

Funeral Today For Noted Author

- June 14, 1966 -

Funeral services were held today at 11 o'clock at the Church of St. Mary of the Harbor for Mary Heaton Vorse, distinguished writer, author of "Time And The Town," the classic book about Provincetown, and a resident here for well over half a century.

Rev. Ernest D. Vanderburgh conducted the services for the woman whose life was so intimately associated with Provincetown and who in "Time And The Town," portrayed the warm, human side of the town she knew for years before it became a national resort. Burial was in the new section of the Provincetown Cemetery.

Mrs. Vorse, frail and long in failing health, died Tuesday evening at her home here, the old Kibbe Cook house at 466 Commercial Street, where she lived with her son, Heaton W. Vorse.

Besides her son, Heaton, Mrs. Vorse is survived by a son, Joel O'Brien, of Westport, Conn., and a daughter, Mrs. Mary Ellen Vorse Boyden of New York City and three grandchildren: John Beauchamp of New York City, and Sally and Gale O'Brien of Westport.

Mrs. Vorse was born in New York City, the daughter of Hiram and Ellen (Blackman) Heaton. Her birth date appears on one of her personal papers as 1881, making her 85 years old, but Mrs. Vorse, herself, said she had passed her 90th birthday.

She studied art in Paris before her marriage in 1898 to Albert W. Vorse, who died a few years later. She later married Joseph O'Brien although she continued to be known as Mary Heaton Vorse, the name she wrote under. She came to Provincetown in 1906 with her first husband and their two young children, Heaton and Mary Ellen.

The Vorses rented a cottage but before they left had bought a home in the West End in which Mrs. Vorse later lived for many years. It was in a fish shed she owned on what was known as Lewis Wharf that Eugene O'Neill's plays were first presented to an audience. It became the home of the Provincetown Players and was the original Provincetown Playhouse. It was later destroyed by fire.

Mrs. Vorse was herself a member of the highly talented group of writers and artists who were to bring fame to the town for their achievements. Besides O'Neill, the

band included such figures as Susan Glaspell, Sinclair "Red" Lewis, Wilbur Daniel Steele, George Cram Cook and many more who were to become famous.

In her book, "Time and The Town," Mrs. Vorse notes with warmth and affection the generosity and neighborliness extended herself and her fellow creative artists who had not then begun to profit from their works. (Both O'Neill and Sinclair Lewis were to receive the Nobel Prize in later years).

In her book about Provincetown, Mrs. Vorse paid special tribute to her friend of many years, the late "Ma" Avellar, Mrs. Angelina Avellar, who lived at 437 Commercial Street, and who, herself, befriended the young writers who had more talent than money.

Besides producing short stories and novels, Mrs. Vorse was a talented reporter. She served as a war correspondent in World War I for the Hearst publications and in World War II for Fawcett publications. Keenly interested in the early struggles of labor in the United States she wrote vividly of the strikes and bloody battles that preceded recognition of the labor movement. Her magazine articles reflected other aspects, as well, of changing social history in the United States.

In 1964 Mrs. Vorse was the subject of a televised interview conducted by National Educational Television for a documentary on the town it later presented nationwide.

The publishers of "Time And The Town" would like to have republished the book and issued it in paperback had Mrs. Vorse been able to revise it and bring it up to date. Active in mind, Mrs. Vorse worked at notes on a revision but her failing health kept her from the considerable labor it entailed.

Her friends knew her for a gently spoken woman whose conversation nevertheless sparkled with unflinching humor and wit. Her close association with many prominent national figures made her mind a storehouse of contemporary United States history.

She had a characteristic reply to the television interviewer who asked her what she thought was a dominant characteristic of a town now mushroomed into one of the country's major resorts.

Mary Heaton Vorse smiled and her eye twinkled. "Change," said, "change — and resistance to it!"

ALONGSHORE

By John Bell

"You can think of more things to do," said my wife in a tone that would have turned litmus paper scarlet, "when you have a column to write."

"It's the nature of the work," I replied, and went on washing jelly glasses. It was imperative, I told myself, that I get this collection of glasses to Heaton Vorse without delay. Half an hour earlier I had found him in his kitchen with two kettles of beach plums on the stove, and he had said he lacked containers for his product. Obviously, unless his problem were solved, he'd never get *South Wind* written.

Home again, I searched the kitchen cabinets. Our glasses stand in three ranks: the Use Every Day row, the Use for Company row, and behind them the Probably Never Again row. From the third I pulled out a dozen miscellaneous tumblers. One of them I recognized: it had contained cheese spread bought during our peniless return from Mexico in 1962.

Outside in his yard, Heaton thanked me for them, raising his voice over the alarum sounded by Joel and Jill O'Brien's little beagle behind the next door. The O'Briens came out on their way to dinner somewhere. "Josie's acting protective," said Jill. "She just had seven pups. Heaton, why don't you show John?"

I demurred. "Might be newsworthy if she'd had seventeen." Jill rose to the defense of motherhood: "Having seven is unusual, especially for a thirty-pound dog! And Josie's feeding them all without help." Jill grinned. "That is, if you don't count my giving her two cans of dog food and a quart of milk every day."

Step Back in Time

To step into the Vorse house, as I did following Heaton into the kitchen, is to step into the 19th century. Modern conveniences have been installed, of course, since Epaphras Kibby Cook lived there in whaling days. Mary Heaton Vorse enjoyed the comfort of running water, electric lights and indoor toilets. They may, in fact, have been put in by David C. Stull, the "oil king" of Provincetown, who bought the property in 1905, shortly after Kibby Cook's death. But Mary Heaton liked the antiquity of her purchase too much to modernize it, and her sons have not altered their inheritance.

In that atmosphere, it was only natural to recall the old whaling logs Heaton once showed me. They recorded voyages made by some of the nine whaling schooners for which H. & S. Cook Co. was agent. One in particular logged the 31-month voyage of the *Alcyone*, Capt. Baldwin, between late 1868 and mid-1871.

A Log is a Document

Romantics have spread the idea that a ship's log is a complete, intimate record of everything

that happens during a voyage to a small crew of men and their vessel. Not so. Ships' logs are kept for financial and legal purposes, and by an officer duty bound to protect the captain's and owners' interests.

For example, *Alcyone's* log tells us that the schooner was struck by a Dutch gunboat while "at anchor, lights on," in a harbor at Madagascar. Damage was slight—bowsprit broken, forestay carried away—but it was logged in every detail. If legal action followed, the record would show where, when and under what circumstances the accident occurred.

Logged information always described the wind's direction and force, the courses sailed, the sails used and any damage to ship or rigging. If land was sighted, it was named and its distance and bearing noted. When the ship came to anchor anywhere, the log told the depth of water, the kind of anchor used, nearly always the length (scope) of chain paid out. Crew activity was recorded most often by a set phrase such as "Watch employed in various ship's duties," unless they had a specific job: "All hands worked breaking out stores from the hold."

Writer of the *Alcyone's* log, however, spelled his words uniquely. The phrases above appear thus: "Watch imploied in veriest Ships Duty," and "All hans worked braking ought stoars from the hole." After a false start from Provincetown (they were blown back by a gale) the next day's entry reads: "At 7 P.M. wind NNEast and Cleare; at 8 P.M. wayed anker and maid Sale to continue the Voigue (voyage)."

Rarely did human concerns require a log entry; then they delight the eye of the researcher. One such begins: "At 1 P.M shiped a see which stove in the Galley and a pease of the bulworks on the port side, filled the Galley...and put out the fire....in the morning when the Cook turned out to make a fire he found that the Copers Kettles with all the Cooking utensiels where gon. The watch was called, mustered all hans but none of them knew anything....Called the men into the Cabin one at a time and questioned then...some of the men had thrown the Cooking utensiels over bord....They were put in irens and sent on deck..."

Next day the case report continues: "...the men appered to be truly penitent...promising that thare Conduck in the future should prove there Cencerety..."

"Taking all things into Consideration and also that for the future thay hav got to liv on bread and water,...let them out of irens and put them on Duty the rest of the Day imploied in veriest Ships Duty. Soends (sic) this Day with fresh breases from the North."