dugan. The members are artists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and writers of works other than poetry for the most part. They meet at Castle Hill two afternoons a week, 3:30

TEN YEARS OF POEMS



FROM ALAN DUGAN'S POETRY
WORKSHOP AT CASTLE HILL
CENTER FOR THE ARTS
THURO, MASSACHUSETTS

to 5 pm, for the months of July and August. The group meets to read and discuss each other's poems. Each member has a copy in hand as the designated member reads their poem to the group. They can *see* and *hear* the poem at once. The emphasis is to make each poem as clear as possible, to change only unclarities or poor grammar. The change must be willed by the author. It is only pointed out by the group and the leader, not changed, and if any of the group speaks strongly of change, they are gently reminded by Dugan not to rewrite another's work.

At least three members have been there since the beginning days: Ding Watson, Nene Schardt, and Rosalind Pace. All the members look forward to each session. They will occasionally have someone who has only a two-week vacation. All return. The reason given is that it is such a well-run group, that it is not threatening. Georgia Coxe related to me that she has been in many poetry workshops, and that they tend to "cut up the poet," and that it is intimidating and painful. But Dugan's Castle Hill group is helpful and respectful of the deep personal nature of poetry. They meet outside on a deck, weather permitting. The cover of the book is just that subject, and though extremely difficult to photograph, was done so successfully by Georgia.

The group is professional. They are interested in their and others' talent and are a working group. It is "not something to do." It is work that bears rewards. Occasionally, Alan Dugan will bring in one of his poems and ask student opinions. He appreciates his group as other poets and takes them at his level. They find Dugan's unfinished poems exciting to hear. It varies how many people will read, but usually each of them has read a work

within two sessions.

The volume shows the result of interest, work, and learning. They are all so rightly proud of this Castle Hill publication. It is *not* a vanity press. I was impressed at the clarity and intensity of these twenty-four poets. It is a volume worth owning and rereading and should certainly be in all Cape libraries. The cost is \$6.95, and it is available at the Provincetown Book Store, Twice-Sold Tales Bookshop in Wellfleet, Hillside Farm Vegetable Stand, and at the Provincetown Art Association. The proceeds go the Castle Hill Center for the Arts. Buy the book for any reason you wish, but buy it and read it.

