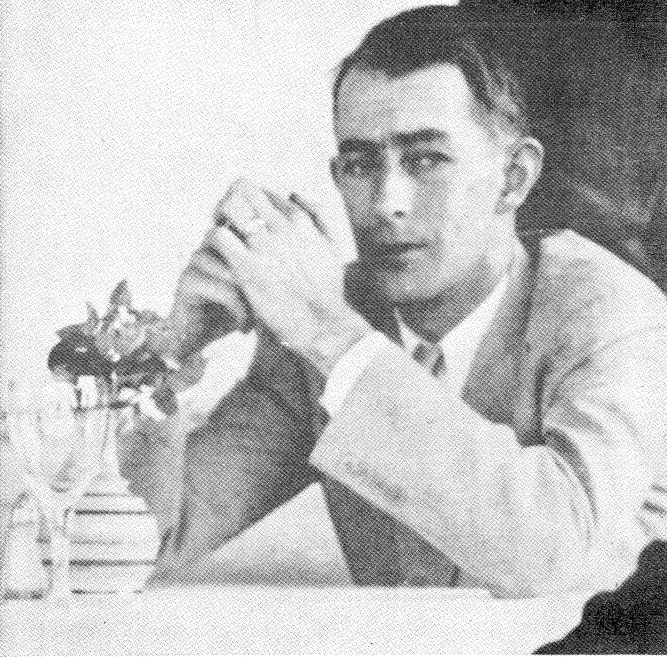
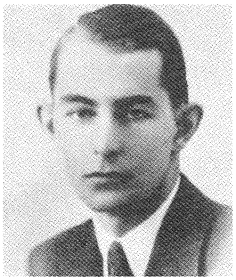


William H. Berri
1907 – 1961

Founder of the
William H. Berri Fund in
THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST

The New York Community Trust
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

At his death at age 54, William Berri had no near relatives—he outlived his second wife and had no children. So he left most of his money to The New York Community Trust, as the William H. Berri Fund, preferentially for scholarships.



When William Berri left the bulk of his estate for scholarships, it was very much in keeping with one of the traits his friends remembered most about him—a consistent desire to help others and bring cheer to them. He may not always have felt this cheer himself, for an accident at the prime of life partially disabled him and he was often in pain. But he never mentioned this. Instead he tried, perhaps all the more, to see to it that his acquaintances got enjoyment out of life. If at times this meant helping people out financially, his generosity was unobtrusive and spontaneous. "Once he decided he liked you," a friend recalls, "Bill couldn't do enough for you." So his scholarships are a natural extension of his generous personality.

William Berri was born in 1907 in Brooklyn, New York, where his paternal grandfather, for whom he was named, was prominent in civic affairs. The elder Berri owned a carpet factory, then developed typesetting machines and became publisher of the Brooklyn *Standard Union*. He was the founder of the Kings County (N.Y.) Trust Company, a member of the New York State Board of Regents and, when Brooklyn became a borough of New York City, was one of the signers of the incorporation. Politics interested him greatly. William Howard Taft used to visit the Berri home occasionally when he was President, and a photo shows the young Berri grandson held in Mr. Taft's ample arms.

But the grandson did not go into politics nor journalism (neither, in fact, had his father, who instead helped explore the Arctic with Admiral Peary). He was perhaps too shy, unassuming and retiring a man for these professions—an introvert who found the arts more appealing. As a teenager he sang in a choir and could play the organ. Not long after finishing his schooling at Hackley, a boys' preparatory school in New York State, he started a business designing and manufacturing high quality contemporary furniture. He was among the first in New York City to get excited by modern interior design and to sell modern furniture. A man of excellent taste, he also imported *objets d'art*. Because he had inherited wealth, he did not have to support himself by these ventures but, if he had had to make a career, his associates felt he would have done well in art.

The sensitive side of his personality was counterbalanced by a restless energy that craved action and found its outlet in sports. The faster and riskier the sport, the more he liked it. But this desire for speed nearly killed him. When he was in his early thirties, he tried to break a speed record racing his stock motorboat around the island of Manhattan. He hit a driftwood log. In the accident his back was so badly injured that for the rest of his life his tall, thin frame was somewhat bent, and he could not pursue any steady, demanding activity. The man of action now had to become a spectator. But this never separated him from sports he loved. He became a good friend of Gar Wood, the world champion motorboat speedster. At his Bobo Kennels he raised boxers and Great Danes that won numerous prizes, including some at the Westminster Dog Show. On a Virginia farm he stabled racehorses that were ridden by top jockeys like Eddie Arcaro and Don

Meade. And, blending his interests in arts and sports, he owned a fine collection of Anderson paintings and prints of horses.

What he particularly enjoyed was cruising in his boat in search of big fish—gamefish like blue and white marlin and sailfish. He knew every harbor in the Bahamas, "and when we'd come into port," a friend remembered, "he could tell you about every boat there, her construction and her good and bad points. He'd have made a good naval architect."

Yet sports were but one of his many interests. He spoke quite good French and always read a great deal—almost anything. One moment it might be an architectural magazine, the next a whodunit. And he took a serious interest in art, movies, and the theatre—fields in which he had a number of friends. His many friends, in fact, covered a wide range—from sports writers to business men, from a fishing guide in Florida to a nightclub owner in New York's Greenwich Village. "He was just naturally democratic," another friend said. "He didn't care who you were or what your background was; if he liked you, you were his friend, and that was that."

The New York Community Trust,
an aggregate of charitable funds,
is the metropolitan area's community foundation.
It serves charitable donors and
builds an endowment for New York City.
New York's major banks serve as trustees. Trustee for
the William H. Berri Fund is the
Morgan Guaranty Trust Company of New York.

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