

Parson, Donald ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1994

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Donald Parson, poet, author, and authority on the game of bridge, was born in Washington, D.C., the son of William Edwin and Anna Rebecca Naille Parson. He was graduated *cum laude* from [Harvard University](#) ^[2] in 1905 and received the master's degree the following year. In 1906 he became sales manager of the Youngstown [Ohio] Car Manufacturing Company but soon opened an automobile agency in that city. In 1914 he went to Pinehurst, N.C., to play golf and in 1915 built a home there. He also had a summer home in Brooklin, Maine.

During World War I Parson served in the army, first as an enlisted man and then as a captain attached to the General Staff in Washington in the military intelligence branch. Promoted to subsection chief, he later served as assistant to the divisional commander. In World War II he joined the navy and when the submarine menace was at its height, he was given command of a Coast Guard picket boat on patrol between Canadian waters and Norfolk, Va.

Parson's early poems appeared in various periodicals including *Wings*, *Talaria*, *Singing Quill*, *American Weave*, *Nature Magazine*, and *Poetry Review*, the latter an English publication. His poem, "The Natural Bridge," received an award in the Elberta Clark Walker Memorial Nature Poetry Contest in 1939. Parson's first volume of poetry, *Behold the Man and Other Poems* ^[3], appeared in 1931, followed by *Glass Flowers* ^[4] (1936) and *Surely the Author* ^[5] (1944). *Glass Flowers* was also printed in England in 1939. After years of research in libraries, art galleries, and museums in the United States and abroad, he published *Portraits of Keats* ^[6] in 1954. This one-volume book brought together all of the known portraits and physical descriptions of the English poet, John Keats.

A highly respected scholar, Parson was also a sportsman who enjoyed golfing, yachting, and angling. In Pinehurst he was president of the Tin Whistles, a men's golfing organization. He was also a noted bridge expert and wrote a column on bridge, "Tricky Tricks," which he began as a contribution to the *Pinehurst Outlook*. His last literary work was *Fall of the Cards* ^[7] (1959), a collection of his Tricky Tricks columns, which was described as "a witty collection of stories centering on intellectual problems at the bridge table."

On 5 Oct. 1907 he married Frances Maria Arrel of Youngstown, Ohio. They were the parents of George Arrel (1911–81), William Edwin (1913–29), Frances (Mrs. Albert D. Hunt, 1914–79), and Donald, Jr. (1916). Parson died at his home in Pinehurst and was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery.

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Additional Resources:

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