

XIII.

Speech

Event

Franklin Spears Appreciation Dinner  
ALICO Center  
Waco, Texas

23 March 1967

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Talk...Bernard Rapoport, at  
Franklin Spears APPRECIATION DINNER  
ALICO Center, Waco  
Thursday, March 23, 1967

This get-together is for the single purpose of honoring a very decent Texan - Franklin Spears.

For many years I have sought a method of defining a decent human being - it is a most elusive task. I guess when we meet one that we simply respond intuitively. I think it particularly apropos that we honor Franklin Spears this evening. Those of us who know him well, recognize that he is a decent human being; those of you who do not, will have this proven to you after you have been privileged to listen to his remarks this evening.

Franklin Spears has a message for all Texans...for all Americans, in fact. Very succinctly, his concern is very much as indicated by Stringfellow Barr in his essay CONSULTING THE ROMANS, and I quote from this:

"The question I've posed might be phrased like this:

Does Rome show us the limitations of force, the danger of too much faith in over-kill and in the power of persuasion by innuendo, trying to move the wills of men without bothering too much with their minds, in fact, if possible, taking precautions that their minds will not operate so that their wills can be approached more skillfully.

'Cities die just like men.' But mere survival is not what I was talking about."

We are so accustomed to being Madison-avenued that we submit to the moving of our wills ... it just seems to be too much trouble to bother about our minds.

When Adlai Stevenson wanted to talk sense to the American people, they

were more concerned with their wills than with their minds, and he didn't get thru. Franklin's task as a politician is most difficult, he does seek to persuade men's minds with reason and fact combined with a rare sensitivity to human feeling.

I am reminded of a quotation from Studs Terkel's book:

DIVISION ST.: AMERICA. On interviewing an indigent teen-ager, the interviewee remarked: "I love life, I wish some of it would come my way."

Franklin seeks, therefore, to persuade men's minds. In doing this, he feels that as a State and as a Nation that we can insure that life --that life to which the teen-ager referred and wished that some of it would come her way-- will indeed be coming the way to an increasing number of Americans.

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To introduce Franklin this evening we are honored by having as the doer the inimitable JOHN HENRY FAULK.

Some call him a madman - he really isn't ... at least, not all the time. He only gets mad where injustice prevails. I have known John Henry Faulk all of my life ... met him a little over a year ago. I can say that I have known him all of my life because no generation of men could persist without a few John Henry Faulks. There is a little part of Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln in John Henry...

I COULD tell you about his fine book - FEAR ON TRIAL . . .

I COULD talk about his many successes in the medium of radio and television . . .

I might even mention that he is just an overwhelming success on his series of speaking engagements, taking him from New York to Oregon and Washington . . .

And I might even make a slight reference to the fact that he was once a professor at the University of Texas.

B U T, all of these pale to insignificance, because John Henry Faulk CARES ABOUT PEOPLE...he not only cares, but he has the courage to be the spokesman for those not sufficiently articulate to speak for themselves.

In this era of status-seekers, John Henry, the dissident --but only when dissidence is required-- is content to be a member of the "out" group. He is that rare combination of an academic intellectual and a mature historian -- he is all of this, but what I love about him most is that he still has that puerile excitement when the forces of good triumph over those of evil.]

Might is that which makes a thing of anybody who comes under its sway. When exercised to the full, it makes a thing of man in the most literal sense, for it makes him a corpse. There where someone stood a moment ago, stands no one.

INTIMATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY...

Simone Weil