

JAMES BARRETT RESTON

It is said that President Calvin Coolidge, looking about him on early morning walks, sometimes remarked quizzically, "Well, the United States is still here." It still is, despite the turbulence, the aggravated tensions, the ceaseless hurry of events, the bewildering fragmentation of interests and activities, the conflicts of passionate advocacy. We owe much to the probing yet steadying minds of men like James Reston. Such sober thoughtfulness, integrity, and diligence may not be wholly unexpected in one who had his origins on the banks of the Clyde, and of the Leven flowing from Loch Lomond.

A member of the golf team at the University of Illinois, it is understandable that he became sports publicist for Ohio State University and then for the Cincinnati Reds. The many sports references and similitudes in his writings recall that experience, such as his rueful remark that with games one at least knew at the end of the day who won. The transition from reporting for the Associated Press the activities at Wimbledon and Aintree to reporting those at the Foreign Office in London is less plausible. But then, as he has said, in many of our most important endeavors we are a nation of amateurs, who, on the whole, have done surprisingly well. The rise from rookie to star was rapid. For eleven years head of the Washington bureau of The New York Times, his reporting and interpretation of news, national and international, won for him many high awards, and the respect and esteem of journalists everywhere. Now he is Executive Editor of that great newspaper. Despite his complex duties he continues to write his column on the editorial page, one more expression of an industry which has occasioned disbelieving comment. We are fortunate in that, not only for the substance of his commentary, but also for the reminder of the public importance of illuminating and objective thinking, in the press and other institutions as well. One remembers the pertinent verses in praise of:

...the obstinately gentle air
That may be clamored at by cause and sect
But it will have its moment to reflect.

The University of North Carolina delights to honor James Barrett Reston.