

THE MEANING OF THE MCSURELY CASE

A Seventeen Year Inquisition



The Jews
of Memphis

Yazoo City's
Jerry Clower



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FROM OUR READERS

Union busting in Virginia

Dear SE:

First, hello. After reading your magazine in our public library for over a year, I finally decided to subscribe. I received my first issue yesterday.

Secondly, I came across something recently which disturbed me greatly. Please look at the enclosed (see below) from the "Continuing Education" booklet from Medical College of Virginia. My tax dollars sponsor this!

I thought that your magazine may be a good forum to inform non-nursing Virginians about how their tax dollars are spent.

Last, a comment. Being a Virginian who seems destined to stay in his native land, I see my subscription as a commitment to change. I feel a deep love for the area in your magazine, despite its hard-hitting journalism. Please keep both aspects.

— Scott Christian
Martinsville, VA

The item Scott Christian sent us is a description for a two-day course "Maintaining a Union Free Health Care Agency." To be held at the Medical College of Virginia in March, 1984, the course "has been designed for nursing and hospital administrators as well as other supervisory personnel to assist them in understanding labor relations legislation and union prevention measures. . . . Supervisors will receive specific advice concerning what they can and cannot do during unionization attempts and how they should handle activity at all stages."

Prison visitors needed

Dear SE:

We are seeking additional prison visitors and hope that *Southern Exposure* might help us. Prisoner Visitation and Support [PVS] is a nationwide, interfaith assistance program for federal and military prisoners. Sponsored by 35 national religious bodies and socially concerned agencies — Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and secular — PVS seeks to meet the needs of prisoners through an alternative ministry that is separate from official prison structures. PVS has volunteer visitors at prisons throughout the United States who regularly visit prisoners and assist them and their families with their needs.

PVS was founded in 1968 by Bob Horton and Fay Honey Knopp, along with five national peace groups, to visit imprisoned Vietnam War resisters. In its first five years of service, volunteers visited over 2,000 conscientious objectors. PVS was encouraged by the CO's to visit other prisoners and today will visit any federal or military prisoner wanting a visit. If you are interested in becoming a PVS visitor, or know of someone who might be, please contact the PVS national office: 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102; (215) 241-7117.

— Eric Corson
Philadelphia, PA

Tell us again

Dear SE:

Finally, after two-and-a-half years of buying your excellent journal at my favorite — and R.I.'s only — progressive-radical bookstore, I am subscribing.

As a community organizer, I find your journal to be not only informative but quite an inspiration in developing a broad-based grassroots movement.

Friends ask me what journal I would recommend — I don't even hesitate to say *Southern Exposure*. Why? Quality

and in-depth analysis and everything else that goes into *SE* make it the logical choice for organizers, educators, laborers, and the rest of us. News and events that inform and guide know no geographical boundaries. That is why *Southern Exposure* is one of my favorite journals. We in New England appreciate the dedication and perseverance of your staff and of the people in the South who give us the strength, inspiration, and knowledge to be Prevailing Voices everywhere!

Southern Exposure, there is none better!

— Raymond L. Neirinckx
Providence, RI

Dear SE:

Your 10th Anniversary issue is extraordinary! Your whole staff must be congratulated.

— Kathy Elaine Anderson
Roadwork
Washington, DC

Dear SE:

Southern Exposure is great! May the next 10 years be even better.

Here's a contribution to help do more. May my subscription never lapse!

— David Swain
Jacksonville, FL

Dear SE:

Thanks so much for sending the 10th Anniversary encyclopedia and ad book. It is very impressive — I started reading and couldn't put it down. Brought back a lot of memories and taught me many new things too.

Keep up the good work!

— Joan Flanagan
Chicago, IL

The Girl in the Madman's March

by Imani Taylor

I was four years old when I marched in my first parade. The Pet and Doll parade celebrated the end of the school year in Loveland, Colorado. The only adults who participated were mamas nudging along three- and four-year-olds who didn't have an older sister or brother to accompany them.

We dressed ourselves, our dolls, and pets in costumes that varied in elaborateness according to our financial status or our mothers' skills with a needle. Lots of prizes went to Huck Finns, Becky Thatchers, and Tom Sawyers. I don't remember the reason for



the Mark Twain theme, but I do remember the whole affair was a big deal. It was especially exciting when my three brothers and I marched together.

I saw a six- or seven-year-old girl bring up the rear of the second squad of marchers in the Ku Klux Klan/White Power parade held in Benson, North Carolina, on July 16, 1983. Her blonde hair hung down onto her white robe fashioned from some fancy polished fabric rather than the cotton sheet of Klan mythology. She looked like I once felt — excited, proud, and happy to be part of something that usually

only grown-ups get to do.

In the first squad, 23 men dressed in camouflage military fatigues were led by robed Klansman Glenn Miller, founder of the Carolina Knights and owner of a paramilitary camp just outside Benson. There was little to distinguish these men from a random selection of men at any shopping center on a Saturday afternoon — nothing except their message, and that they were all white.

The cadence of their march, the determined pride of their posture, and their gazes fixed on the sea of Confederate flags at the head of the parade had me wondering why this show of racial pride was so threatening. No weapons were visible so I didn't have an immediate sense of personal fear — those shudders I get whenever I see a gun poised. But the fatigues, the black high-topped military boots, and the aggressive display of white male supremacy brought the message of Klan



photos by Ben Fewel

terrorism home to me: they want me to know that no form of violence is too extreme to carry out their purpose.

I controlled my fear by keeping busy counting and observing bystanders until the second squad passed by. When the young girl came into view I went numb. It's taken a month of reflecting and a second visit to Benson to uncover the fear, the rage, and the sadness buried beneath that numbness.

I want to talk to that girl and learn the story of her parents. I want to let them know I care for them as people. I want to figure out a way to let them

know how angry I get every time I see a Confederate flag — how it makes me fear for the future and mourn the violent past of every black friend I have. I want to figure out a way to let them know how sad I am that their true self-respect has been robbed by the sense of false superiority over other people; and how I hope that they will learn that our collective survival depends on peaceful cooperation among all people.

Working in my garden, running with my dog, singing songs all help me to work out my fears, my anger, my sadness. But asking questions and seeking ways to bridge the gap that separates us are my main commitments.

In 30 years will this same child march in White Power parades? Will she be like the few grown women at the rear of the third and final squad on July 16? Or will she grow up to march, as I do, to protest police abuse, to curb violence against women, to chal-

lenge our government to seek peace and economic and social justice? Will she have the chance, as I have, to make good friends from other cultures, races, religions, and countries? Will either of us have a chance to live 30 more years? (For the parade in Benson was just a glimpse into the cult of violence that kills thousands every day and threatens global destruction.) And will she learn that the big deal about being grown-up is the excitement, the self-respect, and the good feelings that come from being part of everything and everyone on this planet? □

Right wing profits by Coors move to South

Billboards featuring snow-capped mountains herald the arrival of Coors beer to the Southeast. Once a prized souvenir of trips West, the unpasteurized light-body beer is capitalizing on its mountain mystique with such advertising slogans as "The Best of the Rockies is Yours" and "Turn It Loose" (the latter aimed at a young black market, advertising executives say.)

Despite the expense of shipping the always refrigerated beer from its one brewery in Colorado (the largest in the world), Coors was obliged to move into the South to head off sagging profits in the West. Its share of the California market, for example, dropped from 40 to 20 percent in a decade. Nationally, half of every dollar spent on beer goes to Anheuser-Busch (Bud, Busch and Michelob) or to Miller. Another 40 cents goes to Stroh-Schlitz, Pabst, Heileman and Coors, ranked in order of their sales.

Since 1980, Coors has moved across Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee, and since January, 1983, it has spread into Alabama, Georgia, Florida, the Carolinas, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., completing what marketing vice president Robert Reckholtz calls "our march to the Atlantic Ocean." The company has already wrapped up 10 percent of the Southeast's beer business, and it has picked a 2,000-acre site in Rockingham County, Virginia, for a new brewery. Following its ultra-conservative business philosophy, Coors says it won't borrow money to build the plant but will wait until new income generates the needed cash.

Coors's conservative posture isn't restricted to its attitude toward bank debt. Its owners, Joseph and William Coors, are aggressive supporters of right-wing causes ranging from the National Right-to-Work Committee to the John Birch Society to the Moun-

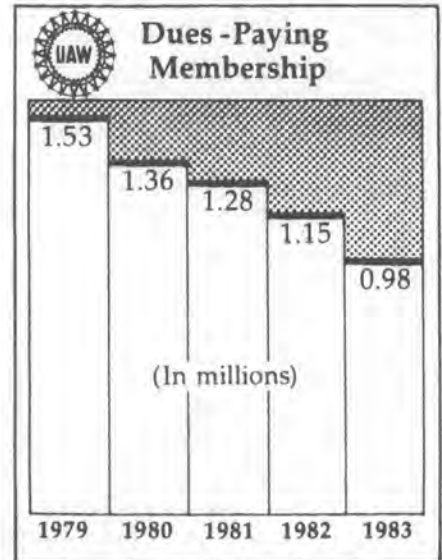
tain States Legal Foundation. The latter's environmental positions became better known nationally when Joe Coor's friend, Ann Gorsuch Burford, and the foundation's executive director, James Watt, moved to Washington. A member of Reagan's "kitchen cabinet," Coors continues to pour cash into the right wing of the Republican Party, including generous contributions to the Heritage Foundation and Jesse Helms's Congressional Club.

In 1977-78, Coors purged a union from its Colorado brewery with such ruthlessness that the AFL-CIO declared a national boycott of the beer. Further allegations of the company's racial discrimination and use of lie detectors to weed out liberal-minded workers fueled the negative publicity. Observers say the company's "image problem" and continuing boycott by progressives in the West have hurt sales. "Every time they have tried to do something on the positive side to improve their image, they have either put their foot in their mouth or stepped on their feet," said *Business Week* a few years ago.

With a new marketing team and a black regional sales manager, Coors is hoping Southern beer drinkers will not look beyond its image as "the best of the Rockies." But with so much Coors money flowing into the right wing, it's probably more accurate to view the beer as "the best of the Stone Age."

Japanese truck plant poses threat to UAW

Nissan pickup trucks began rolling out of the largest Japanese-owned factory in the U.S. in mid-June. Located in Smyrna, Tennessee, about 15 miles southeast of Nashville, the \$600 million plant will eventually produce 10,000 trucks a month with up to 2,000 workers, or "production technicians," as the Japanese and American manage-



ment team prefers to call its hourly-paid employees.

The plant boasts Japanese-style consensus decision-making, quality control circles, calisthenic breaks, a single cafeteria for white- and blue-collar workers (to promote "solidarity"), and more robots (220) than any other auto factory in the world.

One more superlative, this one supplied by Marvin T. Runyon, a white-haired Texan and former Ford Motor executive who is president of Nissan's American subsidiary: "We'll have the best labor-management relations anywhere." No union will be necessary, bristles Runyon, because that would introduce "an adversarial third party, and that never helps."

Alan Jakes, 28, punches hoods out of sheets of steel with a giant press and likes the Japanese approach to production-line work. "They won't let you sit in one place and get bored," he says. "They move you around. It will be years before I know every job in my area. I'm sure some places need unions, but this place isn't one of them."

When reporters asked the United Auto Workers (UAW) about the obvious threat Nissan's anti-union venture poses for its bargaining power, the union dutifully responded with its own saber rattling. Doug Fraser said it

would be "intolerable" to allow the world's fourth largest automaker to set up a nonunion base in the U.S. His successor, UAW president Owen Bieber, calls organizing the Smyrna plant a "must win" situation, as "important" for us now as organizing Ford and GM was in the '30s and '40s."

In a more reflective mood, Bieber admits it could be "several years" before organizing begins in earnest and workers "discover that there is a difference between benefits which are given and benefits which are enjoyed as a right."

Indeed, given the problems the UAW faces in maintaining its leverage within the volatile U.S. auto industry, its difficulty in organizing three other Japanese vehicle plants in the U.S., and its failure to follow the migration of unionized auto-parts suppliers from the Midwest to the nonunion South, the promised showdown at Nissan could be years away.

"We recognize the need for more organizers to work in the South," says James Clark, UAW assistant director of organizing, "but we also have plenty to fill our plate up here." Makers of auto components from axles to oil filters have opened dozens of plants in the South in the last decade and they now employ over 100,000 workers; but there are still more UAW organizers running campaigns (and winning a higher percentage of elections) in Michigan than in the eight-state Southern region.

Ironically, pressure from Japan could ultimately determine the timetable for organizing in Tennessee. All of Nissan's workers in Japan are unionized, and Ichiro Shioji, president of

Japan's Auto Workers Federation, has told the UAW he will use "every means at my disposal" to help organize the Nissan runaway. He refused to give reporters specifics, saying, "If what I have in mind is reported, it would be stopped."

That may sound like more rhetoric, but working from its strength outside the South has paid off for the UAW before. After losing three hotly contested elections at General Motors' runaway plants in Decatur, Alabama, the union finally won representation rights in a trade-off for concessions it gave GM at its organized plants. As the UAW succeeds in its political drive to get foreign automakers to open more production plants in the U.S., it will likely look to new alliances with foreign-based labor organizations to produce similar pressures inside targeted corporations that threaten unions on both sides of the ocean.

Marijuana ranking goes up in smoke

Fayetteville, Arkansas's free-circulation community newspaper, *Grapevine*, decided to investigate the source of provocative reports that the state ranked number two, just behind California, in domestic marijuana production. But each time they cornered a mainstream journalist or editorial writer who had broadcast the state's unusual status with great alarm, they got another reporter's name as the source of the ranking. Finally, they traced the story to one Larry Carver, an agent for the federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

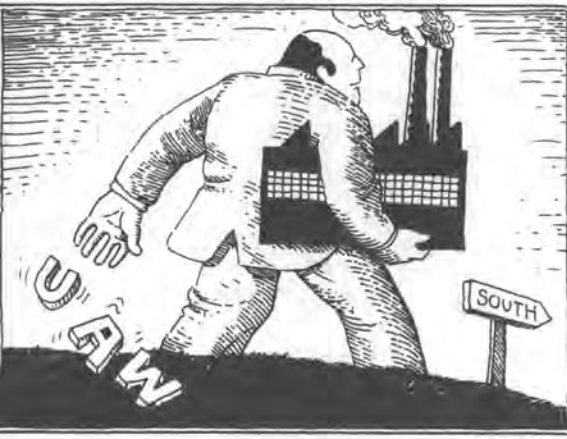
Carver confirmed that he had talked with the Little Rock UPI bureau, but also swore the wire story misquoted him. States can't be accurately ranked since nobody really knows where the illegal crops grow, he pointed out. And what limited data the DEA possesses wouldn't put Arkansas anywhere near the top. (Hawaii, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Oklahoma had the largest number of marijuana plants eradicated in 1982).

Politics governs progress of schools

Governor Bob Graham takes credit for forcing state legislators back into session this summer to pass a package of school finance measures he calls "part of Florida's coming of age as a serious state that's prepared to make a major investment in the future." If that sounds like campaign rhetoric, that's because it is. Graham is expected to run for the U.S. Senate in 1986 against Republican Paula Hawkins, and he's been busy since his first term as governor positioning himself for this next race.

Education, one of his pet themes, got clobbered in the regular legislative session because Republicans and conservative Democrats refused to approve any tax increases. Sales taxes rose to 4 percent last year, and a growing number of Floridians are advocating a California-style constitutional amendment that would freeze property taxes and restrict increases in state spending; proponents hope to get their proposal on the ballot in 1984.

The controversy over where Southern states will get new money to support expanding services promises to consume even more legislative attention in the years ahead. Community groups in Kentucky and West Virginia want owners of mineral wealth to carry more of the tax burden, and in Alabama a coalition of blacks, labor, and consumer groups just convinced the legislature to raise \$200 million in new taxes from business



Robert Neubecker



interests instead of the small taxpayer. A state-sponsored lottery was seriously considered in North Carolina, but lawmakers eventually passed a half-cent sales tax increase, the most regressive form of taxation. As a region, the South still depends far more on sales taxes than the rest of the nation, garnering 58 percent of total state tax revenue from this source compared to the figure of 45 percent for all other states.

The first budget passed by Florida legislators called for no new taxes and included \$1.9 billion for education, \$282 million less than Governor Graham wanted. School systems said they would lay off thousand of employees, including 400 teachers in Dade County alone. When Graham vetoed the budget and announced he would call the legislature back into session, lobbying by school officials, teachers' organizations, and parents' groups intensified, and a Knight-Ridder poll showed a majority of Floridians favored raising taxes to improve education.

A fortuitous ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in the week following Graham's veto got legislators off the hook. The Court upheld a state's right to use a "unitary tax law" to tax multinational corporations doing business within its borders on a basis of their worldwide income. "It was like walking down the street and picking up \$90 million from the sidewalk," said Senate appropriations chair Harry Johnston, referring to the potential revenue the tax change would mean for Florida.

In the mid-July special session, legislators adopted the unitary tax law, hiked alcoholic beverage taxes by \$76 million and authorized property tax increases of \$62 million to come up with an extra \$233 million for the education budget. The money will go for a 5 percent pay raise for teachers and a host of programs aimed at beefing up math and science instruction in anticipation of a new provision that will eventually require students to complete courses in these subjects before graduating. A merit pay proposal for teachers, which Graham backed, stalled under heavy lobbying by teachers' organizations; it will be one of the topics explored by a study commission created by the reform package.

Graham called the legislative turnaround one of the sweetest victories of his political career. But when pressed by reporters, he admitted the new money would "probably keep us where we are now." Actually, given the rapid growth in Florida's school age population, education experts predict the state will drop in ranking from 31st to 33rd among the 50 states in its per pupil spending for schools. That's a long way from achieving Graham's much touted five-year plan to put Florida in the top 12. "There's no way this is going to put us in the upper quartile," said Bob Lee, secretary-treasurer of the Florida Educational Association/United. "We're talking rhetoric here, not commitment."

Industry, inspectors sacrifice miners lives

Mary Counts, the first woman miner in Virginia, this June became the fifth woman to die in a mining disaster. The explosion at Clinchfield Coal Company's McClure No. 1 mine in Dickenson County killed six other miners, including one who was only three days from retirement, and it focused new attention on abuses in mine safety regulation.

The Pittston Company, which owns Clinchfield Coal, claims it had the best ventilation system money could buy, but its apparent failure allowed methane gas inside the mine to build up and explode. The federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) had cited McClure for 639 safety violations

since it opened in 1978; however, the pace of production rarely slackened, as one miner told *Mountain Life & Work*: "The company was rushing us for more coal and not keeping the ventilation and rock dust up to make it safe. We were all afraid that something like this would happen."

J. Davitt McAteer, attorney for the Coal Employment Project and the Council of Southern Mountains, said the explosion — the worst in Virginia since 1958 — illustrated how mine safety policies under Reagan have promoted "a general breakdown of the government's fail-safe system." MSHA fines have declined 45 percent since the last year of the Carter administration.

On the state level, investigations of the Virginia mine safety program turned up the news that Harry Dean Childress, chief of the inspection division, owns \$19,000 worth of Pittston stock. Three state inspectors who also own coal or oil company stock were pulled off their jobs, but the state attorney general ruled it was not a conflict for Childress to own stock since he was a chief administrator rather than a field inspector.

At the Fifth National Conference of Women Miners, United Mine Workers president Richard Trumka lashed out at the government's irresponsibility and charged "seven miners died because corporate greed put speed ahead of safety, and profit was more important than human life." Trumka, who faces his first major bargaining with the industry in September, pledged during his campaign last fall to bring aggressive, innovative organizing to the union, including a new emphasis on health and safety protection and benefits. But with the industry in a deep depression, a third of active UMW members on lay-off, and a 70 percent cut in its organizing staff, little organizing is going on.

Contract negotiations this year could be long and result in a strike. The UMW is determined to resist demands for wage and other concessions from an industry that claims low prices for its exports, reduced demand from domestic utilities, and environmental regulations have cut profits substantially. The National Coal Association (NCA) will also use the bad economy to bolster demands for relief from health-minded legislators. NCA president Stonie Barker told *Business Week* that "thousands

SEEN ANY GOOD NEWS?

There's no reason to let us be the ones who sift through the press to choose the material to include in the Southern News Roundup. If you see a feature article in your local newspaper or a magazine that sheds light on what progressive Southerners are doing — or are up against — send it to us. Send the complete article, date and name of publication (with its address if possible) along with your name and address, and whatever additional comments or interpretations you care to include, to: Southern News Roundup, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

of additional mine workers would be thrown out of work and many coal markets would be adversely affected if any of these [acid-rain] bills becomes law."

It could be months before investigators find definitive answers to explain the explosion at McClure No. 1, but the deeper cause for the deaths of seven American miners is the U.S. industry's abiding opposition to safety regulations which keeps it among the most dangerous in the industrialized world.

Louisiana learns dioxin is for everyone

Dioxin, a deadly carcinogen, is regularly applied to tens of thousands of acres of Louisiana sugar cane fields each year, because the state is one of the few areas in the U.S. not covered by the Environmental Protection Agency's 1979 ban on Silvex and 2,4,5-T — two herbicides containing dioxin.

Most residents did not know about the use of the chemical until the Southern Mutual Help Association (SMHA) released the results of a medical study showing the high rate of health disorders in the cane-producing counties, or parishes. St. Mary and St. Martin parishes rank second and fourth in the state for cancer-related deaths. In Iberia Parish, which has one of the highest cancer rates in the nation, farmworkers and farmers are 2.5 times more likely than the general population to die of various types of cancer.

SMHA, a farmworker organizer and

self-help project begun by Catholic nuns in the early '70s, called on the legislature to ban dioxin and mounted a lobbying campaign with the help of a broad range of environmental, labor, and women's rights groups. Bob Odom, Louisiana commissioner of agriculture, downplayed the danger of dioxin, but his own studies showed rising concentrations of poisons in crawfish and catfish which feed off river bottoms.

The farmer-controlled Senate agriculture committee bottled up the bill to ban the herbicides, but a proposal to establish a commission to gather scientific data on dioxin finally passed. It is expected to report its findings in December, 1983 — a month after the general election in which Bob Odom will likely defeat a host of opponents to win another term.

One of his opponents will at least keep the issue alive. C.J. Becknel, a citrus farmer from Plaquemines Parish, helped convince his home parish to ban the use of several herbicides despite the objections of Odom, who has challenged the parish in court. Becknel decided to turn the tables on Odom by running a campaign that focuses on how agricultural chemicals threaten the state's drinking water and fishing industry.

"We're told it will take two million dollars to beat Odom," said Lorna Bourg of SHMA. "Of course we don't have that kind of money. But we're at least getting the word out to all the groups that helped us in the legislature — the Survival Coalition, Women's Political Caucus, Sierra Club, all of them — that it's not just farmworkers who need a different commissioner of agriculture."

Second trial confirms view of all-white jury

Nobody testified that Johnny Imani Harris stabbed Luell Barrow, a prison guard killed along with two inmates during the January, 1974, uprising at the Fountain Correction Center in Atmore, Alabama. But for the second time, an all-white jury apparently accepted testimony about Harris's presence in Cell-block 1, where the guard was found, as sufficient evidence to make him an accessory to murder. On July 26, the Baldwin County jury convicted Harris of first-degree murder, a verdict which carries an automatic death sentence because Harris was already serving a life sentence — in fact, *five* life sentences.

Harris told his lawyers, "You did a great job, but what can you expect from an all-white jury." He has good reason to be cynical about the judicial process. The life sentences he is serving stem from 1970 rape and robbery charges he was tricked into confessing to, and which are now on appeal before the U.S. Supreme Court. He was charged with the murder of Barrow only after then Alabama Attorney General Bill Baxley found an obscure 1862 statute mandating the death penalty for anyone convicted of first-degree murder while serving a life sentence. Baxley had previously charged four other inmates for Barrow's killing, but he was unable to get the death sentence in their convictions. A candidate for governor, Baxley personally prosecuted Harris and won his conviction in 1975.

In 1978, Harris was 56 hours from being executed when a federal judge ordered a stay. Another judge finally ordered a new trial on the Barrow murder charge because Harris's lawyers discovered a prisoner (Jesse David Gett) who swore Harris was not in the cell-block where the killing occurred and because the state withheld evidence from guards that contradicted the testimony implicating Harris.

Before the new trial began in July, Harris's lawyers argued that the trial should be moved from Baldwin County because a sophisticated survey of potential jurors showed that 69 percent



recalled the prison uprising and 57 percent thought a new trial was a waste of time. The judge rejected this argument, and in the longest jury selection process in Alabama history, the prosecution struck all blacks who were questioned, giving Johnny Imani Harris another all-white jury, the same judge as in the first trial, and a prosecution led by Attorney General Charles Graddick, a man who had won election on a pledge "to fry them till their eyes pop out."

While Harris's attorneys impeached the statements of the prosecution's key witnesses, hundreds of blacks and some whites maintained a daily presence inside the courtroom, and a small group picketed the attorney general's office in Montgomery. Defense attorney Paul Soreff concluded that "no reasonable jury could return a death verdict based on the evidence the state put on." Encouraged by the weakness of the prosecution's case, the defense team decided not to call Jesse David Gett to the witness stand, having learned at the last minute that the state had paid for his trip from a New York prison to appear at the trial. Two guards the defense introduced to the jury shot more holes in the prosecution's case, but after two-and-a-half hours of deliberations, the six men and six women returned with a guilty verdict.

Harris's attorneys will appeal the conviction on a number of grounds, including the jury's selection, the judge's refusal to move the trial, and his failure to give the jury the correct instructions. The combined support work of the Alabama Prison Project, Southern Organizing Committee, SCLC, and the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression was evidenced in and out of the courtroom, as was a strengthened sense of solidarity among Baldwin County blacks. As the all-white jury delivered its verdict, Jennifer Johnston, former director of the Alabama Prison Project, looked around the courtroom. "Many folks were crying or had tears in their eyes," she said. "Then, in contrast to the calm all week, a sense of rage developed as someone screamed, 'There's no justice in Baldwin County.' Later on, as a Montgomery SCLC minister spoke to the press, an older woman remarked, 'Someone is speaking out for blacks in Baldwin County.'"

Can World's Fair spur workers to organize

Planners for the 1984 World's Fair in New Orleans called taxicab drivers together to brief them on proposed traffic changes and new routes to the riverfront festivities set to begin next May. Then came the kicker. Beginning this August, a "mystery rider" will stalk the city's cabs, asking pointed questions about the Fair as a curious tourist might do. Drivers who give "positive answers" will get \$10 and be eligible for a trip to Las Vegas. An extra \$5 goes to drivers who sport the Fair logo on their cabs.

As the hoopla spreads, a different group of workers are making serious plans to go after a share of the expected World's Fair bounty. Hotel employees — numbering 12,000 and ranging from maids to dish washers to clerks — are the largest block of workers in the city, and among its least organized. The work is normally seasonal, but the World's Fair May-to-October schedule will bridge the gap between the peak seasons of two years. That's enough steady business to launch the construction of several new hotels in the city, and according to Wade Rathke of ACORN, hotel workers can use their added job security as a springboard for demanding collective bargaining agreements with their employers.

The New Orleans-based ACORN, or Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, is known best for its organizing low- and moderate-income neighborhoods; but last summer its affiliated United Labor Union (ULU) won a representation election among 350 workers at Hyatt's New Orleans hotel. Now with 10 organizers and organizing committees in 20 hotels, ULU is petitioning the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for elections at a number of other hotels — and it's meeting the forceful resistance of an industry that thrives on minimum-wage labor. Union busting attorneys from Kullman Lang are holding up the results of a July election at the Fountain Bay Hotel,

and another firm is trying to use the nation's labor laws to wear down support for the ULU at the Hyatt.

As World's Fair tourists begin arriving next summer, the direct action experiences of ACORN may be called up increasingly to bring employers to the bargaining table — provided ULU has a strong base in the targeted hotel. "You can't do much by calling out a small unit in one of these big hotels, but if we get some contracts and get a strong enough foothold, this industry can't afford to ignore us," says Rathke. "That's why they're fighting us so hard now."

Citizens score wins in utility rate hike battles

Utility rate increases keep drawing the fire of citizens across the South, and in recent months they've scored some direct hits. In June, the Florida Public Service Commission announced it will penalize Florida Power & Light (FPL) if its new St. Lucie 2 reactor doesn't perform as advertised. The plan, proposed by Floridians United For Safe Energy (FUSE), means that "FPL can no longer stick the consumer with the costs of its nuclear lemons," says FUSE's Mark Richard in Miami.

Under the PSC ruling, St. Lucie 2 must operate at the company's projected 89 percent capacity factor during its first year. If it doesn't, FPL will be penalized \$1 million for each percentage point below the 89 percent level, up to a maximum of \$14 million for the year. Should St. Lucie perform the miracle of operating above the projected figure, FPL could be rewarded at the same rate, up to \$11 million for reaching 100 percent capacity.

The average Tennessee citizen will net a monthly four dollar saving as a result of TVA's May 24 ruling that residential rates should decrease two percent and industrial rates increase by the same amount. TVA will allocate its cheaper power — hydroelectric — to the first 2,000 kilowatt hours it bills each customer and will charge more for subsequent kilowatt hours used.

The new TVA rates reverse the prevailing bias toward large-scale, industrial users and instead encourage conservation. The change follows four years of careful work by the Tennessee Valley Energy Coalition (TVEC), which included organizing more than 30 groups — senior citizens, minorities, environmentalists — to testify at hearings held under the Public Utilities Regulatory Policy Act (PURPA).

In Plainview, Texas, the mayor, city council, and townpeople collected over \$1,500 to give the Texas Municipal League (TML) to fight Southwestern Bell's proposed \$1.7 billion rate hike, which was filed in anticipation of the break-up of AT&T. TML has intervened in rate cases on behalf of cities since regulatory authority was shifted from municipalities to the Public Utility Commission (PUC) in 1976. In each case, TML asked cities to donate funds to hire expert witnesses and attorneys.

Under a new law that takes effect September 1, 1983, the utilities must bear the costs of their challenger's experts. That means the people of Plainview will get their \$1,500 back. Moreover, with changes in the members of the PUC, citizens can count on a utility having to work a lot harder before it can take more money from their pockets. For example, Southwestern Bell's entire rate request could be declared illegal because it is based on projected rather than actual figures, as the law requires.

Destructive power of bomb hits Oak Ridge

Scientists who took unauthorized samples of water from streams around the Oak Ridge Nuclear Laboratory (ORNL) may have at last breached the wall of secrecy that has kept workers and neighbors of this weapons facility ignorant of its dangers. Since the "miracle city" rose from the Tennessee hills in 1943 as part of the Manhattan (A-bomb) Project, most Oak Ridge scientists and engineers have literally looked the other way, avoiding the military consequences of their experiments and

accepting the regimented work plans that discouraged any questioning of broader issues such as the health risks of radioactive wastes.

In 1981, brothers Steve and Larry Gough, with ORNL and the U.S. Geological Survey, respectively, accidentally discovered unusually high concentrations of mercury in samples of creek water they were gathering for a possible joint research project. ORNL immediately blocked Steve Gough from continuing the "unauthor-

ized" experiments. He persisted in raising the issue, but through a series of maneuvers, his superiors eventually forced him out of Oak Ridge and, he says, "covered up" his initial findings by publishing their own study for their bosses at the Department of Energy [DoE] in the fall of 1982.

In May, 1983, under pressure for more details from the Tennessee Department of Health and Environment, DoE publicly acknowledged that the mercury contamination in East Fork Creek was due to a 100,000-pound spill that occurred in 1966. Two weeks later, Ed Slavin, an enterprising reporter from the Clinton, Tennessee, *Appalachian Observer*, got an answer to the Freedom of Information Act request he had filed with DoE the previous fall. What he received was a six-year-old document which revealed that between 1950 and 1977 an estimated 2.4 million pounds of mercury had been released into east Tennessee water and surrounding ground areas. At least 475,000 pounds of that had gone into the East Fork Creek, which winds its way out of the federal reservation through the town of Oak Ridge and into the Clinch River.

The dramatic news coverage of these spills sparked new investigations by state and EPA officials and sent waves of alarm through Oak Ridge, with some residents asking for reassurance from the government they worked for and others demanding immediate action. DoE tried to minimize the problems, but residents of Scarboro, an all-black community nearest to the source of the spills, were especially vocal. "I've fished and swum in that creek since I was a kid," said Jimmy Fuzzell II. "There are long sections of the creek where they haven't even put up their signs warning people away. This is typical of how they've treated people in this community."

The flurry of publicity also led Representatives Marilyn Lloyd and Albert Gore, Jr., to hold on-site hearings into DoE's failure to release information about mercury contamination for six years. While Lloyd seemed interested in giving the government a chance "to mitigate people's concerns," as she put it, Representative Gore went after the deeper problems by inviting Dr. Frank D'Itri of Michi-



Charles Burnett

gan State University's Institute of Water Research to testify. Already briefed through a series of unpublished government documents sent to him by the Oak Ridge Peace Conversion Project, D'Itri spent five days touring the reservation and then unloaded another bombshell at the hearings.

"They're using the best available technology for 1945," he told Gore and Lloyd of Oak Ridge's pollution control methods. "They should have stopped yesterday." Mercury was not the worst of the problems, he told the hushed audience. PCBs, radioactive wastes, thorium, lithium, beryllium, lead, zinc, cadmium, and other hazardous materials were being dumped into huge trenches or directly into ponds and creeks. "They're destroying the ground water resources of the state of Tennessee," he concluded.

Bolstered by D'Itri's analysis, state health officials began planning a lawsuit against Oak Ridge. With the EPA also breathing down its neck, DoE finally signed a "memorandum of understanding" with the state and EPA which outlines 11 points in a "methodical approach" for cleaning up the mess and changing Oak Ridge's system of waste treatment.

In the wake of the new attention to hazards, Oak Ridge workers represented by the Atomic Trades Council are reviewing their health records and exploring possible avenues to increase their protection from the days when men waded knee-deep in mercury sludge and were told it was not harmful. Several groups — including the Oak Ridge Peace Conversion Project, Save Our Cumberland Mountains, and the Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation — are also working in Scarboro and the town of Oak Ridge to help citizens monitor compliance with the clean-up plan and to begin organizing for greater protection; DoE continues to exempt itself from meeting many EPA and state environmental reporting and control regulations.

Inside the Oak Ridge plants, there is evidence of new bickering between officials who want to rebuild the wall of secrecy and a new director of Oak Ridge Operations, Joe LaGrone, who wants to project an attitude of conciliation and take steps to correct the damage done by previous directors.

Union Carbide, the private contractor that manages Oak Ridge's day-to-day production of parts for every nuclear weapon in the U.S. arsenal, has already announced it won't renew its contract past 1986. Potential successors like Westinghouse and Bechtel are lining up to take over the headaches — and guaranteed profits — of running a complex that promises to receive increased attention because of the known and unknown health risks associated with nuclear power. As we go to press, new reports from Washington say the government is actively considering offering Oak Ridge as an ideal site for disposal of the radioactive wastes generated by commercial nuclear reactors.

Growers shun liability for slavery system

In one of the state's hardest-fought legislative battles, North Carolina finally made slavery a crime, becoming only the second state (after California) to do so. Under attack is a system of debt peonage whereby crewleaders recruit unemployed men off the streets with alcohol and promises of work, and then physically keep them from leaving isolated labor camps until they pay a vastly inflated debt for their daily ration of food, alcohol, and cigarettes. The prime beneficiaries of this system are growers who contract with crewleaders and disavow any direct responsibility for farmworkers.

Using federal law, the Justice Department has obtained 21 slavery convictions since 1980, 10 of them in North Carolina. But federal prosecution is cumbersome at best and, at worst, misses the point by only applying to crewleaders. A state law remedying both these weaknesses seemed like a good idea to Malcolm Fulcher, the state representative who chaired a North Carolina legislative study commission examining farm labor working conditions. "I had thought, maybe naively, 'Who could possibly be opposed to an involuntary servitude statute?'" recalls Fulcher.

Fulcher got a quick and noisy an-

swer from the state's Farm Bureau Federation, which employed the curious argument that (1) the proposal "is an insult to every farmer" because it "implies that there is slavery being practiced," and (2) the federal law is just dandy for prosecuting the people practicing slavery.

Over the Bureau's objections, the state House of Representatives passed a law making it a felony for a farmer knowingly to employ a crewleader who is holding workers in involuntary servitude. But when the bill got to the state Senate, it was rerouted from its promised place in the judiciary committee to the farmer-controlled agriculture committee, where it almost died.

After more lobbying by farmworker advocacy organizations and embarrassing national publicity, a bill outlawing slavery finally prevailed and included a provision requiring farmers/employers to pass on any complaints reported to them to the county sheriff, under penalty of a misdemeanor. Farmworker organizations are uncertain how this provision will work in practice, but intend to test it when it takes effect October 1. Meanwhile, they're preparing for hearings on September 22 in Washington that could lead to a tougher federal law. Sponsored by George Miller's Labor Standards Subcommittee of the House Committee on Education and Labor, the hearings will review federal anti-slavery prosecutions, which included another crewleader conviction in Florida in August, but which have yet to crack the system supporting debt peonage. As one federal prosecutor familiar with slavery trials said, "We can keep bringing these cases for a hundred years and nothing will change unless the farmer is held responsible."

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE PERSON

The Institute for Southern Studies, publisher of *Southern Exposure*, seeks to hire a MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPER to direct a program for individual donors to the magazine and other Institute projects. Applicants should have experience in coordinating fundraising events, direct mail and/or public relations activities. All staff receive a \$11,000 salary, plus benefits and supplement for dependents. Send resume to Personnel, ISS, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702. Phone 919-688-8167.

Facing South

a syndicated column:
voices of tradition
in a changing region

Fiddling Her Way to the Top

NORTHPORT, Ala. — With a fiddle in her hand since grammar school, Sharon Winters is playing her way to the top.

She's won at least 75 prizes in Southeastern fiddling and bluegrass contests, including seventh place in 1982 at Nashville's prestigious Grand Master Fiddler Contest. Given the extent of her credentials — trophies, certificates, belt buckles, plaques, and cash — it sounds as though she's old as a grandmother. But Sharon is 19 and a college freshman.

It all started in 1975 when the 11-year-old daughter and granddaughter of fiddlers took violin lessons through a school string program. After she learned the basics, Sharon's father encouraged her to play simple fiddle melodies.

Then one evening, father and daughter attended a once-a-week gathering of fiddlers, pickers, and other "old-time" music-makers across the river from Northport at Tuscaloosa's Capitol Park. Sharon stood at center stage scared stiff, but then she lifted her fiddle and came forth with a sonorous "Red River Valley."

It was Sharon's debut but the timid youngster made her father, Randy Winters, stand beside her and play along, note for note. For weeks, the twosome continued to regale the gathering with just that one tune. Then Sharon began to gain confidence, and she broadened her repertoire to include a few more numbers. She also started playing on her own.

Throughout her childhood, Sharon had heard only the traditional mode of fiddle play carried generations back from Ireland to Appalachia and rooted deeply in the Winters family. She was less than enthusiastic.

But in 1976, a few months after she had begun to play seriously, the 12-

year-old attended an old-time music and bluegrass festival in Tuscaloosa. The event drew some of the best fiddlers in the South, with flashy, impressive styles she had never thought possible.

Sharon quickly became a fan of "Texas-style fiddling," which involves highly intricate variations and rhythms based only on the major melodic theme. She talked to a Texas-style fiddler, studied tapes of his music, and



illustration by Frank Holyfield

began a rigorous, all-day-and-into-the-night practice schedule, putting down her fiddle only for meals.

"The Texas style requires loose wrist action which moves in a figure eight," Sharon explains. "There is no action above the elbow. It comes with hours of practice in front of a mirror. I watch my arm in the mirror and make sure it's doing what it's supposed to do."

One of Sharon's back-up guitarists, Claudie Holt of Birmingham, believes her right arm figures highly in her success.

"She has an awfully good bow arm," says Holt. "She has a long arm and she has a natural way of using it. She stresses the downbeat, too. That's the strong beat and not all fiddle players do that."

Sharon's parents, her most ardent supporters, go on the road with their fiddler daughter about twice a month during a contest season running from April through November. The family's Southern travels and the talented college freshman's practice have paid off big, with an array of

honors ranging from "grand champion" to "fiddle champ" to "fiddle king." But *king*?

"They didn't plan ahead," Sharon laughs. "They weren't expecting to give the prize to a girl."

One of only two or three young Alabama women to compete in the fiddling arena, Sharon discovered many more female fiddlers at Nashville's Grand Master. "Last year we counted 10 girls in the eliminations and they were as good as most of the men."

Sharon has done pretty well at the Grand Master herself. At 14, she made the semi-finals. At 16, she accomplished the same feat. At 17, she did it again. Last June, the 18-year-old fingered and bowed her way to seventh place.

Although Texas style is Sharon's favorite fiddling mode, she is also at home with the Modern Progressive technique (used widely in Alabama, Tennessee, and Kentucky), with the Cajun fiddling of Louisiana, with the Bob Wills Texas Swing, with bluegrass, country, and classical violin. She once cut a record of some of her favorite tunes, and is the only fiddle teacher in the Tuscaloosa area. What's more, she also plays the mandolin and has won about 20 first-place prizes as a buck-dancer. Little wonder, then, that Felix Blackwell of Tuscaloosa, another of her back-up guitarists, observes, "Anywhere there is a gathering of fiddlers, Sharon is the topic of conversation."

— NANCY CALLAHAN
freelance
Montgomery, Ala.

"Facing South" is published each week by the Institute for Southern Studies. It appears as a syndicated column in more than 80 Southern newspapers, magazines, and newsletters.

VOICES OF OUR NEIGHBORS

EAST GERMANY

Women for Peace

The East German government today faces a growing peace movement focused not on NATO but on the weapons and militarism of its own state. Protests have been largely centered in the Protestant churches. Recently, a new component has been added to the debate following passage of a Military Service Law with a clause providing for the conscription of women in times of national emergency.

In response to this new law, a group of women addressed a letter of protest to Erich Honecker, the East German head of state. Margaret Cerullo and Marla Erlien of Radical America visited East Germany and report that the group "was stunned by the derisive reactions to their protest. Many of the women have been called in by their bosses, sometimes in the presence of a state official, to discuss their activity. They have been accused of using coercion to obtain signatures. While most have been asked to withdraw their signatures, none have complied. . . . Similar letters are now being signed and circulated in other parts of East Germany."

For the full letter, from which the following is excerpted, see Radical America.

. . . We women wish to break the circle of violence and to withdraw from all forms of violence as a mode of conflict resolution.

We women do not regard military service as an expression of our equality, but as standing in contradiction to our existence as women. We regard our equality as consisting *not* in standing together with *those* men who take up arms, but in solidarity with *those* men who have, like us, recognized that the abstract term "enemy" in practice means destroying human beings, and this we reject. . . .

We women declare that we are not prepared to be conscripted for mili-

tary service and we demand the legally guaranteed right to object to being drafted. . . .

Since it has not been possible to conduct public discussion of this law, some of us have requested such discussion by means of petitions. Others of us had hoped to be able to participate in the resulting dialogues. Unfortunately, these hopes have been dashed, since no one was prepared to begin a dialogue with us about the questions which concern us so urgently.

We were encouraged to raise our questions with you once again by the speech delivered by Professor Arbatow, member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, during the recent peace congress of different world religions recently held in Moscow. . . . Professor Arbatow relates among other things the moral and psychological supports of the arms race and refers to the myth that the stockpiling of weapons and military forces would contribute to security. . . . [Professor Arbatow said.] "This problem ought to be solved through the active participation of all those who are committed to the service of people, not weapons."

We could not have found a better argument for the necessity of our petition.

We ask you to facilitate a public dialogue. □

The Wage Gap

WOMEN'S HOURLY WAGES AS A PERCENT OF MEN'S WAGES

	1972	1978
Australia	78%	93%
France	88%	88%
Denmark	76%	84%
West Germany	70%	73%
United Kingdom	61%	69%
Switzerland	63%	67%
U.S.A.	55%	62%

Source: International Labour Office, *Bulletin of Labour Statistics*

NEW JERSEY

Tax Revolt with a Twist

by Richard Kirsch

"How many of you earn \$50,000 a year?" No hands went up among the 400 union members at the October, 1982, New Jersey Industrial Union Council convention. So Steve Rosenthal, staff representative of the Communication Workers of America [CWA], continued: "How many of you can afford to send your kids to Princeton without a scholarship or financial aid? How many of you fly a Lear jet to work?"

After the laughter subsided, Rosenthal explained, "Governor Kean has proposed to raise gas taxes, but there's no tax on jet fuel. He wants to raise state college tuitions, while President Reagan cuts financial aid. He wants to cut taxes on corporations in New Jersey, while cutting vital state services." Rosenthal then described an alternative plan for funding state services by increasing the taxes paid by people earning over \$50,000.

Like most other states, New Jersey had huge holes ripped in its budget by the Reagan recession and federal cutbacks. Rather than agree to a Garden State version of Reaganomics, two of the state's public employee unions — CWA and the New Jersey State Federation of Teachers [NJSFT] — initiated the Campaign for Fair Taxes at a conference in February, 1982.

During the next several months, the unions constructed a package of progressive tax measures with the aid of Citizens for Tax Justice [CJT], a Washington, D.C.-based research group which helps citizens organize for progressive tax policies. The tax package proposed by the unions centered on a graduated income tax for earnings of \$50,000 and over. New Jersey citizens were then paying the state 2 percent of their income if they earned under \$20,000, and 2.5 percent if they earned over

that amount. The Campaign for Fair Taxes called for higher tax rates for incomes over \$50,000, ranging up to 6.5 percent for incomes over \$100,000. The proposal would have raised \$450 million — enough to maintain state services without resting the burden on low-income taxpayers.

During the summer of 1982, Republican Governor Thomas Kean failed to win passage of most of his tax package. As on the national level, New Jersey Republicans proposed regressive measures while Democrats proposed to sit on their hands, so that the citizen-sponsored tax initiatives provided the only alternative to the governor's budget. When the governor failed to raise enough votes to pass a gas tax, attention turned to the graduated tax proposal which none of the politicians had taken seriously before. Dean Tibbs, executive director of CJT, explained the process: "We have to get legislators familiar with our ideas. Then when a budget crisis hits, the legislators may reach for an idea they've heard about."

Two important legislators moved to support the graduated income tax. In the state Senate, Wayne Dumont, a Republican who believed in fair taxes introduced a measure which would have raised the tax rate on earnings over \$40,000. Then Speaker of the Assembly Alan Karcher introduced a similar measure into his chamber.

In the fall of 1982, coordination of the Campaign for Fair Taxes shifted from CWA to NJST to New Jersey Citizen Action [NJCA]. NJCA, organized in June, 1982, is a counterpart to groups like Virginia Action and Ohio Public Interest Campaign. It was formed as a coalition of labor and community organizations in the state, many of which were already working on the graduated income tax.

The NJCA staff was reluctant at first to take on the tax campaign as one of its initial challenges. Coalition co-director Jeanne Oterson explains, "In order to build a movement for progressive political change, we need to make our issues popular. It was hard to imagine a popular campaign to raise taxes." But the groups involved in founding NJCA continued to push, and NJCA responded.

New Jersey Citizen Action found that it was possible to make raising

taxes exciting and popular — the key to organizing grassroots campaigns on any issue. Particularly useful in popularizing the issue was an "I Pay My Fair Share" tax pledge created by Peter Sandman, a journalism professor at Rutgers University.



NEW JERSEY CITIZENS LOBBY FOR A PROGRESSIVE INCOME TAX

"You won't get far by saying 'Tax the Rich,'" Sandman comments. "Most people in this country hope that they'll be rich someday. Rather than bursting their bubble, the I Pay My Fair Share pledge lets them imagine being rich: 'I'll pay that extra \$100 of taxes if I earn \$60,000.' The pledge also appeals to people's sense of fair play."

NJCA coordinated the lobbying effort for the graduated income tax, putting pressure on state legislators by sending in groups of citizens from a wide range of organizations to meet with them. For example, the group which met with the Senate president included the head of a local tenant organization, two teachers, a worker from Bell Telephone, a senior citizen tax activist, and a legal services attorney — all from the legislator's district.

For many state legislators, the lobbying campaign was a new experience: the Senate president was not accustomed to his constituents demanding that he support a tax increase.

New Jersey's budget crisis intensified through the fall. The governor supported a Republican move to raise the sales tax from 5 percent to 6 percent (which would have hit low-income people even harder). When that failed as well, he threatened to cut \$150 million from the state budget for 1983, aiming the cuts at edu-

cation and urban areas.

The one tax increase that Kean was unwilling to support was the graduated tax on earnings over \$50,000. Kean — who is from one of New Jersey's wealthiest families — said that he would veto such a tax because it would hurt the state's business climate.

NJCA responded to this charge by preparing a research study which drew in part on a *Fortune* survey of the nation's largest firms. "State and/or local personal income tax" turned out to be among the least important factors in decisions on where to locate a business. State services, including those which would be cut in Kean's budget proposal, were much more important.

The final showdown on the income tax came in December, 1982, and shaped up as a partisan battle between Governor Kean and Speaker Karcher, an almost-certain candidate for governor in 1985. As 200 supporters of the tax looked on, the income tax passed the Assembly with the support of all the Democrats but one. Republicans crossed the line to vote for higher taxes. In the Senate, all the Democrats voted for the progressive tax, and its Republican sponsor Wayne Dumont stood up to the governor and cast the deciding vote.

The governor swiftly vetoed the bill, but the progressive income tax did not die. The final compromise, passed on December 31, after an all-night legislative session, included a 1 percent increase in the income tax for those who earn \$50,000 more.

All in all, supporters of the Campaign for Fair Taxes believe that they won a qualified victory. And when the next budget crisis hits, possibly as soon as November 8, the day after the 1983 elections, the newly elected legislators may think of something better than the usual sour remedies. □

Richard Kirsch is the co-director of New Jersey Citizen Action. This article originally appeared in Dollars and Sense (38 Union Square, Somerville, MA 02143; subscriptions, \$16 per year), and is reprinted with their permission.

Textbook mythology

When the Council on Interracial Books for Children [CIBC] examined 12 American history textbooks published between 1979 and 1982, it found little effort there to explain the nature of white racism in U.S. society. In fact, it reports, "the word 'racism' does not appear." CIBC also found "the almost complete exclusion of the voices and perspectives of African Americans of the period" and "a whitewash of the fundamental contradiction between white supremacy and democracy in the United States."

Teachers and parents who think kids deserve more of the truth should get hold of a booklet CIBC has published to dispel the textbook myths, and then get it installed in their classrooms. This booklet takes up the myths one by one, discussing the reality and offering suggestions for readings. Topics like black land ownership, disfranchisement, elections and terrorism, achievements of the Reconstruction governments, and so on are covered.

There's an extensive bibliography, and a filmstrip and teacher's guide with classroom activities and resources to accompany the booklet. Write the CIBC Resource Center for details: 1841 Broadway, Room 500, New York, NY 10023.

Songs of struggle

"Songs of Struggle and Celebration" is the name of Guy Carawan's new album on Flying Fish Records, and that's exactly what's on it. His renditions of movement songs — civil rights, labor, anti-nuclear, etc. — are moving.

So is his written work, and fans will be pleased to learn that *Voices from the Mountains* is back in print, thanks to the University of Illinois Press. This is the classic work that tells the story of Appalachia through its songs, with commentaries and photographs, co-authored with Candie Carawan, his wife.

Order either from the Highlander Center, where the Carawans have directed the cultural program for 20 years: Route 3, Box 370, New Market, TN 37820. The record is \$6.50 plus \$1 for postage; the book is \$13.95.

Grass roots fundraising

In the bibliography of Joan Flanagan's *Grass Roots Fundraising Book* there's a list of "the best how-to manuals," and Flanagan has seen fit to put her own book on it. She would be guilty of false modesty if she hadn't. Her book has no real competition — here is advice in intricate detail on



zillions of ways for nonprofit organizations to raise their own budgets without recourse to foundations, government, or big donors.

Now there's a good reason for fundraisers whose copy is tattered and frayed from long use to buy a new one: a completely revised edition incorporating new ideas and success stories Flanagan has picked up since she wrote the 1977 edition.

The fundraising book (344 pages) is available from the Youth Project, its sponsor: 1555 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, DC 20036; single copies are \$7.25 plus \$1.50 for handling. Bulk order discounts are offered.

To find out about getting Joan Flanagan to consult with or train your group, write her at 2600 North Burling Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614.

Workers' rights

To say that the rights of workers in South Carolina are at a minimum is to state the simple truth. The overwhelming majority can be fired at will for any reason — good, bad, or non-existent.

But South Carolinians do have *some* rights. The two-year-old Workers' Rights Project [WRP], has produced a clear, concise guide that tells how to make complaints and file applications and appeals under the state and federal laws covering unemployment compensation, wages and hours, job discrimination, organized labor, health and safety, and so forth. Samples of filled-out forms are included, as are samples of the kinds of letters to write in given situations.

In one particularly valuable section, WRP offers sound advice on what to do when asked to take a polygraph. While warning workers not to refuse the test if they don't want to be fired, the guide explains the law's requirement that examiners inform subjects about the test and its results.

Workers' rights are also one subject covered in a new information packet created for the many thousands of people employed in the burgeoning microelectronics industry. The main subject is safety and health in the workplace. "Workers are exposed every day to known and suspected carcinogens and other toxic chemicals, acids, solvents, and metals," according to the packet's compiler, the North Carolina Occupational Safety and Health Project [NCOSH].

The packet includes fact sheets on the various chemicals, describing their health effects and precautions to take when using them; on the processes employed in manufacturing semiconductors and in soldering, including which chemicals are used when and what precautions to take; and on control measures that might enhance safety. NCOSH advises workers on what to tell their family doctors about their work environment and job tasks, and offers detailed instructions on how to file a complaint with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

For the guide to workers' rights, write WRP at P.O. Box 3084, Greenville, SC 29602; a copy is their gift to anyone donating \$5 or more to WRP. For the packet on microelectronics, send \$3.75 to NCOSH, P.O. Box 2514, Durham, NC 27705.

PART I: The Trial of Alan & Margaret McSurely

BY CHARLES YOUNG



photos courtesy of Anne Braden

The blast came at about one in the morning. Dynamite blew the boards just below the bedroom window. Inside, Alan and Margaret McSurely were thrown from their bed. They found themselves on the floor, on their knees, gasping for breath. Margaret remembers the odor of sulphur. Alan remembers the dust.

"I was having trouble getting my breath," Alan said. "My lungs hurt. I couldn't tell whether it was concussion or whether it was because the air was so full of dust."

While Alan scrambled into his

clothes in the darkness, Margaret rushed to the crib of their year-old son, Victor. There was no sound now except for the hollow echo of the explosion ringing in their ears.

"Then Victor stood up in his crib and started screaming," Margaret recalls. "When I picked him up I felt broken glass all over him. He was covered with dirt and debris.

"We were lucky it was so cold. It was about seven degrees outside, and not much warmer in that old house. We were sleeping under heavy blankets and Victor was in an infant sleeping bag. I think that was what saved us."

Alan thought a gas line had burst, causing the explosion. He started outside to check. Margaret stopped him.

"I told him it wasn't the gas line," Margaret said. "We'd been bombed. I just knew it. Al couldn't believe it. He couldn't believe anybody would do anything like that to him."

Moving to an adjoining room, Alan looked out the windows into the darkness to see if there was anyone nearby. Margaret quieted Victor, then after a moment they heard a car start and drive away.

"I knew she was right then," Alan said. "It couldn't have been anything

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else. Somebody had been out there, maybe just waiting to see if we came out."

After a period of time — neither can estimate how long — they began gathering their wits and planning their next move. If the bombers didn't hit them again right away they might have a chance to escape.

They hurried across the road to a neighbor's house and called the state police to report the bombing. After the officer arrived and surveyed the damage, Alan and Margaret hastily piled a few of their belongings into their van. It was about three o'clock in the morning.

"It was time to get out of there," Margaret said.

They headed to Lexington, about a hundred miles away, where they had friends.

A complaint was filed with the U.S. Attorney's office in Kentucky asking the FBI to investigate. The McSurelys then headed east, to Arlington, Virginia, Alan's boyhood home.

Fifteen years later, seated on the couch in her living room in Brookmont, Maryland, Margaret talks about the episode with deceptive calm. Her speech is slow and measured, interspersed with frequent pauses. There is a dream-like quality in her recounting of events that cold December night in the Kentucky mountains. She emits an occasional short burst of nervous laughter as she tells the story, as if to ease the tension.

When Alan talks about the bombing he is a bit more intense.

"The rotten bastards might have killed us," he said. "They sure intended to. You don't throw a bundle of dynamite at somebody's bedroom window unless you plan to blow them away."

When Margaret and Alan McSurely arrived in Pike County in the spring of 1967 as anti-poverty workers they knew little about the nature of their surroundings. They knew that it was one of the most severely poverty-stricken areas of the country, but that was about all. Not until they had been

there a while did they learn that in the face of all that poverty, Pike County was the heart of the nation's leading coal producing region, providing enormous profits for mine owners and operators. The county seat, Pikeville, a town of about 5,000, boasted of having more than 60 millionaires among its residents. At the same time, nearly half of the families living in the county were officially designated as poor, with many others just above the poverty line. These were the coal miners and farmers, descendants of generations of mountain families who had known poverty and deprivation as intimately as they knew the level of credit at the company store.

Within a month after their arrival, Alan ran afoul of some of the officials in the bureaucratic structure of the anti-poverty program. As training director for the Appalachian Volunteer [AV] program, an agency under the federal Office of Economic Opportunity [OEO], Alan had considerable influence over the methods and programs instituted on behalf of the local residents. Prior to his arrival he had been working on an organizational plan entitled "A New Political Union," which he hoped would be adopted on the national level as the framework for an independent political movement outside the two major parties. Essentially, the plan called for the establishment of regional councils for governmental rule, to replace the traditional city, county, and state administrative units.

"My idea," Alan recounts, "was that if we divided the United States into, say, 10 geographic regions governed by regional councils the people would have a much greater voice in government decision-making. But of course that meant doing away with the existing power blocs, and it was looked upon as an openly socialistic technique."

On one social occasion at the McSurelys' house, Alan showed a draft of his plan to one of the other members of the anti-poverty workforce. "I probably wouldn't have shown it to him, but living the way we were, pretty much isolated from any sort of intellectual stimulation, you feel like you have to latch onto anybody you can to have somebody to talk to about things you're thinking about. But he got all excited about it, and first thing I knew he'd made several copies and

passed them around to other people. A consultant to the OEO who was a friend of Sargent Shriver (head of the OEO at the time) got wind of it and it blew his mind. He called my boss, the director of the AV program, and told him what he thought I was up to, and if he didn't fire me the AVs wouldn't get any more federal money.

"The firing by the AVs probably radicalized me more than I was before," Alan recalls. "We'd been pretty effective in getting people molded together into an active group, but in the federal programs you had to be careful not to antagonize the local power structure. I guess I had violated that rule. But the people I was working with — the locals — seemed to like what I was doing and we were having fun getting things done."

Perhaps they were, but the local political leaders were not enjoying the efforts at all. To them, it was nothing but trouble.

On the evening of August 11, 1967, one year before their house was bombed, Alan and Margaret were at home in the little rented mountain shack on Harold's Branch when, at about 8 p.m., they heard a commotion outside. Their dog began barking, and when Alan got up from his reading table to determine the cause of the disturbance he was surprised to see 15 county officials and sheriff's deputies descending on their house from the twisting dirt road that ran nearby. Leading them was Thomas Ratliff, the commonwealth attorney for Pike County.

"I thought they were looking for an escaped convict or something," Alan recalls. "I started to open the door but then it just came crashing in on us. They forced their way in, I looked around and they were coming through the back door too. They started trashing all our stuff, dumping all our papers and books and things, clothes too, all over the floor."

Meanwhile, as Alan tried to get the officers to tell him what the trouble was, Margaret slipped into the bathroom, taking the telephone with her.

The telephone — as Margaret sees it — is the one crucial piece of equipment for any civil rights workers, as the link from unfriendly territory to

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the outside world.

"It was instinctive to pick it up," she said. "I just naturally headed for the bathroom. It was the only place where I might be safe."

As it turned out, she was in the bathroom for about an hour during the time the officers were boxing up their papers and hauling them out to a waiting truck. She called people they knew, anyone who might be able to help.

"I just wanted people to know what was going on," she said, "so if anything happened to us they'd know." One of the people she called was a local lawyer who had been friendly toward them.

"I think I knew what was happening," Margaret said. "I guess I had

expected something like that. Al had been going around the county a lot just before that, talking to people at night in little groups, visiting people way back up in the hollows at their houses, getting home late, and I had been getting worried about it. Being by myself a lot at night, and being about five months pregnant, I was getting a lot more security conscious. We'd had threats before, and they'd been getting meaner. I was afraid they might kill Al some night out on one of the mountain roads. Nobody would've ever known who did it or how it happened.

"There were plenty of people there who didn't like us," she concedes. "And not just the wealthy and powerful. Some of the poor people accused

us of being communists too. I asked one man what he thought a communist was and he said it was anyone who didn't agree with his way of life.

"Some of them said we didn't believe in God, we didn't believe in the Bible. But when they raided us and took all our papers and books with them, about all they left was the Bible we had. I guess they didn't figure they needed that to prove we were bad people."

What they did get was a collection of personal papers and documents, including books and pamphlets, among which were writings by Lenin, Marx, Che Guevara, and Fidel Castro. The collection was later referred to by County Prosecutor Ratliff as "a communist library out of this world."

"It was a matter of opinion," Alan relates. "I'm a socialist. I've never hidden that. We had all sorts of things. We'd been working in civil rights organizations and we used anything we could to build collective units."

The McSurelys were charged with attempting to overthrow the government and jailed in Pikeville. The local lawyer whom Margaret had called warned jail officials about allowing harm to come to them.

"I was really scared," Alan says. "Guys had been pushing me around, telling me to hold my head up so they could see what I'd look like when I was hanged. I didn't know what might happen. It looked like a lynch party to me."

Alan was locked up in a dormitory-type room with about 15 other prisoners. He remembers that they all woke up when he was brought in and began asking questions about him. A jailer told them he was a communist.

"I didn't know what they might do to me," he says. "So I just lay down on an empty bunk and tried to go to sleep, figuring that if they killed me I'd be dead when I woke up. Crazy, huh?"

He fell asleep, and awoke the next morning unharmed.

Meanwhile, Margaret had been put in a cell with two other female prisoners.

"When I told them I was charged with attempting to overthrow the government they both said that's what should be done," Margaret said.

The McSurelys languished in jail for about a week while their lawyer tried



Alan and Margaret McSurely and son Victor

to arrange for their release on bail.

Subsequently, a federal panel of three judges was convened in Lexington to review the charge. The decision was blunt and to the point. The sedition law was declared unconstitutional and the charge was ordered dropped. In part, the panel's decision read: "... it unduly prohibits freedom of speech, freedom of the press and the right of assembly. . . ." Further, it stated: "It is difficult to believe that capable lawyers could seriously contend that this statute is constitutional."

The seizure of the McSurelys' personal papers and documents became the focal point of a series of legal maneuvers over the next year. Eventually, all the material was ordered returned. But not before over 200 of the McSurelys' documents had been copied and delivered to the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, headed by Senator John McClellan of Arkansas, which had been engaged in a probe of the urban disorders of the 1960s.

"We [together with their lawyers] decided that McClellan was trying to use the race-riot thing as a camouflage to get at our personal stuff to use for his own ends," Margaret said.

McClellan subpoenaed the McSurelys to appear before his subcommittee and to produce all the previously returned documents. The McSurelys refused to cooperate, contending that their Fourth Amendment rights had been violated in the initial seizure — a point of argument upheld by the courts when the material had been ordered returned.

This point, however, did not prevent McClellan from citing the McSurelys for contempt of Congress, and at the same time branding them as part of a worldwide communist conspiracy. When asked for a response, Alan McSurely replied that yes, they were engaged in a conspiracy — to unite the unemployed, the working poor, and blacks into a coalition that could demand, and get, their rights as citizens of the United States.

The McSurelys were tried and convicted on the contempt charge and sentenced to prison — Alan for a year and Margaret for three months.

In a statement to U.S. District Judge John Lewis Smith, Jr., Margaret said,

in part: "Judge Smith, I hope you don't mind if I talk plain to you. You knew when we were arrested in Kentucky in 1967 and our personal papers apprehended there was a fierce struggle going on between coal operators and the people. . . . You knew our home was raided and our papers were seized under an unconstitutional state law. These papers were given to McClellan, and yet our rights were not protected in your courtroom. You knew that McClellan lied to the United States Senate when he said the subpoenas were based on outside information about our involvement in the national disorders . . . and again our rights were not protected in your courtroom. You

"What we did is worth it because of our kids. They're all old enough to know now. We talk about it. I think they understand."

— Alan McSurely

agreed to a set of rules . . . designed to thoroughly confuse the jury and to violate due process, and still our rights were not protected. You graduated at the top of your class at Georgetown Law School. You're a smart and experienced judge . . . you have an understanding of the Constitution . . . you know the law and the facts in this case. It all boils down to whose interests you serve. . . . Each time you ruled against fair play, you taught more than a hundred of our speeches could. So when they speak of contempt or disrespect for the judicial process, remember what you taught them."

Another protracted legal battle then ensued. For two and a half years the McSurelys lived with the uncertainty of whether they would be going to prison. They made arrangements for the care of their son Victor

— now four years old — in the event that their appeal failed. On one weekend they drove from Washington to the federal women's prison at Alderson, West Virginia, where they thought Margaret would be incarcerated if they lost the case. When she saw the place, Margaret recalls, "I was terrified."

In December, 1972, the U.S. Court of Appeals handed down its decision. The contempt conviction was reversed. The court ruled that the search warrant used in the raid on the McSurelys' house was invalid and that it violated the Fourth Amendment, and that the Senate subpoenas were based on illegally seized evidence.

The McSurelys were both gratified and embittered by the outcome. Margaret said at the time, "I couldn't believe it at first. Finally we were vindicated. And, of course, I was real glad we weren't going to prison. But then I realized that they could never pay us back for all the time and energy we had spent. . . . What could make up for our pain and frustration and fear and helplessness? It was true that the law had ultimately worked for us, and we could believe in the Bill of Rights again. But we had paid a terrible price."

A civil suit for damages was the next step in the long-running judicial saga. Defendants were McClellan, two of his subcommittee aides, and Thomas Ratliff, the Pike County prosecuting attorney.

Over the next 10 years the McSurelys and their lawyers were in and out of court as they fought to overcome the defendants' delaying tactics, principally those of the U.S. Justice Department which was representing McClellan and his aides as officers of the government. Paramount in the defendants' argument was that a member of Congress could not be sued for damages for activities conducted in the normal pursuit of his governmental duties. When the Supreme Court ruled that this protection did not provide absolute immunity, the suit proceeded to trial.

It was November of 1982. For the McSurelys, the end was in sight. All the points of law had been argued. Now, all they had to do was present the facts of the case to a jury, and let

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its members determine how much money the defendants should pay for their misdeeds.

Testimony stretched out over a period of six weeks. The judge in the case, William B. Bryant of the U.S. District Court in Washington, permitted both sides wide latitude in the presentation of their case. The McSurelys were finally able to tell in detail about the events that had dominated their lives over the past 15 years.

One bit of evidence, however, was not allowed — the account of the bombing at the McSurelys' house. The judge ruled that such testimony would be too inflammatory and therefore prejudicial.

On January 7, 1983, the six-person jury ruled for the McSurelys, awarding them \$1.6 million in damages. A breakdown of the damages included \$218,000 charged against the estate of the late Senator McClellan; \$1.2 million against Thomas Ratliff, the Pike County prosecutor and coal company owner whose personal wealth was estimated at \$3.9 million; and lesser amounts against the two Senate aides who worked for McClellan.

The decision of the jury that Ratliff — as the principal wrong-doer in the case — owes the McSurelys \$1.2 million, does not lighten Alan's feeling of enmity toward him.

"He was a public official," Alan said. "He had higher political ambitions and he was using us to promote his career. He was running for lieutenant governor of Kentucky at the time of the raid on our house and he thought he could get some political mileage out of it. He went around telling people how bad we were, that we were communists and that we had all kinds of evil plans in the works. He even suggested that we were planning to bring Russian tanks into the streets of Pikeville to overthrow the government. He hurt us. But he didn't win the election.

"Then a year later we were bombed. There wasn't much of an investigation, as far as I could tell. Ratliff even suggested that maybe we had bombed ourselves to get sympathy. I hate the bastard."

Following the reversal of their contempt-of-Congress conviction, Alan was quoted as saying: "It's not justice that we are finally proved right. . . . Justice would be that we were never arrested, or, if mistakes do happen, justice would be that the mistake was

corrected fairly and quickly." He later added, "They made a real mistake in persecuting me. Before all this I was just a liberal reformer. Now I'm a real revolutionary."

Does he see the outcome of their case as encouragement for latter-day civil rights proponents?

"There are some big 'ifs' connected with that," he said. "If it hadn't been for the Freedom of Information Act, we wouldn't have been able to get the documents we needed to build our case. If we hadn't had the best constitutional lawyers in the country working for us, for free, we wouldn't have had a chance. And if we hadn't drawn a judge who was willing to sit back and let both sides have their say — something we haven't always had over the past 15 years — we might not have won it. Those are some pretty big 'ifs.'"

Do they feel vindicated by the district court jury's decision? Do they feel compensated by the \$1.6 million award for damages?

"Vindicated? Yes," says Margaret. "Compensated? No. Money helps though.

"But the important thing is we made a point," she adds. "They [police and governmental officials] will think twice before doing something like this to somebody else. They'll know they can't step all over you just because they don't like you, or because they're afraid of you or of what you're trying to do."

"What we did is worth it because of our kids," was Alan's response. (He and Margaret had two children each by former marriages.) "The official public indictment was that we were trying to violently overthrow the government. Then, when we refused to turn over our personal papers to the Senate, it looked like we had something to hide. To have it [the case] heard in a calm setting, like a court of law, it's easier for the children to understand what we were trying to do.

"They're all old enough to know now," he said. "We talk about it. I think they understand." □

Charles Young is a free-lance writer based in Greensboro, North Carolina, and Richmond, Virginia.



The McSurely house after the bombing

PART II: The McSurely Case and Repression in the 1960s

BY ANNE BRADEN

The Politics of Coal

Four SCEF Workers Charged with Sedition

Special Issue

This is a special issue of the Patriot—dedicated to SCEF's program, staff and plans, as we enter our thirtieth year, and sparked by the recent sedition charges against four members of our staff.

We feel that these charges were a direct result of our increasing work to organize people for change. But we realize many readers may have been bewildered by them since, in an effort to keep the Patriot from becoming a house organ, we have given far less publicity to our own program than we have to others.

This issue is an attempt to show you where we're at, what we're thinking, and to introduce some of the staff.

Our expansion into a community of some 22 writers and organizers has strained financial resources that, 18 months ago, were supporting only eight staff members. Our opposition to the war, efforts to clarify the issue of black power, a general drop in contributions to the movement, and many other factors have made it impossible to increase our income as quickly as we would like.

Although the sedition case lasted only a month, costs of fighting it amounted to several thousand dollars. As a temporary measure, to pay part of those costs, we have cut this Patriot and the next regular issue back to four pages. For suggestions on how you can help put SCEF on a more solid financial footing, see page 1.

Alone, there are only 22 of us—but with your support we are thousands.



CARL AND ANNE BRADEN enter the Pikeville courtroom to be arraigned for sedition. The following day, a federal court declared the charges unconstitutional (see story this page).

Expanded SCEF Program Seares Mountain Interests

BULLETIN

LEXINGTON, Ky.—On Sept. 14 a special U.S. court held that the Kentucky sedition law is in violation of the United States Constitution. The court freed all of those accused in Pike County and barred state officials from further prosecution of them.

SCEF officials called the decision the greatest civil-liberties victory in recent years. They said it "clears away a major obstacle to organizing black and white people in the South for political and economic action."

PIKEVILLE, Ky.—Four members of the staff of the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF) were indicted here on charges of sedition September 11.

The charges resulted when SCEF's expanded organizing program began to threaten coal interests in the Eastern Kentucky mountains. The local prosecuting attorney is using the attack as the keystone of a red-baiting campaign to become lieutenant-governor of Kentucky.

Charged are Carl and Anne Braden, executive directors of SCEF, and field organizers Alan and Margaret McSurely, Joe Mulloy, a member of the Appalachian Volunteers (AVs) who was working closely with the McSurelys, was also indicted.

The case began August 11,

when Thomas Ratliff (prosecuting attorney for Pike County, former head of the union-busting Independent Coal Operators Association and now Republican nominee for lieutenant-governor of the state) led 15 armed men into the McSurelys' mountain cabin at midnight. He arrested them and seized their library and other personal belongings. Mulloy was arrested a few hours later.

Ratliff accused the McSurelys of working "to take over Pike County from the power structure and put it in the hands of the poor."

He said, "They have been getting real close to our young people. . . . They have helped get boys into the Neighborhood Youth Corps and they have taken some young people to civil-rights mar-

The Southern
PATRIOT ★
September, 1967

Published by the Southern Conference Educational Fund, Louisville, Ky.

photos courtesy of Anne Braden

A federal court jury in Washington, D.C., in January, 1983, awarded \$1.6 million in damages to two private citizens, Al and Margaret McSurely, who claimed their constitutional rights had been violated 15 years previously in Pike County, Kentucky. The damages were assessed against the estate of the late Senator John McClellan, two of his aides, and Thomas Ratliff,

millionaire coal operator who was Pike County prosecutor in 1967.

For anyone ever abused by public officials, the verdict said that two Davids had wounded Goliath, and that the U.S. Bill of Rights could prevail. For Al and Margaret, the jury decision — although not the end, because the verdict is being appealed — was an important milestone and at least partial

vindication in a struggle that started August 11, 1967.

On that day at sunset, Ratliff and 15 armed sheriff's deputies burst into their mountain cabin, ransacked their belongings, took away a truckload of books, records, and personal correspondence, and hauled both McSurelys off to jail. They were charged, under Kentucky's state sedition law, with

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conspiring to overthrow the governments of Pike County and Kentucky. Along the 15-year road to the Washington courtroom, Al and Margaret McSurely saw their belongings confiscated by McClellan, resisted subpoenas of his Senate committee, and were convicted of contempt of Congress. Al was sentenced to a year in prison and Margaret to three months.

Those sentences were set aside in 1972, but by that time the McSurelys had long since left Pike County — at 4 a.m. December 13, 1968, after dynamite thrown from a passing car exploded under their bedroom window, raining shattered glass into the crib of their year-old son, Victor, and narrowly missing killing the three of them. No one has ever been prosecuted for that crime.

The McSurely case is a testament to the legal skill of lawyers at the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York, who represented them without fee through myriad criminal and civil actions — and to the tenacity of Al and Margaret who were determined to prove that public officials cannot trample on rights of citizens with impunity.

They had a lot going for them. They were young (both 31 in 1967), healthy, physically attractive, intelligent, and highly articulate. Through that era's social-justice movements, they had friends throughout the country and the support of the Southern Conference Educational Fund [SCEF], on whose staff they and I worked and whose public-information machinery had been finely tuned through many battles against repression. The public heard about the case, and the McSurelys struggled not only in courts of law but in the court of public opinion. Al said in 1973:

"If we don't fight back in every arena open to us — the courts, the marble halls of the Senate, the press, the streets, the ballot box — we are letting ourselves down and all our brothers and sisters in the human family."

The real story of the McSurely case goes beyond their personal struggle. Its deeper significance lies in the slender ray of light it sheds on a period that has not yet been properly recorded by historians, the

late 1960s and early '70s.

When the McSurelys went to the coal-producing country of Pike County in early 1967, they became part of a growing movement of poor white people in Appalachia that had begun in the early '60s. It was one of the many movements of that decade, inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, that shook the country to its roots and terrified people in power.

The McSurelys themselves as young white people were part of a small army whose lives had been turned around by the black freedom movement. By the mid-'60s, they like many others were on fire to help poor and working white people build a movement that could develop an alliance with the burgeoning black movement to turn the nation around.



Jackson State, 1970

When they came under attack, the McSurelys were just two among many victims of intense repression that descended on the nation's movement for social justice. That period of repression is little understood. In a way, it was worse than the McCarthyite repression of the 1950s — and I lived through both. In the '50s, many people suffered, went to jail, or lost jobs and saw careers ruined. But Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were the only ones killed by the government for their political beliefs. By contrast, in the late '60s, not only was Martin Luther King, Jr., murdered in a case that strongly suggests government collusion and has yet to be solved — but many younger skilled organizers working in the black liberation struggle

were murdered all over the country; black organizers in scores of communities were shot at with impunity by police, and activists were sent to jail with long sentences on a variety of criminal charges, most of which were later proved false. The repression of the late '60s may not be as well known as that of earlier periods because most of the victims were black and so much history is still written from a white viewpoint.

I was traveling the South then as a staff member of SCEF, which was an interracial organization dedicated to civil rights and social justice. I remember well that one could hardly visit any community without finding that its key black organizers were either in jail, on their way, or just out after much struggle. I was also helping to edit SCEF's publication, *The Southern Patriot*, a newspaper covering events in people's movements. Recently, I went through those files to refresh my recollections of that period. Month after month, page after page, between 1967 and 1973, headlines and articles told the grim story.

For example: Armed police attack black student protesters in Houston, five students jailed on spurious murder charges; press and police attack a black liberation school in Nashville that was later forced to close, leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee [SNCC] in that city jailed on conspiracy charges; black organizers in Gainesville, Florida, held all summer under high bonds; six black organizers in Louisville jailed for conspiracy to bomb oil refineries — charges dropped three years later because there was no evidence; police shoot student protesters in Orangeburg, South Carolina, killing three people and wounding 50, the police later acquitted and SNCC leader Cleve Sellers going to prison.

Or: Armed force against high school and college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, with one student killed and 35 wounded; police invade Knoxville College campus, students held nine weeks without bond, one finally sentenced to 10 years; black organizers jailed on long terms in St. Petersburg; organizers of Black and Proud School in Jackson, Mississippi, under attack by local police and the FBI; SNCC organizer in Texas sentenced to 30 years for selling one marijuana cigarette; police attacks on

Jackson State College in Mississippi — one student killed in 1967, two more in 1970; raids on Black Panther offices in New Orleans and North Carolina communities.

Or: Blacks filing for office in Mississippi suddenly called by draft boards; leaders of welfare-rights group in Jacksonville, Florida, charged with extortion after attending a ministers' meeting to ask for money; armed police and FBI attack on house of Republic of New Africa leaders in Jackson, Mississippi, a policeman killed in self-defense, 11 RNA leaders sent to jail in 1971; 20 sheriff's deputies breaking down a door in a working-class Birmingham suburb, shooting, wounding, and arresting two leaders of Alabama Black Liberation Front, because police "believed they were planning" violence to prevent eviction of a poor woman; Black Muslims in Baton Rouge charged with inciting to riot after police attacked a street meeting with guns and clubs.

This is just a sampling. Ghettos were erupting across the country, and in 1968 the President's Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Commission) issued a report citing the cause as social and economic conditions and saying that "almost invariably the incident that ignites disorder arises from police action." But local officials, with federal support, acted from a different premise. They saw every black gathering as a potential revolution and used this as an excuse to jail organizers. The most usual targets in the South were SNCC members, and those with long records of community activism.

The sharpest attack was on two SNCC leaders — Stokely Carmichael, whose presence in a community terrified officials, and Rap Brown, whose troubles started when he made a fiery speech in Cambridge, Maryland, and left town — after which a dilapidated school building burned down. Soon thereafter, Brown was under \$100,000 bond and the subject of 14 court actions.

In North Carolina, at one point, there were 40 black activists in jail on a variety of criminal charges. One of these cases, the Wilmington 10, sparked a decade-long fight-back that generated a new movement. But most victims of repression languished long in jail, and by the time they emerged local movements they had organized

had long ago been destroyed.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and '60s had met violent repression by local officials from its beginning. In the early days there was wide support for activists facing police dogs and fire hoses, and the Movement used the attacks as organizing tools. But the attacks of the late '60s were different. The charges weren't for demonstrating; they were usually criminal charges. Most of these later proved to be frame-ups, but because the nature of the charges confused many previous supporters, victims were often isolated. And the federal government, which had appeared to be on the Movement's side in the early '60s, openly attacked the Movement under the law-and-order

When they came under attack, the McSurelys were just two among many victims of the intense repression that descended on the nation's movement for social justice.

Nixon administration, which saw the black movement as a threat to the nation's security.

Although Freedom of Information Act releases and congressional investigations have revealed much information on government repression, the massive attack on the black freedom movement in that period is not widely known. This is partly a reflection of white domination in our mass media. Stories of FBI undercover actions against white activists have been much more highly publicized than those against black groups. Also, there have not been many court suits seeking to uncover more information. SNCC veterans have talked of such a suit, but it has not happened yet. One problem is that when groups are totally destroyed, as SNCC and some other

black organizations were, it is difficult to pull together plaintiffs to pursue court action.

Thus, the story of the attack on the Civil Rights Movement has come out only in pieces. Some people think the federal repression started as early as 1964 — after Lyndon Johnson was terrified by the challenge of black Mississippians in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the Democratic National Convention that year. Certainly by 1967, the attack plan was in full operation. The FBI Counter Intelligence Program [Cointelpro] actions against Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., are now well known. We also know that on August 25, 1967, (about the same time the McSurely case was beginning), FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover issued a major Cointelpro directive ordering "experienced and imaginative" special agents to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize" what he called "Black nationalist hate-type organizations." Among the targets listed were SNCC, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference [SCLC], CORE, Nation of Islam, Carmichael, Brown, and Elijah Muhammad. And we know that a subsequent Cointelpro memo issued March 4, 1968, expanded the scope of the August directive and added Dr. King as a target. This was the famous memo that ordered FBI agents to "prevent the rise of a Black Messiah." Exactly one month later, Dr. King was murdered.

We also know that a secret memo sent to the FBI by President Johnson's attorney general, Ramsey Clark, September 14, 1967, gave the green light to attacks on SNCC. The FBI, Clark wrote, should use all possible resources to find out whether there was a conspiracy to plan riots and said sources and informants in "Black nationalist organizations like SNCC" should be "developed and expanded." (Clark in more recent years has been on the other side of social struggle, and now represents former Mayor Eddie Carthan of Mississippi in his fight against current repression.)

We who were active in the late '60s did not know about the Cointelpro memos, but we saw what was happening. Some of us were disturbed by the silence of many whites. White protesters were being jailed too — but usually for short periods. With a few exceptions — like the students mur-

dered at Kent State — they were not being shot at, bombed, or imprisoned on criminal charges that carried long sentences. By and large, white radicals weren't doing too badly then.

I commented on this in a 1968 editorial in the *Patriot* — noting that a federal court had just enjoined a legislative attack on the white-led Highlander Center in Tennessee, at the very moment when Nashville police were conducting mass invasions of homes of black militants in that city. "You preserved freedom," I wrote, "by fighting back at the first signs of attack on it. Today the attack is on militant black leaders. That is where the barricades are, and that is where we who are white had better be, if we value our own freedom."

The McSurelys, who are white, were an exception to the prevailing pattern. They were not in jail long, but they could have been among the martyrs of that period. The dynamite thrown at their house was clearly meant to kill them.

Al thinks they were targets because, although they had actually had time to do very little organizing in Pike County, they represented several things that those in power, both locally and nationally, feared.

"Most of all they feared the black liberation movement," he said recently. "But in addition they feared the possibility of an alliance of blacks with white poor and working people; they feared cadre-type organizations of activists like SNCC had built; and they feared independent political action, outside the two old parties. We were advocating all those things."

The new mountain movement, of which the McSurelys became a part, started in 1963. It began with the activities of unemployed miners who, inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, organized a "roving picket movement" when their health benefits were cut off. About that time, SNCC and other civil rights groups were turning from the symbols of segregation to talk of attacking economic injustice. At a November, 1963, SNCC conference Bayard Rustin noted the need to organize the white unemployed to work with the black movement.

Some young whites took that seriously. The Students for a Demo-

cratic Society (SDS) held a conference on Easter weekend, 1964, in Hazard, Kentucky, along with the Committee for Miners, a support group for the roving pickets. Some students stayed in Kentucky all that summer.

That year also, SCEF set up a Southern Mountain Project [SMP] to continue such organizing. Poverty was rampant in Appalachia and unemployment was astronomical while machines did the mining. SCEF had long stood for black-white alliances and felt that now they could be built. In 1965, several groups — including SCLC, SNCC, Highlander Center, the Southern Student Organizing Committee [SSOC], and SCEF — set up the Appalachian Education and Political



Action Committee [AEPAC] to coordinate such work. From then on, a succession of white organizers went to the mountains.

Repression was heavy from the beginning. One of the earliest activists was charged with criminal libel after he wrote an article criticizing local officials. In Knoxville, in 1966, a house used as headquarters by AEPAC was burned. That same year, SMP organizers were arrested for vagrancy and disorderly conduct. Soon after SMP staff moved into Sevier County, a rural area near Knoxville, headlines in the local press proclaimed "SCEF and SNCC in Sevier County," and organizers leaving a meeting were arrested with fanfare on traffic charges.

With the constant attacks, no solid organizing was accomplished by the SMP. But ferment was spreading. In

1964, a veteran of SNCC's Mississippi work convinced the Council of the Southern Mountains, a widely-respected organization headquartered in Berea, Kentucky, to recruit young people to work in the mountains. The result was the Appalachian Volunteers [AVs], funded by the federal anti-poverty program.

The AVs started out by painting old school houses and trying to help the poor get a voice on local poverty program agencies. Within a few years, many had concluded that they must take on the area's power structure, the coal operators. A cross-fertilization of ideas developed between AVs and Volunteers in Service to America [VISTA] and the more radical organizers on SCEF's Mountain Project, most of whom were veterans of the Civil Rights Movement. The McSurelys' arrival in the mountains in April, 1967, cemented these relationships. Al went there as AV training director; Margaret was on the SCEF staff.

Al's employment with the AVs lasted only a month. The AV administrators soon decided he was too radical, and he was fired. Al and Margaret were both very open in their radicalism. Margaret had worked for SNCC in Mississippi; Al had become active through northern Virginia poverty programs. They took their extensive library to the mountains with them, including works by Marx and other revolutionary writers, and displayed it openly. And they talked freely about the need for poor people to organize and take over the reins of government. They also insisted on talking about things like racism and the Vietnam War — issues that the AV hierarchy considered taboo for discussion. All of this made them easy targets, through which the entire growing mountain movement could be attacked.

After he was fired, Al joined Margaret on the SCEF staff and continued his close relationship with many AVs. One of these was Joe Mulloy, who had grown up in a working-class family in Louisville and joined the AVs from college. In summer 1967, Mulloy persuaded the AVs to support mountain people who were standing in front of bulldozers to stop destruction of their land by strip mining. When one such incident caused a mining permit to be cancelled, there was apparently growing fear within the power structure.

Joe and Karen Molloy getting out of jail



Thomas Ratliff, the Pike County prosecutor and coal operator, was running for lieutenant governor on the Republican ticket. On the evening he led the raiders to the McSurely home, he also raided the Mulloy home and jailed him on sedition charges, too. Ratliff announced that his victims had a "communistic library out of this world," and were trying to stir up "our poor," and that McSurely planned to organize Chinese-like "Red Guards" in the mountains. Hysteria spread in the community.

Joe's wife Karen, also a mountain activist, was able to raise his \$2,000 bond rather quickly. But Al and Margaret stayed in jail a week. No Pike County bondsman would make bond for Al; Margaret refused to leave jail without him, and it took us that long to arrange to post SCEF property in Louisville to cover the \$5,000 bond for each of them.

Soon thereafter, my husband Carl and I, as directors of SCEF, were added as defendants under the sedition charges and were also jailed in Pike County when we refused to post \$10,000 bond. We had not been working in Pike County, which is over 200 miles from Louisville, where we lived and where the SCEF headquarters were. But we had been jailed under this same sedition law 13 years earlier and had long been labeled as subversives in the state. Thus, our names were useful to Ratliff in his campaign to convince voters that a plot was afoot in Pike County. Also,

the Republican candidate for governor that year was already running on a platform that promised to "run the Bradens and SCEF out of Kentucky."

Meantime, SCEF had contacted the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York, and its lawyers had immediately asked a federal court in Kentucky to declare the state sedition law unconstitutional and stop the prosecutions because they were "chilling" free speech. To our amazement, a three-judge federal court did exactly that on September 14, 1967.*

Those opposed to the mountain movement were not giving up. Soon a Kentucky Un-American Activities Committee [KUAC] — we called it Quack — was set up to investigate in Pike County and elsewhere. And it never seemed a coincidence that on the very day after the sedition law was invalidated, Joe Mulloy was sent an induction notice by his Louisville draft board. The board kept a clipping file on his activities, he had lost his occupational deferment, and was applying for conscientious objector status.

Joe resisted the draft on grounds of

* Among the lawyers who worked on the varied criminal and civil aspects of the long Pike County struggle were Pikeville attorney Dan Jack Combs; Center for Constitutional Rights lawyers Bill Kuntzler, Morton Stavis, Arthur Kinoy, Nancy Stearns, Randolph Scott-McLaughlin, and Victor McTeer; Kentucky Civil Liberties Union general counsel Robert Sedler; and many other volunteer lawyers and law students who helped along the way.

conscience (the Vietnam War was at its height), and was later sentenced to five years in prison. That conviction was reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1970, but in the meantime Joe was fired by the AVs (at which point he joined the SCEF staff), left the mountains, and spent much of the intervening years either in jail while we raised bond or organizing around his draft case. We had noticed a pattern of controversial organizers, both white and black, being singled out for induction notices. We published a pamphlet on that, focusing on Joe's case and that of another SCEF staff organizer, Walter Collins in Louisiana. We won the case of Mulloy, who is white, but not that of Collins, who is black.

The sedition charges and Joe's draft resistance rocked the Appalachian Volunteers and eventually led to their demise. Joe's stand was especially traumatic. Edith Easterling, a retired miner's wife in Pike County who was on the AV staff and who loved Joe like a son, said to him: "Joe, how can you do this to us? We're against the war too, but in the mountains, when you're called you go."

The decision to fire Joe was made by vote of the AV Kentucky staff, 20 to 19. The issue provoked deep soul-searching. Until then, the unspoken AV position had been that they must not talk about issues beyond local ones, as most Appalachian people weren't "ready" to hear about such things as racism and the anti-war movement. Many AVs decided that was wrong, and some resigned to protest Joe's firing. Tom Bethell, a journalist on the AV staff, wrote a parable that was widely circulated. It was about a mythical group called the Bavarian Volunteers in the German mountains in the 1930s. They took the position they should not talk about German war preparations or what was happening to Jews — because people weren't ready. They thought that by about 1942 such discussion might be possible. By that time, the parable pointed out, World War II was in progress and "nobody ever heard of the Bavarian Volunteers again."

While Joe's draft case was developing, the McClellan Committee went after the McSurelys. By coincidence on August 11, 1967, the day of the

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sedition arrests, the U.S. Senate agreed to McClellan's demand that he be given authority to investigate the black rebellions that jolted scores of American cities that summer. McClellan, an unreconstructed opponent of civil rights from Arkansas, set out to prove the exact opposite of what the Kerner Commission later said; he believed the rebellions were the product of outside agitators and a communist conspiracy.

The three-judge federal court in Kentucky, when it invalidated the sedition law, ordered Ratliff to hold papers taken in the McSurely raid in safekeeping until the time expired during which the state could appeal. The state never appealed — but in the interim Ratliff notified McClellan of the existence of the McSurely papers. Unbeknownst to the McSurelys and their lawyers until later, one of McClellan's staff flew to Pikeville, went through the papers, and took copies of 234 documents back to Washington.

Thus, McClellan found out — among other things — that the McSurelys attended a SCEF board meeting in Nashville in April, 1967, just two days before what he called a riot broke out in Nashville's black community. Actually, the disturbance was rather minor, and was clearly provoked by nervous police. But McClellan was already interested in it, because Nashville police said it had been planned by Stokely Carmichael and the SCEF board. Stokely had been in town that week to speak at Vanderbilt University, and SCEF invited him to speak on the meaning of the Black Power movement then sweeping the country. He did so, presenting a reasoned analysis; he, the McSurelys and all other SCEF people left town 24 hours before the disturbance.

To McClellan, the papers from Pikeville provided the connecting link needed to portray the black freedom movement as a violent subversive plot. There followed the McSurelys' long fight for their papers, their return through tedious court action, and then subpoenas ordering them to turn them over to McClellan. Those subpoenas demanded documents not only related to their own activities but to those of SCEF, SNCC, the Southern Student Organizing Committee, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, Vietnam Summer, SDS, the National Conference for a New Politics (the abortive

effort to run Martin Luther King and Ben Spock in the 1968 presidential race, which was already being labeled subversive by Senator Eastland), and other groups. In other words, the McSurely subpoenas were aimed at organizations that represented the very heart of the social justice movements of the '60s.

The political implications of that sometimes got overshadowed later in McSurely case publicity — after it was discovered that the papers also included love letters to Margaret from nationally-known columnist Drew Pearson. Margaret had an affair with Pearson while working as his private secretary long before she joined the Civil Rights Movement and met Al. The McSurelys revealed the existence of the letters during their contempt trial. By that time, Pearson was dead, and they and their lawyers believed

one motive, in addition to political ones, for McClellan's relentless pursuit of them may have been an effort to silence Pearson, who was fiercely critical of the senator in his syndicated column.

Revelation of the letters made sensational newspaper copy — and was painful to Al and Margaret. There were reports that McClellan had passed the letters and Margaret's private diary around for other senators to snicker over. The episode shocked the sensibilities of many people, including jurors in the civil suit won last January.

The civil suit was filed on the morning the McSurelys appeared before the McClellan Committee in March, 1969, and refused to turn over their papers. It took the intervening 14 years to get it through a reluctant court system and win their



"WIDOW" COMBS BEING CARRIED AWAY; SHE WAS BLOCKING BULLDOZERS IN AN ATTEMPT TO PROTECT HER HOME IN EASTERN KENTUCKY, LATE '60s.

Tri-County News

Vol. 11 Tri-County News Sevierville, Tenn. Friday, July 15, 1984 Ten Cents Per Copy No. 25



Little Jimmy Dickens, internationally-known country music star, will headline the entertainment for the Ellington Campaign at several rallies. Jimmy and his wife, Ernestine, are strong supporters of Buford Ellington and Jimmy expects to make several appearances in Ellington's behalf during the campaign. Jimmy is usually accompanied by his band, "The Cold Tater Boys."

Communists in County?

by Harry L. Hamilton

"Where are you folks from," asked J. W. "Jim" White, of Gate Creek Baptist Church, of the visitors who had made their second appearance at services there.

"Sevierville," was the answer. "Oh," said Jim, "I've been around here all my life and know a lot about Sevierville. Whereabouts in Sevierville do you live?"

"Down the river," "What particular location down the river," pursued Bro. White. "Cobbtown Road," said the three strangers.

"Well," said Jim White, "We've got all the Communists we need in our church, we do not need any more. Furthermore, we don't need your teaching, we don't need your help, we don't need you! Now, get out and stay out!"

THEY LEFT, WITHOUT A WORD.

These words are strong, and yet the fact they were not questioned at all by the delegation from Cobbtown Road pretty well gives us the answer as to "Who is the VAGUE GROUP that has moved into Sevier County."

LEADER IS WELL KNOWN

After months of "exploration" in the county. After using exaggerated reports about "conditions" in Sevier County (TO SOLICIT FUNDS) After being recognized as troublemakers in Knox County — this unwanted bunch moved into Sevier County in force last week.

Heading the move is CARL BRAIDEN, who was sentenced to a year in prison for contempt when he refused to answer questions about his COMMUNIST activities before the House Un-American Activities Committee.

CAROL STEVENS is one of the VAGUE GROUP that is living in the Mark Aitches house on Cobbtown Road. She is one who has been arrested, charged and generally "taken over the coals" in Knoxville because of her actions in the SMP, SCEP, SNCC, PUP, AFAC, and a whole lot of other "cover up" organizations.

Carol, a tall blond girl who seldom smiles in her newspaper pictures, is sometimes listed as a "public relations worker." Yet, the truth is that this bunch that has come into Sevier County DID NOT seek to inform any of the recognized news media in this or any other area, that they were coming here to "meet the people and do what they want to do." **THEY TRIED TO SLIP INTO THE COUNTY UNANNOUNCED.**

WE REPEAT OUR WARNING

Because this issue of TRI-COUNTY NEWS is going into all the sections of the county to householders on all routes, we want to repeat our warning of last week. We informed our readers that workers from Southern Mountain Project (SMP) and Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF) & Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were indeed in the county in an attempt to try to find out just exactly what they were here for, I went directly in the house and interviewed those who were there. A legitimate and sincere group of people would have some concrete reason for coming to a specific area to work.

This VAGUE GROUP could only mumble something about "getting acquainted with the people and seeing what they wanted to do." It was significant to me that not once did they say any of our people had sent for them to come here.

After my trip in the house on Cobbtown Road, I went to find out my files and re-read some of the material I had. The "half-truthed" and "un-informed" reports, some written under Carol Stevens name, of conditions in Sevier County were obviously written to solicit sympathy and money — NOT TO HELP SEVIER COUNTY.

NOWHERE in the reports did I find that the SCEP, SMP or

any of the other "front organizations" had mentioned these facts about Sevier County:

1. The new Industrial Park which has brought at least 1,000 new jobs into the county and the indications that many more are forthcoming.

2. The new roads which have made transportation to Alcoa, Oak Ridge, Knoxville, Jefferson and Cocke County industries really accessible.

3. The new hospital in the county, the excellent county welfare department.

4. The fact that the county has nearly 15,000 registered voters and has NEVER had a reported case of anyone being refused a vote because of color, race, or any other reason.

5. The fact that the county and city officials recognized that flooding was a problem and after much effort a fine flood control program is now under way.

6. The fact that Callisburg has jobs for just about any one who is willing to work, and officials recognized the fact that it is possible for a student to clear as much as \$800 in a summer's work as well as pay his own way.

7. The fact that a wonderful new housing project is soon in open.

THE REASON THEY DIDN'T

The reason they do not speak of these ways Sevier County is helping itself to correct any wrongs that might exist is because supporters do not send money where it is not needed.

I am very happy that we are able to warn you in advance so that when you come into contact with these people you will know who they are. Don't worry if you can't get them to tell you the real reason they are here — trouble makers seldom advertise in advance that they mean to cause trouble.

Ellington For Governor Supper Saturday at SCHS

Cliff Davis, Sevier County Campaign Manager for Ellington, has announced a Barbecue Supper to be held this Saturday night, July 14, at 7 p.m. at the SCHS Cafeteria.

Tickets are available from Cliff Davis Motor Co., Fred Hillis, Sam Stalup (Gatlinburg).

Special speakers will be Keith McCord and Chuck Swann. **(REMEMBER — IT'S TIME to take "Choice" and not "Cheese")**

To paraphrase the old union saying that "no strike is ever lost," those black struggles of the '60s were not in vain. Beyond the immediate gains of that decade, the ripples started then continued to spread. Although many people were destroyed, others managed to survive and live to fight another day — while younger people influenced by those days went on to build new movements in black communities across the South and the country.

In the same manner, the ripples started in the mountains also spread. There followed the movement for justice by disabled miners and widows, the black lung movement, the effort to reform the United Mine Workers, and continuing work to control strip mining and put severance taxes on coal and other minerals. Although many AVs and VISTA volunteers left the area, some stayed and continued working in other ways. Joe Mulloy, for example, worked for a number of years in the mines of West Virginia, and Karen Mulloy worked in a black lung hospital. They were active in people's movements in that state all during the '70s and are still active today.

In Pike County itself, although many programs were crushed, things will never be quite the same. Edith Easterling, the woman who was at first dismayed by Mulloy's draft resistance, shortly thereafter decided he was right. Easterling was soon fired by the AVs herself for supporting Joe, but continued active in Pike County and now works with senior citizens there. She said recently:

"Joe refusing the draft scared me, but it shook us up, made us think. We needed that. If there had been more people like Joe, maybe fewer people would have been killed in Vietnam. Someday, maybe the people who make the wars will just have to fight them themselves.

"It was hard when Al and Margaret were arrested, but lots of people got educated. Many of us had just accepted it that the courthouse gangs were going to run things. Lots of local people like me wouldn't have ventured out and done anything without people like the McSurelys and the Mulloys. They didn't come tell us how ignorant or dirty we were — like some people who came to the mountains. They

DOLLAR DAYS are HERE!

Yes, Dollar Days are back — just for 10 days through — and only for new subscribers in Sevier, Blount and Knox counties.

We "opened the door" in May when we allowed everyone to subscribe to the paper for \$1.00. Several said they intended to subscribe, but failed to get it in on time. So, from now, JULY 15 TO JULY 26, we have opened the door again.

There are just a few rules — it must be someone not now subscribing. And, it must be

someone with a Knox, Sevier or Blount county address.

If you can qualify — and if you want to be listed as one of the readers of "EAST TENNESSEE'S FASTEST GROWING PAPER" then cut the coupon below and mail it and \$1.00 TODAY.

THIS \$1.00 PER YEAR OFFER WILL POSITIVELY NOT BE OFFERED AGAIN TO ANYONE THIS YEAR! So, if you missed in May, be sure you don't miss again in July. Offer good only until JULY 26.

VALUABLE COUPON

Mail the Coupon to TRI-COUNTY NEWS, Sevierville, Tennessee, with \$1.00 for a years subscription.

Name _____

Address _____

right to sue and the final verdict. During those years, Al and Margaret moved to the Washington area, where Al now works as a mail carrier and Margaret as a secretary in a hospital. They were divorced in the early '80s, and their son Victor, born in Pike County and almost murdered there, is now 15; he is very supportive of the battle his parents waged.

The victory came 15 years too late to save the organizing Al and Margaret and others hoped to do in eastern Kentucky. SCEF's Mountain Project continued about six years but in other parts of Kentucky and West Virginia. The AV program went on, in weakened condition, for a few years and

then disappeared. Control of the anti-poverty program was taken over by old-line courthouse politicians.

The pattern of devastation is similar to what happened to black movements that bore the main brunt of this period's repression. SNCC and multiple local movements were crushed. The civil rights thrust was blunted in that period, and the history of the last 15 years in this country might have been very different if it had not been. For one thing, Ronald Reagan might not be in the White House.

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talked to us about how we could really help ourselves and change who ran things. Because of those times, now we have black lung benefits, a tax on coal even though it's not enough, the strip mining is slowed down. The main thing is that more people know they can stand up to the politicians and the coal operators."

Sue Kobak, Easterling's daughter, is one of those whose life was changed by the '60s. Sue grew up deeply influenced by the teachings of Jesus through her parents' fundamentalist religion and later by watching civil rights actions on TV. "It was learning about the Civil Rights Movement that made me understand the poverty I grew up in — and the fact that something could be done about it," she said recently.

Sue joined VISTA in the mid-'60s and later married John Kobak, another VISTA volunteer. He died at 24 of

cancer his friends believe was triggered by a blow from police during the Poor People's Campaign in Washington in 1968. Later Sue finished college and went to law school. She now practices law back in Pikeville, in a firm that lets her concentrate on helping poor people.

"We were isolated growing up in the mountains," she said. "It was like living in a monarchy that people did not question. It was meeting people like the McSurelys and the Mulloys that made it possible for me to know the rest of the world.

"I remember one of the first times I saw Al. He was talking about some wild scheme he had thought up — something about a national transportation system, using tubes. Al was always coming up with wild ideas. I think he did it to draw attention to problems. But I was impressed — just knowing that somebody had the nerve

to think that way and say it out loud. It was the first example of creative thought I'd ever encountered."

It was people like the McSurelys and Mulloys, Sue says, that enabled her to get out — out of the mountains and old ways of thinking. And it was the battle the McSurelys put up that enabled her to come back, to practice law. Could what happened in 1967 happen again?

"Not in the same way," Sue says. "The publicity focused on Pike County really embarrassed people here. But it could happen — it would just be more subtle now. I still don't know whether I'll be able to stay. But I want to; I'm back by choice now."

As for Al and Margaret, they both believe the long fight they made was worth all they went through.

"They succeeded in stopping us from organizing in Pike County," Margaret said, "but I believe this fight opened the way for others to organize and do political work. I hope many people will take advantage of our victory."

For Al, time and the struggle have only reinforced the ideas that took him to Pike County in the first place. He says:

"The vision we and others had in the '60s of poor and working white people organizing to form coalitions with the black movement was a revolutionary idea. Ratliff knew that, the people who ran Kentucky knew it, the FBI knew it, McClellan knew it. That's the bottom line. I hope that people on our side know it too, because it's just as valid an idea now as it was then, and now may finally be the time when it can be done." □

Anne Braden is a journalist who has been active for more than three decades in Southern movements for social justice. She is currently co-chairperson of the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice and a vice-chairperson of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. She worked on the staff of SCEF from 1957 to 1973, and edited its publication, the Southern Patriot.



ALAN MCSURELY ON HIS WAY TO TESTIFY BEFORE THE McCLELLAN COMMITTEE.

Memphis, Tennessee, is not a place where one would expect to find a thriving Yeshiva (Hebrew high school), a Jewish community center that hosted the 1982 International Jewish Junior Olympics, or a restaurant with a name so redolent of mixed cultures as "Johann Sebastian Bagel." But the city with "more churches than gas stations," home of Elvis Presley and Beale Street, as well as the site of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, is also home to over 8,000 Jewish families.

Formal Jewish identification is

al) to the more modern Reform tradition. Four congregations cover this spectrum.

A good example of their religious diversity is the way Memphis Jews celebrate Purim — a sort of Jewish Mardi Gras — during which men dress up as women and vice versa; drunkenness (until one cannot tell the difference between the hero and the villain of the Purim story) is prescribed; and carnivals, games, and a general good time are enjoyed by young and old. Purim commemorates the escape of the ancient Persian Jews from geno-

SHALOM

Y'ALL by Rachel Saltzman

typically higher in the South than elsewhere in the United States. According to a 1981 "Memphis Jewish Family Life Survey" by the local chapter of the American Jewish Committee, more than 90 percent of Southern Jews are synagogue members, compared to fewer than 80 percent in other parts of the country. Moreover, Southern Jews share ties with Jews elsewhere. Several social and fraternal organizations encourage visiting among cities, states, and even regions of the country. B'nai B'rith (for men, women, and children), AZA (a boy's social organization), Hadassah (for women), Hillel (a college youth group), Jewish community centers, and synagogue auxiliaries all provide outlets for social life, charitable obligations, and ethnic awareness.

In Memphis, and in other Southern cities, the Jewish community includes fifth-generation Jews whose ancestors came to the city before the Civil War; second- and third-generation Eastern European Jews; new immigrants from the Soviet Union; and many from other diverse backgrounds. Their religious practices vary, too, from the ultra-Orthodox (the most strictly tradition-

cide, thanks to the victory of the Jewish Queen Esther and her uncle, Mordecai, over the wicked prime minister, Haman.

The holiday begins at sundown, as do all Jewish festivals. Congregations listen to the reading of the Megillah, the scroll of Esther. Whenever Haman's name is mentioned, children and adults alike twirl noisemakers to drown out the sound of his wickedness. After the service, refreshments are served. Carnivals and parties take place the following day (or on the nearest Sunday for most modern congregations).

At Memphis's Orthodox synagogue, Baron Hirsch, men and women sit separately, as they do for all services, divided from each other by a wooden screen. The rabbi and cantor unravel the scroll and read the Purim story in Hebrew, while small children wander about, twirling their noisemakers. At Temple Israel, the home of the Reform and oldest congregation in Memphis, the two rabbis and the cantor prance in costume about the bima (raised platform at the sanctuary's front) and act out the story in English. Families

sit together; adults as well as children are often in costume. The atmosphere is that of an informal play – of participatory theater – rather than of a sombre religious occasion.

The following day more raucous behavior occurs at the Yeshiva of the South, where the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community of Memphis takes literally the injunction to drink until one cannot tell the difference between Mordecai and Haman. Between courses of the holiday meal, men and a few children dance with abandon to traditional Jewish music. Wives sit and

traditional outfit – complete with tzit-tzit (prayer undergarment), payess (side curls), and siddur (prayer book). The child represents not only the contradictions in this particular Southern Jewish community, but those within American Judaism: a girl acting as a boy, a less religiously-observant Jew dressed as an ultra-orthodox one, and all on a holiday that emphasizes disorderly, “upside-down” behavior. Like this child, Memphis Jewry is a mixture of traits from over 5,000 years of tradition, of Western and Eastern European customs, of Reform, Ortho-



photo courtesy of Rachelle Saltzman/Center for Southern Folklore

tolerantly observe their menfolk. When asked why they are not drinking too, they say that someone must stay sober in order to get the rest of the family home that night.

At the Jewish Community Center on the Saturday night following Purim, a more sedate group of adults representing several congregations, celebrate the occasion with a costume party and dinner-dance to pop tunes. Interestingly, the band there is the same group that played for the party at the Yeshiva. But at that institution they had performed traditional Jewish folk songs. The two events demonstrate the contrast between the more assimilated Jews of Memphis, most of whose families have lived in the South for three or more generations, and the far more traditional members of the Yeshiva, many of whom have come to Memphis fairly recently.

The variety of costumes displayed at the different Purim carnivals highlight the diversity within Memphis's Jewish community. At Anshei Sphard-Beth El Emeth synagogue, a young girl dresses up as a chasidic boy (a sect of very religiously observant Jews) in his

dox, and Conservative theology, and of the influences of American culture on an ethnic community in the rapidly changing South.

Jews first came to the South before the American Revolution. Most were of Sephardic (Spanish, Southern European, or Middle Eastern) background, and they often settled in port cities such as Atlanta, Charleston, and New Orleans. Jews first came to Tennessee in the 1790s and to Memphis in the 1830s, '40s, '50s, and '60s. They were a part of the Western European wave of immigration to the United States caused by political and economic upheavals in Europe during the mid-nineteenth century. Since, for several hundred years, Jews had rarely been permitted to own land in much of Europe, many became adept in the only occupations left open to them – commerce, moneylending, and intellectual endeavors. These skills were readily adaptable to their new homes in America.

Memphis Jewry is a mixture of over 5,000 years of tradition with the influences of American culture.

Although some trade and residency restrictions existed for Jews in American colonial days, by the mid-nineteenth century, such restrictions had been largely removed. As a result, many Western European Jewish immigrants joined other newcomers who followed trade routes and set up businesses in the Midwest and South. Some began as small-time peddlers, who increased their wares and incomes by selling much-needed goods to settlers in what were then frontier outposts.

In Memphis and nearby rural areas,

most Jewish settlers came from middle-class business families, who were able to set themselves up as merchants, tanners, clerks, sawyers, clothiers, bankers, cotton brokers, tailors, and painters. According to Herschel Feibelman, a prominent Memphis lawyer, members of his family, who came to the mid-South in the nineteenth century, "were primarily engaged in mercantile business. I can't say that there was anything of the traditional start where they were peddlers. I rather believe that they were people who had some means and quickly acquired the status

of a merchant doing business in a locale, out of a store." Gilbert Delugach, a Memphis businessman, says:

The German Jewish population, which had such well-known names as Lowenstein, Goldsmith, Bry, Block, Halle, Summerfield, Oppenheimer, [and] Dinkelspeil . . . were associated with mercantile establishments. Seessels were in the food business. Boshwits were in the real estate business. . . . The Peres family in the food brokerage business helped start the early synagogue which became Temple Israel.

Religious matters as well as business affairs were of concern to the first Jewish settlers in Memphis. As in other places, one of the first institutions they established was a burial society — a necessity, for Jews could not be interred in Christian cemeteries. These new settlers also took care of the living members of the community and, by 1850, had founded a Hebrew Benevolent Society so that needy Memphis Jews would not be a burden or an annoyance to the city. The creation of both these institutions demonstrated a sense of group solidarity evidenced by many immigrant and black communities throughout the U.S.

Jewish community identity further manifested itself with the organization of a synagogue, B'nai Israel, or the Congregation of the Children of Israel, in 1854. Although an actual building is not a requirement for Jewish congregational worship, the formal establishment of a house of worship expressed a certain material success, as well as a desire for a more visible display of identity in this new homeland. Further proof of the Memphis Jewish community's growth came in 1865 with the formation of a second congregation, Beth El Emeth, by people who wanted to preserve more traditional practices as B'nai Israel became more "Americanized."

The last quarter of the nineteenth century brought change to the Jews of Memphis. Three waves of yellow fever epidemic in the 1870s devastated their numbers; many either left the city for healthier areas or died. But an influx of new immigrants from Eastern Europe between 1881 and 1921 helped to prevent the city's Jewish community from dying out.

photo courtesy of Rachelle Saltzman/Center for Southern Folklore



YOUNG GIRL DRESSED UP AS AN ORTHODOX JEWISH BOY AT TEMPLE ANSHEI SPHARD-BETH EL EMETH'S PURIM FESTIVAL, 1982.

Jews left Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for a variety of reasons. Many fled as a result of pogroms (officially sanctioned and organized persecutions), military conscription, and poor economic conditions. Gilbert Delugach recalls:

My grandfather, who was unsuccessful in general business, became a smuggler of people because a great many wanted to leave and were unable to leave Russia. It was Russian Poland then, legally, so they would be smuggled out – and that is how my father came out – he was almost 16 years old and they thought that he being the oldest in the family, he would have to go into the Russian army, which no Jewish person ever wanted to do, because the life was miserable for a Jewish person in the Russian army. So, one night he climbed in the wagon, under the straw, and was smuggled out by his father.

Ben Sacharin, another Memphis businessman, relates a similar account of his father's escape from Russia in the first decade of this century:

My father came over without my mother. He was being conscripted into the service in Russia. Of course he didn't want to go; to avoid being drafted, he poured some acid in his ear. But they were going to take him anyway, so he ran away. And he left my mother with two girls. They had sort of an underground system. He remembered swimming across the river to get to the other side. When he got over there, somebody took him in and hid him. They helped him along the way, and somehow or other he got on the ship. I guess he must have had a few dollars – enough to get on the ship. He came over here and he docked at Galveston, Texas. And there was a Jewish federation that asked him what type of work he did in Russia. Well, he used to make barrels. So they sent him over to Memphis. He got a job working at the railroad, I think, putting ties on tracks. I think he was making about two or three dollars a week. So he saved enough money in time, possibly a year or a year and a half, to enable my mother to come over here with my two sisters.

Shipboard conditions for most immigrants during that era were hardly luxurious, but the advent of relatively cheap steamship travel in the late nineteenth century made it possible for many middle- and lower-income people to come to the United

States. Cattleboats and freight ships were pressed into service to carry not only Jews, but other Southern and Eastern Europeans. Fanny Scheinberg remembers that journey quite vividly:

When I was 14, Mama, my daddy, and myself left for the United States. We traveled on that boat for 11 days, from Hamburg to New York. At first we got sea-sick – me and my daddy. And my mama got so sick we thought we were going to lose her. We were in the third class. Food on the boat was meat and potatoes, and bread. Water, tea maybe, I don't remember. I think

about 100. I was able to take that and carry it on and off the train and boat. I was strong; I carried it on on [my] back.

The sea journey was often only the beginning of the troubles newcomers faced in this country. In Europe, Jews had experienced prejudice from Gentiles – in America they found it among other Jews as well. As ever-increasing waves of Eastern European immigrants poured into the U.S. the already assimilated and established Western European Jews in the Northeast began to fear anti-Semitic reac-



THE MACCABIAH GAMES: THE JEWISH JUNIOR OLYMPICS AT THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER, 1982.

there were maybe a couple of thousand on the boat. Big boat. They had first, second, and third class. We had bunks. It wasn't soft to sleep there. We had some covers and a pillow, but not much of a mattress. My mama didn't have a samovar [a tea urn which was a common possession of many Eastern European immigrants]. We had three big packages; one weighed about 200 pounds, one about 150, and another

tions from their Gentile neighbors. They did not want to be associated with those they considered to be lower-class, dirty, foreign-speaking Eastern European Jews. Jack Abraham, who runs Abraham's Deli in Memphis today, relates:

The German Jews, most of them came over with a little money. The Russians,

Hungarians, Prussians, Austrian Jews were lucky just to get over here. It was a social separation. Even if some of the Orthodox Jews developed a lot of money, they still were not accepted. They just didn't like each other I guess. Different lifestyles. The Germans came out of clean cities, educated at good schools, and everything else. The other European Jews came out of hell-holes, ghettos – how are you going to associate with each other? There was nothing to associate, no reason.

Nonetheless, many well-to-do Western Europeans did feel an obligation to

and earn a livelihood. Most of the people that came over were peddlers. They just went to Jacob Goldsmith's and he would give them merchandise and they would peddle it in little country towns or in Memphis until they earned enough to open up a store and buy merchandise. In fact he was instrumental in giving my father-in-law his name. When he got here from Poland, he said his name was Yehezkal. And Mr. Goldsmith said, "You can't go around with that name; we'll call you Harry I." And that became H. I. Schaffer.

Once they had acquired sufficient

learn how to become Americans. Fagie Schaffer, whose family ran one of the kosher meat markets, remembers this house from the 1920s and 1930s:

We had a house called the Jewish Neighborhood House. And there was a very lovely lady, Mrs. Miriam Goldbaum, a spinster, a sweet smile, most helpful and very understanding toward children. She taught us the niceties of daily living, like brushing our teeth and "this is the way we comb our hair"; we used to sing a little ditty. And she would show us the proper techniques, and, I guess, the fundamental bits of hygiene that were necessary. Taught us embroidery and crocheting and to read. The main purpose was to teach us how to be Americans so we could help our parents with English. You didn't need to speak too much English; everyone spoke Yiddish.

Yiddish (often called "Jewish") is a German dialect – with elements of Hebrew, Russian, Polish, and other languages – spoken by Jews from many countries. It thus acts as a tie among Jews from diverse backgrounds and also forms the basis of "Yiddish" culture. According to Henry Samuels, a Memphis furniture store owner, and several other members of the Jewish community, adults used Yiddish as a sort of "secret code." When Jewish storekeepers didn't want their customers or employees to understand what they were saying, they would speak Yiddish. Of course, they had to be careful. Fagie Schaffer remembers that her mother's maid "picked up all these Yiddish expressions. You couldn't speak Yiddish in front of Rosie; she knew what you were talking about. She would speak to my children a little in Yiddish."

The use of Yiddish also occurs today. Adults still sometimes speak in Yiddish or use certain words to convey a private message. Endearments, too, are expressed in this "special" language, which is also used to signal Jewish identity with the use of phrases or jokes. Today, because of the decline of the language among many second- and third-generation American Jews, Rabbi David Skopp of Baron Hirsch synagogue gives special classes in Yiddish – another demonstration of the strong current interest in reviving and preserving Jewish culture in Memphis.

Even in the early part of this century, Jews believed it necessary to preserve Yiddish culture. At the

photo courtesy of Lakee Brooks



MEMPHIS ARBEITER RING INSTITUTE SCHOOL (WORKMEN'S CIRCLE), c. 1920.

help newer Jewish immigrants. They established welfare societies and placement agencies to disperse the strange-looking newcomers to the South and West.

This planned dispersment, along with letters sent home to relatives and friends still in Europe, led many to Memphis. Some families settled in south Memphis, while others came to an area known as "Pinch," near the riverfront in north Memphis, where the first Jews in the city had lived. Evelyn Weiss says her father came to Pinch because, "He could only speak Yiddish, so he had to go where there were Jewish people that could understand."

Fagie Schaffer explains how the Jewish community helped the newcomers get started in Memphis:

When a family came over from Europe, we would call them greeners, because they were new. Some needed help. They had to become acclimated to the conditions. All of our parents were greeners at one time. They all had to come and learn the language

savings, the new immigrants brought their relatives over from Europe and set up small storefront operations such as dry goods shops, delicatessens, fish stores, kosher meat markets, and furniture shops, as well as synagogues and social institutions. In the meantime, Gilbert Delugach reports, "The German Jewish families were already moving east [where the city was expanding]." Although the Western European Jews had the financial security to help out the newcomers, they had no desire to associate with them socially; in 1916 they even moved their temple closer to their new homes and away from Pinch. Still, one person recalls that the Reform Rabbi Sanfield "was very kind to the Orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe."

Further evidence of the established Jews' desire to help out, yet remain separate, came in 1901. By the turn of the century there were so many Eastern European immigrants in Memphis that the Western European Jews founded a Neighborhood House, where these "foreigners" could go to

Arbeiter Ring, or Workmen's Circle, adults and children attended classes and functions for this purpose. Lewis Kramer, an active member, says:

It was a secular Jewish fraternal order. It had Yiddish schools. We had a Workmen's Circle, had all kinds of people. Some of the most religious people still belonged to the Workmen's Circle. [It] projected a better and a more just and righteous world, and they believed in that. After all, the Torah and the Yiddish law is all about justice and righteousness and brotherhood, and that's what the Workmen's Circle stood for.

Although it was called the "Workmen's Circle," this group does not seem to have been primarily a political organization in Memphis, especially in a class-conscious sense. Ben Sacharin recalls, "They weren't socialists, but it was a national organization and maybe some of them leaned toward being socialists. But no, most of the people went there, I guess, just to be with other people." (Gilbert Delugach disagrees, however; "They were socialists, although some of them later became wealthy — and ceased to be socialists afterwards.")

Rosalee Abraham remembers mostly the social rather than the political aspects of the Arbeiter Ring:

It was a real social thing; everybody would go and several mothers would cook one Sunday and several mothers some other Sunday. And they cooked a big lunch and big dinner, and they'd take the children and spend the whole day there. And they'd show movies, and play in the yard, and have a wonderful time. We'd have more fun on Sundays than doing anything else in the world. And there was lasting friendships. We were all friends for years and years. And we went on hayrides, swimming parties out on the lake. They'd get a truck and we'd all go out on a hay ride. They [also] had Yiddish theaters; they still have them once a year.

Social life, such as that provided by the Arbeiter Ring, was and is important for Memphis Jews. Besides the Workmen's Circle, several institutions still in existence provided that outlet: Hadassah, AZA, B'nai B'rith, and Masonic societies were only a few active in the first third of this century. Evelyn Weiss recalls the

Menorah Institute, a one-time education wing of Baron Hirsch synagogue, with particular fondness:

I think that during those days [the Menorah] was the highlight of Memphis. Any Jewish children in the city were always welcome. It was a four-story building and on the fourth floor was a tremendous dance hall, and it was the only Jewish place large enough to accommodate such dances. The different groups would rent out the facilities and would throw a party. And there was a dance with a band every Sunday night.

There were blue laws where the

Pinch because all the children that were raised in the Pinch looked forward to their people coming on Saturday night to pick up their delicatessen and their meat from the butcher shops and everything. And we would all be playing hopscotch and jump rope. On Saturday nights, we got to play with some other children who came from the outlying areas, south Memphis where my husband's family came from. That was a long way from here, but he had a car and he would drive on Saturday nights and he would bring the kids.

Saturday night was not the only



photo courtesy of Fagie Schaffer

AARON DUBROVNER'S KOSHER BUTCHER STORE IN PINCH, c. 1920.

Jewish people were allowed to [have social gatherings] on Sunday, but the Christians were not. Different groups would sponsor a different week, and they would be responsible for refreshments — hot dogs and drinks — and sell it and make money for their particular organization. Yom Kippur [the holiest day of the Jewish year, the day of atonement] was usually the AZA night, after Yom Kippur was over. That was the highlight. If a girl didn't have a date that night she really was just not very popular. That was the only big thing that everyone wanted to go to. Once everyone got there, it was like one big happy family.

That family atmosphere extended to the business world of the north Memphis neighborhood. After the Jewish Sabbath, (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset), when many of the stores catering to Jewish needs were closed, the area came alive for Saturday night shopping and socializing. Rosalee Abraham remembers:

Saturday nights was the night in the

busy time for the shopkeepers of north Memphis. Fagie Schaffer recalls:

Most of the immigrants were really poor and they struggled to make a living. It wasn't easy for them. Only the ultra-religious, like Papa, stayed closed on Shabbos [the Sabbath]; the rest stayed open. For the merchants who kept their stores open on Sabbath, the country trade came in. And the colored folks in their wagons drawn by mules would come early in the morning, spend the day, and leave by dark.

It was through the exchange of goods and services that the Memphis black and Jewish communities most often interacted. Ben Sacharin recalls:

Oh yes, we were open on Saturday — a little on Friday. If you didn't do business on Saturday you just didn't do any business. You know, a lot of colored people would come in. They liked fish. They used to come in the wagons. Then they started coming in automobiles. They'd come in and buy maybe three or four dollars worth

of fish, cut in small pieces, which they would fry, and have little things to go along with it. And they would sell it to their own people and raise a few dollars there. We had sort of regular customers coming by.

Many of the Jewish store owners catered to this black trade, both from Memphis and from the surrounding rural areas. But the relationship between Jews and blacks was not as uniformly and mutually benevolent as some Jews remember. It also reflected the varying degrees to which Jews participated in the racism that dominated the broader community. Herschel Feibelman says:

I think they deluded themselves that blacks loved them and wanted them; they probably contributed to some suffering of blacks because they never sought to ameliorate it. They would lend money, but they would also charge more than the larger groceries would charge. They would provide some help to blacks who were unemployed or ill, but at the same time, I think that they took advantage of the whole pattern of society that was designed to keep the black where he was and give the Jew and any other person similarly situated an opportunity to advance. It's quite interesting to see how many of these [Jewish] families produced doctors, lawyers, educators, people who advanced in every avenue of life. They afforded their children lessons in music, dancing, appreciation of culture, and gave little thought whatever to the fact that this was denied the very people around whom they were living. I can't recall a time when anyone speculated on whether or not it was a wholesome way for a community to function. If they thought about it, they quickly did something that made those thoughts go away. There was nothing they could have done about it; they did not occupy positions of influence in government; they weren't movers and shakers.

Despite the usually lopsided relationship with their black neighbors, some Jewish residents of Pinch occasionally had more reciprocal dealings with them. Oscar Makowsky relates that several black doctors lived above his father's shop:

On one side there were two black doctors and on the other side there was a black dentist. When I was a youngster, I had a toothache and I went up there and this black dentist, he did it. I didn't really think anything

of it. I guess Jewish people don't really feel that way — there's only a few.

When I got here, I had never seen a black person in my life, and as I began to understand a little bit of the atmosphere of living here, I could not understand why the black people were separated from the white people, and why they were not given the same privileges to use the same facilities or eating in the same place.

Fanny Goldstein remembers an incident that gives a clue as to why tolerance did not prevail. Once, she and her mother found her grand-

MEMPHIS CITY DIRECTORY, 1855.

mother in an unusual situation:

My mother and I came in one day and she was sitting down with a colored person. They were both drinking tea. My mother said to her in Jewish, "In America, you don't sit down with people that work for you, people that were beneath you or whatever." And my grandmother said, "This person is sending two children through school and do you think anybody is better than a person that makes such and such and sends two children through school?"

Not all Jews regarded blacks merely as servants, but many Memphis Jews did rely on black maids to run their households. Since these first generation families

rarely had large extended families to help with domestic duties, many chose to hire a maid to enable both husband and wife to work outside the home. Wives worked alongside their husbands, many present-day Memphis Jews remember. Fanny Goldstein recalls, "I always said I never saw my mother sleeping, because she worked in the store all day and she baked all night. She ran the store and she was a very aggressive and hard-working woman, my mother." Oscar Makowsky remembers: "My mother, she was very aggressive in business, smart as a whip. She was a mover. She got things done. She wasn't much as far as a housekeeper. She really belonged to the women's rights movement."

Along with involvement in the business world, a Jewish woman usually retained her traditional role as cook; keeping kosher (observing Jewish dietary laws) was considered too important a matter to surrender to non-Jews. Yet Southern customs would occasionally creep into Jewish homes, even in this key area of Jewish culture. Such changes were often due to the influence of the black domestic workers. Fagie Schaffer remembers her maid

would make greens for my kids — couldn't use bacon stock but she would substitute because I didn't know how. She would use brisket or a little schmaltz [chicken fat]. She taught me how to fix good green beans. What I do is take a little oil and put it into my water with salt and pepper, and a little onion and cook it down. Many a dish she showed [me].

Joe and Mildred Krasner explain how their family reacted to Southern food:

You know, the Jewish people were raised different than the gentile people. They were all with the grits and the greens and all that, whereas the Jewish families — we keep with the Jewish way of eating — the way they learned in the old country. Meat and potatoes was the main dish. We'd never heard of salad until we came to Memphis. We never had salad. I can remember my mother putting a salad in front of my father and he said, "What am I, a cow?"

Despite the fact that pork is not kosher, eating pork barbecue is another Southern food tradition that some Memphis Jews have acquired. Jack Abraham, whose family once ran a

meat-packing plant, says that as a teenager — although his family would have no pork in the house — he went out to local cafes and ate it there:

Whenever we went out [for a date], we'd never go home without going by the "Pig and Whistle." I don't remember the old people going there; I was young. You had to go by the "Pig and Whistle" or the "Jungle Garden" and let the people see you. My parents knew I was going to the "Pig and Whistle"; they didn't know I was eating barbecue. I'd tell them I had an order of french-fried potatoes, forget to mention the barbecue.

This exchange of Southern and Jewish foodways also worked in reverse. Evelyn Weiss remembers that her mother's maid "would take all these kosher recipes like streudel and gefilte fish to her church, and they loved it."

White Southerners were also affected on occasion. One rule of keeping kosher is the strict separation of meat and milk products. Fannie Goldstein relates an incident that occurred during the Depression in her grandmother's delicatessen:

The NRA [a New Deal relief agency] gave you stamps to buy things and they gave you directions about a lot of things. We were a strictly kosher business and a man came in — a non-Jewish man — and he ordered a corned beef sandwich. When the waitress brought it to him, he wanted a glass of milk, and she said to him, "I'm sorry, we're not allowed to serve milk with the corned beef sandwich." And he got up and slammed his napkin down and said, "Damn the NRA! Now they're going to tell me what I can eat!"

Jewish and African-American traditions were not the only cultures that mixed in the areas of Memphis where Eastern European Jews settled. The Memphis city directories show that Germans, Irish, Greeks, and Italians also lived in Pinch during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although their numbers decreased as time went on. Mildred Krasner recalls:

We had Italians, and we had Greeks. The Italians had a grocery store across the street from our store — two or three Italian families lived in our area. We got along fine; in fact, we are

still friends with the families that lived along there. We see them, we talk to them, we're still friends. We never did fight or have any fights with the kids.

Fagie Schaffer also remembers little animosity among the children of differing ethnic backgrounds who lived in the neighborhood:

We all played together, [but] mostly the boys — the Greeks, Italians, and Jews. There is a story, one of the old-timers was looking for a minyan [10 males over the age of 13 necessary for a service] in the park. He rounded up a bunch of boys from the park and it was one or two Greeks and he didn't know the difference. He just put a yarmulke [skull cap] on him and let him be part of the minyan.

And according to Fanny Goldstein: "I never remember as a child ever having any kind of phrases slung at me that might make me feel inferior as in 'Jew.' I don't even remember hearing an Italian being called a 'Wop' or anything derogatory toward the Irish people. I think we assimilated beautifully."

But assimilation only went so far; as Fagie Schaffer remembers "a Jewish girl did not date a gentile. It just wasn't done."

Yet Mrs. Schaffer also recalls:

My mother sent me to the Catholic convent to learn to play the piano. At this time it strikes me as odd; at that time I didn't pay any attention to it. I would go into this Catholic convent and receive my instructions from Sister Sophina, who used to rap my knuckles with a long knitting needle if I struck a wrong note. And I recall that during Passover she would give me a big Easter egg and I could never bring it in the house or eat it because it was always at the time of Passover. But she did not corrupt us or give us any of her religious background. She taught me music and that was all.

Despite such evidence of friendly relations between ethnic groups, it was not always easy being a Southern Jew. According to Herschel Feibelman, many were isolated and forced to deal with attitudes foreign to their own. The Jew in the South, says Feibelman,

had to adjust himself quickly to Southern attitudes. He might find differences between prophetic ideal and community practice as regards blacks, but he had to be very careful

and make sure that he accepted the mores of that community or that milieu. No one, certainly not a Jewish merchant, wanted to be called a "nigger lover," which is an odious expression, but which of course would mean that he was more inclined to favor blacks than someone else who lived in the community.

I think the Southern Jew had one other condition which affected his acceptance, and it is not a happy one to discuss, but it existed and exists to some extent right now. The Jew was isolated from the lowest level of community acceptance, because that dubious distinction was reserved for the black. In a stratified society, there was always someone to be below the Jew. In the Northern community, there was a succession of immigrants who suffered this. In Boston it was the Irish. In New York, first the Irish, then the Jews, then the Italians — now the Puerto Ricans perhaps — and then the blacks. So the Southern Jew, very quickly, within one generation, perhaps within in decade or two, began to feel like he belonged.

The feeling of belonging was not always present. Although many Memphis Jews claim to have been unaware of its existence when they were growing up, anti-Semitism did flourish in certain areas of the South. In the early twentieth century, Atlanta was seen as a focal point of anti-Semitism because of the case of Leo Frank. Frank, a Jewish businessman, was convicted in 1913 of the rape murder of a 14-year-old girl. Two years later Georgia Governor John Slaton commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment (Frank's innocence has since been established), but vigilantes stormed the prison and lynched Frank. The incident gave rise to a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and the first KKK crossburning, which occurred at Stone Mountain. In addition, B'nai B'rith, a Jewish fraternal organization founded in 1843, established the Anti-Defamation League ("to work for equality of opportunity for all Americans in our time") in reaction to the wave of anti-Semitic incidents that occurred throughout the South as a result of the Frank case.

Lewis Kramer recalls:

It happened in the year I was born, in 1915. The Jews of Atlanta were terrorized and boycotted and my folks had a store in the neighborhood

where Mary Phagan lived, the girl that was killed, and they were boycotted because they were accused of giving \$500 to Leo Frank's defense fund. It was the only lynching of a Jew in the United States. And such a crime and such injustice that was brought to a man that was innocent. The governor was almost lynched himself because he commuted his sentence from death to life so he could gather more evidence because he was not satisfied with the evidence that was presented at the trial.

When I first got married and we were going to a place called Stone Mountain to a weiner roast, there was a Ku Klux Klan demonstration with all the white hoods [men] and sitting on the fenders of their cars. And it scared my wife and she hid under the dashboard. And I told her if you're going to live in Atlanta, you might as well get used to this, because it's an everyday occurrence. We don't pay no attention to it.

Such blatant anti-Semitism was not evident in Memphis, but one local newspaper, *The Commercial Appeal*, did print the following item from an Atlanta paper on June 3, 1915, in the midst of the Frank trial:

It was soon evident [once the trial began] that the Atlanta Jews were making a race issue of the matter as they rallied about Frank with unanimity, and the trial had not proceeded far before one of Frank's attorneys injected the race question by declaring Frank was being persecuted because he was a Jew. . . . Thousands of Georgians think that whatever prejudice marks the Frank case has been caused by the manner in which his co-religionists in Atlanta and elsewhere rallied to him.

Interestingly, during the same time that the Leo Frank case was being widely reported, the paper also carried reports of blacks being lynched nearly every day. The *Commercial Appeal's* coverage emphasized the illegal nature of the lynching of Leo Frank, condemned anyone who favored it, and conveyed horror at the mob's action. No regret for the lynching of black people was expressed, however.

Some anti-Semitism, regardless of the reactions to the Frank case, did exist in Memphis. Henry Samuels recalls:

Sometimes in business, when you were waiting on a customer, a lot of country people [mostly blacks] come in. You would be making a sale and of course on North Main Street then, out of say nine furniture stores, say five of them were owned by Jewish people. And you'd be writing up a sale — "I'm

sure glad I came back to you, because I almost bought it from that Jew store up the street." I had red hair — they didn't think I was Jewish. That's when you had to keep quiet and take their money and tell them good-bye, you know.

Fagie Schaffer remembers that once "Papa was walking home from the store late one night and some little boys jumped him. He wore a beard and there was some name-calling. They threw stones at him, but these were little colored boys that did that, around the wartime in the early 1940s."

Anti-Semitic incidents were usually isolated. Many Jews were prominent in the Memphis business community and few



PURIM DANCE, JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER, 1982.

Gentiles were likely to risk public disclosures of anti-Semitism, which was not as socially acceptable as anti-black sentiment. Certainly the Klan does not embrace Judaism or Jews, but neither are its anti-Semitic activities anything like the Russian pogroms, which Jews fled in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or the Holocaust. Most Jews living in Memphis today do indeed feel that they belong there. Being Southern has become a major part of their lives. Fanny Scheinberg remembers:

When I first came here, I wanted to go back [to New York], but after I was married and I had my children here, my friends in New York came to visit. They said, "Oh, Fanny, I'll bet if you had the chance you'd like to come back." And I said, "You couldn't give me New York on a silver platter!"

And according to Lewis Kramer: "I

think we are more hospitable [down here], more warm, more close. [In the North] everybody is cold and curt, just for theirself. I wouldn't say everybody, but a great percentage of the people."

For the most part, the Jews who live in Memphis consider themselves as Southern as their Gentile neighbors, but they also regard their community as being as Jewish as any in the Northeast. Race relations, the nation of Israel, intermarriage, and the fear of anti-Semitism are on-going concerns in Memphis — as they are for most American Jews. Support for Israel is mixed, but at the same time, Jewish identity is being exhibited more and more in Memphis today. The existence of Jewish meat markets, kosher bakeries, and even a ritual bath testify to the endurance of these centuries-old traditions, which have been strengthened through continuing contact with Jewish communities in other cities, as well as through national Jewish organizations.

Life in the Southern U.S. has been far from perfect, yet it has fulfilled the dreams of many Jewish immigrants and their children. Says Oscar Makowsky, "I know I've said this before, but the youngsters that grew up in that area, a lot of them became very famous people. What I mean famous, I mean professionally. A lot of them became attorneys, doctors, and Ph.D.'s." They and their families have achieved material success, but, more importantly, they have found religious and social freedoms incompatible to anything they knew in Europe. And their ambition has been to pass on a deep regard for these liberties to their children. As Oscar Makowsky says, "In Judaism the priority is the teaching of the children. You've got to teach the children. That's the only way Judaism can exist," in the South or anywhere else. □

Rachelle Saltzman was director of an Ethnic Heritage Project at the Center for Southern Folklore in Memphis, Tennessee. All interviews cited here were completed as a part of this project during 1982 and are the property of the Center for Southern Folklore. The research for this article was made possible by grants from the Department of Education, Title IX, the Ethnic Heritage Studies Project; the Hohenberg Foundation; and the National Council of Jewish Women, Memphis section.

photo courtesy of Rachelle Saltzman

THE Correct thing

Charlotte Hawkins Brown and the Palmer Institute

by Tera Hunter

During the post-emancipation era, many black Southerners fled the increasing racial restrictions and violence that accompanied and eventually

ushered out Reconstruction efforts. But even in the strife-torn days of 1888, the Hawkins family found the decision to leave difficult. They had lived in relative comfort on and near the North Carolina plantation of John D. Hawkins, a famous English navigator. Economic and social aspirations overrode emotional attachments, however, and six-year-old Lottie Hawkins moved with her family to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where opportunities were more accessible to blacks.

With the generous support of Alice Freeman Palmer, the first woman president of Wellesley College, Charlotte Eugenia Hawkins (she changed her name in high school), was able to attend the State Normal School at Salem, Massachusetts. But at the end of the first year of the two-year course of study, she interrupted her college education at the invitation of the American Missionary Association [AMA] to teach at its Bethany School in Sedalia, North Carolina.

The AMA's tradition of teaching free black Southerners, dating back to 1861, had shifted by the end of Reconstruction from providing white



CHARLOTTE HAWKINS BROWN IN HER WEDDING GOWN, 1912

teachers to supporting blacks to teach and administer schools. This record made the opportunity seem promising and induced Hawkins to return to the state of her birth. But upon her arrival in 1901, her romantic notions about teaching were dispelled by the responsibilities of running a dilapidated, ill-supported country schoolhouse. Moreover, less than a year after her appointment, the AMA withdrew its financial support, leaving the 19-year-old teacher to face the challenge alone.

In response to the urgings of community members, as well as to the promptings of her own ambition,

Hawkins remained in North Carolina and began a solo fundraising campaign to open an independent school. The doors of the Alice Freeman Palmer Memorial Institute, named for her benefactor, were opened in 1902 to "conduct and maintain an institution for the colored race . . . to teach improved methods of agriculture." By the early 1940s, the educator had changed the school's emphasis from agricultural and industrial training to liberal arts — hardly an easy task to accomplish in an age openly hostile to black education.

As an educator and social reformer, Hawkins, who became known as Charlotte Hawkins Brown after her short-lived marriage to Edward Sumner Brown in 1911, was dedicated to improving both the status and the image of black women. She helped organize the North Carolina Federation of Negro Women's Clubs in 1909, and served as its president from 1915 to 1936. The reformist group's mission was to educate and "uplift" the black race.

Brown was also active in the Southern interracial movement from 1920 to 1946, serving as an "ambassador" for her people and attempting to dispel the pervasive notion of the moral and intellectual inferiority of blacks. She believed — and taught — that if Negro women would learn to act like ladies, they would be treated as such. Addressing the "young girl who wishes to make her wheels of life run smoothly," Brown described the "earmarks of a lady" in her book, *The Correct Thing To Do To Say To Wear*. According to Brown, a lady must be "considerate, not overbearing or dictatorial. She must give the boy plenty of room to be gracious, chivalrous. . . . So many of the rungs of the ladder of old time chivalry [have been destroyed by the] cultivated familiarity on the part of the average girl or woman with men nowadays."

Brown's own life stands in contradiction to the Victorian sexual and social mores she extolled in *The Correct Thing*. Though her definitions of "normal" womanhood included marriage, she was single during all but two years of her life. She founded Palmer Memorial at the age of 19, and by 1941 when *The Correct Thing* was published, she had developed the school to the heights of national prestige. The nature of her work in education and social reform required that she mani-

fest many of the "masculine" qualities she denounced as inappropriate for proper ladies. Moreover, "old time chivalry" had never existed for Brown nor for any other black woman in America. The complexities of her times, the ambiguities evident in her life and work, can be traced through the record of Charlotte Hawkins Brown's efforts to sustain her school and serve her people.



"In my efforts to get money now I don't want my friends to tie my hands so that I can't speak out when I'm being crushed. Just what are they going to ask me to submit to as a Negro woman to get their interests?"

Brown wrote these words as she faced a dilemma common to all black educators: how to obtain money from white resources, maintain self-respect, and build a school more attuned to black needs and preferences than to those of white supporters. She could have pumped jugs of water from an arid field more quickly than she could have attracted white supporters in North Carolina at the turn of the century. Expressing the state's sentiments, Governor Charles B. Aycock said, "Education for the whites will provide education for the Negroes." Even the progressives who intervened to upgrade the lagging public school system supported Aycock's osmosis theory. They formed the Southern Educational Board in 1901 to ensure an efficient flow of Northern and Southern philanthropic capital to education in the South. But the board accomplished fiscal savings by directing funds away from Negro schools toward schools for whites.

Brown's most immediate challenge in attracting funds from philanthropists was to present Palmer Memorial

as a place where the minimal dollar would go far, but not further than a black child's prescribed lot. An early school brochure pictures a young boy dressed in overalls, a tattered shirt, and a knapsack, standing on a dusty, barren road. "The students are poor but ambitious," the caption explained. Another shows an older boy repairing a motor vehicle: "The students graduate with a practical education." These brochures were designed to convince potential donors that Palmer Memorial was a worthy cause and to allay white fears that education would spoil blacks as service workers.

Persistent pleading and self-effacement characterized much of Brown's role as fundraiser. Her mother had warned her that whites "can make you or break you." They sometimes did both. The thin line between racism and liberalism surfaced often in Brown's attempts to juggle personal and business relationships with white women. A letter from Francis A. Guthrie, an early white supporter and long-time friend, reflects Brown's predicament. Do not teach "your boys and girls more than at present their natures are ready to receive," Guthrie advised Brown. "Your pupils are not like you, have not had *your* bringing up." She warned Brown that the students' parents, who were "nearly all very ignorant people," would resent their children being offered academic subjects.

Besides revealing a frequently expressed fear that blacks would rise above racially imposed limitations and no longer "work at the hard drudgery of everyday work," Guthrie's admonitions demonstrate her ignorance about black attitudes toward education. (She was apparently unaware of the sacrifices and hard labor that "ignorant" blacks were willing to endure for the education of their children.) She advised Brown to teach morality instead: "Make it impossible for the young girls of your race to be so weak and hold their virtue so cheap. Christ would prefer this." Christianity was often used to justify racist policies when whites gave and blacks received.

Helen F. Kimball, another white donor and friend, had warned Brown to slow her efforts and concentrate on more "practical" plans. Brown apparently did not take her advice and needed money to pay debts. When Brown approached her for a \$1,000 donation, Kimball reprimanded her for

constant begging and bad business methods. Furthermore, she asked, "Do you get help from your own race?"

Getting more help from her own race, and thus cutting down on the humiliation of seeking funds from patronizing and often dictatorial donors, was Brown's ultimate goal. But she was hindered by the constant need for immediate funds to keep the institution afloat and by the lack of resources in the black community, barely a generation out of slavery when she opened her school in 1901. In 1924, the AMA agreed to renew its support at the end of five years only if Brown could raise a total of \$150,000, plus matching funds for current expenses. Brown managed to keep her part of the deal. But in 1932, it became evident that the AMA objected to the shifting nature of Palmer Memorial's development. Liberal arts had become an increasingly important part of the school's curriculum, and Brown had seriously considered adding a junior college. The AMA politely but emphatically bowed out. This lack of sponsorship forced Brown to reorganize the board of trustees, paying particular attention to the details that would again attract Northern philanthropists.

Once reestablished, with a prominent white male Southerner at its head, the board accepted many of the financial responsibilities that Brown had shouldered alone. Yet the school continued to suffer from financial instability. In 1939 Brown reported with dismay, "We have lost 500 contributors in the period of three years — people whose finances have been reduced to the place that they feel they cannot even spare one dollar."

In an apparently desperate attempt to gain state support, Brown proposed to train "refined, intelligent leadership from [women among] the Negro group" as domestic workers to "release the busy [white] woman for civic affairs." Brown asked that North Carolina acquire Palmer Memorial to serve as the "women's department" for freshmen and sophomores at North Carolina College for Negroes (NCCN) in Durham. She sought favor for the plan on behalf of uplifting the declining morality of black women and their status in domestic employment.

According to Brown, rural Southern black women had not received the correct cultural training for developing

"wholesome" characters or the "right attitudes toward life." And since men outnumbered women substantially on black college campuses, the uncultured women were exposed to the "natural evils resulting from such conditions." If the state acquired Palmer Memorial, she argued, more blacks could learn to become "fine, clean mothers" and "good homemakers for themselves and for others." As busy white women entered public arenas, professional black women would manage their homes, "oversee the unskilled," and receive salaries comparable to those of

sition too expensive. (A similar plan was vetoed a year later in 1940, substituting Bennett College in Greensboro, Palmer Memorial's neighbor institution.)

The state attempted instead to create a new agenda for the black institution. It would gladly make Palmer Memorial a home for "delinquent colored girls." Brown herself had helped perpetuate the negative stigmas attached to black women through her emphasis on their so-called immorality. Yet she frowned on the state's plan, explaining her



WOODWORKING SHOP
— PHOTO TAKEN
FROM A 1917 PALMER
MEMORIAL INSTI-
TUTE PAMPHLET

teachers. The proposal aimed to assure whites that black women would continue to be confined to domestic service, and to make such employment appear glamorous enough to appeal to blacks.

Although Brown had persistently defied whites' attempts to limit her school's curriculum, she was now sacrificing her ideals of black education for the school's financial survival. But state officials must have looked askance at this offer to "release" white women, for they rejected the proposal to merge Palmer Memorial and NCCN, claiming that the distance between Sedalia and Durham made the propo-

response this way:

To tell the truth, after forty years of trying to help boys and girls with a desire to do something to go forward . . . to turn my whole attention to incorrigibles was more than I could do. I have neither the strength nor the ability to cope with the situation.

Nor the desire, one might add. At this point in Palmer Memorial's development, certain kinds of youth were clearly unwelcomed. Admissions applications, in fact, italicized the stipulation that "incorrigibles need not apply."

Brown's rejection of the state's proposal to incarcerate "incorrigibles" signalled the beginning of a new Palmer Memorial, quite unlike the image presented in the earlier brochures. Despite Brown's attempts to mollify white patrons, she still maintained her own dreams for black education. After all, her own education had not been shaped by Jim Crow. At the Cambridge English High School back in Massachusetts, she had acquired the same academic and social rudiments that prepared her white peers for mainstream American life. Her New England background provided a vision upon which she was to build Palmer Memorial into a college preparatory school for the fledgling black elite.

Missionary support had failed, philanthropy had subsided, and state support had been denied. Brown turned to "her own people for support," as she had been advised to do. But the number of blacks with resources to support the school were few and their resources scant compared to the more established whites on whom she had previously counted for sponsorship. Funds from blacks came to Palmer Memorial in the form of tuition. In "A Brief Annual Report (1940-1941)," Brown reported that Palmer Memorial had "made a record here unparalleled by any Negro school in the South in the percentage of [tuition] collections from the student body." The number of North Carolinians in attendance decreased as the character of the student body became more urban and national than rural and local. Open admissions became competitive as hundreds of applications poured in to fill the few yearly vacancies.

The ability to pay tuition was a major criterion for selection, for without that income the school could not survive. Selection standards also included such euphemisms as "aristocracy of character" and "Christian background" which could readily be utilized to exclude the poor, the majority. This elite constituency of black students did not travel across the country to learn "improved methods of agriculture." The publication of *The Correct Thing* in 1941 reflected the fact that Palmer Memorial had become a co-ed finishing school which emphasized "smoothing the rough edges of social behavior."

However triumphant these changes

may have seemed, they had larger implications for black education. The new Palmer Memorial was certainly not what white supporters had in mind as "practical" education for blacks. Instead, the school imitated what whites considered the best for their own children, offering students a wide range of academic courses plus extracurricular activities which included European study trips and participation in the acclaimed Sedalia Singers. But molding character remained foremost in the mind of the founder and principal. Brown instilled the kinds of postures and attitudes that would promote socio-economic mobility into the American mainstream. Black students were encouraged to look, talk, and act according to standards of behavior most pleasing and least repulsive to white society.

Palmer Memorial's new agenda was more attuned to early twentieth century thought than to the growing democratic consciousness of the World War II era. In the earlier era, black educators, regardless of seemingly conflicting views on "practical" versus "classical" education, agreed that the talented and educated few must bear the responsibility of changing the lot of the many. The political thrust for universal education had been crushed under the heels of Jim Crow, along with other progressive social reform measures enacted under the brief Reconstruction era governments. Educated and uneducated blacks alike expected the privileged few to utilize their influence, knowledge, and resources to bring justice and prosperity to the race.

The failure of the "talented tenth" to bring about the expected changes led to dissension. Though Brown must have felt that she was contributing to the redemption of her race by providing her select group of students with opportunities generally reserved for whites, she actually helped lay the foundation for class schisms which continue to plague the black community in these latter days of the twentieth century.

Class of 1933



"If I can only render services to both races and if I can have the confidence of both races there may be accomplished some things that we all desire to see accomplished."

Using the podiums of women's clubs and interracial organizations, Brown tried to annihilate the myths that intelligence, morality, and femininity were racially predetermined. Certain black women were just as good as white women, she would argue. But in this very attempt to attack racial and sexual stereotypes, she furthered their continuance. Certain blacks could *become* just as good as whites, she said, if taught the canons of "proper" behavior as defined by white society. The ambiguous role Brown played in early twentieth century reformism is suggested by conflicting views of that role expressed by two of her male contemporaries. Will Alexander, the white founder of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation [CIC], found her "full of fire and resentment, and eloquence," while W.E.B. DuBois, black educator and a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP], declared that "Charlotte Hawkins Brown represents the white South."

Brown had inherited the Victorian sexual values adopted from whites by middle-class black women who pioneered a movement to organize local, regional, and national organizations in the late nineteenth century. The club women selected "Lifting As We Climb" as the motto of their campaign to correct the moral "deficiencies" of the black masses in order to ensure the entrance of a "better class" of blacks into mainstream American culture. Brown articulated these same ideals as she herself came to political maturity as an interracial

A CLASS IN COOKING
AT PALMER MEMORIAL
INSTITUTE



mediator in the troubled post-World War I South.

Periodically, however, when stunned by the frequently brutal reality of being black and female, Brown spoke out with candor and courage against sexism and racism. One such occasion was the first women's interracial conference sponsored by the CIC in Memphis, Tennessee, in October, 1920. On the train trip to the conference, Brown experienced what she often called one of the most humiliating incidents of her life. Before leaving the Greensboro station, she made arrangements to occupy a car with sleeping facilities. "I had just opened school that day and had been working hard all day," she remembered. "I wasn't going into that sleeper because I wanted to be with white people." White male passengers objected to her presence, nonetheless, demanding that she transfer to the Jim Crow car. She angrily obeyed. Walking

behind her humiliators, she became even more furious when she spotted complacency on the faces of the white women who sat by unmoved.

Brown arrived at the conference bitter, angry, and hurt. When invited to take the speaker's podium, she related the incident in a straightforward speech that left the predominantly white group of women spellbound. To give them an idea of the helplessness she had felt she challenged her audience to entertain the idea of being colored and paralyzed. From her own immediate experience, she moved directly to the issue of lynching — the most often avoided topic in interracial groups. "The Negro woman lays everything that has happened to the members of her race at the door of the Southern white women. You can control your men," she said, and stop lynchings.

As if reminding white women of their responsibility to curb racial

violence was not sufficiently unnerving, Brown went on audaciously to exhume one of the most deeply buried ironies of Southern tradition: "When you read in the paper where a colored man has insulted a white woman, just multiply that by one thousand and you have some idea of the number of colored women insulted by white men." Brown's anti-lynching message attacked the region's persistent blindness to the historically forced sexual relationships between white men and black women, contrasting this with the prevalent exaggeration of the threat that black men posed to white women. Sex, or the mere thought of sexual relations, between black men and white women was culturally defined as "rape," and was used to justify mob violence. Brown concluded, "Won't you help us, friends, to bring to justice the criminal of your race . . . when he tramps on the womanhood of my race?"

Though few white "friends" were prepared to challenge tradition, Brown was still determined to test Southern justice, and filed suit against the Pullman Company for the painful insult she experienced on the train. In retrospect, she never described the indignities she suffered in the suit. As she recounted the incident, "My Southern lawyer, taking no percent of the recovery, sued and won."

Actually, Brown's memory of the incident was somewhat faulty. Whether because of the pain of the memory or out of respect for her lawyer and trustee, Frank P. Hobgood, she made no mention of the racist and sexist implications of his attitude. He approached the Pullman Company for \$3,000, but the company refused to pay more than a paltry \$200. The request must have seemed ludicrous to them, for black women were so severely stigmatized that white men who "insulted" black women did so within their historical rights. While Hobgood rejected the company's concessions, he questioned the validity and "wisdom" of Brown's decision to file suit. Was it worth the risk of provoking "vexacious questions" about the morality of black womanhood, he asked? The attorney advised Brown to reduce her demand to \$1,000 in hope of receiving \$500: "If this sum is offered you had better accept it. . . . I think it is fair, in the event of any amount . . . my fee should be 50 percent."

No thought of chivalry entered the minds of the men who refused to allow Brown to rest in the sleeping quarters, though she was facing a 650 mile trip and had worked all day. Nor did thoughts of chivalry motivate her lawyer or any other man. Anna J. Cooper, another black Southern educator, articulated the need for feminist consciousness among black women when she wrote in 1892, "Confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, [the black woman] is as yet an unknown or unacknowledged factor in both."

If the Pullman incident and legal suit did not prove this to Brown, painful encounters within the black community should have. Black men who lived near her school voiced suspicions about Brown's relationship with her white male trustees. Attitudes in the black community tended to blame the past victims of rape and concubinage for their own victimiza-



BELOW: THE SEDALIA SINGERS

tion. Not only whites, but blacks too failed to question the validity of the stigma of immorality that branded the women. The suspicions expressed about Brown attest to the endurance of that stereotype and represent but one of the many obstacles she had to overcome in order to keep her school afloat.

In Brown's attempts to steer the public away from the image of the "loose woman" and the "bad" Negro, she adopted condescending attitudes of her own. "Until women in our group on the lowest rung of the ladder economically and morally are unshackled from fear and unfettered in their attempts to breathe in an atmosphere of freedom," said Brown, "all Negro women are slaves." But class bias undergirded this apparent recognition of the powerlessness of all black women and their inevitable connection with each other. By implying that black women were morally inferior, Brown failed to challenge the validity of white accusations. Instead, like other reform-minded people of her generation, Brown attributed the negative racial and sexual stereotypes to immorality among the "lower" classes, rather than to white biases and abuse. No black female could be free from humiliating insults, she argued, until those at the bottom had been cured of their social and cultural retardation.

In the meantime, Brown demanded the distinction she considered her due, as one of the morally and culturally "advanced" Negro women. Having lifted herself "through 50 years of training and service from that class

. . . prostituted years ago to save the women of the white race," Brown sought to be "separated somehow or other from the other type of colored women." These sentiments were expressed so often by Brown and other black women during their involvement with the Southern interracial movements of the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, that white women began to regurgitate the message. Carrie Parks Johnson, a Methodist women's leader in this period put it this way: "We know the worst there is to know — but the masses of the best of my race do not know the best of the Negro." Getting to know the best of the Negro race became the limited basis of interracial work with the approval of many blacks as well as whites, a tradition which hinders interracial work even in the 1980s.

Believing that in the white mind, the image of the "best" Negro woman could be characterized only by a vivid and glorified memory of the plantation "mammy," Brown tried to evoke this image to gain white recognition of the virtues of black women. In *Mammy: An Appeal to the Heart of the South* (published in 1919), Brown wrote:

If there is any word that arouses emotion in the heart of a true Southerner, it is the word, "Mammy." His mind goes back to the tender embraces, the watchful eyes, the crooning melodies which lulled him to rest, the sweet old black face.

Few white Southerners actually had black mammies, but they became a composite, imaginary figure for whites who desired to identify with the aristocracy of the antebellum South. An actual member of Southern aristocracy, Fannie Y. Bickett, wife of the governor of North Carolina, introduced Brown at the CIC Continuation Committee of the Women's Interracial Conference in 1921. Establishing the importance of her memories of plantation life, Bickett stated, "My old Negro mammy . . . was to me a mother . . . [I am grateful to find a likeness of] the virtue, the truth, the loyalty, and the fineness of purpose in another generation of Negro women." She commended Brown for her work in clubs, churches, and communities. But, Bickett continued, more important was "the work she is doing for the young girls of today." Then she added affectionately, "I cannot say

more, Mrs. Brown, for your race today than I say in saying that you are as fine as my Negro mammy."

To call a twentieth-century black woman "mammy" was an outrageous insult. Yet Brown graciously, or expediently, accepted the condescending gesture as a compliment. She responded, "I want to thank my good friend . . . for the splendid things she has said about me. . . . I hope and trust too that I am measuring up in every way to what the white people . . . think of me." And then she quickly added, "In doing so I am by no means betraying the confidence of my people." Incidents like these, however, marred Brown's reputation among her people, often prompting outraged verbal attacks against her.

When Brown wrote *Mammy* two years before the Bickett incident, her purpose was to encourage whites to recognize and show appreciation for their faithful black servants. Brown's story is about an Aunt Susan, who dedicated her life to serving a white family in slavery and in freedom. When she became "old and no count," the whites allowed her to die destitute. One can easily draw important parallels between Brown and Aunt Susan: the mammy embodied qualities similar

to Brown's, which made her an honorable black woman on the plantation. The mammy symbolized faithfulness, persistence, strength, and endurance. Having acquired the deportment and been allotted some of the dignity of the master class, she served as a buffer between the races. Since she represented the interests of whites, she helped to stabilize the slave system by enforcing the social behavior that whites preferred, thereby protecting the slaves from the wrath of the whites and sometimes gaining special favors for herself and for the other slaves.

Such was the nature of the ambivalence that characterized Brown's participation in Southern social reform. Yet one thing remains clear: by participating in the ritualistic interracial gatherings, Brown hoped to win social legitimacy and financial security for her school. In these goals she succeeded, although the successful application of the principles she set forth in *The Correct Thing* eluded her all her life. Ladies were supposed to be modest in expressing "negative" emotions, if they expressed them at all. Brown's strength, endurance, and ambition caused her contemporaries to question how a proper lady could manifest such "masculine" attributes without threat-

ening her own femininity or someone else's masculinity.

Brown's unpopular qualities certainly conflicted with the image of the lady she tried so vigorously to create; yet these qualities were political necessities. No black institutions could be built, no racist barriers could be overcome without them. Success and survival demanded that she not subdue her personality. The actual life of Charlotte Hawkins Brown, rather than the one she attempted to portray, often bore the marks of a person struggling to be a freer and more complete human being. If there is a tragedy in Brown's life, it is not that she lived a reality different from the image she projected, but rather that she failed to recognize and understand this dichotomy and its positive racial and feminist implications. □

Tera Hunter, a native of Florida, graduated from Duke and will be attending Yale. Photos were collected by Studio Five Productions, which produced a video history of Palmer Memorial Institute. The history is free for short-term use from the NC Humanities Committee, UNC-Greensboro, or call Studio Five at (919)272-3149 for rental or purchase information.

Epilogue

Charlotte Hawkins Brown resigned as president of Palmer Memorial in 1952, at the age of 79; she died in Greensboro in 1961. The Institute continued under the guidance of Wilhelmina Crosson, Harold Bragg, and Charles Bunrige. Student protests against repressive administrative policies hit the campus during the late '60s and the Alice Freeman Palmer Building, the heart of the campus, was destroyed by fire in February of 1971. The board of trustees, in an apparently



retaliatory move against dissident students and in fear of the growing Black Power movement sweeping the nation's black college campuses, abruptly closed the school that summer in spite of the fact that a full staff had been employed and a record number of students enrolled.

With the loss of the woman and the institution, the town of Sedalia and a large share of Afro-American history were in danger of vanishing into obscurity. But the people of Sedalia, the former staff and alumni of Palmer Memorial Institute, and friends of Charlotte Hawkins Brown would not let the memory die. There is currently a move under way, sponsored by State Senator William Martin of Guilford County, to appropriate state funds to establish a center for Afro-American history on the site. Supporters envision the center as a clearing-house for the documents and artifacts that represent the history and heritage of black North Carolinians currently scattered about the state in various archives and libraries.



CHARLOTTE HAWKINS BROWN WITH A BUST OF ALICE FREEMAN PALMER

attics and barns. they hope to provide a computerized index of those materials as well as a permanent home for documents relating to the school. In addition, they plan to turn the home and gravesite of Charlotte Hawkins Brown into a memorial in her honor.

DEW

Harriet Tubman, nee Ariminta Ross and called "Hatt" was born in 1820 and died in 1913. She had an intuitive sense that always warned her of impending danger. This inward monitor whispered to her, "Arise, flee for your life!" In a vision at night she saw horsemen coming and heard shrieks of women and children as they were being torn from each other. Hatt seemed to see a line dividing the land of slavery from the land of freedom. On the other side of that line she saw lovely white ladies waiting to welcome her and care for her. "Dew" is part of a collection of poems dedicated to Harriet Tubman.

Take it easy, dear. Easy, easy, now. You're safe here, you're safe. No one is going to harm you.

Three men were after you, you say? They were going to rape you? Oh my, my. It's a good thing you got away from them.

Don't be afraid, dear. It's just my husband standing there. He found you unconscious in the swamp. You must have fallen in that red clay mud and then hit your head as you ran from those awful men.

Take a look dear, see? My husband wasn't one of those bad men who was after you, was he?

Oh now, I understand. The men were white but younger than my Bob.

I know some whites do mean things to you colored people here in South Carolina but we're not all that way. If it wasn't for my husband Bob here, you might have drowned or worse.

No need to thank us, dear. Come on and get some of this hot soup in you. You look nice and clean now. The soup will warm you up inside. Our three boys should be home soon and they'll see you safely to your destination.

(Happily) Yes, we do have three boys. I shouldn't really call them boys because they're fully grown men.

Yes, I did say three.

Yes, our youngest does have freckles and red hair that seems to glow in the dark.

Yes, he does make that infernal sound of his by always cracking his knuckles. But how did you know . . . ?

Look out child, you almost knocked the soup over.

Where are you running to?

Come back, dear, come back!

I told you our boys will be home soon and they would take you where you have to go.

Do you think you'll be safe out there in that alligator swamp this time of night?

ALONE??



HARRIET TUBMAN

Freedom Justina Nubée is a psychotherapist, freelance writer, and puppeteer living in Columbia, South Carolina.

Sheryl L. Nelms
POETRY BY

recycling

I rummage through
the rusty
rubble
of other
people's lives

digging the dump

for some
thing
that I
will use
in some new
way they
never thought
of

cashing in

her right breast
was removed
last April
because of a malignant
lump

in May she
started
spending money
fast

as if somehow
she might buy
back all
those scrimping
years

in cash

Sheryl Nelms is a painter, poet, and weaver currently working on an M.A. degree at the University of Texas at Arlington. She has had hundreds of poems published and is a contributing editor to Streets and Byline magazines.

Ruth in Silver

On a morning near the end of October, the preacher's household awoke to a rain of small white globes the size of birds' eyes. The hail purred as it pelted the earth and vanished in its own sound before the children could stroke it. "Spider eggs," William told his sister Caroline. "Flowers," she said. "Ice," their mother explained, and called them indoors. For Ruth Wilkinson, the preacher's wife, the hailstones were yet another sign of a crack in the natural order, a foul-up people seemed to be shutting their eyes to. Her geraniums had not bloomed for a month; grass wilted and sandspurs sprung up in its place; mockingbirds rattled out the songs of crows; the cedars moaned when there was no wind; and when there was wind, between its breaths the crash of the surf 40 miles away could be heard. And always there was a prickle of salt in the air, as if the land were creeping, dragging itself back to the ocean.

"Come in," Ruth called again to the children. They ran into the kitchen, shaking invisible pellets from their hair.

"Now, quietly, quietly," she mimed, posing her pointing finger before her lips, "tiptoe into the bathroom and wash up for breakfast."

"In stadiums across Japan and Australia," she recalled her husband's exhortation yesterday, "he is witnessing to millions. *To millions!* It is not enough to say 'JACKSONVILLE FOR JESUS,' 'POMONA PARK FOR JESUS,' or even, 'FLORIDA FOR JESUS.' We must say over and over, as our great evangelist has often shouted, 'THE WORLD FOR JESUS AND JESUS FOR THE WORLD!'"

Her husband dwelled in a house of possibility but found himself confounded by trifles like cracked distributor caps, too little money, and sleep. So on the day after Sunday he would twist in bed and grumble at the slightest noise. Ruth, being a good wife, tried to make things easy for him.

"For millions," he had cried. "For the world!"

Ruth dipped grits onto the handpainted breakfast plates her mother had given her and pondered her husband's choice of sermons. He was not a stupid man, but she could not see how his words would help the crisis-stricken people of the community.



the River

By Cheryl Hiers

What was that football saying: “the best defense is a good offense?” – or maybe, “the best offense is a good defense?”

She really didn’t know his reasoning but doubted its good sense. Then she stopped. Pivoted back from where she had poured the orange juice into small glasses, she peered at the cat that lounged beneath the table. “Clea?” she questioned. “Clea?”

The cat winked through drowsy lids and twitched the tip end of her charcoal tail. It was Clea all right. But her eyes, which had been butane blue until that moment, now stared out calmly in dazzling green.

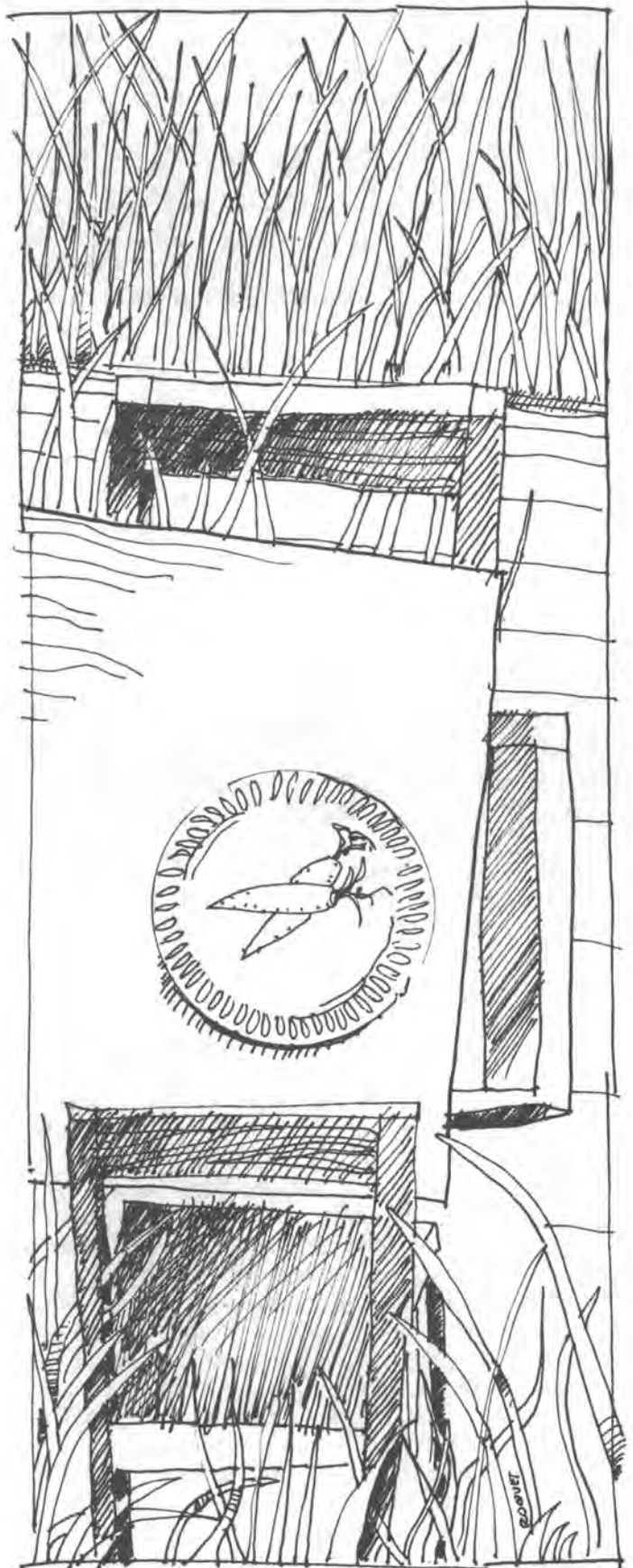
“Oh, my,” Ruth whispered, “oh, my.”

RUTH HAD once told a woman friend that she was handy with a needle but bought, occasionally, a housedress or two at the Diana Shop. She sewed Sunday dresses for Caroline in blue print for the summer and red corduroy for the winter. The woman friend asked her where she got her patterns and Ruth explained that she imagined the image she wanted and then cut a pattern out of newspaper to match it. She had been imagining images for years. Like her husband Curtis, Ruth saw things ahead of themselves. So when she said to the potholder on the wall, after shooing Clea out the back door, “I don’t want to see anything more, or less, in this house today,” she knew she was wasting her breath.

“Don’t worry,” Curtis had soothed her at breakfast yesterday. “Khrushchev’ll back down. He knows he’s beat.” Then he had gone off to lecture the congregation on world mission, taking as his scripture passage, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.”

Ruth shook her head in fuddlement.

It seemed like every time they rode to town now they’d see the army. Herds of snake-green trucks migrating over the arched bridge of the St. John’s River, heading south for Miami and beyond. Once there, what? She imagined the trucks lumbering like a line of June bugs one after the other into the turquoise waters of the Keys, scattering their shells



across the coral, leaving behind only a few bubbles of foam and the land in peace. It wasn't likely to happen, she knew, and she shouldn't want it to. "They are our boys," she told herself, and posed William as one of the young soldiers from Fort Benning, gunbelt across his heart and homesick for her Sunday dinners.

A shaft of wind shook the house and rocked the kitchen with buzzing salt.

"It's the changing seasons," Curtis had said when she pointed out the gaps in weather.

"Since when does Florida change like this?" she asked only herself because she wanted to believe him.

"THEY SPIT in your eyes and blind you," William told his sister. The children stood in the night shadow of the cedar talking about granddaddy long-legs. Ruth sat on the back porch shelling peas in a roast pan on her lap. The wind had calmed and it seemed like any other late October night, warm enough still to be summer. In the dark, Clea was permitted to curl beneath her mistress's chair.

"Can we go into the garage?" William asked. "We want to look at spiders with my flashlight."

"All right, but watch out for coons around the garbage can," Ruth said.

They strolled across the lawn, a saucer of light moving on the ground before them like an animal. "If you see any," Ruth called after them, "chunk a rock at them." It's funny, she thought, how the children seem to love to flirt with the things that scare them most. As if the worst could never happen.

In a quick breeze that came like a man stepping around the corner, Ruth caught the unexpected scent of fresh oranges and tangerines. It reminded her of all the things she liked best about her home and life. She had smelled it first as a child in Georgia in the crate of fruit sent each January by an uncle. Then her family had moved to the small Florida town and she had watched the white knobs of blossoms grow into oranges on their own backyard tree. Curtis had brought her navels from the Indian River when William was born and the ladies of the Women's Missionary Union had kindly bragged over her apple, orange, and pecan salad, to put her — the preacher's young wife — at ease. Ease — that's what she needed now but had not known for so long that the smell of oranges seemed like a ghost from another time. "I guess I just need an aspirin," Ruth told herself.

The peas didn't occupy her long and she was

nearly finished when Curtis came looking for her. He had been watching the nightly news.

"Castro is fueling the flames," he said. "He's yelping that Khrushchev's sold him out."

"What will he do?" asked Ruth. "Castro — I mean — what will he do now?"

"It's like betting on the devil. No telling." He sat in the chair beside her and picked a single pea from the pan. "But we'll see. We can face them down if we have to."

Her husband was a narrow man, arched slightly like a leaf, shoulders stooping, but with a handsome face and blue eyes. Clea's blue. Startled by the thought, Ruth leaned forward and peered close at Curtis's face but couldn't tell if his eyes had changed. Not in the dark.

"Ruth," he said, and she twitched at the tone. It was the preacher's tenor of I've-got-something-of-grave-import-and-long-reaching-effects-to-tell-you. She held still and her husband told her in a few sentences that he hadn't been able to sleep the past few nights because God had been knocking at his heart. He had been literally tossed about until he gave in and listened. What did he hear?

"I've heard The Call," he said, pointing the pea at himself.

"The Call?"

"For mission."

"Where?" Ruth asked.

"Japan."

"Japan?"

"Japan," the preacher said eagerly. "We're going to Japan."

"Oh, my God," Ruth said. "What next?"

HIS EYES shone blue as ever, bright as water. It must be a full moon then, she thought, and stuck her head out the back door. The night was black, even the shadows chased away.

Curtis sat like an excited little boy, hands clasped before him on the kitchen table. She was giving him a glass of milk to settle his stomach.

"Don't you see, Ruth?" he pleaded. "Castro preaches lies that he would brainwash everyone with, if he could. That's why communism is so dangerous. It's out-and-out atheism and it doesn't even pretend not to be. Can you believe it? They say outright that God is dead. How could anyone believe a German idea after World War II? But they believe it and they want the whole world to believe it with them. Those Russians put cows in churches and oats in synagogues."

He prattled on and Ruth nodded her head. She didn't pay much attention because she was trying

to follow a strange tapping noise from the west. She clutched her elbows, paced the kitchen, and worried, "Where could that sound be coming from?"

"I think world mission is the best defense against this threat," Curtis droned. "We got to fight fire with fire."

"What threat?" Ruth asked and noticed that once again Curtis's shirt label stuck straight up out of his collar. Just like William.

"The Bomb," he said.

"Oh," said Ruth. "I thought you meant communism." She slipped the white flap back in place with a fast hand.

"One and the same," Curtis said. It seemed that he had begun to catch the drift of his wife's nerves, as if he picked up something from the touch of his neck hairs.

"Curtis, listen." She pointed to the door. "What's that sound?"

"I don't hear anything."

"Come to the door."

He didn't much like posing at the door, head cocked, but he did, nevertheless, because he too felt the bumps of a faraway crackling.

"Lake George," he said.

"Oh, the bombing range," Ruth cried, remembering what she already knew. They had gone fishing near there, in a river called the Oklawaha, about a year before. The preacher turned and watched her and his blue eyes seemed to click a shade darker.

"The navy must be getting ready," he said.

"That's another reason," and he squeezed her arm below the elbow, "we should leave."

"Why? What does that . . ."

"Japan's a lot farther from Cuba than we are."

Ruth knew then that Curtis understood her fear was more than conversation about the weather — but a blade real and deep inside her like a sheet of metal that would ring out if he touched it. They stood face to face in the yellow kitchen light, not moving. But Ruth felt they were circling one another, eyes locked — each sizing up the other.

"Call the children in," she said finally. "They're watching spiders in the dark."

"MEN ACT and women react,"

her mother had explained to Ruth the day before her marriage. "That's not to say you can't *channel* their actions. Just remember — let them think they're doing it all." Her mother had given her that piece of advice, as a kind of gift, Ruth supposed, along with the hand-painted breakfast plates. For

years Ruth had held the plates with their rose tomatoes, fine nets of lettuce, and baby-finger carrots to be more valuable than her mother's twisted outlook. After all, her parents had not enjoyed a happy marriage, and Ruth vowed not to repeat such a hypocritical relationship. If her father wore the pants in the family, her mother chose the fabric, cut the fit, and hitched them to her height. "He wants a house by the river," she confided once to her daughter. "Over there in the *wilds*. I'm going along with it, but I've told Eva to accidentally drive us by that place on Pine Street." Eva was the real estate agent.

Ruth's opinion of her mother's advice changed gradually over the years as she came to know Curtis more and trust him less. Why did she trust him less? Perhaps she expected too much from him — wisdom and direction and sure handling of their lives. Instead she discovered her husband to be a man inept with the things of the world. It would take him two hours to change a car tire; he had visions of selling catfish or roses to make money; his health was bad and he talked constantly of not getting enough rest. Yet Curtis made the decisions for the family, and Ruth, still a good wife, complied, bit her tongue, and prayed for the best, hoping their luck would change. Then she and Curtis and the children had gone fishing in the Oklawaha — that was a year ago — and the experience had snapped something in her, something that was young and accepting.

She remembered how excited Curtis had been over the trip.

"This is *the* place to catch bass," he exclaimed. "If they were legal, I could make a fortune selling them to restaurants. But you can't sell game fish."

Among swamp lilies and the "kee-kee-kee" of hidden birds, the family took its outing. The brush came right to the edge of the water and trees atangle with vines and moss slanted over them. Ruth couldn't find the shore beneath the mat of black-purple leaves, roots, and green beads that swayed in the wake of their boat.

"Where are we going to have the picnic?" Ruth asked.

Curtis only nodded and kept them churning down the river, taking them farther and farther into narrower and narrower channels.

William pointed his BB gun into a thicket and fired. A faint ping rang out and a pair of huge blue wings lashed through the bushes and soared above them. Caroline curled up in the bottom of the boat and let out a wail that grew sharper as it ricocheted off the water and dug into the dark of rotten logs.

"Hush now," Ruth crooned. "Look, Carol, a

butterfly." A yellow sulphur dipped up and down over the bow, then flapped off into a fan of palmettos, trailing an odor of wild marigolds.

"Watch your heads," Curtis warned. They all ducked to miss an overhanging oak limb.

"Moccasins lay on limbs too," William said, turning his BB rifle up. They had already seen three v-shaped ripples in the river: water moccasins gliding by the boat, straight as sticks, heads slightly up, eyes black as their skin.

"There's one on that log," William cried. Curtis slowed the boat and the boy took aim and fired. The snake drew head and tail together and William fired again.

"Got him!" he said. "Right between the eyes!"

By the time Curtis threw the anchor out, they had spotted two otters, a small alligator, and a raccoon up a tree. "A good experience for the children," Ruth told herself nervously, "seeing all this wildlife." Yet she couldn't enjoy the sights herself. Although for a moment she might admire a giant stalk of elephant ears or a white egret or a deep plop in the water, she felt snagged with worry. "What if we are lost?" she wondered. "Ticket-ticket-ticket," a bird sang and Ruth could hear her mother pronouncing "wilds" like it was a word akin to "hyena."

"It's an Indian name," Curtis told the children. "'Oklawaha' means 'silver river.' It runs from a pure spring out of limestone caves, and its water's always cold. At night when the moon's out, it's supposed to shine like a new dime. Some say," and he winked at Ruth, "that it's magic because you can see all the way to the bottom, to the shadows of the fish even. Look! What's that moving there?" And the children leaned far over the gunwale. "You have to look past your own reflection," he said, "it's like a car window at night."

"I see him," Caroline said. "He's swimming in and out of the seaweed."

"How many people can say," Curtis went on, "that they've been in a real jungle, seen an alligator in its natural home, and watched two otters slipping through the water?"

"And all the moccasins," William reminded him. "Yea," Caroline agreed. "And the butterflies."

And how many can say they nearly stayed there forever because they couldn't get out? Ruth had told Curtis at three o'clock that they should leave before the early dark caught them. He wanted to wait just a little while longer. The fish weren't biting, but he knew they were there. In the hot stillness of the September afternoon the children grew restless. Caroline whined about the mosquitoes; William shot empty claps of air — his BBs long gone. Out of boredom and worry Ruth focused on a cocoon the size of her fist. As Curtis cast and

re-cast his line, she wondered what sort of animal curled inside the egg waiting for a signal it would give itself to emerge.

Then around four the fishstorm hit. The water seemed as solid and steely as the top of a tin can, a flat reflection of limb shards and white sky. A silver tail cut the surface, a fin flapped, and a small whirlpool started off the bow. "They're starting to feed," Curtis whispered, and his line ripped across the tight face of the river.

Within 40 minutes he had caught eight yearling bass. By six o'clock there were 19 strung gill-to-gill on a yellow cord trailing the boat. Every few minutes, one would thrash and rouse the others, the whole line stirring, scales flicking. "Like a dragon's tail," Caroline said. And the tail kept growing.

"I've never seen anything like it," Curtis cried. "You're luck, honey," he told his wife. "You're luck."

The patch of sun dwindled until there weren't any shadows at all — only a gray light that made it seem you were looking through the tangles in a dust ball. With the fish twirling beneath them in a frenzy to be caught, Curtis wouldn't leave. "I've waited all my life for this," he said. So they lingered, and when the anchor was finally pulled in, caked with a lump of mud on each blade, Ruth had to strain to make out the studs of banana spiders overhead. Their spiky legs were already melting into the trees.

Curtis led them back through waterways hardly wider than the boat. Before all the light leaked out of the air they passed a hollow cypress log that looked like the leg-bone of a dinosaur. Squatting on it, a yellow-green turtle blazed with red eyes at Ruth. When she saw him again, she whispered, "It must be his brother," but the third time, she couldn't deny it was the same animal. "We're lost," she thought. "We're sputtering in circles."

"The Oklawaha," Curtis had said earlier, "is one of the few wild rivers left in the South. No dams, no diversions."

"So what?" Ruth snapped back in her mind. "So the river's wild — that only means it spills over the land like varicose veins full of snakes and leaf garbage."

"We're lost," Caroline cried.

"Crybaby," William said, then turned to his father. "You know where you are, don't you, Daddy?"

"Sure I do," Curtis said, and handed the flashlight to Ruth. "Shine that ahead so I can see the channel."

The light stretched thin, picking a bare line through the bushes, exploring the blue veins in a leaf, slashing over the hyacinths. She held it steady until it skimmed a cypress log and struck two red

discs.

"Men bungle," her mother had warned, "and women have to live and suffer with their mistakes."

"Forever?" Ruth moaned that night in the Oklawaha, sending her plea out from the thicket, up a blank sky, and through the light-years that stretch between the living and the dead.

In answer, the red-eyed turtle came round like a pinwheel the fourth time. William scrambled up the flashlight when Ruth dropped it and shone it again on the log. "Ah, it ain't anything, mother," he comforted. "Just an old turtle. That's all." Inside her, Ruth could feel an itch of nerves starting down deep and blossoming like the first small bubbles shooting up in a pot of water about to boil. "So this is the cap to it all," Ruth told herself. "We're lost and he says he knows the way."

For two more hours they meandered about the swamp until Caroline was beyond crying and both children were swollen with mosquito welts. Ruth stayed calm, not thinking of the snakes below them, the gnats around them, or the darkness all over them. She didn't even turn her head back to Curtis when they heard the magnificent squall in the bush and William whispered, low and awed, "Panther. Daddy. Panther."

Ruth concentrated on her itch. She scratched evenly, lightly, ankles and legs and sides and arms and neck and even earlobes and eyelids. By the time Curtis found the channel, her skin had sprouted reddish-white blisters.

"I could say things now before the children that would scald him, humiliate him, kill him," she thought, and remembered the time her father, an enormous man, had stumbled drunk to the front steps. "Help your father in, Ruth Anne," her mother had ordered, knowing the small girl's gestures would only increase the father's guilt.

"You have power," her mother told her the day before the wedding, "but it's a quiet power. Hidden. Remember that."

The words drifted back to her as they moved swiftly over the dark water, the fast air cooling her skin.

"The river's not silver like a new dime," Caroline told her father.

"No moon," Curtis replied gloomily. "Not even a star out tonight."

"No," thought Ruth. "No moon and all the shadows are ones you'd rather not see." Ruth had begun to accept the fact that she was her mother's daughter and that things she would not have thought of doing to Curtis when she was younger she just might do now after all.



“THERE MAY be oranges in the grove,” Curtis had warned the congregation of the Pomona Park Baptist Church, “but they will rot on the bough unless there are hands to harvest them.” He had said that in church yesterday, the day before the morning of hail and Clea’s eyes, the day before the night tapping in the west.

The Call to Japan. Like the other shoe falling, the sermon finally made sense to Ruth. While she and the other ladies were scanning Winn Dixie aisles for fallout supplies, the men went on flirting with visions of worlds conquered. Get them before they get you. *Japan.* She uttered a crabby little laugh and wondered if the women in Hiroshima during the final minutes still worried over how many cans of tomato soup the family would need. Ruth had eight, plus three bags of flour, two cans of grape juice, five cans of pink salmon, four green peas, three spams, grits, rice, and seven cans of spaghetti. The TV told her canned goods were the best since they weren’t as likely to soak up radiation.

Curtis, in a typical act of unthinking generosity, had tried to donate the whole store to a migrant family.

“Food won’t save us,” he had snapped when she headed him off at the pantry.

“That’s for your children. They may need it one of these days.”

“There are children this minute who need it.”

Ruth hated him then for making her the selfish one. For forcing her to decide between her children and another woman’s. Her skin broke out in her swamp itch and she retreated to sit for long stretches soaking in a tub of warm water and baking soda.

“Ruth?” he bargained through the closed door, “It’s all right. I called the deacons and we’re taking up a collection.” And he thought that was that. She could squirrel away all the food she wanted so why didn’t she pull the plug and stop the scratching?

“Nerves,” she told her women friends. “I lie on a bed of stinging nettles at night.”

“We’re all the same,” they consoled. “I never did like hairy men,” one answered, “and that Castro is the hairiest man I’ve seen.” Ruth understood the feeling, coming herself from a family of women with a deep resentment against moustaches and beards. But, and she didn’t tell this to the women, she wasn’t itching just from worry over the black-haired communists to the south. The war they threatened was only one sign of the helplessness

that pervaded her life. Someone she would never know – a man, or two or three or 20 men – would decide for or against her life and the lives of Caroline and William and her husband.

“I feel The Call,” Curtis repeated now, after the children were settled in bed and he had joined Ruth again in the kitchen.

Ruth’s elbow began to itch. “Well, I don’t,” she said frankly, and surprised herself in saying it. In the year since the fishing trip, she had become sly like her mother. “Never tell them what you want,” the older woman had said, “unless you know already it’s what they don’t mind giving.” Ruth had begun to suspect the preacher of things, mistrusted his motives, tracked his steps during the day. “Where were you this afternoon – I thought you were supposed to be visiting Mr. Wilters?” and “Why did Mrs. Tennant smile at you like a cat?”

The preacher lifted his eyebrows. “It’s not important for you to hear The Call. Your place is with me.”

She backed off then, scratched her wrist, and gazed out the back door.

“The hibiscus are blooming now – at night,” she said. “They should be closed up.”

“It’s the warm weather,” Curtis said impatiently. “But that’s not the question. Are you going to pray about Japan, or not?”

Ruth turned back to the man with the stooped shoulders and believed for a moment that was all he wanted. She had a choice. She could pray and if her searchings didn’t turn up anything, she could say, “No, not this time.” There was a straight road and a crooked road and he was offering her the straight: a clean, honest answer one way or the other.

“You know, dear,” he said, “storing food against this thing is like building a dinghy to ride a tidal wave.”

“You can’t eat words.”

“But you can,” he exclaimed. “Words can change the world.”

The preacher went off to toss in his bed, leaving her with the admonition that the world faced a choice between Castro and Christ.

“I’m calling the Foreign Mission Board tomorrow,” he said, kissing her cheek.

They were going. The itch spread to the inside of Ruth’s thighs and across her knees. They were going.

But there was always her mother’s way. Ruth imagined how she would handle it: get on the phone to the Southern Baptist Convention. Tell them her husband suffers a heart condition he won’t admit because of his fervor to serve. Tell them also that two children are involved. Then wait for the politely-worded note from the secre-

tary that would explain how the preacher filled a crucial niche in their "home missions." "We can't afford to lose you," it would say.

Ruth switched off the light in the kitchen, brushed her hair back with her palms, and walked out the back door. The small tricks and bitchery of the past year had not prepared her for this: she was frightened at the size of what she could do and Curtis never knowing. Words can change the world, he had said. Not used to the dark, she edged the past year had not prepared her for this: she was frightened at the size of what she could do and Curtis never knowing. Words can change the world, he had said. Not used to the dark, she edged her way down the steps. "Japan," she said, to see how it sounded for a word meaning "home." Japan. It didn't sound good. Pomona Park was home. She remembered the smell of oranges that had come to her earlier in the evening. This was home, and to pick up and leave and go to a place where she had no family, no friends, not even a language she could speak, was craziness. Craziness. Even with Cuba she didn't want to leave. She knew too, from the very first, that Cuba was just an excuse; Curtis was playing against her fear. When he wanted something, he concocted reasons afterward.

With nothing more than an urge to use her hands, to actually *do* something other than worry, Ruth moved to the flower bed beside the door, dropped to her knees, and began cleaning away the debris and tangles. It was an act of faith to weed the geraniums at night: she could see nothing and her fingers were likely to collide with anything. Nevertheless, Ruth did what her mother had never allowed – she pushed her bare hands down into the soil and weeded. She could feel her mother's disapproval leaning over her: "Ah, your fingernails," the shadow nagged, "why don't you wear gloves?" Ruth jerked back from a small, slick tube, ringed and stiff. It didn't move, but she knew it was alive. And she couldn't explain the presence of fur on the back of some fallen leaves. Her fingers snagged roots of stray grass blades, stalky weeds, three-leaf clover. She sieved through shards of wood and damp pine needles. Bending over to sniff the mint plant, she discovered, by feel, small craters around it: she guessed they were ant-lion traps. "Doodle-bugs," the children called them. She pulled up more weeds, shaking shells free and the chalky, delicate skeleton of a small animal, perhaps a bird since there was the feel of a beak, but it could have been a tooth. Something pinched her on the web of flesh between her thumb and forefinger, and later, a piece of earth slid underneath her hand and a creature, probably a snake, shot past her leg. She scooped out small packets of

dirt, patiently traced root runners, and paused only to scratch herself. Her fingers tried to read the colors of the soil: she felt dark blue, and deep purple, and stitches of red. It was a rich soil.

"So why do you starve my geraniums?" she asked.

Near the end of the bed, she found tiny dents on the surface, much finer than the ant lion traps. "Ah," she remembered, "the hail this morning." Ruth unbent herself then and stood, scratched her nose and with a little cry, recalled the dirt on her hands and beneath her nails.

"I must have marks all over me," she thought and imagined the black spots her fingers had left on her arms and chin, forehead and calves. "Paw prints," she said, and laughed at the picture. "What the children would say!" But Ruth didn't rush inside to wash herself. She stood relaxed and relieved after working, breathing the night air, and feeling better than she had all day. "Work is what I need," she said. And when the clean, fastidious ghost of her mother began frowning, she told it right off: "I'll take a bath when *I'm* ready."

The sense of rebellion fired her and Ruth laughed again. She laughed because she knew she was *not* her mother. "I am someone else," she said, and the words seemed to contain all the strength and decision she wanted for herself and for the whole world, if it needed it. "I am someone else."

Slapping the dirt off the hem of her dress, Ruth walked back to the porch. She still didn't know what she was going to do, but she knew she wasn't going to call Nashville in the morning.

"Enough reacting," she said, brushing a sand gnat away from her eye. Clea made up to her softly and Ruth rubbed her with one knuckle. "Friends again?" she asked the cat. Ruth sat and closed her eyes then, and dozed off in a glad tiredness. When she woke, she saw that the moon had slipped up from somewhere, and in its light the back yard sat before her like a stone, sharp and hard in cedars and sandspurs. A small purple lizard whipped by her toes and Clea pounced after it. "Come back," she called and called again to the cat with the blue-into-green eyes. "The sea may be coming and you don't like water." But the cat stayed gone, and Ruth was alone when the sky turned brown and she started, uncertain and tentative, practicing for the day. "I'm staying here," she said and licked the salt from her lips. "I'm staying here," she said again. "You can go, but I'm staying here." Beyond her, the cedars shook and the hibiscus trembled. □

Born in North Carolina, Cheryl Hiers was raised and lives in Florida. Her short story, "A Citizen of Florida," appeared in "Festival" (Southern Exposure, Vol. IX, No. 2).

PATCHWORK



MABLE WIGGINS'S MOTHER

Patchwork Oral History Project came about in bits and pieces – beautiful, bright experiences stored in my mind, sometimes of no apparent use, but too precious to throw away. I remember sitting on a wooden swing in August with Momme, my maternal grandmother, shelling butterbeans from her garden and eating cool sweet watermelon in the backyard with my paternal grandmother, Nanaw. These times were my initiation to the wisdom of our foremothers. Later, walking through the heavy perfume of our old family friend Louise Jones's flower garden, I learned the stories of a black culture – as fearsome and exotic to me as the great eye of the zodiac hanging above Louise's bed. Gradually, these experiences began to accumulate and when I set about piecing them together, took on a new life of their own. Patchwork, a memory quilt of many hues, came to be a living project.

During the 1970s and the resurgence of the women's movement I began to realize how vital it is to appreciate the experience of women who have come before us. They have prepared the earth for our future gardens. By now it is almost a cliché to say that women's contributions, though mammoth, have been ignored in our society. And yet by dismissing the statement as a cliché, society tends to obscure the continuing reality that a woman's contribution is not considered as important as a man's.

Woman's role has changed, to be sure. We can dream bigger dreams – sometimes we can make them come true. But our foremothers lived in a different world. Men made history; women made do. That was the reality of their lives. And it's the making-do that fascinates me – taking life as it comes, making the best of it, and en-

during. So I decided to concentrate on women in my oral history project and chose the name Patchwork to epitomize the strength and beauty of women's lives – scraps of homespun cloth joined together to create an aesthetic delight for the soul and a practical comfort for the body.

Stories of our grandmothers give us a look back to a time long past, a world dramatically different from our own. They also give us a look inward, revealing a personal history inherited from them which influences our way of looking at and living in this changed world. Each of us can trace a particular way of speaking, a certain style of cooking, an individual concept of life to our foremothers.

Some of our recollections tell the same story. Country folks, black and white, share the same memories of farm chores, homegrown food, and neighbors helping each other. Yet, as Southerners, we are still divided in our perspective on the Civil War. Whites tell of Northern aggression: the rich of lost plantations and stolen silver, the poor of confiscated livestock and contaminated food. Blacks tell of grandmothers who were slaves, and of the time when freedom came.

I started recording conversations with older women on a random basis, beginning with a dear friend, Elizabeth Cousins Rogers, who is 92 this year. (See "Stepping Stones," Southern Exposure, Vol. X, No. 2.) Elizabeth operated a Red Cross canteen in Europe in World War I, married a flyer, knew the bohemian Paris of the 1920s, divorced, became an editor at Vogue magazine, began organizing labor unions during the depression, married an ex-Wobbly, and has spent her life as a dynamic political activist. Her heroism set me afire.



ELIZA FINGER

No less inspiring are women who “only” raised a family, struggling with as many as a dozen children, often alone, with money always scarce. They came through life weaving a strong fabric of love and faith.

I’m frequently met with the exclamation, “Oh, there’s nothing interesting to tell about my life.” It’s never been true. A few well-chosen questions will spark memories long put away. So we spend hours together, both transported to yesterday, each laughing and crying over people and times gone some 50 years and more. Sorrow is never forgotten, old joys are always with us.

I’m not usually so much interested in the dates and names vital to straight documentary techniques as I am in the emotions and philosophies. Why people lived the way they did and how they felt about their lives provides the basis for all that they accomplished in life. To my mind, feelings as well as facts are the essence of a good oral history. So, through the years I’ve learned to listen more and question less. I find that questions are usually answered in the interviewee’s own good time and always more fully than if I had interjected the question myself.

In Patchwork, time is the teacher, yet it is also an enemy. I always work with a sense of urgency, to capture our past before it’s too late, to catch women before they go on, leaving us with questions unasked, unanswered.

Included here are selections from Legacy, a larger work in progress dealing with memories of our grandmothers. It is dedicated to my grandmothers, Mary Una Jones Fory and Bertha Lee Roberts Gilbert Heard.

MABLE WIGGINS

Mable Wiggins grew up with four generations in one home. She talks of the seasonal farm chores in the country: hog killing, molasses making, digging out the water wells, log rolling, and quilting bees. “Just families a-helping families, that’s the way they did it back then, to get big jobs done.



MABLE WIGGINS AS A YOUNG WOMAN

That’s the only way it could be done.” Mable, her great-grandmother Sally McDaniels, her grandmother Eliza Finger, and her father lived in a farm house in Harding County, Tennessee.

It was a hard thing for me to realize, that I had two old, old ladies and I didn’t have a mother. They told me my mother was gone, or that she was dead. I was supposed to understand what dead was, and I didn’t. And why, if she was gone, didn’t she come back sometime? See, a child’s way of thinking. But she just wasn’t there and I felt, just a gap — of something’s gone.

Great-grandmother Eliza used to sit in the corner and smoke a cob pipe. I remember when my grandmother would get after me about something, my great-grandmother would whisper, “Come here, Mable.” I’d go and she’d hug me up and that just fixed it all. That hugging from her, that tender love that was missing, I guess, from Mother. But my grandmother never had nothing like that.

Grandmother Eliza was the caretaker of the family, working all day long, all year round. As Mable says, “That’s just what it took to please her — she was ‘making family go.’”

Her hair was dark brown, she never cut it. People was always talking to her about her hair. “Tell us your recipe,” they’d say. When she washed it, she’d sit out on the back porch and have a little tub sitting up there and have wash water in it and rinse water in another one. She’d just throw it all down there and just wash it like she was washing clothes. I’d just get fascinated sitting around watching just what she’d do to it. On that same

photos@Janice Dee Gilbert

MABLE WIGGINS’S FATHER



porch the sun would come in good and she'd sit there and sun dry it. It would take a long time to dry all that stuff. And I was such a tiny thing, I was in awe about seeing what I was looking at.

Mostly we used the soap that she made. We had a fireplace and we'd burn hickory and oak – hardwood, you know. Every day we'd clean out the ashes and put them in a wooden



MABLE WIGGINS

barrel out in the back yard. When she'd get the barrel up about two-thirds full, she'd start putting water in there and put a drip pan under this elevated base it was on and it would drip out through the barrel and it would be lye. It's strong and dark, almost like iodine. And the hog killing time would be once a year, when it was cold weather because we had no refrigeration. She'd take the lard from the hog meat and then boil this lye in there and the lard and the lye come out to be soap. There was such of a trick to it.

She'd wash clothes with a tub and the washboard sitting in that and there'd be a little jar of the soap. You'd reach your hand down and rub that soap on the dirty clothes like a coat of jelly. And boy, would it suds! It would take the skin off your fingers, it was so strong with lye. You needn't not go to wash with no delicate fingers cause you'd have them skinned to the bleed.

We'd grow and can the vegetables, and then we had fruit that grew in the orchards and we'd take it out in the sun and let it dry. We'd dry beans.

We made our own meal out of corn, we'd take it to the grist mill and have it ground into meal.

I heard somebody talking to her about the Civil War. How when the soldiers come through, they'd break into the house, pour out the molasses and sugar, drag the meat in the dirt – all kind of crazy things. She told about weaving. She was making some cloth to make her menfolks' clothes. She's sitting out in the yard, so she could see. If the soldiers was to come, she was going to hide it. They came and she jumped up and hid it under a big flowerbush.

They had quilting parties going pretty well all the year. We raised the cotton, picked it, took it to the gin to get the seeds out of it, and then we'd card it on combs and make it into batts to go in the inner linings of quilts they had pieced. They had quilting frames hanging from the ceilings or on chairs. In between the other chores, they had quilts rolled up, waiting for them to have time to do a few more stitches. All the neighbors would get together and go in and quilt out somebody's quilt. And they'd go to somebody else and do theirs, and just go all the way around the community. In the winters you'd pile five and six quilts on top of you at a time in the nighttime – and then you'd still get cold!

My grandmother, she had her way about sewing. When I'd go to school, I'd see others how they had their clothes made. She didn't make mine like that. Well, I wanted her to let me sew. One day, she had the patterns all spread out, material cut out, and she had to go start some cooking in the kitchen. When she got away from that pattern, where the nick would be left up high, I got the scissors and I cut it way down this a-way! She come back to it and found it all cut and she says, "Now, if you can do this, you can just finish it now!" I learned to sew from that.

I remember when great-grandmaw died, she was 96. They called it dropsey, it was fluid. It was like she was drowning. She died in early morning. My cousin come and waked me up and said, "Grandmaw's passing away, don't you want to get up?" I still didn't understand what she meant when she said she's passing away. But

I got up and was holding her hand when her head dropped and her last breath came.

The women of different families of our neighbors come together and made her some new clothes that they buried her in. Each one was doing some different part of the dress. It just fascinated me how fast they put it together. They didn't hold the bodies out that long.

But in a way I was scared of what they was doing to her. I was thinking now, what if she was just asleep and not dead? What if she's not dead and they're putting her down in that deep hole? I couldn't get rid of that.

Well, now, I've told off a great big rigmarole I didn't know I knew.

HILDA MURDOCK

Hilda Murdock takes pride in the fact that her family is well educated. "We had doctors and lawyers and ministers, even in the old times. They were very strict about us respecting other people's rights. And they always taught us to let each tub – I'm telling you like they told me – let each tub stand on its own bottom."

My great-grandmother Priscilla Smith said her people always worked in the boss's house. So I think that is one of the reasons why they were educated. The children would teach them to read and write. In a way they thought they were more than the rest of the slaves because they had to be kept clean to work in the house. She said she'd wear this big white rag on her head with these white aprons, and she



HILDA MURDOCK

MARY SMITH HALL



would wear all these petticoats that had to be starched. So the other slaves sort of envied them, you know.

She said they had to sneak in the woods somewhere and have church service. They didn't allow them to have church. The boss man, see, was supposed to be the God. So all in all my family was very religious from the slaves on down to us.

My great-grandparents jumped over the broom. She said they had a big ceremony and somebody played the guitar and somebody played the harp and the preacher says, "Now!" and they jumped over and hugged and kissed and were pronounced man and wife. But my great-grandparents, being as civilized as they were, he being educated, they repeated the marriage vows. They repeated and everybody thought they were smart, you know.

They went on to do pretty good after freedom because we still have some property in Terrebonne Parish that they bought. He bought enough to give some to build a church. My great-grandfather could read a Bible. My great-grandmother couldn't, but late in her life the government had this project and she went to school. She wrote us all a letter before she died.

Grandmaw Priscilla came to my house about a month before she died.

She was in her late 90s and had to walk eight blocks. She was very spry, always jumping around. She liked a little wine and my husband would sneak and buy it for her. She pulled up her dress and danced the reel for us. She told us how she used to raise up her dress and take out her cane knife and go down to the quarters — that's what they used to call where they lived then — to get grandpaw from some lady's house. They stayed together — died together — but she was frisky and he was frisky. They had their funerals in the church that they built, and were buried in the church grounds.

My grandmother was Mary Smith Hall. We called her "Mama." She always had the house full of children. All our friends were her children. For each one of us grandchildren, she had 10 more. The main thing about her was her religious beliefs. We all attributed it to our family as having a guardian angel because of her.

Well, this is what happened. One of my aunts was blinded when she was two years old, and my step-grandfather would bring her every other week to the hospital in New Orleans. So my grandmother says she was just sitting in the rocking chair one day and the door opened and a big light came in and in this light was a lady, all in white. This lady told her, "Mary, if you want your child's sight back, christen her over and call her Eve." Her name was Eva. Well, they christened her over. She was in New Orleans at the time, and on the way home from the hospital, she got her sight. So we began to believe in this guardian angel. I have never seen her, none of us has ever seen her, but Mama made it so clear to us, you could just see her.

We would make it a point to go to church every New Year's Eve night, from babies on up. And she would have the prayer meeting at her house. We'd all meet there and we'd hide our little bottles under the step, so she wouldn't see us. She would make egg-nog and we would spike it. She would pray for us, each and every one of us. So, I still tell everybody that I'm still living on my grandmother's prayers.

We lived a beautiful life with my grandmother. She died here in New Orleans. I can remember, she used to

sit on the stoop in the afternoons and she'd throw this big, beautiful towel around her and she smoked a pipe. All the children in the neighborhood would be around her and she'd be telling them tales.

She'd tell how during slavery they would keep my grandfather's grandfather in a cage for hours without food or water because he was always doing something to antagonize the boss. His grandmother would drink water and go to the cage and kiss her husband and put water in his mouth.

Mama was the type of person that everybody brought their troubles to. People still speak of the type of person she was and she's been dead, oh, Lord, about 40-some years.

SIDONIE BENTON

Sidonie Benton's grandmother was Augustine Gingery of Donaldsonville, Louisiana. She didn't speak much English and used to get mad at Sidonie because she couldn't speak French. Sid says, "I'm a lazy Cajun from down the bayou. I was born practically in Bayou Lafourche. I can tell you something about me. When I was three years old, they tell me, I was a sickly kid. The doctor came one evening and told my mama that I'd be dead by morning. So rather than have my mama get in the coroner, he wrote my death certificate. My papa went to the cemetery and had the family tomb opened for me. My brother used to call me 'Tomb Dodger' til my mama heard him."

My grandmaw tells the tale about how the Union soldiers came in to investigate — and grab whatever they could grab, that's the way they told it to me. They got to what we called the bibliotheque, the bookcase, and one of them took out his sword and broke one of the glass doors, just for meanness. And they took the comb right out of her hair. Our eyes would get that big, listening to her tell it. She was a big woman, she defied them terribly, I believe.

Now, years and years later, my sister got that bibliotheque, and she had it repaired. That glass had stayed broken all those years!

Grandmaw and Grandpaw owned

the whole square of ground right on the main street. One night Grandpaw heard a lot of commotion the horses were making and got up to see. They shot him and killed him. It was Union soldiers. Grandmaw being the kind of woman she was, went out of the great big long back porch to see what the noise was about. It was dark and she tripped over his dead body.

She was bitter about the Civil War — she didn't have any slaves. And, well, she was mad as hell. The reason why I say that is because in French she called the Yankees "beasts."

After the war, they had nothing, you know. She sold one piece of land at the time and I imagine that's how they lived.

Grandmaw used to tell her grandsons who were young that Grandpaw had buried the silver during the war. She always had a vegetable garden and Grandmaw would get that garden dug up every year. They were looking for the silver!

Oh, damn Yankees, I hated them! Course that's all gone, now. I don't feel that way at all now. But down South we still say damn Yankees.

ANNABEL GROS FEIGEL

Annabel Gros Feigel was one of 16 children, born in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, and raised in New Orleans. Her grandmother, Virginia Guidry, was born in 1843 of wealthy parents and educated in France. In later years she lived on a widow's pension from the Civil War. Annabel, her grandmother, her parents, and her brothers and sisters all lived together.

My grandmother didn't have a nice disposition, she really didn't. I mean, I can't lie about it, as I recall it you know.

She had owned a home in Clottsville, Louisiana, on Bayou Lafourche and a pretty home at that. My uncle, he got kind of, you know, a little money hungry. He went and sold the house from under my grandmother's feet. Then he didn't want her after that. He kept her for a couple of months, you know, the usual thing, and then she came to live with us.

I think my grandmother had really

ANNABEL GROS FEIGEL



gotten hurt when she had to move out of her house. She didn't like New Orleans and I think she would have wished to be back in the country, where she was born and raised. They'd had acreage, a garden, a cow, everything for their living. She had so much. But of course then, when she moved with my parents, everything was gone, more or less. That house was vacant for a long time and my grandmother used to go back there and spend time.

We used to call her Memere, that was French. She did nothing, nothing. She sat on that rocking chair on the porch from morning to night. She had no friends. Watched, that's all she did.

Another thing, my grandmother hated my sister Virgie with a purple passion. I kind of stayed away from her, but Virgie was a son-of-a-gun, she could care less. Virgie used to do "Alaria," you know. It's a ball game — you throw the ball up and your leg goes over the ball and you'd say, "One two, three, alaria, four, five, six, alaria," and so on. She loved to play it. So she would play that around my grandmother and Memere would sit there and wait for the opportunity for Virgie to throw that ball down. When Memere died, my mother found 50 balls in her trunk that she had taken away from Virgie. She couldn't stand for Virgie to play ball around her! In those days you could get a ball for a penny. I don't know wherever Virgie got all those balls; maybe my mother would give her a penny and she'd go buy a ball instead of a piece of candy. Fifty balls my mother found in that trunk! Yeah, she was really mean.

Memere got very, very sick, and she lay on the bed many months, maybe a

year. My mother had to take care of her. We slept right there in the room with her. Then when she died, I remember it as if it was yesterday. The embalmers came in with their buckets and all — it was horrible! We lived in a two-story house and they carried her stiff body down the steps and then they laid her on that cold slab. They waked her in the house.

I really got bad memories of this woman. Isn't that awful? It's a shame to be talking about a person like that when they're in their grave. But you just don't lie.

When I think back, I think it was that she was uprooted. It might have been her unhappiness that made her act that way. You just can't uproot old people.

OLGA ROOS BROOKS

Olga Roos Brooks visited her grandmother Elizabeth Roach in New Orleans every summer to be near her childhood sweetheart. She eloped at age 15 and she and her husband joined a traveling vaudeville troupe, later getting parts in silent movies. She almost didn't get married at all, because when the first minister they tried asked her if she had relatives to vouch for her age, she naively replied, "Oh yes, I have my grandmother, Mrs. Eugene Roach." The minister replied, "My God, that's my best friend, she sings in our church. I couldn't think of marrying her granddaughter without her present!" She and her sweetheart swiftly retreated, hopped the ferry across the Mississippi River and were secretly married.

My grandmother had a wonderful voice. She was a renowned singer and sang in five different languages. The



OLGA ROOS BROOKS

critics said her voice was greater than Adelina Patti. She sang in concert where Maison Blanche stands today – it was Christ Church Cathedral – when she was only 15 years old.

She had so many offers to go to the Metropolitan Opera Company, but she bore 15 children, nine of whom survived. I remember when I was a little girl, grandmother sang at the Presbyterian Church up on Prytania Street. She was holding my hand and we were going to the church this Sunday morning and she had a black taffeta dress with great big leg-o-mutton sleeves and she rustled along as we walked. I was sitting in the front pew and when they announced that Mrs. Roach would sing a solo, you couldn't hear a pin drop. When she came out, when she sang, the tears just started rolling down my eyes.

And my grandmother was so particular. She was so refined and ladylike. One time I met her in Holmes department store and I was walking down the aisle trying to catch up with her, and I hollered, "Grandma, how are you?" She turned around and said, "Olga, is that ladylike? When you are in public, be sure to speak in a whisper."

I loved my grandmother devotedly. Many years passed and her nine children came to visit her New Year's Eve night, 1919, and asked her to sing an aria from Carmen. She hadn't sung in five years, but her voice never cracked and never broke. She lifted up her voice and she started singing with all her nine children around her. As she did she took this pain in her heart and later that night passed away.

MALLIE WEATHERSBY

Mallie Weathersby talks of her grandmothers, Fannie Steele Walker and Amanda McLauren as she busily mixes up a skillet of cornbread for her daughter and newborn grandson. Mallie and both of her grandmothers are from a little town called Pineola, Mississippi. "Life was hard, but then, it didn't seem hard because that was what you had to do, just to live, and everybody seemed to enjoy it. It was just like neighbors in the community – there'd be a white family here, may-

be the next house would be a black family. But yet and still, when it come work time all of those families took an interest in each other. They called it 'working through and through.'"

Now, my grandmother Fannie, I hadn't ever met anybody as clean as she was. Her main trouble was trying to keep clean.

You see, back then, people didn't clean house but twice a year. If it was too cold for Christmas, they'd wait til springtime. But most of the time, it was revival time in August. They didn't call it revival in them days, they called it "protract-a-meeting."

The way she would clean her house was to boil big pots of water and take a big gourd dipper full of lye soap and put it in the pot and then clean from top to bottom. Them walls would almost sparkle, you thought they could talk to you. Her floors, they just had the board floors. When she got ready to rinse that floor, she'd rinse it until the water that run off look like you could drink it, it'd be so clean. Absolutely, she'd work you to death.

And she'd make some powerful lye soap. We'd have to go in the woods, where cattle had died, take the bones and put them in the soap pot. That lye in that pot would eat those bones up, they would disappear. And then she would test it. She would get a feather from a chicken and stick it in there and take it out and if it eat those fringes off, it was too strong. My granddaddy's overalls, she would rub them white. Absolutely the truth, they



MALLIE WEATHERSBY

looked like they had been coated with Clorox – and it would be nothing but her fist on that washboard.

And would she fuss if there'd be some dirt on my dress. Oh, my goodness, she'd want to strap me up! I don't ever remember her strapping me, but she'd want to. She'd say she was going to put the whippings on the shelf – she'd save them for you.

Mallie has vivid memories of the quilting bees at her Grandmother Mandy's house.

The ladies would gather in the evening and my goodness alive, they could really do some neat quilting. They mostly did it at my grandmother's house because Mandy didn't have no children and all the other ladies had children around and they'd be under the quilt, bumping heads, you know. They'd say, "You going to get your head cracked with a thimble!" I got mine cracked a many a day.

My grandmother could piece some stars. I'm going to tell you right now. It wasn't shabby, not a bit. It was up-to-date. She had the double wedding ring. I don't know how long it took her to piece it, but when she quilted it, it was some beautiful.

And I did *hate* it, I did hate cutting up material in those little bitty pieces and then sewing it back together. It didn't make sense to me – while they were together, let them stay together. If I could take big squares of material, put them on the machine and sew them up, I had plenty quilts. They wasn't beautiful, but I told them mine kept me just as warm as theirs.

My grandmother like to fish, and sometimes she would go and she would have her work in her apron. She would be sitting down on the riverbank and she would take and stick them poles right in the bank. She would put her leg across that pole, and when the fish bit it, she'd know. All the time, be sitting up there piecing them scraps.

Back then, it didn't mean so much to me, but now it does. It really means something to me to think about how interesting she was. □

Dee Gilbert is a free-lance writer living in New Orleans, and the director of Patchwork – An Oral History Project.

SOUTHERN COMIC

By Tom Chaffin

Green AstroTurf covers a makeshift stage erected at the far end of the high school gym in Dunn, North Carolina. A basket of gladiolas sits before a microphone stand. Tonight's door prizes have been awarded — a black and white TV, a bun warmer and server, a food processor, a tea kettle, and a basketball. A banner hangs on the institutional green wall behind the platform: "Welcome Stockholders: Agriculture Deserves the Credit."

It is the annual stockholders' meeting of the local Production Credit Association, a farmers' credit union, and the bleachers are packed. Folding chairs accommodate the rest of the 2,000 farmers and their families here tonight. The lights are up, and six-foot-high speakers, usually reserved for school assemblies, are

in place on either side of the stage. But most of this assemblage did not come for a recitation of dividend and interest figures.

They came to hear Jerry Clower — "America's Number One Country Comic," a 270-pound man stuffed into a yellow polyester tux-

edo with a raccoon emblem on the jacket and lapels so wide you could land a Lockheed Tri-Star on them.

He bounds from stage left onto the gym floor. He stops just short of the audience, arms outstretched like a defiant gladiator, gives a loud rebel yell that owes more to Johnny Weismuller than to Stonewall Jackson, then darts over to two middle-aged women in the front row, kisses both, unleashes the rebel yell again, and runs up on stage.

"Whoooooowoooo!" he bellows over the mike. "Shoooooot this thang!!!"

Before the laughter and whistles can subside, he steps back, licks his lips, grips the microphone firmly with his large hands, then leans into it: "I don't know

of *any place* I had rather be than..." He pauses before stretching out

the local hook to his stock encomium: "Duuuuuuuuun,

North Caro-

lina!" Another

Rebel yell, and his fluid

Mississippi

baritone brings

it all the



way home: "I'm on *yore* side," he tells them. "You know, to throw me in amongst a bunch of people who promote P.C.A. is like throwin a rabbit into a briar patch."

Clower's white mane, which he pauses again to comb for the same reason that Bob Hope stops to swing a golf club, evokes Andrew Jackson. His craggy visage suggests a cross between Arthur Godfrey and Buddy Hackett, his high-powered delivery, Andy Griffith's country music demagogue in *A Face in the Crowd*. In short, Clower looks, talks, and acts like what he is: a former sharecropper and fertilizer salesman turned comic and Baptist lay preacher.

Minnie Pearl, Speck Rose, String Bean, the Duke of Paducah. To anyone who grew up with the Grand Ole Opry, these names form a sort of pantheon of country comics. Before the South became the Sunbelt, before country music became the Nashville Sound, the country comic was a mainstay of any country music show. Coming on before the main act, with garish clothes and downhome manner, the comic regaled audiences with one-liners and stories drawn from country life. He (or she) became to the white rural Southerner exactly what the Lower East Side schtick comics of New York City became for the Jews of America — the voice of an authentic ethnic humor.

But as country music in recent years has largely waxed in national acceptance, country comedy has waned; its only national outlet is the Nashville-produced TV program *Hee-Haw*. The Jerry Clowers, Justin Wilsons, and Cotton Ivys make a living, but mostly in a regional market — off



record and tape sales, banquet appearances, and Nashville-produced syndicated TV.

Jerry Clower enjoys in the Deep South a folk celebrity roughly comparable to that of Alabama's Coach Bear Bryant, yet his name remains largely unknown above the Mason-Dixon Line. National acclaim eludes Clower, and he can be defensive on the subject of his regionalism, as when he recalled a 1971 encounter with a talent coordinator for NBC's *Tonight Show*. "They said I come on too strong for Johnny."

For Speck Rose, whose blacked-out tooth, green-checked jacket, and bowler are mainstays of the Porter Waggoner show, the only question is, whose regionalism? He recalls forays he and other Southern-based comics made into the North. "They just didn't understand our type of comedy. The other comics who work out of L.A., New York, Chicago, they're telling jokes out of what *they* see every day — the cities, the traffic, the subways. Johnny Carson can pop one on you, and everybody laughs and goes on. Well, you put him in the rural areas of Alabama, Georgia, Arkansas — they will appreciate and enjoy the joke, but they won't relate to it like they would mine or Jerry's."

But if country comedy furnishes

the context of Clower's show business aspirations, his comedic idiom draws on far deeper roots, into the South of the nineteenth century. During the 1840s and '50s, there emerged in what was then called the Old Southwest a literary humor that in its bravado, vulgarity, and iconoclasm was far removed from the mannered literature then being produced by New Englanders like Oliver Wendell Holmes, William Cullen Bryant, and John Greenleaf Whittier.

The humorists of the Old Southwest sought to recapture the voice and life of their disappearing frontier. In their recounting of bare-knuckled fights, coon hunts, and whiskey-sodden outbacks, their works, which would later influence Mark Twain and William Faulkner, celebrated a boisterous regionalism in the face of the growing homogeneity of Jacksonian America. In their tall tales — sometimes ribald, always class-conscious and anti-urban — writers such as Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, Davy Crockett, and William C. Hall sought to preserve for posterity a unique time and place.

Clower's own literary sources extend no further than the *Jackson Daily News* and the *Yazoo Herald*, but his comedy draws on the same tap root. "I've had people come up to me and

say how much they appreciate me making those records, so people'll know how we lived back in them days during the Depression," said Clower. "I bring up some words like the furnish merchant, the country store, rat killins, candy pullins, peanut boilins. Well, that was the culture of the *world*, Son! I mean a peanut boilin in them days was right up there with the sorority dance or the Junior League Valentine Day dance."

"Even as a kid [in Liberty, Mississippi], I had to outdo everybody at the swimmin hole. I had to dive off the highest limb, where at the school the next Monday, they'd say, 'You know, Jerry dived *higher* outta that tree than ole Lane Newman.' 'Oh, he did, did he?' 'Yeah, he took a runnin start and dove off that bridge — he's gonna *kill hisself!*'"

Clower's extroversion is hardly that of the classic comic type who becomes outgoing to overcome a brooding introspection. ("Hell no, he ain't changed," one local told me, "he's always been a damned loud-mouth.") The worst aspect of selling fertilizer, Clower remembers, was being alone on the road. As a travelling comic, he tries to avoid lay-overs for the same reason. "If I get a day off, and it's not feasible to come home and there's not any movies or sports on TV, I have to get out of there and go to hustlin up somebody to talk to — if it ain't nothing but some waiters in the hotel restaurant — cause I just don't like to be alone."

It was at a 1971 public relations outing in Lubbock, Texas, that a local disc jockey taped a Clower monologue, gave it some airplay, and, later, promoted a locally produced album. "From then on," said Clower, "after every talk I gave, I'd say, 'You send five dollars to Box 2122, Lubbock, Texas, and you can get my album.'"

Within a year the record sold 8,000 copies, enough to draw the attention of MCA Records, which offered the fertilizer salesman a contract. "It kinda scared me, cause I didn't know what was happening," Clower remembered. "Owen Cooper, president of Mississippi Chemical, called me into his office and said, 'Now, Jerry, what's happening to you could be tremendous, or it could just blow over, but we are willing to share you for a while — until you find out which way you're going.'"

"Now, if he had forced me to make a decision, I would have stayed with fertilizer. I would have said, 'Bye-bye, show biz.' See, I was 44 years old and I had a family. That's *old* to be backin into show biz."

After Clower signed with Nashville agent Tandy Rice, MCA re-released his first album, *Yazoo City Mississippi Talkin'*. Soon thereafter a single from the album grabbed the attention of country music disc jockeys across the South. "A Coon Huntin' Story," a boisterous Clower recounting of a night-time hunt in his beloved Liberty, Mississippi, sold 150,000 and made the fertilizer salesman's name a *coon celebre* among old boys of the region. "The bottom line," said Clower, "was November, 1973, when I was inducted

into the world-famous Grand Ole Opry."

Clower's career often seems like some pecuniary incarnation of the Hindu god Shiva, with each of his many hands washing the others. In exchange for promotional appearances, Clower still draws a salary from Mississippi Chemical — "enough to keep my Blue Cross paid up." He often peppers his stage and banquet talks with plugs for products he has endorsed — autos, coffees, pesticides, chain saws. During a recent pep talk to a radio broadcasters' convention in Nashville, Clower launched into a sermon on the virtues of enterprise and loyalty, invoking Delta Air Lines as an organization embodying those values. Clower tapes are standard fare on many Delta routes.

Clower brings to his dealings with the press the same hard-sell that he brought to his fertilizer sales route, and he plays out the country-boy-made-good role to its ultimate: "Why, I sell more records *before* breakfast than some of them big dogs in Hollywood sell *all* day." A recent Clower junket included trips to his mother's house in Liberty, Mississippi, to the nearby baptismal hole, and to "that old shack what I grew up in as a sharecropper" — where Clower genially posed in the front yard by his Cadillac. Later, there was a stop at brother Sonny's house in McComb, Mississippi. Finding Sonny out, Clower decreed that the photo opportunity should not be wasted. He posed instead with Sonny's prized bulldog. "He's always on," said Larry Mimms, a Nashville adman. "He *sprays* his personality everywhere he goes. Nobody knows quite where it comes from, but he's always on."

Not always. Clower can be judiciously silent when he needs to be: "I didn't go to Dade County when Anita Bryant asked me to come. I told her I didn't have a dog in that fight. And she said, 'Jerry, all Christians have a dog in this fight.' I said, 'I do not. I'm perfectly willing for the people of Dade County to settle this issue with no outside interference.'"

"And my reason for that was, I remember during racial strife in the state of Mississippi I was doing my best to be Christian and to follow my Christian convictions in all of my actions in this situation. And right in



the middle of cooler heads tryin to prevail, and tellin folks what the law is — up drove a busload from Boston, Massachusetts, with Mrs. Endicott Peabody callin us bigots, gettin off that bus with them placards.

“Well, they came within an inch of causin me to forget all of the progress I had made in the last few years.”

“That Yazoo,” said Mike, “is the dundest hole that ever came along. . . . Talk about Texas. It ain’t nothing to them Yazoo hills. The etarnalest out-of-the-way place for bar, an’ panthers, an’ wolfs, an’ possums, an’ coons, an’ skeeters, an’ nats, an’ hoss flies, an’ cheegers, an’ lizzards, an’ frogs, an’ mean fellers, an’ drinkin, an’ swappin hosses, an’ playin’ hell generally, that ever you did see! Pledge you my word, ’nuff to sink it.”

—William C. Hall,

“How Sally Hooter Got Snake Bit”
April 13, 1850, *Spirit of the Times*

One hundred and eighty miles south of Memphis, 40 miles due east of the Mississippi River, Yazoo City, pop. 12,000, whose Yellow Pages offer 48 churches, straddles the rich delta of that river and the first range of hills to the east of it. Coming to Yazoo from the river, U.S. 49 passes through the Delta’s fecund cotton fields and comes finally to the downtown district, with its two-story storefronts, most built soon after the 1904 fire that leveled the town.

Southwest of the business district, astride the tracks of the Illinois Central, lie the gray and splintered shotgun houses where Yazoo’s black citizens live. These structures cluster along dark corridors whose appellations — Swamp Street, Locust Street, Water Street — pay tribute to the muddy Yazoo River that snakes behind them to the southwest on its way to join the big Mississippi above Vicksburg.

East of downtown Yazoo, Grand Avenue offers a South found in other old port towns of the region — insular and pedigreed communities with names like Natchez, Savannah, Charleston, and New Orleans. Their claim to prosperity is not that of the manufacturing South of Birmingham or the commercial South of Atlanta. No, the

Victorian homes, two-storied and lattice-adorned, that line Grand Avenue, and its ample lawns of gingko, dogwood, and pecan trees, evoke an older and — its residents would add — more manerred wealth.

Still farther east, away from the rivers and their lowlands, beyond the opulence of Grand Avenue, lies the hill country of Yazoo, with its hardwood forests, its isolation, and its scrappy sons who drive Dodge pickups with gun racks and National Rifle Association bumper stickers along its lonesome backroads.

While Clower now lives comfortably with his wife and two of his children on Yazoo’s delta, he quickly adds in interviews that he is of those hills, that he and his people came from this same range of uplands — only 150 miles to the south. “Route 4, Liberty, Mississippi,” to be precise, a backwoods community six miles north of the Louisiana state line.

“My daddy was a sawmill hand. And so we got out and moved in with my grandpa, and started share-croppin. So, I did grow up choppin cotton and plowin mules and playin gator at the swimmin hole and settin at the country store. . . .”

The lowland-highland tension at the core of Yazoo City’s identity animates much of the ambivalence, if not outright resentment, of some townspeople on the subject of Jerry Clower. “I wouldn’t call it resentment,” said Linda Crawford, director of the Yazoo Triangle Arts center. “I think there’s kind of a love-hate relationship in this town with Jerry. We’re glad he’s here, but we like people to know that there’s a lot more to Yazoo City than Jerry Clower. You know, [novelist] Willie Morris is from here too.”

Another local put it more bluntly: “Willie Morris is more Yazoo City than Jerry,” he said. “Jerry’s of the hill country. He’s really more Route 4,



Liberty, Mississippi. You see, Willie's father worked at a gas station but his mother taught music on Grand Avenue, visiting those Victorian houses wearing her white gloves and leaving a calling card when she came by.

"Route 4, Liberty, Mississippi, is that mosquito-ridden hill country of rednecks and sandy soil and red clay and pine trees. So you see, Jerry's not *really* Yazoo City."

"It's real simple," offered Clower, straightening out the confusion. "I was *birthed* at Route 4, Liberty, Mississippi, and grew up there. And most of the tales I tell happened there, with the Ledbetters, while I was coon huntin and fishin and huntin rabbit and playin gator at the swimmin hole. Then, in 1954, when I got out of Mississippi State University, I found work at Yazoo City. And I been here ever since."

It was this milieu of highland life that Clower drew on to create the Ledbetters, the family who garrulously inhabits his Route 4 tales. By now, Uncle Versis Ledbetter, his wife (Aunt Pet), and the rest of the highland clan (Ardel, Bernel, W.L., Lanel, Odel, Marcel, Newgene, Claude, and Clovis) occupy an almost mythic realm in the state of Mississippi. During a recent appearance, Clower drew laughs when he spotted a local south Mississippi congressman and introduced him to the audience as "Marcel Ledbetter's congressman."

For Clower fans, speculating on the true identity of Marcel Ledbetter is something like a parlor game, and Clower is not about to discourage it.

"I won't specifically point out who Marcel Ledbetter is. He could be one of two or three people. And I'm glad I never did identify him. CBS'd be wantin to go down there and do a documentary on him, and Marcel would wind up killin Walter Cronkite. That'd be awful. They don't like cameras. They think TV cameras has caused all the troubles in the world."

When one considers the demographics of the state Marcel Ledbetter calls home — Mississippi is 37 percent black — blacks become a conspicuous absence in Clower's tales. The omission is deliberate: "If we had grown up enough, I could get by with mockin blacks. I could do some black dialect. I could tell some real black stories that happened. Some of the stories I tell, some of the folks is black, but it's not necessary to identify them. Ain't nobody's business. They's friends of mine. We's all in the swimmin hole together.

"I have people come up to me an say, 'Boy, that sho is funny bout that wildcat eatin that nigger in that tree.' I say, 'I don't believe you heard that on *my* record!'

"Fellow'll say, 'Yeah, you know — that John Eubanks, who climbed up there to get that raccoon.'

"I say, 'Man, John's my *first* cousin!' Well — here's a fellow who's an obvious bigot, and it was funnier to him if that bobcat was jumpin on a black fella. But John Eubanks is a man — an he be black or white, it don't matter. He climbed the tree and he said, 'Just shoot up here amongst us, one of us *got* to have some relief.'"

During the racial turmoil of the 1970s, Clower gained a reputation as a racial progressive in Yazoo City. During the past two presidential campaigns, he supported former president Jimmy Carter, an advocacy that in 1980 won him the enmity of the local Moral Majority — at the mention of which Clower bristles. "I disagree with pittin one group against another. Some super-Christians bother me. I feel like some of 'em are so heavenly-minded, they ain't no earthly good."

But it is on the subject of the Moral Majority's advocacy of private education that Clower, a tithing Southern Baptist who speaks often in white and black churches, firmly parts company with many of his fundamentalist brethren. "I was raised and grew up as a bigot. And I don't particularly criticize my folks, but as I got older, my Christian convictions got to prick in my conscience — and I couldn't continue to believe some of the things I believed and did, and claim to be a Christian. And I changed.

"I have some Christian convictions, and I try to practice what I preach. And I fought a war to give a man the right to be a bigot. You can *be* a bigot in America if you wanna be — but I want you to admit it when you are one. I don't want you to say and teach your children that you ain't a bigot when you are one. I mean, if you got a school, and you don't want blacks in it — put up a *sign*. It ain't no problem, it ain't no complicated thing. Just put up a big old sign out there — 'For Whites Only' — and let's get on with it."

“When I was a boy, if you was reached the age of accountability, you could have the freedom to go wherever you wanted to go,” Clower tells his audience, finding his way into a story requested before the show's start.

“But the minute you diiiiiied — they assigned at least *four* people to watch you. I mean, if you died, they didn't *think* of leaving you by yourself. Clower picks up the pace: “So I went to a funeral not too long ago. It was ten o'clock at night, and a great big fella got up with a three-piece suit on and says” — Clower parodies the dulcet baritone of an institutional voice:



"Ladies and gentlemen, this funeral home closes at ten o'clock. We'll open back up at nine o'clock in the morning."

"I looked over at my mama and said, 'Hallelujah, they done figured this out. Let them old undertakers set up with the dead!'"

"Well, everybody got up to leave, and Uncle Versie said, 'Sir, this is your funeral home, and you can run it any way you want to — but I'd just feel a little better if my boys, Newgene and Clovis, set up all night with my friend here. Now y'all just go ahead and shut the door and just leave 'em in here.'"

"Well, everybody left, and there's old Newgene and Clovis settin up in there, smellin them flowers. . . . Well, after about an hour, Newgene could see a beer joint — with that light flashin on and off."

Clower savors the scene. Pantomiming, he holds out his arms and rocks his massive frame on the soles of his white cowboy boots, suggesting the metronomic regularity of a blinking sign.

"Newgene says, 'You know, I believe I'll just step over yonder and get us somethin to drink.'"

"Clovis says, 'No, I ain't gonna stay here with him by myself — I'll tell you what, Newgene, since you brought it up, *you* stay here with him and *I'll* go and get us somethin to drink.'"

"Newgene says, 'Huh-uh, I ain't stayin here with him by myself, either.'"

"So they stay there another hour, and they got to wantin somethin to drink *sooooo* bad. . . . Mouth getting dryyyy!" Clower rolls his tongue around like a man in a desert facing a mirage, then gives his rebel yell and telegraphs the next line: "So they decided they'd go get somethin to drink and just *take* the dead fella *with* 'em." The audience roars as Clower

builds the story like a slow-working carpenter.

"So they got him up — one on one side, one on the other. And here they went. Dead fella was in the middle. . . . And every once in a while they'd *bounce* him, so it'd look like the dead fella was takin *steps*."

Clower pantomimes the dead body moving toward the beer joint, his posture and facial expression freezing into a corpse-like rigidity. Throughout the act, Clower gesticulates with the animation if not the grace of a veteran traffic cop — his Liberty Bell physique underscoring the humor of his movements.

"They walked right into the beer joint — walked right up to the counter an stood the dead fella up. . . . Eased a three-legged stool round on his back, where he'd be wedged in there good. Newgene was standing on one side, Clovis was on the other — drinkin!"

"The dead man was the best dressed man in the *whole* beer joint!"

"About that time a fight broke out!" Clower screams as if bearing witness to bestial violence. "Fist City!!!!" he shouts, rocking into a flurry of onstage shadow-boxing and kicking, giving a blow-by-blow account of the redneck contretemps: "Here they went! Bustin *chairs* over one another's heads!"

Clower plays out the fight. "Wop! Bop! Woooooo! — *Down* they went! A fella drawed back in the melee and hit the dead fella up-side the head and just cut him a *flip* — down in the middle of the floor the dead man went!"

"Waaaaaaaaaaa!" Clower screams. "Here comes the sheriff — blowin them sireens, *linin* them up against the wall, searchin them. . . . 'Ahhhhh!' And Clovis Ledbetter fell down by the dead man, and put his arm under his head. 'Ahhhhh,' said Clovis, 'Ahhhhh! *Speak* to me, speak to me. . . ." Then

he looked up at the fella that hit him and said, 'You! You *killed* him!'

"And the sheriff went over there to handcuff the man what hit him, and the fella said, 'Wait a *minute*, sheriff. *Hold onnnnn!*'"

"I ain't gonna lie about it — I was in the fight. I *did* hit that fella — but it was in self-defense. *He pulled a pocket knife on me!*'"

As the applause, whistles, and laughter well up, Clower punctuates his punch line with another rebel yell, licks his lips, wipes his brow, giggles, and tucks his enormous belly in. Returning his handkerchief to his coat pocket, he gives a high, mischievous laugh, steps to the microphone, and states the obvious:

"I am a *country* fella. I feel like I am *one* of you. Because I did grow up on a farm. I *do* have a degree in agriculture. I *am* country. I ain't ashamed of it. . . ."

The digression leads Clower into another story, another digression. Then, forty-five minutes after starting, the comic approaches the coda with which he closes.

"I am convinced," he says, taking an oratorical tone, "that there is just *one* place where there ain't no laughter. And that is *hell*. And I have made arrangements to *miss hell*. So: ha, ha, ha!" It is pure Clower, and the audience loves it.

"So I ain't never gonna have to be nowhere where some folks ain't laughin! And if you know of anybody that don't believe in laughin, and they walkin around with a hump in their back and their lips pooched out — they ain't gonna laugh at *nothin*! You tell them to go home and look in the mirror and see what all us other folks been laughin at all these many years! Thank you!"

Clower's gray-green eyes betray his fatigue. Sweat stains his world-famous raccoon tuxedo. He greets the audience's standing ovation wide-eyed, arms raised, mouth wide open, a worn but still jovial clown. □

J. Thomas Chaffin, Jr., writes on North American politics and culture for The Nation, The Progressive, and other journals. A native of Atlanta, he recently completed an M.A. in American Studies from New York University. He now lives in San Francisco.



The Way We Lived

Natives and Newcomers: The Way We Lived in North Carolina before 1770, by Elizabeth A. Fenn and Peter H. Wood. 103 pp.

An Independent People: The Way We Lived in North Carolina, 1770-1820, by Harry L. Watson. 120 pp.

Close to the Land: The Way We Lived in North Carolina, 1820-1870, by Thomas H. Clayton. 100 pp.

The Quest for Progress: The Way We Lived in North Carolina, 1870-1920, by Sydney Nathans. 112 pp.

Express Lanes and Country Roads: The Way We Lived in North Carolina, 1920-1970, by Thomas C. Parramore. 110 pp.

The University of North Carolina Press, 1983. Each volume: \$11.95/6.95.

— Margaret Brown

ABOVE: THE SCHENCK-WARLICK MILL, NORTH CAROLINA'S FIRST COTTON MILL; BELOW: QUILTING PARTY



The genius of these exceptionally well-written volumes is that each compresses popular and scholarly history into a limited number of pages without sacrificing accuracy or succumbing to a predetermined orthodoxy. Using North Carolina's historical places as their starting point, the books offer a physical and emotional context to view the dissolution of Indian culture, perspectives on slavery, the beginnings of industrial life, and the impact of the three kings — tobacco, textiles, and furniture — on a small farm economy and its labor force.

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Margaret Brown is a North Carolina 4-H regional leader and a horticulturalist.



Illustrations from *The Way We Lived*

Plantation University

Exit 13, by Monte Piliawsky. South End Press, 1982. 252 pp. \$7.50.

— Tom Dent

In this conservative period of the '80s when popular commitment to social change seems a thing of the past, Monte Piliawsky's *Exit 13* is particularly welcome. Based in part on his brief but jolting experience as a member of the political science faculty at the University of Southern Mississippi [USM] in Hattiesburg, *Exit 13* is a polemical and penetrating indictment of the current status and future direction of American education. Piliawsky's analysis could have easily degenerated into a litany of grievances against USM, but instead he has drawn on his experiences and observations to demonstrate that American "college life and curriculum . . . recreate a microcosm of the authoritarianism, racism, and sexism in society itself."

As a native Southerner, Piliawsky must have had some idea of what he would encounter when he accepted a teaching job at USM in the early 1970s, but he was nevertheless continually astonished by the stagnant and oppressive academic atmosphere he found during his two years there. USM is a state-supported university with a history of incorrigible racism which Piliawsky assiduously documents — from collusion in the death of a 1959 black applicant to Piliawsky's own forced departure in 1973. The administration of USM is openly militaristic and the president during Piliawsky's stay, retired general William D. McCain, rigorously supported compulsory student participation in the Reserve Officers Training Corps [ROTC] program. McCain ran the university like a Confederate army officer, establishing his jingoistic, racist, and sexist policies with impunity and arbitrarily dismissing dissidents from both faculty and student body for minor infractions of university protocol.

Administrative suppression of academic freedom included such abuses as firing the entire philosophy department; controlling the choice and use

of textbooks by a contrived "lending" system; screening the political, personal, and social habits of guest speakers on the campus; exercising absolute control over student organizations; and vigorously suppressing nonconformity and dissent among faculty and students.

Certainly Piliawsky makes his case against USM. But in the second half of the book he uses USM to make more general observations about American education. American colleges, he argues, are developing into indoctrination centers turning out low-level white-collar workers for the American corporate job market. He cites the heavy emphasis on vocational education and the corresponding lessening of esteem for the liberal arts at many community and state colleges. In his view, the attitude reflected in USM Dean Charles Moorman's comment — that "Literature and history, unlike money and possessions, will not bring students solace and wisdom in times of disaster" — has become all too pervasive.

Piliawsky views the current trend toward vocational education as an outgrowth of recommendations made in 1967 by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. The commission, he says, was created in response to major crises confronting the educational establishment: "internal dissension caused by student radicalism, a deepening financial squeeze, and above all, an unprecedentedly large number of black and other minority students demanding access to a college education."

The Carnegie Commission recommended a two-tier educational policy: Most colleges would become primarily vocational; only a few would remain as

bastions of the liberal arts, academic excellence, and research. These elite universities would then be preserved for middle- and upper-class whites, while other students would be channeled into the vocationally-oriented state universities and community and junior colleges. The elite institutions, said the commission, "should be given special support for instruction and research, and for the ablest of graduate students; they should be protected by policies on differentiation of functions."

Piliawsky contends that the commission "had a vested interest in assuring that the rapid changes occurring in higher education would not threaten the existing economic arrangements in the U.S." The make-up of the 14-member commission seems to substantiate that contention. All but one were industrialists or highly placed college administrators. All were white and only one was a woman. Among them were directors of at least 14 major corporations.

Their report — with its recommendations for stratifying education — has led to increased racial and class polarization in institutions of higher learning. Even more damaging, evidence cited by Piliawsky demonstrates that the vocational training being offered neither enhances nor develops the promised marketable skills. The poor are being duped into thinking that colleges offer access to the job market, when in fact students are simply put on hold while learning obsolete or unmarketable skills.

Thus the problem runs deeper than the channeling of blacks (and other poor people) into "vocational" rather

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than "academic" fields. Meaningful vocational education is not in itself undesirable, but Piliawsky shows us an overwhelming decline — or complete absence — of *quality* in vocational training, even in the schools that supposedly emphasize their career orientations. The colleges seem to have become mere certification factories, lacking *both* academic substance and vocational relevance.

Piliawsky is on target when he alleges that the drive for quality education, a concern many blacks had hoped would be addressed and dealt with in the course of meaningful school desegregation, has now been substantially deflected. This opinion has been expressed by too many black observers to be ignored. Despite the fact that the number of black children now in school and the number entering and completing college have noticeably increased during the past two decades, those figures are less impressive when considered as a percentage of the population — or when comparing the last decade with the one before.

Much of the present educational pathology lies buried in the halls of the horribly inadequate public schools most black students attend. Many blacks feel that current high school reading and writing levels are inferior to those of the last days of Jim Crow schools, when many teachers took pride in turning out superior students who would be able to overcome the obstacles of an overtly discriminatory society.

An analysis of what happened in the newly desegregated public schools is extremely complex, but central to the issue is the fact that whites have pulled their children out of the public schools en masse, leaving a depleted tax base and diminishing public concern. Though some black teachers and administrators still work in the public schools, they generally lack the power to make needed changes in the school systems. In addition, there are many theoretical conflicts, even within the black community, over what good desegregated public school education is.

As a result, while we now have the phenomenon of increased numbers of black high school graduates, they are less adequately prepared for college

and for working lives. When these unprepared graduates enter community or junior colleges in search of that certifying degree, they perform poorly. Within a year or two, they have often dropped out of college. Besides the economic pressures black students face in trying to finish college, they simply don't have the basic reading and writing skills to complete college level work. Further, it is almost impossible to determine to what degree pervasive racism at the college level acts as a deterrent to successful completion.

Piliawsky and numerous other educators suggest the need for increased remedial programs for black and other low-income students who come from woefully inadequate high schools. I would quadruple the emphasis on this. At some point in the educational system, someone has to do the job of raising skills to an adequate level. The colleges don't want to do this; they feel it's not really their job. But someone has to do it if the majority of people in the South (and elsewhere in the nation) are to become educated.

My own conviction is that the black communities must take up this issue — and very soon — if there is going to be meaningful forward movement. Continued emphasis on the *amount* of desegregation alone is not going to do the job. Though black expressions of discontent and strivings for control of Southern public school systems might be attacked by some as "reverse racism" or misinterpreted as a "return to segregation," neither of these perceptions is accurate as long as public activism is based on a concern for the quality of education. What seems to have happened over the past decade is that black communities have been lulled to sleep by the imagined benefits of integration. Not only has school integration not occurred on meaningful levels, but black communities and organizations have also failed to adopt strategies for dealing with the educational realities of the post-*Brown* era.

If blacks, particularly in the South, become active in demanding better and more relevant education for their children, this effort will benefit white students also. If you raise a system from its lowest level, all levels must rise. But effective strategies will have to emerge gradually, as blacks begin

to assess gains and losses since the '60s and to reconceive political, economic, and cultural objectives.

Because Piliawsky's observations are based on actual experience as well as on considerable research, he has given us a valuable analysis of the educational problems and challenges we face in the late twentieth century. We look forward to other important, relevant studies of this type in the near future. □

Tom Dent is a New Orleans poet and free-lance writer. His collection of poetry, Blue Light and River Songs, is available from Lotus Press in Detroit.

Poverty of Progress

The Selling of the South: The Southern Crusade for Industrial Development, 1936-1980, by James C. Cobb. Louisiana State University Press, 1982. 293 pp. \$16.95.

— Gregory D. Squires

Has the South shed its plantation traditions and joined the mainstream of American society as a result of the industrial growth of recent decades? In this book, James C. Cobb answers with a persuasive "no." He traces this industrial growth and the way it has involved the explicit selling of a low-wage, non-union, native-born white work force, and a minimalist government (low taxes and few regulations). Perhaps the question Cobb should have asked is whether the mainstream of American society has joined the South.

Cobb forcefully argues that the Southern strategy for economic growth has been firmly rooted in its traditions of white supremacy, minimal government, cheap labor, and regional chauvinism. For example, in the 1930s the city of Louisville, Kentucky, advertised that "Labor in Louisville doesn't require foremen who speak half a dozen different languages. Our workers are Americans. They talk and think American."

A decade later the mayor of Pelahatchie, Mississippi, assured a Connecticut manufacturer: "Our wonderful labor, 98% native born, mostly high school graduates, will lower average

hourly industrial wage rates 5¢ to 49¢ below other southern states and from 50¢ to 95¢ below northern rates."

In the 1970s, when Southern communities found it profitable to recruit foreign investors, the approach had to be altered slightly. An appeal used by one Southern official was that foreign employers found "the Southern work attitude is more like their own way of doing business."

In their attempts to attract new industries, Southern officials have not been afraid to put their money (or the taxpayers' money) where their mouths were. Cobb shows how city after city and every Southern state offered a

requirements. Though they often prefaced such appeals with assurances that they personally were opposed to desegregation as much as anyone, they emphasized the importance of being "practical."

At least a few businesses rejected appeals based on low taxes because of their justifiable fear that low taxes meant inadequate municipal services and amenities for their employees. Environmental regulations have also restricted some recruitment efforts, but Cobb notes that development officials have effectively communicated the region's priority for development over clean water and air. Cobb acknowledges that some progress has been made in preserving the environment, and in a few instances communities declined to recruit firms because of the pollution they would create. But in general the pro-business image of the South has not been tarnished.

The South has grown. New industries have flocked to Dixie and wages have risen. But Cobb illustrates how that industrial development effort has been as much a force for continuity as for change. He asserts, "By the end of the 1970s anti-unionism had supplanted racism as the South's most respectable prejudice."

If the traditions of white supremacy, minimal government, cheap labor, and regional chauvinism remain and the South has not entered the mainstream, recent developments at the national level and in other regions of the nation indicate that the mainstream may soon join the South. Reaganomics represents the same pro-business, minimalist government, anti-black, and anti-union sentiments. Like Southern industrial development officials since the 1930s, federal policy-makers and economic development commissions around the nation point to economic growth as the solution to many social problems, and to subsidies for private industry as the key to that growth.

Where does this leave us? Cobb offers no recommendations to guide us out of this impasse, except perhaps an implied break with current and past policies. Free market advocates point to the pro-business attitudes and the industrial growth of Southern communities as exemplars for the rest of the nation. Their enthusiasm might be

tempered by a reading of *The Selling of the South*. □

Gregory D. Squires teaches sociology at Loyola University of Chicago and edits *The Journal of Intergroup Relations*.

Pissants and Grits

The *Crescent Review*, edited by Bob Shar and Becky Gould Gibson. The *Crescent Review*, Inc. (P.O. Box 15065, Winston-Salem, NC 27103), 1983. 100 pp. \$4.00 per issue; \$7.50 per one-year subscription (two issues).

— Hester Smith Rodgers

There is a peculiar breed of Southerner who goes about clutching two publications and has a colorful collection of papers at home. The publications are *The Fiction Writer's Market* and *Writer's Digest*; the colorful papers are rejections slips; and the strange creature is a fiction writer. Even a talented writer has a hard time getting published because the opportunities are few. Of the literary journals or "little magazines" in the South, none is devoted primarily to publishing fiction. Many include two or three short stories along with essays, reviews, poetry, and other articles; many are strictly poetry.

A mythology has grown up about the South's producing great writers. Critics speak of our sense of community, our deep feeling for history, loss, and evil as things that make writers write below the Mason-Dixon line. The South produces these writers but does not publish them, not nearly enough, anyway.

Of the short stories sent to the little magazines in the Southeast, precious few are printed. The *Sewanee Review* at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, receives approximately 1,080 fiction manuscripts a year and publishes 10 of them. The *Southern Review* at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge receives 1,200 and publishes 12 to 16. The *Carolina Quarterly* at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill publishes 12 to 18 of the 2,100 it is offered. *Cal-*



**Virginia Is Not Only
A Right To Work State, It's
A Want To Work State.**

It has been said that the quality of Virginia's labor force is the best in the South. It's not just the quality of the labor force, but the quality of the work environment. Virginia's labor force is the best in the South. It's not just the quality of the labor force, but the quality of the work environment. Virginia's labor force is the best in the South. It's not just the quality of the labor force, but the quality of the work environment.

Virginia

variety of tax abatements, industrial revenue bonds, and other subsidies to attract business. In some cases, economic development officials provide new production facilities for companies that would move South and then financed the construction with deductions from the workers' paychecks.

Cobb acknowledges that many changes have occurred in the South, some of them more positive than negative. For example, during the civil-rights activities of the 1960s some Northern businesses were hesitant to move to those communities that experienced racial violence, because of image problems. As a result, "moderate" business leaders in several communities encouraged token compliance with newly enacted federal civil rights re-

lalo, the literary journal of the black South, receives fewer fiction manuscripts — about 180 a year — but publishes only about nine. Less well-known journals also have more favorable ratios, but still the pickings are slim.

Now there is one more outlet, a new literary journal dedicated to giving breaks to young writers and new writers — *The Crescent Review*. Based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, *The Crescent Review* published its first issue in March, 1983, with nearly full attention on fiction (and some limited space for poetry). The journal is named for the Southern Crescent, which, says co-founder and fiction editor Bob Shar in a foreword, is “the only passenger train connecting Winston-Salem and Greensboro with the rest of the Southeast.” How is that relevant? According to Shar: “Like crazed railroad visionaries, we intend to shorten distances between active minds and flail away at loneliness on a semi-annual basis. We intend to make it difficult for talented young Southeastern writers to give up on themselves. We intend to give deserving rookies a fair shake. This is primarily a fiction lover’s magazine with an eager ear for new voices.”

The journal’s origins lie in discussions among some members of the Writers Roundtable, a Winston-Salem writers’ club. In a recent interview Shar explained, “We didn’t find a magazine that was primarily devoted to the publication of new short story writers, new Southeastern short story writers. There seemed to be a real need for that. So we went back to the idea of starting a magazine and got organized.

“It was originally going to be — we figured we’d just have fun with it and weren’t really looking to be a real classy-looking magazine, and we were going to call it *Pissants and Grits*. Steve [Lindahl, Shar’s co-founder] sort of said, ‘Well, you know, I don’t think I’d be real proud of that.’”

What they finally published is something to be proud of, a noteworthy new magazine of quality. They weren’t able to pay the writers, and nearly all the work, including the printing, was done by volunteers. But they did have to pay for typesetting, and there are other inevitable expenses that made fundraising a necessity.

Here Shar cites the help of F. Whit-

ney Jones, a Winston-Salem man who consults on fundraising, marketing, and long-range planning for museums and arts organizations throughout the Southeast. Jones is also president of the Jargon Society, a local small press, and he suggested the “What’s it going to do for Winston-Salem?” angle that helped secure money from the city’s Arts Council. The key was to bring in



some big names, so Winston-Salem would have its name associated with well-known writers and their work. The North Carolina Arts Council has also provided financial support.

Publishing name writers in order to get the space for unknowns does seem to be a paradox; but it is a victory, not a cop-out. The better-known writers helped to set a tone of quality, and George Garrett also helped by finding the unknowns whose work fills the first edition of *The Crescent Review*. The author of several novels, short story collections, and books of poetry, Garrett not only supplied the *Crescent* with a chapter of his new Doubleday-published novel *Elizabeth and James*, he is also, says Shar, “the one guy who really got the thing going.” Garrett sent along a list of 40 young writers, and all but two of the contributors to the first issue came from this list. “We thought of calling it *The George Garrett Journal*,” says Shar, half-seriously.

Along with Garrett and other established Southerners like David Madden, the 10 fiction writers represented here include Kimberly Kafka and Jill McCorkle, two 24-year-old previously unpublished women, and several other

young people with little or no exposure outside the world of tiny-circulation little magazines.

It’s also worth noting that although the space for poetry is limited — the poetry being treated almost as filler material — it is first-rate. Becky Gould Gibson is the editor responsible, and she has also included works by both known and unknown poets.

If *The Crescent Review* thrives — at this writing the second edition is at the press — it will provide a great service to the struggling, and not-so-struggling, fiction writers of the Southeast. Perhaps it will be first to publish the next Eudora Welty, Barry Hannahs, Alice Walkers, Walker Percys, Doris Bettses, and Rita Mae Browns. It will also provide a great service to the fiction readers of the Southeast. □

Hester Smith Rodgers is a copy editor and book reviewer for the Winston-Salem Journal.

Books on the South

This list consists of books published since April, 1983. Book entries include works through September, 1983. All books are to be published in 1983. Dissertations appeared in the Dissertation Abstracts Index from February to April, 1983. All dissertations are dated 1982 unless otherwise indicated.

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 (800-521-3042).

ECONOMICS, HISTORY, AND POLITICS — BEFORE 1865

“Born Again in the Trenches: Revivalism in the Confederate Army,” by Gorrell Clinton Prim. Florida State Univ.

A Carolinian Goes to War: *The Civil War Memoirs of Arthur Middleton Manigault* (Univ. of South Carolina Press). \$24.95.

The Civil War Almanac, by Henry S. Commager (Facts on File). \$19.95.

“Ethnic Diversity on the Southern Frontier: A Social History of Purrysburgh, South Carolina, 1732-1792,” by Arlin Charles Migliazzo. Washington State Univ.

“Food in Seventeenth-Century Tidewater Virginia: A Method for Studying Historical Cuisines,” by Maryellen Spencer. Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

REVIEWS

"Historical Geography of the Southern Charcoal Iron Industry, 1800-1860," by James Larry Smith. Univ. of Tennessee.

"In Search of Status Power: The Baptist Revival in Colonial Virginia, 1760-1776," by Jack Stephen Kroll-Smith. Univ. of Pennsylvania.

Martin's Hundred: The Discovery of a Lost Colonial Virginia Settlement, by Ivor N. Hume. (Dell). \$10.95.

"Northern Virginia Slavery: A Statistical and Demographic Investigation," by Donald Mitchell Sweig. William & Mary.

Our Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln, John Brown, and the Civil War Era, by Stephen B. Oates (Univ. of Mass. Press). \$7.95.

"Party, State, and Nation: Kentucky and the Coming of the American Civil War," by Harry August Volz. Univ. of Virginia.

Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790, by Lathan A. Windley (Greenwood). 4 vols. \$15.00.

"Slave Demography and Family Formation: A Community Study of the Ball Family Plantations, 1720-1896," by Cheryl Ann Cody. Univ. of Minnesota.

"The Tactical and Strategic Evolution of Cavalry during the American Civil War," by James Arthur Schaefer. Univ. of Toledo.

ECONOMICS, HISTORY, AND POLITICS - 1865-1983

Appalachia and America: Autonomy and Regional Dependence, ed. by Allen Batteau (Univ. Press of Kentucky). \$26.00.

"Black Political Participation in Florida: A Test of Three Explanations," by John Burt, Jr. Florida State Univ.

"The Black Press of Tennessee: 1865-1980," by Karen Fitzgerald Brown. Univ. of Tennessee.

"Blacks in Memphis, Tennessee, 1920-1955: A Historical Study," by Gloria Brown Melton. Washington State Univ.

Creationism, Science, and the Law: Arkansas Case Documents and Commentaries, by Marcel la Follette (MIT Press). \$20.00/9.95.

Dixie Dateline: A Journalistic Portrait of the Contemporary South, ed. by John B. Boles (Rice Univ. Press). \$13.95/7.95.

"Eugenic Sterilization in Virginia: Aubrey Strode and the Case of *Buck v. Bell*," by Paul Lombardo. Univ. of Virginia.

"Florida's Sponge Industry: A Cultural and Economic History," by Caroline Johnson Commenos. Univ. of Florida.

A History of South Carolina, by Anne R. Osborne (Orangeburg, SC: Sandlapper Publ. Co.). \$11.95.

"Humanity and Desire: Civil Rights Leaders and the Desegregation of New Orleans, 1954-1966," by Kim Lacy Rogers. Univ. of Minnesota.

"International Capitalism and Mexican Migration to the United States," by Victor Rios, Jr. Notre Dame.

Land, People, and Development in Appalachia, by Karl B. Raitz and Richard Ulack (Westview). \$30.00

My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in

the Deep South Remembered, by Howell Raines (Penguin). \$6.95.

"The Political Economy of Regional Capitalist Development: North Carolina, 1880-1980," by Phillip James Wood. Queen's Univ. (Canada).

"The Politics of Aging in Florida: A Case Study of the Silver Haired Legislature," by Raymond Carl Matura. Univ. of Florida.

"A Social Epidemiological Analysis of Central Appalachian Economic Distress," by David Bruce White. Univ. of Pittsburgh.

The Southern Enigma: Essays on Race, Class, and Folk Culture, ed. by Walter J. Fraser, Jr., and Winfred B. Moore, Jr. (Greenwood). \$35.00.

A Tale of Two Cities: Houston and Detroit, by Stanley H. Brown (Arbor House). \$16.95.

"Talk Out or Walk Out: The Role and Control of Conflict in a Kentucky Coal Mine," by William Langer Ury. Harvard.

"The West Virginia Democratic Presidential Primary, 1960," by William Lewis Young. Ohio State Univ.

"Without Urgency or Ardor: The South's Middle-of-the-Road Liberals and Civil Rights, 1945-1960," by Anthony Lake Newberry. Ohio Univ.

EDUCATION

"The Censorship of High School Social Studies Textbooks in Alabama during the Adoption Periods between the Years of 1970-1980," by Shirley Kelley Spears. Auburn Univ.

The Forty-Acre Follies, by Joe B. Frantz (Texas Monthly Press). \$17.95.

"Frederick W. Neve: Mountain Mission Education in Virginia: 1888-1948," by Dexter Ralph Davison. Univ. of Virginia.

"A History of Oachita Baptist College: 1886-1933," by Michael Edward Arrington. Univ. of Arkansas.

"The History of the Survival of an Elitist Black High School in South Florida from 1907-1981," by Joseph James Ceros-Livingston. Florida Atlantic Univ.

"Legislative Decision Making and Educational Finance in Arkansas," by John Claud Gill. Univ. of Arkansas.

"Reading and the Black Child," by Shirley Liggins Hall. Harvard.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

"Cross in the Sun: The Growth and Development of Catholicism in South Florida, 1868-1968," by Michael James Timothy McNally. Notre Dame.

"Faith Healing: Where Science Meets Religion in the Body of Believers," by Douglas Edward Reinhardt. UNC-Chapel Hill.

"The Farm Security Administration Photographs of Marion Post Wolcott: A Cultural History," by Julie M. Boddy. SUNY-Buffalo.

"A History of Mexican American Professional Theater in Texas: 1875-1935," by Elizabeth Cantu Ramirez. Univ. of Texas.

Living with the South Carolina Shore, by William J. Neal and W. Carlyle Blakeney, Jr. (Duke Univ. Press). \$20.00/9.75.

"Recreational Activity Profiles of Blacks

in Southwest Mississippi," by Rose Marie Bowers Chew. Texas Woman's Univ.

"Religious and Regional Sources of Attitudes toward Blacks among Southern Mormons," by Charles Harold Ainsworth. Washington State Univ.

Tolbert's Texas, by Frank X. Tolbert (Doubleday). \$14.95.

LITERATURE

"The Black Experience in Two Novels by William Melvin Kelley," by Ann Dingle. Drake Univ.

"Children of the Confederacy: A Study of New South Themes in Porter, Welty, McCullers, and O'Connor," by Marie Louise Hannibal Albert. Univ. of Hawaii.

"Cultural Primitivism and Related Ideas in Jean Toomer's *Cane*," by Nkem Nwankwo. Indiana Univ.

"The Desolate Servitude of Language: A Reading of the Poetry of Melvin B. Tolson," by Wilburn Williams, Jr. Yale Univ., 1979.

"Elizabeth Margaret Chandler - Poet, Essayist, Abolitionist," by Mary Patricia Jones. Univ. of Toledo, 1981.

"An Exercise in Adjudication: Interpretations of Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away*," by Karen Jeanne Hopkins. Bowling Green State Univ.

Faulkner's Changing Vision: From Outrage to Affirmation (Ann Arbor: UMI Res. Press). \$34.95.

Faulkner's Unchristlike Christians: Biblical Allusions in the Novels (Ann Arbor: UMI Res. Press). \$39.95.

"Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks: A Janus Poet," by Marjorie Jane Smock Schuchat. Texas Woman's Univ.

"The Harlem Renaissance and Negritude Poetry: The Development of Black Written Literature," by Aderemi James Bamikunle. Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison.

"The Immoderate Past: The Image of the Southern Gentleman in History and Fiction, 1860-1980," by Anna Jacoba Leenhouts. State Univ. of Utrecht (Netherlands).

"The Portrayal of Men by Women Writers: A Critical Analysis of the Fiction of Harriet Beecher Stowe," by Gay Schwartz Herzberg. SUNY-Buffalo.

The Presence of Grace and Other Book Reviews, by Flannery O'Connor (Univ. of Georgia Press). \$16.00.

"A Reader Response Study of the Grotesque in the Fiction of Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, and Carson McCullers," by Deborah Hollister Hatch. Univ. of Mass.

"Selected Mountain Literature of Will Allen Dromgoole," by Kathy June Lyday-Lee. Univ. of Tennessee.

"'A Servant of Servants Shall He Be...': Paternalism and Millennialism in American Slavery Literature, 1850-1859," by Gerald Lyon Early. Cornell Univ.

"The Significance of Memory, Myth, and Symbol in the Plays of Tennessee Williams: A Recurrent Structural Pattern," by Judith Johnson Thompson. Univ. of Kansas.

"The Young Artist as Old Bad Air: Louis Armstrong as Artistic Model in *Invisible Man*," by Richard Charles Harrington. Univ. of Virginia.

Freedom or Affluence

by Frances Ellen Watkins

When Thomas Hamilton founded the Anglo-African Magazine in New York in January, 1859, the battle between pro- and anti-slavery forces was at its height. Free blacks agitated and petitioned on many fronts to bring about the demise of slavery and were becoming increasingly militant in the face of the Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision, Fugitive Slave laws, Compromise bills, and the continued denial of citizenship on the part of federal and state governments. In addition to exposing the condition of blacks in the United States, Hamilton hoped to "encourage the now depressed hopes" of those who "for twenty years and more have been active in conventions, in public meetings, in societies, in the pulpit, through the press, cheering on and laboring on to promote emancipation, enfranchisement and education." In the midst of escalating legal sanctions against blacks, both slave and free, some professional and middle-class blacks still ascribed to the goals and values of the ruling class. Frances Ellen Watkins used the pages of the Anglo-African in May, 1859, to speak out against this phenomenon and to warn blacks against the futility of individual enrichment at the expense of fellow blacks still held in slavery. We find her message particularly timely as the election season approaches and certain segments of current black leadership prepare to sell the black vote to the highest bidder.

When we have a race . . . whom this blood-stained government cannot tempt or flatter, who would sternly refuse every office in the nation's gift, from a president down to a tide-waiter, until she shook her hands from complicity in the guilt of cradle plundering and man stealing, then for us the foundations of an historic character will have been laid. We need men and women whose hearts are the homes of a high

and lofty enthusiasm, and a noble devotion to the cause of emancipation, who are ready and willing to lay time, talent and money on the altar of universal freedom. We have money among us, but how much of it is spent to bring deliverance to our captive brethren? Are our wealthiest men the most liberal sustainers of the Anti-slavery enterprise? Or does the bare fact of their having money really help mould public opinion and reverse its sentiments? We need what money cannot buy and what affluence is too beggarly to purchase. Earnest, self sacrificing souls that will stamp themselves not only on the present but the future. Let us not then defer all our noble opportunities till we get rich. And here I am, not aiming to enlist a fanatical crusade against the desire for riches, but I do protest against chaining down the soul . . . to the one idea of getting money as stepping into power or even gaining our rights in common with others. The respect that is only bought by gold is not worth much. It is no honor to shake hands politically with men who whip women and steal babies. We have the greater need for . . . [our children] . . . to build up a true manhood and womanhood for ourselves. The important lesson we should learn and be able to teach, is how to make every gift, whether gold or talent, fortune or genius, subserve the cause of crushed humanity . . . and carry out the greatest idea of the present age, the glorious idea of human brotherhood. □

At Southern Exposure we listen to the voices of many people for guidance and inspiration. We want to recapture in Voices From the Past the indomitable spirit of those who have spoken for human dignity, for egalitarianism and for collective social action. We want to celebrate those ideals, for which many have lived and died. We invite you to listen, to join with these voices which harmonize with our own.

We welcome submissions from our readers for this feature. Send ideas to: Voices From the Past, Southern Exposure, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

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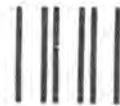
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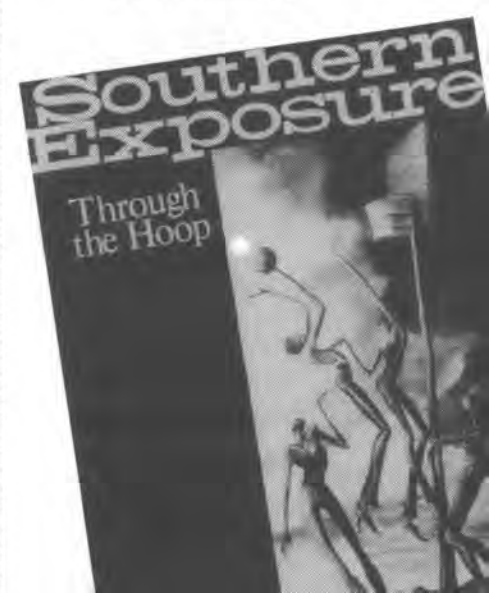
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