

## Award—and Publication— Offered for Ms. That Missed

Do all the manuscripts that are really worth publishing eventually get published? You can start an argument with a publisher, author or editor almost any time over that question. Random House editor Toni Morrison said at a Bard College conference a few months ago that "nobody has any data about

the books that have not been done and may never be."

Now, in an attempt to give the deserving but unpublished manuscript one more chance at seeing print, Bill Henderson, founder-editor of the Pushcart Press, has announced what he calls the Editors' Book Award. The idea is, quite simply, to give an annual award to the author of the best manuscript that has been considered, but rejected, by a commercial publishing house—and to publish that manuscript subsequently under the Pushcart imprint.

In his announcement of the award, which has the sponsorship of a number of leading New York editors and publishing people, Henderson said it would "annually celebrate an important and unusual book manuscript that has been overlooked by today's high-pressure, bottom-line commercial publishing."

The award, which carries a cash prize of \$1000 and a guarantee of Pushcart publication, with appropriate advertising and promotion and standard royalties, will be made by a panel of editors drawn from among the sponsors. Manuscripts can be submitted by author or agent, but—and Henderson insists on this as an essential condition—they must be nominated by an editor currently employed in a publishing house in the U.S. or Canada. They may be either fiction or nonfiction, and the author may or may not have been previously published.

Henderson cites the history of this year's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, John Kennedy Toole's "A Confederacy of Dunces," which went the rounds of many commercial publishers before final publication by Louisiana State University Press, as one of the motivating factors behind the prize. He also mentioned "The Book of Ebenezer Le Page" by G. B. Edwards, recently published by Knopf, as another often rejected book of quality.

"I have a feeling—and so do many of the editors I know—that there are a lot of fine books that simply aren't getting published today because they're not

obviously 'commercial,' or because an editor who admires them cannot persuade a publisher to take a chance on them," he added. "Maybe I'm wrong, and there's nothing really good that's getting overlooked. I simply want to find out. But believe me, if there's nothing worth it, then we simply won't give the award. Publishers have been wrong about so many notable writers in the past, however, that I can't believe they're always right now."

Sponsoring editors of the award include Simon Michael Bessie, James Charlton, Peter Davison, Jonathan Galassi, David Godine, Daniel Halpern, James Laughlin, Seymour Lawrence, Starling Lawrence, Robie Macauley, Joyce Carol Oates, Nan Talese, Faith Sale, Ted Solotaroff, Pat Strachan and Thomas Wallace.

Manuscripts, with editorial endorsement, should be sent to The Editors' Book Award, Pushcart Press, P.O. Box 380, Wainscott, N.Y. 11975.