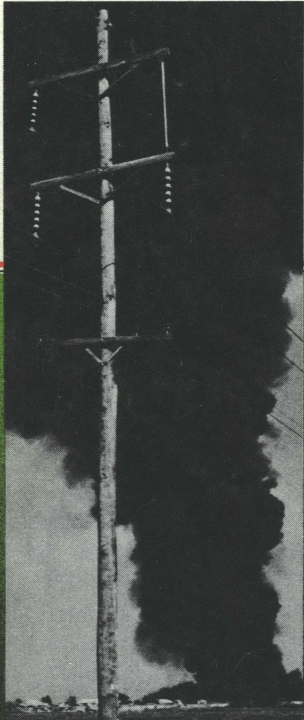


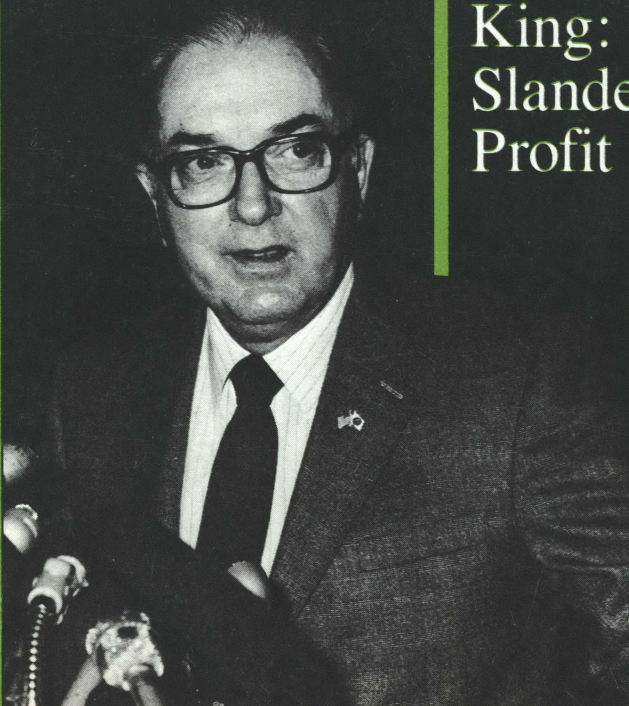
## THE POISONING OF LOUISIANA



Will Black  
Colleges  
Survive?



Helms vs.  
King:  
Slander for  
Profit





**Editors:** Maxine Alexander, Christina Davis, Ben Fewel, Bob Hall, Marc Miller, Joycelyn Moody, Joe Pfister, Dee Dee Risher, Linda Rocawich, Michael Yellin

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## PAGE 12 THE HELMS ATTACK ON KING

### THE HELMS ATTACK ON KING

BY DAVID J. GARROW

A federal holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. finally won congressional and presidential approval, but not without creating a firestorm of arguments and controversy that recalls those 1952 debates starkly reminiscent of the contentious times of 20 years ago.

In 1952, the House of Representatives passed a bill to honor King, but the Senate rejected it. The bill was reintroduced in 1953 and 1954, but was again defeated. It was not until 1968 that the House passed a bill to honor King, and the Senate passed it in 1969. The bill was signed into law by President Nixon in 1969.



Helms and company calling on the King to support the bill. Helms said that the bill was a "symbolic gesture" and that it would not do anything to improve the lives of the poor. Helms also said that the bill was a "waste of money" and that it would not do anything to improve the lives of the poor.

## PAGE 24 TO BUILD A FREE SOCIETY

### To Build A Free Society Nineteenth- Century Black Women

BY DOROTHY STERLING



The Black woman in nineteenth-century America was a free woman, but she was not a free woman in the same sense as the white woman. She was a woman who was free to work, to own property, and to vote, but she was not free to live as she saw fit. She was a woman who was free to be a mother, but she was not free to be a mother in the same sense as the white woman. She was a woman who was free to be a citizen, but she was not free to be a citizen in the same sense as the white woman.

## PAGE 31 THE QUIET DEATH OF BLACK COLLEGES

### THE QUIET DEATH OF BLACK COLLEGES

BY LINDA ROCAWICH

Most are a quiet death, and the quiet death of the Black college is a quiet death. It is a death that is not a death in the same sense as the death of a person. It is a death that is not a death in the same sense as the death of a person. It is a death that is not a death in the same sense as the death of a person. It is a death that is not a death in the same sense as the death of a person.

## PAGE 40 MOUNTAIN MUSICIAN AT THE CROSSROADS

### Mountain Musician at the Crossroads

By Arthur Minton



The rock and roll of the mountain musician is a quiet death. It is a death that is not a death in the same sense as the death of a person. It is a death that is not a death in the same sense as the death of a person. It is a death that is not a death in the same sense as the death of a person. It is a death that is not a death in the same sense as the death of a person.



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## How I Remember

— by Sandra Lake Miller

For the life of me, I can't recall the color of the Tampa Transit buses in 1955. I spent so much time on them that I memorized the other details, smells, and sounds. The bus lurched and groaned like a prehistoric pachyderm and moved with as little grace.

My favorite ritual as a child in Tampa was a once-a-month Saturday bus trip to the Lafayette Arcade to have my braces adjusted. The adjustments were painful, but the trip itself was fun. That Saturday taste of freedom!

A 12-year-old could safely walk from Plant Park over the Lafayette Street Bridge and meander downtown from store to store until late afternoon. The only trick was to get across the bridge before the sun grew too hot.

On the way home, the lumbering bus moved at tortoise-speed from Grand Central, back past the Lafayette Arcade's dreaded dentist office, on to MacDill Avenue, and back to Palma Ceia via Bay to Bay. When we turned left on Manhattan, I was almost home. It was a lot of ride for a nickel!

In warm weather the bus smelled of dust, body odor, and old shoes. You didn't meet the wealthy on the Tampa Transit. These were working people, a few white clerks who commuted downtown, old ladies with shopping bags, tired mothers with a whining retinue of toddlers and pre-schoolers.

But most of my fellow passengers were black domestics, clutching transfers in weary hands on long rides to and from their jobs on the white side of town. For the most part, the ride was silent. I spent hours watching my fellow riders. They were old, young, skinny, bulging, black, brown, cafe-au-lait, or beige. The only thing they seemed to have in common was an aura of fatigue as they swayed with the rhythm of the bus. I imagined them rising at dawn, getting their own children off to school, stuffing their white uniforms into brown paper bags, working eight hours, and

riding two or more hours each way. Four dollars a day plus bus fare was considered a fair wage.

I read the cardboard advertisements in their metal frames above the windows, and wondered at the large sign that dominated the front of the bus, dead-center above the coin meter where it could be read from every seat: WHITE PERSONS SHALL SIT FROM FRONT TO REAR OF BUS. COLORED PERSONS SHALL SIT FROM REAR TO FRONT OF BUS. Colored persons. No one ever used the term "black" then and we would have been astonished by it. The term "colored person" made me giggle — I envisioned a rainbow race, all hues of lavender, green, orange, boarding the bus and carefully stepping to the rear.

No one broached this Sacred Rule of Busdom in Tampa in the spring of 1955. The quandary of where to sit and still preserve the law involved a lot of waltzing about and jockeying for position. If the bus were two-thirds full of whites, then whites could continue sitting as far back as necessary, although few would sit behind the rear door area. Blacks would stand in the rear if all the forward seats and some of their own were taken by whites. No white rider would ever take a seat next to a black person.

This got very complicated. If the bus were two-thirds or more full of blacks, the problem was trickier and called for more skilled maneuvers. Blacks could then come forward to sit a good two-thirds of the way, but never all the way forward. Nor could they pass the point where some white person sat.

None of this seemed fair to my 12-year-old mind. I could not fathom why people whose feet were so obviously tired could not sit down. My fantasy world was inhabited by heroes and I imagined I would be one. I would save the world with unremitting love. My idea was so unique and daring that I would be embraced as a latter-day Jeanne d'Arc, a heroine for all seasons and peoples. Ike would shake my hand and my parents would bask in my fame. Maybe Dave Garroway would interview us. A little child would lead the way . . . I would integrate my Tampa Transit bus!

I planned for days and waited for just the right time. The bus was half full. I was seated up front, riding sideways, near the driver. The bus pulled away from a stop on MacDill and I made my move. With a beatific smile that embraced all humanity, I picked up my shopping bags and strode confidently to the very back of the bus, seating myself between an old black man and a woman who turned grey with shock.

Silence. The eyes of the driver in his big mirror burned holes through me. The old people inched slowly away from me, as discreetly as they could, trying not to draw attention to themselves lest they somehow be blamed for my infraction. The only sound was the hissing of the door, the clack of wheels across pot-holes, and the wind in the windows. No one spoke. Time seemed to cease. No one looked at me. Not one person, white or black, acknowledged my presence in any way, from the moment I took my new seat. I was anathema — a traitor to my own race and an embarrassment to the other, for I had called unwanted attention to blacks. Maybe later in Selma or Mobile someone would have cheered or even joined me. But I was too young, and so was the time, for stepping to the rear of the bus.

My palms dripped sweat. My throat dried up completely and my heart stuck in it. I felt naked and exposed and dared not move again. I prayed for that ride to end. My stop came, thank God! Pulling the bellcord savagely, I leaped from the bus. The driver waited until I was even with the front and as I walked past on the sidewalk, he snapped, "Don't do that again, Sister!" He needn't have worried.

For the next two months' Saturday trips, I wore a large silk scarf around my head and oversized sunglasses which must have looked ludicrous on an undersized child. My effort was unnecessary; no one recognized me or even cared. I was not important enough for anyone to remember.

But, oh, how I remembered. □

*Sandra Lake Miller lives in Florida; her writing has been published in a number of magazines.*



# SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

## Who pays the bill for needed school reform?

Education reforms have come and gone in the South since the Reconstruction and Populist governments of a century ago made quality schooling a public responsibility. Considering their chronic underfunding, it's amazing that teachers and schools have done as well as they have. In the 1982-83 school year, Southern states paid teachers an average salary of \$2,981 less than the national norm, and they spent \$556 less per pupil. According to the Southeastern Regional Council for Educational Improvement, the proportion of state revenues going to education actually declined from 43 percent in 1970 to 38 percent in 1980.

The wave of education reformism now rolling across the South inevitably raises the question of who will pay for new schools, higher teacher salaries, more science and math programs, competency testing, merit pay, and smaller class sizes. In some states the swelling cost of education could force a long-needed debate on tax reform. An additional half-cent sales tax to help finance sweeping changes in Mississippi, for example, will automatically expire in July, but its revenues are so necessary to balance the state budget that the legislature is expected to extend it. Persistent financial problems in the state are also prompting the new governor, Bill Allain, to call for a major review of Mississippi's tax structure, which relies heavily on the six-cent sales tax.

Tennessee's nearly \$300 million education reform package is funded largely with an additional one-cent sales tax that expires in July 1985. The state has no personal income tax, but a growing minority of legislators is reportedly ready to push for one rather than continue the Southern tradition of excessive dependence on a regressive sales tax that puts the heaviest burden on those least able to pay.

All the governors pushing new edu-

## EDUCATION EXPENSES & SALES TAXES IN SOUTHERN STATES WITH NATIONAL RANKINGS

	Public School Teacher Average Salary 1982-83	Ranking	Educa. Spending per Pupil '82-83	Ranking	Sales Tax as % State Taxes '82	Ranking
AL	\$17,850	36	\$1507	50	61%	12
AR	15,176	49	1988	48	54	21
FL	18,538	31	2768	22	75	4
GA	17,412	41	2243	39	52	24
KY	18,400	32	2056	44	46	30
LA	19,265	26	2321	37	45	31
MS	14,285	50	1995	47	67	9
NC	17,836	36	2525	32	44	33
SC	16,380	44	1892	49	55	17
TN	17,425	40	2003	46	76	3
TX	19,500	24	2162	42	63	11
VA	18,707	30	2561	30	42	36
WV	17,370	43	2480	36	70	7
<b>South</b>	<b>\$17,550</b>		<b>\$2192</b>		<b>58%</b>	
<b>US</b>	<b>20,531</b>		<b>2748</b>		<b>48</b>	

cation packages link them to the need to create better workers for the South's new industries; however, as in Mississippi and Tennessee, major increases in corporate property and income taxes were also by-passed in favor of higher sales taxes in Arkansas and in Governor Dick Riley's \$210 million plan now being debated in South Carolina's legislature.

Education reforms financed by a more complex assortment of tax increases, generating more than \$300 million annually per state, are slated for legislative action this year in Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, and probably Texas. Georgia Governor Joe Frank Harris has pledged not to raise taxes, yet he expects the forthcoming recommendations of his Educational Review Commission to take center stage in the 1985 legislative session. North Carolina's Jim Hunt is also avoiding new taxes in this election year, but the \$300 million plan his education commission recently released will likely win favor from lawmakers this summer — and be paid for by a budget surplus and the half-cent sales tax increase passed last year.

## Mississippi man dies in El Salvador battle

Carroll Ishee, a Mississippi-born activist, has become the second U.S. citizen killed in combat in El Salvador. But you won't see his photograph on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine, an honor bestowed upon the first victim, navy Lieutenant Commander Albert A. Schaufelberger. Ishee died fighting against the U.S.-backed government and on the side of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front.

In 1981 Ishee left Tulane University, made his way to El Salvador, and in March 1982, joined up with the guerrillas. According to a January report from rebel radio Venceremos, "Comrade Carroll" died in August 1983, after being hit by fire from a U.S.-supplied helicopter.

Ishee's widow, Lavaun, is a member of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador in New Orleans. At a news conference announcing her husband's death, Lavaun Ishee said she supported him in his actions in El Salvador.

## Resurrection of Elvis as a cardboard cutout

Move over Mickey Mouse. New York accountant Joseph Rascoff plans to reincarnate Elvis Presley as the centerpiece of a multimillion dollar entertainment empire. Even though the singer has been dead for seven years, his name is still better known than that of Johnny Carson, John Lennon, or Jell-O. His Graceland mansion in Memphis draws 500,000 visitors annually — more than Thomas Jefferson's Monticello — and at \$6 a head, plus souvenirs, that trans-



lates into \$4.5 million in yearly revenues for the Presley estate.

That's just the beginning. Rascoff, who manages the business affairs of such groups as the Rolling Stones and The Who, plans a traveling show of Elvis memorabilia by 1986 that could gross \$2.5 million a year, plus two television specials, which will feature unaired Elvis material and a tour of Graceland hosted by the singer's former wife, Priscilla Presley. The 1973 Elvis special attracted more viewers than Neil Armstrong's historic walk on the moon.

Rascoff isn't just setting his sights on Elvis's loyal, and now aging, fans. A new Elvis record scheduled for release soon will feature an MTV-style video to capture a new generation of teenagers. And, believe it or not, a Hanna-Barbera animated cartoon special slated for 1985 is designed to spin-off a regular Saturday morning children's show.

"Elvis is a creative entity, a character like Mickey Mouse," says Rascoff. "It doesn't matter that he once was a performer. That is rapidly becoming irrelevant."

Irrelevant!?!)

Rascoff hopes his marketing emphasis on form over substance will supercede the working-class "Elvis mystique" long cultivated by Presley's omnipotent manager (and father-in-law), Colonel Tom Parker. The cagey 74-year-old Parker got pushed aside last year, following a probate judge's investigation into the former carnival huckster's financial misdealings and consummate greed. Elvis, it seems, earned over \$100 million in his career, selling over 800 million records for RCA, but faulty tax planning left an estate worth only \$10 million, while the Colonel progressively earned

## 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.

bigger shares of merchandising and record deals.

The estate's benefactor, Presley's 16-year-old daughter Lisa Marie, stands to make a bundle from Rascoff's new management approach. But Elvis fans may wonder whether the change isn't just a case of jumping out of the lion's jaws and into the trap.

## Fraud is charged in Mississippi election

Six black candidates who were narrowly defeated by white opponents last November 8 in Tunica County, Mississippi, have filed a federal court suit seeking to overturn the election results. The suit contends white candidates violated the constitutional rights of black voters, as well as the Voting Rights Act.

During five days of testimony in late January, Alvin Chambliss, a senior attorney with North Mississippi Rural Legal Services, presented witnesses to back up the plaintiffs' charges that white candidates took part in an elaborate vote buying scheme, stole votes from key black precincts, denied the black candidates' campaign workers equal access to polling places, and intimidated illiterate and elderly voters.

One of the plaintiffs in the suit testified that Wallace Franklin, a white candidate for county supervisor, gave one of Franklin's black campaign workers "a wad of money" to give to "people who would vote his way at the polls." A woman testified that she received \$10 and a six-pack of beer in exchange for her vote. Others claimed they too received money to vote for white candidates. Franklin defeated his opponent, Lawyer Porter, Jr., by a margin of 455 to 305.

Several witnesses said C.P. Owens, the largest landowner in Tunica and a millionaire who employs more than 100 black workers, intimidated voters at one of the heavily black precincts. Robert Earl Hall, a black elections manager at the Robinsonville polling place, testified that Owens placed himself between an election clerk and a table, "in a position which didn't lend itself to the election

process."

Witnesses also testified that black candidates' names were left off the ballot in some precincts and that voters were prevented from taking sample ballots containing the names of candidates into the voting booths. Willie Crawford, a black circuit clerk and co-defendant in the suit, told Federal District Court Judge William Keady that he received threats prior to the trial by people who wanted him to change his testimony.

Tunica's population is 77 percent black and it is the second poorest county in Mississippi. But everyone in Tunica is not poor: the population of 9,000 boasts 38 white millionaires. The November election was an attempt by blacks to gain control of the political apparatus, and many believe they would have won had fair elections been held. The election results show a narrow margin of victory for the white candidates: W.C. Eskridge, a black candidate for constable, lost to John T. Emanuel, 250 to 219; Lonnie Brown, a black candidate for justice court judge, lost to Virginia J. France, 807 to 793; Lee Morris Johnson, a black candidate for county superintendent of education, lost to Bobby H. Papasan 1,543 to 1,472; Demetrice Norwood, a black candidate for tax assessor, lost to William B. Webb 1,580 to 1,412; and Joe Nathan Joyner, a black candidate for supervisor, lost to George Cloud by 424 to 270.

As of press time, a verdict had not been brought in the case.

— contributed by Joseph Delaney

## Klansman gets death from Alabama judge

Mobile County Circuit Court Judge Braxton Kitrell overruled a jury on February 2 and imposed the death penalty on 29-year-old Klansman Henry Francis Hays for the 1981 lynching of 19-year-old Michael Donald.

Hays was convicted largely as a result of the testimony of another Klan member, James Knowles, who pleaded guilty to federal civil-rights charges in the killing. Knowles testified that he and Hays



# SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

kidnapped Donald at random off the street while looking for a black to kill in revenge for a mistrial declared in the case of a black man accused of killing a white policeman. Knowles said they beat and strangled Donald, slit his throat, and hung him from a tree near his house in Mobile "to show Klan strength in Alabama."

A jury of 11 whites and one black convicted Hays of capital murder last December 20, and recommended a life sentence without parole. In a move unprecedented in Alabama, Judge Kitrell overruled the jury and handed down the death sentence. Hays's case will automatically be appealed.

## Will execution pace make death routine?

Since John Spenklink died in Florida's electric chair on May 25, 1979, opponents of the death penalty have warned that the country is on the verge of a blood bath. Now their predictions sound all too accurate as the rate of executions passes one a month and heads toward one a week, perhaps even one a day. An execution no longer makes the network news, and their repetition in some states also makes them less noticeable — another step toward turning death into the publicly painless event opponents of capital punishment most fear.

Between 1967 and '77, the U.S. enjoyed 11 years without an execution as states awaited, and finally received, direction from Supreme Court rulings. Those decisions in 1972 and 1976 first struck down existing death statutes as "harsh, freakish, and arbitrary" in their application and then approved new laws in Georgia, Texas, and Florida which required "objective standards to guide, regularize, and make rationally reviewable the process for imposing the sentence of death." Today, every state in the South, save West Virginia, plus 16 states outside the region, have procedures for killing capital offenders.

With strong support from the Reagan administration, the Senate passed a bill in February to reinstate the death

penalty. By a vote of 63 to 32, the measure calls for executions in cases of treason, espionage, an attempt to assassinate the president that succeeds or nearly succeeds, and other federal offenses that cause a person's death. Southern senators voted 23 to 2 in favor of the bill. (James Sasser of Tennessee and Lloyd Bentsen of Texas cast "no" votes.) The bill faces stiff opposition in the House.

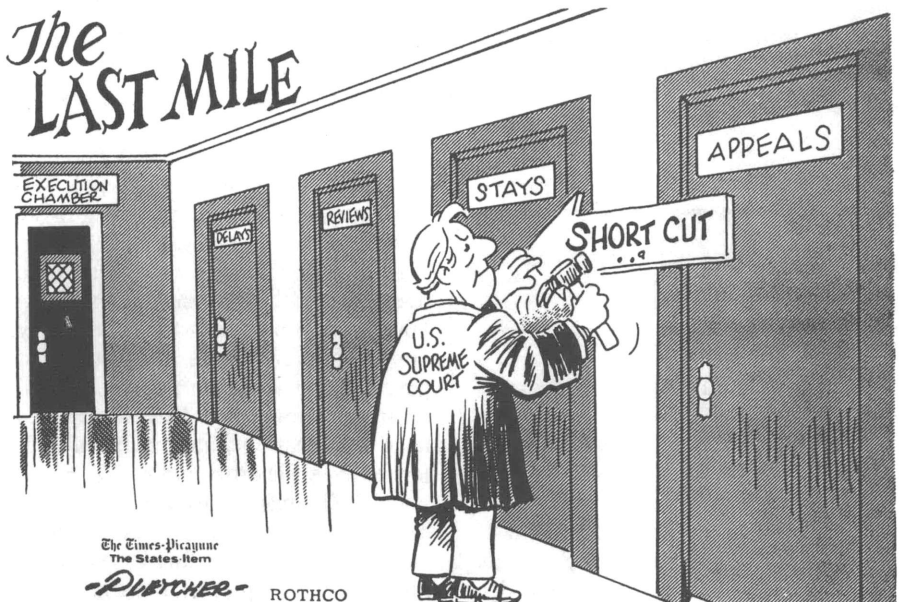
Of the 1,299 men and 12 women condemned to die as of March 1, three out of eight are on death rows in Florida, Texas, and Georgia; five out of eight are in the 11 states of the Old Confederacy and Kentucky. Between September 1983 and March 16, nine men were executed in six Southern states. That no more people have been killed is largely a testament to the determination and ingenuity of relatively few death penalty opponents and lawyers in using a legal system that promises, at least on paper, due process and the protection of the innocent from death.

Since Spenklink was killed, an estimated dozen condemned prisoners have been freed because it turned out that they were innocent of the crime charged against them. A far larger number have received new trials or continually find new grounds on which to challenge their convictions. The blood bath prediction gains new credence now because the Supreme Court, lower courts, state legislatures, governors, and attorneys general are closing more doors to this appeal process.

On January 23, the Supreme Court voted 7 to 2 against requiring a state to determine if a death sentence is in line with sentences given other offenders who were convicted of similar crimes in the state. The decision most directly affects death row inmates in California and Texas whose trials did not include this so-called "proportionality review." By ruling that no such review is required, the court effectively advanced the execution dates of more than a dozen people in those two states.

Meanwhile, evidence against the deterrent value of capital punishment continues to mount (the homicide rates are not lower in states imposing death sentences). So does evidence that the new death statutes are still arbitrary and discriminatory. In early 1984, a Stanford University study of over 14,000 homicides committed between 1976 and 1980 revealed that a murderer is seven times more likely to be given the death sentence if the victim is white than if the victim is black.

New studies, more debate, and more executions will continue until the blood bath becomes too much to stomach for the public and/or courts. One wonders how the national networks will cover the inevitable revelation that someone executed a month or two earlier was innocent of his or her crime and that a pro-death state government had committed the very act it claims to most loathe — the killing of an innocent citizen.





## "Gray Fox" of Southern segregation dies in S.C.

When South Carolina State Senator L. Marion Gressette died on March 1, the state's political leadership fell all over itself to extoll his legislative mastery. The 82-year-old "Gray Fox" — the country's most senior legislator — nearly always got his way in a state dominated by the legislature and a legislature dominated by the seniority system. Gressette's half-century in office included leadership in delaying school desegregation, defeating the Equal Rights Amendment, and stalling utility regulation reforms.

As chairman of the powerful Judiciary Committee, nicknamed "Gressette's Graveyard" because so many bills died there, he helped devise strategies that kept blacks out of the state senate until 1983. This year, court-ordered reapportionment of the senate into single-member districts threatened the old-boy hegemony and even put Gressette's own seat in jeopardy.

In January, state representative Mary Miles, a black woman who had defeated Gressette's nephew in 1982, announced she would give up her house position and go after Gressette's senate seat. Gressette's death means Miles will have to run in a May special election under the current multi-district system, where she'll compete in an area roughly 56 percent white. The new single-member district, scheduled to become effective in July, will be 52 percent black.

— *contributed by Howard Schneider*

## November 3 killers back on trial

The new trial of six Klansmen and three Nazis connected with the November 3, 1979, killings of five anti-Klan demonstrators in Greensboro, North Carolina, contrasts in a number of ways with the 1980 state trial in which six of the current defendants were acquitted of first-degree murder

charges. Federal prosecutors now charge criminal violations of the Civil Rights Act; unlike the first trial, they have secured the testimony of widowed and wounded Communist Workers Party (CWP) members.

In addition, an FBI analyst who testified in the first case that he could not determine the origin of the first hostile shots fired during the 88-second melee, took the stand and said his further analysis shows those shots came from the area of the Klan/Nazi vehicles. And the government has finally produced Bernard Butkovich, the undercover agent of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF) who, posing as a Nazi, attended a Klan/Nazi meeting two days before November 3, at which disruption of the CWP demonstration was planned. His testimony in early February marked the first occasion on which he has publicly answered any questions about his role in events leading up to the shootings. (The other known law enforcement informant, Ed Dawson, is a defendant in the case.)

Butkovich said defendant Jerry Paul Smith talked about building pipe bombs: "He [Smith] said that they had tried them out several times and they worked very well. They had a very good fragmentation effect. In his words, he said that they would work very well if thrown into a group of niggers."

At the same meeting, Butkovich testified, other Klan members said they were going to heckle the communists and throw rotten eggs at them. Afterward, the BATF agent told a Winston-Salem police intelligence officer about the heckling and rotten-egg-throwing, but he never told any local police about the pipe bombs. The pipe bombs were a federal matter, he explained, and policy prohibits disclosure of possible federal crimes uncovered in ongoing BATF investigations.

Attempts by journalists to learn more about this policy by questioning Butkovich were unsuccessful. The policy apparently continues a pattern of government silence, particularly in civil rights matters, when federal agencies have information about planned violence. (See the story below.)

Judge Thomas Flannery has conducted his own assault — on the Constitution — since he took on this case several months before the trial opened. He

barred all spectators, including the press, from the two-week long jury selection. Faced with a lawsuit brought by several North Carolina newspapers, Flannery has since backed down and agreed to provide transcripts of the voir dire, but only a small portion is ready yet. Flannery also slapped a gag order on everyone connected with the case — defendants, lawyers, witnesses — prohibiting them from discussing the case with any outsiders.

At mid-trial the daily courtroom observers are hard-pressed to assess how things are going. The prosecution's case against most of the defendants, they say, has been detailed and thorough, if passionless. But the defense has yet to have its say.

## Court cases question actions of FBI agents

Federal court cases involving civil rights activists in Alabama during the 1960s shed light on the role and responsibility of the FBI, as the series of Klan/Nazi trials in North Carolina may also do some day.

In the most recent, Walter Bergman, now an 84-year-old retired Wayne State University professor in Michigan, sought \$1 million in damages from the government for himself and \$1 million for his now deceased wife Frances. Bergman was severely beaten outside Anniston, Alabama, in the infamous "Mother's Day Massacre" of May 14, 1961. Sixty Ku Klux Klan members assaulted Bergman and other Freedom Riders attempting to test the 1960 Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in interstate transportation.

In February, Federal Judge Richard Enslin, who had presided over the case throughout its eight-year history, condemned the Justice Department for its Watergate-like refusal to release critical documents and ordered it to pay \$35,000 to Bergman and \$15,000 to his wife's estate.

The Bergman suit was filed in 1975, just after Gary Thomas Rowe, Jr., an FBI agent who infiltrated the KKK in Alabama, told the Senate Intelligence



## SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

Committee that Birmingham Police Chief Bull Connor had assured the Klan 15 minutes of immunity to "beat [the Freedom Riders], bomb 'em, maim 'em, kill 'em." Rowe said the FBI was informed of the planned assault.

In its defense, the FBI claimed it had no responsibility to intervene in the planned violence, and that to do so would have meant exposing Rowe — a worse evil, it argued, than allowing the beatings.

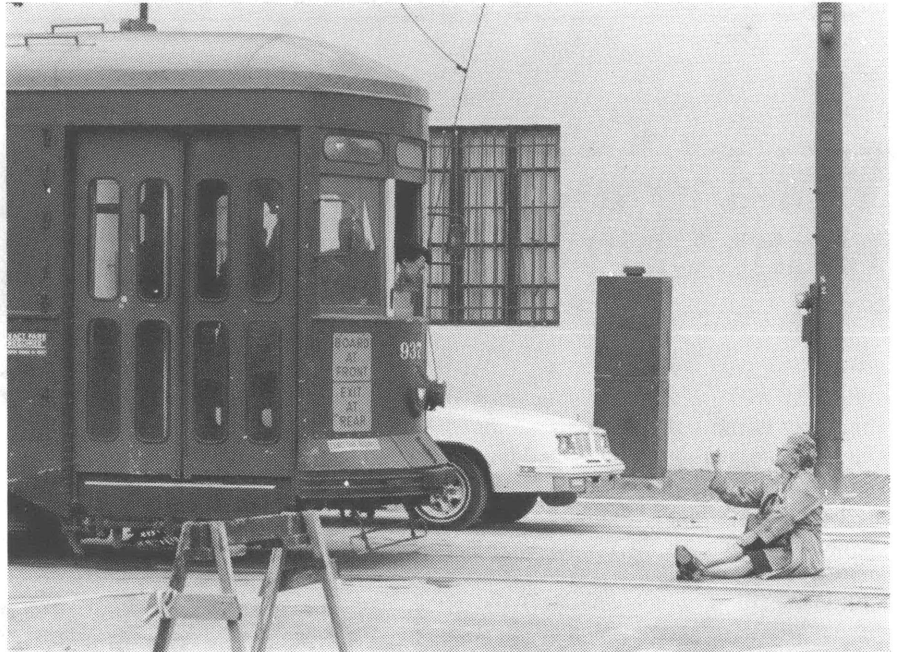
In May 1983, another Michigan federal judge rejected a \$2 million negligence suit filed by the children of Viola Gregg Liuzzo. Liuzzo, a white Detroit housewife, was shot to death by a Klan "action group" while driving with a black man who, like her, was participating in the 1965 Selma-Montgomery march. Judge Charles W. Joiner ruled that the FBI was not negligent since Rowe, whom the Liuzzos allege fired the fatal shot, had informed his superiors of intended Klan violence against the marchers. This constituted "gathering intelligence," Joiner wrote in his opinion; hence the FBI had indeed fulfilled its role. Furthermore, the judge continued, Rowe's undercover work had been instrumental to law enforcement officials: his prompt reporting of the murder led to the rapid arrest of the other "action group" members.

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### Updates and short takes

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**FARMWORKER FOUR.** An investigative team, which included a current and a former *Southern Exposure* staffer, was charged with breaking and entering last fall, after they found federal housing violations at a migrant labor camp in Nash County, North Carolina (see *SE*, Roundup, Nov./Dec., '83). The charges against Chip Hughes, Joe Pfister, Ted Outwater, and Chuck Eppinette disrupted but didn't stop their inspections of other camps in connection with a federal lawsuit on housing conditions and state administrative hearings on changing a standard that now allows growers to house five workers in a 10-by-10 foot room. While large farm-



**NEW ORLEANS SIT-DOWN:** AN UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN WHO SAYS SHE WALKED 10 BLOCKS LOOKING FOR A STREETCAR STOP SHAKES A FIST AT A CONDUCTOR AFTER SITTING ON THE TRACKS. SHE SAID TWO STREETCARS PASSED HER BECAUSE STREETCAR STOP SIGNS HAD BEEN TAKEN DOWN DURING STREET CONSTRUCTION, SO SHE SAT IN FRONT OF THE NEXT ONE THAT CAME ALONG. SHE CLAIMED TO BE SICKLY AND DIDN'T WANT TO BE PASSED UP AGAIN. WHEN POLICE ARRIVED SHE BOARDED A CAR AND RODE UPTOWN. NO CHARGES WERE FILED. THE PICTURE WAS TAKEN BY FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER JOHN R. RILEY (©1984, 4411 CLEVELAND STREET, NEW ORLEANS, LA 70119).

ers vigorously opposed stricter standards, supporters of the Farmworker Four protested their harassment by Nash County officials. One day before the scheduled December trial, the charges against the investigative team were dropped because witnesses didn't report to the district attorney to press their case. A few weeks later, Governor Jim Hunt's administration approved new fire safety standards for migrant housing and changed the occupancy limit to two workers per 100 square foot room.

**LOUISIANA POISONS.** On February 29, after two years of litigation, Louisiana's Environmental Control Commission (ECC) ordered Browning-Ferris Industries to clean up its hazardous waste site at Willow Springs or face up to \$50,000 a day in fines (see "The Poisoning of Louisiana," page 16 of this issue). ECC's ruling calls for the firm to submit information on the migration of poisonous material from its site within 30 days; begin work within 60 days to remove contamination from groundwater sands 50 feet below the site before it reaches the larger 250-foot-deep sands; and come up with a plan of remedial action within 90 days.

**COORS RACISM.** Coors Beer's move to capture more of the Southern market could hit a snag if the comments of William Coors, the brewery's chairman, get wider exposure. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Coors told a group of black and Hispanic business leaders in Denver that "a lack of intellectual capacity" was the root cause of Africa's economic problems. Coors also said that "one of the best things they [slave traders] did for you is to drag your ancestors over here in chains." The remarks drew immediate condemnation from NAACP and African Methodist Episcopal Church officials in Denver and Los Angeles, but both groups said they were not ready to call a formal boycott of the beer until meeting directly with company officials. A six-year-old boycott against Coors, whose owners finance numerous right-wing causes, received a boost in February when a federal court rejected the company's claim that the union-sponsored boycott unfairly restricted its trade (see *SE*, Roundup, Sept./Oct. 1983). Coors controls 10 percent of the Southern market and has purchased 2,000 acres of land for a brewery in Virginia should the demand for their beer grow in the East.



## Working the Night Shift

FAIRMONT, WV — “If one sick child goes home well or with hope for a healthy life, it’s worth it,” says Mary Ann Watson. She has been a nurse’s aide in the newborn nursery at Fairmont General Hospital for 19 years.

Born in Fairmont, of a mother who took in washing (on a washboard) and ironing for the neighbors and a disabled father, Mary Ann learned early about compassion and hard work.

When she was six years old, her mother gave birth to her last child. Mary Ann was sent next door during the delivery. Strong-willed Mary Ann ran home twice to see what was going on. The second time, the kind old doctor permitted her to stay; she even helped clean up her new brother. Ever since, Mary Ann has loved caring for infants.

“When I was in high school, they let me out of the last morning class and the last afternoon one to go home and help prepare meals for the family,” she recalls. Eventually, Mary Ann had to leave high school and go to work on the local Westinghouse lamp assembly line to help care for the family.

She left Westinghouse in 1950, when she and her husband had a son, whom she proudly proclaims “the joy of my life.” But John Edward died of asthma at age 10, and she never had any other children.

In 1964, Mary Ann was employed as a nurse’s aide at Fairmont General Hospital, and finished second in her training class. This marked the beginning of her long and colorful tenure there. Early on, a supervisor told her, “Aides are a dime a dozen.” Mary Ann felt she was forced to work for mere dimes, too: there were frequent double shifts, sometimes seven days a week, for 64 cents an hour.

“That supervisor’s comment made me so angry,” she says. “The aides were do-

illustration by Frank Holyfield



MARY ANN WATSON

ing all the work. It was like slave labor.”

Although there was no available recourse, Mary Ann was not about to sit idle through this exploitation. She came from a long line of labor union workers. Her father was a sheet metal roller at the local aluminum plant, and both grandfathers and two great uncles had been coal miners. This background, and her own convictions, incited her to protest.

Mary Ann and her co-workers petitioned the hospital board for union recognition, but the board refused even to meet with them. Although health care workers were then excluded from National Labor Relations Act protection, Mary Ann and the others agreed to strike.

The winter of 1964-65 was long and bitter with no strike benefits and only food donations. But the underpaid workers remained united. With the help of other unions, they forced the hospital management into negotiation. Fairmont General became the first hospital south of the Mason-Dixon line with a union.

Her participation in the 1964-65 strike and two others since then have won Mary Ann a wide reputation as a dedicated worker. She currently serves as vice-president of her local union; secretary-treasurer of the Marion County Labor Federation and its political education arm, COPE, and of West

Virginia’s Industrial Union Council (AFL-CIO). An active labor lobbyist, she meets and interviews many politicians and candidates.

“I learned the ropes from many good friends over the years,” Mary Ann says. “The labor movement has broadened my life, developed me personally, and educated me about issues so that I deeply appreciate my work and people and union relationships.”

Mary Ann transforms her lessons in the political arena into practical use in the community. She now serves as a board member of a local community health center. And she still takes great pride in being a nurse’s aide. These days she even helps orient new nurses to the nursery, teaching them many things not found in classrooms or textbooks about newborns.

Mary Ann Watson, rank-and-file night shift nurse’s aide, may be “just another health care worker” to some. But few people in any profession exhibit her courage and determination to improve conditions for working people.

—SHARON WATKINS  
freelance writer  
Rivesville, WV

“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.

## Omnipresent Pentagon

There are a lot of places in the South where the Pentagon maintains a high profile — huge bases, shipyards, weapons factories, Oak Ridge, and so forth. But defense dollars permeate nearly every town or county in the region, and the Pentagon buys much more than weaponry — socks, cigarettes, and food, for example. When it does it usually goes shopping in the South. The Pentagon's buying patterns thus reinforce regional economic differences and shore up traditional low-wage Southern industries by smoothing out their business curves.

These are among the findings of a group of staffers of the Highlander Center, who set out a couple of years ago to research the social and economic impacts of military spending on communities in eight states of the upper South. A few months ago they published *Our Own Worst Enemy*, a report on what they found. It's full of facts, figures, case studies, state profiles. We can't do it justice in just a few paragraphs — but they concluded that “what many workers and communities get in the course of producing those goods and services is an appalling series of threats to their well-being.” For example:

- A single point of military production like Oak Ridge takes a heavy environmental toll — not only in terms of local ground and surface waters saturated with its lethal by-products, but also in the ongoing demand for lithium mining in North Carolina, the strip mining of Appalachian coal for TVA to supply Oak Ridge's power, and so forth.

- Workers pay dearly — with their health. Highlander found “a record of over-exposures to radiation, heavy metals, TNT, asbestos, benzene, and other carcinogens; of failures to monitor health effects...; and of keeping industrial workers in the dark by concealing or twisting the truth about workplace health and safety.”

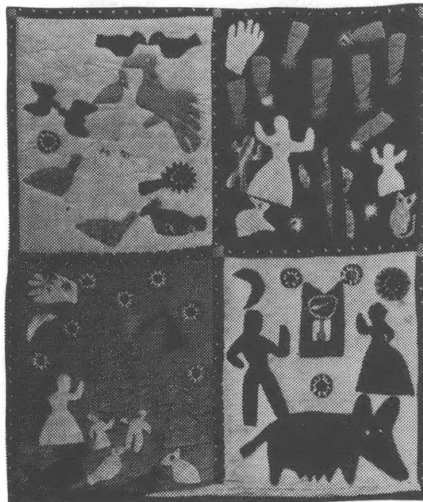
- Economic threats come in several forms. One is the fiscal drain of multimillion-dollar production facilities

that avoid taxation at the same time that they demand extra services of revenue-starved counties. Then there is the defense industry's history of “union busting, unfair labor practices, and runaways.”

For information on the project, contact Tom Schlesinger at Highlander. Order a copy for \$10, or \$12.50 for institutions: Route 3, Box 370, New Market, TN 37820; (615) 933-3443.

## Black Women's Roots

*The Culture of Southern Black Women* is the subject of a new interdisciplinary curriculum guide with an Afro-centric approach to its subject. Produced by a



group of women at the University of Alabama, it is not an outline for a specific course but rather a collection of ideas for activities and readings from which courses can be created or which can be used in existing courses.

The guide is laid out in sections that explore the identity, history, and creative expressions of Southern black women. The focus is on first-hand learning, and there's a useful section on field work — collecting oral histories, taking photographs, interpreting and preserving

the material collected.

The women who wrote it sought advice from a broad range of knowledgeable consultants and employed the practical experience of 12 teachers at nine colleges in four Southern states who experimented with the developing materials over a three-year period.

Order from the Project on the Culture of Southern Black Women, P.O. Box 1931, University, AL 35486; (205) 348-5512. The price is \$7.50; make checks payable to the University of Alabama.

## Segregated Schools

Despite a significant nationwide drop in the segregation of black students in public schools in the 1970s, segregation is still substantial, according to the Joint Center for Political Studies (JCPS). Analyzing data from the Department of Education for the years 1968 through 1980, JCPS found the most substantial progress in the South and the border states. In the Northeast, where the highest level of segregation is found, segregation actually increased during these years. Schools in the Midwest are also much more segregated than in the nation as a whole.

JCPS attributes the difference to stronger federal enforcement efforts and Supreme Court decisions affecting Southern and border states.

In the South, 57 percent of black students attend schools that are more than half minority, and 23 percent attend schools that are more than 90 percent minority. In the Northeast the comparable figures are 80 percent and 49 percent, respectively; in the Midwest, 70 percent and 44 percent.

The study, titled *Public School Desegregation in the United States*, is the work of University of Chicago political scientist Gary Orfield and is available for \$4.95 from JCPS: 1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20004; (202) 626-3500.



## PACIFIC ISLANDS

### Pentagon Satellites

— by Cynthia Z. Biddlecomb

Five hundred miles east of the Philippines, the people of Belau, part of the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, are campaigning for self-government on a nuclear-free basis. They have learned their lessons from their neighbors in the Marshalls, the Philippines, and other Pacific Islands, where many people believe they have been guinea pigs for the United States nuclear program.

While there is some public awareness of the effects on the island people of the nuclear tests of the '50s, it is not as well known that the current nuclear program continues to have a major impact there. Kwajalein atoll, made up of 93 coral islets, encircles an 839-square-mile lagoon — believed to be the largest in the world. In the late '40s, the atoll served as a support base for the atomic tests to the north and as a temporary relocation camp for the Bikini, Enewetok, Rongelap, and Uturik people during the years of testing. A labor camp was set up on Kwajalein and the Marshallese were recruited to clear away debris from the war and to build warehouses, air strips, aircraft hangers, and other military facilities there. About 550 Marshallese were relocated in 1951 to Ebeye island, three miles away, where the navy constructed frame houses, cook houses, and outhouses for 370 people.

Over the years, as the naval station on Kwajalein employed more Marshallese, the population increased on Ebeye, which covers only 78 acres. The population was further increased by the con-

tinued relocation of people from nearby islands. Today the island is the site of the Kwajalein Missile Testing Range, while several of the atoll's other islands have become radar tracking stations. Conditions on Ebeye have worsened to the point that, now, more than 8,500 people live there.

Today, approximately 800 of the Marshallese living on Ebeye have jobs at the U.S. base on the 750-acre Kwajalein island. Every day Marshallese workers make the ferry trip from Ebeye to Kwajalein to work, and every evening they return home to Ebeye under penalty of a curfew. Their children cannot attend the high school on Kwajalein, although Ebeye has no secondary school; their use of the Kwajalein hospital requires a pass from U.S. authorities; and they are not allowed to use the stores, pools, tennis courts, and other facilities on Kwajalein available to the Americans. In effect, the U.S. runs Kwajalein on an apartheid-like system while the Marshallese live in the unhealthy squalor of Ebeye.

In this context, the people of Belau made the first step recently in their move toward self-government by ratifying and approving by vote the world's first constitution with a clause stipulating that the republic be a "nuclear free zone." In fact, due to U.S. displeasure with several points in the constitution, the Belauan people have stated their desire to be nuclear-free on four separate occasions. The most recent vote came in a February 1983 plebiscite on a Compact of Free Association, a treaty giving the U.S. control of Belau's foreign policy and defense interests. Although Belauan voters approved the compact in general, its nuclear provisions did not receive the constitutionally-

mandated 75 percent approval. The Belauan people see this lack of approval as having defeated the treaty. The U.S. Office of Micronesian Status Negotiations intends to renegotiate the compact after November 1984. Meanwhile the treaty with the Marshall Islands will be discussed in Congressional hearings beginning in the spring of 1984.

For more information, write the author at: U.S. Nuclear Free Pacific Network, 942 Market Street, Room 711, San Francisco, CA 94102. □

*This article is adapted from **The Mobilizer**, published by the Mobilization for Survival.*

## MINNESOTA/WISCONSIN Guards Bring Suit

— by Pat Wolff Freeman

Two women who worked as Pinkerton guards at the Prairie Island nuclear power plant until April 1983 are suing their former employer and the plant's owner, Northern States Power Company (NSP), for sexual harassment and discrimination. Fifteen male employees of Pinkerton and NSP are also named as defendants in the lawsuit.

The plaintiffs in the case are Margaret Falde and Laurie Kruse. Falde worked at Prairie Island, located on the Minnesota-Wisconsin border, since April 1981, and Kruse since June 1980.

Their complaint includes several incidents of discrimination and harassment, such as repeated and offensive teasing, touching, and being called vulgar names. Typical incidents cited in the complaint are:

- a package containing obscene pictures with Kruse's and Falde's names



## VOICES OF OUR NEIGHBORS

written on them was left at the work site, addressed to both women;

- Kruse was asked to pose nude for pictures to be taken by an NSP employee;

- Falde received a package of men's underwear with vulgarities written on them;

en were denied access to the computer and log book, even though male employees in the same positions did have access.

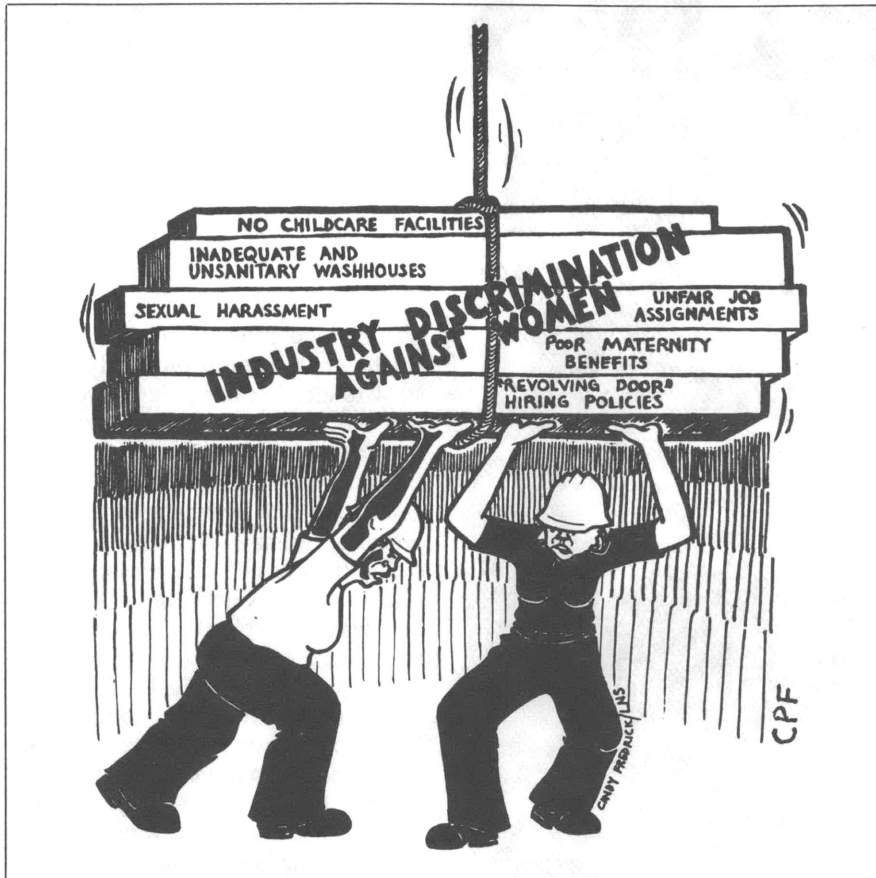
Falde and Kruse met with NSP's affirmative action officer in September 1982 to report incidents of sexual harassment, but they felt no acceptable

charges of sexual harassment.

The women have since hired attorneys and in September 1983 filed their lawsuit against NSP and Pinkerton. A hearing date has not been set, but the lawyers hope to go to trial within a year.

Both Kruse and Falde are currently unemployed and a fund has been established to help pay the costs of the case. Contact the Kruse/Falde Litigation Fund, P.O. Box 845, Ellsworth, WI 54011. □

*Adapted from Northern Sun News.*



- a picture depicting a woman urinating, with Falde's name on it, was posted at the work site;

- Falde was ordered by an NSP employee to remove her clothes and put on a paper suit for a radiation count, even though male employees similarly exposed to radiation were not required to do so;

- Falde was pushed into a men's restroom one day by three male NSP employees and was held captive there for some time;

- unlike male employees, Falde was required to request permission to use restroom facilities and she was denied use of the facilities while menstruating because she refused to give a detailed explanation for her request;

- on numerous occasions both wom-

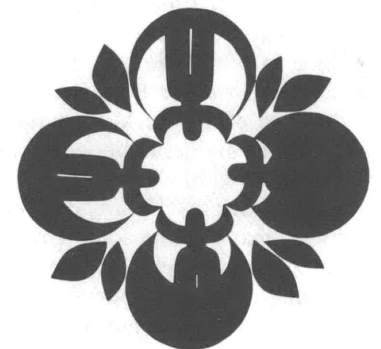
response was made by the corporation. Kruse, who had been promoted from guard to an office position in May 1982, was transferred back to her former guard position one day after showing support for Falde in a complaint filed with NSP in September 1982. The demotion was without advance warning or notice.

When the harassment worsened, the women filed charges alleging unfair discriminatory practice with the Minnesota State Department of Human Rights. Falde and Kruse say they received numerous anonymous telephone calls at home and at work, threatening their physical safety. They refused to return to work after April 5, 1983, when Falde found a note on her car threatening both women if they did not drop their

## World Priorities

If you need a statistic to shock you on the priorities of the world's governments, you'll find them galore in *World Military and Social Expenditures*, by Ruth Sivard. Available from World Policy Institute for \$4.00 (777 United Nations Plaza, NY, NY 10017), a few of the facts the report cites are:

- more than nine million civilians have died in wars since Hiroshima;
- one billion people are living under military-controlled governments;
- the cost of a single new nuclear submarine equals the annual education budget of 23 developing countries which have a total of 160 million school-age children;
- the U.S., which ranks first in the world in military expenditures, ranks ninth in social and economic indicators;
- the U.S.S.R., which ranks second in military expenditures, ranks 25th in economic/social spending;
- two billion people live on incomes under \$500 per year. □





# THE HELMS ATTACK ON KING

BY DAVID J. GARROW

**A federal holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., finally won congressional and presidential approval, but not without creating a firestorm of arguments and controversy that made those 1983 debates starkly reminiscent of the contentious times of 20 years ago.**

In 1963 civil rights opponents contended that the indigenous protest movement that King had come to symbolize was, as Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett put it, "part of the world Communist conspiracy to divide and conquer our country from within." South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond agreed, asserting "that there is some Communist conspiracy behind the movement going on in this country."

Twenty years later Thurmond sounded a very different note, endorsing the King holiday bill "out of



photo by Alma Blount

respect for the important contributions of our minority citizens." But at least one senator — North Carolina Republican Jesse Helms — and several syndicated news columnists seemed more than eager to trumpet the sort of charges Thurmond once favored. By so doing, Helms and his small band of allies brought national derision upon themselves and gave the King holiday bill what the widely respected journal *Congressional Quarterly* termed "a symbolic importance transcending its actual effect." At the same time, Helms was con-

sciously and carefully crafting an issue he could exploit profitably in his 1984 re-election campaign. Even before the King measure was signed into law, thousands of mass mail fundraising letters detailing Helms's assault on King were on their way to previous Helms contributors, and racially divisive ads citing Helms's distaste for King were being readied for broadcast over North Carolina's airwaves.

Every year following King's 1968 assassination, Michigan Congressman John Conyers, Jr., introduced legislation to commemorate the civil rights leader's January 15 birthday with a national holiday. For several years the bills languished quietly, but late in 1979 a substantial majority of the House of Representatives voted in favor of such a measure — only to see it die without action in the Senate.

Early in 1983, with the twentieth anniversary of the famous March on Washington approaching, Conyers and Indiana Democrat Katie Hall launched a new push for passage of the King holiday proposal. Hearings were held in June, and on August 2 the House voted 338 to 90 to make the third Monday in January a federal holiday in King's honor, beginning in 1986. Among those supporting the bill were many conservative Republicans, including New York's Jack Kemp, Georgia's Newt Gingrich, and Oklahoma's Mickey Edwards, head of the American Conservative Union.

In the Senate, Republican majority leader Howard Baker placed the House-passed bill directly on the calendar but was blocked from holding an August floor vote by Helms's threat of a filibuster. When Baker finally called up the measure on October 3, Helms was ready with a three-part assault on King's record. Taking up the cudgels with special fervor, Helms asserted that King had been the puppet of certain advisers whose true loyalty had been to the Soviet Union, that King's private life made him unworthy of commendation, and that King's political beliefs were resolutely un-American.

On the first point, Helms alleged that King "kept around him as his principal advisers and associates certain individuals who were taking their orders and direction from a foreign power." Indeed, Helms charged, "King may have had an explicit but clandestine relationship with the Communist Party or its agents to promote through his own stature, not the civil rights of blacks or social justice and progress, but the totalitarian goals and ideology of Communism."

Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy characterized Helms's assertions as a "last-ditch stand against equal justice," and lamented that it was "really tragic" and "unworthy of the United States Senate" that the North Carolina Republican was making "allegations that are completely unfounded." Most of the specific charges had been aired by segregationists 20 years earlier and are blatantly false.

Helms focused on two King aides with Communist pasts. One, Jack O'Dell, whose party ties were the subject of FBI-planted news leaks in 1962 and 1963, held a low-ranking job in King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference and was not one of King's "principal advisers and associates." The other, white New York attorney Stanley Levison, was indeed one of King's closest confidants for more than a decade. He had been intimately involved in the most sensitive financial affairs of the American Communist Party (CP) in the early 1950s, before his close acquaintance with King.

The Levison-King relationship supplied the initial grounds for the FBI's infamous pursuit of King throughout the last six years of his life. Learning early in 1962 that Levison had been one of King's top private advisers since shortly after King came to national prominence in 1956, Hoover's bureau reconsidered its earlier conclusion that Levison's apparent termination of his CP ties made him no longer a suspect figure. As former FBI intelligence chief Charles D. Brennan revealingly explained in a 1983 comment, the bureau "had to operate on the assumption that Soviet direction must have been behind Levison's move from the Communist Party to Martin Luther King." That assumption led to constant electronic surveillance of Levison, but to the FBI's continuing dismay no evidence whatsoever showed that Levison somehow represented foreign interests in his relationship with King or influenced King in subversive ways.

That surveillance took place with the full knowledge and written approval of then-Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and the FBI's overstated fears about Levison's role led both of the Kennedy brothers to warn King personally that he should terminate the friendship. When King maintained contact with Levison despite the Kennedys' warnings, the attorney general approved the bureau's requests for wiretaps on King's own telephones. The FBI's probe of the world-famous black leader moved into high gear.

Senator Helms combined his October attack on King with a demand that all of the FBI's surveillance materials be released before the Senate voted on the holiday bill. The most relevant materials — FBI documents detailing the contents of hundreds of Levison-King telephone conversations from 1962 through 1968 — already were public, the fruits of previous Freedom of Information Act requests. But Helms harped on the fact that some FBI tape recordings concerning King were sealed pursuant to a 1977 federal court ruling; he asserted that perhaps those items contained unrevealed evidence supporting his charges of traitorous activities. Attorneys representing Helms and the Conserva-

tive Caucus even went into federal court in an unsuccessful attempt to have the surveillance materials released.

Helms never acknowledged the fact that two different Ford administration Justice Department task forces had reviewed those items prior to their sequestering. Assistant Attorney General J. Stanley Pottinger reported in 1976 that his own firsthand examination revealed that the items were "scurrilous and immaterial to any proper law enforcement function or historic purpose," and that "there was nothing in the files, either in tapes or written records . . . that indicated that Martin Luther King was a communist or communist sympathizer, or in any way knowingly or negligently let himself be used by



1964 FBI SURVEILLANCE PHOTO (LEFT TO RIGHT, STANLEY LEVISON, DR. M.L. KING, AND MUTUAL FRIEND CLARENCE JONES)

communists." Justice Department attorney Fred Folsom, who headed the second investigatory task force, reached an identical conclusion.

During the peak years of the FBI's pursuit of King, 1964-65, the bureau's principal interest was not the supposed influence of subversives on King, but the most intimate aspects of King's private life, aspects laid bare by the extensive — and expensive — campaign of under-the-bed buggings that Hoover's agents eagerly pursued in dozens of King hotel rooms. "It was muck that the FBI collected," former bureau intelligence chief Brennan publicly conceded. "It was not the FBI's most



shining hour." Opponents of the holiday consistently alluded to this subject but never conceded that they were advocating a harsher standard of personal conduct with regard to King than that commonly applied to other prominent American political figures.

Beyond communist influence and sexual peccadilloes, the third aspect of Helms's October broadside was that "King's political views were those of a radical political minority" and that King himself had practiced what Helms termed "action-oriented Marxism." Although no fair-minded study of King's record would support that claim, Helms could and did select from among King's hundreds of public speeches a handful of



1963 FBI SURVEILLANCE PHOTO (LEFT TO RIGHT, LEVISON, KING, AND JONES)

phrases where King's criticisms of America's racial ills, economic injustices, and militaristic foreign policies had been particularly harsh.

King's 1967 attacks on the war in Vietnam brought him strong rebukes even from publications such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, and his rhetoric about America's need for "a radical redistribution of economic and political power" also made some contemporary observers uneasy. His private, posthumously published declarations that "something is wrong with the economic system of our nation," that "something is wrong with capitalism," that "there must be a better distribution of wealth, and maybe America must move toward a democratic social-

ism," supplied additional grist for Helms's mill, but did not, even out of context, convincingly support Helms's contention that King's political beliefs were beyond America's mainstream ideological spectrum. King's commitment to nonviolence, his deep religious faith, and his lifelong dedication to justice and equality all belied Helms's attempt to paint King as something other than a fully patriotic American and man of God.

**F**ollowing Helms's October 3 broadside, Senate floor debate on the King holiday measure was held in abeyance for two weeks while majority leader Baker persuaded the hard-core opponents to relent from parliamentary delaying tactics and allow a speedy, mid-month, final vote. When debate resumed on October 18, Helms distributed to his colleagues a thick binder of long-public FBI documents reflecting the bureau's virulent hostility toward King, materials he apparently believed would help support his earlier assertions. New York Democrat Daniel Patrick Moynihan, recalling his own acquaintance with King, angrily termed the binder "a packet of filth" and flung his copy to the Senate floor. Pressed by reporters to respond to Moynihan's attack, Helms answered bitterly that "maybe they were filth because they accurately portrayed part of King's career."

When Edward Kennedy took the Senate floor to rebut Helms's charges, the North Carolinian responded by noting that the FBI's surveillance of King had begun during the administration of John Kennedy. Ted Kennedy's argument ought not to be with him, Helms insisted: "His argument is with his dead brother who was president and his dead brother who was attorney general." An infuriated Kennedy, stressing that his older brothers had deeply admired King despite their complicity in the FBI's surveillances, told the Senate, "I am appalled at the attempt of some to misappropriate the memory of my brother Robert Kennedy and misuse it as part of this smear campaign."

When Helms's series of hostile amendments to the bill were called up for votes, only a small handful of

other senators sided with him. Helms charged that the ranks of the opposition were thin because "an atmosphere of pressure, intimidation, even threats" was present in the Senate, but numerous observers concluded that Helms's own conduct in opposing the bill had propelled some fence-sitters, concerned largely about the cost of adding a tenth federal holiday, into the ranks of holiday supporters.

Helms defensively insists, "I'm not a racist, I'm not a bigot," but some home-state onlookers think differently. "It's not anything new," according to former U.S. attorney H.M. "Mickey" Michaux, a black Democrat who ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1982. "He's just got those deep-seated feelings. He's an individual who speaks his mind regardless of the political consequences." Others suggest that Helms, facing an uphill 1984 re-election fight, wants to appeal to conservative white North Carolinians or seeks a new issue for use in the mass mail letters he regularly sends out through his powerful fundraising organization, the National Congressional Club. They cite Helms's public admission that "I'm not going to get any black votes, period."

David Price, executive director of the North Carolina Democratic Party, says there was "no doubt that one of the prime reasons was to help Helms's nationwide fundraising." The evidence bears him out. Within days of the contentious Senate debate, Helms had letters in the mail asking previous financial supporters to make further contributions to enable his campaign "to recover from the liberal news media's and the left-wing black establishment's stinging, pounding attacks." Such criticism hurt his re-election chances, Helms said, and added, "We are hard-pressed to buy the TV commercials we need. Yet my campaign manager tells me that without new commercials now, we will slip even further behind." He also claimed, "We are scraping the bottom of the barrel right now because we have had to spend all our reserves on our 'grass-roots' voter registration drive to try to counter the voter registration drive of Jesse Jackson and the bloc vote extremists."

Helms's purported fund shortage could not have been too severe, for

**On February 12, 1984 the *Charlotte Observer* reported an incident which dramatizes Helms's attitude toward race and Martin Luther King. "When a photographer prepared to take pictures in Helms's Raleigh study recently, Helms quickly pulled an illustration off the wall and away from the camera," the paper wrote. Helms was quoted as saying, "That'll get me in trouble." The paper continued, "The picture showed a smiling, toothy, black man wearing a planter's hat, sitting in a rocking chair on a columned mansion's porch. He was drinking a mint julep, and the caption said, 'This is what me and Martin Luther had in mind.'"**

within a period of several weeks North Carolina television viewers were being treated to blunt ads in which Helms reiterated his opposition to the King holiday and questioned the position of his Democratic challenger, moderate Governor James B. Hunt. While *Human Events*, the self-described "national conservative weekly," printed Helms's entire Senate speech as a special supplement under the title "The Radical Record of Martin Luther King," right-wing columnists such as James J. Kilpatrick and Jeffery Hart further publicized Helms's diatribe in widely syndicated articles of their own.

Republican Senate leader Baker, noting President Ronald Reagan's promise to sign the King measure into law, sought to distance the G.O.P. from Helms when the final Senate vote took place on October 19: "I have seldom approached a moment in this chamber when I thought the action we are about to take has greater potential for good and a greater symbolism for unity than the vote we are about to take." Some cynical observers thought they saw electoral self-interest, more than sincere sympathy, in the flowery remarks of some holiday supporters, but the final Senate tally of 78 to 22 did amount to a tangible endorsement of King's remarkable career and the far-reaching achievements of the mass movement he symbolized.

Just when the Helms-King controversy seemed spent, Reagan reopened it that very evening by flippantly responding to a press conference

question concerning King's political views with the remark, "We'll know in about 35 years, won't we?" — an allusion to the sequestered FBI tapes, sealed until at least 2027. Denunciations rained down upon the president, and a chastened Reagan telephoned Coretta Scott King to apologize. Former New Hampshire Governor Meldrim Thomson went public with a private letter from Reagan in which the president admitted he had "the same reservations you have" about King's character and affiliations. But no hint of these qualms appeared during



photo courtesy Helms's Senate office

the November 2 Rose Garden ceremony at which Reagan signed the bill into law in the proud presence of Coretta Scott King, her four children, and dozens of her husband's former associates.

In 1963 the shrill insistence of Southern segregationists that the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement was a Soviet handmaiden failed to stop the eventual enactment of the Civil Rights Act. But it afforded those demagogues yet another opportunity to exploit the racial prejudices of some segments of their electorates. To many Americans, the segregationists' verbal tirades only revealed the moral bankruptcy of their cause, just as did the police dogs and fire hoses of Birmingham.

Twenty years later, when three-quarters of both houses of Congress declared that the national contributions of the Civil Rights Movement merited a day of honor, Jesse Helms's strident objections failed to block the holiday, while also revealing the desperate lengths to which Helms would go in a carefully calculated attempt to raise the dollars and provoke the sentiments that might enable him to hang onto his seat in the Senate.

Many Americans may see Helms's conduct as the last flickerings of a dying mentality. But North Carolina's political insiders believe it is a conscious and potentially successful effort to further polarize the state's electorate along racial lines to serve Helms's selfish ends. Though some readers take at face value the plaintive predictions of gloom in Helms's fundraising letters, professionals with access to the private opinion polls know better. "Helms's stand against a Martin Luther King national holiday," the conservative magazine *National Review* joyfully told its readers early in 1984, "appears to have helped his candidacy, not hurt it." As even Democratic operatives privately concede, what once looked like an all-but-certain Helms defeat is now a dead heat. □

*David Garrow is author of the **FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr. and Protest at Selma**. He is currently completing a comprehensive book on King and the SCLC entitled **Bearing the Cross**.*



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# THE POISONING OF LOUISIANA

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LOUISIANA GOVERNOR EDWIN EDWARDS

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**BY JASON BERRY**

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*Edwin Edwards won election to an unprecedented third term as governor of Louisiana in November 1983, taking 62 percent of the vote in defeating incumbent David Treen.*

The state's most popular politician since Huey Long, Edwards was a conservative congressman in the 1960s. A more liberal Edwards first won the governor's office in 1971 and was re-elected in a landslide four years later. Ineligible for a third consecutive term, Edwards left office in 1980 with the highest approval rating of any outgoing governor since public opinion polls were invented.

Campaigning as a born-again New Dealer last fall, Edwards told voters,

"You that are elderly and have seen your funds cut, you that are crippled, poor or disabled, take heart. Take heart for the great healer shall returneth and he shall make you well." Edwards spent \$14.6 million in the course of this campaign — more than any other victorious gubernatorial candidate in U.S. history.

Beneath the colorful persona, however, is a different Edwin Edwards, and his hands are dirty. In the 1970s his administration opened Louisiana to massive chemical waste

dumping by disposal firms and oil companies. The results have been devastating: concentrations of oil sludge and toxic waste have built up in bayous, tropical marshes, and farm soil throughout Edwards's Cajun homeland.

Louisiana now ranks fourth nationwide in generating hazardous waste. Some 183 million tons of waste effluents annually enter the state's rivers, principally the Mississippi. Most come from poorly regulated petrochemical plants. Landfills and deep injection wells account for another 26.7 million tons, while commercial toxic waste facilities store 394,315 tons of toxins annually. With 80 waste injection wells, Louisiana has roughly 25 percent of all such wells operating in the U.S.

Shortly after his re-election, Edwards outraged environmentalists by announcing that he would disband the Office of Environmental Quality, which had been established by outgoing Governor Treen. This office assumed regulatory powers previously held by the much-discredited Department of Natural Resources, which consistently opposed community leaders trying to shut down waste sites. Many people believe the new office was a real contribution to environmental progress. What Edwards will do next is an open question, but the fact is that much of the remedial work desperately needed results from the policies and actions of the environmental bureaucrats of his 1970s administration.

*Louisiana has a spectacular history of political corruption. The late A.J. Lieblich, comparing Louisiana's economy to Arabian sheikdoms, wrote that the state, "floats on oil, like a drunkard's teeth on whiskey." On a recent episode of "60 Minutes," Bill Lynch, the New Orleans Times-Picayune's veteran capitol correspondent, said of Edwin Edwards, "There's never been any question in my mind that he has run the government for his own benefit and for the benefit of his friends. . . . He's never been convicted, he's never been indicted, yet the scent of scandal hangs over him."*

Hazardous waste is big business. Some \$5 billion was spent in America last year to dump toxic waste, and the figure is expected to triple in the next decade. The three leading companies — Waste Management, Browning Ferris Industries, and SCA Services, Inc. — had combined revenues for all operations of \$7.8 billion in 1982. In Louisiana, Edwards recognized the political largesse of this new industry early on.

The earliest known deal involving Edwards began in 1972, when his executive assistant, Clyde Vidrine, helped a firm called BWS Corporation secure land at Tate Cove in rural Evangeline Parish, where Longfellow set his famous poem of the same name. Dumping began at the Tate Cove site with politicians paving the way. State Senator John Tassin told local officials the dumping would be safe. Dr. Ramson Vidrine, Clyde's brother, was Edwards's chief health officer; he gave the green light as well. And the state awarded BWS a waste-dumping permit.

By the mid-'70s Tate Cove was a lethal mess, and local citizens were outraged. Clyde Vidrine, meanwhile, had had a falling out with Edwards and told a reporter that the governor had made him get \$20,000 from BWS before finding the land for the disposal firm. Vidrine said he gave the money to Edwards; the governor denied it. Finally, in 1982, the Treen administration began cleaning up Tate Cove with assistance from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Superfund. Legal action is pending against the Texas waste generators who used Tate Cove.

*The Conservation Foundation recently studied the environmental protection laws of each state and ranked Louisiana forty-third. Among the reasons the foundation gave for such a low ranking are these: Louisiana requires no environmental impact statement for potentially damaging development projects; it spends less than \$2 per capita annually on environmental quality controls, compared to as much as \$12 in some other states; and there is no state regulation of the development of*

floodways and floodplains — particularly important in Louisiana. The study's findings did not measure environmental quality of the states, only the laws. And it did not measure whether or not the laws are being enforced.

Louisiana's southern parishes are known as Acadiana, Cajun country, the namesake of the French Canadian province — present-day Nova Scotia — whose people migrated across the continent in the late eighteenth century. Steeped in the French patois, the region has for generations exuded warmth and celebration. It is a beautiful land, with fish, fowl, and mammals regenerating in the web-work of flora that buffers tropical prairies. This land is Edwin Edwards's home base. To most Cajuns, he is a folk hero, the first of their own to make it to the state mansion.

But his homeland has suffered under his stewardship. A 1979 Department of Natural Resources (DNR) study reflects an ominous image. According to this state inventory of chemical impoundments in south Louisiana, there are at least 2,700 industrial waste sites. In Vermilion Parish alone, 551 oil or gas waste sites were plotted, with another 49 of "unknown" origin. By an objective measure, it is a massive concentration. More critically, the vast majority of these sites lie above the Chicot Aquifer, a huge ground-water source. (See box on page 20.)

Chemical waste dumping in Louisiana has political causes and human effects. Vermilion Parish is a poignant case study that involves Benny and Pat Benezech, brothers who were big Edwards supporters. Pat flew Edwards to campaign rallies in his airplane. In November 1974 a breaking news report alleged that the Benezechs paid Edwards \$135,000 to appoint Ray Sutton, a business associate of theirs, to the office of Commissioner of Conservation. Edwards issued a statement that the Benezechs were "well aware of my intention to appoint Mr. Sutton before they made the contribution." It was the conservation commissioner's job during much of Sutton's tenure to regulate non-hazardous landfill disposal operations, and Vermilion Parish suffered for it.



DUDLEY AND NONA ROMERO IN FRONT OF THE PAB WASTE PIT. "WHAT ABOUT OUR GRANDKIDS?" THEY ASK.



photo by D. Richmond ©1984

In 1976 a firm called Gulf Coast Premix — partly owned by Benny Benezech — negotiated a lease with deputy sheriff Alton Romero allowing it to dump industrial wastes at a garbage dump Romero owned and leased to the parish. As the chemicals built up and the rains came, oily run-off washed into neighboring rice fields and crawfish ponds. Still the toxic loads kept coming.

But Sutton refused to stop the flow of Premix wastes to Romero's land. Health officials wrote threatening letters but issued no halt order. In 1980 the attorney general filed suit, charging the pit was a public hazard. The day after the suit was filed, the pit caught fire and burned for two weeks straight. When the smoke cleared, Romero got on a tractor and prepared the soil for cultivation. The law suit was eventually dropped and DNR gave Romero permission to plant rice on the land.

In the opinion of Paul Jones, a leading Baton Rouge geologist, "Any area used for hazardous waste is a graveyard. It should be taken out of use. That is going to be a witches brew from now on. Those chemicals don't break down in time."

In support of the booming petrochemical economy of the 1970s, Edwards and Sutton took a lenient view of oil waste landfills. More production meant more waste, and it had to go somewhere. At the PAB oil site, also in Vermilion Parish, Alex Abshire earned \$22,000 a month for accepting waste in three large ponds.

In 1981 Charles Hutchens, a lawyer in nearby Lafayette, filed suit against PAB and the waste generators on behalf of several families living around the site, alleging violations of the PAB permit to dump non-hazardous wastes. Hutchens cited soil tests revealing toxic chemicals and violations of the state's water discharge standards. The lawsuit did stop the dumping, but three years later the plaintiffs still await its cleanup. As the suit moves through the courts, Hutchens has used \$12,000 earned in several out-of-court settlements to pay for the expensive, more sophisticated, soil and water samples needed for litigation.

Meanwhile, the plaintiffs live on ravaged land and wait for justice. In a house that has lost its monetary value, Dudley and Nona Romero (no relation to Alton) live different lives than before the dump opened. "We switched to bottled water," Dudley said in his heavy Cajun brogue. "Every time we drink tap water we get stomach cramps." Nona added, "It's not no ache, no! It's a pain like a knife cuttin' through your stomach."

"We are old," he continued, "not no young generation. But what about these grandkids of mine [who live next door]? If it's giving us effects at our age, what will it do to them if they live in it all their lives?"

*There is no environmental "movement" in Louisiana. But there are a number of communities in the southern parishes afflicted by chemical waste, polluted water, and illness. Evelyn Allison is a woman in Vermilion who spent months canvassing families and recording their problems. She located disease clusters in two rural townships. One is near a pit owned by another parish deputy sheriff, Pershing Broussard. (See box on page 20.) The other is on Pecan Island.*

The island, a beautiful tongue of land leading into coastal marshes, has long been a hunting enclave. But oil wells and disposal sites dot the area, and on-site waste disposal is only nominally regulated by the state. Ten homes in one community here have been hit by cancer or leukemia since 1975: there have been eight deaths from these diseases, and three people remain sick with them today. Vermilion Parish's overall



FIRE AT THE BFI DUMPSITE IN SULFUR, LOUISIANA

courtesy of Calcasieu Rod and Gun Club

cancer mortality rate is 6 percent higher than the national average. And despite the absence of heavy industry, only two U.S. counties have higher per capita incidences of intestinal tract cancer.

Dr. Gaulman Abshire of the hospital in Kaplan, a Vermilion Parish town, rattled off a list of his relatives who have been struck: "My uncle had leukemia; his son Dalton died of lung cancer. The daughter-in-law had cancer of the gum; they had to remove half of her face and one eye, but she's still living. My Aunt Estelle had cancer of the rectum. Her brother Renault died three years ago of leukemia. My great grand-niece, little Barbara, was in a group that went to St. Jude's Children's Hospital in Memphis [for leukemia]. She came through. Quite a lot of children have been struck. My sister-in-law had cancer of the pancreas but they found it early enough. They removed 90 percent of her stomach.

"It's not just the oil industry. Because of pesticides, there has been a steady decrease in the bird population here. You can't find a buzzard or crow around here for love or money. Years ago, when cows would die, the buzzards were everywhere. Now cows just rot."

In January 1983, 40 cattle were found floating in the Grand Marais bayou, which loops behind the Broussard waste pits, linked by a drainage ditch. Agriculture inspectors found small concentrations of lead in the stomachs of a few that had not decomposed. But no tests were taken on bones, ears, muscles, or fatty tissues, which are known to absorb chemicals and provide clues to the cause of death. No one knows whose cows they were, or whether others from the same herd were sent to meat markets.

The need for strong environmental safeguards — control not only of waste dumping but also of other factors, such as the dangerous pesticides Louisiana farmers have used for years — was acute by the late 1970s. For his part, Edwin Edwards invested environmental responsibilities in DNR and tried to avoid media association with the problems. Toward the end of his second term, however, the Edwards administration's environmental policy had surfaced, and

south Louisiana had become industry's toilet. Among the controversial policy actions taken:

- In 1979, as the state mapped plans to administer new federal environmental regulations, William Fontenot, an investigator from the state attorney general's office, asked DNR officials what they thought the new enforcement procedures would entail. "We were putting together our budget for the legislature," Fontenot recalls, "and needed to know their projected violations for any one given year. They told me the attorney general's office didn't need additional attorneys — because there weren't going to be violations. They were wrong, of course, dead wrong."

- Late in Edwards's second term, DNR paid Industrial Tank Company of California \$350,000 for a study recommending construction of "the world's largest hazardous waste plant" in a congested industrial corridor on the Mississippi. The land is



photo by D. Richmond © 1984

#### **EVELYN ALLISON HAS DOCUMENTED DECLINING HEALTH IN VERMILION**

below sea level and is a proven flood plain. Industrial Tank (IT) came to Louisiana at the behest of Jim Hutchinson, a top Edwards man in DNR. The state awarded the company's hazardous waste permits in 1980, over the angry opposition of local residents. The plant has yet to be built, however, and the state's ethics commission has ruled that IT violated the conflict-of-interest stat-

utes in its relationship with DNR.

- Carrying the Edwards administration logic into Treen's term, DNR announced in 1981 that the state's dump sites did not qualify for Superfund assistance — because they were not dangerous enough. This caused an uproar, including harsh newspaper editorials, that forced a reversal. Subsequent tests found seven sites heavily contaminated and eligible for EPA assistance.

*While the bureaucracy under Edwards practiced favoritism toward waste dumpers, the governor's own relationship with Browning Ferris Industries (BFI) is a remarkable story in itself. More than any other waste dumping firm, BFI profited greatly by Edwin Edwards's callous disregard for people, land, and water.*

A one-truck Houston garbage operation in 1967, BFI expanded rapidly in the 1970s by buying up small waste-disposal firms and their sites, pumping them with funds for expansion. Today BFI's stock sells well on Wall Street, and the firm has branched out into the Middle East. Louisiana was key to the expansion strategy by virtue of its proximity to the massive petrochemical complex strung along the nearby Texas Gulf Coast.

Edwards was raising money for his first gubernatorial campaign when BFI moved into Louisiana. The Jackson, Mississippi *Clarion-Ledger* reported that Sheldon Beychock, Edwards's 1971 campaign director and later his gubernatorial counsel, worked for BFI subsidiaries, one of which sent employees to campaign on company time. Once elected, Edwards chose E.C. Hunt, Jr., a Lake Charles lawyer and BFI lobbyist, to chair the commission designated to establish regulations governing waste disposal. Over the years, Hunt and Edwards remained fast friends. Hunt contributed \$4,733.50 to the 1983 campaign, while BFI's Committee for Better Government in Louisiana contributed at least \$4,000.

In 1972 BFI purchased land in Willow Springs, a hamlet bordering a swamp in Calcasieu Parish in the southwest corner of the state. The previous owners, Mud Movers, had



# Chicot Aquifer

Most of south Louisiana's chemical waste dumps are located on land atop the Chicot Aquifer, a massive underground lake that has, for generations, supplied water for domestic use and irrigation for thousands of Cajun families. Running 150 miles from east to west, the Chicot totals 15,000 square miles underlying 15 parishes. Vermilion Parish is a "meander belt," or shallow recharge zone of old riverbeds; scores of commercial crawfish ponds dot the area, drawing water from the aquifer. Jeff Davis and Acadia Parishes, on its northern edge, pump one billion gallons from it each fall during the 90-day rice season.

South Louisiana has 2,700 contaminated impoundments of surface water — and a 1983 congressional study of hazardous waste control estimated that 90 percent of such impoundments are serious threats to aquifers. Paul Jones is the geologist who plotted the map coordinates of the Chicot Aquifer in the 1940s. He says, "I don't know of any report that describes what has really happened at the disposal sites in Louisiana. If it were above ground, the Chicot would be a fresh-water lake about 250 feet deep. This lake would be easily contaminated throughout; it contaminates more slowly as an aquifer. Ground water moves at a rate of about 1.2 feet per day. To really find out [the extent of pollution] you would need heavy sampling from the pits and water wells inland around them."

In the absence of sophisticated tests by the state, residents have had to pay for their own. Jerome Vincent lives in a ranch house in Vermilion Parish near a Superior Oil waste pit. His wife died of leukemia in 1982; then his father died of cancer. "I had my well tested," he says. "We found chromium and zinc. I think it's a factor in her death, but I can't prove it. Daddy didn't drink or smoke. He was 68. My wife was 40." Chemical contamination becomes dangerous when it reaches certain levels. Vincent had his wife's hair tested and found above-average levels of zinc and chromium.

"We think the pollution is from

the waste pits around here," says one of Vincent's neighbors. He and his wife have had diarrhea for a year. Their granddaughter was born retarded at the farm across the road. "Sometimes," says the man, "you can see chemical streaks on the road. I've seen trucks running Friday night to Monday morning to the pits." This dump site belongs to Pershing Broussard, a deputy sheriff who ran it for six years with a Conservation Department permit but halted operations in 1982 rather than make needed site improvements.

Nolton and Bertha Abshire live directly behind the pits and drink only bottled water now. "I developed congestion when the pit began," Bertha says. "I had surgery last year for breast cancer. I was lucky; I came out all right." For six years the couple lived with the rumble of 16-wheel trucks discharging at the pit. "Even our clothes smelled after we washed 'em," Nolton says. "I had a bunch of gray marsh hens died on my land. I had me two dogs but they died too. The second just stopped eating."

At the request of Vermilion activists, state health officials tested 40 wells and found traces of barium, which is used in oil drilling. But the Health Department assured residents the water was safe. Subra, a private lab, conducted further tests, found higher levels, and warned citizens not to drink the water. This prompted a condemnation by the state. Finally, physicians from Oschner Clinic in New Orleans went to the parish and publicly advised citizens not to drink the water.

Dr. Victor Alexander of Oschner said, "My bias, my professional training leads me to be very conservative in accepting public health risks. In cases like this, you need multiple samples, split-testing by two labs. Where you've got barium, it's necessary to test for pesticides, radiation, heavy metals, organics. Cover all sides; the chemistry here is complex and requires sophisticated analysis. The state is out-manned and out-gunned. But given the budgetary constraints, I don't think they have used their resources effectively. The state was too quick to issue assurances of long-term safety. I consider this a polluted water source." □

been receiving wastes since 1968. BFI first stated its intent to dispose of water oil waste in a deep injection well, but state Health Department officials refused a permit. After a series of letters, they relented when the Conservation Department, under Ray Sutton, gave assurances of subsoil safety.

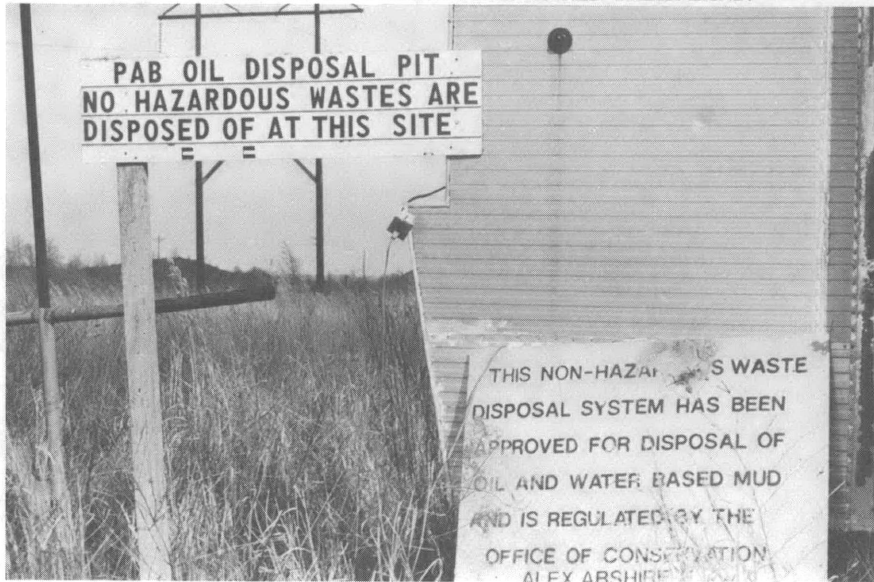
By 1977 BFI had won permission to receive *toxic* wastes at the injection well, and this appears to have been its intent all along. In December 1977 the Health Department wrote BFI granting permission for site expansion at Willow Springs; a large-scale landfill toxic waste business resulted, one which nets an estimated \$1.5 million a year. The letter was the authorization by which BFI accepted thousands of tons of chemical wastes at the 45-acre site over the next six years. Even after 1980 federal guidelines mandated stiffer state regulations, DNR granted BFI "interim permit status" on the basis of the 1977 Health Department letter. As waste disposal continued at Willow Springs, BFI bought land elsewhere in Louisiana throughout the 1970s: three more sites in Calcasieu Parish and across the state in the towns of Darrow and Livingston.

In March 1977 a Baton Rouge firm called Southwest Environmental Company (SECO) purchased 382 acres in Livingston for \$596,000. Governor Edwards's brother Marion was secretary of the corporation, and his brother Nolan's law firm handled the deal. In September a state water inspector informed Robert LaFleur of the Stream Control Commission that barrels of cyanide from another state had been found at the site. Despite a law requiring out-of-state loads to be registered with the authorities before being dumped, the state took no punitive measures, and the cyanide ended up in the Amite River.

When Livingston resident Charles Allgood began protesting, the Edwards law firm informed him in writing that SECO had won favorable comment from the Conservation and Health Departments and the governor's own Council on Environmental Quality. The letter ended by threatening Allgood with legal action if he didn't "terminate" his criticism. In May 1978 SECO sold the land to BFI for \$1.13 million, a

**PAB SAYS NO HAZARDOUS WASTES ARE DISPOSED OF AT THE SITE; THOSE LIVING NEARBY ALLEGE TOXIC DUMPING HAS RUINED THEIR LAND.**

photo by D. Richmond © 1984



profit of \$534,000 in just 14 months. Nolan Edwards was attorney of record; Marion Edwards's real estate firm handled the sale; and E.C. Hunt represented BFI at state hearings which resulted in permits for hazardous waste disposal.

Meanwhile, the situation at Willow Springs worsened. In early 1978 an oil waste pit overflowed. State inspectors told BFI they could no longer release such waste without permission from Health and Conservation — as if such permission would make the practice safe. Then in May news broke that Allied Chemicals of Newhope, Virginia, had signed a contract with BFI to

send toxic loads to Willow Springs. This triggered a local uproar, but the state backed BFI. Stream Control's LaFleur said BFI had the proper permit, adding, "Those people aren't polluting water or streams, according to our tests." By October, however, state inspectors had found ditches alongside the Livingston site contaminated by oily sludge. Again, no punitive measures were taken.

*Then Willow Springs residents began organizing. The Rigmaidens, a family living behind the site, had been hit hard. Beaulah Rigmaiden,*

age 78, said, "When you get in to take a bath, you better have some grease on you. It burn like fire." Her son Herbert recalls, "Back in '77, they brought some stuff in, I think it was gas from one of the plants. I lost 39 head of cows. I saved one, sent him to the meat market."

"There's enough pathology on that farm to keep a team of environmental scientists busy for five years," Dr. Stanley Smith, a pathologist at the Calcasieu hospital, told Cathy Osborne of the *Times-Picayune*. "I don't see how anybody could go and talk to those people and come away with any conclusion other than they've been poisoned." In an interview with this writer, Dr. Smith spoke of illness clusters found in medical studies: "The problem is that we don't know in the long run what those substances will do. Asbestos poisoning didn't appear for 15 years. Here, you are talking about thousands of chemicals about which little toxic impact is known."

In February 1979 LaFleur gave BFI permission to discharge waste off-site after heavy rain. BFI did it at night through a pipeline leading into the swamp behind the Rigmaidens' farm. When the discharge was discovered by a local health inspector, Calcasieu district attorney Leonard Knapp began an investigation. LaFleur later conceded he had not given written permission for fear of local opposition. E.C. Hunt, defending BFI at a local hearing, argued that no violation had occurred because no pollution was proven. But Herbert Rigmaiden recalls: "I came up with six more dead cows. I cut one of 'em open — smelled just like the stuff over there in those pits. Natural Resources is just lyin' to us. They ain't worth a plug penny."

In mid-1979 BFI was in trouble for its waste operations in Darrow. BFI had purchased the site from Gulf Disposal Services, whose secretary was Sheldon Beychok, Edwards's former campaign director. By now a pattern had emerged: Edwards's campaign aides, gubernatorial assistants, and brothers had helped BFI find Louisiana land for expanding its toxic waste disposal operations.

When the state attorney general's office turned its attention to environmental violations at Darrow, Ed-

photo by D. Richmond © 1984



**A SUIT BY LOCAL RESIDENTS HAS SUCCEEDED IN CLOSING THE PAB SITE.**



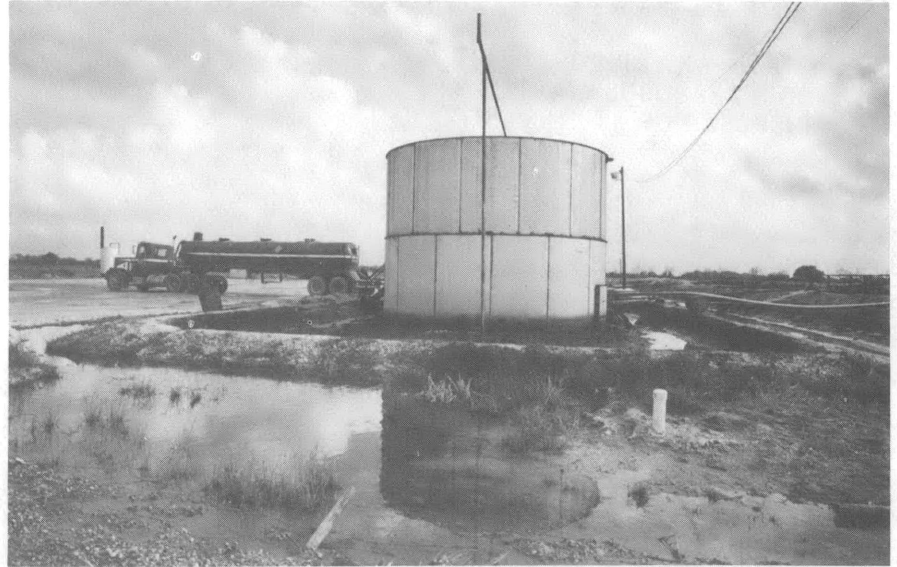
**MAR-LOW'S OPERATIONAL INJECTION WELL NEAR KAPLAN, LOUISIANA, HAS 80 HAZARDOUS WASTE INJECTION WELLS.**

wards sent an aide to meet with DNR and state lawyers to negotiate an out-of-court settlement of complaints at Darrow and Livingston. BFI paid \$50,000 to settle the dispute, a nominal amount compared to its profit margins. Then DNR applied to EPA for \$98,000 to clean up Darrow and work on another BFI site in Sulfur — in effect, asking for federal funds to assist a firm just fined for polluting. EPA denied the request.

By the time Edwards left office in 1980, BFI was deeply entrenched in Louisiana. The lawsuits mounted. Neighbors of a BFI-owned garbage dump in Calcasieu Parish allege that chemical run-offs violate its solid waste permit. The Sulfur site is embroiled in separate litigation with the previous owners and the attorney general's office. And while parish district attorney Len Knapp mounted a legal challenge to BFI's Willow Springs permit, area residents lodged a multi-million-dollar damage suit. Just as in Vermilion Parish, the parish environmental organization in Calcasieu took form because people living around the waste pits couldn't get them closed through state bureaucracy. "The state serves hazardous waste dumpers," said Shirley Goldsmith of Lake Charles, "so we have to fight the state."

When BFI appealed to the Environmental Control Commission (ECC) for site expansion at Willow Springs, the legitimacy of its waste dumping permit — that 1977 letter from the Health Department — was questioned by Knapp. The commission met in April 1983 to rule on BFI's permit standing, and the company backed down from its expansion request. By this time, three years had passed since Edwards had left office, and ECC was having second thoughts about BFI's activities at Willow Springs. Nevertheless, BFI requested an extension of its "interim permit" until 1985, when a Texas facility is scheduled to come on line.

Representing the Calcasieu citizens' group, Knapp attended the April hearing and asked the commission to close Willow Springs immediately. He was armed with medical reports, a hydro-geological study showing chemical leaching



into the Chicot Aquifer below the site, and a University of Texas School of Public Health report commissioned by the ECC. The report noted, "Drinking water samples afford some evidence of contamination." It concluded that chemicals were migrating from BFI and "appear to present a potential environmental problem."

DNR had supported BFI all along and interpreted the 1980 EPA guidelines as giving companies a grace period to renovate waste dump sites to meet new standards while operating under old permits. Moreover, a questionable state law absolves disposal firms of violations occurring before the 1980 regulatory changes. For its part, BFI offered the explanation that the documented leaching of chemicals into the aquifer beneath the site was the result of waste disposal by the site's previous owners — who sold it to BFI 12 years ago. The ECC, in trying to please both sides, told BFI to cease receiving wastes by December 31, 1983. That meant eight more months of profits for the company.

Then, in July 1983, a report by Eugene Senat, a geologist working for the Louisiana State University Environmental Studies Institute found "recurrent problems of leakage" at BFI's injection well at Willow Springs. Commissioned by the Conservation Department, the report found serious fault with that agency's regulatory practices regarding injection wells. DNR was outraged, the

conservation commissioner condemned Senat, and BFI slapped him with a \$3.2 million defamation suit. Senat's report, based on Conservation Department records and site inspections, concluded that "many of the people involved in the permitting of the wells, as well as those enforcing the regulations, have displayed an incomplete and inaccurate understanding of various program regulations."

*History has a way of catching up with even the most confirmed ideologues. Such are the ironies of Louisiana political cycles that David Treen, who as a congressman consistently opposed environmental reform legislation, as governor slowly woke up to the fact that something is wrong in the woods down here. He never understood it fully because, like Edwards, he got his big campaign money from industry. But in his own way Treen did begin to engineer reform. He began cleaning some of the waste dumps and he improved water monitoring along the Mississippi. But his most important change, taking environmental enforcement out of the Department of Natural Resources and investing those powers in a new Office of Environmental Quality, has already been declared unconstitutional by Edwards.*

Edwards has promised a new environmental department. "It will be

**PERSHING BROUSSARD'S LELEUX PIT; 2,700 WASTE SITES DOT THE LAND IN THE ACADIANA REGION OF LOUISIANA.**

photo by D. Richmond ©1984



properly staffed," he says, but by whom? The architects of his administration's deplorable policies at DNR — B. Jim Porter, Gerald Healy, and William DeVille — have all kept their jobs. And the new DNR secretary is William Huls, an oilman who ran the department in the 1970s when the worst decisions were made. What is Edwin Edwards's word worth?

His record on waste dumping has surfaced in scattered news reports across the state, but his environmental record was not particularly damaging as a campaign issue. If there is a flame of hope, it is this: the man is a political genius who moves with the times. On many social issues his record is admirable.

Perhaps he will wake up to the human suffering caused by environmental damage. But the critical state of water quality in Louisiana is clear. If the waste sites don't get cleaned up the economic and human repercussions will be staggering.

In mid-January 1984 the most expensive governor in America retired his campaign debt by flying 618 supporters to Paris for a week of celebrating. Most paid \$10,000 a head, and the trip reportedly netted \$4 million. His old friends are still with him. Sheldon Beychok, the former BFI man, bought a \$10,000 ticket. So did Benny Benezech. In fact, when Edwards was photographed meeting President Francois

Mitterrand of France, Benezech was seated right next to him.

While the high-rollers celebrated in Paris, the people of Willow Springs waited anxiously as BFI fought the site closure ruling all the way to the state's Supreme Court. Willow Springs citizens sent a bottle of local water to the high justices in symbolic protest against BFI, but symbols carry little weight in a court of law. The court issued a stay, giving BFI permission to keep accepting toxic waste after the December 31, 1983, closure date. As this article goes to press in late February, the court has reached no decision. And a remedial clean-up plan, ordered by the Environmental Control Commission last April, has not met ECC standards. Clearly BFI is digging in for the fight, no doubt pleased that Edwin Edwards will soon be governor again.

Just before leaving office in 1979, Edwards met with a group of concerned citizens. Ruth Shephard of Willow Springs recalls: "We went over to the governor's mansion in the afternoon. Edwin came tripping down the stairs in an expensive polo shirt. We had 22 ideas for new environmental laws. Poor Charles Alligood read three of them. Then Edwards said, 'Y'all have to present it to the environmental department.' Then he pulled off this diamond ring and tossed it to the gentleman across from me, a jeweler. We passed that stupid thing around. We were supposed to gawk at it. Then he took the ring back and we were ushered out the door. That was the end of our audience with the governor." □

*Jason Berry is the author of **Amazing Grace: With Charles Evers in Mississippi**, and co-author of **Up From the Cradle of Jazz**, a forthcoming history of New Orleans music. This article was researched with a grant from the Fund for Investigative Journalism in Washington, D.C.*

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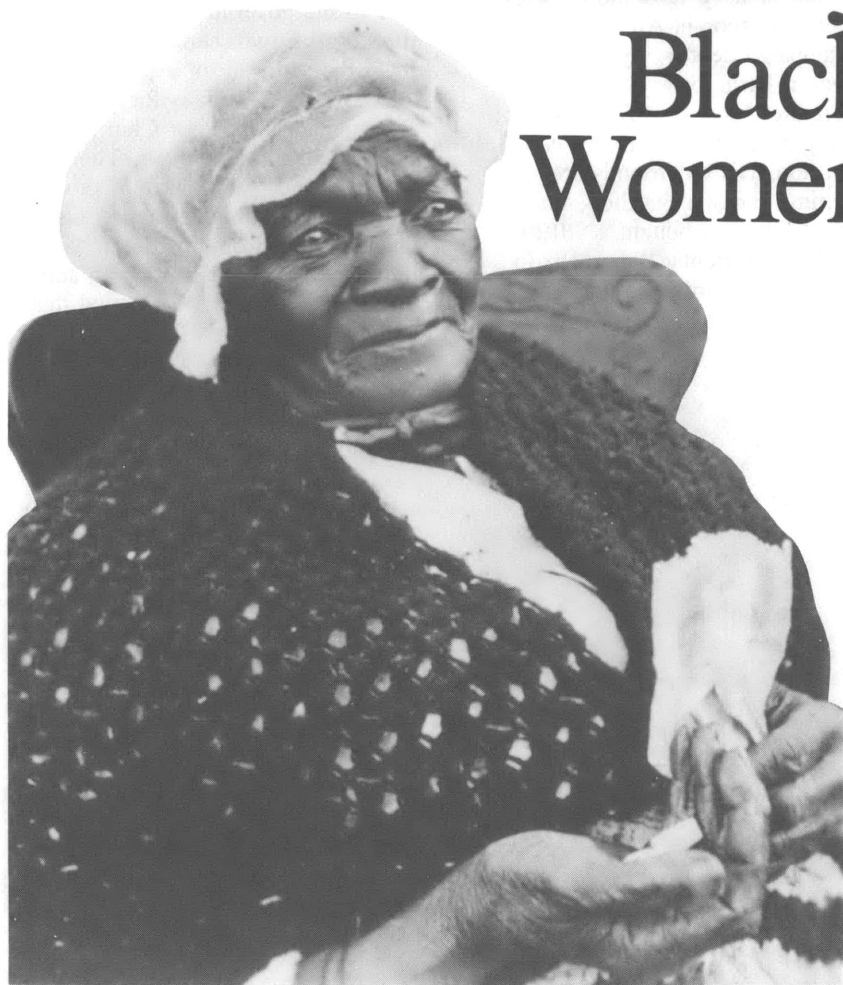


**GAY HANKS IN FRONT OF BROUSSARD'S LELEUX SITE**



BY DOROTHY STERLING

# To Build A Free Society Nineteenth- Century Black Women



To be a black woman in nineteenth-century America was to live in double jeopardy, belonging to the “inferior” sex of an “inferior” race. Yet selections from interviews with ex-slaves and first-person testimony found in government records, letters, excerpts from diaries and autobiographies, and newspaper accounts show that the two million slave and 200,000 free women of that era possessed a tenacity of spirit, a gift of endurance, a steadfastness of aspiration that helped a whole population to survive. My new book *We Are Your Sisters* is a portrayal in documents of the black women who lived between 1800 and the 1880s.

The language in the documents ranges from the folk speech of the untutored slave to the flowery Victorian prose of the educated free woman. Although the voices may seem dissimilar, they corroborate and complement one another. In the mobile society of black nineteenth-century America, the working-class woman and the super-achiever often encountered the same problems. The participants in the great drama of slavery and freedom who talk of themselves and their world speak for tens of thousands of their sisters with whom they shared a common history, common daily experiences, and a common future.

## The Moment of Freedom

*We soon got used to freedom,  
Though the way at first was rough;  
But we weathered through the tempest  
For slavery made us tough.*

— Frances E.W. Harper

“When freedom come, folks left home, out in the streets, crying, praying, singing, shouting, yelling and knocking down everything. Then come the calm. So many folks done dead, things tore up, and nowheres to go,” a woman said. Another added, “We just sort of huddle round together like scared rabbits. Didn’t many of us go, ’cause we didn’t know where to of went.” Freedom imposed on its beneficiaries the need to make decisions, the most urgent being where to live and with whom.

Mary Lindsay was 19 years old when freedom came:

*Mistress say we all free and the War over. She say, ‘They say I got to pay you if you work for me, but I ain’t*

got no money to pay you. If you stay on I will feed you and home you and I can weave you some good dresses if you card and spin the cotton and wool.' I stayed on 'cause I didn't have no place to go, and I carded and spinned the cotton and wool, and she make me just one dress. Mistress go off about a week, and when she come back I see she got some money, but she didn't give me any. Den I starts to feeling like I ain't treated right. So one night I just put that new dress in a bundle and set foot right down the big road a-walking west!

All during the first summer of freedom, women struck out across the fields or followed the railroad tracks. "They had a passion, not so much for wandering, as for getting together," wrote a Freedmen's Bureau officer. For those who had been sold to the Deep South or exiled to Texas, the search for family members was long. Just as survivors of the Nazi holocaust still travel to Europe or Israel hoping to hear of a long-lost relative, these victims of an earlier dispersion persevered in similar efforts. In the 1870s crowded excursion steamers ran from Savannah and Charleston to ports in Virginia. "Aged women and grayhaired men journeyed from far-off Georgia hoping to hear some word or perchance to meet sons and daughters whom they bade farewell at the auction block," the *New National Era* reported. Until the end of the century, black newspapers published advertisements like the following:

**INFORMATION WANTED:**

*Mrs. Thos. L. Johnson, of Richmond, Va. who was sold away from Georgetown, D.C. when quite a child, is very desirous of finding her father, Joseph Thompson, who for many years was a gardner in and about Washington. Her grandmother Rachel Marlin, lived at Rev. Mr. Gillis's and was a member of Asbury M.E. Church, Washington. Her sisters, Cecilia and Priscilla, lived with a Mrs. Mincaster, of Georgetown, and her brother, Henson Thompson, lived in Montgomery Co. Md., before the breaking out of the war. Any information in regard to these persons will be thankfully received by Thos. L. Johnson, Richmond, Va.*

*Charlotte Brock wishes to hear from her son Alonzo; was taken from*

*her about 1859, to Memphis, Tenn; lived there with a family named Morrison. Think he was in the army during the rebellion. Any information concerning him will be thankfully received by his aged mother. Address John W. Brock, Green street Baptist Church, Lexington, Kentucky.*

*Martha Ward wishes information concerning her sister, Rosetta McQuillin, who was sold from Norfolk, Va., about thirty years ago to a*

*"Den I starts to feeling like I ain't treated right. So one night I just . . . set foot right down the big road a-walking west!"*



*Frenchman in Mobile, Ala. She is about forty-nine years of age, light complexion, and much freckled. Her former master was Mr. McQuillin, who resided on Brigg's Point. Any information concerning her whereabouts will be kindly received by addressing to P.O. Box 216, Norfolk, Va.*

The struggle to reunite black families was further complicated by slave owners' attempts to circumvent laws outlawing slavery. When emancipation was imminent, many slave owners drew up apprenticeship agreements binding young slaves to long terms of service. This practice began in Maryland after the slaves were freed on November 1, 1864. A day later, wagonloads of black children were brought to orphans' courts throughout the state to be apprenticed to their former owners. Parents were forced to appeal to military

authorities to secure their children's release. General Lew Wallace, the ranking Union officer in Maryland, was besieged with letters like this one:

*Baltimore, [Maryland,]  
January 10th, 1865*

Sir:

*I wrote you a letter some time ago, and having received no answer, I thought I would write again. It is hard that I should be deprived of my daughter's aid now in my old days, and that she should be kept a prisoner here in a free land. We were delighted when we heard that the Constitution set us all free, but God help us, our condition is bettered but little; free ourselves, but deprived of our children. It was on their account we desired to be free, for the few years we have to live, what need we care. Give us our children, and don't let them be raised in the ignorance we have; help us, and God will help you at the last day. Very respectfully,*

*her  
Lucy X Lee  
mark*

Even after the Supreme Court declared these apprenticeships unconstitutional, the practice continued all over the South. "Not a day passes but my office is visited by some poor woman who has walked ten or twenty miles to try to procure the release of her children," wrote a Freedmen's Bureau officer. A typical complaint to the bureau follows:

*Starkville, Mississippi,  
September 14, 1867*

*Harriet Saunders, a colored woman states on oath that she is the mother of Lucius & Gracy Ann two minor children, that these children were bound out to Green W. Walker with her consent but that the consent was obtained by fraud & misrepresentation and that she did not know what "bind out" children meant, that he promised to give up the children whenever she became dissatisfied & left, but she has some time since left & he refuses to give them up — that her son Richard Oliver is over fourteen years of age & was bound out to Dr. Josephus Walker. That she is able to take care of & provide for said children & prays for an order*



setting aside said letters of apprenticeship.

her  
Harriet X Saunders  
mark

Wives and husbands who lived on neighboring plantations were often able to move in with each other easily, but those who had been sold to other parts of the country had difficult adjustments to make. Many found themselves with two families after emancipation. Willie Ann Grey and her daughter, Maria, had been sold away from her husband in the 1850s. Remarrying, she had three more children, and her second husband was killed in the war. When Philip Grey tracked her down afterwards, she wrote the following:

Salsiva, Kentucky,  
April 7, 1866

Dear Husband:

I received your letter the 5 of this month and was very glad to hear from you. You wish me to come to Virginia. I had much rather you would come after me but if you cannot make it convenient you will have to make some arrangement for me and family. I have 3 little fatherless girls. My husband went off under Burbridge's command and was killed at Richmond Virginia. If you can pay my passage I will come the first of May. I have nothing much to sell as I have had my things all burnt. You must not think my family to large and get out of heart for if you love me you will love my children and you will have to promise me that you will provide for them as well as if they were your own. I heard that you spoke of coming for Maria but were not coming for me. I know that I have lived with you and loved you then and I love you still. I was very low spirited when I heard you was not coming for me. My heart sank within me in an instant. You will have to write and give me directions how to come.

Maria sends her love to you but seems to be low spirited for fear that you will come for her and not for me. No more at present but remain your true wife. (I hope to be with you soon.)

Willie Ann Grey

Many couples agonized over the choices they made. "It will not do for you and I to meet," Laura Spicer's husband wrote when he

learned her whereabouts. "I am married and my wife have two children, and if you and I meats it would make a very dissatisfied family." They began to correspond, although he wrote, "Every time I gits a letter from you it tears me all to pices." In one of his letters he asked:

*Send me some of the children's hair in a separate paper with their names*

*"I always had craved a home an' plenty to eat, but freedom ain't give us nothin' but pickled hoss meat an' dirty crackers an' not half enough of dat."*



on the paper. Will you please git married, as long as I am married. My dear, you know it never was our wishes to be separated from each other and it was never our fault. Oh, I can see you so plain, at any-time. The woman is not born that feels as near to me as you do. I thinks of you and my children every day of my life. My love to you never have failed. Laura, truly, I have got another wife, and I am very sorry, that I am. You feels and seems to me as much like my dear loving wife as you ever did.

A Virginia freedwoman wept when she encountered her first husband.

*'Twas like a stroke of death to me. We threw ourselves into each others arms and cried. His wife looked and was jealous, but she needn't have been. My husband is so kind. I shouldn't leave him, but I ain't hap-*

*py. White folks got a heap to answer for the way they've done to colored folks.*

Hundreds of couples were married in mass ceremonies and thousands more registered their names with justices of the peace or Freedmen's Bureau officers. In part this was in response to the missionaries' warning that God would no longer tolerate "adultery and fornication"; in part it was a recognition of the rules governing a free society and an eagerness to conform to them.

In the first postwar years, freedmen acquired a new image of themselves. A slave who had been called "boy" all his life became a man when he joined the army. After the war, friend and foe alike told him that he was the head of his household and must support his family. It was the men who were called on to sign work contracts, to serve on church and school boards, and to attend political rallies. With their first vote, freedmen were formally initiated into the patriarchal society. Laura Towne of St. Helena Island noted in her journal:

*Today in church Mr. Hunn [a New Jersey Quaker who arrived in 1862 to open a store for free blacks] announced another [political] meeting next Saturday. "The females must stay at home?" asked Demas [an ex-slave and church elder]. "The females can come or not as they choose," said Mr. Hunn, "but the meeting is for men voters." Demas immediately announced that "the womens will stay at home and cut grass," that is, how the corn and cotton fields — clear them of grass! It is too funny to see how much more jealous the men are of one kind of liberty they have achieved than of the other! Political freedom they are rather shy of, and ignorant of but domestic freedom — the right, just found, to have their own way in their families and rule their wives — that is an inestimable privilege! Several speakers have been here who have advised the people to get the women into their proper place — never to tell them anything of their concerns, etc. etc.; and the notion of being bigger than woman generally, is just now inflating the conceit of the males to an amazing degree.*

## Working Lives

Missionaries, schoolteachers, and Freedman's Bureau officials were all eager to tell the freedpeople how to live. General Clinton B. Fisk, the popular head of the Freedman's Bureau in Tennessee, gave a series of lectures entitled "Plain Counsels for the Freedmen." When Fisk's lectures were published as a pamphlet, they were illustrated with a picture captioned "A Happy Family," which showed three generations of black people living in middle-class comfort.

The home of the "Happy Family" represented an ideal which, their well-wishers assured the freedpeople, could be achieved if they adopted the tastes and customs of New Englanders. With the hindsight of more than a century, it is easy to recognize the economic motivation that went hand-in-hand with abolitionist zeal. While Northern schoolmarm taught the freedwomen to sew with Northern-milled cloth and to bake with Northern-milled flour, Northern merchants were the first to introduce these goods in plantation stores. Although a relatively small black elite was able to live in material comfort, the majority of freedwomen were unable to "stay in their place" by the hearth, for they were compelled to work. Mattie Curtis was among these women:

*I got married before de war to Joshua Curtis. I always had craved a home an' a plenty to eat, but freedom ain't give us nothin' but pickled hoss meat an' dirty crackers an' not half enough of dat. Josh ain't really care 'bout no home but through dis land corporation I buyed dese fifteen acres on time. I cut down de big trees dat was all over dese fields an' I hauled out de wood an sold hit, den I plowed up de fields an' planted dem. Josh did help to build de house an' he worked out some. All of dis time I had nineteen chilluns an' Josh died, but I kep' on.*

*I done a heap of work at night too, all of my sewin' and such and de piece of lan' near de house over dar ain't never got no work cept at night. I finally paid for de land.*

To ensure a steady labor supply, a system of contract labor was established under the supervision of the Freedmen's Bureau. Freedwomen

were always paid less than the men. On one Georgia plantation men were paid \$140 a year while women made from \$60 to \$85. In Adams County, Mississippi, Sarah Nelson was promised \$10 a month; John, a man who worked alongside her, received \$15. During slavery, medical care

*premises of said Gray without permission. She is to receive no company or visits of any kind without the permission of said Gray or his agent. For all time lossed by her from sickness or otherwise twenty-five cents per day shall be deducted from her wages. For every day lossed*



was paid for by the slave's owner; after emancipation it was the responsibility of the freedpeople.

Emmie Gray worked in the fields as well as the house. Her employer, probably her former master, spelled out in detail in this contract the restrictions on her private life:

*State of South Carolina  
Anderson District*

*This agreement entered into between I.A. Gray of the one part and Emmie (a freedwoman) of the other part.*

*Witnesseth that the said Emmie does hereby agree to work for the said Gray for the time of twelve months from the first day of January 1867. She agrees to do the cooking washing and all other necessary work about the house. She is to obey all lawful & reasonable commands issued to her by said Gray or his agent, and to be kind & respectful to the same. She is not to leave the*

*without permission she is to forfeit one dollar and if more than two days be lossed without permission she can be dismissed from the plantation by said Gray with a forfeit of her entire interest in the crop.*

*In consideration of the foregoing service duly performed I.A. Gray agrees to turn over to the said Emmie one half of the corn & cotton cultivated by herself during the term above mentioned. Said Gray agrees to furnish & feed the necessary horses and farming implements for cultivating said crop. The above mentioned Emmie agrees to board & clothe herself. If she is sick during the year she is to procure if necessary a physician & medacine at her own expense. It is further agreed by & between the party above mentioned that for all supplys of provision clothing or monies advanced & supplied by said Gray to said Emmie he the said Gray shall have and hold*



*a lien upon the entire crop cultivated by herself during the term above mentioned to the full value of what may be due her and until the same is paid over to her.*

*Witness our hands the 22nd day of February 186—*

Signed in presence of I.A. Gray  
W.J. Simpson her  
D. Sadler Emmie Gray  
mark

Most freedwomen worked as sharecroppers, tenant farmers, or wage laborers. Only a small number were able to buy land. They were scarcely better off economically than they had been as slaves, but they now had some control over their own



lives. Struggling to assert their new status as free women, they were subjected to all manner of abuse from their employers, and often their husbands as well.

### Schooling for the Children

Throughout the trying post-emancipation years, and through the organized terror that ended the

Reconstruction period, the only rays of hope for most freedpeople came from the church and the school. The church promised a better life in the hereafter. Schools offered the children of slaves a more immediate possibility — a chance to equip themselves for living in the world beyond the plantation. But the public school systems founded during Reconstruction were cut back or dismantled; by the 1880s fewer than a third of the black children of the South received free schooling.

The dreams of black parents centered around the private schools and colleges, places like Fisk, Howard, Atlanta University, Hampton Institute, Talladega College, and hundreds of smaller institutes and seminaries.

Most of these early colleges began as elementary schools and many women who attended them went on to establish schools in rural areas. Often with only a rudimentary education and shockingly limited resources, women built learning institutions with their bare hands.

Della Irving Hayden (1854-1924), an 1877 graduate of Hampton, became one of a group of distinguished educators, along with women like

Lucy Laney and Mary McCleod Bethune, whose schools were beacons for black Southerners. After a childhood in slavery, Hayden attended public school in Franklin, Virginia, for four years. Determined to become a teacher, she entered Hampton when she was 18 years old. In a short autobiography written in 1917, she described her first days away from home:

*When we went in to supper, they had a big yellow bowl with sassafras tea, what we called 'greasy bread', and a little molasses. There were three or four new students and one old student. When we were seated he began to eat. We were waiting, and he said, "Why don't you eat?" We said we were waiting for them to put supper on the table. He told us this was all we would get. We had sassafras tea and corn bread and syrup for supper all those two years. That first night I slept on the floor with seven other girls. . . . When it rained, it always leaked. I had an old waterproof of my mother's and many a time I put that waterproof on my bed, with a tin basin, too, to catch the water. I could not turn over for fear of upsetting the basin full of water. The boys all slept outdoors in tents. They had a little stove in each tent. There was no heat in the room except what my lamp gave. Miss Mackie [the principal] made me bathe every morning in cold water, and I have often broken the ice in my pitcher.*

When Hayden's money ran out, she taught in a rural school for two years.

*I was in the woods, twelve miles from the railroad at a place called Indian Town, in Southampton County. The family with whom I went to board were a man, his wife, and two daughters, and they lived, cooked, ate, and slept in one room about 20 by 24 feet — a log cabin. It had four beds, a table, pots, kettles. When I looked around and felt that I had to sleep there I was very discouraged and began to cry. . . .*

*When I went to school I had thirty bright-eyed children. I told them to ask their fathers to come to the schoolhouse to see me on business. The men came right from the fields to the school-house to see what the young teacher could want. I was the*

first teacher they had ever had. I said to the men: "Why can't you go out in the woods, take your axes, and cut down some trees and add another room to the house. I'll give the nails if the men will give the work." All the men agreed to come the next day and cut down the trees and build the room. I sent to the

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*"I came to Fisk School in September, 1868. . . . I had six dollars and when the Treasurer said that this amount would keep me a little over three weeks, I decided to stay until my money ran out."*

---

store and bought nails. The room was notched up in the old-fashioned way and daubed with clay, after which I pasted newspapers inside to make it comfortable. They built me a log chimney where I could have a good fire. I moved into my little room and was as happy as a queen.

Returning to Hampton in 1876, Hayden graduated with honors a year later. For more than half a century, she taught in Franklin's public schools, in Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute, and in her own Franklin Normal and Industrial Institute. Widowed shortly after her marriage to a Hampton classmate, she brought up two adopted children, owned her own home, two cows, and a parlor organ. Her account of the founding of Franklin Institute typifies the beginnings of many schools that gave black youngsters the education denied them elsewhere.

*I rented a little room 15 by 20 feet, bought two dozen chairs, got a blackboard, stove, table and broom. I had twenty-one students the first month. We had five acres of land donated to us by Mrs. Marriage Allen of London, England. I taught school in the week and went on Sundays and begged money at the churches, so we were finally able to put up a building with four classrooms that*

cost about \$1,000.

*The first year I was alone, but now I have three teachers besides myself. In addition to this building we have a dormitory for the girls, with 22 rooms, costing \$6,000. We borrowed the money for ten years, and we still owe \$3,800 of it. Eight hundred fifty students have attended this school and 40 have graduated. Some are teaching, others are in business, and several have gone to other schools.*

Fisk University began in 1866 as Nashville's Colored High School and was able to offer college courses five years later. It received support from the American Missionary Association, but the school was poor and its students poorer still. Family members pooled resources to pay tuition for their children. One freedwoman hired herself out as the university cook to educate her three sons.

Ella Sheppard, one of Fisk's leading students was born a slave in 1851 but was purchased by her father three years later. Living in Cincinnati at the end of the war, she received a rudimentary education including music lessons — though she had to enter her teacher's home by a back door after dark, so that no one would see the black pupil. Her father's sudden death when she was

15 left her penniless. Sheppard later wrote:

*I tried every honorable opportunity to make a living. I took in washing and ironing, worked in a family, and had a few music pupils who paid me poorly. Finally I left Cincinnati and taught school in Gallatin, Tennessee. In five months I realized my deficiencies and came to Fisk School in September, 1868, with all my possessions in a trunk so small that the boys immediately called it "Pie Box." I had six dollars and when Mr. White, the Treasurer, said that this amount would keep me a little over three weeks, I decided to stay until my money ran out.*

*Exceptional musical advantages, then very rare for colored girls in the South, secured me three pupils, who paid me four dollars each per month. Wednesdays and Saturdays I went to the city and taught each pupil one hour, which made it impossible for me, running all the way over the rough, rocky hills, to get back in time for supper; so I went without supper and waited on the table one day and washed dishes the other day. The school was very poor and food was scarce yet it filled one. The beef was so tough the boys called it "Old Ben" and declared that every time they met a cow they*







represented things to be forgotten. Then, too, they were sacred to our parents who used them in their religious worship and shouted over them. We finally grew willing to sing them privately, and sitting upon the floor (there were but few chairs) we practiced softly, learning from each other the songs of our fathers. We did not dream of ever using them in public. Had Mr. White suggested such a thing, we certainly had rebelled. After many months we began to appreciate the wonderful beauty and power of our songs; but continued to sing in public the usual choruses, duets, solos, etc. Occasionally two or three slave songs were sung at the close of the concert. But the demand of the public changed this order. Soon the land rang with our slave songs.

While the challenges were awesome and the opposition formidable the lives of nineteenth-century black women are a testimonial to their strength. Anna J. Cooper wrote in 1892 that to be a member of the first post-emancipation generation was "to have a heritage unique in the ages." An outspoken proponent of women's equality, she, like countless others, welcomed the challenge of freedom: "Everything is new and strange and inspiring. There is a quickening of the pulse, and a glowing of its self-consciousness. Aha, I can rival that! I can aspire to that! I can honor my name and vindicate my race! Something like this is the enthusiasm which stirs the genius of young Africa in America and the memory of past oppression and the fact of present attempted repression only serve to gather momentum for its irrepressible powers." □

Since 1951, historian Dorothy Sterling has focused on writing books for young adults. In 1977 she received the Carter J. Woodson Award for her book, *The Trouble I've Seen*. The illustrations that appear here are from her archives.

This article is excerpted from *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*, copyright © 1984 by Dorothy Sterling, to be published this spring by W.W. Norton & Company. Used by permission.

felt like apologizing.

In spite of our poverty and hardships we were a jolly set of girls, and when we had a chance romped and played with all the abandon of children. We were especially fond of music and gladly gave half of our noon hour and all spare time to study under Mr. George L. White. We made rapid progress, and soon began to help our school by going Fridays and Saturdays to neighboring towns to give concerts.

Those noon-hour classes were the beginning of a remarkable success story. In September 1871 Fisk's finances were at a low ebb. "There was no money even for food," Ella Sheppard wrote.

Many a time special prayer was offered for the next meal. The American Missionary Association decided that the school must be given up. Teachers, pupils felt that this would be a calamity, but no one could see how nor where to get the money even for our necessities.

When Mr. White proposed to take

a company of students to the North to sing for the money, there was consternation at Fisk. Such a plan was looked upon as "a wild goose chase." Prayers for light, guidance and patience went up daily. While we waited for guidance Mr. White called for volunteers from his singing class. He selected eleven voices.

Our teachers caught the vision and enthusiasm of Mr. White and helped to get us ready, dividing their clothing with us. Not one of us had an overcoat or wrap. Mr. White had an old gray shawl. Taking every cent he had, all the school treasury could spare, and all he could borrow, Mr. White started, October 6, 1871, with his little band of singers to sing the money out of the hearts and pockets of the people.

The Jubilee Singers — named in memory of the year of jubilee — began by singing "white man's music," Ella Sheppard explained.

The slave songs were never used by us in public. they were associated with slavery and the dark past, and

# THE QUIET DEATH of BLACK COLLEGES

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by Manning Marable

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*A college must root itself in the group life and afterward apply its knowledge and culture to actual living. In the same way, a Negro university in the United States of America begins with Negroes. It is founded, or it should be founded on a knowledge of the history of their people in Africa and in the United States, and their present condition.*

W.E.B. DuBois,  
"The Field and Function  
of the Negro College," 1933.

Most civil rights activists and progressives are aware of the growing national retreat from school desegregation programs. In the past two years serious efforts to scrap desegregation plans have been mounted across the country, and particularly in a number of Southern cities: Jacksonville, Florida; Little Rock, Arkansas; Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee; Augusta, Georgia; and Norfolk, Virginia.

In every city named, white moderates and conservatives have called for sizable reductions in the number of local schools which are scheduled for desegregation, and major increases in the number of all-black public schools. And despite substantial social science research proving that black academic achievement scores have improved since desegregation, many black leaders — including heads of local NAACP chapters — have acquiesced in the retreat from busing and other desegregation policies.

What has attracted little attention outside the South is another educational crisis which, if left unchecked, will have an even greater impact on blacks: the status of both private and state-supported black colleges.

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## The Catch-22 of Desegregation

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Desegregation plans effected by the courts to improve black higher education have often ironically resulted in a deterioration of formerly all-black institutions. On November 3, 1982, for example, civil rights attorneys George Barrett and Michael Passino filed a motion in federal court in Nashville which charged that "desegregation of Tennessee higher education has failed." Tennessee State University (TSU), an all-black institution, was merged with the overwhelmingly white University



of Tennessee-Nashville under court order in 1979. The new suit declared that TSU "has regressed to previous black-white ratios," as many white faculty, students, and staff have left the university; the suit also claimed that no progress has been made in improving the quality of TSU academic programs. In an interview, Passino stated that TSU students' performance on graduate and professional exams is "way below the national average." As far as the state is concerned, he said, "TSU ends up getting the short end of the stick," in part "because it was established as a black university by statute." White public universities "are also not meeting desegregation guidelines," according to Passino.

Tennessee State's problems are mirrored at more than 60 other black public institutions. In the 1960s and early 1970s, a number of historically black colleges were forced by Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to merge with neighboring all-white schools. All-black Maryland State College became the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore; the University of Arkansas incorporated all-black Arkansas A&M. As a result, many black educators and alumni of these black institutions claimed, with some justification, that desegregation had destroyed their ethnic identity and had actually reduced the educational opportunities available to many blacks. By the early 1980s, Lincoln University in Missouri, West Virginia State, and the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore all had majority-white student bodies. Delaware State and Maryland's Bowie State were over one-third white, and Kentucky State's student population was 49 percent white.

A number of white faculty at black colleges brought lawsuits against their institutions, charging that "patterns and practices of racial discrimination against white persons" were present. At Alabama State University, for example, a white federal judge awarded \$209,000 in back pay to 57 white faculty and staff who claimed "reverse discrimination." One bewildered black critic declared, "This is a strange racial phenomenon, as it was only 14 years ago that various white institutions in Alabama, including the educational, systematically excluded blacks as buyers, consumers, participants, and em-

ployees."

Problems at the 40 or so privately supported black colleges are even more severe. Founded largely by white liberal philanthropists and churches in the decades after the Civil War, institutions like Spelman College and Morehouse College in Atlanta and Tougaloo College in Mississippi served for three generations as the foundations of black learning. Despite the institutional barriers to quality education created by Jim Crow, these small colleges did a remarkable job in preparing black students for productive careers in the humanities and the natural and social sciences.

A brief review of the history of one such college, Fisk University in

Nashville, provides an illustration. During the segregation era, Fisk was the home of a number of major intellectuals: NAACP leader W.E.B. DuBois; historian John Hope Franklin; sociologist E. Franklin Frazier; artists/novelists James Weldon Johnson, Arna Bontemps, Sterling Brown, Nikki Giovanni, John Oliver Killens, and Frank Yerby. A number of Fisk alumni joined the ranks of the black elite as leaders in the creation of public policy. Representing a variety of political tendencies, they include: U.S. Representative William L. Dawson; Marion Berry, mayor of Washington, D.C.; Wade H. McCree, U.S. solicitor general during the Carter administration; U.S. District Judge Constance Baker Motley; civil

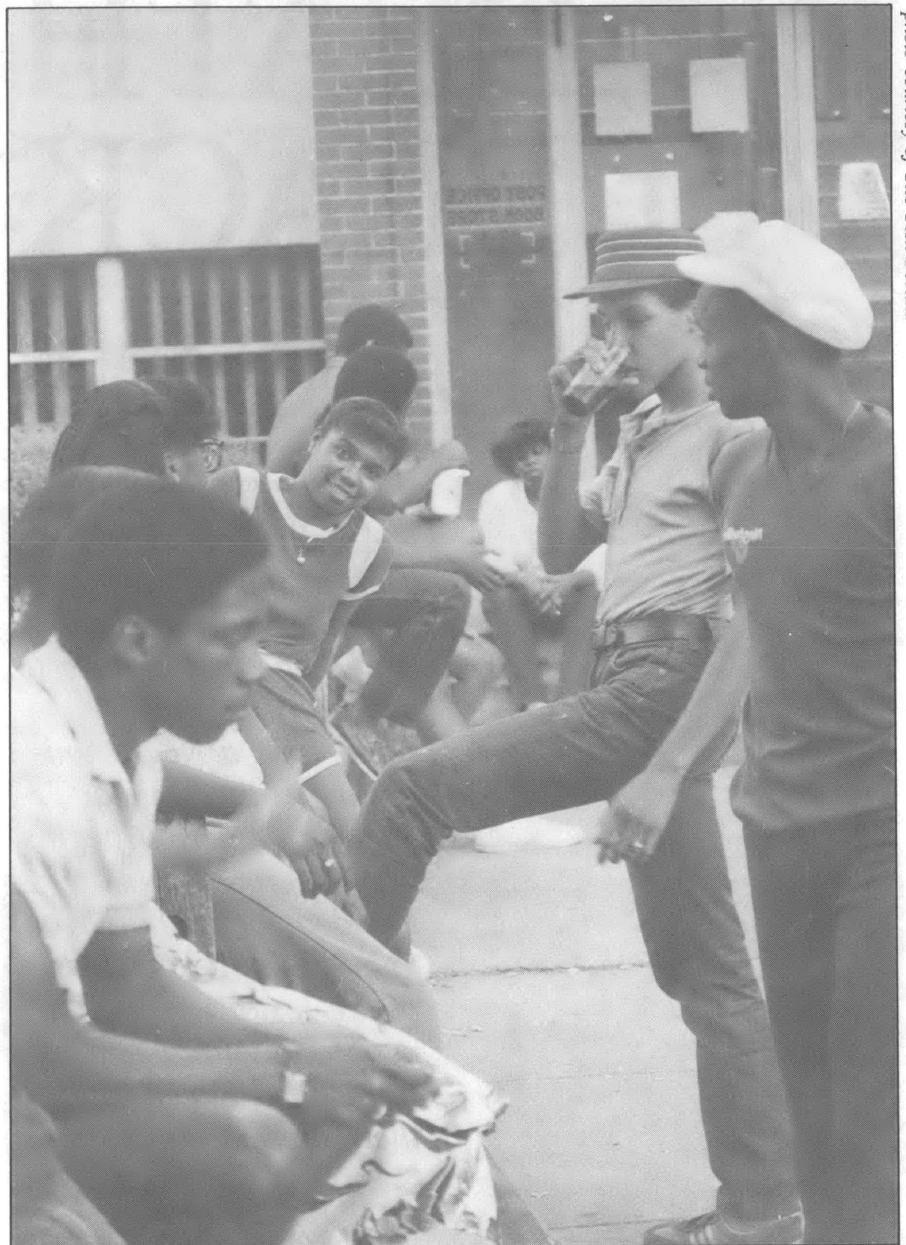


photo courtesy of The Fisk Forum

rights activist John Lewis; Texas State Representative Wilhelmina Delco; federal judge James Kimbrough.

Other Fisk graduates moved into the private sector to establish an economic program for black development along capitalist lines; an example is A. Maceo Walker, president of Universal Life Insurance Company. One out of every six black physicians, lawyers, and dentists in the United States today is a Fisk graduate. A similar profile could be obtained from Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Spelman College, Tougaloo College, Tuskegee Institute of Alabama, Howard University of Washington, D.C., and other black institutions of higher learning.

After desegregation, black students with the best records were suddenly recruited away from black institutions. Black faculty were also lured away by promises of higher salaries, smaller teaching loads, and better working conditions. Black middle class alumni of Fisk and Atlanta University began to send their own children to Yale, Oberlin, and Stanford. As operating costs increased in the 1970s, Fisk was forced, like other black private schools, to dip repeatedly into endowment funds to cover day-to-day operating expenses. In less than a decade, Fisk's endowment dropped from \$14 million to only \$3.5 million.

By the early 1980s, Fisk's cash flow shortages had become regular occurrences. Because of the school's "financial woes," stated President Walter Leonard in one press interview, he was forced almost every month "to raise substantial amounts of money to see that the payroll gets paid." On January 30, 1983, one day before pay day, the college had only \$175,000, exactly half of the \$350,000 needed to make the payroll. Leonard hopped on a plane for New York, Washington, and Boston and returned with \$181,000 from corporate, foundation, and individual donors.

Literally every aspect of university life was affected by the fiscal crisis. In October 1982 the library halted all new book and periodical orders. Basic reference sources such as the *Reader's Guide to Periodic Literature* had not been current for nearly two years. The number of campus security guards was reduced by one-third. The condition of the physical plant

deteriorated even more rapidly than in previous years, as carpenters and maintenance workers were laid off indefinitely. It was not unusual to discover rats and large roaches in classrooms and offices. Xeroxing, phone calls, and postage service were restricted. Many faculty members were forced to purchase chalk, paper, and office supplies out of their own pockets. Local Nashville businesses usually refused to sell materials to Fisk without payment by check and in advance.

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### Attack from the Right

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With the advent of the Reagan administration, the political forces of reaction which once defended black colleges as being necessary "to preserve Jim Crow" have now determined for financial reasons that these black institutions must be closed. On July 28, 1982, Secretary of Education T.H. Bell ordered the end of all further student loans to institutions where defaults in repaying National Direct Student Loans totaled 25 percent or more. The cutoff affected 528 institutions, most of which were community colleges, technical schools, and business schools. Predictably, the largest institutions affected had students from working-class backgrounds or from minority communities.

At the top of the list were most of the major traditionally black colleges: Fisk University, Knoxville College, and Tennessee State University, Tennessee; Prairie View A&M University, Texas; Claflin College and Voorhees College, South Carolina; Cheyney State and Lincoln University, Pennsylvania; Wilberforce University and Central State, Ohio; Shaw University and Winston-Salem State, North Carolina; Tougaloo College and Jackson State University, Mississippi; Kentucky State University; Atlanta University, Albany State College, the Interdenominational Theological Center, Morris Brown College, and Spelman College, Georgia; Coppin State College and the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore, Maryland; and many others.

The campus-based National Direct Student Loan program was created in 1958, and since then has given \$7.5 billion in loans to 6.5 million students. Most of the black recipients were first-generation students, and could not have attended college

without federal support. From the vantage point of black campuses, Bell's decision seemed unusually cruel. It penalized current and prospective black undergraduates by closing off an important loan source during a time when black unemployment is at postwar highs. It penalized students who had not yet attended college for the sake of punishing those who had already graduated.

The impact of these and other budget cuts of the Reagan administration forced black administrators to scramble in a desperate bid for survival. Clariborne C. Davis, director of financial aid at Mississippi Valley State University, stated in a recent interview in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that his school had lost approximately \$100,000 in federal student aid since the beginning of 1983. "If we had the money, we might have had 200 to 300 more students," Davis notes. The students who could afford to attend Mississippi Valley "either are not going to college at all, or are attending less expensive community colleges. Careers could be sabotaged by a student's inability to attend a desired college because of a lack of money." At nearby Tougaloo College, Melvin Phillips, director of student financial aid, states that the lack of federal aid has affected the school's enrollment, or has forced prospective students into the "military service as a way to get college money. With 550 students, we can't afford to lose that many bodies."

At North Carolina Central University, the situation is even worse. According to Vice Chancellor Roland L. Buchanan, Jr., 90 percent of his university's 5,000 students rely on some form of financial aid. When North Carolina Central informed students that they could not postpone the payment of short-term debts this fall, "at least 20 students were forced to drop out when they could not meet the payments because their financial aid had been cut." Buchanan notes that a number of prospective students "have not been able to come to the university because they could not get adequate funds to sustain them while they are here. . . . I feel there is a responsibility on the government to provide opportunities for students who are poor, but who are capable of doing university work." Even at those



traditionally black institutions where the tuition is extremely low, the impact of Reagan's budget cuts had been felt. At the Baton Rouge campus of Southern University, roughly 85 percent of the 9,500 students receive aid. Southern's vice president for student affairs, Clarence M. Collier, states that more undergraduates have had "to use the Guaranteed Student Loan program" just to remain enrolled.

The problems of black institutions transcend mere dollars and cents. Surveys by the National Center for Education Statistics, a research division of the U.S. Department of Education, indicate a general erosion in the number of blacks being trained in higher education fields. For example, between the academic years 1976-77 to 1980-81, black college enrollment increased by 3.3 percent, while the numbers of black high school graduates jumped by 20 percent during the same period. The number of full-time black graduate students in masters and doctoral programs remained the same during these years. The National Center notes that "the number of degrees at the bachelor's level or above awarded to black students slipped 1.6 percent from 1976 to 1981, to 82,000 from 83,400. At the master's level, the number of degrees awarded fell 16 percent for blacks and only 4 percent for whites." Only 10 years ago, about one-third of all black students enrolled in junior colleges. Today over 51 percent of all black high school students, and only 36 percent of whites, attend two-year schools. The vast majority of these black students never advance to four-year colleges. Between 1976 and 1981, the only major gain in black college enrollment was in vocational and occupational programs.

Predictably, the Reagan administration's response to the outcry of black educators and administrators has been contemptuous. For example, last year the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights ordered a study of eight colleges for the "effects of student-aid cuts on institutions with large numbers of black and Hispanic students." President Reagan succeeded in restructuring the commission in the effort to obtain a clear voting majority for his right-wing views on desegregation and affirmative action. As a direct consequence, this January, the commission voted 5 to 3 to

cancel its study on black and Latino higher education. Hispanic Reaganite Linda Chavez, director of the commission, informed the press: "Unless the commission wishes to establish that federal student financial aid is a civil right guaranteed to members of minority groups, this project would appear clearly beyond our jurisdiction." Since the results of the study clearly confirmed the human destruction created by the budget cuts of 1981-83, the administration callously chose to bury the truth.

Fisk administrators anticipated the Reagan administration's moves and tried to offset federal cutbacks by extensive fundraising efforts. In February 1982, the board of trustees announced that it would seek \$2 mil-

lion by the end of June. But even though President Leonard conducted an additional, separate fundraising campaign, the total amounted to only \$200,000 by that autumn. Facing an immediate fiscal crisis, Leonard candidly informed the Fisk faculty on October 14, 1982, of the serious nature of the problem. "I have tried very often to shield faculty and staff from very serious financial problems because I have always felt up to now that I've always been able to pull a rabbit out of the hat. I'm not sure how long I will be able to do that."

Leonard said he had stated when he came to Fisk in 1977 that the university "would not miss a payroll." But "given the way our economy is, the way people resent strong

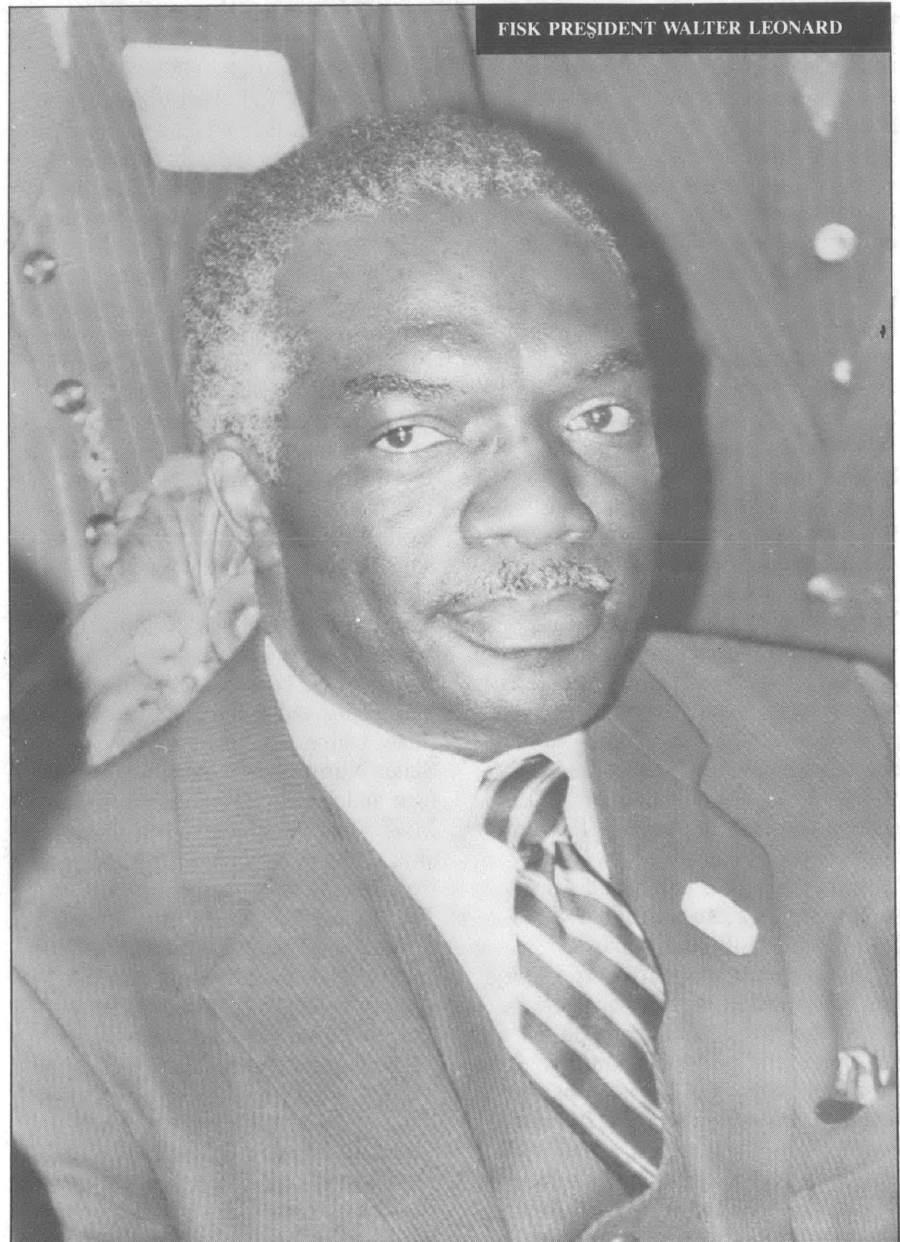


photo courtesy of The Fisk Forum

black institutions, I can no longer make that promise," he continued. When the Nashville press later published his remarks, Leonard added for the record that the "only way we can relieve ourselves of the problem is to solidify our efforts to raise money" and make even greater sacrifices. "I don't think we are suddenly going to sink without a trace."

### **Conservative Leadership Detrimental**

The dilemma for black progressives regarding the increasingly problematic future of black colleges is the historic failure of these institutions to articulate a clear pedagogy and practice of liberation. Few colleges have ever been linked organically to the ongoing economic and political struggles of the black working class and the poor. Many black scholars of note have been fired from these schools for political reasons — and this tradition of authoritarianism is at least three generations old.

In 1927 Howard University dismissed one of the nation's most prominent literary critics, Alain Locke, and three other professors on questionable grounds. W.E.B. DuBois attacked Locke's firing as tantamount to the surrender of "the privilege of free speech and independent thinking" at Howard. In 1944 DuBois himself was fired from the sociology faculty at Atlanta University, prompting a national campaign against the school's tyrannical president, Rufus Clement. In 1949 and 1955, Fisk University's board of trustees fired professors who refused to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. In 1981 Howard University administrators denied tenure to Marxist political activist James Garrett, prompting massive campus demonstrations. As a rule, black colleges are overtly hostile toward unionization among staff members and use every means at their disposal to displace radical and Pan-Africanist faculty.

Part of the reason for the authoritarian character of black colleges can be traced directly back to nineteenth-century educator Booker T. Washington. The founder of Tuskegee Institute in 1881 at the age of 25, Washington built his college in an era of extreme racist violence and overt political repression. Between 1882 and 1927, 304 black men and women were

lynched or burned at the stake in the state of Alabama alone. After 1901 black voters in Alabama were effectively disfranchised for the next 60 years. Washington himself was the object of racist abuse and threats by extremist bigots, despite his accommodationist rhetoric and his emphasis on industrial and agricultural training.

Given the omnipresence of racist violence, one small mistake by a member of the Tuskegee community could have destroyed the college. Thus Washington created an administrative system at Tuskegee which rigorously regulated all aspects of student and faculty life. Students were taught discipline, an uncritical respect for established order, and an outward conservatism in social relations toward whites. Faculty could not protest against Jim Crow restrictions, and NAACP "radicals" like DuBois were viewed with undisguised contempt. Washington frequently spoke out against trade unionism, socialism, and any political movement which jeopardized the interests of his "Christ-like" philanthropists. To survive the long social nightmare of American apartheid, the Tuskegee model for black education discouraged intellectual innovation, radical cultural creativity, and any manifestation of social and political ferment which questioned white supremacy. But the result of accommodation was survival.

Seventy years later, the political conditions which forced the accommodationist style and reactionary pedagogy upon black higher education had been largely overturned. Yet the older structures of social conformity and regulation, a top-down administrative order, and the crude suppression of students' rights still exist to a great extent at black institutions. Washington ultimately lost his famous political debate with DuBois, as liberal arts, a humanistic education, and civic activism became an integral part of the black educational setting. However, Washington's authoritarian model for the administration of black colleges still holds sway, especially in the South. A number of black colleges still retain curfews for "girls"; others demand overt expressions of "loyalty" to the university as a prerequisite to tenure.

When I chaired the political science department at Tuskegee Insti-

tute almost a decade ago, I was informed by my division head that all faculty were expected to be available in their offices "seven hours each day, Monday through Friday." I replied that there was a fundamental difference between high school and college teaching, and that it was impossible for my faculty to do library research, grade papers, and so forth when they were mandated to sit in their offices every single day. My protest was ignored, and perhaps even excused, due to my relative youth and inexperience in functioning at a black college. An administrative "request" at Tuskegee was tantamount to a non-negotiable demand.

An analysis of the boards of trustees of black colleges reveals yet another reason that they maintain a legacy of authoritarian governance. Trade and technical-oriented universities tend to be controlled by powerful white corporate executives and conservative politicians. Tuskegee Institute's board of trustees, for example, includes James M. Roche, former chairman of General Motors Corporation; A. Edward Allinson, senior vice-president of Chase Manhattan Bank; Thomas P. Mullaney, president of Dart Industries; David Mahoney, chairman and chief executive of Norton Simon, Inc.; and William O. Beers, former chairman of Kraft, Inc. Members of Tuskegee's "Centennial Era" fundraising drive include Rand V. Araskog, president, chairman, and chief executive officer of International Telephone and Telegraph; the eccentric former chairman of the board of Bendix, William M. Agee; Nixon administration cabinet member Winton M. Blount; Ford administration cabinet member Donald Rumsfeld; and the president of Eastern Air Lines, Frank Borman.

The more liberal and humanities-oriented black private colleges usually have a greater number of black scholars and liberal whites but are still dominated by corporate capital. Fisk's board of trustees includes the distinguished black historian, Dr. John Hope Franklin; Dr. Wesley A. Hotchkiss, general secretary of the Board of Homeland Ministries of the United Church of Christ; and *Roots* author Alex Haley. It also includes multimillionaire Helen C. Vanderbilt; John W. Garner, vice-president of 3-M Corporation; Albert Werthan of



Werthan Industries; and Otis M. Smith, vice-president of General Motors.

A neocolonial dynamic also operates in the selection of the presidents of many black colleges. In theory, the senior faculty, top administrators, and alumni play a role in selecting them; in practice, black college presidents tend to be chosen by conservative black- and corporate white-dominated boards of trustees with little outside input. Black private colleges gradually received the "right" to be run by black administrators — for example, Mordecai Johnson's appointment at Howard University in 1926 and Charles S. Johnson's appointment at Fisk in 1947. With rare exceptions, however, most black presidents have not been distinguished by their scholarship; they have traditionally been conservative, personally and politically, and have perpetuated the climate of academic authoritarianism and hostility toward the left which their benefactors on their boards of trustees required. A few "Black Power era" scholars have won presidential posts at black institutions — for example, sociologist Andrew Billingsley at Morgan State University in Baltimore and black liberation theologian Cecil Cone at Jacksonville, Florida's Edward Waters College. However, the vast majority of black administrators are dominated by the corporate world, and have little if any sympathy for black studies and the radical pedagogical departures which gave birth to a new generation of black scholarship in the 1960s and early 1970s.

At many traditionally white liberal arts colleges decisions are made by tenured senior faculty, department chairs, and administrators. But at a black university virtually all power lies in the hands of the president. At some schools, black faculty are required to submit their course syllabi for administrative scrutiny before they can order textbooks. Faculty are sometimes disciplined for using "subversive texts," such as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Some black private colleges aggressively discourage student unions from inviting progressive speakers to campus. I know of one college president who officially "banned" the local NAACP president from speaking on campus in 1982 on the grounds that he was too radical!

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### The Case of Fisk

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The struggle for academic freedom and democracy at Fisk during the past academic year typifies the problems at other black institutions. Although they worked with no pay raises for three years, Fisk faculty had become increasingly disgruntled with other, non-fiscal concerns, particularly the decline in student enrollment. Before Leonard's arrival in 1977, the student enrollment figures had already begun to sag. In the fall semester of 1973, 1,569 students attended classes; four years later, autumn enrollment declined to 1,125. During Leonard's tenure, student enrollment continued to drop sharply — to 1,101 in 1979, 889 in 1981, 751

in 1982, and 700 in the autumn of 1983. A bitter two-week-long student strike over campus grievances in 1980 prompted the exodus of many students and probably dissuaded some prospective freshmen from entering the university.

In February 1983 the faculty drafted a letter to the board of trustees, declaring that the root of the enrollment problem was "poor communication by the administration, no accountability to the faculty and uncertain management." The faculty communication noted further that "at a time when the talents and energies of all persons at Fisk need to be focused on the revival of the University, the administrative leadership becomes more isolated, less communicative, stingier with information



photo courtesy of *The Black Collegian*

and apparently without a plan for renewal." Two senior faculty representatives, Gladys I. Forde and Carroll Bourg, attended the February board of trustees meeting, took notes on Leonard's comments and other statements during the sessions, and distributed them to other faculty.

When Leonard obtained a copy of the faculty representatives' report, he became outraged — to put it mildly. In an open letter dated March 17, 1983, and addressed to board members, faculty, staff, and students, the president accused the two faculty observers of "deliberately, knowingly, and maliciously misquoting and misrepresenting" his positions on major issues. "Demagogues and saboteurs will always be part of *any* institution," Leonard began. "Christ had

Judas, and even before that God had Lucifer, Caesar had Brutus, America had Benedict Arnold, and black people have always had Uncle Toms and Aunt Thomasinas and, every once in a while, a few white missionaries who brought bibles and took the land. Fisk has people who fit and embody all of the above. There are not many of them, just a few, but then it only takes one rotten apple to spoil a barrel."

The president suggested that the faculty's "deliberate activities" were designed "to create confusion" and "to cover-up inadequate devotion" to teaching responsibilities. "A sickness which began many years ago has reached a point where only radical surgery will correct it," Leonard warned. In closing, Leonard asked whether "persons who demonstrate such intellectual dishonesty should be members of the Fisk University faculty? I wonder whether people who are acting in ways calculated to promote discord; to plant seeds of distrust; to introduce hate and bias; and, who attempt to undermine and disrupt efforts to preserve the integrity of Fisk, have any right to remain on this campus?"

Although many students still remained apathetic, others were outraged by the president's inflammatory remarks. The March 24, 1983, editorial of the student publication, the *Fisk Forum*, characterized Leonard's actions as "the 'wounded bear syndrome' . . . in which any animal, when wounded, will lash out ferociously and usually without a battle plan at anything it considers an enemy." Leonard's controversial letter was clearly "detrimental to the survival of Fisk," the *Forum* declared, adding that the president had "slandered" the faculty by calling them "a pack of liars," and that his "crude and manipulative" letter was "the most twisted piece of information students have received to date" about the ongoing university crisis.

Faculty members generally agreed that Leonard's response was an example of hyperbole, paranoia, and demagoguery at its worst. One week later, members of the Faculty Assembly cast a vote of "no confidence" in Leonard as president. Fifty-three of the eligible 73 members of the assembly were present. By secret ballot, 38 members voted for the motion, five abstained, and

five voted against the motion. This unprecedented act of public censure represented a demand by the faculty that the trustees take some immediate measures to resolve the campus chaos.

Of course, Leonard retained some support among the faculty and alumni. One Fisk alumnus, Emma Byrd, circulated her own open letter among students, faculty, and trustees, denouncing the "uprising" against Leonard. "People have been dieing [sic] since Jesus for Negroes or Blacks to learn how to read and write!! Let us not get this far into orbit and self destruct!! Let us not go down as a sinking ship of educated fools because we simply acted a fool!!" Byrd praised Leonard as "an individual of high morals, and highly exposed, well-learned, and well bred academic scholar. He is the university's savior!"

Leonard also won the support of most students in April by announcing a 10 percent reduction in tuition and fees for the 1983-84 academic year. Many faculty and students, however, wondered whether the financially troubled university could withstand such a drastic reduction in income. Several middle-level administrators and faculty leaders privately charged that the president's decision was motivated in part by immediate political considerations and was based on insufficient budgetary planning. The tuition reduction decision was also made too late in the academic year to attract more students to the next freshman class.

Several trustees finally stepped into the debate in April, and initiated a "Unity Committee" comprised of two board members, two administrators, and three faculty, including myself. Despite the end of public quarrels, the overall situation at the college continued to decline. For months at a time, the university was unable to pay into the faculty's retirement pension fund. The health insurance premiums went unpaid for several months, and in early March 1983 the company cancelled the faculty's insurance. Inexplicably, the administration decided *not* to inform its faculty that they and their families no longer were covered by health insurance. At least one faculty member had to threaten a legal suit in order for his outstanding medical claims to be paid.





In April, ARA Services of Philadelphia, which had provided Fisk's meal services since 1966, left the university because of an unpaid bill of \$716,835. After a hectic series of negotiations, the administration agreed to repay ARA, and a new food service company was obtained. But Fisk's debts continued to mount. By mid-1983, the university owed the Internal Revenue Service almost \$500,000 in payroll taxes. In late spring, IRS sent an official notice that \$204,900 was "due immediately" — although Fisk had not made any substantial payments as of November 1983. Fisk also owed local utility companies about \$465,000, as well as \$3.5 million to the federal government for the construction of

several dormitories. Not counting long-term debts, Fisk operated about \$400,000 in the red in 1982-83.

Even after these problems, I was not yet convinced that I should leave Fisk. As the director of the Race Relations Institute, my hope was to revive the long-dormant division as a productive center for scholarship and fundraising. In the 1982-83 academic year the Institute held two successful conferences, one on the theme "Corporate Power and Black America," and a second on the "Arms Race vs. Human Needs." The later conference attracted 225 participants from 18 states and five nations (including a correspondent from *Pravda*), and was the first series of lectures and workshops on disarmament and the

domestic impact of nuclear arms spending to be organized by black Americans. Yet part of the modest grant I had solicited to fund the later conference, once given to the financial officer in charge, became virtually inaccessible. It was only on the day of the conference itself that I obtained checks to cover the travel expenses of many invited speakers — money which had been requisitioned weeks before. Some conference participants who had been promised payment of travel expenses in advance had to wait one month to receive reimbursement. In two cases, I had to pay speakers' transportation costs out of my own pocket. I received no explanation why grant monies were unavailable, although no *direct* evidence exists indicating that the funds from this restricted grant had already been spent by the college. Nevertheless, the ordeal of struggling to recover grant money from recalcitrant officials, plus the month-to-month uncertainty of whether we would receive paychecks, and the lack of medical coverage for my three children and my wife, finally broke any hope I had to help rebuild Fisk. Faculty associates of the Race Relations Institute had already requested letters of recommendation to aid them in their search for jobs, and I provided assistance whenever possible. As late as early August, faculty members had not been given contracts for the 1983-84 school year. Sadly convinced that neither the board of trustees nor Leonard was able to address, and much less resolve, the crisis, I resigned. By early September 1983, about two dozen faculty and staff members had also left.

In late 1983, President Leonard resigned in the wake of a controversy surrounding employee pension funds. According to the *Nashville Tennessean*, in May 1983 Leonard "instructed the college to determine its indebtedness to his account — which he believed to be \$14,000 — and to place \$5,000 in an Individual Retirement Account" at Nashville's Commerce Union Bank, "\$5,000 with Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Smith, and the balance in an account at the National Bank of Washington." The *Tennessean* also learned that Leonard "received pay raises of \$5,000 in March 1981 and \$7,000 in June 1982 giving him an annual salary of

## The Fisk Forum

# To stop attrition change attitudes

Attrition is a scary word at a university, and Fisk is certainly no exception. Attrition at a university is nearly the equivalent of a bleeding man. If a man loses too much blood, very soon he will die. If a college institution loses too many students, very soon it too will inevitably die.

The attrition numbers for Fisk are far from good. Back in 1973 the total enrollment numbered 1,561. Ten years later, the university can only boast of a student population totaling 757.

Why is Fisk losing this war against attrition? Well, one main factor is the attitude some administrators and staff members have adopted. That attitude is that if a student is dissatisfied with Fisk, then he should leave. They feel that if students cannot find any value in this great learning institution, then Fisk does not need such persons included in its family.

This attitude, in every sense, is harmful to the survival of Fisk University. The right disposition toward dissatisfied students shouldn't be in the form of "if we don't meet your standards then go somewhere else;" instead, it should be in the form of "if we don't meet your standards then tell us where we fall short, maybe we can correct it."

Also, in a related matter, the University places too much stress on its history. True, Fisk has a rich history that all connected with the school should be very proud of. But it is also time to stop resting on our laurels. Yes, tell students about the Jubilee singers and give them reason to be proud of their past, but also give them reason to be proud of their present and their future.

Fisk students have several things to be proud of—past, present, future, and otherwise. But for all the categories except the past, students often have to seek out things to be proud of. They have to take it upon themselves to overlook our somewhat less than desirable physical plant and find the not so obvious riches that the University possesses.

This school cannot and should not expect to look for good things to be handed

members, as well as faculty. Too, those who attended the aforementioned attrition seminar have heard these ideas also. Such persons may ask why the same thoughts are being reiterated. Well, for one thing, the very nature of the attrition seminar testifies that its approach was slightly out of focus. Only faculty, staff, and administrator were expected to attend—not students (though Dean Satcher did verbally invite students to attend).

The fact is, the seminar was slated to operate without the direct input of students, who, ironically enough, the seminar focused on. Administrators, faculty, and staff could conjecture all day long as to why students are leaving. But why guess at all when they could have simply invited students and asked them?

True, a handful of students attended, but they were Fiskites who had no plans of leaving the school save for reasons of graduating. So the input of several disgruntled and dissatisfied freshmen who have already announced that they won't be returning for the fall was lost.

Another reason why these words should be repeated is because they have yet to sink into the minds of certain members of the Fisk family. Said members are so caught up in the general financial crisis of the University that the problem of attrition hasn't fully grabbed their attention. Surely they must realize that attrition is also a financial problem, because the more students Fisk loses, the less money it brings in from financial aid and other sources.

Fisk is a glorious institution. But until its leaders begin to ask fundamental questions like, "Why are you leaving Fisk?" we are doomed to live the fate of a wounded man and bleed to death.

And we don't know of anyone who would like to see that happen.

## SGA elections

Student government representative elections will be held on Friday April 22 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The election schedule will include candidate debates, question and answer sessions, and a speech night.

STUDENT EDITORIAL, MARCH 24, 1983

\$60,000." Faculty responses were predictable. "That's deeply unfair and reflects what many faculty have suspected for a long time — the president takes care of himself but has neglected the faculty," professor Carroll Bourg stated. Even chairman of the board Timothy Donaldson, who claimed that he knew nothing about Leonard's pay raises and pension payments, told the press that if the allegations were true, "The staff there has something to bitch about." As fiscal conditions deteriorated, Leonard finally announced his departure, to take effect in June 1984.

Black faculty are generally reticent to speak on the record about the authoritarianism and lack of democracy at most black colleges. One faculty member at a small black college in Mississippi, however, describes his environment as "nothing short of a concentration camp." Another professor declares: "The president encourages bootlicking and bad faith. It sabotages everything he does. . . . There is an attitude of mistrust and fear. The president sets the tone and he's responsible for accelerating the brain drain from this school. The suspicion and the paternalism here is for students like going through hell. The students are taught two things: 'sit down and shut up' and 'cover your ass.' . . . Whenever things go wrong, the president either blames the board of trustees or the faculty. . . . We can't build a [viable] community when people are made to feel small." Faculty workloads of four to five courses per semester (compared to two courses at many white private schools) serve as a check on faculty scholarship and productive research. "The average faculty member is not motivated to do work," one faculty member states. "That any scholarship at all comes out of here means that people are 'hyperdedicated.'"

The number of horror stories people have told me are too numerous to mention. At one black college, the president expelled the entire student government leadership for raising issues related to democratic rights on campus. One college president verbally abused a group of students in a public forum and then threatened to take one especially provocative pupil behind the chapel to administer corporal punishment.

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## The Challenge

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Despite these conditions, almost every black faculty member I have interviewed expressed the view that black colleges had to be defended and ultimately improved. "My commitment to the black school is stronger than money," one professor stated. "Teaching at a black college is a personal commitment to the black community. Without a strong black community, true racial desegregation is not possible. That's why we're needed here." One student protest leader described her education at her college as "the best years of my life." Many students and faculty want to challenge the gross failures of these institutions, but not at the risk of their continued survival. Few students at black colleges wish to transfer into majority-white institutions.

If indeed the decline of black colleges was the product of accelerated desegregation of formerly all-white institutions, one might be less concerned. Ironically, however, the collapse of black schools and cutbacks in tenure-stream positions for young black faculty are occurring precisely at a time when white colleges are reducing their numbers of black professors and administrators. At Princeton University, for instance, officials asserted recently that they have made "a vigorous effort to recruit black faculty members." In 1974, however, the number of black Princeton professors was 10, and today the figure has dropped to nine. By way of contrast, the number of women faculty at Princeton in the past decade has increased from 54 to 101.

Similar statistics can be cited across the country. At Harvard University in 1980 there were 34 black professors out of 1,746 faculty; in the spring of 1984, the number of black professors had declined to 24, about 1.4 percent of the total faculty. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the black faculty total only 2 percent; Cornell University, 1.7 percent; Stanford University, 1.6 percent. White administrators are quick to justify these small numbers of Afro-American faculty as a product of the relatively small pool of blacks who earn advanced degrees. But since 1974, the overall proportion of blacks receiving doctorates has risen from 3.7 to 4.4 percent. In 1982, the proportion of all minorities

receiving doctorates in the field of psychology was 8 percent; mathematics, 9 percent; education, 14.5 percent; economics 13.4 percent; political science, 12 percent; and sociology, 10.7 percent. Even after factoring out Hispanics, Asians, and other people of color, these figures indicate that the majority of white universities are making few sincere efforts to hire black graduates. Consequently, the survival of traditional black colleges is of paramount importance to thousands of young black teachers and administrators, who have few avenues of employment outside these institutions.

The challenge of saving black higher education is a two-fold process. Politically, the right to preserve all-black educational institutions means that pressure must be exerted on the federal government to increase its support to these colleges. White progressives especially must comprehend that the battle to maintain a Fisk University or an Atlanta University as an all-black center for scholarship in no way contradicts the demand for a desegregated, pluralistic society. For the foreseeable future, white universities will employ every means, legal and otherwise, to reduce the number of black faculty, staff, and students at their institutions. Thus the effort to maintain black colleges is in essence the attempt to guarantee blacks access to higher education. Second, the pursuit of genuine democracy and a black pedagogy for liberation must be fought for *within* these universities, and any efforts waged by black students toward this end must also be supported.

W.E.B. DuBois observed at the seventy-first anniversary commencement exercises of Knoxville College in Tennessee on June 10, 1946: "Are [black] institutions worth saving? . . . I am convinced that there is a place and a continuing function for the small Negro College. [They] have an unusual opportunity to fill a great need and to do a work which no other agency could do so well." □

*Manning Marable is professor of political sociology and director of the Africana and Hispanic Studies program at Colgate University. During the 1982-83 academic year he directed the Race Relations Institute at Fisk University. He is national vice-chair of the Democratic Socialists of America.*





*Photography by  
Robert Amberg*

**BERZILLA WALLIN DANCING,  
ERNIE FRANKLIN FIDDLEING**

Kentucky. The truck followed the new blacktop to a country store.

"We asked if there was anybody who played music," Holt recalls. "They said, 'Yeah, go see old John up on the hill. He plays banjo and guitar.' So we went up there and there was this guy who lived in a one-room log cabin with his seven kids and seven dogs. The room was completely covered over with rusty old Prince Albert cans that he had opened up and tacked to the wall. We sat around and played music for a couple of hours."

Encounters like this one infected Holt with what he calls the "germ" of old-time music. "I love spending the day with someone, playing music with them, and learning music from them," he says. Realizing that the older generation of mountain artists was fading fast from the scene, Holt tried to collect as many songs as he could during that first summer in the highlands.

In the 15 years since, Holt has created a lively career as folk archivist and entertainer. His progress has paralleled the historical development of mountain music, which has survived by absorbing influences from Afro-Americans, records, and radio into its sound based on ancient British ballads and home-grown religious songs. Like the traditional mountain musicians, Holt has learned directly from older people.

Today, Holt stands at the threshold of realizing a dream. During the past two years, he has begun to use national television as part of his efforts to help preserve the music and crafts of Appalachia.

**"Almost any kind of music"**

Holt did not grow up dreaming of playing old-time music on television. Born in Gatesville, Texas, he moved

## *Mountain Musician at the Crossroads*

*Text by Arthur Menius*

During the riot-torn, political-convention summer of 1968, a pickup truck, battered by the long miles from California, carried 21-year-old David Holt, a friend, and a flop-eared hound named Jezebel deep into the hollows and coves near Hazard,

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to California as a teenager. There he played drums for several bands before studying art and biology education at the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California.

During these years, he ran across a 78 rpm record by Carl Sprague, a genuine Texas cowpoke who, in 1927, became the first cowboy singer to record. Holt decided to visit Sprague's home during one of his Texas vacations, and found to his surprise that Sprague was alive and well. "He taught me how to play the harmonica and some old cowboy songs. I got really excited about learning music from the old timers." That excitement sparked Holt's 1968 journey to the southern Appalachians.

After graduation Holt moved to Asheville, North Carolina, with the idea of studying mountain music for a couple of years before launching his teaching career. He moved in with friends and took a job as a sign maker. "I'd go out and play music every night, and work as long as I could in the day practicing the banjo," he remembers.

Holt studied the old clawhammer style of banjo picking in which the first two fingers of the right hand strike downward on the banjo strings while the thumb plays the shorter drone string and sometimes hits a few melody notes. That method virtually disappeared after the 1940s



**MORRIS NORTON WITH HIS  
HOMEMADE TUNEBOW**

when Earl Scruggs made popular the demanding three-finger style, which became the hallmark of bluegrass banjo picking.

"There weren't many clawhammer banjo players in western North Carolina in the early '70s," Holt explains, "so I learned most of what I knew from fiddlers. Byard Ray would sit for hours, whole evenings, showing me how to play tunes with his fiddle. I would play them note for note on the banjo. That's how I developed the fiddle-note banjo style that I do."

While Holt had deliberately set out to learn mountain music directly from the mountain people, he was not prepared for the great diversity he encountered. Early folklorists promoted the Southern mountains as a repository of ancient British airs,



**BUCK DANCING AT THE BICENTENNIAL FESTIVAL IN DURHAM**

**VIRGIL CRAVEN WITH HIS HAMMER DULCIMER**



and popular accounts reinforced that ethnocentric notion of an isolated frontierspeople, culturally akin to Elizabethan England. The reality, Holt found, was much more complex — and more interesting: “There are musicians in the mountains who will absorb almost any aspect of music, even adding rock to bluegrass. Many people only look at mountain music as fiddle and banjo. They don’t realize that it encompasses almost any kind of music. Any style has been absorbed into the mountains to some degree, the blues, jazz, everything.”

Holt experienced this process firsthand by joining the Luke Smathers String Band in 1973. Formed in 1929, the band performs the popular music of the ’30s on the traditional mountain instruments of guitar, fiddle, banjo, and standup bass. Smathers himself learned swing music from the radio; he and his brother memorized the melodies while a sister copied the words in shorthand.

“The Luke Smathers String Band combines mountain and swing music,” says Holt, “without becoming just another swing band.” Holt plays banjo on their albums [June Appal label JA024 and JA032] and joins them in most of their live appearances, which recently included the 1982 World’s Fair and a Peace Day rally in Asheville.

The Smathers Band, like other musicians that Holt has learned from, fused the music from their local tradition with newer forms and other outside influences, creating new sounds for their own pleasure. Holt sees a parallel process in his own work. “My music is a synthesis of different things I’ve heard, rather than this is just the way someone else played it and so this is the way I’m going to play it. It pulls a lot of things in, I hope, the best of other things.” Holt illustrated this process

on his first solo album, “It Just Suits Me” (June Appal JA038), recorded in 1980.

The Smathers Band is only one of Holt’s encounters contradicting the popular view of the region’s music as an isolated phenomenon. He has learned also from the black musicians in the Appalachians. “D.L. Boyd, who lived in Asheville, was supposed to be a very good fiddler,” Holt explains. “He had influenced a lot of older white musicians in Asheville. He didn’t play in a bluesy style particularly, but like fiddlers do in the mountains, because he played mountain music. He played for a lot of square dances and things like that. He had a lot of unusual tunes that I had never heard of and don’t know anybody that plays now. I had set up an appointment with him one week to go see him and collect some music. The next week I called to make sure it was okay to come over, and his wife said, ‘Honey, he passed away today.’ That really fired me up about collecting. I always think about that when I say, ‘Well, I’ll come back next week.’ ”

The black influence on the hillbilly music tradition dates back to the introduction of the banjo into the mountains by white soldiers returning from the Civil War. During the war, they learned to make the African-derived instrument from black craftsmen. The influx of black laborers into the mountains in the years following the war brought further opportunities for this cross-fertilization. While black string musicians and their hillbilly music have been eclipsed by the predominance of other musical forms and instruments, they live on through white musicians who learned from their black counterparts. Bill Monroe, for example, learned much from fiddler and guitarist Arnold Shultz.



He later incorporated Shultz's style in his modification of string band music that came to be called bluegrass. Holt has also recorded an 89-year-old white banjo picker named Chauncey Roberts who learned from former slaves. "He would play in the most bizarre three-finger style you ever saw, but it worked. It was very rhythmic. His fingers would switch the strings they'd be hitting. Some wild stuff, but very good."

Holt learned a number of tunes from Asheville blues and ragtime street musician, Walt Phelps, who died in 1982. "He had seen a whole lot, and loved making music and entertaining a crowd. I do a couple of his songs — 'Tickle Britches is My Name,' and 'Come on Down to My House.' He inspired different versions of several songs I already knew.

"There was a lot of interchange. Any of these old white guys in Black Mountain and Asheville will tell you that they would often get together with black musicians and play. There certainly wasn't any racial problem with the music." Holt doesn't believe, however, that the mountain air blew free of prejudice. "When the music came around they shared, and then apparently went their own separate ways."

Holt found perhaps his richest source of mountain music in Sodom Laurel, a hollow in the high mountains of Madison County, North Carolina. Sodom Laurel is home to Byard Ray, the fiddler who taught Holt his clawhammer style, and to a number of ballad singers: Holt, Cas Wallin, and Dellie Norton sing dozens of British ballads, modified through two centuries in the mountains and by their own personal styles. They also sing many ballads of American derivation.



**DOUG WALLIN (TOP) AND CHARLES CHANDLER (BOTTOM) FIDDLING**

"I've really worked on learning the singing of the old ballad singers," said Holt, "getting all the twists and turns of their kind of music. Then also for years I did shape note singing, Christian harmony singing. You sing at the top of your lungs, and that's the way the ballad singers sing, too."

Holt also tries to absorb some of these singers' non-musical knowl-





**DAVID HOLT WITH ZEKE AND WILEY MORRIS, THE WRITERS OF "SALTY DOG BLUES"**

edge. "Dellie Norton has been one of my great inspirations. Last year I had some arts council jobs all over South Carolina and she went with me and performed. Here's an 86-year-old woman who's wise about life. She knows how to cure anything with herbs out of the mountains. This was the furthest she'd gone from home. This is a person who's thought a lot, but hasn't traveled far. So to me it was a very easygoing tour and to her it was the most fun she'd ever had. She still talks about that trip."

#### **A Shot in the Arm**

When Holt began collecting songs,

practicing his banjo, and singing, he deposited the tunes he gathered with the Library of Congress. Yet, like most of his teachers, he was not a professional musician. He learned the music the same way they had: at the feet of older players.

He was, on the other hand, young, mobile, and an outsider. Area newspapers began to run stories about this youthful Texan so passionately devoted to the music many mountaineers ignored. That attention led Holt to other musicians and eventually to his career as an entertainer. "After about two years of doing this, I started getting asked to perform, so I started working up a

solo program. For the next three years [1972-75], I made my living just performing for conventions and country music barn type things.”

As Holt realized that he could make a profession out of the music he loved, he began to develop versatility as a performer. “To make a living doing this kind of music I had to be widespread. If someone wanted a workshop, I could do a workshop. If someone wanted a dance, I could call a dance. If someone wanted a concert, I could give a concert for kids, adults, or for old people.”

Holt’s big break came in 1975, when he became the director of the newly established Appalachian Music Program at Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, North Carolina. The school wanted him to create an applied music curriculum for mountain music in which students would play and collect songs themselves.

“That sounded great to me, because it gave me a chance to put all that I had been learning into some kind of cohesive form and to get some of the musicians in western North Carolina on campus to teach their instruments and their ballad singing.

“Students and community members would come on campus and learn to play traditional instruments from traditional mountain musicians. I taught classes in the history of country music, storytelling, country dancing, and square dance calling. I had a string band class. The National Endowment for the Arts was very good to us because they liked the program. So we had classes in the fiddle, mandolin, ballad singing, Christian harmony singing, shape note singing, just about anything you could want. Not only did it plow the music back into the community, but it gave those instructors a chance to think about what they knew and how



DAVID HOLT AND JOHN McCUTCHEON HAMBONING

to teach it.”

As part of its community outreach efforts the Appalachian Music Program conducted the Mountain Musicians Concert Series — three years of monthly performances. Holt says, “These people were being paid a lot of respect for their music. I think it changed a lot of people’s minds in this community about the worth of music. Then the program got a lot of the regular community people playing those instruments.”

The security of his position at Warren Wilson also gave Holt the time and freedom to refine his own performances. He decided to add storytelling, perhaps the oldest and most vital of the folk arts, to his repertoire. “I realized that you could say a lot in a story that you couldn’t say in a song,” Holt recalls, and he





DAVID HOLT AND DOC WATSON (TOP); DAVID HOLT AND LUKE SMATHERS (BOTTOM)

BERZILLA WALLIN WITH PHOTO OF HER FAMILY'S BAND



had already learned many a lively tale from the same people who taught him songs.

Invitations to the National Storytelling Festival increased Holt's commitment to the art. In 1981 he recorded and released on his own label a Southern storytelling album, "The Hairy Man and Other Wild Tales" (High Windy DH-1). This collection of uproarious old yarns — both scary and comic — also incorporates a lot of banjo-picking and other vivid sound effects, earning the album the American Library Association's Notable Record Award for 1982.

The stories help pace Holt's live performances, and contribute to the backporch atmosphere he believes is essential to communicating with his audiences: "I'm experimenting with different ways to move an adult audience up and down. I play a lot of different instruments, so I keep the sounds changing. I put in a story to get a different mood."

Holt left the Appalachian Music Program in 1982 and began his television career in earnest with *Folkways*, a public television series in which Holt visited traditional craftspeople of the North Carolina mountains, ranging from toymakers to blacksmiths. "It gave me a chance to take to the field, collecting what I had been doing and putting it on videotape. That's where I learned to do anything on television."

But national attention has come from another show, Nashville Network's *Fire on the Mountain*, produced by the Linear Group of Asheville. Each Sunday, Holt enters thousands of cable-wired homes around the country. Immaculately dressed — to show his respect for the music — and flashing his famous grin, Holt introduces a half-hour program featuring nationally popular

bluegrass acts and local old-time musicians.

"Over a period of time," says Holt, "this is bound to be an incredible documentary of bluegrass and mountain music. Everything else on this country music channel is very uptown, yet we have a show with the most traditional music, but the most hip format and up-to-date kind of awareness. This kind of music needs a little shot in the arm of media attention. It's going to help make young people aware of mountain music. The spirit of these old songs watch out for themselves and they hook certain people. There will be people converted to this kind of music because of this TV show."

Holt hopes his show will inspire performers as well as listeners: "If I could create a wake, like behind a boat, of interest so that young people could make some kind of living playing mountain music, that would be great. This day and age there have to be professional musicians doing this for it to keep its edge."

But success on national television also poses some knotty questions for this zealous performer and archivist. How will the demands of the high-tech studio affect traditional music and performance styles? Can Holt really use this mass media outlet to help preserve the music and continue its evolution? Or will television end up using him to exploit and possibly damage mountain music? "I've been a folk musician in the folk music world up to now," says Holt. "Stepping into *Fire on the Mountain* and the Nashville Network, I've entered the bottom rung of the entertainment industry." □

*Arthur Menius lives in Pittsboro, North Carolina, and has contributed articles to several publications.*

# WINNING THE BATTLE AT BARNWELL

By Stephen Hoffius



photo by Brett Bursey

PROTESTERS IN FRONT OF THE WHITE HOUSE IN 1978.

**P**ast the sign advertising live pink worms and minnows, past the fields of soybeans, corn, and melons, past the small town of Snelling, South Carolina, lies the Barnwell Nuclear Fuel Plant (BNFP). A series of square, unadorned buildings behind a chain-link fence, its only distinguishing feature is a massive stack. Fifteen years ago this plain-looking facility was expected to launch the next generation of nuclear power plants and transform energy production in the United States and, by example, the world.

BNFP seemed to have everything going for it in 1968, when a consortium of several of the world's wealthiest corporations, including Allied Chemical, Gulf Oil, and Royal Dutch Shell, formed Allied-Gulf Nuclear Services, later renamed Allied-General (AGNS). It agreed to purchase land in Barnwell County for construction of the plant. But in 1983, 15 years after concerned citizens started speaking out against BNFP, Congress pulled the plug on any additional funds to bail out the floundering project, and AGNS officials decided to write off the plant as a tax loss. Much of the equipment

has been dismantled and sold, or given away. And where 300 people were once employed, in early 1984 only a dozen remained.

The battle over Barnwell is a story about organizing by grassroots groups, a swing in the political pendulum in their favor, and the economic boondoggles of the nuclear industry. It is a story about concerned citizens who, against all odds, money, and expectations, defeated the powerful nuclear industry and its allies in high places.

## The Beginning

AGNS (pronounced "Agnes") executives chose to build the plant in South Carolina after high-ranking state officials lobbied for the project. Barnwell County, the chosen location, is also the home of two of the state's most powerful politicians, state senator Edgar Brown and state representative Solomon Blatt. Both, according to a state newspaper, had informed the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) that their state would offer a warm welcome to such a plant.

The county also plays host to a

corner of the Savannah River Plant (SRP), since the early 1950s a major nuclear weapons manufacturing facility. County residents were originally skeptical about SRP's safety, but, having heard of no problems or mishaps there, they trusted nuclear facilities.

The governor's office, the General Assembly, the Budget and Control Board, the State Board of Health, and the State Development Board worked long and hard in convincing AGNS executives of the benefits of moving to South Carolina. In 1967 the state legislature passed the Atomic Energy and Radiation Control Act to encourage the construction of nuclear facilities in South Carolina.

Bolstering this political power operating on behalf of the nuclear industry were the economic arguments for BNFP. AGNS officials trusted the predictions of their economic advisers that the plant offered bountiful profit for the future. In the late 1960s and early '70s, orders for nuclear reactors were on the increase, and scientists could already envision the depletion of the world's supply of fuel for the reactors — uranium. Yet nuclear fuel rods, when

no longer usable in a reactor, still contain most of their original uranium, still usable if retrievable.

The Barnwell plant was conceived to reprocess these spent fuel rods, turning the unused uranium into fuel. BNFP would take the spent rods, chop them up, and dip the pieces into an acidic bath to separate out the remaining uranium. This could then be made into new rods.

The plant would also remove the plutonium produced by the original nuclear reactions. In addition to its primary use — the production of atomic weapons — plutonium also offered the dream of unlimited energy production. AGNS officials planned to sell their plutonium to be mixed with uranium for use by nuclear power generators, but they were also betting that plutonium would eventually be used in breeder reactors — a new kind of reactor that would “breed” more fuel than it used in the power-generating process and make plutonium a never-ending source of fuel. (See the box on the Clinch River Breeder Reactor on page 50.)

### Opposition Takes Root

The first person to speak out against BNFP was not an enemy of nuclear power. His name was Townsend Belser, and he had spent four years working for the navy’s nuclear program under Admiral Hyman Rickover. There he gained extensive schooling in nuclear plant operations and toured government reprocessing plants.

In 1968 Belser, a 33-year-old patent attorney from a politically prominent family, saw a newspaper article about the planned Barnwell reprocessing plant. He was familiar enough with the reprocessing of uranium to question the decision to locate BNFP in an area like Barnwell, which has a high water table and is surrounded by extensive wildlife. “Admiral Rickover ingrained in us a very conservative philosophy,” explains Belser. “We knew that we were dealing with a very dangerous technology if care was not taken.”

Belser didn’t oppose the construction of a reprocessing plant, but he did oppose the choice of South Carolina as the site for one. “If a plant like that was going to be built,” he says, “it should be in a

more sterile and stable environment.” In late 1970 Belser testified against BNFP at public hearings in Barnwell. But his was a lone voice, and his arguments were pushed aside. The plant was licensed for construction that same year.

Belser remained unconvinced, and he began a one-person campaign to alert people to the dangers of the plant. He wrote to the governor, testified before the South Carolina House Judiciary Committee, and even asked Walter Cronkite to investigate.

Belser also described the plant to his friend Bob Wilkins, publisher of *Sandlapper*, a bimonthly state magazine. Belser’s long, detailed article about problems at Barnwell was printed in the May/June 1971 issue and was entitled, “Is South Carolina to Become a Nuclear Dumping Ground for the Entire Nation’s Radioactive Wastes?”

In the article he argued that a nuclear reprocessing plant could cause disastrous contamination of the environment, accidentally or by the regular, planned release of radioac-

tive material out of the plant’s stack. The article consisted of eight pages of detailed, turgid prose with only one graphic, a map — making for difficult and frightening reading. But it was read. Among those who responded with letters to the editor was Howard Larson, the president of AGNS, and J. Bonner Manly, director of the powerful State Development Board.

In challenging the plans, Belser spoke to every group he could find — social gatherings, luncheon clubs, environmental groups — and he took along reprints of his article. In 1971 he addressed the South Carolina Environmental Coalition, an amalgam of conservation organizations and garden clubs. Among those who picked up a copy of the *Sandlapper* reprint there was Ruth Thomas, a 51-year-old housewife who was the Audubon Society representative to the coalition.

“I read it that night,” remembers Thomas, “and didn’t sleep all night. I called Townsend first thing in the morning and asked him what I could do. I said I’d do anything. He sug-



courtesy of Ruth Thomas

RUTH THOMAS TESTIFYING AT A PUBLIC HEARING OF THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION.



gested that I talk with the Audubon Society, and try to get the whole group interested.”

Thomas spoke to the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, and the Columbia Women’s Club, and as she did she began to immerse herself in technical studies, reports, and transcripts of nuclear-related proceedings. Belser suggested further readings to her, and she was an eager student.

Later in 1971 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that nuclear licensing procedures had to be in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1960. The earlier hearings about BNFP’s construction license had not complied with that act. A few months after the Supreme Court decision, the AEC ruled that the Barnwell plant’s license would have to be reconsidered under the new procedures.

For the first time, Belser saw an opportunity to challenge the plant with more than just a microphone and a magazine article. He helped Ruth Thomas and a handful of others set up an organization named Environmentalists Inc. (EI). Its primary purpose was to oppose AGNS’s new request to build and operate the plant.

“There hadn’t even been plans for public hearings,” explains Thomas, “so first we had to force the AEC to hold hearings by making a public clamor.” EI members spoke to groups and wrote letters to the local papers. They searched for allies both nationally and locally, and especially sought other South Carolina groups willing to intervene in the upcoming licensing hearings.

The state of South Carolina responded to the pressure and the arguments of Belser, Thomas, and others and set up a joint legislative committee to study the plant’s expected economic and environmental impacts. Hearings were held in 1971 and 1972, and EI members participated by pointing out some of the problems of the Barnwell plant. They pushed committee members to tour a similar plant in West Valley, New York, which had operated — at a fraction of its capacity and with numerous radiation releases — from 1966 until it was forced to close in 1972. But that tour never took place, and AGNS officials were allowed to brief many of the committee’s witnesses and even edited much of the

final draft of the joint legislative committee’s report. The report found that BNFP’s economic impacts would all be beneficial, its environmental impacts insignificant.

EI continued its opposition and in May 1974 the AEC admitted the group to the next series of hearings on the plant’s requests for construction and operating licenses. Two other small state groups were also admitted to the hearings, the Piedmont Organic Movement and the Hilton Head-based South Carolina Environmental Action Inc. Ruth Thomas represented all the participating groups, and Townsend Belser was hired as their attorney.

The two made a curious pair. “Townsend had the savvy and knew the engineering,” explains Suzanne Rhodes, a former EI member. “And Ruth was just so persistent.” With his broad background in nuclear science and the law, Belser identified the main areas at issue and methodically searched for weaknesses in the AGNS arguments. Thomas, a former art teacher, had no experience in either legal hearings or nuclear

science. AGNS officials had sought to keep her out of the hearings because they felt, says Rhodes, that “she was just a housewife.” She was often described as a “little old lady in tennis shoes.”

“I had trouble doing everything that was required for the hearings,” she admits, remembering the hearing which stretched from the fall of 1974 to January 1976. “But here are people sitting down and planning something that they know could kill people, that could hurt children, and they keep up with it. I was motivated beyond my potential,” she says shaking her head. “I couldn’t stand it, I was just so upset.”

In preparation for the hearings, Belser put in 60-hour work-weeks and 40-to-50-hour weeks during the actual hearings. He billed the organizations at half his usual rate, but that was still far beyond the financial reach of the environmental groups involved. Thomas often attended the hearings by herself, while the industry and government were represented by a battery of experts with seemingly unlimited resources and infor-



courtesy of Osceola

TOWNSEND BELSER QUESTIONING AN EXECUTIVE FROM DUKE POWER.

mation.

On retainer for AGNS was Bennett Boskey, a Washington attorney who had formerly served on the staff of the AEC. Since he wrote the licensing procedures that were being followed in the case, Boskey understood the rules and regulations of the hearings better than the licensing board itself, claims one EI volunteer lawyer.

In November 1975 the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which had replaced the AEC, decided to go

ahead and license the BNFP reprocessing facility on an interim basis. EI wearily joined the Natural Resources Defense Council, a national organization, and contested this decision before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second District.

There was far more work to be done than EI could handle. Adding to the difficulties, Belser withdrew as attorney for the Barnwell intervenors in May 1976. The small group owed him nearly \$8,000.

EI had uncovered some informa-

tion about the Barnwell plant's operation which rallied opposition. Among its findings: BNFP would release significant levels of radioactive effluents into the air; it would contaminate vast numbers of temporary workers should repairs ever be needed; and its design was a larger replica of the New York plant that had been shut down. In May 1976 EI got a boost when the appeals court overturned the government decision to license the Barnwell plant on an interim basis.

## Clinch River Breeder Reactor Bagged

by Jan Pilarski

It was an unlikely marriage of interests: the right-wing Heritage Foundation and Ralph Nader's Congress Watch, the conservative National Taxpayers Union and the Machinists Union, the Council for a Competitive Economy and the Sierra Club. But this unusual coalition scored a remarkable victory in the Senate in October 1983, by defeating Senate majority leader Howard Baker's \$8.8 billion "technological turkey," the Clinch River Breeder Reactor at Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

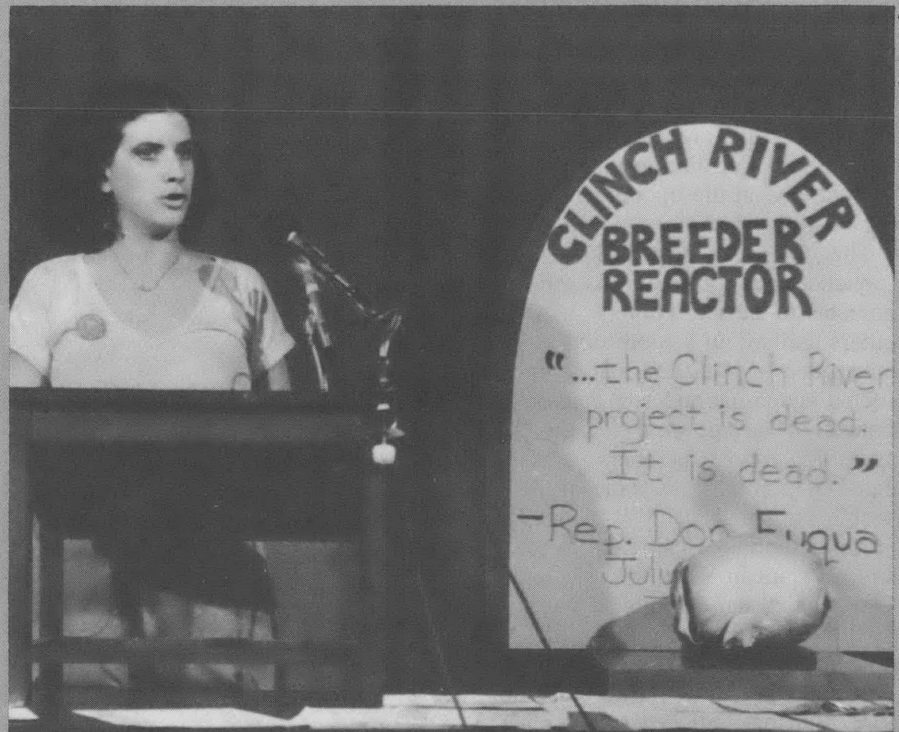
The victory was brewed from a lively blend of skillful organizing and exploitation of the shaky ground on which the breeder reactor plan stood. When the breeder was first proposed 13 years ago, its supporters offered skeptics the dream of unlimited energy. The nuclear plant, they argued, would demonstrate the feasibility of a process of producing electricity while breeding more radioactive fuel than consumed. Critics of the plant, however, pointed to a host of problems accompanying the development of this technology. The reactor, they said, increased the threat of nuclear proliferation by producing plutonium, the stuff of which nuclear weapons are made. Opponents of nuclear power maintained the plant was technologically unsound, while others saw the reactor as an ill-advised boondoggle conceived during a bygone era when electrical demand was skyrocketing.

Ultimately, however, the exorbitant cost of the reactor provided the focus for the anti-breeder campaign. "You could talk about the environmental

and health and safety arguments until you were blue in the face," says Jill Lancelot of the National Taxpayers Union, one of the original anti-breeder organizers. "The economic arguments served as a bridge between liberals and conservatives," she says. Recognizing this fact, 15 environmental, peace, church, and research organizations from different points on the political spectrum forged the Taxpayers Coalition Against Clinch River in the spring of 1982.

The coalition adopted a two-front battle plan: a Washington-based blitzkrieg of lobbying, public education, and media work, and local organizing campaigns to build coalitions in 30 key communities through-

out the country. The local coalitions mirrored the national effort, drawing together affiliates of groups such as the U.S. Farmers Association, the Audubon Society, the National Organization for Women, the United Mine Workers of America, the Steelworkers Union, Clergy and Laity Concerned, Friends of the Earth, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the League of Women Voters. Catholic bishops in most of these communities lent critical support, as did many city and county officials. "The key thing was to put the breeder into terms people would understand . . . something people could easily relate to and become outraged by," says Craig McDonald, field director for Congress Watch and



TAXPAYERS COALITION ORGANIZER NAN SHAPIRO SPEAKING OUT AGAINST THE CLINCH RIVER "TURKEY."

photo by  
Nicolias Kashta



## Civil Disobedience

By the end of the hearings in 1976, concern about nuclear power and its wastes had spread far beyond Townsend Belser and Ruth Thomas. A new group of activists had entered the scene, one whose style was significantly different from that of the conservative, middle-aged EI members.

On August 1, 1976, 18 New Hampshire residents marched onto the property of the Seabrook nuclear

plant to protest its construction and, with 600 supporters rallying nearby, were arrested as trespassers. Three weeks later, 179 more were arrested at Seabrook as 1,200 rallied in protest. Among those arrested was a small group of South Carolinians, including one named Brett Bursey.

The son of a Marine Corps dentist, Bursey was known to South Carolina law enforcement people from an incident in March 1970, when he and four others were arrested for damaging property at the

Selective Service office in Columbia. He was convicted and sentenced but he left town and went underground. Finally arrested in Texas a year later, he was returned to South Carolina and spent 18 months in state prison.

Bursey was a dynamic speaker with infectious enthusiasm. Part street-corner preacher, part rock-and-roller, he made political issues seem of immense importance and political action morally necessary, even fun. He attracted many follow-

coordinator of the local organizing campaign. Organizers like McDonald made the economics of Clinch River hit home by translating the cost of the breeder reactor into what that money could buy for a community.

The local groups also proved adept at making the breeder a campaign issue during the 1982 congressional elections. In at least six Senate races opposition candidates brought the incumbents' voting records on the reactor into the forefront of debate. Three Senate candidates opposed to Clinch River — Paul Tribble (R-VA), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), and Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) — won their races. And two challengers for seats in the House of Representatives, Rick Boucher of Virginia and Robert Toricelli of New Jersey, were elected after making opposition to the breeder reactor part of their platforms. "Boucher's stand on the breeder made for a clear difference between us and our opponent," says his assistant, Andy Wright. "The breeder was one of the best examples we could give of foolish federal spending. We just went and showed how all those freed-up billions could be used to improve the lives of people in our district."

With the breeder's opponents dubbing it "turkey of the year," organizers had a chance to have some fun and get their point across in a unique way. As cameras clicked, Senator Lowell Weicker (R-CT), a Clinch supporter who ran for reelection in 1982, found himself caught in a revolving door with one of challenger Toby Moffet's campaign workers, dressed as a giant turkey. Steelworkers in Pittsburgh sent Senator John Heinz (R-PA) 12 frozen turkeys with the message "Freeze this Turkey." Senators Paula Hawkins (R-

FL) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) received similar Thanksgiving gifts.

The Taxpayers Coalition nearly defeated the breeder in 1982 when, on two separate occasions, the project squeaked through the Senate by just one vote. The Senate, however, directed the Department of Energy (DOE) to devise a new funding plan that would reduce federal expenditures and increase participation by the private sector. That plan, proposed in August 1983, was spurned by many in Congress because it required taxpayers to shoulder the cost of building the breeder. According to the Congressional Budget Office, DOE's "cost-sharing" plan would be more expensive than if the government bore the entire cost of the breeder itself.

In September, coalition organizers launched a phone-tree campaign to undo DOE's proposed financing scheme. Working every night for six weeks, volunteers from Washington-based public interest organizations encouraged thousands of people in key states to send lunch bags to their representatives and senators inscribed with such slogans as "Bag the Breeder," "Don't Let the Breeder Breed," and "No More Pork at the Public Trough."

That same month the House voted against appropriating any more money for Clinch River. In the Senate, a much tougher fight was needed to counter the efforts of Senator Howard Baker, the project's chief supporter. Clinging to the breeder as a symbol of its faith in the future of nuclear power, the industry dispatched legions of lobbyists in preparation for the October Senate vote. President Reagan personally lobbied members of Congress, heavily courting the Congressional Black

Caucus with the promise that a share of the project's contracts would go to minority businesses. But the coalition continued to hammer away with the facts, consolidating support among members of Congress and a very unlikely new bedfellow, the Moral Majority.

The Senate floor fight against the breeder was led by Senators Gordon Humphrey (R-NH) and Dale Bumpers (D-AR). Humphrey, a fiscal conservative who supports nuclear power, set the tone for the four-hour debate in his opening remarks when he said, "You do not have to support everything radioactive to be conservative. It is attentive conservatism to oppose waste, and this project is wasteful according to many experts." Bumpers provided comic relief by exposing the flaws of the DOE cost-sharing plan. "If you called up Mike Wallace and said 'Have I got a scam for you!' he'd hang on you because it's so unbelievable," Bumpers said.

On October 26 the coalition's work paid off with a 56-to-40 Senate vote against further funding of Clinch River. Eight senators who voted to support the breeder in 1982 were persuaded to change their vote in 1983.

In the end, only the nuclear industry was left supporting Clinch River. "The idea of bringing the left and the right together in a coalition spelled the breeder's doom," says Scott Denman, a veteran organizer against Clinch River. □

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ers as he argued that a group of people can change history.

In 1975, after his release from prison, he helped establish a political study group in Columbia, called the Grassroots Organizing Workshop (GROW), which took nuclear power as one of its concerns. Members of GROW turned to Ruth Thomas for information and assistance in their work.

By this time the outrage that Thomas had felt when she first heard Belser was shared by many others in the usually complacent state. South Carolina was becoming widely known as a major center of nuclear facilities and a national dumping ground of nuclear waste, and many residents were displeased. In 1975 four nuclear reactors operated there, and six others were planned. A low-level waste dump in Barnwell buried radioactive material from around the country, while SRP was one of the nation's largest nuclear weapons facilities. Perhaps most threatening, the Barnwell reprocessing plant seemed likely to open for business soon, either reprocessing or storing spent fuel.

Concern about nuclear power was so widespread that Bursey and GROW decided in 1977 to form the Palmetto Alliance, to focus state opposition to nuclear power. The Palmetto Alliance drew a new following of young people, many of whom had been involved in the anti-war movement. And just as the anti-war movement had burgeoned with enthusiasm, drawing in followers, so too did the anti-nuclear movement grow.

But the Palmetto Alliance took a more confrontational path than had EI, whose involvement in hearings and legal proceedings had actually done little to slow down the plant's construction schedule. The alliance members spent much of their first year planning an ambitious event in Barnwell. They intended to rally and demonstrate at the reprocessing plant, engage in civil disobedience, and if necessary be arrested. They invited nationally known musicians and speakers to appear as an added attraction for anti-nuclear demonstrators.

The Palmetto Alliance had no money and few supporters in the Barnwell area. The earlier civil rights and anti-war movements in

South Carolina had never attempted an event of the scale Bursey and the alliance now planned. Many didn't think they could pull it off. They did.

On April 30, 1978, 2,000 people from a score of Southern groups marched by the plant and rallied in a nearby cornfield. Grace Laitala, a 66-year-old woman from Clemson, presented AGNS officials with a petition bearing 10,000 signatures, asking the industry to stop nuclear waste dumping. Laitala's presence, along with that of several Barnwell-area farmers, suggested that anger toward the plant crossed many age and class barriers. She and her 69-year-old husband Everett, a retired professor of industrial engineering, appeared at a press conference where Grace Laitala told reporters, "We're straight people, real straight. We believe in apple pie and staying married and stopping nukes."

The next day the Laitalas were among the 280 people who huddled under a plastic tarp on AGNS property while a mighty rainstorm beat down. When the rain stopped, they were arrested.

The rally and arrests made national news and dramatically alerted South Carolinians to the controversy surrounding the plant as two years of hearings had failed to do. The Palmetto Alliance spent about \$37,000 on the event, despite the fact that few staff people received any money. To help pay the bills, Bursey borrowed about \$6,000 from Northern supporters. The entire Palmetto Alliance was responsible

for that debt, but Bursey had personally made most of the decisions about the organization of the event and about money.

In the aftermath of the Barnwell action, rumblings of resentment against Bursey grew to a roar. Some claimed his radical reputation limited the ability of the group to gain support. Throughout the state movement, Bursey himself became a major issue.

In the year following the Barnwell action, Palmetto Alliance followers separated themselves from Bursey. They moved out of the GROW building — a ramshackle office above a bar and grill, the GROW Cafe, in a low-income neighborhood — and into a more modern office. Three staffpeople were hired — Ted Harris, who had driven Bursey to Seabrook years before; Michael Lowe, a former construction worker at a nuclear plant; and Bebe Verdery, after Ruth Thomas only the second woman to play a leading role in the state's anti-nuclear organizations.

They soon began helping a group called the Natural Guard to prepare for an event to be called Barnwell II. It would be another mass demonstration, to coincide with similar actions around the country on September 30 and October 1, 1979.

Again speakers and musicians addressed a crowd in a cornfield on the dangers of nuclear power, but now the focus was on all three local facilities: the Barnwell low-level waste dump, the Savannah River Plant weapons facility, and BNFP. This time 1,200 people participated in the rally and 161 were arrested. No



BRETT BURSEY AND SUPPORTERS AT BARNWELL

photo by Dic Tutte

longer unique, such events still attracted major news coverage.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter banned the reprocessing of nuclear wastes in an effort to limit the world supply of bomb-grade plutonium. All of the hearings on BNFP's future were cancelled.

Dick Riley, a liberal state senator from Greenville who was running for governor, visited the Palmetto Alliance office in 1978 when it was still located in the GROW building, and spent three hours discussing nuclear power with Ted Harris. Riley won the election and was in power when, in March 1979, a truck loaded with nuclear waste from Pennsylvania's crippled Three Mile Island reactor set off for South Carolina. Governor Riley boldly turned it away, announcing, "South Carolina can no longer be the path of least resistance in seeking the national answer to nuclear waste disposal."

At the time of Riley's election, South Carolina shouldered a major portion of the nation's nuclear waste burden. In 1979 the waste dump in Barnwell, next door to BNFP, buried 85 percent of the nation's low-level waste. Riley didn't oppose nuclear power, but he argued for a more equitable distribution of the responsibility for handling it.

Eventually other South Carolina politicians also spoke out against the spread of nuclear technology, hearing increasingly widespread complaints from constituents about the state's role in the business. By the early 1980s, saying "no" to nuclear facilities had become a mainstream position.

The plant's economic foundations were also eroding by this time. Even before the Three Mile Island accident, utilities had stopped ordering nuclear reactors. A limited number of reactors meant a limited amount of spent fuel available for reprocessing. Besides, reprocessed fuel would be financially attractive only if the price of uranium soared, and that wasn't happening.

BNFP was also experiencing cost overruns. It was originally priced at \$70 million, but the owners had upped their cost estimates to nearly \$1 billion. Opponents of the plant also learned that in 1975 AGNS had asked the federal government to join it in a "cooperative program" of construction and demonstration.

Belser and Thomas considered this request an acknowledgment that AGNS could not afford to complete the plant. By the late 1970s, Belser and Thomas had been relegated to the background of the state's anti-nuclear movement. Belser chose his own exile, moving to Washington, D.C., a city with considerably more work for a patent attorney than Columbia, South Carolina. The move also allowed him to remove himself from the exhausting fight against BNFP — "Burnout," he says curtly.

Thomas remained in Columbia, still fervently and actively opposed to nuclear power. But she was out of the movement's mainstream. The AGNS hearings, temporarily suspended in 1976, were never resumed. And while Thomas welcomed the appearance of a new generation of activists, she was rarely asked to join them. Part of her isolation may be due to the feeling of some former colleagues that she is disorganized or difficult to work with. But Suzanne Rhodes points to another reason for Thomas's exclusion from the young, mostly male, movement: "her age, her sex."

### Victory, For Now

While years of hearings produced damning information, and the speeches and rallies helped change public opinion, politics and economics finally killed the AGNS reprocessing plant in 1983. Though Ronald Reagan reversed Carter's ban on reprocessing early in his administration, he was unwilling to lobby Congress to pay the bills for the plant's completion and operation. AGNS, claiming it feared another government policy reversal, refused to invest further in the plant. Other companies expressed interest in buying it but never came up with the necessary money. Between 1978 and 1982, while AGNS officials scrambled in search of a buyer, the plant's staff was held together by \$75 million in government research funds. And AGNS lobbyists repeatedly returned to Congress asking for one last year of funding. Eventually even Congress balked.

Beginning in 1981, South Carolina Congressman Butler Derrick led an effort in the House to eliminate federal funding. A decade earlier, he had been alerted to the problems at

Barnwell by his friend Townsend Belser. In 1983 Congress finally said no more, and government funding for research at the Barnwell Nuclear Fuel Plant ran out on July 31, 1983.

Some private companies, primarily The Bechtel Group, continue to express interest in taking over the plant. AGNS spokesman George Stribling still says, "We believe it'll come back." For now the opponents of the plant have scored a major victory. But they've hardly had time to celebrate.

Ruth Thomas is busy following a broad spectrum of energy issues, providing the public and media with background information on everything from radiation releases to rate hike requests. Brett Bursey is organizing people around disarmament and American adventurism abroad.

Of the three Palmetto Alliance staffpeople from the post-Bursey days, Michael Lowe remains as director, busy with the licensing hearing for the Duke Power Company Catawba I reactor in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Bebe Verdery works on disarmament issues, Ted Harris in an intervention opposing government plans to reopen a Savannah River Plant reactor that has been closed since 1968.

These people, and thousands more, challenged a multi-billion dollar industry that was supported by the most powerful people in the state and nation. They challenged it in government hearings, in debates, in the media, and in the halls of Congress.

"I was impressed," Belser says now, "to see that a dedicated individual in this country could make a difference. I was shocked by the size of the difference." □

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# Daniel's Garden



**I** watch Daniel in his garden. From the window above the kitchen sink, I see him stand there, his broad back to the house, his large head revolving — always moving, his huge arms hanging as if their size presupposes movement. It is his garden, beside his father's and in the farthest corner of the yard, but it is unlike the neat, weeded rows that Ely has planted. Daniel's rows are crowded and burdened. Except for the singular path he has made, there is no other entry into the bushy overhang, the rambling of vine and branch.

Every summer is the same. Ely plows both gardens and plants his own. We watch as Daniel takes seeds at random and casts them over his plot or stoops, and with a large thumb, pushes the seeds into the moist, pungent earth. A cantaloupe, some tomatoes, eggplant, cucumbers, more cantaloupe perhaps mixed with carrots or radishes, even pumpkin seeds and gourds — Daniel especially likes the ornamental gourds, snap and lima beans, corn, and

peas — all mixed and growing profusely unaware of order and precision, crowding each other for sunlight, fruiting in Daniel's massive, calm hands in numbers that often exceed his father's pampered, planned plantings.

Beyond the gardens is a deep-green field of knee-high soybeans, and beyond that is the forest, brown-green against a light-blue mid-morning sky.

Daniel stands there for a long period not moving except for the predisposition of his head to revolve slowly, at times his chin slightly jerking forward. Usually when he moves it's to touch the growth for which he is responsible. He will hold a green cantaloupe or small cucumber and make his muttering sounds to it, as if urging its growth. He will run his big hand over the verdant leaves and buzz like a bee, and there are times when his meaty fingers move quickly and gracefully, like a slow butterfly, from leaf to leaf.

As I watch he slowly extends his heavy arm — a



by Andrew Borders



Illustration by Ryanthony Taylor

naked arm for he wears only bib overalls — picks a large green tomato and brings it to his gaping mouth where half of it is consumed with a slurping, sucking sound I can hear through the open back door. I wad the dish rag and squeeze it in a knot. He knows nothing of my anxiety nor does my anger disquiet him. Daniel's is a perfect world of moments, a complete world at any time, and, though I relinquished the natural hopes of a mother long ago, I nevertheless plug away at punitive measures that might change Daniel, might make him more cognizant of the complicated world in which we live. If only once he could see what's ahead of us!

He bites again at the green tomato as my anger takes control.

"Daniel!" I yell, slamming the screen door behind me, and I stand on the open porch wiping my hands on a yellow apron. I can smell the freshness of the blooming zinnias that stand along the porch and around the corner of the small house.

"Daniel!" again, and he turns, simple-faced, smiling. "I saw that tomato, Daniel," I yell, and he steps forward his head now almost on his chest. "Come here, son."

Coming across the yard, he stumbles, his huge feet bumping one another, but he rights himself and chances a quick look at me. His wet lips purse a "Mama," then he mumbles unintelligibly.

"What'd I tell you?" I ask knowing he will not tell me. This is for me. "I saw you eat a green-tomato. You know what I said I'd do if I caught you eating another one." He watches his wet-toe shoes. "You remember?"

I look down and see he is making the toes of his shoes move up and down. He is playing a game. His world is perfect, here and now.

I use a finger to get his attention, shaking it under his nose. "I said, 'Do you remember?'"

He looks at the finger, at his toes, at the finger. A new game.

“Didn’t I tell you your stomach would hurt? Didn’t I tell you you’d be sick again?” I question, hoping for remorse and not getting it. I am standing on the concrete porch which makes me taller than he, so I stoop, hands on my knees, and face him.

Daniel tries very hard to bury his chin into his chest, still watching the toes.

I reach forward, lift his face to mine, and try with my best grimace to convey my exasperation.

He smiles.

“What’d I tell you would happen if you ate another one? What’d I tell you, Daniel?” I bare my teeth, and Daniel slides a huge dirty index finger up his left nostril. “Okay, I’ve had it! Come in the house!” My harangue is no longer the third degree but quickly mutates into a conversation with myself.

“Lord knows I try. God Almighty knows I’ve given twenty-three years to trying. Time and again! Your father was here all day like me he’d see what I’m talking about.”

I sigh heavily not wanting to forsake any of my arsenal on him and pull him with me into the kitchen. He stumbles on the threshold.

“Go to the sink,” and obediently he does, stands there gazing out the window, an expectant look on his wide face as if there’s something out there only he can see. “Open your mouth,” I order and he does, slack-jawed, still looking to the far horizon, the blue sky reflecting in his calm eyes. “Wider. Yes. . . . You think my fingers enjoy fooling around in your mouth? God Almighty!”

I force the bar of soap into his mouth and I know the taste must be terrible, but he does not flinch, does not move. Then he looks at me as if he expected the soap in his mouth, as if this too is normal.

I move the soap around in there, place it back on the sink, and take the dishrag and wipe the inside of his mouth. When I hand him a cup of water, he drinks it down instead of rinsing. Knowing it’s finished, he looks away from me, looks out toward his tangled garden then the sky.

“Okay, Daniel,” I say, “enough’s enough. ‘Too much is a dog’s bait,’ my grandma used to say. No more green tomatoes!” I take his face and make him look at me. “No more green tomatoes.”

Daniel smiles. He can break your heart, that boy — always could, and he rubs his wet lips against my forehead, thanking me, I guess, for what I’ve done. A heartbreaker.

One of his large hands goes to his crotch.

“Go on,” I say, and he shuffles toward the hall. “And don’t lock the door!”

I turn to the field peas simmering on the stove and listen for the lock. He bumps the door twice but does not lock it. At the sink I look again out the window and my eyes automatically turn to Daniel’s garden. Why is it I always return there? Even in winter when Ely has plowed it over, my eyes are drawn to the barren corner. I walk in the yard and invariably gravitate to that spot of mute earth, that incomprehensible area, that area of forlorn testimony — my shame and my glory, the plot of my living mystery. Why me, God? Why me for twenty-three years? Why Daniel?

I have cried at times like this, a thousand times, more. But not now. I cried when he was a baby — when he was a boy I sat on the concrete stoop a whole summer of nights and I wept, but not now. There’s something else where the sorrow used to be, something I think may be a stone.

Daniel returns to the kitchen, his pants unzipped but I don’t correct him, and he ambles out the door, slamming the screen. He watches his feet as he walks across the yard. Their monotony seems to fascinate him. At his garden he stops, turns back to the house, and, not seeing me, pushes into the verdant touch of his plantings.

**A**t twelve Ely comes in for lunch. He’s been plowing soybeans and his shoulders are dusty and he smells of grease and dirt. As he washes in the kitchen sink, streams of dirt flow away from his hairy forearms.

“Hot this morning,” he says turning to me with a small towel in his hands. He looks out the screen toward Daniel then back. “We’d a breeze till today. Must be rain coming though it ain’t on the television.”

We sit at the formica table, peas steaming, fresh cut tomatoes cooling beside slices of cucumber. There’s a plate of cold ham between us.

Ely nods his head in Daniel’s direction. “You gonna call him in?” he asks. I reply that Daniel can

eat later and there is enough exasperation in my voice to quell his further comment, but as we begin eating the screen opens and Daniel comes in sliding his heels on the linoleum. Instead of taking his place, which is usual, he stands beside me, so close his trousers brush my arm. I replace a bowl of boiled corn-on-the-cob to the center of the table before turning to him.

“Well?” I ask.

He seems to study my hair.

“Sit down if you want to eat.”

He does not move.

“Daniel.”

Ely looks at our son.

Slowly, Daniel raises his right arm to my face.

He holds it so close to my face I cannot focus on the mark he is trying to show me. Pushing the arm away I realize there is a trickle of blood seeping like a red vein across his thick, muscular forearm.

“God Almighty,” I say, more inconvenienced than frightened — it is only a small wound, perhaps a thorn, “what’d you do?” I push my chair back and rise holding the arm. “He’s bleeding but I don’t think it’s more than a scratch. I’ll get it. Come on, son,” I say pulling him toward the sink. “He hasn’t been a very good boy today. Green tomatoes again. Maybe this is his punishment.”

At the sink the cool water washes over his forearm but the rivulet of blood continues to drip. I pull his arm closer, turning it over to search the soft inner arm, and find two small holes perhaps three inches below the elbow. With each of Daniel’s heartbeats, blood spurts from the lower puncture.

Before I can call him, Ely is reaching over the sink, taking the arm, mashing it. His voice sounds very calm when he says, “Snakebite,” but his face is white with terror.

bous and his nose is a protuberance of distended flesh. His ears seem to literally swell while I watch them. His eyes, now slits, are slowly closing. The lids are too thick to function.

He is laid on a table, and I hover over him, holding his other arm, his hand, and rub his thick forehead. Through a crevice of flesh I can see his eyes and I expect to see fear, but there is no fear, no alarm. He looks at me as if there is something he would say. I wonder if he knows what’s happening to him.

“Daniel,” I say.

He looks away from me to the overhead light and he seems to be very calm. His eyes are the same blue as when he looks out the window.

His breathing grows very heavy, and the nurse across from me says his trachea is closing. A young doctor I do not know swabs at Daniel’s throat with what seems to be iodine while the nurse hurriedly opens a plastic pack containing a tube.

Suddenly I am pulled away from the table and a curtain is drawn around Daniel. The hands holding my arm are old and belong to Dr. Jefford. One hand goes behind my back and I feel him rubbing me between my shoulders, softly, just a touching. We stand together with Ely.

“We need to start antivenin right away,” Dr. Jefford says. His face is lined with myriad wrinkles. His eyes, like Daniel’s, seem too calm for this place. “We don’t know what kind of snake but I think we can narrow it down.” He takes an ink pen — the old refillable kind — from his pocket, unscrews the cap, and makes two dots on his own thin forearm. “I’ve measured the distance in the fang punctures to be an inch which means it’s either a moccasin or a rattler. Because of the antivenin, it’s important to know. We’ll have to pick one and go with it.” His patient eyes hold Ely’s face, watching Ely’s thinking and waiting for his choice.

Ely sucks air over his teeth. “Rattler, Henry. Got to be. I ain’t never seen a moccasin that far up from the creek.”

Henry Jefford nods, turns and ducks behind the curtain. Shortly he comes back.

“Let me tell you what we’ve got,” he begins. “Has to be a large snake. An inch between fangs is pretty big, and the marks where the lower jaw struck,” — he places two lean fingers on the blue dots on his forearm and uses his thumb to mark the snake’s lower jaw placement — “are two and a

**B**y the time Ely has driven us the fifteen miles to the county hospital, Daniel’s arm is swollen to twice its normal size. His chest and neck are becoming indistinct, and his large head is swelling so that his cheeks are bul-



quarter inches from the punctures. Also, the left fang penetrated a good size vessel — that's the spurting you saw, which means the poison's being routed through his body. You can tell from the general swelling it's moving around pretty good." He puts his right hand on my shoulder. "The problem with antivenin is large amounts of it can precipitate lung damage, can cause the lungs to bleed . . ."

"You mean he'd drown in his own blood," Ely says.

"Let's see how it goes," says Jefford, his finger tapping my shoulder. "He's a strong boy, always has been."

Within four hours it is evident that if Daniel is to live massive antivenin doses must be given. His body is unrecognizable. His eyes are now only slits in his taut skin. The massive shoulders and chest have so swollen that the skin seems paper thin, opaque. Several tubes come from his enlarged arms, and there is a tube at his throat.

At midnight Henry Jefford comes to us in the dim hall outside Daniel's room. This time his bony hand finds Ely's shoulder. Softly, "I want you to be ready," he says, looking first at me then Ely. His eyes have not changed but his old face seems beaten. "We're going to give Daniel a very large dose of antivenin. If we don't he won't make it much longer. If we do he may not make it either."

I feel myself sinking against Ely. I smell his shirt and feel his strong arm hold me.

"What are his chances?" he asks, and the words seem to come from far away, almost don't come.

Henry Jefford rubs above his upper lip with an index finger. "I've been his doctor all his life and always thought with his temperament and strength he'd be here long after I was gone. Now this. He's as strong as anyone I know — stronger, but all this may be too much. His heart may not hold out."

From Daniel's door a nurse emerges and motions to Henry Jefford. They whisper by the door and Henry comes back to us. His face is ashen, his eyes, for the first time, seem spiritless.

"Ely," he says, taking our hands, "would you pray with me?" and suddenly, almost inaudibly he is repeating the 23rd Psalm, imploring God with gentle words that well within me, filling a long empty hollow where the psalm is firstly echoes but soon is quiet waters, a field from my youth where I lay in pungent earth and grass watching evanescent clouds — filling, filling until I stand away

from Ely and hold myself, resuscitated, able. I know then that Daniel is dead.

**W**e follow Henry into the room. The nurses are loosening wires and winding them around projections on a bedside machine. We stand by his still bed.

"I washed his mouth out with soap this morning," I say. "He just stood there looking at me and out the window. I even put the soap in his mouth, but his eyes never changed. I think he could see things I could never see."

Ely holds Daniel's hand.

I want Daniel to forgive me, not just for the soap but for the twenty-three years. But he had never said it and now he could utter no saving word. I study his swollen face.

I walk to the door, wrapping a handkerchief around my knitting fingers, turn once more to see him, watching again in my mind's eye from the kitchen window, and leave him. Outside the night is clear. I stand there for a moment overwhelmed by the enormity of darkness, and I wait for Daniel's death to wash over me in quiet wringings of anguish and grief. I should weep at this. I should be distraught and torn.

Since there are no tears, I look for a sign, some indication I have done my part. I wait.

Finally Ely comes out and we go to the truck. All the way home there is no sign, nothing.

As Ely cuts on the lights in the kitchen and begins to make coffee, I go out to the back porch and try to look over the yard at Daniel's tangled garden. I can barely make it out. The darkness takes me, takes my eyes, and I see only the heavens. Watching the stars I think how scattered they are, how randomly strewn, how curiously mingled, crowded, and spaced. There seems no pattern, no plan, as if done by some childish sower, as if Daniel had been there. □

*Andrew Borders is a free-lance writer living in Davisboro, Georgia.*

# THE WANDERER



## RACING YACHT TO SLAVE SHIP

BY GENE GLEASON



### THE RACING SCHOONER WANDERER FIRST SET

sail from East Setauket on New York's Long Island in June 1857, bound for the rarefied life of yacht races and regattas. Within a year, though, she had veered into notoriety as one of America's last slave ships. Such dizzying changes of fortune characterized the vessel's short life; besides the racing and slaving, the *Wanderer* served in the U.S. Navy during the Civil War, limped along as a Caribbean fruit boat, and met its end in the Windward Passage in 1871. And her story sheds a bit of light on the last few years of the North American slave trade.

An estimated 10 million African people were shipped across the Atlantic and sold as slaves before the *Wanderer* appeared. Most went to the Caribbean islands and Brazil, but British-ruled North America imported at least 427,000, and continuation of the African slave trade was among the hotly debated topics of the convention that drafted the U.S. Constitution in 1783. A compromise between those who abhorred the traffic in human flesh and the

wealthy, influential Southern planters who thrived on it was eventually achieved: Congress was granted power to ban further importation of slaves after the passage of 20 years.

Congress so acted in 1807, outlawing the slave trade beginning in 1808. By this time, Africa had become less important as a source of slaves: at the start of the Civil War, about four-fifths of the nation's three million black slaves had been born in the United States. But Congress never stopped the slave trade. Even after 1820, when the law was rewritten to equate slaving with piracy, a crime that carried the death penalty, the illegal trade continued, and no one was ever executed. The nation had no will to enforce the law, and Congress never voted any but token funds toward its enforcement.



### THE WANDERER BEGAN LIFE WITH IMPRESSIVE

credentials. Designed by master mariner and yacht architect Captain Thomas B. Hawkins, she closely resembled the *America*, a great

American racing schooner that won the America's Cup in 1851. The *Wanderer* was somewhat larger, measuring 114 feet in length, registered at 234 tons.

Colonel John D. Johnson, who commissioned her construction, was an experienced yachtsman and a member of the New York Yacht Club (NYYC). Johnson began his career as a Mississippi River pilot and became the wealthy owner of a large sugar plantation on the Delta below New Orleans, as well as a summer home on Long Island. In the summer of 1857 he took the *Wanderer* on a shakedown cruise, sailing to New England with the NYYC squadron.

From the sweeping convex curve of her hull to the long, slightly concave deckline, Johnson's new yacht exemplified speed and luxury. The captain's cabin and stateroom reflected the taste of a Southern white man of means, with a carefully chosen library, the best available nautical instruments, satinwood furniture, damask and lace curtains, fine engravings, and Brussels carpets. Flying the NYYC burgee and commanded by Captain Hawkins, the *Wanderer* cruised down the Atlantic coast in

December 1857, touching at Key West and New Orleans before going on to Havana.

Like the *America*, the *Wanderer* was built for speed. At her fastest she exceeded 20 knots, faster than any contemporary steamship and all but a few of the fastest sailing vessels. During one 24-hour ocean run the *Wanderer* averaged 14 knots. In January 1858 she easily defeated five Southern yachts in a regatta off Brunswick, Georgia, and Captain Hawkins handled her with a finesse that drew crowds and approving notices in Southern newspapers before she returned to New York on April

Corrie was said to be very rich, a member of a prestigious South Carolina family, a tall, suave man with a flair for lavish hospitality, fully acceptable, it seemed, to New York society. Few Northerners knew him as the Washington lobbyist for his state's slave and mercantile interests, who claimed to know the price of every member of Congress. In fact, the British consul believed that Corrie exercised more political influence than any of the South Carolina congressmen.

But it was the fate of the *Wanderer* after he bought her, not his Washington activities, that soon became the

States . . . well, that seemed a more likely possibility to the observers along the Port Jefferson shore.

Acting on rumors that the *Wanderer* was about to become a slave ship, the U.S. surveyor there alerted the local port authorities. On June 9, 1858, the steam cutter *Harriet Lane* intercepted the *Wanderer* as she headed out to sea, towed her to Manhattan, and subjected her to inspection by customs officials. Corrie — who later boasted that bribery had carried the day — somehow convinced the officials that his ship was not a potential slaver, and the *Wanderer* cleared the port.

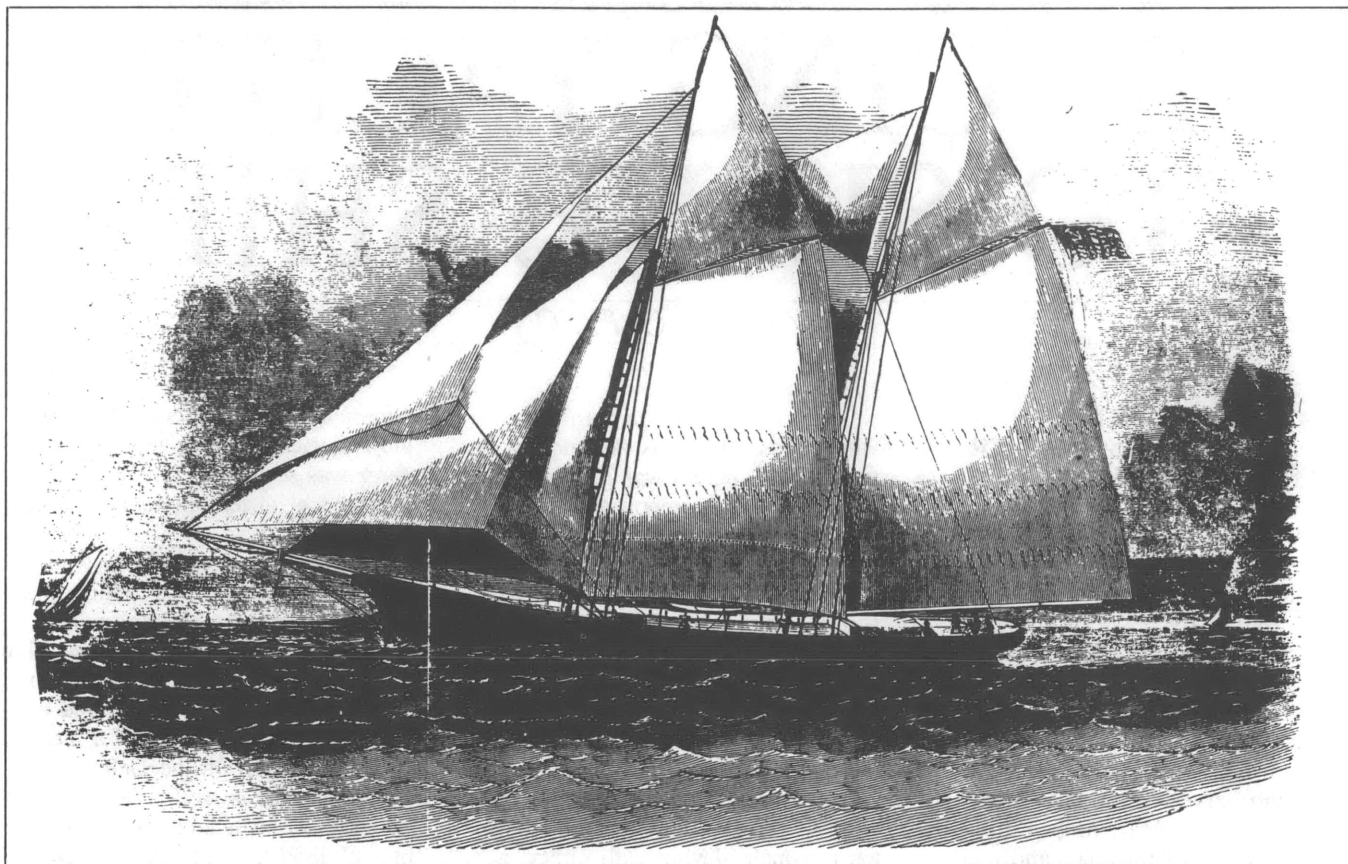


Illustration courtesy of the Peabody Museum

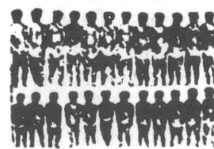
RACING SCHOONER WANDERER BECAME A FAMOUS SLAVE SHIP IN 1858.

11 of that year.

Soon after the *Wanderer* put in at Port Jefferson, on Long Island Sound, she was to lose her spotless reputation. Colonel Johnson sold her to William C. Corrie, described in newspapers as a “high-toned Southern gentleman from Charleston, South Carolina,” for a sum variously reported at \$12,000 to \$30,000. With Johnson’s sponsorship, the new owner was promptly accepted as a member of the Yacht Club.

subject of lively gossip. Why, for example, were 15,000-gallon water tanks being installed aboard the schooner? Corrie’s explanation — that the tanks would provide water ballast — was accepted by few. Then again, with her tanks filled and 20 people aboard, the *Wanderer* would have a two-year drinking supply. But what yacht owner would want that?

On the other hand, if one wanted to provide drinking water for 500 slaves during a one-month voyage from Africa to the United



CORRIE SAILED SOUTH TO CHARLES-

ton, where the water tanks were filled and hundreds of tin pans, spoons, and cups were taken aboard. Then the *Wanderer* set out to sea. Ostensibly, she was headed to Trinidad and St. Helena, but the schooner missed the latter by nearly a thousand miles, sailing instead into the Congo River of West Africa on September 16, 1858.



The provisions of an 1842 treaty called for Great Britain and the U.S. to patrol jointly the African coast to suppress the slave trade, but the ships used were steam-powered and slow. Few slave ships were caught as they raced from West Africa to Cuba, the usual route. The U.S. patrol squadron never numbered more than seven slow vessels, and they spent most of their time in support of Liberian-American trade, neglecting the slavers. Between 1842 and 1853, the American patrol captured only nine slave ships and released them all after, at most, the payment of small fines.

The British patrollers were more zealous, but they knew America would flare up in indignation if they were to search and seize a vessel flying the U.S. flag. So, when the *Wanderer* laid up in the Congo River for 10 days while the crew built a temporary slave deck below the yacht's regular deck, the British man-of-war *Medusa* — which was docked nearby and whose crew was probably aware of the *Wanderer's* mission — did nothing to stop it.

About the time the slave deck was nearing completion, two American patrol ships, the USS *Cumberland* and the USS *Vincennes*, got word of the *Wanderer's* mission, but they were too far from the Congo to intercept her. With its new deck in place, the *Wanderer* moved out of the river and sailed along the African coast, dropping anchor here and there to pick up groups of Africans imprisoned ashore in detention pens. By the time she was sighted by the anti-slave patrol, the *Wanderer* had 490 Africans chained to her deck.

Captain Benjamin Totten of the *Vincennes*, steaming south along the coast toward the Congo River, saw a tall-masted schooner in full sail dart out from shore. He hailed the yacht, but it failed to acknowledge him. Captain Totten had no real chance of intercepting her; she was doing at least 20 knots, and his top speed was eight-and-a-half. The yacht sped west until Totten saw it disappear into a white dot on the horizon. Days later, Totten learned that the westward-fleeing yacht was the famous *Wanderer*, now far beyond his range.

The manacled captives — mostly young men — were stowed along the temporary deck in tight parallel rows. Sanitary conditions, ventila-

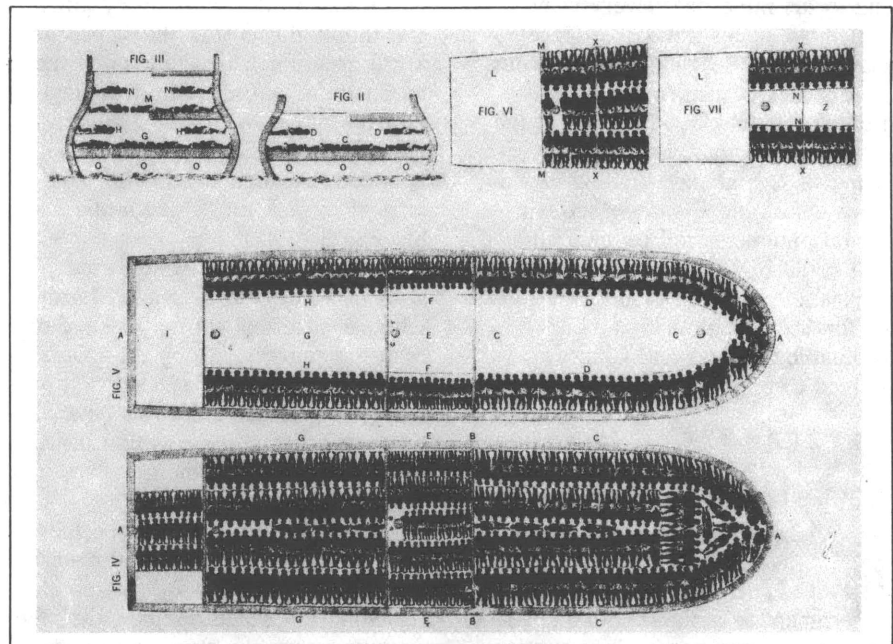
tion, food, and water were barely sufficient to keep them alive. But when the ship reached the doldrums, her sails went slack and the temperature rose to intolerable levels. Deaths from disease and the equatorial heat abounded.

Finally the *Wanderer* reached American waters; on November 28, 1858, the light-keeper at Cumberland Island, Georgia, sighted her standing offshore. The next day a local pilot guided the slave yacht through St. Andrew Sound to Jekyll Island, whose owners, the Dubignon family, are supposed to have received \$15,000 for allowing the slaves to be landed there.

The surviving slaves, shivering with cold, were unloaded at night. Their first meal was cooked in a huge mess kettle still exhibited on Jekyll Island, which is now a state park. Then the *Wanderer* was guided to a concealed anchorage on the Little Satilla River; the crew was paid and told to make themselves scarce. The yacht's slave deck was quickly dismantled and the vessel thoroughly scoured. A tug transported 170 of the new slaves to a Savannah River plantation; others were marched overland in small groups. The remainder stayed on Jekyll Island, where many blacks still claim them as ancestors.

**CLEARED OF HER HUMAN CARGO AND REFURBISHED** throughout, the *Wanderer* quickly resumed the role of a pleasure boat, moving on to Savannah for entry clearance. Port collector Woodford Mabry at first accepted Corrie's story of making port to avoid a storm and was ready to grant clearance. But then a fresh storm blew up: a gale of rumors that the *Wanderer* had landed slaves from Africa. Mabry canceled the clearance and notified federal officials; they hauled the *Wanderer* to Savannah as a suspected slave ship.

Reports of the incident reached Washington by the end of 1858, and the Senate asked President Buchanan for a full report. Buchanan confirmed the landing of slaves and promised a thorough investigation and prosecution. Three members of *Wanderer's* crew were charged with piracy, but Corrie fled to escape arrest. Corrie now claimed that not he but a syndicate was the actual owner of the yacht, and that his was only a one-eighth interest. Among the syndicate's most prominent members was Charles Augustus Lafayette Lamar, who was soon arrested and identified as *Wanderer's* principal owner.

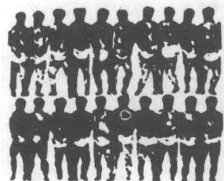


**THIS PLAN OF THE *BROOKES*, A SLAVE SHIP EXAMINED BY A 1788 COMMITTEE ADVISING THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT ON THE REGULATION OF SUCH VESSELS, SHOWS HOW SLAVERS TYPICALLY STOWED THEIR HUMAN CARGO. ABOLITIONISTS CLAIMED THAT THE *BROOKES*, BUILT TO ACCOMMODATE 451, CARRIED AS MANY AS 609 CAPTIVES ON ONE OF HER VOYAGES. THE PLAN APPEARED IN A PAMPHLET BY THOMAS CLARKSON, LONDON, 1839, AND IS REPRINTED FROM THE BOOK *FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM* BY JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN.**

Lamar was a figure out of nineteenth-century melodrama. The son of Gazaway Bugg Lamar, one of the South's richest men, Charles A.L. Lamar had been baptized in the arms of the Marquis de Lafayette in 1825. He became a hero at age 14 by striving to save his mother and five younger brothers and sisters after an explosion aboard his father's steamship *Pulaski*. His relatives included such notables as Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar, who would become a U.S. senator, secretary of the Interior, and an associate justice of the Supreme Court; Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar, a president of the Republic of Texas; and Howell Cobb, secretary of the Treasury under President Buchanan.

But none of his relatives outshone Charles Lamar in his ability to attract attention. When his father moved north in 1846 to direct the Lamar empire of plantations, ships, banks, and other interests, Charles stayed on at Savannah to run the Southern end of the business with great success. His participation in politics was loud and aggressive. He settled personal disputes by dueling his opponents — or by knocking them flat. With his uninhibited use of a coarse voice and a gold-headed cane, he rallied a substantial following to his rabid pro-slavery stand.

Almost all his kinsmen supported slavery, but "Roaring Charley" must have struck even them as an extremist. He advocated revival of the African slave trade and had participated in several slave-trading expeditions before the *Wanderer* set sail. Moral arguments fell on deaf ears: if you could buy a black for \$30 in Africa and sell him or her in America for \$600 or more, it was a profitable business and Charley wanted to be in on it.



THE *WANDERER* WAS SOON FORFEITED TO THE FEDERAL

government as a slaver. But Lamar managed to buy her back at auction on March 12, 1859, for only \$4,001. Corrie had surrendered to the authorities in January 1859, but he was never tried. Lamar, for his part, bent every effort to erase the evidence of slaving by keeping the newly arrived

slaves out of federal hands. On the brink of Civil War, local officials in Georgia gave Lamar unsparing assistance by releasing to him the Africans who had been held as witnesses, thus eliminating the chance of their testifying. The accused crew members were freed; several of Lamar's partners in the voyage were cleared by Southern courts; and Lamar himself suffered only one conviction: 30 days' imprisonment for freeing a *Wanderer* defendant by force, and he served it in the comfort of his own home. The NYYC expelled Corrie and erased the *Wanderer* from its ship list.

Frustrated in his attempt to revive the slave trade, the resourceful Charles Lamar had a new idea: why not use his yacht to pick up Chinese laborers and ship them into the U.S. through Cuba? That scheme died, and thoughts turned to the Central American fruit trade. In October 1859 Lamar announced that he was selling the *Wanderer* to one David Martin, a man never positively identified but who used at least four different names, as occasion warranted.

While Lamar was out of the city, Martin employed the eloquence of the experienced confidence man to wangle \$2,000 worth of supplies out of Savannah merchants. Fully armed and thoroughly drunk, he signed on a full crew for a fruit-trading voyage to Cuba and sailed without paying Lamar's price. When the *Wanderer* reached the high seas, Martin announced that their destination was Africa, to pick up "a cargo of blackbirds."

First Mate Henry Welton tried without success to dissuade Martin, who stayed drunk during most of the eastward journey. Along the route, he halted an occasional ship by firing a six-pounder across its bow, borrowed rum and navigation instruments, and paid for them with promises.

When the *Wanderer* reached the Azores, Martin conned local chandlers out of \$1,500 worth of supplies. Reaching the Madeiras, he hailed the *Jeannie*, a French ship, and induced her captain to replenish the *Wanderer*'s dwindling supply of rum and whiskey. As Martin and his aides rowed back to the *Wanderer*, Mate Weldon seized the opportunity to act. He rallied the crew, told them to

ditch Martin and his slave-trading scheme, and brought the *Wanderer* about.

She swung past the howling captain in his small boat and headed for the western Atlantic, stranding Martin and four crewmen. They were promptly rescued by a French bark, and Martin obtained passage to America as a distressed seaman. He was arrested and drew a five-year sentence for stealing the *Wanderer*.

Welton brought the *Wanderer* into Boston harbor on Christmas Eve, 1859, placing it in the custody of a federal marshal. Lamar soon managed to regain possession, but the outbreak of the Civil War scuttled his plans to send it on another slave trip; her future lay elsewhere.

The Union Army seized the yacht at Key West, installed additional guns on her deck, and assigned her the classification of gunboat, fourth class. Her enormous water tanks were put to use replenishing the supply of ships on blockade station, and her unusual speed made her an efficient dispatcher of messages. She regained some of her early glory by capturing the sloops *Belle*, *Ranger*, and *Anna B.* and demolishing a Confederate salt works at Pensacola, Florida.

There are many gaps in the rest of the *Wanderer*'s story, but she seems to have changed hands several times after being sold to a commercial firm in 1865. She was registered for the West Indian fruit trade in 1869 when Gazaway Bugg Lamar made an attempt to regain possession of his son's yacht by appealing directly — and unsuccessfully — to President Andrew Johnson. (Charles Lamar had fought through the war and survived until a week past its end, when he was killed by a stray shot in Columbus, Georgia, as Union forces took possession of the town.)

As for the *Wanderer*, with shortened masts and her glory gone, she disappeared in 1871 while carrying a cargo of fruit through the Windward Passage. Just east of Cuba, she crashed against the rocks of Cape Maisi and sank forever.

*Gene Gleason, a free-lance writer living in Tryon, North Carolina, is the author of numerous books and magazine and newspaper articles, including a collaboration on the American Heritage book *Seafaring America*.*

# REVIEWS

## Pottery for the People

**Brothers In Clay: The Story of Georgia Folk Pottery**, by John A. Burrison. University of Georgia Press, 1983. 344 pages. \$35.00.

— by Ben Fewel

Pre-dating today's studio-trained, artistically oriented professional potters, indigenous artisans were "turning and burning" crocks and churns, jugs and jars, and all manner of utilitarian ware essential to Southern life. Folk pottery, a once-viable trade in the region, was largely displaced in the twentieth century, and is now all but obsolete.

In the prologue to *Brothers in Clay* author John Burrison recounts his first meeting with Lanier Meaders of White County, Georgia, which set him off on a 14-year exploration of Georgia folk potters: "I came to realize that Lanier was just the visible tip of a substantial historical iceberg. In his community alone he is the last link in a chain of tradition encompassing seventy other potters and spanning a century and a half. And for the state as a whole he represents over four hundred folk potters who contributed to the agrarian lifestyle that characterized the region until quite recently. As a folklorist I became interested in tracing the continuity of Georgia's pottery tradition from its inception to the present in the belief that, if properly told, the story would reveal a great deal about the role of the folk craftsman in the South."

And the story is properly told. Burrison, an associate professor of English and director of the folklore program at Georgia State University, has written a book that combines the popular appeal of a *Foxfire* volume with the painstaking academic care of the scholarly monograph.

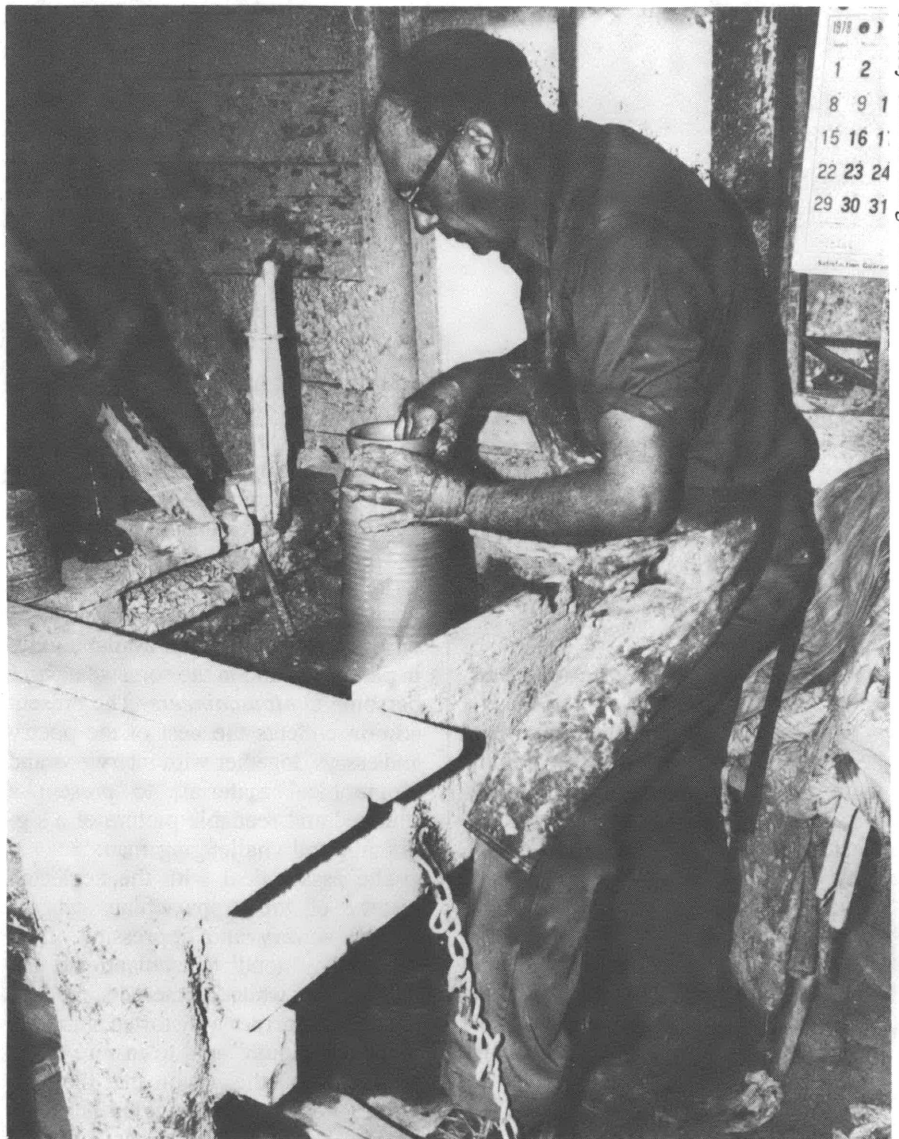
*Brothers In Clay* is lavishly illustrated with more than 160 photographs, including 12 color plates, and in 16 chapters covers a spectrum from the significance

of folk pottery as a craft in the developing South to the regional idiosyncracies of Southern pottery. Burrison devotes a chapter to each of Georgia's 10 principal pottery regions highlighting the practitioners of the pottery dynasties and exploring their traditional techniques and forms passed from generation to generation, telling whence they came and where they went — drawing the lines that unite the "brothers in clay." Also included is a genealogical table of Geor-

gia folk potters.

In short, the book will prove an informative delight to a wide audience from folklorists and social historians to the general reader interested in crafts and culture in the South, from collectors and dealers of traditional earthenware to practicing potters.

*Ben Fewel plays in clay [less often than he'd like to] and is the fiction editor of Southern Exposure.*



LANIER MEADERS OF MOSSY CREEK, GEORGIA

courtesy Univ. of Georgia Press



courtesy Univ. of Georgia Press



RANGE OF SALT-GLAZED WARE ATTRIBUTED TO ATLANTA AREA, LAST QUARTER OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. (LEFT TO RIGHT, REAR: PICKLING JAR, KRAUT JAR WITH LID, CHURN. FRONT: TWO WHISKEY JUGS AND A PITCHER.)

## A Lifetime of Struggle in Poetry and Prose

**In a Land of Plenty: A Don West Reader**, by Don West. West End Press (P.O. Box 7232, Minneapolis, MN 55407), 1982. 205 pp. \$5.00.

— by Mike Henson

Now that the mythic Old South has been replaced by the slick New South, there remains more than ever the need for writers who are willing to break up the lies and the myths. For over five decades, Don West has been smashing those myths and inspiring people through poetry, scholarship, and active participation in the struggle for justice and dignity. Readers already familiar with West will welcome this new collection of his writings. New readers are in for an experience.

West was one of the founders of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee. He went on to become a coal miner, farmer, labor organizer, teacher, school

superintendent, newspaper editor, and pastor. He has had a home and a library destroyed by Klan elements for his stands against racism. In the 1960s, he founded the Appalachian South Folklife Center in Pipestem, West Virginia, where he still lives in active retirement.

Through it all, he has continued to write poems and essays that speak out for workers and the oppressed. West's writings have long been available only in pamphlets and in the somewhat cumbersome *O Mountaineers*. The present edition collects the best of the poetry and essays, together with interviews and biographical material, to present a rounded and readable picture of a significant and challenging man.

The essays deal with the neglected history of the Appalachian struggle against slavery and oppression. If at times they tend to romanticize the resistance of white Southerners, the purpose is to correct a distorted image of the "solid South" and to inspire white workers with the notion that they too have a heritage of struggle. Thus, he writes of abolitionists, organizers, and balladeers.

The poems are written to point up the

reality of life in the coal camp, mill town, and farmland South, to celebrate the dignity of poor and working-class people, to recite the history of the struggle for freedom, to protest, to mourn, to break down racism and stereotypes, and to move people to action.

At times this call is direct.

Listen

You mountain kid  
Old woman or man,  
I would call you back  
To your own heritage . . .

At other times it is more subtle, as in "Memphis," written for Martin Luther King, Jr.

Where Mississippi waters  
washed garbage from the street  
death came looking for a man  
and there the twain did meet.

A sullen Southern dampness  
subdued the bullet whine  
it found the man in Memphis.  
He walked the picket line.

Here the implied call is for us to share the courage of the martyred leader.

West's poems are also a protest against mainstream poetry, which is

illustration by Constance Adams West



generally obscure in reference, complex in structure, and morally ambiguous. West's verse is simple, direct, and takes a clear stand. In spite of thousands of books sold through a 50-year career (*Clods of Southern Earth* sold more copies nationwide than any other book of poetry except Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*), West has been ignored by critics and scholars, who seem to feel that if a poem can be experienced directly by an untrained person, it must be worthless. In spite of a formidable academic background, West has operated outside these networks and outside these rules. Consequently the critics and an-

thologists have ignored poems like "Bill Dalton's Wife":

Hit shore was painful  
The way Bill Dalton's wife  
Lay up thar on Bull Creek  
An' suffered out her life.

The granny women from  
Over on Wolf Creek's head  
Come to tend the labor  
An' thar found Lizzy dead.

The babe was crossed, Bill said  
The doctor wouldn't come —  
Bill was powerfully in debt  
An' couldn't pay the sum.

In the 50 years since the first publication of this poem, the accents may have changed, the midwives may have been largely replaced by clinics, but the basic social reality is the same.

The challenge in the work of Don West lies not in sorting out the tricks of language in the poems. There are none. He writes "naked words that have no subtle meaning." The real challenge (and the real lesson for the would-be poet) is that West calls on us to live, thoroughly engaged with the pain and struggle of others:

How can the poet speak when  
he has not walked with the  
people, when he has not been  
inside their hearts? And how  
can the poet sing whose own  
heart has not been broken?

*Mike Henson is an Appalachian writer and worker who now lives in Cincinnati. His novel *Ransack* and his 1983 collection of short stories, *A Small Room with Trouble on My Mind*, were also published by West End Press.*

## Explaining Ourselves: The Southern Compulsion

**Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain**, by Fred Hobson. Louisiana State University Press, 1983. 391 pp. \$35.00/\$12.95.

— by John Egerton

An urgent compulsion to explain their native land — to attack it or defend it, for their own needs or for the benefit of others — has driven scores of Southerners to write uncounted millions of words in the past 150 years or so. No other region of the United States, and perhaps no other region in the world, has stimulated such a verbal outpouring. Leave aside the novelists, poets, and playwrights — and in the South, of course, that means leaving aside the likes of Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Tennessee Williams, Ralph Ellison, and dozens more — and still the quantity and quality of written words about the land and its people cannot be matched anywhere else on this continent.





photo by Barbara McKenzie

Fred Hobson's splendid synthesis of history, literary criticism, sociology, theology, and old-fashioned Southern storytelling does not explain why we are forever trying to explain ourselves to ourselves and to others. But that is hardly a criticism; others have attempted, with only middling success, to account for the abundance of articulate regional apologists and attackers, and Hobson didn't take on that task. Rather, he identified 20 or so of the most interesting and provocative writers and combined their lives and their literary works into a portrait of the South as seen by its own most perceptive observers.

Hobson's roster of apologists and native critics is a balanced blend of celebrated and obscure figures from both sides of the fence, as well as a few straddlers and others who defy classification. From the pre-Civil War period he focuses upon a fanatical white supremacist and abolitionist named Hinton Rowan Helper, pro-slavery polemicists George Fitzhugh and Edmund Ruffin, and a "gentleman" advocate of race and class privilege, Daniel R. Hundley. After the war there are diehard rebels — but also, native-born advocates of racial and social equality. In four long mid-book chapters, Hobson highlights the conflicting views of eight of the most influential writers of the post-war century.

Here, in point-counterpoint pairings,

are the vitriolic rantings of Robert Lewis Dabney and the conciliatory exhortations of George Washington Cable. Thomas Nelson Page, an unreconstructed Virginia racist, and Walter Hines Page (no relation), a somewhat vacillating critic and reform advocate from North Carolina, are two more studies in contrast, as are Donald Davidson, the Vanderbilt Agrarian reactionary, and Howard W. Odum, the Chapel Hill social planner. The fourth match-up pits William Alexander Percy and his Old South *Lanterns on the Levee* against Wilbur J. Cash and his critical analysis in *The Mind of the South*.

Hobson's final section, dealing with the contemporary South, focuses on three writers: resident critic Lillian Smith, expatriate apologist Richard M. Weaver, and the South Carolina reconciler, James McBride Dabbs. Others, principally journalists, are noted in passing — Harry Ashmore, Hodding Carter, Ralph McGill, Stetson Kennedy (author of a 1946 polemic called *Southern Exposure*), Willie Morris, Larry King, Pat Watters — but James Jackson Kilpatrick's white supremacy tracts are curiously excluded, and completely ignored are the important works of Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, Harry Golden, and numerous other interpreters of the South in the turbulent two decades following World War II.

By far the most glaring omission, however, is of black writers throughout. "[I]f any Southern writer possessed, and was entitled to possess, a rage to explain the South," Hobson wrote, "it was the Southern Negro, and I omit black writers — Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison most prominently — only because it would be impossible to do them justice in a work of this scope." It is a lame excuse. Wright and Ellison can more logically be left out in the company of Faulkner and the other novelists. But

## WANTED: SELECTIONS FROM CONTEMPORARY SOUTHERN WOMEN'S JOURNALS

for an anthology. Send 5-to-20 pages, typed with a photocopy of the original, to Agnes McDonald, Department of English, Atlantic Christian College, Wilson, NC 27893. At the top of each selection, note briefly what you feel is the focus. These are some of the topics of interest: Southernness, Family, Work, Sexuality, Race, Class, Creativity, Spirituality, Friendship, Aging, Personal Growth, and Community. Journals that explore the issues facing the woman in her struggle for selfhood and meaning are sought. Please do not send material that simply logs events. Deadline for manuscripts is September 1, 1984. Include SASE. If you are not now living in the South, include a brief description of how you consider yourself Southern.



what about W.E.B. Dubois, Allison Davis, Charles S. Johnson, John Hope Franklin, Martin Luther King? The absence of their interpretations of the South greatly weakens the book.

The chief criticism that can be made of *Tell About the South* is, in fact, that it leaves out so many writers whose books are such expressive examples of the Southern rage to explain. Not only the novelists but the preachers, the politicians, the lawyers, and most of the historians are passed over. A few representative additions from these groups would have helped, if only to make a telling and ironic point: that down through the years, this region of widespread illiteracy and anti-intellectualism has bred an astonishingly large number of verbalists — skilled artists of the written and spoken word — who have more than held their own wherever their words have reached.

So it is Hobson's choice that is most vulnerable here, not his handling of the writers he has chosen. What is here is exceptionally well-organized, well-informed, well-written. Hobson, who is a professor of English at the University of Alabama, has a sure grasp of Southern history and a confident understanding of his authors and their books. Even if he doesn't think Lillian Smith's *Killers of the Dream* is a classic, as I do, his carefully constructed words command attention and respect, and they often are persuasive. For all its omissions, *Tell About the South* speaks volumes. □

*John Egerton is a Nashville-based freelance writer who often exercises his own rage to tell about the South. He is a frequent contributor to Southern Exposure and the author of numerous magazine articles and books, including The Americanization of Dixie and his most recent, Generations: An American Family.*

## Looking Back: The Other Southern Compulsion

**Womenfolks: Growing Up Down South**, by Shirley Abbott. Ticknor & Fields, 1983. 210 pp. \$13.95.

— by Cheryl Hiers

Like the Ancient Mariner who is driven to recount again and again the

tale of his wondrous and awful past, the Southern writer has often seemed obsessed with "looking back." Shirley Abbott begins *Womenfolks: Growing Up Down South* with her own personal acknowledgment of the role history has played in the lives of Southerners. "From the earliest days of my life," she writes, "I encountered the past at every turn, in every season. Like any properly brought up Southern girl, I used to spend a lot of time in graveyards."

Raised in Hot Springs, Arkansas, Abbott has written a tribute to the Southern past that is at once a history of the region and a commentary on what's happening to it today. Spurred on by an elderly aunt who wanted to know: "Who are we? Where did we come from?", Abbott began a family genealogy that gradually broadened into a perspective on the lives and character of Southern women — though it should be noted that while her book is entitled *Womenfolks*, Abbott focuses primarily on the experiences of *white* women. Often funny, often moving, *Womenfolks* is a pleasure to read. Not afraid of using the personal "I," Abbott has managed to combine autobiography and historical analysis effectively: her own reflections on growing up Southern and female act as an elegant bridge between her discussions of the past and present.

Starting with the Scotch-Irish immigrants of the early eighteenth century, Abbott examines the women who have lived in the South, the hardships and poverty they faced, the joys they knew, and the peculiar brand of strength that they passed on to their daughters and granddaughters:

*I grew up believing, though I could never have voiced it, that a woman might pose as garrulous and talky and silly and dotty, but at heart she was a steely, silent creature, with secrets no man could ever know, and she was always — always — stronger than any man. ("Now you don't have to let on about it," my mother would advise.)*

We see Abbott's female relations "sweating thigh to thigh" in a green Chevrolet on the way to the cemetery to clean the graves of their dead. We see them peeling peaches by the bushel and talking about "how to keep dill pickle jars from exploding." We see Abbott's mother working with the black maid to set the white linens boiling on the stove.

Among these private glimpses into the folkways of a culture, Abbott reviews the major events in the history of the South and how they affected women. She discusses the decimation of the Southern American Indian and what the Civil War meant to the white Southerners who owned no slaves and were "unwilling conscripts with nothing to gain and no idea what they were fighting for, except to defend their homesteads." A chapter on the "old-time religion" presents a succinct and well-told history of the Baptist church in the South and how it very likely — through its primitive family courts — proved a strong ally to women by helping to enforce law and order in the community.

Abbott is sensitive to the problems of slavery and racism in the South — and how white women, while helping to perpetuate the abuse of black people, have also suffered because of it. But she is more concerned with women's relations with men. In a lengthy and highly autobiographical chapter entitled "Generations," Abbott considers the minority status of Southern women and how often, as a defense, mothers teach their daughters to dissimulate and hide their true feelings around men. "The advice that most mothers pass on, though usually not in direct discourse," Abbott writes, "is that men are the enemy: a pack of Yankees. Treat 'em sweet, and talk real nice to 'em, but don't ever forget what they are."

As a child, Abbott picked up a strong, clear message from the women she was around: "Men are children. Men are little boys. They can't stand pain. They never grow up. They can't face the truth." Far from endorsing this attitude, Abbott observes the real damage such beliefs do to both men and women. How can these strong, independent, yet dissimulating women, Abbott wonders, have respect for people "they regard as small boys to be tolerated, put up with, cajoled?" One only wonders if the problem she describes is unique to Southern women, or stands true for women everywhere?

Despite the complex problems and prejudices Abbott sees in the South, the prevailing tone in *Womenfolks* is one of respect and praise for a culture the author fears may one day be "gerryman-dered into a rich, bland, hateful thing called the Sunbelt." Accepting the need

for growth and change, Abbott suggests we should also try to save what has been good and what has been distinctive about our lives in the past. We shouldn't forget where we come from. In remembering and retelling the history of Southern women, Shirley Abbott carries on, with verve and intelligence, the tra-

dition of her mother and aunts and distant female relatives who believed that "the past matters," and that to lose it is to lose an essential part of ourselves. □

*Cheryl Hiers is a free-lance writer who lives in Ormond Beach, Florida, and contributes frequently to Southern Exposure.*

supports, loneliness, the burdens of illness, and the displaced — the interviews reveal universal themes and personal idiosyncracies in equal measures.

Listen, for example, to the following voices as they speak of good times and bad, past and present:

**Eva Jackson:** *Some people don't think about what old people need. I reckon understanding would be one thing to keep people from going to nursing homes, 'cause a lot of young people think that they never going to get old; they think they are going to stay young always. Maybe old people need a little more sympathy and understanding, a little more respect. Some people think when you get old you don't need to go nowhere — you done been all you should go — all you need to do is set at home and not do nothing.*

**James Poole:** *The happiest time of my life has been when I was thirty-five up until now. The time before that I didn't see things as well as I did after I got grown. Then I could see that it was necessary to sort of take care of myself and go to looking out for a better life, like going to church, joining the church, 'tending the service, and things like that. I wasn't interested before that. The change came from just a feeling I had, that I wasn't living according to like I should. One thing now is that I'm just glad that I live this good number of years, and I'm proud of my health. I think it's a blessing to have some older people around to tell younger folks about old times and experience and be a help to them. If all the older people would die out the younger people wouldn't have the knowledge unless it's something they read.*

**Lizzie Mae Walker:** *If I get sick my sisters will look after me. But if I get sick so I cain't do nothing for myself I'm a going to the rest home. I'll take my Social Security and let them take the check to spend it and keep me. But I'd rather stay here. When you're in somebody else's house you don't know how to do and act. I just as soon for folks to speak what they think about me as to go around, "Pst, pst, pst," whispering. I'm not afraid to live here by myself. I ain't never heard nothing. You know, it was a old man and woman, Elsie Mangum and old man George Mangum live here and she was the one that built these two rooms, and folks ask me have I ever seen Elsie and George or heard 'em. I says, "No, I ain't seen nary one of 'em. I don't look for 'em. I don't listen for 'em. Them folks dead." Folks think that Elsie and George might come and haunt me, but I don't never get scared.*

*I'm happy as a lark now. My nephew's wife she says, "You ought to live a happy life, Lizzie Mae," and I says, "I do." I says, "When I get mad I ain't got nobody to fuss at and that ends the fuss." When you ain't got nobody to speak to, you cain't fuss.*



photo by Robert Clare

## Growing Old Gracefully

**Don't Send Me Flowers When I'm Dead**, by Eva J. Salber. Duke University Press, 1983. 147 pp. \$25.00/\$12.50.

— by Jonathan P. Sher

*"I was raised to work and I still enjoy it. I'll go on working as long as I'm able. When I'm not able, when I get to that, I hope I'll do a big day's work and lay down at night and go to sleep and not wake up. I tell people: 'Don't send me flowers when I'm dead. I want them now.' It wouldn't do me two cents worth of good after I'm dead to put me in my grave and put a pile of flowers on me as big as this house. If you've got a flower you want me to have, give it to me while I'm living."*

So speaks Annie Lane, a 71-year resident of the small Piedmont town of "Red Hill," North Carolina. Her voice is one of many that breathe life into the pages of this remarkable new oral history book by Eva Salber.

Dr. Salber, an advocate and practi-

tioner of community medicine and professor emeritus at Duke University's Medical Center, spent six years getting to know 45 old people living alone in two small rural communities. Her official interest was in collecting data on both illnesses and the utilization of health services among elderly people living by themselves. However, unlike other health professionals or social scientists who limit themselves to an academic or clinical interest in such "clients/subjects," Salber viewed them as fellow citizens well worth getting to know and with whom much could be shared. Her sensitivity as an interviewer and her genuine affection and respect for these men and women, both black and white, endow this volume with a lyricism as unusual as it is enjoyable.

The foreword by Robert Coles, the introductory chapter by Salber, and the splendid photographs by Dominic D'Eustachio and Duncan Heron establish a context for the interviews that is informative without becoming intrusive. Still, as one would expect, the oral histories offer the book's highlights as well as its *raison d'être*. Loosely organized around seven themes — olden days, independence, work and poverty, social

When these rural elderly speak, E.F. Hutton may not listen, but Eva Salber did. Their words, and her work in bringing them to our attention, are gifts to be treasured. Salber's voice is also well worth heeding: "At the end I am left not with despair about the uncertain ending of these lives and the almost certain concomitant suffering of their last years. Rather I am overcome by their steadfast courage in adversity, by their independence, their endurance, their faith, their love of nature, family, friends, and their will to survive. Old, sick, frail, poor they may be, but the world to them is a beautiful place, and life is worth fighting for to the very end.

"We should acknowledge their courage, strengthen their resolve, ease their hardships, fight with them to preserve their independence, enable them to maintain their dignity when facing death. It has been done in other countries; it can be done in ours." □

*Johnathan P. Sher is associate dean of the School of Education at North Carolina State University.*

## Books on the South

*This list consists of books published since September 1983. Book entries include works through March 1984. All books were published in 1983 unless otherwise noted. Dissertations appeared in the Dissertation Abstracts Index from May to September 1983. All dissertations are dated 1983 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

**Anti-Rebel: The Civil War Letters of Wilbur Fisk.** E. Rosenblatt. \$25.95.

**The Attitude of the Northern Clergy toward the South, 1860-1865,** by Chester F. Dunham. Porcupine Press. \$17.50.

**An Appraisal of the Negro in Colonial South Carolina: A Study in Americanization,** by Frank J. Klingberg. Porcupine Press. \$17.50.

"Black Americans and Their Contributions toward Union Victory in the American Civil War, 1861-1865," by Joe H. Mays. Middle Tennessee State Univ.

"The Black Family in Slavery, the Foundation of Afro American Culture," by Susan Diane Toliver. Univ. of Calif.-Berkeley, 1982.

"Black Odyssey: The Sea-Faring Traditions of Afro-Americans," by James Barker Farr. Univ. of Calif.-Santa Barbara, 1982.

**Black Southerners, 1619-1869,** by John B. Boles. Univ. Press of Kentucky. \$24.00

**Building an Anti-Slavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860,** by R.J.M. Blackett. LSU Press. \$25.00

**Colonial Virginia: A History,** by D. Alan Williams and Thad W. Tate. Kraus International, 1984. Price not set.

"Faithful Magistrates and Republican Lawyers: The Transformation of Virginia's Justices of the Peace, 1705-1805," by Anthony Gregg Roeber. Brown Univ., 1977.

**The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860,** by Suzanne Lebsock. Norton, 1984. Price not set.

**The French in the Mississippi Valley, 1740-1750,** by Norman W. Caldwell. Porcupine Press. \$15.00

**Georgia and State Rights,** by Ulrich B. Phillips. Mercer Univ. Press. \$14.95.

**Gray Ghosts of the Confederacy: Guerrilla Warfare in the West, 1861-1865,** by Richard S. Brownlee. LSU Press, 1984. \$8.95.

**History of Black Americans: From the Compromise of 1850 to the End of the Civil War,** by Philip S. Foner. Greenwood. \$39.95.

**History of Black Americans: From the Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom to the Eve of the Compromise of 1850,** by Philip S. Foner. Greenwood. \$45.00

**Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860,** by William J. Cooper. Knopf. \$17.95.

"Ideologies and Programs of the Negro Anti-slavery Movement, 1830-1861," by Adam Dewey Simmons. Northwestern Univ.

**Index to South Carolina Land Grants, 1794-1800,** by Ronald V. Jackson and Gary R. Teeple. Accelerated Indexing (Salt Lake City). Price not set.

"The Joe Bell Site: Seventeenth Century Life-ways on the Oconee River," by John Mark Williams. Univ. of Georgia.

"Negro Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Georgia," by Thomas Ralph Statom, Jr. Univ. of Alabama, 1982.

**The Old South in the Crucible of War,** edited by Harry Owens and James J. Cooke. Univ. Press of Mississippi. \$12.50/7.50.

**The Opening of Texas to Foreign Settlement, 1801-1821,** by Mattie A. Hatcher. Porcupine Press. \$25.00

"Quest for Eden: George Washington's Frontier Land Interests," by Rick Willard Sturdevant. Univ. of Calif.-Santa Barbara, 1982.

**Reflections on the Civil War,** by Bruce Catton. Berkley, 1984. \$3.50.

"Responses in Mississippi to John Brown's Raid," by Adrienne Cole Phillips. Univ. of Mississippi.

**Roanoke Island: The Beginnings of English America,** by David Stick. UNC Press. \$14.95.

"Slavery in a Border City: Louisville, 1790-1860," by Hanford Dozier Stafford. Univ. of

Kentucky, 1982.

"Speculators and Land Development in the Virginia Military Tract: The Territorial Period," by Ellen Susan Wilson. Miami Univ., 1982.

**The Texas Navy: Freedom Fighters for the Republic of Texas,** by Linda E. Devereaux. Ericson Books. \$14.50.

**The Virginia Militia in the Seventeenth Century,** by William L. Shea. LSU Press. \$20.00.

### ECONOMICS, HISTORY, AND POLITICS — 1865-1984

**African Fundamentalism: A Literary Anthology of the Garvey Movement,** by Tony Martin. Majority Press (Dover, MA), 1984. Price not set.

"Alabama's Port City: Mobile During the Progressive Era," by David Ernest Alsobrook. Auburn Univ.

**All That Is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region,** by David E. Whisnant. UNC Press. \$24.00.

"At the Bar of Judge Lynch: Lynching and Lynch Mobs in America," by John Raymond Ross. Texas Tech Univ.

**Biscayne Country, 1870-1926,** by Thelma Peters. Banyan Books (Miami). \$14.95.

**Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition,** by Cedric J. Robinson. Biblio Distributors. \$40.00/14.50.

"Black Politics in the New South: An Investigation of Change at Various Levels," by Paul Jeffrey Stekler. Harvard Univ.

**The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979,** edited by Henry L. Suggs. Greenwood. \$29.95.

**Chinese in the Post-Civil War South,** by Lucy M. Cohen. LSU Press, 1984. \$25.00.

"Class and Equity of Public Service Delivery in Kentucky," by Gregory S. Taylor. Univ. of Kentucky, 1982.

"A Commodity-Regional Model of the West Virginia Economy," by Fereidoon Shahrokh. West Virginia Univ., 1982.

**The Creation of Modern Georgia,** by Numan V. Bartley. Univ. of Georgia Press. \$20.00/10.00

"Crisis in Identity: An Urban Ethnography of Neighborhood Revitalization [Candler Park Area of Atlanta]," by Robert G. Fishman. SUNY-Buffalo.

"Deterrents to Union Organizing: An Analysis of Union Representation Election Outcomes in Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, 1975-1980," by Gerald Edward Calvasina. Univ. of Mississippi.

**A Documentary History of Arkansas,** by C. Fred Williams. Univ. of Arkansas Press. \$27.50.

"The Dunning School and Reconstruction According to Jim Crow," by John Harelson Hosmer. Univ. of Arizona.

"The Emergence Process of Black Elected Leadership in North Carolina," by Sampson Buie, Jr. UNC-Greensboro.

"Employment Conditions of Blacks in the Coal Industry, 1900-1930," by Price Van Meter Fishback. Univ. of Washington.

**First Time: The Historical Vision of an Afro-American People,** by Richard Price. Johns Hopkins Univ. Press. \$25.00/12.95.

"From Craft to Industry: The Building Process in North Carolina in the Nineteenth Century," by Carl Reavis Lounsbury. George Washington Univ.

"Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, History, and the Culture of the New South, 1865-1913," by Gaines Milligan Foster. UNC-Chapel Hill, 1982.



# REVIEWS

"Gideon's Southern Soldiers: New Deal Politics and Civil Rights Reform, 1933-1948," by Patricia Ann Sullivan. Emory Univ.

"A Glorious Work': The American Missionary Association and Black North Carolinians, 1863-1880," by Maxine Deloris Jones. Florida State Univ., 1982.

"The Growth and Decline of the Afro-American Family Farm in Warren County, North Carolina, 1910-1960," by Marsha Jean Darling. Duke Univ., 1982.

**Growth in the American South: Changing Regional Employment and Wage Patterns in the 1960's and 1970's**, by Robert J. Newman. NYU Press, 1984. \$30.00.

"History of the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation," by Daniel Ray Robertson. LSU, 1982.

**In a Narrow Grave: Essays on Texas**, second edition, by Larry McMurry. Univ. of New Mexico Press. \$7.95.

"Institutional Change and Mechanization in the Cotton South: The Tractorization of Cotton Farming," by Warren C. Whitley. Stanford Univ.

**Journey from Jim Crow: The Desegregation of Southern Transit**, by Catherine A. Barnes. Columbia Univ. Press. \$25.00.

"Journey from Jim Crow: The Desegregation of Southern Transit," by Catherine Ann Barnes. Columbia Univ., 1981.

"A Journey through Mexican Texas, 1900-1930: The Making of a Segregated Society," by Davie Montejano. Yale Univ., 1982.

"The Kisatchie Story: A History of Louisiana's Only National Forest," by Anna Cannaday Burns. Univ. of Southwestern Louisiana, 1982.

**Knoxville, Tennessee: Continuity and Change in an Appalachian City**, by Michael J. McDonald and William Bruce Wheeler. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$14.95.

**The Myth of the TVA: Conservation and Development in the Tennessee Valley, 1933-1980**, by William U. Chandler. Ballinger. \$25.00.

"Nightmare and Dream: Antilynching in Congress, 1917-1922," by Claudine L. Ferrell. Rice Univ.

"The 1966 Gubernatorial Election in Georgia," by Harold Paulk Henderson. Univ. of Southern Mississippi, 1982.

"The 1966-1967 South Texas Farm Worker Strike: A Case Study of Farm Worker Powerlessness," by Ray Robert Leal. Indiana Univ.

**North Carolina Illustrated, 1524-1984**, by H.G. Jones. UNC Press. \$24.95.

**Northernizing the South**, by Richard N. Current. Univ. of Georgia Press. \$12.50.

**Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy**, by Eric Foner. LSU Press. \$14.95.

**The Pan-African Connection: From Slavery to Garvey and Beyond**, by Tony Martin. Majority Press, 1984. \$19.95/\$7.95.

"The Political and Economic Impact of National Energy Policy on Blacks and the Poor," by Edward Thompson III. Howard Univ., 1982.

**The Politics of San Antonio: Community, Progress, and Power**, by David R. Johnson *et al.* Univ. of Nebraska Press. \$24.50/\$10.95.

"Post-Reclamation Use of Surface-Mined Lands in Kentucky," by Basawaraj N. Hiremath. Univ. of Kentucky, 1982.

**Power in America: The Southern Question and the Control of Labor**, by John Keller. Vanguard Books. \$6.95.

"Presidential Reconstruction in Texas: A Case Study," by Nora Estelle Owens. Auburn Univ.

**Proceedings of the Black National and State Conventions, 1865-1900**, edited by Philip S. Foner and Richard C. Winchester. Temple Univ. Press. \$39.95.

**Protest Is Not Enough: The Struggle of Blacks and Hispanics for Equality in Urban Politics**, by Rufus P. Browning *et al.* Univ. of Calif. Press. Price not set.

"Published Resources for the Study of Blacks in the District of Columbia: An Annotated Guide," by Thomas Cornell Battle. George Washington Univ., 1982.

"Registration and Party Affiliation: A Case Study of Black Floridians," by Roy Alonza Jackson. Howard Univ., 1982.

**The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890**, by Steven Hahn. Oxford Univ. Press. Price not set.

**The Selected Essays of T. Harry Williams**. LSU Press. \$19.95.

"The Social Ecology of Homicide in Dade County, Florida," by Charles Russell Massey. Florida State Univ.

"The Social Impact of Naval Base Development on a Coastal Community: Camden County, Georgia," by Mary Margaret Overbey. Univ. of Florida, 1982.

"Socioeconomic Impact Assessment for National Forest Planning in the South," by James Edward Bell. Michigan State Univ., 1982.

**Southern Community in Crisis: Harrison County, Texas, 1850-1880**. Texas State Historical Assn. \$19.95.

**Southern Enigma: Essays on Race, Class, and Folk Culture**, edited by Walter J. Fraser, Jr., and Winfred B. Moore, Jr. Greenwood. \$35.00.

"Southern State Constitutions in the 1870's: A Case Study of Texas," by John Walker Mauer. Rice Univ.

**Swamp Water and Wiregrass: Historical Sketches of Coastal Georgia**, by George A. Rogers and R. Frank Saunders. Mercer Univ. Press. Price not set.

"Symbolic Equality: The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights, 1953-1961," by Robert Fredrick Burk. Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison, 1982.

"The Taxing District of Shelby County: A Political and Administrative History of Memphis, Tennessee, 1879-1893," by Lynette Boney Wrenn. Memphis State Univ.

"The Terms of Freedom: The Freedman's Bureau and Reconstruction in Georgia, 1865-1870," by Paul Alan Cimbala. Emory Univ.

**The Texas Economy Since World War II**, by Mary A. Norman. American Press. \$1.95.

**Texas Shrimpers: Community, Capitalism, and the Sea**, by Robert L. Maril. Texas A&M Univ. Press. \$18.00.

**Theirs Be the Power: The Moguls of Eastern Kentucky**, by Harry M. Caudill. Univ. of Illinois Press. \$12.95.

**TVA: 50 Years of Grass-Roots Bureaucracy**, edited by Erwin C. Hargrove and Paul K. Conklin. Univ. of Illinois Press, 1984. \$19.95.

"Twentieth-Century Pastoral: Epideictic Discourse in the Founding of the Tennessee Valley Authority," by David Benson Bradford. Rensselaer, 1982.

"Ways and Means of Improving Minority Influence on Public Policy: The Politics of Enacting Laws in the United States Congress That Work to the Advantage of Black and Poor People," by

D'Linell Finley, Sr. Atlanta Univ., 1981.

**We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century**, edited by Dorothy Sterling. Norton, 1984. \$19.95.

**White Land, Black Labor: Caste and Class in Late Nineteenth-Century Georgia**, by Charles L. Flynn, Jr. LSU Press. \$20.00.

**Who Owns Appalachia? Landownership and Its Impact**, by the Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force. Univ. Press of Kentucky. \$25.00.

## EDUCATION

"An Analysis of Programs for the Emotionally Disturbed in the State of Mississippi," by Celestine Russell Jefferson. Univ. of Southern Mississippi, 1982.

"Attitudes of Louisiana Public Secondary Principals and English Teachers toward Teaching the Bible as Literature," by Jimmy Lavon Woods. Northwestern State Univ. of Louisiana, 1982.

"Black Founders of Reconstruction Era Methodist Colleges: Daniel A. Payne, Joseph C. Price, and Isaac Lane, 1863-1890," by Paul R. Griffin. Emory Univ.

"Creationism vs. Evolution: A Study of the Opinions of Georgia Science Teachers," by Paula Garrison Eglin. Georgia State Univ.

"Coming of Age: Hollis B. Frissell and the Emergence of Hampton Institute, 1893-1917," by Wilma King Hunter. Indiana Univ., 1982.

"Five Black Educators: Founders of Schools in the South, 1881-1915," by Arnold Cooper. Iowa State Univ.

"Implications of Statewide Coordination of Continuing Education Programs in Public Institutions of Higher Education in Twelve Southern States," by Thomas Deal Pow. Univ. of Alabama, 1982.

"The Influence of the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce on Policies of the State Department of Education as Related to Economics Education, 1959-1981," by Deanna Wagner Gordon. Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1982.

"State Aid to Private Higher Education in North Carolina: A Historical Description," by Dorothy Pennington McIntyre. Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1982.

"A Study of Selected Factors Relevant to the Continuation of Black Studies Programs in Four-Year Colleges and Universities in the United States," by Richard Edward Flamer. Gonzaga Univ.

## BIOGRAPHY

**Albert Gallatin Brown: Radical Southern Nationalist**, by James B. Ranck. Porcupine Press. \$22.50.

**Black Americans in Autobiography: An Annotated Bibliography of Autobiographies and Autobiographical Books Written Since the Civil War**, by Russell Brigano. Duke Univ. Press. \$25.00.

**Black Socialist Preacher: The Teachings of Rev. George Washington Woodbey**, edited by Philip S. Foner. Synthesis Pubs. (San Francisco). \$18.95/\$8.95.

**Congressman Sam Rayburn**, by Anthony Champagne. Rutgers Univ. Press. \$18.50.

"Demagogue or Democrat: Theodore G. Bilbo and the New Deal," by Chester Monroe Morgan. Memphis State Univ., 1982.

**Dictionary of Georgia Biography**, by Kenneth Coleman and Charles S. Gurr. Two volumes. Univ. of Georgia Press. \$60.00.

"Donald Davidson, A Critique from the Los-

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ing Side: The Social and Educational Views of a Southern Conservative," by John H. Kohler. Georgia State Univ., 1982.

"Earle Chester Clements and the Democratic Party, 1920-1950," by Thomas Hamilton Syvertsen. Univ. of Kentucky, 1982.

"From Private Realtor to Public Slum Fighter: The Transformation of the Career Identity of Charles F. Palmer," by Stephen Wayne Grable. Emory Univ.

"Henry William Ravenel, 1814-1887: South Carolina Scientist in the Civil War Era," by Tamara Anne Haygood. Rice Univ.

"Jane Edna Hunter: A Case Study of Black Leadership, 1910-1950," by Adrienne Lash Jones. Case Western Reserve Univ.

**Keith and Kin: A Portrait of a Southern Family, 1630-1934**, by Carolyn L. Harrell. Mercer Univ. Press. \$24.95.

**May Mann Jennings: Florida's Genteel Activist**, by Linda D. Vane. Univ. Presses of Florida, 1984. Price not set.

**Personalities of the South**, by J.S. Thomson. 12th edition. Biblio Dist. Centre (Totowa, NJ). \$49.50.

"Stephen Dodson Ramseur: A Biography," by Gary William Gallagher. Univ. of Texas-Austin, 1982.

## CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

**Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music**, by Henry E. Krehbiel. Tanager Books (Dover, NH). \$6.75.

**Afro-American Religious History Anthology**, edited by Milton C. Sernett. Duke Univ. Press. \$35.00/\$12.75.

**America's Black Musical Heritage**, by Tilford Brooks. Prentice-Hall, 1984. \$14.95.

"The Black Church in American Culture," by Gerald Graham Bennett. Bowling Green State Univ., 1982.

**Black Fertility in the U.S.: A Social Demographic History**, by Joseph A. McFalls and Stewart E. Tolnay. Duke Univ. Press. \$40.00.

**Black Folk Medicine: The Therapeutic Significance of Faith and Trust**, edited by Wilbur H. Watson. Transaction Books, 1984. \$24.95.

**Brothers in Clay: The Story of Georgia Folk Pottery**, by John A. Burrison. Univ. of Georgia Press. \$35.00.

"Contributions of Four Blacks to Art Education in the South, 1920-1970," by Donald Fred Davis. Arizona State Univ.

"Cultural Ecology of the Middle Trinity River Basin [Texas], 1850-1970," by Thomas Reed Lee. Southern Methodist Univ., 1982.

"Cultural Influences on the Art and Crafts of Early Black American Artisans (1649-1865)," by Phillip Lindsay Mason. Ohio State Univ.

"Economy and Culture: The Boom-and-Bust Theatres of Pensacola, Florida, 1821-1917," by Jack L. Bilbo. Texas Tech Univ., 1982.

**Folk Visions and Voices: Traditional Music in North Georgia**, by Art Rosenbaum and Margo Newmark Rosenbaum. Univ. of Georgia Press. \$27.50.

**Hope and Dignity: Older Black Women of the South**, by Emily H. Wilson. Temple Univ. Press. \$19.95.

"The Informal Social Support Networks of the Black Elderly: The Impact of Family, Church-members, and Best Friends," by Robert Joseph Taylor. Univ. of Michigan.

**The Loblolly Book: Water Witching, Wild Hog Hunting, Home Remedies, Grandma's Moral Tales and Other Affairs of Plain Texas Living**, by Thad Sitton. Texas Monthly Press. \$9.95.

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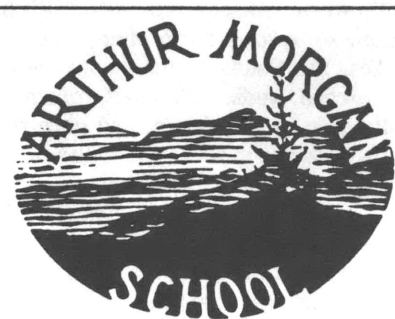
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## Romantic Appalachia

by Don West

*Don West's recent collection of poetry and prose is reviewed on page 64. It includes the full text of his 1968 essay "Romantic Appalachia — or Poverty Pays If You Ain't Poor," which is condensed here: strong words for the poverty warriors and other outsiders who periodically invade the Southern mountains.*

Almost every day we get letters from those wanting to come to Appalachia to "fight poverty." They've seen movies, comic strips or TV (Lil' Abner, Beverly Hillbillies). It's not that there's no poverty in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago and other parts. There is. But Southern Appalachia has that "romantic" appeal.

So we are "discovered" again. It's happened every generation, sometimes more often, since the Civil War.

Yes, the Southern mountains have been missionarized, researched, studied, surveyed, romanticized, dramatized, hillbillyized, Dogpatchized, and povertyized again. The latest "missionary" move is the "War on Poverty." It was never intended to end poverty. That would require a total reconstruction of the system of ownership, production and distribution of wealth.

This is not the first time in our lifetime that big city folks have come down to save and lift us up. I remember the 1920-1930s. Southern Appalachia was discovered then, too. Young "missionaries" were sowing their "radical wild oats" from the Black Belt of Alabama and Arkansas to Harlan County, Kentucky, and Paint and Cabin Creeks in West Virginia. They were mostly transients, as "missionaries" frequently are. I don't know a single one who remained.

There is a qualitatively different situation for those who come to fight poverty in Appalachia now and back in the 1930s. Then they came on their own. There was no OEO, no VISTA, no Appalachian Volunteers. Nobody was paid a good salary to fight poverty. They made their own way, shifted as best they could. It was Depression times, too. Some did good work. Some were murdered by thugs. Others were beaten, crippled. Issues were sharp and violence was too common. They who worked at organizing the poor had to keep a wary eye.

But things are considerably different now. The young "missionary" in Appalachia has it comparatively easy. First, he is paid. He has food to eat regularly, a place to sleep. He goes to bed with scant fear of being murdered in his sleep. And in an area where tens of thousands of families live on less than \$2,000 a year, poverty fighters may get much more.

Some salaries are large — \$10 thousand, \$15 thousand, \$20 or \$25 thousand or more.

Some of the bright young "missionaries" who came down in one of the poverty-fighting brigades, perhaps despairing of saving our "hillbilly souls," certainly failing to organize the poor, now find money in poverty by setting up post office box corporations that receive lucrative OEO grants or contracts to train others to "fight poverty." If they failed to organize the poor themselves, they nonetheless can train others to go out and do likewise.

So many do-gooders who come into the mountains seldom grasp the fact that the poor are poor because of the nature of the system of ownership, production and distribution. When the poor fail to accept their middle-class notions they may end up frustrated failures.

Their basic concern was not how they related to the mountains but how the mountains related to them and their notions. With their "superior" approach, they failed to understand or appreciate the historic struggles of broad sections of the mountain people against the workings of the system back beyond the 1930s. And before that the mountain man's struggle against a slave system that oppressed both the poor white and black slaves.

The "missionaries" — religious or secular — had and have one thing in common: they didn't trust us hill folk to speak, plan and act for ourselves. Bright, articulate, ambitious, well-intentioned, they became our spokesmen, our planners, our actors. And so they'll go again, leaving us and our poverty behind.

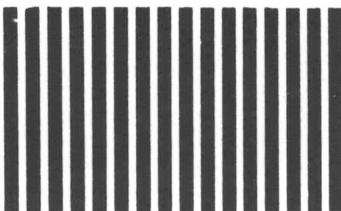
But is there a lesson to be learned? I think so. If we native mountaineers can now determine to organize and save ourselves, save our mountains from the spoilers who tear them down, pollute our streams and leave grotesque areas of ugliness, there is hope. The billionaire families behind the great corporations are also outsiders who sometimes claim they want to "save" us. It is time that we hill folks should understand and appreciate our heritage, stand up like those who were our ancestors, develop our own self-identity. It is time to realize that nobody from the outside is ever going to save us from bad conditions unless we make our own stand. We must learn to organize again, speak, plan, and act for ourselves. There are many potential allies with common problems — the poor of the great cities, the Indians, the blacks who are also exploited. They need us. We need them. Solidarity is still crucial. If we learn this lesson from the outside "missionary" failures, then we are on our way. □

*At Southern Exposure we listen to the voices of many people for guidance and inspiration. We want to recapture the indomitable spirit of those who have spoken for human dignity, for egalitarianism, and for collective social action. We want to celebrate those ideals.*

*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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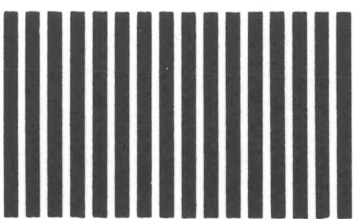


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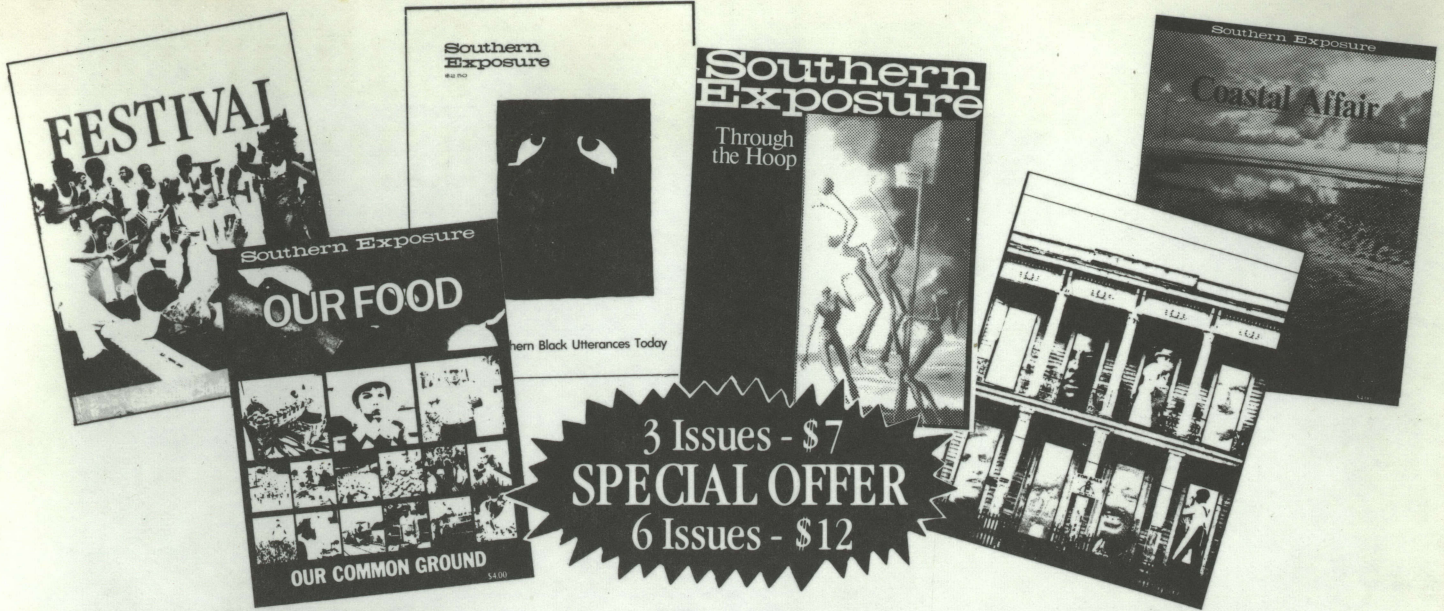
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