

As of Sunday, January 25, there will be a new addition to the cultural life of Memphis. The Dixon Gallery and Gardens, 4339 Park, will open its doors (1 P.M.—5 P.M.) to the public charging an entrance fee of \$1.00 for adults and 50¢ for children.

I met the Director, Michael Milkovich, who was formerly curator of Brooks Art Gallery, 1963—65. "I am glad to be back in Memphis — this gallery is an ideal situation. We will be supplementing the existing galleries. The Pink Palace supports regional talent and of course Brooks has a very wide range. Our areas of development will principally be amongst the Impressionists and other later 19th century artists. There is no limit to what we can do."

A dynamic man, Milkovich was excited both personally and professionally by the opportunities given to Memphis. Mr. Dixon created a charitable trust to be administered by a Board of Trustees composed of friends and business associates. "In this type of completely up-to-date gallery, the director makes recommendations as to purchases and disposals to the Board as well as fully documenting and researching the acquisitions and bequests. The director guarantees a professionally run and organized gallery."

We then took a world-wind tour of the house. I remember a large living room furnished in the English style—dark Chippendale, floral chintz, pale colors of green, beige and rose, some silver, a great many porcelain pieces and the gleam of Waterford crystal. Over the mantle is the *piece de resistance* of the collection, Degas' *Danseuse Ajustant Son Soulier* (Dancer Adjusting Her Shoe): a quiet painting of a quiet moment. On the opposite wall is the newest acquisition, a portrait by Mary Cassatt, who was an American impressionist and student of Degas. "The Cassatt gives us a perfect opportunity to expand the collection into the American Impressionists and painters who were experimenting with this new art of the 19th century."

We went into the adjoining library where from the French windows Milkovich told me of the plans for expansion. "We have so much — paintings, porcelain — and will be acquiring more — so we need the space. We will probably build on this



Photograph by Alan Copeland: Dixon Gallery and Gardens

# center city

VOLUME III, NUMBER 2  
JANUARY 22, 1976

## IMPRESSIONS at DIXON

PAT WATERS

## From where I stand... look-alike lacking

DAVID BOWMAN

Who needs a real steamboat when you can get a simulated steamboat? That seems to be one of the premises in the recent announcement of the new multi-million dollar River Museum for Mud Island.

Simulation-beats-reality is not a new premise; it's been around at least as long as Disneyland. The Disney people knew that real animals, for example, can misbehave, while simulated animals never do. Their behavior can be programmed by animatronics down to the last cute detail. Better, they're safe, odorless, and never embarrassing—just like we want our lives to be.

So instead of a real steamboat, we can look forward to "the front third of a Mississippi River steamboat . . . accompanied by the sounds of the engines and river, and of passengers appropriate to the various rooms and spaces." Not outside, on the Mississippi, but inside, comfortably housed in a large exhibit hall.

The one-third steamboat is one of the weaker components of architect Roy Harrover's \$23 million plan for the new Volunteer Bicentennial

eastern side of the house." We paused to look at the Epstein bust of Churchill. I asked if it were a copy of the bust in the National Portrait Gallery in London. "Sculptors produce in batches of 6 or 9, so this is likely a companion to what you refer." As he pointed out the various artists — Fantin-Latour, Chagall, Gauguin, Boudin — he commented on how the gallery will look. "The carpets will be taken up — they would not take the wear — and the small personal things will be removed — too easy to become someone's souvenir of the Dixon Gallery."

We recrossed the foyer, with its Reynold's portrait, to the dining room. A lovely room with elegant Chinoiserie wallpaper and a stunning portrait by Sir Henry Raeburn. "As you see, these large 18th century pieces give us a superb opportunity to develop the gallery historically. The furniture is period Georgian imported from England — comfortable and solid. We can put paintings in a living setting."

As we returned to the foyer Milkovich opened the French doors to expose the idyllic vista of an English garden in the *natural* style (not so rigidly ornamental as the French). "We will develop the garden botanically — different plants in different seasons. We are building green houses and are planning quite an extensive staff — the property is 20 acres — garden and gallery should be viewed as whole — complementary and interdependent. There are many pieces of garden sculpture — most acquired in Europe. Just wait till April when everything is in bloom."

I went back to the living room for a last look at this museum-home. In memory, the paintings are a blur of green vistas and landscapes. The Degas and Cassatt, the still portraits, are a vivid contrast. I commented on the quietness, the relaxing aura of the room. "Dixon was a quiet man who appreciated beautiful things. He wanted no frou-frou, no show. He could have bought late Gauguin at late Gauguin prices — he did not. He wasn't so interested in name or personality. He collected about himself what he liked."

This is a collection formed by an intensely personal sense of aesthetic values. Mr. Dixon had the time and opportunity to sit and gaze at these paintings — to let his attention wander from one to another. He has given Memphians a chance to do the same.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — "From Where I Stand..." is a section title which CENTER CITY utilizes to denote material which is predominantly of a commentarial nature — that in no way implies that such comments are editorial (expressing the views of the editor or publisher).*

*Anyone, within reason, may submit writing expressing legitimate concerns about public affairs in Memphis for publication under that designation.*

## SIMULATED MEMPHIS (Bowman)

Park on Mud Island, but it is by no means the only flaw in what many people have called "an exciting plan."

For example, the museum also calls for "a space resembling a honky-tonk saloon" and "a simulated control room of a recording studio." Though the real Beale Street is in shambles, courtesy of progress, we could at least get a bowdlerized saloon (with real beverages) on the new Beale Street—if the museum money went there. We could also get a first-hand look at the workings of one of Memphis' real recording studios, like the Stax studios on McLemore, for the price of a tour booth—if the museum money went there.

No doubt there are reasons for the River Museum. It will wrap Memphis up in one convenient stop-and-shop package; it will eliminate the need to drive here and there into strange neighborhoods for the real thing.

But it will be dull. It will never change. Unlike the real steamboat, with different weather, varicolored sunsets, and changing sights and smells; unlike the real saloon, with a different crowd and new sounds every night; unlike the real recording studio, with a different artist cutting different tracks every time you go there—you can go to the River Museum once and never have to go again.

There is also the odd coincidence that (according to its master plan) the new Memphis Museum under construction at the Pink Palace will feature a whole section on the 1840–1870 river trade, including steamboats, rafts, and river lore, and a whole section on Memphis music, including the origin of the blues, W.C. Handy and other famous musicians, rock and roll, Elvis Presley and others, and the Memphis Sound of Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, Carla Thomas, and others. Since the Memphis Museum staff will also be in charge of the River Museum, maybe duplication will be avoided.

Judging solely from the marvels described, the River Museum seems over-large and over-expensive. No information as to its costs have yet been circulated, but you can bet it will take a big bite of the estimated \$23 million needed for Volunteer Park.

As to the rest of the park, I must admit I found Mr. Harrover's slide show very persuasive. But so many more close looks at the plan by city officials and the public (removed from his personal eloquence) will be needed. If it's a good plan, it will survive criticism. If certain parts of it crumble under public scrutiny, some taxpayers will be relieved.

# blue blood in the godhead

JIM ROPER

"The Ruling Class," Peter Barnes' savage satire about the British upper class, opened recently at Circuit Playhouse. It is a must for anyone who loves good theater.

When the eccentric 13th Earl of Gurney dies accidentally by choking on a noose in his bedroom gallows (I said he was eccentric) his money-hungry heirs are shocked to learn he has left a small fortune to the butler, Tucker, and the rest to his only living son, Jack. The heir, diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic, has been a sort of out-patient at a mental institution. When he shows up, it's bad enough that he has shoulder-length hair, wears a monk's robe, and preaches a philosophy of love. But he really horrifies the family when he proclaims he is God.

"When did you first realize you were God?" his aunt demands. "Simple," Jack answers, "when I prayed I found I was talking to myself."

His uncle is determined that the Gurney name won't be scandalized. "It's families like ours that set the tone," he proclaims airily. Determined to cash in on the estate by any devious means possible, the family agrees to a plan to have the Earl marry and produce a suitable heir. If that works, they can dispose of Jack and control the estate themselves.

As Jack is forced to admit his lack of divinity, he changes quickly into a character intent on revenge and destruction. By this time, he has been declared "cured" and "fit for society."

The play is deftly directed by J. Eric Bethancourt. For the most part his cast is superb. But it is Bill Baker as both the 13th and 14th Earls, who dazzles in his role. Baker is in complete control from beginning to end. He gives a real lesson in what it means to be an actor, and he's a pleasure to watch.

The play's choreography is by Harry Bryce, and Vincent Astor plays the organ.

"The Ruling Class" runs through February 1 at Circuit Playhouse.

## PATRICIDE

STEVE SIMS

My first throbbing began just south of Winchester's store, east of the bluff. There were trails, ponds and trees then: a quiet spot, destined to become fruitful.

We were together then: won, lost and won again our charter; fought and lost a war; and the fever nearly nailed us down. But we were together then.

Came river traffic and trade; breweries and conventions; commerce galore; a medical school, colleges, trolleys and theatres. Just name it, we could produce it, buy it or tame it. Some we made rich and famous, others, just rich.

What anybody wanted we could serve up, and it was the best or worst you could find: preachers, whores, churches, saloons; do-gooders, gamblers, drunks; politics and Mr. Crump; blacks, whites, and blues; mules, pavement, whiskey and indians; planters and yankees—buildings!

We disbursed goods and services, and collected people. People of all sorts—from up North and from the cotton belt — from foreign countries. Business boomed — all sorts — some we used to know nothing about like recording, producing and promoting.

Then we got the spreads. (There's gold out there! Go east young man!) Cotton, politics, and rock'n'roll — all were replaced by a new king — the developer. Buying quietly, selling loudly. Houses, apartments and condos; shopping centers — but no trees. Dirt, but not even a gentle roll in the terrain. "So what?" you said, "it's nice and quiet and away from all the mess that started in '68. Besides, it smells new and is expensive — it's genuine plastic. I'll take it!" And I sweated and strained and built streets, sewers and utility lines, and you had it.

But wait a minute! Now I get it. Yes, you mined me for commerce, stayed till the good was gone, then moved on. Left me exposed, quietly hoping that this area of your birth would slide into the river.

But I'm not used-up yet. I've another vein of ore. The future will mock your desertion.

For two years Center City has been distributed free of charge. We were able to do this because we had financial support from First Presbyterian Church and the Memphis Presbytery, a group made up of Presbyterian churches in West Tennessee, eastern Arkansas, and southwest Missouri.

Partial, but not total, funding will be available to the paper this year. This means we have to ask for funds from other sources to continue publishing. We hope our readers can help. If you are able to contribute, fill out the coupon below and send it, along with a \$5 subscription fee, for a year's subscription to the paper.

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Help us make 1976 our best year yet. Send in your subscription fee today.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Contrary to malicious rumors, CENTER CITY will be published biweekly—that's semi-monthly, fortnightly, every other week—as opposed to bimonthly, a word which sometimes means biweekly, semi-monthly, fortnightly, twice-monthly, but on the other hand sometimes does not.

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# earthly delights

## DOWNTOWN EXHIBITS

### Sterick Building (Lobby)

January—paintings by Winston Stringfield\*

### National Bank of Commerce Building (Lobby)

Through January 30—Jason Williamson's Bicentennial series of water colors, "Moments of Legacy"\*

## FILM

### Brooks Gallery

February 1—"The Twelve Chairs" (Mel Brooks)  
—2:30 p.m.\*

### Center Film Society

January 23—"Persona"  
January 30—"North by Northwest"  
February 6—"Reivers"—UT Student Activity Center Auditorium—7:30 p.m.

### Filmtrak

February 2-3—"The New Land"—Jewish Community Center Auditorium—8:00 p.m.

### Images

February 8—"Tristana"—200 Clough Hall at Southwestern—8:00 p.m.

## MUSIC

### Dixon-Myers Hall

February 5 & 7—"Il Trovatore"

## THEATRE

### Playhouse on the Square

January 22 thru February 22—"Tobacco Road"—Wed., Thurs., Fri., & Sun. at 8 p.m. and Saturdays at 6:30 p.m. & 10 p.m. (tickets are \$4-\$4.50)

### Circuit Playhouse Theatre II

Through February 8—"Cowboy Joe" (play by Lynn Eaton)—Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights at 8:30 p.m.

## LECTURES—DISCUSSION—DIALOGUE

### American Issues Forum

January 27—"The Welfare State: Providing a Livelihood"—Carolyn Taylor, Field Supervisor, Information and Referral Unit, Tenn. Dept. of Human Services—First National Bank Building Auditorium—12:15 p.m. &  
January 29 at the Cossitt-Goodwyn Libraries—12:15 p.m.

## EXHIBITS

### Dixon Gallery

January 25—Opening—1 p.m. to 5 p.m. daily—Closed Monday & Friday

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**city**

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## "DEATH & DYING" at MSU

A ten-week seminar on "Death and Dying" will be offered by Continuing Education at Memphis State University beginning on February 3.

Contemporary attitudes toward death and dying will be examined in the early sessions of the seminar. Later sessions will focus on specific medical, legal and theological issues, such as suicide, euthanasia, abortion and "pulling the plug."

Rev. Tom Hart and Rev. Delton Pickering, Catholic and United Methodist campus ministers at Memphis State, will coordinate the seminar.

The seminar will meet from 7:30 to 9:30 on Tuesday evenings (February 3 - April 13) in Room 219, Johnson Hall, on the Memphis State campus. A course fee of \$10.00 for the entire seminar will be charged. Registration information can be received by calling Continuing Education at Memphis State, 454-2700.