September 2015

John MacVane Correspondence

John Franklin MacVane 1912-1984

Bertha MacVane

Hilda McLeod Jacob

Maine State Library

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Recommended Citation

MacVane, John Franklin 1912-1984; MacVane, Bertha; Jacob, Hilda McLeod; and Maine State Library, "John MacVane Correspondence" (2015). Maine Writers Correspondence. 339.


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MAC VANE, JOHN.

Born at Portland
Maine Author Has Gained Distinction Abroad

MAR 30 1946

By ALICE FROST LORD

AH, now when the music of Spring's in the air
Pray give me a dusty lane,
And a tattered pack
To swing on my back
And an old song to sing again.

For there's nothing so fair when
Spring's in the air
And the madness of youth's in the air
Than the lilt of a song
As you're swinging along
By the edge of some friendly knoll.

And then—when the high of the evening comes on,
Oh, I ask for a still white moon
In a star-filled sky
Where the angels die
When they dance to the devil's tune.

For there's nothing anon when evening comes on
To do if you never love
The passionate sight
Of an April night
Of the dance that they do above.

Loved Casco Bay
According to his mother, Mrs. William L. MacVane of Portland, her son, John, spent many Summers during his boyhood on Casco Bay, loving its sea and island beauty. Little did he or his family then dream that time would bring war experiences to him, the role of foreign correspondent, authorship and broadcasting that would make his name widely known abroad as well as at home.

John Franklin MacVane was born in Portland of Highland Scottish ancestry and was graduated from Portland High in 1928. He went away to Phillips Exeter Academy, won his bachelor's degree from Williams College, and then studied abroad, taking his honor as bachelor of literature from Oxford. It was during his stay at Williams that he and a roommate brought out a volume of verse, "Swords in the Wind," from which the lead-poem for this article is quoted. Inasmuch as that was 15 years ago, his first literary work may seem to him and his friends as ancient history. This is his only collection of that kind, and

John MacVane, Native of Portland

"Journey Into War"

His second work was prose, and this came during the last world war, and is titled, "Journey Into War," with the sub-reading, "War and Diplomacy in North Africa—an Appleton-Century publication in this country, and put out in London by Robert Hale, Ltd.

In that book, Mr. MacVane protested eloquently against any arrangement in Italy that would substitute a Grandi for Mussolini, or in Germany that would name some German general for a Hitler. He is quoted:

"I think most of us felt that the ineptness of American diplomacy when it was finally exposed might provoke a feeling among people at home that 'since we blundered so badly abroad we'd better stay at home and to hell with the rest of the world.'"

"We felt that the blunders might give ammunition to the Isolationists in their inane argument that by some mysterious process America can isolate herself from the rest of the world. None of us thought that was true for a minute and most correspondents in Europe, I believe, realize that only if America takes her share of the responsibility for world organization after the war will the idea of world peace have the chance of a teardrop in hell."

His War Experience

Here in this country, Mr. MacVane was a reporter for the Brooklyn Eagle and for the New York Sun. About the time of Munich, he became sub-editor on the London Daily Express. Then he went to France as correspondent for British and American news agencies.

In 1940 he left France in June and became war correspondent accredited to the British army for the National Broadcasting Company of America. In this capacity he covered the London blitz, and was the only broadcaster on the Dieppe Raid.

In the North African campaign he was accredited to the British First Army and the American Forces, and from London and North Africa he made between 1500 and 2000 broadcasts to America up to November of 1943. Again, he held a key post in the radio news coverage of the invasion of Europe, and was the first reporter to enter Paris.

Today Mr. MacVane is located in New York City, and his broadcasts are heard daily on several stations. His wife, Lucy Maxwell MacVane, was in London from '36 to '45, and they have three children. The family arrived in New York just June, and came to Maine to spend the Summer with his parents, Dr. and Mrs. W. L. MacVane, whose home is at 209 State Street.

Brother Well-Known

It also is of general interest that Mr. MacVane's brother is Captain William L. MacVane, Jr., who has just arrived home from Japan. He was surgeon with the 61st Portable Surgical Hospital, and won the Bronze Star Medal for major surgery done under adverse conditions in the Pacific.

Part of his record is that, when the unit was overwhelmed with a sudden influx of critically wounded soldiers, Captain MacVane continued to operate efficiently, relying on enlisted personnel as assistants, and for over a protracted period. When ordered to retire for rest, he returned to the operating room in less than an hour to continue his work, thereby saving many additional lives.
March 15, 1944

Mr. John MacVane

Dear Mr. MacVane:

Your book JOURNEY INTO WAR we added to the library at once upon publication, and we are proud to report that there are patrons awaiting their turn, and the book itself is never in! When we discovered that the author of this alert and absorbing book was born in Maine, our interest was increased.

We write to offer congratulations upon a book that seems to us to possess lasting value; and also to mention the Maine Author Collection, which is an exhibit of inscribed presentation copies of books written by Maine people.

We gather all available biographical, critical and photographic material about our authors, and preserve the correspondence. This data, with the books, provides a treasure for the future student and researcher, and is of course of present fascination for the many visitors and students of today. The books are distinctive for their autobiographical highlights, anecdotes, original verse, pen-and-ink sketches, notes about the writing of the book. Whatever the subject and mood, the inscription lends individuality and interest; and we are always grateful to our authors who seem pleased to do this.

It is possible that your present duties and environment do not coincide happily with literature, of however current a topic. We do want to offer best wishes for the book — which, we trust, is but the first — and to say that we hope you will want to inscribe a copy for inclusion in the Maine Author Collection when this is possible. Call at the library when you are again in Maine, and see the Maine Author Collection.

Sincerely yours

hmj

Secretary
October 30, 1945

Mr. John MacVane
C/o D. Appleton-Century Co., Inc.
35 West 32nd Street
New York 1, New York

Dear Mr. MacVane:

One of the postwar pleasures which we promised ourselves was to write to you again about your very excellent and popular book, JOURNEY INTO WAR.

A copy was purchased for the lending section of the library, where it has served faithfully and well; but the Maine Author Collection, a permanent exhibit of books written by Maine people, has never been able to boast a copy. SWORDS IN THE WIND is here, and we hope that you may want to inscribe and present a copy of JOURNEY INTO WAR for the purpose.

This collection is not for lending, but is for permanent preservation, of great interest to visitors, of lasting importance and increasing value to students. The inscriptions are distinctive; amusing or inspirational, anecdotal or artistic, they are all original, and give a personal touch to the books.

It would give us great pleasure to include an inscribed copy of your book in this collection, and we hope that it may be possible. When you are again in Maine, wont you call at the library and see the exhibit?

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection
March 26, 1946

Mr. John MacVane  
c/o D. Appleton-Century Co., Inc.  
35 West 32nd Street  
New York 1, New York  

Dear Mr. MacVane:

On the whole, trans-Atlantic mail service for the past few years has been surprisingly efficient; but it has been perhaps not infallible, and so we write again about the Maine Author Collection, fearing that our earlier letters may not have reached you.

Briefly, it is a permanent exhibit of books written by Maine people. This is the only place where all the works of all Maine authors are gathered together and permanently preserved, together with all available biographical and critical information. The books are inscribed presentation copies, valuable in their own right, distinctive because of the original inscriptions. Students and visitors call constantly, and the future worth of such a collection is even greater than the present.

We purchase for lending all non-fiction by Maine people (fiction is circulated through our traveling libraries), and so JOURNEY INTO WAR is of course in the library and available to our patrons throughout the state. We hope that you may want to inscribe a copy for the Maine Author Collection. It would be regrettable if this inclusive collection were to lack so fine a book by so capable a native son, and we shall continue to hope that you will share with us the pride of including your book in the exhibit.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of  
Maine Author Collection

hmj
January 15, 1947

Mrs. William L. MacVane
209 State Street
Portland, Maine

Dear Mrs. MacVane:

For the past few years, we have endeavored to get a letter to your son, John MacVane. The last one, sent in March, 1946, has traveled widely, and at last returned to us.

This is quite disappointing, for we are happy to claim Mr. MacVane as a Maine author; his book, JOURNEY INTO WAR, has been since publication in the lending section of the State Library; and we were writing to him about the Maine Author Collection.

This is a permanent exhibit of books written by Maine people, including early and contemporary names, and comprised of about fifteen hundred volumes of all sorts -- history, autobiography, poetry, cook books, juvenile stories, psychology, art, novels. These books, inscribed and presented, form a fascinating unit which is of increasing value and absorbing interest to casual visitors and serious students alike.

Of course the omission of Mr. MacVane's fine book is regrettable, and we hope that one day this matter may be corrected. If it is possible for you to give us your son's address for this purpose, we should be most appreciative. If you do not care to do this, would it be possible for you to forward a letter to him from us? Any help that you may be able to give us would be most gratefully received.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

Encl.
Dear Mrs. Jacob:

I am very sorry that you haven't been able to get in touch with John, but a letter to the National Broadcasting Co. will always reach him.

He has been with the United Nations since their first meeting, and no doubt you have heard him over one of the radio stations. His address at the present time is: 1239 Madison Avenue, New York City, N.Y. Apt. 4B.

Sincerely,

January 17th

Bertha MacVane
January 20, 1947

Mrs. William L. MacVane
209 State Street
Portland, Maine

Dear Mrs. MacVane:

Thank you very much for your kind note, and for sending us your son's address.

You must be exceedingly proud of the fine work Mr. MacVane has been, and is, doing.

We have written to him again about JOURNEY INTO WAR, and our hope that it may be placed in the Maine Author Collection; and we are grateful for your help in the matter.

Please call at the library whenever you may be in Augusta, and see the Maine Author Collection.

Sincerely yours

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection

hmj
January 20, 1947

Mr. John MacVane
1239 Madison Avenue
Apartment 4B
New York, New York

Dear Mr. MacVane:

The enclosed letter will show you that we have been trying for some time to reach you. The post office cooperated, and it is a much-traveled letter; but although its date is not current, we still feel the same about the Maine Author Collection and its lack of your book JOURNEY INTO WAR.

It was possible to add SWORDS IN THE WIND some time ago; and we earnestly hope that you will want to inscribe a copy of JOURNEY INTO WAR for the collection.

Your fine work has our continued good wishes and you have our cordial invitation to call at the library and see the Maine Author Collection when you are in Maine.

Sincerely yours

hmj
Encl.

In Charge of
Maine Author Collection.
Dear Mr. MacVane:

It is a day of rejoicing: The inscribed copy of JOURNEY INTO WAR for the Maine Author Collection has been received. We are especially pleased to notice the inscription -- so many Maine people share that feeling.

Your book remains, several years after its publication, a fine piece of reporting, one which we continue to be glad is in our library and available to the citizens of the state.

Please accept our most appreciative thanks for the Maine Author Collection copy. We are proud that Maine can claim its author.

Sincerely yours

hmj

In Charge of Maine Author Collection