

From Her Own Point of View: Rediscovering Rose Wilder Lane, Literary Journalist

By Amy Mattson Lauters

This article discusses the fifty-year writing career and works of Rose Wilder Lane (1886-1968). To date, most scholarship about Lane has focused on Lane's relationship to her mother, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and Wilder's more famous books. This article argues that Lane's work deserves its own examination, that her contribution to literary journalism should be recognized, and that her story illustrates a need in scholarship to look for alternate sources of literary journalism. It documents Lane's journalistic career from its beginnings "On the Margins" with the San Francisco Bulletin in 1915 until its end with a masterpiece of literary journalism from Saigon in 1965. Lane's work shines because she committed absolutely to a point of view in telling both her fiction and nonfiction stories. That point of view varied, but as her fiction career passed behind her, it was increasingly her own, as she gave voice to "American" values of individualism and freedom from government interference.

Before the Bloggers: The Upstart News Technology of Television at the 1948 Political Conventions

By Mike Conway

At the 2004 political conventions, Web loggers received press credentials for the first time in history. Bloggers confidently wrote about putting new life into the conventions, which they said had been ruined by politicians and television. But more than 50 years earlier, television was the exciting new technology of the political conventions.

The 1948 conventions became television's political coming-out party, launching the medium as a serious journalistic platform. Through oral history interviews and other historical sources, an important confluence of technology, politics, and journalism emerges amid the backroom deals, balloons, speeches, posturing, and demonstrations inside the Philadelphia Convention Hall during those wilting summer months in Philadelphia in 1948. Politicians initially pushed for television coverage because of the potential audience, but soon realized the live camera would forever change the event. That spring, AT&T opened up the first commercial coaxial cable video system, creating a television network of 17 stations in 9 cities that could show the events live, allowing more than a million people to watch the political process simultaneously. Just as important, the conventions forced radio and print journalists who had ignored or ridiculed television to confront the medium and appear live on camera.

Subterranean Days of Rage: How Magazine Letters to the Editor in 1952 Foretold a Generation of Revolution.

By Brian Thornton

Golden hues of nostalgia have helped create a whitewashed pop culture portrayal of the 1950s as a Father Knows Best time of innocence and tranquility, when most Americans “liked Ike,” believed what they read in their newspapers, and lived carefree Happy Days and Wonder Years. But a study of letters to the editor printed in 10 popular national magazines in 1952 tells quite a different story.

The research in the current article confirms the argument that the 1950s were much more complicated than generally perceived. The focus here is on the previously unheralded letters to the editor that voiced opposition to much of the status quo. In many letters there is simmering rage expressed by unquiet men and women: Letter writers of 1952 punctured the image of a culture of complacency by challenging the anti-communist hysteria of McCarthyism, railing against racial inequality, demanding drugs be decriminalized, decrying bias in their newspapers, and challenging the subjugation of women.

The research in this article examined all the letters to the editor, a total of 3,719, published in 10 largely general interest magazines—The Atlantic, Ebony, Harper’s, Life, Look, The Nation, New Republic, Newsweek, The Progressive and Time—from Jan. 1, 1952 through Jan. 1, 1953.

What this current research reveals is what people in 1952 wrote to the national magazines, describing their feelings about a wide range of issues and news of the day.

Were Those the Days? Revisiting the Pulitzer-winning Efforts of Community Newspapers in the 1970s

By John Hatcher

In the history of the Pulitzer Prize only 47 small daily and seven weekly newspapers have received the award. This study conducts a case study comparison using inductive, qualitative methods to understand what happened that allowed community journalists at three small newspapers to pursue journalism campaigns that were awarded the Pulitzer Prize in the 1970s. The study uses in-depth interviews with journalists and textual analysis of documents including prize-winning articles to explore how these stories were pursued. The findings are presented in a series of narratives.