

Southern Exposure

THE FUTURE IS NOW

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POISONS, SPIES, TERRORISM IN OUR BACK YARDS

Southern Exposure

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The Future Is Now

I have a white friend who passed through one of the first desegregated high schools in Alabama in the early '70s. He became a "dope-head" to avoid taking sides in the often violent warfare between white and black teenagers; he dropped out. Or so he thought.

His daughter enters the first grade this year. Education reforms his parents called "a race issue" were never addressed. He knows it's not a question of race, but as of yet there is no self-conscious alliance of white and black parents willing to tackle the issue of quality education for all the city's children. My friend and his wife are deeply disturbed about their daughter's schooling. For them, the future is now; they know they must take new risks, reaching out in ways they've never tried before to make their community worthy of the next generation.

Life won't get better by itself. I wish it would, but the purveyors of hate and greed keep making money and getting elected to public office. Ronald Reagan is a monstrous magnification of the teenage bully in my friend's school, who inflamed fear with one bellow, issued reassuring words of self-promotion with the next, and occasionally found it necessary to "whip ass" for reasons never fully explained to my friend.

We cannot drop out of this fight. The price is too great. The permissive attitude toward racism and right-wing terror (read our reports on Mobile and Greensboro, pages 5 and 55), the legacy of a corporate "out of sight, out of mind" policy toward poisons (see the section on toxic waste, page 28), the reactionary resurrection of anti-democratic values (page 8), the government's impulse to defend the status quo with lies, spies and provocateurs (page 52) — these nightmares and others will haunt us for decades if we don't take action today. Our future is now.

For us at the Institute, the imperative of these times led us to a three-day retreat where we rededicated ourselves, as eclectic individuals, to

work in unison and with new vigor toward a world free of bullies and butchers. We named racism as the critical obstacle which must be directly confronted because our absurdly segregated society leaves the best of us fragmented, frustrated, divided in two camps (at least); without a self-conscious multi-racial approach to community activism, we can tread water at best, but will more likely burn ourselves out in isolation from one another. For our organization, we decided that approach includes a hiring policy that ensures we assemble a staff equally balanced, black and white, men and women.

We also discussed how this magazine and the other programs of the Institute for Southern Studies can help sustain you in a new mission of citizenship, of participation in the PTAs, unions, cooperatives or Ban The Dump campaigns, of leadership: you, reaching out, speaking out, to your kinfolk, neighbors and co-workers about the insanities around us, listening to other people's fears and fantasies, joining with them to build for tomorrow today. All of us, caring, not being cynical, not waiting for the next president, spreading resolve that we must do it ourselves, over time, perhaps over generations.

We'll be experimenting with *Southern Exposure* to make it more useful in that task of leadership. This issue, like the four general issues and two topically focused book/issues we'll do beginning in 1982, contains new sections of short news items, resources, perspectives from our neighbors and our past, as well as a collection of articles, interviews, success stories, cultural profiles and historical lessons.

Our plan is to send you more issues each year, thinner than the past books, but informative and inspiring, practical and provocative. We'll need your help to make the bi-monthly *Southern Exposure* work. Please tell us if we're too depressing, stodgy, strident or tame, too long-winded, laid-back or narrow-minded. Send us your letters and items for new sections, too. If you don't do it, who else will? Our future together begins now.

Bob Hall



Photo by Kurt Cobb

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Your recent issue, "Stayed on Freedom," was fascinating in its recreation of the Movement. Reading it made me wonder if you would be interested in one of the institutions right here in Selma, Alabama, that was touched by the Movement.

Good Samaritan Hospital (or "Good Sam" as most Selmians call it) was the place the civil-rights workers went to have their wounds bound up after the confrontation at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. It was here that Jimmy Lee Jackson died, here that John Lewis of SNCC lay close to death for days. And it was in the old wing of the hospital that dozens of priests and nuns camped out during the demonstrations that followed.

Today, "Good Sam" is spearheading an effort to set up rural health clinics in the surrounding counties. The clinics seem to be having some effect — the infant mortality rates have dropped 50 percent in the two counties where the clinics now exist.

— *Alston Fitts, III*
Director of Information
Good Samaritan Hospital

What will it take to prevent nuclear war?

I am asking thousands of people that question this summer, seeking a mix of responses that may add a new dimension to society's understanding of this complex and central issue of human survival.

I am soliciting responses through October 1. They will be edited and a representative selection will be published under the title, "What Will It Take to Prevent Nuclear War?" The book's distribution will coincide with the Second Special Session on Disarmament at the U.N. in the spring of 1982.

The late General Omar Bradley pointed out that the United States risks becoming a nation of "technological giants and ethical infants." As a 37-year-old parent, a longtime nonviolent activist, and as the editor since 1973 of *Peacework*, a New

England peace movement newsletter published by the American Friends Service Committee, I have become increasingly concerned with the threat of nuclear holocaust.

Maybe someone out there . . . possibly one of your readers . . . is in a position to offer a revealing answer. Someone who until now simply hasn't been asked.

— *Pat Farren*
2161 Massachusetts Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02140

England peace movement newsletter published by the American Friends Service Committee, I have become increasingly concerned with the threat of nuclear holocaust.

ered. None of the witnesses identified him as being the murderer.

Mitchell Blazak faces the distinct possibility of going to his death in 1982 for a crime he didn't commit. If you believe that there are few errors of justice discovered regarding capital offenses, consider the following statistics. In the period from 1893 to 1962, there were eight individuals executed in error, 23 who received the death penalty in error, and 30 who received life sentences in error.



Illustration by Leslie Asdry

I am writing on behalf of Mitchell T. Blazak, prisoner No. 28599 on Death Row at Arizona State Prison.

Mr. Blazak was convicted solely on two points: the testimony of one man who lied repeatedly under oath and whose statements contradicted themselves, and a hair found on a ski mask. The hair was admittedly planted on the mask. Two detectives swore to this. And all of the witnesses to the crime said the mask was not the one used by the gunman.

Mitchell Blazak's prints were never found at the scene of the crime. No murder weapon was ever recov-

Without the financial support necessary to prove he was framed for his crime, there is a distinct possibility that Mr. Blazak will join the ranks of innocent victims of the death penalty, or at the very least spend the rest of his life marking time in a prison cell for a crime he did not commit.

Any contributions may be mailed to his father, Mr. Steven J. Blazak, who has established a defense fund in his son's name. The address is: 775 W. Roger Rd., Comanche Wells No. 201, Tucson, AZ 85705.

— *Mrs. Valerie Amato Birdsall*
Phoenix, AZ

Mississippi Upsets GOP's Game Plan

Wayne Dowdy, the Democratic mayor of McComb, Mississippi, put together a coalition of blacks, rural whites and organized labor to win a congressional seat that's been held by Republicans since 1972. The district includes Jackson, the state's biggest city, and a dozen counties in the southwestern corner of the state. It was a slim victory — the margin was only 912 votes out of over 110,000 cast — but an important one.

Dowdy barely edged out another Democrat in the primary election and the GOP expected an easy victory in the July run-off. But Dowdy came out early with strong, unequivocal stands in support of extension of the Voting Rights Act and against the Reagan budget cuts. Black voters, especially, responded with heavy turnouts and near-unanimous support.

Black voters — 43 percent of the district — have played a crucial role in who wins the seat for years. In a three-way race in 1972, a black independent candidate took eight percent of the vote, and a Republican won the election with less than a majority. Black independents took 20 percent in 1978 and 31 percent in 1980. But this year was different, and some political pundits are calling it a turning point in the way Southern politicians court black support.

The *Southern Political Report* quotes one observer as saying that, in the first primary, Democrat Britt Singletary "tried to cut a deal with the black leadership but wouldn't acknowledge it publicly. Dowdy did; said he agreed with them [on the Voting Rights Act]. He did the same thing with the AFL-CIO and teachers." Says the *Report's* editor, "Dowdy's tactic of appealing directly to black voters on the issues, over the heads of the

'black political leadership' that Southern Democratic politicians usually deal with, worked. . . . The result [in the run-off] was that while white voters were turning out at the same level as in the first primary, blacks were nearly doubling their turnout. . . ." Dowdy drew 95 percent of the black vote.

In *These Times* commented that the election "casts doubt upon the 'Southern strategy' that has guided Republican and New Right political operatives." The *New York Times* went further: "Republican opposition to extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 led to a turnout of black voters that was large enough to reverse recent Republican trends."

But none of them pointed out the obvious: Dowdy's victory would not have been possible without the Voting Rights Act, one indication of why a broad national coalition has been aggressively seeking to ensure the Act's extension next year and why many conservatives would like to see it either die or be weakened.

TV Preachers Fib About Following

PTL, the Charlotte, North Carolina-based evangelist organization, is in trouble with the Federal Communications Commission. The *Charlotte Observer*, which in 1979 published allegations that the television ministry had raised \$337,000 for overseas projects but had spent the money to pay bills at home, now reports that the FCC is pursuing the allegations of fund diversions. The newspaper in June quoted unidentified sources close to the FCC investigation as saying that testimony by PTL president Jim Bakker was contradicted by other PTL officials and PTL documents.

Meanwhile, two separate studies charge that the audience claims of most television evangelists are way out of line with their actual ratings. For instance, Jerry Falwell, who

boasts an audience of 50 million for his "Old Time Gospel Hour," actually has only about 1.6 million viewers. The research was done by William Martin, professor of sociology at Rice University, and Jeffrey Hadden, professor of sociology at the University of Virginia. Their findings also showed that the audience for each of the 10 major television evangelists declined between February and November, 1980. The "PTL Club," seventh in the religious ratings and appearing on 123 stations, had 1,050,000 viewers in November, an 11.9 percent decline. Oral Roberts, tops in the ratings, appeared on 177 stations and drew 2,351,000 viewers, down 21.6 percent from February.

Weapons Makers Flex Their Muscles

A strike by about 4,400 union employees of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Y-12 nuclear weapons component plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, began on June 20 when workers rejected a contract offer by Union Carbide, which operates the plants for the Department of Energy.

After seven weeks, Union Carbide made a number of important changes and a new contract was ratified on



Illustration by Leslie Udry

August 7. "Things had just built up until people weren't going to take what the company was giving us anymore," said Robert Keil, president of the Atomic Trades and Labor Council, which negotiates for the 18 unions involved. The last strike at Oak Ridge occurred in 1970 over wages.

Seniority rights for bidding on new jobs and better working schedules had been increasingly ignored by the company, and a cumbersome grievance process was "less than responsive," said Keil. The new contract provides a 10.5 percent raise this year, a nine percent raise next June, and a 1983 raise to be negotiated later. The grievance process is still unsatisfactory, said Keil, but seniority issues were resolved in favor of the unions. "It was a strong victory for us," he said, "something we can keep building on."

King Cotton Goes Snap, Crackle, Pop

King Cotton's grip on the Mississippi River delta is slipping faster than ever, reports the *Wall Street Journal* in a recent front-page feature story. Rice has seized the number one spot in many delta counties, especially since the federal government lifted its acreage controls for the crop in 1975.

In the last decade, as world demand steadily increased, rice production doubled in Arkansas, quadrupled in Mississippi and leaped eightfold in Missouri. The reason so many farmers are switching is simple: rice can be three times as profitable per acre (\$300 versus \$100), and since it is more resistant to quirks in the weather, the chances of a wipe-out season are slim.

"This land's been in cotton for over 100 years," says James Tinsley, once a cotton gin manager in Jackson County, Arkansas. "But it will never see cotton again." The last of the county's more than 20 cotton gins was dismantled this spring, gone the way

of the sharecropper and tenant farmer. A few family farmers say they'll stick with cotton, but their 2,500 acres in cotton is dwarfed by the 80,000 acres now planted with rice. As recently as 1969, the county's 33,000 acres of cotton outpaced the 25,000 in rice.

The rice boom has disrupted more than the cotton gin business. Land prices have soared, and conservationists worry about how long the abundant underground water supply will last now that so much land is flooded all summer. The heavy aerial spraying used by rice farmers also disturbs environmentalists; many cotton farmers contend the chemical spraying hastened the demise of their yields.

A few farmers also wonder if they switched to rice too fast to maintain the marketing independence they enjoyed as cotton growers. A rice farmer "is at the mercy of the co-ops to buy and market his crop if he isn't rich enough to have his own drying and storage facilities," says the *Journal*. So the stakes only escalate for those who have chosen the "bigger is better" path.

The average farm in Jackson County is 700 acres, and many are over twice that size. A rice farmer needs as much as \$400,000 for the modern, machine-intensive business, including the cost of drilling wells and installing turbine-driven pumps. Most farmers say they are still stretched pretty tight, but they hope the stability of their new rice economy will even-



Illustration by Leslie Uby

tually give them breathing room. But if the market for rice suffers some unforeseen manipulations, the big delta farms could go even further into debt — or out of business altogether.

Prosecutor Stops FSC Harassment

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC) has won its two-year battle against persecution by the FBI and the federal grand jury in Birmingham. In late May the government announced it could find no evidence to justify continuing the investigation. "The witch hunt is over," said FSC executive director Charles O. Prejean.

Since 1979 the federation has been harassed by FBI visits and subpoenas of all its records, lost thousands of dollars in delayed loans and grants, and had to spend \$50,000 in legal fees and hours of time fighting the persecution. FSC staff charged the whole investigation was instigated by the power structure in Sumter County, Alabama, where it is located. (See *Southern Exposure*, Winter, 1980.)

FSC, founded in the 1960s, is an association of more than 100 cooperatives and credit unions involving more than 30,000 low-income families in the South. It conducts training programs and helps poor people become independent of big bankers and landowners.

The long persecution brought strong protest from a national committee of civil-rights organizations and from the grassroots. Shortly before the investigation was dropped, several hundred people came from all over western Alabama to march in support of FSC. The demonstration turned into a multi-issue protest, directed at the entire anti-people direction of the federal government. The marchers called for an end to the assault on the Voting Rights Act, protested cuts in social programs and demanded cuts in military spending.

Photo by David Lay/Southern Advocate



8,000 people marched in Mobile's largest demonstration ever, demanding an end of violence against blacks, renewal of the Voting Rights Act and a halt of cutbacks.

Blacks and Whites Organize Against Alabama Lynchings

Mobile, Alabama: Early Saturday morning, March 21, 1981, an evil deed broke the silence surrounding a long string of attacks upon this city's Afro-American community. Shortly before dawn, 19-year-old Michael Donald's mud-and-sand-covered body was found hanging from a camphor tree in an integrated neighborhood. A reminder of the more than 5,000 Afro-Americans lynched in the United States since the Civil War, the Donald case has become a focal point for organizing against institutional racism and genocide in this community.

Black community leaders immediately protested the lynching, and the FBI intervened at the request of several black organizations. Three weeks later, in early April, whites, too, took a stand. Although belated, the effort in Mobile's white community to generate a response to racism began when six white leaders, five from the religious

community and one labor representative, signed a letter that was sent out to both black and white leaders, but with its emphasis on reaching whites. The result was an ad published in five Mobile newspapers condemning the lynching and calling on Mobile "to respond with a serious, sensitive commitment to confront racism and violence in all areas of our community life." The ad was signed and paid for by nearly 200 people, most of them white.

The group named itself Citizens Against Violence and Racism (CAVAR), and it has since been targeting the white community in its outreach efforts, although blacks are also involved. The group instituted a program of community education and action and has stimulated the heads of religious denominations and ministerial associations to form a citizens commission to work against racism.

Judy Hand, a Birmingham-based projects director for the Southern Organizing Committee (SOC), has been working with the Mobile white community. She recently announced that the CAVAR ad is being distributed throughout the South by SOC as an example of the response that can and should occur in communities in the region. "As alarming as the attacks themselves is the deafening silence, especially on the part of white leadership, with which this epidemic violence is being met," Hand wrote in a letter to Southern organizers. "White Americans with a desire for justice cannot allow those being attacked to shoulder the full responsibility of demanding that the attacks be stopped. We must raise the cry together, and especially must decent white citizens rise to say 'No' to violence against blacks and all persons of color, and to racism in every form."

Differences over tactics and strategy within the black community have hampered communication and action, but through the efforts of People to Promote Better Politics — a two-year-old Afro-American organization with a reputation for leadership in grass-roots struggles — and other leaders, particularly Afro-American ministers, the community has been mobilized to display a collective response to white control and racism. The most massive resistance was organized during events leading up to the Sunday, April 26, mass meeting at Bethel A.M.E. Church and a rally that followed. About 5,000 people, mostly blacks, turned out for what many said was the largest civil-rights march in Mobile's history and, certainly, the high point of recent anti-racist organizing. Only a few white leaders attended the event. However, the scene was in marked contrast to the Mobile of the 1960s: few civil-rights demonstrations were held in the city because both black and white leaders strongly opposed "intervention" by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The march protested not only the

Donald lynching, but also other recent racist violence in the Mobile area, the Reagan budget cuts and moves to let the Voting Rights Act die. Speakers included Jesse Jackson of People United to Save Humanity (PUSH) and SCLC president Joseph Lowery. Before the march, Jackson delivered a sermon to a packed church; he criticized the government and the courts for "turning their backs on the plight of the poor." He went on to admonish the crowd to "stop looking for the White House, the statehouse or the courthouse for justice . . . if you want justice, it starts at your house and my house." He said it is time to start marching again and cited progress made by the marches of the '60s, specifically the initial passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

Lowery said that equal justice is everyone's struggle and that black and poor people are sleeping through a retrogression. The gains of the '60s are being chipped away, he warned, adding that the jobs that at first materialized have become cruel symbols of tokenism.

Because the national press has down-played the lynching, many people outside the Mobile area still don't know what happened. In March, 1981, the morning after a cross was burned on the Mobile courthouse lawn, Michael Donald was found hanging after being brutally tortured. Two weeks later, another black youth was fatally shot by white police in Prichard, a predominantly black mobile suburb, and a black man was found hanged in a cell in nearby Chickasaw. Empty

nooses were hung from interstate bridges in the area and in two Mobile public schools. In June the Mobile police fired a white officer after a black woman accused him of raping her. Charges of preferential treatment and racism came from throughout the black community when the officer was charged only with misdemeanor assault.

Official response to these recent acts against Afro-Americans has not satisfied community leaders. In Prichard the death of the youth shot in the back by police was ruled justifiable homicide. The youth found hanging in the Chickasaw jail was said by authorities to have committed suicide. In the Donald lynching, the district attorney's office presented such a weak case that three white men, charged with murder, were released when a grand jury found insufficient evidence to proceed. One major witness was a woman who said her boyfriend told her he had been involved in the slaying of a black man on the night Donald was killed. She changed her story, as did Johnny Ray Kelly, who had testified at a preliminary hearing that he saw three men who reported "jumping on a black dude who owed them some money for some pills." A cab driver who said he had been with Kelly that night later contradicted this account, and Kelly was convicted of perjury. Under Alabama's Habitual Offender Act, Judge Joseph Hocklender sentenced Kelly - who has received four felony convictions - to life imprisonment.

Local leaders are convinced that these attacks will go without sufficient investigation and prosecution if the silence outside Mobile continues. Casmarah Mani, who works with an organization called People's Community Hall, has been spreading the word outside Mobile. A May, 1981, "People's Lobby" in Washington was held to get Congress to prod the federal Justice Department to enforce anti-Klan statutes enacted after the Civil War and other laws which seem to be ignored when violence is aimed at blacks and pro-

AGAINST VIOLENCE AND RACISM IN OUR COMMUNITY

We, the undersigned citizens of the Mobile area, feel called to respond to the resurgence of violence and racism occurring in the Mobile area and throughout the country:

- the apparent lynching of Michael Donald
- the tragic murders of the children in Atlanta creating fear in black families throughout our country
- the symbolic, racist incidents occurring throughout our area, including cross burnings and nooses hung in our public schools and elsewhere
- the lack of public, community response and awareness to racism and terrorism
- the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and the Neo-Nazis
- the attempted assassinations of high public officials and leaders

We join together in this statement to express our sincere sympathy to the families of victims of violent attacks. We pledge our support to see that every effort is made to bring to justice the person or persons responsible for these acts of brutality - not for vengeance, but for the protection of other innocent people and the achievement of a decent, harmonious community where individuals and families can live in mutual respect, safety and peace.

We assert that racial antagonism and violence are among the most persistent and destructive evils in our nation.

- We call on the Mobile area religious, business, labor, civic and political leaders and educators to respond with a serious, sensitive commitment to confront racism and violence in all areas of our community life.
- We call on our law enforcement officials to use a careful, professional, and unbiased approach to the Michael Donald case and all other cases of apparently racially motivated acts.
- We call for a federal investigation into the apparent lynching of Michael Donald, in support of the demands for such an investigation.
- We call on our legislators to become aware of the far reaching racial significance of cutting financial support to programs that often are of primary benefit to minority persons and to insist that adequate funding be given to programs that insure a quality of life for all people.
- We call on the local media to become more sensitive to the needs of minority people.

In light of the serious escalation of violence in our community, we urgently call on all of our neighbors to recognize our common human bonds, to reexamine all social, political, economic and cultural structures and to challenge those who divide the human family into different camps of suspicion and hostility toward one another.

Citizens Against Violence and Racism

This ad was signed by black and white community leaders in Mobile in the wake of the lynching of Michael Donald. We urge concerned citizens to organize similar local statements in their own communities.

gressives. In telling of the epidemic proportions that violence had reached in Mobile, Mani could speak from first-hand experience: in 1976 Mobile police literally attempted to lynch him. After a rope had been placed around Mani's neck and thrown around a tree and tightened, one of the eight officers could not go through with the lynching and stopped it. Following a community campaign, Mani filed a lawsuit that was settled out of court for \$41,000, but none of the officers was ever prosecuted or even disciplined by the police department.

While the progressive forces in Mobile have begun to organize against racism, the old reactionary voices of oppression have not been silent. From a recording studio in the basement of the U.S. Capitol, Alabama Senator Jeremiah Denton cited the anti-racist forces in Mobile as an example of terrorist penetration of the continental United States, right in his own state. A much-decorated former Vietnam prisoner of war, Denton was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1980, promising to end "federal giveaways," protect and restore "traditional" moral values and crack down on sexual promiscuity and terrorist agents of foreign governments inside the U.S.

Denton now heads the recently organized Senate Committee on Security and Terrorism, and he uses that position to attack anti-Klan demonstrators and progressives who are fighting white supremacists in his hometown of Mobile.

"We have a piece of paper from Mobile, Alabama, handed out to a great many people down there showing Libya, Cuba and the Soviet Union and others as the solution to what's wrong with the country, and violent overthrow as a necessity," said Denton in a weekly radio broadcast to his constituents.

Diane Hampton, convener of CAVAR, says the effect of Denton's statements upon her organization has been minimal. She attributes a recent decrease in the intensity of activities by progressives to summer vacationing. But Casmarah Mani says the attack has

had the effect of isolating his organization, which he fears is a prelude for police attacks on it. His warning makes sense; the current investigations of progressive groups by Denton's committee call to mind past decades when witch hunts by the House Un-American Activities Committee went hand in hand with attacks by the FBI and police on the Black Panthers, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and numerous other groups who fought against the real terrorism represented by the Klan and its supporters in the halls of power. □

This article is based on staff reports and material published in Fight Back, the newsletter of the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic & Social Justice (SOC), available from Box 811, Birmingham, AL 35201.

Wall Street Says Military Hurts US

Kidder, Peabody & Company, the Wall Street brokerage firm, issued a report this summer on the implications for the U.S. economy of the "differences in perceptions about the Soviet military threat as viewed from Washington and other world capitals." Considering the source, the anti-administration conclusion is worth noting:

"In Bonn, the Schmidt government is limiting the increase in real defense outlays to about 1½ percent as it struggles to restrain a ballooning budget deficit. In London, Prime Minister Thatcher has dismissed her navy minister as she presses her program for trimming defense expenditures. . . . France will be giving higher priority to income redistribution and nationalization at the expense of defense outlays. . . .

"If the U.S. pursues the administration plan of increasing real defense spending by nine percent per year

while Europe and Japan expand their military outlays by three percent per year or less, the American economy is bound to suffer by comparison in the long run."

The economic, political and cultural impact of military spending is the subject of a special issue of *Southern Exposure* scheduled for late 1982. If you have article ideas, please contact us as soon as possible.

We also welcome your submissions for a special issue on the Coastal South which will appear in the spring of '82.



Illustration by Leslie 10/79

Creation Myth Now Required Reading

Louisiana has become the second state to mandate the teaching of scientific creationism whenever evolution is taught. The bill requires that equal time be given to the theory that people, species and matter were created by God. A watered-down Senate bill which only would have *permitted* the theory's teaching was revamped in the House to make it a requirement.

The sponsor of the bill said that without the mandate, "children are being taught that they come from monkeys and not being taught any alternative view."

The constitutionality of the law and a similar bill which passed earlier in Arkansas is being challenged in court by the ACLU. For a while it

looked as if Louisiana's Board of Education might challenge the law since it, and not the legislature, has the authority to set curriculum. But State Education Superintendent J. Kelly Nix said he would "accept it as a mandate" and attempt to implement the law "with all deliberate speed."

The new law will cost taxpayers about \$7 million for textbooks, course guides and teacher preparation.

In both Arkansas and Louisiana, the laws say teachers are to start creationism instruction with the 1982-83 school year.

Duke Power, UMW Still Struggle On

Harlan County, Kentucky, and the Brookside Mine are in the news again. Back in 1974, the United Mine Workers (UMW) won its first contract in years in eastern Kentucky after an 11-month, highly publicized battle that saw miners march on Wall Street and picket the headquarters of Brookside's owner, the Duke Power Company of Charlotte, North Carolina. (See *Southern Exposure*, Spring-Summer, 1976). On and off camera, Duke's managers seemed more than willing to play the role of heartless villain and, though they finally signed a contract with the UMW, they pledged they'd never compromise "the right to run our own business as we see fit."

Now comes the news that a federal grand jury has indicted Duke for jeopardizing the safety of miners at the firm's St. Paul mine in Wise County, Virginia. The company allegedly used explosives improperly and failed to close the mine when gas-clearing fans stopped working. Duke's mining subsidiary and its president, Norman Yarborough (the notorious "bossman" at Brookside), were also charged with trying to obstruct the grand jury's investigation by attempt-

ing to bribe a witness.

While Duke has changed little in personnel or in policy, the UMW has endured several internal upheavals since it declared the Harlan County struggle "proof of our commitment to make eastern Kentucky 'UMW Country.'" A series in the Whitesburg, Kentucky, *Mountain Eagle* reports that UMW miners still account for only 15 percent of the over 100 million tons of coal mined in the 30-county eastern Kentucky region. The union has only won eight out of 20 elections in the area since the Brookside victory, and it has negotiated contracts at only three mines — all of which have since shut down.

As an example of how companies sell out or bring in company-backed unions to thwart the UMW, District 19 president Joe Phipps cites Harlan County's Helen Ann Coal Company, where the union won elections in 1974 and 1977. "We couldn't reach an agreement with the owners — the Blanton family — who took all the equip-

ment out of the mine and informed the UMW that they had closed it. It was sold to Duper Jackson, who hired new workers. Then it got to be Southern Labor Union," an organization long known for making sweetheart contracts with owners.

The UMW's research and organizing departments are now trying to choose companies for organizing that are more likely to sign contracts once their workers vote in the union. "Before we make any attempt to organize, we are running surveys on the mine itself to see who really owns it and where the coal is going," says Ernie Justice, president of District 30, which includes parts of eastern Kentucky not in District 19. Justice says that under international president Sam Church there's a new commitment to organize the coal fields in the East and West, using better-trained organizers (his district is slotted for nine) and better research. "Organizing is definitely going to take a 180-degree turn," he promises.

Right-Wing Asks Congress To Straight Jacket "Family"

If you haven't heard of the Family Protection Act before now, you'd best dust off your reading glasses, brace yourself with a hit or two of bourbon and maybe even leaf through your dog-eared copy of 1984.

"Family Protection Act" is the deceptive title — Fundamentalist Christian Nuclear Family Enforcement Act would be more appropriate — of an omnibus piece of federal legislation which, if passed, will haunt each of us from the cradle to the grave. As might be expected, those with the least power in this society — poor people, women and children — are the targets of the Act's most draconian provisions.

Under Title II (Taxes), babies born

to married couples will earn a tidy \$1,000 additional tax exemption for the proud parents. The same reward is offered for adopted babies. And, in anticipation of the consequences of the proposed criminalization of abortion, the Act's drafters have added a \$3,000 exemption for the birth or adoption of a handicapped or bi-racial baby. But note that the tax benefits are for *married* couples; single parents, mostly women, and unmarried couples are specifically excluded.

For babies fortunate enough to have parents who work for a corporation, the tax title offers a hefty tax incentive to the corporation for establishing cooperative employer-employee day care facilities. No such incentive

is provided for the employees or for small businesses or independent neighborhood centers or cooperatives.

If Mom and Pop have any money to spare after meeting the day-to-day bills, Title II grants them up to \$2,500 a year — tax-free — to deposit in an “education savings account” to send the tyke to private school. Not public; private.

Expanding Reagan’s international human rights policy to the home front, several sections will prohibit federal agencies such as the Office of Domestic Violence from interfering with state “supremacy” in child abuse and spouse abuse programs and legislation. Federal funds for family violence centers will no longer go directly to the centers; rather they will be allocated to the states for disbursement. State legislatures, of course, have been notoriously ostrich-like in considering domestic violence as a real social problem. But more importantly, under the new federal law, corporal punishment inflicted in the name of discipline will be exempted altogether from child abuse statutes. The Act also provides that such “discipline” may be exacted either by parents or any other person authorized by the parents.

Under Title III (Education: Community Participation in the Teaching of Religion), parents of children in public schools not only are granted authority to participate in “decisions relating . . . to the study of religion,” they are also given the right to review “textbooks prior to their use in public school classrooms.” The Moral Majority and its ilk, of course, have proved quite successful in organizing local efforts to ban everything from Shakespeare to the dictionary. So widespread classroom censorship is all but guaranteed under FPA. And just to sweeten the pot for the textbook vigilantes, the Act protects parents’ rights to “participate” and “review” with civil action for damages if they don’t get their way. Federal funds will, however, be denied for textbooks “if such materials do not reflect a balance between the status roles of men and women, do not reflect different ways in which

men and women live, and do not contribute to the American way of life as it has been historically understood.” What this boils down to is that under FPA, parents will have the right to establish religious curricula in public schools, but not to censor textbooks which are racist and/or sexist, which, as we all know, are historically understood components of the American way of life.

Traditional sex roles will be further enforced by a provision that prohibits the government from interfering with local school districts’ “right” to prohibit “the intermingling of sexes in any sports or other school related activities.” While this section appears to be directed at little Suzie who wants to play on the football team, its most profound effect will be in the area of vocational education where girls and young women will be excluded from training courses for traditionally male, higher-paying jobs like plumbing, welding and electronics.

On the chance that there may be a secular humanist school district or two left in the country after the fundamentalist purge, another section mandates that no governmental entity shall abridge the right of any individual to “participate in the free exercise of voluntary prayer or religious meditation in any public building.” While even the most ardent atheist could have no objection to individuals stopping for a moment of prayer in the school hall or the courthouse, the Act’s sponsors make no bones about the fact that in drafting this section, the intent was to override the 1962 Supreme Court decision banning compulsory prayer in the schools. The legislative summary of the Act says: “The right . . . of individual prayer . . . is not designed to exclude some element of group devotional reading as well.” If a teacher feels moved to lead a class prayer every hour on the hour, there is nothing the principal or school board can do — even if the children or parents object. Any teacher restrained from conducting classroom prayers could bring civil action in state or federal court.



Illustration by Beth Epstein

Of course, FPA is no bastion of teachers’ rights. If teachers belong to a union, the school’s doors could be closed for lack of federal funds. “Payment of dues or fees as a condition of employment for teachers” (as is the case in most closed-shop union contracts) is prohibited in schools receiving federal funds. So much for the First Amendment and the right to organize.

And what of all the little tots attending Jim-Bob’s Christian Academy? Well, first off they’d all be white. A section of the Act’s title on the Rights of Religious Institutions and Educational Affiliates protects Jim-Bob’s tax-exempt status as long as the school’s by-laws profess nondiscrimination. Oh sure, the attorney general can bring suit against Jim-Bob if the school refuses to admit blacks or girls or handicapped students, but under FPA the school would have had to engage in “a policy of deliberate and intentional discrimination” for at least four consecutive years before the AG can file. With this nifty loophole, legislative experts speculate that Jim-Bob need only change the school’s name every three and a half years or so.

As the kids at both public and private schools approach sexual maturity, they’ll have lots of questions and lots of confusion. The FPA provides



Illustration by Beth Epstein

“release time (from public school) for parenthood education to be conducted by churches or parents.” This appears to be an off-hand way of saying that “parenthood education,” which presumably includes sex education, will no longer be a matter of public school concern. And sure enough, other sections of the Act prohibit agencies receiving federal funds from “counseling” on abortion and contraception without parental consent and from “suggesting” homosexuality, with or without parental consent.

So, as graduation time approaches, there will be a lot of Jane Does who’ve dropped out of school to have babies. If Jane is poor, which she probably is, she will only be able to get a federally funded abortion if her life is in danger. But even then she’ll probably have to go to court to prove to the feds that her life really is jeopardized by the pregnancy. Only problem is that under FPA, the only agency which provides free legal services to the poor, the Legal Services Corporation, is prohibited from conducting any abortion-related litigation.

Let’s say that Mama Teen is healthy and she and Papa Teen decide to get married to make the baby legit and to take advantage of the \$1,000 tax bonus. Everything’s fine and dandy for a few months until the baby arrives

and the bills start piling up. Mama T. can’t find a job because she doesn’t have a high school diploma and Papa T. can’t find a job that will support the three of them. So, in true teenage frustration, Papa T. does the truly teenage thing – he deserts the fledgling family. Mama phones the nearest Legal Services offices to find out if there’s not some way she can get Papa to pay child support during the separation, and if he doesn’t come back, she’d like to find out about getting a divorce. Sorry, she’s told, under the Family Protection Act of 1981, Legal Services is prohibited from giving “legal assistance to any proceedings . . . seeking to obtain or arising out of divorce.” This provision of FPA leaves most poor mothers without legal access to divorce, alimony, child support and even legal custody of the children and household property. It means under most state laws that unless the woman can scrape together the money to pay for a divorce, the wandering spouse can return at any time to lay claim on the children and any property she has acquired during his absence.

The Family Protection Act drones on and on, laying waste to constitutional rights with one hand and enforcing fundamentalist dogma with the other. But the final title of the Act is clearly the most ominous, for it severely restricts litigation under the Act from the federal courts: any action brought in state court under the FPA may not be removed to federal court unless the United States or a U.S. employee or official is a party. Since one of the primary functions of FPA is to ensure state supremacy on issues covered by the Act, the enforcement title appears to prohibit citizens from challenging the constitutionality of any of the Act’s provisions since only the federal courts, and ultimately the U.S. Supreme Court, have the authority to interpret and define constitutional law.

If the Family Protection Act is an example of the Reagan regime’s push to “get the government off our backs,” we’d damn well better listen

when even die-hard conservatives like columnist James Kilpatrick protest: “In one way or another, the bill violates just about every precept of conservative political philosophy.”

Or New Jersey’s Representative Millicent Fenwick, a Republican, who characterized FPA as “interventionist in really quite a radical way . . . I am a conservative, but I am beginning to wonder what I am, my dear. I am fiscally conservative. But I am also very conservative about our Constitution and our independent judiciary and our free press.”

Senators Roger Jepsen of Iowa and Albert Lee Smith of Alabama – both Republicans – are sponsors of FPA, which they introduced in Congress on June 17. Hearings and floor action are expected to begin following the August recess, and considering the success of Reagan’s tax package, the administration may well push the bill into early deliberations to take advantage of the momentum gained from the tax sweep.

Talk to your friends, colleagues and co-workers about FPA; write letters to your Congresspeople and ask your friends to do the same. Time’s awasting, and if the folks on the Hill don’t hear from a lot of us, the Fundamental Christian Nuclear Family Enforcement Act will become law.

– Liz Wheaton,
with thanks to the Washington
legislative office of the ACLU

Textbook Finally Allowed in School

At a time when book burnings and censorship are being revived as weapons against progressive ideas, a victory for the other side has been won in Mississippi.

Charles Sallis, a Millsaps College historian, and James W. Loewen, a Tougaloo sociologist, embarked in 1968 on the Mississippi History Proj-

ect. Their mission was to produce a ninth-grade social history text free of the racist and sexist stereotypes that pervade John K. Betterworth's *Your Mississippi*, the only state history then on the State Purchasing Board's approved list. The board, appointed by the governor, screens textbooks for use in both public and private schools in Mississippi and determines which may be paid for with state funds. Its exclusive approval of Betterworth had allowed the book's white supremacist philosophy to take the predominant place in Mississippi's classrooms for years.

In seeking to end this monopoly of thought, Sallis and Loewen worked with students, educators and numerous consultants, and produced a new text, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change*, published in 1974 by Pantheon Books. It won acclaim from professional historians and teachers and was touted as a model for state history texts and a milestone in the teaching of history. In 1975 it won the Southern Regional Council's Lillian Smith Award for best Southern nonfiction.

But the Mississippi purchasing board refused to place the book on the approved list for classroom use. The vote divided on racial lines, with the two black board members voting for and the five white members voting against its use. Sallis and Loewen, with the aid of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, took the matter to court in 1976. On April 2, 1980, Federal District Judge Orma R. Smith ordered the book placed on the approved list for six years, saying that no justifiable reason could be found for its exclusion and that the plaintiffs' right to a fair hearing and to academic freedom had been denied by the purchasing board's sanctions.

So, while the state's school districts will not be *required* to purchase *Mississippi: Conflict and Change*, they will now have the option to do so with state funds. Hailing this as a landmark decision and a victory for academic freedom, John Anthony Scott, writing in the American Historical Association's newsletter, asserts that it

constitutes "an elaboration and implementation of *Brown v. Board* and . . . lays the axe to the ideological defense of segregation and racism. Such ideology cannot be banned from the texts, but it may not be permitted to monopolize them either. This is a constitutional prohibition that is stated here in absolute terms."

Unions Press On Against Stevens

J. P. Stevens has gone heavily into the printing business — mostly in union shops! The company has been purchasing printing plants since the mid-'70s when they bought Foote & Davis of Atlanta. They now own plants in Georgia, in Lincoln, Nebraska, and in Louisville, San Francisco and Birmingham. "Every plant they bought is a GAIU one," noted Graphics Arts Union president Kenneth Brown.

In other news about Stevens, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that federal labor officials are entitled to the names of supervisors and other company officials who contribute time or money to anti-union groups like the J.P. Stevens Employees Education Committee; however, the court said the government is not entitled to the names of workers involved with such committees. The decision comes as part of Stevens's continuing battle with the National Labor Relations Board.

The Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) had charged that the anti-union committees were being used by management in the 17-year struggle to organize Stevens (see "Union Busters," in *Southern Exposure*, Summer, 1980). ACTWU again faced a pro-company workers' group this summer in its first election at a Stevens plant since signing a contract with the company last year that covered 10 mills in the Carolinas and Alabama. The union lost the election at the Rock Hill, South Carolina, plant by a vote of 433 to 299.

Even Bankers Love The Mighty Sun

Is solar power gaining credibility among mainstream economists and developers? If the banking industry of Florida is any barometer, the answer is a definitive "Yes." The cover story of the July issue of *Florida Banker*, the official magazine of the Florida Bankers Association, flatly rejects the contention of the editor of another trade magazine, *World Oil*, that solar energy's impact on the U.S. energy market will be no more than "a mosquito bite on an elephant's fanny."

"Actually," says *Florida Banker*, "the technology already exists for a 20 percent contribution to America's energy needs by the year 2000." The biggest obstacles to achieving this potential are more institutional than economic, including the government's reluctance to support solar research and bankers' fears of investing in innovative technologies. The magazine points out that more than three-fourths of the U.S. Department of Energy's research and development allocations go for nuclear power generation, and it cites with approval the perspective of former Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus, who recently told an audience in Tampa:

"The answer will not soon be forthcoming from the halls of Congress or its purse, nor from the board rooms of corporate America. The answer is here, today, in the form of independent businessmen and women, the 'energy entrepreneurs' of our generation who are busy making solar work now, in the present."

The magazine profiles several ventures using solar technology, from real estate projects to the makers and installers of solar hot water heaters. It then suggests that bankers should support with loans and investments such innovators, even if the federal government shies away from the power of the sun.

Newsletter News

Helpful information often comes in short spurts. Concise, yet chatty, newsletters that keep us informed and merit your attention (write for a sample copy) include:

Southern Political Report, a bi-weekly four-page tip sheet on the ambitions, deals and doings of politicians in the 11 Southern state capitals and in Washington, with an emphasis on party politics, individual races and the issues or non-issues dividing same. \$85 annual subscription — wow! — to SPR, 514 Constitution Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002.

Education USA, an eight-page weekly bulletin covering education issues, innovations and federal policy changes, with attention to how larger social problems affect schools, from multicultural curricula to teacher lay-offs. \$57 subscription, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, VA 22209.

North Mississippi Rural Legal Services Notes, a bi-monthly series of stories not only on the cases handled by legal services attorneys, but the community issues and organizing that lie behind the staff's work and ultimate court rulings; inside view of typical justice in the rural South. NMRLS, P.O. Box 928, Oxford, MS 38655.

Intelligence Report, the monthly eight-page newsletter of the Southern Poverty Law Center's KLANWATCH project, profiling Klan activities across the nation; comes free with a donation to the project. SPLC, 1001 Hull St., Montgomery, AL 36101.

Just Measure, a periodic report from Southerners for Economic Justice on union organizing and its relation to traditional civil-rights, religious and feminist concerns, with an eye toward how these four parallel groups can form a circle of common support for progressive economic reform. Comes with a donation: SEJ, 1525 Westbury Dr., Richmond, VA 23229.



Southern Fight-Back, the monthly 12-16 page publication of the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic & Social Justice (SOC), reports on a wide range of Movement activities, organizing campaigns and demonstrations in a style familiar to readers of the old *Southern Patriot*, also edited by Anne Braden. Available with a \$5 donation to SOC, P.O. Box 811, Birmingham, AL 35201.

Southern Neighborhoods, "the bi-monthly publication of the community control movement in the South," offers news on housing, community development programs, funding sources, and federal government actions related to community development initiatives. \$6 for six issues. SN, P.O. Box 36250, Decatur, GA 30032.

Organizing Notes monitors U.S. intelligence agencies, political surveillance and attacks on civil liberties. Free with a donation to its sponsor, the Campaign for Political Rights, a coalition of 80 national groups. CPR, 201 Massachusetts Ave., Washington, DC 20002.

Share the Wealth

A group of several dozen individuals in Georgia and the Carolinas have launched a new foundation to give small grants to community organizing and progressive projects in the three states. The Fund for Southern Communities expects to donate \$25,000 this fall to programs not traditionally funded by private or public grants.

The money comes from two sources: (1) donors who annually give \$1,000 or more of their income or inherited wealth to "support projects working for a more equitable distribution of social, economic and political power"; and (2) Association members who contribute two percent of their time and/or income to the Fund (for example, a member earning \$15,000 a year could pledge \$150 and 3 working days of his or her time to the Fund).

The Association allows people of moderate means to pool their small donations and to offer their skills (bookkeeping, carpentry, counseling, office help, etc.) to nonprofit groups identified by the Fund. A board of directors of representatives from the Association, the donors and community activists reviews proposals and makes grants.

If you live in Georgia or the Carolinas and would like more information about this innovative mechanism for sharing resources, write Alan McGregor, Fund for Southern Communities, P.O. Box 927, Atlanta, GA 30301.

Organizing Kits

A new packet from the Institute for Southern Studies (publisher of *Southern Exposure*) contains a dozen fact sheets on capital punishment, including statements from prison experts, public officials, victims' relatives, churches, attorneys, and even an editorial by William Buckley condemning the execution of John Spenklink. The Death Penalty Information Packet is ideal for class or individual study and is designed as a handy orientation kit to give to media, ministers or legislators your group may be trying to reach. Send \$2 (\$1.50 each for 10 or more) to DPIP, Institute, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

Another packet, with materials on how to organize in your town against the Klan, is available for \$3 from the National Anti-Klan Network, P.O. Box 10500, Atlanta, GA 30310.

NICARAGUA: Literacy Crusade Follows Revolution

Southerners don't have all the answers. We don't even have all the questions.

Southern Exposure proposes a regular dose of global exposure to remind us that what we do here is intimately interwoven with the efforts, hopes and dreams of our neighbors — in the rest of the nation and the rest of the world. This new section will feature projects or events or people outside the South that can inspire us or give us ideas for our work. Your comments, clippings and leads are welcome. We'll reward anyone who contributes an item we publish with a one-year subscription to Southern Exposure.



Cover of one of the literacy crusade's promotional pamphlets.

Editor's note: *The recent literacy crusade in Nicaragua is the subject of a special issue of the Interracial Books for Children Bulletin. The report includes a description of the crusade, personal accounts by some of the participants, an account of the work of Paulo Freire (whose teaching methods formed the basis of the crusade), an examination of the primer-workbooks used, and several other articles and resource lists. Some excerpts, used by permission, appear here.*

Close on the heels of the 1979 revolution that toppled 45 years of Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua came a second revolution. As in other Latin American dictatorships, illiteracy had been used as a tool to keep the *campesinos* (the rural poor) docile, unquestioning, unaware that there *are* alternatives, that control of their destiny *is* possible.

The women and men who took up arms against the Somoza regime had as their goal not just the overthrow of a government, but the liberation of a people — and after victory in battle, the next priority was literacy. At the time of Somoza's defeat, half of all Nicaraguans could neither read nor write. In rural areas the illiteracy rate was estimated at 75 to 80 percent, and, for women in many villages, 100 percent.

Plans for a literacy crusade began five weeks after the new government took control in July, 1979. The crusade's goal was to bring functional literacy — reading at the third-grade level — to 50 percent of the popula-

tion, or as many as could be reached. The crusade organizers conducted an extensive examination of literacy programs in other Third World nations and invited the internationally renowned expert Paulo Freire to Managua to consult on methodology (see box). While method and content were being planned, a village-by-village nationwide census was carried out to determine levels of literacy in each of Nicaragua's 16 provinces.

Influenced by Freire's methodology, the planners hoped to provide one literacy teacher for every four or five *campesinos*. A serious problem was how to mobilize national resources for such a large-scale campaign without interfering with production. During the revolution, entire sections of Nicaragua's cities had been destroyed by the punitive bombings of the National Guard. Before Somoza fled, he pillaged the national treasury and left massive debts which the new government pledged to honor. Money to pay these debts had to be earned from exports, which meant increasing production.

At the time of Somoza's defeat, half of all Nicaraguans could neither read nor write.

A clever solution was arrived at. Those who volunteered to work in the literacy crusade would be divided into two groups. One would consist of young people not yet actively engaged in productive work, who would leave the cities and live with the *campesinos* in the rural areas and mountains for a period of five months. They would give classes in the evenings and by day work in the fields planting

crops, harvesting, tending animals and helping to increase the nation's productive capacity. These volunteers would comprise the Popular Literacy Army (EPA), better known as *brigadistas*. The second group would be primarily adults — factory workers, government workers, homemakers and professionals who would remain at their regular work in the cities and teach in the urban *barrios* during non-working hours. These were the Popular Literacy Teachers, called "popular alphabetizers."



Most volunteers for the *brigadistas* were high school and college students, although some were as young as 12. Many had fought in the revolution and were already committed to its goals. The government made specific efforts to enlist other young people in order to raise their consciousness about the realities of poverty and oppression among the *campesinos* in the rural and mountain areas.

Initial preparations lasted six months. The literacy crusade first launched a pilot project in the same

PAOLO FREIRE: Education for Liberation

In Latin America, despite a century of educational programs and many adult literacy campaigns, the number of ignorant and illiterate people is increasing and many remain oppressed. There must be a better way.

Paulo Freire, the son of a Brazilian peasant, believes that there is. Now widely respected for his theory of political education, his reputation is due to the success of a program for adult literacy tried and perfected in the early 1960s among some poor Brazilian peasant communities.

As a teacher, Freire found that the inability of illiterate peasants to learn was related to their feelings of fatalism and helplessness. They saw themselves as powerless, worthless objects. Their only real ambition was to obtain the possessions which to them symbolized success and achievement.

Freire set about creating a process to help the peasants free themselves from this state of powerlessness. The result was his

concept of "conscientization," which is somewhat similar to consciousness-raising as it is understood in the U.S.

A basic principle of Freire's methodology is that people learn best as a group, from one another, without the formal "teacher-pupil" relationship. He has tried to create a situation in which people stop being passive objects crammed with information by their teacher. Instead they begin to look critically at their environment and the influence it has on them, and to make their own decisions.

Peasants gather in the presence of a coordinator who shows pictures of everyday scenes or objects for discussion. Every new discussion helps those taking part to stand back from their own situation until finally they see it more critically. For people who have always accepted that the factors affecting their lives are beyond their control, this is an important step forward. Drought, hunger, hard labor and debt to remote employers — all part of a way of life they have believed to be inevitable — now become problems to be studied and reflected upon.

This reflection is the "reading" of reality. Then, according to Freire, comes the will to "write" or create. The construction of a well yielding water where it is needed or the building of a wooden

house are conscious acts through which the peasants discover their effectiveness. Having proved that they have the power to change nature, what is to prevent them from transforming other aspects of their life?

One of Freire's basic tenets is that there is no neutral education — only education to "domesticate" or liberate people. Education is either conditioning to accept the status quo or deconditioning to question and change it. For Freire, education is conscientization — a process of making people aware, through which they learn to "read" (*i.e.*, understand) true reality and to "write" it, which means taking it into their own control. To interpret conscientization as merely a progressive literacy program for peasants is to completely miss the point. It is a totally new alternative to traditional education, where change and learning and experience take on simultaneous and equal roles.

Freire recalls an old peasant, illiterate in the conventional sense, who asked: "If God made the sun for all people and lets the rain fall, why should the earth, which God also created, belong only to the rich?" According to Freire, people with sufficient understanding to ask that type of question have the potential to control the course of their own lives.

northern provinces where the Sandinistas had originally made their base. Undertaken by the 80-member Patria Libre brigade, its objective was to test a training design and gain practical experience that would later be transmitted to the other *brigadistas*.

After completing the pilot project, each of the 80 members of the Patria Libre conducted workshops and trained 560 more teachers. These, in turn, trained 7,000 teachers. For the final phase of the pilot project which ended in March, 1980, schools and colleges were closed early, releasing thousands of volunteer students for additional training. By the conclusion of the last phase of training, 95,000 teachers (60,000 *brigadistas* and 35,000 "popular alphabetizers") were prepared for the campaign.

On March 24, 1980, truck convoys by the thousands left the cities of Managua, Esteli, Léon, Grenada and Matagalpa and fanned out to all of Nicaragua's provinces. Because of the terrain, thousands of *brigadistas* had to march by foot. Some traveled by boat, some by helicopter. Each *brigadista* was eventually outfitted with jeans, a gray tunic, a mosquito net, a hammock, a lantern by which to teach at night and a portable blackboard.

From the end of March until mid-August, the *brigadistas* worked by day in the fields or homes of the *campesinos* they lived with and by night provided two hours of instruction to five to seven *campesinos* huddled around a gas lamp. On Saturday, there

were workshops with other *brigadistas* to evaluate the week's work, discuss common problems and plan the week ahead. For those *brigadistas* who could not meet because of distance, all-day Saturday radio programs gave news of the campaign and offered advice and encouragement. In the cities, the popular alphabetizers worked at their regular jobs, gave two hours of instruction at night and also met for Saturday evaluation workshops.

The campaign took its toll: six *brigadistas* were murdered by remnants of Somoza's National Guard forces who had fled to the mountains — another 50 died from accidents or illness. But the campaign itself was extremely successful. At its end, some 500,000 *campesinos* were no longer illiterate, and the rate of illiteracy was down from a national average of 52 percent to just under 13 percent. Confirming the statistics are the documented exams and the simple sentences that all *campesinos* had to write at the end of the five-month learning period.

As important as the literacy they gained, however, was their new awareness of themselves and of their significance to the nation. Prior to the revolution, *campesinos* had been considered of little or no consequence; but this campaign, a major indication of positive governmental concern, contributed greatly to a new sense of dignity and self-worth.

The influence of the crusade on the *brigadistas* and other "alphabetizers" was also dramatic. They gained a new understanding and respect for the rural poor and a new commitment to the goals of the revolution. □

Excerpted from Vol. 12, No. 2, of the Interracial Books for Children Bulletin, the review journal of the Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023. Copies of this special issue are available for \$2.75 (including postage and handling); a free catalog listing the anti-racist, anti-sexist print and audio-visual materials developed by the Council is also available.

ZIMBABWE: Equal Rights for Women

Progress in women's rights in Zimbabwe since the 1980 revolution — progress largely the result of women's active participation in the long guerrilla struggle by Africans to take control of their nation — is the subject of an article by James Borders in the April/May, 1981, issue of *The Black Collegian*.

"The equality of women is Party policy," says Naomi Nhwatiwa, Zimbabwe's minister of community development and women's affairs. "We think we will find support because anyone who does not go along with it would be violating Party policy that we all fought for and for which many of us died." Her statement is supported by another woman cabinet member, Teurai Ropa, who elaborates: "No society which exploits half of its people could even consider itself free, least of all aspire to the noble cause of building socialism."

Given the opposition in the U.S. to the ERA, we find the statements by Zimbabwe government officials especially heartening and feel it important to watch in the coming years both the progress and pitfalls of translating revolutionary words into practical results at the grass-roots level.

Borders also quotes Ama Aidoo, a Ghanaian woman delegate to the United Nations conference on women last year: "If the western feminists want justice for Africa and the rest of the developing world, they should influence their countries' policies to eliminate neo-colonialism and the activities of multinational corporations which not only exploit the resources of the developing countries, but also thrive on the cheap labor of women and children." □

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“A Place To Call Our Own”

by Richard Couto

This story begins with the Farm Security Administration, a New Deal program which bought, improved and redistributed land. In the South, a few of the projects were designed specifically for black tenant farmers. One such project was in the Douglas Community of Haywood County, West Tennessee.

The Tennessee Farm Tenant Security Program, known simply as “the Project,” purchased about 4,000 acres from Will Douglas, a white farmer, then terraced, fenced and divided the land into 36 plots ranging in size from 85 to more than 100 acres. The Project built a house on each property, along with a smokehouse, a barn and a chicken coop. Forty-year mortgages at three percent interest allowed families, who were usually tenants on the same piece of land, to become property owners.

A great deal of the Jeffersonian ideal of the virtue derived from land ownership underlay this and similar federal experiments of the 1930s. Rexford Tugwell, head of the Division of Subsistence Homestead and the Resettlement Administration – New Deal agencies which preceded the FSA – envisioned a federal policy that fostered the creation of an economic base for financial security, improved education, political reform and perhaps even the development of democratically controlled institutions such as cooperatives and health clinics.

At the Douglas Community, that vision embraced black farmers and directly confronted racial inequality in the South. As Jesse Cannon, Jr., a second-generation member of the Project, says of his parents and others who first bought land in 1939: “A lot of people who were tenants living on the plantation suddenly became property owners; they became independent-minded, so to speak. They had some say-so in their livelihood, and they didn’t have to depend on the white landlord.

“They were just part of a few blacks at the time who had property and could say, ‘Look, I can say what I feel, because you can’t kick me off my land. This is mine.’ It made a big difference, ever so gradually.”

The following interviews detail the relationship between land ownership, race, and the lives of people over 40 years and two generations.

Land

Jesse Cannon, Sr., lives in the house he first moved to on the Project. He is nearing the age of retirement and like many others began working in nearby factories when the income from the farm was inadequate. He assumed responsibility for a family at the age of 13 when his father died. He eventually married and raised eight children of his own.

Jesse Cannon, Sr.: Back in the early days, I was trying to do better all the time but it was hard. In 1936, I moved from Tipton County to Haywood County and I was a sharecropper. I improved myself a bit and I went to renting. But I had a situation concerning the rental check that the government was paying people not to plant crops. This landlord didn’t want me to have a rental check, but the government official said I was entitled to one.

I got a card one evening when I come out of the field telling me to come to Brownsville to pick up the check. So I took the card up to the landlady. I said, “If it’s your check, I want you to have it. If it’s mine, I want it.” She said, “It’s my check. It’s my land, it’s my check. You don’t have no land and you don’t have no check coming.”

I said, “Well, I’d like for us to go and let em explain it.”

She wouldn’t go. So we went on over to Brownsville and picked up the check, me and the other fellow that lived on the place.

She left word at our house when we got home that evening late to come up there to her house. The next morning we decided we’d go up there, and so we went up there and she set out at us. She called me a Nicodemus – I went out by cover of night – and the other man was there, she called him a Judas – he betrayed her. She wanted us to give up the checks, but we wouldn’t give them up.

Her nephew come by the house and said, “Jesse, you decide to give that money up.” I told him, “No, the government said it’s mine, I want it.”

“Well, I tell you one thing,” he said. “If you keep it, it’s going to cost you a hell of a lot.”

Well, we had to go up in her yard to get water in that old well, and after a couple of days, I got to trying to consider things in proper place and I said, "I'm going up there in her yard getting water and they could say I insulted her some kinda way." I started to leave the crop, started to just move by night, but I said to do that would be a bad mark against me in years to come. I might want to farm again and it would hurt my children. So we decided to give the check up, make that crop, and leave the next year.

After I gave it up, a month or better, she came by the house one day and she was telling us, "Jesse, before you got my check, I passed the road and looked at my crop and said, 'It was so pretty,' but when you had my money and wouldn't give it to me, I passed the road and looked at it and said, 'I wished there was some way I could burn it up.'" She was happy then, after she had the money.

When she left I went on back in the house and I told my wife, "You know we were in danger when I had that money." I related what she told me. I said, "She could have come here and set us afire overnight."

Then the landlord, she told me, in August, "I'm going to have a lawyer come up here and we're gonna fix up some papers so we won't have any trouble next year." So I went on down [to the lawyer's]. Mr. Douglas wasn't there, but finally he come about 7:30 that night. So I told him what I come down for. "I do not want to sign this paper," I said, "but I'm living there with that lady. I have to go up in the yard to get water every day and I'm afraid not to sign." I signed it and I went over to Brownsville to the ASC [Area Soil Conservation Service] chairman, Mr. Tom Freeman, and I told him what had happened. I told him I didn't want to sign it but she requested it. So he told me, "Say, that won't work. That will never happen. That's just like highway robbery."

I moved after I got that second year's crop but this paper was signed in August before I moved. So the following spring, I was on another man's farm and I got a notice one day to come to Stanton to the bank and pick up my check. When I got there to get the check, they told me my old landlord had my check. I said, "Got my check?" They said, "Yes." I said, "What's she doing with my check?" They said, "You signed a paper for her to get that check. Said she loaned you some money to make that crop. Stated on that paper she was entitled to get that check."

I left the bank and took the bus or train to Brownsville and went to Mr. Freeman. I said, "The thing you said couldn't happen, done happen." "What thing?" he said. And I explained about the paper and how she had my check. He said he would have the whole ASC committee meet and straighten it out.

So we met. They were five white men, Mr. Douglas, he was one, and me. Mr. Douglas said, "I don't remember your saying anything about not wanting to sign the paper." Now they were five white men, so I looked down a while and then I looked him straight in the eyes and I said, "Mr. Douglas, you're a white man and I'm a Negro and I can't call you a liar and I'm not trying to do that, but don't you remember how I come to you in August at 7:30 in the evening. You were late and I said that I did not want to sign the paper but I was afraid cause I lives on her land and had to go up to the house for water." I was looking him in the eyes. Then the old man looked away and said, soft as can be, "I reckon I do."

The chairman sent them out and told me I could get the check back. I said, "Will you get it back?" He said, "No, but I'll tell you what to do." So he told me, "Write to Mr. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture, and tell him what happened." So I wrote and sure enough about two weeks later I got a letter saying to come to Brownsville again for a meeting with the old lady, me and the other man who was still renting from her. Well me and him got there first and she came with her nephew and said, "The thieves beat us here." She called us thieves.

They told all of us we were meeting to settle the matter of the check and if we didn't want to do it, it would have to go to Washington. Now the other man, whose check she had, he was willing to give her a third for peace sake. They asked me how much I was willing to give and I told them, "Not a dime. It's mine and I want it." Well, we talked some more and then we took a break and the other man said he was willing to give half. Now that weakened my position and made me seem uncooperative and I was afraid if we didn't settle it, I would have to go to Washington — I wouldn't have had to but I thought I did — and I didn't have money for that so I agreed to give her a third.

But that only made me more determined to get my own place and when the Project started I went down to sign up. I had a chance to own my own place and I jumped at it.

The Lord blessed me and my family and saw us through this. We got the check back and got our own place. This whole area of the Project was Mr. Willis Douglas's place, you know, the man who drew up the papers to take my check away. In fact, when we came on the Project, our house was the one they had made out of Mr. Douglas's old house.

Tom Rice is another of the original members of the Project. He runs a small store very near his house and is the father of 13 children.

Tom Rice: Master Stanley H. Rice was the supervisor over the Project, we didn't have bosses then. The first year our supervisor had a meeting, called us together in a meeting, and he told us we had 40 years to pay for one of these units but he said, "My advice to you is to pay all you can." He told us, "If you can't pay way ahead on it, then I advise you to pay three years ahead of schedule and if you have a bad year why you still won't be in no cramp. You won't have to pay anything cause the payments have

An FSA official and Reverend Powell, a member of the Tennessee Farm Security Program ("The Project").

Photo courtesy Vanderbilt Medical Center





Photo courtesy Vanderbilt Medical Center

A field day celebration at the Project

already been paid.”

So I taken in his advice. I made three payments on it and paid it out. But I had a stream of luck. When I started to buying, cotton was five cents and when I got set up to sell, cotton jumped from five cents to 30 cents and from 30 cents to 40 cents and I was making good crops all the way from 20 to 25 bales of cotton and all the hay and corn the barn could hold and I put it all to good use. I gave it to them as I made it.

I started the store in October, 1947, that’s when this building was built. I started a theater here in ’49; I ran it about two years. We had Floyd Nelson from WDIA* and B.B. King. They were the two best that I had play here. I had several other little bands. B.B. King played here off and on for two years until he left and got famous.

There was other music, too. We used to have the 8th of August celebration to celebrate the Project. [The day also commemorates Emancipation.] The Project would all meet together and give a big free dinner, everything was free, and invite people from different counties around to celebrate with us on that day – feast with us on that day. We’d have music to entertain the peoples; the Fredonia Band and the Miller Brothers’ Band and sometimes we’d have music machines [jukebox] to entertain the people and everything to eat or drink was free.

Jesse Cannon, Sr.: Different families would bring different kinds of foods. We’d have representatives from various parts of the country – even as far as Washington – attending our meeting. They would lecture to us and after the meeting we would spread the food and sit down and eat like one big family and then we’d go home. We enjoyed that tremendously. We looked forward to that affair every year.

We did other things together, too. We used to work together cleaning off the roads and what not. If something needed to be done down at the school, we’d go to school and clean up the campus grounds there. And that was just lovely – that mens could get together and work and beautify the place. We did that and I enjoyed every year that I’ve been here.

* Popular radio station in Memphis that featured black performers. See *Southern Exposure*, Vol V, No. 2-3, for an article on WDIA.

I was happy and I went ahead and was able to purchase. It puts some responsibility on a person, whereas if I was still sharecropping I’d be looking to the man for whatever is necessary, but now I have to look to myself.

School

Tom Rice: I really can’t explain how important it was to own the land. It meant a whole lot to me. First, I could keep my children in school and train them the best I knew how to train them. When I was working other land, I didn’t have time to train them and I didn’t have money enough to send them to school.

Born and raised in the Douglas Community, Jesse Cannon, Jr., returned after graduation from medical school to practice in the Douglas Community Health Clinic, which is in Stanton, Tennessee, seven miles from Douglas. His father, Jesse Cannon, Sr., was an early member of the Project and an original member of the community group that organized the clinic.

Jesse Cannon, Jr.: I was born here. I attended first through eighth grade at the Douglass School. At that time actually it went to the tenth grade. When I reached the eighth grade it was subsequently changed over to a grammar school.

Douglas Community at that time was totally a farming community. There was no other economic base at all and everybody that you knew, everybody that you grew up with, was farm kids. School was geared around your farming activities. You were out during the summer months to till the cotton, you went back to school for the month of August and part of September and then you were out again a couple of months to pick cotton. Sunday was your day off. That was your only free time and most of the kids in the community, the boys and girls in the same age, would kinda take turns going from house to house each weekend to play softball or baseball, whatever else. Your life revolved around your family because that was it with the exception of Sunday afternoon when you got a chance to get out with the other kids.

Most of the families were large families; for instance, my family was eight kids. I’m the oldest of eight kids. Everything was within the family unit; we were in our own little world. We had a lot of food because we were farmers. We didn’t have any money and we worked like dogs and we felt that was the way it ought to be. We were sheltered from a lot of the things in the outside world.

Let me tell you a little bit about Douglass Junior High School and what that was like. Of course, it was an all-black school. One that had people who lived in the community for the most part as teachers; some were from Brownsville. They were an extremely proud group of teachers. It was one of those things I didn’t really realize at that time and appreciate, but now that I look back the community was really behind the school. They were there when the kids had plays, and there were a lot of those type activities: plays and parties for the kids, and there were field days.

The entire community was always behind those type things; anything that would raise funds for the school, because a lot of the things such as books and even equipment was not given to them simply because the funds

were channeled in another direction. Quite often teachers would request new books and not get them, so the community would put on some type of function to get those kinds of things. Invariably, when kids from Douglass Junior High School went to high school, at that time they went to the all-black high school in Brownsville, they were the class leaders. It was really uncanny how it happened so that I think it all started there.

Earl Rice is the son of Tom Rice and former president of the Douglas Community Health and Recreation Council and a science teacher at Haywood County High School. In addition, he is a Democratic National Committeeman and owns and farms land on the Project which earlier belonged to his grandfather.

Earl Rice: The original Douglass School building was torn down in 1977 but stood from 1939 until then. The federal government built it as part of the Project and turned it over to the county. We had an enrollment here at one time of about 600 to 700 students. I can remember this as being probably some of the best days of my life. We used to have plays. I remember I had a starring role in one of the plays which was very fascinating to me at the time. We used to have all kinds of activities during the daytime and nighttime. We would have picnics during the year. We would have May Days where all the black schools in the county would come into the Douglass School. It was an overall competition between all the black schools in the county, elementary schools as well as junior highs.

The teachers here were some of the best that I encountered in my life, and I think that got us off to a good start. They saw the need to instill in us to work hard, to study hard, and that was one of the things that kept us going because during that time it was a crisis situation, days were kinda dark for black people. We had to have that beacon or that light at the end of the tunnel and I think these people provided all of the services that we needed to keep us motivated and moving in the right direction.

The Douglass School today is on the killing floor so to speak. It's going to be phased out, as it stands. The superintendent of schools has stated that the population shift is to the city and they have plans on the drawing board to build a new junior high school and to add new classrooms on to Haywood Elementary and plans for a new gymnasium at Sonner Hill Elementary and when that occurs, probably within three to five years, Douglass School will be phased out.

Freedom Movement

Jesse Cannon, Jr.: The first year there was freedom of choice, I had the choice of starting as a freshman as a member of the first integrated class at Haywood High School here. I opted to do that with the encouragement of my eighth grade instructor and that was how it all started as far as the integration was concerned. I was a member of the first integrated class and my class was the first to have gone through four years of integrated situation. There were only 15 blacks that first year and the total enrollment was about 800 students.

That experience was one that taught me a lot. It was an

atmosphere of hatred. It was almost as if you were living in two different worlds or two different planets, to go to school there. It was very traumatic for some of the children, and they had some longlasting emotional damage because of it. Somehow, I survived. I started participating in various community activities such as the band and we got into sports, my brother and I. It was not a bad experience by the fourth year, one that I think made me a different person. A lot of things changed because of us and a lot of people probably changed because of us and I'm sure we did, too.

The largest group of blacks at that time [late '50s] who were leading the Movement were people from this particular community. They were the ones who provided homes for various civil-rights workers or other legal people to have a place to stay. They knew that they could provide those homes without fear that someone was going to kick them out because they were doing that. Not only that, they organized rallies and provided transportation. They did the legwork and they organized the first massive groups to descend upon the courthouse here in Brownsville, the county seat, and they were the ones who stood there in lines for weeks to get registered. They could do this because they had their own farms.

During those years, I remember my parents being very edgy all the time. I know they took turns sitting up at night while sort of standing guard particularly after there had been some bombing incidents in other communities. I remember they organized a community-type guard system and they would take turns watching for any strangers coming through the community.

Tom Sanderlin arrived at the Project within a year or two of its beginning and still lives in the house into which he moved. He was renowned for his cooking both at the August 8 celebrations and at the camp which was conducted for the New Farmers of America.

Tom Sanderlin: The time when we went to register and vote, the white people called it a "thing." "Ya'll niggers got that thing going on out there. Ya'll trying to take the county over."

I thought that some of the white friends I had were my best friends in the world, but when I got my name on that charter, I speak to them and they'd ask me what could they do to me, not what they could do for me. We'd stand in line to register. They'd put acid on the steps at the courthouse and folks would go up there and sit in it. Some of them old people — when they stand up all their pants be done ate up. But we kept a hanging in. If they just had opened up and say, "All ya'll niggers come on up here, register and vote," it wouldn't been a bit of problem cause they wouldn't went. But when they find out that they were trying to keep the vote from us, then we went to getting the folks to register and vote. We knowed it was important. You go to the white man's store, if you hadn't registered or tried to vote, you'd get what you want. But those trying to register and vote, it was hard for them to get what they wanted. They wouldn't let em have it. The Negroes that were working for the white citizens, they were told they better not and they wouldn't.

Tom Rice: We started in '57. We got to reading

Freedom Village

by Ella Baker

The residents of the Douglas Community were not the only blacks in West Tennessee to join the struggle for voting rights in the 1960s. In 1961, Ella Baker wrote this story for the Southern Patriot from neighboring Fayette County describing the plight – and the determination – of families who faced repression for their activism, and who did not have their own land to protect them from economic reprisals from the white community.

It was around the New Year, 1961, that I visited Freedom Village in Fayette County, Tennessee.

“Freedom Village” is the name Negro tenant farmers have given the tent city into which they moved when they were evicted by white landowners after they registered to vote.

Eight families were living there in early January, and hundreds more may soon follow if the federal government is not permanently successful in its court efforts to enjoin further evictions.

The olive-drab tents without floors, surrounded by inches of mud and mire; the darkness within these tents that are lighted by kerosene lamp and heated by wood stoves; the not-too-well-clad children crowded into the tents or squashing around in the mud; and the hungry shivering dogs wandering about: all of this painted a picture of anything but hope for the new year.

But the real tragedy is that in the wealthiest country in the world, in the jet-propelled atomic age of 1961, human beings could honestly say that their mud-floored tents were more comfortable than the shacks they formerly called “home” for five, 10 or 30 years.

Yet this is what those tent-dwellers told me, and this is the true story of a Negro sharecropper’s life in Fayette and Haywood Counties.

It is a story of years of hard work and little or no money; it is a story of big families living in one-or-two-room shacks.

There was Willie Trotter, 36, who has six children ranging in age from 14 years to eight weeks. From the 10 bales of cotton he made, he received less than \$160 “profit” for the year.

Mr. Trotter was glad to have his small floorless



tent, because the house he lived in before had two rooms, but one needed repair so badly that the family lived in one room. Freedom Village meant *better* living to this family.

Walker Allen Mason, 27, made five bales of cotton and ended the year with about \$125.

These two farmers were well-off compared to Mrs. Dora Turner, who had worked the same farm for 38 years in her own name and 20 years before that with her mother.

When typhoid-malaria killed her four brothers, Mrs. Turner plowed 12 years and paid off a \$2,200 debt which the landlord said her mother owed. Last year, 1959, she ended owing \$50.

This year, 1960, she received six checks of \$30 each – a total of \$180. When she was evicted after voting, she was confronted with a bill for \$600, she said. Her 1960 share was three bales of cotton. This she had to give to the landowner and was told she still owed \$291.95. . . .

Freedom Village faces the winter with prospects of having to house many more families and the demands of the moment leave little time to think about the final outcome.

Floors have to be put in tents, land has to be drained and packed to offset the mud, sanitary facilities have to be improved, and – hopefully – electric lights and windows secured for the tents. At the same time, families must be fed and clothed.

Despite this yeoman task, there is talk in Fayette County about buying land for group or cooperative farming; about work projects, and about small industries that will hire Negroes.

What does the future hold? What is the answer? I wish I knew. But of this I am sure.

The deprivations and the hardship which the evicted Negro farmers now endure are revealing for all the world to see both the general plight of the Southern sharecropper and the machinations that have been robbing Negroes of the right to vote.

And the determination of Negroes to vote in Haywood and Fayette Counties is a sure indication that a new dawn of freedom is breaking through the age-old social, economic and political discrimination that has blighted the lives of both whites and Negroes in the South. □

different books and reading Dr. Martin Luther King and he explained to us what it takes to make a citizen.

Earl Rice: The [Haywood County Voters] League was set up in order to get the right of blacks to be able to register to vote. Because of the fact that my father was one of the League's co-founders, it brought on a lot of problems. The business was thriving at the time and during the crisis situation that arose after that my father's business was totally cut off. He was boycotted. He was refused service by the Coca-Cola company here in Brownsville and the wholesale houses here in Brownsville which used to deliver groceries to him. His credit was cut off at the bank. He was unable to establish good credit. There were other people also who were denied credit, and they had to go into Memphis to establish credit. And through this my father endured tremendous pain. He had to stand by and see his business drop down to nothing and food he had been selling, he could no longer get because of the fact that he was involved in the founding of the League.

Jesse Cannon, Sr.: My boy, the doctor, he was organizing. I can't remember it now, some type of a club. Anyway, they made him president. He didn't know what it was all about when it began to develop and come to find out he was the president of this area here of the civil rights. They would go places, I'd take my truck and haul loads of them – white kids, black kids, what not – go to Brownsville, Covington and they demonstrated.

Somehow or another we lost the idea of being afraid of anybody when we realized that it was right for us to have our rights to vote like everybody else. We decided we were going even if we died. One of the officials had some of us fellows that was interested in it to come to his house and talk. He was trying to tell us not to register. We told him that they register dogs, they register old cars, trucks, why couldn't we be registered?

"Well, it just ain't time. I don't want you to be too hasty."

But we realized that we had waited too long then and we were just determined to go on. We went right on and the Lord blessed us. We come through. No one got hurt. One person got hit there in town. Many a family that was living



Photo courtesy Vanderbilt Medical Center

The Douglass Community Junior High School, built in 1939 to serve the Project, played a central role in the life of the community.

on the other man's place had to move, but us, having our own place, we wasn't threatened. It gave us consolation to know that we could set still and still we could fight for our rights and that's what we did. I never was threatened directly, but I was afraid in a way, cause I determined if they did come here to kill me I was going to die trying to provide for my family.

The Clinic

Jesse Cannon, Sr.: Sometime in the early '70s some students from Vanderbilt come down and they was talking to us about a clinic that was being established in Rossville* and telling us what a grand job they was doing. They were trying to get the idea in us whether or not we would like to have one in this community. Finally, they come down and set up a health fair here. I believe it lasted about two weeks. People could go in to be examined, treated and different things. They even carried some to the hospital and directed them to doctors for certain complaints. They had a dentist there who pulled teeth and they helped the people out so much until we just admired it, admired the effort.

Later on they asked, "What do we feel that we need the worst down in this community?" It was suggested that we needed a recreation center and later on it was suggested that we need a clinic.

Earl Rice: Some while back, we dreamed of being able to work to develop a clinic. I feel it would never have happened if it had not been for the health fairs because of the awareness that was rekindled in the minds of the people. They could see how a clinic would really work. I think many of them after the fairs said, "Well, this worked so easy, maybe we can get this accomplished." People in the community were saying that we're going to have something close, where we can have medical help. We want a doctor. We have the brain power in the Douglas community to produce a doctor, to produce a lawyer, or anything else we want.

One of the greatest things about the clinic is that I'm a part of it; that I have been able to help and to work as hard as I possibly can to help the people within the community to make this a reality. I think putting these things all together, the clinic, as a whole, is a dream come true and I'm proud of it and the fact that I had a part in it. This is something that I had always dreamed of, being useful, helpful to my community. I had the opportunity to go elsewhere to work, but I chose to come back home and to help out at home.

Jean Thomas Carney is the director of the Douglas Community Health Clinic. She is a native of Haywood County who shared the common experience of migration to another urban area, in her case New York, and the dream of finding a future which was different and better than the past which she knew. After her return to the county, she studied public administration, worked as a child advocate in Haywood County and directed the development efforts of

* See "Sick for Justice," *Southern Exposure* Vol. VI, No. 2, pp. 73-76.

the Douglas Community Health and Recreation Council which sponsored the clinic.

Jean Thomas Carney: I really wonder what the people were doing before, how did they live with some of the problems that they have. They just didn't have the money for the care or they had medicaid/medicare cards and the physicians are so overbooked in the areas that they take a certain number of medicare patients and no more. Well then, that leaves people having to travel long distances for care or to find someone who would accept the medicaid/medicaid card, and if they haven't got the transportation, they still can't go and if they hire someone to carry them, it's going to cost them. This is a poverty area and there's just no doubt about it, there's no question about the need here and what the clinic is doing for that need.

Jesse Cannon, Jr.: My becoming a doctor was strictly an impulse. I graduated from high school in '69. I had already received a scholarship in engineering at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Three days after graduation, my mother died unexpectedly. My response was not so much one of remorse but of anger. I felt that there had been some foul play. My initial impulse was to find out what it was, and I figured the only way I'd ever find out was for me to be a physician. So I promptly called my guidance counselor and told her that I was going to change my major in college, and that's how it all started.

When I was finishing up, I was looking for some source of funds. I had scholarships and grants in medical school, but I also got married and couldn't raise a family on those. I needed extra money so I sold my soul to the National Health Service and that's honest. Then when it came my time to be assigned, this site was becoming available. I started working with the site about six months before I finished my residency trying to get it organized along with the community members here because my father was on the board, and I knew all the people who were working with it. So I just started coming out every so often giving them some pointers about things I thought should be included in the project, and when I asked the regional office if I could be assigned to it, then they said, "Fine." So here I am.

Jean Thomas Carney: We're proud of what we've done for the town, too. I feel that renovating this building [the clinic] here in Stanton has really brought the town back to life. Down the street there are a number of stores that have opened up; we even have a drug store on the corner that wasn't here before. Buildings that were torn down, very little activity, there's much more now as a result of the health clinic being in the town. We have more people coming here for health care, then they use the drug store; they are able to go to the bank and then down to the grocery store. Plus there is a restaurant here now that wasn't here before. We brought our doctor back. I think it has made a remarkable change in the community.

Jesse Cannon, Jr.: One of our more interesting early experiences was with the mayor of Stanton, who was white, of course. It was an emergency, he had burned his hand cooking something and spilled some grease on it. He come running in the door and asking for help, in obvious pain and with second degree burns on the palm sur-

face of his hand. We took care of it and followed him up for about two weeks, and he got very excellent results without any contractions or any deformity. As a result of it, I think of his telling other white merchants and members of the community, we subsequently got all the white merchants to come here as patients, even one of the local contractors who is a multi-millionaire. So I think that early experience for him probably helped us to bridge the gap. We had no previous white patients and by him coming here on an emergency basis and getting treatment for a burn and getting excellent results, it was sort of a means for us early on having some contact with the rest of the white community.

Earl Rice: The clinic is working probably as well as I've seen any integration measure. Our staff is fully integrated. Dr. Cannon is the black physician. We have a white nurse practitioner. So the entire office staff is fully integrated with the front office being black and white. Each time I go into the clinic, I see the chemistry working and coming together so great and the people are working together. If someone had told me this would be going on in Stanton, Tennessee, I would not have believed it. But today it is working.

Jean Thomas Carney: Twenty years ago, I wanted to get away from Haywood County and never come back. When I left Haywood County, I said I would never, never come back. I did come back, not because I wanted to, but because there was illness in my family and I had to come back. But after I got back here, I saw a need and I saw some things that I wanted to do here at home, and I felt that I couldn't get these things done living someplace else. The only way to get them done was to stay here and work with the people to make these changes.

We're going to expand the clinic and we're going to work on our recreation park which we have an application in now to get funds to provide a recreation site. We're looking at the possibility of providing low-income housing through the Douglas Community Health and Recreation Council. So this council is just a beginning, really we're just beginning.

The people here are originally from the community and they feel that this is home — "I'm not going anywhere, I'm going to do what I can to improve the community." They are farmers and they've always lived on the land and they feel like this is mine and I'm going to take care of it. Even though it's been a long time, I know from '75 to '79 getting just the clinic opened, they didn't give up but kept right on going, kept right on trying. I think they will continue the same way and I think the children will carry on. They have a feel for what a grass-roots group can do, what people can do, if they come together and work together and stay together. □

Richard Couto directs the Center for Health Services at Vanderbilt University. His book, Streams of Idealism, traces the experiences of several communities in establishing and operating health clinics. A videotape describing the events narrated here is available from the Center for Health Services. The research for this article was made possible by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



WVSP: Voices Serving People

by Bill Adler

Not long ago, a local citizens group in rural northeastern North Carolina got some unexpected help when they started a campaign to change the admissions policy of Maria-Parham Hospital so poor people would not have to pay deposits before being admitted.

A community radio station, WVSP-FM, featured frequent and detailed reports on the Assembly of Vance's* organizing efforts, providing information carried by no other media in the area. When the campaign culminated in a mass meeting at the county courthouse, WVSP aired the entire four-hour meeting live.

"They magnified our audience all

over the county and beyond," recalls Kenneth Smith, one of the campaign's chief organizers. "It was an electrifying and stimulating experience, and the mass attention they gave people's dissatisfaction with the hospital had a dramatic effect."

A few days after the hearing, the hospital made several basic concessions on deposits, hiring blacks and improving staff attitudes toward black and poor patients.

Located over a beauty shop, one block from the main crossroads of tiny Warrenton, radio station WVSP has been living up to its call letters — Voices Serving People — since it first went on the air in August, 1976. By giving people a sense that radio is a medium for two-way communication, it is a model of information sharing that goes beyond the normal idea of broadcast-

ing programs at listeners. It is the only rural, community-based National Public Radio (NPR) member, and the only listener-supported, non-commercial, rural, black-controlled station in the country.

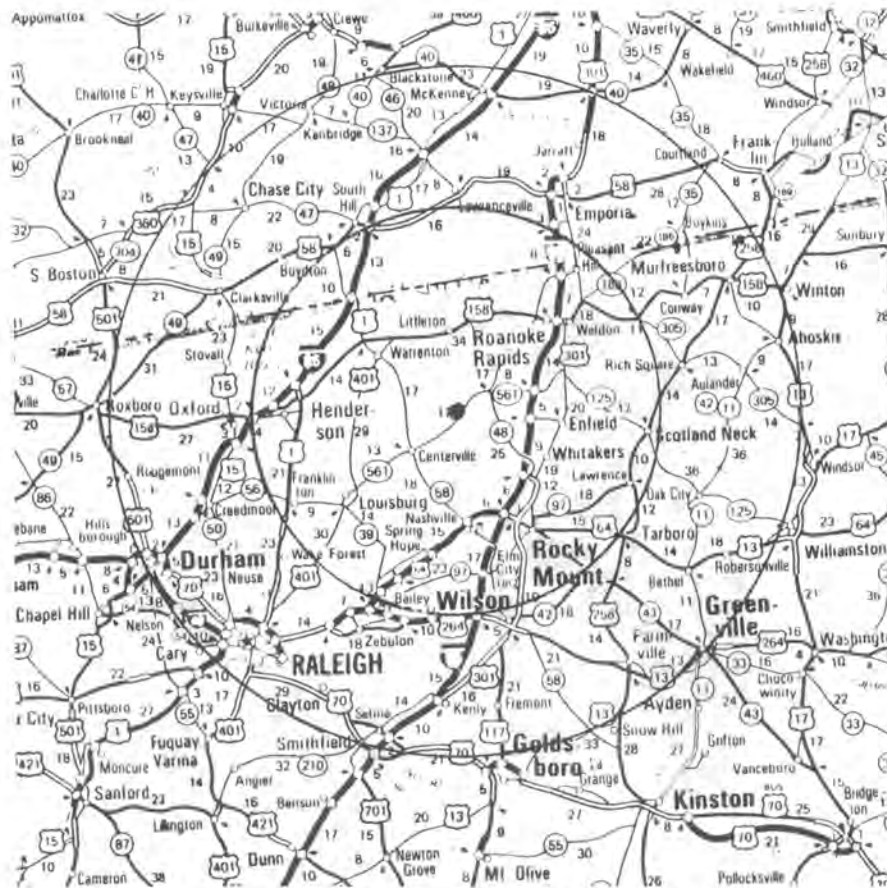
The roots of the station and its bonds with the community it serves go back to 1973 when activists living and working in the incredibly poor black belt counties of North Carolina met to assess the region's needs and possible solutions.

"We didn't decide that radio was more important than housing, or housing more important than education or health or whatever. We saw, however, that it would perhaps be possible for us to have some impact on all those areas with a radio station," says Valeria Lee, who grew up in Warren County and is now the station's general manager.

"You ran down the dial and you had a choice of country, soul, gospel and easy listening. Not much by way of information, variety or entertainment. We knew there could be something better."

A lot of trial-and-error went into those early days. None of the original staff had any experience in running a radio station. Valeria Lee was a high school guidance counselor. Her husband Jim, who became news director and engineer, knew virtually nothing about radio technology. Without wealthy backers or on-the-air experience, the founders learned to rely first and foremost on their personal tenacity and political commitment to a vision of public radio pieced together from sources as diverse as an FCC handbook on "How to Start a Broadcast Station"

* For an article on the Assemblies, a network of black rural organizations in southern Virginia and northeast North Carolina, see *Southern Exposure*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (Spring, 1979).



WVSP's listening area extends in a circle around its transmitter (the black dot on map).

to a first-hand trip to Cuba to see rural radio in a revolutionary context.

During one three-month stretch in 1977, when funds nearly dried up, three people – Valeria and Jim Lee and Walter Norflett – managed to maintain the entire 18-hour day themselves. “It was a desperate situation,” Norflett remembers. “We just refused to let the station go under. We sat with our faces looking toward the meters, but I can’t say our brains were alert.”

Not having enough money or people is still the station’s biggest problem, although now the budget runs over \$175,000 and there is a full-time staff of nine. Staff complaints about too many 12-hour days and seven-day weeks and too little equipment are only muted by their senses of humor and concern for the work.

“Some days I feel like my goal is to take too little time and too little equipment and try to get something out there that folks need to know,” Candy Hamilton says. “Other days, when I’m more up, I feel we have a chance to share our resources with people who can perhaps gain more control over their lives by having more information or seeing ways they can become involved.”

With huge projects like covering the hospital campaign or the multi-year organizing of J.P. Stevens plants in nearby Roanoke Rapids, it’s easy to see how Hamilton and the two other members of the station’s news staff get stretched thin. The same expansive, community orientation permeates every aspect of WVSP. Indeed, its triple focus for programming flows directly from a recognition of the unique mission and condition faced by a radio station serving a largely black, rural audience, as expressed by Valeria Lee’s statement to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting: “To be black and a part of the rural South and not have access to the blues or jazz or African music was to be denied access to our culture; to be removed from the power centers and not have access to detailed reports of national and international developments fostered isolation; to have as models the urban experience without recognition of contributions of minorities and country folk was to foster notions of second-class status.”

The three pillars of the station’s 19-hour daily schedule, which rest on this philosophy, are music (“mostly jazz”), news from NPR and the in-house staff, and community-oriented

shows that involve one segment or another of the potential listening audience of 350,000 – including shows for young children, teenagers, consumers, and a nightly call-in show, “Community Expressions.”

Serving as an alternative source of information and entertainment has not been easy. The challenge of fulfilling WVSP’s two-way communication potential is even harder. For example, the “Community Expressions” call-in show is still plagued with a lack of listener participation. “Too many people have come to think that what they say and think isn’t important,” explains David Cole, host of the 90-minute program.

Georgia Collins, the station’s development director, believes the lack of interchange is due to the deep-rooted belief that listeners have no role or right of participation. “People have been trained to look at the media in passive kinds of ways,” she says. “We are reaping the results of adults who grew up with media without having any understanding of how it can be used.”

Cole also cites as a deterrent the fact that many listeners have to call long-distance, a financial burden the station can’t relieve because of its own limited resources. Some shows, however, spark heated debate. The night the six Klan-Nazis were acquitted in Greensboro “the phones were lit up for the solid program,” says Cole.

Staff member Jere King believes that changing the view of radio as a one-way medium must begin with children. Toward that end, she produces “Tickle Me Think,” a 15-minute morning program designed for five-to-eight year olds.

“The biggest thing I try to do is expose kids to different kinds of cultural activities,” says King. “There’s a lot of songs and traditional folk pieces. In the series, ‘The World is Big, The World is Small,’ we hear a lot of international stories. It lets kids know to look around the world for ideas.” Closer to home, King has featured kids reading stories selected in a countywide competition.

The popular afternoon program “Let’s Rap,” produced by teenagers involved in the station’s Health Education Project, also “gives kids a kind of outlook on how to take care of their problems,” Vince White says. White, 21, is a volunteer who works with

eight VISTAs hired by the station under a grant to introduce teens to health issues. As with several other special projects begun by the station, it's not always easy translating education and service projects into quality radio programs.

Mary Taflinger, another VISTA, says she found it frustrating at first to use "Let's Rap" as an organizing tool. "Initially it didn't seem like anybody was interested in the health aspect of it. All they wanted to do was disc-jockeying. But later we found it allowed us to get to know the kids a little better and then find out where their interests are."

"Let's Rap" still mostly features disco music, but the teens also produce audio spots on health, poetry and a daily newscast. In addition, the Health Education Project and Warren County students produced a one-hour program on adolescence called "Changes: Feeling Good About Growing Up." Five other features are planned for this year on nutrition, chronic disease detection, VD, teen pregnancy and drug abuse.

The Health Project has also performed a radio drama entitled "How the Junk Floyds Took Nutritianne." The drama is about how the Floyds "took this lady who was teaching nutrition and tried to damage her mind because they were really into junk food," explains Steve Hyman.

Hyman, a 26-year-old Health Project VISTA, has used other innovative methods to get the message of health nutrition across to a sometimes unsympathetic audience. He has produced two 30-second health spots on good nutrition which he calls "a little reflection while you boogie."

Hyman is a good example of what an accessible radio station can do for community members and vice versa. He says he first became involved in WVSP about four years ago after discovering the then-new station right in his hometown.

"I'll never forget it," he says. "I came to this little room here and I saw Chick Corea [the record album] laying on a table and I said, 'Oh wow,' because I was just beginning to cut my teeth on this kind of stuff."

Hyman has stayed involved ever since, eventually learning "the board" — the production studio equipment — and hosting his own shows. Most of the other VISTAs and youth working in the Health Project have earned their

FCC licenses and host various programs. Volunteers from as far as Durham and Greenville also produce several of the music shows that dominate the programming day. The station hopes to recruit more volunteer hosts and to continue to experiment with its mix of music; for example, it plans to expand the time devoted to blues, which always brings more listener requests than can be fulfilled in its present two-hour Sunday slot. The station's music, especially its five to eight hours of jazz a day, has undoubtedly brought it most of its listeners and volunteers, but the bulk of the staff's time goes into producing the news and community features and administering the growing list of special projects.

In addition to the Health Project, a Media Project Against Crime has produced three illustrated booklets, a touring play featuring children and adults from the community, a videotape series on alternatives to prison, and a weekly radio show on crime problems and solutions. This project, funded by the U.S. Justice Department's Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, indicates how the station has expanded into other media forms and how it relies on unusual sources for its operating funds. A recent matching grant from the Commerce Department's Small Business Administration allowed the station to double its wattage from 50,000 to 100,000 — a move which should improve reception for listeners on its fringe areas, but which has also increased the monthly electric bill from about \$500 to over \$950. A pending grant from the Presbyterian Self-Help Development Fund will pay the salary of the station's first full-time engineer, and \$9,000 from National Public Radio will support Jim Lee to produce nine half-hour programs on Cuban and Haitian refugees that will be distributed through the NPR network.

Georgia Collins says listeners now contribute about 10 percent of the total budget. She hopes to raise that to 60 percent by 1986 and also to convince area small businesses, especially black-owned companies, to underwrite specific programs in return for a mention of their name as WVSP supporters.

The station retains the nonprofit, worker-managed structure originally created in 1973, with a 10-member

board governing the parent organization, Sound & Print United, Inc. Five people are elected by the station's founders, two by the staff and three by the "members" — anyone who contributes \$25 or 12 hours of work per year.

Over the years, the staff has found that advocating worker management was one thing, but sitting down and struggling over group decisions is a difficult learning process. "We had a lot of problems the first year," admits Valeria Lee. "We simply didn't know how to work as a collective. But we knew that to build something that advocated different ways of doing things, it was important to live it, to do it, to be it. And, you know, that's been the only way we could have survived."

"School prepares people for the job market by teaching them they have to have someone to tell them what to do," says Jere King. "The good thing about WVSP is that no one tells you how to do anything. The problem comes when I cannot do something a certain way and the deadline is upon me. Then it's the responsibility of the collective to have some input and say, 'would this be helpful?' or 'should you try this?'"

Going beyond the established roles and empowering people to make decisions for themselves, with each other, is what WVSP is all about. Its possibilities as a community radio station are clearly unlimited. As Jim Lee asked in a speech to the National Black United Fund Conference on Public Policy and Economic Democracy last year: "How many microphones and tape recorders can be placed in a community or region? What happens when people realize that telephones contain microphones or that home tape recorders can produce radio programs?"

WVSP is a challenge — a direct challenge to the mystique of commercial and most non-commercial broadcasting, which claims that only certain people have the authority and the right to the microphone.

"Just how much of a threat to the status quo is an informed population? In our part of North Carolina," says Jim Lee, "we are just beginning to find out." □

Bill Adler is an organizer with the Roanoke Rapids chapter of the Carolina Brown Lung Association.

“GET IN THERE AND FIGHT”



TAKING ON TOXIC DUMPING

Love Canal. PCB dumping in North Carolina. PBB poisoning of livestock feed in Michigan. Kepone in the James River — all these events have made national headlines over the past few years as we have finally had to face the legacy of our lax approach to monitoring chemical wastes.

However, such nationally significant events are really only the tip of the iceberg. Every state in the South has been the scene of harrowing episodes caused by chemical waste disposal, and new ones come to light every day.

Most of the blame for these atrocities must fall on the corporations which produce these lethal wastes. An estimated 90 percent of our hazardous wastes have been disposed of illegally or improperly by companies mostly interested in saving a few dollars on disposal costs. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state regulatory agencies are underbudgeted, understaffed and under-skilled — and consequently unwilling and/or unable to take the vigorous action necessary to protect citizens from the horrors of chemical dumping. Under Reagan's leadership, there is little hope that the performance of these agencies will improve.

The all-out drive for industrial expansion in the South further compromises government policies towards hazardous waste. For instance, while North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt launched a vigorous campaign to bring the micro-electronics industry — and its chemical problems — to the state, he was also steering an improved but obviously flawed waste management act through the General Assembly. A comparison of Southern laws with those in states like New Jersey which have labored to overcome their legacy of chemical nightmares shows just how weak an approach the South has taken.

States have largely focused on only one tack for "solving" their waste problems: burying them in landfills and hoping they'll go away. This approach also applies to low-level radioactive wastes, which are also viewed as a "crisis" problem by most state governments. The problem is that land-filled wastes will not stay buried forever: they *will* leak, *will* enter the water supply, *will* endanger the health of people living around the landfill. Even the most technically advanced landfills will eventually leak some chemicals; many of these substances remain deadly virtually forever. However, alternatives like recycling reusable materials, neutralizing the most deadly wastes or even curtailing their production are viewed skeptically by most industry and government officials because to do so would reportedly be too expensive. So state governments are pursuing landfill programs that only defer the payment of the high costs until the time when leakage from these new waste dumps creates a new generation of Love Canals.

At the same time, state and EPA officials have refused to acknowledge the hazards that past dumping and landfilling have created. As people discover an alarming incidence of skin rashes, breathing problems and other health disabilities and link these symptoms to nearby waste dumping, the "responsible" state agencies assure them that everything is safe, that there is no problem — until local residents create such a clamor that their horrors must be faced. And in many situations — Love Canal and Memphis, for example — the help they finally receive is woefully inadequate.

Viewing the government's poor performance in protecting and assisting these citizens, residents of communities

slated for new landfills have fought back with vigor, telling officials that they do not want landfills in their communities. Most such dumps have been targeted for rural and low-income areas, where people generally have less political power, but still the communities have rallied together and often stopped states' plans to saddle them with the region's waste products. Citizens in Hickman County, Tennessee, and Heard County, Georgia, have recently fought off landfills, and people in other parts of the South are now engaged in similar struggles.

State officials and to some extent the media have often portrayed these dump opponents as selfish people who oppose dumps out of fear and ignorance; their thinking is portrayed as limited to: "Not in my backyard, you don't." However, newly aroused citizens often unite with the victims of past dumping to agitate for sane waste management policies throughout their state. For instance, Tennesseans Against Chemical Hazards (TEACH) combines victims of past dumping with opponents of new landfills to seek compensation for victims and improved regulation of all forms of hazardous waste. In fact, TEACH is representative of a new wave of community organizing throughout the South aimed at revamping our approach to waste disposal and protecting us from present and future Love Canals.

To dramatize the seriousness of the hazardous waste dump dilemma and the vigor of citizens' response to it, we have prepared this section as a brief reader on the problems the South is experiencing with both past dumping and new landfill plans. Kenny Thomas analyzes the frustrating attempt of Memphis residents to get relief from the city's legacy of poorly regulated dumps and "midnight dumping." Betty Brink shows how inept state regulations allowed a "temporary" low-level radioactive waste storage center in Texas to become a long-term lethal hazard. Ginny Thomas and Bill Brooks profile Georgia 2000's successful campaign against a hazardous waste landfill in Heard County, Georgia. Finally, Nell Grantham discusses her own horrifying ordeal with an abandoned chemical dump but explains how this experience led her to help start TEACH.

Much of this material is extremely depressing; the exasperation Memphians feel as the city, state and EPA ignore their problems is gruesome to consider. However, throughout these articles the determination of the individuals involved is quite inspiring. As we learn from Nell Grantham, even those Memphians who got the cold shoulder from their government have stuck with the efforts of TEACH and tried to assist others facing similar problems. Therefore, despite the gloomy nature of the problem, the continued work of groups like Georgia 2000 and TEACH does point to some optimistic conclusions. As more and more individuals band together to protect themselves from hazardous wastes, they are laying the groundwork for greater grassroots involvement in combating our chemical hazards and protecting people from the tragedies that have occurred in the past. □

At the end of the section, we have provided a brief glossary of the chemicals, and their potential effects, mentioned in these articles. Our thanks to the Highlander Center and its excellent publication, We Are Tired of Being Guinea Pigs!, for the information provided.

“OUR GOVERNMENT WOULDN'T DO THIS TO US”



by **Kenny Thomas**

Almost a hundred people were packed into a long, narrow room in the Frayser Community Center. The doors were shut to keep out noise from the adjacent gymnasium, and the television lights were blazing. The heat was almost unbearable. The debate, too, was getting hot.

"If Alexander declares an emergency, it would make Frayser eligible for federal disaster relief funds," said a man in his late twenties who was wearing a business suit and sitting in front of the room. "That's why I'm saying we should go after Alexander."

A woman in her thirties rose. "We may have to get arrested," she said, "but I'm willing to do it for my children. That's why I think we should do it, for the children."

It was no small decision the residents of Frayser — and their friends from North Memphis — were prepared to make: the decision to sit in at the office of Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander, to risk arrest. But these police officers, factory workers, hospital technicians, homemakers and teachers, most of whom had met for the first time only two weeks before at the founding meeting of the Frayser Health and Safety Committee, voted on the evening of February 22, 1980, to do just that.

They were scared and frustrated. Scared by the recent discovery that their own private hells — the illnesses that plagued their families — were in fact shared with their neighbors; frustrated because for two weeks they had been trying to get public officials to listen to their pleas for help. "We didn't have any idea what to do," recalls one Frayser resident.

The cause of their concern: chemical wastes, buried long ago underneath their homes, now leaking out and destroying their health. The story of the chemical contamination of the Frayser neighborhood — and the nearby community of North Memphis — graphically illustrates the increasing threat posed by past practices of improperly dumping hazardous wastes and the frustration that citizens across the country are facing in trying to protect their families from these wastes.

When James and Evonda Pounds bought a modest brick house on Steele Street in the Frayser section of northwest Memphis, they were glad to be moving. When they moved into it in January, 1976, they looked forward to having a larger house and yard, and living within walking distance of Evonda's parents. "We thought it had a nice yard for the children to play

Evonda Pounds and her son Tommy.

Photo by Larry J. Coyne/Memphis Press-Scimitar



Photo by Jack E. Cantrell/Memphis Press-Scimitar

in," says Mrs. Pounds.

As it turns out, it was not such a nice yard. Once it was warm enough for them to play outside, the three children frequently came in with rashes, especially when it had been raining. Their daughter Sabrina developed respiratory difficulties as well.

"When I took them to our doctor, he told me their problems were being caused by chemical contamination," recalls Mrs. Pounds. "Naturally I thought of stuff I had inside the house. But I had a locked pantry and that couldn't be it. It was a while before I noticed that it was only after they came in from playing." Armed with that knowledge, she went to the Memphis/Shelby County Health Department in August, 1976, her first of many trips.

For the next three years a tug-of-war ensued between Mrs. Pounds and the Health Department. In response to her complaints, the Health Department would take a few soil samples; several times the samples mysteriously "disappeared." In 1977, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also ran tests. Both agencies told her that there were "trace amounts" of insecticides in her yard but that they posed no health hazard.

That Evonda Pounds kept going

Brother Greene (far right) and 15 Frayser and Cypress committee members await hearing on their arrest at the Governor's office.

throughout these fruitless skirmishes is a tribute to her persistence, which she ascribes to simply "being stubborn" and worried about her children. "The more they said nothing was wrong when my doctor said it was chemical contamination, the more I wanted to do something," she says.

Her suspicion that health officials were not telling the whole truth proved correct. The two chemicals that turned up most frequently, chlordane and heptachlor, are both carcinogens and dangerous even in small amounts. EPA banned both from most commercial uses, its hand having been forced by a 1975 lawsuit brought by the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF). Chlordane was found in concentrations ranging from two to 20 parts per million (ppm) in the Pounds yard, with a reading of 18.96 ppm under the swing set. As EDF community organizer Ruffin Harris says, "These were exactly the levels of chlordane we went to court to ban." Yet the Health Department continued to maintain that the levels found in the Pounds yard were both safe and typical of Memphis, even after the *Memphis Press-Scimitar* published data from a

1970 EPA survey showing the background level of chlordane in Memphis is only 0.0138 ppm. EPA also refused to acknowledge the danger, even though its own data contradicted its public pronouncements.

The source of these dangers: "midnight dumping," the practice of abandoning chemical wastes in deserted areas late at night. Usually, someone with chemicals to dispose of will pay a truck owner to take them away, saying the equivalent of "Forget where you got this." In the 1940s and '50s, before Frayser was developed, the area was a popular dumping ground for chemicals from the Velsicol Chemical Company and also, it is rumored, the Mallory Air Force Station. No one knows for sure what was dumped, but there is no longer any dispute that it occurred.

Across the Wolf River from predominantly white Frayser, the residents of predominantly black North Memphis were becoming equally concerned by the hazardous waste problem. In the midst of their community sits the Hollywood Dump, a formerly legal dumpsite used to bury chemicals

produced by Velsicol. The dump site actually consists of two separate landfill operations. One, known as the "endrin pit," is a mound of hazardous endrin waste containing sludge from a sewer-cleaning operation in the vicinity of the Velsicol plant. The other, located on the opposite side of North Hollywood Drive, contains a variety of hazardous pesticide wastes such as chlordane and heptachlor. State officials closed the dump in 1964 after Velsicol was implicated in a massive fish kill in the lower Mississippi River (see box).

Located on the banks of the Wolf River, the dump leaks chemicals into the river, making its fish unfit for human consumption. The Shannon Elementary School is located just beyond the Wolf River levee, and neighborhood children formerly used areas of the dump site as a playground; several children have drowned in the dump's gravel pits.

In May, 1979, members of a local community group — the Cypress Health and Safety Committee — focused on the problems of chemical contamination from the Hollywood Dump. Led by long-time activist N.T.

"Brother" Greene, the group had already successfully fought on issues ranging from blocking the nomination of a U.S. Court of Appeals judge to cleaning up raw sewage in the Cypress Creek. Securing the assistance of U.S. Representative Harold Ford, the committee pressured EPA to run tests at the dump site.

The results were frightening. If people thought the levels of chlordane in Frayser were high, those found in the Hollywood Dump were astronomical. EPA took a soil sample from the Shannon School playground and found 390 ppm chlordane, but later said the result was in error. Tests in the dump itself showed concentrations ranging from 170 to 5,000 ppm. (In Fall, 1980, a Vanderbilt University chemist found a "hot spot" that registered 500,000 ppm — a 50 percent concentration of chlordane!)

With this information in hand, the Cypress Health and Safety Committee tried to have the Shannon School closed, but the city refused to act. The committee continued to pressure the city to clean up the dump, and managed to publicize the issue to some extent — for instance,

VELSICOL: a Record of "Known Ecological Abuses"

The name of the Velsicol Chemical Company pops up again and again when the subject is irresponsible disposal of hazardous wastes. It's the company behind the Hollywood Dump described here, the Hardeman County dump responsible for Nell Grantham's troubles (see interview on page 42) and countless others.

Velsicol is a wholly owned subsidiary of Northwest Industries, a holding and management company. It manufactures and sells a variety of specialty pesticides, resin products, industrial chemicals and other chemical products, and has plants in Arizona, Illinois, Mexico, Tennessee and Texas. The wastes produced have found homes all across the South. After abandoning the

Hollywood Dump in 1964 and the Hardeman County dump in 1972, says Nell Grantham, "They went right into other parts of Tennessee to dump — one of those places is Bumpass Cove, Tennessee. I know they have dumped in South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama — all through there."

The Memphis plant, opened in 1932, employs 250 people. It was implicated in a massive fish kill in the Mississippi River in 1964: more than five million fish from Memphis to New Orleans died as a result.

Michael Brown, the reporter who broke open the Love Canal disaster at Niagara Falls, has looked into Velsicol's activities in his book *Laying Waste: The Poisoning of America by Toxic Chemicals*. He found the company to be second only to Hooker Chemical (the company responsible for Love Canal) in involvement in "known ecological abuses." Its record, he says, ranged from the fish kill to "illnesses among plant workers in Texas. In Michigan, flame retardants from a firm it purchased had found their way into livestock feed, leading to the destruction of animals across

the state. In Memphis, it was suspected that toxic emanations from its plant had caused employees of the municipal wastewater treatment plant to fall ill. . . . The company once refused to comply with a federal request to call back two chemicals, and in 1976 it was publicly chastised by a United States Senate committee staff for permitting the further production of a pesticide, leptophos, after it appeared obvious that workers were becoming ill in its vicinity. . . .

"Controversy flared highest around Velsicol's manufacture of chlordane and heptachlor. Since 1965 heptachlor, along with its epoxide, had been suspected of causing cancer in mice. Velsicol claimed otherwise. . . . On December 12, 1977, a special grand jury returned an 11-count indictment against the company and six of its past or present officers, employees and attorneys, charging that from August, 1972, to July, 1975, the defendants had conspired to defraud the government, concealing material facts indicating that the substances induced animal tumors. The charges were later dismissed."

they found out that Nathan Tennessee was raising hogs for human consumption on the dump site itself — but it was apparent to many in the group that more allies were needed to get any action taken, and they began to look to Frayser for those allies.

Some members of the Cypress group were hesitant to work with whites from Frayser. Greene explained how he overcame this resistance: “One told me, ‘Those white folks just moved up to Frayser to get away from blacks. Why should we help them?’ I said to them, ‘The problem we are fighting in Hollywood is a very big thing. If we work together, we can get farther faster.’” Thus began the effort to forge a racially unified coalition to protect the residents of Frayser and North Memphis from the hazards of past chemical dumping.

In January, 1980, Brother Greene visited Evonda Pounds with Ruffin Harris, who had come to Memphis to help the Cypress group on behalf of the well-respected Environmental Defense Fund. Harris advised Greene and Pounds to conduct a door-to-door survey to establish the extent of the health problems in Frayser, as had been done at Love Canal. Two reporters who had followed the issues closely — Tracey Wilkes of WMC-FM and Leonard Novarro of the *Memphis Press-Scimitar* — were recruited to help with the survey.

Going door to door in one of Memphis’s colder winters, the surveyors heard the same stories over and over again. “I knew other people had problems similar to mine,” says Pounds, “but I didn’t realize how widespread it was until that day.” Adds Wilkes, “It got really scary.” In a single block, 26 out of 28 people interviewed had symptoms possibly related to chemical contamination, and there had been at least three cancer deaths in the past two or three years.

One man in his seventies was at first skeptical of the idea that chemicals were a problem. Oh, he had to paint his house every two years, he said, because the paint kept peeling off, and a few trees had died in his yard. Then there were the allergies that had begun when he moved into his home five years ago. But he didn’t think they had anything to do with



Photo by Jack E. Cantrell/Memphis Press-Scimitar

chemicals. The surveyors moved on. A half block later, they looked back and saw the man panting after them. His breathing, he said, he also had been having trouble with his breathing, but he hadn’t really thought much about it. House after house: tumors, breathing problems, rashes, cancer. One by one the Frayser residents recounted their illnesses.

The political impact of this and subsequent surveys was even greater than their psychological impact. The stark figures on how many people were sick were enough by themselves to establish that *something* was wrong in Frayser. When just under half the people interviewed in a one-block

Pigs raised by Nathan Tennessee at the Hollywood Dump.

area have cancer and three-quarters have breathing problems, as Novarro later found, health officials have some explaining to do.

Bolstered by the daily news media features on Frayser, Greene, Pounds and Harris used the contacts made during the survey to pull together a Frayser Health and Safety Committee. Meeting jointly with the Cypress committee, the organization held its tumultuous inaugural meeting on February 7, 1980. One hundred and thirty people attended, and about 20 testified about their illnesses with

TV cameras rolling. Early on there were attempts to create divisions in the group: city council member Glenn Raines denounced Brother Greene as an outsider to the neighborhood who had never shown any interest in it before. However, a member of the audience quickly retorted, "And where have you been for the last four years, councilman?" The speaker, Jane Hensel, was elected the group's president. The members also decided to meet the next day with County Mayor William Morris.

The meeting with Morris seemed to be a promising beginning. The members of the delegation told him their stories one by one. The accounts "seemed to make an impression on him," recalls Billie Jean Rochevot. "He promised to help and come out to Frayser the next day." Besides that, Morris told the press he thought as many as 25 to 30 families would have to be relocated. But in about 10 days his promises had evaporated, and no further offers of help came from his office.

However, the Frayser Health and Safety Committee continued to attract new members afraid for their own health. Rochevot herself responded immediately to the press coverage of the committee's first meeting. A 31-year-old police officer, she has personally suffered greatly from the chemical contamination: "I'm very bitter; I lost my ability to bear children three years ago. My daughter is five. When she plays out in the dirt her hands get infected. She has lost a thumbnail twice, and one of her toenails once. Once I stayed up for two straight nights with her. She couldn't breathe. She had a rash all over her chest. You can't keep your children inside all the time."

With support swelling from others like Rochevot, the Frayser committee became impatient to get some immediate action taken. In a joint meeting with the Cypress Health and Safety Committee, they targeted Governor Alexander to have him declare Frayser a disaster area and make it eligible for federal disaster relief funds. The committee took a bold step in the tactics of direct action, choosing to sit-in at the governor's Memphis office to force a meeting with him.

As the State Office Building opened on February 25, about 40 members of the Frayser Health and Safety Committee went to the top floor and took over the outer portion of the gover-

nor's office. Alexander was not even in the state, but in Washington for a meeting of the National Conference of Governors; the demonstrators knew this fact, but were hoping to stimulate some action from him anyway. However, Alexander either did not hear about the protest or simply refused to speak with them; to this day, the demonstrators do not know which. The group settled in for a potentially long stay, but the 15 people who had vowed to stay overnight were arrested shortly after the building closed for the night; the charges were later dropped, and the group received no response to their requests at all.

Recalls Rochevot: "The sit-in was a desperate attempt to get the attention we deserved. We had this feeling that if we'd been Hein Park or Germantown [wealthier Memphis neighborhoods], we would have gotten somebody's attention, but here we were, residents of a middle- and lower-class neighborhood. It was as if we were unimportant. Finally, we said, 'We're going to get his attention if it takes going to jail.'"

Even if Alexander was unwilling to assist them, the publicity the Frayser and Cypress committees had generated finally brought some responses from government officials. Under constant pressure to "come up with something," the Health Department announced that it had found witnesses to illegal dumping in Frayser in the 1940s and '50s. At almost the same time, EPA announced that there had been *no* dumping in Frayser, a claim it later retracted. Despite this contradiction, the two agencies were of one voice in assuring the community that the levels of chemicals found in Frayser were neither dangerous nor unusual. Evidence to the contrary was ignored.

The group did receive some solid support from one government official — U.S. Representative Harold Ford, whose congressional district included the Hollywood area but not Frayser. According to Ruffin Harris, "Ford got on board first, it took the least pressure to get him on, and he's been good all along." Specifically, he kept after the EPA to intervene, and he was instrumental in having hearings called by House Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee member Albert Gore, Jr.

As a result of such pressure, EPA

embarked on a more ambitious testing program encompassing air, water and soil samples, and the federal Center for Disease Control surveyed Frayser residents and residents of a control neighborhood in northeast Memphis to compare disease incidence.

Nevertheless, the EPA still refused to take strong action to clean up the situation. Though it started more testing, it confined the testing to a tightly restricted area. When a barrel was unearthed from one resident's yard, EPA whisked it away and later announced it was empty, despite eyewitness accounts to the contrary. Test results throughout the neighborhood showed dangerous levels of chlordane and other chemicals, but these were again dismissed as "trace amounts."

Finally, in response to Representative Gore's hearings in April, 1980, EPA created the Metropolitan Environmental Task Force — labeled by community residents as the "Task Force." This 25-member board was appointed to advise EPA on environmental problems in Memphis, particularly those related to Hollywood and Frayser. It included public officials, Jaycees, the Rotary Club — but only three residents of the affected neighborhoods. EPA added five more residents to the Task Force after an outraged protest at the first meeting of the group, but ignored the demand that at least 50 percent of the Task Force consist of victims. Eventually, opposition to the Task Force grew so strong that Brother Greene was arrested at a meeting and many area residents left in a huff.

The only significant concession the EPA would make was to place a fence around the Hollywood dump — and that only happened as a result of pressure from Ford and Gore. Even the Task Force had little power to influence EPA's action. When it finally decided to clean up some of the Hollywood Dump's "hottest" spots, EPA put together a "Technical Group" to deal with the problem consisting of itself, the Health Department — and the Velsicol Chemical Company. The Task Force had no say in how the dump's hot spots were to be cleaned up.

The still-unfinished cleanup of the Hollywood Dump's hot spots is the only such effort undertaken by EPA in Memphis. The agency maintains to this day that it has no evidence to



Leonard Akins points to a hole where a barrel was found in his backyard in Frayser.

justify individual health testing in Frayser or to say that toxic chemicals have been found there in significant amounts. Thus, from EPA's standpoint, "cleaning up" Frayser is not only unnecessary, but meaningless. The frustration this caused among Frayser residents is understandable. As one explained, "One thought just kept going through our minds. Our government wouldn't do this to us. It was hard for many of us to face the fact that our government was doing this to us."

As the level of frustration grew in response to continued government

inaction, the initial cohesion and commitment of the Frayser and Cypress Health and Safety Committees waned. Part of the problem was the hotly debated sit-in. The entire experience was anti-climactic and accomplished little while dividing the group significantly. People began missing committee meetings, apparently feeling that nothing was being accomplished. In addition, personality conflicts mounted within the Frayser leadership itself. Jane Hensel resigned as president and was replaced by Billie Jean Rochevot. Hensel claims that Rochevot forced her out; Rochevot retorts that Hensel quit.

Tensions also existed between

Greene and the Frayser leadership. Greene attributes the split to racial tensions; members of the Frayser group alternately claim that blacks are either still active in the organization or "are more comfortable with other groups that are mostly black." One Frayser resident goes so far as to call Greene a racist, saying, "He makes blacks feel guilty for going with the whites."

The Cypress and Frayser committees have ceased meeting together, and though they have continued, by necessity, to work cooperatively on some projects, relations between the two groups are clearly strained.

The Cypress group has dropped out of the "Task Force" and moved on to other issues. The Shannon School is still open.

After the sit-in, a third community group became involved: ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. Black ACORN members in the Northside Manor Apartments, just north of Steele Street, were incensed when the housing project was excluded from the EPA's testing area. "We were dead set on getting the apartments included," says Anne Jefferson, the group's chair. But when their main demand, individual health testing, was ignored by EPA, ACORN too fell by the wayside, going on to more winnable issues.

The Pounds family now wants to move out of Frayser. "It took us a long time just to get an agent," says Evonda Pounds. "Now when he tells prospective buyers it's on Steele Street, they say, 'No, thanks.'"

Pounds has grown discouraged with the whole effort to seek a solution to the problem. She long ago quit going to Frayser Health and Safety Committee meetings, and now expects nothing more than more bad news. Her doctors have found evidence of liver and kidney damage in her, and of chromosome damage in her children. In early 1980, hardly a day went by for her without hearing from a reporter. Now she never knows what "great news" she'll get next. □

Kenny Thomas, a former ACORN organizer, is a free-lance writer whose articles have appeared in The Guardian and In These Times. Portions of this article are based on an earlier article he wrote for the October, 1980, edition of Memphis magazine.

“A SLOW, CREEPING DEATH”

TACKLING THE TODD NUCLEAR DUMP

by Betty Brink



When Hurricane Allen, 1980's much-feared "killer storm," seemed headed for Galveston Island on the upper Texas coast, residents braced for a dose—considered long overdue by most weather watchers—of 200-mile-an-hour winds, high waves, and funnel clouds. Instead Allen blew ashore a couple of hundred miles further south, sparing the port city from a disaster that could have been even greater than the one that

wiped out Galveston in 1900. The danger lay on Pelican Island, an island in the Houston-Galveston ship channel that faces Galveston Bay on one side and lies only 2,000 yards across a narrow channel from the densely populated city on the other. Pelican Island was then the home of over 10,000 barrels of radioactive waste, some of it mixed with flammable chemicals. The drums sat out in the open without adequate protection from high tides or hurricane-force winds. Alongside them were

14 22,000-gallon tanks holding over 300,000 gallons of radioactive coolant water from two nuclear power plants. Many of the 55-gallon drums, stacked two-deep on concrete pallets in a fenced yard near a nuclear waste reprocessing plant, were already rusting and corroding from the wet salt air and constant sea winds.

Six months before, the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) had submitted an internal report to the Texas Department of Health (TDH), the agency that had licensed the plant 15 years before. The report said the nuclear waste site — owned and operated by the “research and technical division” of the Todd Shipyard Company — could be “destroyed by tides resulting from a major hurricane.” Even though Galvestonians had not been told of this DPS warning, by the summer of 1980 angry residents were being heard from Austin to Washington on the subject of Todd’s dangers. Public interest had been kindled by a series of events that had begun the previous fall. Now, almost two years later, the waste site is being shut down, Todd is out of the nuclear business and Texas has new laws on the books regulating the disposal of radioactive waste. It’s not an unqualified victory for Todd’s opponents: the laws could be better, and Pelican Island will probably never be adequately cleaned up. But things are better than they were.

In November of 1979 this country’s three permanent nuclear waste dumps closed, with no assurance that they would reopen anytime soon. Wire service stories reported, however, that a Texas shipyard was willing to take “wastes which nobody else will touch.” Though the Todd shipyard was licensed only for temporary storage of low-level wastes, it opened its doors to receive 3,000 drums a month and quickly doubled its normal radioactive inventory.

This crisis brought Todd its first public attention when Janice Coggeshall, a Galveston city councilor, saw one of the news stories, a short item that said wastes being turned away at the nuclear dump in Barnwell, South Carolina, were to be trucked to a temporary storage facility in Galveston County. It was the first she’d heard of it.

At about the same time, Peggy Buchorn of Bay City, traveling home

from San Antonio one night, found herself behind a tanker truck with a radioactive symbol on its back. Buchorn, an anti-nuke activist who has been fighting the construction of a giant nuclear plant near her home, got into a conversation with the truck’s driver via her CB. She discovered that the truck was carrying radioactive water from the Rancho Seco nuclear plant in California and was headed for Galveston to unload.

The same month, *Science* magazine reported that the nation’s nuclear medicine facilities were about to shut down when they heard of a little-known processing plant in Galveston whose plant manager said he could take most of the medical waste generated in the country.

Galveston Mayor Gus Manuel said he didn’t know Todd was in the nuclear business “until Mrs. Coggeshall told me.” The mayor worried about hurricanes as well as what he called “a slow creeping death for Galvestonians.” Buchorn had already called Galveston’s state senator, A.R. “Babe” Schwartz.

Reaction was swift. The city council and the county health department both passed resolutions asking the state health department to ban all further shipments to Todd and called for a full investigation. Schwartz, who then chaired the Senate’s Natural Resources Committee, began the first of several hearings almost immediately. Texas Governor Bill Clements toured the site. Clements, an avidly pro-nuclear Republican oilman who isn’t easily shocked by the practices of Texas’s big businesses, called the storage yard’s condition “deplorable” and ordered TDH to stop shipments to Todd from out of state. (Todd had by then admitted that 80 percent of its wastes originated outside Texas.) The health department balked and Clements found himself entangled in the interstate commerce laws. “Shut them down anyway,” he replied. “We’ll look at the law later.” Meanwhile, the governor’s energy advisory council, which had been looking into the question of radioactive waste disposal since mid-summer, began a series of hearings on Todd’s dump.

TDH Commissioner Robert Bernstein said Todd was only violating the “spirit of the law” by storing “excessively high amounts of nuclear waste in the hurricane-prone area” and secured an “agreement” from Todd

that the company would stop taking waste water from nuclear power plants. But Bernstein did admit there were some “weaknesses” in the law which the legislature ought to correct. He, too, decided to hold hearings in Galveston in March, 1980.

All the hearings, with their attendant media attention, finally revealed to the public just how bad the situation at Todd Shipyards really was.

The shipyard had been on Pelican Island since 1934, when Todd bought out an old Galveston construction company and soon became the largest industry in the area. Today Todd owns six other yards; its corporate headquarters are in New York. In 1960, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s predecessor, licensed Todd to service and refuel an experimental nuclear merchant ship, the *N.S. Savannah*, and to rebuild its tender ship, the *Atomic Servant*. Several years later, Todd decommissioned the *Savannah*, which had turned out to be an economic disaster, and decontaminated and sold the tender.

To recoup some of its investment in nuclear technology, Todd decided in 1968 to open a facility for reprocessing, temporary storage and transfer of “low-level” nuclear wastes. Since Texas is an “agreement state” under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, the state assumed authority for all nuclear materials licensing in place of the feds. Todd did not have to worry about federal regulation of its proposed facility. It had only to apply to TDH’s radiological division. The amounts Todd intended to handle were small at first, and they were exclusively from Texas. However, the license was so easily amended — 31 times — and oversight was so lax that Todd soon found it could do just about anything it wanted with nuclear materials. The company even secured state permission to dump irradiated waters into Galveston Bay — though federal law specifically denies states the power to authorize such a thing.

To a large degree the lax oversight was unavoidable; there simply wasn’t authority for the government to do much about Todd even if it had wanted to. No environmental permits or studies were required, and nothing on the island — the barrels, tanks or buildings — had to meet any design criteria to withstand hurricanes or

floods.

The state laws that did apply were grossly inadequate: no bonding was required nor was anyone assigned responsibility for decommissioning the site, cleaning it up or paying for perpetual care. The state's power to enforce the law barely existed: the penalty for violators read, "Not less than 50 dollars nor more than 200 dollars . . . upon conviction." The state's enforcement agency was understaffed and underfunded and faced an ever-growing number of license requests from radiation users. And councilor Coggeshall found that much of the state monitoring consisted simply of "checking paper records prepared by the company." One health official said bluntly, "The license was unenforceable so we didn't enforce it."

At the time of the Senate hearings, Todd was operating under a permit limiting it to storing no more than 2,000 barrels at a time, none of which was supposed to remain on site longer than one year. But Charles Hathaway, the plant manager, admitted to the senators that his yard actually held over 16,000 barrels of waste; 338,000 gallons of coolant water containing radioactive strontium, cesium, iodine and tritium; and 15,000 gallons of toluene, a highly flammable and unstable chemical which no permanent dump would accept.

Further testimony revealed one questionable practice after another. Many of the barrels had been stored for three years. It had been two years since any waste had left the island. Todd shipments had, two years before, been turned away twice from the permanent disposal site at Beatty, Nevada, because they were leaking radiation. Some barrels had never been checked to verify the amounts or kinds of radiation inside. No studies had been made for heavy metals. No monitoring wells existed on the island. No geological studies had been made, nor had there been any study of soil permeability.

Reporters for *Hot Times*, an Austin anti-nuclear tabloid, found that TDH had detected radiation exceeding permissible limits outside Todd's fence and that soil samples just outside the plant contained two to 14 times the permissible levels of radioactive cesium, cobalt and manganese. They also found a May, 1979, inspector's report that said, "Many of the waste

drums have been in the open so long that the bottoms are rusted out. . . . This area drains directly into the bay. . . . There's no way of knowing what, if any material has drained into the bay undetected. . . . I did find one area of the bay contaminated with several isotopes."

In 1979 Todd dumped over 40,000 gallons of irradiated water into Galveston Bay, yet TDH took only one water sample that year. And it was taken a mile and a half from the site, a technique another TDH inspector called "useless" for detecting excessive radiation in the bay. (In February, 1980, the state Department of Water Resources found "some irregularities" in the bay near Todd's point of discharge.) The condition of the bay waters prompted Ed Ibert, Galveston County's environmental officer, to announce, "I won't even feed my cat oysters from the bay, much less eat them myself."

Even as the various hearings were bringing out the shoddy practices in Todd's past — and getting sensational statewide publicity — the company kept operating and accidents kept happening.

In January, 1980, Ibert asked OSHA to inspect Todd's nuclear division. He cited "lax handling of low-level wastes by the workers," many of whom were stevedores and worked at Todd part-time with little or no training. He also questioned Todd's practice of piping drinking water through rubber hoses "running along the ground through puddles and around barrels of radioactive stuff."

Then in early February, before OSHA could get there, 11 workers were accidentally exposed to a "teacup full" of strontium-90. They didn't know what they were handling because the vials weren't labeled, and they were initially misled about what it was they had spilled. By the time the full extent of the accident was discovered, workers had tracked strontium-90 from the bathrooms to the parking lots. "The whole plant was contaminated," said one worker, and "people were cutting their nails till they bled to make sure they were clean," reported another. Meanwhile, plant officials, including the company doctor, publicly denied for the first 24 hours that the accident had happened at all. And though the workers were eventually told the

truth about the strontium, it was six months before any Galveston health officials were told.

On the day after the accident, Todd Shipyards Corporation, whose nuclear manager had boasted in the Senate hearings only three months before that he could handle "up to one million drums" for storage on Pelican Island, announced that it was "going out of the nuclear business . . . due to the insane and hysterical publicity" that had lately surrounded its operations.

Three days later, Todd removed 32 grams of plutonium from one of its buildings. In a March hearing, Hathaway testified that he did not know why the plutonium had been there, how long it had been there or where it had gone. It turned out to be a left-over from the *Savannah*, and its existence on site violated the provisions of Todd's lease.

In May, 1980, a fire broke out in the processing building, destroying a vial crusher with radioactive residues in it and coming "perilously close," in the words of a TDH staffer, to explosive materials mixed with more radioactive chemicals, before it was contained. The health department reported that "a very small amount of radiation" was released into the air and there had been some contamination of the fire-fighters' boots and the run-off water.

Then in October, Babe Schwartz obtained a TDH document reporting that a shipment including two leaking boxes of plutonium had been turned back from the newly reopened Beatty dump after officials there discovered that the plutonium had contaminated "roughly half" of the 157 containers it was shipped with. The point of origin: Todd Shipyards. Southwest Nuclear, a California firm licensed to package and ship nuclear waste, had picked up the materials a year before in Albuquerque, transported them to Todd for temporary storage, and removed them a year later at Todd's request. The material had been stored that year out in the open, at the end of a roadway on the island. It had contaminated the pavement and the nearby soil with not only plutonium-238 and -239 but also strontium-90 and ytterbium-169. Soil samples taken after Todd's initial cleanup still showed signs of radioactivity. But after two more checks the health department pronounced

the site clean. All the soil has been removed.

No one knows how many people came in contact with the leaking materials nor what routes the trucks followed as they criss-crossed several states trying to unload them. One thing is clear, though. No Todd official and no TDH inspector ever checked the containers while they were on the island. In fact, TDH didn't even know they were there until the leak was reported by Beatty. Todd had never listed the plutonium on any of its manifests.

Todd had finally gone too far. Under public pressure, in January, 1981, the health department sued, and it chose to file under a solid waste act that carried stiffer penalties than the radiation act. Although the state presented a strong case showing continuous violations and clear health and safety hazards, Judge Ed Harris of Galveston refused to grant an injunction mandating immediate action. Calling Todd "a good citizen" that had acted "in good faith," Harris continued the case for several months, giving the company more time to clean up the site. Todd, worried about the penalties, hurriedly began to reduce its barrel count by shipping everything to the dump in Hanford, Washington. (Beatty was closer, but it was still refusing shipments from Todd.)

In June, 1981, Todd offered to pay \$13,500 in civil fines in an out-of-court settlement — \$50 a day for 270 days it was out of compliance with state regulations. The state has agreed,

explaining that since Todd is close to compliance, there is no need to "greatly punish" the corporation.

There are now fewer than 200 barrels of nuclear waste on site, and 15 acres, including the once-contaminated area, have been sold. But over half of the irradiated water remains, and it is being discharged into the bay at a rate of 150 curies a year — a six-fold increase over Todd's original limit. TDH says that it increased the curie limit to help Todd get rid of the water faster and doesn't claim to have tested the safety of the practice. It will take several years — perhaps as many as five — for Todd to dispose of the water at this rate. And what it's doing is still illegal under the federal Atomic Energy Act, which does not authorize a state to license the dumping of nuclear materials into coastal waters. But no federal authorities have made any attempt to enforce the law.

All the publicity and public outrage about Todd has had at least one practical effect. Texas lawmakers, in the spring of 1981, passed two bills that will tighten regulatory control over nuclear-waste handlers and establish a new waste repository. Dump sites on flood plains or barrier islands and over fragile aquifers are specifically prohibited.

Rick Lowerre, an environmental lawyer and Sierra Club lobbyist, helped draft the legislation. He believes the regulatory bill is "tough" but will work only with constant citizen oversight and if adequate funds are

allocated for enforcement. Some of the safeguards written into the law include: a single system of regulation; a prohibition on storing out-of-state wastes; required public hearings on environmental and socio-economic impacts of site development and on applicants' financial condition and past history; advance notification of some types of shipments; a prohibition of certain nuclear materials such as plutonium; population baseline and continuing health studies where sites are located; company responsibility for decommissioning, clean-up and perpetual care; improved worker protection and training; civil penalties for violators of \$25,000 a day and criminal penalties of \$100,000 a day and up to a year in jail. Finally, if the state fails to enforce the law, private citizens may bring suit.

But the Sierra Club is less than happy with the passage of the repository bill, which authorizes creation of a state-owned low-level radioactive dump to store waste created within Texas. All the anti-nuclear groups lobbied against it. But it had the strong support of the state's medical, utility and uranium mining industries and of Chem-Nuclear, the company that runs the Barnwell dump. (Chem-Nuclear's Texas lobbyist was once director of the governor's energy advisory council, and the firm has made no secret of the fact that it hopes to contract with the state to operate the permanent dump.)

Despite the loss on the repository bill, however, Lowerre and other environmentalists are hopeful. They have seen the Todd fiasco lead to enough citizen opposition to get the regulatory bill, and they feel further opposition can prevent any permanent site's being found for years. They hope they can buy enough time for someone to come up with a safer, more reasonable alternative. □

Betty Brink has been raising hell in Texas for more than two decades. For the past few years she has been primarily interested in anti-nuclear, utility and energy issues and speaks out wherever she finds a forum. As a member of Citizens for Fair Utilities Regulation, she is leading the intervention against NRC licensing of a Texas Utilities nuclear plant. She lives in Fort Worth and is the mother of five and grandmother of three.

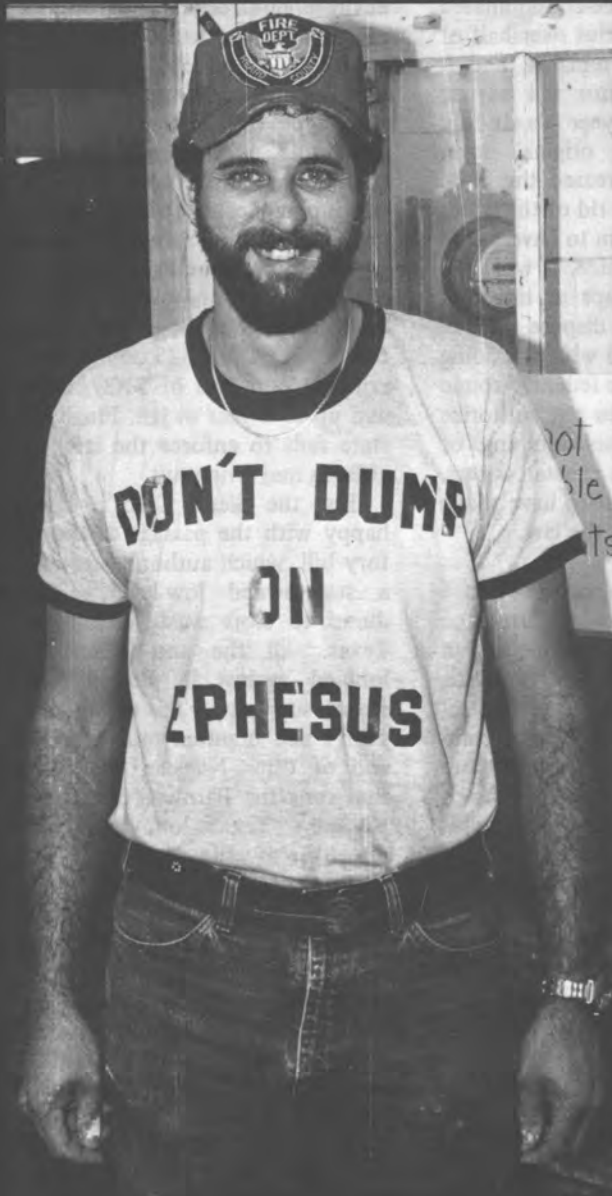
"They just send a guy down there with a fishing pole."

William Hellums, supervisor of TDH's licensing division, recently resigned, charging that the "increasing work load and inadequate number of staff is threatening the whole regulatory process with a breakdown.... There are not enough employees now to protect humans and the environment

from radiation hazards.... There are 18 uranium mining operations in Texas but there is no one in the radiological division assigned full-time to uranium licensing." He also charged that the department knows the location of only half the 25,000 x-ray machines operating in Texas.

In South Texas, where abandoned uranium mines have been turned into aquaculture ponds, another official says the department cannot afford any sophisticated methods of taking fish samples from the ponds for radiation testing, so they "just send a guy down there with a fishing pole."

HALTING THE HEARD COUNTY LANDFILL



“BUDDY, WE’RE HOME”

by Ginny Thomas
and Bill Brooks



Heard County, Georgia, seems an unlikely spot for gun-toting confrontations between the forces of state authority and the general population. It's a rural county of about 8,000 people lying midway along the state's border with Alabama, far from any major traffic arteries. Most of its land is owned by private timber companies; there is little large-scale agriculture and no major industry.

Yet more than 200 of its people gathered on a hot day in July, 1980, to stop some construction in their county, standing up to 10 state troopers and two private armed guards sent to protect the building site. The site was slated to become a hazardous waste landfill, and the citizens of Heard County had come to see it as a serious threat to their health and safety.

On that day last year, the troopers exchanged heated comments with the crowd for an hour or so, then left. The two private guards, originally under the impression that they were guarding an oil rig, stayed on into the evening, until it was clear the people would not disperse. The guards left together; the crowd melted into the night. But the fight over the waste dump was only beginning.

In May, 1980, Decatur entrepreneur William F. Belote formed Earth Management, Inc. (EMI), to capitalize on the growing concern over where to store the tons of hazardous wastes produced in the southeastern U.S. each year. Belote hoped to build a landfill in Georgia to handle toxic wastes produced throughout the region. EMI targeted Haralson County as the most desirable location, but this plan ran into a major obstacle: Georgia House Speaker Tom Murphy, a Haralson County landowner. EMI contacted Murphy about the site; he recalls, "I just said I wouldn't like it. I never heard another word about it."

Within a month, EMI set its sights on a new location. Heard County is one of 16 Georgia Piedmont counties considered suitable for hazardous waste landfills, and soon — though it produces little waste itself — it was a target for the rest of the Southeast's lethal products. The landowner, former state representative Hershel Parmer, granted EMI an option to buy 276 acres of Heard County land. The company quietly began preliminary investigations on the site.

EMI could not keep its work secret for long. In July, 1980, Heard Countians learned about EMI's plans and began organizing opposition to the landfill. Citizens in the area were already aware of the dangers associated with such landfills; less than a year before they had fought off a dump promoted by a local firm.

Meeting at the town hall in the county seat of Franklin, local citizens

agreed to band together to stop EMI. With the help of local physician Jack Birge, the group took over Georgia 2000, a dormant nonprofit corporation which had been concerned with health and environmental issues, and began holding meetings and researching hazardous waste landfills.

The organizers didn't need to do much outreach in the community; everyone quickly took a stand against EMI. Twenty core members traveled across the county speaking several times a week about the landfill and drumming up support. Within a short time, over 900 of the 8,000 Heard Countians became members of Georgia 2000, and many others actively supported the cause. The group raised enough money locally to take on the massive anti-dump campaign. Christine Cook, secretary of Georgia 2000, says, "We've been passing the hat after talks at churches, town halls, anywhere we can speak. It's all donations from individuals — people who care." A large fish fry in Ephesus, near the proposed site, raised almost \$2,000. A combined volunteer fire and emergency medical service in a small town in Alabama held a benefit for Georgia 2000, adding several hundred dollars to the coffers. A gospel sing raised more. A country-and-western singer sold several thousand copies of "The Heard County Song" and donated the proceeds to the effort.

Citizens responded to EMI's work at the site by surrounding the area, carrying shotguns and hunting rifles, to prevent further entry of equipment. Earth Management maintained that it needed access to the property to fulfill requests for further hydrogeologic data from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

Soon after, EMI's drilling rig burned. Residents deny that the rig burning was the work of local people. One nearby resident notes that an EMI truck was seen leaving the site just before the fire and jokes, "If it had been one of us, the truck [parked next to the rig] would have gone, too."

However, state officials felt local citizens were responsible. EPD released EMI from the requirement for additional information, even though EMI's one water table measurement showed that at least one of the proposed "secure" cells would be below water. Governor George Busbee dispatched state troopers to provide protection for EMI employees and supporters.

This protection, locals say, consisted of weeks of harassment of the dump's opponents — and by then virtually everyone in the area not directly connected with EMI was among them. Families on their way to church were stopped while troopers searched their cars. Local trucker Harold Cook charges that one employee of Hershel Parmer shot at anyone coming down the road near Parmer's chicken houses. "This is a public road. People go by here on their way to church and would get shot at. Busbee never did anything about *that*."

On September 17, 1980, EMI formally applied to the state for a hazardous waste landfill permit. According to the application, the facility would accept between 90,000 and 180,000 tons of hazardous waste per year from producers in Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Florida and the Carolinas. EMI claimed its plans reflected the most advanced landfill technology available. The company had conducted a geological survey purporting to show that the selected site was suitable for a chemical waste "secure landfill." According to the proposal, the site would not accept radioactive, explosive, shock sensitive or pyrometric materials, but would take highly toxic, infectious, teratogenic and mutagenic substances such as arsenic and pesticides. EMI made no plans for testing substances before they entered the dump, although such testing is essential to screening out unacceptable substances and to preventing fires caused by the mixing of incompatible wastes.

Local citizens quickly uncovered the proposal's defects. Georgia 2000 sent copies to various experts, including Dr. Robert Cook, a noted geologist at Auburn University. Cook — a supporter of landfills in general — gave the Georgia 2000 activists some lively ammunition by pointing to defects in the design of the containment cells, the monitoring control of surface waste water and other geological problems, all of which he felt "indicate a potential for long-term environmental damage."

With support growing and technical evidence on their side, Georgia 2000 sought legal ways to block the facility. Under pressure from many of his constituents, County Commissioner Wayne Miller condemned the 276-acre site on September 26, 1980 — six days before

Parmer was to transfer the title to EMI. Basing its action on the right of eminent domain, the county announced plans to develop a comprehensive recreational park on the site. Though such an act was virtually unprecedented, Georgia 2000 members were determined enough to try extreme tactics to win their point. EMI appealed the condemnation to a local court, charging that the condemnation's sole purpose was to prevent the establishment of a hazardous waste facility.

At the same time, six landowners filed suit against the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, EPD and its director, Leonard Ledbetter, and Earth Management. Georgia's constitution grants complete control of solid waste disposal to the counties, but the state's 1979 Hazardous Waste Management Act strips local governments of any control over solid *hazardous* waste disposal. The landowners argued that the act was unconstitutional and that EMI had no right to open a landfill without local approval.

By October 27, 1980, when EPD held a public hearing on the proposed landfill, community opposition had mushroomed. Georgia 2000 presented more than 3,000 signatures on a petition to "Stop the Dump." Over 500 citizens attended the public hearing;

testimony ran late into the night.

Despite solid local support, frustration was setting in among some of the activists. "The hearing was all for show," complained Clyde Cook, new president of Georgia 2000. "They never intended to listen to us."

Anti-dump organizers stayed with the effort despite their exasperation with the state. In November, voters elected a new county commissioner: Steve Lipford, an active member of Georgia 2000 who ran as a vocal anti-dump candidate. Lipford has aggressively opposed the site and rejected any notion of compromise with EMI. "The people of Heard County elected me to keep the dump out," he emphasizes. "They'd run me out of town if a deal were ever made."

Shortly after the election, residents felt the first flush of victory. A superior court judge dismissed the landowners' suit against the state and EMI, but on November 11, 1980, a local court upheld the county's right to condemn the site; the county then won in EMI's appeal of this decision to the Fulton County Superior Court on December 18. In addition, EMI had not received the state permits necessary to be legally defined as an "existing facility" by November 19; this failure meant the site would be subject to compli-

cated new EPA Resource Conservation and Recovery Act regulations and thus would be delayed indefinitely until those regulations went into effect.

These opening-round victories were clouded by threats of violence circulating in Heard County. Georgia 2000 members received threatening telephone calls from unknown parties. Boards with protruding nails were regularly thrown into driveways. "In the last phone call, this guy 'reminded' me that my two kids could easily be picked up coming home from school and beaten," said one activist. Frightened but determined not to back down, affected members kept the threats secret to avoid any possibility of retaliatory violence.

In early January, a "firebomb" destroyed a small shack on Hershel Parmer's property; Parmer and the media described the shack as a blacksmith's shop worth \$15,000. A trip past the property a few days later, however, revealed one anvil amidst an old iron bed and other junk. Mrs. Parmer admitted that the smithy tools had been there when the property was purchased and had not been used since. When volunteer firefighters arrived to put out the blaze, Mrs. Parmer held them off at gunpoint, refusing to allow

"There aren't even any grubs in that creek anymore."

Heard Countians had good reason to distrust the state's ability to protect the public from a bad waste dump. In 1978, the EPD informed Wilkinson County officials that Gordon Services, a firm begun by a local truck mechanic, would open a waste oil refinery in the county. After the facility had operated for seven months, local residents accidentally learned it was not a waste oil refinery — it was a hazardous chemical waste dump, accepting materials from as far away as Kansas.

Angry citizens found an appalling range of chemicals had been dumped at the site, many of which were highly toxic to humans. As a local pharmacist charged, "There's enough arsenic alone in that dump to poison every man, woman and child in South Georgia." The dump wreaked havoc on the local environment. Numerous "runovers" from an open trench built on a steep slope spread contaminated water and soil onto adjacent land. Trees next to a creek exposed to the runoff began dying steadily. Comments the owner of this property, "There aren't even any grubs in that creek anymore, but the state says there's no problem."

In fact, EPD disregarded potential problems at the site. When heavy metals appeared in the site's ground water monitoring wells, EPD responded by moving the monitoring wells further away from the burial areas and claiming there was no contamination.

Local citizens reacted angrily when they learned the true nature

of the site. They built an observation station across the road from the facility and staffed it 24 hours a day. When trucks appeared, local citizens, including one 70-year-old woman, took turns lying down in front of the entrance to block entry. Within two months, the citizens succeeded in closing the facility down.

Two years later, contamination is still present at the site. The latest measurements in the newest monitoring wells show that levels of heavy metals like chromium and cadmium in the water far exceed federal limits. Since heavy metals tend to move slowly out of a landfill, their presence in the water at this early stage indicates that other chemicals, such as organic pesticides, have dispersed widely in the area. The state has taken no action to clean up the dump.

One of the major officials in the EPD when the Gordon Services facility was licensed was enforcement officer Roy Baggett. He later moved on to a new position — vice-president of Earth Management, Inc.

anyone onto the property.

On February 17, the small grocery of Cramer Rogers, a major Georgia 2000 activist, burned to the ground. Rogers reported that a caller the previous week had warned, "We haven't forgotten about you, and we are going to get you." Although arson was ruled the cause of the fire, the police have no suspects in the case. Rogers was inadequately covered by insurance and lost around \$15,000.

Despite such disasters, the Heard Countians persisted in their campaign to keep EMI out of the area. They soon got another significant boost: a highly professional critique of the landfill proposal which shot holes in many of the arguments EMI had made. On February 25, 1981, Heard County Commissioner Steve Lipford presented Governor Busbee with this study, prepared by the Center for Environmental Safety at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Among the findings of the study: Georgia taxpayers would have to bear "enormous post-closure care and maintenance costs" under the EMI proposal; the proposal provided for inadequate lab equipment and staff to analyze the wastes the facility would be accepting; and "based on prior landfill experience, surface and ground water will be contaminated and uncontrolled reactions between incompatible wastes will occur with the resultant possibility of toxic fumes, fires and explosions." Georgia 2000 released the report to the press the next day, and new allies rallied to the Heard Countians' cause.

With technical evidence on their side and with a continued determination present in the community, prospects look good that the EMI facility will never open in Heard County. EMI has appealed the condemnation suit to the Georgia Supreme Court; a decision is expected soon, and a ruling in favor of the county could effectively bar the dump from that site forever.

In June, Governor Busbee indicated that the state might look at other areas for hazardous waste landfills. "Hopefully we will be able to go to a more rural area that won't affect as many people as Heard County," he said.

Johnny Adams sums up local feeling towards the landfill campaign: "You can push a man a long way and he'll keep on backing up — until he's home. And buddy, we're home."

The seeming victory on the home front has not ended Georgia 2000's efforts. The group is now running a statewide campaign to improve regulation of hazardous wastes and works actively with other citizen groups on a variety of environmental issues. The news media frequently reports the group's point of view on events associated with toxic waste.

But improving the state's waste management program has proved difficult. At least partially in response to events in Heard County, the 1981 General Assembly overwhelmingly passed a bill establishing a Hazardous Waste Management Authority and granting it complete power over the siting and operation of any facilities. The legislature adopted the bill in record time and, according to House Speaker Tom Murphy, the object was "to get the Heard Countians off our backs." Under the new law it will be impossible for a county to condemn land targeted as a landfill site.

Further, the EPD — charged with enforcing the state's regulations — remains reluctant to regulate vigorously. Certainly, EPD's past performance warrants little confidence in the agency's management capability (see box). In fact, many of the EPD employees have backgrounds in sanitary landfill management but little experience with significantly more dangerous hazardous wastes; however, they tend to see hazardous waste management in terms of sanitary landfill management and discount many of the concerns raised by citizens. And Governor Busbee, who places industrial recruitment at the top of his list of priorities, has promoted speedy establishment of landfills and a relatively lax waste management program as incentives to new industry.

However, Georgia 2000's statewide educational and organizing work has prompted a strong spirit of resistance to the state's waste management practices. During a recent two-day conference on hazardous wastes, state officials repeatedly emphasized that landfills were "the only option." But other speakers and members of the audience shocked the state officials by questioning the need for landfills. One person demanded, "Does all this talk about 'suitable hydrogeology' mean that you [EPD] are refusing to look at incineration?" County commissioners and sanitary landfill operators expressed concern over a loophole that exempts small firms from reporting on their waste

disposal practices; many of these wastes now end up in municipal landfills. Clearly, hazardous wastes have become a major issue across the state.

In the past few months, Georgia 2000 has provided technical assistance and support to other groups working on a variety of issues — for example: investigating a massive tree kill caused by a chemical firm in Flood County and documenting radiation hazards in two areas resulting from the state's failure to monitor or clean up the sites adequately. The group circulates educational materials throughout the state and is working with a public access television station to produce a special on environmental problems in Georgia.

Heard Countians are also interested in helping others fight landfills. Recently, Georgia 2000's newsletter, the *Heard Voice*, reported that the state is considering land in Jones County as a potential landfill site. Led by a local politician, citizens have already held a town meeting and now plan to block the landfill "in any way necessary." Georgia 2000 has distributed copies of the Center for Environmental Safety study nationally; used by both state agencies and environmental groups across the country, it has proved very effective in calling into question the safety and rationality of hazardous waste landfills.

The fight against EMI's landfill has profoundly changed the lives of many Heard Countians; they have learned many lessons and are committed to putting the brakes on hazardous waste production as firmly as possible. As one Georgia 2000 member mused, "You know, when I go to buy something now, I really think about how much hazardous waste might have been produced by this one thing. Then I think, 'Do I really need this?'" □

Ginny Thomas is a research consultant with 12 years of experience in health and related issues. She works part-time for Georgia 2000, representing the group before the legislature, state agencies and the news media. Bill Brooks is Georgia 2000's citizen-scientist, offering technical assistance. His background is in chemistry and physics, and his concern for the management of hazardous wastes is an outgrowth of his fight to clean up several radiation hazards in Georgia.

"TOGETHER WE CAN DO IT"

FIGHTING TOXIC HAZARDS IN TENNESSEE



Interview with Nell Grantham

In 1964 the Velsicol Chemical Company bought a 242-acre farm in Hardeman County. Or someone did, and it got mysteriously turned over to Velsicol. We looked up the deeds, and it changed hands six times in two months before they finally got the deed to the thing.

The health department came out when they were permitting the site. They told Daddy that there was no way the stuff would get out. At that time there were only three families that lived within four miles of the place.

Velsicol dumped 300,000 55-gallon drums of unknown chemicals at the site. The way they buried it was they took a dozer and dug 15-foot trenches and had a dump truck back up and dump it. Some of the barrels were not capped; others burst open when they dumped them in the pit. They just covered them over with about three feet of soil and ran a bulldozer over the top of them.

You could follow the trucks from Memphis and smell the chemicals. We had no vegetation growing on the sides of the road whatsoever where they were hauling that stuff in here, cause it killed it.

They had a fire up on the dump one time when they were still using the site. Thought the world had blowed up up there. That was around '68, '69. I think it burned the dozer up.

In 1967, a USGS [U.S. Geological Survey] report showed that the chemicals were leaking out, five years after they started dumping. We found another document that in 1967 the state of Tennessee had a public hearing that no one knew about. In 1967 I was 12 years old; that's how much good it did me to know about that meeting. No one was there except Velsicol and the state, George Wallace, the environmentalist for Hardeman County working for the state department of public health, was there.

We got a copy of what was said in the meeting. At one point George Wallace stated that the chemicals were getting into the residents' water supplies, that he couldn't go out there and tell the people this cause he'd have a mass panic on his hands. In 1967, from Highway 100 to the Teague Road — that's about four miles — there was only three houses. That's the type of mass panic he would have had.

Finally, Eugene Fowinkle, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Public Health, closed Velsicol down here in 1972. He was at the public hearing in 1967 and knew about the

leaking, but he didn't close the dump down for five years.

Velsicol Chemical Company was thrown out of Shelby County in 1964 because they were dumping in the Hollywood Dump. They dumped in Hardeman County until '72, when Fowinkle closed them here, then they went right into other parts of Tennessee to dump — and one of those places is Bumpass Cove, Tennessee. I know they have dumped in South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama — all through there.

In November of '77 citizens in our area began to notice a foul odor, a smell and taste to our drinking water. We all had private wells, anywhere from 90 to 200 feet deep. Our water had gotten so bad that you could set a glass of water on the table overnight and it would congeal — like a jelly-type thing. There was oil film on the water when you'd run it; when you'd run a dishwasher it'd leave a powdered film on the dishes.

Everyone out here is family. I have two brothers and two sisters. We all married, but we never left home. We brought em back with us, and we built next door to Momma and Daddy. Daddy — Steve Sterling — is a little bitty short guy, couldn't weigh but about 120 pounds, but he seems to rule with an iron hand, and always has. If you can convince my dad, you can convince anybody in the world.

Everybody takes their complaints to Daddy. Everyone always has. We were all complaining, "Daddy, there's something in our water." Or: "Daddy, there's these funny little white things floating around in our bathtub. Can't you smell that stuff in the water?"

"Oh, all you kids are crazy. You don't know anything."

Anyway, Daddy got sick; he had a real bad kidney infection. Momma took him to the doctor, and the doctor put him on medicine and told him he had to drink 12 glasses of water a day cause of the medicine he was taking. My Momma's pretty stubborn, so she decided while he was home he would drink his 12 glasses of water a day. She gave it to him for about three days; he ended up in the hospital, and we thought he was gonna die. Because of the water. It was never proven that

it was because of the water. But it didn't happen until Momma was making him drink the water.

After Daddy got out of the hospital he said he wasn't gonna drink any more of the damn water, and we started hauling it in. Everybody started hauling. So we all got together and got to talking about it and that's when we went to George Wallace. As my Daddy said then, "George Wallace works for our health department; we pay these people; we voted them in office; they're going to protect us." We wanted our water checked, but the only thing he tested for was bacteria. He never said a thing about the USGS

Nell Grantham has lived all her life in Hardeman County, Tennessee. She, her parents, her brothers and sisters and their families make up most of the residents of the Toone-Teague Road. Just down the road from their houses sits their most important neighbor, however — a 242-acre chemical dump site owned by the Velsicol Chemical Company.

In 1977 Nell and her family began to wonder about the quality of water found in their wells. After months of questions, they finally learned the truth: Velsicol's dump had leaked deadly chemicals into their water supply. Since then, these rural people have battled against the giant corporation to seek compensation for the injuries caused by Velsicol's improper disposal practices.

The troubles she's had over the past few years might have overwhelmed a lot of people. But Nell Grantham has kept her spirit and fought on with amazing vigor. She is now the chairperson of TEACH — Tennesseans Against Chemical Hazards — a statewide group of dumping victims and landfill opponents banded together to seek sane waste management policies and to protect citizens from the sort of atrocity visited upon Hardeman County.

Nell recently took the time to sit down and relate her ordeal to *Southern Exposure* and also outline the exciting efforts now being undertaken by TEACH.

report — said there wasn't anything in our water.

So we kept asking the local health department what was wrong. They kept saying they couldn't find anything — they tested two or three times. They finally told us we would have to see the [state] water quality division in Jackson. We took a water sample to these people; they told us that they couldn't test it because they didn't take the samples themselves. We started in November with our local health department; in March we finally got water quality to come out and take a test — March of 1978.

They came back and told us that we might have a problem. After two or three more tests, they told us that we had chemicals in our water — what type they didn't know. But they kept testing and they came up with a list of 12. I think five of these were known carcinogenics at that time — benzene, chlordane, heptachlor, endrin, dioxin, those are the major ones I remember. That was April that they finally told us that.

They kept on testing and finally got the EPA down. They sent a sample to the EPA and we waited about six weeks. We hadn't gone to the media with any of this cause the health department and the state had asked us to keep it quiet until they found out what was going on. After we waited about six or eight weeks, we called the EPA in Atlanta. We were told that we were not a public water system and that since we didn't have 25 or more people on one well we would have to wait our turn; that could be six months to a year.

We called our senator, Jim Sasser, and told him what was going on and he called the EPA and got our water tested. At that time they found 21 chemicals and 11 known carcinogenics. They came out and they told us — they never told us to stop drinking our water, they just *advised* us that we shouldn't use it to cook or drink, that we could only use it to take baths in, or for household cleaning, and to take cold showers no longer than five minutes at a time. So we did this for three or four months. Then they came back and told us that the percent of chemicals in our water had risen real high and they told us not to use our water, other than just for bathroom facilities.

We finally went to the media cause we were really getting the runaround.

In October of '78, after we got some media attention for our problems, EPA came out and advised us not to use our water at all. They told us we couldn't have any gardens because of the chemicals getting into the food chain. No stock animals for food such as beef or pork or poultry — anything like that. A neighbor of ours had a hog that we sent to a lab in Nashville; it was highly contaminated. They told us do not risk eating them at all. We also have a lot of natural springs around here that come under this dump and pick up the chemicals.

At the end of October, my brother Woodrow and his wife Christine went to congressional hearings in Washington. They got into the hearing and found out that we had the most dangerous chemical of all, which was carbon tetrachloride, running at about 13,000 parts per billion in our drinking water, and we were drinking it. If you look up carbon tetrachloride, you'll find that a teaspoonful of it is lethal. We don't know how much we got.

So they finally came out and told us to cut our wells off — not to use them at all. It was like camping in your home. Families would carpool together, and each family one night a week would take all the kids, or whoever wanted to go, and go to a public shower in Chickasaw State Park, which is about 15 miles from our home, to give our kids a bath at night. You'd go visit a neighbor and you'd say, "Can I take a bath?" or "Can I give my kids a bath before I go home?" You'd go to a public laundromat to wash your clothes when you'd bought and paid for a washer and dryer to use in your own home. All this was at our own expense.

The National Guard was bringing us in the water tankers that they use on maneuvers; they were bringing us 500 gallons of water twice a week, and this was for a community of 32 people, including children. We were totally cut off for about six months — all the water we used we hauled. They even told us that our kids shouldn't be laying on the carpet watching TV if we'd steam-cleaned the carpets. The stuff was in our carpets, in our paneling — it was in everything. All of our plastic dishes, tupperware — anything that had plastic in it — these chemicals would absorb into them and when they were used we'd get another dose of the chemicals.

Once we got the media to cover our story, Velsicol finally said, yes, maybe it was their chemicals. They never said that it *was* their chemicals; they said that it *probably* is. I guess you would say as their Good Samaritan act, they're doing all this stuff. They started running water out of Jackson, Tennessee. We got water in a gasoline tanker; the water was rusty, but it was water.

Then they came in and put in a temporary tank — 10,000 gallons, I believe — and they started running water to some of the homes. They had to come into our homes and replace the plastic PVC pipes, our hot water heater, our faucets. We were granted some money from HUD and the Farmers Home Administration to put in a main water line from the city of Toone. They granted us \$250,000 together to put in the water, and the city of Toone had to come up with \$30,000. The city of Toone turned down the proposal. We asked if we could not be incorporated and build our own water tower. Then the city of Toone wanted us to have the water.

It wasn't costing me \$5 a month to run my own well, but now I have to pay a minimum of \$10 a month for water and have since 1979, and no one has offered to pay it back. Velsicol said they would pay for all the fixtures we had to have changed like our hot water heaters, dishwashers, washers and dryers — they said we could not use these anymore because of the plastic fittings in them because the chemicals would stick to them. They did replace my hot water heater, but I'm still having to use my washer and dryer and dishwasher because I couldn't afford to buy another one and can't afford to go to a laundromat each week. So I'm still using those.

Shortly after that, Velsicol started work on putting a cap on top of the dump site. They finished late last fall. They put in three feet of clay, loam and topsoil, and they seeded it. The cap is now washing away; there's some ravines up there that's knee-deep to waist-deep on me. Velsicol is now filling in the holes and re-seeding. When the seeds came up this spring, they came up around the pits; over the pit areas the seeds did not grow at all. It looks beautiful from the road cause all you can see is this tall green grass; it looks like a golf course. But you get out on it and there's not very much

grass on the pits. They tell us that it's expected it'll do this, and it'll take two or three years to get the cap settled in — that's a bunch of bull.

They also put in some monitors at the dump when they put the cap on. What it does is measure the rainfall that comes through the cap. The type of clay they use should turn the rain-water back so it doesn't penetrate and pick up the chemicals and get into the water table. Supposedly. They went in to see how much water had gone through their cap in six months' time. When they pulled the tops off their monitors they found that the monitors were full of water and also contained nine chemicals; they're trying to figure out how they got in there.

They say the stuff is still vaporizing out; when it rains here you still get the foul odor and the smell from the dump, your eyes burn, and what have you. There are 1,000 acres in Hardeman County that are contaminated. They have even lowered our taxes because we live in the contaminated area.

I moved away from Hardeman County for six months. I moved to Chester County cause my father-in-law had had a stroke and we were taking care of him. When I came back, I noticed there was a smell and a taste to our water. Everybody else said I was nuts, but to me it seemed they had gotten used to it and I hadn't. So I started asking around and got some water testing done by Dr. David Wilson. He found some PVCs. He's not sure it comes from the plastic used in our water lines. Velsicol does make a chemical that is similar to PVCs; we're waiting to find out if we have chemicals or we do not. One reason that we suspect Velsicol is that they put in our water tank on the dump site and our water lines come directly across the land Velsicol owns close to the pit.

There are no men who have lived in this area for 20 years that are over 60 years old. The last three that died all worked for the chemical company. My uncle, George Wilson, worked on the dump; he just did little odds and ends. He died last September. Roy Wilson, another uncle, died in January; he ran the bulldozer there. Clyde Thomas died a few months ago; he bought the trucking firm that hauled the stuff in. Leroy Agee owned it before that; he is in real bad health. He looks terrible; he has emphysema,



Photo by Jack E. Cantrell/Memphis Press-Scimitar

cancer, heart damage and I don't know what-all. Another fellow who hauled the chemicals is on a dialysis machine three times a week. A first cousin of mine has had 24 skin cancers removed. I'm not saying that working up there caused it, but it looks sorta suspicious.

The long-term health effects are what I worry about, plus continued exposure to chemicals vaporizing off the dump, or what might be in our water. Who knows? In 20 years my kids may have cancer. I may never have grandchildren. I may not even live to see my kids grown. That's something we don't know. That's something no one knows. But when you've been drinking contaminated water with chemicals that you know can cause cancer, that makes it look worse. My kids are my biggest concern. What kind of life are they gonna have?

There's not been a child born in this area in the last four years. The last child was born without an abdominal wall. He was rushed to a children's hospital and spent three months there.

Toone-Teague Road resident receives medical examination to check for chemical poisoning damage.

They did surgery three times; since then he's had surgery on both eyes, been back in the hospital several times — they didn't think he'd make it for a while.

Out of my Momma's 11 grandchildren, nine wear glasses. Hearing problems, vision problems — their teeth look awful. Every kid on this road has had extensive dental work. My two kids had \$1,500 worth of dental work done on baby teeth; the dentist said he didn't know what was causing it, but that if he didn't fix them it would deform their permanent teeth. My younger daughter, Penny, lost three teeth last week. I don't know if she's trying to raise money or what. Both my children complain of muscle cramps, fatigue really. They refuse to drink the water at school cause they say it has a taste. I think everybody through here has arthritis. Nerve damage, numbness of the limbs. You get up and you can't walk; your legs don't work. Skin rashes that you

don't know what causes it.

We left for a weekend and my husband's skin rash cleared up; he comes home and takes a shower and he breaks out again. You just wonder. After all we've been through, there may not be anything wrong with my water now, but I'd like to know for sure. Maybe it's in my head, but I wish somebody'd prove it. It's like a nightmare you didn't wake up from. You have all these people telling you, you feel like everybody's patting you on the head like you're some little child, saying, "Just calm down, calm down, everything's gonna be all right, I'm gonna handle it." And nobody does anything. So I'll do it myself.

If I have the money I will move out. Right now I can't afford to, but I'll get my kids out of it one way or another. And I'll certainly check out the area before I move anywhere, see if they got anything laying around.

There are about 80 people right now in a class action suit against the Velsicol Chemical Company for the sum of two-and-a-half billion dollars. We go to federal court October 21 at 9:30 a.m. We have seven families that have settled. The lowest amount a guy settled for was about \$12,000, and I think the one that got the most got about \$50,000. Everybody I talk to — the different lawyers and all — say we have a perfect chance; they don't see why we can't win it. There is no way these citizens down here could afford to hire a lawyer. So the lawyers will get a third of the settlement — but only if they win. I may not get but 10 cents, but they'll know I've been there — the state of Tennessee and Velsicol, too.

In the spring of '80 I went to a meeting with some people at the Highlander Center outside Knoxville, a workshop on toxic chemicals. I didn't know what I was going for, but I am a licensed practical nurse and it's something I thought I might learn from, so I went to their meeting. While I was there, I met people from five other counties that had the same problem I did — chemicals were in their drinking water, or they were having a landfill put in, or they had a landfill and the state of Tennessee was doing nothing but patting them on the head and telling them, "Don't worry about it."

The biggest thing I found out was that Eugene Fowinkle had gone into

Bumpass Cove, Tennessee, and told these people, "Why, don't worry about your little ole dump; you ought to be with the people in Hardeman County." He told the people in Hardeman County that Bumpass Cove was worse; he was telling us two different stories.

When he came back down the next time and told me that, all I did was hand him a press release from a paper in east Tennessee where he stated that the dump in Hardeman County was worse than Bumpass Cove; then here he was telling me that Bumpass Cove was worse than me. Uh-uh. He backed up at that.

That's how TEACH — Tennesseans Against Chemical Hazards — came about. The six counties that were at that workshop got together and decided the citizens of Tennessee would band together and fight the state as one, not one little group at a time. We voted to become a coalition and started working on it in the spring of 1980.

So far we have shown films on chemical hazards in the different counties. We've met with people that were willing to help educate us, like toxicologists, and have worked with organizations like TNCOSH [Tennessee Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health], the Highlander Center and the Tennessee Toxics Program. They're showing us what the state's supposed to be doing. We have also gotten citizens in other communities together. We have groups like the Cypress Health and Safety Committee, Concerned Citizens of Frayser; Hardeman, Hickman, Madison, Davidson, Sullivan and other counties now belong. We have the POW, that's People of Woodstock; they're going under the name of Prisoners of Hazardous Waste (they just leave the "H" out). It's really a statewide organization, from one end to the other.

Our biggest success was when we had a group from Hickman County come in and ask what TEACH was about. We told them we were a group to educate other citizens, show them how to organize, what types of things to look for if they had a dump or were about to get a new one. With our help, the Hickman County folks went back home with about six weeks' notice before there was a public hearing for a landfill to be put in their county. These people, when the state got there to hold their little hearing, had 1,000

citizens banded together to fight that dump. The state backed out; it was not approved. HALT — that's Hickmans Against Lethal Trash — then went into the next county and started to organize there, because the company proposed to move over to that county; so they're still fighting the landfill.

Another victory we had was in Sullivan County. Sullivan County has a municipal landfill. The owners wanted to put in a "special waste" landfill for highly toxic chemicals. The special waste permit was denied to the owners of the landfill because the citizens got an independent USGS report that proved the land was unfit for a special landfill. When the state had the hearing, TEACH members from all across the state of Tennessee were there to support the Sullivan County group. After they all testified, the permit was turned down.

We heard that some people in Smyrna were going to court against a company. We hadn't even gotten in touch with these people, yet we were there when they had their court date and we testified for them. And they won against the landfill that had polluted their wells.

Now the citizens of Tennessee are keeping their eye on what the Tennessee Departments of Public Health, Solid Waste Management and Water Quality and all are doing. We're asking questions and we're wanting answers. And we're looking for our own answers. We've looked into alternatives for landfills. We're not in the position now — financially and otherwise — to hire lobbyists and all this, but we do ask questions of the state.

The biggest thing we're doing right now is educating the citizens of Tennessee so they'll know what's happening — how to keep records, what to look for, what the state and industry are doing. For instance, we got a copy of a report that Water Quality did on all the rivers. They're all polluted, but the worst two are the Loosahatchie and the Wolf River in Memphis, and people have been fishing out of these commercially. Fowinkle finally got up and said, yes, they were contaminated and that somebody needed to put up signs telling people not to fish and not to swim in these areas. He said it was up to the Department of Wildlife to do this. We did some checking and found out that it was *not* the Department of

Wildlife, it was the Department of Public Health that was responsible, so we all sent letters and pressured the governor and Fowinkle to put the signs up. The last word I had was that the signs were in the making and that they would be up before long. So it's small victories, but we're getting there.

Betsy Blair is working with TEACH through the [Vanderbilt University] Center for Health Services. She'll be condensing all the information on the different counties that are in TEACH, the problems they've had, what's happened with them — just a brief summary of it. She's gonna be working on a health survey to profile the health of people in the state of Tennessee. We know that the Appalachian mountain area — Bumpass Cove, Erwin, Washington County and all that — has a lot of cancer and heart attack vic-

tims. So what we're gonna try to do is take the state apart in sections and see what factories and chemical companies are located in those areas, what they make and what health effects might be associated with them. Big job, huh?

Rob and Carol Percy and I have gone through a training program to take over the work of our staff person. I hope I know more than what I did, I think I do. Now we're working on some fundraising for TEACH. All donations are appreciated.

I'm fixing to go to Connecticut, Rhode Island and New York to talk to some people up there, statewide coalitions, people that have the same problems, and see what they're doing up there. I want to see if I can find anything that'll help TEACH and just try to make myself more aware of what's going on. Educate myself,

really.

When people I talk to get discouraged, I try to let em know that what is happening in their county is the same thing that happened in Hardeman County. I've been there; I know what's gonna happen. But neither them nor I by myself is gonna stop it. It's gonna take us all working together, and together we can do it. But by ourselves we can't.

People are all the time saying to me, "Well, somebody needs to do something." I look at that person and I say, "Well, what's wrong with you? You can do it. Get in there and fight. Don't give up. Together we can do it." □

For more information about TEACH and Tennessee dumping hazards, contact: Nell Grantham, Route 2, Box 192, Meden, TN 38356 (901) 658-5963.

A CHEMICAL GLOSSARY

Arsenic is a metal released during different industrial processes such as coal combustion and pesticide production. It causes lung, skin and liver cancer and birth defects. Exposure symptoms include nausea, vomiting, skin inflammation and muscle weakness.

Benzene results from the production of organic chemicals, pesticides, solvents and paint removers. It is a carcinogen which causes aplastic anemia and leukemia, as well as other blood diseases. Prolonged exposure can cause headaches, dizziness and injury to blood vessel walls.

Cadmium is a metal produced by mining and smelting operations, coal combustion and other industrial operations. It hampers breathing, can damage the lungs and cause cancer of the lung, liver and prostate, as well as cell mutations and birth defects.

Carbon tetrachloride is used as a solvent, as a cleaning and degreasing agent and as a fire extinguisher. A carcinogen, it is highly toxic to the liver and kidneys and causes severe depression of the central nervous system.

Cesium primarily results from nuclear power generation. It concentrates in soft tissue and the genital organs and may cause cancer.

Chlordane and **heptachlor** are insecticides that cause cancer and affect the central nervous system, eyes, lungs, liver and kidneys. They also can create acute poisoning symptoms: stomach pains, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea and convulsions. Their use was suspended by EPA in 1978.

Chromium is a metal used as a cor-

rosion inhibitor, in chromium plating and in various metals industries. Exposure to chromium compounds can cause ulcerations on hands, arms and feet; chest pains and bronchial inflammation; and perforations in the nasal cartilage. It is suspected of causing lung cancer.

Cobalt is used in steel and paints and also in medical therapy. It irritates the skin and eyes; causes illness when swallowed; and can cause heart stress and thyroid damage.

Dioxin is a side product of 2,4,5-T, a component of Agent Orange. Animal tests and some of the evidence from exposure to humans indicates that dioxin causes both cancer and birth defects.

Endrin is an insecticide that has caused cancer in test animals. It affects the liver and central nervous system, and also causes the acute poisoning symptoms listed for chlordane.

Iodine-131 is primarily a product of nuclear power generation. It accumulates in the thyroid gland and can cause cancer.

Kepon is an insecticide that affects the central nervous system and is toxic to the liver and the testes. Its production was suspended in 1979.

Manganese is used in a variety of industrial processes, including mining and ore processing. It affects the respiratory system and can also cause central nervous system damage such as acute anxiety and hallucinations.

Plutonium-238 and **-239** is a fission product of nuclear plants and weapons; it is found in radioactive wastes. It concentrates in the bones, liver and spleen and can cause liver and bone cancer, lung cancer and leukemia.

Polybrominated biphenyls (PBBs) are used as fire retardants. They are carcinogenic and mutagenic to test animals and cause symptoms such as headaches,

muscle pains and diarrhea.

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are used in electrical and transformer fluids and for flameproofing. They are carcinogenic and particularly damaging to the liver and skin. PCBs can cause neuralgia, hearing disturbances and stillbirths.

Polyvinyl chloride (PVC) is used to make hundreds of plastic products ranging from baby bottles to food packaging to cosmetics. It causes birth defects and cancer, psychological disturbances, impaired liver function, central nervous system depression, dizziness, nausea, dulled vision and changes in skeletal joints.

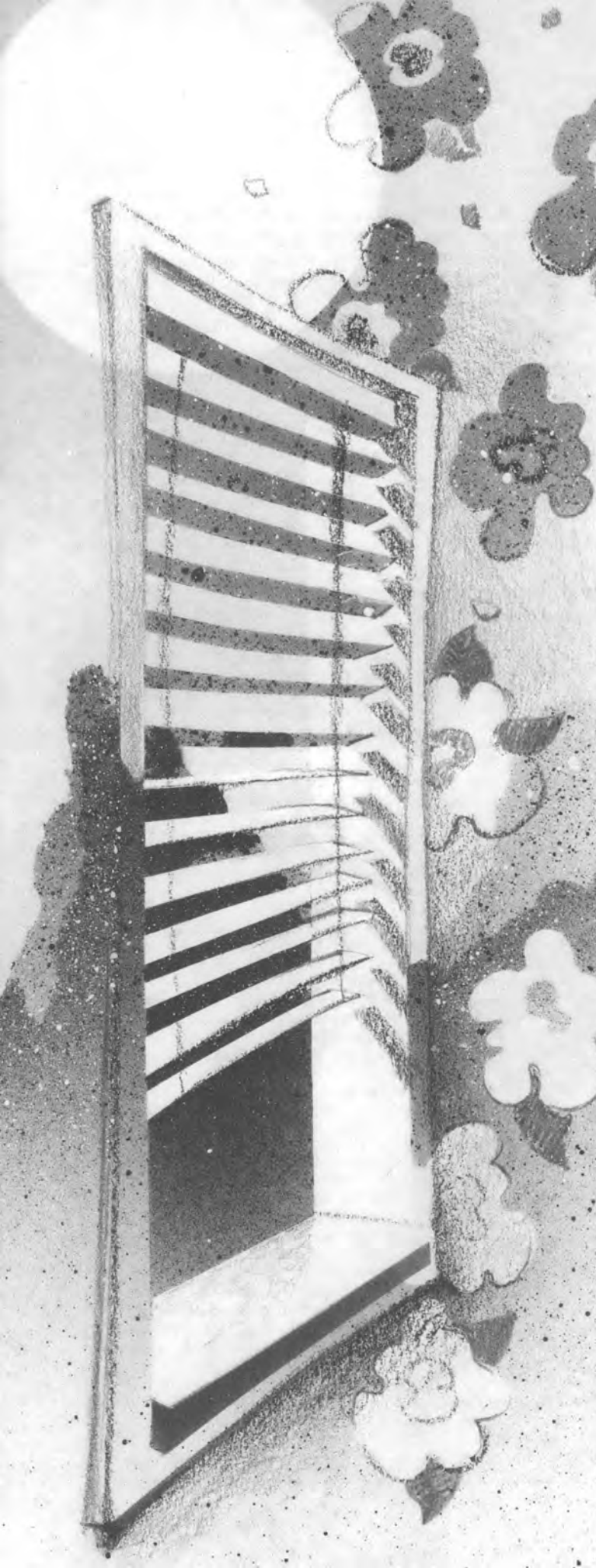
Strontium-90 is a fission product from nuclear power plants and weapons; it is often found in radioactive wastes. It causes bone cancer and leukemia in animals.

Toluene is used in the manufacture of benzene, chemicals, plastics and paint. It causes liver damage; irritates the skin, eyes and upper respiratory tract; and causes weakness, fatigue, confusion and dermatitis.

Tritium is a radioactive form of water primarily resulting from nuclear weapons manufacture and use and the production of luminous dial watches. Its health effects are uncertain at present, but it does get distributed to every cell of the body.

Ytterbium-169 is used as an x-ray source for portable irradiation devices.

The information above is adapted from We Are Tired of Being Guinea Pigs! A Handbook for Citizens on Environmental Health in Appalachia. It is an excellent publication which also contains useful information for people in other parts of the country. It is available for \$5.00 from the Highlander Center, Route 3, Box 370, New Market, TN 37820 (615) 933-3443.



The moon had not yet crested the pines but strips of light already crawled across the corrugated tin of the farmhouse roof. Cass sat up in bed. She heard her grandparents moving through their rooms below, closing each Venetian blind. She waited for her mother to begin to shut those upstairs. She listened as her mother's steps hesitated in front of Aunt Violet's bedroom door.

Before Jake had come home from the Pacific, Aunt Violet's door was always open, moonlight slanting through her blinds. Cass lay back in bed. She remembered her aunt as a sprawl of cream satin striped by the moon into an expanse of white chenille spread. Violet was sprawled there now, stretching for her radio to change the station.



War Babies

Bonna Whitten-Stovall

Cass would like to have known which of the Saturday night beaux, if any, inspired that long and restless search for song. Through closed doors and the dark Cass saw that her aunt's soft underarms were pock-marked pink from the pressure of the spread's flower clusters. But any moment now Violet would rise, in obedience to the persistent rapping, and seal her door with a bath towel still heavy from daubing at her curls.

And only when Jake quieted down downstairs would Cass's mother tiptoe in to bed.

It was just one month ago that Cass had watched her brother Josh scrape the cheap tin model tank along the airport runway. "Umpin, my Umpin, my Umpin, mine!" Josh crooned and stamped. The family's laugh was communal but brief. A fatherless boy needs an uncle. They were worried about the plane.

Cass studied the thin white mark cut by the toy tank into the runway. The trail was not unlike those the night crawlers left on the garden walk.

Then it was time.

Uncle Jake hovered in the shadows of the plane's entry, pulling back on a woman's uniformed arm. Cass had never seen a woman in uniform before. She watched the jaunty cap and cherry red smile dip in and out of the metallic glare at the top of the steps. The woman was waiting for something. When a cloud overtook the sun, she nudged Jake towards the stairs, saying more to the family arrayed at the bottom than to him, "Lieutenant Hardison, the war is history. You are home."

Lieutenant Hardison hurried down the steps, past his family and into the terminal. They reorganized and followed as quickly as grief and fear, old age and the children allowed. Inside, Jake loosed his tie and one wild whinny of laughter. He spun Joshua into the air and examined the model tank.

"Got another man in the family, yessir," he said.

It was Violet who nudged Cass forward and, smiling at her brother, said, "This here's Cassie, Jake. Don't you recognize your niece?"

Do you think Jake was there when they got my Tate?" Cass's mother had never called her husband anything more than Tate until the day the death notice arrived from the Marine Corps. Then he became "my Tate." She pulled her rocker closer to the grandfather's on the wide front porch, looked around her, and lowered her voice. "Do you think that's what's wrong, Daddy Hardison?"

"Now, girl," he said. "Some things best left unasked."

"But you've thought of that too, haven't you?"

"Yes, child."

"Oh my God."

"I guess we all have," he said.

"And I think I've had it hard."

"Well, I reckon you've had a right smart," he said. "Raising Josh and Cass by yourself."

"By myself?" The mother stilled her rocker. "Why I would never have made it through the first week if I hadn't been here with you and Mother Hardison."

"A right smart." The old man took up the rocking. "A right smart of trouble. But we all have to do our parts."

"I know that's what happened," the mother said. "Jake was there when they killed my —"

"No, child, we don't know."

"And he saw it happen," she said. "I can see it in his eyes."

"No, child," he said. "And besides, you're looking at it wrong." The old man stared out across the dusty fields. One gnarled forefinger began to tap on the arm of his chair, drubbing his phrases to the vacillations of the rocker. "Because it really wouldn't matter." His rocker squeaked.

"If you were in that fox hole." Tap. Thump. Squeak. "And the moon started rising. Big. Bright. So the Japs would be sure to see you in all that light. You would hear them creeping closer. Singing through the jungle. Carrying that knife. Would it matter?" Squeak. "Who you looked at." Screech. "Whoever's with you'd be your brother. When you saw those slanty eyes. Singing through that knife. Brother?" He slapped the arm of the chair. "Yep." He stopped his rocker and stood. "Even old slanty eyes," he nodded. "I think at the end you must know we're all brothers."

"Oh, Daddy Hardison," she said. "I know. But sometimes when Jake starts that singing, I think I can't go on."

The old man squeezed her outstretched arm and turned to go.

"What's a fox hole?" Cass asked from behind the pyracantha at the bottom of the steps.

What's a fox hole?" Uncle Jake's berry brown toes had prodded the mound of moss Cass had brought up from the creek bed.

"Making a bed for my dolls," Cass said, selecting a cold slab of moss and kneading the red clay from its underside. When it was in place, she traced for her uncle the outline of rooms made by the roots of the live oak. One patient blue eye watched from the jungle floor of shadows and shades that ravaged Jake's face.

"What's the matter?" she asked, following the line of Jake's other eye to the clump of mosses, still jeweled from the night. "Something the matter?"

He said nothing.

"It works real well," she reported, but she shifted her weight to shield another mound three feet behind, where the burnt umber of the failed transplants were tossed after pruning.

"Well," he said as he turned. "Dolls do need a bed."

She watched his lean jungle legs pick toward the creek where her random gashes oozed slick and red in its tufted banks. Then, brushing off her dolls, she headed for the porch where Granddaddy Hardison and her mother sat talking.

These kids will be his salvation." The grandmother had finished shelling tomorrow's butter beans but still held a bouquet of green pods in one hand.

The mother stood in the door, buttoning the bottom of a fresh cotton duster. "Yes," she said.

"Tate would be proud of that."

"Yes."

"The wheels of the Lord grind small." The

old woman picked a worm-speckled bean from the colander.

"Finished?" The mother asked.

"When I sent the two of them out together," the old woman answered, "I never thought I'd live to see the day I'd be satisfied just to get one of them back."

The mother turned off the light and crossed the porch to the swing, glancing once at the drawn shades of the children's bedroom above.

"And Joshua getting to be the spit image of Tate," said the old woman.

"Cass too," said the mother.

"Cass? She's Ames through and through," said Grandmother Hardison.

"She has her father's mind."

"Well, maybe. Law, that Tate. Bet he's giving St. Pete a time with his infernal questions. Yep. We may get him back yet." The old woman slapped the arm of her rocker twice, her sob cutting off the splatter of bean shells on the linoleum.

The mother leaned forward in her chair but ignored the shells. "Listen," she said. "He's starting. He'll wake the children."

Mamma!" Joshua sat up in bed.

"Go back to sleep, Silly," Cass mumbled. "It's only Uncle Jake."

When the door opened, Cass smelled her mother's bath powder and sank back into the feather bed, "We heard it," she said.

"Mamma, Mamma, Mamma," Joshua cried.

"It has something to do with the moon. I know that much." Cass curled herself around her mother's seat, which jiggled slightly as she rocked Joshua's bed.

"Shhh. Don't wake Josh any more than he already is," her mother said.

Cass waited until her brother's breaths smoothed across her uncle's ragged wails: "Marine, you die." Jake sang it over and over on moonlit nights. He chanted it in a high woman's voice. Grandfather couldn't stop him. No one could. They tried to keep the moonlight out, but they couldn't stop him.

"And fox holes," Cass whispered. She did not want to ask about the knife.

The mother's pause made her case for no more questions. She took Cass's hand. "Please, Baby," she said. "All we can do about war is try to forget it. We have to forget it. Jake has to forget it. My Tate —" she stopped. "Your Daddy would want us to forget. Can't you go back to sleep, Angel?"

Cass smothered further into the "Evening in Paris" promise of her mother's wrapper. "I like the bottle best," she said.

"Hmmm?"

"The bottle. I like your perfume bottle better than the smell. Midnight blue and round like the moon," Cass paused. "I don't ever want to hate the moon, Mamma."

"Cass. What am I going to do with you?"

"Give me the bottle when the perfume's gone," Cass said.

"It's yours now. But please, Baby, try to sleep."

Cass waited to pair her breathing to Josh's. She let the hand her mother held go slack. She could feel her mother's legs tighten to lift slowly off the old mattress, without sound. Her mother would turn to straighten the covers, pulling them tight up to Cass's chin, and kiss Josh and tiptoe to the door. There she would sometimes stand for minutes, looking at them in the wedge of light from the stairs. It was the part Cass liked best. She would sometimes go to sleep then.

Tonight she heard the door close, but waited until the scent was gone to sit up. She did not want to sleep, she wanted to think.

"I have my daddy's mind," she said.

"Damn damn damn damn damn," Violet had said. "Help!"

"It isn't working?" Cass had tipped the squeeze bottle away from Violet's head, stopping the flow of red.

"It's staining the sink, dope. Look."

They had watched as a few undissolved dye pellets hit the kitchen sink and began to soak into the cracks and worn places.

"You'll have to get the bleach, quick!"

"But Jake's in the pantry," Cass said.

Jake stayed in the pantry when he was bad. The grandmother's crockery was stacked on the kitchen table. They ate in the dining room around the mother's Limoges, pushed to the middle and covered with dish towels. Canning lined the upstairs hall. The pantry was the only room in the house without windows. The women cleaned on Jake's good days.

"I paid two fifty for this!"

Cass hadn't budged.

"It has to stay on five minutes. You want me to ruin a towel too?"

Cass had jumped from her perch on the drain board but hesitated at the pantry door.

"Of course," Violet said. "I suppose if anybody around here worked but me we could just buy a new sink."

"Daddy's security pays for us." Cass had gone through the door.

She could smell the newspapers. It had been the grandfather's idea to take them daily: CHURCHILL THANKS ATOMIC BOMB FOR PEACE, DOOLITTLE WANTS SINGLE COMMAND, MACARTHUR CITES SPIRITUAL

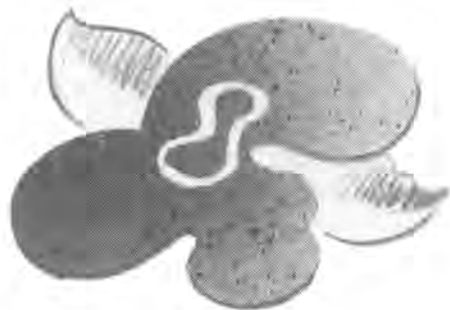
GOALS OF OCCUPATION. No one ever saw Jake read them, but once when they had all been in the kitchen making fudge, the pantry door had rattled and a long crumpled column of newsprint had been poked through the crack at the bottom. "Home Boys Still Fighting," it read. "The war continues for three Marines ambushed by Japanese stragglers in the jungle here today. . ."

She could smell the newspapers and she could smell Jake asleep, sweaty and sour and scared beneath the covers. She felt for the bleach.

At the door she had turned back to see. Only a patch of ankle showed. Sure enough, Jake slept with his head under the cover at the foot of the cot, his feet under the thin pillow, the subject of much family discussion at the table. She could have told them. She had slept that way herself while her grandfather was gone for three days to the cattle auction. It was to confuse burglars, prowlers, werewolves and now, she supposed, "old slanty eyes." She could see how silly it was, child's play. He looked like Joshua, damp and twisted in his covers. She had wanted to straighten them herself as Mother did. To hold his hand.

"Any time, Lady Astor." Violet had dripped ping, ping, ping into a sauce pan from the stove. Cass looked at the patch of ankle and shut the door.

"Did you see his bayonet?" Violet had grinned sideways over the pan, red rivulets sluicing her face. He kept it, they said, under the covers.



Joshua fidgeted in bed. The hall light was out now though Jake still sang. Cass promised herself never to be afraid again. But when she slept the dream came.

"This is a fox hole," said Granddaddy Ames. Tufts of red fur were caught in the sticker bushes around the hole. "Careful, Cassandra, watch your eyes."

I brushed my hair behind my ears and stooped and began to crawl. The stickers grabbed for me. I pulled my sweater tight. The stickers pulled at my hair. I tried to pick them out. It made my fingers bleed. I could hear Granddaddy Ames's

boots trampling down the stickers at the entrance, but he could not reach me now. I wanted to turn back, but "Watch their eyes," he had said. Ahead, they glowed. I crawled again until my head snapped back. The stickers held me tight. I couldn't move. I watched their eyes. They got bigger and bigger and melted together. Then I could see the end of the den. There was a man lying in the shadows.

"Daddy?" I cried. He turned to face me but he had no eyes.

"Daddy!"

He smiled. It was my Daddy but he had no eyes. I could hear him breathing. It got real loud. The shadows at the end of his feet began to move. It was a woman. Like a woman from Japan. Her face was round and bright and she was singing. I couldn't understand her words.

"What are you doing?" I screamed.

"She's binding his feet, can't you see?" It was Uncle Jake who answered. He was crouched in a corner under a sheet. The woman from Japan looked at Jake and smiled. He looked at her and his eyes went awful.

I looked at her. Her face was crumbling.

Then she was the moon, singing softly as she came towards me. "Marine, you die. Marine, you die."

Cass sat up in bed. She felt a hand on the back of her neck. Don't scream, don't scream, she commanded herself. She burrowed under the covers. She caught her breath. She listened. She couldn't hear it anymore. Jake was not singing. It was over. She hugged her hands to the back of her neck and cried.

"I have my father's mind," she said. "My father's mind." She cried into the pillow.

Violet, be a doll and get me another cup of coffee." Jake had already pushed his half-full cup across the table. It knocked over Violet's cigarette pack and clanked against her Coke bottle.

Violet pulled her duster around her and set the cigarette pack back on edge. Both mothers stood, but Cass had the cup. "Let me get it," she said. "Please?"

Jake spoke only to the mothers. "Sit down, both of you. I want Lolly Gag to get it. All she does is lie around all day listening to that damn Jew music."

"So now it's my fault they had to close the bomb factory," Violet said.

"It's a damn good thing they don't broadcast Tokyo Rose," Jake said.

"Jake, we don't use words like that at the table," the grandmother said.

"Violet here would be her biggest fan," Jake said.

"Or it's the factory's fault the war is over," Violet said.

"Hour after hour, half dressed, and mooning over God knows who," Jake said.

"Watch your language, son," the grandmother said.

"Half the county," Jake said.

"I mean, the war *is* over, isn't it?" Violet said.

"Half the county," Jake said. "Or what's left of it. Oh, hell," he said, jerking the cup from Cass's hand. "I'll get the damned stuff myself. I've had about all the hen company I can take for one morning." He slammed from the room.

Violet buffed a nail on the linen cloth.

"We'll just have to teach the children to leave when he's using words like that," Grandmother Hardison said.

Violet patted a wild curl into place and pushed up from the table, one bare foot caressing the instep of the other.

"I think," she said, "he's getting better."

I'm not allowed." Cass faced the yellow legs under the single bulb in the hall.

That's the same ankle, the same ankle, she reassured herself. *I wanted to straighten his covers and hold his —*

"Oh, Violet won't mind. Ain't she on a date? She won't be back for hours."

"I'm supposed to be in bed."

Joshua had bled too much when he had his tonsils taken out. His mother had stayed with him in town for 10 days now. Cass had checked the almanac for the dates of the full moon the day her mother left for town and tonight had come to the top of the stairs to brace for it. She hoped to take comfort in her grandfather's snores when Jake began his song. But nothing had happened. She had fallen asleep, curled on the two top stairs.

"I have to go now." She stood.

Jake leaned across her and pushed back the door to Violet's room. The blinds were open. The room crawled with silver stripes.

"I don't want to go in there," Cass said.

"And Violet with the best radio in six counties, and how she got it everybody knows."

"I don't," Cass said.

Jake's hand reached for the radio.

"If we can play her radio, we can shut her blinds." Cass jerked the cord.

Jake ripped the shades open again. They shuddered against the sill. The noise subsided to the dull claps of water under a dock. Jake's hand went back to the radio. The stations rushed by in little rips of sound. He stopped.

Are the stars out tonight?

He tuned it carefully.

I don't care if it's cloudy or bright.

He adjusted the volume.

I only have eyes, it said, for you, dear.

Jake stepped full frame into the light from the window. His torso was sliced into layers. His arms began to shake. He steadied one on the long frame. The blinds began to rattle, but he did not sing.

Cass shifted slowly across the bed, trying to avoid the flower clusters of the spread. *Impossible*, she thought. *They are everywhere. Maybe Violet will come in early.* She listened for the clock. She watched the silver stripes snake down Jake's body. She counted them. They dwindled. She tried to pinpoint exactly where the flower clusters were beginning to mark her. *Impossible. Maybe Violet will come in early.* She listened for the clock. *Maybe I can leave anyway.*

The last razor's edge of light slipped across Jake's toes and was sucked with the moon beyond the room's high frame dormer. It was dark. Jake clicked off the radio. The girl's body snapped from the curl of a question against the high headboard, bedsprings slapping in protest: no, no, no. *Impossible.*

He fumbled at Violet's bureau. Cass smelled the tobacco, then heard and saw nothing until a match flickered at her side.

"You can see good in the dark," she said. She knew this was the only thing to say. It is what Violet would have said and he was always bumming Violet's cigarettes. He laughed. The red coal bobbed in midair then plunged to her side as the whole mattress tilted and Jake stretched out beside her.

"Training," he said. "Nothing but training. But I'll tell you what, doll. If you'll come over here and be good, I'll take you on a picnic tomorrow."

Baby! You scared me. What're you doing here? I thought it was Jake on the prowl again. Instead of a big white sugar lump." Violet snapped on the lamp. "You scared me." She straightened the ashtray she had overturned. "You should have left a note on the door, saying - 'Someone's,'" she rumbled, "'been sleeping in your-'" She lifted Cass's chin. "Bed," she said. "And crying too."

She cocked the lampshade to extend its light and dropped to a chair. "I shouldn't have left you.



He's scared you half to death. That big baboon. Singing like a loon. Well, I don't think he's crazy. I just think he's mean as hell." She stood up. "I ought to go down there and run him through with his own bayonet. And start him up again?" She sat down. "Who am I kidding? And it's my fault. I knew better than to leave you. That damned moon!" She fumbled in her purse for a cigarette. Two rolled stockings fell out. "Oooops! La!" she said. "De, da. Sorry, sugar lump. But don't tell, hear?"

"You okay?" She reached automatically for the pack on the night stand, sat back, lit, drew, then leaned forward to eye the butts in the bowl. "Secrets. Secrets," she said, but she held out the cigarette pack. "Want another?"

"He -"

Violet exhaled a slow steady stream and spoke across the plateau of white: "Look. I said I was sorry. We're all crazy anyway. Don't you know that yet? It's the moon. Don't I know it? I don't like that boy at all." She took another puff, this time with a funny face. "And he doesn't like me," she said. "Much. Not enough anyway. Not for long," she said. "Look. If you're going to sleep here tonight you've got to stop that sniveling. You'll have me starting. Then where will we be? Sure you don't want one?"

"He -" Cass said.

"He what?"

"He says I have to go on a picnic with him tomorrow -"

"Jake? He talked to you? Tonight? That's a good sign. Listen. He's nuts, sugar lump. You don't have to go to the garden gate with him if you don't want to."

"I don't."

"That silly assed Jap should have finished his job." She picked up one of the stockings from the floor and stopped. "Oh, baby, love, I -" She kneeled by the side of the bed. "Gee, I'm sorry, I -"

"Violet, he -"

"He?" Violet said and flung the stocking out. "He. He. He. Can't we forget about him for a while? Can't we forget for a minute? War is hell? Hell, it's all hell." She was up now, dropping garments to the chair. "Just you stay out of it, babycakes. Just you stay good and out of it."

"I will."

"No, you won't. Scoot over."

"I —"

"You think you will, but you won't. I thought I would," Violet said. "But I don't. I can see you don't believe me. Good. Now scoot." She snapped out the light. "No, that's too far."

Under the tobacco Violet still smelled of starch. She wiggled. "Listen," she said. "Sugar lump." She took Cass's hand. "I want to tell you." She stopped. "I love you, sugar lump, and I want to tell you. I mean, that after a while, you begin to realize that they're all like Jake. Hey, say! Relax. It's not that bad. I mean, inside. Inside, they're all like Jake. Raving and crying. And never that far away from Death, I think. You don't understand, do you?"

The bed shook but Cass couldn't hear her.

"I don't understand, babycakes. Anyway, that's the way it is. I think. And," she said, "we're not much better. You don't see that yet. Well. You see that I went off and left you tonight. You see that. No," she said. "We're not much better. Only sometimes. You're not going to believe this but. . . . Sometimes? It's not so bad. Do you believe that?" She stopped. "You still with me?" she said. "Sleepy?" she said. "Me either. But we will be in the morning." She flopped over. Only, after a while she was back, face propped on her forearm studying her niece.

"So Jake's given us the shakes," she said. "Poor Jake thinks there's Japs out there." She poked Cass in the belly. "Do you think they're gonna get us? Huh?" She tickled her in the ribs.

"Stop it, Vi, I —"

"*Ma-line, you die,*" Violet sang.

"Vi!" Cass said.

"*Latrine, shit fly!*"

Cass giggled.

Violet caught her. "You see what I mean?" she said. Cass felt her aunt catch her breath. "You do see that, doncha, dope?"

"I don't know."

"Well," Violet said. "You will."

No, I don't want to go," Cass said and pried at the scab of an old mosquito bite. "I can't."

The mother fed the steaming sheet into the wringer. "We can't always have what we want," she said.

Cass had the scab.

"We'd have a fine life if we could." The mother kept the steaming lump moving between both hands and, when the other end jerked free, slapped the sheet into the pail. "It's high time you learned we all have to do our part," she said. "And, anyways, since when don't you like picnics, girl?"

"We could wait till we can take Joshua. It's not fair with him still sick."

"Your brother's going to be in bed for at least a week more," her mother said. "And what he doesn't know won't hurt him."

"Yes," Cass said. "It will."

Her mother had one more sheet.

"It will, it will, it will." Cass said.

The mother dried her hands. "Cassie?" Water continued to spill from the press, then to ooze and finally to splat monotonously into the dull wash water.

"I can't," Cass said.

"Can't never could do anything," her mother said and turned back for the load. "I hope," she pressed a thin apron end against the seepage from the steaming bucket, "that you're not going to go and get sick on me too."

"She'd better be sick," Grandfather Hardison said from an upstairs window where he sat fanning Joshua. "If she's going to continue lolling around my porch while her mother does all the work."

The girl stood. The swing nudged her forward a step. A welt of warm purple trembled on her thigh.

"Now what?" Her mother put down the wash. "You've sat there and picked at that bite until you're bleeding and will have to go inside and wash up before you can help me. I don't want your fly specks all over my clean sheets." The screen door clapped twice behind her.

The mother returned to the screen once.

"And Cass, please don't let Uncle Jake hear you say you don't want to go. Trust me?" she said. "He's a sick man, Cass. And someday you'll understand."

"That's what Violet said too, but she said I wouldn't have to go."

"Violet's a light-headed, irresponsible fool."

"A light-headed, irresponsible, over-sexed fool," Grandfather Hardison said and lowered the shade.

Cass transferred the smudge of red to her hand, carefully, conserving it. Then she returned to the swing and sat, where, in time to the clicks of her mother's wooden pins on the clothesline, she tattooed herself in blood.

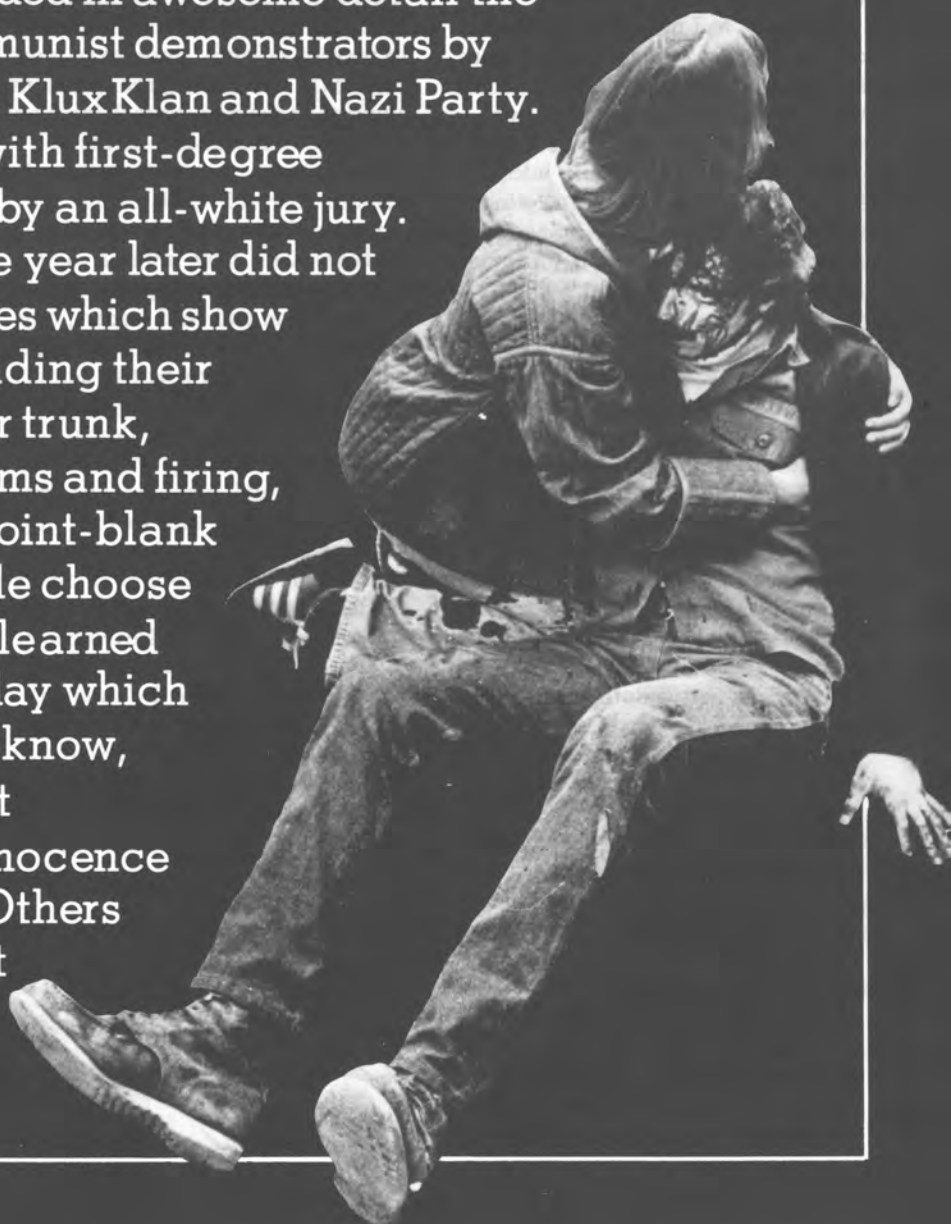
But when she had finished, she went inside and washed off. □

Bonna Whitten-Stovall is a Mississippi writer now living in Brooklyn, New York.

INSTITUTE SPECIAL REPORT:

THE THIRD OF NOVEMBER

On November 3, 1979, television cameras from four stations recorded in awesome detail the killing of five communist demonstrators by members of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi Party. Six men charged with first-degree murder were tried by an all-white jury. Their acquittal one year later did not erase the videotapes which show them calmly unloading their weapons from a car trunk, running after victims and firing, in some cases, at point-blank range. Some people choose to believe the jury learned things about that day which the rest of us don't know, some evidence that established the innocence of those charged. Others would like to forget the incident altogether.



THE WAY IT HAPPENED

Based on interviews with eyewitnesses, courtroom testimony and the videotapes, Patricia MacKay reconstructed a narrative of the November 3 confrontation. We present it here with a sample of what the cameras recorded that day:

The CWP demonstrators had just finished singing and were beginning to get picket signs out of a small pickup truck which was parked at the intersection of Everitt and Carver. It's a very small intersection — the

streets are like alleys, hardly wide enough for two cars.

Some of the demonstrators had gotten signs out of the back of the pickup and were preparing to assemble when the nine-car caravan came down the street.

Raeferd Caudle, the Nazi from Winston-Salem who owned the blue Ford Fairlane, rolled down the window of the car he was in and yelled, "Remember China Grove!" Other Klansmen and Nazis yelled, "Kike!" and "Nigger!"



By now we, too, might have forgotten — except for three things: (1) we spent hours interviewing a reporter who sat through the entire trial; (2) we watched the entire footage of all four cameras, everything that the jury saw; and (3) we spent four hours interviewing, as no other reporter has done, a police informant within the Klan who was intimately involved in the planning and execution of the confrontation on November 3, but who was never called as a witness.

Once we had done that much, we could no longer forget the Greensboro killings. Too many questions remained unanswered, and those that our research answered pointed us toward deeper research, particularly into the role of the police, the prosecuting attorney and city officials in managing and mismanaging the events surrounding the killing, subsequent publicity and the trial.

What follows is a synopsis of a much longer report resulting from our investigation. Our intent is not to prove any conspiracy but rather to provide a record of what happened in a way that illuminates a host of remaining questions which must be answered before anyone in good conscience can place Greensboro in its proper perspective. To date, the Greensboro Police Department has provided a record. So has the Communist Workers Party. Both reports are evasive and distorted, their primary purpose to absolve each organization of any responsibility for the confrontation. Our report aims to provide a third voice, an independent perspective on the events. It does not try to prove a single thesis or vindicate anyone of wrong-doing.

From what we know now, the actions of various parties can still be explained in more than one way, some more palatable than others. The mere possibility that certain police officers plotted with Klansmen to assassinate troublesome communists

may be unthinkable to some. A reporter who read a draft of the entire report remarked, "I know this kind of thing happens in places like El Salvador, but it's too frightening for me to think about the implications of it happening here. I *can't* believe it." But even if one gathers from our report only that the police knew a caravan of armed Klan and Nazis were headed toward the demonstrators, a reasonable reader still has to conclude that their failure to warn the demonstrators or bystanders, or to be on the scene to prevent violence, amounts to gross negligence and raises grave questions about their motives for such inaction.

Some of the questions the full report raises may never be answered. A massive civil suit initiated by the wounded demonstrators and relatives of those slain may unravel some mysteries as federal agents, police officers, Klan and Nazi leaders, city officials and others are forced under oath to explain their part in actions leading up to and following the event. But that suit is moving slowly. A well-financed investigative team of reporters would probably uncover other information, too. We only hope to encourage the probing effort and to share what we know so others can learn from what happened in and around Greensboro on November 3.

(For a copy of the full report, which includes a lengthy interview with KKK-FBI-police informant Ed Dawson, please send \$3 to: *Southern Exposure*, "Greensboro Report," P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.)

BACKGROUND

1 November 3, 1979, was not the first confrontation between Nazis, Klansmen and members of the Communist Workers Party (CWP). In the spring and early summer of 1979, the Federated Knights of the KKK began holding public meetings at which they showed the film "Birth of a Nation" and attempted to recruit new members. A few protesters — members of the Revolutionary Communist Party — came to one of the public meetings in Winston-Salem, but it wasn't until the Klan took the film to a community center in China Grove that protesters arrived in force.

On Sunday, July 8, members and supporters of the CWP (which then called itself the Worker's Viewpoint Organization, or WVO*) arrived at the community center about an hour before the film showing was scheduled to begin. The tiny China Grove police force was also early, stationing officers at the community center well ahead of starting time. The counter-demonstrators outnumbered and outflanked the Klansmen gathering outside the center; pressing forward while the police tried to keep the groups separate, they succeeded, as they later put it, in driving "these scum Klansmen off the lawn of the China Grove Community Center."

Their symbolic victory consisted of capturing and burning two Confederate flags while "these 'brave Klansmen' defended them by peeping out of the windows as the flags went up in smoke." The group inside the center

* In October, 1979, the WVO, at a national meeting in New York, changed its name to the Communist Workers Party.



The first seven cars of the caravan drove through the intersection and eventually stopped. The blue Ford and yellow van stopped 10 or 20 feet before the intersection, and the demonstrators didn't even notice them. You could see on the film that they were all looking toward the first part of the caravan which had driven past them; several of them were laughing and joking with each other. It obviously hadn't dawned on them even then that there might be real trouble.

included Roland Wayne Wood, head of the Forsyth County unit of the Nazi Party and one of the men later charged with the November 3 murders. Raeford Caudle and Jerry Paul Smith, two other participants in the November killings, were also inside, along with members of the moderate and militant factions of the North Carolina Klan. According to one Klan leader, both sides were armed and the only reason the men inside did not open fire on the communists was that "if shooting began, the three policemen trying to maintain order would be killed."

After the China Grove confrontation the WVO got cocky. They had marched into the heart of Klan country and, they thought, publicly shamed the "cowards" into submission. "What made a difference in China Grove," they boasted, "was the mighty force of militant, armed and organized fighters, fighting in the people's interest. WE AFFIRM THE CORRECTNESS OF HOW TO FIGHT THE KLAN AS SHOWN BY CHINA GROVE!!!"

The WVO leaders were exceedingly naive, some would say stupid, to think that these men who embraced the violent, macho image of the Klan could continue to be baited yet never retaliate. Their desire to out-do the rival Revolutionary Communist Party, which also sought to build its reputation through militant rhetoric and direct action, may have further blinded the WVO. The rivalry between the two communist groups was bitter, but its subtleties and very existence escaped most outsiders. Significantly, even Nazi Party head Harold Covington, who lives in Raleigh, confused the two groups. On September 11, 1979, he sent a letter to RCP member Cindy Hopkins claiming the Nazis could get help to combat communists. He warned that most Nazis had killed communists in Vietnam, but "so far we've never had a chance to kill the homegrown product." Covington con-

tinued, "We've put a few in the hospital and we nearly killed some of your people at China Grove - we had it all worked out with the cops, that if you were dumb enough to try to attack the community center, we'd waste a couple of you and none of them would see anything." But, of course, it was the WVO, not the RCP, at China Grove.

As the communists fought each other, racist organizations in North Carolina sought to form an alliance. On September 22, Virgil Griffin, head of the Invisible Empire of the KKK, led a caravan of 20 Lincoln County Klansmen to a meeting with Nazis and other Klan units northeast of Raleigh.

With much publicity and in the presence of 100 onlookers, Griffin, Covington and Gorrell Pierce of the Federated Knights formed the United Racist Front. Although Griffin is reported to have told the group to "kill 100 niggers and leave them dead in the streets," the primary purpose of the new alliance was to seek retribution for their embarrassing defeat at the hands of the "jew-communist scum" in China Grove. (According to Nazi theory, blacks are mere pawns in a Jewish-communist conspiracy to take over the world.)

If WVO leaders knew about the different Klan factions or that the state's most militant leaders had formed a Klan/Nazi coalition, they failed to modify their strategy accordingly. Their perceived victory in China Grove was heady stuff, and, with a false sense of bravado, they decided to dare the Klan to confront them again. Events moved quickly:

October 4: WVO leaders publicly announced a "Death to the Klan" march and conference in Greensboro.

October 10: Several RCP members were arrested for trespassing when they disrupted classes at the University of North Carolina branch in Greensboro. They said they wanted "to

further educate them [the students] by telling them what's really going on in the outside world" and to recruit them for a rally featuring RCP presidential candidate Bob Avakian. As an indication of Greensboro officialdom's growing disgust with agitation by the RCP and WVO, District Attorney Michael Schlosser (who later prosecuted the November killers) personally visited the Greensboro campus to solicit witnesses for his prosecution of the RCP disrupters.

October 10: On the same day as the RCP arrests, the Greensboro police discussed the proposed WVO march at a staff meeting. They noted that they couldn't prevent the march "in view of First Amendment rights," but that the parade permit they issued could make restrictions. According to the Police Department's Administrative Report issued after the rally, "The restrictions which were discussed included prohibiting weapons, concealed or in view, and restricting sign posts to 2-inch X 2-inch thickness."

Considering the escalating friction between communists and the Klan, it's natural to assume other precautions were discussed by the police, although they are not specified in the report. "If you want the offensive potential of a demonstration controlled," said a police officer in another city, "you don't just bar weapons. You allow only cardboard tubes for signs or banners . . . you control the space where the demonstration occurs, you make your presence very visible with a show of force that is intimidating and pervasive. All that's standard strategy from the '60s."

No one has yet explained why the Greensboro police did not employ any of these methods (many of which were used in the subsequent February 2 National Anti-Klan Network's march in Greensboro. But the police did authorize one means of pre-demonstration planning during, or shortly after, the October 10 meeting. On or

A few demonstrators near the front of the caravan began chanting, "Death, Death, Death to the Klan." There was more yelling.

Then one of the demonstrators hit a car with a stick — Virgil Griffin's car. There was shouting and some of the Klan in the front of the caravan stopped, got out of their cars and started toward the demonstrators. And then Mark Sherer, the one filmed loading his gun, leaned out of the window of the third car, pointed his gun in the air, and fired a shot with black gun powder. It's unheard of

to use black gun powder; it's messy and old-fashioned. But you can see the black smoke for quite a distance. That's one reason for thinking it was a signal shot.

The people began to scatter, of course, when they heard this shot. But the defendants and several others who were in the two vehicles on the other side of the intersection then got out and grabbed picket sticks from the back of the CWP's pickup truck, which was open and began assaulting demonstrators with them.



about that day, Ed Dawson, a long-time Klan member and informant for the FBI and the Greensboro police force, was contacted by the department and asked to "find out" what Virgil Griffin and the Klan intended to do about the WVO rally. Dawson soon made contact with Griffin; they discussed the march and agreed to get together at an upcoming Klan rally in Lincolnton to talk further.

Dawson's official or unofficial instructions from the police, his relation to the FBI and his possible coordination with other agents or informants are not known. But by Dawson's own admission, he quickly adopted a role more suited to a leader in the Klan action than to a simple conduit of information.

October 11: RCP members were arrested for "inciting a riot" at Hampton Homes, a predominantly black housing project, where they were recruiting residents for their rally.

October 16: Several CWP members passing out literature near Cone Mills' White Oak plant entrance were attacked by RCP members with clubs. The police describe the fight in their administrative report, but do not identify the assailants as members of the RCP. Several pieces of evidence indicate law enforcement agencies at the time routinely assumed the WVO was an offshoot or affiliate of the RCP. The police confusion over, or refusal to distinguish between, the two groups is important because if they thought that the CWP was responsible for the incidents at the university, Hampton Homes and White Oak, that misinformation could have provided justification in the minds of certain officers to hold back and let the Klan/Nazis beat up the communists on November 3.

October 19: Nelson Johnson, a WVO leader, applied for a parade permit for the November 3 march. The Greensboro police advised him of the

proposed restrictions against weapons and he agreed to them.

October 20: Virgil Griffin and his Invisible Empire held a march and rally at the Lincoln County Fairgrounds. After the rally, Griffin convened a meeting, with about 90 people attending, at which none other than informant Ed Dawson was the featured speaker. The purpose of the meeting was to recruit people to confront the "Death to the Klan" march. Dawson told us:

"And at the speech I explained everything that was going on in Greensboro. I didn't add, I didn't take anything away. That they were going through the schools and throwing red paint, that there were signs posted, and this, that and the other thing. I gave maybe a 20-minute speech on the goodies that was going on and I asked for a show of hands, how many people was coming. Eighty hands went up in the air!

"So then I gave the second part of my speech: what to expect if they came up here. I told them, 'Now, if you come up here, I want you to know that we're not fooling around. I don't know if any of you know Marion Porter and the Labor Party, but these people here are different. You push *them* around, they'll push back. They're big enough, they won't just stand there while you're screaming at them.'

"'Number two,' I said, 'if you carry a gun, if you go out in the open there with a bulge in your pocket, that place is going to be infested with police and you *will* be arrested. If you carry a gun, you better have your damn bond money in your pocket, because you're gonna be arrested if you try any garbage.' And after that speech, I asked for a show of hands. Then only about 40 or 50 of them raised their hands, after the second part of it. Because I wanted them to know what to expect if they were gonna come up

here and start screaming and carrying on."

October 23: The FBI began an investigation of the CWP in Greensboro and Durham which was completed on November 2, according to newspaper reports. Andrew Pelczar, an FBI field agent in Greensboro, said the investigation was started because the organizations made frequent statements supporting "the use of violence to achieve its goals." Pelczar later refused to elaborate on his statement, and his superiors in Raleigh and Washington denied that any FBI investigation had begun prior to November 3. No report on any FBI investigation made before or after the shooting has ever been made public.

Newspaper reports after November 3 also disclosed that an agent from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) of the U.S. Justice Department infiltrated the Nazi Party in North Carolina sometime in the summer of 1979 and sold a number of high-powered weapons to its members. BATF agent Bernard Butkovich attended at least one planning meeting for the caravan, but did not ride with it on November 3. He left the state soon after the shooting. His role in the event has never been revealed. Because of our limited resources and primary focus on actors in Greensboro, we could not pursue an investigation of Butkovich or other suspected federal agents active during the period.

October 28: Nazi and Klan members gathered in Winston-Salem (Forsyth County) to plan for the November 3 confrontation. Virgil Griffin called Ed Dawson to tell him that three Lincoln County Klansmen at the meeting would call him afterwards with a report. Dawson says he waited until 11 p.m. and then went out to paste Klan posters over the CWP's "Death to the Klan" signs. His posters showed a figure hanging from a noose with the slogan, "It's Time for Some



Old-Fashioned Justice.” We do not know what, if any, plan was devised at the Winston-Salem meeting. We do know that all of the men in the last two cars of the caravan – the men who fired on the demonstrators – were Nazis and Klansmen from Forsyth and Lincoln Counties. Dawson later told us that although he “firmly believes” no gun attack was planned, he didn’t realize the Nazis were involved until the morning of November 3. “And if they had something separate planned for the communists,” he said, “they would have made sure they were at a good spot in the caravan. . . . That’s the way I would do it.”

October 31: CWP members met with the Board of Elders of All Nations Pentacostal Holiness Church, who had suddenly withdrawn permission for the communists to hold their November 3 conference (which was to follow the march) at the church. The CWP had held previous public meetings at the church, but this time they say they were told that a church member who worked as a secretary in the police department had been warned by the police that the church might be bombed if the meeting were held there. Reverend Curtis Johnson, minister of the church, refused to answer our questions regarding the decision. The CWP found an alternative site for their conference at a night club in the shopping center across the street from the church.

November 1: Nelson Johnson and Paul Bermanzohn held a CWP press conference to announce final plans for the march and to denounce the police and city officials. Their complaint was three-fold: the police had never mailed them their parade permit (a process which normally takes three days), had obstructed their use of the church and were harassing CWP people who put up posters advertising the march and conference.

Following the CWP news conference, Ed Dawson, who had watched the whole thing, spoke briefly with Johnson and Bermanzohn. According to Bermanzohn, he portrayed himself as a “small-business owner.” Dawson then went inside the police department, asked for and received a copy of the parade permit, which detailed the route of the march, gave its correct starting time and place, and had written on its face the restriction against weapons.

November 2: At about 11 p.m. Virgil Griffin addressed a group of 14 Klanspeople and Nazis at the Buffalo Gas Station in Lincoln County. He reportedly stressed the importance of “making a show of force” in Greensboro the next day. Afterward Griffin drove to Greensboro with Coleman Pridmore, the Exalted Cyclops of Lincoln County, and Jerry Paul Smith, Chief of Security for the Invisible Empire. They were joined by Griffin’s girlfriend, Cindy, and arrived in Greensboro at three a.m. on November 3. Ed Dawson met the group at an all-night restaurant and then led them past the Florida Street shopping center, location of the night club where, Dawson told them, “the rally was supposed to end.”

NOVEMBER 3

2 Racists from across North Carolina began gathering at a small house on Randleman Road south of Greensboro at about four a.m. Dawson had persuaded his old friend Brent Fletcher to allow the use of his home as a rendezvous point for the caravan. It was marked with a Confederate flag. According to Dawson, the group sat around drinking and talking, “small talk, old-time talk, Klan stuff,” and “showing off guns” including a shotgun and a .357 Magnum. About 4:30 a.m.,

Dawson went home to get some sleep.

At about seven a.m., says Dawson, he got up and called Detective Jerry Cooper, his long-time police department contact. “I told him how many people were over at the house, and what was there – they had a couple of guns. . . . I was just supposed to be their source on how many people and if they had guns. So I said, ‘I doubt if I’ll be able to contact you again or call you.’ So he [Cooper] gave me the number of his car, so if I could get away . . . I could contact him in his car.”

Then Dawson returned to the house on Randleman Road. And, at about 8:30, he did manage to slip away again and telephone Cooper. The message: “There was 12 to 14 people at the house and they had guns, *everybody had a gun.*”

At 10 a.m., Detective Cooper briefed the police commanders and tactical units that an “undetermined number of Klan members” were assembling at the house on Randleman Road and that some of them had “handguns.” The officers were told that the Klan planned to heckle the marchers along the parade route and throw eggs at them and that, if a confrontation occurred, it would come at the end of the parade. After receiving their location assignments, the tactical units were given permission to go to lunch and instructed to be at their posts by 11:30 a.m. – a half hour before the march’s scheduled beginning.

The police have never revealed what, if any, plan they had to thwart the caravan’s disruption of the parade. When a reporter later asked Chief of Police William Swing if he didn’t think his officers had an obligation at least to warn the demonstrators, press and residents at the housing project, the chief said he didn’t think it was “important.” How the police knew about an egg-throwing assault is also a mystery. Dawson claims he did not know such a plan existed, only

About 20 seconds after the first shot was fired, Brent Fletcher fired a shotgun into the air from his car window. People were running everywhere — into houses, apartments, everywhere. The camera crews retreated to the other side of the street. It was during this period that two shots were fired from the area of the stick fight, the intersection. These were the “pistol” shots whose source the FBI analysis couldn’t positively identify. The jury ultimately

decided they came from the CWP and that they were the first “hostile” shots — shots 3 and 4.

After shot 4, Jim Waller tried to grab a gun from the back of the pickup, and Klansman Roy Toney wrestled it away from him. Although the FBI analysis was not able to identify shot number 5 either, other evidence and testimony indicated that Toney fired the gun after he got it away from Waller.



that he “expected” a “fist fight” to break out, probably at the end of the march: “There would have been a couple of heads bashed in. . . . A broken arm, broken leg. Oh yeah, I figured there’d be a fight. I told them.”

As the morning unfolded, the failure of the police to incorporate information it possessed into a strategy for defusing possible violence became all too apparent. Other law enforcement officials interviewed have noted that the half-hour lead time for the tactical units is far from a cautious approach to what was shaping up as a head-on collision between armed racists and militant anti-racists.

While the tactical units ate lunch, Detective Cooper and the regular officers of District II (the Morningside area) began taking their positions. At 11 a.m., Sergeant W.D. Comer, the officer in charge of monitoring the parade itself, radioed Lieutenant P.W. Spoon, who was in command of the entire operation, that he had again tried to talk with some of the 40 to 50 demonstrators gathering at the Windsor Community Center, but they were “very hostile towards the police . . . no one would talk to us.” Comer decided to station himself and the other patrol car assigned to escort the march near Windsor — even though he knew the parade permit said the march would begin at Morningside Homes, corner of Everitt and Carver Streets, eight blocks away. Press reports and CWP posters had designated Windsor as the starting point — at 11 a.m. — but as television crews, reporters and CWP members gathering there left to assemble at Morningside, one wonders why an alert police officer didn’t unravel the confusion surrounding the two starting points.

Remarkably, the two *tactical* squads assigned “to provide surveillance of the marchers” were of no help to Comer or anybody else; they were still eating lunch 23 minutes later

when the shooting began.

The list of officers out of action on November 3 should perhaps begin at the top with the commander of District II, Captain T.A. Hampton. He had a previously scheduled noon meeting and had turned command for the day over to Lieutenant Spoon. For no explained reason, Spoon was out of radio contact from his 11:00 conversation with Comer until 11:14, when he was called back inside police headquarters to discuss a phone call from the pastor of All Nations Church. Spoon did not return to radio contact until 11:21 — only 45 seconds before the caravan reached the CWP demonstrators.

In an effort to explain the absence of a commanding officer during the crucial period, the Police Department’s Administrative Report emphasizes that the minister’s call “was very significant because of the intelligence information received by 613 [Cooper] earlier in the day that if trouble developed, it would likely be at the termination point of the march. . . . A new location at which to hold the planned rally at the end of the march would now have to be located.” Spoon was working on this matter when he returned to his squad car radio. Whether or not this explanation holds up — and Ed Dawson knew about the new conference site before November 3 — it still does not explain how Lieutenant Spoon and his partner for the day, police attorney M.A. Cawn, remained uninformed of the fact that by 11:14 a Klan/Nazi caravan had formed and was headed toward the CWP march. It certainly was not because the caravan went unnoticed.

According to Dawson, the group left Randleman Road about 11:05. As he tells it, “We went outside then and everyone was standing around . . . and I said, ‘If we’re going, let’s go. If we’re not, let’s go home.’ And someone says, ‘Who’s in charge here?’ And I looked at Virgil, and Virgil looked at me. . . .

So Virgil points at me and says, ‘I guess he is.’ So I said okay.

“So we started off and finally got down to the ramp at I-85 and 220, and I was talking on the C.B., ‘KKK. Everything okay?’ But the van holtered, ‘Can you hold it up? The Fairlane from Winston just went by. He’s lost apparently, he didn’t see the cars on the ramp.’ So we all got out on the ramp there. *I could see [Detective] Cooper’s car just parked there on the overpass. He was watching us.*”

At 11:06 Cooper tried to radio the unavailable Spoon and then asked for Lieutenant Daughtry, the field commander of the tactical section. He was told Daughtry was still in the office, so Cooper reported to Sergeant Burke of the tactical unit: “Okay, you got eight vehicles parked and loaded on the ramp from down where we went this morning. They’re on the ramp off 85 and 220. It looks like 30 or 35 people. . . . They’re just sitting on the ramp there waiting, all in the vehicles. So we’re gonna stand by here and kind of monitor them, see what they do.”

At 11:13 Cooper radioed Burke again: “We’re rolling now, headed that direction from this location. There’s a total now of nine vehicles.”

The ninth vehicle, which the caravan had been waiting for, was Raeford Caudle’s blue Ford Fairlane, driven by Jack Fowler. Among the weapons in its trunk were the AR-180 semi-automatic rifle with which Fowler was to wound Mike Nathan, the .357 Magnum pistol with which Jerry Smith later killed Cesar Cauce, and several shotguns. Although the Fairlane was the last car to arrive at the caravan assembly point, Fowler positioned it in the second-to-last slot, in front of the yellow van in which Smith, Matthews, Wood and the others later charged with murder were riding.

At 11:16 Cooper finally reached Lieutenant Daughtry and advised him of the Klan/Nazi caravan’s location: “On [U.S.] 29 now, approaching



After shot 5, the first seven cars loaded up and began to take off. Within 30 seconds, they were all out of the area. In the film, you can see Cesar Cauce standing beside the pickup with a stick in his hand — just standing there. Meanwhile, the other Nazis and Klansmen went back to the blue Ford, opened the trunk and pulled out their weapons. Twelve seconds after shot 5 was fired, Nazi Wayne Wood began firing bird-shot at the demonstrators. The FBI identified shot number 6 as coming from Wood's gun.

Florida Street.”

At 11:16, as the Klan/Nazi caravan was moving closer, Daughtry radioed to Burke, “Tracy, are y’all in position?” To which Burke replied: “Not really. We can start that way, most of us jumped out to get a sandwich or something.”

By this time, most of the CWP people were at Morningside Homes, at the Everitt/Carver intersection site of the march kick-off. They were singing freedom songs and clapping and having a good time. There were lots of children, some of them in uniforms, and they were poking and punching at an effigy of a white-robed Klansman while the adults were passing out literature and putting posters on a flat-bed truck where their microphones and amplifiers were.

WFMY-TV news photographer Jim Waters and CWP member Dori Blitz told of seeing two marked police cars at the intersection of Everitt and Dunbar, two blocks east of the rally site, approximately 10 minutes before the Klan/Nazi caravan arrived. According to an anonymous source who was monitoring a police radio scanner that morning, the patrol units were investigating a minor traffic accident as the caravan drove toward Morningside. Rather than instruct the officers to stay on the scene in case of a confrontation, they were ordered via radio to *clear the area*.

The police transcripts of the radio conversations between officers assigned to duty are very precise as to what the police were doing during these crucial minutes before the Klan/Nazi caravan arrived at the CWP gathering.

11:17.45: Cooper to Daughtry: “Just made the turn onto Lee Street.” (This placed the caravan at about a half-mile east of Windsor Center and about the same distance southwest of the corner of Everitt and Carver.)

11:18.57: Cooper: “Turning on Willow Road now.” (Any possible police confusion as to where the

caravan was headed should now have been cleared up, because Willow Road leads away from Windsor Center and onto Everitt Street.)

11:19.28: Daughtry to Burke: “Let’s hustle on in and get in those positions because they’re moving before we anticipated.” Burke: “We’re on the way.”

11:20.14: Cooper to Daughtry: “Part of them should be there by now almost.”

11:20.31: Daughtry to the operator: “See if you can raise 202 [Lieutenant Spoon].”

11:20.41: F-3: “No contact.”

11:20.52: Cooper to Daughtry: “They’re parking up on Everitt Street at Willow Road.” (This is about two blocks from the corner of Everitt and Carver.)

11:21.09: Daughtry finally made radio contact with Spoon. He said, “You been copying the traffic of 613 [Cooper]?”

Spoon: “Negative, I’ve been on the phone. I need to get with you. Another thing just popped up you need to be aware of.” (Spoon was referring to the conversation with Reverend Johnson about the CWP’s use of his church.) Spoon asked Daughtry for his location, which was at the corner of Washington and Benbow, about two blocks from Windsor Center. “Meet me there about the old train station,” Spoon said. Daughtry agreed to do this despite the fact that the train station is about a half-mile west of Windsor and more than a mile west of Everitt and Willow where he knew the caravan had stopped. Although Daughtry knew Spoon was unaware of the caravan’s progress, he made no attempt to inform him of the situation.

11:22.02: Cooper to Daughtry: “They’re now at the formation point.” Spoon to Cooper: “What traffic you got going?” Cooper: “OK, we got

about nine or 10 cars on the opposite side has now arrived at the formation point for the parade and it appears as though they’re heckling at this time, driving on by, uh, they’re definitely creating attention and some of the parade members are, uh, [break in transmission] . . . 10-4, they’re scattering, stand by one.”

There is an unexplained 32-second pause. Then:

11:23.10: Cooper: “We’ve got a 10-10 [fight in progress] down here, you better get some units in here.”

Note that “here,” “the formation point” and Cooper’s previous vague references to the Everitt/Carver intersection left other officers still confused about where to go.

Spoon to Daughtry: “Your people in position over there?” Daughtry: “10-4.”

11:23.27: Cooper: “Shots fired, sounds like. . . .”

11:23.31: Spoon: “Move the [District II] cars into the area.” Daughtry to Burke: “Move in.” Burke: “On the way. . . . Come on, Gary.”

11:23.41: F-3 operator to Spoon: “Can you advise for F-1 where you want the [District II] cars?” Spoon: “Move them into the area . . . should be there at *Windsor Community Center*.” (emphasis added)

11:23.47: Cooper: “Heavy gunfire.” Spoon: “Pull all available cars in the city to the area of . . . the Windsor Community Center. Don’t all come to the area, I’ll advise further when I arrive on the scene.”

11:23.50: F-1 operator to three District II units: “Everitt and Carver, move into the area, have a 10-10, possible shots fired, just move into the area and stand by.” (F-1 had apparently been monitoring Cooper and knew the location of the fight.)

11:24.14: Comer: “It’s not at Windsor, I think they’re at Everitt and Carver where . . . the Tact units are at.

Shots 7 and 8 were fired by Jerry Paul Smith, with the .357 Magnum pistol, as he was running down the sidewalk toward Cesar Cauce.

Wood then fired two more shots — numbers 9 and 10. By this time, nine people had been wounded, including Jim Waller, who was then killed by shot number 11, the first shot fired by David Wayne Matthews.

Shot number 12 was the first shot positively identified by the FBI as coming from a CWP gun. Dori Blitz, who was

standing near where Waller died, fired a pistol at the assailants.

The next shot was another blast from Wood's gun, then Blitz fired shot 14 at Jerry Smith, who was drawing a bead on Cauce as he scrambled on his hands and knees near the rear of the truck. Smith fired shot 15 at Cauce, and Blitz fired three shots at Smith. Cauce was fatally wounded by shot 19.

The FBI analysis identified shot number 21 as the first shot to come from the community center.



We're with the group at Windsor, no problem."

11:24:29: Cooper: "Most of the fire is coming from the yellow van, coming from the yellow van, they're now leaving the scene."

For the next 37 seconds, the F-3 channel was interrupted by phone calls from residents in the area asking for police assistance. However, the F-1 operator continued to instruct police units into the area of Everitt and Carver and to switch their receivers to F-3 for information. But by the time the police arrived, the shooting was over. Detective Cooper, who reported the shots, apparently made no attempt to stop the gunfire or to apprehend any fleeing vehicles. Another police unit did arrive in time to capture the yellow van, and reported its capture on the radio at 11:25:27. Almost two minutes later, at 11:27:19 — four minutes after Cooper first reported shots — an order finally went out to seal off the Carver/Everitt streets area. By that time, all the other cars had gotten away.

The shooting lasted only 88 seconds. Cesar Cauce, Sandi Smith and Jim Waller were dead. Bill Sampson died a few minutes later. Mike Nathan was sprawled on his back with blood gushing out of his face. He was still alive but he would not survive the wound. He died in the hospital two days later.

THE RESPONSE

3 The initial reaction in Greensboro was shock and outrage; the Sunday morning newspapers were filled with descriptions of the shootings and with unanswered questions about how it all happened. But, almost immediately, the fact of the five

murders, the deaths of five human beings, began to be obscured, as the victims' ideology and tactics — rather than the actions of the Klan, Nazis or police — increasingly became the main object of public scrutiny.

The most neutral, "objective" headlines appeared the first few days afterwards, before the "official response" solidified. Most of these headlines attacked both the CWP/WVO and the Klan, but did at least call the Klan the attacker — though one, in anticipation of the eventual official view, referred to a "shootout" between Klansmen and communists. A reading of the papers of November 4 and 6 would also have led one to believe the police had been less than thorough in their attempts to prevent the murders. Questions about the police were raised in the first few days, notably in a November 6 editorial in the *Greensboro Record*. But these questions, still unanswered, disappeared as the media became preoccupied with the latest in a stream of official explanations which trickled forth from police headquarters.

Each new police statement seemed to divert the press further away from questions of police irresponsibility or complicity by raising such side issues as the legal right of the Klan to possession of the parade permit, the CWP's motives in setting conflicting starting times and places for its march, CWP hostility toward the idea of police escorts, the change of conference sites, and the history of WVO/CWP action against the Klan.

By mid-November, the Police Department's Administrative Report reiterated its explanations and added some new excuses, such as, "There was insufficient probable cause to stop and/or arrest the members of the caravan." The Report concluded that "the police officers assigned to the march performed their duty in a professional and reasonable manner," and again it focused on the hostility and "confusion created by" the

communist demonstrators to explain the delayed response to what it called "the Worker's Viewpoint Organization-Klan confrontation." The implication that the WVO took the lead role in the confrontation pervades the report from the first sentence on; no evidence of Klan/Nazi planning for the rally is included, but several pages are devoted to leaflets, letters and quotes from the CWP to document how it "had been in conflict with the Ku Klux Klan prior to the shooting incident."

By November 6, the Greensboro papers had begun to follow the lead of the Police Department by soft-pedaling the motives of the Klan and attributing the violence to the communist victims. There were "in-depth" explanatory articles about the revolutionary ideology of the victims headlined "WVO 'Targeted' Cone, Other Mills for Infiltration" and "They All Hate Each Other," Professor Says of Leftists." There were no parallel articles exploring the racist ideology of the Klan or the Nazis, but there were two articles — headlined "Wife Says Couple Joined Klan Group in Ignorance" and "Nephew's Radical Bent Surprises Lincoln Deputy" — that portrayed two of the arrested Klansmen as naive dupes who didn't know what they were getting into.

In the next few days, the attacks on the CWP/WVO for causing trouble intensified, and the Klan was described as no longer opposing blacks, just communists. A headline reported that a young Nazi was there solely because "It was just something to do." On the other hand, a story based on an unnamed co-worker of a CWP victim said the communists were there because they "needed a martyr" and had "a plan" to accomplish that goal.

Ironically, as the press narrowed its search for causes behind the killings, it simultaneously sought to absolve the city of Greensboro from any responsibility for the violence. Greensboro



Shots 22 and 23 were fired by Jack Fowler with the AR-180 semi-automatic rifle. The next shot was from the community center, and then Roy Toney fired the gun he had taken earlier from Jim Waller. Fowler fired the AR-180 twice more, wounding Mike Nathan as he was running to help Waller.

mayor Jim Melvin led the way, personally telephoning reporters to promote the official interpretation that the killings were “an isolated incident involving mostly outsiders.”

On November 5 the *Greensboro Record* carried a front-page article headlined “Why was this city picked for battleground?” Its lead paragraph stated a theme that was repeated over and over in coming months: “In the aftermath of a mind-boggling tragedy that has focused unwanted world attention on the city, Greensboro is asking itself ‘why us?’” The article quoted CWP leader Nelson Johnson’s observation, “This is my hometown, man. We [many of his fellow party members] live here. Greensboro is no different from any other town.” But the article projected a picture of a town where leftist activists were unwanted and unneeded. As the writer put it, “What will the incident do to the image of the city, which has generally been regarded as a progressive, even liberal Southern community?”

The Greensboro newspapers’ fundamental assumption that racial tensions don’t exist in Greensboro is an attitude that has held sway for 20 years, as Bill Chafe documents thoroughly in his book on the city, *Civilities and Civil Rights*. The papers perpetuated the city’s self-deception by printing numerous editorials from around the country which praised Greensboro racial relations. Some blamed the violence on the Klan, others blamed both the Klan and the communists, but all reinforced Greensboro’s self-concept as a victim of outsiders and extremists.

Those community groups which sought to focus attention on the tragedy saw their efforts frustrated at every turn. Some groups wanted to condemn racist violence and police complicity; others expressed a need to organize the Greensboro community to prevent similar occurrences in the future; still others merely wanted to

publicly declare their outrage at the Klan’s cold-blooded murder of other human beings. But all met with disdain from the press and resistance from city officials. Instead of ensuring that protests were safe and orderly, officials chose to scare off potential demonstrators with repeated warnings of impending violence, constant publicity about mobilizing more police or national guard troops, speculation on the need for medical services, jails and magistrates, and so forth.

Even the local and state Human Relations Commissions adopted similar attitudes. Rather than facilitate a peaceful airing of grievances, they discouraged the need for citizen involvement and acted as public relations agents for the city and state. On November 16, Jerry Drayton, chair of the city’s Human Relations Council, sent a one-and-a-half-page memo to his council members in which he described the events of November 3 as “a shooting” in which Klansmen were “reacting to Communist challenges to a confrontation” and which resulted when their cars “were attacked by marchers with heavy sticks.”

Although Drayton acknowledged in his memo that blacks were “dissatisfied with the performance of the police,” he explored neither the police nor the Klan/Nazi roles on November 3. The Nazis are not even mentioned in his report. The HRC’s subsequent memo, dated November 19, to the North Carolina Department of Administration, explained how the council had acted to thwart participation of Greensboro college students in the funeral march held by the CWP on November 11. The students from N.C. A&T State University were advised their campus would be protected and that “if they were going to participate, they should know with whom they were affiliated.” The memo carefully notes that the HRC staff did not tell the students whether or not to join the funeral procession. But, according to

student leaders, the focus on violence and communism was a clear warning that marchers would be risking their lives if they participated.

The memo dismisses the occurrence of anti-Klan demonstrations in other cities around the nation as a strategy of “far-left groups seeking to exploit the issue of right-wing extremism in order to strengthen the forces of left-wing extremism.” These demonstrations are characterized as violent, with the police suffering the majority of injuries as they attempted to keep Klan marchers separate from communist counter-demonstrators. “Few of the violent counter demonstrations [sic] have been ordinary citizens,” the memo says. It then lists six communist or communist-affiliated groups as the dominant anti-Klan forces and ignores the leadership of respected civil-rights organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organizations and Jewish groups like the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith.

By continually projecting the image of outsiders, professional leftists and communist agitators, the HRC followed the official pattern of obscuring Greensboro’s indigenous racism and legitimate concern for its elimination. One sentence in particular sums up the distortion promoted by public officials and the HRC: “Again, the police and the citizens of the community in which this incident occurred were the victims.”

Considerable evidence indicates a federal agency immeasurably assisted the city’s sophisticated subversion of public protest and public scrutiny into the events surrounding the shootings. Agents from the U.S. Justice Department’s Community Relations Service (CRS) apparently arrived in Greensboro within 24 hours of the killings to help coordinate a “cool out” response. Under their guidance, officials publicly interpreted the inci-

Toney fired shot 28, and it was this shot which critically wounded Paul Bermanzohn, who is now partially paralyzed with a shotgun pellet still in his brain. In the film, you can see Bermanzohn with a stick in his hand facing the armed Toney, who fires on him.

As shots 29 and 30 were fired from the community center, the Nazis and Klansmen began running back to their car and van. But David Wayne Matthews continued shooting.

With shot number 31, he killed Mike Nathan. His next shot, 33, probably hit Sandi Smith as he fired toward the person at the center who fired shot 32. Another shot came from the community center, and Matthews fired back, fatally wounding Sampson, who reportedly fired shots 36 and 37 as he was falling.

Shot number 38 came from the other side of Everitt Street, near the parking area where most of the TV and newspeople were.



dent as a “gun battle,” “shoot-out” and “showdown” between two extremist organizations from outside Greensboro. The city had no cause for alarm, except to prepare for opportunists that seek to exacerbate tensions for their own gains. By spreading rumors through the press and via contacts in the liberal community, the agents created an atmosphere of suspicion which fragmented a coherent, united community response and portrayed anyone willing to speak out as a possible CWP agent, communist sympathizer or pawn of outside leftists, who did indeed flock to the city to “lead” the protest effort.

The CRS succeeded in instilling such fear in Greensboro that a memorial service planned for November 18 by a group of black ministers and other respected citizens was abruptly canceled. The ministers had envisioned their service, and a rally planned to follow, as a positive alternative to the CWP funeral march. While the November 3 killings shocked and grieved the ministers, they — like many other human-rights advocates — strongly opposed the CWP’s provocative rhetoric, disruptive actions and insistence on bearing arms during the funeral march. No sooner was the service announced, however, than one of the ministers was threatened; others were warned about impending violence and shown secret government files on alleged “communists” who were helping to organize the rally.

The Community Relations Service’s orchestration of this campaign of intimidation is documented in Pat Bryant’s article, “Justice vs. the Movement,” in the Summer, 1980, issue of *Southern Exposure*. Bryant also documents how the CRS tried to abort a subsequent march and rally sponsored by the National Anti-Klan Network on February 2, 1980. That demonstration was planned as a massive protest of the killings and as a commemoration of the twentieth

anniversary of the Greensboro sit-ins, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that the coalition planning it succeeded. Official interference included an attempt to block the coalition’s use of the city coliseum on February 2, an attempt which was not abandoned until coalition lawyers filed suit against the city.

Under the direction of the CRS, law enforcement officials around the state met with student leaders to discourage them from getting involved. Although the sponsoring coalition, the February 2 Mobilization Committee, had made a firm decision to hold a nonviolent march with all participants unarmed, State Bureau of Investigation officials visited campuses around the state and warned student groups that bloodshed was nearly inevitable.

Delaney Wilson of North Carolina Central University, for example, was told by SBI agents that bombs or other explosives might be used and that, in the event of communist-incited violence during the march, the police and National Guard would be stationed all along the parade route with their rifles aimed directly at the marchers. Wilson and the NCCU students were not intimidated, but shortly before February 2 the bus company they had hired to transport them from Durham to Greensboro canceled their contract. Wilson was told that the company feared its buses would be bombed. The students made arrangements with another bus company and participated in the march. But Wilson found, in discussion with other student participants, that all had been warned by SBI or other agents that they might be bombed or shot at or, at a minimum, identified as communist sympathizers.

Not until May, 1980, did any official or quasi-official city agency question the action of the police on November 3. But that criticism, from the mayor’s blue-ribbon Greensboro Citizens Review Committee, was super-

ficial at best. “At least 17 minutes passed during which the Police Department could have dispatched cars to surround and accompany the caravan,” the committee’s report pointed out. The committee also criticized the police for lying in early statements regarding the extent of their knowledge of the Klan/Nazi caravan, but it did not investigate inconsistencies in the police report itself.

When asked why the committee didn’t conduct a more thorough hearing into the Police Department’s role on November 3, a committee member who asked to remain unidentified said, “You have to understand that the people serving on this committee were essentially volunteers. We all had to work at our regular jobs during the day, and then we had these meetings from seven to 10 or 11 at night. There was no staff to work with us, and there’s only so much you can do without any staff.”

At the time the jury selection began for the Nazi/Klan trial in June, 1980, the question of police complicity or negligence remained unexplored. Most of the Klan/Nazi defendants had been depicted in the press as good ole boys who were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. The CWP victims had been depicted as violent communist revolutionaries who had been looking for trouble and martyrs. And the city of Greensboro had become the object of public sympathy.

THE TRIAL

4 From the beginning, District Attorney Michael Schlosser insisted that he would not allow the trial of the four Klansmen and two Nazis to become “political.” But if the motives of those charged with first-degree murder were even going to



be discussed, the prosecutor would necessarily have to explore the Klan and Nazi political beliefs. By rejecting that approach, Schlosser seemed to give away a big part of his case.

Schlosser's own political biases — he told the media shortly after the killings that the communists “got what they deserved” — understandably led the victims' widows to ask that a special prosecutor, an outsider, be appointed to conduct the case. But Schlosser, an elected official who acknowledged his constituents' growing anti-communist sentiments, denied the request without a hearing.

Many other questions remain about decisions Schlosser and the prosecuting team he headed made before going to trial. Since he is now a defendant in the civil suit arising from the killings, he politely declines to discuss any substantive aspects of the trial. Among the questions left unanswered are:

- Why did he decide to drop the conspiracy charges against the 14 men indicted for the murders?
- Why was Virgil Griffin, who was clearly instrumental in organizing the caravan, never indicted at all?
- Why were conspiracy charges dismissed against Raeford Caudle, who brought most of the murder weapons?
- Why did Schlosser, after commenting that “conspiracy is difficult to prove,” turn around and charge first-degree murder — surely a far more difficult charge to prove, especially when the question of motives is foreclosed at the outset.
- Why were Bernard Butkovich (the BATF agent) and Ed Dawson never called to the witness stand?

The decision to go for first-degree murder was particularly problematic, and several veteran criminal attorneys have said they knew the jury would return a not-guilty verdict as soon as they found out about the charge. “I tried to get some bets,” recalls one attorney, “but no other attorneys would bet on a guilty verdict. First-

degree murder carries the death penalty, so right there you exclude [from the jury] blacks, liberals and more educated people who are opposed to capital punishment. They are also not as frightened about communism and more aware of what groups like the Klan and Nazis stand for. They are precisely the kind of jurors you want in a trial like this. By excluding them on the capital punishment question, the chances of conviction were nil.”

Then, too, the prosecution tactics were limited by the decision to charge several CWP survivors with felony riot. If Schlosser hoped to prove later, in their trial, that the communists intentionally engaged in a riot which resulted in the death of five people, he could hardly present evidence now that the Klan/Nazis were solely or primarily responsible for the riot. Yet how could he hope for first-degree murder convictions without such evidence?

Meanwhile, all of the defendants were provided with free court-appointed legal counsel, though in some cases their claims of indigence were questionable. And for reasons never explained, the prosecution agreed to reschedule the trials of David Matthews and Wayne Wood, so all six first-degree murder defendants could be tried together. There were several advantages for the defense from this consolidation, explained John McConahay, a Duke University professor and recognized expert on jury selection.

“First,” McConahay told us, “the more defendants you have, the more likely it is that jurors will become confused over which person did what. But more importantly, when you bring a whole bunch of people together for a trial, you have a pooling of peremptory challenges during jury selection which allows you to exclude more prospective jurors than if you had just one defendant on trial. Obviously, the more you are able to pick and choose, the better your jury will be.”

McConahay stressed that the jury which was finally seated was the kind of jury prosecutors would want in a *typical* murder trial. “The system is very well-equipped to convict the usual defendant — someone who's poor, someone who's black, someone who's killed someone who's either not of major concern to the community or who *is* of major concern but in a positive way, like a police officer or the town's rich kid. But when you kill somebody who is unusual in a negative way — a gay or a black, even if it's a black school teacher or a member of the Communist Workers Party — then the system isn't quite equipped to handle that. The normal kind of jurors who are likely to be conviction-prone then find themselves trying someone who has killed a “bad” person, and they're conflicted about it.”

Indeed, Schlosser allowed people to serve on the jury who admitted they held views such as “it's less of a crime to kill communists.” Of those selected to serve, only one was college-educated. That juror, a Cuban refugee named Octavio Manduley, belonged to an organization characterized in the media simply as “an anti-Castro organization.” In fact, the CIA-sponsored *20th of May Organization* conducted the bungled Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. Manduley joined the group while he lived in Cuba, served on its board when he moved to Miami in 1960, and recruited and trained other anti-communist exiles for the invasion. He worked with the group until 1965 when he moved to Greensboro.

Manduley acknowledged during questioning that he had heard of the CWP, and he characterized it as a group that followed the same pattern as “any other communist organization. They need publicity and a martyr and they need to project that they have many more people than they certainly have.” He said that he knew little about the Nazis or the KKK, except that they were “patriotic” groups.

Matthews blasted one more shot, and then the van began to move out. It stopped to pick up one more person. If it hadn't made this stop, it's likely the whole caravan would have gotten away. One police unit finally arrived in time to capture the van, and they so reported at 11:25.27.

The shooting lasted 88 seconds. Cesar Cauce, Sandi Smith and Jim Waller were dead. Bill Sampson died a few minutes later. Mike Nathan never recovered; he died two days later. Nine others were wounded.



Schlosser told the press he accepted Manduley because of his "honesty." He was later chosen foreman of the jury.

Jury selection ended on July 28. All 12 jurors and four alternates were white. In addition to Manduley, William A. Browning stated during questioning that he felt "sympathy for anyone sitting on the defense side of the room"; during the trial, he showed open contempt for the prosecutors as they questioned witnesses. Although the prosecution team still had several of their peremptory challenges left when the full jury was empaneled, it accepted two other jurors who said the CWP instigated the confrontation and another who thought the Klan stood for "patriotism and the family." So, of the six men and six women seated on the jury, five expressed definite biases against the communists and/or in favor of the Klan or Nazis.

The prosecutors might have neutralized the anti-communist sentiment of the jury by emphasizing the humanity of the victims. In fact, the prosecutors took the opposite tack, referring to those gunned down as "the alleged victims" or "the communists." According to courtroom reporter, Patricia MacKay, "The prosecutor did nothing to humanize the victims. While the refusal of the CWP survivors to testify made it more difficult to mitigate the effects of the victims' communism, the prosecutors could have, but didn't, bring in friends or co-workers as character witnesses."

Schlosser and his partners also failed to raise legal objections when the defense attorneys intimidated by their questioning that communism was *the* issue on trial. No objection was even raised when the defense red-baited witnesses put on the stand by the prosecution. "The defense would intimidate black witnesses, especially," said MacKay. "They'd ask, 'Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party? Have you attended a

communist meeting? Have you ever read a communist leaflet?' Only one person refused to answer those kinds of questions."

By allowing defense attorneys to badger witnesses for the prosecution in this manner, the prosecutors left the jury with the impression that it is somehow illegal to associate with communists or to read their literature. The prosecutors thus damaged the credibility of their own witnesses by default and further escalated the jurors' anti-communist biases.

The bulk of the evidence for the prosecution, however, rested not on the testimony of eyewitnesses but on the news photographs and TV videotapes taken on November 3. The admission of films and photos was problematic; under present law, the only way the prosecutors could introduce them as substantive evidence was to convince the defense attorneys to agree, to stipulate, that the films could be used in this way. In return for this stipulation, the prosecutors allowed the defense team to introduce an FBI sound analysis of the shooting — an analysis that traced all but three of the 39 shots fired on November 3 to specific weapons and the areas where the weapons were located.

Robert Cahoon, leader of the six-member defense team, commented, "As soon as we saw it [the FBI report], we figured it would clear us. That report dumbfounded the state, and bless their hearts, they were the ones who had it prepared." An unidentified juror confirmed Cahoon's statement: "The part that did play a greater impact on the verdict was the highly technical analysis of the firing — in the pinpointing of the shots. Without that, we never would have known there was anybody else doing anything except the Klan."

There are grave doubts about the accuracy of the FBI analysis, however. The three untraced shots — numbers 3, 4 and 5 — were identified only as

"pistol" shots coming from the area of the stick fight at the intersection of Everitt and Carver. The jury attributed these shots to CWP demonstrators and, most significantly, considered them to be the first "hostile" shots fired, agreeing with the defense's arguments that the first two shots from Klan weapons were directed into the air.

At the time the FBI report said shots 3 and 4 were fired, the videotapes show the stick fight breaking up and demonstrators can be seen dragging a person to the front of the Channel 12 news car. That person is Frankie Powell, who was eight months pregnant at the time. Don Pelles, one of the demonstrators, said, "I thought she was dying. She was bleeding severely from head wounds and had been hit in the back of her legs. All we could do was to try to get her under the car because they were still shooting. I was wounded in the legs and Tom Clark was wounded in the head as we were trying to get Frankie to safety."

Birdshot, not pistol bullets, caused Powell's, Clark's and Pelles's wounds. And only one person was seen with a shotgun in firing position at that time: Johnny Pridmore, Exalted Cyclops of the Lincoln County Klan. Pridmore claimed his gun jammed and he never fired a shot. The refusal of CWP survivors to testify at the trial may have made a crucial difference in this aspect of the case. At least the jurors might have questioned whether the "mystery" shots came from the CWP if they had heard testimony from Powell and Pelles, which could be substantiated by the videotapes and the birdshot taken by doctors from their wounds.

It should also be pointed out that the sound analysis used by the FBI and uncontested by the prosecution is far from infallible. Professor Mark Weiss, who worked with the firm of Bolt, Barreneck & Newman which



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developed the sound analysis methodology in work on the Kent State killings and Kennedy assassination, says it is possible for two experts to take the same evidence and reach different conclusions because more than one type of analysis can be used. It is an experimental technique, not a rigid science. The Greensboro trial, to his knowledge, was the first time the FBI had attempted to use the methodology. The basic approach depends on measuring distances of sound waves as they bounce off objects; the more movement of objects, weapons, and microphones, the more difficult it becomes to pinpoint the number and originating source of gunshots. When we described the scene in Greensboro, including the number of shots fired within a short space of time, Weiss exclaimed, "You'd have one hell of a time trying to isolate one train of echoes from another because of their overlap." The FBI is confident its analysis is correct, but even its experts cannot explain why nine spent shell casings from Jack Fowler's AR-180 were found on the street when the analysis says the weapon only fired four shots.

The four defendants who were identified as firing weapons testified at length in the trial, but most court reporters were astonished that the jury chose to believe their claims of self-defense. Defendant Wayne Wood, for example, claimed he was shooting into the air to scare demonstrators, but the FBI analysis showed that his first shots wounded people hiding under a car.

The final witness for the defense was "surprise" witness Rexford Stephenson, who worked with Jim Waller at Greensboro's municipal waste treatment plant. Six days after the killings, a story in the *Greensboro Record* quoted an unidentified co-worker of Waller's as saying Waller told him the CWP "was looking for a martyr and national news cover-

age" and that the group had "something" planned which "was likely to give them both."

Those words were hauntingly similar to the words used by jury foreman Octavio Manduley when asked during jury selection what he knew about the CWP: "They need publicity and a martyr."

On October 13, 1980, Stephenson dropped his shield of anonymity and

REPEAT PERFORMANCE

It is difficult to measure the devastating consequences of the permissive attitude toward racist organizations which resulted from the actions of Greensboro police, public officials, newspapers and prosecutors. Perhaps one news item will suffice:

"Twenty robed Klansmen mobbed the Lincolnton, North Carolina, jail on March 9, 1981, and demanded that a black suspect charged with raping a white woman be released to them. One of the leaders, Jerry Paul Smith, was recently acquitted of murder charges in Greensboro. . . . Ernest Smith, the black man charged with the rape, had been relocated and his court-appointed attorneys are considering asking that the trial be moved from Lincoln County."

took the witness stand for the defense. A two-term Vietnam War veteran and avowed anti-communist, he testified that during a conversation about the China Grove confrontation, he warned Waller that someone could get hurt or killed. "We are prepared for violence," Waller responded. And when warned again that someone might get killed, Stephenson said Waller told him, "That's what we need, a martyr."

Under further questioning, Stephenson described Waller as "a dangerous

and violent man . . . capable of using a gun against those who disagreed with his views." (Other co-workers interviewed for the original news story said Waller was "quiet, gentle, a good worker.")

The circle was now complete: from foreman to final witness, the prevailing opinion — barely challenged by the prosecutors — held that the slain protesters had called for, and were thus responsible for, their own deaths. The jury deliberated for 10 days, and then announced that all six defendants were found not guilty of the first-degree murder charge. Shortly after the verdict, foreman Manduley characterized the four men and one woman killed on November 3 as "despicable." Said defense attorney Robert Cahoon, "The defendants were very patriotically depicted while the victims were very subversively depicted. That had to make a difference."

The stereotypes of the victims and defendants were as much a part of the evidence as the FBI analysis. By refusing to discuss the ideologies which brought the groups to the corner of Everitt and Carver on November 3, and perhaps more importantly, by refusing to discuss their own biases regarding the victims and defendants, the jurors deliberated in a climate of ignorance and prejudice. And by refusing to explore the role of police and federal agents in planning the Klan/Nazi caravan, the prosecution preserved the defense claims that the CWP provoked the confrontation and that the defendants acted only in self-defense.

In such an atmosphere, a Greensboro jury on November 17, 1980, absolved a group of "patriots" of responsibility for eliminating the lives of five human beings. □

This report was written by Liz Wheaton with the assistance of other staff members of the Institute for Southern Studies.

There's Good Rockin' Tonight

by Peter Guralnick



If you frequent the honky-tonks, you may very well have run across the music of Sleepy LaBeef. For a number of years he worked the area around Atlanta. Before that it was Port Huron or Kansas or the circuit of NCO service clubs where there is \$300 or \$400 to be made for a night's work and a string of bookings to be lined up — if you go over. When I first met him in the spring of 1977, Sleepy LaBeef had been working Alan's Fifth Wheel Lounge, about an hour north of Boston, for nearly three months on a pretty regular basis. There he had been laying down original rockabilly sounds six nights a week, five sets a night, to an appreciative audience of truckers, regulars, factory workers off the late-night shift and just plain Sleepy LaBeef fans who may have caught him on talk-master Larry Glick's two a.m. phone-in broadcasts from the truckstops.

How in the world, the question naturally arises, did a six-foot-six, 265-pound, basso profundo, first generation rockabilly from Arkansas ever end up at Alan's Truckstop in the northeast backwater of Amesbury, Massachusetts? In the case of Sleepy LaBeef the answer lies in a series of mischances and coincidences. He had spent much of the previous summer fixing up a 1948 Greyhound

Silverado, which was intended to carry him on his nonstop touring of 39 states. That bus caught fire and burned up on the Maine Turnpike on New Year's Day, 1977. Sleepy's clothes, tapes and record collection were all destroyed, and the bus was left a charred shell. He played his gig that night at Alan's anyway, and when the opportunity arose, he welcomed the chance to settle in. The result was that for the next year he would use Alan's as his base, booking out of the club, living in the motel unit behind it, working intermittently at restoring the bus for resale and establishing Sleepy LaBeef as New England's number one name in rockabilly and country music.

"Call them honky tonks if you want," wrote *Country Music* editor Michael Bane, "but for the Saturday-night regulars, that raunchy, neon-lit bar with its cheap beer and even cheaper solace is called *home*. The honky tonk is as American as apple pie . . . a working-class pit stop between today and tomorrow; a buffer zone between exhaustion and despair; soft lights and hard country music — a good honky tonk is all that and more."

Finding Alan's (and Sleepy LaBeef) was for me like finding the bluebird of happiness on my back

door. I had traveled thousands of miles to hear music like this, played in just this kind of setting, and as Sleepy ran through what must have been a typical set (featuring everything from Muddy Waters to Webb Pierce to Elvis Presley and Little Richard), I turned to my friend, whose expression mirrored my own, and we both silently asked the question: could this really be for real?

Over the next few months we would come back again and again. For a while my friend joined Sleepy's band, and we became friendly with Cliff and June, who owned the Truckstop complex, until the Fifth Wheel was closed down for non-payment of taxes. We heard Sleepy run through a good portion of the 6,000 songs he estimates to be in his repertoire. ("I don't know why, I used to just listen to a song twice on the jukebox, and I'd have it. I don't like to boast, but I honestly think you could put me in a room trading songs with just about anyone you could name, and I could just keep going longer than they could.")

In the space of one short evening with Sleepy LaBeef you can get a short course in the history of rock'n'roll, from Jimmie Rodgers to Jimmy Reed, encompassing Woody Guthrie, Chuck Berry, Joe Tex and Willie Nelson as well. A multi-instrumentalist who plays the guitar with all the gut-wrenching fervor of a blues artist like Albert King, Sleepy is possessed not only of an encyclopedic knowledge of the field but of the flair, originality and conviction to put the music across as well.

Every night at the Fifth Wheel was a little bit different, and Sleepy always adapted to the occasion. On weekends he wore his wide-lapeled, white western tuxedo with ruffled shirt. If there

was a trucker in the audience who could pick — or even one who just thought he could pick — Sleepy gave him his moment on stage. For birthdays the band responded appropriately. If the crowd was dead, it would be mainly sad songs, fast waltzes and mournful country standards. For Monday night Fifties Night — when the waitresses exchanged their black cowboy pantsuits and hats for saddle shoes, rolled-up jeans and sloppy shirttails — Sleepy would take on a more imposing look in T-shirt and black leather jacket, his lip curled, hair slicked back, surveying the room good-humoredly from under hooded '50s eyes.

The one constant was that Sleepy always put on a good show. The crowd might change, Sleepy's mood certainly varied, the band underwent radical changes of personnel (in the years I have known Sleepy, only the drummer, Clete Chapman, who signed on in Iowa in 1974, has stayed for any length of time), but the feeling remained the same. He would go through phases when he would play the fiddle (actually Sleepy saws on the fiddle, which is a recently acquired enthusiasm) almost every night for two weeks running; then he might not pick it up again for months. The same with piano, which he attacks with the same rough enthusiasm, if not the skill, of Jerry Lee Lewis. Some nights he might inject a heavy dose of blues; other nights it was nonstop sets of rockabilly free association in which Sleepy would shift from song to song — often after no more than a verse — with no sign to the band other than his own booming vocals and a guitar, and with a decided taste for obscurity, which could make a Jerry Lee Lewis medley out of songs no one would ever think to

Below, an early portrait of Sleepy; at right, with his sister



associate with Jerry Lee, but done up in the Killer's inimitable style.

All this was great fun, but it was nothing compared to the thrill of the rare occasions when Sleepy would really catch fire. This would generally come on older, gospel-influenced material like "Worried Man Blues" or Roy Hamilton's "You Can Have Her," but there was no predicting when it would happen or if it would happen at all. When it did, Sleepy would almost go into a trance, swinging and swaying in an irresistible, rock-steady groove, going on like Howlin' Wolf for 10 or 15 minutes at a time, extemporizing verses, picking lyrics out of the air, savoring the moment until he had extracted every last ounce of feeling from it, and then shrugging offhandedly as he went back to his table. "You don't," he apologized, "want to get too wild."

He was born Thomas Paulsley LaBeff (the family name was originally LaBoeuf) on July 20, 1935, out in the country from Smackover, Arkansas, where he grew up on a 40-acre farm which his father eventually sold for \$300 to go work in the oil fields. He remembers his mother singing "Corinna, Corinna" as she walked behind the plow. Sleepy was the tenth of 10 children and was nicknamed at an early age, on his first day of school, as a matter of fact, because — here he pulls out a frayed picture showing a six-year-old with heavy-lidded eyes almost glued shut. He started listening to Groover Boy, a disc jockey on station KWK out of Shreveport, who played a mixture of hillbilly boogie and rhythm'n'blues and, according to Sleepy, developed the Bo Diddley beat years before it actually became popular, with his radio theme song, "Ham-bone." He listened to Lefty Frizzell, too, who was broadcasting on KELD in nearby El Dorado in the early '40s (when Lefty himself was only 13 or 14), injecting a lot of blues into his performance.

Unlike most rockabilly singers, though, Sleepy does not cite black music per se as being the pre-eminent influence on his work. He feels strongly, however, that rock'n'roll, black and white, came primarily from the church, and indeed that is both where he started out singing (United Pentecostal) and where he lists his strongest influences: Vernie McGee, a guitar-playing deacon, and the Reverend E.F. Cannon, pastor of his Norphlet church. He also cites Martha Carson, whose "Satisfied" became a white gospel standard, but above all it was Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the great black gospel singer (she originated "This Train," among other classic gospel numbers), who he feels provided the bedrock for rock'n'roll. Jerry Lee Lewis, he is positive, derived his piano style from Sister Rosetta's blithely bluesy guitar work, particularly

on the highly influential "Strange Things Happening in This World" (cited also by Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins as one of their most vivid musical memories). As far as Elvis goes, Sleepy's first reaction when he heard "Blue Moon of Kentucky" on the radio was the shock of recognition. "Cause I knew exactly where he was coming from. I thought, this is really something. Here's somebody singing just like we have in church for years. Only he was putting that gospel feeling to blues lyrics — that was what was so different about him."

Sleepy quit school in the eighth grade over a misunderstanding with the teacher, though "I never did give up on learning." At 14 he traded a .22 rifle to his brother-in-law for a guitar and "liked it so well I was playing in church within two weeks." Then at 18 he left Arkansas ("Around the time it started to happen in Memphis I headed west, I guess") and ended up in Houston, where he went to work as a land surveyor, a job he has always liked because "it gives you a chance to meditate on lots of things." He also started singing with his first wife, Louise, in various gospel duos and quartets around town, mostly on "family-type shows" like the Houston Jamboree. That was where he met Elvis for the first time and where his wife made the mistake of lending Elvis her guitar after he had broken the strings on his own. "After he did the show he came back and said thank you, real nice and polite, but the front of the guitar was just about defaced, and it was all scratched up and every string was broke — we sold it for, I think, \$90, and that was an \$800 guitar."

It was shortly thereafter that Sleepy switched over to secular music and started making records for Pappy Daily — one of the most colorful of a colorful line of Texas entrepreneurs and George Jones's discoverer — both under his own name and under various pseudonyms, for border stations like XERF in Del Rio. The records for XERF were cover versions of popular hits of the day, sold by mail order and made to look and sound as close to the original as possible. According to Sleepy, he did everything from the Everly Brothers to Fats Domino, though it seems difficult to imagine him fooling anyone with that booming bass voice today. The records he made under his own name or variants thereof — as Tommy LaBeff, for example, on Wayside — included frenzied classics like "Tore Up" and a "Baby, Let's Play House" that came complete with Presley-like hiccuping vocals. He recorded for Gulf, Finn, Picture, Crescent — all with little or no commercial success. Sleepy established a name for himself around town, investing in a couple of clubs and a hamburger drive-in and playing the rough Channel joints seven nights a week ("We didn't wear helmets back then, but it might have helped if we

had"). Then one night, while he was waiting to go on at the Wayside Lounge, "The waitress said, 'There's a telephone call from Columbia Records in Nashville.' I went to the phone and said hello. A man said, 'Sleepy? This is Don Law. I want to sign you up.' He sounded serious. It was hard to believe."

Sleepy signed with Columbia in 1964, moving to Nashville shortly thereafter. In 1968 he signed with Shelby Singleton, whom he had met originally on the Louisiana Hayride a decade before and who acquired the Sun catalogue from Sam Phillips the following year. With the exception of the six months he spent playing the role of a swamp monster in the movie *The Exotic Ones*, Sleepy has been on the road ever since.

It's very likely that Sleepy has never made any money from any of his records. Except for "Blackland Farmer," a country chartmaker in 1971, he's never had anything resembling a hit ("I believe anyone could have had a hit with 'Blackland.' I didn't do anything special with it"), and certainly Shelby Singleton has never been lavish with his financial support. Without any promotional money behind him or income from writing or record royalties, Sleepy's whole living is on the road. Still, he manages to make the best of it in his own imperturbable way. About six months after his bus burned up, Sleepy acquired an almost-new Banner motor home through a helpful automobile dealer — just one in his legion of New England acquaintances — and between that, a little Vega and a high-backed trailer to bring up the rear, Sleepy's entourage (his wife Linda, a three-piece band and occasionally his son Harmony Paul) manage to make it from gig to gig in comfort, if not in style.

Everywhere Sleepy goes, he has what he calls his "following." It changes from venue to venue,

but it takes in all ages and all walks of life, from police officers or wealthy business people to college students, truckers, Swedish rockabilly fanatics and Navy personnel from the nuclear submarine base in Groton, Connecticut. Throughout the confusion of booking changes, personnel changes, automotive breakdowns and personality clashes that are bound to crop up, Sleepy remains absolutely unflappable ("You know me, I don't ever get too excited") and somewhat inscrutable besides. You can't really direct Sleepy, even towards something unquestionably to his advantage, if Sleepy doesn't want to do it himself. Whatever he does do, though, proceeds from the warmest of impulses, and Sleepy always proves the most gracious of hosts. The only qualities which he will not tolerate are drug use among band members (this has cost him a number of musicians, needless to say), bad language, dirty jokes and racial slurs. In this, as everything else, though, Sleepy can be so oblique in his disapproval that the offending party is sometimes not sure just what he or she has done — but will do almost anything to make sure it



Left, Sleepy in Houston, Texas, ca. 1957. Right, a publicity photo.





Sleepy doing his bit in "The Exotic Ones."

doesn't happen again.

When the Truckstop was closed down by the state tax commission in October of 1977, it seemed as if an era had come to an end. Sleepy's life didn't change much. June was still booking him, and he and Linda continued to live at the motel — which had also been closed down — so we would get together socially, to listen to tapes or just to talk, fairly often. Sleepy still had his books; he had his collection of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, gospel singer Claude Ely and, of course, his rare rockabilly records; he studied the Bible assiduously as always; and whenever he got in a tape of a new religious "debate" (a fundamentalist dialogue between two preachers like the Florida evangelist, the Reverend R.E. Bayer, and an Ohio preacher known as the Walking Bible), he would eagerly play us portions.

For a while, though, it seemed he was oddly dispirited — subdued, preoccupied; some nights he seemed almost distracted on the bandstand of whatever club he was playing. We speculated that perhaps Sleepy's religious convictions were leading him to question the nature of his vocation. A long-time teetotaler, he had recently quit smoking, too (Sleepy, a man of prodigious appetites, had been smoking five packs a day for most of his adult life), and maybe he was now giving serious consideration to his stated intention of taking up preaching some day. ("I'm not a hypocrite. I don't live it but I know it's the best thing.") He went out of town for a couple of months on tour, and when he came back he was his old self again, singing and playing with all his old vigor and enthusiasm.

After that, surprisingly, things started picking up for Sleepy. He played New York and was invited to appear at England's prestigious country festival at Wembley. More stories appeared on him; he was a runner-up for *Country Music's* Silver Bullet Award for promising newcomers (47-year-old Jack Clement won the award); even

Shelby Singleton began to wonder if Sleepy's time hadn't finally come, though as far as Shelby was concerned, such thoughts were speculative only and did not necessitate any kind of rash financial commitment.

Sleepy, of course, remained calm in the midst of the storm, although "storm" might be a misnomer for what could still turn out to be just another trade wind. Talking with Sleepy is always an education in historical perspective anyway, and his conversation is studded with references to the great and near-great, the almost weres and never wases — Charlie Rich at Houston's Sidewalk Cafe, Elvis at the Magnolia Garden, Willie Nelson clerking at a record store in Pasadena, Texas, Johnny Spain and Frenchy D., Rocky Bill Ford, Bobby Lee Trammell and Charlie Busby, the guitarist from Red Shoot, Louisiana, who taught James Burton how to play. "I think if they'd gotten the breaks," says Sleepy ruminatively of these last, "they could have been just as great as the ones who made it."

In many ways Sleepy is as great a performer as I've ever seen, and when you see the way that people respond to his music, you wonder why, and if, rockabilly ever went away. Sleepy has a theory on that — "I didn't ever see it change. The people were still digging it, and the musicians liked it, but the big companies figured it was a fad and they took it away from the kids" — but in any case it is no exercise in nostalgia for the people who have come out to see Sleepy LaBeef at Alan's Fifth Wheel or the Hillbilly Ranch; they couldn't care less that it was John Lee Hooker who originated "In the Mood" or Scotty Moore whose licks Sleepy duplicates note for note on "Milkcow Blues Boogie." Sleepy's records may not do him justice, but Sleepy knows how good he can be.

"I never sold out," he can say with pride. "Nobody owns me. I know I'm good. I wouldn't be honest if I didn't tell you that. I've been around long enough to know that if I get the breaks I can still make it — Charlie Rich was older than me when he finally did. And if I don't get the breaks — well, when I started in this business I didn't even know you could make a dime out of it. And I think I'd still be doing it tomorrow, if there wasn't any money in it at all. That's just the way I feel."□

Peter Guralnick is the author of Feel Like Going Home, a contemporary classic in the popular music field, and has written for publications ranging from The New York Times Magazine to Country Music. This article is excerpted from Lost Highway. Copyright ©1979 by Peter Guralnick. Reprinted by permission of David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc.



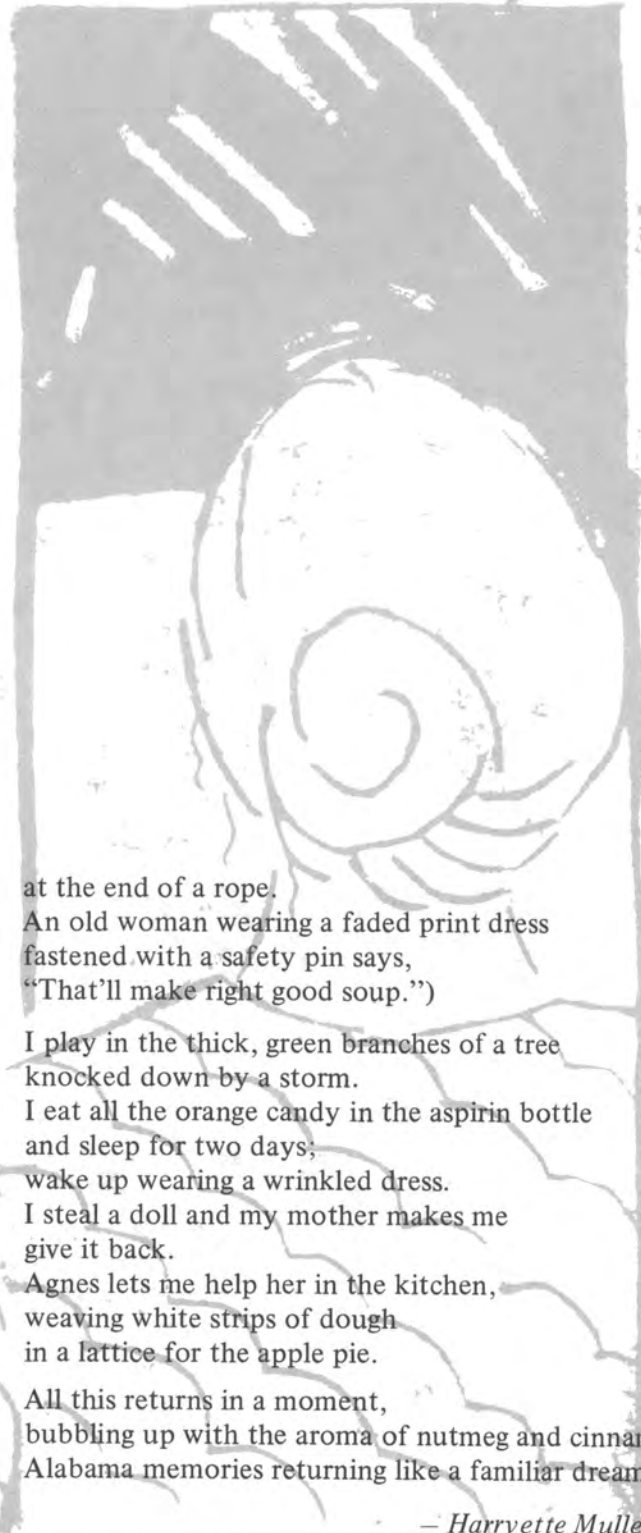
Alabama Memories

Houses with peeling skins of gray paint,
with swaybacked wooden porches
furnished with dingy sofas
and wringer washers perched on
old fashioned legs.

Houses with dirt yards and muddy chickens.

Houses with no indoor plumbing,
with outhouses leaning at tipsy angles.
(I remember being embarrassed to pee
in a red-rimmed white enameled chamberpot
on a rainy night with all the old folk
looking at me.)

Sounds of buzzing flies
and screen doors banging in the summertime.
Dirt roads where the dust flies up in your face
and a grassy field where a mule chews
where a mule chews slow and thoughtful-like.
(Some men have caught a huge turtle
and are dragging it down the street



at the end of a rope.
An old woman wearing a faded print dress
fastened with a safety pin says,
“That’ll make right good soup.”)

I play in the thick, green branches of a tree
knocked down by a storm.
I eat all the orange candy in the aspirin bottle
and sleep for two days;
wake up wearing a wrinkled dress.
I steal a doll and my mother makes me
give it back.

Agnes lets me help her in the kitchen,
weaving white strips of dough
in a lattice for the apple pie.

All this returns in a moment,
bubbling up with the aroma of nutmeg and cinnamon
Alabama memories returning like a familiar dream.

— *Harryette Mullen*

SOUTHERN STEEL

Mike Williams and Mitch Menzer

The history of Birmingham and its working people is unique to the South. Termed the "Magic City" for its miraculous growth in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, Birmingham underwent industrial development that sharply deviated from the South's agrarian norm. Yet its racial attitudes, its treatment of laborers and its corporate practices were distinctly Southern. Despite the injustice and suffering endured by the working people who came to Birmingham, the rise of heavy industry where once only pine trees and corn fields stood is in many ways remarkable – and is worth recalling today, as the iron mines are sealed shut, the rolling mills quieted and most of the blast furnaces shut down.



A key turning point in the Birmingham District's development was the advent of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company (TCI) which, in the 1880s and 1890s, successfully merged several coal and iron companies. At three times the size of its largest competitor, the Sloss Iron Company, TCI produced half the District's coal and iron. In 1907, United States Steel acquired TCI through a complicated series of stock manipulations that still raises suspicions of major antitrust violations. With this purchase, U.S. Steel eliminated its Southern competition and doubled its already vast supplies of raw materials. Pictured here are the owners and management of the Woodward Iron Company, a TCI competitor, at the groundbreaking of a new mine, c. 1910.

Photo courtesy University of Alabama



Many of the early skilled workers in Birmingham were immigrants – primarily from Great Britain, France and Germany – who were attracted by jobs for men who knew how to build furnaces, make iron and mine coal. Later they were joined by Poles, Prussians and Italians who, around the turn of the century, assumed somewhat less skilled jobs. Puddlers, such as those pictured here in Gate City, Alabama, in 1895, stirred molten iron in 500- to 600-pound lots. Skilled workers naturally led the way in wages. The few furnace masters received \$4 to \$5 per day, and some got bonuses for iron produced over a quota. Common laborers around the furnaces, including iron carriers, were paid \$1.20 per day in 1900. Iron ore miners, the vast majority of whom were black, were paid about the same as common laborers, about \$1 per day. As in Northern industries, workers put in 12-hour shifts, six days a week, with furnace men working a double shift of 24 straight hours every other Sunday. Wages in Birmingham, however, were 25 to 40 percent lower than in the North.

Photo courtesy Mrs. Richard Hassinger



Counties in the Birmingham District leased their convicts to coal mines, and a fee system developed by many county sheriffs made justice impossible. Under this system, the sheriff derived his salary from fees charged to the prisoner upon his conviction. If convicted and unable to pay his fines, sheriff's fees and court costs, the prisoner was sentenced to hard labor to pay off the charges. Obviously, this system provided a powerful incentive to the sheriff and his deputies to arrest and convict men for any possible offenses. Consequently, stockades at coal mines and gangs of shackled prisoners working on Birmingham roads were a common sight. *Photo courtesy Birmingham Public Library*

Pratt Consolidated Coal Company's Banner Shift prison epitomized the abuses of the convict lease system. Half the prisoners worked from five a.m. to eight p.m. in seams of coal 36 inches high. In 1911, 123 black convicts died in an explosion; 30 percent of those killed were serving sentences of 20 days or less. Others, burned or maimed in the disaster, received no medical attention. The usual punishment at Banner was a severe whipping; however, the "dog house," a standing coffin-like box sealed except for a small hole at nose level was also used. Standing in the hot summer sun or the cold of winter, 400 prisoners spent 4,000 hours in this box in 1925. The 360 convicts at TCF's Pratt No. 12 prison slept in six sleeping rooms, one of which is pictured here.

Photo courtesy U.S. Steel Corp.





The leasing of state prisoners to private individuals began in 1846 when Alabama leased convicts to plantation owners in order to avoid the expense of operating a penitentiary. By 1872, railroads and coal mines in the District dominated the bidding for the prisoners. Coal mines paid \$16 a month, plus room and board, in 1898 for the unrestrained use of convict labor. Over 80 percent of the prisoners were indigent, mostly illiterate, blacks charged with vagrancy or other Jim Crow-related offenses. As the price for convict labor climbed, these leases proved highly profitable to the state treasury. Between 1922 and 1926, 1,150 convict miners produced 1.5 million tons of coal at an estimated market value of \$3.5 million. Despite scandals involving bribery, embezzlement and mistreatment of prisoners, the system was not abolished until 1926.

Photo courtesy Birmingham Public Library



Approximately 60 percent of Birmingham's work force was black. Blacks dominated iron ore mining, and about 65 percent of the District's coal miners were black. Whether facing the intense heat and toxic gases of the coke ovens, loading coal and iron by hand, or digging foundations with picks and shovels, blacks were relegated to the bottom of the industrial hierarchy. Of all the jobs held by blacks, iron carriers had perhaps the most physically demanding and crucial job. After the iron cooled in long sand molds, it was broken apart and loaded into railroad cars. Breaking the separate molds with sledge hammers and crowbars, the iron carriers had to work quickly so the sand bed could be prepared for the next cast. In the Jim Crow days of early Birmingham's industry, blacks rarely operated machinery and almost never filled supervisory positions. This group of black laborers stands at an iron ore outcrop owned by the TCI Company.

Photo courtesy Samford University

Coal mining was Birmingham's most dangerous occupation. Roughly half of all mining fatalities were caused by roof cave-ins. In this photo of TCI's Pratt No. 3, note the absence of any roof supports as well as the open flame miner's lamp. Even as late as the 1950s, systems for supporting the roof consisted of nothing more than wooden posts, and often these were not used. One-third of all deaths resulted from sudden explosions of methane gas in mine shafts. Birmingham coal companies did little to prevent explosions; forced ventilation of the mines was minimal, and miners wore lamps with open flames as late as the 1930s.

Photo courtesy U.S. Steel Corp.





From the time of Birmingham's earliest industries in the 1870s, companies built tracts of houses which they rented to their workers. Along with these houses came a commissary where the company sold mining supplies, including dynamite, fuses, oil and tools, as well as food and household items. Company towns, originally intended to attract workers to remote sites, proved highly profitable; firms such as the Sloss Iron Company maintained large villages for workers adjacent to the furnaces near downtown Birmingham. During the Panic of 1893, as much as 40 percent of TCI's profits came from house rents and store sales. TCI's subsequent refusal to lower rents and prices angered many coal miners and helped precipitate the strike of 1894. Even during the relatively untroubled year of 1899, TCI's mercantile sales of \$2 million provided one-third of the company's profits. The names of many of these company towns — Fairfield, Ensley, Muscoda, Ishkooda — still appear on Birmingham area maps. Here a TCI sheriff stands guard on Red Mountain, overlooking a company town in the 1930s — perhaps Muscoda or Ishkooda.

Photo courtesy FSA

In 1894, over 80 percent of the non-convict miners formed the United Mineworkers of Alabama and struck rather than accept a 30 percent wage cut. The companies responded by stepping up production at convict mines; evicting the miners from company-owned houses; and importing strikebreakers, the vast majority of whom were black. After four months of guerrilla war, the strike was defeated. Most remarkable about the strike, however, was that blacks and whites, despite company efforts to divide them, remained cohesive and fought as they worked — side by side. Another organizing attempt was not made until 1908, when a strike was again defeated, this time when operators successfully aroused public sentiment against the strike by exploiting racial prejudice. Citing the danger of "8 or 9 thousand niggers idle in the State of Alabama," Governor B.B. Comer ordered state troops to cut down the tents in which the striking miners were camped. The mines were not unionized until 1934, when the UMWA, riding a crest of pro-union fervor, organized almost every coal miner in the Birmingham District, while the Steel Workers Organizing Committee organized most of the steel works.

Photo courtesy U.S. Steel Corp.



Mike Williams and Mitch Menzer are graduates of Amherst College in American Studies. Williams, a native of Tuscaloosa, is currently a student at the University of Alabama. Their research into the history of Birmingham was supported by a Youthgrant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The photographs shown here are part of "Images of Work," a larger exhibit of historic photographs of industrial Birmingham which will be shown in and around Birmingham.

Prisoners' Rights: MOTHERS AND BABIES

In 1979 Terry Moore was serving 15 years in a Florida prison for the crime of stealing five dollars. She was also waging a determined struggle to keep her newly born baby with her in the prison. In the process, she uncovered a neglected Florida statute which allowed her to keep her baby. Her case began a prolonged fight over the rights of mothers in Florida prisons to keep their babies, pitting women in the prisons, their attorneys and a prison reform coalition against the state Department of Corrections, the state legislature and Governor Bob Graham.

Moore's efforts to hold onto her child indirectly received widespread public attention when "60 Minutes" profiled her in a 1979 report on the disparate sentencing practices employed by American courts. She was paroled shortly thereafter, and the Florida legislature set out to abolish the statute by which she had been able to keep her baby in the prison. However, Governor Graham intervened and helped pass a bill which actually strengthened the original statute by better defining the decision-making process and removing an 18-month limit on how long the mothers could keep their babies at their sides.

The fight for the basic right of the mothers to bring up their own children has been a difficult and continuing one, with the prison administration openly hostile throughout. For example, officials recently attempted to keep Josephine Baxter, a prisoner at Broward Correctional Institution (which has no nursery), and her newborn baby in a confinement cell in the prison's psychotic wing. Baxter and her attorneys went to court and she was transferred to

the Florida Correctional Institution for Women (FCI), but only after an additional week's delay: prison officials chose to wait for the court order to arrive in the mail, although the judge's office and the attorneys had already notified them of the order verbally.

Moreover, not every court fight is a success — particularly for black women. In 1979 Mattie Henry was the first black woman to go to court to

keep her baby with her in the prison. Henry and many others believe that Judge Wallace Sturgis's decision against her was prompted by racism. In 1980 she wrote, "In the two years I've been here, I have not seen a black mother who bore a child here at FCI who was allowed to experience the joy and closeness of motherhood. However, I have seen two mothers who happened to be white and who was allowed to

Photo by Judy Watson





keep their babies. Why is it more favorable for a white mother to be granted the joy of motherhood, and a black mother to be denied the joy of motherhood?" There has been more success since then, and now about half of the mothers who have been allowed to keep their babies are black. However, of four mothers turned down, three are black.

As of June 30, 1981, nine mothers were keeping 10 babies (a set of twins was born in April) with them in a nursery at FCI under the 1979 statute. The nursery at FCI is in a cottage outside the prison walls. Each mother and child have their own room, and they share a large living room with a kitchen and television. Originally designed to house eight mothers with babies, the cottage was modified to serve as many as 10. If pending court cases are successful, there could soon be 11 mothers and 12 babies at FCI.

Problems at the nursery have arisen, primarily from the administration's refusal to address the needs bound to arise when this many families live together 24 hours a day. Although there is a strong need for a counselor to work with the mothers, offers of assistance from churches and organizations in the surrounding communities have met with resistance. A day-care program could be implemented at no cost to the state and would allow the women to participate in job training and educational programs at the prison, but prison officials seem more intent on watching the nursery fail.

Despite the hardships, the nursery program does work, and in a time when the Florida Department of Corrections was under constant attack for its inhumane practices and improprieties, the nursery brought in the only positive publicity. Nevertheless, the

Florida legislature, led by Representative Chris Meffert, determined to repeal the statute in 1981. A coalition forged by the Florida Clearinghouse on Criminal Justice which included the Florida Catholic Conference, the National Association of Social Workers, Florida IMPACT, NOW and several church groups refuted all of the opposition's allegations. They even had to testify at one hearing that the importance of the mother/infant bond overrode concerns about the child's not being able to visit a supermarket.

But logic does not always prevail. The bills moved through committee hearings "like they were greased," as one lobbyist stated, and passed overwhelmingly in both the house and the senate. A promised veto by Governor Graham, who had written the original version of the strong 1979 statute, never materialized. Instead, the governor proposed a compromise which, by entirely ignoring the importance of the bond between a mother and an infant and allowing mothers to keep their children in only a few unusual circumstances, would have been worse than having no statute at all. In fact, the only victory the coalition could muster in the 1981 legislature was to stop the governor's compromise; Florida now has no statute on the books pertaining to pregnant women in prison and the placement of their newborn babies.

Coalition members are continuing work on three fronts. First, they are

preparing for a move by the state to try to remove the babies *already* in the nursery, a move which would be patently illegal since all the babies are there under court order. Second, they are ready to file two cases for women who were pregnant and in prison at the time the statute was changed. Third, they will soon initiate a suit for a woman sentenced after the repeal of the statute which will argue for the right of a parent to her or his child.

The coalition needs assistance. Not only is technical help needed on all the custody cases — from lawyers, pediatricians, child psychologists and so forth — but money is also necessary. All the lawyers work for free, but they cannot also pay the cost of expert testimony. Moreover, funds are needed for the women in the nursery who are often short of baby clothes and bottles. There is a critical shortage of baby food. Babies who are eating baby food (as opposed to still being on formula or breast-fed) only have turkey and rice to eat; kids who are older and on junior food only have creamed corn and carrots.

For more information or to send assistance, contact the Florida Clearinghouse on Criminal Justice, 222 West Pensacola Street, Tallahassee, FL 32301. □

Our thanks to the Clearinghouse for providing the information on which this article is based.

MISSISSIPPI SPIES

Ken Lawrence interviewed by Ashaki M. Binta

Anyone involved in organizing that challenges the established order may find the battle getting tougher as those in power feel more and more threatened. The re-emergence of right-wing politicians, surveillance agencies and terrorist activities by racist organizations is a new incentive for progressive activists to study past methods of infiltration and disruption by official and quasi-official power.

The following interview with Ken Lawrence highlights the role of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission and offers important lessons for understanding how state agencies act to thwart the Movement, including the use of informants, smear tactics, internal frictions among civil-rights groups, the press and red-baiting. Documents featured here focus on the Commission's activities to counteract the "Freedom Summer" organizing campaign of 1964, the development of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, and the Meredith March Against Fear in June, 1966, during which the concept of black power first became popular. (For more on these events, see Southern Exposure's "Stayed on Freedom," Vol. IX, No. 1.)

The methods and effectiveness of the Sovereignty Commission parallel the FBI's now infamous Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO). But the Sovereignty Commission began its program against the black movement several years before J. Edgar Hoover instructed his agents to "prevent the rise of a messiah" who might lead a black revolution.

Ken Lawrence has been researching the activities of the intelligence agencies in Mississippi and elsewhere for 10 years, and is a plaintiff in a class-action lawsuit against the Sovereignty Commission and other agencies that conduct surveillance of political activ-

ity, filed in federal court by the ACLU of Mississippi. He is now director of the Jackson-based Anti-Repression Resource Team, and was formerly on the staffs of the Southern Conference Educational Fund and the American Friends Service Committee. He was interviewed for Southern Exposure by Ashaki M. Binta, a Mississippi-based free-lance journalist, activist and former labor organizer.

The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission was created by a 1956 act of the legislature which states that, "It shall be the duty of the commission to do and perform any and all acts and things necessary and proper to protect the sovereignty of the State of Mississippi, and her sister states, from encroachment thereon by the Federal Government or any branch, department or agency thereof; and to resist the usurpation of the rights and

powers reserved to this state and our sister states by the Federal Government or any branch, department or agency thereof."

Naturally that meant, in those days, denial of political rights to black people — one Jackson newspaper called it "counter-intelligence activities against forces seeking racial integration." The Commission was given subpoena power and the authority to enforce its subpoena with the threat of fines or imprisonment. In that sense it was a state witch-hunting agency modeled after the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee; nearly every other Southern state followed the Mississippi model. But the Commission was much more than that.

In the early '60s, it was a propaganda agency. The Sovereignty Commission produced a film called "A



Demonstrators on the 1966 Meredith March Against Fear are harassed by police as they set up their tent for the night. Stokely Carmichael is the person about to be clubbed.

Message from Mississippi." Erle Johnston, Governor Ross Barnett's top campaign aide and editor of the *Scott County Times*, joined the Sovereignty Commission staff as a public relations officer, even though he had condemned it editorially at the time it was created. He had the film made in his home town of Forest. Its message was that Forest was an ideal, racially segregated community, and that both black and white people loved "the Mississippi way of life."

The Sovereignty Commission sent that film up North, and later another one, "Oxford, U.S.A.," which blamed "outside agitators" for the violence that ensued when Governor Barnett, backed by armed white vigilantes, attempted to prevent James Meredith from enrolling at Ole Miss. The Sovereignty Commission also sent prominent speakers to the North to promote segregation: one was Alvin Binder, a leading Jewish attorney from Jackson. Another was Rubel Phillips, the state's leading Republican, who was later sent to prison for his part in a stock swindle. The Commission prepared speeches for its representatives and written questions and answers for the press to use.

It was also a lobbying agency, and was instrumental in establishing and funding the Coordinating Committee for Fundamental American Freedoms in Washington to act as a clearinghouse for opposition to federal civil-rights legislation. The Sovereignty Commission gave \$10,000 of its own appropriation and raised another quarter million toward this effort, including a \$50,000 direct grant from the Mississippi legislature.

The Sovereignty Commission never claimed to be impartial. Not only did it never investigate the ultra-right, it actually contributed large sums of money — \$193,500 over a four-year period — to the white Citizens Councils. Over the years a number of Citizens Council members served on the Sovereignty Commission, and one legislator who served on the Commission, Tommy A. Horne of Meridian, had been arrested in the '60s in connection with the 1964 Ku Klux Klan murders of three civil-rights workers in Neshoba County — Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner.

At its height the Sovereignty Commission claimed it had files on 250 organizations and 10,000 individuals. This information was dis-

RESTRICTED

Information received by telephone Tuesday, June 7, 1966

Last night, Rev. R. L. T. Smith, Dr. Whitney, Fannie Lou Hamer, Rev. Richmond, Rev. Ed King, and Whitley met at the Masonic Temple. The meeting had been arranged for the purpose of discussing today's election. Prior to the meeting, James Meredith was shot at Hernando, Mississippi, and the meeting included some heated discussion of the matter. Martin Luther King called Ed King from Memphis and told him that he and McKissick (National Director of CORE) were in Memphis. Martin Luther King said he was calling on all of his people that participated in the Selma march and was going to bring those people in to march in Mississippi.

All the four candidates for congressional districts allegedly left early this morning for Memphis. The march is scheduled to form in Memphis with SNCC, MFDP, CORE calling all their people to go there and congregate. Charles Evers is recruiting his Fayette group to take to Memphis.

The march will be kicked off this afternoon if they can get a representative group to start. MLK told Ed King that this would be a larger march than the Selma march and that they were using all the news media because they want to strike while the iron is hot.

Sunday is Medger Evers memorial day. A march is going to start at the Masonic Temple here in Jackson. They plan to march down Lynch Street to Terry Road, then to Pascagoula Street, then to Farish and into the Farist Street Baptist Church. The younger people who are associated with SNCC are going to agitate people en route to the march and during the march to try to get them angry. They they plan on throwing rocks and knocking out windowpanes as the march proceeds, trying to create a disturbance. They will come to the place to begin marching equipped with rocks, etc. They expect more than 5,000 people to participate in the Sunday march because they feel a group might leave the march from Memphis and come on down.

(From information received it appears there will be some secrecy surrounding the plans made in Memphis.)

RESTRICTED

Report received by telephone June 23, 1966

A secret meeting that was held in Benton began on the evening of June 22 and ended at 4:00 A. M. on June 23.

Chilly Willie who is head of the Deacons for Defense from Bogalusa, Louisiana, represented that group. Discussions as to safety were had as to the program to be conducted in Philadelphia tomorrow. A vote was taken among the group and it was decided the Deacons would go armed. Chilly Willie got mad at King for preaching nonviolence and called him an SOB. The deacons will travel to Philadelphia with guns and they will be in cars with Mississippi tags on them. They will have colored women or maybe some white women with them and the reason for this is that if they are stopped and searched for the guns they intend to pass them over to the women so that can hide them in their pocketbooks or between their legs up under their dresses. The Deacons plan on putting their people out at strategic points in the area and if any white men draw guns or use weapons or cause any act of violence the Deacons will shoot them and they will also fight them. They plan on going first to a local church in Philadelphia and have a meeting in the church and then they will march to the courthouse and King will join them on the march.

Chilly Willie said if he gets Sheriff Rainey in his eyesight, he will kill him.

Another all-out boycott, more severe than the one previously had, is planned for Canton because of the arrest of C. O. Chinn last night by the Canton police. Chinn is supposed to have shot a white man. The Negroes do not think that Chinn shot the man. They believe it was a put up job, so they are fixing to go all out and try to break the back of the community on this drive.

Originally they had planned to camp out in a Negro ball park tonight in Canton, but in view of the arrest of Chinn last night they are going to move it and camp beside a National Guard Armory in Canton and hope it will anger the police and cause them to create an incident. They want to anger the police in Canton.

If the group is prevented from having their rally on the Capitol grounds here in Jackson on Sunday, then there will be one of the biggest riots that the world has ever seen. They say Watts will be a small one compared to this one. They plan to block off the whole area surrounding the Capitol but they plan to have it on the north side apparently.

Internal documents of the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, reporting infiltration of civil-rights groups' planning sessions

June 20, 1965
Louise, Mississippi

A meeting was held this evening at the camp site of the "Meredith March" in Louise. This was a private meeting attended by only the various head representatives of the participating organizations. The press was excluded.

There was a heated argument concerning the remarks made by Martin Luther King that he did not go along with the comments being made by Stokely Carmichael and others like him, supporting a "black power" program. King had made public that he did not like the comments being made about wanting to get "white blood" and other such comments having to do with black supremacy.

Reverend Ricks, who was fired sometime ago from SCLC, is now with SNCC. He spoke along the revolutionary line saying that they wanted guns and other means of protection so they could create a black power structure.

Bob Green, a colored male from Michigan, is Martin Luther King's main Lieutenant in Mississippi. He reiterated made by Martin Luther King condemning these revolutionary type ideas. Green said that it was King's feeling that if it were not for the nationwide interest and focus on Mississippi he would withdraw all of his people, automobiles and financial support. Evidently King is very displeased at the tactics being used by some of the more militant members of the "March". It was mentioned that two white people who were participating in the "March" had packed up and left because of the cries for "black power".

A member of CORE called Herb, a white male from New York, said he and Floyd McKissick were also displeased with some of the statements that had been made and wished the "March" were over. They want to return to their own separate organizations' work and not have anything to do with these other militant organizations.

The common theme drawn is that if it were not for all of the nationwide publicity and financial support, a large percentage of those groups participating in this "March" would like to call a halt to it. However, they are committed and cannot do anything about it.

As of this writing, they have not been able to find any locations for their tents in the Yazoo City area. It is possible that they may spend Tuesday night in Louise or they may go to some church site located off Highway #16 in Madison County.

It is believed that they will spend some time in the Madison County area doing voter registration work so they will not arrive in the Jackson area prior to the 25th of June.

Guards are being used to patrol the camp sites at night. One of the things they are on the lookout for are incidents which could be picked up by the press that would cast an unfavorable light on the "March". Particularly they are watching for couples performing indecent acts. On this date, at night, the guards found a nude white female and a nude colored male sitting in an automobile. They were kissing at the time. The guards pulled them apart.

One of the tents is set aside for men and the other is set aside for women. On several occasions, in the early dawn, mixed couples have been seen leaving from the same tent.

Two representatives of the United States Department of Justice are present almost all of the time. John Doer is in and out a good bit. It should be noted that the meetings referred to above are held in complete security, with no representatives of the Government or press present. They, the various organizations involved, do not want it known that there is such dissension between the organizations.

Investigation will be continued.

June 14, 1966
Jackson, Mississippi

The Organizations that are on the "March" are still confused as to which route they want to take. They are debating on whether to continue on Highway #51 or go through the Delta.

Floyd McKissick called the MFDP office in Jackson and asked them to send up some representatives for the meeting tonight to help decide on which route to take.

SNCC, CORE, SCLC, MFDP and the Madison County Movement discussed whether or not to let the NAACP join the "March" since Charles Evers has decided to join the "March". Charles Evers is supposed to be at this meeting tonight.

Roy Wilkins stated that he was still opposed to the "March" but, if Charles Evers felt that it would be wise for the Mississippi Branch of the NAACP to join that he would give his full cooperation.

seminated to state agencies, prospective employers and newspapers, and in whatever ways would disrupt the Movement.

The Sovereignty Commission was abolished by the legislature in 1977, after we filed our lawsuit. The files were ordered sealed and deposited in the Department of Archives and History. The law makes it a crime to "willfully examine, divulge, [or] disseminate" the documents, so by publishing these documents we may be risking three years' imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine — of course, the law is ridiculous and unconstitutional.

Actually the Sovereignty Commission had ceased to function four years earlier when Governor Bill Waller vetoed its appropriation. In his veto message, Waller said the Commission's work is now being done by the Department of Public Safety and the Attorney General's Office. We know that's true because we've seen Highway Patrol investigators spying on United League marches, and the Attorney General's Organized Crime Intelligence Unit has reported investigating several groups in Mississippi, including the Republic of New Africa.

The Sovereignty Commission documents are spy reports gathered by the Movement's enemies. They can't be taken at face value; all secret police files are full of distortions and inaccuracies, and these are no exception. The documents for the Meredith march were gathered in the summer of 1966; a number of civil-rights activists were campaigning for public office as Freedom Democrats, and the state was trying to discredit them. While that was happening, James Meredith began his march, and while walking in the Delta was shot. The eyes of the nation were focused on Mississippi once again, as they had been two years earlier during the Mississippi Summer, and the leaders of various organizations vowed to pick up the torch from where Meredith fell and carry on to Jackson.

It was through the surveillance of Reverend Edwin King's campaign for Congress as a Freedom Democratic Party [FDP] candidate that the Sovereignty Commission spies first learned of the plans for the march, and from there they went into action. The Commission had two spies at a relatively small campaign meeting on June 6, 1966, the day Meredith was shot. As you can see from the docu-

ments, they were most concerned about finding divisions within the Movement. Both reports take the fears of older and more conservative members of the Movement about the militancy of the younger SNCC activists at face value, and report them as fact.

On June 9, the Sovereignty Commission's spies reported that the Deacons for Defense and Justice of Bogalusa, Louisiana, planned to participate in the march as a security force. In the event that the marchers were attacked as Meredith had been, the Deacons would provide armed protection. Immediately the Commission took an interest in identifying cars bearing Louisiana tags. From then on, the file contains almost daily reports of the comings and goings of march leaders, debate over the Black Power slogan, concern with the activities of "mixed couples," and other topics of discussion — no matter how trivial. One irony is that even Movement fliers and handouts bear the Sovereignty Commission's RESTRICTED rubber stamp. Certainly the reports helped the state plan its public relations counterattack. Using information furnished by the Sovereignty Commission, Senator James O. Eastland made a speech charging that 11 communists participated in the Meredith March. And people were "punished" for their participation later on. This is one of the important functions of political intelligence-gathering; Frank Donner, author of *The Age of Surveillance*, one of the best books on the subject, calls this the doctrine of deferred retribution.

A perfect example of this is a lengthy article titled "Professional Agitator Hits All Major Trouble Spots" in the August 18, 1966, *Jackson Daily News*; it is a smear story, together with pictures, of Jo Freeman, who at that time was a civil-rights worker in Grenada, Mississippi. Among other things, it focuses on her participation in the Meredith march. In an internal memo, Sovereignty Commission Director Erle Johnston wrote, "We furnished the local press photos and background information on a young white woman who had been active in the agitation in Berkeley, California, Alabama, and Mississippi. The photos and stories about her were given wide publicity and eventually she left the state." A source at the paper confirmed to me that this is a



A few samples of red-baiting in the headlines

A Spymaster Speaks

Erle Johnston, Jr., was publicity director of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission from 1961 to 1963 and its director from 1963 to 1968. He was editor of the Scott County Times from 1942 until his retirement in 1979. Recently, he published a memoir of his years as a political insider with former Governor Ross Barnett, I Rolled With Ross. Ken Lawrence interviewed Johnston in his newspaper office in Forest on October 31, 1978. Here are a few excerpts from the interview.

I called myself in those days a practical segregationist.

You have got to have informants. If you are trying to fight anything you consider alien to law or alien to custom, you've just about got to have people who'll tip you off about what's going on. If you didn't, you'd spin a lot of wheels over nothing.

Keep in mind that even among the so-called civil-rights groups that they were fighting each other a lot of times, and they would try to use us to undermine others sometimes, you know, very under the table.

The last years we were looking more for subversives as opposed to integrators. After all, integration wasn't against the law, but subversives, the people who were on the House Un-American list or on the Senate Security list — names of people and names of organizations which were public record — and you know a lot of times some of those people would be in Mississippi, and they might try to stir up the colored race to doing something. Well, if we could find out their background, expose them for what they represented, a lot of times they lost their influence. The colored were not — in other words, if anybody looked communistic, they wouldn't go along with him.

Sometimes there would be one person in the whole town who would be the troublemaker. And sometimes you'd have to figure out a way to get him to move somewhere else.

You know good and well that the Sovereignty Commission could not have called Washington and said, you know, "We don't like this outfit, and this outfit." That would be just like the kiss of death, you know. So the only thing we could do would be, through our investigative channels, try to find out if there were what we might call irregularities on one or the other, and then try to get them in our hands whichever way we could.

reference to the article about Jo Freeman.

During the summer of 1964, the Sovereignty Commission was trying to counterattack the Freedom Summer civil-rights workers. As usual, red-baiting was considered the most effective approach. Newspaper stories inspired by the Commission appeared in the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, including a pair of stories late that summer, headed "Freedom Group Linked to Communist Fronts." Their appearance coincided with the Freedom Democratic Party challenge to the state's regular delegation to the Democratic national convention in Atlantic City.

Again in 1965, when the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was holding hearings on the denial of voting rights in the state, stories appeared in the papers red-baiting the FDP. The same thing happened in June, while the Mississippi legislature was considering proposed constitutional amendments to limit voting rights, and in October, when the national spotlight was on the House Un-American Activities Committee's investigation of the Ku Klux Klan. Each time, the idea for the stories originated with the Sovereignty Commission.

The Sovereignty Commission also claims credit for getting the presidents of two private black colleges fired. They intervened in the election for editor of the Ole Miss student paper and smeared one of the candidates, Billy Barton, as a "liberal" — a false charge as it turned out. They covertly supported one Headstart program — Mississippi Action for Progress [MAP] — against another — the Child Development Group of Mississippi [CDGM] — because MAP was firmly in the grip of "moderate" leaders while CDGM was a grass-roots program organized by militants and run by poor people. They tried to prevent the federal government and private foundations from giving money to programs where Movement militants held influence. They worked with officials at the University of Southern Mississippi to prevent the ACLU from establishing a chapter there.

But exploiting internal differences was the main approach, just as it was for the FBI. A couple of years ago, I taped an interview with Erle Johnston, who is now in retirement, about his years with the Sovereignty Commission. He bragged to me that civil-rights

groups often fought each other, and that sometimes one would involve itself with the Sovereignty Commission in the course of its factional maneuvering — "very under the table," he said (see box).

We don't know who the agents were who filed the reports on the Meredith march. The Sovereignty Commission had full-time staff investigators and paid informers. Erle Johnston told me they all had code names, so only he knew the identities of the infiltrators. They also used electronic surveillance.

Ralph Day, the head of Day Detectives and a member of the Citizens Council, has testified in our lawsuit that he conducted investigations for the Sovereignty Commission. Erle Johnston says Day was not really an investigator, just a conduit to pay agents so their names wouldn't appear on any official records. That was a serious problem for them, because during the Commission's early years enterprising reporters had learned through the records at the State Auditor's office that the publishers of two black newspapers — Percy Greene of the *Jackson Advocate* and Reverend J. W. Jones, who put out a small paper in New Albany — were both on the Sovereignty Commission payroll.

Information was also shared between the Sovereignty Commission and other intelligence agencies. The best documentation I've seen concerns political surveillance during the Republic of New Africa trials in 1972; at that time intelligence was shared among the Jackson Police Intelligence Division, the Hinds County Sheriff's office, the FBI, the U.S. Marshal's office, the Highway Patrol, the Attorney General's Organized Crime Intelligence Unit, the Chicago Police Red Squad, and the Sovereignty Commission. At other times, they've worked with the Justice Department's Community Relations Service and agents of the Treasury Department.

We're not sure about contacts with the CIA, but former CIA director Allen Dulles did meet with Sovereignty Commission director Erle Johnston in 1964.

Erle Johnston claims the FBI is a "one-way street," meaning they accept information from agencies like the Sovereignty Commission but don't release information from their own files. I have seen evidence, however, that the FBI did open its files to the

Sovereignty Commission. It was an instance where the FBI had tried to discredit a certain leading civil-rights figure by gathering evidence to show that certain minor federal regulations had been violated. When the U.S. Attorney refused to prosecute because the evidence was insufficient, the FBI then opened its files on the case to the Sovereignty Commission, which in turn passed the information on to smear the leader.

The Sovereignty Commission had other targets besides civil-rights and Black Power groups. They included the ACLU and militant organized labor. The documents we have show that the Sovereignty Commission was especially worried about the 1971 strike of the Gulfcoast Pulpwood Association [GPA], an organization of woodcutters assisted by SCEF. The spy reports on the strike are quite detailed, and we all had a good laugh when we saw what the November 19, 1971, minutes of the Commission said about SCEF's role in the strike:

"SCEF's primary objective is to work with both blacks and whites and get them integrated and united to work together. They have been successful in getting some of the Klansmen to say, 'Sure, we used to be against the Negro, but we were wrong.'" You can see what really frightened them.

Shortly after the strike began, a long editorial red-baiting the GPA and SCEF appeared in the *Jackson Daily News*, titled "Carl Braden Stirs Strife in Laurel Pulpwood Fracas." It was accompanied by a cartoon showing a stack of logs labeled "Laurel Pulpwood Agitation" with a hammer and sickle beneath them. The editorial had lengthy quotes from a recording of one of the strike meetings.

This may have come from the Sovereignty Commission, though in this instance my source wasn't certain. It may also have been prompted by the FBI; there are a number of instances in which the *Daily News* ran smear stories as part of FBI COINTEL-PRO operations.

These activities are still going on, but different agencies are doing them now. A few days after we filed our lawsuit against these agencies, the head of the Highway Patrol tried to smear me to a television reporter. Unfortunately for him, the reporter was a friend of mine. □

Facing South

a syndicated column:
voices of tradition
in a changing region

The Traveling Goatman

JEFFERSONVILLE, Ga. — Charles “Chess” McCartney is 97 years old. He’s spent almost a third of those years traveling about the country in a trinket-laden wagon pulled by 16 large Angora goats. The “Goatman” — as he’s mostly called — has traveled with his goats to every state in the Union except Hawaii. They’ve even been to Alaska!

The Goatman’s journeys began in the early years of the Great Depression. Through working long hours in the field six days a week, and teaching the Gospel on the seventh, Chess was able to own his own home, some farmland and a church near his parents’ homeplace in middle Georgia. Compared to many of their neighbors, Chess and his family were prosperous.

But the economic crash of 1929 changed their lives completely. Seeing no future in farming, since food was plentiful but money was not, Chess and his family decided to see how the rest of the world was doing.

Leaving their worldly goods behind for those less fortunate, Chess took his wife, son and dog and set off in an old two-stage, iron-wheeled wagon train, with enough food to last them through a long, cold winter. These travels were to last — for the Goatman at least — for over 30 years.

The Goatman, and his family when they were with him, used to walk alongside the billy goats as they pulled his two wagons along the road. The first wagon carried the postcards and novelty trinkets which the Goatman sold along the way. The second wagon, which was hooked onto the first, was where they slept. The nanny goats and the young ones were tied behind it. Some of his goats stayed with their master for as long as 25 years.

A close friend of the Goatman, Hub Gardner, recalls the primitive conditions in which the Goatman thrived. “I’ve been over to Rome, Georgia, delivering cards to him when the snow would be knee-deep. And the only

heat he had was a kerosene lantern hanging in the wagon. It burned all night. As I walked up I could see straight through the cracks in the wagon. He stayed on the road winter and summer enjoying it all.”

Maybe due to the lack of competition in his unusual line of work, the Goatman has made plenty of money. He had many shrewd tricks for getting the most for his cards and novelties. One was building a fire near the road out of pieces of old rubber tires. The black smoke would roll up, bringing people running to see what it was.

“Look all you want to, folks,” the Goatman would say. “Take pictures if you have cameras. If not, I have picture postcards for sale, 15 cents each or three for 50 cents.” He says you



Illustration by Frank Holyfield

wouldn’t believe how many people would jump at that offer, thinking they were saving money. He would also preach to his customers out of his ever-handy Bible.

The Goatman invested his money in land, back when land was dirt-cheap and few people, especially in the South, had cash to buy it. He owns one-acre plots all over the United States. The Goatman’s hobby is building churches — five, so far. One is a little log church on an acre of Louisiana swampland.

Life hasn’t always been easy for the Goatman. “My arm was chewed all to pieces where a horse drug me across the road once,” he told me

recently, showing me his twisted arm which he can still use very well. “But the only pain I have now at age 97 is where my leg has been slit on both sides and has eight screws in it, where the doctor fixed it up after some teenage boys overturned my wagon with me in it. They also cut the throats of eight of my lead-goats and left them laying dead on the highway.” Soon after this incident, in the early 1960s, the Goatman retired from the road to his homeplace near Jeffersonville.

Four or five years ago, his house there burned down. The Goatman lost most of his shoulder-length hair in escaping from the flames.

Still a traveling man at heart, he now lives in an old school bus near the site of his burned-out house. Like his wagon, the bus has no electricity or other modern conveniences. But the Goatman doesn’t miss them. The postcards and novelties are still selling, and people still come by to visit, buy and listen to his tales of adventure on the road.

To any who have missed him since his retirement from his travels, the Goatman would like to say, “I’m still around and kicking, which I hope to be for some years to come. So look me up for a visit or drop me a line. It’s always good to see and hear from old friends.” □

— LORENE L. PARKER

freelance
Russellville, Al.

“Facing South” is published each week by the Institute for Southern Studies and will henceforth be a regular feature of **Southern Exposure**. It currently appears in more than 80 Southern newspapers, magazines and newsletters. If you’d like this fascinating series of Southern profiles — written each week by a different grass-roots Southerner — to appear in your local newspaper, call your editor and tell her or him to write “Facing South,” P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702, or call (919) 688-8167. “Facing South” is an ideal feature for community/political newsletters, too. Our rates are based on circulation and start at \$3 a week.

REVIEWS

Last Stand at Rosebud Creek, by Michael Parfit. E.P. Dutton, 1980. 304 pp. \$15.95.

The New River Controversy, by Thomas J. Schoenbaum. John F. Blair, Pub., 1979. 195 pp. \$12.95.

Powerline: The First Battle of America's Energy War, by Barry M. Casper and Paul David Wellstone. University of Massachusetts Press, 1981. 314 pp. \$7.95.

The County Energy Plan Guidebook (\$7.50); **Farm and Rural Energy Planning Manual** (\$5.00); and **Energy and Power in Your Community** (\$6.00): all available from the Institute for Ecological Policies, 9208 Christopher St., Fairfax, VA 22031.

Energy Wars

by Jim Overton

W

hat this powerline boils down to, I think, is a violation of the civil rights of rural people who are treated like a colony to be exploited and have no political power to do anything about it. . . . When you have such an obvious and tragic derogation of the whole purpose of laws, which is to keep a civil, stable society going, then you get into what we're heading for now, which is a full-scale powerline guerrilla warfare."

— Verlyn Marth,
Minnesota farmer

In July of this year over 50 Appalachian activists gathered at Tennessee's Highlander Research and Education



Photo by Daniel S. Brody

Center to discuss the region's new energy wars. The struggles they came to share revealed dramatically the impact the nation's drive for new energy supplies will have in this largely rural area. Oil shale leasing in the farm areas of middle and eastern Kentucky; increasing acidification of West Virginia rivers due to strip mines; uranium prospecting in Virginia and North Carolina; new oil and gas leasing throughout the region — all are being vigorously promoted by our massive energy conglomerates.

Not on this particular agenda but of equal concern to all those present were the other offshoots of our energy program soon to touch on Appalachia: these include the prospect of massive new pumped-storage power plants, 765-kv power lines and new nuclear and coal plants for the region.

Energy exploitation is nothing new to Appalachia, of course — nor to the South as a whole. Coal, oil and gas exploration are staples of the South's economy. But presently we are experiencing a renewed drive to find and extract energy supplies across the region. For instance, off-shore oil leasing has received new support, and it is likely that the land between the mountains and the sea will soon be scoured for new energy supplies as well.

Now such energy speculation is receiving an enthusiastic boost from President Reagan and his controversial Secretary of the Interior, James Watt. Watt has already begun dismantling Interior regulatory programs and opening up federal forest land to widespread energy development.

Given this massive mobilization of energy exploitation, it seems a necessary time to take a long, hard look at some recent case studies of what energy exploration and energy exploitation can do to an area.

Michael Parfit's *Last Stand at Rosebud Creek* examines the Montana Power Company's massive strip-mining and coal-power-plant development in Colstrip, Montana. Beginning in 1962, Montana Power bought up some abandoned strip mines dating back to the 1920s and undertook to build as many as six massive coal plants right next to the renewed mining operations. The company experienced little opposition to their first two plants, but in 1974 local concern about ranch land degradation, Native American rights and the boom-town stresses that brought drugs, crime and overcrowding to Colstrip finally led to a vigorous anti-power-plant organizing effort spearheaded by local ranchers. Six years of low electricity demand growth, environmental restric-

tions from EPA and determined lawsuits from the Cheyenne Indians blocked the construction of Colstrip Units Three and Four, but as of Spring, 1980, the construction schedule was moving slowly forward — and Colstrip Units One and Two continued to generate electricity from the coal strip-mined next door.

Parfit brings this story to life by interviewing 18 area residents who trudged through Montana snows in December, 1974, to speak for or against Colstrip Three and Four. Virtually every chapter focuses on one of these individuals, including anecdotes from their childhood, expressing their reasons for supporting or attacking the coal plants and finally tracing their lives up to the present.

Parfit is more novelist than historian, choosing to focus on these personalities instead of sketching the history of coal development in Colstrip and analyzing the pluses and minuses of the project. Occasionally, his "new journalism" style is grating, as when he presumes to offer us the thoughts of the initial 1920s booster of Colstrip's development even though the man has been dead for many years.

But on the whole Parfit succeeds in exploring the human impact of such development from all sides, showing us both the anger of the opponents and the optimism of the supporters. Particularly interesting is the portrait of Martin White, head Montana Power official in Colstrip, and Wally McRae, local rancher and leader of the opposition, as they pursue a strained friendship while arguing endlessly about the Colstrip project in meetings from one end of Montana to the other.

A more detailed, and blessedly hopeful, look at energy exploitation is found in *The New River Controversy*. Thomas Schoenbaum relates the tale of how the Appalachian Power Company attempted to construct a massive pumped-storage power plant on the New River, the oldest river in America. The long-standing struggle over the project pitted Virginia against North Carolina, developers against preservationists, power companies against the local people, and ultimately produced some fascinating legal and political shenanigans on both sides. In the end, a unique coalition including environmentalists across the country, determined local residents and the North Carolina AFL-CIO (which bravely took a position directly opposed

to the national AFL-CIO by condemning the project) joined forces with such strange bedfellows as Senators Sam Ervin and Jesse Helms, North Carolina Republican Governor James Holshouser and Democratic Attorney General Rufus Edmisten to oppose, and finally in 1976, beat back the plant and save the New River Valley.

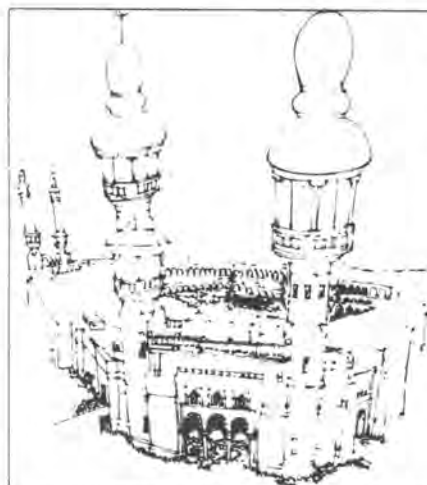
The battle over the New featured a clear clash between old-style American values and Connecticut Yankee-style technology. Our oldest river, the New River and its valley are a geological, archaeological and historical treasure, as well as the long-time home of many North Carolinians, Virginians and West Virginians. The pumped-storage power plant is the epitome of the technological fix: it runs water downhill to produce electricity during periods of peak demand and then at night pumps the water back uphill; in the process, it consumes four units of electricity for every three it produces. By constructing this technological marvel, Appalachian Power would have drastically altered the structure of the valley and forced the relocation of at least 2,700 people.

Schoenbaum gives an insider's account of the effort: he personally devised many of the legal strategies that led to halting the plant. He begins with a brief history of the New River that dwells on its historical and environmental assets, then takes us through the intricate legal and political saga that lasted almost 12 years. Schoenbaum concentrates on the political strife that involved the bulk

of the political machinery of both North Carolina and Virginia. He clearly explains the motivations on both sides of the fence; for instance, he details how Appalachian Power rallied its troops in Virginia while, at the same time, Governor Holshouser took up arms against the plant to a large extent because the two affected counties were Republican strongholds in North Carolina and also because "Appalachian Power Company, since it did not do business in North Carolina, has little political clout there."

Unfortunately, Schoenbaum gives us precious little information on how area residents viewed the project and only occasionally refers to their role in mobilizing opposition to the plant, aside from the discussion of the inspiring Festival of the New which the three-state Committee for the New River organized as "a symbol, an expression and a celebration of the river." The fact that 3,000 people turned out gives ample testimony to the love people felt for their aged river valley region.

However, even though he doesn't discuss it in depth, Schoenbaum clearly has a strong appreciation for the needs of these local people and for their devotion to the land — and how such feelings aided the campaign. As he concludes: "To many people this conflict represented a struggle to preserve something of their own roots in the American experience and the relationship with the land. The New River controversy proved that these profound values still exist



Warships crammed with tanks and heavy artillery are poised off the Persian Gulf, ready to "marry up" with Marine brigades trained in the California desert. In Washington, the CIA predicts the downfall of the Saudi regime, while the Pentagon prepares to prop it up. Military specialists are dispatched to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Oman. President Reagan calls for a "ground presence" of US troops and praises Israel's "combat-ready and combat-experienced military as a 'strategic asset'.

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in America despite energy shortages and economic concerns."

By far the most in-depth, exasperating but compelling analysis of the energy wars can be found in *Powerline* by Barry M. Casper and Paul David Wellstone. In 1973, two Minnesota utilities — the Cooperative Power Association and the United Power Association — announced plans to build a coal-fired electric plant next to a lignite strip mine near Bismarck, North Dakota. The plant was to supply power to eastern Minnesota via a 400-kv DC powerline which would run through the heart of Minnesota farming country. Frustrated by the fact that the key decisions on the project were already made before they could try to take advantage of Minnesota's new liberal regulatory programs, hostile to having their land invaded by giant utility power poles, and concerned about the potential health effects of the powerline, area farmers waged an intensive battle against the powerline through legal suits, legislative and administrative campaigns and civil disobedience.

Finally, once most of the farmers' means of legitimate protest were exhausted, the towers began to topple, and farmers engaged in armed confron-

tations with power company employees. Despite their aggressive efforts, the line was finally completed; however, the recurring destruction of towers and insulators has severely hampered the operation of the powerline and called into question its long-term reliability. (Since the writing of the book, the utilities have sold the powerline to the Rural Electrification Administration; now it is a federal offense to tamper with the line, and the FBI can pursue violators.)

Like Schoenbaum, Wellstone and Casper speak from the insider's point of view: both were very active in the anti-powerline campaign. However, they unfold their story primarily through accounts by leaders of the struggle. After a fairly weighty 100 pages of technical details on the powerline, discussion of the confused early hearings held by the state and repeated emphasis on the trickery employed by the power companies, the authors ground us firmly in the growing frustrations of the farmers and then engross us in the furious effort to stop the powerline. Though the farmers don't win, we can share in their sense of strength and learn from their awakening to political commitment. Particularly compelling are the

words of Gloria Woida, a leading spokesperson for the cause, as she explains what the protest taught her:

I used to sit home and be a real quiet mama and take care of the kids and work on the farm — just self-interest in your own personal little world, you know. But all of a sudden the powerline comes around one day, and it opens up your eyes to what people really have to do. . . . I will never shut up and be a quiet person again and I will be involved in other struggles. Had I known what the Indians were going through in Wounded Knee, I'd have been there; and if I'd known more about the Vietnam War protests, I think I would have been there.

The underlying message resounding throughout all three of these books is that our current drive to exploit new domestic energy sources, which is largely aimed at providing power for our increasingly urban society, will continue to wreak havoc not just on the environment but on thousands of rural Americans — unless we make a conscious commitment to revolutionize our energy supply. As companies strive to extract more and more

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energy supplies from the land, as utilities plan more of their plants for "less-populated" areas and construct gigantic powerlines to move their electricity to the cities, and as we backslide into past energy exploitation atrocities via the leadership of the Reagan administration, we will further drive rural people from their homes, diminish our farmland and ruin the natural resources we can all now enjoy.

Perhaps the most optimistic element of *Powerline* is that the protesters have had to face these harsh realities and have struggled to work out some positive solutions. They have become an active presence in Minnesota in favor of decentralized energy solutions — and have become increasingly critical of the social structure that saddled them with the powerline. As Patty Kakac sums up:

We're at a point where people who are fighting this have come to realize that if they want to continue the fight against the powerline, it has to develop into something broader. People have come a long way in their thinking and working but they're still not at a point — they're fighting to get this powerline down, away from here, but it has to be more than that — it has to be part of a whole energy struggle. People have to realize it is going to involve a whole change in lifestyle. It's hard for me to explain it because I see the way farmers are now — they're part of the whole system. But they're beginning to change, realizing that bigness in farming isn't everything, how important land is, not just owning it but taking care of it.

The rest of us could stand to learn a few of these lessons, and act to make them a reality as soon as possible.

One helpful resource group for learning how to move forward with changing our energy supply is the Institute for Ecological Policies. Headed by long-time energy activist Jim Benson, the Institute "is committed to fostering the bold action required to move federal energy policy away from a strategy that is characterized as 'burn America first' and 'strength through exhaustion.' We believe there is only one way to change our course, . . . Individuals at the community and state level must acquire enough

political power to wrest decision-making away from the energy companies and to make the decisions themselves to the benefit of their community."

Three recent Institute publications provide invaluable assistance in making this goal a reality. The *County Energy Plan Guidebook* provides a lengthy methodology for pinpointing current energy supply and demand in your county and estimating how much energy can be saved through conservation and alternative energy resources. An example of how the *Guidebook* can work: researchers in Geneva County, Alabama, have used the *Guidebook* to determine that conservation could save \$108 million in the county through the year 2000, and have followed up by encouraging the county government to develop a strong energy conservation plan.

The *Farm and Rural Energy Planning Manual* serves as a supplement to the *Guidebook* for people in agricultural areas, but it is also a useful resource to rural activists when used independently of the *Guidebook*. The *Manual* can provide general data to convince farmers and other rural Americans that they can save energy — and money — through use of a variety of renewable energy resources.

Finally, *Energy and Power in Your Community* abbreviates the detailed methodology of the *Guidebook* and provides a more political focus on the positives of alternative energy strategies by showing their economic advantages. The methods outlined in this book are much quicker to use and less comprehensive than those found in the *Guidebook*, but they still provide useful information. The book also includes a discussion of the nation's total energy picture that can be instructive to newcomers to the energy wars.

Of the three publications, *Energy and Power* is likely to provide the best education and organizing tool for energy activists. Because the methodology focuses on showing how much money is lost to the community as a result of current energy use patterns, groups can use the results to put political pressure on their local government to take stronger steps towards conservation. The following example from Montana indicates how easy it is to dramatize the energy problem through the *Energy and Power* methodology.

A quick estimate of last year's energy consumption . . . found that the total energy bill for the Butte-Silver Bow area was \$46.6 million. When averaged at the household level, it was found that each household now supports an energy bill of about \$4,000. In 10 years, that will rise to about \$16,000, exceeding the average household income today.

The above numbers, while a rough estimate, were enough to convince community leaders of the severity of the energy problem. A main advantage to adding the municipal sector was that the chief executive saw that the local government's energy bill had doubled in the past three years, and would do so again. This sector is one that the taxpayers pay for directly, and one that elected officials can do something about in a short period of time. It is highly visible, and energy conservation examples set a good example for local citizens and businesses.

Though the data collected from this study might be somewhat general, it is still convincing enough to educate people about the need to conserve quickly. For groups who are eager to change their community's energy plans, this is a valuable first step. □

Jim Overton is a staff member of the Institute for Southern Studies.

by Charlaune Harris, Houghton-Mifflin, 1981. 179 pp. \$8.95.

Sweet and Deadly

by Chris Mayfield

The young heroine edits the society page of the local newspaper in Lowfield, Mississippi, a small cotton-farming Delta town where her family has lived for generations. She thinks she knows it all by heart — the quiet streets, the old houses, the familiar, smiling faces. But then

her parents are killed in a car wreck she believes was rigged, and her vision of the town begins to turn inside out as danger approaches nearer and nearer to her once-sheltered back yard. Trusted family friends grow unaccountably aloof, while people she's known only superficially — like her editor, and members of the black community — offer unexpected help and friendship.

Sweet and Deadly is Charlaine Harris's first mystery novel, and it whets the appetite for more. Harris grew up in a small Delta town herself and has also worked as a reporter; thus both the setting and the language have the ring of truth. There's none of the

bowdlerized dialect that Northerners too often use when writing about the South ("Y'all come back now, heah?"). The mystery aspect is satisfyingly scary and builds effectively on the contrast between the little town's sleepiness and the shocking fact that a murderer is at large. There's also romance, and it too is realistic and restrained.

Harris's writing is not uniformly elegant, and her heroine's name (like the title) is distracting and irrelevant, because the connection between this Catherine Linton and the character in *Wuthering Heights* is not made clear. But these are minor quibbles, and mystery fans everywhere should wel-

come this novel, and the fact that the South is beginning to come into its own in this genre. □

Chris Mayfield edits Facing South, the syndicated newspaper column of the Institute for Southern Studies.

Mountain Tales

by Chris Mayfield

“Mama!”

yelled my four-year-old daughter, running in from her perch by the record player. “That man sounds just like Grand-daddy when he’s telling a story.”

What higher compliment could be paid to “Mountain Tales,” June Appal’s recently released album of six traditional Appalachian stories. Performed by members of the Roadside Theatre — a traveling theater group based in eastern Kentucky — these delightful tales are told with a lively home-grown warmth that endears them at once to anyone who’s grown up with storytelling in the family. Several of the tales are ones that Roadside Theatre members heard themselves as children, which accounts for much of their ring of truth. The record’s charm is also due to the broad range of voices, their vivid mountain accents and the beautifully timed pacing of the stories.

Several tales are rollickingly funny — particularly “Fat Man” (my daughter’s favorite), which tells what happens when people can’t resist teasing the Fat Man who lives under the bridge. (“No, I’m not ready! I’m not ready!” cackles the little old man as the Fat Man begins to swallow him whole. Maybe he’s not saved?) “Cat and Rat” sounds a lot like the familiar story of the old woman and the pig who wouldn’t jump over the stile; here the rat’s trying to get his tail back by bringing the cat a saucer of milk. There’s a humorous “haint” tale, too, in which an old man receives the fright of his life and is cured of “that thar rheumatiz” once and for all.

In a lower key comes the strange, wistful story of the purty little many-colored fish; this tale explains, accord-

Photo by Tim Cox



Angelyn DeBord and Don Baker of Roadside Theatre tell “Mountain Tales.”

ing to folks back where the narrator comes from, "how the first rainbow ever got started."

Then finally there's "Three Gold Nuts," a version of "Beauty and the Beast" which takes up the whole second side of the record. This hauntingly beautiful love story is told mainly by Ron Short and Angelyn DeBord, perhaps the two most memorable voices in the company. It has that essential upward motion of all truly wonderful fairy stories, towards a moment when victory, which seemed hopelessly out of reach, is gained by dint of great love and sacrifice. Here a woman recalls her lost husband from an enchanted, amnesiac sleep:

"Once ye was a b'ar, and I could have you," she sings, "but now you're a man, and I can't have you."

And he turned to her, and he knewed her.

To order this record, or for a catalogue listing June Appal's many fine recordings of mountain music, write them at Box 743, Whitesburg, KY 41858. □



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edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Persephone Press, 1981. 261 pp. \$8.95.

This Bridge Called My Back by Liz Wheaton



here have been a few books, a very few, which have unlocked the hidden parts of my mind, made me think about who I am and what I am and how I relate, or not, to people around me. Ultimately, I credit those books with altering the course of my life.

This Bridge Called My Back will prove to be one of those books. Its subtitle, "Writings by Radical Women of Color," may limit its sales to an audience mostly radical, mostly women, mostly of color. That would be a tragedy. Because it is just those people whose minds are locked in

perpetual tunnel-vision who need *This Bridge* the most. It is an equally important book for those of us who consider ourselves open-minded, liberal or progressive, for those labels allow many of us to cloak ourselves in a facade of non-racism, non-sexism and non-homophobia. *This Bridge* is an essential link to these deeply hidden biases.

Let me explain: I am a feminist, yet when I probe through the layers of conditioning, I find some very distressing elements of sexism. If I, as a feminist, continue to hold biases against my own sex, how very deeply ingrained and well hidden must be my prejudice towards all people who are different from me — racially, sexually, culturally, economically, politically.

Aurora Levins Morales's essay in *This Bridge* explains in a different way:

Piri Thomas's book *Down These Mean Streets* followed me around for years in the corner of my eye on bus terminal bookracks. Finally, in a gritted teeth desperation I faced the damn thing and said, "OK, tell me." I sweated my way through it in two nights: gang fights, knifings, robberies, smack, prison. It's the standard Puerto

Rican street story, except *he* lived. The junkies could be my younger brothers. The prisoners could be them. I could be the prostitute, the welfare mother, the sister and lover of junkies, the child of alcoholics. There is nothing but circumstance and good English, nothing but my mother marrying into the middle class, between me and that life."

Nothing but circumstances . . . for each and every one of us.

In their introduction to *This Bridge*, editors Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa write, "We want to express . . . the experiences which divide us . . . to explore the causes and sources of, and solutions to these divisions." They, and the 27 writers and poets whose labors built *This Bridge*, have accomplished that goal. Beyond the anger and pain of their experiences, there is much celebration and much love. With that positive reinforcement, I now feel the strength to probe my own festering biases. "The revolution," Moraga and Anzaldúa remind us, "begins at home." □

Liz Wheaton is a staff member of the Institute for Southern Studies.

Books on the South

This list consists of books published since May, 1981. Book entries include works up to November, 1981. All books were published in 1981. Dissertations appeared in the *Dissertation Abstracts Index* between February and June, 1981. All dissertations are dated 1980 unless otherwise noted.

The entries are grouped under several broad categories for your convenience. Mention of a book here does not preclude its being reviewed in a future issue. Unsolicited reviews of publications of general interest to our readers are welcome. Recent works are preferred.

Copies of the dissertations are available from: Xerox University Microfilms, Dissertation Copies, P.O. Box 1764, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

ECONOMICS, HISTORY AND POLITICS

The Afro-American Periodical Press, by Penelope L. Bullock (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$25.00.

"All Things to All People: The American Colonization Society in Kentucky, 1829-1860," by Charles Raymond Bennett. Univ. of Kentucky.

Appalachian Women: An Annotated Bibliography, by Sidney S. Farr (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky). \$18.00.

"Benefit-Cost Analysis of the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969," by Louise Chandler Julian. Penn State Univ.

"The Black Struggle for Education in Louisiana, 1877-1930," by Sue Lyles Eakin. Univ. of Southwestern Louisiana.

Blacks in Tennessee, 1791 to 1970, by Lester C. Lamon (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press). \$8.50.

"Churches at Work: Richmond, Virginia, White Leaders and Social Change in a Southern City, 1900-1929," by Samuel Claude Shepherd, Jr. Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison.

The Cost of Mississippi: Its Past and Progress, by Jerry Kinser (Baton Rouge: Moran Publishing Co.). \$10.00.

"A Critical History of the Southern Baptist Indian Mission Movement, 1855-1861," by Lexie Oliver Wiggins, Jr. Univ. of Alabama.

"The Darker Side of 'Heaven': The Black Community in Houston, Texas, 1917-1945," by James Martin Sorelle. Kent State Univ.

Education and the Rise of the New South, by Ronald K. Greenwood and Arthur O. White (Boston: G.K. Hall). \$19.95.

Faithful Magistrates and Concerned Lawyers: Creators of Virginia Legal Culture, 1680-1810, by A.G. Roeber (Chapel Hill: UNC Press). \$24.00.

Flaming Feuds of Colorado County, Texas, by John W. Reese (Salado, TX: Anson Jones Press). \$13.00.

From the Old South to the New: Essays on the Traditional South, ed. by Walter J. Fraser, Jr., and Winfred B. Moore, Jr. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press). \$35.00.

From Savannah to Yorktown: The American Revolution in the South, by Henry Lumpkin (Columbia: USC Press). \$19.50.

"The History of Alexander City State Junior College: Its Beginning, Foundation and Progress, 1963-1980," by Reginald William Hall. Auburn Univ.

History of St. Tammany Parish, by Frederick S. Ellis (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Co.). \$19.95.

I Hear Them Calling My Name: A Journey Through the New South, by Chet Fuller (Boston: Houghton Mifflin). \$12.95.

"Institutional Purpose and the Management of Virginia's Coastal Wetlands," by Carl Christian Mabbs-Zeno. VPI.

"Like A Plague of Locust": Immigration and Social Change in Tennessee, 1850-1880," by Kathleen Christine Berkley. UCLA.

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“The Aim of a Woman’s Being”

Messrs. Editors,

Will you allow a female to offer a few remarks upon a subject that you must allow to be all important? I don’t know that in any of your papers, you have said sufficient upon the education of females. I hope you are not to be classed with those, who think that our mathematical knowledge should be limited to “fathoming the dish-kettle,” and that we have acquired enough of history, if we know that our grandfather’s father lived and died. ’Tis true the time has been, when to darn a stocking, and cook a pudding well, was considered the end and aim of a woman’s being. But those were days when ignorance blinded men’s eyes. The diffusion of knowledge has destroyed those degraded opinions, and men of the present age, allow, that we have minds that are capable and deserving of culture. There are difficulties, and great difficulties in the way of our advancement; but that should only stir us to greater efforts. We possess not the advantages with those of our sex, whose skins are not coloured like our own, but we can improve what little we have, and make our one talent produce two-fold. The influence that we have over the male sex demands, that our minds should be instructed and improved with the principles of education and religion, in order that this influence should be properly directed. Ignorant ourselves, how can we be expected to form the minds of our youth, and conduct them in the paths of knowledge? There is a great responsibility resting somewhere, and it is time for us to be up and doing. I would address myself to all mothers, and say to them, that while it is necessary to possess a knowledge of cookery, and the various mysteries of pudding-making, something more is requisite. It is their bounden duty to store their daughters’ minds with useful learning. They should be made to devote their leisure time to reading books, whence they would derive valuable information, which could never be taken from them. I will not longer trespass on your time and patience. I merely throw out these hints, in order that some more able pen will take up the subject.

– MATILDA

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The letter above was an anonymous contribution to *Freedom’s Journal*, August 10, 1827. It represents an early expression of a “women’s rights” viewpoint, the first expressed by a black to be seen by the editors. We’re reprinting it from *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, Volume I, edited by Herbert Aptheker (Citadel Press, 1951).

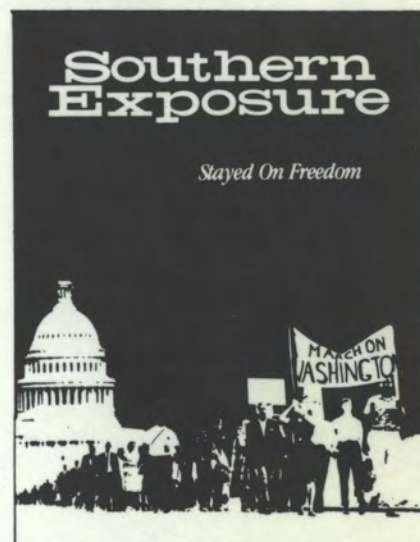
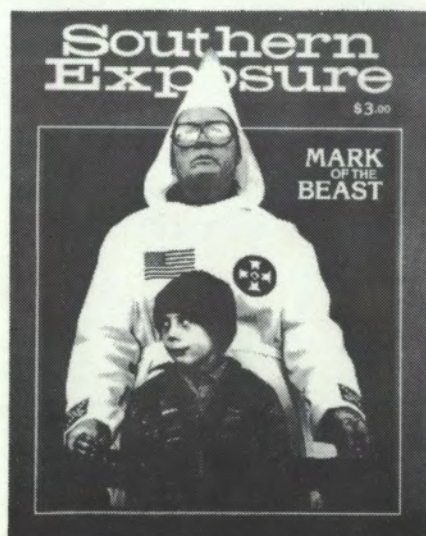
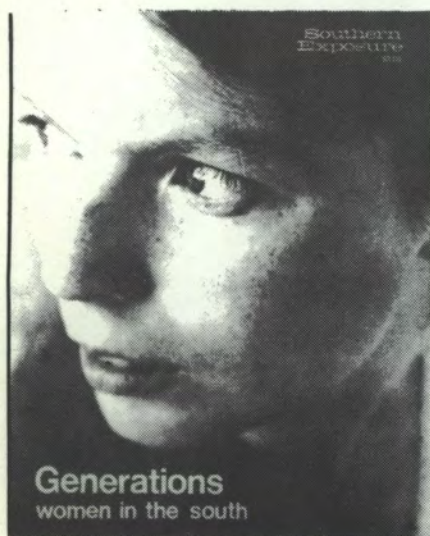
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