
Oklahoma Books

ON THE HEELS of wide acclaim for Edward Faulkner's *Plowman's Folly*, the University of Oklahoma Press last month released another book destined for a warm reception by lovers of American literature everywhere.

Bearing the one-word title *Ziba* and written by James Pipes, a former country storekeeper in the Louisiana swamplands, the volume contains nine poems in Negro folk idiom.

Using the language of the workers from the fields, mills and levee camps, Mr. Pipes glorifies the feelings of these Americans about their everyday life as they work, play, gamble and face adversity, always with a philosophical and strengthening good sense of humor.

Ziba should definitely be read aloud. The last poem in the book, "Freedom is a Word," sends tingles down the spine and sticks in the mind. It is as truly American as the Star-Spangled Banner and Fourth of July picnics. Parts of it are as follows:

Oh, Freedom is a word
a bent-up word
but
it's bended good
'cause it's bended
jus' lak prayer
on its knees
but, Lord, it kin straighten up
Sometimes
Freedom starts out
as a puny young thing
but it sho'ly kin full out big.xxx
Times
I've seen Freedom
w'en you could buy it
for fifteen cents
but whatcha gonna do, Sonny
ef you ain't got
the fifteen cents?xxxxx
Lord
w'en they built that Liberty Bell
a man had to bend
'fore it would ring
an' same way with Freedom, Sonny
a man's got to bend
jus' so he kin learn to stoop.xxx
I'll tell you 'bout Freedom
w'en Freedom came in the world
it wasn't nothin'
but a bunch o' rags
an'
ever'time it gits dressed up
seem lak the world
got to git it right back
in rags again.
But Lord
rags don't worry Freedom
Freedom got mo' glory
than a fire engine
with a fire.xxxx

Freedom, that's a liberty lovin' word
as full of beak an' talon
as eagle eggs
hatchin' on In-de-pen-dence Day.

Lew Sarett, poet and faculty member of the School of Speech at Northwestern University, said of the book, "The publication of *Ziba* is an event, a truly exciting event for anybody who is at all interested in the efforts of men to capture the poetry of America and of her various regions.

"Mr. Pipes has managed to capture beautifully the imagination, the spiritual quality, the earthiness, and the poetry in the Negroes of whom he has written. His book is superb 'regional writing.' But it is more than that; it is a part of America as a whole."

William Rose Benet wrote in the Saturday Review of Literature, "The most exciting thing that has happened to me for some time has been the reading of an advance copy of a book that came all the way from Norman, Oklahoma. The book is called *Ziba* by James Pipes, and is published by the Oklahoma University Press. I was not requested to say anything about it, and the book was not originally sent to me. I read it by chance, and it has hit me like a block-buster.xxxx

"He (Pipes) has caught the magical word-sense and the rich music of the Negro improvisations. This is a Book; a real contribution to our literature. I never felt so sure of anything "

Kenneth Kaufman said of the last poem in his Daily Oklahoman book review page, "It's implications are nothing less than soul-shaking." And "I don't think Walt Whitman ever penned anything more grandiose than:

Freedom is a lonesome word
a sor'ful word
but, Lord, it's a good tastin' word."

"Here," wrote Mr. Kaufman, "is the tragic sense of life, crowned with the glory of song, the placid acceptance of imperfection in the world, and a deep and abiding sense of joy in the mere fact of living."

Excellent drawings by Edith Mahier, of the O. U. art faculty, decorate the book.

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Waves

Beryl C. Barnett, '18ba, '19ma, formerly teacher of journalism and English at Central High School in Oklahoma City, and Betty Jen Campbell, '43ed, Van Buren, Arkansas, have entered training with the WAVES at Northampton, Massachusetts.

Mary Abshire, '41-'43, Tulsa, seaman second class in the WAVES, was on duty at the Naval Air Station, Atlanta, Georgia.

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