

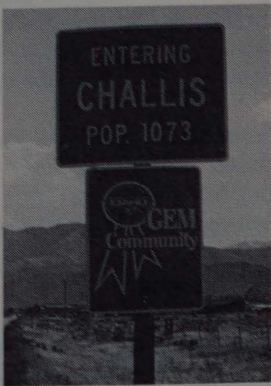
In This Issue:

"Can Ezra Pound Come Home?"
by Troy Passey



According to the Idaho Humanities Council, the answer is "Yes," if we believe one major Idaho daily which the evaluator claims headlined its coverage of an Idaho Humanities Council-sponsored Pound Symposium "POUND NOT ANTI-SEMITE."

"The Case of the Cross-Dressing Librarian"
by Jon Winegarner



Plot: isolated, small town, mysterious disappearance of a young girl, arrivals of a travelling artists' book exhibit and statewide anti-Gay initiative

Sub-plot: reports the town librarian is cross-dressing. The (ex-)librarian tells his story in this ICB exclusive.

To begin at the beginning, I was born February 6, 1953 in the small, southwestern North Dakota town of Hettinger where my father took his first church after Chicago Theological Seminary. I was the fourth child of eight (four boys, four girls). Cleveland, Ohio became home when I was eight years of age. Finishing high school there, I spent two years adrift — a commune in the Ozarks of Arkansas, a brief stint tripping around Europe, another two or three months criss-crossing North America on a Greyhound Ameripass. Summer after freshman year of college (College of the Ozarks, Oakville, Arkansas, biology major) I returned to Cleveland and found work at the monster industrial complex of Republic Steel. (Fiery furnace, molten iron, 20 ton ingot slabs glowing orange hot.) Weary of life in hell, I planned a trip west to visit my sister in Idaho who was working for the Forest Service at a ghost town called Custer while attending Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Piling my younger brother and sister into a 1961 Rambler American, in 1974 we launched forth with home-grown dope drying in the rear window.

What I found, in the mountains of Central Idaho, aside from my sister (alive and well), was a kind of solace, a spiritual homeland, untrammled, wild and wide open for exploration and discovery. This place, in its rugged boundlessness, fed me in a deep and wondrous way. I stayed on working summers for the Forest Service. 1975 through 1978 I worked on fire, fence and trail crews, as a fire lookout, and a recreation patrolman before feeling the pull to return to Cleveland, finish school and "improve" my lot in life. Anthropology grabbed my interests this time around. People and culture are so curious a phenomena. I particularly relished the study of symbolic analysis: what and why this or that becomes fixed with meaning, how that fits into a bigger picture of the culture and/or human complex and how meaning of charged symbols change with culture contact, origin or techno cultures. Along the way to my degree, I minored in psychology and religion. Although I finished summa cum laude, I only managed to get work as an archeologist on crews doing pre-construction cultural resource assessments, with occasional excavation of sites required. I grew weary of digging dead people and cultures: my interests were really in the living. So, I returned to graduate school in San Francisco. I studied counseling, psychology, and the human growth processes as identified by lesser known schools of Western psychology, ancient, esoteric knowledge and religions of Asia (Taoism, Buddhism, etc.). After a year of school there, and some intern work at a drop-in center for the homeless in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, I found myself homeless and jobless, unable to afford further schooling. I was living out of my trusty old VW camper van on the streets of San Francisco. Desperate to escape, I applied for summer employment in the Challis National Forest. I got a job and returned in May of 1987, after nine years absence, to the spiritual homeland I had always felt I would and should return to. Working that summer as a recreation patrolman, and fire fighter when needed, hiking into the mountains whenever I could, I felt a sense of relief, a "home again" kind of comfort. I left in January 1988 to house-sit for my parents in

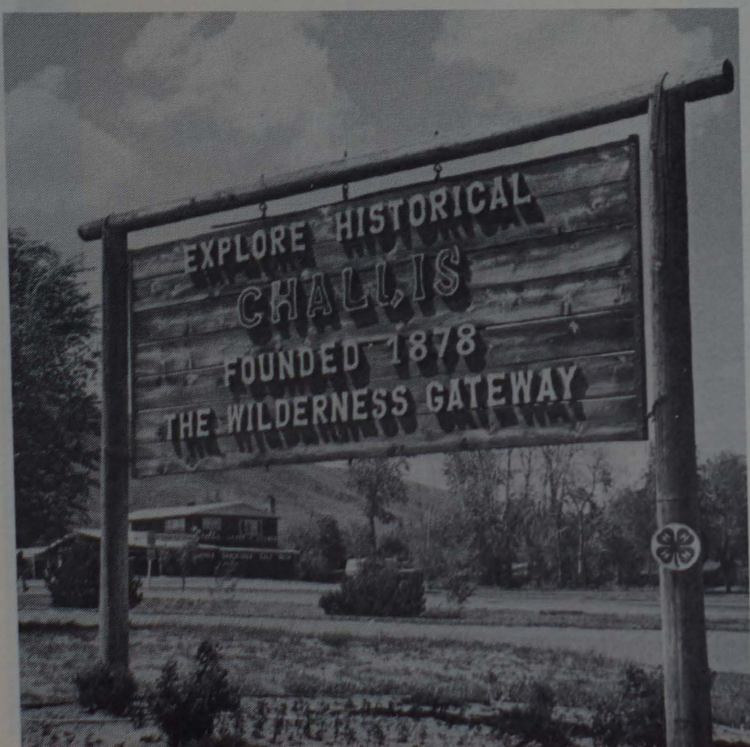
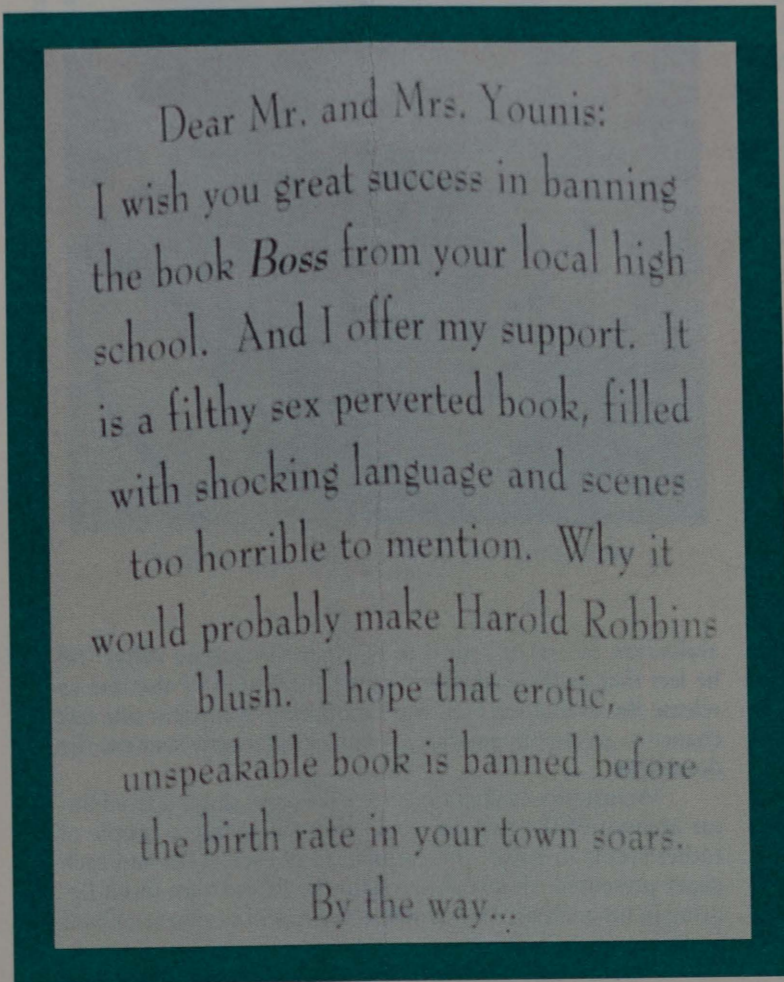


Photo by Tom Trusky

IDAHO CENTER FOR THE BOOK NEWSLETTER

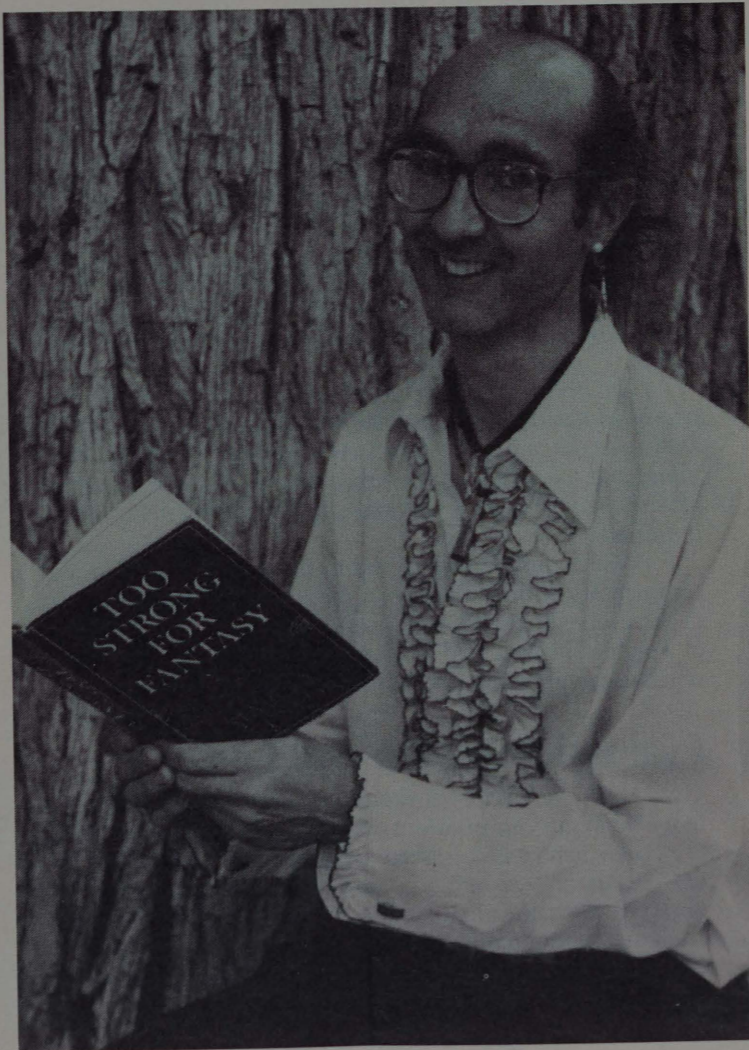
"...because people read t-shirts."
VOL. 4/NO. 1
April 1997
(Idaho Biblio Controversies)



from T-shirt by Heather Katula, Boise (see p. 2 for back of shirt).

THE CASE OF THE CROSS-DRESSING LIBRARIAN

by John Winegarner



Ex-librarian, Jon Winegarner

Cleveland, not having anything better to do with myself that winter in Challis, I returned early next summer, jobless and homeless again but at least at home in the mountains of Idaho and trusting in providence. And providence did provide a job on the helitack (helicopter-borne firefighters) crew during the fieriest summer on record. After months of action in Yellowstone Park, Wyoming and in Idaho, I had a fair bank account from twelve-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week work on the fire lines. Friends in Challis suggested because I felt so at home in Challis, I should consider making an offer to the bank on a house they had just been refused a loan on. After some back and forth negotiation, and the bank's consideration of other offers, we settled on a \$19,500 cash price — only half of what the bank was in the hole for it. Six months after arriving here homeless and jobless, eighteen months after leaving San Francisco under the same conditions, I was now the owner of one of the largest old homes in Challis. Old timers tell me how they feel it's the nicest place in town because of its native stone architecture, its half-acre lot with the creek running through the back yard, and its rich soil in a huge garden area.

In the years since, I have put in thousands of man hours refurbishing, restoring and remodeling the house, landscaping the ground, and generally making the house my home. Now it is not only one of the "show places" of Challis (though few actually see it), but also it is a seasonal gathering place for the Challis alternative community, and is known by friends, neighbors, and police alike for some exceptionally loud Halloween and Mardi Gras parties.

bishing, restoring and remodeling the house, landscaping the ground, and generally making the house my home. Now it is not only one of the "show places" of Challis (though few actually see it), but also it is a seasonal gathering place for the Challis alternative community, and is known by friends, neighbors, and police alike for some exceptionally loud Halloween and Mardi Gras parties.

I was not rehired by the the Forest Service 1991. Summer of 1990, I had worked with the forest hydrologist as her assistant in the forest supervisor's office. There I was vocal about my concern that we were failing to meet forest plans on water quality monitoring, particularly as it related to resource extraction activities and their impact on stream morphology and fisheries habitat. I think I made them anxious, being on the "inside," with access to files and computers. I spent the next year-and-a-half living on savings and doing occasional jobs, carpentry or stone masonry, for friends, before being hired as the assistant librarian in Challis. As the assistant, I worked under a high school-educated Mormon housewife ten hours a week for \$4.25 an hour for ten months before she moved on (her husband took a job with a mining organization in Arizona).

In May of 1993, I was promoted to Librarian Executive Director of the Challis Public Library. I took a few months getting the hang of the administration part of the job and then began to pursue the greater challenge: how to make the library a beacon, believing all great art or literature should carry us not only into our deepest selves, but also to the boundaries and beyond our own cherished understandings and, in so doing, paradoxically, show us who we are. Unfortunately, I was left trying to work with a do-nothing board of mostly uneducated, clueless people headed by another high school-educated, Mormon housewife. They were incapable of doing even the job they were legally bound to do. I spent my entire tenure there covering for their do-nothing incompetence as they again and again failed to make a move, arrive at a decision, or take action on everything from budgets to housekeeping. Somehow, in their infinite wisdom, they assumed I would be like every other mousey, housewife librarian, placating and sucking up. Slowly, I recognized all my efforts to educate them on matters such as budget and public finance had all the effectiveness of talking to a wall. I found this ironic, in that I have been told time and again that my capacity to explain clearly and precisely would make me an excellent teacher.

I recognized I was stuck with a non-supportive board, that in its incompetence — due to lack of vision and intellect — could not and would not make a decision on anything. When I asked that the cleaning of the library be contracted outside the library, they directed me to my two-page job description of duties and said that if some of those jobs had to be done on my own time, that was fine with them. If I had a problem with being asked to do library work on my own time, obviously I did not care enough for and about the library or my job — after all, they countered, we board members are donating our time. Once I was out of the library, the board did act on contracting cleaning services and compensating the librarian for all hours worked.

The board took a hard turn against me after a few good citizens went to a city council meeting to complain that the librarian wore women's clothes and their children could no longer go to the library without fearing for their safety. This was April 1994, after my New Year's Eve appearance cross-dressed at a private party where a couple of citizens who would later complain to city council were also in attendance. Interestingly, it took these good citizens four months to get around to going to city council; however, since their leader was of the "bar crowd," and alcohol being a depressant, it is no wonder it took them that long to act. Other than a visit to the bar on Halloween with fellow revelers, I had never made a public appearance cross-dressed in Challis.

concludes next issue



Winegarner's home in Challis, Idaho

Photo by Tom Trusky

CAN EZRA POUND COME HOME?

by Troy Passey

Over ten years ago, on October 4 and 5 of 1985, the Ezra Pound Centennial Conference was held in Hailey, Idaho—the birthplace of Ezra Pound. This particular Poundian literary conference was unique in three significant ways: First, it was a celebration of Ezra Pound—the 100 year anniversary of his birth. Second, Olga Rudge, Pound's companion, and Mary De Rachewiltz, the daughter of Rudge and Pound, voyaged from Italy to attend the event. And third, public discussion of Pound's anti-semitism in the course of the conference became quite hostile. The controversy concerning how Pound's anti-semitism was addressed at the conference continues to linger to this day.

How I Got Involved

As a graduate student at Boise State University I took a graduate level Book Arts class during the Fall 1994 semester. As a requirement in the course, I had to write a research paper dealing in some way with literary Idaho.

In 1994 in Idaho there was a religious-right enkindled ballot initiative (proposition 9) designed to deny civil rights to gays and lesbians. Bigotry was a charged issue in the months preceding the November election. Besides pomme frites and Sun Valley, Idaho is perhaps best known for survivalist-isolationist-Fundamentalist Christian-apocalyptic-racist-extremists in the northern (Hayden Lake) part of the state: the Aryan Nations. Since Aryan Nations publish from their compound, I thought I might write my research paper on some issue dealing with their press. I telephoned their office and asked to speak with their leader, Rev. Richard Butler. I was told that he was a busy man, and asked what I wanted. I was thoroughly chilled; the man's voice on the phone sounded like a hillbilly from Deliverance. Timidly, I asked if they would please send me a few of their brochures, pamphlets, newsletters, anything they printed. The man said: "This heer is Amerka, and you oughta know ya' ain't gonna get nothin' fer nothin'." So, with reluctance and trepidation I got a money order from the post office



Pound's mistress, Olga Rudge, made headlines protecting his reputation from the Twin Falls Times-News

for ten dollars, wrote "Aryan Nations" on it and sent it away to Hayden Lake. Feeling contrite, I sent a personal check to the ACLU for twenty dollars, but I could not help wondering which was more effectual: twenty dollars of litigiousity, or ten dollars worth of bullets?

A week or so later I received a package from northern Idaho and opened it: a few paltry magazines entitled Calling Our Nation—pornography of racism. It is not an exaggeration to say that my hands felt dirty from touching the pages. Right after the absurd article "Big Bang: Another Jewish Myth" in Calling Our Nation issue No. 71, I found my topic: "The Poet as Hero: Ezra Pound." I thought Ezra Pound as Idaho racist icon would be my research paper topic until my instructor mentioned the Ezra Pound Centennial Conference held in Idaho in 1985.

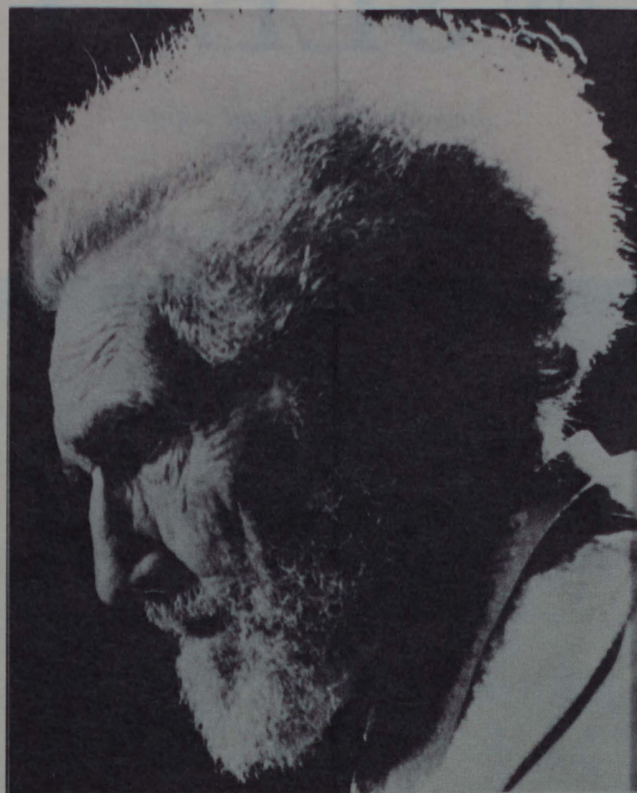
Pound Conference Particulars

The conference was sponsored by a \$12,396 grant from the Idaho Humanities Council (then called the Association for Humanities of Idaho). As per customary procedure, the IHC had an official evaluator at the conference. The IHC asked Norman Weinstein, an English adjunct faculty member at Boise State University, to perform this role. Weinstein was extremely disparaging of the Hailey conference for neglecting to address, and even obscuring, Ezra Pound and the issue of anti-semitism. Because he felt that the issue of Pound's racism was being overlooked during the course of the conference, Weinstein endeavored to keep the issue, if not in the forefront of, at least present in the minds of conference participants.

After deciding to focus on the Pound conference for my research, I called Norman Weinstein and asked his view of the conference in terms of Pound's anti-semitism. According to Weinstein, the conference was a "whitewash." The participants in the Hailey gathering were more interested in the proper "decorum of the conference" and in upholding an "image" of Pound rather than in "investigating Pound." Even after a decade, Weinstein was vehement in his condemnation. He referred me to his written "Evaluation of the Ezra Pound Centennial Conference," on file with the IHC in Boise.

Then I called Rick Ardinger, one of the organizers of the Hailey conference; he is currently the assistant director at the IHC. I told him my plans to write a research paper on the conference, and asked for a copy of Weinstein's evaluation. While Ardinger told me his opinion of Weinstein's perception of the conference, I forgot to ask permission to quote him. Suffice it to say, he believed that the conference did not camouflage the racist aspect of Pound. Ardinger named Weinstein as a friend, but implied that Weinstein was, perhaps, extremely sensitive on this issue. Ardinger seemed reluctant to share Weinstein's evaluation with me. He suggested that it would be difficult to locate and that I should contact the Idaho Historical Library for a copy of the evaluation. I raised the issue of whether or not Weinstein's evaluation was a public document. Ardinger admitted he was not sure.

I tried the Idaho Historical Library. Dead end. Then, my Book Arts instructor called the IHC and persuaded them—either through eloquent rhetoric or strong-armed intimidation (I am not sure which)—into releasing the document. But Ardinger did a curious thing; instead of mailing the



Idaho Poet Ezra Pound. . . Still controversial?

evaluation to me, he sent it to Norman Weinstein. Why? Did he feel that as the evaluator, Weinstein, should be the one to release the evaluation? Or, was he offering Weinstein one last chance to recant? In any case, Weinstein promptly sent me the document.

Weinstein's evaluation is a twelve page, single spaced linear account of the two-day conference (including a couple of earlier events in Boise)—his estimation of each event and each paper presented, almost always with the Pound/race motif figuring in his analysis. An example is Weinstein's critique of Ford Swetnam's presentation:

"Pound and the Little Journals" [actually, Swetnam's paper is entitled "Pound and the Independent Presses: A New Renaissance"] was the designated topic of Ford Swetnam. He immediately informed his audience that he was expanding the topic to include small book presses. That sounded inviting. What Swetnam delivered was less inviting... Nearly all of the information Swetnam shared could easily be found in any literary encyclopedia. The economic problems faced by small presses in Pound's time were mentioned superficially in passing. Pound's attempt to usurp the editorial control of several small presses was not discussed in terms of Pound's literary and/or fascist politics.

Weinstein evaluates almost every presentation at the conference in terms of Ezra Pound's anti-semitism and/or Pound's association with fascism. It is as if Weinstein was only interested in hearing about Pound/anti-semitism/ fascism. Any other analysis of Pound was dismissed. Of Peter Dale Scott's presentation, Weinstein writes:

Peter Dale Scott opened his talk on "Man of Anger, Man of Peace: the Poetic Politics of Pound" with the confession that he was "troubled by certain aspects of Pound's thinking." What troubled Scott was not revealed in the content of his bland and tepid apology for Pound's fascism.

Weinstein's assessment of the Pound Conference is not entirely negative. Of Bernard K. Duffy's paper "The Rhetoric of Ezra Pound's World War Two Radio Broadcasts," Weinstein writes:

The next presentation did something to relieve the total one-sidedness of the afternoon. It was only one voice. Bernard Duffy was the only voice at this event—besides my own [italics mine] and the voices of two others in the audience to say the obvious: Pound was a fascist and anti-semitic and never denied it himself.

What is interesting to me in reading this account and commentary of the conference is the active role Weinstein took in the proceedings. Weinstein consistently brings up the issue of Pound's bigotry and fascism—typically during the question/answer period that follows a paper presentation.

Evaluation of the Evaluation

After I received Weinstein's evaluation, I had intermittent telephone conversations with Rick Ardinger concerning the Hailey conference. I asked Ardinger about the role of the IHC evaluator. According to Ardinger, the evaluator is an observer who provides the IHC with an "objective written account." The evaluator reports on the "intellectual discussion," whether or not the proceeding included "balance," and a simple description and synopsis of "how the project went." In a let-

ter to me, Ardinger wrote:

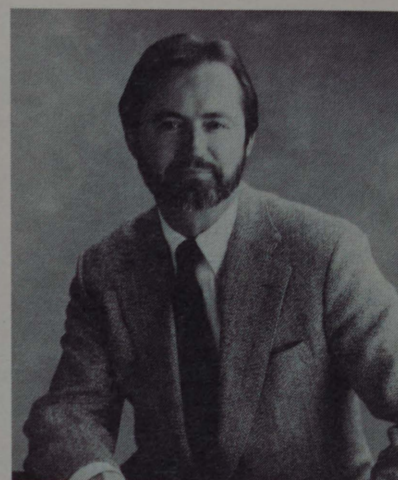
Typically, the IHC evaluators are assigned to projects to attend lectures, note the kind of intellectual exchanges taking place between scholar and audience, comment on the quality of an event or exhibit, perhaps ask questions, and give a general, balanced report for our files. The role Norm [Weinstein] played at the Pound Conference—that of an aggressive—sometimes antagonistic—questioner is not typical of IHC evaluators.

Weinstein acknowledges his participation in the conference. He writes, "The reader of this report should rightly question my objectivity in judging the quality of this event in which I held such a controversial position." Weinstein then counsels any questioning reader to measure his report against "audio and video tapes for verification."

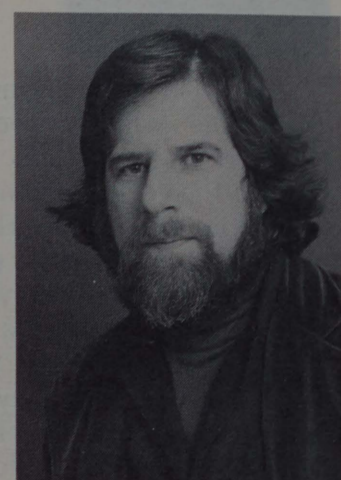
I appreciate Weinstein's forthrightness, but I think the question is not how candidly he chronicles the events of the conference, but rather the inherent difficulty of maintaining two roles simultaneously: evaluator and participant. Here is a sample of Weinstein's interaction: On the first day of the conference Olga Rudge responded to questions offered by the crowd of just under one hundred and fifty people gathered in Hailey's Liberty Theater. In his evaluation, Weinstein writes:

I decided to ask Rudge a question which I hoped would penetrate the trivial details she seemed to concentrate upon. I asked: "Did you see Pound act towards his Jewish friends in ways contradicting his public declarations of anti-semitism?" ...Rudge: "No. You have it all wrong. Pound was NEVER an anti-semitic."

I understand the dilemma Rudge's rebuttal would generate in all



Tom McClanahan IHC director and organizer of Hailey Conference



Norm Weinstein, IHC evaluator at Ezra Pound Centennial Conference

knowledgeable conference attendees; they knew better. Quite possible this dialogue became the catalyst for Weinstein's fixation with the fascist/anti-semitic; a lens through which he inspected each subsequent portion of the conference.

Rick Ardinger offers his own view of the dialogue between Rudge and Weinstein. The following paragraph written by Ardinger in the introduction to his book *What Thou Lovest Well Remains*, relates his perspective of their opening day exchange:

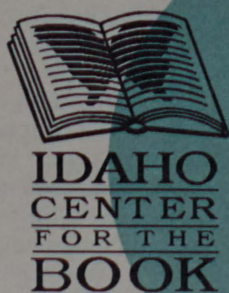
It was a beautiful fall afternoon, the sun was bright, the sky clear and blue, and the trees ablaze a brilliant gold... Mary and Olga fielded questions about Pound from conference attendees in Hailey's Liberty theater. I moved uncomfortably in my chair [emphasis added] when the two were asked to defend Pound's anti-semitism.

This paragraph helped me understand the milieu of the conference. Adjectives describing the day, "beautiful," "bright," and "ablaze" imply an idyllic setting. I infer from his tone that his expectations of the conference were that it would be constructive and gracious. The work "fielded" indicates that the answers were skillful and perhaps practiced, as if Rudge and De Rachewiltz had played this "game" before. Ardinger's physical reaction to the question of anti-semitism reveals how uneasy and awkward the suggestion of racism makes people feel, especially when that charge is aimed at the daughter and lover of a man who is being recognized on the anniversary of his one hundredth birthday.

Weinstein's condemnation of the conference in terms of Pound's anti-semitic fascism is consistent throughout his critique. In the conclusion of his evaluation, Weinstein wrote (and even underlined):

That a large part of this event emerged in my mind as an elaborate set of intellectual evasions and rationalizations to justify Pound's innocence from the charges of racism and anti-semitism is shameful, intellectually irresponsible, and a misuse of public funding.

concludes next issue



The ICB Newsletter is published biannually in April and October. Contributions, inquiries, requests for subscriptions should be sent to:

Idaho Center for the Book
Boise State University
Boise, Idaho 83725

<<<http://www.eils.lib.id.us/icb/icb.html>>>

Subscriptions are \$10.00 per year.

Reserve YOUR copy now!!!
From the acclaimed author
of *Boss* comes...

Servant to You

Hardcover Price: \$19.95

Name: _____
Street Address: _____ Phone: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Please send _____ copies of *Servant to You* to me at the above address as soon as available. I agree to hold the author and publisher harmless should any fornication and/or sexual misconduct occur because of the reading of this book.

I have enclosed \$19.95 plus \$2.00 Shipping for each copy I have requested.

Backside of Katula t-shirt