

## NELSON BOND: AUTHOR AND BOOKMAN

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In 1932, twenty-four-year-old Philadelphian, Nelson Slade Bond, arrived in Huntington, West Virginia, with a friend just to check out a small school, Marshall College. The friend moved on, but Nelson stayed and became one of a number of impressive students taught by Page Pitt in the Journalism Department. While at Marshall, he met a vivacious girl, Betty Gough; and they were married in 1934. The young couple settled in Roanoke, Virginia, where they raised two sons. Nelson's father had written a few stories, and his love for writing passed to his son, as Nelson chose to pursue a vocation as a free lance writer and author working from his home.

Soon after he left Marshall, Nelson began his career as professional writer. In April 1937, he entered the field of science fiction with the publication of "Down the Dimensions" in *Astounding Science Fiction*. That November's *Scribner's Magazine* published his memorable and humorous fantasy story, "Mr. Mergenthwirker's Lobbies," which established his reputation as one of the leading writers of SciFi and Fantasy. He recalls with nostalgia an encounter at the first World Science Fiction Convention in 1939. An enthusiastic and breathless kid hurried up to Nelson, saying, "Mr. Bond, I just sold my first story!" Nelson replied, "Congratulations. I suppose you have a drawer full. Forget them. The second story must be better." Years later, Isaac Asimov wrote him, "Thank you for the best advice I ever had." Nelson also heeded his own advice, writing and publishing scores of stories of his own in the field.

The success of "Mr. Mergenthwirker's Lobbies," which was serialized by another writer for radio, prompted Nelson to branch out into that media. He thought that if someone else could be paid for writing a script of one of his stories, he could do it himself. Over the years he authored over two hundred radio scripts. When radio drama moved to television, Nelson easily made the transition to the small-screen. In 1946 he adapted his story, "Mr. Mergenthwirker's Lobbies," for NBC, which became the first full-length live drama performed on network

television. He went on to write some twenty scripts for television, including an adaptation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. His move to movies was not so successful. Hollywood personalities, such as Rod Sterling, urged him to come to California and give screen writing a try. Sadly, after only receiving a fist full of empty promises, he returned to Virginia greatly disappointed.

He published one novel, *Exiles of Time*, in 1949, the story of a comet striking the earth. Many of his stories, however, have been gathered in hardback books, including *Mr. Mergenthwirker's Lobbies and Other Fantastic Tales* (1946); *The 31st of February* (1949); *Lancelot Biggs: Spaceman* (1950); *No Time Like the Future* (1954); *Nightmares and Daydreams* (1968); and *The Far Side of Nowhere* (2002). Some of these first editions now bring up to \$400 in the rare book market. A recent publication, *That Worlds May Live* (2002), is available both in paperback and digital versions. Many of his stories and books have been translated in foreign languages and published overseas. At least two more compilations of his stories will be published in the next two years.

In the Spring of 2003, Nelson began to transfer his personal papers to the University Libraries at his former Alma Mater, Marshall University. Some twenty-six cubic-foot boxes have already arrived and more will follow. The collection will contain all of his output as an author. His papers include the original drafts of all his stories, along with copies of the publications in which they appeared. There are also copies of all his radio plays, verse, articles, correspondence (including fan mail), contracts, agent correspondence, and financial records. A full run of the Nelson Bond Society's Newsletter is also included.

Now in his ninety-fifth year, Nelson has had a varied and interesting life. He has left a lasting legacy in his writing, and will be remembered as one of the founders of modern fantasy literature. Marshall University is certainly proud of Nelson Bond, one of its most illustrious alums, and very pleased that he's depositing his papers to Special Collections at Marshall