



Robert Flanagan of Delaware, Ohio

Robert Flanagan. Author, poet and teacher. He has reviewed boxing, poetry and comedy books for the Columbus dispatch, taught fiction writing at Thunder House and literature to inmates at the Marion correction facility and served as a judge of the CLCA new book awards. He is retired from Ohio Wesleyan University after thirty years as Director of Creative Writing.

I met Bob back at St. Ann's school in Toledo. We played pass and tap football together in the St. Ann's playground. Bob was stocky built and not much of a runner. He liked to play quarterback and throw the ball to a speedy receiver, me. Our friendship grew and eventually I spent quite a bit of time at Bob's home on Whitney Avenue. The first time there, Bob invited me to box with him. I thought my quickness would overcome his weight advantage. At the time, I didn't know that Bob was a student of boxing. He had a speed bag and a large punching bag in his basement. I came out swinging wildly. Bob countered with jabs and various punches and beat the crap out of me. We continued to play football, baseball and some basketball together, but my days of boxing were over. We laugh about how he punished my face, when we get together now.

Bob has a great sense of humor and is a quick wit. I remember watching a dress rehearsal of a play put on at our high school, Central Catholic. Bob was playing a sheriff with a fake moustache. He was in the middle of one of his speeches, when he suddenly reached up to his face. He hesitated a couple of seconds and then continued his speech while the rest of the performers started laughing. Later, I asked him what he said to make everyone on stage laugh. He said "I whispered; 'that was a close shave.'"

Bob bought a used Studebaker and proclaimed that he was the stud with a stud. We were driving around one night, I think there were three guys and Cheryl Bliss, who kept saying; "Just think of me as one of the guys!" She had just said that one time when the Stud ran out of gas. Bob looked at Cheryl and said "You are one of the guys. Get out and help push." (and she did!!!) Later, when Bob was beginning to write poems and short stories, He thought about changing his last name to "O'Flanagan" to sound even more Irish. Cheryl told him that he would probably be known by his initials; "B-O Flanagan". Bob decided to keep his real name.

Bob's father was a decorated disabled marine veteran, who was unable to work. His family was from County Roscommon. In later years, Bob would visit Ireland to try to find the old homestead. He was delighted to learn that the place was still called Flanagan hill even though the entire family had left during the great hunger. His Mother worked at Champion Spark Plug Co. as a plug tamper operator. I remember Bob's Mother putting white tape around her fingers before she left for her second shift job. The irony about this is that Bob dropped out of the University of Toledo to join the Marine reserves. I went to work at Champion Spark Plug, where my first job was supplying plug tamper machines. Mrs. Flanagan always said that I was the best supply man that ever worked there. Bob went on to write a book about his experience in Marine boot camp at Paris Island, "The Maggot".

Bob came back to the University of Toledo to obtain his BA. He then went to the University of Chicago for his MA. There was a literary contest while Bob was at U.T. Awards were to be given out for the best new poetry and the best new short story. The announcer came on to say that the winner of both parts was the same person. Bob was heartbroken. He felt that his poem was very good, but his short story was just average. The heartbreak turned unto elation as he was declared the winner of both awards.

Bob had met a young lady, Katy Borer on a blind date. While on that date, Katy brought out a cigarette and started to light it. Bob knocked the cigarette away and said that he didn't like to see ladies smoke. Needless to

say that didn't go over very well. Bob was beside himself a few days later. He really liked Katy, but he was afraid if he just called her for a regular date, she would refuse. He was trying to come up with something special so that Katy would go out with him again. I suggested that he take her to the Toledo Museum of Art. Bob took my advice and Katy agreed to go with him. They were wed in 1963 and they are still married and living in Delaware, Ohio. Bob credits the longevity of the marriage to Katy's inexhaustible patience. I told Katy that she may either thank me or blame me for suggesting the Art museum.

For more information about Robert Flanagan and a list of his writings, go to www.robertflanagan.com