

1978

A Journal of Politics and Culture

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Southern Exposure



Packaging the New South

*The Packaged New South
Is Bigger and Better, Richer and
Full of Opportunity.
Not your old, unhappy South,
Grimy and unwashed,
But the new, Giant Economy-South
Cures All Ills . . .
Feel Finer in Five Days Or
Leave.
Do you remember the last New South?
And the one before that?
All this news of Progress brings to mind
A wicked little letter/poem written
To an earlier group of Proud Saviors
By our good friend, John Beecher:*

YOU KIDDING OR SOMETHING WHITE FOLKS?

To the Messrs J.F. & Robert Kennedy, Meany, Udall, et al.:

Sirs:

I have been stirred to the depths by your recent sonorous pronouncements, exhorting the populace to cease & desist from discrimination practices against Negroes & since I have no doubt at all of your individual & collective sincerity, I should like to call to your notice an egregious instance of this evil against which you so eloquently inveigh & which any one of you individually has ample power to correct, but collectively could instantly eradicate by a mere stroke of the pen as they say. Well, my wife & I were recently motoring through the "fair" state of Alabama when in our road rose gigantic the new Widow's Creek power plant of the TVA which is an agency of the US Government. Deciding to inspect this imposing facility, my wife & I each took a most edifying leaflet from the guard (white) at the entry. We proceeded to the visitors' gallery whence we commanded a view of the generators, a long row of which were thrumming in unison except for one which was getting a new armature. Electricians (white) swarmed antlike over the generator being repaired & as we were intently observing their activities a black employe of the US of A came up to us pushing a broom over the spotless tiles of the gallery. I smiled at him & he smiled back in friendly fashion & I asked him why he wasn't working down there on the generator with the electricians (white) & the broom-pushing black smilingly replied though with what I thought was a touch of irony, "You kidding or something white folks?"

— John Beecher

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from our readers



You have occasionally solicited ideas for topics. We are engaged in primarily a civil-rights practice. I would like to see an in-depth study of how blacks are now participating in the political process in the South, twelve years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act. My idea is that the issue would study voter registration, turnout, candidate recruitment and success (or lack thereof) of black candidates at all levels of government. Also I think it appropriate that the historical/constitutional origins of many of our local electoral structures be analyzed.

My interest stems from recent litigation here in Mobile where we represented black plaintiffs who successfully challenged the at-large election features of our city government. Such cases are premised on the existence of racially polarized voting in an at-large election system where blacks constitute a substantial minority. We proved that the at-large structure coupled with majority vote run-off requirements as presently operating in Mobile rendered the vote of black citizens almost meaningless. Additionally, we showed that when the present electoral form was adopted in 1911 it was with the general intent to submerge the voting power of minorities. Such electoral devices are in many cases as effective a barrier to full participation in the political process as were the "literacy tests" and poll taxes.

There are of course numerous sources of information available for such an issue and I will be glad to discuss this further if you are interested.

Larry Menefee
Mobile, Ala.

Growing up straight in the South (or US for that matter) was a trying experience, but pales by comparison to the experience of growing up gay in such an environment. I'm glad **Southern Exposure** let us share Louie Crew's recollections with its readers.

I have to agree with his point that we straights need to get off our ass and start attacking our unwillingness to coexist openly with gay folks, since that's where the *real* problem originates. It's tough, but we can't let our pseudoreligious campaigners march with their banners of ignorance and psychobrutality without being outraged enough to do something about it. It may mean that our passive role of "enlightened acceptance" of Gays isn't gonna cut it anymore. We may need to do some evangelizing of our own.

Jim Hartye
Durham, N.C.

It was good to see the article by Louie Crew on being Gay in Dixie (Vol. V, No. 1). Alas, I feel also that it was a very safe article. Safe for Louie Crew and safe for **Southern Exposure**. Because Louie is safe behind his "couple" which so many heterosexuals will identify with and safe behind a "respectable" job (although I'm sure neither his students or his co-workers respect his gayness). Louie and his article will be accepted before those of us who take a stronger stand against our oppression as Gay people will. Louie will pass as *nice* and those of us who really rattle the chains of our oppression get the shaft.

I too grew up Gay in Dixie and I also grew up *very* poor (white trash — or rather, Lavender Trash). I choose to live collectively and organize around my oppression as Gay and working class right here in Dixie. My sisters and brothers are fighting for our jobs right now as staff persons at the local food co-op. We are threatened with being fired because we are out-front Gay and call for FOOD FOR PEOPLE NOT FOR PROFIT, and jobs in the co-op for third world people from the community. We get the *shaft* because we just aren't nice. That's right. We are not Gay. We are *angry*.

Michael Oglesby
Fayetteville, Ark.

I disagree heartily and completely with your assessment of Nashville music, and very deeply resent the lopsided approach which sees this as the apex of music-in-the-South. I'm a composer and a member of *Southeastern Composers League*, an organization of over a hundred composers of serious music in the Southeast. Our stuff doesn't win platinum records and no teenagers hound us for autographs — but come back in a hundred years and see what is preserved and remembered about music in the Southeast. It won't be Nashville.

And I'm a member of the Unitarian-Universalist church. Liberal religion may not be exactly indigenous to the South — but it's here, and has been for some time, and its influence should be dealt with in any meaningful roundup of Southern religions.

Basically what I'm saying is that your "pop-culture" approach to the South isn't good enough. The forces that must operate to make meaningful changes in our lives, must operate at *all* levels, not just percolate from the bottom up. You could be doing your share to spread the word about serious art, music, and literature in our region — and instead you give us Nashville, which has its own brand of pizzazz and doesn't really need any help from you. And in religion, it may be understandable to be fascinated with the quaint Bible-believing rituals and quirks of our past — but the meaningful future can only come via wider and less dogmatic frames of belief and understanding. You may be aiding the South in growing politically, but in my opinion you need to take a second look at what you're doing for it, and to it, culturally.

William B. Hoskins
Jacksonville, Fla.

I was gratified to see my dissertation "A More Perfect Union? Slavery, Comity and Federalism, 1781-1861" listed in your Books on the South column (Volume IV, No. 4, p. 117). However, you have the wrong university designation after it. I realize Yale University needs to claim all the good dissertations it can. But, I did my work at the University of Chicago.

Paul Finkelman
Irvine, Calif.



Steve Hoffius' article "Railroad Fever" in *Southern Exposure*, Vol. V, No. 1, does an excellent job of describing the ongoing saga of railroading in the South. His subject is well researched and he displays some insight while describing the plight of modern rail travelers. With few exceptions, the old one liner is still quite true, "You can't get there from here."

I was personally involved during the past few years with the drive by

local county governments to save the Norfolk and Western Railway's branchline from Abingdon, Virginia to West Jefferson, North Carolina. This mountain railroad has been widely documented by writers and photographers over the years and represents the finest example of Southern Appalachian branchlines, among those remaining. Were public policy really geared for encouraging train riding, this branchline could have served as a highly popular introduction to "getting there" by train. The railroad passes through fifteen miles of the Mount Rogers National Recreational Area, now under development by the US Forest Service.

The irony and tragedy of this branchline's abandonment lies in the tangle of federal programs and regulations. For \$400,000 purchase price and that much again for rehabilitation, the public could have had a functional

NEWS THAT DISTURBS ME

I received my copy of *Here Come A Wind* (Vol. IV, No. 2-3), enjoyed it very much.

Recently a Mr. Lewellen from Ball State Univ. and radio station WBST-FM came to my house and taped the enclosed song I made, also some of my memories of the strike at Wilder. Your book was very helpful.

He thinks later this will be aired on WOWO, Fort Wayne.

Mr. Lewellen is very much interested in preserving our past heritage.

I have written a book about life in the Tenn. Hills. But as yet I haven't published it. I'm hampered greatly by lack of education. And must have it retyped.

Now I have had some news that greatly disturbs me.

A permit has been taken out to strip mine at Wilder. And you've seen the deplorable condition it was left in before.

Again, nothing will be done to reclaim it.

I'm writing to the EPA, but don't expect to hear anything. Please advise me.

Enclosed is the song I wrote. Sorry I can't send the tune, as I know no music notes, and had to publish it as a poem.

— Della Stulty Mullen

A Place That Didn't Last

On faraway hills and mountains,
where once we roamed so free,
Now there's nothing much, but old
strip mines,
Won't even grow a tree,
Won't even grow a tree.

When the price of coal dropped low,
old Fentress mine shut down,
Then came along the big bulldozers,
Lord they scraped your mighty
mountains down,
Scraped your mighty mountains down.

Summers now I go back, to that lonely
silent land,
Where old Laurel Creek's still running
swift,
But she's red as the blood of man
But she's red as the blood of man.

You'll find no pages in a history book
of these people once so proud.
Some's on a hillside sleeping,
Sleeping in the red clay ground,
Sleeping in the red clay ground.

Some scattered to the cities, where
we're called hillbilly trash,
But in our hearts we long to go back
to a place that didn't last
A place that didn't last.

— Della Stulty Mullen
Muncie, Indiana

transportation system which could have continued to serve the industrial needs of northwestern North Carolina while bringing vacationers into the heart of Virginia's Highland Country. Instead of what I consider to be "sound planning," the Forest Service is going ahead with plans to construct a sixty million dollar scenic parkway which will channel all those 4-wheel drives and R-V's into the backcountry from Interstate 77.

I am interested in sharing my thoughts with others who feel America should give more consideration to train travel.

Michael Testerman
Richmond, Va.

I was greatly disturbed by Leo Ribuffo's statement in his review (*The Angelo Herndon Case and Southern Justice*, by Charles Martin, *Southern Exposure* Vol. V, No. 1) that, "Ultimately, Herndon was freed by shrewd legal tactics, not mass pressure." The same thing was said of the Communist Party's role in the Scottsboro Case by Quentin Reynolds, biographer of Samuel S. Lebowitz, the lawyer hired by the ILD who eventually argued the case before the Supreme Court. Both your reviewer and Mr. Reynolds are totally wrong.

Angelo Herndon and the Scottsboro Boys owed their lives to the mass agitational work of the American CP. Had public attention not been drawn

to the case, had legislators from the local to the federal levels not been inundated and pressure brought to bear, had not the light of public scrutiny been focused on the repressive judicial system under which they were being politically tried, the defendants would have gone silently to their graves. That Ribuffo admits this in one paragraph casts suspicion on his statement quoted above.

Where would the lawyers, with all their shrewd legality, have come from had not the CP brought them in and held off the death penalty or imprisonment of the defendants as long as they did? Can there realistically be any question, at this date, that the Supreme Court (or any court) bows to shrewd legalisms? Hardly. Were reason the basis of our judicial system, or of our political system, or of our economic system, I think it can safely be said that Reconstruction would have proceeded unhampered, slavery would never have been a system under which millions were oppressed, Vietnam or wars of imperialism would never have taken place, and blacks would never have been lynched. There would also never have been a need for union organizing as employers, harkening to reason, would have gladly offered a portion of their profits to those who did the work.

In the case of the Wilmington 10, now, in 1977, it is not reason or shrewd legal arguments that will save the lives of the ten defendants criminally incarcerated by the State of North Carolina on the basis of extremely dubious "evidence" and prosecutorial illegality...but mass pressure applied and focused from all over the world. Hundreds of groups and thousands of individuals will have to raise their voices in protest before the vast machinery of the state judicial system ceases its grinding of human lives to consider "shrewd arguments." The Wilmington 10 *will* be saved, as were the Scottsboro Boys and Angelo Herndon, and the American CP to its honor will have once again played its part.

That Ribuffo realizes this, yet pays liberal lip-service to the state-fabricated myth of the impotence of mass pressure, is only damaging to the crusading image *Southern Exposure* so often, and so admirably, presents.

Bill Mantlo
New York City

A Way of Saying
by Sarah Gordon

to the memory of Ellen Stone Gordon, 1906-1972

Your death was like this

On the way to summer camp
We near the Pee Dee Bridge
I raise slightly my twelve year legs
To distance the trestle and water below

I consider countless rails of cool steel
Circling, winding, plumbing horizons
The feckless eye is wont to seek

From my back seat angle
I see a strand of your hair, obstinate,
Curling near your ear

I see your eye blink
Your voice familiar for the first time.

Soon I'll study chlorophyll,
Write forlorn letters, their route home a mystery
I'll trust, not quite believe

On the hike to Conestee
I'll stumble among strangers
And counselors will urge me
To wade where rocks in cold streams
Tenaciously resist my toes.

And I'll slide slide fall more quickly
Than hands can grasp, knees lock
(tree limbs just out of reach)

Below me the rocks, the water

Your death like this

New South Politics: Three Profiles

Dutch Morial

New Orleans Elects Black Mayor

by Bill Rushton

When Judge Ernest N. "Dutch" Morial was elected "the first black mayor" of this South Coast city November 13, 1977, political observers all around the country sat up to take notice.

New Orleans is the nation's fourth blackest city (relative to percent of total population), and the largest and most powerful city in the third blackest state in the country. When he took over the reins of the nation's second largest port — the Southern terminus of the mid-continent grain export/oil import traffic carried by the Mississippi River — Dutch Morial became perhaps the country's most powerful elected black official.

The true significance of Morial's November victory can really be understood only in the context of the history of Afro-American involvement in the city's political and cultural life. African slaves were first imported into the state of Louisiana, then a French colony, after Indian slavery was abolished in 1719. By 1724, colonial administrators had finished compiling the *Code Noir*, a document outlining the mutual rights and obligations of Louisiana's masters and slaves. By

comparison to conditions in Anglo-American colonial areas, the results of the *Code Noir* were relatively progressive. All slaves were required to be baptized in the Catholic Church, establishing common cultural ties between blacks and whites in Louisiana that were closer than those anywhere else in the South — ties that were preserved through the Civil War until separate, black Catholic parishes began to be formed with the consent of the Archbishop of New Orleans in 1897. Colonial-era slaves were permitted to retain a good many of their own cultural traditions as well, and in New Orleans they were allowed Sunday afternoons off to gather in what was then called Congo Square to dance the *bamboula* to their own music, forming a unique milieu which helps explain why jazz originated here rather than in, say, Savannah or Charleston.

Most importantly, the *Code Noir* also regulated the conditions under which slaves could be set free, and defined the rights and protections which freed slaves enjoyed. The year of the publication of the *Code Noir* was, therefore, the year of the first "people of color," or *gens de couleur*, and the beginning of the black Creole culture that would spawn Dutch Morial two and a half centuries later.

Catholic and often well-educated, the "high yellow" interracial Creoles of New Orleans were still shunned by

whites after the Civil War, and in turn, they shunned the darker blacks. The Creoles were concentrated in the city's Seventh Ward, near the French Quarter, while the darker blacks remained across town. But over the years, the different groups have become more or less amalgamated into a large and diverse black community — still noticeably lighter than any other American urban black community — with its own banks and universities and political leaders.

Dutch Morial, the latest of these leaders, was born in the Faubourg Marigny of a seamstress mother and a cigar-maker father, both of whom still spoke French when he was a child. Nicknames are a common part of any French background in Louisiana, and they are usually handed out at a very young age. As Dutch Morial told a reporter a few years back, "I think some neighbor gave it to me — maybe because I was wooden-headed?"

Hard-headed, for sure. After graduating from Catholic Xavier University, New Orleans' black Creole training ground, Morial set out to become the first black graduate of LSU's Law School. He entered the same class with Robert Collins, a local magistrate and political leader who hopes to become the first black federal judge in the South — and Crescent City political yarn-spinners insist that the ambitious Morial raced through school so he wouldn't have to share

Bill Rushton's first book, on the French-speaking Cajuns of South Louisiana, will be issued this fall by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.



In 1972, Judge Morial was overwhelmingly elected to the Louisiana Court of Appeals, making him Louisiana's highest ranking black official and the South's highest ranking black judge. From there he mapped out his race for the mayor's office.

the "first graduate" honors with Collins.

Morial returned to New Orleans in 1954 to rejoin the law practice of the late A.P. Tureaud, the city's first black attorney and the mayor-elect's chief mentor. Tureaud had been a co-founder of the Orleans Parish Progressive Voters League, the city's first modern black political organization, and staff attorney for the NAACP.

Morial started in Tureaud's office as a clerk in 1951, just in time to pitch in on the lawsuit that eventually desegregated New Orleans' public schools, and he never slowed down. In subsequent years, Morial's NAACP-financed lawsuits desegregated the restaurants at New Orleans' airport, downtown hotels, and the city's taxicabs. The day LSU opened its New Orleans branch campus (now the University of New Orleans), Morial filed suit to integrate it, too.

Eventually, he was elected president of the local NAACP chapter, and increased its membership from 2,000 to 7,000 in three years. In one of the most stirring moments in the history of the local civil rights movement, Morial tried to desegregate the hiring practices of businesses along Dryades Street, the main drag through Central City, New Orleans' largest ghetto. When merchants refused, Morial helped organize a march of 15,000

people on City Hall, the largest demonstration in city history. On another occasion, he invited Thurgood Marshall to town, but the city refused to rent him the Municipal Auditorium, which faces onto the old Congo Square. Morial filed suit again and won. His opponent in that skirmish was moderate Mayor deLesseps "Chep" Morrison, whose son, Toni, was an unsuccessful candidate against Morial in the 1977 election's first mayoralty primary last summer.

In yet another successful case, Morial took the state to court when it passed a law prohibiting teachers from joining the NAACP. His plaintiff in the case was his wife, Sybil, a teacher and a well-known activist in her own right. Mrs. Morial, the daughter of a wealthy physician, was a childhood friend of UN Ambassador Andrew Young – and his date to the senior prom.

In 1967, Morial became the first black member of the Louisiana House of Representatives since Reconstruction. He led the fight to lower the voting age to eighteen, and when Governor John McKeithen appointed him to be the sole black member of the Louisiana delegation to the 1968 Democratic National Convention, Morial responded by filing suit and winning seats for other black delegates. Governor McKeithen, a racial moderate who evidently appreciated political

spunk, made Morial a judge in Orleans Parish Juvenile Court in 1970. In 1972, Judge Morial was overwhelmingly elected to the Louisiana Court of Appeals, making him Louisiana's highest ranking black official and the South's highest ranking black judge. From there he mapped out his race for the mayor's office.

There had been one major disappointing defeat for Morial in this long string of superlatives. In 1969, he ran for New Orleans councilman-at-large, and even made it into the second primary. He lost the election by a scant four percent margin to Joe DiRosa. Ironically, it was Councilman Joe DiRosa that Judge Dutch Morial finally beat to become the city's first black mayor.

New Orleans' banana republic politics may not be as sleazy as the political life of other American cities – but it is assuredly more openly sleazy. For the last eight years, the major domo of New Orleans sleaze has been Major Maurice "Moon" Landrieu. His angelic reputation in other parts of the country is directly proportional to how far away from the city you are. Seen in the shadows of the scandal-ridden, inefficient and financially disastrous Superdome, Moon Landrieu's reputation is well-nigh unprintable. During his freshman term

in the state legislature, he was the only white member to vote against one mindless segregation law after another; and he did win election eight years ago with ninety-seven percent of the black vote. So he's not exactly dumb. Just sleazy.

Landrieu started out *his* legal career representing arrested employees or associates of the pinball company that paid *his* way through law school. After his election as mayor, he promptly devised a series of urban policies whose sole beneficiaries were his major campaign contributors. The Superdome/convention/tourist industrial complex in New Orleans is now dominated by Landrieu cronies. Of the three largest hotels in town, all built since he came into office, one was financed from a sheriff's gambling connections, another was built over public air rights without legal authorization, and the third got the contract to manage the publicly owned Superdome. Landrieu's campaign finance chairman got the airport limousine franchise. The historic French market was ravaged to make a tourist shopping center, still half-vacant, and most of the Central Business District was bulldozed in anticipation of the high-rise hotels and office buildings which never materialized. Worst of all, Landrieu has handed over to Dutch Morial a city in the worst financial straits since Reconstruction.

While Landrieu and Morial exhibit professional cordiality in public, their political styles could not possibly be more different. Take, for example, some of the back-room deals which characterized the first mayoralty primary.

Landrieu, who had backed Morial for councilman-at-large in 1969, declared his intention to remain neutral in the mayor's race. But shortly before the election, he dramatically announced his support for Toni Morrison, son of former Mayor Chep Morrison, Landrieu's mentor. Morrison, the Uptown Establishment's preferred candidate, also started out in the state legislature representing a district half black and half white. He has defeated black candidates before by drawing on substantial black support. "We did it the last time, and we can do it again," Morrison's campaign promised.

"No, we *didn't* do it last time

and we *can't* do it again," retorted Morial, who says he still has in his possession Mayor Morrison's denunciatory letter from the Thurgood Marshall incident. Morrison refused to back Morial in the second primary.

Meanwhile, State Sen. Kat Kiefer — long-time political foe of Landrieu who had investigated the dome scandal — entered the race with the backing of the maritime industry, the city's largest, and a considerable number of black leaders. Kiefer, a Ninth Ward street brawler with a history of public drunkenness and assault, eventually became a partner in this city's largest law firm. Kiefer and Morrison both waged slick, well-financed campaigns, and had either made it into the second primary with Morial, one of them might have been elected.

But shortly before the first primary election, Councilman Joe DiRosa, the only other major white candidate, pulled a political stunt unprecedented even for Louisiana. A long-time critic of the local private utility monopoly, New Orleans Public Service, Inc. (NOPSI controls gas, electricity and transit), DiRosa mailed every registered voter a utility bill for over \$400 that looked remarkably like the real thing. NOPSI felt compelled to denounce the stunt in public statements and advertisements — and the resultant hoopla helped DiRosa edge out Kiefer for the number two spot. Morrison came in fourth. Morial, who had held onto the largest chunk of the black vote, came in first in the non-partisan open primary's field of nine.

That turn of events set the New Orleans Establishment on its ear. DiRosa had been a frequently mentioned luncheon companion of New Orleans racketeer Carlos Marcello, and the town's Anglo-Episcopal mafia was loathe to see the government handed over to the city's Italian one. On the other hand, Morial had filled all the requisite civic affairs posts — board slots with the United Fund and local universities, even a part-time teaching job at Tulane's Law School, but Uptown wasn't sure it was ready for a *black* mayor.

Most of Morial's campaign chest had been raised in small contributions and from a spectacular series of entertainment benefits featuring local black

musical talent and nightclubs.

The "big" white money didn't start rolling in until the ludicrously inarticulate DiRosa met Morial in their first, and as it turned out, last, televised debate. Morial later looked straight into the minicam TV corps at his victory night disco bash and said he owed nothing to anyone and, at the same time, everything to everyone equally. And that's how he's expected to play it.

The campaign trail is rich with evidence suggestive of future New Orleans policies. Both Morials showed up for a large, gay-organized fund-raising cocktail party to fight Anita Bryant's New Orleans appearance in June, and after 3,000 people showed up for that march, Morial issued a strong statement on gay rights. Gays were active in the highest echelons of his campaign, and are expected to be included on the citizen task forces Morial plans to establish to advise him on such issues as the appointment of a new police chief.

Morial also picked up heavy support from the Jewish community, including an endorsement from Uptown's Jewish Councilman, Frank Friedler, one of only two elected officials in town who dared to endorse him against DiRosa. When DiRosa's second primary slot was confirmed (loser Kiefer had threatened to file suit to delay the second primary election and recount the ballots), a member of the city's second wealthiest Jewish family organized a full-page listing of prominent white endorsers for Morial. Toni Morrison, who studied law for awhile in Buenos Aires, had the support of the city's Latino community in the first primary, but there were "Viva Morial" signs all over the dance floor on victory night.

Morial's victory in New Orleans compares favorably to those of former mayor Fred Hofheinz in Houston, especially with regards to the gay vote, and with Maynard Jackson's victories in Atlanta, although Morial won with a higher percentage of the white vote.

Given the unique nature of the city he will now govern, that's not hard to believe. "Dutch Morial for Mayor," asked one local newspaper headline: "Too Black, Too White, or Just Right?" The next four to eight years should provide the answer. □



Bill Baxley

Alabama After Wallace

by Randall Williams

The joke in Alabama used to be that if Attorney General Bill Baxley wanted to run for governor, he had to get married first. And if he wanted to *run and win*, he had to marry Lee Wallace, George and Lurleen Wallace's youngest daughter.

Baxley, a bold, flamboyant figure who became the state's chief law enforcement officer when he was twenty-eight, had long been considered Alabama's most eligible bachelor.

By this time next year, the long-familiar visage of George Corley Wallace will be gone from the Alabama statehouse. And, at age thirty-six, William J. Baxley is married — though not to Lee Wallace — and already on the campaign trail to succeed George Wallace as governor. If he can overcome recent widespread rumors and allegations about his financial dealings, he just may win.

Baxley is something of an enigma. He makes noises in the best populist tradition against the same "big mules" on which former governor "Big Jim" Folsom threatened to use his corn shuck mop as far back as 1946. Folsom, a giant of a man reminiscent in some ways of Louisiana's Huey Long, was a racial moderate who assailed "the interests." He attacked the Alabama Farm Bureau for its manipulation of state politics, but

Randall Williams, a former Alabama newspaper reporter, edits the Southern Poverty Law Center's newsletter.

never had much success at it.

Two decades later, Baxley hauled the Farm Bureau and five other powerful lobbies into court for violation of election laws. He won the case, though the conviction was overturned by a higher court. Baxley then sued Edward Lowder, a Farm Bureau official reported to be one of the most powerful men in the state, for using the Bureau's vast financial resources to benefit his own business interests. The suit continues, though Baxley's chances for ultimate success are uncertain.

Baxley's prosecutions of politicians, church bombers, corporate polluters and inmate murderers have earned him, on separate occasions, praise from both Birmingham liberals and Wiregrass rednecks. His energetic activity has won respect in a state where two previous attorneys general left office under criminal indictment and a third is remembered chiefly for his odd habit of accosting people on the street for such breaches of the peace as jaywalking.

Baxley is riding high now, following the conviction of Robert Chambliss, the ex-Klansman found guilty in November of the 1963 bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. The story is tragically familiar; everyone knows it, knows that four little black girls died in the explosion and that the murderers were never caught.

Never caught, that is, until Baxley came along. His pursuit of the men

who planted that dynamite has been relentless, almost fanatical. According to Baxley, he was in his third year of law school at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa when the bombing occurred; he was so shaken by the event that he hardly slept or ate for two days, and when he took office as attorney general seven years later, he put the unsolved church bombing at the very top of his agenda.

That story sounds almost too good to be true, almost certainly the product of some press office flack, except that Baxley's friends and many reporters who regularly cover him believe it happened just that way. They also say the incident clearly demonstrates the generational difference between Baxley and Wallace. Baxley thinks that, if anything, his prosecution of Chambliss will hurt him in the upcoming campaign. He told a recent gathering of Montgomery press people that the Chambliss prosecution won him support in New York and California. "Unfortunately, the people in New York and California don't vote in Alabama," he said. But Bill Baxley does not seem to care if he loses the votes of some of those who resent the resurrection, after all these years, of the spectre of the bombings and beatings so closely identified with Alabama during the Civil Rights era.

Going after Chambliss is the kind of bold stroke that has characterized Baxley's personal life style and career. He is impetuous and likes to

gamble. His friends say he is bold to the point of recklessness, but pragmatic to the point of ruthlessness. Several years ago, he made headlines with a Las Vegas trip in which he won \$30,000. Though such exploits draw heavy criticism in the media, Baxley has shown no inclination to alter his habits.

In person, Baxley is disarmingly charming, in an innocent, boyish way. His best friends are two former Montgomery newspaper journalists with whom he once shared a bachelor apartment. Friends say he hates to be left alone, and that he has the fear some politicians have of being killed; he has been known to literally barricade himself inside his apartment, sitting with a gun nearby and furniture against the doors, watching television. He is also morbidly afraid of dogs, and will cross the street to avoid meeting certain breeds on the sidewalk.

For a politician, he seems somewhat aloof. He has a reputation for not returning phone calls and for ignoring the buddy system that other politicians follow. As a result, he is said to have few real friends in the Alabama Legislature, and that could be problematic if he were to win the governor's office.

Baxley has also been known to prosecute some of his own allies, as Kenneth "Bozo" Hammond discovered, much to his discomfort. Hammond, a shoe store owner from a small Alabama town, had been elected president of the Alabama Public Service Commission (PSC) largely on Baxley's support. Baxley had campaigned hard for him because he opposed the incumbent president, Eugene "Bull" Connor. Bull Connor had parlayed his notoriously racist practices as Birmingham's public safety commissioner during the civil rights movement into the lucrative position on the PSC, and Baxley was anxious to see him finally defeated. With Baxley's active support and advice, Hammond won. But several years later, Baxley prosecuted and convicted him for using his influence with the utilities to get bribes from suppliers. A reporter who covered Hammond's trial said it was almost like watching a father and son: "Now, Kenneth, tell me . . .," Baxley would say while Hammond was on the stand.

Baxley also once resisted overtures

by no less a legend than Paul "Bear" Bryant, the Alabama football coach. Baxley had entered a Birmingham restaurant and spotted Bryant sitting alone, obviously immersed in one of his occasional bouts of melancholy. Baxley is a great fan of Bryant, and he waved him over to have dinner. After a time the conversation turned to the problems Baxley's office was causing some of Bryant's strip miner friends.

Baxley pointed out that the cases were handled by Asst. Atty. Gen. Hank Caddell, whose father is on the University of Alabama Board of Trustees. "Yeah, Henry Caddell is an old friend of mine and a good man, but his boy is just trying to be a turd about this," Bryant drawled. It was, again, a case of one generation running head on with another, and though Baxley politely heard Bryant out, he never called Caddell off the strip miners.

Caddell, like several others on Baxley's staff, is an Alabama boy who went off to Harvard Law School. When Baxley took office, he recruited Caddell and several others and brought them back home. He also put black attorneys on his staff, and that had never before happened in Alabama.

Baxley has given his assistants considerable freedom to operate, even on those occasions when it seemed to go against his best political interests. Baxley is pro-labor, but he risked the jobs of thousands of Birmingham steelworkers while Caddell wrestled with United States Steel Corporation about the air pollution caused by its furnaces. The company had been given four years to clean up its pollution, and faced stiff fines for its inaction. But US Steel said they would close the plants down rather than pay fines, and for a time it looked as if that would happen. Six hours before the final deadline, the company backed down and agreed to pay the fine for every day they were in violation. Today, air pollution is greatly reduced in Birmingham.

Caddell and Baxley have also attacked the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Environmental Protection Agency for "acting against the best interests of Alabama." Baxley's aggressive action on environmental issues, political corruption and white-collar crime endears him to many progressives and liberals, but other stands delight conservatives. He is, for exam-

ple, a law and order candidate of the first magnitude and believes sincerely in the death penalty as a deterrent to rising crime. In his first statewide race, he campaigned for attorney general by saying that, as the Houston County district attorney, he had obtained the most convictions in history.

"What he did to Aubrey Cates is exactly the same thing the John Birch Society would have done to Earl Warren if it could have."

Since Wallace's first term, Alabama has not executed anyone; but there are more than twenty condemned men in Holman Prison now. A reporter asked Baxley recently if he would commute any death sentences and Baxley replied that he was personally familiar with the cases of twelve of the condemned and that they deserved to die. An effective courtroom lawyer with an old-style bombastic delivery, Baxley himself handled the prosecution of Johnny Harris, a black convict sentenced to death for killing a guard during a prison riot several years ago. Alabama now has a new death penalty law, but there wasn't one on the books at the time of the riot. Baxley found a hundred-year-old law which allowed death for a prisoner under life sentence who commits murder. Since Harris was the only inmate in the riot who fit that description, Baxley prosecuted him for the guard's death, though many other prisoners were involved.

Morris Dees, who was Harris' lawyer, says, "In his closing argument, he whipped up the jury, shouting so loud the windows rattled. 'If I'd a been there,' he's yelling, 'I would'a set me up a .50 caliber machine gun in the door, and I would'a given them one minute to get out, and anybody that wasn't out, I'd a mowed them down. Killed them all.'"

There are lawyers in Alabama who will forgive whatever sins Baxley may have committed, but will neither forget nor forgive what Baxley did to Aubrey Cates. Until the last election, Cates was the presiding judge of the

Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals. He had been on the bench for two decades and was considered one of the finest legal minds in the state and was the only Rhodes Scholar ever to serve on that court. Baxley accused Cates of "legal nit-picking" and of having a judicial philosophy of setting criminals free.

Baxley recruited one of his assistants, twenty-eight-year-old Bill Bowen, to run against Cates and, in a state-wide television blitz paid for from his own pocket, Baxley attacked Cates, citing two examples of reversals he found particularly distasteful. Neither of the opinions had been written by Cates, and Baxley carefully neglected to say that no judge could reverse a case without majority agreement. Wade Baxley, the attorney general's brother who practices law in Dothan, was among those attorneys who defended and supported Cates, but the damage had been done.

Bowen won easily, demonstrating that Alabama voters still respond to skillful demagoguery and that Bill Baxley is a man to be reckoned with in a statewide campaign. Still, Baxley's effective ouster of a judge with whom he disagreed was viewed by many with alarm. "What he did to Aubrey Cates is exactly the same thing the John Birch Society would have done to Earl Warren if it could have," said Ray Jenkins, editorial page editor of the *Montgomery Advertiser*. Cates became ill and died not long after leaving office. Baxley said after the election that he had made a political mistake and would not repeat it. Still, the incident will haunt him during the campaign.

Baxley's financial dealings may cause him even greater trouble. His statements show that he has been speculating, often putting as much as \$20,000 into a particular stock, but holding it for as little as a week before selling. "He has a high-risk life style and this is part of it. We don't know yet all the details of his gambling and his debts," says Mark McIntyre, an investigative reporter for the evening *Alabama Journal* in Montgomery.

In recent months, McIntyre has been probing Baxley's relationship with a Louisiana millionaire named Louis Roussel, who controls a number of insurance companies which operate in Alabama. McIntyre calls Roussel's American Benefit company "a vast, self-dealing web," and says that of the

company's stock portfolio in 1976, ninety-eight percent was invested in other Roussel companies. The investments paid a cumulative dividend that year of 0.17 percent, and Roussel loaned himself \$4 million of the American Benefit assets, at three percent interest. Roussel is currently suing McIntyre for his coverage of Roussel's finances.

Roussel says he delivered \$25,000 in cash to Baxley's campaign in 1974, when Baxley was running unopposed. Baxley says he returned all but \$1,000, and he filed a campaign contribution statement for that amount. Roussel has promised an additional \$100,000 when Baxley runs for governor, and Roussel's New Orleans bank has given Baxley a personal loan of \$55,000.

Recently Baxley went to Oklahoma City to testify as a character witness for Roussel in an insurance investigation there. McIntyre says that only Baxley knows why or to what extent he is involved with Roussel. Baxley's associates say that the attorney general is broke and is trying to sell land he owns near his home in Dothan, but Baxley himself now responds to McIntyre's questions with insults instead of answers. McIntyre believes Baxley is honest. "He won't tell you the whole story, maybe, but to the degree to which he will talk, he's pretty reliable."

Baxley's profane insults to those who are bothering him are not new. When an official of the white supremacist National States Rights Party wrote Baxley two years ago protesting his reopening of the church bombing investigation, Baxley sent back, on his official stationery, a one-sentence reply: "My response is — kiss my ass."

Most of those who know Baxley feel that he would be a good governor — pragmatic, autocratic, perhaps, but energetic and activist in areas long neglected by George Wallace. He is considered likely to push for a repeal of the right-to-work law, to work for more equitable taxes and to try to shake off the grip that lobbies still hold on state government. If elected, he has promised to "twist a lot of arms and kick a lot of ass," and so would probably be a one-term governor. And that, Baxley says, would be all right with him. □

by John Norton

In South Carolina, "political observers" agree that Democratic gubernatorial candidate and self-proclaimed populist Tom Turnipseed is crazy, or cunning, or both. In the weeks following his Halloween campaign announcement, staged before power company offices in the state's six largest cities, a traditionally restrained press has freely quoted unidentified politicians who describe Turnipseed as "an inspired madman," "dangerous" and "demagogic."

"Turnipseed is a latter-day Huey Long," one Republican declared in a remark widely reprinted in the state's dailies. "He's crazy as a damn bedbug, but crazy in a smart way."

Many progressives say they doubt Turnipseed's sincerity, while the rock-hard conservative political establishment bleats warnings about the chaos sure to follow his inauguration. Potential supporters attracted by Turnipseed's talk of fundamental governmental reform are put off by his rhetorical style, and his emotional stability is a frequent topic over cocktails.

Black leaders are ambivalent about the former Wallace aide and segregated academy organizer: "It would be a national disgrace and embarrassment for a former Wallace segregationist to come from Alabama and be elected Governor of South Carolina by blacks," the senior member of the black legislative caucus told a reporter. But Isaac Williams, state field representative for the NAACP, demurred: "No one is capable of examining a man's heart, so you have to look at his actions. We have been able to get Tom's support on many issues of interest to blacks.... I think people aren't discrediting Tom's new convictions."

Formerly editor of OSCEOLA, a weekly newspaper in Columbia, SC, John Norton is now a free-lance writer in that city.

A Populist in South Carolina?

And no one is seriously questioning the viability of Turnipseed's convictions either. Political polls indicate he is presently better known and more respected among voters than any of the other candidates now being mentioned as contenders in the June, 1978, Democratic primary. Supporters believe, and detractors fear, Turnipseed may be able to organize the most broadly-based political coalition in state history, a coalition of blacks, labor, and middle-class suburbanites often dreamed of by Southern politicians. "He has a certain low-class charisma," a political consultant grudgingly admits. And a veteran political writer concedes that "he may be crazy, but he's right on the issues. And he's the only candidate in the race right now who's speaking out on them. He could win."

In the context of his rise to prominence, Turnipseed is both a phenomenon and an enigma. Born in Mobile in 1936, he says he was educated in the "forget, hell" school of Southern sociology. "I remember during World War II down in Mobile, we had some Northern people move in behind us. I don't know where we got it from, but it was like we were supposed to fight them. We were taught in the public schools some real strong biased-type things. We were taught that black people were not really 'people' people. It was the worst kind of insulation and isolation."

Turnipseed was also exposed to Alabama's populist tradition, and he says he developed a general resentment toward arbitrary power and privilege at an early age. His father was an entomologist; when Turnipseed was ten, the family moved to Virginia where his father took a job developing oil-based insecticides for Shell Oil Company. "We lived there about two years and then all of a sudden Shell created the Shell Chemical Company, some big corporate move, you know, and all of my daddy's colleagues were told, 'You don't have a job anymore.'

And here he is with three young kids, up in Virginia, an Alabama boy without a job. My father wasn't a very articulate man, just very good at his research. I never will forget how disillusioned he was with the corporation and the idea that the bottom line is everything."

Turnipseed's father found a job with North Carolina State University helping Wilkes County, NC, farmers develop a commercial apple crop. At age sixteen, Turnipseed experienced the first of three emotional breakdowns and was hospitalized for three weeks for treatment of mental depression. (Details of his psychiatric treatment were released recently after opponents leaked the information to the press.) "I just got depressed," he says. "I was president of my class in high school and playing football and doing everything, and then all of a sudden I started withdrawing. It was a situation of not being able to cope with society as it was."

Turnipseed played football on scholarship for two years at a North Carolina junior college, then joined the military. Two years later, he enrolled as an undergraduate in history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 1958 and again in 1959, he was hospitalized for depression. "Always in late winter," he recalls. "It was a terrible experience, but I think I'm stronger today because of it. I found out what I have to do to be happy is to become totally involved in society and absolutely totally involved in helping people."

In the early '60s, Turnipseed set out to help white Southerners. He finished law school at Chapel Hill and moved to Barnwell, SC, where he accepted a post as director of the struggling South Carolina Independent Schools Association, a loose-knit coalition of segregated private schools organized in anticipation of court-ordered desegregation. "I just felt like it was another example of the South being set upon," he explained recently.

"I was a racist, no doubt about that. And I'm sorry for it. I felt instinctively that the South was being done wrong, but I didn't really understand the reason. Now I understand and totally believe that the biggest problem we had was being an economic colony. And the thing that has helped perpetuate it has been the racial thing — keeping people divided on race, teaching white people to be poor and proud and hate black people."

Turnipseed left South Carolina in 1967 and joined the Wallace presidential campaign. "I was attracted to his populism. He was a great deal more of a populist than a lot of people realize, but it was exclusionary to black people to a large extent and that was totally wrong." Turnipseed served as Wallace's national campaign director in 1968 and was instrumental in organizing the petition drives that helped place Wallace on the presidential ballot in fifty states. After the defeat, Turnipseed stayed on to organize Wallace's successful bid for governor and to lay groundwork for the 1972 presidential race.

He left Wallace in 1971 for reasons that remain cloudy. Turnipseed says he was turned off by the political intriguers who surrounded the governor. Some accounts say Turnipseed was fired after he told *Parade* magazine he would "make Cornelia the Jackie Kennedy of the rednecks," but Wallace has always insisted they parted on good terms.

Shortly after his return to South Carolina, Turnipseed organized the South Carolina Taxpayers Association and became its first and only executive director. In press releases he described the group as the foundation of a grass-roots movement to return control of government to taxpayers. In the beginning a strong conservative influence was apparent within the group; and Turnipseed continued to be attracted to Wallace. After the Maryland assassination attempt and Wallace's decision to withdraw from

the presidential race, Turnipseed tried to organize a draft-Wallace movement in South Carolina.

The Taxpayers Association served as Turnipseed's first forum for attacks on the political and economic establishment, and his first assault was on the South Carolina Public Service Commission (PSC). The commissioners, Turnipseed said, were dominated by a small group of senior state senators who controlled appointments to the PSC and who were themselves influenced by large retainer fees from utilities. The payment of retainers to legislators by regulated utilities has since become an integral part of Turnipseed's rhetoric in three campaigns for public office.

Turnipseed says the formation of the Taxpayers Association marked the turning point in his attitude toward blacks. "I'd never really known any black people. When I got to know them through my work with the Taxpayers, I just said, my God, what have we done? I started thinking how it would be to be black. To endure what they've endured. I began to realize that blacks and whites were going to have to get together to change things."

Turnipseed began to articulate what has become the underlying theme in all of his battles with the power structure. The South, he said, has been under the control of outside economic forces, epitomized by the New York financial structure headed by David Rockefeller. These forces control the flow of money and use this power to exploit the South, to keep wages low, to keep unions out and to encourage the divisiveness among poor blacks and whites that serves to maintain a cheap labor market. At rate hike hearings, Turnipseed closely questioned power company executives and was able to document a series of financial ties between Northern banks and state power companies. He charged that rate hike requests were a direct result of the banks' conspiracy to reap excessive profits from the Southern colony.

The state press generally evidenced a great deal of suspicion about Turnipseed's change of heart on the race issue, and columnists claimed the Taxpayers Association was little more than a hollow shell organized by Turnipseed to further his own political ambitions. In the spring of 1972, Turnipseed made a well-received speech before the state NAACP in which he pled for

black-white unity. The remarks by a former Wallace operative attracted national media attention; Turnipseed was interviewed on the CBS morning news, and *Newsweek* mentioned him as a politician worth watching. Turnipseed's credibility was further enhanced when a prominent black Columbia attorney became the Association's legal counsel and instituted a suit challenging the constitutionality of a state law that allowed utilities to collect rate increases under bond pending approval from the PSC.

"Unless he does something really outrageous, I think he'll make the runoff," one political observer says. "If he does, you can bet his opponents will try to combine forces. . . he's a threat to their whole way of life. There'll be an all-out effort to stop him."

Turnipseed claimed in the summer of 1973 that the Association had 4,000 dues-paying members and predicted that a fall membership drive would produce 200,000 new members "who are tired of this state being at the bottom of everything that matters." The membership drive never materialized; in November, the Association's staff resigned amidst charges Turnipseed was interested only in seeking public office. Turnipseed denied the charges, but a few months later, the Association was defunct and Turnipseed announced he would oppose state attorney general Dan McLeod in the July Democratic primary. Turnipseed relied on volunteers to run his campaign while he intervened in new rate hike hearings before the PSC. When he began to gain in the polls, McLeod's supporters panicked and conducted a well-financed campaign in the black community playing up Turnipseed's segregationist background. Turnipseed lost, but the margin was small enough to force a reconsideration of the claim that Turnipseed was a demagogue without a following.

Turnipseed's political fortunes improved in 1976. He ran as a Democrat in one of the state's few predominantly Republican senatorial districts and defeated his Democrat-turned-Republi-

can opponent by 17,000 votes. During the campaign Turnipseed used tabloids and television spots to attack his opponent for accepting retainer fees from a state-regulated railroad, and he promised to speak out on the senate floor for fundamental reform in state government. Turnipseed told reporters after the election that "the people want leadership and that's what they're going to get. Every time a scalawag is paid off, I'm going to expose it."

The South Carolina Senate is an all-white, all-male body steeped in tradition, and while debates often become heated, gentlemanly conduct is the first rule. Turnipseed was quick to show his disdain for the aristocratic heritage. His open-collared shirts and casual attire were in marked contrast to the three-piece suits and robes of office worn by other senators. His maiden speech was a direct attack on the senate leadership. He cited a nationwide study that found the state general assembly to be fiftieth in functionality, a situation he attributed to a state constitution that places all power in the legislative branch, and a seniority system that allows "a small group of old men" to control government. Turnipseed joined several freshman senators in an attempt to revise senate rules to provide for a more equitable distribution of committee assignments. When the effort failed, Turnipseed lashed out at the senate's two most senior members, charging them with conflicts of interest. Senate finance chairman Rembert Dennis, whose law firm received more than \$200,000 in utility retainer and legal fees over a ten-year period, had been a favorite Turnipseed target for years. On the senate floor, Turnipseed described the fees as little more than bribery. Dennis responded by telling reporters Turnipseed had embezzled funds from the Wallace campaign and was "a fugitive from justice." When Turnipseed threatened to sue, Dennis admitted he could not back up the charges and made a public apology.

The bills introduced by Turnipseed during his first senate session are consistent with the themes he has voiced over the last five years. In general, they attempt to reduce conflicts of interest in the general assembly, to reform utility rate structures and regulation, and to provide for a more equitable dis-

tribution of power. However, none of Turnipseed's bills were reported out of committee last session, resulting in criticism that his abrasive manner and refusal to work "within the system" have made him ineffective as a senator. Turnipseed disagrees and points to a growing sentiment in the general assembly to alter the selection of PSC commissioners as evidence that his style has been effective with voters. "Besides," he says "I'm not here to 'work' with the legislature; I'm here to change the legislature."

"Turnipseed Has Appeal, But Can He Govern?" the state's largest daily newspaper asked a few days after he announced his candidacy for governor. The columnist questioned Senator Turnipseed's "mercurial temperament and slashing style," yet still admitted, "He might be able to put together a rare combination of voters: retirees, working-class whites, blacks and liberals. He must be considered a serious contender."

"I don't think voters generally perceive him as demagogic or unbalanced," another state political analyst says. "They seem to be attracted to what they see as righteous indignation. I think voters for the most part feel powerless, and they're ready to respond to someone who's telling them they don't have to be powerless."

Some observers think Turnipseed can lead the ticket in a three- or four-way primary if he can convince black voters his racism has been exorcized. He appears to be making progress. Last spring he joined black leaders in an unsuccessful attempt to block passage of a new capital punishment law. On the senate floor, he has frequently criticized state agencies for failure to place more blacks in executive positions, and he has appealed to the white business community to "recognize our collective guilt" and support affirmative action programs.

Turnipseed's willingness to speak out in favor of collective bargaining for public employees and on other issues of concern to organized labor has earned him the support of state labor council president, Jim Adler, and is expected to produce contributions from national labor organizations. His relationship with former Wallace supporters is unclear; some have accused him of "selling out to

I'd never really known any black people. When I got to know them through my work with the Taxpayers, I just said, my God, what have we done? I began to realize that blacks and whites were going to have to get together to change things.

— Tom Turnipseed

the NAACP," but others are volunteering to work in his campaign — evidence, Turnipseed says, that the time is right for a black-white political coalition.

Turnipseed estimates he will spend \$150,000 in his campaign — considerably less than the \$700,000 spent by reform candidate Charles "Pug" Ravenel in his aborted 1974 race. He says fundraisers are concentrating on small contributions, sales of turnip-related novelties, and "meet the next governor" cocktail parties. Professional political consultants say Turnipseed's \$150,000 won't be enough, but he believes he can cut costs by severely limiting advertising. "I'm not going to run a traditional campaign. I plan to spend most of my time in the senate working on legislation and fighting for the people. I'd rather have thirty seconds on the news because I'm out doing something for the people."

Turnipseed will probably face three opponents in the June, 1978, primary — Lt. Governor Brantley Harvey, former state senator Richard Riley, and former congressman Bryan Dorn. All three are moderates and long-time

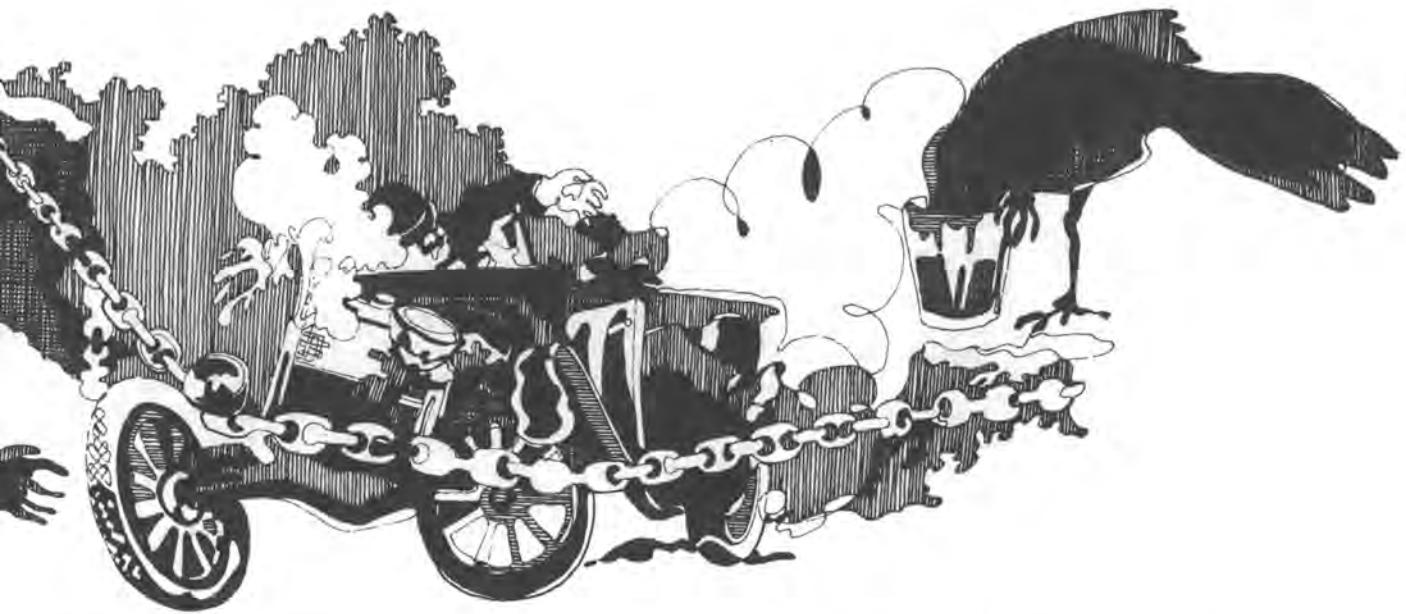


members of the state's Democratic leadership. Harvey, who has most of the traditional money behind him and is supported by many older black leaders, is considered by some to be the front-runner at this point, with Turnipseed close behind. Harvey's Beaufort law firm has received retainers from a regulated utility and some of his supporters fear Turnipseed will be able to dump rising energy costs in Harvey's lap. "We're praying for a mild winter," one says.

Leaders of the struggling state Republican party would like to see Turnipseed emerge as the Democratic primary victor. In their scenario, Democrats who fear Turnipseed will then join with Republicans to defeat him in November. Turnipseed believes he will receive a majority of votes on the first ballot and avoid a runoff, but few observers agree. "Unless he does something really outrageous, I think he'll make the runoff," one political consultant says. "If he does, you can bet his opponents will try to combine forces. I mean, let's face it; he's a threat to their whole way of life. There'll be an all-out effort to stop him." □



Drawing by Frank Holyfield



Child of the Lord

Interview with Bill Livers by Nathalie Andrews and Eric Larson

Polecats and possums, that's about all that was in this country then. There wasn't no coons in this country. Had been, but they all killed out. Coons ain't been here too long now. Uhh-uh. I tell you how long they been here about. Been here about, oh, I say, not over thirty years, if they been here that long.

Yeah, I tell you what, you hear of the 1937 flood?...That's when the coons come in. They come in on logs from different upper counties, you know. Come ridin down rails and logs. And they jump, when they get to the bank, they jump off here, and come on til they got the country pretty well stocked with coons. Before that there wasn't no coons in this country, bet for twenty-five years. But I've heard my daddy say that when he come on, there was plenty of coons. He was raised around Stamping Ground, Georgetown, and up in that country, and they got to huntin them and killed them out, until durin that flood. And they come durin the '37 flood.

And wasn't too many snakes, and a lot of them snakes rode them logs down. Washed here and there. Come in here. Weren't too many snakes round here until right after the '37 flood. Washed in here from different parts of Kentucky, you know. Some of them things come plumb on up from Virginia almost, plumb as far as the Kentucky River runs. Yeah, they come in on logs and things, tryin to get out of that water. And some of them settled here and some of them on down, til they got it pretty well occupied. But before then, there wasn't no coons. No nothing here. Just rabbits, groundhogs, possums and polecats.

Listening to Bill Livers talk is one of the most pleasant experiences on earth. It's got to be, the way the words pour out, smooth as homemade sorghum, soft as country rain.

Back then in about 1920, 'bout '22, we got kind of short of eatin. My dad was livin then. My mother was livin then. My mother told Dave, she said, "Dave, you drink all the time. Why don't you straighten up a little bit?"

Papa said, "Well, I will. We got to need some fuel here. We need somethin to eat here."

Nathalie Andrews and Eric Larson have spent several years in Owen County talking and playing music with Bill Livers. Support from the Kentucky Arts Commission's Public Media Program and the University of Louisville enabled Ms. Andrews, an archivist, and Mr. Larson, a musician, to collect the material used in this article. Copyright, 1977, by Andrews and Larson.

Well, said, "You ought to pray, Dave. That would help us out so much, if you'd pray. Ask the Good Lord and see what we have to have."

He said, "I had a big shot of whiskey. I can't talk to Him. You talk to Him. I'll 'Amen' to everything you say."

Mama said, "Well, Lord, send us down a half-barrel of flour."

"Amen, Lulie, Amen."

She said, "Send Bill Livers down a little pair of shoes so he can get ready to go to school."

"Amen, Lulie, Amen."

She said, "Send Dave down a pair of overshoes so he can feed Mr. Tom Foster's cows and sheep and hogs and one thing, way out in the cold."

"Amen, Lulie, Amen."

"Send him down a nice warm coat."

"Amen, Lulie."

So Mama says, "Well, can you think of anything else goin, Dave?"

He said, "While you got Him, hit Him up for a blackberry cobbler," he says, "while you got the Old Boy goin."

Bill Livers is a tenant farmer in Owen County, Kentucky. That's what he's been all his life – a cropper. He lives in Long Ridge, outside of Owenton, the county seat. He's a good storyteller who plays the fiddle. He's an unbelievable fiddler who cooks; an incredible cook who philosophizes. And all the events in his stories come down square within a few miles of Long Ridge.



Back in them days, there, we were all small, and all loved to.... I hunted when I didn't go to school. Sold hides for fifty and seventy-five cents apiece. Two dollars apiece. Tryin to make a little Christmas change, you know.

And so my papa and mama worked out every day they could, you know, to feed us. A whole bunch of us.

So I went huntin that day, and the dogs treed in a big rock pile. I kept movin rocks, and the dogs kept on smellin, smellin in there, and I kept movin a few more rock. And they kept smellin and smellin. Directly one threw his head up on the rock and commenced to barkin.

I said, "He must be close to him, whatever he is."

And he run and made a lunge under there and came out with a groundhog. And he must have weighed ten, fifteen pounds. A great big hog. See, he hadn't woke up from his winter's nap. He was still asleep, you know.

Well, I thought a minute... and I had to make him leave, you know, keep him from chewin him up too bad. Hang him in the tree.

And I looked back under and there was another one. There was two of them in there, denned up for the winter, you know. I just pulled him out. He was just stiff, just lifeless. I just tied the two together and come home with them.

Along about ten-thirty, eleven o'clock, Mama hadn't never come in. We was kind of hungry, waiting on her to come in. Well, she worked up until five o'clock, you know, and couldn't get in at the time to cook us what we wanted. So I just said to myself, "Let's took him out to the woodpile and skin him."

Skinned that gentleman, brought him in there and throwed him in the pot, and cooked him. We brought the other in and laid him in behind the drum stove, you know.

They all settin at the table. Some had knives and forks, gettin ready to cut on this hog. And I had a few potatoes around him, sweet potatoes, and cooked him til he get pretty well tender.

And we commenced to eatin that hog. Some of them eatin gravy and some of them eatin corn bread and one thing. One of them looked up at me and said, "Hey, Bill, he ain't gonna be enough. Get the other one."

I said, "Alright, I'll get the other one."

And I heard a little noise in there

before I got in there. And that hog had done woke up back from behind that drum stove. Had thawed him out, you know, and he woke up from his winter's nap. He was settin up in there just like Joe Louis gettin ready for a boxin.

I said, "Good gracious alive, what am I gonna do!" That hog made a lunge at me and I run back in behind that drum. I called the dogs in there. That hog had done got fully awake then, you know. Doggone, knocked all the stovepipe down. And some of them up on the table, and some of them made it to the bed, and some were up in bed, and some rolled plum over behind.

Them dogs was cuttin in there, and that hog was right up there fightin. And one of them looked at me and said, "I believe, my God, he's got a razor, the way he's cuttin us in here." She said, "Open the door and let him out."

I said, "Some of you all get off the bed and open the door. He's got me up in this chair and I can't get out. Open the door and let him out. You all said, 'Skin him.'" I said, "I can't skin that hog. That hog's bad! That hog's rough! It whupped everything in the house. Open the door!"

They opened that door and that hog took off out-of-there. And one grabbed him a hand of stick stove wood, and hind-threw him.

Said, "By Jove, he woke up from his winter's nap. We'll never get him no more." I said, "You see him goin yonder." I never will forget that.

And so, I tell you that from that time to this, whether he's asleep or not, I cut his head off as soon as I get ahold of him. I make sure he won't wake up on the old boy.

Bill's reputation as a cook is on a par with his fiddling. Here's how he cooks groundhog:

Oh, you put him on and boil him til he gets good and tender and then put him inside the stove and bake him, you know. Yeah, you can cook a great big one, put him on and parboil him. After you get him in, just keep on cookin til you can just take your fork and tear on in. And take your black pepper and your sage and tomato puree and put him inside the stove and just keep on bakin. He'll get just as brown as the back of my hand, out on top. And then take and put your potatoes around him and you steam em so they get good and tender, you know, and then you can

just take little old fashioned country sage that you put on sausage, and it makes the best eatin that EV-RY WAS! I never threwed one away.

"Sweet Owen" County lies in northern Kentucky, in the outer bluegrass. Rolling hills near Owenton tumble into steeper hollows and ridges as they push down onto the Kentucky River flood plain, rich with bottom land along the creeks.

If Bill isn't working for the Cammack's, more than likely he's fishing out on Cedar Creek, at the old mill pond, at a spot on Severn, or at one of several pools hidden around Big Twin Creek. Sometimes he goes over to Grant County, on ninety-nine-mile-long Eagle Creek: "One more mile and it'd been a river and a lot harder to cross."

Bill knows where to fish, when to fish for what, what time-a-day the fish get hungry, and what they like to eat (swallow whole, not just nibble at). Steadily he fills a home freezer, storing up for future fish fries.

This is Bill's country; he knows it well. He can live off it, applying skills he learned from his forebears. Grandmother Lizzy, on his mother's side, was full-blooded Cherokee.

She didn't know what it was to go up here to the drugstore and get medicine. She got her own medicine, right back in these woods and different things, get different herbs. And she could take and make salves,... She didn't know what it was to go to the store and buy her stuff. She got hers out of the ground.

Nature is an integral part of Bill's world, too, and his tales are filled with animals, tamed or wild: Bambsi, the deer; Amos and Andy, raccoons; Jim, crow.

...and he would drink whiskey! I be doggone...

I'd say, "Jim, do you want a piece of bread?"

"Nawooooo!"

I said, "You want a little drink of water?"

"Nawool!"

I said, "You want to drink a little drink of wh...?"

"OH YES! OH YES!"

Put that whiskey glass down there, he'd slap that foot up top of it, and run his bill in plumb to his eye. And just run

backwards and fluff his feathers with it, just like a bird taking a bird bath, you know.

I said, "Jim, I don't mind you drinkin the whiskey, but, by Jib, you can't go takin no bath in that darn stuff when I'm dryer'n a bone myself!"

Bill Livers has spent all his life, except for a few months, here in Owen County. His grandfather, a stonemason from Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, brought his family to Kentucky by ox cart just after the Civil War. They settled in Lexington, then moved to Great Crossings, and then to Stamping Ground. From there they came on to Owenton, where they stayed. Bill is the last surviving member of his family; many fell to accidents, his father to an infection, "TB of the gland," for which he had not the time or money for adequate treatment.

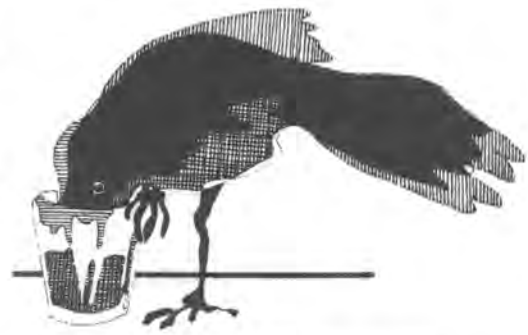
Mama cooked all her life. And she used to go out and cook Sunday dinners for the big rich white folks all around Owenton. And some of them are living yet, I know they are. And cooked some of the best meals that you ever eat, and never went to school.

They just set out what they wanted to cook, beans and potatoes, corn, tomatoes, and salads, and cakes and one thing. And go on to church and just leave her there. And say, "Now, Lulie, there's the stuff." They knowed she didn't have no education, but when they got back, she'd have everything fixed: fried chicken or baked chicken and dressin, and the table set and everything ready.

And durin the holiday, durin Christmas, we never did get to have no Christmas til Mama got to come home. They'd keep her plumb on to New Years. All durin Christmas week, she had to go somewhere, either to cook dinner or serve supper. They'd come after her in an old buggy, or an old Model-T car. You could hear it: "Chug-along, chug-along, chug-along, now I take her to cook."

Well, in the meantime, they pay her maybe a dollar and a half, two dollars, for that meal, but she'd come in with the awfulest load of different kinds of cakes and all we wanted to eat, and we'd be eatin all the time - bringing in big sacks-full and pans-full.

And the sisters was Myrtle, and later one Louise, she said, "I want you to help wash these pans now." She said,



"I brought you all something good to eat, so I can take the pans back. I have to go back day-after-tomorrow, and get them pans ready."

And Mama get them and stack them together, that she brought in for us to eat. Wash them pans and take them back up there be refilled, cooked with supper that night. I tell you I miss her so much.

Bill's great-grandfather on his father's side, Uncle Virge Livers, was a fiddler: "One of the best," and "a pretty good guitar picker and an awful good banjo picker. Aww, he could lay on the strings of that banjo. Yessir. He had two boys, Albert and Claude Livers, and they took it up. Albert, he was on the banjo. And Claude, he was on the mandolin and violin, too. He'd play mandolin awhile and then reach and get the violin."

So Bill had music handed down to him through his family (he still plays the tune "Old Virge" written by his great-grandfather), but it was his childhood friend, Clarence Orr, son of his father's employer, who taught him to fiddle. Clarence is left-handed, so that's the way Bill learned. Later, when he got his own instrument, it took over a year to switch to a right-handed technique. He still claims to get mixed up on occasion.

Bill's music represents more than the family and local traditions in which it is rooted, for he picked up tunes wherever he went - movies, radio, parties, even the circus. And he's still picking them up and adding to his repertoire of blues, rag, swing, popular, and old-time dance tunes.

Uncle Virge Livers and his two sons walked or rode mule-back to play for dances and parties, usually not more than three or four miles from home in Owenton. Bill also played at fish fries, barbecues and festivals in Long Ridge and neighboring towns, but in the last few years, has traveled hundreds of miles to perform at folk festivals and universities.

Bill has the gift of music. He plays the fiddle with an abandon that is breathtaking. At times, listening to him is like watching a reckless skater on slick ice, sliding through. Music is snatched from thin air, fiddle tunes fill the space, pulling your heart, tapping your toes. Bill's singing is soft and tender and pure.

At times listening to him is like watching a reckless skater
on thin ice, sliding through. Music is snatched from thin air,
fiddle tunes fill the space, pulling your heart,
tapping your toes.

Drivin this Model-T Ford, 1926. They had them Model-T Fords, and I never had drove in that one. So I thought, well, my first try I'd try to drive one, you know. So there was an old rich fella stayed over to Owenton all the time, the rest of the boys had been drivin for a long time. So I had him catch me out there one day, and he said, "Well, Livers, can you drive?"

I said, "Why sure." I hadn't drove a hit or lick.

"Well," he said, "get in that Model-T there and take her down there and get me five gallons of gas and a quart of oil and bring it back up here."

I took it out. "Chug-a-lug-a, chug-a-lug-a, chug-a-lug-a." Went on down there and got five gallons of gas with it, turned around there and brought it back.

Well, I knew what to do, but at them times they used to have the spark on this side and the gas over here, and you wanted it to go, you pulled down on your spark. You set the spark where you wanted it and feed with the gas, you know. You come to a hill, you pull down on the gas. If you ever wanted to slow down you eased up on your gas. Well, at that time they put these foot-feeds on these here 1926 Fords, put a foot-feed down there with a little knob on it.

So we goin on, old man Major sittin there, great big old cigar shot back in his mouth, and a plug hat sittin on the side of his head. The specs hung on his nose and the chain hung down. I said, "My God, I'll shake them off before we get there!"

We goin down that road. Old Livers Chug-a-lug. That old Ford said, I'll-take-you-there-I'll-bring-you-back, I'll-take-you-there-I'll-bring-you-back, I'll-take-you-there-I'll-bring-you-back, I'll-take-you-there-I'll-bring-you-back.

Went down the road, I know there was something kept getting faster and faster, but I didn't know what to do. I looked around, that little knob came off that foot-feed, and it fell plumb through the floor, that little hole, you know, where it come up through there. Went plumb through there, and the further

she run, the faster she got, til it was wide open, you know.

I sat up in there wheelin, just barely missin the culverts and one thing. Mr. Majors said, "My God, son, slow her down!"

I said, "Mr. Majors, I...uh, I'm gonna slow her down." And I passed a two-horse wagon, hubs just run together as they went by. He said, "Can't you slow her down?"

I said, "I done tried everything in here!"

He said, "Don't you tell me you can't stop her."

I said, "I can't."

He said, "I've got a notion to knock your head in."

I said, "You hit me, I'm gonna get out of here and leave you in here. I'm gonna let you have this Ford." Because he couldn't drive noways, you know.

Went down that Gratz Road there. Had to make a sharp curve in there, you know, and well, I hit that and just turned up on two wheels and went around there. They were workin on the road down there, and Mr. Majors said, "Don't tell me you can't stop it. They got the road blocked down here."

I said, "You better tell them to open it up before I get there, because I'm comin through."

Well, they had a log chain stretched across that road there, had it hitched to two stumps. Well, I hit that log chain the first time, and got back and tried it again. The second time it drove that cigar back in ol' man Majors, plumb to the fire. You oughta saw him tryin get that fire out. Course his head hit the windshield and drove that derby over his ears. You oughta saw him tryin to get it off.

I was tryin to get out of there, couldn't get out. He was tryin to reach

me with one hand. I was tryin to get out. Finally, he got me by the shirt collar. He just jerked me up and down. He smacked me on one side of the jaw, turned around and smacked me on the other.

But by that time, I'll be doggone, I think all the water jumped out of the radiator and jumped back in there and scalded him almost. And he gettin out of there and he called me everything but "a child of the Lord." And so from that day I never drove one for five more years, before I ever drove another one — until 1930, and I bought one of my own by then.

About once a month during the spring, summer and fall, Bill spreads the word that he's having a fish fry on a Saturday coming up. The first arrivals on that day help Bill and Hattie finish the preparations: stringing the lights, splitting kindling, and setting the black kettle on its stand. If it rains the whole show moves to the tobacco barn.

Shaking the fish in a sack of corn meal, a little flour, salt and pepper, Bill decides to play some music and asks someone to tune his fiddle.

Just as the fish hits the fat, his fiddle is placed in his hands, and he says, "Have you baptized that bow with rosin?"

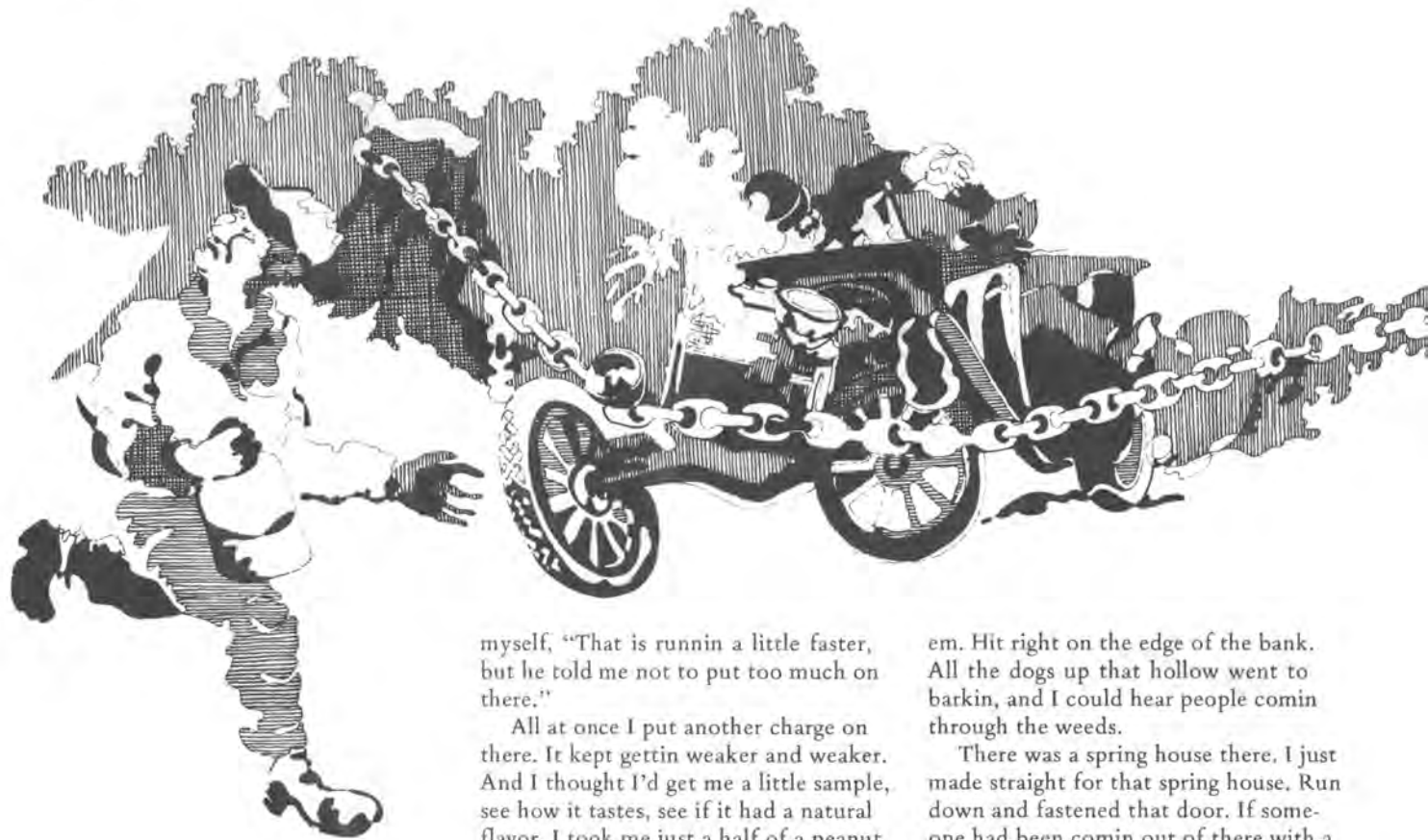
"Yes, Bill, she's all ready to go."

"Well, then, let's give em that 'Down Yonder!'"

Bill calls his shots, song after song, often repeating favorites. After "Down Yonder," he does "that Ten-o-see Waltz." Then "Old Virge" to get people dancing, "Come and Sit By My Side Little Darling" for romancing. Everybody comes in on the chorus of "Raise-a-Ruckus." The group-singing at these fish fries can be beautiful, but more often is off-key and out of time. No one seems to mind.

The fish is cooked continuously until it's gone as are Hattie's hushpuppies. She's one of the best cooks around, and worked for a while in the kitchen at the Governor's mansion. The potluck dishes such as potato salad and cole slaw move quickly and are gone before the later musicians are ready to eat.

By one in the morning, maybe half the crowd leaves. By three, only a handful remain. By five, you might be the only one up with Bill. He tells you a story about a still that blew up on him when he was trying to "stouten it up" a little.



Yeah, back there in 1928, I was livin...I stayed over in Monterey part of the time, and stayed in Owenton part of the time. Mr. Kenton, me and him's buddies, he was makin whiskey. That was back in Prohibition days.

So he told me, he says, "Drink all you want, but whatever you do, don't put too much fire under the still while I'm takin a load. I got to take a load into Covington." And he said, "You just watch things while I'm gone."

I said, "Yessir, Mr. Kenton, I'll watch."

Well, he had a big fruit jar, a half-gallon fruit jar full there. And it looked like to me it wasn't runnin out of the faucet fast enough. I was feedin it horse weed. I got an arm-load of horse weed, put it under that still. I could hear it go "Chug, chug-chug, chug-chug." I said to

myself, "That is runnin a little faster, but he told me not to put too much on there."

All at once I put another charge on there. It kept gettin weaker and weaker. And I thought I'd get me a little sample, see how it tastes, see if it had a natural flavor. I took me just a half of a peanut butter glass-full, and it just, "Ehuhh," just took my breath. I said, "Oh my gosh, she's stout enough!" I said, "I got to do something with this fire, I got too much fire under here."

And that still just bulged out, and bawled, "MMMMMMUHH!" Just bulged out like her sides would fold back. I said, "There ain't but one thing for me to do." I said, "She's gonna blow her top. I'm gonna have to get away from here, do something!"

I went into a bunch of weeds. I could hear her, "Chug-chug...MMMMHHH!" But I took that half-gallon of whiskey with me so I'd have it on the run. I know she's got to go, because I's scared to get back up there any more.

Directly that thing blowed up. It blowed right plumb in the Kentucky River. Never will forget it. The boiler come over my head, just sailin. Just like one of these here flyin saucers, you call

em. Hit right on the edge of the bank. All the dogs up that hollow went to barkin, and I could hear people comin through the weeds.

There was a spring house there. I just made straight for that spring house. Run down and fastened that door. If someone had been comin out of there with a bucket of water, I would have died.

But it was the only way I had to cool off my whiskey. And from that day to this, I never made another drop.

Mr. Kenton come back up there to get another load. He was wonderin where I was gone. I was in the spring house and the latch fell over the door and I couldn't get it open. When you get in there with one of those old fashioned latches, there wasn't no way to get out to open it. But I was drunk and cool when he come back from Covington, Kentucky.

As it starts to get light, you pick up a few beer cans and get ready to go. Bill throws his arms around you and plants a big wet kiss on your mouth and with his one good eye gleaming, says, "What a time we had tonight. They's nothin in this world like bein with y'all. God bless you and good night." □



photo by Michael Fanning

FLOOD WITHOUT RELIEF

The Story of the Tug Valley Disaster

by Deborah M. Baker

The hottest selling postcard these days in Mingo County, West Virginia, shows the railroad station in the county seat the day after the April 4th flood. The roof of the building and a sign saying "Williamson" are the only landmarks visible above the floodwater.

The steady rain in the first week of April, 1977, swelled rivers and creeks throughout the Appalachian parts of West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. Even for people in a region with a history of chronic flooding, the magnitude of the disaster that followed was difficult to grasp. Thousands of people were left homeless, entire communities destroyed, roads and buildings were covered with six inches of mud.

Despite a 44-foot flood wall which separates Williamson from the Tug River, the water that poured from its banks to surround the railroad station and crush homes in its path left the town of 6,000 among the hardest hit in the area.

With Williamson's businesses now reopened and the post-disaster sense of urgency gone, it's tempting to think that, for residents of the Tug River Valley, the devastation of last spring has been reduced to a memory on a postcard rack. But inside the hundreds of HUD trailers which dot the narrow

valley on the West Virginia-Kentucky border, it's clear that the lives of flood victims have not returned to normal. And the pattern of corporate and government neglect — which added to the severity of the flooding and made disaster recovery even more tortuous — is continuing.

Through the media and their own organization, the flood victims' protests have reached Washington — where several agencies are now preoccupied with evaluating their public relations during relief operations — and the West Virginia state capitol in Charleston, where Governor John D. (Jay) Rockefeller, IV, finally announced that he was tired of the victims' "whimpering." To date, no government agency has yet demonstrated a willingness to provide adequate flood protection for the Tug River Valley, or to tackle the underlying problems of how land practices like strip mining contribute to the severity of flooding by denuding the hills and clogging the rivers with sediment.

Deborah M. Baker is a free-lance journalist. Her research into the state and federal government response to the floods in Appalachia has been partially supported by a grant from the Fund for Investigative Journalism in Washington, DC.

I've seen water back up that creek every year, all my life, but nothing like this. It was like a tidal wave. It tore things up just as far as it went.

—Flood victim

No one was prepared for the fury with which the Tug River left its banks the night of April 4th. Sylvia Walker, her husband, Bud, and sixteen-year-old son, Terry, scrambled out of their house in Chattaroy Hollow, a few miles outside Williamson, and headed up the side of the mountain to escape the swollen creek. They watched while their house and the neighbors' houses were demolished.

The scene was the same up and down the river. When the water receded the following day, homes that represented a lifetime of savings and work were badly damaged or totally destroyed, and priceless family pictures and personal possessions were washed downstream. Numbed flood victims crowded into churches, schools, or the homes of friends, set up tents on the hillsides, or lived in their cars.

After years of paying rent, the Walkers had finally managed to buy a small lot and house two years ago, and had spent countless hours making it their pride and joy.

"Other people say, 'Well, my God, it's just a house,'" said Mrs. Walker a few weeks later. "Yes, but you put everything you have into that house, your very souls almost, and it's you — it's you and your family — that have worked and loved and quarreled and done without to get to that particular spot."

If you could ever get these federal people and state people to give you a straight and honest answer — regardless of what it is — then people might be able to plan a little bit.

—Flood victim

The first wave of disaster relief was marked by confusion. The Red Cross, National Guard and state police were the first on the scene and their jurisdiction and chain of command was unclear. The state was ill-prepared to cope with such a disaster. Its 1971 emergency plan was outdated and virtually useless. An emergency operating center, hastily assembled in the basement of the state capitol building, suffered from lack of information and coordination. "It was just a circus," recalls one of the state workers. It was

not until several days later, when Governor Rockefeller put the newly named head of the state police, a former Army general, in charge of relief operations, that the state response assumed any semblance of organization.

The Federal Disaster Assistance Administration (FDAA) appeared a week later, after the county had been officially declared a federal disaster area. The agency's "one-stop" centers were designed to help flood victims through the maze of federal programs available to them, but were staffed by workers hastily drafted for the job and not sufficiently trained in the complexities of federal relief programs; they offered a kind of hit-or-miss help and often left flood victims with unanswered questions after hours of standing in line.

The available answers were often disappointing. Despite the variety of federal help at hand, some flood victims inevitably fell between the bureaucratic cracks. For people whose homes were too damaged to qualify for HUD's mini-repair program, but whose incomes made them ineligible for loans from the Small Business Administration, there was little help. Neither the mini-repair grant nor a special \$5,000 grant to replace posses-

photo by Michael Fanning



"Emergency relief" mobile homes from HUD sit along the highway waiting to be towed into town.



Citizens meet on their own following the devastation of the flood (downtown Williamson, above).

sions offered under FDAA could be used to offset the SBA loan. SBA at first would provide loans only at its regular 6.625 percent interest rate; it took weeks of agitating by flood victims and Congressional action before loan rates were lowered.

One of the earliest and most effective disaster response mechanisms came from the citizens themselves. The Tug Valley Recovery Center (TVRC) formed a few days after the flood, and with the involvement of dozens of residents — flood victims, community workers, business people and others — set up shop in a local church and began feeding, clothing, sheltering and providing cleaning supplies to disaster victims. Hundreds of persons came into the church daily, and many became involved in the more political aspects of the TVRC: circulating anti-strip mine petitions, organizing a day-long work stoppage to protest high SBA loan rates, demanding input into HUD's activities and decision-making, outlining long-term land and housing strategies, leaning on the state to provide more effective response to the needs of the flood victims.

In the months following the flood, the all-volunteer TVRC remained the sole organized voice for flood victims. With support from various churches, it continued to sponsor social service projects and a home-rebuilding program using outside volunteer labor. The group remains a thorn in the state's side on the issues of land and housing. A weekly newspaper published by the TVRC highlights the ongoing problems of flood victims and has strong community support.

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) came in for the sharpest criticism from flood victims. To them, the agency's mission of providing emergency and then temporary housing seemed mismanaged and inefficient.

HUD blamed its difficulties on the magnitude of the disaster (the largest since Hurricane Agnes in 1972), the mountainous terrain, and the shortage of available contractors to haul and hook up mobile homes.

The recovery was to be done in two phases: 16-foot-long campers would provide emergency shelter, and then standard-size mobile homes would be available as temporary dwellings. Flood victims immediately resisted the notion of being crowded in camper parks miles from their land, and asked HUD to change its policy to allow campers on homeowners' sites while houses were being repaired or rebuilt. HUD eventually agreed to the change, but it took weeks to implement — and hundreds of flood victims ended up packed into campers at three Mingo County sites.

Even that was a slow process: by the end of April, only forty-eight families out of an estimated 1,800 who needed housing were in the campers. Some of the homeless were still living in cars or tents.

For the Walkers, the weeks after the flood followed a pattern typical for many flood victims: a few nights in their car, some time at the home of relatives, then in a church. May found them in a camper park, huddled with hundreds of other families on a Williamson ballfield.

Sylvia Walker says her neighbors were in a state of shock. "Some of these people I've known all my life, and they're just like strangers — just like a whole new person," she said in early May. "I go to talking to them, and I'll joke with them and everything, even hoping that making them a little bit mad will kind of jar them a little. I think that if they get mad enough at me they'll say, 'Hmmp, if she can do it I can do it.'" An overpowering smell of raw sewage and a blistering heat wave in June made conditions in the parks even worse, but flood victims coped. A few feet of white picket fence, two folding chairs, and a mud-covered barbecue grill marked the outside of the Walkers' camper. It wasn't much, but it was home.

Adding to flood victims' frustration were miles of HUD disaster mobile homes which lined a four-lane highway near Williamson. Not enough contractors could be located to haul them, HUD said, and they sat there for weeks.

I got mad, so I called over to the HUD office and I raised all kinds of Cain. Finally this man came on the phone and said, "What's wrong with your mobile home?" I said, "I have no idea — I don't even know where it is. I don't have one." And he said, "I've got it down here on paper that there is one on your site." I said, "Well, somebody has lied to you — or else that thing is so pretty it's blinding me and I can't see it."

— Flood victim



Residents continued to meet together to protest the inadequate response from the government.

The Walkers' drawn-out journey from camper park to their own mobile home followed a pattern of foul-ups familiar to flood victims. During the first attempt to deliver their trailer to the Chattaroy site, it was damaged beyond repair. A lack of available trailers caused another delay, HUD says, but when more mobiles came in, the Walkers still didn't get one. It was only after two weeks of irate phone calls — and the intervention of the top man in the local HUD office — that the Walkers discovered their problem. After site inspection by a HUD field worker, their property had been erroneously rejected as inadequate for the trailer. It was early July before the mobile home was installed and hooked up properly.

For many families, arrival of the mobile homes meant little; it was weeks before utility hook-ups were completed and they could actually move in.

Those whose homes were being restored to livable conditions under HUD's mini-repair programs, meanwhile, faced a different set of problems. Mini-repair work, done by HUD-hired contractors, was often slow and shoddy. Moreover, many HUD policies lacked logic and were administered differently by the regional offices in Pittsburgh (which has jurisdiction over West Virginia) and Atlanta (which governs Kentucky). For example, HUD insisted that since it was not winter, mini-repair could not be used to restore furnaces, although homeowners argued it was impossible to dry watersoaked houses without them.

The only loophole to this policy provided for repair if a doctor certified its need for health reasons. But unequal application of the provision resulted in furnaces for only half a dozen West Virginians, while several hundred were restored in Kentucky.

HUD and its special disaster mechanism, FDAA, committed another major blunder by locating disaster offices several hours driving time away from the flooded areas, citing the lack of motels, restaurants and available rent-a-cars at the disaster site. The move created a chasm between flood victim and federal bureaucrat, and even between HUD field workers and their office-bound superiors. Nobody, it seemed, could get a straight answer on anything from decision-makers a hundred miles away. Mingo County Commissioner Gerald Chafin threatened at one point to have HUD's top person in the state arrested in order to get him to a coordinating meeting with flood victims.

"HUD came in here with the idea of going their own way," Chafin remembers. "There was no attempt on their part to have any coordination with local government." When Chafin found HUD workers wandering around lost in unfamiliar territory the first few days after the flood, he offered to provide county-paid local guides. He says it took HUD three days to come up with an official "yes."

As the chorus of criticism from flood victims and the press swelled, HUD seemed to get even more uptight and inflexible. The agency's concern with its image, in the eyes of many observers, interfered with its

relief mission. One HUD field worker — who was yanked out of the area after making some candid comments at a community meeting about the agency's inefficiency — said, "Being in the Charleston office, HUD officials had no immediacy of the flood around them. But they did have print media and TV, and all they heard was bad PR."

From the start, criticism of the relief effort was felt in official Washington — and resulted in a series of farcical encounters between flood victims and bureaucrats. In the first instance, a staff member from the White House Office of Public Liaison called to express what she termed "Administration concern." She offered to help set up a meeting between officials and flood victims, but her offer of help was quickly retracted by her White House superiors. The call, they said, had not been officially authorized. Publicity in Washington prompted a visit from HUD Secretary Patricia Harris and President Carter's son, Chip. A defensive Harris said the agency's problem was its failure to communicate, and that HUD was doing the best it could. A visit a few days later from HUD Assistant Secretary Monsignor Geno Baroni seemed full of promise, but resulted in no action.

People's whole lives were washed down that river, not just their homes. And nobody's gonna do a damn thing for them. As long as that coal rolls out of here, they're not gonna do anything.

— Flood victim

The first, awful days are finally over.

But for the scores of families sitting in mobile homes on the flood plain, the lingering questions — about land, permanent housing and flood prevention — are of mounting concern. Mingo County, like the rest of southern West Virginia, faced a critical housing shortage before the flood, a situation aggravated by existing substandard housing and a growing need for units in the wake of the recent coal boom. With an estimated 1,400 families in the county affected by the flood, Mingo alone has a need for between 5,000 and 6,000 units immediately.

One solution is to build new homes for flood victims on land which is high, dry — and corporately owned.

In its first official recognition of the dilemma posed by widespread outside corporate ownership of land, the state of West Virginia pledged in May to negotiate with coal and landholding companies for land for the homeless. The state legislature provided \$10 million to buy the acreage. But after six months of negotiation, the state has come up with only thirty acres of land and an option to buy 270 more; it says it will be two years before the first site will be ready for house construction.

On December 1, Governor Rockefeller also announced that within

twenty years the state expects to buy a 5,500-acre tract owned by the Philadelphia-based Cotiga Development Company — after the site has been strip mined by the “mountaintop removal” method which shears the tops off hills to get to the underlying seams of coal.

The Governor called mountaintop removal, “practically the only solution available to us for freeing up safe, flood-free land.”

The Tug Valley Recovery Center disagreed, charging that once again corporate interests were taking priority over people’s needs. The site to be stripped had been pinpointed all along by Valley residents as the most desirable housing acreage in the county — without being flattened by stripping. The plan to strip it “is proof beyond a shadow of a doubt that Rockefeller belongs to the energy interests and not to the people of West Virginia,” said TVRC spokesperson Jerry Hildebrand.

The TVRC also pointed out a discrepancy between the assessed value of the land under option and the price the state plans to pay. For example, a 120-acre tract owned by Cotiga has an assessed valuation on the county’s tax books of as little as \$50 per acre for both surface and mineral ownership, but the state will pay a price “not to exceed \$4,500 an acre” for the surface rights alone. (Cotiga will retain the mineral rights, although under the agreement with the state, the company



photo by Pat Goudvis



The Van Hoose family (left to right): Wally, Marquetta, Shelley and Wally, Jr. They joined with their neighbors to relocate their homes off the flood plain. The state said they would help, but after months of delay, the group decided they would have to do everything themselves.

won't be permitted to continue to mine.) "If the land is worth \$4,500 an acre," said Hildebrand, "Cotiga's holdings in the county should be reassessed and the taxes upped accordingly."

The state's plan thus far calls for providing housing starting at \$30,000 — more than most flood victims can afford. Moreover, there are no firm plans to turn developed land over to flood victims who want to build their own homes. Nor has the state made any commitment to try innovative housing, such as pole-beam construction, which is adaptable to hillsides. The TVRC hopes to finish construction this winter on a pole-beam demonstration house built for less than \$20,000.

The nearly 750 families whose rent-free year in HUD mobile homes expires in the spring face grim alternatives. They can buy their trailers, but according to HUD policy, they have to get them out of the flood plain. With eighty percent of the county's acreage owned by outside corporations such as Georgia-Pacific, Island Creek Coal and US Steel, there is no land available to buy, and the state has made no moves to acquire the existing mobile home parks to ensure residents a place to stay. Or the flood victims can build on their own land on the flood plain — with no more protection than they had last April.

The Walkers are among the families caught in this bind.

"We're looking forward to building a new home," Sylvia Walker said in November, "wherever the state provides some land for people." They

have lined up a house loan, but the waiting continues.

"I think if the state wanted a new highway, or wanted to encourage a town to put in a shopping center, it would be done in no time," she added. "It's just like they don't give a damn about the flooding victims. They'll give it to us when they get good and ready."

With no firm promise of land in sight, they plan to buy their HUD mobile home at the end of their rent-free year. Meanwhile, they fight the feeling of "temporary."

"We've spent a lot of money in this trailer, trying to make it as much like home as possible. But you still go around with this feeling of temporary all the time. No matter how hard you try to make it have that feeling of permanency, you can't do it. It sort of keeps you in a strain. I've had that feeling of permanency before, and I know how important it is and how good you can feel with it."

We didn't ask for much. We asked for 100 feet by 100 feet. We wanted to build a comfortable home, have a small yard, and just a small place to garden, if it's just a tomato patch. You put us in a shoebox and we're not going to be able to do anything.

— *Flood victim*

Residents of one community upstream from Williamson found some available land and a coal company to sell it — and have given up on the state after it failed to help them obtain it.

"So far the state has promised us everything and refused to do anything," said Wally Van Hoose, a young coal miner who has led the housing fight in the little community of Rawl.

Wally and Shelley Van Hoose and their two children had lived in their "dream house" only five months when the flood hit. It was destroyed. They moved in with relatives — three families in a house — and waited for a HUD trailer. The disaster had also taken away their livelihood: the mine where Van Hoose worked as a general laborer was flooded and shut down for two months.

By June, HUD had still not delivered a trailer. Desperate to move out of their crowded living quarters, the Van Hooses used a \$5,000 FDAA grant and some income tax return money to buy a mobile home and put it on their house lot. Van Hoose was back at work just a few weeks when miners throughout the state went on strike to protest medical care cutbacks. The strike lasted ten weeks.

With no income and no way to make payments on the house which had washed away, the family declared bankruptcy. Their 75-foot by 95-foot lot went back to the bank — which offered to sell it back to them for \$5,000. With their mobile home now on bank-owned property, the Van Hooses could be given a 30-day eviction notice at any time.

A few weeks after the flood, Van Hoose approached his employer, Princess Coal, about leasing or selling some of their land on higher ground near Rawl. The company had turned down similar requests in the past, but was now willing to talk about selling land

to the state which could then be developed for flood victims.

The idea mushroomed, and soon Van Hoose and his neighbors at Rawl had formed a small organization and were planning to relocate families in a hollow off the flood plain just a half mile away. Residents would help one another build homes. The state encouraged the plan, offering an architect to do layout and promising to put in water, sewage and roads. But nothing was done.

It was late December before the state proposed a plan for Rawl. The state would build six \$30,000 houses and two dozen rental cluster units and sell them to the residents.

Van Hoose and the others were disgusted. "They're going to bunch us together like sardines," he complained. "When they get through, you could

reach out and touch your neighbor's house." The group was also upset because the state proposal involved relocating two cemeteries.

Pointing out that the state had completely ignored their wishes to build their own homes on state-developed land, Rawl residents flatly rejected the proposal. The state agreed to scrap the plan, and the flood victims found themselves back where they were eight months earlier.

Van Hoose says many of his neighbors have given up on the state, and now plan to buy double-wide mobile homes or to rebuild on their old lots in the flood plain. He and some other neighbors however, have discussed the possibility of bypassing the state and negotiating privately with Princess Coal for the land. It would be far more expen-

sive for the residents. "But if the state does it, you don't have no say-so in what they're doing," said Van Hoose. "You take what they offer, and if you don't like it, you stay here and get flooded."

Back to normal? God, no. I hope nobody ever thinks that. As long as most of these people live in HUD trailers, it's just gonna be a constant reminder to them of why they're in that trailer in the first place. Seems to me like so many people think that as long as the businesses are going top notch, everything's all right. Well, they're wrong.

—Flood victim

Eight months after the flood, Sylvia

photo by Michael Fanning



Because of strip mining, clear-cutting of timber, government failure to implement adequate flood prevention, and railroad opposition to river channelization, cities and towns in Appalachia have become part of the river beds. Appalachians have learned that the bitter price of these mindless practices will not be paid by the power conglomerates, but by innocent people in the region and by all American taxpayers. Are we to become the sacrificial lambs of energy independence? Are we to become an Appalachian Atlantis?

—Tug Valley Recovery Center

It is clear that no state or federal agency is willing to take on the awesome task of figuring out what factors contributed to the severity of last spring's flood.

The waters had barely subsided before many flood victims blamed strip mining as a major contributor to the damage. The feeling wasn't limited to flood victims. Rockefeller and a National Weather Service official were among the first public officials to say that stripping had a substantial impact. Both softened their statements a few days later, however, and a statistic from the National Weather Service quickly provided a handy excuse. While the average amount of rain

recorded in the Tug Fork basin in the storm periods prior to April 4 was under five inches, the NWS claimed that some fifteen inches of rain had fallen near the Tug's headwaters on the Virginia-West Virginia border. Flood victims were incredulous when the NWS cited the source of the statistic — a washing machine in somebody's backyard — but the cry of "fifteen inches" was quickly taken up by officials who preferred not to deal with the question of stripping and other land abuse.

Rockefeller — a former strip mine abolitionist who changed his tune and sought strippers' support for his 1976 election — appointed in cooperation with the legislature a citizens' panel of non-experts who were charged with the responsibility of determining the flood's causes, preventing future similar disasters, and making the cleanup effort effective.

It was an impossibly broad mandate, and the panel responded by scheduling a haphazard series of appearances by public officials destined to provide a survey of opinion, but no new facts.

The state Department of Natural Resources, the regulatory agency which oversees the strip mining, says a study of contributing factors is beyond its responsibility or capability; they also say that until such a study is made more stringent criteria for stripping in flood-prone areas will be premature. Nevertheless, the debate continues within the department itself.

Walker finds that the numbness she described in the weeks following the disaster has worn off, but not the feeling of insecurity.

"You just feel like you've been thrown right out there in space and you're sort of suspended — and nowhere to go but just stay right there. And those people who aren't able to get out, or haven't realized what they could do to fight this feeling, they're in trouble. They sort of walk around like they've been given a tranquilizer.

"I think sometimes the only way people can hold it together is stay busy — at least for me that's the answer." She has thrown herself into her work as a VISTA volunteer for the Tug Valley Recovery Center's social services program — a job she likes better than her previous work as a grocery store

clerk. "If I was back there, I'd just dwell on what has happened, and I don't want to do that. The past has been quite rugged, and I really don't want to think about it any more than I have to."

For Sylvia Walker, Wally Van Hoose, and hundreds of other flood victims, the real tragedy of April may prove to be not so much the tangible losses as the intangible effect on their own mental health and their network of relationships with family and community.

Mrs. Walker thinks the only way to deal with that threat is to fight back.

"Too long the politicians have done things their way," she said. "I'm tired of being a puppet. I don't intend to be nobody's puppet no more. Once people understand they don't have to be, they won't. It's just that simple." □



Sylvia Walker

photo by Marat Moore

A DNR engineer testified before a House of Representatives subcommittee that rainfall runoff from the 30,000 stripped acres on the West Virginia side of the Tug was a major contributor to flood damage. His boss, the state's reclamation chief, disagreed and supported industry claims that strip mines had actually held back some water.

Anti-stripping forces claim that proof of the effect of strip mining on flooding has been around for years; they cite a number of studies linking strip mining to sedimentation, including the US Army Corps of Engineers' National Strip Mine Study, one by the US Geological Survey, and three by the US Forest Service.

A recent Forest Service study has confused the issue. A report on three Kentucky watersheds from information gathered during April's flooding indicated that reclaimed strip jobs held back some water flows.

Save Our Mountains, West Virginia's anti-stripping group, says the recent study is inconclusive and that there is a need for a basin-wide study of the Tug River. The organization recommended a moratorium on strip jobs in flood-prone areas until such a study is completed.

The Appalachian Regional Commission — the thirteen-state agency through which federal money is funneled — created a four-state consortium to formulate a long-term economic recovery program for the

disaster area. But the consortium won't deal with flood causes. "It requires expertise beyond the capabilities of our staff," explained Keith Kelley, director of the Central Appalachia Development Project. The decision seems to fly in the face of a statement by the ARC's new federal co-chairman, former North Carolina Governor Robert Scott, who said in an August speech, "The severe flooding in Central Appalachia this spring suggests we must examine current (environmental) practices to assure adequate safeguards."

Despite its mandate to provide flood protection for the nation's streams, the US Army Corps of Engineers has no plans to initiate the type of study Scott called for. The Corps has documented the detrimental effect of strip mining on its reservoirs, but says it is unclear to what extent sedimented streams affected April's floods. Without specific Congressional direction and funding for such a study, the Corps won't act.

Of more immediate concern to flood victims is the Corps' inaction on flood control projects along the Tug. It has studied flood protection for the Tug and its sister fork, the Levisa, for forty years, but the floodwall along Williamson's business district was the only protection it developed in the entire valley. No other plan meets the Corps' mandatory "cost benefit ratio" test which determines whether or not

a project will have sufficient economic benefits to outweigh the costs. It has simply never been economically justifiable, the Corps says, to provide major flood protection along the Tug River.

With the federal government estimating it will put \$83.5 million into West Virginia's disaster counties — most of that in Tug Valley — by the time the cleanup is through, flood victims question the validity of the Corps' argument.

The Tug River was in mid-study when the April flood hit. The Corps had narrowed down proposed future protection to one recommended plan, involving a channel cutoff for the river thirteen miles upstream from Williamson at Matewan, and a longer and higher Williamson floodwall. The plan ran into opposition from two camps: residents outside of Williamson and Matewan, who pointed out that they wouldn't be helped at all by the project, and the residents of Williamson's black community — the only segment of the city left out of the floodwall plan.

Pending federal legislation would allow the Corps to abandon economic justification in providing protection to the hard-hit disaster areas. The special action could result in the inclusion of Williamson's black residential section in the floodwall plan, but apparently will offer little hope for residents of the valley outside of Matewan and Williamson. □

art by Janet Beyer



by Rod Stipe

“I’ve worked on just about all the inland rivers,” he said, steering hard on the rudders. “Yes sir, the Missouri, the Illinois, the Mississippi, the Ohio, the Wabash, the Cumberland – now that’s a purty son of a bitch, that Cumberland River. Course, they say the Arkansas beats them all, but I haven’t been down there yet.”

“What about the Tennessee?”

“Oh yeah, made that run to Chattanooga many uh times. US



Steel had us pushing acid up there about four years ago. That Tennessee River’s a good run. I tell you what’s a hell of a river, boy –”

“zzzHello all stations. Hello all stations. This is the United States Coast Guard, St. Louis.... For the complete marine information radio broadcast, please listen to Channel 22, Alpha.... Outzzz”

“Now, that Black Warrior River down Alabama, that little bastard’s as swift as the Missouri. One Captain said he had his deckhands trained to roll out of their bunks and into their life jackets whenever the boat bumped ground. Hell, that’s no place for me, wouldn’t work down there for a hundred and fifty a day. I’ll settle for a hundred and ten a day on this Mississippi and Illinois run any time.”

Having just finished checking the tow, I had come up to the pilot house to visit the relief pilot. We had made the noon watch together, but hadn’t yet talked. I sat on the bench beside the radar.

The After Watch

"You're kinda green, ain't you, boy?"

"Well, this is my second trip. I've been out eighteen days this time."

"I could tell by the way you turned your line loose back there on the lock wall. Always work your line off fast in case something happens to cause it to foul down. You don't want to be around that line if she fouls and breaks."

"Hell, that's what happened to my leg. I was checking down the first cut of a double up at Lock 26 when my line fouled and snapped. Before I could move, it lashed back and caught me right under my knee and knocked me halfway across the tow. They said my foot was laying up against my shoulder when they got to me. Hell, all I know is if it weren't for that surgeon there in Paducah, I'd have a wooden leg right now. Yes sir, he fixed it back right. I was in and out of that hospital over a year, but he fixed it right. Johnson's his name. Dr. Isaac Johnson. Damn good surgeon."

"Sure sounds painful."

"They wanted to take it off but I told em I'd drag the damn thing around like a dead fish before I'd let em cut it off. I ended up having three operations on it, but at least it works, not good as new, but I can get around."

Every few minutes, he'd spit tobacco in the trash can. After slowing the boat, he pissed in a small plastic bag, knotted it and flung it out the door into the river. He glanced down at the radar and talked as he steered.

"There's supposed to be a black buoy out there somewhere." He chewed and spat, and

swept the search light from bank to bank. "Yep, there she is, right off that port barge, damn near didn't find it.... You know, boy, I reckon this pilot's job is the most boring job on the boat. Out there on the deck you're always doing different stuff, totin' rigging, laying wires, tightening ratchets, working your line; why, hell, it keeps a man in shape. Up here behind these sticks, you get lazy. Aw hell, the money's good, but you're stuck up here six hours a watch. You can't take a break if you want to, no sir, you're stuck here the full six. I reckon that's why we like to bullshit so much. It's like entertainment, I guess. Some pilots will lay up nights, just thinking of lies that will —"

"zzzThe Hugh C. Green to the northbound boat below Goat Islandzzz"

"Uh. WZC6031, the Frances-A back to the Hugh C. Green."

"zzzYeah Skipper, I'm up here above Sellers Landing with eight loads of coal and I's wondering if that two whistle would be all right with you?zzz"

"That'll be fine, Cap, I've just got four empties and that two whistle will be fine...uh, say, is ole Dodirty Red still cooking on that boat?"

"zzzNo Skipper. Dodirty got off... oh, about three weeks ago. He was mumbbling about going to Mexico so I guess we won't see him for another sixty days or so.... He likes them 'senioreetas'zzz"

"Yeah, I gotcha, hey hey, he's a good riverman all right: sure can fix them groceries."

"zzzYes sir, Skipper, maybe it's good he's gone. I generally gain ten pounds when he's on herezzz"

"You better watch him or he'll start feeding you some of that Mexican stuff."

"zzzRoger, Roger on that, Skipper.... Well, I better let you go and get on down the creek. See you on the two whistle, and WZY8811 the Hugh C. Greenzzz"

"Good morning to ya and WZC6031, the Frances-A."

He was quiet for a long time. I made coffee in the galley for the six a.m. crew change, and it was daybreak when I returned. He was propped in the chair, feet on the counter, one hand on the rudders.

"Well shit, boy," he started. "Tell me a good lie before we get off watch." His eyes were smiling, adding, subtracting. For some reason my mind raced back to an old tale told by my granddad.

"All right," I said. "But you better listen close. . . ."

"Three men were floating down a river on a rock. One was blind, one was naked, and the other didn't have any arms. Well, the blind man saw a silver dollar floating in the river, the man with no arms reached down and picked it up, then put it in the naked feller's pocket."

He almost spit out his coffee. "Hey Lord, boy, that's all right." He was laughing all over. "That's all right. With lies like that you're bound to make a riverman, bound to."

"I've been told that a man that don't lie don't have nothing to say."

He steered and laughed. "Damn right, boy, damn right." □

Rod Stipe, whose home is in Knoxville, has worked the Illinois-Mississippi River run on the "Frances-A" for about a year.



The Innocence of Joan Little

by James Reston, Jr.

Introduction

*Editor's Note: The Joan Little case attracted national and international attention throughout the twelve-month period following the death of her jailer in August, 1974, until her acquittal in August, 1975. Two years later, on October 15, 1977, Joan Little escaped from the Women's Correctional Prison in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she was serving a seven-to-ten year term for a previous conviction. The following month, the first of several controversial books expected on her trial appeared. On December 6th, Joan was recaptured by police in New York City. And once again, Joan Little was in the news. In the following three-part section, we present excerpts from the book, *The Innocence of Joan Little* by James Reston, Jr.*; a critique of the book by Mark Pinsky; and a portion of Joan Little's unpublished autobiography prepared by Rebecca Ranson.*

*Excerpted with permission of Bantam Books, Inc.; published by NYTimes Books; Copyright © 1977, James Reston, Jr. All the photographs are from The Raleigh News & Observer.

The Joan Little case was distinctly Southern. The manipulation of the national press was possible only because the national press brought to North Carolina the nostalgic, fixed view of an Old South of helpless black victims, and gross, ignorant, white law enforcement. This was the sixties revisited, and it brought out of the closet a lot of those dusty trappings. The Joan Little defense played this theme to a fare-thee-well, and it was lapped up by the press and the nation....

In the Joan Little extravaganza, the characters became as interesting as the legalities or the philosophical issues that the case raised. In these chronicles, the range is diverse: a sheriff and his deputy, a scientist and an undertaker, a psychic and a psychopath, the competing lawyers of vastly different outlooks, a feminist and a black activist over the hill, and Joan Little herself, whose true character, by design, remained indistinct to the end.

The result allows the reader to judge the guilt or innocence of Joan Little, in possession of far more facts than

the real jury had — in a sense, to act as a superjuror. But the issue, of course, is far broader than the legal question of guilt or innocence. One hardly knows what that means in this case. The show prodded and pushed the legal system out of recognition. As a nationally followed case, it became a stage where only lawyer-publicists belong. As a psycho-drama of desire and hate, the jurors expected the lawyers and the witnesses to act like the characters from their favorite television series. When they did not, they were less believable. If the behavior of the defense lawyer, Jerry Paul, was extreme and outrageous, he was reacting to the extremity and outrageousness of the charge and the punishment. It was the excess of it all — on all sides, including the press and the jury — that stands out.

These are the facts. In the early morning hours of August 27, 1974, a policeman bringing a drunken prisoner to the Beaufort County Jail in Washington, North Carolina, discovered the dead body of the white jailer, Clarence Alligood, lying on the bunk bed of the sole female prisoner in the jail, Miss Joan Little, twenty-one years old and black. Alligood's body

was naked from the waist down. Sperm was present on his leg, and an icepick lay loosely cupped in his hand. He had icepick wounds around his temple and his heart. Joan Little was gone.

Over a week later, she turned herself in to the North Carolina authorities, saying that she had acted in self-defense against a sexual assault, and she was immediately charged with first-degree murder. If she were convicted on that charge under existing North Carolina law, she would automatically be executed in the gas chamber. In the months that followed, she became a symbol of women's groups, civil-rights groups, prisoners'-rights groups, and the opponents of capital punishment. At the time of the crime and the trial, North Carolina had over a third of the nation's entire death-row population. In the course of the Joan Little case, through the use of highly sophisticated money-raising techniques, over \$350,000 was raised nationally and worldwide for her defense.

On August 14, 1975, she was acquitted.

From Chapter I:

Sheriff Ottis (Red) Davis

East from the Piedmont, speckled with crossroads called Pinetops, Crisp, and Penny Hill, the flat, sandy tobacco country stretches away from the highway in vast gray fields with shacks off in the distance, marooned amid orderly furrows, past Conetoe and Bethel — "first at Bethel, farthest at Gettysburg and Chickamauga, last at Appomattox" the excuse ran — through the swamps and endless corridors of high-standing pine to the bridge across the Pamlico, where it and the Tar River converge into a wide, baylike, brackish expanse. "Original Washington," 1776 — 1976, the first town in the United States named after George Washington, but the claim was disputed by Washington, New Hampshire. At Main Street, the black letters against the steely background impart the news that this was the town where Cecil B. DeMille grew up — a fact that had always seemed appropriate, for the whole affair had been a kind of Cecil B. DeMille extravaganza.

Past the old railroad station, now a community art gallery in celebration of the Bicentennial, along the new

waterfront plaza that the town had made in the sixties where dilapidated wharf warehouses once sagged toward the brackish water, along the clean main street, newly landscaped with garden plots, to the old hotel that now housed the aged: clean, well-kept. . . and integrated. The mayor had been proud of that.

"As a psycho-drama of desire and hate, the jurors expected the lawyers and witnesses to act like the characters from their favorite television series. When they did not, they were less believable."

"They take their cane poles down to the river and fish together," he had said, two doors down at Harris Hardware, his Windsor knot loosened around his brief neck, his stocky legs raised from the wooden floor as he leaned back in his chair. He had been surprisingly calm about Washington's ordeal; few others in the town were calm about it.

When the marchers had come a week after the incident, Max the mayor, Max Roebuck, stood across the street, watched them "raise a little hell," but heard nothing "out of the way," nothing he could take offense to, and he did not blame the "self-interest groups" for taking advantage of the case, thought they'd be foolish not to, but it was being done at the expense of his community's reputation. Still he had jumped six inches when a motorcycle backfired, as Golden Frinks, the civil-rights man, exhorted his small group of followers.

The mayor had a fondness for the phrase "dad-burn." He knew who the town "ruffians" were, but they'd be dad-burn brave to try something. "We white people" didn't like it when integration was forced on us in 1965; it made him madder'n hell, and he wouldn't have cried if the judge who ordered it, Judge John D. Larkins (Federal District Judge), had gotten in an accident — though we wished him no harm — but now, "We've done more around here in the last ten years than we did in the forty before that, and I have to admit that integration is one of the finest things that ever happened to this town. We've had less trouble now than when we were totally segregated, and it's because we've got dad-burn good young people."

At the corner of Main and Market streets, away from the Chamber of Commerce, whose pamphlet describes the county as "historic but hyperactive," past John Wilkinson's modest law office, past the police station, the spanking new courthouse comes into view. The building is egregious, set apart by its height and size, its mani-

cured patch of grass, and moat of parking spaces from the two-story, turn-of-the-century structures that form the rest of the downtown. It has the feel of newness and aspires to importance with its brick veneer and mixtures of cultures. The portico, above the steps, combines Williamsburg colonial with a Romanesque arch and Corinthian columns. Corinthian columns for new courthouses were certainly out in the Piedmont; that is a difference.

The double doors open to the carpeted stairs leading to the basement. Impeccably clean throughout, the linoleum basement floor is waxed and buffed, the yellow cinder-block walls washed and immaculate. The basement is given over to police functions, nearly all of which, except for the civil-defense office, became involved in the events of August 26-27, 1974: the magistrate's office where the jailer, Clarence T. Allgood, guided a woman at about 10:30 p.m. so that she could swear out a warrant; the dispatch room, with its maps of Beaufort County and of the town of Washington beside it, boldly lit, where the round-faced, pleasant, coffee-colored lady, Beverly King, was working when the jailer came back to ask her at 2:55 a.m. if all the deputies had gone in for the night; the sheriff's office, with its glass partition, behind which the daytime matron, Mrs. Louise Stokes, a large leathery woman, shares the hostility to outsiders. Occasionally she would contribute an unfriendly remark to a conversation, "If you look at the jailers we usually have around here, they're not exactly lady-killers."

It was not easy to get Sheriff Red Davis to talk openly about the case. He had been stung early by his open-

ness, when, several months after the event, he spent an hour and a half with a reporter relating everything he knew about the case, then the writer went home and "ran me down like a dog."

Only reluctantly, in March, 1975, had he consented to a tour of his jail, across the hall from his office, but he should have done so more often, for it was no miniature version of Old Bailey, no tiny convict hulk, as most visitors were primed to expect.

The basement jail was new and clean, the work of a Texas company that specializes in jails nationwide. Alligood had taken on immense, grotesque proportions, but the harmless-looking, slight, almost wizened daytime jailer who stood before the bank of video screens seemingly unnoticed, as the sheriff gave his tour, was hardly that. And the woman's section of the small facility, set off from the rest down a short corridor, a turn to the left though a barred door...

"Did you announce yourself?" Jerry Paul blasted at Detective Jerry Helms at her trial, as the officer explained his entrance into that short corridor on the night of the killing.

"No."

"You did not!"

"No."

...a turn to the left, through a barred door, Helms caught sight of the jailer's feet, with his brown socks still on, his shoes in the corridor, a bra and negligee tied to the bars on one side of the cell, a blanket tied to a bar on the other...

"When you peeped around the corner..." Paul persisted in his cross-examination, relentlessly painting the whole crew as peeping Toms, oafs, voyeurs; it had been overkill, but the lawyer is not a subtle man. Helms had ventured no farther; he went to the dispatcher's office to get Beverly King and another officer.

In September, the sheriff was anxious to show off the new system that he himself had devised for the protection of female inmates. The county had not allotted any new money for a full-time matron, nor did such money seem justifiable, since women were incarcerated in the Beaufort County jail on a sporadic basis. Sheriff Davis had devised a new video system whereby television screens covering the women's cells and the corridor to it were placed in the dispatcher's office, and when a woman

was locked up, no males were allowed in the dispatcher's room. The authority for this innovation rested solely with the sheriff. The head of the whole jail system in North Carolina could only offer advice. He felt that the real answer to women's privacy in jails had been provided by the Asheville jail, where the sheriff had put up a sign by the monitor covering the women's section:

*"Any person caught watching
this monitor will be
discharged immediately."*

Once the case was over, the sheriff felt his obligation had ended.

"People around here tell me the case is over, the court has ruled, and you don't have to say nothin'; I get more criticism for talking to any outsider now than I do for anything I did in the entire year of the Joan Little case."

And he didn't like writers trying to soften him up by fancy introductions either. That was a "big mistake" with Red Davis. It reminded him of the time he'd stopped a man in a truck loaded with watermelons, driving a little too fast, and decided to give the driver a break, until he offered a watermelon in thanks. "Next thing he'd be comin' around here wanting a favor, saying, 'Remember that watermelon I gave you.'"

When the piqued, thin-skinned publicity-weary man finally submitted to a few questions, he wanted the author's scribbled notes afterward to Xerox, a gesture with the smell of lawsuit, intended to compel the accuracy of the chronicle. But suddenly he would soften.

"Let's talk a little bullshit," he said benignly. "You pay me a hundred thousand dollars, and I'll quit this job tomorrow, and we'll write a hell of a book together..."

The sheriff's mind was not on the Joan Little affair when he finally closed the door. He was aggravated that day by something else for a change, his red hair above his freckled face mussed, his glasses sliding down his nose some. "Take this case," he began, putting the stub of his cigar down in a cluttered ashtray. "A farmer out here in the county has a little safe, and he's got fifteen hundred dollars in it. It's his life savings, earned with his own sweat over the years. Now you and I would say he's a damn fool for

keeping it out there on his farm, and he *is* a damn fool. Someone goes out there and takes that safe, and several weeks ago I get some pretty good information who it is.

"It's two people in fact, and I go to 'em and they deny it, and I say, 'All right, if you didn't do it, you won't mind taking this lie-detector test I've got for you,' and they say OK. So I make all the arrangements, get it all set up, and I call 'em up — to tell them to come down here at ten o'clock this morning. Meanwhile, they go out and get 'em a lawyer, and the lawyer says, 'Don't say nothin'.'

"So I'm grounded. I'm not going to get too excited about it. I'm going to the high school football game tonight and have just as good a time as I would have if this hadn't happened. But I can't interrogate 'em, because that would be violating the law. So I'm asking you: what's the answer? Should lawyers have that much power? How am I going to protect that man out there in the county?"

His speech has the sound of the sea in it, influenced by the Devonshire English that remains purest on Ocracoke in the Outer Banks. "High tide" was "*hoi told*," as John Fry in *Lorna Doone* might say, pronounced deep in the throat, and the county adjoining Beaufort, Hyde, was "Hoid" county. But Devonshire was not the only influence on the sheriff's speech. There was also a touch of "Bunyanese," named after the crossroads in the northeastern part of the county, and it is distinctive for its cockney *ow* in "flounder" and "sound."

The third accent of Beaufort County, "plantation Southern," seemed to have had no influence on Red Davis. So between Devonshire and Bunyon, combined with rural Southernisms, Red Davis was an easy mark. His reputation as an investigator is good, but the feeling among the prosecutors was, "Let Red do the investigating, and someone else do the testifying." On the stand, his delivery, flat and often imprecise, did not carry the outrage against the evils of crime that prosecutors like in their witnessess.

The sheriff continued: "I'm what you call an old-timer, believe in good, clean law enforcement, believe in making it safe for your mother to walk down the street, believe that if you do something you should pay for it. I've always believed that, since 1946 when



CHRONOLOGY

May 8, 1954	Joan Little born, Washington, NC
January 3, 1974	Arrested and charged with shoplifting, Washington, NC
January 9, 1974	Arrested and charged with shoplifting, Washington, NC
January 15, 1974	Arrested and charged with breaking, entering and larceny, Washington, NC
June 4, 1974	Begins serving sentence in Beaufort County jail, Washington, NC
August 27, 1974	Joan Little escapes; her jailer found stabbed to death
September 1, 1974	Rendezvous with Jerry Paul
September 9, 1974	Indicted for first-degree murder
July 14, 1975	Trial begins, Wake County Superior Court, Raleigh, NC
August 14, 1975	Acquitted of murder charges
December 20, 1975	Begins serving 7 to 10 year sentence for breaking, entering and larceny
October 15, 1977	Escapes from Women's Correctional Center, Raleigh, NC
December 7, 1977	Arrested, New York City

I joined the police department in the little town of Belhaven, east of here, at the age of twenty-two, since 1950 when I moved to the Washington police, and 1956 when I became a deputy sheriff in Beaufort County. In the old days, there were only a few positions, and if a man showed up well, then he'd become a sheriff's deputy. Things have changed now, and the standards are going down all the time, and that's because of the pressure to have more colored on the force. I'm speaking generally. Since I became sheriff in December 1974, I've hired three new people and two have been black. One of the two already

improved his situation by getting hired by the State Bureau of Investigation.

"Of course, there's always a number of folks who want to become sheriff. I ran for the job for the first time in 1962 against Sheriff Harris, ran against him and four others. All the deputies supported Harris, and they even had a man run in that election from a little community of five hundred people out in the county where I was solid as a dollar — just to cut votes away from me. Still I got to the second primary with Harris. Before the vote I went to him, said, 'If you'll give me a little security, if you'll look out for me after the election, then it's over.' And we got in a car together and went out in the county to see a big politician, and made an agreement: that as long as Harris wanted to be sheriff, I wouldn't interfere.

"Nineteen seventy-one was when I began to get a little recognition. They had a strike out at Hamilton Beach and Scovil Company — they manufacture electrical appliances — and I had the authority to keep a driveway open, for the employees and the strikers, and I was making some right sharp arrests out there, even arrested a twenty-thousand-dollar man, an official for the union. After it was finished, some people thought I showed up well, and

the National Spinning Company offered a salary that was *within* five hundred dollars of what the sheriff of Beaufort County made. I thought that was a little ridiculous, even though, with five children, I could use the money — and I told them that within a thousand dollars of the sheriff's salary would be OK. But Sheriff Harris went out there and asked them please, not to consider me for the job, because he didn't want to lose me. He began to recognize me a little more after that; actually I got a raise out of it, and in the press when I'd be the arresting officer on a case, I'd be called the chief deputy, though Harris never officially designated me as such.

"In 1974, Sheriff Harris got very sick and decided not to run, so in May I ran for his job. In fact, he went into surgery on the very morning that Allgood was killed. Since his term did not officially expire until December, I had to please him and the public too in the way I handled the case. Now when I'm politicking, I don't stoop to the scrapings, black or white. I talk to the leaders and to the average class of folks. I know if I'm caught talking to, say, a white bootlegger, people will say I'm obligated to him, and I don't want to be obligated to nobody. So I don't get seen with folks

like that. You don't catch me politicking in these honky-tonk places, talking with scum. I try to keep my standards up.

"So I ran on my record in 1974 and won. Got ninety percent of the black vote, so apparently I wasn't disliked. I get along with the black, and that's why it hurt me when Joan Little's lawyers said she'd be taken advantage of in Beaufort County. I knew I couldn't afford to take advantage of her, not with the support of the black votes like I've got. Besides that, I'm a family man. I've got five kids who are proud of me. I can't be out there pushing people around. She'd have been a damn sight safer in my hands than running around the county at the mercy of the world. Out there, anybody can take a whack at her. Hell, after she was in custody, her lawyers argued [September 18, 1974] that her case should be moved because the acting sheriff of Beaufort County had 'undue influence with the public' and I took that as one of the best damn compliments I'd ever had.

"They called us excitable, but I only really get excited when people aggravate me. If someone dropped dead of a heart attack in the next office I'd walk over there in a normal pace. In a high-speed chase, I don't get excited, no matter how fast I'm going. If I think I'm losing control

of myself, I just stop. There were things in that year that aggravated me, but they weren't in those first few days when we were looking for Joan Little in Beaufort County. After all, it was just a jailer who had been killed by an inmate.

"To this day, I can't understand what all the fuss was about. If it had been the president or a high official that had been killed, I could understand, but it was just a jailer. If a black man came in here and killed me dead, do you think there'd be much interest? Oh, there'd be a box in the paper: **Sheriff Of Beaufort County Killed By A Black**. But if I went out and killed a black man, it would be all over the papers. They'd be all over me, probably burn down this town. In September '75 a black killed a highway patrolman in cold blood. He had had twenty-eight years of experience, one less than me, and you could not find a finer man around here. He even had a ball-park named after him, and I understand he was praying in his church on the day he was killed. Nobody got excited about that.

"So you see, I could not afford to have Joan Little killed in Beaufort County. I had too much to lose. People here are not going to elect a sheriff who lets that happen, and I've got a seventeen-year-old daughter who's watching everything I do."

From Chapters IV & VI:

Jerry Paul

"The people of Little Washington think I'm on some kind of vendetta against them, coming from their midst as I did and making my law practice defending blacks in eastern North Carolina, but they've got to explain my actions in their own terms, in terms they can understand. I know these people. I know what they are. I didn't really set out to be a rebel. I set out just to be a lawyer. At one time I was as well known in that town as anybody, but as a football player, not as a lawyer. I won't say I was as well liked as anybody, but I had my place, and it was a comfortable place.

"I am a country boy. I grew up with a lot of violence, from football to loading cucumbers in the summer, hurting so much after a day of lifting those crates that I knew I didn't want to spend my life doing that. In the 1960s these upper-class kids would talk to me about violence, about getting guns, blowing up the system, and I knew they had never seen violence, because there's nothing pretty about it. Those others, who were really good at violence, ended up so screwed up in the head that it was easy for me to come to a position of nonviolence. Still I never really slept well in Chapel Hill, never felt



Joan Little, with Jerry Paul and Karen Galloway, talking to reporter Rick Nichols at the Women's Correctional Prison in Raleigh, NC, February, 1975.

entirely comfortable standing around with a drink in my hand talking to university professors. It makes me tense"

His house in Chapel Hill is not the retreat of a private man. Situated in fashionable Lake Forest, modern in design, it has great sheets of glass surrounding the living room and front stairwell, so that one feels out of doors indoors, but also knows from some distance if the Pauls are at home. Six weeks after the trial Jerry Paul was seldom at home. He had become a bona fide celebrity, constantly moving to lectures before college audiences — "They all want to hear that the Joan Little case proves that the system works, and they get uncomfortable when I say I tricked the system into working" — negotiating movie rights with the likes of Dustin Hoffman, appearing on *Black Journal* with Golden Frinks as an authority on racism and Southern justice. His reference point had suddenly become William Kunstler, who took two or three cases a year and spent the rest of the time lecturing, and Paul had even told one reporter that he had become bored with the law.

That was the bluster of his public side, the side that scandalized some and bored others, but the warmth of his private side was also at work. That week Joan Little had fled back to him from the Black Panthers. She had been in their tow ever since the acquittal, traveling around the country saying silly things. But after a television show in which she failed to be uncomplimentary to Jerry Paul, there had been a tussle with Larry Little, the North Carolina Black Panther leader. Celine Chenier had said: "The Panthers have a way of dealing with you if you're a woman."

Paul sat on his living room couch, "the very couch," he said, where he had done most of the preening of Joan Little for her deliverance, where he had planned her wardrobe, "the very couch" where only six weeks before her trial she had told him for the first time what really happened in that cell on August 27, 1974.

"At the very beginning — even on the trip under the moonlight from Little Washington to Chapel Hill — I realized that this was the case I'd been looking for. It had all the issues — civil rights, women's rights, prison reform, and later capital punishment —

and I realized that right away. I've tried so many cases that if I hadn't recognized its potential immediately, I'd be very poor. But the question was which of the issues would float. I knew immediately that if I was to get Joan Little free, I'd have to do some things that you don't ordinarily do in a case. I had to get it out of Washington. I had to have money, and I had to create a big public interest. Without these three things, I'd never win it. A large part of my preliminary planning was done on that trip back. I suppose I was already programmed to act as I did. It was a case of preparation meeting opportunity.

"But my mind was also on the system that we were up against. You've got more prisoners per capita in this state than anywhere else in the nation. In one eastern county, Jones County, one person in ten is in jail. You've got more young people in jail than anywhere else, and I had defended many of them. The system is so repressive that it is making the young frustrated and forcing them to do irrational things, trying to fight back. The overcrowding of the jails is the nation's worst, and you've got a prison commissioner, David Jones, who advocates public executions and is a potential candidate for Governor. In one judicial district consisting of two rural eastern counties, a prosecutor has put twelve people on death row in the last two years — that's more than the entire death-row population of twenty-four out of the thirty-four states which have the death penalty.

"Still, the courtroom is the worst place to raise political issues. The state is in control. The court is the instrument of social control. Yet the public seems to be attracted to court cases, and historically, the movement or the Left has used the courtroom to demonstrate abuses. I had spent ten years of my practice doing that.

"Also, Watergate was on my mind, where Mitchell and the others had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on their defense. You see, people wanted to believe after Watergate that the system worked. The system didn't work. Look, I had defended kids who had done much less than the Watergate figures had, and yet they got much, much longer sentences. So, the question to me, riding back to Chapel Hill, was: Could a poor person get the same kind of defense that Mitchell

got? If the least really are judged equally with the best, why can't the least go up there and be the least?

"I could not sell Joan with her negative side coming out. She has that basic personality flaw that her environment created in her, and it's still there. She's not an honest person. She's not a kind person. She's a violent person. That doesn't mean she committed this crime. It only means she's a product of her environment. Beyond that, Joan is an actor, a mimic, an impersonator. The psychiatrist to whom I later referred her told me, 'Joan Little is not a real person.'

"So I decided early that I had to create her totally. She could not carry the character alone unless you gave it to her. You could let people see only so much of her. If they saw too much, the mask would slip away. You walk a double line here. You've got to have the publicity, so she's got to be seen, but you run the risk of creating a person whom a prospective juror will not like. So I maintained a strict control on everything. If I had let her say publicly before the trial some of the things she said afterwards, she would have lost.

"To be really good on the stand, the client must be an extension of her lawyer. The client literally must be her lawyer in that chair. You must be able to control — by eye contact, by body movement, by inflection of words. She must know what I want her to do in every situation. Joan's training in this began that first night in this house. That night, and from then on, I would sit at an angle from her when she talked in public, so she could watch me out of the corner of her eye. She could glance at me for approval of what she was saying.

"She had to take the approach: 'I don't like to kill people. I don't believe in capital punishment. I don't believe in killing. Maybe I shouldn't be punished in court for killing this person, but I still have to suffer with it.' You see, Inez Garcia was stupid. I went to California after the verdict, and these feminists would come up to me, say, 'If only you had argued the Little case in the way we did the Inez Garcia case, then we would have really had a victory,' and there was Inez Garcia rotting in jail on a five-years-to-life for a second-degree!

"If I had tried to sell Joan with the stance: 'I did a brave thing, I killed the

old lecher and I'm glad of it,' I'd have blown it. Because if you can't sell your theory to the public, you can't sell it to a jury. Still, once I made up my mind to take the case, all the ideology goes out the window, and there's only one consideration: winning.

at first with how much money we were going to get out of the case, and urged that we not take it unless the Little family could come up with so much money at the outset. I told them, 'We're going to take the case for nothing.'

Washington lawyer and told him that if Sheriff Davis didn't quit talking about the outlaw statute, he, Dr. Carpenter, was going to go to the local TV station and tell them what he had found. That scared Red Davis so bad, he straightened up some.

"... my mind was also on the system that we were up against. You've got more prisoners per capita in this state than anywhere else in the nation. In Jones County, one person in ten is in jail In one judicial district a prosecutor has put twelve people on death-row in the last two years. . . ."

"A case like this attracts a lot of immature people who want their pre-suppositions to be worked out in fact. The feminists wanted Joan Little to be a goddess on a pedestal, and when she didn't act like one, they got so disillusioned that they missed the real issues. For instance, when the riot happened at Women's Prison, one of 'em asked Joan what she thought about it, expecting a political pronouncement, and Joan said, 'That's what happens when you get a bunch of horny women together.' So they couldn't see the real human being who was suffering, the human being who couldn't get along in society, who couldn't stay out of jail, because her talents never were encouraged. The feminists were trying to create an illusion for Joan that she couldn't deal with, and because I became responsible for her, almost a father to her, I wasn't about to give her anything but a realistic starting point.

"In the first week, I brought my colleague, Karen Galloway, in on the case. I already anticipated problems down the line with Golden Frinks, although I needed him at first for publicity. Karen was the only black person I had. Her participation would negate actions by Golden, and I surmised that he would not be effective in his attacks on me if he had to attack Karen at the same time. Beyond that, Karen was just starting out: she passed the North Carolina Bar a week after this case fell on us. She had been with me since her junior year in college, so I knew she would be more willing to put up with my antics than the other lawyers in the firm. The other partners had a more conservative and traditional view of the law. They didn't like publicity. They were very concerned

"Joan is a lower-class black. Karen is a middle-class black. I'm watching the favorable reaction of white women to Karen, and I figure if they'll accept Karen, if she comes off well, she'll drag Joan along with her. They'll never look at Joan. I've got to give them an image of what Joan can be...and maybe is.

"In the week of Joan's surrender I started a technique that was later to become an oft-used strategy: of filing appeals and motions by the pound and attaching information to them as exhibits that I wanted to make public. Later we would use this strategy to buy time. On Thursday of that week, we attached the autopsy report to a motion that had nothing to do with the report, and then called a press conference. This was the only way the autopsy could be made part of the public record. It happened this way:

"I received a call from Dr. Page Hudson, the State Medical Examiner. He told me that information in the autopsy report indicated a different picture of what happened in the Beaufort County Jail than the one being painted by public officials. He invited me to come over to his office and damned if the report did not fit with the story Joan had told me! When I told Dr. Hudson what she had said, he replied, 'I'm reasonably certain she's telling you the truth.'

"It was not the first time that medical people had been helpful. In the few days after the killing, when Joan was still at large and Sheriff Davis was talking about making her an outlaw and the local newspaper was editorializing about what a 'good man' Alligood was — one who had died 'in the line of duty' — Dr. Harry Carpenter, who did the autopsy, went to a

"In a general discussion with Dr. Hudson that followed, we talked about how the public generally feels that medical examiners as state officials work only for the prosecution, and he told me a story of a murder case in Smithfield, North Carolina, where the medical people had evidence of the innocence of the defendant, but the defense attorney had never asked the examiners any questions. This was when I first saw the possibility of using Dr. Hudson and his colleagues, and I invited Hudson to correct the public's impression by attending our press conference. I knew the press wouldn't pay a bit of attention to the intricate details of the autopsy, but I felt that the mere presence of the doctors would have an effect. It turned out better than I could have hoped.

"The press conference was held at a community church in Chapel Hill, and the autopsy report and the motion were released. Karen and Celine were there, along with Dr. Neil Hoffman from the Medical Examiner's office. Hoffman read out a carefully prepared statement and the press paid no more attention to it than I expected. But someone asked him, 'Where are the pants?' referring to Alligood's pants.

"I don't know where the pants are,' Dr. Hoffman replied.

"Are you saying that your investigation is not complete until you find the pants?"

"Well, yes, that's right."

"Are you also saying that this autopsy report raises doubts as to whether Joan Little killed the jailer?"

"It raises some doubts in my mind."

"The next day the papers carried the headlines, **State Medical Examiner Throws Doubt On Little's Guilt**, and I figured that was the last time I'd ever get a medical examiner to a press conference. You know, it's a damn shame that you've got to trick public officials into telling the truth. If I had been the medical examiner, I would have stood up there and said, 'They've hidden the pants. This report raises doubt about her guilt, and what're people hollering about making her an outlaw for anyway?' but no, you've

got to trick 'em to say that, and that's a sad commentary on the system.

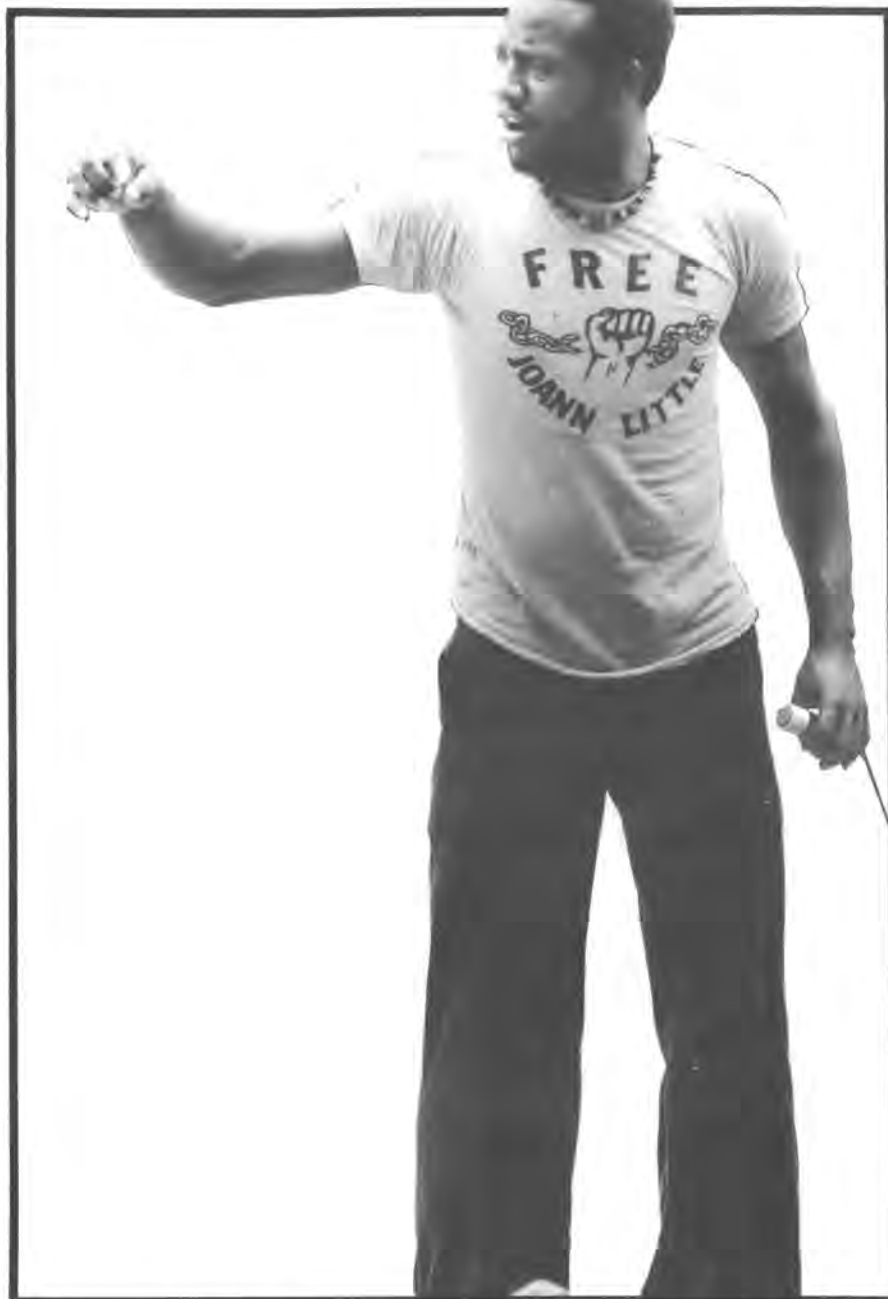
"A newspaper story like that starts you, but of course it does not make a national case, and in September I began to work with the underground press. Now the underground press will print. You've got to give them the whole story. You've almost got to write it for them. But they will print. *WIN* magazine came in and did a story, and I started to get letters from all over the country. Later, *Great Speckled Bird*, *Rage*, *Rising Up Angry*, *Off Our Backs* ran stories.

"Meanwhile, I contacted Marvin Miller, an attorney in Washington, DC, who had good contacts in the underground up there, and who had worked with the Attica cases. This was a period of kicking around ideas and sizing up the situation, and I was thinking about bringing Marvin in on the case. Having an out-of-stater — a so-called foreign attorney — on a case gives it a little more appeal, and Marvin could help get the word around. But I made no firm commitments to him yet.

"In October, 1974, the case took off, and it did so in Washington, DC. Four years before, I had done some work on an NBC White Paper on the black exodus from Eastern North Carolina and collaborated with Nancy Mills, who is with the Institute for Corporate Responsibility. I called her up, told her I had this case, and asked how I could get some national publicity for it. We talked about it some, and she told me to make a trip up there and promised to set me up with some women's groups.

"'You do all the organizing,' she said. 'I know you're going to do it anyway. But remember, let Karen do the talking, and you keep your mouth shut. They don't want to hear from you anyway.'

"At that point we had about six hundred dollars in the Joan Little Defense Fund. I took two hundred and fifty of it for the trip, took Karen with me, and before it was over we had raised twenty thousand dollars in Washington, DC, alone. We talked to several women's groups, with me pushing Karen out there. They put us on the radio, made tapes of what we had said, and sent them all over the country. A TV station got interested, and sent a woman down to do an interview with Joan, Karen beside her,



in Women's Prison. I went back up several weeks later, and Nancy told me. 'You've got the biggest case in this town.'

"We sold the Joan Little case in Washington, DC. All the women's groups started to pick it up, and if I learned one thing in this whole business, it was that you've got to have the women in any political movement. They've got the time and the intelligence and they'll work hard for you.

"Meanwhile, I knew that the case *had to be delayed*. You can not try a case effectively with the defendant still in jail. The trial was set for November 18, and I had to get her out, because I had not put my strategy

together yet. I had not put my publicity together... the publicity was still not great enough so that local officials would feel that everybody was watching. With what we had then, they still would not feel that they had to project at least the appearance of fairness.

"Beyond that, I had realized on September 19, 1974, that the prosecution had the evidence to convict Joan Little on first-degree murder. Perhaps it was not the 'smoking gun,' but it could be made to look like it. I realized what they had the first time I went through the evidence, and I had to keep them from noticing it somehow. But I ran scared about that from

September 19, 1974, until August 15, 1975. It was sitting right under their noses that whole time, and they never saw it.

"I figured if I kept Billy Griffin, the prosecutor, mad all the time, he'd never come up with the answer. I had had one case with him before, a labor case, and I knew his temper. In that case, the officers could not identify the black defendants, and so I put other blacks at the defense table to demonstrate this. Griffin got mad, threw one of his famous temper tantrums, insisted that the defendants sit in prescribed seats, and answer the calendar when their names were called. He got his way. The judge even made the defendants stand when their names were called, and the officers took notes on where they were sitting. That was illegal and unethical as hell.

"I know I have to make an ogre out of Griffin eventually, but it's not time to do that yet. I want him relaxed, so I can get my continuance. Griffin's not easy to paint as a villain. He's stupid, but he's not an ogre. That's why later I was so happy that they brought in

John Wilkinson, because John's so much easier to portray as an ogre.

"You can not create a national case like Joan Little's without a fool. About a year before this case, I read *Selma 1965*, and in that book the author made the point that without Jim Clark there would never have been a Selma. Without Bull Connor, there never would have been a Birmingham. In every big case you've got to have one who'll act the fool for you, and Billy Griffin always acted the fool for me time and again. Once he said to a reporter, 'I've had a bellyful of you bastards.' I couldn't have paid him to say a thing like that! So I played on it....

"So you've got to know how people are programmed. We were getting all that publicity in the Joan Little case by accusing people in the east of being rednecks, and they're scared of that. If they're scared of that, that's their program. They've got to prove they're not. They're on the defensive. Griffin played right into our hands time after time. He's a fascist, you know. Fascists don't come across as

ogres. They don't run around with swastikas on, but if you read the diaries and letters that people in Nazi Germany wrote, it's the same line: how the law must be preserved, fighting for freedom, that kind of thing.

"What worries you in a trial like this is a line of questioning like, 'Miss Little, aren't you a prostitute?'

"She says no, and there's never been any evidence of that. But the jury goes into their room and says, 'That's the district attorney talking. He must have some information. She must be a prostitute who lured Alligood into her cell.'

"You see, simply by asking the question, the district attorney testified to that, even though there is no such evidence. But if the solicitor comes out bad in all the pretrial publicity, and he asks that question in court, the jury's going to go back into their room and say, 'The son of a bitch is railroad-ing her. He must be one of those red-necks they've been talking about. We're not rednecks. We're going to prove we're not by finding her not guilty!'" □

AN OPEN LETTER: JERRY PAUL ON TRIAL

Sometime early in 1978, a jury in North Carolina will hear charges against attorney Jerry Paul that could end his practice of law. Every lawyer, and every person who may someday need a lawyer, should be aware of this case and what it means.

The North Carolina Bar Association brought the charges. Under North

Anne Braden, a veteran fighter for civil rights and liberties, is co-chairperson of the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic Justice (SOC).

Carolina procedure, a jury will hear evidence. If the jurors decide the charges are true, a committee of the Bar will fix punishment, which could be disbarment.

The charges grow out of Paul's defense of Joan Little in her 1975 murder trial. All of them involve things he is alleged to have said to the news media — some before the trial, some long afterward, and all outside the courtroom far from the hearing of the jury.

Specifically, Paul is accused of violating the Bar's "Code of Professional Responsibility" by (1) calling himself a "freedom-fighter"; (2) calling the Little trial judge "old-fashioned"; (3) saying the North Carolina judicial system is racist; (4) describing Ms. Little as "innocent"; and (5) saying the size of the pocketbook available has a lot to do with the kind of justice a defendant gets.

Under the First Amendment of the US Constitution, how can a man be denied the right to practice his profession for expressing such opinions? To understand this case, one must understand the situation in North Carolina at the time of the Little trial and beyond — and the role that Jerry

Paul has played in that state for almost a decade.

Jerry Paul believes that a defendant is more likely to get justice if the public knows about a case. So he cooperates with organizations that are getting the word out and building mass movements.

This worked in Ms. Little's case, as it has worked in many others. Ms. Little was by no means the first black woman to be sexually assaulted in a Southern jail. But this time the nation heard about it, and the eyes of the world were on the Raleigh courtroom where she was tried. The judge had to rule fairly, so the defense got a jury that was fair.

If legal ethics demand that a lawyer work in the best interest of his client, Paul surely did. But for those in power in North Carolina, what he did was highly embarrassing.

"The people who run this state want at all costs to maintain their moderate image on racial things because then they can do all the union-busting they want to," Paul said recently.

In 1975, the state's image was already in trouble. There was the Wilmington case, the Charlotte 3, and the

The Innocence of James Reston, Jr.

by Mark Pinsky

In his introduction, James Reston, Jr., lists what he says are the "five crucial questions" arising out of the case of Joan Little, the young black woman charged with and acquitted of first-degree murder in connection with the death of an elderly white jailer who, she said, attempted to assault her sexually in her Beaufort County, North Carolina, jail cell in the early morning hours of August 24, 1974:

Mark Pinsky covered both the case and the trial of Joan Little for newspapers, wire services, magazines and radio.

In a sexual assault, does a woman (or a man) have a right to kill her (or his) sexual attacker? Is the level of decency in North Carolina and the nation above the spectacle of human executions? What recourse does a prisoner in jail have to the brutality of jail authorities? How has the lot of the black citizen changed in the rural South? And finally, despite the flood of flowery acclaim for the South that Jimmy Carter's election has brought, how new is the New South?

The questions are excellent. Unfortunately, the answers are not to be found in *The Innocence of Joan Little: A Southern Mystery*. The reasons lie with both the form and the substance of the book. Using the

Japanese film "Rashomon" as a model, Reston provides what is essentially an oral history of the affair, using transcripts of fifteen lengthy interviews of principals in the case. Fifteen conflicting views of any event, presented uncritically, would be difficult enough to sort out if each person were telling the truth to the best of their ability. In this case, however, a majority of the participants are so thoroughly caught up in creating obvious and outright fabrications, and in inflating their own roles, that a reader unfamiliar with the Joan Little trial would come away knowing less for having read this book.

largest Death Row population in the country. On top of all this came Joan Little.

Before the trial started, the Bar Association assigned lawyers to "watch" Paul. He learned about that from a lawyer who was asked to cooperate and refused.

Actually, the Bar had been "watching" Paul for a long time. In the late '60s and early '70s — when black students across North Carolina were going to jail in mass for protesting injustice in newly-desegregated schools — it was Jerry Paul who was defending them. Not just in the courtroom, but in mass meetings and the court of public opinion.

When a chief of police in eastern North Carolina planted drugs on a young black man, Paul exposed it. When a black youth was shot by a policeman and the state brought criminal charges against the victim, Paul brought charges against the policeman in civil court and won.

Paul wasn't urging innocent defendants to cop guilty pleas. He wasn't turning away clients who had no money. He was handling seventy percent of his cases without fee, taking bartered services for others, and trav-

eling the state representing the dispossessed and the poor.

Jerry Paul just didn't — and doesn't — fit the mold powerful people in Bar Associations have carved out for lawyers. Growing up with wealthy adoptive parents, who later disowned him, in Joan Little's home town of Washington, NC, he was always a rebel. By the time he began practicing law in Greenville, NC, in 1968, he says he knew three things:

"I knew it was more important what kind of human being I'd be in twenty years than how much money I made. I knew something had to be done about racism, because it was getting in the way of everything worthwhile. And I knew I wanted to create a law practice in which attorneys could fight on the side of people being kicked around — instead of being part of the lawyers' club that helps do the kicking."

He did that and in nine years has represented more than nine thousand clients, counting all those jailed in mass arrests. Many of them were innocent of any crime except asserting their rights or being poor. And because Paul fought outside the courtroom as well as in it, many of them went

free.

That's the kind of law practice the North Carolina Bar has set out to destroy. If they succeed, life will no doubt be more comfortable for the people who run the state. But where will it leave the people without power and money who are looking for a lawyer? If Paul is disbarred, other lawyers in North Carolina (and elsewhere) will surely get the message.

Jerry Paul has already spent nine days in jail as a result of the Little case — for contempt because he told the judge he was acting like Alice in Wonderland's Queen of Hearts ("Off with their heads"). Paul survived those nine days unscathed, and although it's much more serious, he can no doubt survive being disbarred and find another way to make a living.

It's the rest of us who should be concerned about this case — for ourselves and our own future. We can help by making an earmarked gift to the NC Legal Defense Fund, P.O. Box 643, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, and by letting the NC Bar Association (107 Fayetteville St., Raleigh 27601) know what we think.

— Anne Braden
Louisville, Kentucky



"If I had tried to sell Joan with the stance: 'I did a brave thing. I killed the old lecher and I'm glad of it,' I'd have blown it. Because if you can't sell your theory to the public, you can't sell it to a jury. Still, once I made up my mind to take the case, all the ideology goes out the window, and there's only one consideration: winning."

Mullin's did I find wholly believable. (Judge Henry McKinnon was also believable, but his limited role, i.e., approving a change of venue from Washington, NC, to Raleigh, while important, did not make his observations especially valuable.)

The main problem with oral history is that people lie to you. The folks in Reston's book are no exception. Now "lie" is a pretty strong word. Someone kinder might say that the difficulties involve "selective recollection," "disremembering," "exaggeration," "fudging on details," etc. In any case, good research would have been Reston's best safeguard against such occupational hazards, research which would have made it possible for him to ask the right questions and critically evaluate the answers. Furthermore, given the limited space in a book like this, the truthfulness of a person's testimony ought somehow to be reflected in the space allocated for their words within the author's larger mosaic. Obvious lies ought simply to be discarded. Unfortunately, that has not been Reston's practice in *The Innocence of Joan Little*.

Here are a few of the more egregious errors that I found among the interviews:

Sheriff Ottis "Red" Davis. The sheriff's account of Beaufort County's recent history of racial harmony is simply at odds with the facts. If time had not exactly stood still in eastern North Carolina until the late 1960s, it was dragging its feet. And almost nowhere did it dig in its heels more than in Beaufort County — in matters of voting rights, jury service, public accommodations, school desegregation and, yes, police brutality. But, to hear Sheriff Davis tell it, Washington, NC, had a better racial climate than Chapel Hill, or Tuskegee, Alabama.

District Attorney William Griffin recalls his thoughts when his summer vacation in New Jersey was interrupted with news of the murder and escape:

My initial reaction was that if things like that are going to happen, they'll happen in Beaufort County. All the messy cases in my district seem to take place in Beaufort County. People are more litigious there, and the county has quite a few sorry folks, white and black.

At another point in his narrative, the sheriff mentions the illness of a key law enforcement official on

Occasionally, when Reston pauses in the transcripts to make an observation of his own, his analysis is excellent, as here, when discussing the strategy of District Attorney William Griffin:

Griffin never understood that the Joan Little case had long since travelled beyond legalities, that the courtroom was simply the stage for a far broader spectacle in which only lawyer-publicists belonged, and that the horror of the audience outside, stretching now beyond state and national boundaries was sustained as much by the danger to Joan Little's life as anything. Had Griffin acceded to reducing the charge to second-degree murder or manslaughter back in November, the nation would never have heard of Joan Little and the case would have been handled "the country way" from start to finish.

It is both a pity and a loss that Reston, who covered the trial for television and the newspaper *Newsday*, who perceived the crucial issues at the outset, and who could be so incisive in the relatively few instances in the book where he relied on his own analytic skill, chose to present this kind of oral history of the Joan Little case.

In the entire book, the single bit of new information I found about this affair was that Joan Little's and Jerry Paul's hometown of Washington, North Carolina, was also the birthplace of Hollywood film mogul Cecil B. DeMille. Of the interviews themselves, the only ones I found credible, in the main, were those given by prosecuting attorneys William Griffin and John Wilkinson, and defense psychologist Courtney Mullin — and only Ms.

several occasions. That illness, he once told me, was a severe, debilitating case of *alcoholism*. The sheriff never failed to make two related points to journalists who interviewed him, and does so here. First, that after spending an hour and a half with an out-of-town reporter, he was surprised to find himself portrayed as a "redneck." He refused to be specific, but he apparently was talking about an article I wrote for the magazine *New Times* in which I didn't let him get away with the kind of self-serving nonsense he is fond of pawing off on the media. Which brings us to his second claim, that he is beloved by the blacks of Beaufort County. Sheriff Davis consistently points out that he got "ninety percent of the black vote" when he was elected sheriff. Unfortunately, he always fails to state whether he is talking about the Democratic primary or the general election. A little prodding from Reston would have revealed that Davis has no figures at all for the Democratic primary, and is referring to the general election, in which ninety percent of the black vote means little, given the reality of Beaufort County politics.

Ernest (Paps) Barnes, Margie Wright, Golden Frinks and Celine Chenier. The various accounts given by these individuals of the events immediately following the killing of Clarence Allgood are so flagrantly divergent (as is that of Jerry Paul) and conflicting that they almost go beyond the realm of myth and epic. Each must have his or her own reasons for their exaggeration, some of which are obvious. Celine Chenier was under increasingly debilitating pressure even before her involvement with Joan Little, as leader of Action for Forgotten Women, the prisoners' rights organization. And Golden Frinks was understandably bitter at being shut out of the most important case of his career as a civil rights leader for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

Jerry Paul. There came a point in the Joan Little trial when reporters stopped believing anything Jerry Paul told them outside the courtroom — and for good reason. Almost for his own amusement, it seems, he spun tales of secret witnesses, Polaroid pictures of the crime taking place and all manner of bizarre and palpably false information. Likewise, he has

never provided a full accounting of the massive fundraising efforts made on behalf of his client.

In the course of two chapters devoted to his memories of the case, Paul manages to badmouth the efforts of almost everyone else involved in the case, including his law partners (who have since left his firm), SCLC, the Black Panthers, feminist groups, left-wing groups like the Communist Party, and the news media. Each was, by Paul's account, foolish, misguided, naive, incompetent, and/or subject to the manipulations and grand design of the chief defense attorney,

Of his client, he recalls:

I could not sell Joan with her negative side coming out. She has that basic personality flaw that her environment created in her, and it's still there. She's not an honest person. That doesn't mean she committed this crime. Beyond that, Joan is an actor, an impersonator. The psychiatrist to whom I later referred her told me: "Joan Little is not a real person."

(At another point in his monologue, Paul says that he refused to refer her to a psychiatrist, thinking he could do a better job himself.)

It should be noted that throughout the trial and for some time afterward, Jerry Paul has been under a good deal of pressure apart from the fate of Joan Little and the disintegration of his law firm: a dying child, jail sentences for contempt of court and disbarment proceedings. Any combination of these things may have contributed to his mesmerizing mixture of messianism and megalomania.

Terry Bell. This alleged "secret witness" was one of Paul's more outrageous ploys. It was so outrageous, in fact, that the only reporter in the press corps who fell for it was James Reston, Jr. In addition to causing a good deal of useless legwork for other reporters (whose editors in New York and Washington wanted to know what was going on), this scoop prompted a distinct cooling of enthusiasm on the part of Reston's editors at *Newsday*. Why such an embarrassing incident is referred to, much less given an entire chapter, is beyond comprehension.

The list could go on and on. Deputy Sheriff Willis Peachey, surely one of the more sinister presences in the Raleigh courtroom and at the scene in Washington, is permitted to explain away an almost criminally

negligent and botched investigation. City Councilman Louis Randolph is allowed to justify a lack of vigorous black leadership in the county.

There are also smaller factual errors. The respected criminologist Herbert MacDonnell becomes the "notorious Hubert MacDonnell." (In his earlier account for the magazine of the *Sunday New York Times*, Reston twice reported that Joan Little faced the electric chair, although North Carolina actually uses a gas chamber.) There is no index.

In his introduction, James Reston, Jr., characterizes his story as a

. . . circumstantial case of murder and rape, with two distinct theories of how the crime(s) happened, each supported by considerable evidence (not all of which was presented to the jury or reported to the public in the press). As the chronicler, I have endeavored to relate both theories with equal passion. Each theory of the case was based largely on a view of the character of Miss Joan Little — heroic or villainous — and judging the defendant was largely a matter of predisposition.

Yet Reston later says that he found Joan Little's character "indistinct to the end," and the chapter that bears her name is composed almost entirely of transcripts of her trial testimony and cross examination. If Joan Little's character is so central, where is the revealing interview with Joan Little? Where are the long interviews with the jurors, with the presiding judge?

The author's promise of "equal passion" turns out to be an equal lack of passion, punctuated only with obscure literary references and glib, one-word characterizations of people and their actions. A lecturer on creative writing and author of two novels, Reston seems throughout more intrigued with the literary formula of his "mystery" — as he nearly admits in his introduction — than with the pursuit of the questions he knows the case raises in real life. His failure to provide an interview with Joan Little — who was willing and able to cooperate — fits well with the construction of a fictionalized mish-mash of competing egos fighting over her life, but it is also the final proof that the book is not a serious investigation of how justice works in the South, and more importantly, what American justice means for its victims. □



During the trial of Joan Little, I was teaching at Attica prison in New York State, but word about her and her acquittal was often discussed in my classes there. She was the heroine to the North Carolina inmates; a black woman from down home, down South, making a strong stand.

Later, I began teaching acting and creative writing at the NC Correctional Center for Women in Raleigh, and it was here that I met Joan. Seeing her for the first time, I was amazed – she seemed so small and skinny and young to have made the fight she did.

Joan was a member of my part-time acting workshop and later joined "Souls from Within," a full-time project for the women. She was frequently disturbed by articles and plays that were written about her. "That ain't me," she would say. And I would encourage her to write her own story, for I believed there were many people who would like a firsthand word from the real woman.

Joan offered to tell me her stories on tape, if I would edit and organize the material. I agreed and we started the tapings in August of 1976.

– Rebecca Ranson

I Am Joan

I Am Joan

I was born May 8, 1954, in Washington, North Carolina.

I got six brothers and two sisters. I'm the oldest in the family. I am an average, twenty-two-year-old woman trying to live her life. I know that now under the circumstances that I've undergone that it's very important that I not go back to the old way of life.

You know, life is one hole. It's like being on a playground; you don't learn how to play the game, you got to get off on the side. Life is not gonna stop for you. It's gonna continue and go around and around.... People expect a lot out of you. People try to stereotype you as a person. I am a human being; one that breathes, hears and sees the same as anyone else. I am not what someone has picked up out of a fairy tale, something that came out of the seventeenth century.

I am not against the experience that I've had in life or the things that I've done. I think that what I've done, where I've been, what I've been through have all taught me and have been a major factor in my finding out who the real Joan really is. Because two years ago I didn't know who I was and what I wanted my life to be like. My life at that point was only going up to the poolroom with my friends; going out every now and then. Now I don't consider myself as being the worst sinner in the world, and I definitely don't put myself in the category to say that I was a saint. By all means no. I was far, far away from being a saint, but I never considered myself as being the type of person that did all the really bad things.

My past is past to me. It's like a distant nightmare that I don't want to relive ever again. I am a new Joan Little. At one point, I looked at myself as being almost a tramp on the street, someone that had no future or

no meaning in life. If I were to pass away, I would of felt like I was just another corpse that was making room for somebody else that was coming into the world that could do something meaningful. Now, I see that regardless of what you are or who you are or what you might be...even a wino in the street has a purpose. That person who stands out in the street corner has a reason for standing out in the street corner.

Basically, I think this society has come to the point wherein they are too hard, too harsh and definitely too judgmental against their own kind. They've stopped looking into what they're doing and looking into somebody else's backyard. Besides I can't even begin to look in somebody else's backyard because I haven't raked up my own. You know, my own experiences have taught me a lot, and I feel that at twenty-two years old, I have matured enough to say that my experiences have been those of a woman in her forties.

Teaching

I was born in a house on Greenville Road, and then Mother moved to 418 Pierce Street and that's where I grew up at. It was like two houses, one house, but both of them was joined together and like you could just step right across from one porch on to the next porch and go on. Then we moved out to the country and behind it we had this wood house, a house where you keep wood in and all kinds of stuff. My mother had an upholstery machine where she had learned how to upholster sofas and stuff and she had all her old trunks from way back. It was real nice in there. She had all her clothes, coats and stuff out there.

I went out there when I was out for a school break during the summer, and cleaned all that stuff and made it neat. She had a dresser that looked like a

desk, and I took all the chairs and set them up in there and made a school. I used to go downtown and buy paper and pencils and my brothers and sisters had nothing to do, you know, cause I had to clean up the house. After I finished cleaning about twelve o'clock I'd call all of them in there, and I'd give them something to do and show them how to write and make letters. I'd put a letter up there and have them make the same letter I'd made, and I might put a straight line and say, "Make a straight line first and then come around and do this right here and you'll have an H."

I used to have a good time teaching school, but what made me mess up was, I started teaching my brothers and sisters about sex. Ha ha ha ha! I was, I'd say about fifteen, and I was trying to find a way of doing things to keep my mind occupied so I wouldn't have to start running the streets or whatever, you know, cause me and my stepfather wasn't getting along. So this was my way of expressing myself, doing something that I really wanted to do. With my little sister, I'd get a piece of paper and say, "This is something that all little girls have, the vagina." And I'd tell my brothers, "Now, you are different than her cause you are a male and you have a penis."

Well, when mother found out she said, "oh, no," and said, "No more, no more. You can go out there and you can teach them how to write letters but don't show none of that." And I said, "Well, if I don't tell them, they gonna grow up and ain't gonna find out nothing." I'd tell my sister. She would have never known about her period unless I had told her. My mother always thought that you just don't tell. She grew up in the old fashion.

Fathers

My stepfather lives at home. My real father lives in New York. My real father never lived with us, and my mother got married when I was six years old. I remember it very well. I didn't accept the fact of her getting married and I think that my mother — she had some kids already — I think she should have considered the fact of the kids. She may have thought we didn't know what was going on but we did. I resented that for a long time. I

thought, "You ain't my father and you can't tell me what to do."

Those kind of changes put Mama in the middle and that's one reason why I started running out like I did. I could not deal with him, and he didn't have the authority to tell me what to do. And he would tell Mama, "Joan is disrespectful. It's cause you let her get away with it." My mother never really put her feet down and beat me, but she was constantly aware of the trouble. Like if I said I wanted something, my father gave it to me and he wouldn't even give the other kids things. He wanted me to come to New York and live with him, but my mother didn't want any of us to be separated. My father left when I was eighteen months old. See my father was married already when my mother started dating him.

Let me tell you about my mother though. My mother never has been the type to run around. The first time my mother ever went to a club was when she went in one with me and that was last year. I went in to thank this man for giving me some money for the defense fund and she didn't even want to go in there then. She ain't never drunk no beer. She ain't never smoked no reefer. Ain't never shot no dope, and I said, "You ain't never done nothing." You know, I can remember her having boyfriends and stuff, but there was only about two of them, and I didn't know them that well then because I was small, but I knew them after I got grown because I remembered the faces.

Jimmy

Let me tell you what I ended up doing one time. I got so many weird things that happened in my lifetime. See my family is really big. In Washington there's not that many Littles but my mother is really from Pitt County.

I didn't know that the Midgets were any relation to me at all cause my mother kept us home all the time. We didn't never go visiting anybody, so when they started living on our street, Mama told us Yvette was supposed to be a relation to us but that was as far as it goes. Kids don't be listening to nothing like that. Far as I was concerned, we was just playmates and I used to love to go to Yvette's house all the time cause she had a lot of brothers — Ernest, Lee, Jerry, Johnny

— and they used to live two houses away. Ernest and all of them had a band and they used to get out there on the porch and play music and stuff. We'd get out there and be dancing, going in and out the kitchen and her Mama'd be in the living room with the door closed, watching TV. The band would be playing and we'd be running and she'd have kool-aid and dessert back there to eat. Oh, we'd be having a ball!!

I hadn't ever seen Jimmy before — never in my whole life had I seen him. It's so funny now. Jimmy was in, I think it was the tenth grade and I was in the seventh. There was an old truck parked there in the back of their house, a black truck. We was back there playing Mama and Daddy. Jimmy was supposed to be my husband. Yvette had my brother for her husband. Okay, we'd leave and come to Yvette's house and eat dinner. Well, it was mud actually and then me and Jimmy would go home. Our home was on the other side of the truck and so we'd go on the other side of the truck and we'd be talking, you know. You know how you feel when you're real shy cause you ain't never been around no boy before and see, Jimmy was older. He kept telling me, "I like you." And so I'd say, "I guess it's about time for us to go and be eating and visiting Yvette again." Then it started getting dark. They had a light in the back of their house. You could go down to the electric company and get them to put up a post light right in the back of your house.

Okay there was one of those back there and Yvette said she was going home. Jimmy stayed.

He and I were just sitting back there in the backyard talking and it was dark and there were honeysuckle vines growing all up on the fence and stuff. We had a place called "the woods" where we had made a path and we'd say, "Don't nobody know how to go through the woods." Me and Jimmy was sitting out there talking and...uhh...then he kissed me. That was the first time anybody ever kissed me before!! I said, "Well, I think it's time for us to go," and he said, "Well, okay."

I think it was about the next week before I saw Jimmy cause he was in school and stayed with his grandmother around the corner on Fifth Street, and so he didn't ever come

around unless he came in the evenings to visit his Mom.

I was coming out and I saw Jimmy coming up. I said, "Hey, Jimmy, how you doing?" And he said, "Hey, where you going?" I said, "I'm going to the store," and he said, "You want me to walk you to the store?" I said, "Yeah."

I was going to this store called "Shorty's." Shorty used to give me candy, snowballs, cookies and stuff. He knew all of us cause we had grown up around Shorty and you know we got used to seeing him ride by on his bicycle. He was a real short, fat man. There was this warehouse right across the street from us and it's dark, not real dark. Jimmy walked me to Shorty's just about four or five houses away and then he asked me to go with him. When he asked me, I said, "Yeah."

He started coming over to my house all the time. Like he used to say he was coming over to see my brother, but I used to play with my brothers all the time so my mother didn't think nothing about it. Sometimes my brothers wouldn't be home, and Jimmy'd come over and we'd be out there playing, riding bicycles.



He started to come almost every evening and my mother got on me. She said, "That boy is hanging over here too much and you're hanging round that boy too much and I'm gonna tell him that he can't be coming here to see you. He can come over here to see Jerome, but he's a boy and you are a girl and you can't be playing

with him." She went and told Jimmy's mother not to let Jimmy come over there to see me. After that he kind of slacked up and left. I think I went to New Jersey and when I came back from there, I was about 17 or 18 years old and still liking Jimmy. I knew then he was my cousin, but it didn't really phase me until I started getting up and I said now he's actually my cousin, you know. Then, when I look back we wasn't really doing anything. It was just, you know, alike. If I had been older and didn't know he was my cousin we would have probably got into something but I was so young. I didn't even know what a man was all about much less what a man could do to a woman.

Johnny

I used to tell my mother don't try to hold so much grip on me cause when I was like about fifteen or sixteen everybody got to go out and date and stuff. She didn't want me to date nobody. She said I was too young. What I ended up doing, I started going with this boy. He was eighteen and I was fifteen. My mother said he was too old for me. I just couldn't see where he was too old cause I really liked him. I thought the sun rose and set in him. Seemed like he knew a whole lot more than I did cause his mother, she used to let them go out all the time and go to dances and stuff.

There were school dances and the pay was a quarter to get in. My mother was working nights. What I'd do is I'd keep my lunch money and Yvette, she'd always ask me about going to the dances. I didn't want to say no, because I was embarrassed. Like at school they used to joke me and say stuff about you're in high school now and your Mama won't let you go to dances. I went. You don't want to be left out of your group. Sometimes the dances would last until twelve or one o'clock. I would have my brothers watch for me and open the door so I could get in. My mother, she would always fuss but when she'd go to work, she didn't have no say-so and I went to dances anyway.

Mama got so tired of it that she started checking up on me at school. I was going to school but I just didn't want to stay home and I got so tired of her being so possessive that I started

staying with a friend. I'd go to school every morning and when Mama would leave for work, I'd go home and pick me up some clothes. Every time she would come looking, I'd go out the back door or hide or something like that so she put the police to looking for me. The Chief of Police then was Mr. Cherry. I went down and talked to him and my mother. He says, "Now, Joan, you gotta stay at home. Just go home now with your mother and stay there." I said, "Yeah," and went home and left that same night and went back to a friend's house. Then I heard my mother had been to see some lady and signed some papers and the police was looking for me again. They picked me up and told me I was going to a juvenile hearing because I was under the jurisdiction of my parents and I wasn't obeying them.

I went to court and the judge said he was gonna put me on six months probation. He let me go and I went home for about two months. Later I had to go back to court and that time he put me on a year's probation and said for me to not come back before him or else he was gonna send me to a girls' home. My mother talked up for me, but about a week later I was there again. So he said he wasn't going for it and there wasn't gonna be no hearing or nothing, that he was gonna send me to that girls' home.

Before all this, before going to Dobbs, the reason why my mother got so mad and all was that I was messing with this dude named Johnny. She didn't like him cause she said I was too young. The judge told me I could live with my aunt. I did and she was even stricter than my mother. I couldn't go nowhere on Saturdays and I had to stay there and I mopped, waxed, washed and ironed. She give me five dollars for allowance. If I went downtown, I had a certain limit of time to go and be back. When I came home, I couldn't visit with anybody. If I went anywhere, I had to be back before six o'clock. If I didn't have her permission, I couldn't even leave the porch, much less the yard and here I was sixteen years old.

My aunt said, "Since you want to date this boy so bad, I'm gonna let you have company." When I started taking company I wished I hadn't, cause we were sitting in her living room. He couldn't sit nowhere close to me or put his arm around me or

nothing and kissing was out. My aunt was sitting in the next room and she'd keep passing back and forth in the room. No lights turned down or nothing. Johnny came one time and said this is it, the only time.

I was sleeping in the back room by myself. My aunt had a son and a daughter but they was real young. Since I was older, I slept in the room by myself. After they all went to bed, I would lock the door and sneak out by the window, and run down the street. Johnny lived over by the school, a good three blocks away, and I'd run the whole way. I'd go over there and knock and ask was he there and his sister, she'd say, "Yeah, he's upstairs in bed. You can go on up." So I'd go on up and wake him and talk to him. I'd stay until probably three or four and run home and jump in the window and get in bed and sleep like I'd been there all night long.

Johnny's mother worked in a fish house where they cleaned crabs, and she wasn't right down on none of her kids. She let a person do what they wanted to do. I wasn't understanding anything my mother was saying about her then, but I can understand it now. If Johnny wanted to come in and lay up with a woman, his mother just wouldn't have nothing to say about it. Only time she had something to say to me was if my mother would come up there looking for me. Well, Mother would come around saying stuff like, "I don't want my daughter around here," and she wouldn't say nothing to her. I'd be upstairs and I'd be looking at her out the window. I'd hear her say, "If Joan comes here, please send her home. I don't want to be calling the police to send them around here all the time. Joan is too young to be hanging out." I'd just stand there and listen.

I thought it was real hip.

I thought I was real grown.

Training School

I was taken to Dobbs Girls' School in Kinston. My social worker, who used to be a teacher, took me up there. She told Mother to have my clothes packed and she'd pick me up. The lady came to get me, took me to Kinston and put me in the Lennox Cottage at Dobbs. That's the first cottage when you come through admissions.

I ran away from training school. It wasn't that bad, but it's hard being so young and locked away. I wouldn't have run away but this lady accused me of talking loud in the lounge when it wasn't even me. She was gonna make me buff floors until morning on my knees with an army blanket to make it really shine. I wasn't going for it. I stepped.



Little Washington

After nine o'clock at night in Washington, there ain't nobody on the street. You don't see hardly even three cars coming down the highway unless they're passing through town. I was totally all into the black community and I knew where I was. There wasn't nobody there that was gonna hurt you as long as you didn't cross that bridge.

Washington is the kind of town that's way behind the times. You can tell there's a lot of racism that goes on in town because there's a railroad track that runs down the middle of town and from Fourth Street on back there's nothing but blacks, the black community. On the left-hand side are all the whites so you know by what street people live on whether they're black or white. If they say Tenth Street, you know you're across the tracks in the black neighborhood. Most of the black streets are dirt streets.

The poolroom is on the corner of Fourth and that's where all the blacks hang at. They go down there long about this time of year, summer when

it's hot, and they drink wine and beer and hang. They sit around and listen to music and play pool, you know. There are a few clubs down there like the Elite and the American Legion and there's Griffin Beach. A lot of blacks go to Griffin Beach. It's not like a regular beach. It's just a little road going way back up in the woods. When you get down there in the woods, there's about three little shacks sitting up in there and there's the whole big Pamlico River that you can swim in. It's not that great. When you go up into a shack to change clothes into a bathing suit, it's like some carpenter took some boards and built a hut out of them. Nothing at all elaborate. The whites go to a beach called Butcher's Beach. They got a paved road to it and it's real nice.

About four years ago my mother moved to Chocowinity. Chocowinity is an Indian name. Used to be Indians there, but there aren't any settled there now. I don't know where they went but just into history.

In Washington, there's not what you would absolutely call integration. They integrated the schools in about '70, I think. I was a sophomore and they moved me to Washington High School. You know, you just don't hear of a black and white walking down the street hand in hand. You might go to Greenville, a college twenty-two miles away, and you might see it but you don't see it in Washington.

Blacks and whites don't really do nothing together. Not church either. We went to a Baptist Church. Jehovah's Witness is integrated. The people that come up, they're not gonna change. They don't want to change. You live in a community like Durham or Chapel Hill, and you don't come in contact with the kind of things like down there.

I remember there used to be a man, Johnny Rawls, down there in Washington. I worked for him in a cafe, a little small cafe. On the left-hand side was a door for the blacks and on the right-hand side was one for the whites. If you'd go on the side where the whites was, you just wouldn't never get waited on. You'd just be sitting. They wouldn't wait on you. It was air-conditioned on the white side.

On the black side, there'd be things like hot sauce bottles with some salt in them sitting up on the tables.

There'd be a jar with some toothpicks sitting up in it. No napkins, no tablecloths or nothing, plus he had all this food stored and stacked up in one corner. When a black went in there, where you ordered at, you could see the kitchen part, the oven and all. You'd stand at this open window and they'd have pudding and desserts sitting up there on top of this deep freezer, and if they'd turn their back and you wanted to, you could reach your hand in there and get some. Ya ha ha ha. It was a trip! The white side was real nice.

see a car coming up in the parking lot. When I left, if they were going by the testimony in the trial, the police came in and they were trying to find out where the jailer was and they went walking around back in the women's section. He was locked in but they didn't have no key. There was one key, like a big ring with all the keys to the whole courthouse. When I left out, I snatched up those keys that was in the door, so there was no keys at all in the whole jailhouse.

I could see the police cars coming up the street cause I could look right

was locked into the room. I didn't get paranoid or nothing. He'd gone around the block and he told me he'd heard my name all on the radio, on TV, he said, wanting me for questioning about the death of the jailer. After that point, I just stayed.

The police kept coming up to the house. Like one night they came up and I was getting ready to come out of the bedroom. It was in the summer-time. Down there where I live they cut off all the lights, raise the windows up and, you know, people sit on the porch till eleven, twelve o'clock because it be so hot to sleep. All the lights were out and I had walked out in the front. The floors were made out of cement. That's how the old-timey houses were. I was walking down this little short hall into the living room, and I just happened to hear a car easing around the corner, just like damn police cars, you know.

I couldn't run out the door or the back door cause I knew they probably had the police all around so the first thing I thought about was jumping in between the mattresses and this is what I did. Don't ask me how I got in there or what made me do it. It's just the first thing that jumped in my mind. I just got in there. The mattresses were about eight inches thick I know. They were this real heavy old mattresses that got feathers in them. It's not hard like the ones they make now. I could fit plus it be sinking in the middle, and

"I ran away from training school. It wasn't that bad, but it's hard being so young and locked away. I wouldn't have run away but this lady accused me of talking loud in the lounge when it wasn't even me. She was gonna make me buff floors until morning on my knees with an army blanket to make it really shine."

I worked as a dishwasher. I did that in the summer and after I couldn't get back into Washington High, I tried to go to work for Mr. Rawls. He wouldn't accept me so I went to work for Mr. Levee at another restaurant. I had to make hot dogs there every day during the week and on weekends, too.

Some people stay in Washington, but most of my friends have gone. Young people don't hang around there nowadays. Only place they can go to work is the garment factory of Hamilton-Beach or this yarn place, and they seldom hire a lot of young people. When they get out of high school and get their diplomas, there's no real jobs for them there.

Washington is behind the rest of the world. It took two hundred years to get racism the way it is, and it'll take just that long to get it straightened out.

Part II: After the Incident

After the jail, after the incident happened at the jail, I was just running down the street. My intention was to get to my cousin's house, and when I got there I was asking him for help, you know, trying to explain bits and pieces. I guess it didn't make sense what I was saying. We finally got it together, what had happened. He got just as uptight as I did.

When I left the courthouse, I could

across the street at the house where I used to live, you know, and that's where they thought that I was going.

The police was looking and everything. My cousin started getting so uptight I started wondering myself if he was so nervous he was gonna jam me. So, I just left.

There was this liquor house, but I didn't know nothing about it. I just more or less knew it was by them sitting on the porch and me passing by when I used to live on that street. I didn't know nobody but I just walked on in the house like I wanted to buy me a shot of liquor. Pops was sitting out there on the porch and I said, "I got something I want to talk to you about," and he say, "Okay," and I say, "I'm tired and sleepy, can I lay down?" and he say, "Yeah, yeah okay. Go on back there and go to sleep. It's alright with me."

So I went back there and laid down on the bed. About thirty minutes later, he close up the house, came back there and lay down on the bed. I started telling him the main things that had happened and he said, "Wow, little girl, you got yourself in a whole lot of trouble, I got to tell you, you know. Well, I'm going to do everything I can to help you out." I believe he was pretty high.

The next morning he got up, heard a knock on the outside of the door, locked my door and went on out. I



so I got under there and stretched my arms out trembling. You know it was hot as hell under there. I was scared to breathe. I heard them when they came in. They just busted in the house and told Pops they got a warrant to search the house and I heard them go upstairs.

Upstairs is where it looked like they had started making rooms but they didn't, so it was just one big room and Pops had a whole lot of junk up there. He had this lady who used to come around drinking and all. She was laying up there with another man. She was drunk. They must have been into something because she was naked and the police hurried up and came downstairs. They came in where I was, shining flashlights on the bed. They shined them in the closet, and one of them raised up the mattress and I said, "Ohhhhhh, Gawwhhddd," but he didn't pull it all up, just raised it a little bit, got on top of the bed and then he left.

Police didn't come back until the next day when I was sitting in there talking to Pops' son. We was just sitting there talking and they come up on the porch. One man was talking to Pops and telling him they'd received a message that I was there and if he'd just give up that information they'd pay him, and Pops told them that money didn't mean nothing to him, that this girl's life meant more than money and he wouldn't tell them anything.

They wanted to search the house again. So I got between the mattresses and Pop's son laid up on top of me like he was asleep, and Pops raised hell saying, "Whatcha gonna come in here waking my son up and him sleeping and him out working all day?" So they left on out that time. I said, "Wow, things are sure enough getting hot. The next time they come they probably gonna tear this house apart." I told Pops I should probably leave so it wouldn't get him in trouble.

What I had intentions of doing was going to this old house, this two-story house up on Pierce Street. Nobody lived there. This guy I used to run with on the street, his family owned the house but nobody lived in it. It was furnished but it was so old on the inside, it just looked like every day it was gonna fall or cave in. I was gonna go up there. I knew how to get in and I was gonna try to hitchhike a ride out of town, but I was

too scared. Pops' son, he talked to me and said he had heard so much that he felt like they'd just shoot me down on sight. He wanted to try to take me to Greenville where I might could talk to a lawyer, and I told him I'd just hold. Then on Labor Day weekend, I saw my cousins outside the house. I thought maybe I could hitchhike a ride and go upstate somewhere, but it was broad daylight and I couldn't just walk out there.

Somehow word got around to this sister named Margie and she found out that I was at Pops'. I didn't even tell my mother where I was. I called her and told her I was alright but said, "I'm not gonna tell you where I am because as long as you don't know, you can't tell nobody!" I just didn't trust nobody, you know. One night I was just laying on the bed and I hear somebody knocking on the window and I said, "Who is it?" and she said, "Margie. Tell the sister to come out the back door. I got a ride for her."

I walked round to the back door and opened it up for her and she came in. She had another girl with her she called Sissie. She told me to hurry up and git clothes on cause we got a ride. She said, "Jerry Paul got it all set up and here's what we're gonna do — put your Mama in one car and your sister in another car." My sister looks just like me. "When we leave, one car is going one way and the other car is going the other way because they got two tails out there. That'll use up the tails and then, the third car, that's the one we're gonna use for you. We'll let the other woman walk into the house and change wigs with you. Then she'll stay in the house and you'll walk out." So that's what we did.

Sissie got out of the car with Margie and I put on the wig that Sissie had on and walked out and got into the car. We rode away and went down to what they call Mister Ed's and when we got down there, Jerry Paul's car was waiting. We drove up beside Jerry's car. I got out of Margie's car and Margie and Jerry got into an argument about the damn wig. Margie wanted her damn wig back, and Jerry says, "Man, I'll pay you for the wig. This ain't no time to be arguing." Ya ha ha! We got in Jerry's car and rode on up to Chapel Hill.

When we got to Chapel Hill, we went over to this professor's house.

He like helped a fugitive for a couple of days, you know. The SBI issued me as an outlaw which means you can be shot down on sight. Jerry was making negotiations with Charles Dunn, who was head of the SBI then. The negotiations were that I was supposed to get a speedy trial and at no time was I supposed to be held in custody by Beaufort County officials. I was supposed to be held in an adjoining county or at the Women's Prison but not at Beaufort County, so Charles Dunn agreed to those terms. I was supposed to turn myself in.



It was September 7, 1974, about three o'clock, I believe. Jerry came over to the professor's house and picked me up and we went on over to Charles Dunn's office. He read my warrants to me and told me I had been charged with first degree murder and that I would be held at Women's Correctional Center. There was a lot of peoples out there, a lot of reporters and a lot of different political branches, so they didn't bring me back out the front door. They took me out the back to a SBI car. When I got out there, this lady and man put handcuffs on me. There were about four other cars, eight policemen and a female officer was in the car with me. All of them rode over to the Correctional Center to make sure that I was in prison. After they called the dogs off, I just went on in the Women's Correction Center and I stayed there from September 7 until February 26th when I made bond at \$125,000. □

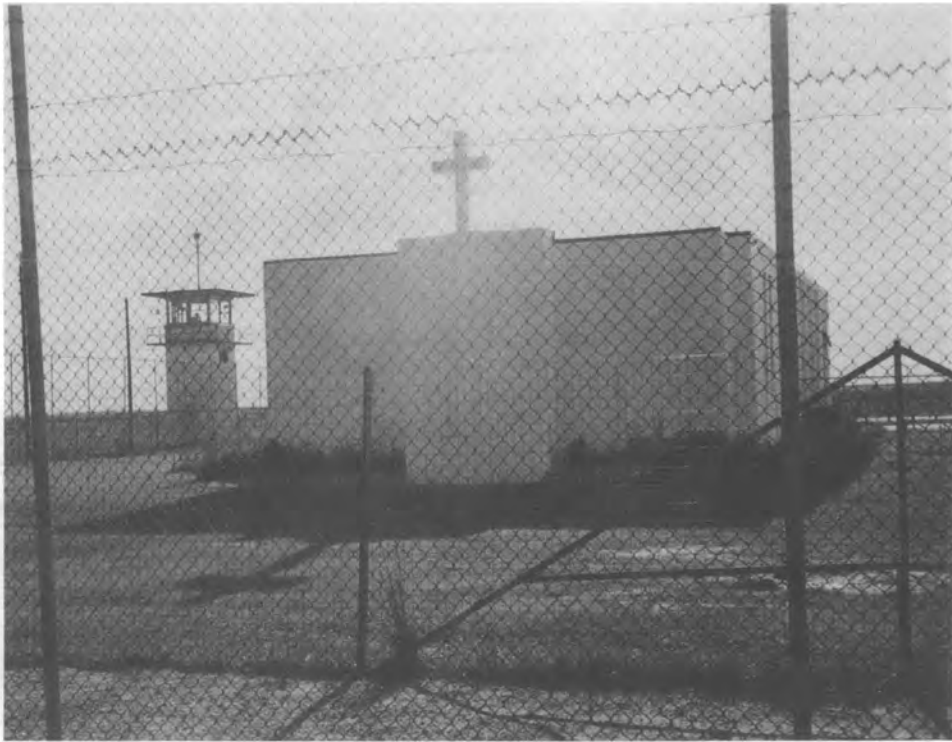


photo by Brad Foster

A Visit to the White House

by Michael Bert McCarthy

The following is an episode from Michael Bert McCarthy's semi-fictional autobiography, The Long Journey of Dixie Lullabye.

McCarthy, a Florida native, has worked variously as a disc jockey, freelance journalist, political editor of the Los Angeles Free Press, and sociologist. He served time from 1963 to '69 in California prisons. There, he says, "I obtained an extraordinary education in the disciplines of social and political science, social psychology and philosophy."

Now living in Hixson, Tennessee, McCarthy is currently at work on The Rise of the Dragons, a political history of the California Prison Movement, as well as The South: A National History.

It was typical of Southern jails in the 1950s: a concrete and brick, two-story building with the first floor housing the sheriff's offices, jail booking office and small kitchen; the second floor, a hollow shell with a steel-barred cage set about four feet from the surrounding green walls and three feet below the dimly lit ceiling. There were segregated cells, each with two flat, metal-slatted bunks and an encrusted toilet bowl-wash basin combination. The floor, an unpainted, grey-grouted cement, sloped towards drain-holes to facilitate a monthly hosing and to accommodate the inevitable flooding by a rampaging prisoner.

The two fifteen-year-old boys occupying the front cells by the security door were typical, too. Except they were clothed in State-issued, white cotton boxer shorts, dirty with road clay, torn by briars and thistles. They were runaways from what was called, by some, The Florida School for Boys, and by others, The Florida Industrial School at Marianna. Whatever. It all meant the same thing in the end. They were juvenile escapees from Florida's one reform school for boys. And that's why both boys had that look of cold, infantilizing terror about them. They knew what awaited runaways.

At a little past three o'clock in the afternoon, the security door swung open, and the county jailer came in, dressed in the gaudy green, grey and gold patch uniform, keys clanking and clinking against the hollow silence. Then came the two Statemen in the

casual dress of the boys' school informality: white solid or thin-striped, short-sleeved shirts; brown or black slacks; white cotton or black argyle socks; black or brown laced shoes. These were the men with taut grins and white Baptist faces, men off the broken farms of north Florida, southern Georgia and Alabama, men in the benevolent tradition of the Southern paternal order. Hard Christian men serving the State, steeped in the doctrine of original sin and the swift application of salvation and retribution.

The jailer keyed the lock, and told the boys in a not unkindly way to back up against the cell door with their hands behind them. A Stateman manacled first one, then the other boy. He asked each if the cuffs were too tight; they in turn mumbled their no's. They were motioned out of the cell — the slimmer of the two, Mike, moving lamely on his left leg. His knee, ankle and foot were encrusted with blood and dirt.

The jailer led them down the hollow concrete steps, into the booking room, and the Statemen motioned the boys to the wooden bench by the wall as they signed them out. The officials exchanged their goodbyes, then the boys were led squinting into the orange-white sun of the parking lot. The omnipresent grey Statecar sat waiting, a well-used transport for State supplies and runaway boys.

The Statecar headed northwest out of Apalachicola on Highway 98; the boys were seated in the rear, the window and door handles removed. Fifty miles per hour along the golden Gulf Coast where the sun splashed on white beaches, green-brown saw grass, the sparse northern Florida pines. Then north on 71 out of Port St. Joe, through Wewahitchka, along the Dead Lake.

Little was said, What was there to say? They were taking them back to Marianna. Going to Hell in the "Sunshine State" of Yankee tourists and retirees.

The Statecar moved along the three-hour trip through the small towns of Blountsville and Altha, through the open grazing land of the humid Florida Panhandle. The road signs marked the distance as they drew nearer and nearer to Marianna. At the 20-mile sign, cold sweat began to film on the bottom of the boys' feet, in

the palms of their hands, in their armpits; it trickled through the hair of their groins, down and around their testicles to the vinyl seats, soaking their asses. The near-naked boys sat, manacled arms behind their backs, on the elevated rear seat of the State station wagon, gawked at by pedestrians from curbsides and passengers in faster vehicles. Images conjured of Southern times past, of other runaways, their black bodies manacled, clothing torn and tattered, seated in the rear of a wagon.

The Statecar passed through the rock portals and up the road leading to the central offices of the school: it swung left and stopped in front of the Director's office. Mr. Dennis, the school's Boy Scout leader, got out of the passenger seat and walked to the office door; he said something to the inside. Then, back at the car, he waited. Soon a tall, angular man, the Director, came out. He had a slight, right-legged limp born with a sternness he seemed to pride. He neither looked at nor spoke to the boys, but motioned to the driver with a long, gaunt arm, pointing towards the dining room and kitchen, and he said something to Dennis.

Dennis said, "Okay," and got back into the car. They drove the short, pine tree-lined road past the kitchen, and stopped before a one-story, white cement, windowless building. "You boys just sit there for a minute." Dragging some keys from his pocket, Dennis unlocked the building's heavy wooden door, and disappeared into the darkness. The boys could hear the clammer and din from the dining room as nearly 400 boys sat down to their evening meal.

Shortly, the Director appeared at the right side of the car and reached through the front window to unlock the rear door. "You can get out now," he said to Mike. Dennis reappeared through the doorway and opened the car's left rear door, telling the other boy, Woody, to get out. Motioning toward the building, the Director said, "You boys get on in there." Dennis led them out of the late afternoon Florida sunlight into the near-darkness of the building known as the White House.

The boys were led into a dank, whitewashed corridor six feet wide, eight feet high. The aged walls were lit only by a single wire-encased bulb

glaring against the musty ceiling. Three-quarters of the way down the corridor were two identical rooms, one on either side, both lit with bulbs encased in the rusty wire mesh. The boys were directed to the one on the left, the Colored Boys' Room it was called...equal and identical, separate by law. Word had it the only difference was in the number of strokes given blacks.

The room held nothing but a rusting, GI-green army cot, with an uncovered, striped mattress and pillow, dark with the liquid stains of human misery. The two runaways were uncuffed and ordered to sit on the cot. The two Statemen stood over them, silent, watching as the terror began to tremble their bodies. A third Stateman stood waiting in the corridor. The Director began to question them: "Why did you boys run Don't you know you can't get away from here? You boys are lucky; farmers hereabouts shoot runaways. Either that or the swamps get them. What's your excuse?...if you've got one I want to hear it."

Woody began to cry softly, the Director's voice signaling the inevitable emotional buildup to the beating. Mike, crying too, tried to speak: "I don't know I couldn't take anymore....I just wanted to get away.... I..." Dennis said nothing; the Director slowly tapped his game right foot. Finally, Mike gave up, his head bowed. "Alright," the Director said. "Which of you will go first?" Neither answered. The Director pointed to Mike. "You then, let's go - into the other room." And giving a nod to Dennis, the Director led Mike into the White Boys' Room.

Pointing to the army cot, the Director gave the instructions: "Alright now, son, it'll go easier on you if you do as I tell you. You're to lay down on the cot on your belly; turn your face to the wall. If I were you, I'd stuff the corner of that pillow in your mouth. Once we begin, don't turn your head. Don't cry out or scream. If you do, we start all over again. Place both hands on the cot frame and keep hold of it. Do not try to get up, or try to stop us. If you do, we'll send for some kitchen boys to hold you down. I'd try to stay as relaxed as you can; you're less likely to be hurt."

The mask of sternness began to slip.

Something - remorse perhaps - began to flow down the long lines of his face. "Now get this straight in your head. Every boy is told about running away. You knew the punishment; you've seen boys brought back to your cottage from here. You knew what to expect when you were caught. So you asked for this."

The new mask melted into place: two hundred years old; seen from a thousand Protestant pulpits; from a multitude of Southern court benches at sentencing time; before the cringing figure of the mischievous child; at the hanging of a good slave gone bad; before the daughter being sent away from the unacceptable lover. The Patriarch stood towering before Mike. A long pause followed as he turned the shoe of his flawed right leg on the cement floor, as he spoke the formula: "Let me tell you something son, this is going to hurt me more than it will you."

Having said his piece, the Director pulled himself erect, the tone of self-pitying condescension gone from his face: "All right now, lay on down there, turn your head, and get ahold of the cot." The boy, visibly shaken, did as he was told. The Director spoke again: "You'd best do as I said and stick the corner of that pillow in your mouth." Mike caught the pillow corner in his mouth, turned his head flat on its side, shut his eyes, and waited. Seconds, minutes of clenched waiting. His body trembled. Sweat ran under his arms, sweat ran down the crack of his ass, the white-cotton shorts turning damp, clinging to the skin of his buttocks. He lay there in the silence, waiting for it to begin.

He heard Dennis' footsteps return, the Director step halfway out the door, and tell him to "hit the fan." And then he heard the awful roar of the huge exhaust fan at the corridor's end. The whole of the White House seemed to shudder under its force. It filled the room until no sound but the fan was possible.

Half in fear, reacting to the shock of the fan, Mike turned his head towards the Director. In a glimpse of terror, he saw it. Pushing his head back towards the wall, he took the pillow again into his mouth; his hands squeezed the bed frame; he clamped his eyes shut.

The first stroke exploded. The sound like the booming *Ka-Pow* of a

shotgun slammed into his ears as the impact of the blow penetrated into the tissues of his ass. The second stroke was higher, cutting just across the top elastic of his shorts. *Crack-Pow*. The boom echoed louder off the barren walls; the shock of pain cracked into his lower back. He was driven deep into the mattress.

The mattress and springs pushed his body up to meet the third stroke: *Crack-Pow*. The skin on the back of his thighs was ripped upwards with the stroke's completion. *Crack-Pow*. Two thousand, three thousand, four thousand.... The pain began to turn a deep, bright red as it ran through him.

He saw it clear. Swinging in an arc over the Director's head, slapping into the cheeks of his ass.

The Paddle. An innocuous, school-room term given it by the Director. The Paddle. Two strips of quarter-inch polished leather, two feet long, over two inches wide, separated by a sixteenth-inch piece of taut, pliant sheet metal. Attached to a four-inch rounded hand grip, the leather was perforated on either side midway down, with one-eighth-inch holes, ending in a half-inch long taper. The effect brought the whipping weapon down in a cracking slap that drove through the thinness of the cotton shorts, into the upper tissues of the skin. Halfway through the beating, the holes were filled with blood-covered flesh. The paddle began to pull and suck to the side and away. Finally, with each stroke, the tapered end snapped the flesh, cracking it wherever it had grown taut and swollen.

Crack-Pow. The strokes were coming in a marked rhythm now. As the Director began each stroke, the foot of his twisted right leg slid on the cement floor, making a terse rasping sound. Then as the paddle was swung up and over the Director's head, it scraped against the ceiling just before it came down against the flesh. Between the eighth and twelfth blows the boy, now crying softly into the pillow, began to try different measures to ease the blows. First he waited the split-second between the scrape on the ceiling and the impact, tightened his lower back, ass, and legs, and just as the blow landed, he would force himself to go limp.

Between the sixteenth and twentieth, he tried just the opposite. Just as

the blow was to land, he would go rigid; as it ended, he went loose.

Somewhere between the twenty-third and twenty-sixth, he succumbed to deep guttural moaning, biting the pillow deeply so it was tight against his tongue and the roof of his mouth. He knew nothing would ease the pain as the Director, in his practiced, methodical manner, alternated the strokes first to the middle buttocks, then to the back of the legs, then to the small of the back, then hit just one cheek, the tapered end snatching and tearing at the inside of the crevice.

At the thirty-first stroke, the boy went into a state of semi-shock. The roar of the fan, the lunging breathing of the Director, the scraping foot, the paddle catching at the ceiling — all became surreal. The blows passed into his body, sending a numbing wave into his groin, on into the mattress, pushing him deep into the springs. At the thirty-sixth stroke the boy lost track of numbers. Then, without apparent reason, after ten or twelve more, it ended.

For the first time since the beginning, the Director spoke: "All right now, get up." The boy tried, but nothing moved. "I said, get on up." The boy again tried to move his legs, to turn, but nothing worked. "If you don't get up off that cot like I told you, we're going to start all over again. Now get up."

Pulling against the bed frame, Mike moved his body from the cot. Pushing, he turned toward the Director who was already looking out the door to the Colored Boys' Room where Woody was waiting; the long strap hung hot and ready in his hand. An image of a hard-hewn woodcutter awaiting the next load of logs filled the boy's mind. Crying, he finally managed to sit upright on the sagging cot, as Dennis re-entered the room.

"Alright boy, stand up, drop your shorts, bend over, and let's have a look at you." Mike finally struggled to his feet as Dennis moved closer. He turned his back to the Statemen, pulled slowly at the waistband, and drew the shorts to his knees as he bent. "That ain't too bad . . . some bleeding," the Director motioned with his hand, talking to Dennis. The boy, head down, looked through his knees. The already mud-smudged, tattered shorts were now blotted with blood.

"Okay, you can pull them up. Go

with Mr. Dennis and do as he tells you"; the Director turned and went into the Colored Boys' Room.

Dennis motioned to Mike to follow him down the corridor. Limping stiff-legged, the boy obeyed. "Now you just stand over there in the corner with your face to the wall and wait. Don't make any more noise, or else the Director will have you back in that room." It was the first time since entering the White House that Dennis had spoken to the boy. "We'll take you down to the hospital afterwards to see to your leg wounds." Dennis left the boy standing face towards the wall, as Woody was taken into the White Boys' Room.

Dennis gone, Mike leaned against the wall, gulping for air, trying to stop the trembling. A few feet to his left, the fan roared on, covering the voices in the White Boys' Room. Suddenly the second round of strokes began, the sound cracking off the walls, echoing into the corridor, breaking in the boy's ears. He slunk to his knees, falling against the wall, covering his eyes with his forearm.

The Director again took up his steady rhythm: *Crack-Pow* — two thousand, three thousand, four thousand — *Crack-Pow*. The fifth stroke, the sixth...

The boy pushed his head harder into his arm, but the image of the Director swinging the strap over his shoulder and down upon the prone body would not fade. Again and again he could see it fall.

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth stroke the boy called Woody began to cry out at each impact. At the twenty-third, the Director shouted at him: "Boy, I told you to stuff the corner of that pillow in your mouth and keep it there. I don't want to have to listen to your crying and bawling." The strap fell upon the boy as he got the pillow back into his mouth.

When the twenty-seventh stroke hit Woody, it must have cracked him open. He screamed. A loud, deep, animal cry of agony. Again and again he screamed. As each explosion of leather on ruptured skin broke, he screamed. By the thirty-third, the screaming was one long, continuous wail, rising with each stroke.

After the thirty-sixth stroke, a scuffle broke out in the White Boys' Room. Mike heard the Director yell

to the other Statemen, "Get him back on his stomach," and to the boy, "Boy, this is it with you. Now you lay yourself back down there or else we'll send for the kitchen boys. You ain't getting anything you don't deserve. Now lay back down there and take your medicine like a man." Woody was forced back on the cot and the beating and the wailing began again.

An insane image began to fill Mike's mind. He'd seen it dozens of times at the movies and on the TV: Somewhere out West, a fort is surrounded. The last remaining troops of a long siege peer over the stockaded walls. Over a not-too-distant hill, the glow from an Indian camp lights the nocturnal horizon. The cavalry troops are waiting to see if the volunteer sent to get relief makes it through the encircling savages... Suddenly, the silence is broken by a scream. A loud, deep, screaming cry of agony as the volunteer's white skin is ruptured.

Succumbing to hysteria, Mike's scream mixed with those of the boy on the cot.

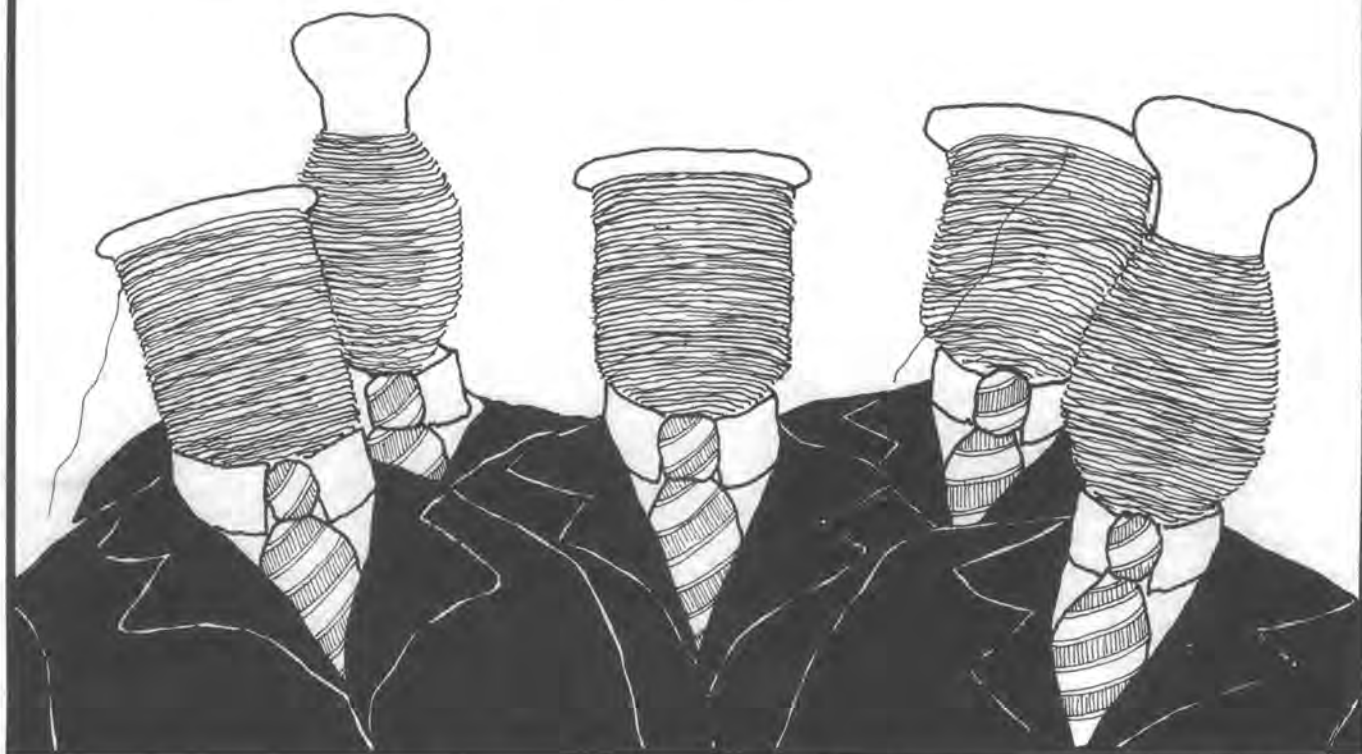
Finally, the beating stopped. The three Statemen came out of the White Boys' Room. "What is the matter with you, boy . . . do you want some more of the same?" Mike looked up and saw the three pallid-skinned Christians; the tall angular one swinging the blood-wet weapon in his hand. With all his force, with all the resourcefulness he could call upon, he shouted, "I'm praying to Jesus for forgiveness!"

After a long pause, the Director spoke again, "Well boy, you just do that, but you'd better do your praying a lot quieter — or else you'll have a lot more to pray about. Now keep quiet, hear me!" Without waiting, he led the Statemen back into the room, and the beating continued; through forty, forty-five, fifty. At the fifty-sixth stroke, Mike lost count.

He slowly pulled himself to his feet as the sound of the exploding crack of The Paddle, Woody's cries, merged into the receding roar of the fan. The pain from the wounds on his foot and leg, from the swollen, cracked flesh of his back and buttocks, melted into rage. It no longer mattered how long, how many blows, or what manner of retribution the Statemen inflicted. They had done all that was necessary. □

The Men at the Top

THE STORY OF J. P. STEVENS



Institute report by Jim Overton, Bob Arnold, Bob Hall

J.P. Stevens takes pride in describing itself as "the world's oldest diversified textile company." In more recent years, it has downplayed the fact that it is also one of America's oldest family-run businesses. As the company grew from one mill in Andover, Massachusetts, to its present eighty-five plants with 45,000 employees and \$1.5 billion in sales, it retained many of the characteristics of its founder and his family. Stevens is still controlled by a very small group of carefully selected men; and like Nathaniel Stevens, the company's founder, these modern mill men want to control, as much as possible, everything that affects Stevens' business, including its workers and the communities where it has plants.

Stevens' much publicized opposition to labor unions becomes more understandable, though no less atrocious, in light of this ideological refusal to share power with "outsiders." The company has even refused to obey a string of court orders which have found, among other things, that "with scant regard for the means employed other than effectiveness, Stevens interfered with, restrained and coerced its employees in the exercise of their rights under the labor law, flagrantly, cynically and unlawfully." When workers overcome such coercion and vote to be represented by a union, as they did in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, the company still refuses to bargain with them in good faith. A National Labor Relations Board administrative judge declared in December, 1977, that Stevens "approached these negotiations with all the tractability and openmindedness of Sherman at the outskirts of Atlanta."

Nevertheless, over the years, Stevens has been forced by outside circumstances and its own greed to change its policies — for example, to open plants in the South, to sell its stock to the general public, to hire black workers.

The Institute for Southern Studies has published other articles on textile workers and the campaign to organize J.P. Stevens (see *Southern Exposure*, Vol. III, No. 4 & Vol. IV, Nos. 1-2). In the following, we focus on the men at the top, the men who established and maintained the company's anti-union policy, the men who owned and directed the company from its beginning in New England to its migration South to its current partnership with the big Wall Street banks and insurance companies.

Captain Nat Starts A Company

J.P. Stevens & Company traces its history back 166 years to the War of 1812 when its founder, Nathaniel (Captain Nat) Stevens, was running a general store in Andover, Massachusetts. According to family legend, the twenty-six-year-old Stevens had spent several years of adventure on the high seas, and had returned home to make his fortune. The War apparently provided just the opportunity he needed. While courting his future wife, he spent long hours talking with her father, a successful mill owner; both men agreed with other businessmen in New England that the War with Britain left America in need of domestic manufacturers of wool cloth. The idea intrigued the energetic and ambitious Captain Nat, and in 1813, with financial assistance from two partners, he converted his father's grist mill into a woolen mill. He called it the Factory Company; it was the first Stevens textile mill, but only one of dozens started by young New Englanders in the early nineteenth century.

Conversations had not made Captain Nat an expert at running a woolen mill, so later that year he hired James Scholfield as overseer. Some relatives of Mr. Scholfield were hired, too. But by 1815, Captain Nat had mastered the details of the business, and he promptly asserted his control over the mill by firing Scholfield and his relatives.

Business boomed during the war. But with the return of peace, British woolen goods flooded the domestic market and many woolen mills went out of business. Captain Nat, however, continued to move forward; he boldly switched to flannel production, becoming the first domestic producer of flannel goods. This daring venture paid off quickly. By 1832, he had gathered enough capital to buy out his last partner and change the name of the operation to the Stevens Company. He continued to build up his investments and expand his influence in New England business and social circles. He soon owned stock in a gunpowder factory, banks, insurance companies, mills, railroads, and several water power associations. He also served a term in the Massachusetts legislature.

By 1852, the editors of *The Rich Men of Massachusetts* described him

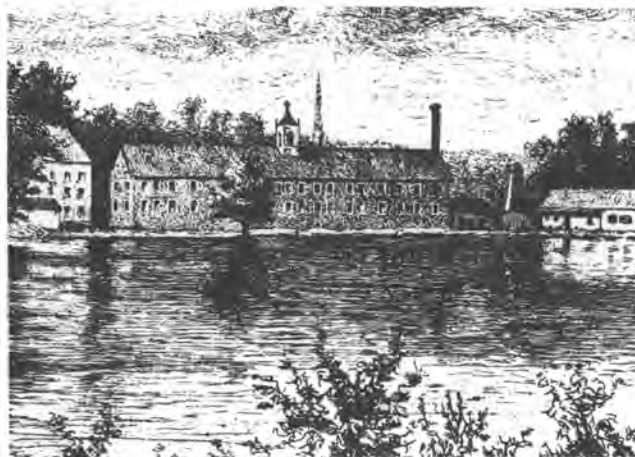
thusly: "Started poor. A remarkable specimen of an energetic character. His perseverance yields to no obstacles." His response to the gentle taunting of Abbot Lawrence, a much respected importer of woolen and flannel goods, dramatizes Captain Nat's determined approach to business. In 1820, Lawrence advised Stevens to close his mill and boasted that overseas manufacturers would always produce goods more cheaply. Stevens replied, "As long as I can get water to turn my wheel, I shall continue to run my mill." Ironically, Lawrence later asked Stevens to join him and other textile leaders in establishing the Merrimack Water Power Association, a lucrative privately-owned enterprise that made possible the development of Lawrence, Massachusetts, as a textile manufacturing center.

As the Stevens company grew in the 1850s, Captain Nat initiated the longstanding tradition of bringing his immediate family into the business. His brothers, George and Horace, became partners as well. But not all the Stevens family entered the business. Nat's eldest sons, Charles and Henry, left Andover to begin businesses of their own after incurring the wrath of their father. Charles had gone on a lengthy and expensive vacation to Europe against his father's will, and Henry had worked for a rival mill in Andover when it undertook a vigorous price war with Captain Nat.

Nat Stevens started another family tradition — expansion. He purchased a second mill, making him the only flannel manufacturer in the United States owning two mills (see box on next page). The Civil War brought so much business that the mills often ran twenty-four hours a day. As busi-

ness prospered, the aging Captain Nat became less and less involved in the company's operations. He died one month before Appomatox, at the age of eighty. He left behind a personal fortune worth over \$400,000 which helped the family survive the glut of textile goods following the end of the Civil War and the resumption of British imports. The future for his heirs looked even rosier after Moses, Captain Nat's son, accidentally discovered an innovative 60/40 blend of wool and cotton. The new product helped the company weather the post-war depression that peaked in 1873. Getting the jump on his competition, Moses also streamlined the marketing of his goods. Traditionally, textile mills marketed their products through a number of selling or commission houses; but in 1867, Moses placed the entire Stevens account (except the old standby, flannel goods) in the hands of Faulkner, Kimball & Co. Pleased with the results, Moses handed over the rest of the account three years later.

The marketing agents of textile goods became increasingly influential in the late 1800s. They had a keen sense of what would sell and could provide credit for the manufacturers they represented. As the commission houses developed into the most powerful part of the business, the Stevens family began asserting its policy of close, personal control in this area. The family enlisted Henry Page, a long-time neighbor and friend, to become a partner in the Faulkner, Kimball firm and to look after the Stevens account. The firm soon became Faulkner, Page & Co., and in 1883, John Peters (J.P.) Stevens, Sr., (Moses' nephew) joined its Boston office.



The first Stevens' mill as it appeared in 1885.



God, Captain Nat and the Haverhill Mill

The Stevens companies have always been tightly controlled by a small group of family members. However, not all members of the family were welcomed into that circle.

A telling example of how money has been more important than blood is the war between the Hales and the Stevenses. Ezekiel Hale, Jr., Nat Stevens' cousin, purchased a woolen mill in Haverhill, Massachusetts, from his father in 1833. There were a number of outstanding debts from the mill's operation but Ezekiel longed to run his own business. After some initial hard times, Ezekiel, Jr., finally made the mill profitable by 1839, whereupon he added his equally ambitious son, Ezekiel James Madison Hale (known as E.J.M.), as a partner.

In 1843, however, with the mill running smoothly and profitably, Ezekiel, Jr., was overwhelmed by the firebrand preachings of Reverend William Miller, who predicted that Jesus Christ would return to earth in glory in December, 1843, and take all saved souls to heaven with him. In preparation for this event, Ezekiel divested himself of his worldly goods; E.J.M. hastened to point out that God would look more favorably upon him if he gave up his ownership of the woolen mill, too. After much meditation, Ezekiel followed "the will of the Lord" and, despite protests from other members of his family, conveyed his interest in the mill to E.J.M. for \$20,000.

By 1845, Ezekiel had lost patience with waiting for the world to end. He wanted his property back. E.J.M. maintained that he had paid a fair

price for the mill and refused to sell it back to his father. Ezekiel took his son to court. Thanks to the testimony of the widely respected Captain Nat Stevens, who insisted the mill was worth over \$30,000 (even though other witnesses refused to value it at over \$20,000), Ezekiel won his case and his interest in the mill.

All was not well, however; hard financial times and the ownership furor had left the mill in severe financial trouble. In 1852, Ezekiel and his partner E.J.M. (the two had resolved their differences) signed a mortgage agreement with Andrew W. Hammond of Andover for \$16,000. Operations continued shakily but steadily until 1854, when Captain Nat secretly purchased the mortgage from Hammond. When Ezekiel could not meet the first payment, Nat immediately foreclosed on the mortgage.

On February 14, 1855, a large group of mill magnates and curiosity seekers gathered outside the mill office to witness the auction sale; besides the Hales, Moses and George Stevens were present. Once the bidding began, Ezekiel and E.J.M., who were determined not to let the mill fall into cousin Nat's hands, watched the Stevens brothers like hawks to see if they would bid for their father. However, Moses and George watched calmly, not once lifting a finger to bid. The auctioneer slowly worked the price up to \$25,000, which was offered by a little-noticed stranger. When no one topped this bid, the auctioneer turned the mill over to the stranger — who turned out to be Captain Nat's trusted foreman. The Hales were outraged. Nathaniel offered to sell the mill back to his cousins at a greatly inflated price. But negotiations soon died as did familial fondness, and the Hales and Stevenses refused to speak to each other for many years.

This rather cunning move was the beginning of the expansion program that built the Stevens family into a modern textile giant. Captain Nat became the first flannel manufacturer to own two mills, giving him the capital to weather the frequent panics of the 1800s and, more importantly, to make a grand killing off the Civil War. Above all, however, the story hints at the Stevens credo: *profits before people* — even before people from their own family.

Shortly thereafter, J.P. Stevens moved to New York and took charge of all the Stevens' mill goods. By 1899, when Henry Page died, the family was no longer satisfied with the services of the selling house. They were also becoming alarmed by strong competition from the conglomerate American Woolen Company. Since J.P. Stevens had acquired enough experience to run his own selling house, the family encouraged him to leave Faulkner, Page & Co. and begin his own business. On August 1, 1899, the day after his son, Robert T. Stevens, was born, he opened a new selling house with twenty-one employees, \$25,000 in capital and two accounts: M.T. Stevens & Sons, and A.D. Gleason, another close family friend and wool manufacturer from Gleasondale, Massachusetts. This was the beginning of J.P. Stevens & Co.

By 1907, when Moses Stevens died, the two branches of the Stevens family controlled six mills and a selling house, which were each incorporated "for the permanency of the business . . . (not) for building up large fortunes by watering the stock." Like his father, Moses Stevens had ably practiced the policy of influence through corporate and political involvements: he was president of Stevens Linen Works; trustee of the Andover Savings Bank and the Merrimack Fire Insurance Co.; director of the National Exchange Bank of Boston; and served terms in the Massachusetts General Court, State Senate, and the US House of Representatives, where as a powerful member of the Ways and Means Committee he was instrumental in passing new wool tariff legislation favorable to the textile industry.

His devotion to the business matched his father's. Once, while traveling by buggy to the Haverhill Mill, Moses ran into a brisk thunderstorm. When his son, Nathaniel, suggested they stop and seek shelter, Moses replied, "Nat, when you are going anywhere on business, never pay any attention to the weather." His success at expanding the family business can be measured by the fact that, until the formation of American Woolen in 1899, M.T. Stevens was the wealthiest and largest woolen manufacturer in America.

He left the company in equally determined hands, but now there were two strong family figures. In Massa-

chusetts, Nathaniel continued to run the New England mills in the family tradition, expanding whenever possible and replacing his father as a leader among New England industrialists. In New York, cousin J.P. Stevens rapidly built up the selling house and became involved in numerous financial institutions and manufacturing associations.

The new conditions did not threaten family unity, however, as biographer Lloyd C. Ferguson notes:

The connection between these concerns was still further cemented by J.P. Stevens' family loyalty. Incorporation in no way diminished family control, and the leaders of the family showed no inclination to join the huge woolen combination that constituted their major competitor.

The real future of the textile industry, however, lay in the South, and J.P. Stevens, Sr., was one of the first to recognize the region's potential need for credit and marketing agents. He criss-crossed the South for twenty years, looking for new cotton mills that would sell cloth through the Stevens commission house and that seemed healthy enough for his own investments. He was aided in this effort by cousin Nat, who established strong contacts with Southern mill men in his own extensive travels. Mr. Nat provided the Southern mills with the capital to expand and in the process garnered new accounts for J.P. Stevens' commission house.

Their investment gave the Stevens family a significant voice in the affairs of the Southern mills; and since the Southern mills had little contact with their buyers, they were dependent on the commission house to tell them what to produce. Stevens simply followed the practice of their competitors: they encouraged the mills to produce at maximum capacity, ensuring a steady flow of substantial commission fees; and they convinced the mill owners to pay off loans before paying dividends, ensuring the safety of the Stevens family investments.

By the end of the 1920s, the changes in the textile industry were apparent. The newer, more efficient Southern mills were outproducing the older New England mills. Although New England mills still had more spindles, Southern mills had sprung up at an astonishing rate, especially after

World War I. Southern businessmen, usually spearheaded by a local group of wealthy investors and aided by a commission house's credit arrangements, would build a mill in a small village and begin attracting an eager workforce from surrounding farms. The local government and power company provided tax incentives and cheap power, and the isolated nature of the towns combined with the depressed local economy and pro-company government to make union organizing all but impossible.

J.P. Stevens, Sr., soon became only one of many Yankees anxious to exploit the region's "textile opportunity." In fact, the first wave of revolt by mill workers in 1929 at places like Elizabethton, Tennessee, and Marion and Gastonia, North Carolina, broke out largely in reaction to the introduction of Northern-style "scientific" management techniques known as the speed-up and stretch-out. But the strikes were violently crushed, and the system of milltown paternalism — like the system of plantation paternalism before it — was forcefully preserved. J.P., Sr.'s investments remained secure; his vision that higher profits could be squeezed from the South proved correct. The final display of his uncanny feel for market conditions came with his death two days before the stock market crash of 1929.

His sons, J.P., Jr., and Robert, were left with control of J.P. Stevens & Co. Throughout the Depression, they carefully expanded both the selling house and their investments in selected Southern mills. By 1939, they had brought the sales volume of the company to \$100 million, putting it among the top five commission companies in the business. The brothers also recognized the importance of having well-managed suppliers who could turn out the right product at the right time. Like other marketing agents, this realization led them to want more control — and outright ownership — of the mills they sold for, not just those run by their cousin Nat.

When World War II erupted, the company was in a good position to take advantage of the tremendously increased need for textiles. J.P. Stevens & Co. funneled lucrative government contracts to the family's New England mills and to those it controlled or represented in the South. Of course, it helped to have Robert

Stevens appointed a colonel in the office of the Quartermaster Corps and serve as deputy director of purchases in charge of federal contracts worth tens of millions of dollars (Stevens was one of the top five textile contractors in the war). In his new position, Colonel Robert also made a number of friends who would help the company for decades to come (see below).

1946: The Crucial Year

The year 1946 proved to be a critical one for the growing Stevens empire. Nathaniel Stevens had run the New England mills quite well, adding four new mills in his forty years of running the company. He also had gained much influence in the New England financial community, serving as president of the Andover Savings bank, a director of the First National Bank of Boston, and a key figure in the American Wool Institute and the National Association of Woolen Manufacturers. But when he died in 1946, no single heir seemed capable of managing the New England mills or settling the huge tax debt on Nat's estate.

At the same time, the Stevenses at the New York commission house needed capital to buy their own chain of Southern mills. They knew the normal postwar burst of consumer spending would mean profits for the textile companies that could integrate manufacturing and merchandising operations, and thereby respond quickly to changes in market demands. One other factor contributed strongly to their interest in moving South. In 1940, the CIO singled out M.T. Stevens & Sons as a focal point in their drive to organize the woolen and worsted industry. The general shortage of workers during World War II helped the campaign move forward swiftly; the Stowe Mill voted in the union in 1940. The Peace Dale and Hockanum Mills followed shortly. Workers in the Stevens mill went for AFL representation in 1943. Finally the Pentucket employees voted in the CIO in 1945. And although the unions had lost elections in the other plants, they persisted in their organizing attempts. Thus, five of the family's

Five Generations of "Mr. Stevens"



Nathaniel (Captain Nat) Stevens
1786-1865



Moses T. Stevens
1825-1907



Horace Stevens
1836-1876



Nathaniel Stevens II
1857-1946



J.P. Stevens, Sr.
1868-1929

Robert (Bob) Stevens
1899 -



Whitney Stevens
1926 -



J.P. Stevens, Jr.
1897-1976

ten New England mills were quickly unionized and the others seemed ready to follow. It is not surprising that J.P., Jr., and Robert were looking South with eager eyes.

So in 1946, the two sides of the Stevens family decided to reunite and join a group of Southern mill owners for one of the biggest textile mergers in history. In a transaction valued at \$50 million, M.T. Stevens & Sons, J.P. Stevens & Co., and eight Southern textile firms (all clients of the Stevens commission house) merged under the name of J.P. Stevens & Co., Inc., with Robert Stevens as chairman and J.P., Jr., as president. The former owners each received stock in the new company

equivalent to their stake in the old firms. In addition, the new company sold stock publicly on the New York Stock Exchange to raise a pool of working capital. When the deal was completed, the Stevens family held 40 percent of the stock — giving them the largest single block of votes in running the company, and thus effective control of a company twice the size of their previous assets. The number of plants directly controlled jumped overnight from ten mills to twenty-eight mills with nineteen of them in the South, largely in the Greenville, South Carolina, area.

Stevens did pay dearly for the financial privileges gained by the merger; they had to swallow their

pride and allow outsiders to own part of the company for the first time since 1832. From two family-owned businesses, they expanded into a public corporation which issued stock traded on the open market. A majority of the new stockholders were Southerners, and many of the old mill owners became officers and/or directors of the new corporation. Of the twenty-three directors named in 1946, more than half were Southerners. However, the Stevens brothers kept the upper hand by having the new directors establish a three-man administrative committee responsible for making vital corporate decisions between the board meetings. This committee consisted of Robert Stevens,

J.P. Stevens, Jr., and William Fraser, treasurer of the predecessor company since the 1920s and virtually an adopted member of the Stevens clan. Even though the Southern directors and officers were given many responsibilities in coordinating manufacturing, the crucial issues of finance and marketing remained in the hands of the Stevens family and their old associates.

The Southern Connection

Among the new group of Southern directors was a collection of men that Stevens had carefully courted for years. Their names read like a Who's Who in Southern textiles. J. E. Surrine and Alester Furman of Greenville, the two men most credited with making that city the hub of the Southern industry, stand out. The aging Surrine, head of the textile engineering firm of J. E. Surrine & Co., sat on the boards of twenty-six mills. He had frequently joined with Furman, an insurance, real estate and investment broker, to recruit the contractors, investors and distributors necessary to open a new mill somewhere in the Southeast. Both men were also directors of banks, railroads, and power companies in the Carolinas, making them key allies for the Stevens move to the South.

William and S. Marshall Beattie, Ramond C. Emery and R. E. Henry, all of Greenville, were other new additions to the new J. P. Stevens board of directors, and they received a total of 47,000 shares of stock in exchange for their interests in five of the eight Southern mill companies absorbed. Norman Cocke, president of the Duke Power Company, was also put on the board, since his company owned the newly acquired Republic Mills. (It was common practice for electric utilities to encourage a mill to locate in their territory by buying some of the mill's stock. Buck Duke made a special habit of this practice and eventually owned parts of mills all over the Carolina piedmont.)

The two Southerners who became most involved in the day-to-day management of the new company were the Carter brothers, Wilbur and Harry, of Greensboro, North Carolina. They received over \$2.5 million in stock for their interest in the Slater-Carter-Stevens chain, and for the next twenty years, they vigorously helped

Black Workers at J.P. Stevens

In the late 1960s, federal government pressure for equal employment opportunity coincided with a tight labor market for white workers. Textile executives hired blacks in unprecedented numbers. Today, poor Southern blacks account for more than twenty percent of the textile work force.

This change in textile employment patterns marks the end of using the threat of black labor as an omnipresent club against white workers. A federal Industrial Commission Report in 1901 found that mill owners viewed blacks as a reserve labor force, to be used "to keep out much of the agitation of labor. The employer must have something to hold over the union organization."

But textile executives still manipulate their self-created culture of white supremacy and anti-unionism to pit white and black workers against each other in an attempt to keep Southern textile workers unorganized.

J.P. Stevens, an experienced practitioner of this divide and conquer policy, wrote a letter in 1974 to employees at one Roanoke Rapids, NC, plant where eighty percent of the workers were white: "A special word to our black employees. It has come repeatedly to our attention that it is among you that the union supporters are making their most intensive drive — that you are being insistently told that the union is the wave of the future for you especially — and that by going into the union in mass, you can dominate it and control it in this plant, and in these Roanoke Rapids plants, as you see fit."

During the organizing drive at Wallace, NC, Stevens put pictures of the San Francisco "Zebra" murder victims along with photos of the black suspects on the company bulletin board. The caption read: "Would you want this to happen here?"

Stevens, along with other textile companies, is guilty of violating the equal employment codes of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance by failing to implement "specific goals

and time-tables for the achievement of full and equal opportunity...that would assure non-discrimination in recruiting, selection, placement, promotion and upgrading."

The United Church of Christ Board for Homeland Ministries, noting Stevens' history of discrimination in their resolution at the company's 1977 annual meeting, said, "Women and Blacks suffer from discrimination in employment practices from the J.P. Stevens company. The Company has been convicted twice for violating the law against employment discrimination, and is fighting the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the courts concerning additional complaints."

Race-baiting and institutionalized discrimination against minority workers are just one aspect of company policy and patterns that earned Stevens the title of "The Nation's Number One Corporate Outlaw."



Stevens acquire new Southern mills. By 1963, the number of plants had nearly doubled to 55, with most of them in the Carolinas. Another key figure in this phase of expansion was John P. Baum, a Georgian and former mill manager whom Robert Stevens had met in the Quartermaster Corps. He joined the company after the war and became the prime mover in transferring Stevens' wool and worsted manufacturing to Dixie.

Throughout the twenty year period following World War II, the Stevens method of expansion (shared by other emerging giants) was two-fold: (1) close down antiquated or unionized shops in the North and bring machinery to new mills in the South; and (2) buy out existing Southern mills to

increase production of a certain product line or to enter a new line. Demand for textile goods was enjoying its longest boom in history, so the object for producers was to control as much productive capacity as possible and to gain as big a share of the market as they could through acquisitions and diversification into new products. In addition to being cheaper than modernizing Northern plants or building new ones from scratch, the two-pronged expansion method allowed Stevens to blame the unions for its exodus from the North and to buy into well-established, pro-textile local power structures in the South.

The rapid shift of woolen and worsted production to the South illustrates the pattern. In 1946, Robert

Stevens sent John P. Baum southwards on a site-hunting junket. Stevens soon bought the Hannah Pickett mill in Rockingham, NC, and converted it to woolen goods production. They also purchased a Navy plant in Milledgeville, Ga., and converted it to woolens, and commissioned Charles Daniel to build a large plant just down the road in Dublin, which was completed in 1949. In each of these locations, the company was cordially greeted by the local leaders. For instance, in Rockingham, they were given a long-term contract for a supply of cheap water.

Once these mills were operating, Stevens could close down its outdated plants in New England. In Rockville, Connecticut, they doubled production quotas for their Hockanum Mill em-

Reaping the Benefits of the Harvest

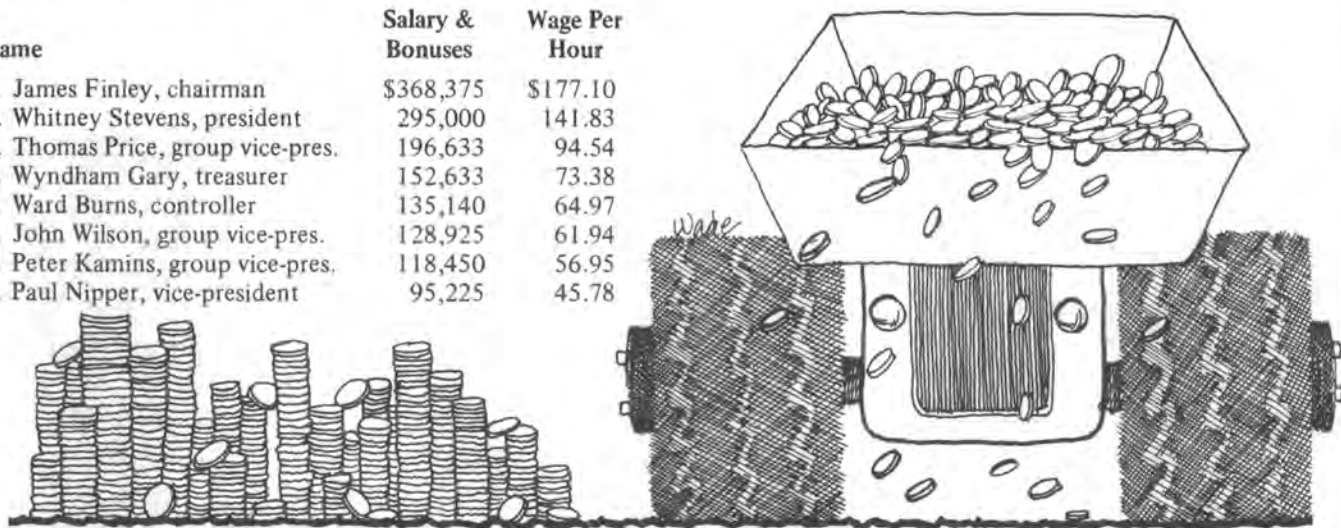
The best example of the attitude of Stevens officials toward money came up at the recent stockholders' meeting. When asked how much the outside directors of the company receive for their services, James Finley replied that the amount was so insignificant that he saw no reason to comment. In fact, these directors are actually on retainer for \$8,000 per year; and they receive about \$2,000 more for attending board meetings, for a total each year of \$10,000 — *more than the average Stevens worker makes in one year.* Hardly an insignificant amount it seems.

Of course, to Mr. Finley it's merely a drop in the bucket. In 1976, Mr. Finley received \$368,375 in salary and bonuses. (This amount does not include his pension benefits or lucrative stock dividends.) If we assume that he works a normal 40-hour week, his hourly wage for 1976 was \$177.10. Quite a lot of money for a man who likes to describe himself as "just a country boy from Georgia." In fact, none of the major officers of the company are hurting for money: the following chart shows just how well they do in comparison to the folks in the plants.

Name	Salary & Bonuses	Wage Per Hour
1. James Finley, chairman	\$368,375	\$177.10
2. Whitney Stevens, president	295,000	141.83
3. Thomas Price, group vice-pres.	196,633	94.54
4. Wyndham Gary, treasurer	152,633	73.38
5. Ward Burns, controller	135,140	64.97
6. John Wilson, group vice-pres.	128,925	61.94
7. Peter Kamins, group vice-pres.	118,450	56.95
8. Paul Nipper, vice-president	95,225	45.78

Altogether, the top 28 directors and officers of the company average \$109,883 per year, an hourly wage of \$52.83. The average Stevens worker receives \$3.65 an hour. Stevens' wage structure makes James Finley seem as valuable to the company as 45 workers.

The pensions for the top officials at Stevens are even more lopsided compared to a worker's. James Finley stands to get upwards of \$90,000 *per year* when he retires. Whitney Stevens will receive a pension in excess of \$100,000. Wage earners receive only \$5 per month for each year they worked. So a devoted worker with 40 years service could draw pension benefits for over 30 years and still not get as much as Finley and Stevens will get in one year. In fact, all the major officers of Stevens will receive over \$50,000 every year once they retire.



ployees, forcing the union to strike to protect their contract. On a visit to the plant, J.P. Stevens, Jr., attempted to justify the stretch-out to the local paper: "That is the situation in the New England mills in general; a man does not produce nearly as much, we believe, as he might and as he could without being asked to make any undue effort."

Ten weeks into the strike, during which Stevens refused to bargain on the disputed issues, Stevens announced they would close the plant. Allen Goldfine, a millionaire mill owner from New York, offered to buy the plant for \$1 million, but he found the company unwilling to sell for any price, despite their promise to the people of Rockville to sell if they received a reasonable offer. He told the *Hartford Times*:

I want to buy the plant but I'm getting the runaround . . . The company will not give me, a prospective buyer, an inventory of the machines and equipment in the plant. They will not even tell me how much insurance there is on the mill — and they say they want to sell it.

Eventually Stevens turned down Goldfine's offer and liquidated the plant, taking most of the mill's machinery to the South and laying off some 1300 New England workers. The company's message that the union had "caused" the closing was passed on to the Southern textile workers.

The New South

The main reason it was cheaper to move South than to modernize and pay workers a decent wage was the pro-industry atmosphere created in the Carolinas by the powerful Southern allies of the Stevens, J. E. Serrine, S. Marshall Beattie, and Alester Furman characterized the first generation of textile pioneers, but a new generation was making itself known, J. P. Stevens consciously placed men from this new breed of Southern textile enthusiasts on its board of directors well into the 1960s.

One example of the new-style leader was Robert Gage, a banker in Chester, South Carolina, chairman of the Aragon-Baldwin Mills when it merged into J. P. Stevens in 1946. He served on Stevens' board of directors from that year to his death in 1968. As a prominent banker, an advisor to several state government agencies and direc-

tor of the Federal Reserve Board, Gage helped make credit available to expand the textile industry. And as chairman of the Public Works Department of Chester, he pushed through a modern water-sewage system that helped the local Stevens plant and that became a model for other communities.

Perhaps the archetype of this new generation of Carolina businessmen was Charles Daniel, founder of the South's largest construction company (until recently) and director of Stevens from 1953 to his death in 1965. His Daniel Construction Company, based in Greenville, built the first three Southern mills Stevens constructed after World War II and remained their most frequently used construction firm. He was personally responsible for convincing several wool processors to locate in South Carolina and got the port of Charleston equipped to import wool — two factors which were vital to Stevens' relocation of their woolen and worsted manufacturing described above. A close friend of Bob Stevens, Roger Milliken and other top industrialists, Daniel energetically recruited national companies to relocate to South Carolina, offering a complete package that included building, railroad siding, access roads, sewage and water hook-ups, employee housing, utilities and tax incentives. More importantly, Daniel and other businessmen engineered the replacement of the agrarian-dominated South Carolina legislature with what *Fortune* magazine called "a government conspicuously friendly to industry." Through their efforts, the legislature enacted a right-to-work law, changed the method of funding public education from county property taxation to a regressive sales tax, eliminated the franchise tax on out-of-state corporations, and exempted from the sales tax all machinery used in processing finished goods — all programs that helped the growing textile giants at the expense of the average citizen and worker.

The creation of a pro-textile South by men like Charles Daniel helped not only Stevens but the entire industry. At the same time, the industry received aid at the national level from Southern congressmen who identified protecting textiles with protecting democracy. For instance, after the first National Labor Relations Board ruling in 1966 that found Stevens

guilty of illegally firing workers for union activity, Congressmen William Jennings Bryan Dorn and Mendel Rivers of South Carolina and William Tuck of Virginia hastened to the floor of the House to condemn this "attack on our free enterprise system." Tuck hinted of darker implications, stating that the Labor Board had "undoubtedly become exposed to the methods employed by Communists." When the union asked the government to cancel Stevens' military contracts because of their labor law violations, House Armed Services Committee chairman Rivers rushed to their defense, sending telegrams to President Johnson and the Department of Defense expressing his disapproval and strongly defending the company. The contracts were never cancelled.

Stevens' influence with Southern legislators also paid off on the local level. A 1975 investigation of Stevens' property tax records in Duplin County, North Carolina, revealed that Stevens had underpaid its taxes by over \$250,000. It was also discovered that their lawyer in Duplin County was David Henderson, US Congressman from the district. As the *Raleigh News and Observer* tactfully stated, "Henderson's moonlighting gave an added gloss of respectability to the undervaluation of the Stevens properties."

By linking itself with both the old and the new of the Southern elite — bankers, industrialists and political leaders — Stevens laid the groundwork for uninterrupted growth. But in the mid-1960s, another dramatic shift began to take place in the industry, a shift as important as the one that had brought J.P. Stevens, Sr., to the South a half century before.

Courting the Wall Street Elite

By the mid-'60s, industry was becoming more dominated by the largest companies, the ones that could command a significant portion of the market in several product lines simultaneously. For Stevens, that meant getting the capital to expand existing lines in consumer goods like sheets and towels, while also purchasing plants that made new lines like hosiery and elastics.

Such huge sums could only come from the biggest Wall Street banks and insurance companies. And rather than sell more stock, which would mean



McCarthy's "Bumbling Target"

The 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings brought a member of the Stevens family — Secretary of the Army Bob Stevens — into the public limelight for the first time since Moses Stevens' terms in the House of Representatives. For thirty-five days, Joe McCarthy subjected Secretary Stevens to insulting questioning and harassment, eventually leaving the public with an image of Stevens as the unjustly persecuted hero. A look at the facts reveals a slightly different picture.

The controversy began when McCarthy severely criticized Brigadier General Ralph Zwicker, a long-time military man and close friend of President Eisenhower, for his handling of the promotion and honorable discharge of Major Irving Peress, who was suspected of being a Communist. After several meetings with the Pentagon, Secretary Stevens, "entirely on his own, without consulting the White House...issued an order forbidding Army officers to appear before the McCarthy committee."

McCarthy responded angrily to Stevens' order. He maintained that Stevens had no authority to issue the order (he was legally correct) and that Stevens was indirectly aiding Communists. Finally, Senate Republican leaders and Vice-President Nixon met with Stevens and McCarthy to discuss how to handle the increasingly embarrassing and politically divisive affair. In the agreement which resulted, Stevens thought he had protected the best interests of the military, but he

was ruefully surprised by the public reaction. The London *Times* observed, "Senator McCarthy achieved today what General Burgoyne and General Cornwallis never could — the surrender of the American army." And another reporter quoted McCarthy saying, "Stevens couldn't have conceded more if he crawled in on his hands and knees."

Stevens had no strong objections to McCarthy's activities before this incident. As Senator Karl Mundt reminded him, "After all, you and Joe are friends. You went to his wedding. You're against Communism and so is Joe." In fact, Stevens had been most cooperative with McCarthy, allowing him to veto several personnel transfers and send his aide, Roy Cohn, to military bases to check for possible Communists. McCarthy's influence on the Army was so strong that *New York Times* military editor Hanson Baldwin wrote, "Whether President Eisenhower realizes it or not, Senator McCarthy is now sharing with him command of the Army."

But McCarthy's public humiliation of the Army outraged Stevens. With Army special counsel John G. Adams, he charged that McCarthy and aide Roy Cohn had pressured the military to grant favorable treatment to Cohn's own aide, G. David Schine, then serving as an Army private. Stevens stated, "The prestige and morale of our armed forces are too important to the security of the nation to be weakened by attacks on our military personnel." At this point, President Eisenhower stepped forward and publicly expressed his support for Stevens.

McCarthy retaliated by charging that Stevens and Adams had tried to halt the hearings on the Peress incident by secretly agreeing to grant favors to Schine and then using these favors to pressure McCarthy into backing off on his military investigations. In effect, he accused the two of blackmail.

Finally, the Permanent Senate Subcommittee on Investigations held hearings on the matter in May of 1954. During these hearings, Stevens had to endure the lengthy questioning from McCarthy. He admitted that he granted favors to Schine but denied that he had used these favors to coerce

McCarthy into dropping his investigation. These favors included allowing Schine to take a special fourteen-day furlough and granting him passes for thirty-four of his sixty-seven days at Fort Dix; Stevens also asked the CIA to give Schine a job.

The entire investigation was a tortuous ordeal for Stevens; he was later referred to as "the decent but bumbling target of Senator McCarthy" by *Time*. On September 1, 1954, the Subcommittee released its findings. McCarthy was strongly reprimanded for acting with Cohn to pressure the Army in the Schine matter. The public notoriety resulting from the hearings, coupled with McCarthy's record, led to his censure by the Senate and the effective removal of his former awesome powers.

Stevens himself was not clearly absolved in the affair, however. The committee found that he and Adams "did try to bring about a termination or deferment of the Fort Monmouth investigations in one backstage maneuver or another." The Republican Majority Report concluded:

We find that the motives of Secretary Stevens, as head of the Army, were beyond reproach, but that he followed a course of placation, appeasement and vacillation throughout the period leading up to this controversy when he should have asserted himself by protesting such action promptly to the committee or by terminating such contacts through administrative action.

In their respective parts in the foregoing, we feel that Secretary Stevens and Mr. Adams failed to exercise their responsibilities appropriately.

The Democratic Minority Report chastised Stevens in even stronger language:

Unwarranted special privileges and preferential treatment were accorded Private Schine. There is no valid excuse for this having occurred. It could not have happened except for the decisions and orders of the Secretary of the Army and special counsel...

He thus demonstrated an inexcusable indecisiveness and lack of sound administrative judgement... This action can and must require of its Secretary of the Army more firmness, strength and courage of judgment than was demonstrated by Secretary Stevens.



Colonel Robert Stevens

bringing in more owners and further decreasing the Stevens family ownership, the company decided to borrow money. In 1965, it got a \$30 million loan from New York's Irving Trust; in 1967, it borrowed \$59 million from Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.

To keep getting that kind of money, Stevens knew it needed more friends on Wall Street. In fact, the Wall Street banks and insurance companies loaning money to Stevens also wanted a "closer relationship" — they wanted their agents sitting on Stevens' board of directors so they could see what was happening to their money. In 1966, a partner in the Wall Street

brokerage firm of Goldman, Sachs & Co., who had put together several multi-million dollar deals for Stevens, was put on the board. Ironically, this man, Sidney J. Weinberg, Jr., filled the vacancy on the board created by the death of Charles Daniel, the man who had helped so greatly in integrating Stevens into the Southern power structure.

Weinberg comes from a family that has long been prominent in the financial and cultural affairs of New York. His father, another partner at Goldman, Sachs & Co., was the financial wizard behind Henry Ford's expansion and the creation of the Ford Founda-

Stevens and Militarism

From the company's inception during the War of 1812 until the present, military contracts have provided its owners a significant source of income. The tight relationship between Stevens and the military has been cemented by the family's involvement in military operations. Even the founder was affectionately known as Captain Nat because he headed the local militia unit in Andover, Massachusetts.

In the twentieth century, the family has escalated its participation in Army affairs. During World War I, Nathaniel Stevens (Captain Nat's grandson) headed the Joint Committee of Wool Manufacturers, which cooperated with the Council of National Defense and federal purchasing agents to ensure orderly production of goods; he was later the manufacturers' representative to the government War Services Committee. Meanwhile, his nephew, Abbot Stevens, served as a captain in the Quartermaster Corps, assigned to overseeing textile purchases in New England. Stevens received a total of \$10 million in military contracts during World War I.

During World War II, Robert Stevens was commissioned a colonel and put in charge of the Army's textile purchasing. The company got over \$50 million in government contracts in these years, and at times, more than 90 percent of its products went to the military. No wonder Horace Stevens once admitted, "It is probable that it (Stevens) took more than its full share of what was offered to the industry."

As Deputy Director of Purchases for the Quartermaster Corps, Robert Stevens also made some important friends. In fact, he recruited a number of fellow officers for the company. Perhaps the most important were John P. Baum, a Georgian who used his Southern contacts as a base for engineering the relocation of Stevens' wool and worsted production to the South, and James D. Finley, another Georgian, who steadily rose through the company's ranks to become Robert Stevens' successor as chief executive officer and chairman of the board in the late 1960s.

Stevens has continued its close relationship with the military to the present day. Throughout the Vietnam buildup, A.W. Anthony, a Stevens vice president, served as the chairman of the Military Fabrics Committee of the American Textile Manufacturers Institute, and received a Patriotic Civilian Service plaque from the Army for his efforts. Also, as a gesture of appreciation for help in supplying clothing and textile goods during the Vietnam War, the Army presented its Defense Supply Agency Special Award to Stevens' Whitmire, South Carolina, mill. The chart indicates that the Pentagon still turns to Stevens for many goods.



FISCAL YEAR	TOTAL SALES	TOTAL SALES TO GOVERNMENT	GOVERNMENT SALES AS A PERCENTAGE OF COMPANY SALES
1966	\$ 854,800,000	\$62,000,000	7.3%
1967	846,000,000	68,000,000	8.0
1968	963,000,000	29,558,000	3.1
1969	1,000,000,000	34,795,000	3.4
1970	892,600,000	10,456,000	1.2
1971	861,100,000	9,652,000	1.1
1972	957,700,000	10,116,000	1.1
1973	1,114,000,000	1,224,000	0.1
1974	1,264,100,000	10,724,000	0.8
1975	1,123,000,000	14,443,000	1.3
TOTAL	\$9,879,600,000	\$236,525,000	2.4%

"Bob Stevens would close even the original North Andover mill if it didn't make a profit. He isn't running any museums."

Indeed, Bob Stevens closed the plant down in 1969.

tion as a way to keep the Ford estate from the government's taxmen and the Ford company in his children's hands. Today, Weinberg is the chairman of Stevens' Audit Committee, overseeing the financial affairs of the company. His firm of Goldman, Sachs & Co. still handles Stevens' major deals with Wall Street investors. He has proved an appropriate person to help make the financial, political and even cultural contacts necessary to transform Stevens from a conservative, family-dominated business to a conservative alliance of family and Wall Street running a billion dollar, international corporation.

During this period, Stevens family members were also extending their connections within key New York financial circles. Robert T. Stevens had long since been a prominent figure in industry, serving as a director of General Electric, New York Telephone, and other major corporations. He also headed the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and later served as a director of Morgan Guaranty Trust. His brother, J.P., Jr., sat on the boards of many major institutions, including the New York Life Insurance Company and Manufacturers Hanover Trust. In the early '70s, Robert's son, Whitney, joined the advisory board of Chemical Bank, and the new president and later chairman of J.P. Stevens, James D. Finley, was added to the board of Manufacturers Hanover Trust and New York Life. It should not be surprising, therefore, that in 1972, Stevens borrowed \$30 million from Morgan Guaranty, Chemical Bank and Manufacturers Hanover — three of the top five banks in the country. *Business Week* described the tight group running the company as "clubby Wall Street types," who remained "aloof" from the public.

The ties continued to get stronger. In 1974, Stevens borrowed another \$18 million from Manufacturers Hanover and \$50 million from three insurance companies, including New York Life. That same year, the chairman of New York Life — R. Manning Brown — replaced Duke Power's D.W. Jones on the board of Stevens. R. Manning Brown was also an influential

director of Morgan Guaranty Trust, an important connection Stevens wanted preserved after Robert T. retired from the bank's board that year. In 1975, another New York financial leader, Virgil Conway, chairman of the prestigious Seaman's Bank of Savings, was added to the board of Stevens. Stevens also brought two top Wall Street veterans into its management: Ward Burns, who had supervised the Rockefeller family's European investment, became controller; and Wyndham Gary, member of a leading corporate law firm, became treasurer.

The crowning proof that a tightly knit club held the reins of the company came in 1976 with the appointment of David M. Mitchell to the board to fill the vacancy left by the death of J.P. Stevens, Jr. Mitchell, the chairman of Avon Products, maker of women's cosmetics, is no stranger to other Stevens' directors. R. Manning Brown is a director of Mitchell's company, and in turn, Mitchell sits on the board of Brown's New York Life, along with Stevens' chairman, James Finley. Mitchell also joins Finley on the board of Manufacturers Hanover Bank. Thus, by bringing Mitchell onto Stevens' board, the company replaced a family member with a man from the equally tight Wall Street family that is anchored by New York Life and Manufacturers Hanover, two of the biggest lenders to Stevens.

No one suggests that Wall Street now totally controls the company. But a transition is clearly apparent. The only remaining Southern board member is Alester G. Furman, III. And, like his grandfather before him, he is so important to Stevens' foothold in the Southern business elite, and particularly in the aristocracy of Greenville (where Stevens has 22 of its 85 plants), that he will likely remain on the board for many years.

Preserving the Family Tradition

The shift to the domination by Wall Street types has been slow, and Bob Stevens has been careful to ensure that

the Stevens family retains the strongest voice in company decision-making. Much more than his late brother, J.P., Jr., Bob Stevens has been responsible for guiding the company since World War II. And he is very aware of the family heritage; as he said when being confirmed as President Eisenhower's Secretary of the Army, "I am steeped in sentiment and tradition with respect to the company that bears my father's name."

He has followed closely the traditions of the Stevenses, reflecting the same drive and determination that have characterized the leaders of the company since the days of Captain Nat. As Bob Stevens once said, "We go to the marketplace and attempt to find out what the public wants. If the public wants straw, we'll weave straw." His aggressive brand of salesmanship often undercuts his sentimentality; as a company executive once noted, "Bob Stevens would close even the North Andover mill (Captain Nat's original mill) if it didn't make a profit; he isn't running any museums." Indeed, Stevens did close the plant in 1969.

He has also consistently adhered to the policy of tight family control over all the operations of the company. This policy has led to the staunch anti-union stance which has brought Stevens into the public limelight. (See "Stevens vs. Justice," *Southern Exposure*, Vol. IV, Nos. 1-2, pp. 38-44.) Just as Captain Nat fired James Scholfield to gain total control of the plant, the present-day Stevens company has fired people who advocated unionization. Bob Stevens maintains that the union is a third party, and that "a third party can serve no useful purpose." He contends that the problem has not resulted from the actions of the company, but from the influence of the union, which has disrupted the "unusually fine relations" the employees have with the company. "Look, we don't feel a union is necessary," Bob Stevens told a reporter. It is this insistence that has led to the company's unfair treatment of its employees (see box) and to its reputation as "the number one labor law violator."

Now in his late seventies, Bob Stevens clearly wishes to pass on the company's control to a group of trusted men who, if not related

by blood, are at least related by philosophy. He has certainly found his personal successor in James Finley, who, despite his Georgia upbringing, is a throwback to the ways of Captain Nat Stevens; as *Business Week* observed, Finley "reflects closely the New England founders' congenial conservatism." Chairman of the Board Finley and Chairman of the Executive Committee Bob Stevens worked closely together to restructure Stevens' corporate organization in the early '70s. Although he officially retired in 1974, after fifty-three years with the company, Bob Stevens is still often seen entering Stevens headquarters to put in a hard day's work.

Another Stevens still figures prominently in the direction of the company: Bob's oldest son, Whitney, the

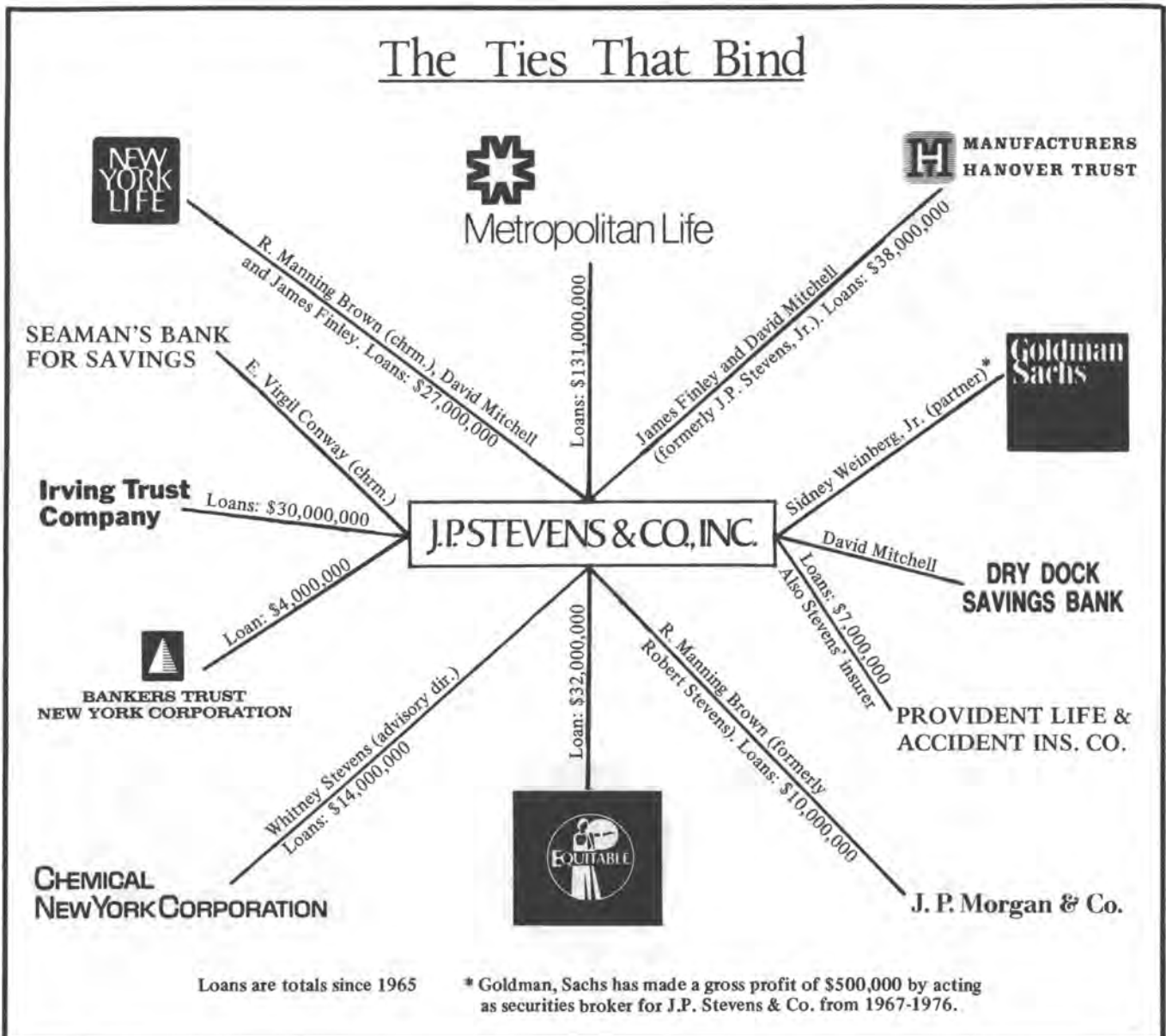
current president. Whitney has followed the family tradition of gaining access to powerful business circles by involving himself heavily in financial institutions and manufacturing associations. Brought up in one of the toughest divisions of the company, woolen manufacturing (Bob Stevens' own love), Whitney seems destined to become the next chairman when Finley reaches retirement age in 1981. It is more than likely that he will provide the same leadership that has characterized the company under James Finley and Bob Stevens. As one company executive stated, "Finley and Whitney Stevens think just like Bob does."

The tight control of Stevens family and friends will likely continue unless there is some protest from the Wall

Street directors. Such an event would not be unprecedented; last year alone, the chief executives of twelve of the top 500 companies in America were fired by their boards of directors because they did not perform well enough. And it was usually the outside directors who initiated the move to change managements.

But the Stevens family has shown an amazing resiliency and strength through 165 years of operation. With powerful family control at the upper echelons of management, and with the family's large block of stock (in 1971 they still owned over 20 percent of the company's stock), the Stevenses are likely to exert a considerable portion of their historic domination over the billion dollar Stevens corporation. □

The Ties That Bind



Dragging Main





Ya gotta have a car, man.
You can't just stand around.

They come to Main Street, as they have for three decades, from the small communities and farms surrounding Burlington, North Carolina. They are the sons and daughters of farmers, mill workers, construction workers, day laborers . . . professions which they will also follow in time.

They say they come to Main Street because it's a great place to pick up dates. More than one Main Street regular met his or her spouse right there under the mercury vapor lights. Some have since divorced, married a second Main Street regular, divorced again and returned to seek a third.

By nine o'clock the street is lined with cars, their occupants sitting cross-legged on the hoods or lounging against the sides. A line of cars creeps slowly along Main Street between Boone's Laundry and the defunct Southern Grill, pausing now and then as someone stops to exchange a few words with one of their friends by the side of the road.

They have time on their hands that has to be passed somewhere. There's nowhere else to go, nothing else to do. The conversation revolves around tickets, beer, cars and the Law. The police had a special squad for a while, just to reduce the traffic on Main. They'd clear the street completely; five minutes later, everyone would be back.

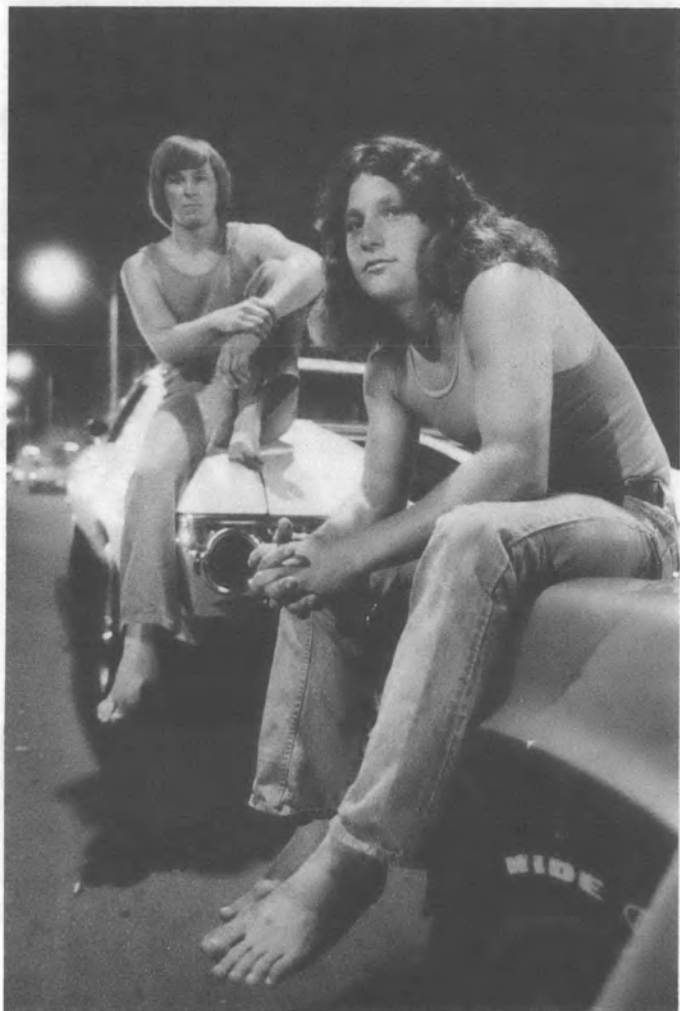
Their cars make it possible for them to form their own community of peers, far removed from their geographic homes. Their cars allow them to just up and leave when they want to, leave their problems and irritations behind and drive towards the brightly lit Main Street. If you don't like the way things are HERE, you can always hop in your car and go THERE.



— David Rolfe

Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel







From 1938 to 1939, over a thousand Southerners told their life stories to writers employed by the Federal Writers' Project (FWP), a New Deal program. They lived in a rural, impoverished and segregated region. For many of them, time was measured less by calendar and clock than by season and task — planting, laying by and harvesting. They worked on farms, in mills, oil fields, coal mines and other people's homes.

Most of the people interviewed were already poor before the Great Depression; after 1929, things only got worse. Their life histories provide a view of the world they saw, experienced and helped create. They tell about growing up, getting married, having children, prospering (or not), getting old. They describe how major events — the Civil War, Emancipation, World War I, the New Deal — affected them. They talk about race relations, family life, sex roles and religious beliefs.

Almost as interesting as the life histories themselves is the story of how they came to be collected. The Federal Writer's Project was a government experiment in work relief and sponsorship of the arts, the product of the needs and hopes of a specific time. As part of the Works Progress Administration, the FWP tried to offer meaningful work to unemployed writers. It centered its efforts on the production of a series of multi-authored

"You reckon folks shore enough want to read about such as us?"

Such As Us

by Tom Terrill and Jerrold Hirsch

state guides. Equally significant were such programs as the recording of ex-slave narratives, some of which were published in *Lay My Burden Down* (1945), and the Southern life history project.

W.T. Couch, regional director of the FWP in the Southeast and director of the University of North Carolina Press, supervised an extensive program for collecting the life histories of common Southerners. He thought and worked in a cultural context in which the South had become an important symbol of the nation's economic problems; he was influenced by Southern intellectual developments such as Agrarianism, and by Northern response to Southern problems. The sudden end of a seemingly endless prosperity had brought new attitudes and programs to the forefront of national attention. Couch's vision of the work the FWP should undertake grew out of his reaction to these currents of thought.

The dominant criticism of American life in the 1920s had focused on the shallowness of middle-class life, the excesses of prosperity and the backwardness of large segments of the population. The South, along with Main Street and Winesburg, Ohio, provided critics with the symbols of much that they found wrong in American life. In the 1930s, the South continued to symbolize the nation's problems. As one historian observed, "The Bible Belt seemed less absurd as a haven for fundamentalism, more challenging as a plague spot of race prejudice, poor schools and hospitals, sharecropping and wasted resources."¹

Much of the writing that made the South in the 1930s a symbol for the Depression focused on the plight of the Southern tenant farmer. More than any other book, Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road* (1932) inaugurated the new interest in Southern

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tenant farmers.* The world he created was inhabited by degenerate, stunted and starving people. Couch found little to admire in Caldwell's *Tobacco Road* or in his volume of impassioned reporting, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937). Moreover, Caldwell's plea for collective action on the part of tenant farmers and for governmental control of cotton farming failed to impress Couch, who remarked:

If tenant farmers are at all like the Jeeter Lesters and Ty Ty Waldens with whom Mr. Caldwell has peopled his South I cannot help wondering what good could come of their collective action. Nor can much be expected from government control if the persons controlled are of the type that Mr. Caldwell has led us to believe now populate the South.²

Like Couch, the Nashville Agrarians were dismayed by Caldwell's portrayal of the South. The Agrarian manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (1930), had rejected industrialism and idealized a simpler agrarian economy. Though Couch objected to Caldwell's gloomy assessment of the region's people, he insisted that "the South must recognize that conditions of the kind Mr. Caldwell describes actually exist in this region, and must do what it can to correct them." He took issue with the Agrarians who, he said, "assert that virtue is derived from the soil, but see no virtue in the Negro and the poor white who are closest to the soil."³

More liberal than the Agrarians and yet no less critical of Caldwell's work, Couch developed an idea of his own for examining Southern conditions. He wanted to give Southerners in all occupations and at all levels of society a chance to speak for themselves. Collecting life histories was one way of doing this.

Couch was convinced of the advantages of life histories over more conventional methods. He thought that Southerners speaking for themselves would demonstrate that Southern life was more complex than easy generalizations had led people to think. In discussion with other FWP officials, he argued against "the possible objection that only sociologists can get case histories that are worth getting. The fact is that when sociologists get such material, they generally treat their subjects as abstractions." He thought fiction was equally inadequate because of its "composite or imaginary character."⁴

Only by permitting individuals to tell their own stories from their own points of view, Couch thought, could the statistical and sociological evidence already gathered be given meaning and

context. What can we learn, he wondered, from knowing that the average sharecropper moved frequently unless we understand what it means to him in the context of his own life? Underlying Couch's emphasis on the worth of material "written from the standpoint of the individual himself" was a strong commitment to democratic values.⁵ There had been, he argued, numerous "books about the South...written from other books, from census reports, from conferences with influential people."⁶ And on the rare occasions "when the people have been consulted they have been approached with questionnaires in hand and with reference to particular problems of one kind or another." This, he thought, was unsatisfactory: "With all our talk about democracy it seems not inappropriate to let the people speak for themselves."⁷

The democratic impetus of the life history program was reflected not only in the voice of the people, which had seldom been heard before, but also in the way the material was gathered. Field workers far removed from the decision-making about the life history program collected the actual materials. In areas like the Southeast where there were few unemployed writers, the FWP employed literate middle-class individuals who were out of work. Themselves victims of the Depression, they were not far removed from the people they wrote about. Most had been born and reared in the South, and some, like Bernice Kelly Harris, wrote histories of people they had known all their lives.⁸

Field workers approached those they did not know in a casual and random manner. Ida Moore remembers choosing "the people to be interviewed more or less by instinct...saying I'd like very much to stop by for a few minutes and talk with them."⁹ This friendly sharing "of a few minutes" between neighbors perhaps explains why, unlike much similar material, these life histories do not seem to have been cajoled from beleaguered and defenseless individuals, unsure of how to cope with people who wished to study them.

The life histories submitted by the field workers often had to be edited by more competent writers on the project. The field workers, however, possessed qualities that more than compensated for their lack of writing skill. William McDaniel, the director of the Tennessee Writers' Project, remarked of one relief worker, "Her greatest attribute is that she is one of the people. She shares their views, religion, and mode of living, and through that gets into her stories the essence of their community life."¹⁰

Relying on their personal, and occasionally eccentric, understanding of what was required, field workers went about their task, picking their own subjects for their own reasons, and often

*See Bob Brinkmeyer's retrospective appraisal of Erskine Caldwell in the book review section.

taking great liberties in following the suggested interview outlines. This meant that the life histories collected constituted a skewed sample of Southern life. Middle-class individuals, for instance, were under-represented. It also meant that the life history collection represented not a single vision of who and what was significant in the South, but a collective one.

In 1939, thirty-five of these life histories were published in the critically acclaimed *These Are Our Lives*, edited by W.T. Couch. Plans to issue more volumes were abandoned when rising opposition to the New Deal forced the FWP to curtail its most innovative projects. In the spring of 1978, the University of North Carolina Press will publish more of these life histories in Hirsch and Terrill's *Such As Us*. From the perspective gained with the passage of forty years, these stories can now be read as vivid chapters in the social history of the South, reaching as far back as slavery times and as far forward as the eve of World War II.

The following excerpts are from three of the FWP life histories, and are included in *Such As Us*. The editors have changed the names of the people mentioned in the life histories to protect their privacy, but left the names of the original interviewers, where known. □

Photo courtesy of the Southern Historical Collection.



"I Was a High-Minded Young Nigger"

1939, Charlie Holcomb, Johnston County, North Carolina. Interviewer unknown.

Original title, "Tech 'Er Off, Charlie," from "People in Tobacco," an unpublished manuscript edited and partly written by Leonard Rapport. A copy of "People in Tobacco," is located in the Work Progress Administration Papers in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.

1. Dixon Wecter, *The Age of the Great Depression, 1929-1941* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1948), pp. 159-60.
2. W.T. Couch, "Landlord and Tenant," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 14(1938): 309-12.
3. Couch, "Landlord and Tenant," p. 312; W. T. Couch, "The Agrarian Romance," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 36 (1937): 429.
4. [Couch] to [?], "Memorandum Concerning Proposed Plans for Work for the Federal Writers' Project in the South," 11 July 1938, Federal Writers' Project, Papers of the Regional Director, William Terry Couch (hereafter cited as FWP-Couch Papers), Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library at Chapel Hill, NC.
5. Federal Writers' Project, *These Are Our Lives*, p. x.
6. Couch to Douglas Southall Freeman, 25 March 1939, FWP-Couch Papers.
7. Federal Writers' Project, *These Are Our Lives*, pp. x-xi.
8. Bernice Kelly Harris, *Southern Savory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), pp. 181-205, offers an informative account of one project worker's experience and what it meant to her.
9. Mrs. Ida Cooley (formerly Ida Moore) to Jerrold Hirsch, no date.
10. Letter, McDaniel to Couch, January 20, 1939, FWP-Couch Papers.

NOTE – Southern Exposure does not normally publish interviews in heavy dialect. However, in the 1930s, interviewers worked without the benefit of tape recorders, and we thought that we must adhere to a faithful reproduction of the writer's transcription. Perhaps we may learn as much about the writers as their subjects.

"We has always been tenement farmers and my pappy before me was a tenement farmer. Used to be, when I was a young man, I thought I could manage my business better and dat I was gonna be able to own a place o' my own someday, but day was always sumpthin come a long and knocked de props from under my plans. My 'baccer was either et up by de worms, or it was de rust or de blight, or poor prices – always sumpthin to keep me from makin' dat little pot I planned on. And den time de lan'lord had took his share and de cost o' de fertilizer and de 'vancements he had made, dey wan't but jist enough to carry on till de nex' crop.

"But Lawdie Lawd, dat was back when I was a high-minded young nigger and was full of git-up-and-git. Day wan't nothin' in de world dat I didn't think I could do, and I didn't have no patience wid niggers what didn't look for nothin' but sundown and pay day.

"...My gran'pappy lived wid us too, but he wasn't able to do much work. He had de miseries in his back and walked wid a stick. But he was right handy 'bout things like sloppin' de hogs and feedin' de chickens. I was his pet chile, too, and he holp me out a lot in de little things a chile has to learn growin' up. I was a frail chile and wan't able to work in de fields like most chillun. And gran'pappy looked out for me. When dey was

wormin' and toppin' to be done, he would take me to dig bait for him, and den we would go to de crick and ketch a mess o' catfish. He used to do a heap o' thinkin' while we was sottin' dar fishin'.

"I 'member once he caught a big, fat catfish and jist played wid him for a long time. He pointed to de fish and tol' me to watch him. Den he lifted de fish outen de water and dat fish kicked and thrashed sumptin turrible. Den he lowered de line and let de fish back in de water. When he did dat de fish jist swum around as easy as you please. Den gran' pappy pulled de fish out on de bank and we watched him thrash around til he died. When de fish was dead gran'pappy turned to me. 'Son,' he said, 'a catfish is a lot like a nigger. As long as he is in his mudhole, he is all right, but when he gits out he is in for a passel o' trouble. You 'member dat, and you won't have no trouble wid folks when you grows up.' But I was jist a kid den, and I couldn't make much out of it. I let dat plumb slip my mind, and later on it shore caused me a heap o' grief.

"...One time atter I had sold all my 'baccer and de lan'lord took his share and de fertilizer money and de 'vancements out, it looked to me like I was gonna have a little left for myself. Den de warehouse man called me back and tol' me he had figgered wrong and dat I owed some more warehouse charges. I knowed it wan't right, and it made me so mad I jist hit him in de face as hard as I could. Den I kinda went crazy and might nigh beat him to death. I got twelve months on de roads for dat, and all de time I was away from home Dillie and de chillun had to try to make another crop, but 'course day couldn't do so good by dayselves and Mr. Crawford, dat's de lan'lord, had to carry 'em over. Hit took me three years to git him paid back.

"By dat time I knowed it wan't no use for me to try to overmake anything but jist a livin'. I was 'termined my oldest chile was gonna hab a chance in dis world, and I sent him all de way through high school. Willie was a mighty good boy and worked hard when he was at home.

"Atter he got outta high school he tol' me dat a man wid jist a high school eddycation couldn't git nowhere and dat he wanted to go to college. Me and Dillie talked it ober and we didn't see how we was a-gonna do it, but we let him go to de A & T College. Will worked mighty hard and made good grades and worked out most o' his way. In de summer he would come home and he'p wid de 'baccer and we made some mighty good crops. Willie would take de 'baccer to market and go over de accounts, and he was pretty sharp and always come home wid money in his pocket.

"De last year Willie was in school he started gittin' fretful and sayin' dere wan't no future for

a nigger in de 'baccer business, and dat he didn't want to come back to de farm. Dat hurt me, 'cause I had counted on Willie helpin' me, but I wanted him to do what he thought was best.

"When he graduated he was one o' de brightest boys in de class, but dat was when de trouble started. Willie knowed he had a good eddycation and didn't want to waste his time on no small job. But he couldn't find nothin' to do and he finally come home and started settin' around and drinkin' and gittin' mean. I didn't know what was de matter wid him, and tried to reason wid him, but he wouldn't talk no sense wid me.

"Dat fall he took a load o' 'baccer to de warehouse, and when he come back he was all mad and sullen and I knowed he had been drinkin' again. All dat night he drunk and cussed sumptin turrible, and de nex' mornin' his eyes was all bloodshot and mean-lookin', and he had me scared. He said he was gonna take another load o' 'baccer to de warehouse, and I didn't want him to go, but he went anyway.

"Long 'bout dinnertime one o' de neighbors come a-runnin wid his eyes bulgin' clean out on his cheeks. He said dere had been a fight at de house and dat Willie had been hurt.

"I got on my ol' grey mule and rode into town as fast as I could. When I got to de warehouse I seen a bunch o' men standin' around and den I seen my Willie layin' on de ground and a great puddle o' blood around his head. I knowed he was dead de minute I seed him. For a while I didn't know what to do. I looked around at de crowd and dey wan't a friendly face nowhar. Right den I knowed dey wan't no use to ax for no he'p and dat I was jist a pore nigger in trouble. I picked my Willie up in my arms and saw his head was all bashed in. Dey was tears runnin' down my checks and droppin' on his face and I couldn't he'p it. I found de wagon he had driv' inter town and laid him in dat. Den I tried my ol' mule on behind and driv' home. I never did ax nobody 'bout what happened to de 'baccer he took in.

"When I got home I washed Willie's head and dressed him in his best suit. Den I went out to let Dillie hab her cry. We buried him at de foot o' dat big pine at de left o' de well, and made some grass to grow on de grave. Dat's de mound you was lookin' at as you come up to de house.

"For a long time atter dat I couldn't seem to git goin', and dey was a big chunk in de bottom o' my stumik dat jist wouldn't go away. I would go out at night and set under de pine by Willie's grave, and listen to de win' swishin' in de needles, and I'd do a lot o' thinkin'.

"I knowed Willie had got killed 'cause he'd been in a argiment wid somebody at de warehouse. Den I got to thinkin' 'bout what gran'pappy said 'bout

de catfish, and I knowed dat was de trouble wid Willie. He has stepped outen his place when he got dat eddycation. If I'd kept him here on de farm he would a-been all right. Niggers has got to l'arn dat dey ain't like white folks, and never will be, and no amount o' eddycation can make 'em be, and dat when day gits outen dere place dere is gonna be trouble.

"Lots o' times dere is young bucks dat gits fretful wid the way things is, and wants to cut and change, and when dey comes talkin' around me I jist takes em' out and shows 'em Willie's grave."

"And I can stretch that ten dollars out
for the three of us."

1938, Lola Simmons, Knoxville, Tennessee. Life History by Dean Newman, Jenette Edwards, James Aswell, FWP writers.

Original title, "Green Fields Far Away," located in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina library, Chapel Hill.

"Calvin and me come from the mountains, for Calvin knowed he could make a living in some way or another about town doing odd jobs. So we left the farm. We fared on down to Knoxville. Our times has not been easy here. But then times has always been hard with us. We was both born poor. Lived poor all our lives. All in all, though, it's a lots easier making out here than it was back there on the farm. We ain't never had to ask a penny off of no one. Never asked the government to put us on relief, neither.

"...This place here we live in, it's not any great shakes of a place. But we're going to stay on as long as we can. Every time we've moved from here to somewheres on the edge of town, Calvin's lost work. Here he's in close-catch of town folks that wants a job done right off. The biggest trouble about living in a basement like this is they's not any room for spreading. Well, three rooms is enough for me and Calvin and Cap, even if they's not big rooms. This here sitting room is space enough to hold the parlor furniture and Cap's bed. Cap's just only fifteen but he's near outgrewed that bed back yonder. He has to lay catercorners of it now. Ought to be some way Calvin could stretch it out, seems to me. I don't see no way we could put a double bed in that space even if we had cash to buy it – which we ain't.

"Me and Calvin takes the back room. They's no grate in it, but some heat comes from the kitchen. That kitchen has a sink with running water, and that's the closest we ever come to having a bath-



photo by Marion Post

room. Well-a-day, not having such means less to us than most. Coming from the mountains, we is use to a wash pan and a tub for cleaning up. We has a half-way sort of a little water privy in the kitchen closet, but it don't flush right. I can tell you, though, it beats trotting out in the back yard in the weather.

"The last of the three rooms we has is damp and cold without you keep a fire going all the time. And we can't do that. The basement's about all that's brick about the whole house. That's the reason our rooms stays that way. The house up above us is in awful shape. The roof leaks. It lets the water all over the kitchen floor. I just reach the broom out. I keep sweeping it to the back door. The walls stay so wet half the time that wallpaper just pops off everywhere.

"...I guess we can't expect just a whole lot for the rent we pay. The landlord never misses coming a Monday for our two-fifty. But fixing things up is another tale and it's never told. He won't do a blessed thing about this wetness and it matters not how much we howl. Tells us now that the government is planning to tear down every house in the block and put up some sort that ain't tenements. Well, 'twon't be no trouble to tear down. Just give a push, and not such a hard one either, and the last one of these houses will come down and never a wrecking tool needed to help out.

And the neighborhood is worse and far worse than the houses. Oh, I know it's no place to bring a youngin up at all. I thank the Lord that me and

Calvin has got but only the one, and that's Cap. We can manage him all right with both of us studying on it. Most of the families in this block has from six all the way to ten youngins, and all sizes. Seems like about half of the mothers is sick. They just let the youngins run around as filthy as cow-dab. I tell you, most of these youngins learn to cuss and swear and take the Lord's name in vain when they's buggers of five years old and less. They start fighting amongst one another. Before long the ma's and pa's take sides. It ends in a cutting scrape or one or the other taking their leave of the street. Me and Calvin stays clear of it all.

Calvin and me both can read right well. In times back, we used to read the Bible pretty much. But seems like you always come across something you can't make out straight. So we just stopped.

"...Calvin gits plenty of work here in Knoxville. He works cheap and that's the reason, I guess. He's not what you'd call a skilled worker. But he can do as good work as the best of them, I don't care what name you call them by.

"They's more folks here in Knoxville that wants cheap repairing than any other kind. The rich folks is the same way. Calvin knows where he can git supplies cheap. He can take a contract lower than most and still come out on top. If he could just go straight from one job to the next, why I bet he'd make close to twenty dollars a week. Like things is now, he makes about ten. He loses money looking for jobs and figgering on gitting things in shape to git the contract. Old customers has always stuck to him. But things ain't going to keep dropping to pieces about the same folks' house if they's fixed right. And Calvin always fixes them right. Sort of cuts his own throat, but he does it.

"I do all the washing and ironing and cleaning and cooking. And I can stretch that ten dollars out for the three of us. Rent and coal and kindling and food eats up about seven of it. That leaves three for other things and the clothes we wear. It don't take no more than fifty cents a day to feed the three of us. We's country folks. Glad to git corn bread and beans and potatoes and greens. I've heard some doctors say you could live on corn bread and vegetables without meat. I doubt it. Not and be hardy. I try to git meat for us at least twice a week. Fix an egg for us at breakfast. I pay a nickel a day for a pint of milk for Cap. I know he ought to have it,

a growing boy like he is. We never had to spend a red cent on doctors' bills for no one of us. Not even when Cap come. It didn't cost me nothing because the midwife was a friend of mine. She wouldn't hear of me paying her for helping me through.

"Me and Calvin wasn't only thinking about easy going for our own selves when we come to Knoxville. We knowed Cap would have a better chance at schooling here. And do you know what? That boy ain't turned sixteen yet and here he wants to quit school and go to work. Some ways I don't blame him. As hard as we work it looks like it just never is anything left over for us to throw to him to spend for fun. And they ain't a soul lives around here I care for him to run with. Well both me and Calvin carries burial insurance. It'll git us out of his way without cost if anything happens to us. I don't see no sense in paying out for that on Cap yet. He's not going to die no time soon. If he's going to start out for hisself, I want him to have some sort of a good job. He can have every penny he makes for hisself, too, I don't belief in milking your children.

"I told him it's got to be some good straight job. Some boys git it in their heads that they can make a sight of money selling liquor. The law cracks down on them almost as soon as they git a start. We see it happen every day around here. You've got to keep the law paid off a good and plenty or else the penitentiary is where they's going to land. Now if they does pay off, where is the profit left from selling? Ain't none. So there they is. I told Cap if he had it in his head to do that, he better be clearing his head of it right now.

"I don't blame him one bit for having his mind set on making a little money to have fun on. Seems like me and Calvin ain't never done a thing ever but work hard all our lives. Some folks find pleasure in going to meeting on Sunday. But it's no church I've had sight of here in Knoxville where the ones coming in and out ain't dressed up fit to kill. Some says it's all the same in the eyes of the Lord about how you dress. But I knows if He's got sense at all, he knows our clothes is too wore out for Sunday strutting. I know they's shabby in my own sight.

"Calvin and me both can read right well. In times back we use to read the Bible pretty much. But seems like you always come across something you can't make out straight. So we just stopped reading it. Looked a pure shame, as wore out as we was to read things that upset your head.

"I guess I got on to the main of it, though. I know that Jesus Christ died to save sinners. And all that me and Calvin have to do is trust in Him. And we do. And we believe on Him. I don't see where they's any way to keep me and Calvin out of Heaven."

Vote Early, Vote Often, and Vote the Dead

A Note on Reconstruction

In 1877, Wade Hampton succeeded Daniel Chamberlain as governor of South Carolina. Political Reconstruction thereby ended and white supremacy was restored. That December, Governor Hampton told the Democratic state legislature, "We should reverently give thanks to Him who alone has wrought this great deliverance."¹ But, as Hampton knew, God had help.

All along, people have known that in 1876 South Carolina politics was dirty politics.² Seldom, however, were any white South Carolinians willing to detail the machinations behind their victory. But in 1938, Eloise Davis Ruff, then seventy-eight, told a Federal Writers' Project worker how local whites regained political power in Fairfield County, a midlands South Carolina county where blacks outnumbered whites by more than two-to-one in 1860, a ratio that persisted during most of the nineteenth century.³

Virtually all the Fairfield whites told the census taker in 1860 that they were planters, and they seemed to think that their prosperity would continue uninterrupted. But after the Civil War and Reconstruction, Fairfield whites, like others, were out of office, economically depressed, surrounded by what they perceived to be a black sea, and they became involved in the larger struggle to restore their own political power, a process they called "Redemption."

Mrs. Ruff was one of "the better sort" in Fairfield County. Her family had long been there, and her father was a substantial planter. Her two brothers were active in business, newspapers and Democratic politics — R. Means Davis was one of the most distinguished members of the faculty at the University of South Carolina, and James Quinten Davis, a banker, used

his skills to good effect in the state elections. She herself had married W. H. Ruff, a very successful merchant, and as his fortunes rose, so did her social position. Eventually, the social matriarch of Ridgeway, Mrs. Ruff became vice-chairman of the Fairfield Department of Public Welfare and wrote a social column for the local newspaper.⁴

In 1938, she talked easily and clearly about the past with a Federal Writers' Project interviewer-writer, W.W. Dixon, who also lived in Fairfield. When asked, "What elected Wade Hampton in 1876?" Mrs. Ruff itemized the way it happened:

1. *The organization of Democratic clubs, and the red shirts worn by these members on all public occasions.*

2. *The grandeur of these clubs on horseback in military formation gave heart and thrill and hope of success to white people, while it carried fear to the Negroes and low-down white men, their leaders.*

3. *Sympathy and enthusiasm of the white women — their willingness to endure hardships and make sacrifices for the cause of white supremacy.*

4. *Multiplication of votes by white individuals; for instance, there were nine men at home who first voted ten tickets each at Ridgeway, then to Jenkinsville and voted the same number of tickets. From there, they went on to Feasterville and voted ten tickets each, again.*

5. *Many votes by minors.*

6. *Voting dead people, their names secured from the local graveyards.*

7. *By election managers arranging the tally sheets at the precincts to correspond to the number of votes. My brother James was an expert at all such manipulations, and I am sure God has forgiven him for all such chicanery, with the purpose we all had in view.*

8. *General Hampton's tour of the State, escorted to the speaking points by local committeemen and large*

numbers of men and boys in red shirts.

9. *The greetings of young girls who strewed his path with flowers, and the bands of music that were a part [sic] feature of all the public occasions.*

10. *The purchase of a few hundred Negro votes.*

South Carolina whites used intimidation, violence and fraud to secure Hampton's election in 1876 and to end the Radical state government, and glorified their success as the "ousting of the carpetbagger," condoning most, if not all, of the means used to accomplish that end. Some whites found that multiple voting in 1876 even enhanced their social standing; not a few may have voted more in the events as they retold them than they actually did in 1876. And as Mrs. Ruff indicated, white South Carolinians justified their "chicanery" then, and for many years thereafter, as proof of their loyalty to the noble cause of white supremacy, "the end we all had in view."

FOOTNOTES

1. *Newberry [S.C.] Herald*, Dec. 5 1877.

2. John S. Reynolds, *Reconstruction in South Carolina, 1865-1877* (Columbia: The State Co., 1905), 344-397; Alruthus Ambush Taylor, *The Negro in South Carolina During the Reconstruction* (Washington: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1924), 233-250; Henry T. Thompson, *Ousting the Carpet-bagger from South Carolina* (Columbia: R.L. Bryan Co., 1926), 110-134; Francis Simkins and Robert Woody, *South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1932), 474-514; Alfred B. Williams, *Hampton and His Red Shirts: South Carolina's Deliverance in 1876* (Charleston: Walker, Evans & Cogswell Co., 1935); Joel Williamson, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1965), 411.

3. Julian Stevenson Bolick, *A Fairfield Sketchbook* (Clinton, S.C.: Jacobs Brothers, 1963).

4. Fitz Hugh McMaster, *History of Fairfield County, South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C.: The State Commercial Printing Co., 1946), 27-28.

“King Cotton” The Federal Theatre Project

introduction by John O'Connor

In the late 1930s, Hallie Flanagan, the national director of the Federal Theatre Project declared, “Shakespeare and circuses, musical comedy and modern satire, theatres for children and youth, dance theatres, living newspapers; marionette theatres, vaudeville and variety, classical theatres made vibrant for modern youth, radio, theatre of the air – all of these are in the province of a living theatre sponsored by the government of the US.” Although others – especially some Congressmen – did not share her vision, for four years (1935 - 39) the Federal Theatre Project became a national “people’s” theatre, as it fulfilled its primary task of providing jobs for unemployed theatre professionals.

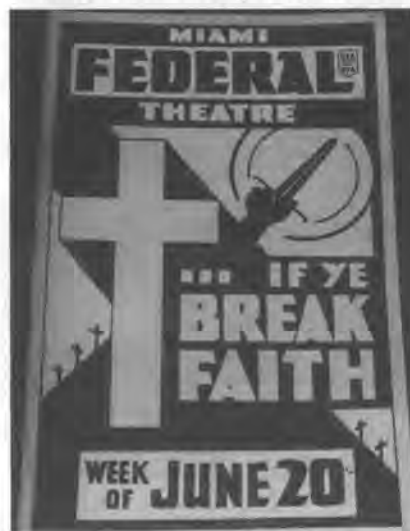
The most visible and controversial of the five WPA Arts Projects (the others covered music, art, writing, and historical records), the Federal Theatre Project produced over 900 full-length plays and employed over 12,000 theatre personnel. Many of the people it employed were performers, like vaudevillians, who knew a skill that was no longer in demand; others were young people just getting a start in their chosen profession. People like playwrights Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams (in New Orleans), producer John Houseman, directors

Joseph Losey and Orson Welles, set designers Howard Bay and Ben Edwards (from Alabama), lighting geniuses Abe Feder and George Izenour, composers Lehman Engel, Virgil Thomson, and Alex North, and actors Will Geer, E. G. Marshall, Arlene Francis, Joseph Cotten, and John Huston all established their reputations, in large part, through jobs with the Federal Theatre.

The FTP also created new theatres and audiences, and significantly advanced American stagecraft. The out-

door theatre in Manteo, North Carolina, was built with WPA funds, and Paul Green’s *The Lost Colony*, which is still produced at Manteo every summer, began with Federal Theatre actors. The Project also brought into the theatre groups that had always been on the outside. Black units were established from Birmingham to Seattle, giving black writers, artists, actors, and directors the opportunity to step beyond the stereotyped roles which had usually been assigned to them in the past. Although black and white units normally did not mix, and each group usually produced its own plays, budget and personnel cuts and casting demands of particular plays did bring some of the units together. Ethnic communities across the country enjoyed Federal Theatre productions in their native tongues, from Yiddish in New York to Spanish in Tampa. The FTP also produced new plays for children, the audiences of the future. Marionettes for both adults and children were a FTP favorite, and special units were established in Miami, Jacksonville, Durham, Goldsboro, Oklahoma City and Dallas.

The Federal Theatre was organized by geographic regions to give local units more autonomy and to encourage the production of regional theatre. Theoretically, wherever ten unem-



Poster Announcing FTP Play



ployed theatre professionals were located, a unit could be organized. But from its inception, administrative reorganizations and budget cuts forced the FTP to consolidate. For example, the Florida Project started with twenty-two units in 1935; within a year it was eleven, then seven, then finally three. The Southern region began with units in North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. These groups ranged from the Carolina Playmakers, associated with the University of North Carolina and specializing in folk drama, to the old stock companies of New Orleans and Atlanta, to radio performers of Oklahoma City.

Most of the productions of these units were the old, safe fare that stock companies and vaudeville troupes had staged for years. Some of the units toured the surrounding countryside, bringing theatre to many people who had never seen it before. The North Carolina players alone performed regularly in over half a dozen cities. The Jacksonville unit developed a "history of drama" series which was staged in high schools throughout northern Florida.

Occasionally the Southern units responded to particular community issues or to Hallie Flanagan's plea that "the theatre must be conscious of the

implications of the changing social order." When the Federal Theatre organized twenty-two simultaneous openings across the nation of *It Can't Happen Here*, a dramatization of Sinclair Lewis' novel about the rise of Fascism in America, Birmingham, Miami, and Tampa were among those cities which mounted productions. Another topical play, *If Ye Break Faith* by Maria Coxie, premiered in Miami and was later produced in Jacksonville and New Orleans. And an anti-war play, in which the six unknown soldiers from Europe and America return to try vainly to convince others about the waste and uselessness of war, was well received in the same three cities. The New Orleans *States* described it as the "most difficult and most impressive offering the Federal Theatre has had before the public."

But for the most part, the Southern units seemed reluctant to stage plays about their own region and history. In fact, New York City produced more plays about the South — from the biographical *Jefferson Davis* to the melodramatic *Big Blow* (about a Florida hurricane) — than all of the Southern companies combined. Productions considered controversial in the North were simply too volatile for audiences in the South. Consequently, plays on topics like tenant farming,

such as Conrad Seiler's *Sweet Land*, or J.A. Smith and Peter Morell's *Turpentine*, were only performed in the North. And even there they still managed to provoke the wrath of the Southern establishment. In fact, a Savannah weekly, *Naval Stores Review and Journal of Trade*, labeled the New York production of *Turpentine* "a malicious libel on the naval stores industry of the South," and suggested that "Southern Congressmen could properly protest...the play's author's hope to better conditions in the Florida camps." And two years later, when the FTP was struggling to get refunded, protest they did.

There were, of course, important exceptions. The New Orleans unit staged Gladys Ungar and Walter Armitage's *African Vineyard*, the only effort by a white company to confront the race issue. In that play, the setting was South Africa, the conflict between the English and Dutch attitudes towards life, land and blacks; it was left to Southern audiences to draw the inevitable parallels themselves.

In Birmingham, a black company also mounted major productions concerned with racial matters. M. W. Morrison's *Great Day* was sweeping in its scope, and covered the history of the Negro from 4500 B.C. to the present. With their production of *Swamp Mud*, by Harold Courlander, a play about a black man's futile attempt to escape from a chain gang, they caught the attention of the white press; the *Birmingham Weekly* found the lead actor, Russel Veal, "so effective, his every emotion, his every outcry of pain and distress seemed to be your own." But such efforts were ultimately too costly for Southern-based companies. The Birmingham unit lost its funding within a year, during the first round of budget cuts; and most companies in the region, unwilling to jeopardize their continued survival, offered more traditional, hence safer, dramatic fare.

Such conservatism was not due to lack of support from the Project's Washington-based directors who encouraged various Southern units to produce factual dramas about their

John O'Connor is on the staff of the Research Center for the Federal Theatre Project at George Mason Univ. in Fairfax, Va., which has the nation's largest collection of FTP material. Photo above is from Triple-A Plowed Under.

region. According to Hallie Flanagan, the South offered "rich dramatic material in the variety of peoples, the historical development, the contrasts between a rural civilization and a growing industrialization." And John McGee, who had been head of the Federal Theatre in the South, was convinced that it would make an ideal subject for a "living newspaper," a new dramatic form created by the FTP. The living newspaper was actually a documentary with a clear editorial slant that informed the audience of the size, nature, and origin of a social problem, then called for specific action to solve it. Projections, masks, spotlights, loudspeakers, ramps, and characters in the audience were some of the devices used to bring the facts to the audience in unforgettable fashion.

The New York living newspaper unit had, in fact, researched and drafted a factual drama titled *The South*. But the play's controversial subjects, which included tenant farming, organized labor, the anti-lynch law, the TVA, Huey Long, and Angelo Herndon, promised to be too offensive to the powerful Southern block of Congressmen and state WPA officials. The drama never made it to the stage. Some of the ideas in this draft were adapted to later living newspapers. The

problems of tenant-farming and farming in general were exposed in *Triple-A Plowed Under*. The Huey Long and Angelo Herndon scenes were included in 1935, a review of that year's events, and TVA became the focus of the second act of *Power*, a play about public ownership of utilities. None of these living newspapers ever played in the South, however, despite their focus on Southern issues and events.

A living newspaper had been planned on the growth of Southern steel mills, but it ended up as a fictionalized social drama, *Altars of Steel*, by Southerner Thomas Hall-Rogers. It dramatized the effects of absentee ownership, labor organizing, and ruthless price cutting. In the play a small, Southern mill is bought by United Steel, and immediately both labor and capital seek unfair advantage over each other. The two major characters — the former mill owner and a labor organizer — die during a riot at the plant, and nineteen workers perish in an open-hearth explosion. The play caused a tremendous controversy in Atlanta where it opened, possibly because the author was so evenhanded in his depiction of the conflict. Columnists used the play as a focal point in blaming or praising general changes in society. The Atlanta *Georgian* summarized the debate, which con-

tinued throughout the week-long run of the play: "The memory which should linger is...the need of economic freedom for the South and its development of its own teeming resources."

Another attempt at a Southern living newspaper was *King Cotton*, written by Betty Smith with the assistance of three other writers/researchers: Robert Finch (her husband), William Perry and Clemon White. Smith was part of the Frederick Koch — Paul Green circle of dramatists at the University of North Carolina, and much of the play reflects their interest in tragic folk drama. Thus, the problem of a one-crop economy is seen primarily in human terms. The factual material on the condition of the sharecropping system is interspersed with dramatic moments in the life of one family, the Britts.

Like the other WPA living newspapers, *King Cotton* is heavily documented with much of the material — the case histories and statistics — footnoted. Mr. Blackboard, a personification of the loudspeaker used in most other living newspapers, supplies this information, thereby generalizing the particular dramatic moment. The audience simultaneously learns the facts and witnesses their particular effect; this technique forces the public to focus on both a particular problem and its causes.

Unfortunately, the Federal Theatre Project was killed before it could produce *King Cotton*. What its reception and effect might have been can only be speculation.

In the following scene of *King Cotton*, a so-called "expert" testifies before a Senate committee. In later scenes, he travels to the South to learn more about the problems of cotton farming, and talks "to mill hands, mill owners and social workers." By witnessing what happens to the Britt family during one year, he learns the economics of the cotton industry — the sharecropping, the marketing, the mill, the company store — and its effect upon the people. He returns to the Senate with recommendations about controlled production, crop diversification, working conditions and education, among others. In the typical up-beat fashion of the living newspapers, the play ends with the Senators sitting down to write a bill, vowing "we be not adjourned until it is finished." □



An Example of the Living Newspaper: A Scene from the play, 1935

King Cotton

Loudspeaker: The Living Newspaper presents: "King Cotton."

(Front curtains open and the projection flies back to a screen upstage center. The title words grow smaller and fade out, leaving full screen to shots of cotton pickers.)

Over a vast realm from Virginia to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rocky Mountains, cotton is king. In one year, he has stored in his coffers more than two billion dollars or almost half the total amount of money now in circulation in the United States in that year. King Cotton employs thirteen million persons to till his fields and to care for those who till them. He has hundreds of thousands more laboring in his mills. Oh yes indeed! Cotton is king in the South!

(Projection dissolves to girls working at spinners in a cotton mill.)

But of late there are signs that the king is sick; that he has become a senile old tyrant; that his subjects live in abject slavery under his rule. The United States government has been gravely concerned about him. Let us go down to Washington and see for ourselves.

(Projection fades out.)

SCENE ONE: A SENATE COMMITTEE MEETING

(The Projection has been raised out of the way and lights come up on the platform upstage center, where the clerk and six men dressed in conventional stage senator's costumes are seated about a long table above which hangs a blackboard. The senators are large and impressive. They wear wing collars and puffed-up black satin cravats, cutaway coats and striped trousers. Each wears a mask, half again as large as lifesize. The masks are caricatures of Senators Smith, Thomas, Bankhead, Pope, Ellender and McNary. Each senator speaks with an accent indicative of the section of the country which he represents.)

Smith Mask: *(Rising)* Let's get down to cases. What I am driving at as chairman of the Agricultural Committee of the United States Senate is not to have this annual grouch every year, but to establish a permanent program, a permanent law of equity and justice and fairness to the farmer so that he can go home and not be scared to death that God will be good to him. We have got into the most infernal paradox in the world. The farmers pray God for droughts and disasters in order to be prosperous, and everytime there comes a good season, they all go to the poorhouse. That is a hell of a note, isn't it?

McNary Mask: It is, Senator Smith. But what would you have us do?

Smith Mask: I would first have us all become acquainted with the problem, Senator McNary. That is why I have called in the aid of a research expert. He has made a study of the problems of the South and if there is no objection, we will hear from him now.

(He looks for an objection.)

There being none, clerk, will you call Mr. Elbert Q. Expert in?

(Clerk rises and exits up left, returning almost immediately. Lights come up on Mr. Elbert Q. Expert who enters from up left on stage level.)



Mr. Expert: Very well, gentlemen. I have made an extensive study of the South. Indeed, I presented a doctoral dissertation on education in that region. If you ask me to state my conclusions briefly –

(Spatter of applause from the senators at the word, "briefly.")

I should allege that the chief thing wrong with the South is its lack of proper educational facilities.

(Smith spreads his two hands over his mask in a gesture of weariness. Other senators wag their heads from side to side in a rhythmic gesture of weariness.)

If we could educate the South to the North's standard of living, we would have solved the problem: for once having seen a better way, the Southerner would not be content with a poorer.

Smith Mask: *(Sorrowfully)* I'm afraid it is not as simple as that, Sir.

(Mr. Expert smiles with superiority.)

McNary Mask: *(Sotto voce)* I do not like his smirk of academic superiority.

Mr. Expert: It *is* simple, Senator. If I had a blackboard, I think I could demonstrate –

(Blackboard lights up with a projection of a caricature of a bookworm at his desk. He is in shirt sleeves and wears a green eyeshade. Lamp burns on his desk and next to it is an oil can labeled "midnight." Huge coffee pot is on desk next to a paper bag of sandwiches. Books are everywhere: in piles on the desk, on the floor, in his lamp and he is even sitting on some. A voice is heard via the loudspeaker behind the blackboard.)

Mr. Blackboard: *(Testily)* Speak up! Ask for what you want. Don't say "if" and "and." Holler for a blackboard and pound your fist on the table and you'll get it. Just holler for things. We got lots of people on the project. Get you anything you need. I'm Mr. Blackboard.

Clerk: A while ago, you were the loudspeaker. I don't like the idea of calling you Mr. Blackboard now.

Mr. Blackboard: If you don't like it, you can call me Bee Bee for short.

Smith Mask: Mr. Blackboard is inclined to look down on our meetings a little, but he's willing to straighten us out sometimes on the facts.

Mr. Blackboard: Thank you.

(Blackboard light goes out. Mr. Expert steps toward the platform and continues.)

Mr. Expert: Let us look at library figures.

Senators: Figures? *(They groan.)*

Mr. Expert: In ten cotton states there are 347 libraries; in the whole United States, 6,235. *(Pause)* Come on, Mr. Blackboard – I mean Bee Bee. Do your stuff.



(Blackboard lights with a projection showing a small library building labeled "Cotton States" and 347; a proportionately larger building, labeled "United States" and 6,235.)

Mr. Blackboard: There are your figures, Mr. Expert. Hey Senators! How do you like it this way?

(Projections on blackboard changes to three and two-thirds large books labeled "United States," and one and one-tenth books labeled "Cotton States.")

The average person in the United States borrows 3.67 books per year from his library. The average person in the South borrows only 1.1 books per year.

(Blackboard blacks out.)

Mr. Expert: The figures clearly show—

Mr. Blackboard: *(Lighting up)* Say! How am I doing, Elbert?

Mr. Expert: Fine, Bee Bee, Fine!

(Blackboard blacks out.)

These figures clearly show, Gentlemen, that the South is not well-informed. Now the average sharecropper—

(There is a small disturbance. At right, a spot picks up Hubert Britt, a grizzled and middle-aged farmer. He is hard-pressed and desperate, and inclined to be resentful. He is very likeable however. He hurries in angrily.)

Britt: Just a minute!

Mr. Expert: *(To the senators)* Pardon me. This is something I did not foresee. *(Sympathetically to Britt)* What is the trouble, Sir?

Britt: I heard what the blackboard said and we ain't a-goin' to let you spread lies about us folks down here in Dixie. If you want to tell these politicians about us, tell em the truth.

Mr. Expert: Exactly. *(To senators)* As I was saying, the South is backward. In the United States as a whole—

(Projected on blackboard: in a border made by the outlines of the map of the US are four cartoons of illiterate-looking men holding books upside down on their laps and cleaning their fingernails with pen points. One man is black, three white.)

—only four people out of every hundred are illiterate. But in the South—

Mr. Blackboard: Here you are.

(Projection changes to map of US with all but the ten cotton states blacked out. In them, ten cartoons, seven black and three white of identical illiterates.)

Ten out of every hundred are illiterate among the subjects of King Cotton.

Britt: Cotton is king all right. Like them old-timers in Egypt who made men carry big stones for years an' years so they could have a tomb built where—

McNary Mask: *(Rising)* Mr. Chairman, I move that the sergeant-at-arms



be directed to eject this disturbance.

Smith Mask: One moment, *if* the gentleman from Oregon please.

(Other senators lean forward in attitude of debate. A monotonous oratorical sound arises.)

Mr. Expert: *(Pounds the table and shouts)* Silence!

(Senators lean back and rigid silence envelops them. Mr. Expert looks at his fist, smiles happily at Blackboard.)

It worked! *(To Britt)* I know the South is bad off. Didn't I write a hundred page thesis on the subject? But you, as a farmer, should not speak so harshly of the greatest crop of the South, cotton. Cotton is your benefactor. Without cotton, the South would starve.

Britt: I hitchhiked all the way up here to tell you stuff-shirts and bloated faces that that's exactly what we are a-doin'. Starvin'! *(To Mr. Expert.)* An' if you didn't keep your nose poked in books all the time, you'd know we're starvin'!

Mr. Expert: Who are you?

Britt: I'm Hubert Britt. I'm one of ten million that chop cotton. Since you know so much, you up and tell the senators how much I make for workin' all year from sun-up to first dark. Just tell em.

Mr. Expert: Why, . . . I . . . , don't know. How much *do* you make?

Britt: Last year I got eight cents a pound. I made nine bales.

Mr. Expert: Ah! How many pounds in a bale?

Britt: *(Disgusted)* Five hundred.

Mr. Expert: Let's see. Five hundred times eight cents. That's forty dollars. Nine bales . . . hey, Bee Bee!

(On blackboard is projected 9 times 40 equals \$360)

Mr. Blackboard: Three hundred and sixty dollars, Elbert.

Mr. Expert: You mean that's all you got for a year's work?

Britt: Didn't get that much. Didn't get but half of that. I sharecrop.

Mr. Expert: You mean you *share* your crop?

Britt: Yeh. Got to give my landlord half of everythin' I grow.

Mr. Expert: What for?

Britt: For lettin' me use his land and furnishin' me.

Mr. Expert: Furnishing . . . ?

Britt: Say, you are dumb. All you know is what you read in books. Furnishin' means that he gives me seed, a mule and gives me credit when I have to buy food.

Mr. Expert: Then I understand that you had free seed, a mule and supplies, a house and one hundred and eighty dollars clear at the end of the year. Doesn't sound so bad.

Britt: I had to buy my stuff at the landlord's store. He gave me credit. I had to settle up out of my half; out of my one hundred and eighty dollars. When I paid up, all I had left was sixty-five dollars.



Mr. Expert: Surely your case isn't typical. Cotton brings more than eight cents a pound some years. I know that.

Mr. Blackboard: *(The figure \$210.00 is projected on the blackboard)* At 9.4 cents per pound, cotton brought the average sharecropper \$210. For a whole year's work. This was not pay for one man's work but of the entire sharecropper's family.

Mr. Expert: Do the wives and children have to work too?

Britt: You bet your life. Me an' Lally and all five of our kids got to chop cotton or old man Powers would put us off his place.

Smith Mask: So that your yearly per capita wage after you settled with your landlord and the commissary was sixty-five dollars divided by seven, or about nine dollars each for the whole year?

Britt: Yeh! Yeh, not enough to pay the doctor for the malaria our youngest died with.

Mr. Expert: I hardly think it is as bad as you say. You said, and I believe I read somewhere that the landlord usually gives you people your homes, doesn't he?

Britt: If you can call them homes. Trouble with you is you got all you know out o' books. Why don't you come along with me an' let me show you what they call a sharecropper's house down where I come from. Before you talk so much why don't you find out what in hell you're talkin' about?

Mr. Expert: I'd like to go, but the Senate committee expects me to—

Smith Mask: Tut, tut! That's a very good idea, Britt. You take him home with you. We'll wait.

Bankhead Mask: We've been sitting up here talking about doing something for the cotton farmer for thirty years now. We won't have finished I'm sure, before our witness returns.

Thomas Mask: One moment. Are you able to make a living?

Britt: I ain't done it.

Thomas Mask: Well, you do live.

Britt: By goin' in debt.

Thomas Mask: Would you be able to make a living if you could rent more land?

Britt: I ain't able.

Thomas Mask: Have you ever thought about moving to some other territory where you might be able?

Britt: It takes money to move.

Thomas Mask: You don't see much future as a farmer, then?

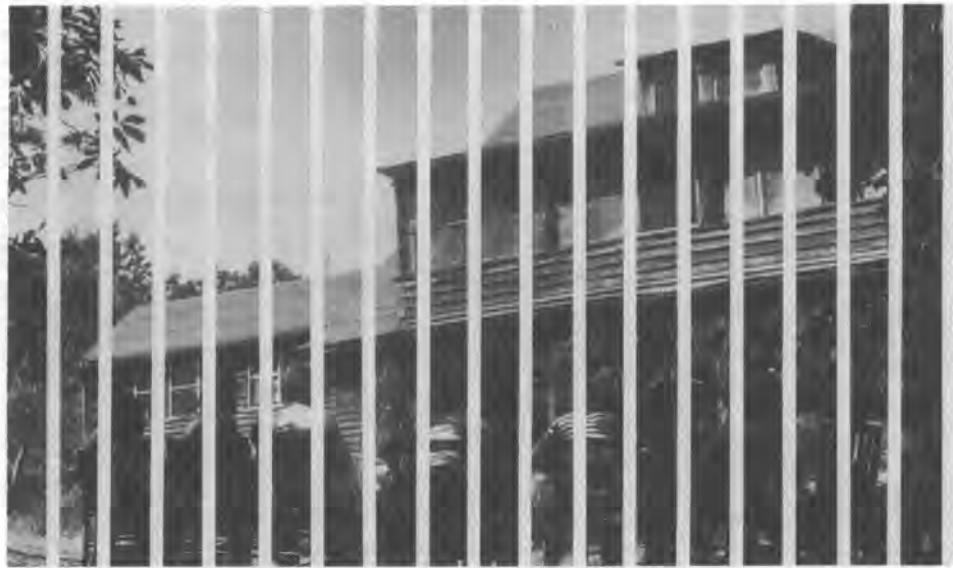
Britt: I don't see none. And you won't neither when this feller comes back and tells y'all what he's seen. Come on, Mister.

(The spot follows them out, up right, then dims.)

Smith Mask: Well! Now maybe, we are getting somewhere.

(Blackout.)





The Trial of the Highlander Folk School

by John Egerton

For more than a year, the pressure had been rising: Southern public officials seeking evidence of Communist subversion in the civil rights movement had been zeroing in on the Highlander Folk School, a racially integrated adult education center on the Cumberland Plateau near Monteagle, Tennessee. An undercover agent sent there by the governor of Georgia had come back with photographs of whites and blacks dancing and swimming together, and with a group picture showing Martin Luther King, Jr., in the company of a writer for the *Communist Daily Worker*. The attorney general of Arkansas had charged that Highlander was "flying in formation" with the NAACP, which he denounced as an "agent of a Communist conspiracy designed to set up a 'Black Republic' in the South." Mississippi and Alabama officials, likewise given to equating integration with communism,

Tennessee free-lance writer John Egerton is teaching magazine journalism at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg this year. For more about Highlander in *Southern Exposure*, see Myles Horton, "The Spark That Ignites," vol. IV, no. 1-2, and Sue Thrasher, "Radical Education in the '30s," vol. I, no. 3-4. See also Frank Adams, *Unearthing Seeds of Fire*, Winston-Salem: Blair Publ., 1975.

were also urging the governor and the legislature of Tennessee to eliminate what many arch-segregationists in the region were calling "a Communist training school teaching methods and tactics of racial strife."

The year was 1959. For more than a quarter of a century, the Highlander Folk School had held firmly to its small base in Grundy County. Occasionally, it had received substantial support from among "the common folks" in the area; frequently, it had been a controversial presence resented and opposed by the county's power holders. It could claim not just to have survived, but to have been an effective voice for unionism, integration and the rights of the poor. But in the climate of fear and defiance that was sweeping the South in reaction to the movement for racial equality, an irresistible consensus was forming in Grundy County and elsewhere across Tennessee and the South: Highlander was a symbol of radicalism and discord. It would have to go.

First a resolution was introduced in the Tennessee General Assembly "to Investigate the Subversive Activities of the Highlander Folk School." It passed both houses with scant opposition, and was signed by Governor Buford Ellington.

Then, five members of the legislature appointed by the governor held closed and open hearings in Tracy

City, near Monteagle, and in Nashville, the state capital. They heard an outpouring of allegations against the folk school and a few voices in defense of it.

Next, the committee presented a condemnatory report to the House and Senate, and urged them to direct the district attorney general to bring suit against Highlander for the revocation of its state charter. The legislature quickly passed a resolution to that effect without debate, and again Governor Ellington added his signature.

There followed a raid on the school by the district attorney and state and local police; the arrest of four persons for possession of whiskey and interference with police officers; a court hearing on whether the school should be padlocked as a public nuisance; a jury trial to determine whether its charter should be voided; a conviction, and two futile appeals. Finally, in the early winter of 1961, a court-appointed receiver sold the holdings of the Highlander Folk School at public auction.

The investigation, raid, hearing, trial and conviction all took place swiftly, between February and November, 1959. The appeals required almost two years. The forced sale was over in a matter of hours. Twenty-nine years after its founding, the Highlander Folk School was finally gone from Grundy County.

Myles Horton remembers. He was Highlander's first and only director during all the years of its existence in Grundy County — and for a while after it was "reborn" as the Highlander Research and Education Center in Knoxville. Now seventy-two years old, he lives in semi-retirement as director emeritus of the "new" Highlander Center at its mountain-top location in Jefferson County, east of Knoxville.

"I was in Europe when they staged the raid," he recalls. "They arrested Septima Clark and Guy Carawan and a couple of others, charged them with illegal possession and sale of alcohol and resisting arrest. When the cops threatened to break down the door of my home with an axe, they were given a key. They found a little gin in there, and down in the basement they found an empty ten-gallon keg with an open bung hole. It smelled like whiskey to them, so they poured a little water in it and sloshed it around, and then they got one of the highway patrolmen to taste it. At the hearing, he testified that it tasted like liquor, said it was god-awful. So I went home and checked that old barrel, and found out it had mouse droppings in it. When I saw the cop the next day, I said, 'You know what you drank? You drank mouse turd soup.' He turned pale."

Horton chuckles at the recollection. He is a garrulous man, given to easy laughter, and he nourishes a Southerner's penchant for anecdotes and stories. He looks considerably younger than his years. It is hard to imagine him as a radical of the 1930s.

"We had some trouble in our early years," he says, "but the first twenty-five years were relatively non-contro-

versial compared to what happened in the late '50s. It was the temper of the times — to be specific, it was the race issue — that brought on all the trouble. Ironically, it was outside agitators from the state governments of Georgia and Arkansas who applied the pressure. Governor Ellington, in my opinion, didn't have enough sense or ability or energy to lead an attack on Highlander. He was a neuter — a racist, but not an energetic one, like Marvin Griffin or Orval Faubus — and he agreed to the Highlander purge because he was under pressure, not because he believed the charges against us."

Time may have mellowed Horton's memory of the folk school's early years. Hulan Glyn Thomas, who wrote about them in a Vanderbilt University master's thesis in 1964, recorded numerous examples of hostile opposition to Highlander from its origin until the beginning of World War II. The school's commitment to the laboring classes and to the labor movement in the South incited the wrath of courthouse power blocs, anti-union industrialists, some religious leaders (including evangelist Billy Sunday), the American Legion and the Ku Klux Klan.

Horton, a Tennessee native who studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York and at the University of Chicago, had returned home in the middle of the Great Depression intent on applying adult education methods he had learned in the Danish folk school movement to the needs of unemployed miners and timber cutters in the mountains. He had the encouragement and support of such noted Socialists and "social gospel" Chris-

tians as Norman Thomas and Reinhold Niebuhr. Labor union leaders also welcomed his determination to develop an outpost on the frontier of the labor movement in the South. Horton and Don West, another young Southerner interested in the transplantation of the Danish folk school idea in the mountains, secured the use of a Grundy County farm owned by Lillian Johnson of Memphis, and from the start, their efforts at participatory democracy were controversial.

They set up evening classes, music lessons, a library and other programs for adults in the community — but their union organizing activities and general support for unemployed and unrepresented working people drew such fierce opposition that Lillian Johnson was put under heavy pressure to evict them from her land. (After a few years she finally deeded the property to Highlander, but in 1934, after Don West had departed, Horton was offered an alternative site in Fentress County, one hundred miles to the northeast, and actually chartered the school in that county because he anticipated losing the Grundy site.)

In 1940, an organization called the Grundy County Crusaders launched a campaign of harrassment and intimidation to drive Highlander out of the area, and others who saw liberalism, unionism, socialism and communism as one and the same — and racial integration as the proof of the pudding — kept Highlander in a state of uncertainty throughout the 1930s. Even the liberally inclined Nashville Tennessean saw fit in 1939 to infiltrate the school with an investigative reporter and to publish his series of articles purporting to expose a hotbed of Communist

photo by Emil Willmetz



Myles Horton (far left) in a discussion with a small group beside Highlander lake, during the first integration workshop, 1953.

photo by Emil Willimetz



Highlander main building (above). At right, a workshop on integration held July 24 - August 6, 1955. Seated at right in front row is Rosa Parks. On Dec. 1, 1955, she refused to move to the back of a bus and began the Montgomery Bus Boycott that sparked the Civil Rights Movement.



Sheriff Elston Clay of Grundy County, Tenn., padlocks Highlander's main building, September, 1959.

activity there. According to the Hulan Thomas thesis, Highlander probably survived its first decade only because the pro-labor Roosevelt Administration was in office — and because “the profound shock of Pearl Harbor... destroyed much of the remaining opposition to the radical left, and Highlander was no exception.”

If Horton's remembrance of the distant '30s has softened, his recollection of more recent years — and particularly of 1959 — seems much more detailed and precise. In a matter-of-fact manner, without apparent bitterness, he talks about Highlander's year of crisis:

“The whole thing was a put-up job. The legislative investigating committee admitted it could find no proof of

communist activity — it couldn't, of course, because there wasn't any — but they told A.F. Sloan, the district attorney general, to sue us for the revocation of our charter anyway, because we were in technical violation of some state laws. That was in March, as I recall. It took Ab Sloan until the end of July to move against us. That's when they staged the raid, during a workshop on school desegregation, and arrested Septima Clark and the others. She was our director of education, a black woman from South Carolina, a marvelous person. They were arrested and jailed, but never brought to trial. Sloan got what he was after — that little bit of alcohol in my house — and that was all the excuse he needed to take us to court.

“There was a preliminary hearing,

and then in September, at the Grundy County courthouse in Altamont, there was a three-day hearing in circuit court after Sloan had asked for an injunction closing us down as a public nuisance. That was the so-called ‘padlock’ hearing, before Judge Chester C. Chattin. We had a young lawyer from Nashville named Cecil Branstetter representing us. The state had Sloan and three or four other lawyers.”

Sloan had given a revealing quote to the press after the raid. “The members of the legislative committee gave me information mostly on integration and communism,” he said, “and I wasn't satisfied I could be successful on that. I thought maybe this [raid to find whiskey] was the best shot, and I think now I'll be successful.”

In the files of Nashville and Chattanooga newspapers, in a book on Highlander by Frank Adams (Unearthing Seeds of Fire), in a Vanderbilt master's thesis by Joan Hobbs and in the voluminous record of court proceedings, the full picture of Sloan's successful prosecution is preserved in great detail.

The state's strategy in the padlock hearing seemed primarily to be to present Highlander as a place where illegal and immoral behavior between whites and blacks went on routinely. A parade of state's witnesses, most of whom were shown on cross-examination to have police records or reputations of unreliability in the community, testified to having witnessed wild parties, drunkenness and open sexual intercourse between whites and blacks at the school. One man said Highlander had a reputation in the community as "an integrated whorehouse." Another, edging closer to the truth, said "people don't like it" that Highlander was integrated. "Don't allow them [black people] on this mountain," he added. (Although the folk school had included blacks in its programs from the beginning, none had ever lived in Grundy County.)

John Clark, one of only a handful of local people to testify for Highlander, said he had never witnessed any immoral behavior at the school; it was opposed, he said, because people in the community "don't like the colored folks. That is the main burning issue."

Defense attorney Branstetter called about twenty witnesses, all of whom denied categorically the charges that had been made. They were treated roughly on cross-examination by Sloan and his prosecution team, who drew repeated protests from Branstetter and an occasional admonition from Judge Chattin.

In closing arguments, prosecutor A. A. Kelley asserted that "there is proof in here, abundance of it, that [Highlander] is a place where moonshine whiskey was kept and stored. Great quantities, and where bonded whiskey exists. Rums, Gins, Vodkas. And the whole range and gamut of the fancy, fine drinks." Attorney General Sloan, repeating the testimony that Highlander was thought of in the community as "an integrated whorehouse," said in his closing statement: "I don't care if it is integrated or not.

I am after it. It is against the law to have one of them in Grundy County We are not interested in that school for what it teaches. We are not interested in that school for the type of students that it has I filed this [complaint] to try to stop it before they trained the youth of this country to follow the footsteps of those people that were caught in sexual intercourse out of wedlock. That is the kind of practice that I am against . . . not what they teach."

In the testimony, there had been an admission by Myles Horton and others that beer was made available at cost to participants in the school's workshops and programs who wanted it. Sloan charged that the practice amounted to selling beer without a license, and likened the school to the sort of "roadside honky-tonks" he was pledged to eliminate.

At the end, Judge Chattin issued a ruling from the bench. "I don't see anything at all to the charge of immorality," he said. "I don't think the state has made out its case at all on that point. As to the charges of fighting, quarreling, and drunkenness, not here. The only thing I see wrong is the sale of beer. . . . I think that the proof shows by great preponderance that they have been selling beer out there. . . . That is a nuisance, to permit the sale of beer without a license." He issued a temporary padlock order on the school's main building, allowed continuation of the school's programs elsewhere on the grounds, and set an early November trial date to determine whether there was sufficient evidence to justify the revocation of Highlander's state charter.

The original cause for the attack on Highlander — the allegation that it was tainted by communism — had receded from view. The charges of immoral behavior had been thrown out by the court. But the climate of hostility and outrage against the school was, if anything, more intense than ever. The state was determined to carry out its purge.

May Justus remembers. She is eighty years old now, living alone in a small house near the old Highlander property. A native of the Tennessee mountains, she came to Grundy County in 1925 with Vera McCampbell, a colleague of hers at a Presbyterian mission school in Ken-

tucky. They taught in the local schools — Miss Justus until 1938, when she turned her talents to writing books for children (she has now written over sixty), and Miss McCampbell until 1958, when she was fired from her teaching job for attending a Highlander event at which Eleanor Roosevelt and Harry Golden spoke. In 1959, May Justus was Highlander's secretary-treasurer. She testified in defense of the school during the legislative investigation and in court. When one interrogator suggested that she might have come under "suspicion" because of her involvement with the folk school, she replied:

"Sir, a person must live by his Christian principles regardless of what human beings think about him. As long as I can lie down and sleep at night, knowing that I have lived right, people can think what they want to about me."

She has remained in the community, holding steadfastly to her belief in Highlander and her own commitment to its purposes. "I'm surrounded by a great deal of love," she says serenely. "My children from the days when I taught school never were against me. They know me, and we understand each other's feelings. These people have come to be my family, the only children God ever gave me. I'm devoted to them, and they to me. Some of them are in their sixties now."

She recalls: "I offered to resign from my church, but not from the Kingdom of God. Many people were shocked and angered at my association with 'niggers,' but an eighty-year-old elder in the church told me, 'I know a lady and a Christian when I see one. Don't leave.' So I never did. I harbor no bitterness. I had none at the time. Those who hated Highlander — they are what they are, and can't help it. There are reasons why, scars they didn't cause. I was never threatened, and I was never afraid. I had been there so long, I was confident they wouldn't harm me, even though they didn't approve."

The people of Grundy County haven't changed their views about Highlander or about integration, Miss Justus says: "The trial didn't have anything to do with beer, or with Myles Horton's personal gain — those were just excuses, ridiculous charges. No, it was about racism. People here

just couldn't think of blacks as human beings. 'We don't want them niggers in our county, even going through our town,' they would say. The first thing I learned when I came here was, no blacks. Total segregation. It went deep — a feeling of superiority, of 'white is right.' Not even one black family lives in the county today, and never has. That's what it was about, and that view hasn't changed. If the trial was being held here now, and you picked a jury at random, it would end up the same way. It was not just the unlettered and illiterate of Grundy County who were against Highlander, though. It was also the upper class, the rulers — lawyers, doctors, politicians, here and in places like Nashville. They were wrong. In the long and shameful history of human bondage and slow emancipation, Highlander will some day have a bright chapter."

Septima Clark remembers, too. She is also nearing eighty, living now in her native Charleston, South Carolina, where in 1956 she was dismissed from her teaching job for being a member of the NAACP. "I had forty-one years of service," she says quietly. "They took my pension. But I have recently received \$7,200 from the state — ten percent of what they owed me — and next year, I'm supposed to get my pension. There are thirteen black members of the legislature now, and one of them got it for me."

The Citizenship Education Program Mrs. Clark developed for Highlander became the basis for future gains in

black voter registration in the South. "Many of the achievements we made in the civil rights movement started with that Highlander program," she says. "You can see the results everywhere — in black elected officials, in voters, and now in the efforts of Indians and Appalachian whites to get their rights. The segregationists were scared of Highlander. They said Myles Horton was taking money from the school, but integration was what really worried them. Myles didn't — he was doing people a favor, helping people. They just wanted to get rid of him and the school."

Mrs. Clark is now a member of the same school board that dismissed her more than twenty years ago. "It just goes to show," she says, "that we can get something done nonviolently."

The trial opened in Altamont on November 3, and lasted four days. The state's opening claim was that Highlander's charter should be revoked for three reasons: it had sold beer and other items without a commercial license; Horton had received property and money from the school — in other words, had realized personal gain — in violation of the charter; and the school had permitted whites and blacks to attend together, in violation of a 1901 state law. (The US Supreme Court's 1954 Brown decision had voided that law, but the state claimed that the court's ruling affected only public schools, not private ones such as Highlander.)

Cecil Branstetter, for the defense, conceded to the latter charge and

invited conviction on it. Highlander had always been integrated, he said, and welcomed an opportunity to defend its position in court.

With Judge Chattin presiding, it took more than a day to seat a jury. Both Branstetter and Sloan, the district attorney general, probed each prospective juror for his or her views on segregation; some heated exchanges took place, and several jurors were seated over Branstetter's objection. But before testimony commenced, the judge limited the jury's consideration to two issues — illegal commercial sales, and Horton's personal gain. The race issue, like the charges of communism and immorality, would not be argued in court. (A deposition of Edwin H. Friend of Atlanta was permitted in the court record, however. Friend had attended Highlander's 25th anniversary celebration in 1957 as an undercover agent for Georgia Governor Marvin Griffin. While there, he had photographed Martin Luther King, Jr., and others with Abner Berry, a columnist for the Communist Daily Worker who also had concealed his true identity from Highlander officials. The photograph was later given wide circulation as "proof" that King attended "a Communist Training Center." In his deposition, Friend said his assignment as a Georgia undercover agent was "to go to Monteagle, Tennessee, to the Highlander Folk School and find out whether that malignancy of the NAACP and Communism was leaking out over Georgia.")

The state's case included testimony from beer distributors that they had delivered cases of beer to the school, and testimony from others — including Myles Horton — that the school's executive committee had conveyed title to Horton's house and sixty acres of land to him. The property transfer would prove to be the straw the state would seize.

Highlander was shown to have assets of about \$175,000, including two hundred acres of land, a dozen buildings, and a library containing several thousand volumes. Its income of about \$70,000 a year came almost entirely from foundations, and was spent on modest salaries for its small staff and on the operation of its workshops and programs. From 1932 until 1954, Horton had received only subsistence funds and necessary expenses — no salary. He and his wife



Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking at a Highlander workshop in Monteagle, Tenn., in the fall of 1957.

and two children lived on the premises, as did his mother and father.

"The executive committee of Highlander transferred the title of my house to me in about 1956," Horton recalls. "My wife, Zilphia, had died, and the committee wanted to make the transfer so my kids would have a home if something happened to me. We had built the house with our own money on land sold to us by Highlander, and my parents had done the same thing. We paid the school for the land and built on it some years earlier, but we had left it in the name of Highlander, and that's what the committee changed. They said I had put twenty-four years of equity into the place, I had earned it, and it should be mine. They also put me on a salary in about 1954 — \$1,200 a year, as I recall — and by 1959 my salary was something over \$5,000 a year. Sloan was very clever. He hammered away at that, made it look like the school was being operated for my personal gain and benefit. He told the jury, 'It's not what he's getting, but what he's going to get. He's got it set up so that some day, he can cut the melon — when he gets ready, he can take everything.' The jury was led to believe I would do that — and they convicted me on that."

When testimony ended, there was little doubt of the outcome. In final arguments, Sloan and A.A. Kelley bored in on the property transfer. "He got it for nothing," Sloan said derisively. "Deeded it to himself." Branstetter's passionate assertion that the state hadn't proved its case appeared not to move the jury. Before they retired, Judge Chattin told them: "There will be only one issue for you to determine, and that is this, Has Highlander Folk School been operated for the personal gain of Myles Horton?" At ten minutes past two on the afternoon of November 6, the jury filed out. Forty-five minutes later, they were back. The verdict: yes, Horton had profited; he was guilty.

Four of the jury members who still live in Grundy County remember. Noah White, Paul G. Cook, Douglas Partin and Colleen Meeks — the only woman on the panel — remember the issues and the outcome, and they are

as convinced now as they were then that their decision was the right one.

"They were selling beer and whiskey without a license," Partin says. "The prosecutors had pictures of it, they had proof."

White goes further. "Horton admitted he took grant money for himself," he says. "He profited, and didn't pay tax on it. All I can say is, justice was done. If that place was down there now like it was then, somebody would blow it away. It wasn't the race thing—that didn't influence me, and wouldn't now."

And Paul Cook: "I didn't want to sit on that jury, but I was sworn to tell the truth. A decision under oath is a very sacred thing. I decided without a doubt in my mind that Myles had profited, and they had sold beer without a license. They weren't paying taxes, either, or having classes, or using textbooks. That integration business, that didn't have anything to do with it. Lots of folks around here resent the colored, and we still don't have any in this county — but they'd have been in trouble without the niggers, and you'd get the same decision now, if the trial was today."

And finally, Colleen Meeks. She is the postmaster at Coalmont now. "Everybody thought I was just a little housewife out there, with her mind at home," she says. "I had no preconceived idea, knew nothing of it, and I didn't want to be called. I was scared. This was big doings. But I wouldn't be intimidated — I'm not like that. If Branstetter had convinced me, I'd have voted for his side, and I'd have stuck by my guns. It was a simple question: Did Horton profit, or did he not? I decided from the evidence that he did, and my conscience is clear about it. I had no bitterness toward those people. They were good people, some of them. Horton conducted himself admirably. He was a gentleman, an educated man — but he profited from the school. The race thing? Well, this county won't tolerate blacks — never would, and it's still that way — but I honestly don't think that influenced us. I know it didn't influence me."

What is "personal gain"? In his charge to the jury, Judge Chattin had made no distinction between legitimate and illegitimate compensation. Branstetter protested, and after

two conferences with counsel at the bench, the judge reluctantly made a clarification to the jury: the payment of salary or conveyance of land in lieu of salary does not constitute personal gain. But the damage had been done. Highlander was worth thousands of dollars, it received money from out of state, grants from New York foundations, gifts from the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt — and Horton was in charge, he parceled out the funds, and now he held title to a house, to land....

On February 17, 1960, Chattin issued his ruling in the Highlander case. On the charge of Horton's personal gain, he agreed with the jury. On the two issues he had reserved to himself, he also ruled against the school: it had sold beer and other commodities without a license, and it had allowed whites and blacks to attend school together, in violation of Tennessee law. He ordered Highlander's charter to be revoked and appointed a receiver to liquidate its holdings. Court costs would be paid from the school's assets. He told Horton in the ruling to "wind up your affairs."

Cecil Branstetter remembers. He had fought a hard fight. The jurors remember him as "the smartest lawyer I ever saw" and "the man I'd want to represent me if I ever got in trouble." Immediately after the trial, he had filed an affidavit swearing that a deputy sheriff had told him that he, the deputy, had told members of the jury during the trial that Highlander "should be run out of the county." (The state had quickly responded with sworn statements from all twelve jurors that no one had tried to influence them.)

Branstetter had sought a new trial, citing thirty-two errors in the proceedings, and when that had failed, he had appealed to the State Supreme Court. A year later, in April of 1961, the five judges of that court had unanimously upheld Judge Chattin's ruling on Horton's gain and the school's sale of beer, but found it "unnecessary for us to pass upon the constitutional question as to the mixing of white and colored, male and female, in the same school." Branstetter had then taken an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, which on October 9, 1961, denied Highlander a hearing. (Burke Marshall, who headed the civil rights division of



Septima Clark (left) and Rosa Parks, 1950s. The Citizenship Education Program which Septima Clark developed for Highlander became the basis for future voter registration work throughout the South.

the justice department under Attorney General Robert Kennedy, had written Branstetter a letter of regret, saying the government could not file an *amicus curae* brief in behalf of Highlander because of the lack of "any federal question at all" in the case.)

"What was clear from the first," Branstetter recalls, "was that the state wanted to get rid of Highlander. The raid was a farce, a publicity thing, the kickoff of the campaign. Once the jury had ruled with respect to Horton's personal gain, it wasn't necessary for the State Supreme Court to pass judgement on the segregation issue, and they left it out for fear of a reversal. We could find no precedent for the state's revocation of the charter, and there has been none since, but the law is clear: the charter of a non-profit corporation can be revoked for cause, and since there are no stockholders, no owners, the property escheats to the state. That's what happened. Everything Highlander had was turned over to a receiver and sold at auction."

And Scott Bates remembers. A French professor at the University of the South at Sewanee, three miles from Monteagle, he had testified at the trial in behalf of Highlander, and

later had served as president of its board of directors. He remembers May Justus as being "valiant, courageous" in her lonely stand in the community, remembers others around Monteagle who supported the school but were afraid to say so publicly, remembers Horton as "a generous man who never profited from the school, far from it."

Bates also remembers Saturday, the 16th of December, 1961, when all the belongings of Highlander were sold at auction: "It was a grim affair. We had hoped to salvage the library, but we had no money. The auctioneers told us they wouldn't sell it unless they got a bid of at least \$3,000, but they let it go for \$500 to a second-hand book dealer from Chattanooga. It was like a picnic, a circus — hundreds of people came, eager to take away mementos of the school. It was like the dissection of a corpse. Later, some lawyers involved in the prosecution of Highlander bought some of the land." (The chief prosecutors — A. F. Sloan, A. A. Kelley, Sam Polk Raulston — are all dead. Only C. P. Swafford of Dayton, an assistant attorney general who sat at the prosecution table but took a minor part in the case, is still living. He says he knows nothing about who bought the

land. As to Highlander, he says: "As I remember, the community just didn't want things like that to go on in the county. Drinking, big parties — they just wouldn't put up with it, it was not a good atmosphere, especially for the young people. I really don't remember much about the facts. I had a very small part in the trial.")

Both the house belonging to Horton and the house of his parents were considered assets of the school, though they had built and paid for them with their own money. They were included in the auction, as was everything else except personal effects. The sale of buildings and land netted \$53,700 for the state's treasury. In his book on Highlander, Frank Adams says, "Lawyers from the Grundy area bought Highlander's library and turned the building into a private club."

But Highlander was not through, and the controversy surrounding it had not run its course. Even as appeals of the court ruling were being pursued, Myles Horton made application to the Tennessee secretary of state for a new charter. His request listed new incorporators, a new location (in Knoxville), and a new name — the Highlander Research and Education Center — but the objective was clear: to set up a successor organization to the Highlander Folk School. The state resisted, saying such a charter would be illegal, but Horton threatened to sue, and Branstetter, knowing the state had no authority to refuse the application ("it was an administrative function — they couldn't judge it before the fact"), pressed his advantage. The charter was issued.

Several years later, when Buford Ellington was again Tennessee's governor, the legislature tried again to investigate the "reborn" Highlander for alleged subversive activities.

"It was in the mid-sixties," Horton recalls. "When I heard what the legislature was up to, I sent Governor Ellington a personal message. I told him we had cooperated once, but we wouldn't do it again — we wouldn't turn over any information. He would just have to send me to jail, and live with the consequences. I was told later that Ellington tried to get the investigation bill defeated, but he couldn't do it. The legislature had inadvertently failed to pass an appropriations bill

for the investigation, though, and Ellington wouldn't let them have the money. Then Chuck Morgan, representing the American Civil Liberties Union, put an end to it all when he went into federal court in Nashville and got an injunction blocking the investigation. I think it was the only time an injunction was ever granted to block a state legislative investigation." (Morgan's recollection of the case is also vivid. "They had overreached," he says. "Used the word 'subversive' without basis. We got it voided for vagueness, got an injunction — and the state didn't appeal.")

There were other ironies, early and late, and often unreported. An early incident occurred in 1935. A coalition of Southern liberals and radicals sought to stage an All-Southern Conference for Civil and Trade Union rights in Chattanooga, but the local American Legion got up in arms, and some of its members chased the delegates out of town. Most of them, including a small group of students and teachers from Commonwealth College in Arkansas, ended up at Highlander, where they heard speeches and passed resolutions against lynching and other violations of human rights. One of the Commonwealth delegates to the conference was a young radical from the Ozarks by the name of Orval Faubus. The later-to-be governor of Arkansas is best remembered now for his attempt to prevent desegregation of Little Rock's Central High School. He has never publicly acknowledged his presence at Highlander, but he has been heard to admit it privately.

A later behind-the-scenes incident happened in 1965, after the Tennessee State Library and Archives had acquired some of Highlander's private files. While the collection was being catalogued, some unsigned "poison pen" letters were circulated in the state administration, charging that the library director was "in complete agreement and sympathy with Myles Horton and all that his Communist backed school stood for." The material was impounded for several months while the librarian's job hung in the balance. In the end, he was given a vote of confidence by the commission overseeing the library and archives, and the Highlander papers were again made available for public use.

One further irony still exists. It can be found in the Tennessee statutes.

Chapter 37 of the Tennessee Code Annotated — "Segregation of Races" — still contains the 1901 act prohibiting interracial schools. In brackets, it is designated "Unconstitutional," but it has never been repealed by the legislature.

In the aftermath of the Highlander trial, several of the key figures in the case were advanced to higher positions. Judge Chattin was appointed to the State Court of Appeals in 1962, and A.F. Sloan, who had been his close associate since 1947, was named to replace him as judge of the circuit court serving Grundy and adjacent counties. Judge Chattin was further elevated in 1965 to the State Supreme Court, where he served for nine years. Sam Polk Raulston, another of the prosecution attorneys, also was made a circuit judge.

It is Myles Horton's belief that those promotions were, in effect, rewards. He says: "I think both Sloan and Chattin were told — by Ellington, I suppose — that if they would get rid of Highlander, they'd be promoted. And they were — quick." Cecil Branstetter doubts things were done that bluntly. "I have no evidence of knowledge of a deal regarding Judge Chattin or Ab Sloan," he says. "I doubt if there was any agreement, any clear understanding that they would be moved up. That wasn't necessary. What they did simply came out the way the state wanted it to come out — and in the predictable sequence of events, it just naturally follows that their careers would be enhanced."

As it turns out, Branstetter is probably right. Because Judge Chester Chattin, like all the others, remembers too.

He lives in retirement in Winchester now, just twenty miles or so from the old Highlander property. He remembers that "the American Legion up there had been pushing against Highlander for years. No disturbance or anything — they just wanted to get rid of it legally. The school didn't teach anybody anything, I don't reckon — they just had a good time, and then Horton turned it into that mess. The main point, as far as I was concerned, was that the trustees had deeded part of the property to him, and that violated the charter. The state brought in all that other business, but the main thing was the property, and I was upheld on that. I also ruled against

them on the race issue. I made a mistake on that. The Supreme Court should have reversed me on that. But Horton was after all the property. He wanted it in his name. Without a doubt, he violated the charter."

Does the judge consider his later advancement in any way an expression of appreciation for his handling of the Highlander case?

"A favor? No, there's nothing to that. I went on to the Court of Appeals two years after I ruled in that case. Nobody up there tried to help me because I didn't ask for any help. One of the judges had died, and I called Governor Ellington at the mansion and told him I would be interested in the job if it was open. He said he had already promised it to somebody else, but if the man didn't take it, he'd call me back. And he did. It was Governor Frank Clement who first appointed me to the circuit court back in 1958 — and later, in 1965, he appointed me to the Supreme Court. I had managed his first campaign in this district. No, nobody gave me any special help or did me any favors. I was just lucky, being in the right place at the right time."

The old Highlander near Monteagle is a subdivision now, featuring modern two- and three-bedroom homes on a half-acre or more of plateau soil. There is a cemetery close by, next to a patch of woods beside a gravel road; among its permanent occupants are the wife and father of Myles Horton. Horton's one-time house, a handsome log structure, is surrounded by a chain-link fence. The sign on the gate says "Doris' Beauty Shop."

The new Highlander across the mountains in Jefferson County carries on the forty-five-year-old mission of its predecessor. Myles Horton is still around, but he doesn't play much of an active role in Highlander's adult education programs any more; that responsibility rests mainly with Mike Clark and other younger men and women. The focus of those programs has shifted with the times — from labor organizing to black liberation to the interests of mountain people — but the *idea* of Highlander hasn't changed.

"They called us communists," Horton remembers, smiling, "but they misunderstood. We've always been after something more radical than communism. What we've been after from the beginning is democracy." □



One Teacher's Journal

by Harriet McLeod

Calloway School is in eastern South Carolina, near a marshy, moss-hung river, and surrounded by miles of straight pine trees. It's past the Wando Lounge and Poolroom, past small clapboard "shotgun" houses, beyond Carter's Grocery where the kids sneak out at lunch to buy "a soda and a candy," and the Dynamite Social Club where there is dancing, drinking and sometimes violence on Saturday nights.

The school has no yard to speak of. Grass is sparse, and the dust turns to muck in the rain. It is a long brick building with clumps of trailers scattered around the back. Calloway is an almost all-black school; only two white children were in the elementary grades the year I taught there.

Although the number of miles is the same, Calloway is farther from me now than it was two years ago when I drove the long road out and back, more often than not crying all the way home. It was my first year of teaching. I didn't know what to expect. As I was to learn (a lesson that lurked around every corner waiting to whap me over the head), it was best to expect nothing.

The principal, Rev, hired me to teach BRL. I didn't know what that was. I was to receive training but never did, aside from an odd workshop on human relations.

Then, on the first day came another surprise — I had no classroom. I went to Rev. "Oh yeah," he said in his slow basso, looking at the ceiling. "Well, what we're going to do is have you and Miss Wetherington team teach."

Miss (Dody) Wetherington refused. She wasn't about to have forty or fifty kids in one tiny trailer, and I agreed with her. So for three weeks, I "taught" on the football field (being eaten by mosquitos, in the gym (competing

for attention with the basketball practice), in the lunchroom (smelling lunch cooking). At first there were no textbooks — they trickled in all fall. My last class finally received their English books in January. The problem was not money; books were free for my classes. The problem was that the assistant principal ran out of them and didn't reorder for months.

So we tried without books. It was hard. At the beginning of the school year there was the usual profusion of supplies, but this newness wore off. "I ain't got no pencil," they'd say. "You got a pencil? Who got a pencil? I ain't got no paper. You got a paper?" Kids would fight over a pencil. I spent at least two hundred dollars during the year on pencils, pens, word puzzles, books, Scrabble games and so forth.

Finally the county sent us a trailer. Its ceiling was falling in and there were no steps. We moved in anyway, and for several weeks workmen were in and out of the makeshift classroom, hammering and drilling, giving it electricity that sometimes worked, heat that failed about one day a week during the winter. I suppose they tried to fix the roof, but every hard rain there were two huge puddles; we arranged the desks around the leaks.

Except for a few desks, we had folding chairs that had been at the school since 1956. I scraped and scrounged and dug up almost enough desks. I practically stole some bookshelves. We worked like movers. We mopped. Though Rev always assured me that the trailer would be mopped and swept, it was swept only when I did it, and mopped twice, by me, once when we moved in and once when we got the school ready for the PTA Open House. And so I learned my

Harriet McLeod is currently living on Sullivan's Island, South Carolina. Though the names of the people and the places in this article are fictitious, Harriet McLeod is relating her own experience.

second lesson. MAKE DO. And don't trust the principal or the county administrators to get anything for you. I saw that my very classroom, teaching materials, everything, depended on me.

BRL turned out to be a programmed text reading lab. The kids hated it because the Dick-and-Janeness of it hurt their pride. "Sheeeeeut!" they'd say. "We have that stupid little book last year." And they firmly refused to do it. I was to struggle with BRL all year. After three months, 9-C, my class of all boys, some non-readers, finally admitted that they were working above their heads, gave up the farce and went back to Book One or Two. Until then, I hadn't been able to get past their pride — they wouldn't admit that they couldn't read. And I couldn't force them.

Calloway kids were already under so many stigmas that it was almost impossible to boost their egos enough to motivate them to learn. They were

homogeneously grouped in homerooms according to their "ability," 7-A, 7-B, et cetera, and stayed in the same homeroom all through high school — only the numbers changed. It took nearly an act of God to get a child transferred to a different level.

My teaching methods varied. Authority never worked. They balked at anything you told them they *had* to do. I tried appealing to their pride. "Don't you *want* to learn?" "Yes, but not now." "Well, then what do you want to do?" "We want to go outside, have a free day, go to the store." I'd get angry, lose my voice, stomp and cry in sheer frustration.

Structure worked. But you had to get the worksheet into their hands immediately; they didn't listen to directions. I'd give them the work and then go to them individually, showing them how to do it.

Love also worked. To love and respect the children no matter what they did or didn't do was something

I learned from two other teachers. Eventually I began to get these things back from the kids. After a while, all my classes were good but one. 7-A was made up of bright, precocious kids who had been together since the fourth grade; they gave every teacher trouble. They were my homeroom and last period class so I started and ended the day with their singing, stomping, beating the desks, playing in the closet — their high energy and defiance.

Discipline at Calloway was administered in two ways. A misbehaving student was either sent out of the class and made to pick up trash on the school grounds, or whipped, usually on the hand, with a strip of tire rubber. They loved the first punishment. They got out of class, they were *outside* and they could come around the trailer and leer through the windows at their less fortunate friends inside.

Unknowingly, I sent two students to the office that first week that we



photo by Pat Goudvis

had a classroom. They missed the next two days of classes. When I asked that they be allowed to return to take a vocabulary test, the assistant principal agreed. Instead, they skipped the test and ran around the trailer all period. I raised hell at a faculty meeting about the uselessness of our disciplinary measures. But detention was out. We couldn't keep them after school because some lived twenty miles away. So discipline was non-existent as far as the administration went. We had to handle it ourselves.

Here's an excerpt from a letter I wrote in October:

Today was horrible. I was dizzy all morning, don't know why. Some of Sally Smith's students urinated all over her classroom

during lunch today. The reason is that she shares the room with Bill Akerson (i.e., two classes going on at once because she is a new teacher too, and has no classroom, like me, for the first three weeks), a thoroughly incompetent teacher and repulsive person. He's white — the kids hate his guts and it tends to prejudice them toward other white teachers. This guy can't handle the kids at all (especially 7-A) so he just beats them with a strap or sends half his classes to the office every period. The kids who did this were

doing it against him, but poor Sally has to suffer. Two days last week and one this week, my trailer had no heat. Which means no teaching. Dody's is not working either. They can't pay attention when they're cold. I tried writing on the board with gloves on. It gets progressively worse as I find out more things, and have normal expectancies crushed. I was to receive folders for my kids but they haven't come. Also grades were supposed to go out two weeks ago Friday but we have no report card folders, and I hear today that we're going to switch over to the nine-weeks system which will be just dandy. Maybe an easy transition in another school, but in an organization like Calloway, it will take all year.

Avis is my friend. I am her confidante — her mentor. I don't know what I am to her really. She checks with me now and then. She gives me the news. Avis tells me tales of wonder and of woe. She keeps in touch.

"How you doin, Miss McLeod," her soft voice asks over the phone.

The softness is a change. I think Avis is beginning to realize she is a girl.

"Well fine, Avis!" I say. "What have you been up to?"

"Nothin. Just *nothin*." Avis speaks in accent marks, coming down hard on the first or last word, spitting it out in disgust.

Avis was my student, though I doubt I ever taught her much. She stubbornly refused to do anything in class, prancing away on skinny legs when I tried to put a hand on her, long neck twisting, almond eyes flashing the whites, hands flapping like the wings of a scared crow, flapping you away — "*Don't touch me!*" Avis wouldn't sit down. The others called her "jelly neck" because of her sauntering, head-bobbing, flat-footed sashay around the room. She'd reply, "Shet up you long-face, peanut-head self," or "you ashy-leg nigger," or something like that according to the physical characteristics of the offender. They'd call back, "Shet don't go up!" and so it would go, insults flying.

Now on the telephone I invite her to come to the beach sometime, to swim. "You got a ocean in yo' backyard?" she challenges in amused disbelief.



photo by Leslie Vorgetts

Avis

"Yeah. Have you been swimming up there in the river yet this spring, Avis?"

"Hunh!" she grunts, "I ain' swim in no river with no snake."

"How's school?"

"Ee okay. You know Joe Brown? He daddy bun *drown!* He step in a hole."

"That's awful! What about school, Avis. You learning anything?"

"Miss McLeod, I *tell* you," she pronounces. "We ain' learn *nothin* in Rev'rend Jenson's class. Nothin but them little *newspapers*. He started in the book on chapter *six* and we read about four *pages*, maybe *five*, and that *was that*. The rest of the time we jes' *play*."

So Avis keeps me up to date on Calloway news.

She lives in one of the seven or eight communities of the general area. She is kin to many people. Many folks are kin to her. It was always to a teacher's advantage to know all the family structures so you could say things like, "Joe, tell your cousin Barbara to tell Ventphis Ladson's mama that he's not doing his homework."

Now Avis informs me: "You 'member Alethia Washington? She daddy get *stab* by a man. They drunk. Cortancie daddy leave her mama. He gone New Yawk. Elvira Kinlaw uncle kill a man — shoot em dead in *de head*."

Avis is a member of the Sanctified Church of the Revival of Miracles, as are most people in her community. She sings in the choir, wearing a long pink or blue dress on alternate Sundays. Her voice is powerful and pure, and her mouth opens as wide as a tree frog after a rain.

One day she called up, troubled. "I ain' bun save," she reported.

"What do you mean, Avis?"

"I bun seekin fo' the Holy Ghost fo' a week now wid Sistuh Smith. An' I didn't get save. I bun goin to church but it didn't happen."

"What didn't happen?"

"I didn't get *SAVED!*" she repeated emphatically as if I'm stupidly slow. "The Holy Ghost didn't come." She is very upset.

I tried comfort. "Well, you know, that's okay. I mean, you're only thirteen. You've got plenty of time."

The problem is not the children and never was. The problem is the horrible school they have to attend and the system that keeps it that way. Teachers like Akerson were *rehired*. He was not the worst. There was Rev. Jenson, who had three jobs: he taught history at Calloway, worked at the docks at night and preached in a town eighty miles away. So he slept in class. If the kids woke him, he beat them with a two-by-four.

There was Mrs. Jones. I could always tell which of my classes had just been with her because they would come in sullen, hating and resenting me. She filled the kids with propaganda, telling them not to trust white teachers. Mrs. Jones got into trouble with Rev once for passing two failing girls because they had sewn her a pants

"I almost *fo'teen*! I gonna get save if it's the *last thing I do!*" she almost yelled with typical determined stubbornness.

Lucinda Smalls died while Salvation was happening to her, they say. This took place during the school year that I was teaching at Calloway. Nathaniel Smalls, Lucinda's cousin, says that during the prayers for her (she had a tumor in her head), she saw Jesus' face and saw her Father coming for her and died right there at the altar amidst a frenzy of shouted prayers and wailing gospels and hand clapping and screaming.

"Who's your boyfriend, Avis?"

She used to say "Sheeeeeeeeeeeuh! I ain' mess wid them swell head, stupid boys. I ain' got de time."

Now she says evasively, "I ain' know. You know Willamena Bacon? Ernest sister?"

"Yes," I say.

Very low-voiced and confidential, Avis tells me, "She have a baby," with shy pride in the good news.

"Oh, that's nice. Is she in school?"

"Yeh, she in school. And Rev'rend Simmons' daughter, you hear 'bout her?"

"No." Rev, as everybody called him, was the principal at Avis' school when I taught there.

"They buryin her *tuh-morrah!*" Avis can be very dramatic.

"What happened!"

"She bun kill in a car accident."

Now I feel sorry for Rev, though I bitterly resented him while teaching

suit. But apart from that, no one supervised either Jenson or Jones. They were both kin to Rev.

I alternated between bitterness, frustration, helplessness, rage at Rev, rage at the county, utter depression, and sorrow for the predicament of these children. Finally, some of the other teachers and I took action. We started making phone calls, writing letters. We went to board meetings — white school board, black parents. In my notes from one meeting, I wrote: "The superintendent is very explanatory about the 'problems' he faces. He's good at letting 'you people' know such things as 'expenses are going up; it takes a lot of money to run our schools, much less make repairs.'"

Indeed. School money doesn't exist in Banks County because proper-

at Calloway. He was a great preacher and a formidable community leader, but he should never have been a principal, however well-meaning. Rev. called us Philistines and Judases when we disagreed with him, and sometimes said of failing students: "Oh, pass em on, pass em on, ain' no use in holdin that child back."

Avis is doing better in school now; she reports A's and B's, especially in English. She had refused to learn much from me, but, in a way, I gave her a lesson in compassion, although she would not know that word for it. It was a breathless, gummy, gnat-filled afternoon — heat flowed in dizzy waves like fainting spells, and the trailer-classroom walls were fairly sweating. Frustrated to the snapping point, sick at the behavior of 7-A and my inability to get past their pride to teach them how to read, I put my head down on my desk (after they had left), and cried.

Avis, still there, came up and touched my shoulder. *Punch*, like that, with one finger. She would not get too close.

In a strong reproving tone, she said, "You ought to know better than to let them chil'ren make you cry, Miss McLeod."

"Well, Avis," I said, "some of these children are bad and they must not want to learn."

"Yeh," she said. "But ain' *none* of em over *thirteen years old*. You shouldn't hab let em make you cry."

I recall another cry, and a lesson given to me — by Avis' grandfather.

ty taxes are exceedingly low. The reason is obvious; many of the legislators own large tracts of land and they won't tax themselves. One high school of affluent, middle-class, mostly white students formed its *own* school board to raise funds and decide policy.

We wrote a list of grievances to the school board, including such things as unusable bathrooms, lack of materials, a deteriorating physical plant, lack of organization (bells never rang, schedules went haywire, there was no communication by principal with teachers), arbitrary promotion of students, and the rehiring of incompetent teachers.

All that happened was that Rev was fired. Or rather, he resigned, effective the end of the term. Of course, he took it personally, and his last few

There was a school board meeting. Two-hundred-fifty black people, silent, demanding in their solidity and quiet patience. Twelve board members, white, nervous, discussing business, dodging our requests for the heat to be fixed, the bells to ring, the clocks to work, desks, books, pencil sharpeners. After the meeting, I cried. Rev. Brown came up to me and said paternally, "What's the matter with you, little lady?"

I couldn't speak. Another teacher answered for me: "She's upset because these children don't get what they deserve."

He looked down at me with all the wisdom and pain of history in his mild face, and with sympathy for my naivete, and said mockingly, but kindly, as if teaching a child the first hard lesson in growing up, "Lord, Lord. *You* gonna get em what they deserve?" So I had climbed down off my white charger in shame.

Avis and I have been friends every month or two for a couple of years. She always reaches me wherever I'm living. "Hey," she greets me, voice cautious, but confident as if this call is going to please me no end. It usually does. Bad memories of the backward perverse system of twisted personalities, selfish motives, and political chicanery that was education in that county, of bitter hostilities and constant frustration, disappear into the crackling of the long-distance line.

"Well hi, Avis! What's new?"

And she tells me. □

— Harriet McLeod

months were ones of vengeance against the teachers who had complained to the board.

My memory is haunted by two events of the spring that I doubt I can ever efface. I took my classes on a field trip to the museum in Charleston. That is, all my classes but 7-A. They had been unruly for three weeks, and had done no work. When we returned, the classroom had been turned upside down. Books were strewn all over the floor, some torn in half; all my desk drawers were emptied; the bulletin board was ripped down.

7-A remained obstinately bad through the last week of school. No one was clear about the exam schedule. Although Rev had scheduled exams to last three days – Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday – he also told us that final report cards were to be handed out in homeroom Tuesday morning. You figure it out. We tried and never succeeded. Plus, students who still owed money in fees were not to receive their report cards at all.

Tuesday morning, 7-A gathered around me. Report cards were very important to them. I called the names, but kept the cards of those students who owed money, and told them how much was due. Most of 7-A owed fees. They protested, more and more loudly, and crowded around, yelling and fussing. One boy snatched his report card from my hands. Another threw a book at me and it hit me in the head. They slapped the report cards to the floor. They punched and hit me.

As I bent to retrieve the report cards, somebody pushed me to the floor. "Oh look at that lady! Heeeee, hee hee! She fall down."

I ran. They followed me, yelling taunts and insults. Laughing. I ran to the car, hysterical, rolled up the windows and locked the doors. Kids crowded around to see what was the matter. One or two came up with appeal written on their faces, and knocking on the glass, pleaded with me: "Please, Miss, I didn't, I didn't do anything. Them children bad."

I sobbed and shook for hours, and now, as I allow myself to recall this, I cry again.

I never returned.

The good times I had with my kids are almost overpowered by that blinding memory. But some images stand



I miss those kids, their innocence, their decency and manners, their pureness of feeling. Avis reminds me. I haven't forgotten.

out like the big yellow letters that spelled LANGUAGE on the collage we made across one wall of the trailer. Like Elaine's poem: "If I die bury me deep. Lay a book upon my feet. Tell Miss McLeod I gone to rest. But I be back to take her test." And the image of the time I watched the same sweet girl flinch as she received five licks on her palm from Rev. I see myself telling June, "You've gotten so tall!" and her reply, "How high I get?" Jackie saying, "You give us a little minute to study?" And David saying, "Miss McLeod, it's a good thing you got a boyfriend." "Why, David?" And Joe answering, "Cause David, he be tap dancin in yo' heart!"

There was Ventphis and his *Star Trek* script that would rival any on television. Marty, the eighth grader from New York with an IQ of 150, explaining to me the feminine quality of the sea and the old man's lover-like relationship to her. Benjamin's answer to the question, "What do you want to learn?": "I want to learn everything there is."

Finally, a letter from one in 7-A:

Miss McLeod I am sorry for the way I act in your class but I think the devil make me do that but He ain't going to do that no more. When you took the children on that trip and when you get back the

class was mess up but you think we did it but we didn't. I am tell you the truth. I am afraid I might not pass. I just get two books from you and that's my math and language. I didn't get no social studies, spelling, science. I am closing my letter but I am not through away my love I got for you Miss McLeod. I just want you to remember m, remember e, but most of all, remember me. Love ya, love ya, I hope you love me, Adell.

There remain some hardworking, dedicated teachers at Calloway. And a few things have changed. The new principal is doing a better job, although at first he was as incapable as Rev. The building looks better because the parents worked hard for six consecutive Saturdays, cleaning and painting the entire inside. But I doubt that the county will ever go so far as to build a new school.

And the worst teachers, Rev. Jenson, Mrs. Jones and the assistant principal are still there, the first still falling asleep, and the second still poisoning the kids' minds.

I miss those kids, their innocence, their decency and manners, their pureness of feeling. Avis reminds me. I haven't forgotten. Calloway is far away for me now. But the children are still there.



BOOK REVIEWS

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In Search of the Silent South: Southern Liberals and the Race Issue, by Morton Sosna. Columbia University Press, 1977. \$11.95.

When Griffin Bell claimed during his confirmation hearing that he had worked quietly for desegregation "behind the scenes," someone remarked that it must have been mighty crowded back stage during the days of "massive resistance." Morton Sosna's study reveals just how thin the ranks of Southern liberalism actually were during the reign of Jim Crow. A handful of white liberals from George Washington Cable to Lillian Smith appealed to a "Silent South" to end racial injustice; they believed that a majority of their fellow white Southerners shared their conviction that something had to be done to improve the lot of blacks. Bound to the white South by ties of kinship, religion and culture, it was psychologically necessary for them to believe in the existence of a Silent South, even though they were

often only tolerated as eccentrics, if not persecuted as heretics. Sosna argues that the liberals' precarious position in Southern society and their sense of the uniqueness of Southern culture caused them to resent Northern criticism of the region and to claim a sort of proprietary right to set the pace and tone of racial protest.

Sosna classifies white Southern liberals as all those who took some public stand against the racial status quo. Before 1920, a "liberal" was someone who favored a policy of uplift of blacks within the framework of white supremacy. In the 1920s liberals concentrated on preventing lynching, and in the '30s they supported the New Deal's efforts to improve the economic status of poor whites as well as blacks. Not until World War II did the liberals face substantial pressure from black leaders and Northern liberals to criticize segregation *per se*.

The book portrays the drama of the liberal as an "island of tolerance in a sea of hate." In the first chapter Cable's appeal to the Silent South goes unheeded and he is forced to leave the region, perceived by most Southern whites as a traitor who had sided with Northern critics. Sosna then sketches the development of the most important network of Southern liberals, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, founded in 1919 under the leadership of Will Alexander, a Methodist minister, in response to a wave of lynchings and riots. Sosna traces the entry of Alexander and other liberals into the New Deal and describes their largely unsuccessful attempts to broaden the base of Southern liberalism by enlisting poor whites and

blacks in a coalition that would fuse the cause of racial justice with an attack on poverty in the South.

The climax of Sosna's tale comes in the 1940s when Southern white liberals argued over whether to come out publicly against segregation or to stick with the older policies of gradualism, education and economic progress. Having dispassionately traced the vacillating course of the mainstream Southern liberals in the 1940s, Sosna introduces Lillian Smith in a final chapter to administer the *coup de grace* to her more timid brethren such as Howard Odum and Virginius Dabney. Like Cable, Smith appears as a voice crying in the wilderness, an "evangelist" summoning white Southerners to heed the best in their own religious and cultural heritage.

The book's strength lies in its recognition of the diversity and complexity of Southern liberalism, and Sosna's narrative is an admirable blend of detachment and sympathy. As he makes his case, the author carefully plots the intellectual assumptions and political positions of the liberals. He is adept at using the small but telling detail, and avoids easy adjectives like "patronizing" or "condescending" in describing liberal behavior. And he gives a particularly sensitive treatment to the religious sources of Southern liberal conviction. In his most impressive chapters, Sosna offers us balanced portraits of the sociologist Howard Odum, the aristocratic editor Virginius Dabney, and the writer Lillian Smith. In many instances, his careful scholarship illuminates the differences between the liberals' public and private stances.

Despite his perceptive analysis of the moral dimension of Southern liberalism, Sosna ignores the economic and social factors so critical to an adequate explanation of the liberals' relation to Southern society. In particular, he leaves the relationship between the liberals and the business elite, North and South, virtually unexplored, and fails to explain why the South's so-called "best people" were alienated from the "liberal" position on race and poverty under the New Deal.

Sosna's definition of liberalism solely in terms of racial views (and not economic policies) only works if history is read *backward* from the *Brown* decision. It does not explain the economic and political conflicts of

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

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the '30s. As a consequence, Southern New Dealers in Congress such as Hugo Black and Maury Maverick are given short shrift in Sosna's book. Poor whites are portrayed as the thralls of demagogues or the objects of liberal concern — not as participants in political protests which forced liberals to respond. The concept of the "demagogue" (a central image in the minds of liberals) is never defined, nor are adequate distinctions made between "demagogues" with populist economic leanings and those with business support.

In pointing to black support for Jimmy Carter's campaign, Sosna ends

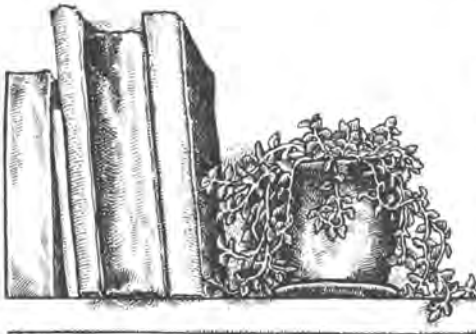
his book with the suggestion that "Carter's election to the presidency must be rewarding to those who, like Lillian Smith, believed in a Silent South. The seed first planted by George Washington Cable back in 1885 took a long time to germinate and mature. It may just be beginning to produce its best fruit."

That the Protestant evangelical tradition common to Carter and Daddy King can provide a powerful source of moral conviction on race relations is undeniable. But that Southern liberalism should come to power with Bert Lance, Griffin Bell and Charles Kirbo as Silent Partners is

perhaps something less than a cause for jubilation. And it is by no means a strange fruition of the traditional dependence of Southern liberals upon the "best people" of the South as allies against the grosser forms of racism.

Still, Southern historians may be excused a certain need for optimism, and Sosna has significantly elevated our understanding of this fascinating subject. His book should engage the attention of readers interested in the strange career of Southern liberalism and its ever-present mythology.

— Walter A. Jackson



Members of the Tribe, by Richard Kluger. Doubleday, 1977. 470 pp. \$10.00.

"I am an American. No other loyalty interferes. My nation is the United States. My race is the Caucasian. My faith is Judaism."

— Seth Adler
Members of the Tribe

Members of the Tribe is an outsider's book, written by one about another. Richard Kluger, from Paterson, N.J., and author of *Simple Justice*, a monumental work on the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, has intertwined and fictionalized the rise of the Coca-Cola empire and the Leo Frank case, transposing both from Atlanta to Savannah. His story focuses on one Seth Adler, a teenage immigrant from New York who grows to adulthood in south Georgia, ultimately becoming the ingenious legal counsel for the Jubilee soft drink company and, much later, the embattled defense attorney for Noah Berg, a kinsman falsely accused of killing a young white girl in a Jubilee bottling plant.

In real life, Leo Frank, a supervisor for the National Pencil Co. in Atlanta,

was framed, railroaded and lynched in connection with the basement bludgeoning of Mary Phagan, a young employee of the company. Apart from the judicial system — particularly, a politically ambitious and ethically unscrupulous prosecutor — the principal villain in the affair was Tom Watson, who led the nearest thing to a pogrom in American Jewish history. Watson (portrayed by name and with his own words in *Members of the Tribe*) whipped up the xenophobia of the white populace of Georgia in the pages of his journal, the *Jeffersonian*, until neither a fair trial nor a commuted death sentence was possible. The one-time Populist and promoter of a racial alliance between rural and urban working classes had become soured by repeated defeat at the polls, and by 1913 he was ready to gorge himself on the corpse of Leo Frank and ride a wave of anti-semitism to the US Senate.

There are some problems with *Members of the Tribe*, problems of structure (which is somewhat disjointed) and of voice (which is confused at times). Aside from the geographic setting, certain particulars of the case have been altered in the novel; Leo Frank was a Jew of German rather than Polish origin; in reality, it was his employer who was a Jew related by marriage, rather than any of his attorneys; and the reputations of both Leo Frank and Mary Phagan are somewhat besmirched in their fictional representations.

There is no reason why an historical novelist can't make such alterations, although some Southern Jewish reviewers have objected. The one alteration that I did object to was Kluger's

decision to turn suspicion away from the likely killer, who was black (see *A Little Girl is Dead* by Harry Golden), and toward two white gentile company officials. A change of this kind makes a good deal of difference, given the political upheaval surrounding the case, and in making the change the author slides away from some of the key issues. For liberal readers of 1977, it is far more convenient to have as the villain an educated, white Southerner who keeps silent while a Jew is convicted, rather than a poor, semi-literate black janitor who keeps silent to save himself from lynching — or worse — for having killed a young white girl.

But Kluger well understands other forces at work in the Frank case. As the "Berg" trial begins to lose touch with reality, Seth's daughter Judith asks an Atlanta newspaper about the "obsessive interest" in the case.

"Well now, I'll tell ya," he said. "Partly it's because a little white working girl got killed, and that always plucks the heart strings. And partly it's because the defendant is a Jew and a Yankee, and you couldn't hardly have a more villainous combination. I mean niggers get strung up a dime a dozen for lookin' cross-eyed at a white woman's butt, so there'd be no novelty in that. And a poor-white boy'd be likely to get a lot of sympathy. People'd figure he was just bein' playful or tryin' to spread his oats and the girl became too fidgety. But a genuine Jew? Why, that's a twist. Jews are exciting. They're foreign — even if they're not, they seem that way in most of Georgia — and smart and rich and look kinda spooky, like Noah Berg. Everybody knows they're tightfisted and money-crazy, no matter what-all nice things get said about 'em. And

o' course his being a Yankee Jew to boot makes him just perfect to hate. On top of which, most of these people around the state got nothin' to do this time o' year except sit and whittle and watch the crops grow by day and count June bugs by night. It's quiet as a lizard out there, so all they do is talk about the murder of this poor innocent girl-child and how Berg's eyes're gonna pop right out of his skull when the noose is sprung."

The only element missing is that, by changing the ownership of the fictional facility where the killing took place to native and gentile from Northern and Jewish, Watson's railing about the intrusive and exploitative entry of capital into the South's economy cannot be included.

Still, Richard Kluger tells a good story in the form of an Adler family memoir. Seth's story telescopes the traditional Southern Jewish saga of the peddler with a pack who, in the space of a generation, grows from merchant to magnate and, in turn, fathers a second, more affluent generation which enters the professions and, perhaps, politics.

Young Seth begins his career in south Georgia managing a rural feed and general store where, he recalls, he

is viewed "as a co-author of the Old Testament and the living embodiment of the Mosaic Code, in admired contrast to all those other dark-eyed, black-capped, nigger-coddling, lucre-gouging, Christ-killing *momzers* out there." At about the same time, he writes his brother in New York that "what my Jewishness does is to distinguish me. It tells me what is just and right no matter what or how the heathens holler...it means a kind of living martyrdom...."

Regardless of how tightly Southern Jews wrapped themselves in a flag — American, Confederate or whatever — there remains an element of doubt. Judith Adler says that even as her father grew wealthy and respected by his gentile clients and friends:

No day passed, I suspect, in which he did not remind himself he was a Jew in a menacing un-Jewish world and that unless he conducted himself with ultimate decorum, he would be denied the professional and social acceptance he enjoyed. That it was a limited acceptance and, beneath the courtesies and civilities of the region, a precarious one, he did not doubt. And while he never felt stigmatized by his differentness, he insisted, he was incapable of ever putting it out of his mind altogether.

The definitive, unflinching account of Jews in the South — in fact or fiction — has yet to be written. Eli Evans, a bona fide insider, has produced one of the best works, *The Provincials: A History of Jews in the South*, and is reportedly now at work on an historical novel based on the life of Judah P. Benjamin, the Jewish member of Jefferson Davis' cabinet. Yet even Evans' work tends toward apologia. On the other hand, Harry Golden, an "outsider" who has lived in North Carolina for more than a quarter of a century, has been writing with increasing acuity on the subject, but with decreasing depth, as the years go by. In *Our Southern Landsmen*, he writes of Savannah in the Revolutionary period that "the first Jewish settlement in the South is important...because this Jewish community along the Hamacraw" offers a look in "microcosm."

"The Jews," Golden writes, "were important not because they were Jews, but because they were dispossessed who, once settled in Savannah, became proprietors."

— Mark Pinsky



Certain People, by Stephen Birmingham. Little, Brown and Company, 1977. 301 pp. \$8.95.

Near Greensboro, North Carolina, before a modern black bourgeoisie could be said to exist, Charlotte Hawkins Brown founded and administered Palmer Memorial Institute, the first high-brow secondary school for the children of high-brow blacks to be established in the South. It is appropriate that Stephen Birmingham began his exploration of the black upper crust by considering the impact that authoritarian educators had on that elite stratum's development. Aside from the well-known problems of self-hatred, confused identity and nagging feelings of inferiority, perhaps the most devastating psychological wounds suffered by the emer-

gent black bourgeoisie (and black people in general) have been caused by the despotic behavior of black leaders and the authoritarian structure of the black institutions they created.

Certain People represents in many ways the culmination of a critical trend initiated by E. Franklin Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957) and extended into the sixties by Nathan Hare's droll *Black Anglo-Saxons* (1965). Like the two previous books, *Certain People* is a work of limited conception and superficial execution. But while Frazier's and Hare's works are sociological, *Certain People* is simply journalistic. In fact, the book is based mainly on interviews. Even in spots where Birmingham makes unflattering remarks about the lifestyle of some prominent black person, it must be remembered that he got his information from the horse's mouth. These people seem so eager to flaunt their opulence and good breeding that they occasionally play the dozens on themselves.

Like the work of Frazier and Hare, this book is overly burdened

with gossip. It is, however, often the sort of gossip that can be informative. An example:

...as black preachers prospered many of them bought or built their own churches, and rented them back to their congregations, thus providing themselves with a tidy source of income. This is currently the case with the Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr., of Atlanta who owns his Ebenezer Baptist Church. The rent his congregation pays him has made Dr. King well-to-do.

So much for the *house of the Lord*. Birmingham also devotes a great deal of space to delineating the genealogy of nearly every rich, famous and black (and sometimes not-so-rich, famous, or even black, for that matter) person he interviewed. The result is a style of reportage dense with references to third cousins and other minute relations which aren't so much roots as they are the thickets that surround the family tree. Clearly, this book was intended to be read by the very kinds of people Birmingham writes about.

In *Certain People* we learn what famous white people consorted with

their slave women (never the other way around) to produce odd-colored batches of mixed breeds who sometimes were educated in New England schools. The book, in fact, is weighty with tales of mulatto good fortune, especially the cases which suggest an Horatio Alger story. These fair, keen-featured people came to establish an aristocracy of color within the segregated black communities, and Birmingham labels them the "Old Guard" of the black elite. Alongside this "Old Guard" and in some ways antagonistic to it, Birmingham describes a set of newly rich (*nouveaux riches*) darker colored blacks whose success is grounded in business, the professions, sports, and, quite possibly in some cases, criminal behavior.

In all his discussion of these elite blacks, some of whom he effortlessly describes as "leaders," Birmingham never quite makes clear just what political relation they bear to the mass of the black population. We are, however, treated to extraordinarily intimate views of the lifestyles of John Johnson and George Johnson (the unrelated *Ebony* and Afro-Sheen tycoons of Chicago), a peek at the frivolity of Molly Moon, noted matron of New York's smarter set, and a great deal of gratuitous information purporting to document philistinism among wealthy blacks. Although some of this latter information is very funny, it will strike some as low and mean.

Birmingham is at his best composing lively historical sketches and interviewing the people whose lives he seems to know so intimately. But when he plays social scientist, he drops into deep water. Part of the problem with his sociological speculations is the inadequate foundation upon which his work is built, namely Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie*. Whereas for Frazier the concept of *class* was narrowly economic, leading him to an assessment of black business enterprise, Birmingham wants to stuff the black elite into compartments of pure psychology.

Hence, according to him, "Class is not simply defined by money, material possessions, or even manners. It is more a matter of self-assurance, dignity, and a commonality of interests within a common organization." And although distinctions (perhaps because they exist only in the mind) are not perfectly clear at times, "...in the end, an upper class emerges from

people who have the deepest and most solid feelings of their own self-worth, and of the worth of their similarly situated and similarly thinking peers."

While this definition may jibe with Birmingham's liberal sensitivity, it is a mite unsatisfying to the eye of a lower-class black who understands his subordination to the elite as a distinctly *political* relationship derived not so much from what people may think of themselves, as from a social order based on the inequitable distribution of wealth and power. That takes us back to Charlotte Brown, the authoritarian black leader.

Considering that Birmingham is white, his intimate portrait of the black elite suggests that the outer sanctum of the class, its veneer of neurotic symptoms, has been exploited to the fullest. Interest in the foibles and foolishness of the black bourgeoisie

will hopefully decline and make way for a more profoundly critical analysis of class relations within the black community. Birmingham has added no depth to what we knew, chiefly from Frazier, of the black bourgeoisie — its roots in miscegenation, its bizarre consumption patterns, its capricious set of mind and thinly veiled self-loathing. There are various highlights, certain sensational revelations, but those items are the stock-in-trade of exposé journalism, which is essentially Birmingham's field.

Certain People captures our interest by claiming to address the need for serious study of the social role of black elites in the contemporary United States. But in the end, reading this book is like going to a movie. You may learn a few things, but mainly you're just entertained.

—Harold Barnette

Potter, Vidalia

Vidalia Potter (who often as not
put sheet to show and quilt underneath
when she made the bed and always forgot

the social worker woman's name
and made coffee that went to waste
every time the woman came,

who fretted about a festering sore
on one of the legs of one of the girls
and walked at six to the Safeway store

for bottle drinks — Dr. Pepper,
Strawberry Creme, a 7 Up —
bread and bologna for supper,

who never was sick and never was well,
whose man had a job at the chicken plant
and told time by the quitting bell,

who loved her children as best she could
and washed the leg and swept the floor
sometimes and thought about the good

strong-smelling man who called her to bed
when he wasn't drunk and he wasn't tired)
never could get it fixed in her head
what the social worker said.

Miller Williams

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A Return Visit: Erskine Caldwell

by Bob Brinkmeyer

"Regional fiction," writes Erskine Caldwell, "has always been the lever-and-wedge of American Literature. More than any other kind of writing, it keeps the records for, and makes the interpretation of, the social and racial structure of the nation. It is the vivid history of the folkways of the country; it is the personal diary of the people." It comes as no surprise then that as a struggling writer in the 1930s, who had produced a number of short stories but no extended and significant piece of fiction, Caldwell would declare to himself: "I would never be able to write successfully about other people in other places until I had written the story of the landless and poverty-stricken families on East Georgia sand hills and tobacco roads." Driven by such determination, he sat down and wrote his masterpiece, *Tobacco Road*.

Erskine Caldwell was born in Moreland, Georgia. His father was a pastor in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church; consequently the family hopped from small town to small town over the South, following the church's assignments. Early on young Erskine began accompanying his father, the Reverend Ira S. Caldwell, on trips into the countryside to visit the church members and folk met along the way. Here Erskine came face-to-face with the bonds of poverty which shackled the tenant farmers and sharecropping families to lives of

The Literature of Memory: Modern Writers of the American South, by Richard Gray. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977. 377 pp. \$16.00.

Richard Gray is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Literature at the University of Essex, England, and a brave man. For with *The Literature of Memory* he ventures into territory already well surveyed by such distinguished critics as Louis Rubin,

physical and spiritual deprivation. Erskine remembered his father's words on leaving one family's miserable shack: "That poor chap back there hasn't got a chance in the world to get out of the rut he's in as long as he lives. He's as bad off as a toad in a post hole. It's a disgrace that human beings have to live like that. And all those children. What's to become of them when they grow up? Be toads in post holes, too?"

Perhaps in part because his family had always been on the move, Caldwell was always a particularly restless and observant person. He could never stay in one place too long; he was addicted to travel and experiencing places and lifestyles different from his own. While attending a small church-supported college in South Carolina, he spent his weekends hopping freights to get as far away as he could and still be back by Monday morning. And later in life, between long bouts at the writing table, he would travel around the nation, and when he was more wealthy, the world. His eyes were always open: with Margaret Bourke-White he collaborated on several volumes of photographic essays with texts on different cultures.

But throughout all his travels and wanderings, the South, and particularly its poverty-stricken countryside of tenant farmers, kept its hold on Caldwell's imagination and his social conscience. He was both appalled and fascinated by Southern lifestyles and folkways. Time and again he returned to Georgia and the Deep South states, apparently driven by the desire to experience firsthand the deprivation of the poor white farmers so he could later tell their stories in his writings. "In my mind," he writes, "there was a foreordained story to be told, and it had to be related as the people themselves knew it." But Caldwell

Cleath Brooks, Malcolm Cowley and C. Vann Woodward. Their perceptive and graceful studies — particularly Rubin's *Writers of the Modern South: The Faraway Country* — establish a high standard for anyone examining Southern literature in its historical and cultural setting.

Inevitably, much in Gray's book is familiar. His thesis that the best writers of the Southern Renaissance were obsessed both with the history and myths of their region and with the

found he could not write about the South while living there. Life under Southern skies was depressing and enervating: "I could not become accustomed to the sight of children's stomachs bloated from hunger and seeing the ill and aged too weak to walk to the fields to search for something to eat." He had to articulate his vision from a distance. Most of his works on the South were written in hotel rooms in New York City or in Maine, where he kept a house.

It was there that he wrote *Tobacco Road*, a disturbing novel which caught a good number of readers off guard with its grim portrayal of the family of Jeeter Lester, a down-and-out sharecropper too poor even to buy food, let alone the fertilizer and seed necessary for planting. The characters in *Tobacco Road* are so earthy and so crude (the novel opens with Jeeter's daughter seducing her sister's husband Lov — while the Lester family looks on apathetically — so Jeeter can sneak up and steal Lov's sack of turnips), that many readers are naturally tempted either to dismiss them all either as too disgusting for words or as merely comic grotesques. That Caldwell had something else in mind is evident and is revealed in some comments he made after the novel was completed: "I wanted to tell the story of the people I knew in the manner in which they actually lived their lives from day to day and year to year, and to tell it without regard for fashions in writing and traditional plots. It seemed to me that the most authentic and enduring materials of fiction were the people themselves, not crafty plots and counterplots designed to manipulate the speech and actions of human beings."

Unfortunately many readers have refused to extend any compassion to the Jeeter family because of the

"idea of history" as well seems indisputable. Few would quarrel with his emphasis on "the doubleness of the regional tradition" — the plantation South versus the South of the sturdy yeoman farmer — and on the tension which that duality produced. His praise for Robert Penn Warren and his conclusion that of all the writers, William Faulkner comes closest to encompassing and communicating "the Southern experience" will draw general assent.

family's apparent inability to exhibit any normal human responses, either to other people or their own situation. One critic, Robert Jacobs, has said that, "They are devoid of modesty, shame, and human feeling;" and he goes on to declare the novel a misdirected but triumphant comic novel, written in the Southwest humor tradition of brawls and violence. Likewise in the stage version of the novel, which had one of the longest runs ever on Broadway, we find another comic interpretation — an interpretation which actually distressed the author.

Does this widely accepted critical interpretation of *Tobacco Road* as a comic story mean that the novel, written apparently out of compassion for the downtrodden and for the purpose of gaining sympathetic support for them, is an utter failure in its design? No, I think not; I see it more as a case of misdirected reading, which reveals certain basic characteristics of the American reading public. To begin with, *Tobacco Road* is not a true comic novel; it contains humor, certainly, but the humor is of a dark sort which reveals the levels of baseness which people are driven to when social forces crush in on them from all sides. Caldwell's fiction differs widely from what we think of as typical "Southern" writing (epitomized by Faulkner) which is deeply personal and highly dramatic, often probing far into the individual consciousness and touching on the terrible questions of sin and expiation. *Tobacco Road* is more like the work of the American naturalists (exemplified by Frank Norris and Upton Sinclair) who placed more of their emphasis on the enormity of the controlling forces of nature and society while portraying characters, with sympathetic detachment, as the pawns rather than the masters of their environment. *Tobacco*

Gray organizes his study chronologically and topically. An introductory chapter on "The Social and Historical Context" explores the roots of both agrarian rhetoric and the myth of the genteel Old South through a brief examination of William Wirt, John Taylor of Caroline, John C. Calhoun, and John Pendleton Kennedy. After discussing Ellen Glasgow as a transitional figure, he moves on to a consideration of the Nashville Agrarians, particularly John Crowe Ransom,

Road works as a comic novel only if the Lesters were actually in control of their lives, if their grotesque manners were merely absurd idiosyncrasies. But the Lesters are the hopeless, stunted victims of poor soil and a predatory social system. Caldwell underscores the cruelty of their plight when he describes Captain John, Jeeter's former boss, who gave up the land, leaving his sharecroppers to go it alone without any farm supplies or the backing necessary for credit:

Rather than attempt to show his tenants how to conform to the newer and more economical methods of modern agriculture, which he thought would have been an impossible task from the start, he sold the stock and implements and moved away. An intelligent employment of his land, stocks, and implements would have enabled Jeeter, and scores of others who had become dependent on Captain John, to raise crops for food, and crops to be sold at a profit. Co-operative and corporate farming would have saved them all.

While the grotesqueness of the characters in the novel makes them comic in the sense that they are a far cry from what most people consider normal, they should not be seen as laughable country bumpkins, like the folks in "Li'l Abner." On the contrary, the Lesters and their cohorts live in ignorance and are driven by animal lust because they have nothing else; they are outcasts from a society that nonetheless preys on them. We see this most clearly when Jeeter, Dude, and Bessie make their disastrous trip to Augusta. To regard these people as comic figures is to deny Caldwell's emphasis on the destructive forces of society which are always on the rampage. A comic interpretation is an easy way out, a way to disregard the plight of a segment of our population by confining them to the role of

Warren, Allen Tate, and Donald Davidson. Next Gray treats those writers who celebrate "The Good Farmer" — Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Erskine Caldwell, and Thomas Wolfe — and those like Caroline Gordon, Eudora Welty, and Katherine Anne Porter who deal with the "Old Plantation Myth." Following the obligatory chapter on Faulkner ("The Individual Talent: William Faulkner and the Yoknapatawpha Novels"), Gray concludes with a look at Southern writing

comic grotesques, much as white America overlooked the plight of blacks by relishing the image of "funny darkies," perpetuated for so long in productions like "Amos and Andy." Even more significantly, to read *Tobacco Road* as comic is to deny one's own responsibility, as a member of the American society, for the plight of those who don't fit into the American Dream. Caldwell asks readers of *Tobacco Road* to accept responsibility for the creation of the Lester family and those like them, to see them not as an exception, but as the normal product of an oppressive social system. Is it any surprise then that the American masses reduced this social commentary into "Hee-Haw" comedy?

Caldwell's other important novels about the South, *God's Little Acre*, *Journeyman*, and *Trouble in July*, are altogether of a different sort than *Tobacco Road*. For one thing, they are not about powerless, crushed-down tenant farmers; we find in these other novels more "normal" characters, or at least characters whose dilemmas are more recognizably similar to our own. These works are closer to the mainstream of Southern fiction, and, with the exception of the strike episodes in *God's Little Acre*, lack the emphasis on oppressive social forces at work. They are fast-moving, exciting tales, often bordering on melodrama; they are good, but not great.

Caldwell is right to credit so much of his development as a writer to his compulsion to unfold the real story of the tenant farmers of east Georgia. For it was only in telling their story — in his own struggles to confront the poverty which lay at the heart of his homeland and which called to question so much of the American way — that Caldwell was able to create a truly enduring work of art. □

since World War II. Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, and James Dickey he dismisses as imitative, limited and overrated. Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor, and William Styron, however, are "easily the most distinctive, exciting and genuinely inventive [writers] to emerge in the South over the past twenty or thirty years." Of these three, Styron, he believes, is the best.

Gray's explications of Glasgow, the Fugitive poets, Warren, Wolfe, and Faulkner are perceptive but, like the general theme and scope of his book, unoriginal. He does offer new insights in his treatment of writers like Roberts, Gordon, Porter, and McCullers, writers who are normally listed more often than analyzed. Each receives a critical but fair appraisal in *The Literature of Memory*. Gray also devotes considerable attention to the frequently neglected Southwestern humorists, Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, author of *Georgia Scenes*, and George Washington Harris, creator of *Sut Lovingood*, and traces their influence on both Caldwell and Faulkner.

Gray is provocative, too, in his reading of individual works. His

comments on Allen Tate's *The Fathers* and Wolfe's *The Hills Beyond* may send readers scurrying to the library for copies of those books. His staunch defense of Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* is certain to elicit dissent as are his strictures against *Lie Down in Darkness*.

Many will also question Gray's flat assertion that there are no black writers "of any stature" who can be called "Southern." (Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and Alice Walker spring immediately to mind as evidence to the contrary.) Others may wonder at his rather casual dismissal of Walker Percy, Reynolds Price, and Randall Jarrell. And some will no doubt think him too hard on Tennessee Williams.

Judging by his extensive bibliography, Englishman Gray read nearly everything he could lay his hands on that had to do with Southern literature and history. Yet his scholarship contains several puzzling omissions and errors. Gray admits that he was not able to make use of Joseph Blotner's *Faulkner: A Biography* (1974). Unfortunately, he also missed Virginia Spencer Carr's biography of Carson McCullers, *The Lonely Hunter* (1975),

C. Vann Woodward's "Why the Southern Renaissance," *Virginia Quarterly Review* (1975), and the newest novel by Reynolds Price, *The Surface of Earth* (1975). In the absence of these titles, his book already seems dated.

Most of the errors are minor typographical slips, but the substitution of Henry W. Grady for Albert D. Kirwan as the co-author with Thomas D. Clark of *The South Since Appomattox* (pp. 306 and 364) is more serious. Grady had a lasting impact on the New South, but he certainly wasn't writing books about it in 1967!

Richard Gray poses no threat to the established masters of Southern literary criticism. At best his study supplements and amplifies their themes and insights. Specialists will probably want to own *The Literature of Memory*, but the general reader would do well to stick with Louis Rubin. Not only is his *Writers of the Modern South* shorter and better written than Gray's tome, but at \$2.45 for the paperback edition, it's also a lot cheaper.

— Cam Walker



My Soul is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered, by Howell Raines. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977. 472 pp. \$12.95.

A friend, a young German woman, says she was born at a time when most people in her country were concerned with obliterating the painful memories of World War II and the wholesale slaughter of Jews and dissidents. Incredibly, she knew nothing about the concentration camps and the murders until, at seventeen, she left her home in Hanover to seek work. A wealthy Jewish family living in Switzerland took her on as a companion for their daughter; and when they asked her if she, a German, had any qualms about working for Jews, she asked blankly, "What do you mean?"

Now, more than two decades after the US Supreme Court's landmark decision on school desegregation, twelve years after Selma's "Bloody Sunday," when Alabama state troopers and county police beat and gassed voting-rights marchers, nine long years after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. — can it be that many of us,

blacks as well as whites, have conveniently erased from our memories the terrible toll exacted during the early years of the civil rights movement? Some of us — those who were born during the '50s, who first knew of the battle for civil rights only as a shadowy and vaguely frightening thing — have never been presented with a comprehensive picture of the small acts that, taken together, made the movement. Now Howell Raines has produced a book that is so graphic and complete and fair (and almost incidentally, so moving) in its chronicling of the years of upheaval from 1955 until 1968, that it serves as a virtual textbook on the Deep South of that time.

Raines, formerly with the *Atlanta Constitution* and now the political editor of the *St. Petersburg Times*, took a year and a half to talk with the people who formed the movement: leaders like Ralph Abernathy, Fannie Lou Hamer, Andrew Young and Julian Bond; those who became their followers; and the opposition — J. B. Stoner, Bobby Shelton, and the rest. The ensuing oral history is more

forceful than anything Raines, or any other journalist, could have written. It is one thing for a writer to tell us that nonviolent demonstrators arrested during confrontations in Alabama and Mississippi suffered at the hands of their jailer; it is quite another to listen to Fannie Lou Hamer's account of a companion's beating.

They carried us on to the county jail . . . I started hearing screaming like I had never heard. And I could hear the sounds of the licks, but I couldn't see nobody . . . But anyway, she kept screamin', and they kept beatin' on her, and finally she started prayin' for 'em, and she asked God to have mercy on 'em, because they didn't know what they was doin'.

Raines has done a remarkable job in compiling and organizing the accounts that compose *My Soul is Rested*. (The title of the book comes from an exchange between Dr. King and an elderly black woman who was supporting the 1955-56 Montgomery bus boycott. When King told the woman that she was "too old to keep walking" with those who were protesting segregation on city buses, she replied, "Oh, no . . . my feet is tired, but my soul is rested.") He manages to make a difficult editing task seem altogether effortless and natural.

Raines begins the story with Mrs. Rosa Parks, the black woman whose refusal to move to the back of the bus sparked the Montgomery boycott; he concludes with Abernathy's curiously touching account of Dr. King's death. The material that spans the time between these points is as absorbing and carefully paced as that in any first-rate novel. We hear from the scoundrels as well as from the heroes; we are privy to the dissent and the depression and the terrible fear that plagued — but did not defeat — those who shaped the movement. And of course, we see the triumphs. In fact, the book is a real-life version of *Spoon River Anthology*. There is high drama here — and sorrow and laughter and hatred and great love.

Despite its length, *My Soul is Rested* is remarkably lean. We learn everything we should know about a given person or event without being overwhelmed by a distracting surfeit of dialogue or description. The work is eminently believable, and it is all the more valuable because the author has opted to sit back and allow those who made history to tell their own stories. Interviews

appear as soliloquies punctuated by questions and editorial asides that clarify murky points and provide background when needed. The only vital element that has been omitted is an index, something that is sorely needed in a book of this scope and caliber.

As a faithful rendering of a painful era, *My Soul is Rested* does not make for particularly comfortable reading. But reading Howell Raines' collection of oral history is imperative for everyone — especially white Southerners — who wants to know the whole truth about what is called the New South. For as Nannie Washburn, a wonderful working-class heroine from Alabama, told Raines, "History'll tell the truth on what the white man's done, and I'm ashamed . . . I walked for freedom, because I knew I'd never be free in white skin as long as the black people was in chains with black skin."

—Michelle Green



Black Workers in White Unions: Job Discrimination in the United States, by William B. Gould. Cornell University Press, 1977. 506 pp. \$20.00.

It's no secret, as Gould points out, that for most of its history, organized labor has systematically discriminated against black workers. Blacks were either excluded outright from union membership or segregated in special, "auxiliary" locals. Other equally devastating forms of discrimination included restricted admission to apprenticeship programs, nepotism, the denial of journeyman cards to qualified black nonunionists, maintenance of separate lines of promotion and seniority, discrimination in job referrals, providing black applicants and workers with false information about job conditions, and the exclusion of blacks from policy-making positions inside the unions.

Race discrimination, although typically American, seems especially offensive in the context of a labor movement, based upon broad egalitarian

principles and economic justice for the disadvantaged. *Black Workers in White Unions* records the doleful history of black-white relations in unions and documents "the continuing fundamental resistance of a substantial portion of the labor movement to the elimination of discrimination in employment."

Some union leaders contribute to the problem, according to Gould, by their refusal to vigorously recruit minority members and acknowledge and remedy the continuing effects of past discrimination. In 1961, for example, A. Philip Randolph, the Negro president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, as part of his running battle with white labor, submitted a memo to the executive council of the AFL-CIO which charged that some unions continued to segregate blacks or exclude them from leadership positions. The council responded with a twenty-page report denying the charges and blaming Randolph for causing "the gap that has developed between organized labor and the Negro community." George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, snorted that Randolph had "gotten close to those militant groups and he's given up cooperation for propaganda." Most of the mergers of segregated unions did not take place until later, after passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As for recruiting new minority members into the union, both Meany and Lane Kirkland, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, stated in 1972 that they were "unconcerned" about organizing new workers or the decline in union membership.

Gould believes that race discrimination in employment will not be eliminated until the law imposes — and labor and management accept — remedies that promise, in the language of the school desegregation cases, "realistically to work . . . and work now." Surely he is right, for the history of race relations teaches that equality is never achieved by moral suasion alone, nor by the recitation of principles.

As an example of the ineffectiveness of voluntary remedies for past employment discrimination, Gould cites the much-touted New York City Plan adopted in 1970 to provide jobs for minority-group workers in the construction industry. One of the

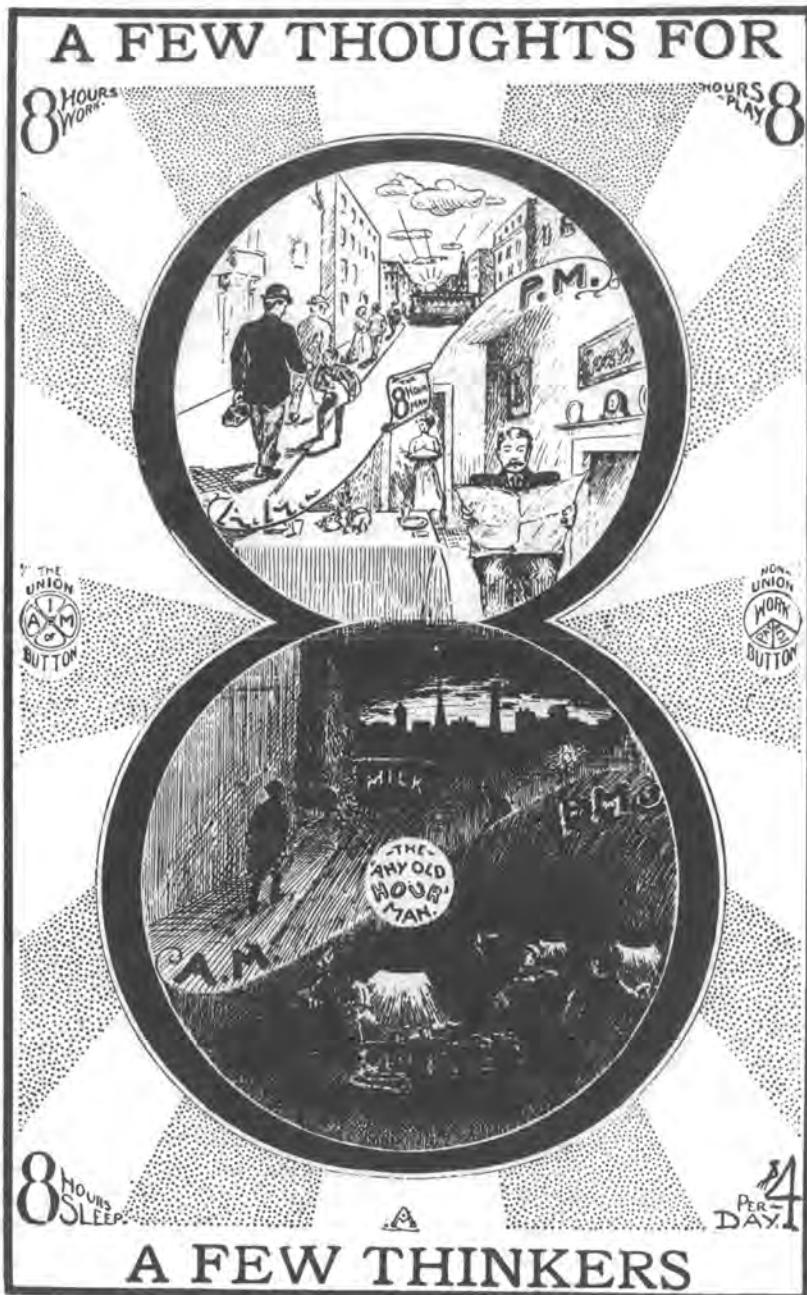
goals of the plan, which affected contracts involving federal funds, was to introduce 800 minority trainees during its first year of operation. The goal was never met because of the refusal of both trade unions and contractors to comply with on-the-job training programs. Eighteen months after its adoption, only 22 blacks and Puerto Ricans had actually been admitted into unions through operation of the plan. On January 12, 1973, Mayor John Lindsay announced the city's withdrawal from the plan, and asked the Department of Labor to set goals and timetables for employment of minority workers.

What does work to eliminate racial discrimination in employment? According to Gould, remedies that alter practices and make discrimination prohibitively expensive for both unions and employers: firmly monitored hiring quotas; monetary awards for victims of discrimination, including back pay, front pay and punitive damages; class-wide relief in Title VII litigation; training programs for minority workers; seniority awarded to those unlawfully denied employment; and equal access for blacks to leadership positions within the union.

Gould is a tough critic of organized labor, but he is neither a union buster

nor a stalking horse for management. The axe that he grinds is economic justice for blacks, and it cuts against management as well as unions. Equal employment opportunity is both a fundamental right of black workers and a necessary condition for solving any of the nation's racial problems. For example, as the economic status of minorities improves, resistance to integrated neighborhoods and schools will decline. Economic justice is the key to the color-blind society in which we as a country profess to believe.

— Laughlin McDonald



American Labor Songs of the Nineteenth Century, by Philip S. Foner. University of Illinois Press, 1975. 356 pp. \$13.95.

Conventional wisdom assumes that, with a few exceptions, the American labor song and ballad began in the early 1900s with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Now Philip Foner has shattered convention with a collection of over 550 songs culled principally from labor periodicals published well before 1900. They include ballads from before the Civil War, songs from the Knights of Labor, miners, Populists and socialists, and lyrics imported from the British Isles and Germany.

It is not clear whether all the verses collected here were originally meant to be sung. But Foner is interested in them not as a musicologist, but as a social historian. The songs and poems attract his attention for their insights into the causes of strikes and other labor actions, into the workers' reactions to them, and into labor's strategies for changing the political and economic system.

The pieces offered here provide a glimpse into the changing focus of the concerns of labor during the nineteenth century. The earlier songs reflect a broadly political point of view, one in which the interests of labor are identified less with specific reforms of working conditions than with the resolution of national issues. Early labor songs commented upon the War of 1812, the Nullification Crisis, and the Bank of the United States. Occasionally — more often after 1830 — working conditions were alluded to, but usually in an individualized, sentimental manner.

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Nevertheless, from the very earliest years of the nineteenth century, the lyrics produced by the incipient American labor movement manifested an awareness of the differences between workers and bosses, awareness which took many forms. Some verses proudly asserted the dignity and importance of working men and women. Others attacked the rich for their greed, their arrogance, and their efforts to subject working people to their own prejudices and economic advantage. Of attempts to impose industrial-capitalist discipline upon workers, one writer observed:

Then we've vigilant committees,
Who perambulate our cities,
And who overlook a peacock, yet will
shoot a wren,
And all their aim and end,
Is just to recommend
All work and no *play* to the Working Men.

Whatever contemporary scholars may conclude about the true nature of the American Revolution and the conservative aims of its leaders, there was no doubt in the minds of these early nineteenth century versifiers that the struggle for independence was a struggle for an egalitarian social and economic system. Any variation from this ideal was the work of latter-day "Aristocrats" who had gained control of the mechanisms of government and were manipulating them to their own ends. Songwriters freely invoked the heroes of the Revolution in defense of democratic ideals:

Call, call to mem'ry Washington,
Call Jefferson the sage;
Read, read the *Crisis*, *Common Sense*,
But blast the *Senate's* rage!

By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, some songwriters began to realize that it was not the corruption of a good system that was to blame, but the system itself; their songs demanded a fresh start. At the same time, calls for union among workers grew louder, and demands for labor reform grew more insistent. As the labor movement grew stronger after the Civil War, it concentrated its energies on securing the right to organize, better pay and shorter hours, and the broader political vision apparent in the earlier songs atrophied. Appeals to the ideals of the Revolution and attacks on the bank were replaced by "eight-hour" songs and cynical parodies of "America" and "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Foner's book, then, is not a collection of folksongs, but a sampling of the material from which folksongs are made. Like many traditional songs, the verses drew upon, and sometimes parodied, well-known songs and themes. Tunes in particular were usually lifted from popular songs already familiar to the audience. Stephen Foster songs, hymns, Civil War ballads — all were fair game. During the last half of the nineteenth century, the connection with Southern folk music is particularly evident in the frequent use of contemporary minstrel tunes, such as "Old Dan Tucker" and "Gwine Back to Dixie." None of Foner's songs, however, with the exception of those borrowed from previous folklorists' collections, are really a part of folk tradition. He has chosen primarily topical items and has excluded occupational ballads and other sorts of songs whose subject matter might have had a more enduring appeal to the nineteenth-century audience.

Songs written before the Civil War are arranged chronologically; those dating after the war, when the material became more abundant, are grouped according to their subjects or organizational origins — the Knights of Labor, miners, Populism and allied movements, and socialism. Besides songs written in America, Foner has included many lyrics imported from the British Isles and several which originated among German immigrants.

Annotation of the songs is minimal, and the brief commentary inserted between the groups of songs consists of a cursory, elementary history of American labor movements. A labor historian of Foner's stature should, it seems, offer more enlightening analysis. As it is, the songs and the comments repeat, rather than illumine, each other.

As an anthology and not a complete collection, this book should have been either shorter or more varied. Many of the songs are no more insightful than other sentimental poems of that era, while others are more repetitious than is necessary in a representative selection.

For scholars interested in nineteenth-century social history, or in the "folk process," this book will be of some use, but to general readers it will be less interesting. It fails to live up to the standards of its predecessors in the distinguished *Music in American Life Series*, which has included Archie Green's *Only A Miner* and Malone and

McCulloh's *Stars of Country Music*. It is, finally, a disappointment.

— Dell Upton



Earthly Possessions, by Anne Tyler. Alfred A. Knopf, 1977. 200 pp. \$7.95.

Anne Tyler's latest novel, *Earthly Possessions*, ends up as a much finer story than it begins. Having written, by the age of thirty-seven, six other novels and numerous short stories, Tyler is such an accomplished artist at this point that the process of writing — tacking down details with her inimitable deftness and humor, stretching and squeezing a sentence to hold her exact meaning, reeling off page after page of perfectly executed dialogue — now seems for her almost effortless. And during the first half of *Earthly Possessions* it's almost too easy. We are not quite beguiled by her skill out of our disappointment that the story hasn't caught fire; the characters are interestingly eccentric but not compelling. Maybe the radiant perfection of the last two novels, *Celestial Navigation* (1974) and *Searching for Caleb* (1976), has led us to expect too much; we wonder if Tyler isn't producing novels too fast these days.

But then, just over halfway through the book, Mindy pops into the scene, a seventeen-year-old unwed expectant mother. Tiny and superficially child-like, she spouts heartbreakingly funny clichés ("Hearts are my sign") and banal dreams. ("Priscillas, That's what we'll have. Priscillas, Everywhere but the living room; I think there we'll have fiberglass drapes of some kind. Gold, you know, or maybe avocado.") But Mindy's bright energy and her unexpected strengths and insights take the story, and the reader, by storm. In her presence, other characters come to life as well: Charlotte Emory, the

narrator-heroine; the unlucky bank robber, Jake Sims (Mindy's reluctant boyfriend) who has taken Charlotte as a hostage on his crazy flight down the East Coast from Maryland to Florida; and Charlotte's own family (fat mother, preacher husband, beautiful-absurd children, and houseful of stray boarders escaping from the outside world) which is revealed through a wonderful series of flashbacks.

The real heart of the book opens up when Jake and his hostage "rescue" Mindy from a home for unwed mothers in south Georgia, and flee towards Perth, Florida, where Jake hopes his whole messy life will be straightened out by his fine, cool, boyhood buddy, Oliver. But nothing ever works out the way Jake plans. Instead, Mindy grows up, and her painful, funny adolescence is crazily but convincingly compressed into the twenty-four hours of their drive into Florida. "I'm only young! I can't do this all by myself!" she sobs at one point, contemplating her approaching motherhood. But at last the emerging strengths and depths of this frail teenager force Jake to stop running from her. He realizes, in the words of another cliché, that they belong together.

Equally momentous things happen to the thirty-five-year-old Charlotte. Watching the struggle between Jake and Mindy (both of whom she sympathizes with but feels powerless to help) Charlotte examines her own flight from her life and loves. The

inscrutable evangelist she's married to; her mother locked in layers of fat; the stray child, Jiggs whom she's always held ready to give back to his real mother at any moment; all had seemed part of a life she had to escape. Away from them, she would discover new vistas of emotion and experience. Now she sees that isn't so.

The novel ends with Charlotte back in the decaying old brown house in Clarion, Maryland, the house she's lived in all her life, the house she was determined to escape. Things are much as they have been, chaotic and unsatisfactory. But Charlotte herself is changed, and no longer believes that a person can pass through life unscathed. Life is nothing but a journey, she sees now, and its funniness, its pains, failures and loves have to be encountered no matter where you go; even when you're kidnapped, there is the strangely vulnerable and pathetic robber to deal with. Charlotte's husband wonders now if the two of them ought not take a trip somewhere, to freshen them up, like she used to want to do. "But I tell him no," says Charlotte. "I don't see the need, I say. We have been traveling all our lives, we are traveling still. We couldn't stay in one place if we tried. Go to sleep, I say. And he does."

Anne Tyler has been criticized for not dealing with the current events and the political cataclysms of our time. We search her books in vain for any mention of Vietnam, the Ken-

nedys, Martin Luther King or Watergate. In this respect, she seems to me to resemble Jane Austen, who managed to sidestep the major historical events of her own time, such as the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon, in her effort to depict accurately English village life at the conclusion of the eighteenth century. Although she does not talk directly about the big events of contemporary life, Tyler does concern herself profoundly with peoples' states of mind and their behavior, which are shaped by those events. To this end she brings many of the same gifts for which Jane Austen is celebrated: a wit which delights even as it stings, a pen which shapes the English language precisely to its purpose, a flawless ear for regional mannerisms and conversation.

Tyler observes and reveals the condition of twentieth century Southern America with that very, very rare blend of sharpness and lightness of touch. "You mostly wear this little smile," says the robber in *Earthly Possessions* of the heroine, Charlotte Emory; he could be speaking of Anne Tyler as well. Modern American readers, obsessed with our national problems, may be mystified and even a trifle miffed to discover a true novelist of manners in our midst. But as Anne Tyler's growing fame testifies, some of us are learning to appreciate our good fortune.

— Chris Mayfield



Early Dark, by Reynolds Price. Atheneum, 1977. 140 pp. \$7.95.

Two places dominate the literary geography of North Carolina. To the west, nestled in the cool Blue Ridge where the natives cultivate apples and tourists, lies Thomas Wolfe's *Alamont* — Asheville. And to the east, fifty miles on the other side of Raleigh, where the soil turns to sand and the

land flattens into the tobacco fields of the coastal plain, lies Reynolds Price's Warren County. The former is certainly better known and more prestigious. And it is gone. The small town Wolfe knew disappeared as he watched it; his work recorded its passing. Price's country still exists, however. Warren remains a county of small towns and hamlets, and in those communities you can find Mustians, Abbotts, Guptons and Alstons, members of the families that have lent their names to Price's characters. In fact, Rosacoke Mustian, the heroine of his first novel *A Long and Happy Life*, may be out there right now in Warrenton or Norlina or Macon or Afton or even Wise.

If you should miss her in Warren County, you can find Rosacoke in Price's new play *Early Dark*. In this, his first piece of writing for the stage,

he returns to the story of *A Long and Happy Life* and successfully brings the vitality and humor of the novel through the difficult passage to stage drama.

In the play, as in the novel, Rosacoke Mustian, a handsome young woman, dreams of leading a long and happy life as the wife of Wesley Beavers, a Warren County boy who has left home for a hitch with the Navy in Norfolk. When Wesley returns after his discharge, Rosacoke hopes he will marry her, but he soon goes back to Norfolk to sell motorcycles. A few months later at Thanksgiving when Wesley visits again, Rosacoke gives herself to him, but even this is not enough to hold the elusive Beavers. Shortly thereafter Rosacoke discovers that she is pregnant. She hardens herself against Wesley and vows to bear her burden alone.

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Confronted with Rosacoke's condition during his Christmas visit, Wesley offers to elope with her to South Carolina, but Rosacoke resists and articulates the vision that comes to replace her dream of a long and happy life:

Let me get this straight. You offer to drive me to South Carolina and marry me at dawn in some poor justice of the peace's living room, then give me a little one-day vacation and bring me home for Christmas with my family that will be cut again by this second blow, then take me on to Norfolk to spend my life shut in two rented rooms while you sell motorcycles — me waiting out my baby, sick and alone, eating what we could afford and pressing your shirts and staring out a window in my spare time at concrete roads and people that look like they hate each other. — That's what you're standing here, offering me, after all these years?

Despite Wesley's admission that he can offer her no more than this, she eventually relents, and the play ends with them together, although "separate [and] a step apart."

While the novel and the play tell

the same story, Price insists that the latter is not simply "the novel dramatized," and he is correct. Price wrote *A Long and Happy Life* in 1957. In the play's preface he tells us that "the playwright shares the novelist's name and some of his physical and mental traits. He is changed, however, by nineteen years." Some of the effects of those nineteen years may be seen in Price's substitution of the ominous *Early Dark* for the more optimistic *A Long and Happy Life*.

Whatever his reasons, the title choices are justified in both cases. The novel has its share of sorrow and death, but in the end we remember the Delight Baptist Church Christmas pageant and the image of Rosacoke kneeling behind the manger, holding little Frederick Gupton on her shoulder, Warren County's own madonna and child in a ritual of joy and renewal. The play does not end with the pageant, however, and instead of focusing on love, the drama's conclusion emphasizes separation and distance. We find also in the play a streak of bitterness and anger in Milo,

Rosacoke's older brother. Milo's resentment, entirely absent from the novel, is directed against Issac Alston, the patriarch of the county, for whom the play makes much more of the frustration and loneliness that characterized the relationship between Rosacoke's mother and her hapless, alcoholic father.

We see from those around Rosacoke that a long and happy life is a rare thing indeed, and now it seems that her simple dream is to be denied her as well, for that joyless vision of her future in Norfolk, merely a passing thought in the novel, is here not only articulated but also confirmed as her fate. The very love on which she had hoped to build her dream destroys it. In the retelling of the story the darkness settles around Rosacoke at the early age of twenty. Even with its abundant humor, the play is essentially tragic, the story of people who, as Price himself has pointed out in the preface, "could tell Sophocles or Beckett numerous complicated facts and possibilities."

— Richard R. Schramm

Books on the South

This list is comprised of works published since August, 1977. Book entries concentrate on the fall months and include new publications through January, 1978. Dissertations listed were compiled in the *Dissertation Abstracts Index* during August-Nov. 1977.

The entries have been placed under several broad and loosely-defined categories for your convenience. Mention of a book here does not preclude its being reviewed in a future issue. Unsolicited reviews of publications concerning the South or of general interest to our readers are always welcomed. Preference is given to recently released books.

Copies of the dissertations below are available from Xerox University Microfilms, *Dissertation Copies*, P. O. Box 1764, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. The cost is \$7.50 for microfilm and \$15 for xerographic.

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Administrative Reorganization of Mississippi Government. A Study in Politics, by Thomas E. Kynerd. University Press of Mississippi, 1977. Price not set.

"The Attitudes of Selected Texas Public School Officials Toward Collective Negotiations," by Alvin B. Marson. Dissertation. East Texas State University.

Carolina Quest, by Thomas C. Parramore. Prentice Hall, 1978. \$13.80.

"The Clash of Values in Ecological Decision-making: West Virginia Legislators and the Movement to Abolish the Strip Mining of Coal," by Keith L. Smith. Dissertation. Johns Hopkins University.

Confederate Mississippi: The People and Policies of a Cotton State in Wartime, by John K. Bettersworth. Porcupine Press, 1977. Reprint of 1943 edition. \$18.00.

Economic Development Manual, by Kenneth C. Wagner. University Press of Mississippi, 1978. Price not set.

"Economic Incentives for Institutional Change: The Case of the Virginia Wetlands Act," by Roy R. Carriker. Dissertation. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

An Economic Profile of Texas, ed. by Louis J. Rodriguez. Madrona Press, 1977. \$15.00.

"The Effect of the Lobbying Techniques of Major Educational Interest Groups on the 'Client' Role of Select North Carolina Legislators Engaged in Educational Policy-making Efforts," by Constantine D. Kolouris. Dissertation. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"The Effect of Selected Federal Programs on the Government of West Virginia, 1962-1972: A Study in Intergovernmental Relations," by

Harry C. Taylor, II. Dissertation. West Virginia University.

"The Enforcement of State Fair Employment Practice Laws: A Case Study of the West Virginia Human Rights Commission," by Hoyt A. King. Dissertation. West Virginia University.

"The Feasibility of Establishing a Fishing Harbor for the Georgia Shrimp Industry," by Abdullah Ersoz. Dissertation. University of Georgia.

"Growth and Economic Development in Metropolitan Texarkana, 1900-1972, With Particular Emphasis Upon Public Sector Dependency," by Richard L. Laughlin. Dissertation. University of Arkansas.

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"Inter-regional Migration and the South, 1965-1970," by Peter O. Way. Dissertation. University of Chicago.

Journal of the Senate of Virginia: Session of 1778-1799, ed. by Cynthia A. Miller. Virginia State Library, 1977. \$10.00.

Kentucky, by Stephen A. Channing. W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1977. \$8.95.

"A Noble Bargain: The Louisiana Purchase," by Suzanne R. Van Meter. Dissertation. Indiana University.

North Carolina, by William S. Powell. W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1977. \$8.95.

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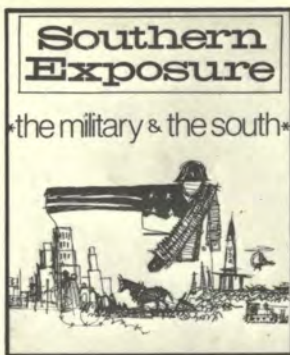
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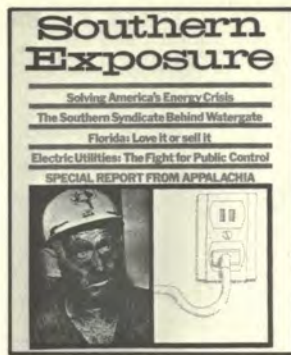
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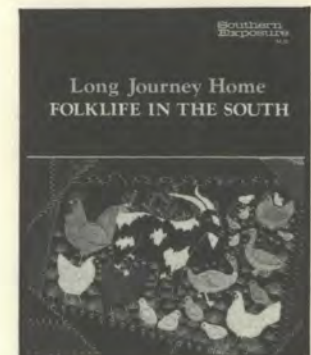
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