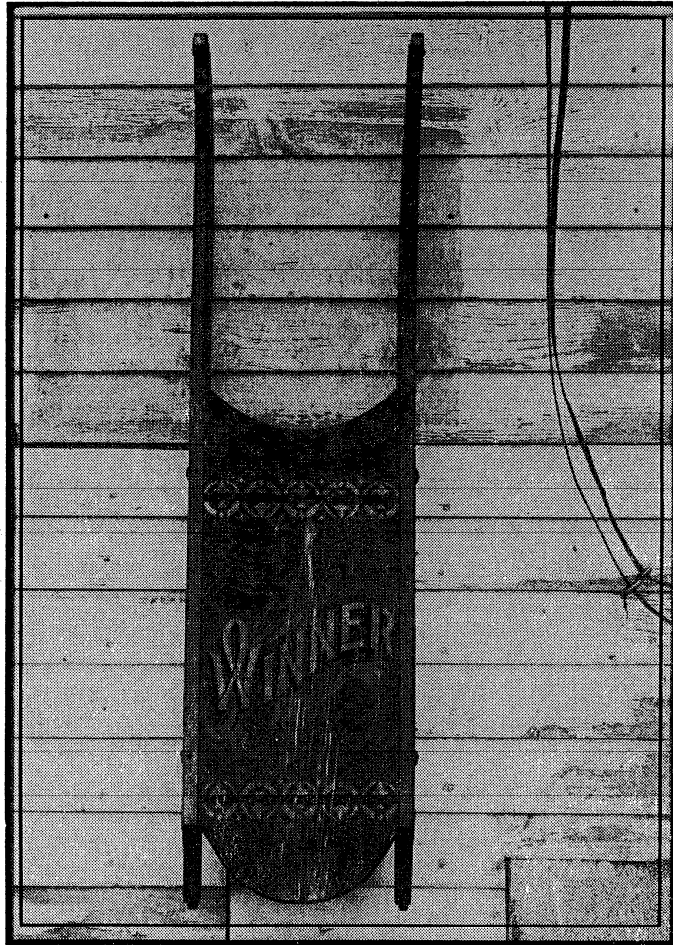


# SPRING

The Journal of The  
E. E. Cummings Society



SPRING

The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society

New Series Number 2

October 1993

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## PEOPLE AND EVENTS

In our original outreach efforts to contact those who had already done significant work on Cummings, a number of interesting replies—some exciting, some sad—came back to us. We reached Robert Wegner, for example, and he has agreed to do a piece for us. We also reached Rushworth Kidder, but he is involved now in The Institute for Global Ethics, a non-profit research and educational organization, and is no longer doing journalism and literary/artistic criticism.

But we received word that the following people who had done significant work on Cummings were deceased: Robert Maurer, died c. 1981; Hyatt Waggoner, died c. 1988; Barry Marks, died c. 1989. We would also like to mention the passing more years ago of: Theodore Spencer, Lloyd Frankenberg, and Howard Mumford Jones.

It was when Spencer was advisor for Friedman's honors thesis on Cummings that he gave the young student his first opportunity to meet Cummings during the Fall of 1947, and it was Jones who gave him his first chance to lecture on Cummings at Harvard during the following year. Frankenberg was one of the chief contributors to Cummings' period of popularity during the 1950s, with his book *Pleasure Dome* and accompanying record album (1949)—Friedman recalls meeting him at the Cummingses' apartment in Patchin Place around that time.

But most importantly, we would like to record here the passing of Marion Morehouse Cummings, on May 18, 1969, and the memorial service held for her at the Jefferson Market Library, which looms just across from Patchin Place, on June 11, 1969. Friedman, and his wife Zelda, vividly recall Robert Lowell speaking the eulogy, and the aged Ezra Pound sitting silently among the mourners.

We earnestly invite anyone with news and information about other Cummings scholars-critics-friends-fans to contact us.

We continue here our memorial in honor of D. Jon Grossman.

From the 25th Anniversary Report (1974) of the Harvard Class of 1949.  
pp. 506-508:

### DAVID JONATHAN GROSSMAN



**BORN:** April 6, 1922.

**OFFICE ADDRESS:** Publications Division, Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy (5797).

**PREPARED AT:** Staunton Military Academy, Staunton, Va.

**YEARS IN COLLEGE:** 1946-1947. **DEGREE:** L. ès L. (Univ. de Paris),  
1950.

**MARRIED:** Anne-Marie Tschann, Oct. 12, 1945. **CHILD:** Jerome Louis,  
Dec. 29, 1953.

**OCCUPATION:** International civil servant

**OFFICES HELD:** First vice-chairman, 1966-67, general secretary, 1967-68,  
Federation of International Civil Servants' Association (FICSA).

**MEMBER OF:** Société de Linguistique de Paris; Collège de 'Pataphysique.

**PUBLICATIONS:** Numerous essays; French translations of prose, poetry and  
plays of E. E. Cummings '15.

In 1947, after reading the Augustan History (about which nobody told me: I had to discover it for myself), I decided that it would be more

interesting to watch a world rebuilding than a world on its decline. Accordingly, back I came to Europe (which a few years earlier I had assisted, they tell me, in "liberating"), thus depriving Harvard of its chance to award me an earned degree. Harvard has, I understand, survived, but I have never regretted my choice.

The Sorbonne. A Montparnasse bookstore. A stint on a Guggenheim-financed "little magazine." An office job with the U.S. Air Force in Paris. A short term for the Department of State. And then – realization that while it's impossible to improve this universe, one should at least try to do as little harm as one can.

Since then I have never, in the name of liberty, made or dropped a single bomb, atomic or otherwise, nor machine-gunned a single group of Puerto Rican pilgrims. I have never, in the name of equality, helped a single billionaire to avoid paying his taxes, nor for that matter helped to collect them. I have never, in the name of fraternity, prolonged the life of a single terminal patient who was longing but to die.

*Post hoc ergo propter hoc*, I daresay that my income places me in the bottom 10% of the Class of '49. I have, however, managed to keep a roof over my family's head, and to keep us eating regular.

And at night I sleep well, a dreamless sleep, and awake refreshed "to wash, and dress, and eat, and drink, and look at things, and sit and think, and work – and God knows why," as the feller says. Washing and dressing are neither goats' milk nor Brooks Bros., but eating and drinking remain – a half-century of digestion permitting – *quenelles de brochet Nantua* and Chablis Premier Cru 1966. Things looked at include Greco's *Storm over Toledo*, columbines, Alps and a certain person's shoulders. Sitting usually involves a book, and thinking often does, too; the author may be Thucydides or Catullus, Flaubert or Boris Vian, Shakespeare or E. E. Cummings. Work involves the United Nations, and when you consider that from 1918 to 1939, only twenty-one years passed, we're not doing too badly.

I have voted in only two presidential elections: once against a Harvard man, who won, an once against a man from my prep school, who lost. No sense of loyalty.

I believe that Socrates was the moral superior of Adolf Hitler; that

Abraham Lincoln was sincere but misguided; that sex is more fun than bowling; that there is, after all, some difference between the later Beethoven quartets and *La Marseillaise*, that Joe Gould, '11, was a more serious historian than Arthur Schlesinger, '38; that abortion is a sure means of eliminating cancer in the second generation; that divorced priests should be allowed to remarry; that Groucho Marx is a greater menace to society than Karl; that American culture has been on the skids since the mid-thirties; that this is not a major catastrophe; that I have no responsibility for doing anything about it; and that I couldn't if I would.

My motto is from Cummings, '15: "nothing is what particularly matters," which I Latinize *e pluribus nihil*. [Copyright by the President and Fellows of Harvard College]

The following was added, at our request, by Jerome Grossman, Jon's son, January 7, 1993:

After he wrote this, probably in 1973, Jon went on with his career as head of the FAO Editorial Branch, a typical Jonish job: not very high-ranking, not very pretentious, not very well paid – but everyone in a UN organization wants to publish a book or two, and that's where the organization's reputation is at stake, and a man like Jon might want to preserve it.

Meanwhile, *The Enormous Room* translation was finally finished and published in 1979, along with *58+58 poems*, both at Bourgois's. The ER was awarded the Prix du meilleur livre étranger, and Jon got the 1980 Prix Halperine Kaminsky, from the Société des Gens de Lettres, for his global Cummings translation work (he was, and remains, the only American ever awarded that prize).

Jon retired from FAO in 1982, after twenty-three years of international service. He elected Gascony as his place of retirement, and lived in a house built by his wife Anne's grandparents at the turn of the century. A pretty obvious choice when one knows Gascony and its food, people, climate, landscapes, and architecture; and a choice that allowed Jon to indulge in unsuspected underlying passions, such as mushroom-catching and orchid-ae-raising.

He went on writing about food and poetry and bees; reading about everything; listening to hundreds of miles of magnetic tape on his two Revoxes, and occasionally organizing open-air recorded concerts for the indigenous....He also kept an eye on his former professional world, as a consultant and editor.

Jon died from a brain hemorrhage on December 4th, 1990, after a few days in a hospital where holistic doctors forbade him to smoke.

Sometimes, out of intellectual probity, he was rough and scared many people. But he never knowingly harmed anyone but the willingly harming, because he took no pleasure in others' pains.