



Carl Zuckmayer and Alice Herdan-Zuckmayer at the pond at Backwoods Farm, 1941.

## THE LIBRARY

HERE is then the library: my rock, my refuge, my cloister. When I sit in my cell, no goat bleats, no chicken cackles, no pig grunts, no duck quacks, no goose honks, no rooster crows.

It has the good smells of leather and dust. It is cool, isolated, and completely quiet.

I am speaking of my own cell on the tenth floor. It takes three keys to get to it. The first key unlocks the elevator that takes me to the ninth floor. This is the place where all religions are brought together. Here the popes stand in long rows, and not far from them is Martin Luther in a splendid edition. Calvin and Zwingli are here, the Mormons and the Shakers. Here also are the church fathers and Buddha, Confucius, the Jews, the saints, and Mohammed. The dogmatists and the heretics are here, the peacemakers and the fighters, the saints and the devils.

Sometimes, when I hurry out through the half darkened corridors of this floor as the closing bell is ringing, it seems to me that they are all trapped in their books by a spell and condemned to frustrated silence.

The second key unlocks the door to the tenth floor at the top of a steep, narrow iron staircase. It leads to a passageway past a long row of studies, small cell-like rooms, each with a large desk, a swivel chair, a bookcase, and a window with a view of the White Mountains of New Hampshire. The third key opens the study door. Each of the fifty-one study rooms has its own individual key. These cubicles are reserved for professors where, we are told, "work can be carried on close to books, and without interruption or disturbance."

On the eighth and ninth floors, the studies are on corridors separated from the rest of the library by an iron grillwork. The tenth floor is given over entirely to study rooms. "The doors to the corridors are kept locked, no telephones are allowed, and typewriters, if any, must be 'noiseless.' These studies are assigned, for the period of a semester, to members of the faculty who seem to have special need of them. Some like to use them because their work requires a large number of books which it would be very uncomfortable to carry home. Others may need fewer books, but they have small children at home, or students come into their offices and interfere seriously with important work they are doing. For all of these a library study can be of inestimable value." After about two years, when I had become a familiar visitor to the library, I received a study room for the first time. I had to use innumerable books at the same time, since my plan was to

compare old documents from the early Middle Ages. At home I was seriously disturbed in my work. For me the cubicle was of inestimable value.

Even driving into the town and catching sight of the university gave me, every time, feelings of joy, peace, and content.

The library stands exactly in the middle of the town. It is no accident that it is located there. This central place was chosen deliberately.

On the south side of the library is a broad middle section with two matching wings in Colonial Georgian style, red brick with white window frames and doors and a white tower. Since the library stands on a slope, the north side has ten low floors, while the rest of the building has only two high stories.

The middle section, with its tall church windows and tower, reminds one of the peaceful, square churches of New England.

The building is simple and beautiful in its massive proportions. Although it was built in 1928 in the style of a former era, its effect is genuine and not imitative. It towers over the classroom buildings that surround it on the edge of a grassy lawn with old trees, and it has a commanding situation in the town.

I like best to approach under the trees, past the large playing field, and across the lawn bordered by the three parts of the library. That way I come to the south door, the main library entrance.

I push through the revolving door with my knapsack and pockets full of books and stand in front of the main desk, where books are checked out and returned.

I unpack my books and pile them up. The two pleasant ladies behind the desk take them from me and record their return.

In the first year there was not much conversation, but now I know all the staff by name, and they know me. In time I have even come to know the lady in charge of circulation. There is something in her manner which commands respect, and I always feel a little tempted to curtsy like a schoolgirl in her presence. But when, after three years, she showed me the dumb waiter, the little elevator that you can use to transport your books to any floor instead of carrying them up the stairs yourself, in that memorable moment I felt for the first time that I belonged. I had risen from apprentice to journeyman.

The ladies and I speak about the weather, about our health, about the flowers on the desk, always new and unusually beautiful, about the last concert in Hanover, about happenings in the town. We speak in whispers, though no one is reading in the great hall, because there is something solemn about the hall that allows only muted voices.

Even the students, who have just been romping like St. Bernards and Great Danes on the playing field, come through the hall on tiptoe like the tame bears you feed sugar to, and they buzz like muted trumpets.

This is the enormous entrance hall, long and high like a church. In the middle is the circulation desk, and on the wall behind it is an inscription: "This building is the gift of George F. Baker in memory of his uncle, Fisher Ames Baker, Dartmouth 1859, a soldier in the Civil War and an eminent member of the New York Bar."

George F. Baker gave a million dollars for building the library in 1928, and then donated another million to maintain it. Another former Dartmouth student, Edwin S. Sanborn, class of 1878, left the library a million dollars to buy books, so its excellence seems assured for many years to come.

If it should ever start to decline, other Dartmouth graduates will be found who will gladly reach deep into their pockets to save and preserve the dreams of their youth and the center of their happiest memories.

Crimson curtains hang at the great windows of the hall. Large red leather armchairs are provided for those who are waiting or who wish to look through books.

In the east wing of the hall, which has its own door, books of special or current interest are spread on tables. These books may deal, for example, with the causes of the Chinese revolution, atomic energy, the state of cancer research, new novels in world literature, American politics, or modern poetry.

The most recent books are at the circulation desk itself. These may usually be borrowed for only three hours and read only in the library, because many readers are waiting for them.

There are glass cases built into the north wall of the hall, where pictures and books of special interest are displayed. In the west wing of the hall stands the card catalog, arranged by author on the left side and by subject on the right for those who have forgotten the author of a book or want to have a complete bibliography of a subject.

From the east wing of the entrance hall you can reach two large rooms. One is the plain but friendly room which is only for newspapers. Across from it is the reference room, paneled in gray-green wood, with highly polished dark tables and antique chairs. Alcoves and bookcases are built into the walls, and it looks like a library in an English castle, where the lord really reads the books he owns.

This is the place for dictionaries, encyclopedias, bibliographies, and atlases. Grimm's dictionary is there, and another dictionary that gives terms for food in six languages. There are collections of quotations and genealogies, "Who's Who" books for the living and the dead. The library handbook tells me that the volumes in this room are books that give the answers to the questions most often asked in university libraries.

The desk at the front of the reference room is manned by staff members from

8:00 A.M. until 11:00 P.M. There are small forms for inquiries, and the librarians, always friendly and helpful, give out information tirelessly. They help the students look for titles in the card catalog and find books on the shelves. They help them find material on the Emperor Augustus or Churchill. They tell them where to put their coats, where they may smoke, and where they may not.

“Although the privilege of smoking is practically never accorded in libraries because of the hazard of fire,” the handbook states, “yet in accordance with the idea of making the Baker Library an enjoyable place in which to study, smoking is permitted in the Tower Room, the seminar rooms on the top floor, and the northeast study room in the basement. Students are asked to confine their smoking to these three places.”

The Tower Room, which can be reached by two big staircases from the entrance hall, takes up the whole second floor. It is a gigantic room, oak-paneled, with large and small tables and comfortable armchairs. Here, they say, students should read for pleasure, and not because of tests and grades. The chairs are durable but not too massive, and so comfortable that you often hear the students snoring in rows. Especially during the war you could often hear a powerful many-voiced chorus of snores, because nine-tenths of the students were in the navy and had to get up by six, and this was the only undisturbed place where they could rest.

In this room, which holds about four thousand books, there are all kinds of reading to bring students in contact with “the best of modern creative work as well as with the great minds of the past; with humor, light fiction, adventure, as much as with serious thought.”

“No rules or restrictions are posted here,” they explain. “It is assumed that this room and its contents will be regarded as one would the library of one’s club. It is possible that in later years some students may feel that in this room were spent some of the most valued hours of their college life.” On winter evenings faculty members sometimes read aloud poems and prose here. The students gather about the fire that burns in the fireplace. Soft lamplight fills the room, and over everything spreads the fragrance of coffee, which is served in the background. “If the library is in a certain sense the heart of the college,” they say, “this room is the heart of the library.”

There are many other rooms in the library, for example the places where books are sorted and catalogued. There is also a room where the catalogs of Harvard Library and the Library of Congress are kept. If a book is not in the Dartmouth Library, it can be borrowed from Harvard, Yale, the Library of Congress, or some other library.

There is a staff of employees whose job it is to get the book you need. In all

the five years I used the library, I never heard, "That book is not available. I cannot get it for you."

Once I asked for a remarkable book about the childhood of the monk Benedict and his sister Scholastica. I emphasized that the book was not absolutely necessary, but because of its uniqueness I would like to see it. The search took two months, but finally they found it in a Benedictine monastery in Indiana. When it arrived I had to pay only the postage, here and back, eighty cents. There was no borrowing fee. "No limit is set to the number of books a person can borrow," they explain. "Some books are known to be peculiarly difficult to replace if lost, and students are requested to use these only in the library. . . . Students are allowed to keep books for two weeks with the privilege of renewal unless others are asking for them."

In November 1946, before I left for Europe, I brought back sixty-eight books, and many of them I had had for three months or longer. Of course most of them were about the early Middle Ages, a subject not of interest to many readers. There is a fine for overdue books of three cents and five cents a day. "The system breaks down if books are not returned so that others may use them. Fines are not imposed to make money or even primarily to inflict a penalty. . . . Most failures to return are due to thoughtlessness, and the fines are imposed, and made large, to help prevent this."

Most of the books are in excellent condition. This is not the result of special carefulness on the part of the students, but because the books are taken to the bindery in the cellar before they fall apart, and then they reappear in new bindings.

In the library is also a museum, a small room patterned after the first library, founded in 1772 by Bezaleel Woodward, a mathematics professor and the first librarian.

There is also a Treasure Room which contains rare books. It is a solemn, empty, elegant room. Its stained glass windows are decorated with mottoes and crests that have to do with the history and traditions of the university. Somewhere I once read in a description of this room: "A question has been raised about the significance of the three stars pictured on one of the windows. It should be stated here that they are the original seal of the Phi Beta Kappa society of Dartmouth and have no connection with the trademark of Hennessy cognac."

Right next to this room are the offices of the library staff and the head librarian, rooms so fine and comfortable that you wonder if they ever want to go home.

One of the librarians, Mr. Rugg, collects unusual plants, and his office looks like an exotic greenhouse. When I wanted to do a particular historical study and

needed help, I was introduced to him, and he gave me a tour of the library.

I later received two letters from him, which I have saved. One is dated January 1942, five weeks after the outbreak of war, and says, "I heard yesterday that you are having difficulty in coming over to Hanover because of the new government regulations. I hope that these problems can be cleared up, and that you can get permission to come to the library. In the meantime, if you need particular books, please send me a list, and I will be glad to have them sent to you. You need pay only the postage for them. With friendliest greetings to you both..."

The second letter came six months later, when we had very strict gas rationing that kept us from traveling far. "I haven't seen you since gas rationing went in," he wrote, "and I hope that you have received a supplementary card so that you can continue your studies at the library. Some of my friends have been promised supplementary cards for doing research. Meanwhile we will of course be glad to send you the books you need by mail."

In the meantime, however, I received a supplementary ration card as a farmer because I began to sell eggs, goat milk, chickens, ducks, and geese in Hanover. I set my sales location near the library, and Mr. Rugg was pleased and satisfied.

In 1943, in the middle of the war, when I received permission to accompany an American friend on her 3,000-mile trip clear across the country to California, I sent Mr. Rugg a redwood root from San Francisco. It was a little root of one of the giant trees of the western forests. Tunnels large enough for auto traffic are cut through their trunks. They grow over one hundred thirty feet high and live to the venerable age of nine hundred or more years. Whether this little scion of a giant tree has taken root in Mr. Rugg's eastern garden, or perhaps in a flower pot in his office, I haven't asked. Possibly, when I come back, I will see the beginning of a tree, for Mr. Rugg is a magician with plants, as well as having a good hand for books.

Downstairs there is also a section of medical books, a photostat copying room, and a large room under the entrance hall where students can read specially assigned books. The walls of this room are covered with paintings by a modern Mexican artist. We are told to have patience and to study them thoroughly before rejecting them. I have studied them thoroughly, but I have little patience, and I avoid this room. All the rooms that I have described are for getting books, for studying and thinking, or for relaxing.

But there is still the core of the library, made up of the nine levels where the books are kept. The Americans call these "stacks," a word that means to arrange in layers, heap or pile up, and is sometimes used in connection with piles of bricks or hay in barns.

You go to these stacks to look for books. The process is very simple. In the

card catalog in the entrance hall you look under the title or the author of the book you want. Then you write down the call number on a slip of paper, perhaps H 26 R 322C. Next to the door leading into the stacks is a large directory sign, where you can see that H (History) is on the sixth level, while 26 indicates which bookcase holds the book. R is the first letter of the author's name, and 322C is the number of the book on the shelf and indicates further that it is the so-and-so-many-eth book by the same author. Sometimes you find the letter "q" or "f" on the catalog card. That means: Look out! This book is of unusual size, quarto or folio, and will be on a special shelf big enough to hold such books. In addition, there are directories by each of the stairways, in case you forget what you read on the large directory sign at the entrance.

Since the library stands on a slope, as I mentioned before, you come from the entrance hall, which seems to be at ground level, into the fourth floor of the stacks. There are three levels of stacks below, three above. Each level is eight feet high, and on the right and left are stairs connecting the levels. On each level there are three corridors, two wide ones which are lighted by a row of windows where there are desks and tables, and a narrow one in the middle between the bookshelves. These corridors are like three parallel roads, connected by eleven crossroads lined with books on dark green iron shelves from floor to ceiling. On the end of every bookcase are again numbers showing what books are to be found there and indicating precisely the geometric position of every volume. The middle corridors and the alleys between the shelves are illuminated by many electric lights that you turn on yourself and should turn off as you leave. On the north wall of every level are seven open cubicles with tables and chairs where you can look over the books or read them before checking them out and taking them home. On the second and third levels the cubicles are closed for students who want to concentrate on their work and study without interruption. Finding books is not difficult after you master the system. But then comes the best part—the book you are looking for is surrounded by books you didn't know about, or have forgotten, or that you perhaps knew once and now find again.

Sometimes, when I had worked in my room on the tenth level for eight or nine hours and was tired, I went down and wandered through the avenues and alleyways of books, stopped where I wanted to, drew out a book, leafed through it, and laid it on one of the tables so that I could look into it again when I pleased.

Books that have been taken from the shelves should be piled up on tables so that they can be replaced correctly by trained hands and not exposed to the danger of accidental misplacing. Every morning a staff of young people is busy putting books back in the places where they belong so that they can be found



again.

So I go through the stacks, look at the books, taste many, and sometimes find a new friend. And as I go through the rows of hundreds of thousands of books, I think these are all mine to use. These belong to me, to the students, to the professors, and to the visitors who come to the library. It is this feeling of common property, or of the possession of the unusual by the common people, that underlies the fact that hardly anyone wants to take anything away and keep it. Theft is not a problem in the library and does not have to be taken into consideration. In my rounds I go down to the third and fourth stacks, where the alleyways are lit by bluish fluorescent lights on the ceilings.

Here are the Greeks and Romans, the old geographers that reported about the Island of Thule and the Amazons. Here stagecoach travelers tell about the Alps, rickshaw travelers about China, and flyers about the South Pole. Here is the fall of Rome and the rise of Christianity. Here are the biographies, from Alexander the Great to Bernard Shaw and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Here are the Russians in their anarchist and religious, Christian and terrorist, pacifist and revolutionary writers, represented up to the recent Soviet comedies and plays. Here is Shakespeare in old and new editions, in all interpretations, appearing in all his different characters. Here are the English, from Beowulf to Priestley.

Here are the Germans, from the Ulfilas Bible through the editions of classical and romantic writers to Barlach's "Blauer Boll." No stop is made with the modern writers. They stream in, newer and newer, without end or censorship.

In the fall of 1945, Nazi books arrived: novels, magazines, school-books, poetry. They were sorted and set out. A small display of them was put together in the glass cases in the entrance hall. There were no propagandists among them, no goose-step display. They were legitimate books like *Mein Kampf*, a Rosenberg, a Ludendorf, poems by Schirach, photographs of the Führer, German magazine pictures of the war. The aggressive titles, the ugly Führer, the poor-quality printing all drew amazed comments and derision from the students. In another case were pictures from German magazines, mostly nature shots, and they called forth admiration.

The books are all here, the Americans, the French, the Scandinavians, the Dutch, and the Italians, the Russians, the Indians, the Chinese, and the Spanish. Here are the masses of people of all eras in their literature and their history. Here are religion, law, music, folklore, the sciences, agriculture, fishing and hunting, sports, technology, detective stories. Everything is arranged, but not abridged and not selected. The students to whom this library has been given are to search, choose, and decide for themselves what they want to do with it. The older generation does not want to rule the younger, and the young people do not fear

their elders.

When the Dartmouth College library was dedicated, the librarian made a speech:

Every achievement of the human spirit is based chiefly on faith.

Those who planned this library planned it with faith, they worked into its very fabric certain beliefs which *none* can prove, which I will not argue.

They believed that more and more Dartmouth will teach that all things are interlocked about a central reality. Therefore they planned to place the building so that it might be at the heart of the campus, yet so that related buildings could be grouped about it; to draw in all the books of the college; to keep the books for the most part central in the building, and not dispersed.

They believed that to surround boys with beauty is good— a part of their education. Therefore, of certain rooms, the design, color, and furnishings were studied as problems in the creation of beauty.

They believed that students should be given a chance to – acquire the habit of reading, as a resource for leisure, as the surest way to retain a keen and useful mind; therefore, the Tower Reading Room is an experiment in the cultivation of the reading habit.

Of the background of these beliefs—of a central reality of beauty, of the best of the heritage of the past—the tower is the symbol, for Dartmouth an inspiration, for the world a sign.