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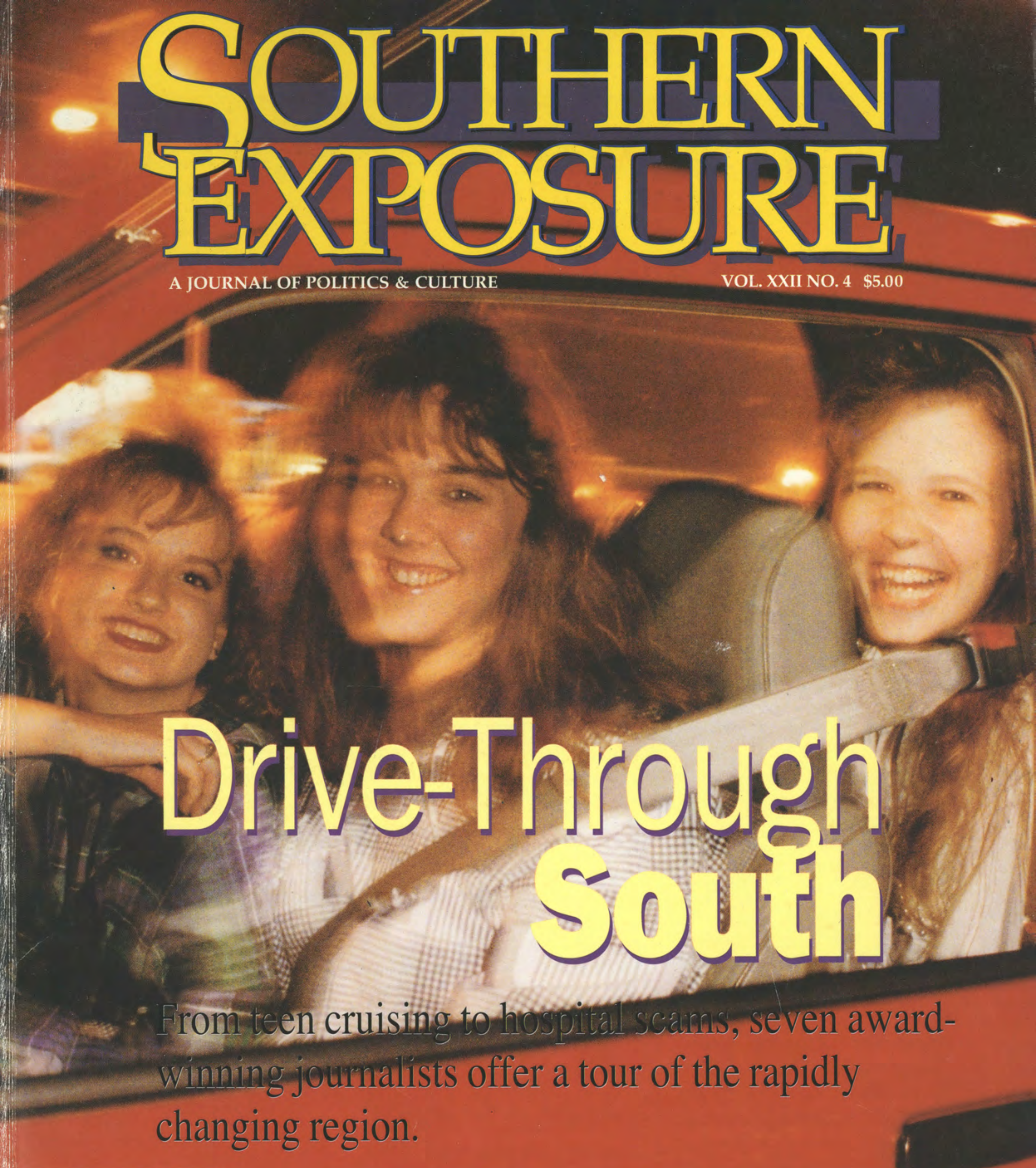

Drive-Through South

From teen cruising to hospital scams, seven award-winning journalists offer a tour of the rapidly changing region.

ALSO **Cane Country Images**

Community Economic Development Assessed

Photo by Chandra McCormick.

Joyce Priestly of the Bessie "K" Plantation in Vacherie, Louisiana. The plantation was torn down in the last two years. Priestly moved from the rural plantation to a housing project. Priestly and other cane country workers lost their jobs to mechanization. Quo Vadis Gex-Breaux tells the story in "Voices," page 37.

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WINTER ISSUE

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From the Editor

John L. Johnson of Indianapolis, Indiana, sent a letter about our last cover featuring a group of cheerful children of various ethnic origins. "I've never seen children together as you've depicted. I'm certain after the photo was taken, the children went back to their respective race specific enclaves." These smiling children, he concluded, "are images only in the mind's eye and on covers of magazines. The racial divide will forever be with us. What bitter pity."

The picture comes from a classroom in a real place (Garden Hill Elementary in Atlanta). It may be an unusual scene, but it does exist.

Should *Southern Exposure* portray only the most grim aspects of the South, as the letter writer seems to suggest? If we publish the rule and not the exceptions, are we really defining the South? Are most aspects of the South grim?

As a transplanted Chicagoan who lived in West Virginia and east Tennessee for 15 years, I was continually amazed at the diversity of the people and the land: trailers and brick ranchers, strip mines and ridgelines of green mountains, hard-shell Baptists and Unitarians. And that was just in the mountains. As I travel through other parts of the South, I see an even more dramatic mix of landscape from mountain to ocean, and of races, religions, music, food, accents. I see grim — and magnificient — and ordinary.

As the new editor of *Southern Exposure,* I hope to shine a light on some of the many facets of the region. Eric Bates, who is now investigative editor and director of the Institute for Southern Studies' Investigative Action Fund, left some big high-top sneakers to fill (he favors green ones, though he wears purple sometimes). He created a format that combines cover section, features, investigative stories, fiction, and the other departments. He lined up great writers and department editors.

> *If we publish the rule and not the exceptions, are we really defining the South?*

This format will continue. Cover sections focusing on the image of the South, eminent domain, youth, community economic development, and women and health are in the works. I'll continue looking for union activity in spots where there hasn't been any before and for community organizers making progress against astonishing odds. I'll seek voices that have never been heard and well-known voices that provide a counterpoint to the mainstream political climate.

In whatever we cover, I'll try to show some of the richness of experience in the South and balance it with equal parts humor and hope — with pinches of hand wringing and skepticism. I'll try to avoid wallowing in the despair many of us felt after the last election, but I can't promise a complete absence of wallowing. I do promise some optimism and, I give fair warning, some more smiling people. They too represent the South.

— *Pat Arnow*

ROUNDUP

SUPERFUND SCHOOL

Some New Orleans school children have gotten first-hand classroom lessons about toxic waste and the environment. It was not a positive experience. They found their school was built on top of a former municipal dump, recently placed on the Environmental Protection Agency's growing list of Superfund sites.

Back in 1987, children going to Moton Elementary felt pretty good when they walked into their new $5.9 million building. Since the mid-'70s parents had been pressuring the New Orleans 9th Ward school board to move from the decaying facilities located across from a housing development with a bad reputation. The new school — with skylights in the library and computer and television terminals in every room — was a coup.

Early this fall, students packed up their books, pens, and pencils and left the still-new building for what could be the last time.

There are also 300 residences, a business complex, a recreational center, and a 155-bed retirement home built over the site. Most of the people living in the Press Park area and Gordon Plaza subdivisions were able to buy their homes through a government program for low- and middle-income families during the 1970s.

ABCDEFGHIJKL
TOXIC WASTE

The area had been a city landfill from 1910 to 1965. Construction on low-income housing developments began in 1969.

"The little nest egg I thought I had, so far as a decent home — I find out it's a total disaster," retired longshoreman Don Lewis Sr. told a reporter outside his residence in Press Park. Lewis lived there with his family for 14 years; in 1983 his 16-year-old daughter died of cancer. He doesn't know if her death was related to the toxins buried under his home. But he does know his home is worth next to nothing now.

"This site has been in the mill for quite some time now," Ursilla Lennox, the EPA's remedial project manager for the site, explained calmly. "We investigated the site in the '80s."

As early as 1983, soil tests conducted for the school board turned up potentially hazardous materials. In 1985, just two weeks after a report came in that the site contained materials known to cause cancer, the school board voted 3-2 to excavate the site and replace the contaminated soil with "clean" soil. Despite subsequent reports of 100 potentially dangerous chemi-

LETTUCE NOW PRAISE PRISONS

Far away from the interstates, RVs, and urban crime Florida's known for, South Bay is a small, quiet town; bounded by the North New River on one side, Lake Okeefenokee on the other, the town's settled in land thick with mango, poinciana, and jacaranda trees. Out on U.S. 80 there's a sign proclaiming "Welcome to South Bay, a special place we like to call home." All that may change soon.

Executives at U.S. Sugar announced mid-summer that they couldn't afford the $10.6 million losses their subsidiary, South Bay Growers, had suffered in the last season. Cutting costs, the corporation decided to turn their 8,000 acres of vegetables over to sugar cane.

South Bay's mayor, Clarence Anthony, said his heart sank. "I sat around for weeks, saying, 'Oh, God, what are we going to do?' I was devastated."

With good reason: Along with the vegetable crops went 1,300 jobs — in a town of 4,600. "This was not just an industry," explains Anthony. "This was *the* industry." South Bay Packers had a $17 million payroll and provided 18 percent of the town's tax fee revenues, along with owning 490 duplexes which were home to 1,100 people.

U.S. Sugar bought out the family-owned and operated company in 1980. Old-timers say it changed the close-knit ties between workers and management. It felt more like the corporation it was, they say — but it was a decent corporation. "They treated you fairly. Nobody had any reason to complain," said Paul Wilson, a South Bay Growers employee for 17 years.

Mayor Anthony once worked at South Bay Growers himself, picking celery. Now he's faced with the job of picking up the town's economy. So when the chance came in mid-summer for a 1,300-bed prison facility to be built on the southern end of town, a $34 million construction project, Anthony took it. The mayor says he's doing his best to ensure that contracts for employment opportunities and future vendors are offered first to local people.

Ensuring the survival of South Bay's thriving community, Anthony says, is the important part. "We will do what a lot of other communities won't do. . . . If our city can turn the dirt on this prison by April or May, we can make it."

Photo by John Pineda/Miami Herald

SOUTH BAY
HOME

WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW PRISON, UP TO 1,300 PRISONERS WILL SOON CALL SOUTH BAY, FLORIDA, HOME.

Photos by Beth Harrison/Front Page

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, PRIDE MARCH, 1993.

MEN DEMONSTRATE AT THE NORTH CAROLINA LESBIAN AND GAY PRIDE MARCH AND RALLY, ASHEVILLE, 1992.

cals in the area, construction proceeded on schedule, and the school opened its doors two years later.

The Agriculture Street landfill "didn't qualify" for Superfund money, Lennox says, when it was first tested. "Hazardous material rankings have been updated since then."

Among the chemicals found were lead and PCBs. PAHs (polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons), classified as "suspected carcinogens" and usually found in oil wastes, were also present, along with DDT. Workers at the old landfill apparently sprayed the pesticide on the dump every day to keep down insects. The dump was used to burn debris from Hurricane Betsy in 1965; it was also the receptacle for ash from city incinerators.

Nonetheless, Moton Elementary principal Paulette Bruno says, "All indicators were that the site would be safe."

So far, there's been a lot of talk about toxics, but not a whole lot of action. The EPA released a draft environmental impact report this fall. Funds will be appropriated by springtime to begin dealing with the mess. Several residents have filed lawsuits against the city.

Schoolchildren, upon finding they were to be bused to a former private school downtown, seemed to take the most practical stance. "We have to leave because if we stay we might get sick or something," explained seven-year-old Tiffany Major. "The building's on toxic waste."

GAY RIGHTS FIGHTS

Cobb County, Georgia, received a lot of attention when its anti-gay resolution caused the county to lose the pre-Olympic volleyball games, previously scheduled to be held in Cobb. Former Olympic diving champion Greg Louganis, among others, opposed situating the games in Cobb because of the resolution.

Thanks to the sample document the Christian Coalition passes around, Cobb County's resolution, passed in August 1993, sounds a great deal like resolutions across the South, condemning what it calls "the gay lifestyle" on the grounds that it stands "in opposition to community standards." The resolution renders homosexuality a choice individuals make which is dangerous to the rest of the community; gays and lesbians therefore shouldn't have any "special protection" under the law.

"The South has been a focal point for anti-gay activity," says Scott Nockagawa, director of the San Francisco-based National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's "Fight the Right" campaign. "But the gay rights movement is very active and rapidly growing."

In Cobb County, there remains ongoing opposition to the resolution. Larry Pellegrini, a lobbyist for GAPAC (Georgia's gay/lesbian advocacy group) explains that they've made the most progress through education. "When the measure passed a year ago, only 11 percent said they opposed it. Last month, 41 percent opposed it. It's a prime example of people who initially reacted to myths and fears."

Advocacy groups, action committees, and task forces have sprung up across the South to fight anti-gay resolutions and anti-gay legislation. Here's what some of the states are working on right now:

- Elsewhere in Georgia, Savannah and Chatham County are both in the process of introducing anti-gay resolutions. Another resolution passed without notice recently in a southern Georgia County.

Atlanta, home to a large gay/lesbian population, saw a domestic partnership measure pass only to be vetoed by the mayor. The legislation passed a second time and was again vetoed.

Proposals to add non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation to the current anti-discrimination clauses in city and county contracts are on the table in Atlanta and Fulton County.

- In Tennessee the Christian Coalition introduced an anti-gay resolution in Blount County in April 1993. The Coalition then forwarded the resolution to every county in the state; it passed in all but three.

Jeff Manning, co-founder of Smoky Mountain Gay and Lesbian Support, put it bluntly: "In the state of Tennessee gays and lesbians have no rights." Manning recently lost his job due to his involvement in the gay rights movement.

Manning says they're working on getting Tennessee's sodomy law off the books, but right now "people are afraid just to come out of the closet long enough to sit and talk sociably."

- Kentucky has seen anti-gay resolutions introduced in 15 counties, as well as recent attempts to recriminalize sodomy. A bill which would prevent teachers from saying anything about homosexuality in the classroom passed in the house but failed in the senate.

Southerners on New Ground, an advocacy group, has been working to have sexual orientation added to the anti-discrimination laws on Louisville's books.

- Controversy in Texas continues in the aftermath of Concerned Texans' successful attack on Austin's domestic partnership ordinance. The ordinance would have extended spousal health care benefits to the domestic partners of gay, lesbian, and unmarried city employees. Concerned Texans organized shortly after the ordinance originally passed in September 1993. Former Vice President Dan Quayle gave the Concerned Texans a congratulatory phone call when the ordinance was repealed this spring.
- Florida gay rights advocates are in the midst of fighting a repeal. Alachua County's Ordinance One would repeal a county ordinance prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Also in Alachua, Amendment One would prevent the county from passing any future ordinances to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination. The matter is currently in the courts; some residents are suing to have the initiatives removed from the ballot.
- Gay rights attention in Mississippi is focused on Brenda and Wanda Henson's Camp Sister Spirit in the small town of Ovett. When the lesbian couple established the feminist education and resource center in the fall of 1993, they met with opposition from local residents. They've been shot at, chased, and threatened repeatedly. Attorney General Janet Reno sent in federal mediators last spring, but the Henson's harassers refused to participate in any discussion.
- In Louisiana advocates for gay and lesbian rights have won a temporary restraining order prohibiting enforcement of the state sodomy law. The victory came about after a group of gay men and lesbians filed suit, challenging the law's constitutionality.
- South Carolina's legislature approved the repeal of their state's sodomy law but the governor vetoed the change. Anti-gay measures preventing gays and lesbians from adopting children and serving in the state's division of the National Guard were introduced recently; the legislation passed in the house but died in a senate sub-committee.
- Virginia courts saw a recent battle based largely on myths about homosexuals during the Sharon Bottoms case. Bottoms, a lesbian, was granted the right to have custody of her child after spending years in the courts trying to prove her ability to be a

SOUTHERN AUTHORS ON SOUTHERN MEDIA

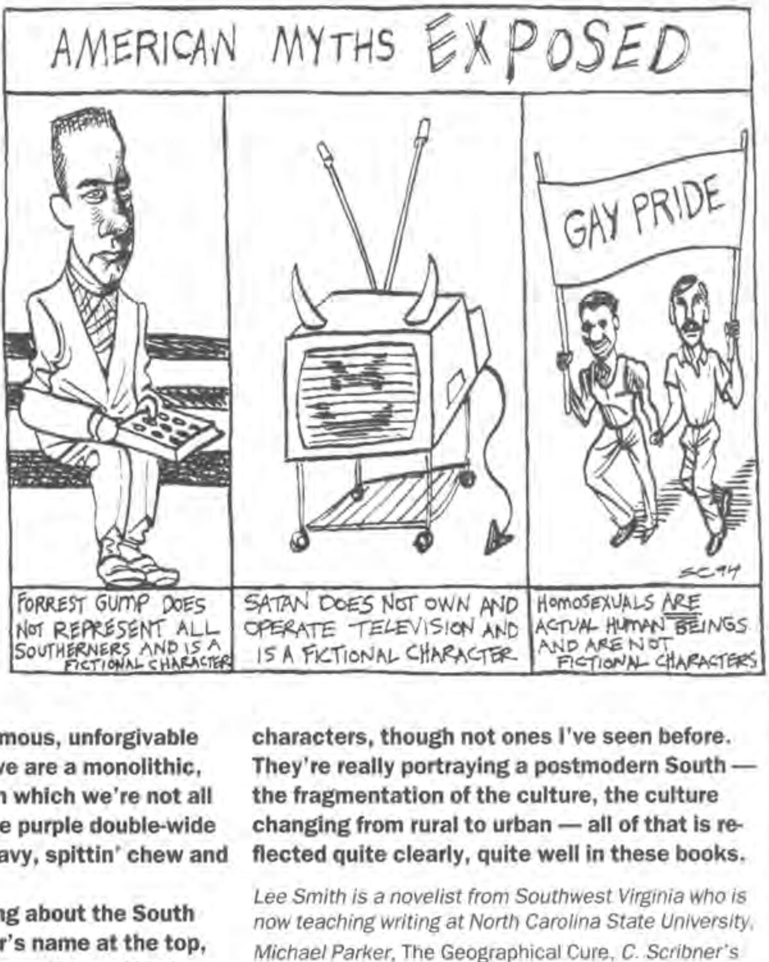
DENISE GIARDINA

I thought *Forrest Gump* presented the nation, particularly the South, as a mythical kind of place. Everything happened so easily; the idea of the South as this land of milk and honey really came across to me. But there are things about the South I'm not so crazy about. *Forrest Gump* doesn't treat racism in any way beyond those one-on-one relationships between the characters. And I can't imagine seeing something like labor conditions being addressed.

I didn't like such a romanticized version of the country, although I really liked the main character. I liked the mythic quality of the film — but everything from Forrest standing in the schoolhouse door to Vietnam was such a caricature. Even things like the Klan were kind of cute. And his accent — it sounded like he had mush in his mouth.

Denise Giardina is a fiction writer and teacher at West Virginia State – College.

Forrest Gump, *Paramount Studios. Director, Robert Zemeckis; Producer, Wendy Finerman.*


AMERICAN MYTHS EXPOSED
GAY PRIDE
SC94
FORREST GUMP DOES NOT REPRESENT ALL SOUTHERNERS AND IS A FICTIONAL CHARACTER
SATAN DOES NOT OWN AND OPERATE TELEVISION AND IS A FICTIONAL CHARACTER
HOMOSEXUALS ARE ACTUAL HUMAN BEINGS AND ARE NOT FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

HARRY CREWS

It is a rare magazine piece or book or film about the South that does not make the enormous, unforgivable error of assuming that we are a monolithic, undivided culture, and in which we're not all on the porch steps of the purple double-wide trailer, eatin' red-eye gravy, spittin' chew and callin' the hounds.

When I see something about the South now, I look at the author's name at the top, and unless I have read something of his before and I trust him, I don't bother. I'm so damn old and so rank, there's a lot I won't read anymore.

Harry Crews, in his own words, "A man who has spent entirely too much of his life alone in a room talking to people who don't exist and doing things that have never been done. He does not regret it."

Harry Crews is an author, playwright, and teacher in Gainesville, Florida.

LEE SMITH

I've been reading some great new books by Southern authors lately. Randall Kenan's *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead*, Michael Parker's *The Geographical Cure*, and Tony Earley's *Here We Are in Paradise* are great new books by young North Carolina writers. The writing goes back to the old traditions of storytelling in the South; it goes back to African mythology, really.

The characters in all the books are Southern characters, though not ones I've seen before. They're really portraying a postmodern South — the fragmentation of the culture, the culture changing from rural to urban — all of that is reflected quite clearly, quite well in these books.

Lee Smith is a novelist from Southwest Virginia who is now teaching writing at North Carolina State University.

Michael Parker, The Geographical Cure, *C. Scribner's Sons, New York 1994.*

Tony Earley, Here We Are in Paradise, *Little Brown, Boston 1994.*

Randall Kenan, Let the Dead Bury Their Dead, *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York 1992.*

SHOPPIN' SHERIFF

This sheriff is always on the lookout, persistently hunting his prey. He won't rest until he finds a deal. Not a drug deal — but bargains for his department.

Lake County Florida Sheriff George Knupp recently bought his force $16,000 worth of computer equipment, and enough computer paper to run his office for a year and a half. The laptop computers and reams of paper came to a little over $250.

Most of Knupp's purchases come to just a fraction of their retail value. He turned more than $1 million in excess jail funds back to the county last year.

Knupp says the deals he finds aren't all that extraordinary. "You just have to shop around," he explains. Knupp scored the laptops for his force when the St. John's Water Authority updated their computer equipment.

He buys surplus oil for the 300 vehicles maintained by the police department. "It's usually about 80 cents a quart. We got it for 12. When you change the oil in that many vehicles every 3,000 miles," Knupp says, "it makes a big difference."

Feeding the 500 people in the Lake County jail can add up too. But Knupp buys surplus canned fruits and vegetables and powdered eggs at a military warehouse in nearby Starke. He buys medical supplies surplus; recently, he picked up Haz-Mat supplies, like the special gloves used for handling toxics. The gloves usually go for over $10. He paid $1.50 per pair.

Knupp found a lot of good deals this year:

— $2,000 laserjet computer printers for $35 apiece. Knupp bought seven.

— A four-wheel drive truck with fewer than 10,000 miles on it, $100.

— $600 bulletproof vests for $7 each. Knupp snagged 25.

— Six $100 tarpaulins, each for four bucks.

Tracking down criminals and hunting bargains seem to require some similar skills. "You have to go out and look for bargains. They won't just come knocking on your door," says Knupp.

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good mother despite her sexual orientation.

Across the board, advocates for gay and lesbian issues said education was the best tool to bring about the changes they hope to make and to stave off the discriminatory legislation they face.

In his speech denouncing Cobb County's resolution and requesting the Olympic volleyball preliminaries be moved elsewhere, Louganis summed it up.

"Prejudice," he said, "comes out of fear. And fear is out of ignorance."

— A. Lorraine Strauss

QUAKER HOUSE KEEPS ON GIVING PEACE A CHANCE

When they began helping soldiers from Fort Bragg Army base who objected to the war in Vietnam, none of the Quaker House founders thought their makeshift center would still be open one year later — let alone 25. But this fall more than 100 supporters gathered in Fayetteville, North Carolina, to celebrate a quarter century of peacemaking in the shadow of the Fort Bragg Army base. The nonprofit project of the Religious Society of Friends in the Carolinas, Quaker House provides free counseling to soldiers at Fort Bragg, nearby Pope Air Force base, and the Camp Lejeune Marine base.

Quaker House got its start in June of 1969, when Dean Holland, a 20-year old soldier at Fort Bragg, hitchhiked 60 miles to the Chapel Hill, North Carolina Friends Meeting. He asked Quakers there to help him and other like-minded soldiers at Fort Bragg become conscientious objectors to the war in Vietnam. Within a month, Carolina Friends scraped up enough money to rent a dilapidated house across the street from the VFW hall in Fayetteville.

Several months after the Friends arrived in Fayetteville, Holland became the director of Quaker House. He was the first conscientious objector at Fort Bragg. Tragedy struck in December 1969, when Holland and assistant director Kaye Lindsey were killed in an automobile accident.

Bob Gwyn was present when Holland first spoke to Chapel Hill's Quakers. A former clerk for the Chapel Hill Month Meeting and a founding member of the Quaker House Board of Overseers, Gwyn remembers, "We thought we could come up with some money to keep Quaker House around that first summer. But there were so many GIs who needed our help and the anti-war movement really started to heat up." Then, as now, Quaker House squeaked by on contributions from individual Friends, donations at monthly and yearly meetings, and from other supporters.

Over the years Quaker House has had some remarkable moments. On May 16, 1970, Quaker House joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War to hold the largest antiwar rally in Fayetteville's history. Hundreds of protesters turned out; many were GIs dressed in wigs and sunglasses to avoid detection by military police.

Only four days later, Quaker House was destroyed by fire in an apparent case of arson. Local authorities showed little interest in investigating, and the case was never settled. The board and staff were forced to search for new

Photo by Phil Marcus

QUAKER HOUSE AND VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR HELD THE LARGEST ANTI-WAR RALLY IN FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA, HISTORY, MAY 1970. THIS YEAR QUAKER HOUSE CELEBRATES ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF HELPING CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.

quarters when the town invoked previously unknown or ignored zoning restrictions preventing repair of the original house.

From May to October of that year, the Quaker House board of directors and the worship group which had sprung up soon after Quaker House's founding met out of doors amidst the ashes of the burned building. Many who attended those meetings recall Army intelligence officers parked across the street monitoring the Friends' silent reflection.

Ultimately, Quaker House solved its real estate problem with the assistance of the GI Bill. Bill Carothers, an ex-soldier from Fort Bragg, had purchased a home in Fayetteville with a VA loan. In November of 1970 Quaker House paid Carothers the equity he had in the house and assumed the mortgage.

These days, Quaker House staff stay busy helping gay and lesbian soldiers make sense of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy. They also assist AWOL soldiers in returning to their bases for legal discharges, and they counsel teens about the realities of military life. Director Sandy Sweitzer offers workshops on conflict resolution and racial reconciliation for both civilian and military communities.

Despite the country's all-volunteer armed forces, Quaker House continues to see a small but steady stream of men and women who enlisted only to discover, once they're in service, that their conscience demands they get out.

"We help a lot of people who don't think about the moral implications of military service until after they've got a gun in their hand," says Sweitzer. "When they realize they can't be involved in an organization that kills, we're here for them."

Sweitzer announced Quaker House's new toll-free number, (800) FYI-95GI, at the gathering. The line makes the organization's assistance available to soldiers in Florida, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana, and the Carolinas.

— Robert Lamme

WORKER CLIMATE CHILLY IN SOUTH

Guidebooks and magazines promote parts of the South as great places to do business, live, and work. The September 1994 *Money Magazine* ranked Raleigh/Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina, as the number one places to live in the country, Gainesville, Florida, as seventh. Raleigh/Durham also topped *Fortune Magazine's* 1993 list of cities for brain workers; Austin, Texas, came up high on that list as well. But according to a new study released by the Southern Labor Institute, "The Climate for Workers," the Southeast remains the worst place for workers in the country. "If you measure the South in terms of economic activity, then we're fairly well off," says Kenny Johnson, director of the Institute. "But as soon as you start looking at quality of life issues — infant mortality, state-legislated worker protection, wages — we continue to come out on the bottom of the scale."

Money Magazine asked its readers to rate the places they lived according to indicators including clean water and air, availability of quality health care, state government, tax rates, and education. "Climate for Workers," relying primarily on census data, vital statistics, and government reports, included some other factors, too. Their report also took a close look at 41 items such as environmental factors, state-legislated worker safety and protection, employer-based health insurance, fatal occupational injuries, and minimum wages. (Texas and Georgia's are $3.25 per hour. Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee do not have a minimum wage.)

In the overall rankings, Virginia was the only state in the South to come out in the top 20. The five states with the worst climate for workers are in the South, according to the report. Mississippi remains the worst state overall for workers, as it was in the Southern Labor Institute's 1988 and 1990 reports. The next four states, in ascending order, are Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina, and West Virginia.

The study confirms the *Green Index* from the Institute for Southern Studies (publisher *Southern Exposure*). In the book, which ranks each state on 256 indicators of pollution, public health, and environmental policies, Southern states hold 10 of the bottom 15 positions.

"When we first did this study in 1986," Johnson says of "The Climate for Workers," "the South was showing a good stance and favorable conditions for creating jobs. Yet it remains behind in every other measure that's important to men and women."

The South does have a good record for creating jobs. But in-

POLICING THE AIRWAVES NYPD BLUE

The popular television series *NYPD Blue* is being shown on more Southern stations this season despite continued efforts by the American Family Association to keep it off the air. Its Emmy Awards and its high ratings may have more to do with its being shown than the work of civil libertarians, but the effort to keep *NYPD Blue* from viewers appears to be running out of steam.

EFFORTS BY THE AMERICAN FAMILY ASSOCIATION TO KEEP THE POPULAR TELEVISION SHOW NYPD BLUE OFF THE AIRWAVES ARE NOT FARING WELL THIS SEASON IN THE SOUTH.

Last year, the American Family Association in Tupelo, Mississippi, wielded some clout. President Donald Wildmon launched an effort to prevent airing the ABC series. *NYPD Blue* promised graphic realism including scenes of sex and violence, and the group reacted with a campaign of phone calls, petitions, and letters to ABC affiliates.

By the beginning of the 1993 season, 57 stations — affecting 10 percent of the national audience — had decided not to carry the show. Two-thirds of those stations were in the South.

As the season opened this year, the American Family Association's influence had diminished. Though they continue a campaign to keep *NYPD Blue* off the air, they haven't been successful. Only 19 ABC affiliates refuse to carry the show now, says ABC spokeswoman Janice Gretemyer. A concentration of stations are still in the South.

WKPT, Kingsport, Tennessee's, ABC affiliate, is one station that has begun airing the show this season. "We feel all the episodes but the first few just weren't all that objectionable — and it has won a lot of awards," says George DeVault, president and general manager. He says he had received a large number of letters from American Family Association members in 1993, though he claims the mail arrived after he had already decided not to run the show.

At WTVD in Durham, North Carolina, which chose to air the show last year, the letters and phone calls which once flooded its office have slowed to a trickle. Program director Jan Miller says he gets just as many calls thanking him for running the show as he does the ones objecting to it.

Donald Wildmon has not given up, though. At a recent Christian Coalition convention, he gave a speech on Hollywood's attack on Christian values. *Freedom Writer* editor Skip Porteous wonders how it was Wildmon knew so much about network TV, *NYPD Blue* included. "During his presentation," Porteous notes, "he claimed he never watches TV."

THE ULTIMATE PYRAMID SCHEME

I VISITED THE GREAT PYRAMID AND LIVED
SC 94

Giant cows, dinosaurs, or peaches towering over small towns have pulled our eyes away from the monotony of the interstate for years. Soon, driving through Florida down I-75 — middle America's route to the Disney World Resort Complex — vacationers could have the chance to see a different kind of monument: a pyramid 50 stories high with the capacity to store 300,000 caskets and a million funeral urns. At a height of 495 feet the pyramid would be six feet taller than Egypt's great pyramid. An Orlando radio station's "name the pyramid" contest elicited "Ashes 'R' Us," "Club Dead," and "The Last Rest Stop" as possible names for the park.

Pyramid Memorial Park, the name preferred by its developers, Pyramids Unlimited, will feature a 171-foot "Golden Pyramid," a 25,000-square-foot visitor center, gardens, a memorial, and an educational museum along with "The Great Pyramid." The smaller "Golden Pyramid" could be ready to open within 18 months, but the 14-acre main attraction wouldn't be ready for 10 years. Enthusiasts say the park could create 150 permanent jobs and offer $100 million in construction costs; Pyramids Unlimited hopes to sell $1 billion worth of burial spaces.

"To think there'd be 1.3 million people who would want their loved ones' dead remains in Sumter County . . . well, I just can't comprehend it," Cathy Wiesjahn, a local store owner, told one reporter.

fant mortality rates, pollution, wages, and median household incomes all fall short. The South also has the dirtiest environment of the nine regions the report investigated. "We would like to be able to report that the public policy response to that unpleasant fact has been region-wide adoption of wise and future-oriented environmental policies," writes Thomas P. Cork, the author of the report. "Sadly, that is not the case."

Which is exactly the problem, Johnson says. "Southern policy makers continue to measure progress by how business is doing. The quality of life issues don't have a high value put on them — at least not in terms of tax dollars."

In 1991, the most recent year for which data were available, state and local contributions to school systems ranged from New Jersey's $8,447 per pupil to last place Mississippi's $2,793. As a matter of fact, five of the 10 states spending the least on their students fell in the Southeast. Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Arkansas all spent well under $4,000 per student.

High school graduation rates reflect these spending trends. The South once again dominates the bottom of the list, with half of its 12 states falling into the bottom 10 nationally. Louisiana showed only 56.7 percent of its high school students receiving a diploma. South Carolina, Florida, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama graduated less than two-thirds of their students.

The South also has the highest percent of its work force in high-disease risk jobs; mining, cotton weaving mills, and other cotton products, chemicals and allied products are all staple industries in the South. The South shows the worst legislated worker protection and the lowest median household incomes.

"One of the things the South has to pay attention to is the kind of jobs we're bringing in," Johnson says. "It's essential that they're paying decent wages — that's all most people want. A fair day's work for a fair day's pay — take care of the family, take care of things."

The other essential change, says Johnson, is that "We've got to invest more in people. Those areas that continue to do well have an educated work force, things like that. Ultimately, we need a set of policies that stresses the importance of people."

APPALACHIAN POVERTY WORSENED DURING 80S

After signs of improving during the 1970s, poverty in Appalachia worsened during the Reagan-Bush years, according to a new study authored by University of Richmond Professor Richard Couto.

"While problems of the inner-city crowd the problems of Appalachia off the front pages of the nation's newspapers, the problems remain," Couto finds.

The Appalachian region — 399 counties stretching from southern New York to northern Mississippi — has done proportionately better than the national average in reducing poverty since 1970. Nonetheless, Appalachia's 15 percent poverty rate is still above the national 13 percent rate. Parts of New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia — primarily industrial centers — have actually brought their rate down to 13.6 percent. But the coalfields of Eastern Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, and parts of rural Tennessee find one in four people still living in poverty, with rates exceeding 25 percent in some areas.

Central Appalachia shows the most uneven record. Tied to the coal economy's booms and busts, the coalfields experienced prosperity in the late 1970s. But with the steady decline of the coal industry, those parts of the region unable to create jobs or recruit new businesses have suffered disproportionately. In 1990 the coalfields claimed eight of the 10 poorest counties in Appalachia. And according to 1990 census data, eastern Kentucky alone had seven of the poorest 25 counties in the country.

Ron Eller, head of the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky, points out that what large-scale rankings don't show are the success stories. The economies of some Kentucky coal counties have grown by leaps and bounds in recent years as they transitioned out of the mining economy by developing local and regional infrastructure. The focus, Eller says, should be on "distressed communities" within regions; in some of the poorest pockets 60 percent of the people live below the national poverty level.

"Of course, the big losers are the children," says Tina Wilemma, executive director of the Commission on Religion in Appalachia, which sponsored Couto's study.

In 1990, one out of five Appalachian children lived in poverty, a 7.5 percent increase from 1980. In the coalfields, one in three children live below poverty level.

Compiled and edited by A. Lorraine Strauss
Illustrations by Steven Cragg.

Readers are encouraged to submit news articles to Roundup. *Please send original clippings or photocopies with name and date of publication, or articles of no more than 500 words.*

FOLLOWUP

Unions for Hog Workers

By Mary Lee Kerr

Over the past decade, North Carolina has been hogging a larger and larger share of the nation's swine production and processing, attracting corporate farm operations with cheap land, lack of zoning, and low-wage, non-union labor.

Now, there is good news and bad news for workers in two North Carolina hog processing plants since we reported on their plight in the "Clean Dream" and "No Place Like Home" issues of *Southern Exposure* (Winter 1993 and Fall 1992).

The good news is at Lundy Packing Company in Sampson County. A union election held June 3, 1993, at the plant was finally certified in September by the National Labor Relations Board. Workers had voted in favor of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union and the International Union of Operating Engineers becoming their collective bargaining agents, but the company delayed certification by challenging the 318 to 309 vote.

"I see this as a historical election," says union representative Ron Kazel. "Since only about 4 percent of the work force in North Carolina is organized, it's a major event to bring in a union at a large employer like Lundy. They're no longer willing to work for minimum wage or put up with harassment on the job and all the discrimination."

They have also had to risk a chronic illness. Hogs carrying brucellosis, a bacterial disease, exposed 129 people in the plant to the chronic flu-like malaise. When the problem was first discovered, Lundy's was not willing to avoid purchasing brucellosis-infected hogs. Meanwhile, at least 47 workers developed the lingering illness.

"A lot of them struggle and go to work," says union representative Frank Jackson. "Probably some will end up with early disability."

But with the union victory, workers have a better chance to resolve health issues without losing their jobs. In fact, workers fired for union activities were compensated with back pay. Yet problems with the company continue; Lundy has been slow to respond to the union's requests to meet and bargain.

The bad news is farther east in Bladen County where workers and union organizers are engaged in an uphill struggle to organize in a hog slaughtering plant. After meeting strong resistance from management at Carolina Food Processors in Tar Heel, the union lost an August 1994 election 587 to 704.

The United Food and Commercial Workers Union filed some 135 allegations of company misconduct during the election. In response the NLRB issued a formal complaint against the company. "They fired six people and threatened the rest with plant closure," says the union's Ron Kazel. "They told them, 'If you sign a union card you'll be fired. If you vote for the union, you'll be fired. But if you vote against the union, we'll give you more money.'"

"We're defending all charges that the UFCW has filed against us," counters Sherman Gilliard, director of human resources at the plant. "We do not want a union. North Carolina has the lowest union representation of any state in the country, and we pride ourselves on being union-free. In a unionized environment, individuality is taken away from the employees in terms of being able to speak for themselves."

The employees who did vote for the union disagree. Some of them report that Carolina Food Processors' bad behavior goes far beyond poor conduct during the election. "While the election was going on, they would tell people the union's not thinking about your family, but yet they can't even get off work to take their sick child to the doctor," says plant worker Mary Holmes.

"When I slipped on a piece of meat and hurt my knee, they never even let me go to the doctor," says Agatha Cromertie, another worker at the plant.

Emma Jacobs contracted carpal tunnel syndrome in both hands from her job of separating chitterlings. When an orthopedist recommended surgery, the company told her she could only have a weekend to recover. Rather than risk the more serious injuries that she'd seen in other workers who had returned right after surgery, she quit. "They went through all this suffering and injury," she said, "and I just couldn't see myself doing all that."

These women are working for the union toward another election. "I thought the union would have been great. I thought the union would not have let them send injured people back to work and for simple things like being able to go to the restroom," says Jacobs. She adds, "The union is not going to stop, and I really pray that they don't stop." ❑

Photo by Robert Willett/Raleigh News & Observer

LARRY SIMMONS, WHO WORKED AT LUNDY PACKING FOR 20 YEARS, SAYS HIS BRUCELLOSIS SYMPTOMS HAVE PERSISTED FOR YEARS.

Mary Lee Kerr is a research associate with the Institute for Southern Studies.

Best of the Press

By Eric Bates

Each year we honor reporters whose stories help communities confront their problems and contribute to positive change. The Southern Journalism Awards are coordinated by Eric Bates, investigative editor of Southern Exposure *and director of the Investigative Action Fund.*

Reading the morning paper, it can be hard to make sense of the South. Gangs in the cities, Republicans in the suburbs, Wal-Marts in rural communities — given the bewildering pace of change behind the headlines, it can be hard to know what to think or who to believe.

Fortunately, some journalists work to help us better understand the region. Each year *Southern Exposure* and our publisher, the Institute for Southern Studies, sponsor the Southern Journalism Awards to honor reporters whose stories broaden the range of issues, voices, and sources found in the region's daily newspapers. By asking tough, often imaginative questions and by probing untapped sources of information, these writers show how the media can analyze a community's problems and contribute to changes.

This year, a panel of 33 judges selected winners for investigative and youth reporting from 114 entries. The categories included investigative and youth reporting in three divisions based on the size of the newspaper's circulation. The panel included journalism professors, magazine and newspaper editors, reporters, authors, and community leaders.

Together, these stories offer a sort of guided tour of the South. They take us cruising with bored teenagers in Virginia and digging through landfill records in South Carolina. They expose hospital scams and abusive foster homes in Florida. They show us the destruction of vital woodlands in Alabama, and hope for the neglected wood industry in Kentucky. Above all, they offer clarity and insight in the midst of chaos and confusion.

Of course, the press has often struggled to keep abreast of change in the South. To put present-day newspaper reporting in context, journalist and author John Egerton takes us back to the days following the Second World War. As he recounts in an excerpt from his new history entitled *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South,* most white newspapers tried to take the middle road between white supremacists and those who wanted to dismantle the racist legacy of slavery. Papers were "striving for equilibrium" — and in the process, they failed in their mission to expose injustice and provide a voice for the entire community.

The Institute for Southern Studies has recently launched an effort to help foster journalism that strives to live up to its mission — the Investigative Action Fund. This new endowment will sponsor hard-hitting investigative reporting, link journalists across the region, and provide internships and media training for youth, minority journalists, grassroots activists, and others working to empower citizens and communities. The fund will also administer our annual journalism awards to honor the very best of the Southern press — recognizing reporters and daily newspapers that strive, not for equilibrium, but for equality. ❑

JUDGES Maxine Alexander, Alease Alston, Harry Amana, Richard Boyd, Cynthia Brown, Anne Clancy, Meredith Emmett, Robin Epstein, Gillian Floren, Katherine Fulton, Rachel Hall, Karen Hayes, Lois Herring, Neill Herring, Steve Hoffius, Chip Hughes, Jereann King, Jenny Labalme, Ruby Lerner, Marc Miller, Tema Okun, Dee Reid, Derek Rodriguez, Al Sawyer, Caroline Senter, Bob Sherrill, Dimi Stephen, Lori Ventura, Lester Waldman, Hollis Watkins Jr., Nayo Watkins, Michael Yellin, Barry Yeoman. Special thanks to Marc Miller and Jane Fish for excerpting the first-place winners that begin on page 15.

Striving for Equilibrium

By John Egerton

"The four or five years right after World War II," writes John Egerton, an independent journalist and long-time contributor to Southern Exposure, *"appear to have been the last and best time — perhaps the only time — when the South might have moved boldly and decisively to heal itself, to fix its own social wagon voluntarily. But it didn't act, and the moment passed."*

What happened? And why didn't the press provide a stronger voice for change? In this article adapted from Speak Now Against the Day, *his new history of the generation before the civil rights movement published by Alfred A. Knopf, Egerton examines how newspapers searched for the middle ground in race relations — ignoring the warnings of the black press and failing to "seize the time and do the right thing."*

I like to look at newspapers as diaries or ledger books, vast repositories for the daily accumulation of raw material from which history is shaped and made permanent. From that perspective, the ratio of waste to essence is very high — about like gold mining or pearl harvesting. All those pages, all that ink, all that effort, and so much of it expendable, come and gone and forgotten in a matter of hours. But pause and look carefully at everything — the news and editorials, the photos, the display ads, the classifieds — and a pattern begins to emerge. You learn what people said and did, what they ate, what they wore, what they drove; deeper still, you learn what they thought, what they believed, what they valued.

Reading Southern newspapers from the postwar '40s now, you can get an acute sense of a region and a people striving for equilibrium in a time of great uncertainty. After the exhilaration of victory in the summer of 1945, consensus quickly eroded and then evaporated into the magnolia-scented atmosphere. The South was still confused, ambivalent, defensive, still a place divided — against outsiders and against itself.

For two and a half years, the newspapers were full of signs. They told of decorated combat veterans like PFC Jack Thomas of Albany, Georgia — an orphaned black youngster raised by his grandmother — who had risked their lives for liberties they weren't allowed at home. They described each new addition to the lengthening file of civil rights decisions by the federal courts, which were chipping away at the elaborate legal framework of racial segregation and discrimination. They cast a critical eye on the woefully inadequate schools, hospitals, housing projects, and other public facilities to which black citizens were confined under the "separate but equal" doctrine. They reported on the deliberations of biracial community groups in widely scattered cities that were working openly and actively for tolerance and fairness in race relations. And they recorded and amplified the voices of individual advocates of social reform — as well as the strident voices of political demagogues, Klan terrorists, and a host of other reactionary extremists. Clearly, there had to be some sorting out of feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.

"When I went to North Carolina to become editorial page editor of the Charlotte *News* in September 1945," said Harry Ashmore, remembering back almost 50 years, "there was a little hint of change in the wind. Nothing powerful — just a feeling, really, that it might be a good time for some fresh thinking. North Carolina wasn't the most backward Southern state by any means; it had abolished the poll tax years before, and it had one of the best state universities in the country. The *News* was a fairly progressive paper — W. J. Cash was on the editorial staff there before the war. I felt I could get establishment support on any plea for fair treatment of blacks — if it stopped short of what they called the social question. In other words, equal was negotiable, or at least open for discussion — but separate was not."

Two years later, when Ashmore moved out to Little Rock to edit the *Ar-*

kansas Gazette, that faint stirring of liberalism was already beginning to die down. The report of President Truman's civil rights committee came out that fall, and a few months later, the Dixiecrats bolted out of the Democratic Party over the civil rights issue. The Cold War had started, too, and Communism was getting the blame for almost every deviation from the political or social status quo. From then on, social reform of any kind was a hard sell. The time for quietly making little changes was past — if there ever really was such a time.

Photo courtesy Carter Papers/Mississippi State University

Hodding Carter, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his work in the Delta *Democrat-Times*, poses with his wife Betty at their home in Greenville, Mississippi during the late 1940s.

YOUNG TURKS

The experiences of war had given Harry Ashmore a new perspective on his country and his native region, and in that he was not unlike thousands of others returning to take up their lives "down home." But most Southerners — young ex-G.I.s in particular — weren't temperamentally inclined toward passive introspection and soul-searching. They didn't spend a lot of time worrying about the South's readiness and capacity for social or economic or spiritual renewal; the region's problems didn't yield to such reflective analysis.

Instead, a 29-year-old journalist like Ashmore, having a daily page to fill and an audience waiting, was much more likely to focus on the issues of the moment from a middle-ground perspective. In the postwar South, that meant moderate progressivism: not harking back to the romantic myths of the Old Confederacy, but also studiously avoiding, as much as possible, the sacrosanct totems of segregation and white supremacy.

To anyone then active in the field of daily journalism, it must have felt like a great time to be living and working in the South. Newspapers had a virtual lock on the communications business, and local papers enjoyed an influence that far exceeded their size. The chains had not yet penetrated to all corners of the region; except for a few Hearst and Scripps-Howard papers, almost every operation was locally owned. The television networks were just then forming in New York, and they wouldn't break into the Southern city markets until the end of the decade. Radio was doing a little news and information programming, but not much. Some papers, like the *Courier-Journal* in Louisville and the *Arkansas Gazette,* to which Ashmore gravitated, blanketed their states with both news coverage and circulation; they were indispensable to anyone who tried to keep up with what was going on.

Personalities dominated the papers. Owners, publishers, editors, and even some lower-echelon writers were widely recognized as influential and important people. Readers all over Georgia and even beyond the state knew who Ralph McGill was and what he was saying in the Atlanta *Constitution;* likewise, Virginians followed Virginius Dabney in the Richmond *Times-Dispatch,* and North Carolinians knew Jonathan Daniels of the *Raleigh News and Observer.* Birmingham columnist John Temple Graves had a following that extended well beyond the circulation area of his paper. And, quiet little man that he was, even publisher J.N. Heiskell of the *Gazette* was no stranger to his Arkansas subscribers.

When conservative and liberal owners locked horns, as did Jimmy Stahlman of the Nashville *Banner* and Silliman Evans of the *Tennessean,* readers in their area followed the fight avidly. When reactionary rivals competed daily, as Thomas Hederman of the *Clarion-Ledger* and Frederick Sullens of the *Daily News* did in Jackson, Mississippi (even though Hederman owned both papers), an entire state could be affected. Against that dominating influence, Hodding Carter and his smaller, more isolated Delta *Democrat-Times* in Greenville gave Mississippians an offsetting moderate voice, magnified by Carter's 1946 Pulitzer Prize and by the regional and national recognition his magazine articles and books received.

Young turks like Harry Ashmore represented at once a continuation of certain Southern traditions and a departure from them. The papers he worked for in both Charlotte and Little Rock were family-owned companies that regarded racial issues with a certain benevolent inattention. Theirs was not a philosophy of dehumanization; they were intellectually but passively accepting of the basic rights undeniably due to black citizens. They wanted to be tolerant, enlightened, and fair on the subject — but not crusading. They were not fight-to-the-death defenders of a rigid and inflexible segregationist orthodoxy, but they weren't destroyers of it either; more accurately, they were resigned to it as a reality that they felt would not soon change.

"You couldn't have stayed at home and had any influence at all if you openly opposed segregation," Ashmore observed. Looking around at his contemporaries back then, he concluded that a majority of editors in the region tended to see things in more or less that way. There was a broad mainstream of acceptable opinion — moderate, reasonable, informed, but carefully circumscribed — and he fit comfortably within it.

Beyond the seasoned old hands of Southern newspapering — dominant figures like McGill, Dabney, Carter, and Daniels — Ashmore could look up to experienced and talented editors at the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, the Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, the Nashville *Tennessean*, and the Chattanooga *Times*. At a number of the smaller dailies throughout the region, there were also editors and publishers whose moderation and tolerance were an inseparable part of their sense of duty as public servants.

There were weekly editors with a nontraditional perspective, too. Neil Davis, a Nieman Fellow with Harry Ashmore and Thomas Sancton at Harvard in 1941, returned from the service to edit the Lee County *Bulletin* in Alabama, and throughout his long career there, his paper was a model of professional responsibility. J.W. Norwood, publisher-editor of the Lowndes County *News* in Georgia, fought fearlessly when he got mad — as he did when he condemned the state Democratic Party leadership in a scorching editorial in 1947: "Given a choice between crooked, scheming politicians and voting with the Negroes, I choose the latter, and to paraphrase those famous words of Patrick Henry, 'If that be treason then make the most of it.'"

"FIRST AND RIGHT"

These, collectively, were representative echoes of the majority voice of the Southern press in the first two or three years after World War II. Though they weren't exactly editorializing in close harmony, they did tend to follow the middle path of pragmatic progressivism on which there was a high degree of consensus. They were Southerners bonded by choice to a region with which they closely identified; they were editors who seemed ready to face realistically the South's problems and needs; they were white men (and a very few women) who thought they were as well qualified as anyone, and better than most, to offer enlightened leadership in the eternal Southern challenge of race. *Time* magazine, writing in 1947 about the "realistic and readable" Harry Ashmore ("neither a Yankee-lover nor a deep-dyed Southerner"), described him as an editor who "tempers his enthusiasm for reform with consideration of the facts of Southern life." No one had to be told that foremost among those facts was segregation.

The editors were no anvil chorus of Jim Crow-busting reformers; no one in daily journalism in the South was on that mission in the '40s — and, for that matter, neither were very many Northerners. Only the black papers and a handful of regional writers outside the mainstream press dared to confront segregation in print from within the region. Lillian Smith's articles exhorting the South to reform its racist ways were widely published in other journals, but her own *South Today*, which she and Paula Snelling had edited in north Georgia, was discontinued in 1945. Alabamians Aubrey Williams and Gould Beech enjoyed a period of success in Montgomery with the *Southern Farmer*, their populist and racially inclusive monthly tabloid for families who worked the land, and they got in some good licks against segregation — but again, it was not daily journalism, and it lasted for barely a decade.

The black papers, all weeklies except the Atlanta *Daily World*, often published news and commentary on racial issues that couldn't be found in any white publication, but few outside the black neighborhoods paid much attention. Black publishers and editors in the South got little except grief from a mixed bag of critics — liberal and conservative, black and white, North and South. (They were spurned by the white press, too; in 1946, the association of newspaper correspondents in Washington voted to exclude the *Daily World*'s representative from the congressional press galleries.) If the papers were at all conciliatory on social issues, they were viewed as timid and Uncle Tomish; if they were combative, they were called recklessly radical; if they tried to entertain or amuse or titillate as well as to inform, they were dismissed as sensationalist rags. But in their denunciation of segregation and its crippling effects on Southerners black and white, the black papers were not only first and right but prophetic; the problem was not with them but with the whites who ignored their warnings.

It was also in the 1940s that the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine sent reporters to open bureaus in the region. Meanwhile, transplanted Southerners were making their mark at publications in the North, writing critical and hard-hitting stories about the South and its problems in the New York *Herald-Tribune*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *New Republic*. Kentuckian Ted Poston was a pioneering black reporter for the New York *Post* beginning in the late 1930s, and George Streator, a Nashvillian and a Fisk alumnus, was the *New York Times*'s first black general assignment reporter, beginning in 1945.

There were, to be sure, some urban papers in the South, and numerous smaller dailies too, that controlled public opinion on the conservative flank of the mainstream journals. The Nashville *Banner*, the Hederman papers in Jackson, and the Charleston *News & Courier* were usually in a reactionary class by themselves. Also staunchly conservative on most economic, political, and social issues were the Dallas *Morning News*, New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, the Houston *Post* and *Chronicle*, and the papers in Memphis, Knoxville, and Chattanooga.

D. Tennant Bryan, who owned the Richmond papers and the Tampa *Tribune*, moved them ever closer to the camp of the conservative resistance. Virginius Dabney, in his long tenure as editor of the *Times-Dispatch* for the Bryan family, had endorsed FDR four times — "with diminishing enthusiasm," he later explained, adding: "I held my nose and stayed with Truman in 1948." But the tide was turning fast; soon after that, Bryan named 29-year-old conservative reporter and editor James J. Kilpatrick to replace the retiring Douglas Southall Freeman as editor of the *News-Leader,* and in the next five years Kilpatrick would pull both his paper and Dabney's *Times-Dispatch* sharply to the right.

Photo courtesy N.C. State Archives

LIKE OTHER SOUTHERN PUBLISHERS, JONATHAN DANIELS OF THE *RALEIGH NEWS AND OBSERVER* (RIGHT) COULD NOT BRING HIMSELF TO EMBRACE HENRY WALLACE OF THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY.

PARTY LOYALTY

Nevertheless, what was most surprising about the postwar positioning of Southern publishers, editors, and writers on the liberal-to-conservative spectrum was that the balance continued to weigh in favor of the more moderate and progressive papers all the way to the end of the 1940s. Thus, a curious and inexplicable anomaly continued: a press more forward-looking, more open-minded and liberal, than its political representatives, its pillar institutions, or the generality of its readers. It bears repeating that they were not integrationists, not left-wing radicals, not revolutionary reformers. But except for a few, they were not right-wing reactionaries either.

"We were saying that the South should live up to the promise of the 'separate but equal' doctrine," said Harry Ashmore. "That was as far as we felt we could push. But at the same time, I think most of us knew that there was no way to make separate equal — and so in a sense, we were really forcing the integration issue."

Newspaper publishers and editors and reporters — the principal dispensers of adult education in the pre-television South — might well have led the region to a quicker, more direct, and more equitable resolution of its racial conflicts, had the choice been left to them. But when the Dixiecrats forced the issue, the dividing line became an unbridgeable canyon.

"We had to stick with the Democratic Party or take up with the Dixiecrats," said Ashmore. "The other third party — the Progressives, with Henry Wallace — was not a realistic alternative in the South. They were as far out on the left wing as Strom Thurmond and the Dixiecrats were out on the right. The way we saw it, the traditional Democratic Party occupied the middle ground. The only real choice the Southern liberals had at that point was to stand and fight as yellow-dog Democrats. Party loyalty was all that saved us."

As the forces of reform and resistance came ever closer to open conflict, the narrow demilitarized zone between them was diminishing rapidly, its occupants crossing over to one side or the other, or abandoning the field altogether. Among them were some troubled men and women who believed in fairness and justice, but whose deference to Southern traditions restrained them from advocating the sudden demise of Jim Crow.

Even the most prominent Southern journalists — McGill, Dabney, Carter, Daniels — reacted negatively to the report of President Truman's civil rights committee, which outlined a number of specific proposals to end racial segregation. Their consternation underscored the deep and conflicting feelings that divided the South's progressives and liberals and moderates almost as much from one another as from the majority on the right.

Of them all, McGill seemed the most troubled — not so much by the contents of the committee's report as by its broader implications and its probable long-term consequences. The committee, he wrote, had "tried to cut the cloth to fit many patterns." The result was "a report with Christian aims . . . but it can't be enforced, even with troops. It still has to be accomplished by improving the human heart." This coercive effort, he said, would only "harden resistance and widen the gulf."

The Atlanta *Constitution* editor was still several years away from joining the fight against segregation and discrimination, but he was beginning to see the unavoidable struggle that lay ahead. "I cannot be a good crusader," he wrote in that portentous fall of 1947, "because I have been cursed all my life with the ability to see both sides of things." For a long time, he had seen and felt the white South's troubles most acutely; now, with each passing month and year, the black side of the case for simple justice was weighing ever more heavily in his troubled mind. Seeing both sides in the South's undeclared civil war as 1948 was dawning, Ralph McGill surrendered to the melancholy muse within him and waited in fatalistic resignation for the lines to be drawn and the battle to begin. "Some day," he added in an apocalyptic closing line, "the Lord's going to set this world on fire." ❑

Investigative Reporting, Division One (TIE)

Carving a New Economy

By Bill Bishop

Lexington Herald-Leader

Kentucky officials have long boasted about their plans to boost the rural economy. But when columnist Bill Bishop of the Lexington Herald-Leader *looked behind the headlines and self-serving pronouncements, he found a state pursuing rural development through a failed idea. In a dogged series of more than 45 columns, Bishop showed how the policy of luring industry with tax breaks had failed to bring economic progress. And he highlighted opportunities and successes largely ignored by the state.*

Quicksand, Ky. — One day in early April 1993, a ragtag group of woodworkers proved what for 40 years had only been talk — that a fine-furniture industry could grow and thrive in the hardwood-covered hills of eastern Kentucky.

These weren't giants of industry, nor were they living off some fat government grant. The woodworkers belonged to the Kentucky Wood Manufacturers Network, an organization of small companies that one member said resembled an industrial "guerrilla outfit."

The physical proof of the group's success is a rather large, dark-finished set of cabinets and bookshelves. It's an imposing piece of furniture, fine enough to attract attention from buyers at the world's largest wood-products trade show that took place recently in Germany.

The cabinet was assembled in Breathitt County. It was perhaps the first time advanced technologies have been used in eastern Kentucky to produce fine furniture. Yet the product was not as important as the process: In one day, these firms showed Kentucky the way to a new and more prosperous future.

The question now is whether anyone is willing to follow — or whether Kentucky will continue to stumble down a path of long-failed policies to a future of low individual incomes in rural counties and higher state budget shortfalls.

This tale — and the choices it presents — began three decades ago, when the federal government built a modern wood-manufacturing shop at Quicksand. The University of Kentucky taught classes there for two decades, with some success. Graduates of the Wood Utilization Center went on to careers in private business or government service.

The Quicksand center, however, never lived up to its billing. It never became the center of a more advanced wood industry in eastern Kentucky — something beyond the saw-and-ship business that now dominates the state's wood industry. The university's hierarchy never showed a full commitment to Quicksand. Money was gradually cut, and in 1983 even the classes stopped.

What didn't stop was talk about wood products as an economic alternative for the mountains. That possibility has been discussed for decades and continues to be hashed over any time people talk about the future of the mountains.

The reason is obvious. Some of the

OTHER WINNERS For investigative reporting in Division One (circulation over 100,000)

Second Prize to Denise Gamino of the *Austin American-Statesman* for her definitive and disturbing account of hundreds of disabled and chronically ill children confined to some of the worst nursing homes in Texas.

Third Prize to Dave Parks and Michael Brumas of *The Birmingham News* for calling attention to hundreds of suffering veterans exposed to toxic chemicals during the Gulf War — and for pressuring federal officials to investigate their diseases.

A DREAM DEFERRED

More than $3 million in woodworking machinery stands idle nearby as two University of Kentucky employees methodically saw two-foot staves.

The scene is as sad as it is ludicrous. Here in this huge, well-lit room, the state owns one of the most complete woodworking plants in the commonwealth. Three decades ago, this shop was built as the center of a new wood industry in eastern Kentucky. Yet these two men are the only people in sight — and they are doing work that could be accomplished in a basement workshop.

As a result, eastern Kentucky is revisiting its past: Timber is being cut and shipped from the region at modern-day record rates, just as it was cut and shipped in enormous quantities 80 years ago. But the profits from the sale fall mainly outside the region. It's cut-and-sell time in eastern Kentucky, the quicker the better.

The building at Quicksand was constructed to help eastern Kentucky develop a hardwood-manufacturing industry. Eastern Kentuckians were to be trained in advanced woodworking techniques. The university was to have shown how timber in the region could be managed over the long haul to build a local economy, not clear-cut for a one-time profit.

The Quicksand center, however, stands little used. And the exploitation for short-term gain continues in eastern Kentucky. More than 75 percent of the timber leaves the state without further processing. And that is where the jobs are. Oregon officials figure that sawmills provide three jobs for every million board feet of timber; every other step of woodworking, up to fine-furniture making, provides between 12 and 80 jobs for the same amount of wood.

Kentucky is becoming an expert at missing its chances to build a wood industry. Near the turn of the century, Quicksand was at the center of a short-lived industrial explosion. Men cut timber, built mills, and shipped lumber by river and rail. More than 500 people worked at E.O. Robinson's timber operation, and between 1908 and 1922, they cut and shipped all the hardwoods on 15,000 acres.

It was an incredible boom. The city of Jackson saw its population jump fivefold in 20 years, to 2,300 in 1911. When the logs were gone, however, so were the people.

Robinson deeded his denuded 15,000 acres to the University of Kentucky, to see whether UK could bring the forests back. Robinson hoped the restored land would serve as a model for eastern Kentucky.

In the early 1960s, Robinson's hopes met with the stirrings of what was to become the War on Poverty. John Kennedy's first attempt at rural economic development could be found in the Area Redevelopment Act of 1961. The pet bill of Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois, the act was expected to pump federal money into the distressed regions that were flooding the cities with poor migrants. The purpose of the measure, Douglas said, was to "bring jobs to people, not people to jobs."

The act dedicated $642,000 to a woodworking facility in Breathitt County. The wood industry had been the subject of great interest among the burgeoning economic development groups that sprang up in eastern Kentucky during the 1950s. By the time Lady Bird Johnson came to Quicksand in October 1963, a little less than a month before she was to become first lady, those hopes had taken physical form.

Today, however, there is no comprehensive program at Quicksand. There is no ongoing demonstration of wood manufacturing, no meaningful improvement in timber management, and no students.

The program died the death of a thousand cuts. Although the classes were successful — students learned their trade and went to work, often out of state — the university slowly nipped away at Quicksand's budget. In 1983, it stopped offering wood-manufacturing courses. The program is still listed in university bulletins, officials say, but that listing is misleading. Money for the courses has been gone for more than a decade.

There are occasional seminars at the center, but the overall lack of activities at Quicksand has troubled university officials. Forestry department chairman Robert Muller wrote a proposal in 1991 to revitalize Quicksand. Similarly, Quicksand manager Carroll Fackler and forestry professor Don Graves have constantly proposed new programs for the facility. The proposals have all come to nothing.

Instead, there are just a few men cutting staves on equipment meant to build a new and stable industry for eastern Kentucky.

world's finest hardwoods grow in eastern Kentucky — and they grow in abundance. Kentucky is the nation's fourth-largest exporter of wood.

Unfortunately, the wood is squandered. The wood industry is a $1 billion business in Kentucky. Given the size of the state's forests, Kentucky's wood business should churn $3 billion in sales.

Sales are short because little of the resource is processed in Kentucky. Instead, high-wage, large-employment industries of secondary wood processing — furniture-making, for example — thrive in other states. Of the states neighboring Kentucky, only West Virginia lags the commonwealth in the number of secondary wood manufacturing firms.

Kentuckians have believed that because this state grows a bunch of wood, it also ought to have all the industries that make wood into doors, windows, flooring, and furniture. Unfortunately the economy doesn't work that way. Just because you grow wheat doesn't mean you bake bread. Or, in an example a bit closer to home, just because you mine coal doesn't mean you make electricity or steel.

To make matters worse, the state has done next to nothing to help the wood industry develop. Albert Spencer, from Eastern Kentucky University, figured that wood industries received less than one percent of the more than $1 billion in tax incentives the state has ladled out in the last four years.

ANOTHER TASK FORCE

In 1988, the legislature decided to try again to revive the state's wood industry. It set aside money for a commission and a study. The results of this effort shouldn't surprise those familiar with the circular-sailing route of the typical government task force. Everyone argued about who would get the money and nothing was accomplished.

Except . . .

At one meeting, the commission heard about new methods for building a thriving economy. The ideas came from

Italy and Denmark, where small firms combined in flexible business networks. They shared jobs, technology, and training. Through networks, the small firms accomplished the scale of big business but kept the flexibility to change that comes with being small.

The presentation "just set me on fire," remembers Andy Cowart, owner of Cowart and Co., a small wood-manufacturing outfit in Nicholasville. After the meeting, he talked to his competitors about forming a network to compete in larger markets.

When opportunity came, they were ready. In 1990, Cowart and three other members of what had become an informal network won a $2.5 million contract for a development at Disney World, a job none of the firms was large enough to fill alone.

Networking began to make hard money sense. Cowart and 16 other firms formed the Kentucky Wood Manufacturers Network. They asked the state Cabinet for Economic Development for a small grant. The network wanted to hire a technology specialist and a manager to coordinate the group's joint ventures. It was an arrangement that had proved enormously successful in Europe.

The cabinet approved the scheme in 1991. The office of Governor Wallace Wilkinson wrote a draft news release announcing the grant. And then, nothing. The money never reached the network. Governor Brereton Jones came into office, and the entire project was put aside as the new administration concentrated on building the state's economy by offering hundreds of millions of dollars in tax incentives to out-of-state firms.

Cowart had heard about the Quicksand facility during one of the task force's meetings. He visited the plant and, like most who see the spread of $3 million in wood-manufacturing equipment, Cowart was in awe. He realized the original builders of Quicksand were right. It was a place where the state could begin to build a new industry.

It was also a place the University of Kentucky had forgotten. "After Quicksand got buried, the easy answer for accountability from UK was, 'Well, it's not supported by industry'; 'well, it's obsolete'; 'well, it's geographically dislocated,'" Cowart says. "UK had to have some believable reasons why they were sitting on it now."

To Cowart's mind, none of these reasons was credible. He and the network set out to dispel the justifications for Quicksand's failure, reasons that had built up over 30 years in a thick crust.

The group devised a project. Cowart would design a new selection of furniture. Eight members of the network would build the components. The pieces would be assembled at Quicksand, and the resulting cabinet would be displayed at the trade show in Germany.

The university agreed to open Quicksand to the project. It also allowed Cowart to tap into its computer network so that designs could be transmitted from Nicholasville to the shop floor in Breathitt County. Finally, the state put up a small amount to send the cabinet and information about the Kentucky network to the German trade show.

COOPERATING TO COMPETE

On April 3, it all worked. By the end of the day, the cabinet was complete — and all the reasons why eastern Kentucky couldn't be the center of a fine-furniture industry had been eliminated.

"The project showed it doesn't matter where Quicksand is," Cowart says. "We can kill that argument. At the same time, we can kill the argument that Quicksand has no function unless we put $10 million more into it. It is a functional facility. It can be used if there is a willing spirit to make that happen."

The wood network demonstrated that and more. It showed that with computer technology, distance no longer prevents advanced manufacturing from flourishing in isolated eastern Kentucky. It showed that cooperation among wood firms can produce an economical product. Cowart figured his firm alone could build the cabinet for $6,000 to $8,000. With each business doing its specialty, the cost dropped by half.

It showed that eastern Kentucky can compete in the high-wage world of advanced wood manufacturing. It proved there is a place in the region where a new industry can be built. It demonstrated that the Kentucky wood industry can compete internationally.

And the world took notice. Cowart says there was some individual interest in the particular line of furniture created at Quicksand, particularly from Middle

Photo by Charles Bertram/Herald Leader

CARROLL FACKLER IS SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY'S LITTLE-USED WOOD UTILIZATION CENTER IN BREATHITT COUNTY.

Eastern buyers. More important, however, Cowart said that German wood manufacturers talked to network representatives about farming out work to Kentucky woodworkers.

"We were promoting the fact that we could build what you want," Cowart says. "We're very flexible. You tell us what you want, and that's what we'll build. And that really set people off on their ear. We were there to promote a capability and not just a product. And that is something people were fascinated with."

The response from the state since the April demonstration and the trade show in Germany has been exactly nothing. The wood network's 1991 proposal still sits in some forgotten drawer in Frankfort. "There's a lot of talk now," Cowart says, "but I'm not at all certain that people are willing to make critical commitments on a scale large enough for it to make any kind of a difference. . . . I'm not at all confident that the decision-makers in state government understand."

Kentucky continues to hand out tax breaks — $700 million and counting — to a variety of companies with no plan as to how this will help build a new economy. Meanwhile, a way to bring prosperity to eastern Kentucky awaits that "willing spirit." ❑

Investigative Reporting, Division One (TIE)

Patient Pipeline

By Carol A. Marbin and Jeff Testerman

St. Petersburg Times

A four-day series in the St. Petersburg Times *revealed a little-known but enormously profitable pay-for-patients system that costs untold millions in health care dollars each year. A nationwide network of hospitals, treatment programs, and patient headhunters use questionable tactics — and collect hefty fees — for referring patients to "treatment" they sometimes don't need.*

The series also revealed that there is virtually no regulation of patient referral services and brokers, some of whom use phony credentials to gain credibility. And few states forbid referral fees, which patient brokers often split with police, probation officers, and others in trusted positions.

St. Petersburg, Fla. — Elaine Goldman, a New York City schoolteacher, wanted a cure for depression. Instead, she wound up in a Los Angeles weight-loss center where she was charged $80,000 for treatment of anorexia — a disease she never had.

Edward Barlow, an Allons, Tennessee, man with crippling back pain, thought he was going to "the number one pain center in the nation." He ended up in a Florida detoxification program, where he was told to play volleyball.

Karen Robbins, a Harbor Springs, Michigan, grandmother, was promised she'd lose weight at a fancy Florida facility. Instead, she found herself in a lockdown psychiatric hospital held against her will.

These cases aren't flukes. Like scores of others, Goldman, Barlow, and Robbins were victims of a little-known but enormously profitable cog in America's health care industry — the patient broker.

Working individually or for so-called referral services, patient brokers make their living by matching patients with treatment programs. Drinking too much? A broker will find you a place to dry out. Own a hospital with empty beds? A broker will find patients to fill them.

In theory, it sounds fine — sending people with problems to places that can help. In fact, critics say, many patient brokers, eager to make a buck, refer unsuspecting people to inappropriate treatment programs.

This pay-for-patients system not only hurts patients: It's siphoning millions of dollars from insurance companies and public assistance programs, driving up health care costs for all Americans. "What we're seeing in this area is highly organized business crime," said Joseph Ford of the FBI's health care fraud unit. "Some of the companies involved are built on corrupt foundations. Everyone is making money, from the bottom to the top."

A nine-month *Times* investigation found that:

▼ Patient brokers can make as much as $3,000 for every patient they send into treatment. In some cases, they share these finder's fees with school counselors, public health workers, union representatives, even police and probation officers who help steer patients into the treatment pipeline.

"Each scheme is more diabolical than the last," said U.S. Representative John Bryant of Texas. Investigations are under way or recently completed in at least nine states: Florida, Texas, California, Georgia, Massachusetts, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Colorado.

▼ So great is the competition to get people into treatment that prospective patients are offered free plane rides, limousine services, vacations, beer, even bail money to get out of jail. A Michigan woman says one patient broker was so determined she stay in a Florida program that he offered to fly her husband down and treat them to a vacation at Disney World.

▼ Patients are sometimes labeled with false diagnoses so their insurance will cover their treatment. Such phony diagnoses can remain a part of the patient's medical record for the rest of their lives. And patients sent to treatment centers hundreds of miles from home often find the 28-day programs are short-term remedies with no follow-up.

"It greatly concerns me that all over the country we have such a high percentage of people being convinced to enter short-term McTreatment programs at an exorbitant cost," said Shirley Coletti, a local advisor to U.S. drug czar Lee Brown.

Photo by the St. Petersburg Times

EDWARD BARLOW, WITH HIS EX-WIFE SANDRA, SAYS HE WAS "NOTHING BUT A PRISONER" IN A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL THAT TOOK AWAY HIS PAIN MEDICATION.

▼ Patient brokers and patient referral services are largely unregulated. In Florida and other states, employees aren't required to be licensed or have any special training even though they routinely deal with the sick and the troubled. A number of patient brokers are ex-alcoholics and drug addicts with criminal records.

Authorities have barely begun to understand the problem. Although many major professional organizations consider referral fees unethical, federal law does not ban kickbacks unless they involve a public assistance program such as Medicare. Few states have laws that even address the question of kickbacks for referrals.

"These people have no ethics at all. They're morally bankrupt," said Paul McDevitt, a licensed Massachusetts mental health counselor. "They're like the grave robbers in old England who provided cadavers for the medical schools. The grave robbers of today are taking the bodies of those so confused as to be dead and shipping them out to treatment centers where they never get well. And the doctors who are the pillars of society are still reaping the benefits and still never asking where the bodies come from."

WHERE THE MONEY IS

Referral services. Patient brokers. Headhunters. Call them what you will, they're the product of free-flowing insurance money and a glut of hospital beds.

Experts say the explosion in treatment facilities in the 1980s was fueled by the narcissism of the "me decade," a time when it became almost trendy to seek professional help for emotional problems. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of beds in private U.S. psychiatric hospitals more than doubled, swelling from 17,157 to 45,143.

"The enormous growth in psychiatric beds was largely from investor-owned hospitals," said Dr. Jerry Wiener, president-elect of the American Psychiatric Association. "It was believed huge revenues would be available."

And they were. Beginning in the 1970s, most insurance companies agreed to cover inpatient treatment for substance abuse and psychiatric care. Public assistance programs such as Medicare and Medicaid offered similar benefits.

With insurance paying up to $1,000 or more per patient a day, the bounty was too much to resist. Finding people to fill all those beds has spawned a well-organized network linking treatment centers willing to pay for patients with services that are only too happy to supply them.

HELPING EVERYONE BUT THE PATIENTS

They're sick. Their drug habits or emotional problems have threatened their lives, sabotaged their jobs, and ruined their marriages.

But for many Americans, the referral services they turn to for help do little but worsen a bad situation. Patients end up misdiagnosed, misplaced — and ultimately, ill-served.

Patient brokers "are taking advantage of those who are already in terrible, terrible mental and physical conditions and are not able to make decisions for themselves," said Shirley Coletti, president of the respected Operation PAR drug treatment center in St. Petersburg. "The patient is so vulnerable. They will jump at every opportunity they can. When treatment is presented in such an attractive manner — and sounds so exciting that you can hardly wait to go — most people are not able to figure right from wrong."

Just ask Matthew Lachovsky. His life was hell. His marriage was crumbling, divorce court was imminent, and cocaine seemed his only escape. But at a Pontiac, Michigan, counseling center, the Detroit welder glimpsed heaven.

"They showed me a videotape of a treatment center that reminded me of a resort. It had an aerial view of the grounds and tennis courts," Lachovsky said. "A nurse came out and gave a guy a can of soda as he was lounging by the pool. I said, 'That's nice.'"

He flew to sunny South Florida, albeit no resort. And his treatment at the Dade County hospital was fine — while his insurance lasted. But when the money ran out, Lachovsky was dumped at a Fort Lauderdale halfway house for indigents. There he stayed for five months, pleading with officials at Aventura Medical Center for his return plane ticket. "I was the victim of a marketing scam," said Lachovsky, 26. "And I don't want anybody else caught up in it."

After hospitals and patient referral services bleed their insurance dry, many patients are released, confused and angry — but seldom cured. "I was not well when I went in, and I was not well when I came out," Elaine Goldman of New York said of her $80,000 treatment at a Los Angeles rehab clinic. Goldman got everything from vitamin therapy to mud packs. What she didn't get, she said, was any counseling for her depression. "It was a nightmare," she said.

Patient brokers have sprung up around the United States and Canada "because they've found a lucrative trade niche that no one was filling," says Marek Laas, a former Medicaid fraud prosecutor in Massachusetts. "It's like Willie Sutton said when he was asked why he robbed banks: 'That's where the money is.'"

For Jack Coscia, the money amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars, according to a 1993 civil fraud lawsuit the federal government has filed against him.

In one of the more creative schemes to date, Coscia and a partner opened a suburban Philadelphia referral service that specialized in marketing drug treatment to Amtrak employees. Through contacts in the Rail Workers' Union, he allegedly targeted Amtrak employees who were nearing the end of seasonal furloughs and were subject to drug testing. Coscia's pitch to the workers: Stay in a comfortable hospital and get clean before you have to return to work.

What Coscia didn't tell workers was that his service, Matrix Health Management, was getting kickbacks from a Pennsylvania hospital for every patient sent for treatment, the lawsuit says. In all, the Northwestern Institute of Psychiatry treated 800 rail workers and their dependents. The cost to taxpayers: $11 million for the treatment and another $1 million for Matrix, Amtrak says.

How did Coscia find so many patients? He paid Amtrak counselors and union officials for every worker they referred to him, the lawsuit alleges. And, the lawsuit adds, he offered union officials hotel rooms, entertainment, and a $1,025 beach house rental in Ocean City, New Jersey.

Coscia also found a ready supply of patients in United Steel Workers locals. Many wound up on planes to distant treatment centers, says Sharon Michaels, president of the local in Hammond, Indiana. "The manager of our plant kept asking why union members had to go to Florida or California for treatment," said Michaels. "And our insurance company didn't like paying for the air fare far away."

After learning of the allegations against Coscia in Philadelphia, Michaels said she would try to sever her union's relationship with him. "I don't want to be involved in anything that might be crooked," she said.

Coscia's attorney, Harold Kane, said there was nothing wrong with referring steel workers to Florida or California for treatment, and that they likely were sent to the best hospitals Coscia could find. Kane said prosecutors filed a civil complaint against Coscia because they couldn't support criminal charges. "Jack Coscia intends to win this case, and Jack Coscia feels he has done nothing wrong," Kane said.

In its lawsuit against Coscia, the government spelled out what referral services and treatment centers already knew: "Each new patient is a new business opportunity."

"A WASTE OF TIME"

The opportunities are as plentiful as there are people in need of help.

People such as Bill Holdgrafer, a Philadelphia engineering manager seeking psychotherapy for his depression. Holdgrafer, 38, was stuck with a $1,800 bill for treatment a patient broker promised would be covered by insurance. "It seems like all they wanted to do was hustle me off someplace so they could get a commission," Holdgrafer said. "I really didn't feel like they had my best interests at heart."

People such as Donald Loomis, a disabled Michigan man whose mother contacted a Hernando County referral service to help rid her son of a 20-year alcohol problem. Loomis, who had cocktails on his plane ride to Florida, agreed to admit himself because the Tarpon Springs center sounded like a beach resort. U.S. taxpayers have been billed $31,000 for his rehabilitation, he said. "I didn't get nearly any type of help for my alcoholism," said Loomis, 52. "It was a waste of time."

And people such as 18-year-old Cephas Griffin of Warren, Ohio, who was told by a patient broker he could avoid going to jail on a probation violation only by admitting himself to a psychiatric hospital in Clearwater, Florida.

"The way he described it to me it was like a resort," Griffin said. "He said I get to go to the beach every week." Griffin's mother, Rose, said the patient broker told her the family's insurance would cover all treatment costs, but her husband is being billed thousands of dollars.

"I was at a vulnerable state, and here he offered me some help that sounded legitimate and wasn't costing me anything," Mrs. Griffin said. "When you've got a kid that you know is not a bad kid but is in trouble . . . you'll take anything that's offered to you."

Monica Durick worked as a marketer for a Dade County treatment center until leaving the business altogether earlier this year. She described the majority of patient brokers this way: "These people will kill you for a patient. It was cutthroat."

Photo by Brian Baer/St. Petersburg Times

ANDREW SIEGEL OWNED A NOW-CLOSED FLORIDA PROGRAM THAT ALLEGEDLY PAID PATIENT BROKERS TO SOLICIT PREGNANT DRUG ADDICTS AT TAXPAYER EXPENSE.

POSITIONS OF TRUST

Some patient brokers have other jobs. And they have used those trusted positions to steer patients to distant treatment centers.

Take Tony Pace, director of a Toronto counseling center called Family Plus. According to documents filed in a recent lawsuit, Pace also acted as a patient broker, referring clients to several U.S. programs, including Future Steps, a now-closed treatment center owned by Andrew Siegel.

Last April, Siegel agreed to pay $900 and plane fare for every patient that Family Plus referred to Future Steps, Pace said in a sworn statement. Pace's commission would be reduced, however, if a patient failed to remain in rehab the full 30 days, records show.

Pace's statement was taken as part of a lawsuit Siegel filed against Metropolitan General Hospital in Pinellas Park, Florida. The hospital rescinded Siegel's contract to treat patients there after investigating allegations that he was soliciting pregnant drug addicts from out of state for treatment paid by Florida taxpayers.

Pace, in his statement, said American hospitals kept him in business. "The only time we do make any money is when we refer to the United States," he said. "In a nutshell, the American hospitals pay for our operation here."

Then there's Robert Paul Long Jr., a mill worker who also serves as an employee assistance professional for United Steel Workers Local No. 1219 in Pittsburgh. In his position, Long is supposed to provide unbiased guidance to coworkers with drug or alcohol problems.

The Employee Assistance Professionals Association, a national organization to which Long belongs, requires in its code of ethics that members advocate community treatment. Why then, the union wants to know, did Long funnel at least six steel workers through a Florida patient referral service headed by Renee Steely?

"I've asked [Long] why so many of our members were being sent to Florida," said Local No. 1219 president Don Thomas. "I've been jumping on his case about it. He told me he doesn't place our members [in the Pittsburgh area] because the centers aren't that good."

Long, a recovering alcoholic, acknowledged working with the Florida service but insists he was never paid for referrals. "The mill is my only livelihood," said Long. "I just act as a labor liaison. I'm here to help the person who needs help. If I need to get someone into treatment, [Steely] helps."

Other recruiters have even more at stake. They're on the public payroll. Police officers, welfare workers, school counselors, and probation officers often are on the front lines of the drug war. They make daily decisions to send people for treatment, often at taxpayer expense. And records show that some officials have been accused of taking cash for referrals.

In Tampa Bay, for example, two state agencies are investigating allegations that managers of a Pinellas County treatment program paid two employees of the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services $250 for every pregnant woman referred to treatment.

In Ohio, authorities are investigating allegations that probation officers accepted money to refer addicts to a local halfway house. It, in turn, sent many of its patients to treatment centers in Florida.

And in Georgia, the former head of the state prison system's employee assistance program pleaded guilty in August 1993 to charges he accepted more than $110,000 in kickbacks to refer state employees with drug or alcohol problems to a Colorado treatment center.

John Whiddon, program administrator of Florida's Office of Medicaid Program Integrity, says patient brokering affects virtually everyone, whether through improper treatment, bigger insurance premiums, or higher taxes. "The consequence of an improper solicitation is medically unnecessary services 99 percent of the time," he said. "We just can't afford it." ❑

The Big Tree Farm

By Katherine Bouma

Montgomery Advertiser

In Alabama, the pine tree is king. Once a land covered by old-growth forests, the state is being turned into a giant tree farm where identical pines dominate the once diverse landscape, and the money they produce dominates the economy and the power structure.

For more than a year, Katherine Bouma of the Montgomery Advertiser *investigated the forestry industry. In the process, she examined the ecological impact of devoting more and more of Alabama's forests to farms of a single species of tree, the loblolly pine.*

MONTGOMERY, ALA. — Alabama, one of the most ecologically diverse places on Earth, is rapidly being converted into a giant farm of identical trees that are extinguishing the state's native species.

From the Appalachian Mountains to the Gulf of Mexico, Alabama is home to an incredible variety of plants and animals. But at the same time that the wood products industry boasts that Alabama is growing more trees than ever, scientists are noting dramatic declines in many species, particularly aquatic and forest-dwelling animals.

Increasingly, many are pointing a finger at the timber-growing practices that have steadily altered the state's woodlands, making them less healthy as forests, and possibly, as businesses. "We are definitely ruining the forests that way," said Edward Wilson, a native Alabamian who is one of the world's foremost experts on biological diversity. "Reforestation with one species is roughly the equivalent of building a line of Wal-Marts — as far as biological diversity is concerned."

During the past 18 months, the *Montgomery Advertiser* investigated the state of the state's forests. Our findings include:

▼ The number of acres in pine tree farms nearly doubled during the 1980s, and in 35 years, 70 percent of the state's woodlands will be pine plantations, the U.S. Forest Service estimates. Already, one-fifth of the total tree mass in the state is loblolly pine.

▼ Tree farms are replacing the state's natural forests, harming the state's ecology, scientists say.

▼ Tree farms have not brought the expected prosperity to Alabama. But for better or worse, the state is wedded to the timber industry. Nearly 66,000 Alabamians count on wood products manufacturing for $1.8 billion in wages, and timber companies are a primary source of employment in many of the poorest counties.

▼ Timber companies continue to take advantage of deals the state offered while wooing them. Out-of-state corporations and local timber landowners alike avoid paying even as much tax on land and buildings as private citizens do.

▼ Alabama is number three in the nation for the number of animals protected under the Endangered Species Act, and biologists also are seeing population declines in common forest animals. Scientists have no idea how many species Alabama is losing, or even how many unique species might still be un-

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OTHER WINNERS For investigative reporting in Division Two (circulation of 30,000 to 100,000)

Second Prize to Mike Compton of *The Ledger* in Lakeland, Florida, for his sweeping indictment of how agribusiness is exploiting a new wave of migrant farmworkers from Latin America — and for giving workers a chance to speak for themselves.

discovered, because there's no system to catalog the state's bounty.

Every year, 280,000 acres of Alabama are clear-cut: Loggers fell every tree on the land and often burn or poison whatever plants remain. No laws or rules protect Alabama's forests from loggers who fail to take care to protect the plants, animals, or water systems.

Even the tree crop is increasingly unhealthy. From 1972 to 1985, the annual death rate of standing pine trees in Alabama grew by nearly two-thirds.

Photos by Montgomery Advertiser

ALABAMA TREE FARMERS, LIKE THE OWNERS OF THESE PINES NEAR SELMA, PAY LESS PROPERTY TAX THAN THEIR NEIGHBORS.

NATIVE FORESTS

Things were different 100 years ago.

Timber companies that came to Alabama intending to cut every merchantable tree did not replant the land with species unnatural to the area. And unless they planned to convert the land to agricultural use, they did not take measures to prevent the native forest from rejuvenating.

"All the genetic diversity was still there," said George Russell, forest practices chairman for the Lone Star Sierra Club. "It naturally regenerated with the exact same gene pool."

But even those harvests were more destructive than anyone knew, scientists have discovered in the first studies of the subject. They found that native plants and animals might never recover or return to land after a clear cut, contrary to the reassurances of foresters. "I just don't think foresters have been very interested in these issues," said Susan Bratton, a University of North Texas forest ecologist.

Even more menacing to the overall diversity of the state are the so-called pine plantations that don't allow genetic variety. Now, timber companies usually replant using seeds all drawn from a single super tree, one that has grown particularly straight and tall, particularly quickly. Any other plants or animals in a tree farm are considered weeds or pests, to be exterminated by fire or chemicals.

Timber companies have been cutting Alabama's woods for more than a century. Since Reconstruction, they have flocked to the South on programs designed to bring jobs and prosperity. But neither the cut-out-and-get-out period of the 19th century nor the pulp and paper mills built after World War II have brought that wealth.

"If you look at the indices of economic health, almost any will put Alabama and Mississippi at the bottom," said Southern historian Wayne Flynt.

Yet the state has grown dependent on the jobs and revenue forestry does provide. Trees are the state's number one cash crop, and 214,000 people own woods they might consider an investment.

The industry benefits from deals that allow it more freedom from regulations here than in almost any other state. At the same time, the industry is dodging the taxes companies would have to pay in neighboring states. To keep those perks, the companies make political donations and hire lobbyists to work with the legislature, which oversees the departments charged with watching over the industry.

Scientists and industry officials agree that more research is needed on many of the troubles surrounding the industry: poverty, crop failures, and dying wildlife. Some are proposing more careful timbering that maintains a healthy forest throughout all stages of the harvest. But more and more scientists and conservationists are saying the only way to save the state is to set aside natural sites with historic significance and for preservation of plants and animals — now.

"You've got to think ahead and recognize that saving and maintaining natural areas of Alabama is going to have a more serious and sustained, larger, long-term income yield than stripping and developing it will," said Edward Wilson of Harvard University. "I'm sure the state has been pretty careful about maintaining its oldest and most historic buildings. It should look at its environmental treasures with equal fervor because some of these are literally 10,000 years old and irreplaceable."

"BURNING DOWN THE LIBRARY"

Alabama's wild plants and animals are disappearing at a frightening rate, scientists say. And we may never even know what we've lost since we don't know what we have.

"We're burning down the library: We

don't even know what's in there," said David Cameron Duffy, a New York biologist who recently completed studies of Southern forests.

As pine plantations blanket the state, supplanting natural forests, evidence pours in that Alabama is losing its native plants, animals, and even entire ecosystems. "There's not a species in Alabama that's not affected," said George Folkerts, a field biologist at Auburn University and former forester. "It's the most wide-ranging change to the environment that's going on in the Southeast."

Alabama has 86 plants and animals listed as threatened and endangered, placing it behind only the diverse states of Florida and Hawaii. Songbirds, wildflowers, frogs, salamanders, mollusks, and mice are disappearing from Alabama in disturbing numbers.

"For the last 20 years, a lot of our forest species have been declining on an average of two to four percent a year," said Jim Woehr, non-game program coordinator for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. "Do you know what that means? We've lost over half of them."

Although wildlife biologists agree that the numbers of all sorts of wildlife are declining, no scientist has solid numbers on most species. Most plants and animals in Alabama remain uncounted — some probably even undiscovered. "I think it's very safe to say that a significant percentage of our native fauna and flora are in decline," said Scott Gunn, coordinator of the Natural Heritage program, a division of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources supported by the nonprofit Nature Conservancy. "What percentage? Nobody knows. Nobody's doing the work. We don't have the money or the time to gather the cold, hard facts to present them so people will believe it whether they want to or not."

While species have been declining, the number of trees and total acres of Alabama covered by woods have increased. But many plants and animals can't survive on tree farms or among the tiny young seedlings and sprouts that boost the total tree count.

A tree farm is better habitat for animals than any sort of development, biologists say. But without diversity of plants, trees of different sizes and ages, good soil, and a variety of prey species, most species won't survive.

PRIVATE PROPERTY IS MARKED TO SAFEGUARD IT FROM FORESTING, BUT MANY SPECIES OF PLANTS AND ANIMALS RECEIVE NO SUCH PROTECTION.

The number of different kinds of plants and animals in a forest usually is directly proportional to the number of layers of foliage, Woehr said. "In a tree farm, you don't have the ground cover, the sub-canopy trees, you don't have the shrub layer below that, so that instead of having maybe a five-layered forest you have a lone-layered forest, and that is devastating to many of our species, including most of our birds."

Most dramatic has been the drop in the number of migratory birds stopping in Alabama during the past few decades, Woehr said. "If you look at the species across the eastern United States you will find 45 to 90 percent of neotropical migratory birds are in steep decline for the last decade. We're probably talking about anywhere from 30 to 60 species." The wood thrush, which Woehr said has the most beautiful song of any Southeastern bird, is declining at a rate of four percent each year.

Most biologists agree that deforestation and lack of healthy forests in the Southeast are playing a role in the decline of birds that stop here during annual migrations. After crossing the Gulf of Mexico, migratory birds drop dead of exhaustion if they don't quickly find a place to recover.

And finding a tree isn't enough for many birds. For reasons that aren't completely clear to scientists, some birds won't live near the edge of a forest. According to research presented at last spring's Alabama Wildlife Society meeting, breaks in the forest as narrow as a road can ruin it for a forest interior species, one that will live only deep in the woods.

Many such birds may avoid forest edges because of pests like the brown-headed cowbird, biologists say. The cowbird drops its eggs into the nest of a smaller bird. After hatching, the baby cowbirds break the eggs or throw to their death the other, smaller hatchlings. Wood thrushes in Alabama now are raising five times as many cowbirds as their own offspring, Woehr said.

SNAKES AND SALAMANDERS

Not only birds are suffering from forest fragmentation. Various animals are declining as a result of the fire ant, which may be the single largest problem for all sorts of forest interior animals, said Bob Mount, a retired professor of zoology and wildlife at Auburn University.

Fire ants live on the forest's edges and prey on the eggs and the young of many animals. So a long, narrow plot is useless for forest interior species, as is one that's too small. Even 2,000 acres can be too small for certain animals, wildlife biologists say.

Even in areas where a large enough forest exists, many animals can't survive standard components of timber harvests, particularly herbicides and clear cuts. "Snakes and turtles are devastated because they can't move to another habitat," Woehr said. "The soil, after a clear cut, dries out and is horridly compacted by the driving of the heavy equipment through there in what they call site preparation. Even if their habitat recovers 10 or 20 years after a clear cut, they can't move back."

Mount, Alabama's foremost reptile expert, said forestry is the culprit in the decline of the threatened gopher tortoise, the threatened Eastern indigo snake, the Florida pine snake, and the black pine snake, which is one of the rarest snakes in North America.

The gopher tortoise digs burrows used by snakes and other animals, Mount said. "Any time you harm the gopher tortoise, you hurt a whole host of animals."

Not only are the gopher tortoises' burrows smashed by heavy forestry equipment, but the animals themselves sometimes are killed by herbicides. "I can't prove it, but it makes sense that if you kill the herbaceous vegetation that the gopher tortoise depends on, the gopher tortoise can't survive," Mount said.

He also blames forestry practices for troubles of some small animals that live in tree cavities or on the forest floor. "Common sense is going to tell you if you go out and strip an area of vegetation, any animal that is not big enough and quick enough to get away is going to be destroyed."

The Red Hills salamander depends on shady, moist ravines, which aren't shady or wet any longer when the trees are gone, said Mount.

Scientists blame loss of forests for the probable extinction of the ivory-billed woodpecker, which lived in river bottom hardwood swamps, and the endangerment of the red-cockaded woodpecker in Alabama, which lives in pine trees that are at least 80 to 100 years old. Much of both birds' habitat has been replaced by plantations of pines that are allowed to reach an age of only 15 to 25 years, scientists say.

CULTIVATING DIVERSITY

Why should it matter if timber harvests extinguish a tiny, mud-dwelling amphibian that survives in five south Alabama counties?

The Red Hills salamander might never contribute to the state's economic, medical, or social well-being. It's certainly not adding much beauty or recreational value to the state. But, like a canary in a coal mine, it might be a signal that something is very wrong with the planet. Scientists say that ecosystems become more precarious every time they lose a bacterium, fungus, plant, or animal. Not every one is a keystone species, the one that holds the ecosystem together, but scientists have only the most rudimentary understanding of the job of many organisms.

"We talk about how this species is connected to that species, and we get the idea that it's a few points connected on a line," said Ed Passerini, a University of Alabama professor of environment and humanities. "No, it's not that way. It's that this species is connected to this species, while it's being connected to this species, while it's being connected to this species, and so on. It's far more complicated than any diagram we could ever devise, any language could ever describe, especially primitive things like English or mathematics."

As a result, scientists don't know how long extinctions can continue without ruining Earth for the plants and animals absolutely necessary for human survival.

The smallest organisms are the least known but also the most abundant. Edward Wilson, one of the world's foremost experts on biological diversity, estimates that 4,000 to 5,000 bacteria exist in a pinch of soil. That leads scientists to believe small, unknown species also are the most crucial.

"Things that people don't think are very important are very important in the fabric of the world," said George Florets, an Auburn University field biologist. "We couldn't get along without the maggots."

Worldwide, species disappear every day, some before they are even cataloged. We are in the midst of the sixth great "extinction spasm" of the world's history, Wilson wrote in *The Diversity of Life*. "The extinction of species has been much worse than even field biologists, myself included, previously understood."

"Any number of rare local species are disappearing just beyond the edge of our attention," he wrote. "They enter oblivion . . . leaving at most a name, a fading echo in a far corner of the world, their genius unused." Scientists are still so ignorant of the natural world that they don't know whether the number of species on Earth totals 10 million or 100 million, said Wilson.

Passerini said, "We are blowing away species faster than ever before and don't even know what species are out there."

Wilson, who teaches at Harvard University, said every plant and animal has performed billions of acts of natural selection during millions of years and now has a special ability or trait that enables it to survive. That trait may provide the gene for an important crop, fiber, energy source, or medicine, he wrote. Forty percent of the pharmaceutical prescriptions filled each year are derived from plants, animals, or microorganisms.

Habitat destruction is responsible for the current extinction phase, Wilson said. Humans are the first animals to become a geophysical force, altering the face of Earth so that other species can no longer survive on it.

Some naturalists also worry that, in the words of Georgia woodlands manager Leon Neel, "we dehumanize ourselves when we destroy the land."

Wilson quotes studies showing that patients recuperate from surgery more quickly when they can view natural landscapes. He also says that people will always choose to look at natural landscapes rather than any urban view. They are especially drawn to grassy savannas similar to those found in Africa, the birthplace of the human race.

That suggests a primal, human link to nature far beyond the understanding of physicians and other scientists.

Although science is far from determining the importance of nature to the human mind or soul, Wilson said, the salvation of humans might lie in setting aside ecosystems, habitats, and beautiful, ancient natural forest areas for people to enjoy.

Alabama is still one of the most diverse places in the United States, and even the world. It has as many different species of snakes as anywhere on Earth, with 40 species in south Alabama alone, Wilson said.

"What's important for Alabama is clearly more land put aside as natural reserves to preserve its beauty and diversity," Wilson said. "Alabama is an exceptionally beautiful state, and its natural beauty and extraordinary diversity of life from the Gulf waters to the Appalachian Mountains of the northeast should be cultivated." ❑

Investigative Reporting, Division Three

Beneath the Surface

By Eileen Waddell

The Item

In mid-1993, the eyes of Sumter County, South Carolina were on Laidlaw Environmental Services. After a decade of operating a 279-acre hazardous waste site without a permanent permit, the company faced a $1.8 million fine from the state for multiple safety violations. Officials with the Environmental Protection Agency banned the facility from accepting waste under the federal Superfund program, citing the release of dust tainted by hazardous waste. And Sumter County was fighting Laidlaw in court over its zoning.

Knowing what a volatile time it was for the landfill, Eileen Waddell of The Item *decided to take a hard look at Laidlaw. Her investigation revealed frequent land swaps and an illegal deed — and raised disturbing questions about who will pay if an accident occurs.*

SUMTER, S.C. — Laidlaw Environmental Services is burying waste in land it doesn't own.

From 1972 to 1989, none of the operators of the landfill owned the land into which they were burying toxic waste. They leased it from local wheat, corn, and soybean farmer Dargan Elliott Jr.

Laidlaw, which has operated the landfill since 1986, has reversed that trend — sort of. Laidlaw owns hazardous waste burial cells 1 and 2, which have been filled and closed down. But Cell 3, where Laidlaw is now burying waste, is owned by Elliott, who sold the company the 58 acres just last September but then bought it back three months later.

Since 1989, Laidlaw has been burying more and more waste on what is referred to as the "279-acre permitted site." But last year, Cell 3 was traded back and forth. In September, Laidlaw bought Cell 3 from Elliott. Then, in December, Elliott bought it back — for "$5." "$5" is a common notation for property deeds at

OTHER WINNERS For investigative reporting in Division Three (circulation under 30,000)

Second Prize to Clay Redden, Mike Salinero, and Keith Clines of *The Decatur Daily* for providing a clear and comprehensive look at how political action committees corrupt Alabama politics.

Third Prize to Mickey Higginbotham, Rick Lavender, Betsy R. Jordan, Don Hudson, Angela Smith, and Sandra Stephens of *The Times* of Gainesville, Georgia, for continuing their ambitious survey of the county's racial divisions and community solutions.

the county courthouse and does not necessarily reflect the amount of money exchanged.

Thus, Elliott is once again the owner of his own private, active, hazardous waste burial cell, which he is leasing to Laidlaw.

Elliott has owned an active cell before. According to records on file with the Sumter County deeds office, Elliott owned burial Cell 1 while waste was being buried there. The cell was closed in 1984; Laidlaw bought the 29.85 acres in 1989 for "$5," according to county records.

Elliott also owned Cell 2 much of the time waste was being buried there. Cell 2 was opened in 1984 and closed just last year; Laidlaw bought the land underneath it — 44.73 acres — in 1989, also for "$5."

Laidlaw started to dig Cell 3 last spring. At some point in the future, Laidlaw plans to buy the property again, company officials say.

Photo by The Item

Attorneys Tom Salane and Henry Richardson Jr. examine aerial maps to help Sumter County challenge a permanent operating permit for the Laidlaw landfill.

WHO WILL PAY?

Because Laidlaw has not always owned the cells it's used, opponents of the landfill have wondered for years who would be legally responsible for a spill or a leak at the landfill: Laidlaw, or Elliott or his descendants?

Members of Sumter's Citizens Asking for a Safe Environment (CASE) aren't convinced when officials with the state Department of Health and Environmental Control say that Laidlaw would be responsible should a leak occur on any part of the landfill.

DHEC has never been particularly concerned throughout the years that Elliott owned most of the landfill. David Wilson, director of the DHEC's Division of Hazardous and Infectious Waste Management, said there is no state regulation requiring Laidlaw to own the land underneath the landfill.

Officials with the Environmental Protection Agency in Atlanta say there is no federal regulation either, even though under the law, the EPA holds owners and operators equally liable in case of a leak or an accident.

"It's fairly common for hazardous waste facilities to be owned by someone other than the operator," said Rich Campbell, EPA section chief for hazardous waste permitting in North and South Carolina. "We trace liability through financial agreements with the operators. If those fail, we are likely to go after the operator first, but both are equally liable."

Campbell said it is unusual, however, for a portion of a hazardous waste landfill to be owned by an individual, as is the case with Elliott.

Campbell said he's not sure why the EPA has never required operators to be owners, but making it a requirement now would mean a massive readjustment in the way the hazardous waste industry is run. "It would put a big burden on a lot of folks," Campbell said.

Attorneys for groups opposing the landfill's permanent operating permit, including Jimmy Chandler, attorney for Columbia's Energy Research Foundation and South Carolina's branch of the Sierra Club, agree with CASE. Chandler says Laidlaw's liability for a leak could easily be challenged in court if the company doesn't own the land when a spill occurs, or possibly, even if they didn't own the land when the waste was being buried — or if Laidlaw declares bankruptcy.

Elliott might be deemed responsible for cleaning up the site, Chandler added, although the cost would be beyond any individual's ability to pay.

The courts are a common avenue for liability questions, admits Campbell of the EPA. "Bankruptcy is a big problem in the hazardous-waste business," he said, but declined to comment on a specific case. "When a company declares bankruptcy, we look at their finances and we look at other sources, too, first and foremost the owner."

EVADING TAXES

Why a private citizen would want to own a piece of property into which hazardous waste is being buried may be a mystery to most people.

Laidlaw has paid Elliott, who still does some light farming near the landfill, what land officials call a more than fair market price for most of the land the company has bought.

Elliott has never publicly commented about his land dealings with the landfill operators, and he could not be reached by *The Item*. No one has answered the phone at Elliott's residence for the past three weeks.

People knowledgeable about Laidlaw's land dealings, however, say Elliott several months ago told attorneys hired by Sumter County that he didn't ask Laidlaw officials why they changed their minds about owning Cell 3. They also said that that's vintage Elliott: He generally rents what he rents and sells what he sells without asking Laidlaw too many questions.

Elliott did talk to the attorneys during the discovery process for the county's pending court case against Laidlaw for allegedly violating the county zoning ordinance. Elliott may be called later to testify about his relationship with Laidlaw when the case begins in state court.

JANET LYNAM, A SPOKESWOMAN FOR CITIZENS ASKING FOR A SAFE ENVIRONMENT, EXPRESSES CONCERN ABOUT POLLUTION AT THE LANDFILL.

Dan Jones, vice president for public affairs with Laidlaw's parent company, Laidlaw Environmental Services of North America, Inc., said taxes are the reason the company sold Cell 3 back to Elliott. Jones said the company gets better tax breaks when they lease rather than own the land.

Laidlaw attorney Henry Taylor said the company sold the 58 acres back to Elliott in December because the county had reassessed the property after the September purchase, causing the property tax to climb dramatically. "We didn't know those changes were coming when we bought the land," Taylor said.

Taylor said Laidlaw paid between $100,000 and $150,000 in equipment, real estate, vehicles, business, and personal property taxes to Sumter County last year. Not including vehicle taxes and business taxes, which are not released to the public, Laidlaw paid $40,254.77 in personal property, equipment, and real estate taxes in 1991, according to Sumter County Treasurer Elizabeth Hair. In 1992, Laidlaw paid $57,309.54 in personal property, equipment, and real estate taxes — making the company far from the biggest taxpayer in Sumter County.

The 1992 figures reflect the reassessment on the 14 pieces of property owned either by Laidlaw or Elliott and considered part of the landfill operations by Sumter County. Combined, real estate and equipment taxes for those parcels were $97,233.88 last year, according to the Sumter County Assessor's Office, nearly $40,000 of which was on property in Elliott's name.

Reassessments are common after a property purchase or when the use for a parcel changes. Some businesses in Sumter County are reassessed every year. Laidlaw is one of those.

Laidlaw is not considered an industry, and so pays taxes at the commercial rate, or six percent of the assessed value. Much of the land that Elliott owns around the landfill has an agricultural exemption, which means he is taxed at a rate of four percent of its assessed value, even though on much of Elliott's land there's not a cow. And there's not a row of corn.

That's not unusual, county attorney Henry Richardson said, and Elliott isn't doing anything wrong. Richardson said the state tax commission has been lenient with its definition of agricultural land. The interpretation of the definition has been very lenient, too, he said.

"South Carolina is an agricultural state," Richardson said. "The state encourages agriculture. Timberland, for example, even if it isn't being harvested, could be considered agricultural. We have to be liberal to be fair."

The owner's definition of a piece of property is rarely contested unless the property is very large, Richardson said, and county officials have not contested Elliott's.

Elliott's property that he leases to Laidlaw that is situated within the "279-acre boundary line" is taxed at a six percent rate. Some of Elliott's property around a railroad spur across the road from the landfill is mixed: Part is taxed at four percent and part at six.

WHAT'S BURIED HERE?

But there's another curiosity about the December sale of land from Laidlaw to Elliott, where Laidlaw made $5.

The deed, which was probated in Lexington County, doesn't reflect the fact that the land contains hazardous waste, which is a violation of a state statute. According to section 30-5-36 of the South Carolina code of laws, written to reflect federal laws on hazardous substances, the deed should contain the wording, "The real property conveyed or transferred by this instrument has previously been used as a storage or disposal facility for hazardous wastes."

The deed, signed by Laidlaw president Bill Stillwell and recorded at the Sumter County Courthouse on December 23, 1992, does not contain that wording. The missing clause is a violation of a state statute with no penalty attached.

And it's not the fault of the county's Register of Mesne Conveyances, who records the county's deeds, said Sumter County attorney Henry Richardson. "It may at worst invalidate the deed, but it would probably be up to Mr. Elliott to complain about it," Richardson said. "It's a curiosity. Sumter County, however, will have to insist on going back in and correcting the deed to alert future land holders." ❑

A Second Chance

By Sally B. Kestin

Sarasota Herald-Tribune

Florida officials showed little concern when reporter Sally Kestin began investigating cases of children who were molested, sexually assaulted, or raped in foster homes and shelters for abused children. The problem, they insisted, was not widespread.

Kestin's series of stories proved otherwise. By the end of her investigation, one top official estimated that at least 9,000 young sex offenders and 11,000 abuse victims in Florida were not getting the help they needed. Her reporting led to firings, transfers, and reprimands at the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services — and prompted legislators to improve tracking of abuses and treatment for victims and offenders.

CARRABELLE, FLA. — Steve fidgets in a chair in his counselor's office and talks optimistically about the future.

"I want to be a cop, a fireman. I want to be everything. There's just so many choices."

That view of a world filled with possibilities wouldn't be so unusual coming from any other 16-year-old. But two years ago, Steve couldn't read or write. The only thing he had mastered, while growing up in an impoverished, unstable home in Miami, was how to break into houses.

He wound up in a psychiatric hospital for troubled youths in this gulf-front town in the Panhandle after breaking into a home, terrorizing two children, and forcing one of them to commit a sexual act at gunpoint.

Steve's crime and background were so heinous that they caught the attention of several attorneys and Jim Towey, then head of the South Florida region of the state Department of Health and Rehabilitation Services (HRS). Towey contacted hospitals in and out of Florida, trying to find a place that specialized in sex-offender treatment and would take Steve, whose real name is not being disclosed in this report to protect his identity. After several months of searching, Towey convinced the president of Inner Harbour Hospitals, a group of non-profit psychiatric hospitals, to take Steve on at a reduced rate.

Now, nearly two years later, Steve is reading at a sixth-grade level and talks about the remorse he feels for the pain caused by his life of crime and sexual offenses. "Every day, I say, 'stupid fool,'" he says, embarrassed to be talking about it with a stranger.

He would rather focus on the positive: "I'm excited about myself and the progress I've made. I want to do everything right, now. I want to go to school and get my education."

THOUSANDS LACK TREATMENT

Though it is too soon to declare success, Towey — who was named to head the HRS last year — says that Steve at least has a chance to turn his life around. It's a chance that thousands of other young sex offenders in Florida never get. "He's obviously a changed kid," Towey says. "I'm hopeful."

Apart from Inner Harbour Hospital,

OTHER WINNERS For youth reporting in Division One (circulation over 100,000)

Second Prize to Beth Macy of the *Roanoke Times & World-News* for systematically examining the causes and consequences of teen pregnancy, and for going beyond the numbers to tell the human story of pregnant teens and young mothers.

Third Prize to Ron Hayes of *The Palm Beach Post* for opening the pages of the newspaper to a group of youth too often shunned and silenced — gay teens.

which has six youths in its sex-offender program, Florida has only one other treatment center for young offenders. But that institution, the Elaine Gordon Treatment Center in South Florida, can take just 22 juveniles.

HRS and mental health therapists estimate that there are thousands of young rapists and molesters in Florida, most of whom were sexually abused themselves. And without treatment, it is feared, the number of victims will continue to grow, perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

Photo by Sarasota Herald-Tribune

MANY CHILDREN HAVE BEEN MOLESTED OR RAPED IN FLORIDA FOSTER HOMES — BUT A FEW HAVE GOTTEN A SECOND CHANCE.

The legislature included $2 million for treating juvenile sex offenders in the juvenile justice package passed last week. Critics say that treatment is expensive and doesn't have proven results. It costs $236 a day per child at the Elaine Gordon Treatment Center and $290 at Inner Harbour.

Towey says the investment is worth it, "particularly when you look at the alternative, which is much more expensive when they're in adult prisons at $50,000 or $60,000 a year."

Steve says he would have continued molesting other children if he hadn't been caught. His older brothers, an uncle, and a social worker sexually abused him. "Other people were doing it to me so I started doing it," he says.

He molested his younger brother. He fantasized about molesting hundreds of girls and boys. He hadn't planned on molesting the child that he unexpectedly found in a home he was burglarizing.

Burglary was another habit that he picked up from his older brothers. When he was just six years old, they would hoist him through windows to steal "whatever you could grab."

AN OPEN DOOR

But on that September morning in 1991, Steve cased a house and decided to break in by himself. He says he wanted money to go to a party in Miami Beach. But when he got to the house, he was surprised by two boys, one about 10 and the other seven. They were out in the yard playing when he arrived.

Steve pointed a flare gun that he had stolen and then smashed it down on the hand of one of the boys, who was trying to hold the gate shut. Frightened, the boy ran into the house and locked the door. Steve says he conned the boy into opening the door by promising to leave if he could have a glass of water. Once inside, however, Steve asked the boys to show him where their parents kept jewelry. They didn't cooperate.

"The older brother got smart, so I whacked him across the head," Steve says. The younger boy defied Steve's orders to stop screaming, and Steve locked the child in a bathroom.

"I was getting real aggravated, irritated," Steve says. "I grabbed the older one and took him in a closet" and forced him to perform oral sex.

"They were ruining my plan," Steve says. "If they weren't there, none of this would have happened. When I saw these kids, a hundred different plans came through my mind." He thought of tying them up. He even thought of killing them.

At the time, human life didn't have much value to Steve. He lived with his mother and grandmother, who had medical problems and were trying to support him, his three brothers, and six cousins. He had run away several times. Often, he would venture "as far away as possible," even sleeping in parks to get away from home.

Steve viewed the home he broke into as an opportunity. "Everything I wanted was in there," he says.

His education consisted of one week in the third grade. He says he vowed never to return after a teacher forced him to read in front of the class, a task he could not perform.

He was repeatedly picked up by police, and at one point spent 16 months in a juvenile detention center. His brothers were in and out of jail. Since he's been in Inner Harbour, he's talked to one of his brothers during a hiatus from jail. But his mother and grandmother have apparently moved. They never attempted to contact him.

Since he has no family to live with, social workers are trying to arrange for Steve to go to a group home in Tallahassee when he is released from the treatment center this summer.

He is looking forward to enrolling in school, getting a job and eventually settling down and having a family. "Four years ago, all I saw was going to prison, getting out, going to prison," he says. "It was a door that was blocking the other view. Now that I'm here, I can see that door is open and I have all these choices."

He says he knows that people will be skeptical of his rehabilitation. "I can't say, 'Step into my future and see I'm not going to do this,'" he says. "I can just show them with my actions." ❑

Life in the Turn Lane

By Jan Vertefeuille and Caroline Nylen

News and Advance

Six reporters at the News and Advance *in Lynchburg spent five months interviewing more than 200 teenagers who attended 22 schools in central Virginia. The result was "The Teen Age," a three-week series exploring teen views on guns, birth control, AIDS, parents, MTV, sexual harassment, church, drugs, stress — and "drive-by dating," the '90s version of cruising.*

Lynchburg, Va. — Leaning out the car window, her blonde hair bobbing in cadence with her words, Michelle tries to explain the mating ritual that drew her to join the army of cruisers rolling along Wards Road.

"You see," the Appomattox teen says, jerking her chin toward a carload of male admirers who have stopped nearby and are hollering at her and her two friends. "This is what happens."

With hair sprayed into place and carefully applied lipstick, Michelle, Staci, and Jodi, all 18, are piled into Staci's bright-red Ford Festiva to cruise. They're here "to see friends and meet some guys."

That there are cute guys out cruising tonight is the consensus of girls on the strip. Michelle occupies the passenger seat, and with the window down, she's ready. Even less subtle than the guys, Michelle meets people by sticking her head out of the car window and yelling at them.

"Half the time, you just talk, find out where they're from," she explains. "Then you beep at them when they go by again. By the time the night's over, you're beeping at everybody on Wards Road."

It's Friday night, 10 o'clock — a prime cruising hour, but the crowd's a bit thin. Later, after the football games are over, the floodgates will open and Wards Road will be teeming with teenagers and post-teenagers looking for fun.

But for now, there's only a trickle of cruisers. Someone's bass from a souped-up stereo they're showing off reverberates across four traffic lanes. Cars honk at each other in greeting, girls pull up alongside guys and then speed off, giggling. The guys accelerate after them.

Growing up with drive-through banking, drive-up dining, drive-by shootings, it's natural that these kids participate in drive-by dating. The car gives them safety and mobility — it allows them to pull up to meet someone and get away if they want to.

Brandon and Alan are explaining how they meet girls. "Here, we'll give you a firsthand demonstration," Brandon says, and toots at a car full of girls that passes by. He waves to them, and with both hands up in front of him makes a beckoning gesture, yelling, "Come 'ere."

The girls look back and drive off, which is enough for Brandon and Alan to take off after them. "We'll be back," they yell and pull out of the parking lot in a beat-up Escort.

When they return an hour later, Alan

OTHER WINNERS For youth reporting in Division Two (circulation between 30,000 and 100,000)

Second Prize to Sylvia Reyes of the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* for raising thought-provoking questions about the care and treatment of Texas children infected with HIV or dying from AIDS.

NORTH
BUS
29
NORTH
501
NORTH
SOUTH
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501

LYNCHBURG TEENAGERS CRUISE WARDS ROAD FOR DATES, FRIENDS, AND PLACES TO DRINK — SEARCHING FOR FUN AND A WAY TO KILL TIME.

says the night has gone "OK" — but not great. The two are dressed casually for their evening on the town — a flannel shirt or sweatshirt, baseball caps, and jeans. Brandon has been eying some girls in a Geo, but "they wouldn't talk to us," Alan says, tipping his cigarette ashes out the window.

Brandon, in turn, says Alan has two girls in mind — "but he can't get them to stop."

"Most times," he adds with a macho nod, "*we* get the attention."

THE PARKING LOT

Along Wards Road, the cruisers are easily separated from the drivers who are headed somewhere else. The cruisers have their windows down and are rubbernecking at the passing vehicles. The businesses along the strip don't like the cruisers loitering, so the stream of cars has to keep moving or risk being kicked off some business's property unless they're customers.

Leaning closer to a new-found friend so he can hear her over the steady rumble of cars rolling by, Adam laughs and eyes the cop standing a few hundred yards away. Adam is 20 and lives in Roanoke now, but he came back to Lynchburg to hang out — and he's been drifting around the area for hours already. Now, he leans against his car in the Kroger parking lot surrounded by a pair of high school girls and a couple other friends and asks, "Want a beer? Want to buy a cellular phone?"

Jennifer, 15, who just met Adam, says she hasn't done much while she's been cruising tonight — as usual. "There's not really much to do around here," she says, eying a police car sweeping through the parking lot, a regular Wards Road presence keeping cars moving and kids in line. "They're trying to kick everyone off."

What she and everyone else are doing is simple, Jennifer says. "They just sit around and listen to music and drink."

Photo by Mark L. Thompson/News & Advance

For her friend April, 15, this Friday night was the first time she'd ever gone cruising — and after a few hours of standing around, sitting around, and driving around, she wasn't too impressed. A track team member, April doesn't drink, so she spent the evening chatting and listening to music. "This is just a night out," she says. "It's just kind of boring for me."

Adam — who sports a buzz cut and an earring — says cruising has a timeless appeal for bored kids and adults. What everyone really wants, he says, is a place to just hang out and meet people.

"They ought to get someone to just buy a parking lot," he says. "They'd make a killing . . . if they would just let people hang out and sit around and talk." A few minutes later, the cop walks over to the loosely knit group of about six. They peel out of the parking lot.

THE MALL

For at least some of these cruisers, the night began with a visit to the mall, one of the most popular places to walk around, talk — and kill time before you go cruising.

Near the movie theaters in the mall sits a sign directed at the shopping center's youthful hangers-on. "No congregating," it reads. "No loitering . . . . No loud or obnoxious behavior."

Loitering quietly nearby are Kristan and Suzanne, both 13. They manage to while away two hours, walking and talking. Why are they here? "To see all the people," Suzanne says.

Mel, 16, pauses in his umpteenth lap around the mall to explain. "We walk around, look at the girls and sometimes look at the shoes."

"Well," he adds. "Mostly, look at the girls."

The goal — the pinnacle of achievement — is to come home with a girl's phone number. But how often does that actually happen? "Not too much," admits Chad, 17. After the mall, they may go to a football game if it's Friday. But, often, their destination is Wards Road. "If you got a nice, decent car," adds Chad, "you race sometimes."

At the far end of the Candlers Station parking lot, the pink-and-green neon of the temple-like arch at Movies 10 beckons. This is another mecca for kids looking to hang out on a Friday night. A night on Wards Road frequently begins at this dollar movie theater. "Front Row Joe," the movie chain's mascot, stands guard over marquees promoting the movies being shown. Boys drive by slowly, checking out the action, not the movies. They go to meet girls, yelling at one they're interested in.

What do they yell?

"Hi!"

"If they say 'hi' back, you can tell if they want you," explains Matt, a 16-year-old Rustburg High School sophomore.

THE PICKUP LINES

There are, one cruising expert says, two big pickup lines on Wards Road.

1) "You want a ride?" and

2) "You wanna drink some beer?"

Those two lines, says Cindee, reflect the two goals foremost in the minds of typical cruisers: "meeting people and getting drunk." She just turned 19 and says she now cruises only occasionally, mostly to people-watch. But in the good old days when she cruised every chance she got — starting when she was 12 — Cindee followed a simple pattern: "I'd get a lot to drink and go out there. I only cruised to meet guys."

Actually, that mostly consisted of getting rides around the cruising circuit and finding someone to pal around with for part of the evening. Usually, she'd also hang around with friends she came with or met up with somewhere along Wards Road. Some of her friends, she says, came not just to be seen, but also to buy drugs — and here, dealers aren't hard to find, she says.

The crowd — which starts to pick up as soon as the mall closes — ranges in age from 12-year-olds whose parents usually think they're at the mall to 25-year-olds reliving their high school glory days.

Ginger, 22, has been cruising Wards Road since she was 16. Now, when it gets boring, she can head for Gatsby's or Trotter's. When she was younger, it never seemed to get boring. "It used to be a whole lot more exciting," she says. "I guess I just got older."

And it's gotten rougher, she says. "The crowd's changed. Kids now tear up things, they destroy it. It's too bad."

When she was 12, Cindee would walk to Wards Road from the mall — something she now thinks was foolhardy. "I would go up there by myself," she says. "Anyone who offered me a ride, I got in the car. That's not real bright."

There used to be more places to get out of your car and just linger — a bench near a phone at Hardees, the K-Mart parking lot. Now, the stream of cars just keeps moving around the slow loop.

Even though the night has turned chilly and it's growing late, many want to keep cruising. Brandon and Alan are still out to meet girls. "I'll go all night if I have to," Brandon says. ❑

It's Hard to Say Goodbye

By Erika Johnson Spinelli

The Item

Forty years ago, black parents in Summerton, South Carolina, sued white school officials for segregating black children in separate and inferior schools. Their struggle sparked Brown v. Board of Education, *the landmark Supreme Court ruling that declared school segregation unconstitutional in 1954.*

But Summerton continued to evade integration by building a new black high school — Scott's Branch — as part of a state plan to prove that separate schools could be equal. For decades, the student body at Scott's Branch remained almost all black, its facilities substandard.

In June, Scott's Branch closed to make way for a new high school. Erika Johnson Spinelli of The Item *spent three months with the last graduating class, listening to students share their opinions about education in one of the poorest school districts in the state — and their hopes for the future.*

SUMMERTON, S.C. — The 52 graduates crossed the Scott's Branch High School stage Thursday with mixed emotions. Many are sad to leave the school they know so well: a dilapidated building worn by time and use that houses a predominantly black student body, despite the fight for integration that began here 40 years ago.

But some students are glad to be leaving Summerton, a racially divided town where jobs are scarce and the future, for them at least, is bleak.

Most are aware of the historic significance of their graduation; as they walked across that stage in their caps and gown, they marked the end of an era. And they believe that those who follow — who will graduate from a new, $7.5 million high school — have a chance at something better, something more equal and, perhaps, less separate.

The State Department of Education said in November 1993 that it would intervene in the district's operation because it had failed to meet academic standards. Even the district's superintendent, Dr. Milton Marley, said he believes the students haven't gotten the education they deserve.

"You'll hear people say you don't learn much here, but you do," argued Terell Oliver, an 18-year-old who graduated Thursday. Terell and some of his classmates don't share the disparaging views that were widely expressed recently when the 40th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* was observed and the media descended upon Summerton.

Sitting in a gym flanked by scuffed wooden bleachers and broken window panes, Terell and classmate Kenneth Jones — who both graduated at the top of their class, their names frequently appearing on the all-"A's" and -"B's" honors list — reflected on their historic alma mater and the education they received there.

Terell started with the broken window panes. "We had baseball practice in the gym one day when it was raining," he laughed. "That's why some of them are broken."

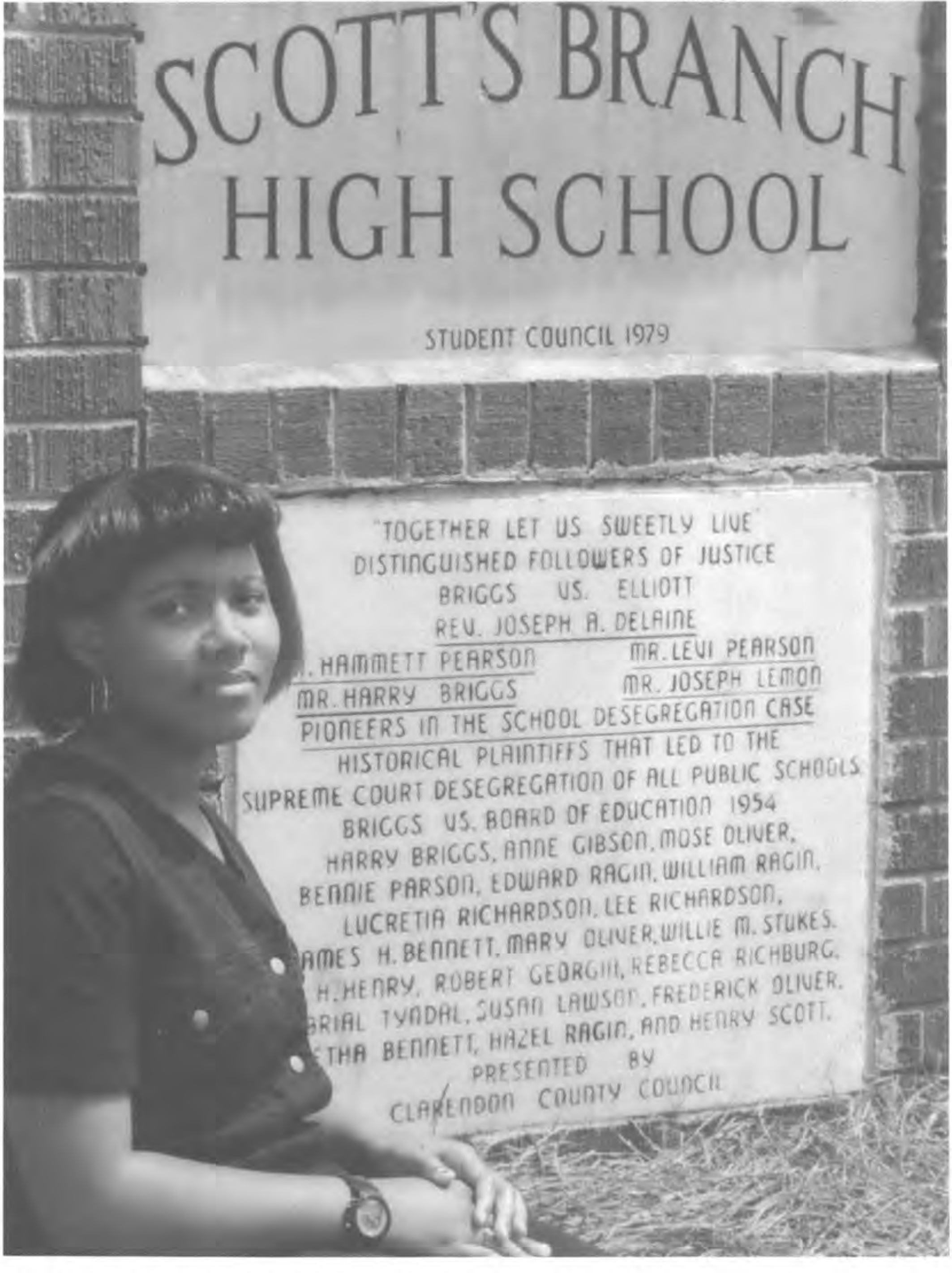
He pointed to two in particular, naming the teammates who did the damage. He looked around. "I know every crack in this place," the Summerton native said. He paused. "I don't think I'm deprived."

"I like it small. The teachers know you, and they know what you're capable of doing," said Kenneth, who moved here from Charlotte three years ago. "You have a friendship with the teachers. It's not like a teacher-student relationship, but more of a friendship. And that's important.

"But it's up to you," he said. "You have to apply yourself."

There are a few things he misses about

Photo by Erika Johnson Spinelli/The Item


SCOTT'S BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT COUNCIL 1979
"TOGETHER LET US SWEETLY LIVE"
DISTINGUISHED FOLLOWERS OF JUSTICE
BRIGGS VS. ELLIOTT
REV. JOSEPH A. DELAINE
. HAMMETT PEARSON
MR. LEVI PEARSON
MR. HARRY BRIGGS
MR. JOSEPH LEMON
PIONEERS IN THE SCHOOL DESEGREGATION CASE
HISTORICAL PLAINTIFFS THAT LED TO THE
SUPREME COURT DESEGREGATION OF ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BRIGGS VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION 1954
HARRY BRIGGS, ANNE GIBSON, MOSE OLIVER,
BENNIE PARSON, EDWARD RAGIN, WILLIAM RAGIN,
LUCRETIA RICHARDSON, LEE RICHARDSON,
AMES H. BENNETT, MARY OLIVER, WILLIE M. STUKES,
H. HENRY, ROBERT GEORGIA, REBECCA RICHBURG,
RIAL TYNDAL, SUSAN LAWSON, FREDERICK OLIVER,
THA BENNETT, HAZEL RAGIN, AND HENRY SCOTT.
PRESENTED BY
CLARENDON COUNTY COUNCIL

Quantae Ragin, president of the last senior class at Scott's Branch, sits before a monument commemorating the historic case that began school desegregation.

Charlotte schools. "There's no lockers here," he said first. "And at the junior high I went to in Charlotte, it was mostly white."

He doesn't really miss the mix of races, although he says a single-race education "can be good. It can be bad." But he knows that blacks and whites in society are "mixed," and perhaps schools should reflect the community they serve.

Terell complained that universities overlook the small, rural school when it comes to handing out athletic scholarships. "See that boy playing basketball?" He pointed at a short, stocky fellow on the court. "He's a *good* football player. He can stop anybody. But he's only got little schools calling him."

Their program is a tad underfunded, Terell said. He grimaced as he describes the baseball team's seven-year-old uniforms made of polyester and nylon.

Despite state efforts to equalize funding, a small tax base and other factors combine to lessen the amount of local and state income District 1 receives compared to the amount of funds that urban, land-rich school districts get.

During spring baseball season, Terell played on the same field the football team used in the fall, in the side yard of the long-closed Summerton School. The bleachers were moved from one side of the field to the other, depending on the season. There was a scoreboard for football games, but no point-keeper for the baseball games. The only score was kept by memory, and "What's the score?" was echoed frequently by newcomers to a game.

"SINK OR SWIM"

Down the street from the athletic field sits the high school, a county yard from

U.S. 301. Across Fourth Street is a yard of trailers and tin-roofed houses. A rooster crows during the day, serenading students outside at lunch.

When a friend told Kisha Beach that she would be finishing her education at an all-black high school, she didn't believe her. But when she arrived at Scott's Branch two years ago to begin the 11th grade, she found out her friend wasn't kidding. The school she attended in Brooklyn, a high school for students intending to enter a medical profession, was about 50 percent black.

But she appreciated the education she's received at Scott's Branch. This year, Kisha took college-level English and college calculus via satellite. "At one time I thought this school was easier. But they just do things slower," she said. "At other schools [with adequate facilities] you learn the same thing . . . . Sometimes we just have to improvise."

Senior class president and salutatorian Quantae Ragin admitted she didn't have the greatest scientific study opportunities at Scott's Branch. "We haven't had the facilities — you know how it is," she shrugged. "So we had to compromise a lot."

The 18-year-old took some challenging classes her senior year: pre-calculus, physics, history, English, and college-level art history.

Superintendent Marley sees the Scott's Branch student education in a different light, though. His answer, when asked whether the students have received the education they deserve, is a simple, definite "No."

"They won't know it until they go to college and interact with others and see what they missed," he said.

But Marley speaks in defense of the school to state department officials who say that the school doesn't meet academic standards. "We've been left to sink or swim. We've gotten no help from anybody — not from higher education, no one. We've had one student teacher in the six years I've been here, and that's only because she's from here and insisted on being here," he said.

PLANNING TO LEAVE

Marley hopes the new high school will provide an incentive for graduates to help *create* jobs that would allow them to live and work in Summerton: He hopes they'll want to send their children to the new Scott's Branch High School.

At present, this small town doesn't have much to offer these students: Kenneth Jones wants to become an engineer; Quantae Ragin, a chemist; Terell Oliver, a nurse; Kisha Beach, a physical therapist. Those kinds of jobs are nonexistent.

For now, there aren't even many part-time jobs for teenagers who want to work; only two of this group, Kenneth and Shamonia Baxter, work after school. Kenneth puts in 16 hours a week at a local truck stop to help his mom pay the bills and to save money for school trips. Shamonia is a housekeeper at the Summerton Inn on the weekends and tutored elementary school students for the '76 Foundation, a non-profit educational group, after school.

But those aren't full-time jobs, Kenneth said, which is why many Scott's Branch graduates will leave town. So they have worked hard at school, won scholarships, and are planning their moves for later this summer. He wants to live in Atlanta, where he believes there are good jobs and more opportunities for blacks. "(I want) to help mankind. To help my race," he said. "There are stereotypes about blacks — that we're lazy, on welfare. But every race has their poor section."

While school and community integration was successful in many Southern towns 30 years ago, Summerton has remained the same, despite the fight for segregation that started here.

Terell plans to leave town, too. From his course-work in health occupation at F.E. DuBose Vocational Center in Manning, he is certified as a nurse's assistant. He wants to go to Central Carolina Technical College and major in either nursing or graphic engineering. Then, he said, he'll be ready for Baltimore. "Nobody wants to just stay here and be nothing," he said.

Kisha will go to Charleston Southern University and major in biology. On Awards Day last week she learned that she won a full scholarship — $12,000 — for her four-year education there. She wants to be a physical therapist or pediatrician. She said her mother advised her not to go to an all-black college — "'because the world's not all black,' she said to me" Kisha remarked. "She said, 'You'd be isolating yourself.'"

Her roommate may be Shamonia, who plans to major in education there — and return to Summerton to perfect her teaching skills. "I want to give back some of what I've been given," she said.

Quantae will leave Summerton, too, but she may return one day. She has decided to major in chemistry at Winthrop University. She picked Winthrop because of its diversity. Her predominantly black high school alma mater made her "want to explore more," she said. "That's why I didn't choose a black college. Most of my friends think the same way."

NO HANGOUTS

The high school isn't the only thing that's segregated in Summerton; the town, too, is split by color.

"People don't mix like they should," said John Ragin, a graduate who plans to enter the Navy. "People should be used to getting together."

But there's a problem: There's no place to get together, whether you're black or white. Growing up in Summerton means no movie theater, no hangouts, few jobs and not even much trouble to get into. "It's small, boring, and there's nothing to do," said Brooklyn transplant Kisha. She lives with her mom just outside of Pinewood, and has to borrow a car to visit friends.

"We need something here. We need a movie theater," Quantae said. "We have to go so far away to do something, to go to a club — a *safe* club." She speculates that the long-time separation and slow-growing economy is the history of the town that won't go away. While school and community integration was successful in many Southern towns 30 years ago, Summerton has remained the same, despite the fight for segregation that started here.

"The whites live on that side," Kenneth said as he pointed toward town. "And the blacks live on that side," he pointed in the opposite direction.

It's a way of life that Scott's Branch students aren't reluctant to talk about or shy to question. "It's back in the past," Quantae said about Summerton. "The only time you see a black and white person in the same place is [in the town's only] grocery store. I don't know what's wrong with everybody." ❑

Cane Country Images

By Quo Vadis Gex-Breaux

My friend, Chandra McCormick, and I rode into Louisiana cane country looking for the people in her photographs. Chandra, a documentary photographer, had shown me pictures of sugarcane workers she had taken over the past 10 years. These were friends she had come to know during trips to cane country, and I too wanted to meet these people who projected quiet images of dignity and elegance in the photographs.

River Road follows the Mississippi River northwestward into St. James, Ascension, St. John the Baptist, and St. Charles parishes. We rode past cane plantations and through the deserted quarters that once housed cane workers. Row houses with long-faded paint, or no paint at all, sit vacant now; the alleys between them which once teemed with children at play are hushed and still.

At Port Allen in West Baton Rouge Parish, we turned off toward Allendale plantation. The lone "matriarch" of the quarters at Allendale, Juanita Matthews, with one of her grandchildren on her hip, told us that Ringo and Rose were dead. They had been the couple with whom Chandra stayed on her visits. The old harmonica-playing man and his son who lived two doors away were also dead, she said. All the others had moved on, too. Some moved to nearby small communities; some to housing projects and subsidized housing. Some went to the cities. She told us 11 of her own 12 children are "grown and gone."

Our visit coincided with the first cutting of the cane and the beginning of "grinding time" when the cane is trucked to the refineries for processing. Juanita Matthews' husband runs tractors and machines. Often he will not get home until late night after dropping off workers

continued on page 39

Photos by Chandra McCormick

Padded Steps/Sister Song (a litany)

Walk softly, my sister
You are beauty, myth, legend and extinction
yours is the road too steep to lose foot on
lest it sink you into eternal depths
Walk softly,
You a gazelle
picking cane and cotton
remade daily in your ancestors' images
Walk softly,
Maybe light steps
will leave less of a scent
to be tracked
but history will insist
that you be hunted down in the bush
of your invented realities
those dreams you shared
and made real so that others
would have a path upon which to
Walk softly, my sister
Up in the middle of the night
rocking yours
or someone's baby
soothing someone's
momentarily lost soul
carrying shadows into
swamp pathed freedom
Walk softly, sister
Raising six children
fruit of the man you just
want to take care of
your instincts nurture growth
Walk softly
Crow reborn from human bones
phoenix rising out of hatred's ashes
form beyond definition
giver to a taking world
Walk softly, sister
A lifetime is relative
sometimes a hundred years
lived in twenty or
not even thirty
lived in ninety
Walk softly, sister
The drummer who
plays without sticks
makes you dance while
others hear no music
Walk softly,
Play the piano
like one who reads composers' spirits
not the music they leave
written on flat pages
Walk softly, sister
Sing your song blue, spiritual
or sassy
New Orleans style
accompanied by holy horns,
sacred strings, divine drums
sing your song, or play it
out on the riverfront
to the water and its many
buried wishes sung daily
by the waves
Walk softly, sister
Human glider fish
one stroke across a pool
water goddess, admired,
unadorned, envied and
beyond possession
Softly, my sister
Let the river's muddy deep waters
heal raw middle passage scars
pried open daily by hopes
snuffed out by years of yearning
Walk softly, sister
Cooking and pouring libation
at foreign altars
while praying your way through tomorrows
torn away from emptinesses
waiting hungrily at locked mind doors
Walk softly, my sister
The stars, the moon, its fullness
every dreary or, blue cloud bright
day is yours
as your magic bounces off mountains
in monotonous minds
Walk softly
In your multi-hued finery
accented by a thousand
dialected tongues that garden scented
ears must hear
Walk softly
And talk to each other
mother to daughter
sister to sister
aunt to niece, one to another
listen and
let the words save you
Walk softly, my sister
Do not be consumed
by your longing
and remember to save
some of you for yourself.

— Quo Vadis Gex-Breaux

Valery Morgan with son, T.J. Morgan, Allendale Plantation, Port Allen, Louisiana.

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in nearby parishes. The shucks burned from the cane before it is trucked away leave a sweet smoky pungency that blends with river smells to create wafts of damp, thick air. The same air undoubtedly holds unregulated airborne chemicals from nearby chemical processing plants in this area also known as "Cancer Alley." Grinding time used to be high time in the quarters. People were working, and they knew they had a payday coming. They would have money to provide for their families and money to celebrate. They would cut cane from sunup to sundown. Then the parties of blues playing and singing would go from house to house for days.

Rose and Ringo had been "scrappers." Scrappers went to the fields after the machines, scrapped the cane left behind, and packed it into waiting trucks. Chandra remembers that a few years ago, scrappers lived — sometimes several generations to a house — in the dozen or so row houses the workers rented on the Allendale plantation. Even after the advent of two-row machines and as late as 1992, scrappers worked the cane fields. Today, three-row cutting machines brought in by the corporate farmers gather nearly all the cane they can use. These "Big Farmers," as the local workers call them, see the expense of scrappers as superfluous.

"Nobody scraps anymore," Juanita Matthews told us, "the machines do it all." Matthews started working in the cane fields when she was 14. Now, at 58, having been diagnosed with hypertension, she stays at home and keeps her grandchildren.

When I asked Matthews if she had ever thought of leaving, she said, "I lived in Baton Rouge for a couple of years, but I didn't like it. I like it better here in the country where I feel freer, more secure. My [grand]children can go outdoors, and I don't have to worry about what they will see when they open the door. I just like it better." ❑

MARK GATE, THE ELDEST OF 10 CHILDREN, WORKED WITH HIS MOTHER AND FATHER IN THE CANE FIELD ON THE GLENDALE PLANTATION IN ST. JOHN PARISH.

Quo Vadis Gex-Breaux lives and writes in New Orleans where she also works in development for Dillard University. She has four sons. She has published poems in local and national journals including the Xavier Review, *the* New Laurel Review, Nkombo, *the* African-American Review, Black River Journal, *and the anthology* Word Up. *She also contributed to* Life Notes, *a collection of personal writing by contemporary black women edited by Patricia Bell-Scott.*

Chandra McCormick is a photographer who lives and works in New Orleans. Her work has been exhibited widely throughout the country including the New Orleans Museum of Art. She and her husband Keith Calhoun have spent many years documenting the lives of Louisiana sugarcane workers.

A LONG SKINNY HOUSE TO FIT THIS PIECE OF LAND

Can community-based economic development come from the bottom up, or does it always have to look at the bottom line?

By A. Lorraine Strauss

Early spring days in southern West Virginia are chilly, the smell of coal smoke lingering in the air. Roads rut out into mud tracks, and yards turn swampy, but the afternoons are warm, and the faint haze of green on the sides of the mountains holds out the promise of new growth, burgeoning gardens, and the warmth of summer.

It was on such an afternoon in 1987 that Beth Spence drove through a creek outside of Harts, West Virginia, to visit Leo Watts.

A native of West Virginia, Spence began looking at rural homelessness during her time at Covenant House, an urban shelter in the state. Working with a Catholic sister, Spence interviewed families in the Harts area to assess the housing needs of "the hidden, forgotten homeless who live up the hollers and along the ridge tops. I sat down at the tables and talked with the women, usually," Spence remembers. "It was easy to talk about housing problems, but then we'd move into health. Most of the children had health problems, including childhood pneumonia. The children who were having so many health problems were also failing in school."

Leo Watts was friendly on that spring day. He came out onto his porch to talk to Spence. His arms were bandaged up to the elbows — the result of fighting a fire that could have burned his house down.

Watts' house had large holes in the walls and ceilings, dirt floors in the bedrooms, and no running water. It was not atypical for an area where it's estimated as many as 50 percent of the families live in substandard houses.

"I built it, but it's pretty bad," Watts told Spence. "It's a roof over my head, but it leaks. It's about like being outside. It ain't much, but it's all I got."

Once Spence had completed an initial assessment in Harts — many of the homes she visited, like Watts', didn't meet the United Nations definition of a house — she and the Catholic sister arranged a community meeting.

Courtesy of C.J. Jones

MELVIN ANDERSON WORKS ON A VOICE OF CALVARY MINISTRIES REHAB PROJECT FOR THE MINISTRIES' HOME OWNERSHIP PROGRAM.

"It was amazing," Spence remembers. "About 50 people showed up. We said, 'Look, we don't have a program, and we don't have any money, but we'd like to get something started.' Thirteen people volunteered to be on the steering committee, and seven stuck with it."

Nora Kelley, a welfare mother with four children, was elected the first director of the new organization. When a Presbyterian church group donated $50,000, Harts Community Development had a system in place to use the money to build houses. "The men had sort of been in the background," Spence remembers. "But when the money came through, these nine guys — all on welfare or disabled — went out and walked the property. That's something Habitat for Humanity might not have thought of — walking the property and then designing a long, skinny house specifically to fit this piece of land."

A crew of nine built the organization's first house — a house for the Watts family, which Leo and his wife Marlene helped design and build. The site supervisor found young, unemployed men to work; after taking them through the construction of the house, Harts paid for them to take their licensing exams. A crew of women came in the evenings to hang drywall and paint.

Since its inception in 1989, Harts Community Development has built seven houses and rehabilitated several more. "People were convinced to really look at what they needed to do for their community and how it could be done rather than following the money path," Spence says.

"The most important value that undergirds the work is the belief that poor people must be allowed to make the decisions, all the decisions — even the bad decisions — and make mistakes and learn from them, and go on from there," Spence continues. "There's got to be room to allow that to happen because if you don't have that, you don't have empowerment. This empowerment thing, to me, is more important than houses."

GOT TO BE PEOPLE

Clean, safe, and affordable housing, entreprenuership and job creation, and accessible quality health care are all indicators of a thriving community. During the War on Poverty in the1960s, the federal government funded community development programs providing necessities to poor communities and hard-pressed neighborhoods. A lot of what's now called community development revolves around housing projects in inner cities initiated by "community development corporations." Public and private money is earmarked for physical development — but the balance sheet is the important part.

The people in the ventures have little input. As a result, many of these projects fail to bring about any real change in the communities they profess to help.

"When I became involved in the movement, community development was a process to involve people so that their capacity could be built up," says C.J. Jones, development director for Voice of Calvary Ministries in Jackson, Mississippi. "Poor people got into community development because nobody else cared. People still don't care about the poor. But they do care about physical development."

Grassroots development, on the other hand, seeks to expand capacity and resources of whole communities, working from the bottom up. The emphasis, according to Ralph Paige, director of the Federation for Southern Cooperatives, is "not necessarily looking at the bottom line, but looking at the things people need, the ability for a community to control its own destiny."

Ben Poage, a minister with the Kentucky Appalachian Ministry, has worked for such change for over 20 years. The communities he finds himself in are often struggling with legacies of the golden age of mining on the Cumberland Plateau. Now that the big companies have pulled out, many towns are left "caught up in a seemingly endless downward spiral of poverty," writes Poage.

Like Spence, Poage stresses the importance of developing the resources already existing in the community — the people. "The economic salvation for Heartland Appalachia is not through enticing outsiders to come in and set up factories, but is found in our own ability to use our human and natural resources, with some outside capital and technical assistance, to launch community-owned and community-run enterprises."

Grassroots development gives people the opportunity to create employment and provide an extraordinarily diverse number of services, based on the needs of their own community. More and more groups provide development funds, micro-enterprise loans, entrepreneurial training, and co-ops for craft makers and rural minority farmers. Motivated by the conviction that the only sustainable development is for, by, and of the community, leadership development programs, housing construction and rehabilitation, health clinics and education centers have also been created.

For Phyllis Miller, director of the Mountain Women's Exchange in Jellico, Tennessee, there's little choice. "Economic development in the mountains must come from within. The geography just does not lend itself to attracting industry. We must help ourselves and each other if we are to survive."

Building the capacity of people, say practitioners of grassroots development, is the only way to ensure their efforts' inclusiveness, and ultimately, the ability to bring about significant change. "Any time I think about economic development or community development, before economics there's got to be people," says Margarita Romo, founder and director of Farmworker's Self Help in Dade City, Florida. "There's got to be strong people. There's got to be nurtured people. There's got to be people that first can begin to see the worth in themselves."

Photo by Beth Spence

WHEN A HOME IS NOT A HOUSE: AS MANY AS 50 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION OF SOME RURAL COUNTIES IN WEST VIRGINIA LIVE IN SUBSTANDARD HOUSING. SOME OF THOSE HOMES DON'T MEET THE UNITED NATIONS' DEFINITION OF A HOUSE.

CONVERTING POWER

Many of those who practice the grassroots version of community development, including C.J. Jones and Ralph Paige, came out of the civil rights movement. The roots of community-based economic development reach back even further, to Tuskegee Institute, to church-based support groups in the mountains, and to the cooperative movement of the late 1920s. People involved in the civil rights movement turned to that legacy of community-based economic development as the most appropriate vehicle to continue working for social and economic justice.

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives headed by Paige was founded in 1968 in order to provide minority farmers in the rural South with some power in the marketplace. Voice of Calvary was founded in 1962. For Paige and Jones, working for economic change at a grassroots level was a natural extension of their struggle to vote, to be represented, to have a voice. It became a matter of converting political power to economic power.

Jones remembers a time, during the early days of the civil rights movement, when a group of families was evicted from the plantation they lived on because they voted. Someone donated a field, and the families lived in tents. Jones says it was this incident which spurred him to become involved in community development. "We didn't own land. We didn't own any jobs we could send these folk to. What you had were these folk who were completely and totally excluded from the economic system. I began to feel that the issue of justice in America was an economic issue, not a social issue. A lot of the social issues came about because of the economic injustices."

In many ways, community-based economic development was a practical response to a system which is exclusionary. "Grassroots involvement is an essential part of the delivery of goods and services," says Ed Bergman, professor of economic development at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "It's the way people get what they need, what the system doesn't provide."

By the mid-1970s, the roots of the community-based economic development movement were growing deeper and spreading wider. Money from the Office of Economic Opportunity spurred a number of community development efforts. The Special Impact Amendment of 1968 established the first community development corporations, and those grew in number and capability. The Ford Foundation came on the scene to provide financial support and technical assistance, allowing the development corporations to do housing work across the country.

The money didn't always trickle down all the way to the grassroots, though. With the money from the government and foundations came their agendas. The funders wanted to see tangible results, especially housing. Farmworker's Self Help, providing education, health care, and job opportunities to migrant workers, didn't fit into the agendas. The organization survived for 14 years with no federal funding. C.J. Jones says the money was accessible to projects on which he worked, but its uses were so restricted it was of little help.

Obstacles to these groups' work still exist. Mary Tyler, co-founder of the East Jackson Economic Development Commission and executive director of Area Relief Ministries, points out "the general image that our population has of poor and minority people. They automatically assume that you just don't have what it takes to sit at the table with bankers, and with corporate people, to discuss intelligently their putting some of our resources back in our community. They tend to want to talk with everyone but the people at the bottom. And that's who they're going to have to talk to."

Despite the many impediments practitioners of community-based economic development face, those involved in the work say the successes are worth the effort. "I work with a lot of women, heads of households," says Ralph Paige, "and it's a wonderful thing to see them come out and say, 'Hey, I ain't gonna take this any more. I am a human being, and I can do.'" ❑

Lorraine Strauss edits Threshold, *the magazine of the Student Environmental Action Coalition and was a summer intern at the Institute for Southern Studies.*

DEVELOPMENT WITH DIGNITY

An Assessment of Community-Based Economic Development in the South

By Isaiah Madison

Quitman County, Mississippi, in the heart of the Delta, has a population of slightly under 10,000. It is one of the poorest counties in the state with a 59 percent black population and a very high black unemployment rate. Almost one-third of the families and more than a half the children live in poverty with 22 percent of the residents receiving some form of public assistance. The semi-feudal plantation tradition of the surrounding Mississippi Delta continues to cast a debilitating cloud of apathy and dependency over Quitman County.

There have been some changes, though. Prior to 1987, the town of Marks, Mississippi, in Quitman County, was governed exclusively by whites, although African Americans made up almost 60 percent of the population. Today, as a result of the settlement of a lawsuit in 1987 challenging the single-district electoral setup, Marks has a black mayor and two blacks on the five-member board of aldermen.

Economically, Marks and Quitman County are typical of rural communities throughout the South especially in Black Belt and mountain areas. They are the areas largely bypassed by the Sunbelt economic development boom of the 1960s and 1970s.

Throughout its history, much of the South has pursued economic development policies that sacrificed long-term prosperity to exploitative business interests by guaranteeing free or cheap supplies of labor and land, a largely non-unionized work force, relaxed environmental regulations, low taxes, and various kinds of business subsidies at public expense. As a result of this legacy, the South continues to be the poorest region in the nation with a per-capita income that is 88 percent of the national average. Of the 12 states with the lowest manufacturing wages, eight were in the South. During the past three decades, Southern workers have suffered a massive and sustained assault. Low-paying service jobs replaced good-paying manufacturing jobs with medical and pension benefits. Between 1969 and 1989, high-wage manufacturing jobs in the South fell from 27.5 percent of the total work force to 18 percent, while lower-paying service jobs increased from 14.3 percent to 22.6 percent.

The economic downturn in the South reflects a long-term depression of the national and global economy in which large-scale industrial employers cut costs, downsized, closed up shop, relocated to Third World countries, and turned massive numbers of employees permanently out to pasture. As a *New York Times* story put it, corporate America "facing stiff competition and disappearing profits . . . has been throwing workers overboard by the millions."

The Markses and Quitman Counties of the South are still being left behind in the economic development race as Southern states continue chasing after the rainbow of large industrial plants overflowing with jobs.

Southern political leaders have been aware of this fact for more than a decade. While some states have undertaken scattered local economic development enterprises, none has implemented holistic, bottom-up, community-based economic revitalization strategies.

Quitman County Development Organization shows how community economic development can work. QCDO evolved out of a local social service organization associated with the Mississippi Action for Community Education (MACE). It was created in 1977 as a community-based economic development organization committed to helping local citizens help themselves. QCDO now operates a community credit union which has made loans totaling more than $4 million, a housing development corporation engaged in extensive housing rehabilitation throughout the county, a rural transportation program, a laundromat, thrift store, printing service, and an industrial foundation which recruited three industries to the county creating 225 jobs. QCDO itself has 18 employees.

Like many other communities throughout the South, the real economic development story of Quitman County is not told in its persistent poverty. That only reveals the cumulative impact of mechanization and long-term deindustrialization. Such a focus does not take into account the countervailing bottom-up, community-based economic development work of QCDO and similar community economic development enterprises across the South.

The Assessment

Amidst escalating anxiety about the South's stagnant economy and increasing interest in community-based economic revitalization alternatives, the Institute for Southern Studies undertook a large-scale assessment of community-based economic enterprise in the South in 1991. The objectives of the study were to document the lessons and achievements of the community economic development movement and examine implications for strengthening work. Documentation covered the period from the Office of Economic Opportunity's anti-poverty programs of the 1960s to the present.

After conferring with numerous practitioners, we decided to use a broad definition of community economic development including human and social development strategies as well as traditional business development activities. We surveyed community action agencies, community development corporations, community development financial institutions, crafts projects, and micro-enterprise programs. We also included church-based initiatives, farm worker organizations, mutual help associations, rural health projects, small businesses and business support programs, small and minority farm projects, cooperatives, and worker-owned businesses.

Fifty community-based economic enterprises from Virginia to Louisiana responded to the survey. While much of the community economic development activity we documented is still at an emerging level, on the whole the survey paints a much more hopeful picture of Southern economic development than suggested by the economy's chronically depressed trends.

Our assessment documents several accomplishments — and shortfalls — of the Southern community economic development movement over the past 30 years. The full assessment report will be published by the Institute in early 1995. What follows are some of the key findings. They include (a) achievements — material achievements; (b) strategic policies; and (c) long-range guiding principles — goals and objectives.

Racism and political opposition are cited as the most detrimental external impediments.

ACHIEVEMENTS

From farm worker communities in Dade City, Florida, to black inner-city residents of Jackson, Mississippi, from the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina to poor mountain communities in southern West Virginia, people generally believed to be hopelessly impoverished can come together and create community-based ventures that improve their material circumstances. These programs provide affordable housing for the homeless and ill-housed, create business ventures to employ the unemployed, establish health clinics to meet the needs of the medically unserved, and create crafts cooperatives to provide income opportunities for unemployed rural residents.

Successful models

Quitman County Development Organization is an initiative that has made an impact. Because of its work over the past seven years, Quitman County is far less racially divided and economically depressed than it would be if QCDO did not exist. The majority black population is far less politically isolated and materially vulnerable than it would be. Due to QCDO's emphasis on local leadership development and black political empowerment, the number of African-American public officeholders in the county has increased from none in 1987 to 12 (out of 42) today. Robert Jackson, who heads QCDO, is a member of the county board of supervisors. He credits political education and empowerment work of QCDO with significantly increasing support by local white leadership for community-based development work. A similarly impressive initiative is the Human/Economic Appalachian Development (HEAD) Corporation. HEAD is a church-related regional community development cooperative in Berea, Kentucky. Formally established in 1973, HEAD promotes community-based economic development in rural central Appalachia through a variety of business, housing, and consumer development services and initiatives. Today HEAD operates the largest regional housing consortium and community development bank in the region with assets of $11,400,000 and more than 400 employees.

Other successful community economic development initiatives abound in the South. The construction of a shopping center by Durham's Hayti Development Corporation has instilled in local residents a tremendous sense of pride. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives and Watermark Association of Artisans market their community-based products abroad. The Center for Community Self-Help has achieved national recognition as a model community development financial institution. Mid Delta Home Health, North Carolina Association of Community Development Corporations, Mountain Association of Community Economic Development, Business Innovation Center, Mayhaw Tree, and Voice of Calvary Ministries are all examples of successful community economic development ventures which have greatly benefited their communities and engendered community ownership and support.

Facilitators of revitalization

The assessment finds that the most helpful sources of technical assistance for community economic development organizations are "groups like us" and "face-to-face networks." Such assistance is usually very inexpensive or free of charge. Out of the 50 participants, these two responses account for 38 percent of all forms of "most helpful technical assistance."

This finding confirms the existence of an extensive corps of effective and resourceful community developers throughout the South engaged in a range of productive community economic development activities. The abundance of proven community development capacity provides an avenue of long-term economic hope amidst generally discouraging material circumstances. These exceptional development skills and achievements have not yet captured the attention of most mainstream state economic development leaders.

STRATEGIC POLICIES

The assessment documents a consensus among the participants concerning a number of important strategic policies calculated to minimize programmatic failure and maximize programmatic success.

Community organizing

The assessment refutes the claim that community organizing is not an essential component of effective community economic development work; "organizing the community to pressure back" is cited as the second most frequently used strategy to overcome obstacles to community economic development work. On the other hand, banks and chambers of commerce are given 34 percent of the weight as the local institutions causing the most harm to community activity. Racism and political opposition are cited as the most detrimental external impediments to community economic development, receiving 38 percent of the total responses.

The findings indicate that community organizing is a vital ingredient in the entire community economic development soup. According to Harry G. Boyte in *Dissent*, community organizing — of the kind embraced by most community developers — is about teaching people the "craft of cooperative public problem-solving."

Flexible and diverse strategies

The study shows that the most successful community economic development practitioners are those who can work with a broad spectrum of diverse (and sometimes contradictory) elements both within and outside the community. The main strategies employed by the respondents to overcome "external obstacles" range from "building relationships with people in power" (21.6 percent) to "organizing the community to fight back" (21.6 percent).

> *"Economic imposition is not community development, but colonialism."*

Practitioners who are most effective in implementing a holistic, community-driven agenda engage in constant collaboration, innovation, and experimentation. Operational flexibility is their *keynote*. Elements essential to success in the sea islands of South Carolina are not necessarily as effective in inner-city Birmingham or rural East Tennessee. The study reveals significant variations in operational approaches between different types of community economic development projects and the race or gender of the leaders. Cooperatives and rural development groups are inclined to be far more political than their urban counterparts. White-led projects are two times more likely to "build relationships with powerful people" than "organize the community to pressure back." Conversely, black-led organizations are almost two times more inclined to "organize the community to pressure back" than "build relationships with powerful people." Consistently effective community developers devise resourceful ways of affirming diversity without fighting about differences.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

While the strategic policies necessary to maximize the success and minimize the failure of community economic development ventures may vary greatly among projects, we documented some matters of principle that are applicable to all community economic development work.

Human and community resources

Thirty-four percent of the survey respondents cite "developing human and community resources" as a preeminent objective of their community economic development work. This involves strengthening the confidence, capacity, and ownership in local residents and organizations to enable them to initiate and implement community development ventures on their own behalf. It explains why "moral encouragement" is cited as the most important form of "technical assistance" received by the respondents. There is skepticism on the part of many community economic development practitioners of the potentially subversive impact which external resources can have on serious bottom-up community empowerment. One participant cited a development assistance organization that was so linked to funders that its ability to empower the community group was seriously impaired.

The Voice of Calvary Ministries' human development work in an economically depressed section of Jackson, Mississippi, illustrates how basic human development work (e.g. community education, home ownership training, parent education, job readiness training, tutoring) lays a solid foundation for physical development. Through their work with community residents, the Ministries' staff nurtures and strengthens local community leadership, increases home ownership, reduces crime and drug trafficking, improves relations with the city government, the police department, and the school system, and increased safety and well-being in the neighborhood. "Our goal is to develop the capacity of folk in the community. We address poverty by creating equity in neighborhoods — a sense of personal ownership and investment in the community," says Voice of Calvary's C.J. Jones.

Robert Giloth, executive director of Southeast Community Organization in

Baltimore, affirms that creating wealth is a better criterion of community development than job creation. "More appropriate outcome measures might be *wealth creation* . . . business start-ups, or regional-based indicators of economic performance," says Giloth in *Neighborhood Works* (emphasis added). He stresses "mak[ing] jobs available to the job-needy and prepar[ing] the job-needy for available jobs" as preeminent goals of economic development.

This finding supports the recent call by the research organization MDC for reexamination by Southern policy makers of "job creation and dollars invested" as adequate measures of economic development activity. In its 1992 report, *Coming Out of the Shadows,* MDC states, "Job creation and dollars invested are no longer adequate goals for development. In rural areas, issues of jobs are linked to those of infrastructure, social support systems, education, and protection of natural resources. Job creation is only a piece of the economic development puzzle in a changing, competitive economy." Many current economic development strategies designed to revitalize persistently impoverished areas focus almost entirely on business development and job creation goals without giving sufficient consideration to economic development taught by the participants in the assessment.

> *"There can be no sustainable development without sustainable democracy."*

Building local capacity

A common myth is that the main ingredient for community economic development work is infusion of external resources (e.g. capital, technical support, and guidance). This is contradicted by the assessment, which finds that building human and institutional capacity contributes more to community economic development work than abundant external resources.

A commitment to institutionalizing bottom-up community economic development capacity is especially strong among mountain and Deep South participants. Human/Economic Appalachian Development Corporation (HEAD) and Mountain Association of Community Economic Development (MACED) are mountain groups that institutionalized a broad range of support. This strengthened their ability to counteract hostile forces and win the support and assistance of others.

Stella Marshall of Workers of Rural Kentucky says, "The creation of meaningful jobs by the formation of small locally owned businesses . . . helps keep families off of support systems that keep them in a state of dependency."

Abdul Rasheed of the North Carolina Association of Community Development Corporations says that building organizational development capacity as a guiding principle has to do with "building institutions that will outlive me."

Lorna Bourg captures the importance of institution building: "Basic human needs are not met in a sustained way without attention to increasing resources and building permanent bottom-up human and institutional capacity."

Many participants point out the incompatibility of the faddish nature of much government and foundation support with the need for long-term institutional development.

Democratic empowerment

The participants in the assessment cite democratic decision-making and ownership as the third most important principle of their work. This affirms local control as a guiding principle. Cooperatives, small business support, and rural groups, agree with Irvin Henderson, formerly with Gateway Community Development Corporation: "Anytime you are trying to do something that affects someone's quality of life, you don't want to impose it on them."

Lillie Webb of the Center for Community Development of Hancock, Georgia, stresses that local community responsibility is essential to our governmental scheme: "The government needs to be returned to the people. And the people need to accept the responsibility of government. The people are the government. . . . We need to take the full responsibility for what's happening to us, and not just give that responsibility to somebody else."

If an economic development venture is primarily dependent on support and resources from outside the community it serves, it is not community economic development. As Jim Sessions of the Highlander Center points out, "There can be no sustainable development without sustainable democracy."

"Economic imposition," says another respondent, "is not *community* development, but colonialism."

Some grassroots community economic development practitioners argue that democratic principles are not embraced by all community economic development practitioners. They insist that many of the groups receiving the lion's share of funding support operate in a "top-down" manner which negates democracy and subverts development. This is probably rooted in systemic hostility to genuine community-based economic development.

Effective leadership

In the balance between the business and human sides of community economic development enterprise, champions of community development argue that the human element is the more fundamental and critical aspect. This is because the human community is both the end to be served by community economic development activity and the means by which that end is achieved. The bulk of this article has been about how community economic development relates to the human community as its end. But the human community is the means of community economic development as well, as the assessment reveals.

The community economic development leaders we interviewed can be grouped into three categories: (a) those who possess the capacity to inspire the poor to undertake initiatives of community revitalization but who lack the self discipline to translate their vision into sustained programmatic activity; (b) those who possess exceptional practical discipline but who are unable to mobilize the impoverished communities; and (c) those who possess both the capacity to inspire the poor with a vision of community transformation and the ability to lead a disciplined and structured business enterprise.

The community economic development projects which impressed us the most were headed by those whose leadership skills place them in the third category. Among the leadership qualities most broadly evident among them are:

▼ *Balanced Competencies.* They are perceptive community leaders and disciplined business managers.

▼ *Sense of vocation.* They come to their work with a strong calling. They do not see what they do as a job or temporary activity. They are in it for the long haul.

▼ *Personal integrity.* They tend to operate aboveboard with a sense of personal integrity and respect for the contributions of others.

▼ *Determination to succeed.* They consistently make seemingly unworkable projects work because of a stubborn unwillingness to throw in the towel. Sam Dillard, owner of Dillard's Barbeque in Durham, North Carolina, says, "Winners don't quit and quitters don't win."

▼ *Collaborative Work.* They stress working collaboratively and cooperatively with others in their organization and community.

▼ *Eye for winners.* They recognize an excellent product or human or material resource when they see it.

▼ *Results oriented.* They focus on finding solutions to problems rather than complaining about difficulties. In shopping for resources, they are more interested in building-blocks than blueprints — in concrete tools than abstract models.

It would be misleading to discuss the attributes of effective leaders without stating how emphatic the assessment is concerning the impact of the broader political and economic environment on the ultimate achievement of community economic development ventures — regardless of the leaders' personal qualities.

U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich makes the same point when he notes a 15-year trend toward increasing economic inequality in the United States. In *The Washington Post* he says, "Unless we turn this [unequal distribution of income] around, we're going to have a two-tier society; we can't be a prosperous or stable society with a huge gap between the very rich and everyone else."

The best leaders of community-based enterprise — no matter how thoroughly competent, committed, and resourceful they are — cannot compensate for woefully ineffective leadership at the highest levels of society. Leaders of community economic development ventures who are most adept at balancing books and mobilizing the poor are powerless to preserve peace and stability in a society which has resigned itself to the existence of an ever-expanding army of permanently unemployed and unemployable people who have no stake in it at all. At best, such leaders can only keep the chairs neatly arranged on the deck of a sinking Titanic. ❑

Isaiah Madison is executive director of the Institute for Southern Studies. He became interested in community economic development when working as a lawyer in Mississippi. He handled cases for black farmers having difficulties holding onto their land and became involved with the Federation for Southern Cooperatives.

The complete results of the community economic development assessment, Development with Dignity, *are compiled in a report published by the Institute for Southern Studies. To receive a copy, see the coupon in the magazine, or send $20 (which includes postage) to the Institute for Southern Studies, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.*

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PULLING THE DRY BONES TOGETHER

A ROUNDTABLE

By Molly Chilson

In August the Institute for Southern Studies sponsored a roundtable for leaders of community economic development organizations around the South. The participants spent a weekend in Atlanta discussing pressing issues, especially money, race and organizing. The following are some of the highlights from 12 hours of tape.

PARTICIPANTS

Marvin D. Beaulieu: formerly with Southern Cooperative Development Fund, Inc., Lafayette, Louisiana. **Marcus F. Bordelon**: Human/Economic Appalachian Development Corporation, Berea, Kentucky. **Michelle Flynn**: Tennessee Network for Community Economic Development. **James Grace**: East Winston Community Development Corporation, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. **Cornelius J. Jones**: Voice of Calvary Ministries, Jackson, Mississippi. **Isaiah Madison:** Institute for Southern Studies, Durham, North Carolina (publisher of *Southern Exposure*). **Abdul Rasheed**: North Carolina Community Development Initiative, Raleigh, North Carolina. **Margarita Romo**: Farmworker's Self-Help, Inc., Dade City, Florida. **James Sessions**: Highlander Research and Education Center, New Market, Tennessee. **Vernessa Taylor**: Rural Opportunities Corporation, Durham, North Carolina. **Mary Tyler**: Area Relief Ministries, Jackson, Tennessee. **Lillie Webb**: Center for Community Development, Hancock County, Georgia. **John Zippert**: Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund at their Rural Training Center, Epes, Alabama.

ISAIAH MADISON:

There is a lot written about community economic development. They look at you and since you don't measure up to the Fortune 500, they eliminate you. They say this is a dismal, disgusting failure. I wanted to tell you this and ask you if it's true.

VERNESSA TAYLOR:

I see a lot of what I call raggedy CDC [community development corporation] operations. They are doing great work, but they can't stand up to scrutiny. We have to put community development organizations in a position in which their finances are impeccable. They have to understand how to raise money — not just from finances — but by becoming entrepreneur-minded and sustaining the programs.

JOHN ZIPPERT:

I'm not sure there is a CED [community economic development] movement, or if there is one, it really hasn't become a movement in the sense of gathering enough people, the time of those people, the money of those people, and the kind of commitment that says this is a life and death struggle.

On one side I could be my greatest critic because we have not succeeded. On the other side I can bring you to 500 houses we've built. I can bring you to 15 credit unions with 8,000 people who've saved seven million dollars. But they're still under all kinds of restrictions that don't let them do what they really want to do. A person can get a housing subsidy on their income tax and sit there and block me and a group of community people from getting the housing subsidy to get decent houses.

I'm saying we haven't disrupted enough. (laughter)

MARY TYLER:

About six years ago, I wrestled with how to get people in the community organized to speak out for what their needs were. I worked with statewide and local advocacy groups. I began hearing about community development corporations. I learned that when an organization comes into the community and says it's going to organize, normally the people who work within that organization represent about 10 percent of the actual community. Ninety

percent of the individuals in the community aren't a part of that community organization. We created an organization that would organize the community. That means going to an individual and talking about your right versus your duty. It's not your right to eat; it's your duty to feed the family. It's not your right to vote; it's your duty to vote. It's not your right to speak out; it's your duty to speak out.

We develop people by educating them. And then after so many people have been educated, they are fed into the community organization. The end result is an educated people, and the community organization is ready to take them a step further. We really hit the grassroots. My caution here is that we need to stay focused on the fact that when you say "bottom up," you don't mean the 20 people who represent the unity among us. You must go to that other 80 percent.

MARGARITA ROMO:

In our community, the first time that we began to organize, none of us knew what we could do about the situation except move people onto buses and stay away [to avoid immigration officials]. All those undocumented people came together. They used to meet out in the woods, build a little fire and talk about rights. We began to find out that we had the right to certain things, even as undocumented people. So we started building.

I didn't know that I was an organizer. We realized that we had to educate ourselves. First it was food. When the border patrol came in, everybody went into hiding. We had to load up a truck with food and go from house to house. We were organized.

Today these people aren't undocumented anymore, and they have groups in different communities. In our area of organizing, it's gone from a simple thing of looking over your back and making sure you're safe to coming to a place where now we know that we want to live like other folks — because farmworkers live 20 years less. We organized around that, and now we've got health care. So, in our community we found that we were organizing, but we didn't know that's what we were doing.

JAMES GRACE:

As I buy my suits and ties to wear to work and negotiate deals and talk with bankers, I realize that, at the bottom, what we are doing is not going to work unless you go back into the community and organize. I feel that in my soul. But I can't get any money for it. I have managed to organize in the last five years — to the detriment of my organization. I am on that cusp of where I might fail because I dedicated our resources to doing that.

ABDUL RASHEED:

One of the things that I'm advocating in North Carolina from my colleagues who are not of the African-American community, is to look in their own back yards first. If we could get our white colleagues, our Native-American colleagues to organize in their own communities, and then bring them to the table to join with African-American communities — if we could get the poor white community to come to the table in the same numbers as African Americans have historically — we then could join together and go forward. We could speak to racism and classism in a different way.

MICHELLE FLYNN:

I want us to talk about the racism that pits community-based organizations against people like Legal Services or whatever agency is supposed to be working with them. And when dollars start flowing in, who is controlling those dollars, and what does that mean? As you know, those who hold the purse strings like to provide money for technical assistance and training, but the kind of money that is necessary to really help change communities is money for organizing. It's never been there, but we shouldn't stop talking about the need for that.

JAMES SESSIONS:

In the mountains, there is a long, adversarial history with the government, going back to the revenuers [federal agents who broke up illegal whiskey stills]. Whoever the government is, it's not us. It's always somebody else, somewhere else — from federal government to state government. The state capital is far from the mountains except in the state of West Virginia. So you never have access to state government. An adversarial relationship with the government is no surprise at all to people in the mountains.

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LILLIE WEBB:

I've been learning a lot of ways that we can use the resources that we have already. We don't have to look to the commissioner and the mayor and the congresswoman and the president to do for us the kinds of things that we need to do for ourselves. It's important for people to understand that you can't rely on one visionary if the community is really going to change. If we're going to be about changing community, it's going to take everybody understanding what the plan is — taking part in the development of the plan — and what community means to them.

In terms of economic development in the past 25 years, our options were incinerators, landfills, and prisons. And we were thinking, what is it exactly you are saying to us? We're only fit for garbage or to be locked away? It took a decision of the Supreme Court of Georgia to defeat a mega-dump landfill proposition in our community, and we thought we had won. But the company came back and wanted to buy the petitioners who'd been against the dump. Three of the six petitioners put the community's interest above their own and turned away over $300,000 dollars. We mobilized around that issue of the environment, but instead of being reactive this time, we decided that we need to become pro-active. It's time for us to hold the Constitution to what it says when it talks about our rights and our roles and our responsibilities — and so the community development was formed.

MARY TYLER:

We formed a statewide organization to address the issues around the Community Reinvestment Act and banking. We talked about issues around income. How do you, in fact, redline [section off certain areas from private capital based on race, class, or income] around income? Poor folks are a part of your community, are a part of your banking establishment. They cash checks with you. They make deposits with you. Some of the local banks can throw some crumbs if a group gets strong enough in a rural area — it might throw some technical assistance funds, might throw some very small investment funds — so they can write on their report that they did a good thing. Deep down they're the devil.

Photos by Pat Arnow

C.J. JONES AND LILLIE WEBB

JAMES GRACE:

There is no information about poor and disadvantaged people that can be utilized to legitimate some of the stuff we are trying to do. I can't even get proper data to justify building a hot dog stand in my community of 27,000 people. People will say it won't work. There are not enough people. I know that is a lie. But I can't prove it on paper.

ISAIAH MADISON:

I think this illustrates one of the serious problems that we're dealing with. We're riding other people's train. The question is, when are we going to get off of this train of dealing with the agendas of too many folks in the community making too many demands? I want us to work and move together on these issues. What CJ Jones and I call pulling the dry bones together.

MARGARITA ROMO:

I don't remember in all the time that I have been working with my community —and it's 23 years — I don't remember ever sitting around the table with Mexicans — Hispanics — talking about their problems. I'm feeling that right now, and I'm about to cry because I feel like that really does make a difference in what you are trying to do when you are isolated. I know that we have gone through the process of getting more educated, changing our community. I know that we are a respected entity there, even though they don't like us. They know what we've done, and we've shown them that we're not people that just get old clothes and beans and rice. That we also have a mouth and we can speak. And yes, we're putting a lot of money out there. Why can't we get some of it back?

MARVIN BEAULIEU:

That's the reason we did a bank. There were people on our board who said, "Why do you want to become a bank and become just like the devil?" But in my mind we were going to be fighting with the banks till we were blue in the face. Banks are so critical. It has now been documented that a lot of the urban problems we have are because of policies of the banks — the disinvestment — a lot of it is race-based. If you look at the banking industry, it is a white, male industry, almost 95 percent, and they are not very responsive.

MARCUS BORDELON:

On that issue, HEAD [Human/Economic Appalachian Development Corporation] is a bank, too. It's a low-income people's bank. Banks traditionally say poor people won't pay money back. So we have a housing loan fund. We have a business loan fund and a credit union to serve low-income people only. We're proving the banks wrong in the mountains.

JAMES SESSIONS:

Community organizing is somewhat different from mobilizing behind one issue or organizing bankers or mobilizing the capital or what have you. Community organizing isn't just organizing professionals or institutions or advocacy groups, but it means organizing a community to control its resources and control its development.

JOHN ZIPPERT:

Insuring and requiring a democratic process from the very beginning in these organizations is very important. I am talking about one person one vote, the whole cooperative idea, open membership. When a few people get some information, or somehow as a result of your process, the bank says, "We're going to help two or three people become successful so we can show them as a model to the community," there is a problem. They may move away. They may have no interest.

After some development occurs in communities, then a lot of people say, "Well, we no longer need to be troubled with organizing. We no longer need to be troubled with an educational process. We no longer need to reach out to people who didn't catch on the first time or who didn't grab." Those are people who we still need to reach out to. And I think that's where some of our failures have been.

We do impose some principles, standards, constraints. The Federation will get to a point where we say, "We will work with you if you want to continue going in this kind of democratic, cooperative economic development context. If you don't, we might hook you up with some other people, but we're not going to go down a road different from one that we feel will work for you." That may be imposing some things on the community. This is what we do, and it's worked to some extent.

ABDUL RASHEED:

We are trying to support individuals who are committed to a community, committed to putting individuals and communities in a stronger position, committed to helping individuals gain assets so that they can hire more of the people in that community — in that neighborhood — to improve and control their quality of life.

The way that traditional economic development works is that generally they're looking to maximize profits. So, if the best opportunity to maximize profits is in your neighborhood today, then that's where they are going to invest. If the best opportunity to maximize profits is in Korea tomorrow, then they will move their business to Korea.

In a CED context, we're trying to invest in individuals who have a long-term commitment to the community. They aren't going anywhere. They have roots there. They're committed fully to that community, and their ultimate goal is not to maximize profits. It's to try to build human and community assets in such a way that people can control their quality of life. It must be long-term, and it must be focused on building healthy communities as opposed to this notion of just making people rich for the sake of being rich.

JAMES GRACE:

One of the by-products of what they're talking about in this whole CED movement is going to be wealth. Because, number one, we start out claiming that we're going to try to create jobs and opportunities for the people in the community. Now we expect them to stay marginalized. That's the conflict going out of this. You all might as well get used to talking about money, because the issue's going to come up — money and opportunity.

C.J. JONES:

Back in 1977 we had four young people go to medical school. Three of those young people are living and working in health care in poor neighborhoods. One has moved to Kansas City and is a heart specialist making gobs of money.

ABDUL RASHEED:

Big Money. That's right. That's the risk.

C.J. JONES:

The risk, I mean everything we do, there's a risk in it, but I have to glorify in those three.

Also participating in the Roundtable discussions:

Barbara Banks: Appalachian Community Fund; community artist-in-residence, Garrard County, Kentucky. **Edward Dixon**: formerly with Natchitoches Economic Development Corporation, Natchitiches, Louisiana. **Beth Spence**: Harts Community Development in Harts, West Virginia; Rural Programs for Covenant House. **E. Lynn Stacey**: Business Innovation Center, Mobile, Alabama. **Institute for Southern Studies staff in attendance: Pat Arnow, Alease Alston, Bob Hall, Mary Lee Kerr, Ron Nixon, Lorraine Strauss, and Sharon Ugochukwu**.

Molly Chilson is a freelance writer in Durham, North Carolina.

A Moment of Gratitude

By Deborah Noyes

He sat high on the wooden bleachers, a tall, stooped man with silver hair, squeezing his domestic beer can into the shape of an hour glass. If, like the doctors said, he was running out of time, Lewis chose to forget it. He only knew he didn't want to go home to supper. He wanted no part of greeting Maggie's brother or the anemic wife and pack of coyotes they called children. He could hear them howling a block away, clear to the park, and imagined them scattering out of the silver new Mercedes Benz station wagon with yellow comic books, howling at a moon that didn't want them. Lewis supposed he would live without meatloaf. His heart would thank him.

In the clearing behind the dugout, a group of teenagers passed a cigarette and thumped their feet in the dust to the beat sounding from an enormous radio propped on a handle of the seesaw. Wild-eyed and quick, they seemed curiously unhappy despite a show of playful shoving and laughter. Lewis knew these kids wouldn't let suppertime or the breeze, the hush of shadows, perform the usual exorcism. Tonight, a Friday, they would stay, bring the devil into the dark and grip him.

He pulled the tab on his last can of beer and wrapped his lips around its upshoot of foam. When he looked up, he spotted Travis, his nephew, sulking by the chain link fence, the sun a pinkish, steel-gray smear behind him. Travis wore the same brown corduroys, now threadbare, that had already a year ago begun exposing his bony ankles. Lewis wondered, why for all his newly amassed money, the boy's father wouldn't break down and buy the kid a decent pair of trousers. The sight of his nephew flicked a switch in Lewis's brain, set him thinking how the years pass and how he'd spent thirty-four of his own driving a bus for the city. For all his determined silences, Travis seemed to have no ambition, no moxie, and yet that narrow boy's stare — assessing him last Thanksgiving over the pages of a science fiction novel — professed to judge him. Lewis had nothing to be ashamed of. He had dedicated his life to supporting things: his wife, a mortgage, the precious tank of exotic fish he collected and replenished for years before losing patience with loss and flushing them away, the last of the slippery dead. He'd supported an ornery solitude, too, easy as dreamless sleep, as that hypnotic ring of colored fish drifting slowly forward, slowly back.

He swallowed some warm beer and watched his nephew approach the bleachers. The letters, careful script on fussy stationery, said Travis planned to attend Columbia University when he graduated high school, that he would study microbiology or something. His sisters called him "techie," with contempt. Lewis watched him climb the bleacher steps and set his wilted-looking body down on a lower bench. "Hello, Uncle Lew."

"'Lo, Travis."

"Aunt Margaret says come to supper now. She sent me to find you. Dad wants you to see his new car."

"I'll be along. I doubt your father bothered to tell you, but a man should finish what he starts." Lewis displayed his beer can. "Unless you want it. You're the guest after all."

"No, thanks. I don't drink on week nights."

"But you do weekends?" Lewis demanded.

"Occasionally. At a dance or something."

"You go to dances?"

"Occasionally. If I feel like it. If there's a good band playing."

"A regular Prince Charming, my nephew."

"Uncle Lew," he reminded him. "Everyone's waiting."

They sat in stubborn silence a moment, Travis eying the group beyond the dugout with blank, hazel-specked eyes.

"If you walk back with me, I could show you the car."

"I saw the car in the picture your mother sent."

"It's better in real life."

"Real life? I can't imagine anyone in real life paying that much cash for a lousy wagon. If you're spending for a Mercedes, least you can do is buy a nice model, a sports model. Otherwise it's a waste, seems to me."

"That's fine if you don't have family," Travis said pointedly, a slippery, entreating expression on his face. "That's fine if it's just two of you." He sat back down but gingerly, as if the bench might be unstable. "I understand you've seen the doctor again?"

Illustrations by Antonia Manda

Lewis winced. He formed a sudden image of the whole pack of them circled hungrily around a cooling feast, howling perhaps and banging the ends of Maggie's bent wedding silver on the table, Maggie whispering about his "condition."

"Should you really be drinking?"

"No." Lewis startled even himself with his ferocity. The group at the dugout froze in their antics to look them over; a mob stare, laced with malice. Travis didn't flinch, staring past his uncle as if the conversation was a formality and Lewis was already dead. "No, I shouldn't be drinking, but I do and will go on doing, and I don't appreciate people policing my diet, Travis."

"I'm trying to help." He made his way laboriously down the sloped bleachers. When he reached the bottom, Travis paused and looked back. "I'll tell them I couldn't find you." Lewis shifted on his bench, pinned in a moment of gratitude.

The boy strayed off, slapping at a mosquito. Lewis watched him go, and so did the crowd at the dugout. Lewis didn't pay much attention when a section of the group broke gradually away, like a cell dividing, to drift after his nephew. He shut his eyes to the breeze and realized with a sense of melancholy and regret that he was hungry. If the beer and relative quiet had lasted, Lewis might have sat up there on the bleachers till dawn. He'd done so in the past, to imagine the crowd's roar as he sauntered past home plate, the ball he'd whacked lost in a patch of elms far beyond the field. Or to lose himself, literally forget himself by entering a sort of trance there on the bench. Nothing could harm him then, no memory or anxiety would penetrate his armor. He couldn't do it, don the armor, if he made a conscious effort, and he couldn't prolong the magic if distracted by his rough hands and frayed cuffs, the gas in his stomach, if he ran out of beer or acknowledged a need to urinate. On Friday and Saturday nights the neighborhood kids took over this spot, drinking and carousing, and their shrill obscene voices, approaching from all sides now and shifting angles like echo, panicked him. He thought of the beer back in his refrigerator, that if he doused it in ketchup a slice of Maggie's infamous meatloaf might not sit too heavy with him.

He took his time. Lewis mostly took his time about things now, the doctors had told him to, and he paused as if listening to a distant trumpet at the edge of the field by the path. A bird or two screeched out of the brush, and a voice giggled. Lewis trudged on, trying not to determine what the neighborhood cretins did in that thick patch of bushes after dark. Copulated probably, there on the edge of the park, right down there in the dirt.

When he looked, he didn't see faces anymore, except the pretty ones sometimes, underage girls in short tight skirts under liquor store neon searching the faces they found for signs of softness of character, for someone to purchase their beer or apple wine or their sticky sloe gin for them. He studied them sometimes as if to answer a question, as if to seek a solution in faces that should have been innocent. Once he gave in to the pleas, bought a pair of them a six-pack. The willowy one kissed him on the cheek when he returned with their change, said: "Keep it, gramps," and sauntered away with her friend. They left Lewis there rubbing his stubbled cheek, and rubbing it, afraid.

When he walked in, the two young coyotes were stretched out on the parlor floor in front of the television. They were absorbed in a music video in which three beastly looking youths in black leather were lowering a fourth into a spitting pit of fire. Before they could release him, drums accelerated and the scene flashed on to another — a bright field of wheat that could have been Kansas — with the doomed fourth youth, the singer, busy slobbering over a girl on a picnic blanket. She wore a straw hat and nearly transparent dress and to spite the hat wore lipstick the color of bruises; overall she looked more inclined to turn a trick than sit all the sunny afternoon long slurping watermelon. Lewis scowled. Neither of the girls said hello. Nobody said anything. The entire house, in fact, was a hush.

In the kitchen, Maggie and her brother's wife sat back from the table with coffee mugs. "Well, there they are." Maggie popped out of her chair like a jack-in-the-box and slid the pan of meatloaf from the oven.

"I told you not to wait."

She wiped her hands on a singed pot holder and craned her neck. "It certainly took him long enough to find you."

The anemic sister-in-law shifted on her chair. Lewis smiled at her. "'Lo, Sue Ellen."

"How're you feeling, Lew?"

"Oh fine and you, Sue Ellen, how are you feeling?"

"Very well, thank you." Her words hurried. "Where's Travis?"

"Haven't seen him since last Thanksgiving at your place."

Lewis's gaze circled the table top, mismatched place settings dotting it like multi-colored shells at low tide. She really had put out the wedding silver. It glistened in careful rows beneath Superman and Ronald McDonald drinking cups. A gallon of low-fat milk on a braided mat in the center glowed with dew. The rolls looked stale. "Where's the husband? Out waxing the new car?"

"He's napping," Maggie explained. "They drove all day."

"It's just like Travis," Sue Ellen said. "To up and vanish before supper."

Lewis opened the refrigerator and peered inside. "What'd you do with it?"

"With what, dear?"

Lewis turned on her. "Don't 'what dear' me, Maggie. The beer, where'd you put those two six-packs?"

"Beer isn't part of the diet."

"The diet. Beer is not part of the diet." Lewis slammed the refrigerator door and it shot back open. "I think I'll decide that."

"Don't get worked up, Lew."

"I'll work up all I want," he said. "I'll work up and drink beer and clog my arteries if I damn well want to."

"Lewis, please. The company."

His voice dropped. "My beer, Maggie."

"I dumped it. And don't forget what the doctor said about your blood pressure. I dumped every one."

"I don't believe you."

"Down the drain."

"Maggie — "

"I did, didn't I, Sue? Go check the pantry you don't believe me. The cans are lined up like always, ready to get the deposit."

Lewis felt fingernails in his palms. "I'm asking you, Mag. I'm asking politely."

"For God's sake, look."

Lewis felt his conviction fold. He touched her shoulder. "All right, then, Maggie. You can't help yourself. I'll drive down after supper and buy some."

"I'll have to dump those, too." Her lashes fluttered over brimming tears. "I'll have to because it's got to be done."

Sue Ellen gasped suddenly as if someone had kicked her in the belly. Her bloodless hand shot up toward the threshold where Travis stood supporting himself in the doorway, swaying a little with head hung low. His pale blue oxford button down and the belt edges of the worn corduroys were spotted with dark blood. His nose bled, and his knees were smeared with grass juice.

"What the Christ happened to you?" said Lewis.

Travis moved stiffly to sit at the table. He poured himself a glass of milk, looking disoriented but not ashamed. Sue Ellen rose unsteadily from the chair, coffee sloshing over the sides of the mug she was holding. "Answer him, Travis. Tell your uncle what happened to you."

He bit into a roll but stopped chewing to press his bloated lip. Travis looked down at the bread, saw it was bloody, and dropped it on the table. "Nothing."

"Oh, that's sweet," shrilled Sue Ellen. "That's sweet. 'Nothing,' he says. Nothing." Her tone softened, turned sinister. "I'm going to get your father."

She had reached the doorway when Travis said, "Don't." He seemed to mean it. The two young coyotes had found their way to the action and now stood behind their mother in the doorway with identically streaked blonde hairdos, pinching one another.

"I want an explanation," sobbed Sue Ellen. "I want to know who did this to you. Now, Travis. Get talking."

"Nothing, Ma. Some kids just started a fight."

"Just! Just started a fight? Imagine what you'd look like if they finished it — " She moved toward him but stopped at arm's length as if she couldn't bear the thought of touching him, as if convinced he wouldn't bear up under her trembling shadow.

"I'm fine," he said. "I'm going to wash up."

Travis limped out of the room and left the others there to avoid one another in a frozen semicircle. The kitchen seemed hot and bright. The girls communicated under their breath and drifted back to the other room. Lewis heard their incessant music, its beat a chant, pulsing in there, pulsing. He sat down at the table, the blood thick in his face. His own pulse, abrupt and menacing, seemed somehow — for the moment — linked to that music, to those teen dream videos somebody spun out like quick sticky webs with all the same glint in sunlight. What had gone wrong with being young? When had it stopped seeming the best place to be, a place to reach back to and clasp in the fingers like the petals of some rare flower? Youth was a different ball game now, a devil with vacant eyes. The young coyotes could care less if the elder limped in caked with blood. Kids today fed off violence; it consumed and amused them, and this enraged him. Lewis would go in there now and smash that television to bits. "Your brother's hurt," he would remind them sternly. "Your flesh and blood strolls in pounded like a piece of veal, and you — " But what would he say? They weren't his kids. Lewis had no children. He longed for a beer and a bit of quiet, a cigar perhaps, though those, like most things, were forbidden him.

Lewis thought vaguely of his abandoned saltwater tank, of slippery small bodies drifting slowly forward, slowly back. He had the sudden sensation that he and all the others were like those fish, engaged in random motion. He imagined God peering in at them through the glass with whiskey stare, tobacco-stained fingers plucking them one by one over time from the surface and flushing them down a toilet — eternally disappointed, losing interest. Lewis supposed he might retrieve his tank from cobwebs in the basement. He would be more patient now.

Sue Ellen's voice grated. "Whatever happened to 'turn the other cheek?' I raised that child to use his brains, not his fists. You know I did."

Travis resurfaced looking a little less battered. He'd changed into one of Lewis's beige polyester dress shirts — without permission — but still wore the corduroys with their stained knees.

"Who was it?" Lewis asked. He could barely contain himself.

Maggie released an undignified snort. "The boy lives three hundred miles away and he's supposed to recognize them. Ha."

He leveled his gaze on Travis. "I thought maybe he'd seen them around last visit or something."

"He was in the ninth grade last time, Lew. Let it be." Maggie cleared her throat, smiled charitably. She stooped to slice the meatloaf. Sue Ellen probed her reflection in the peeling gold-rimmed china plate, glancing up mournfully at her son from time to time. Lewis crossed to help with the gravy, welcoming the opportunity to peer into the pantry in the event that Maggie was bluffing. She wasn't. They were lined up in there like petite gravestones, twelve empty Budweiser cans. He settled into his chair with the gravy bowl and smiled uncertainly at his assembled guests.

"Jane, go wake your father," called Sue Ellen. "Now please, girls. It's time for supper." When no reply sounded in the room beyond ancient plaster walls papered with dank marigolds, she turned entreatingly to Lewis. "Could you — ?"

"Sure, honey." He strained to stand, palms flat on the sticky tablecloth. "Which room's he in?"

"Yours." Maggie sat down with a bowl of summer squash and gingerly spread a paper towel in her lap. "It was the quietest."

"Mine?" Knowing better than to pursue his complaint, Lewis passed through the dim hallway and knocked, pounded, on his own bedroom door. "Hey, Kenny old man, time to chow." When he got back to the stuffy kitchen, the girls were seated, slurping milk through Twisty-Loop straws Maggie had purchased in their honor from a grocery display sale. Travis seemed to watch his uncle's every move, and Lewis felt a burning sensation in his cheeks, guilt seeping through cracks in the lower regions of conscience. Travis was, after all, blood. He should have looked out for him. The boy's gaze remained unusually intense, even after Lewis joined them at the table, and when at last he said something, it was under his breath: "I told you you should have come."

Lewis cleared his throat and requested potatoes, refusing to be bullied. Sue Ellen had leaned over to spoon squash onto her son's plate and asked did he have something to say. "Speak up."

"You're going to Columbia?" Lewis interjected, staring numbly at the bloated lip. "Huh, kid?"

Travis didn't so much as nod, knife and fork clicking.

"You don't answer your uncle, Travis?"

"Yeah."

"Yeah, what?" coaxed his mother. "Don't say 'yeah.'"

"I am, yes."

Lewis nodded heartily, slapping ketchup on his food. He watched Sue Ellen and Maggie dote on the young ones, brush bangs from their eyes, ease their elbows off the table, turn up the edges of sulking mouths too busy chewing to smile. Lewis tried not to notice the gleam in Maggie's gaze as she surveyed them. Children were sorrowful, marks of failure, his failure. His body had failed him from the jump, seducing with strength, concealing the clogged tissue and faulty fluids until it was too late to waive his expectations for a family, for longevity. Lewis hated that glazed look of hers and glanced around the table to cultivate his irritation. Irritation suited him, better than guilt.

Maggie's brother strayed in rubbing his eyes. He was balding and pink-cheeked and bent like an old woman. He didn't notice Travis, just sat and stared fixedly through a film of sleep as Maggie and Sue Ellen piled his plate with food. After a while his wife said: "For God's sake, Ken. Aren't you going to say something?" He stared back at her through a working mouthful of mashed potato and said, "What?"

"What," mimicked Sue Ellen, turning to enlist Travis, who looked down at his plate. "'What,' he says."

Ken scratched at the pink sleep lines beside his nose and went ahead with his meal, and when at last he glanced at his son, it was only because everyone else was anticipating it. The room was ripe with waiting.

"What happened?"

"A fight," Travis sighed.

Ken studied a fork full of meatloaf from various angles. "You get a few in?"

"Oh yes, Ken. It looks that way. Doesn't it." Sue Ellen left in a huff, her napkin fluttering to the linoleum. Maggie tagged along to comfort her and the two wide-eyed nieces, cheeks hollowed, blew furtive bubbles in their milk.

"Just a friendly inquiry." Ken's fork paused in mid-air just before he set it down at a deliberate angle on his plate. He regarded Travis a moment suspiciously, then motioned past him. "Pass the salt if you would. Do something constructive."

His mouth set in a grim line, the boy got up and crossed the kitchen without speaking. Lewis heard the screen door slam. He waved at a fly and, faced with the hollow sound of coffee cups clinking in saucers, with collapsed pineapple upside-down cake and hours of earnest if passionless debate with Ken about pro-sports figures or presidential politics, Lewis decided he was better off following Travis's lead. Despite his weakening knees, he would do well to proceed to the Liquor Mart for beer. Nobody looked at him when he stood up, and out on the lawn he felt drained yet liberated, as if something had been lifted from him. He slammed the door of his truck with a flourish. The pickup bounced and rattled so much that Lewis felt it straight inside to his chest. He drove slowly at first, sure his organs were being systematically creamed in a blender. His insides were turning to mush. Whatever it was holding the whole of him together had to be composed of sheer will. The rest of him, the ribs and spine and spotted skin, was not cooperating. It took effort to resist monitoring — which invariably meant interfering with — his breathing.

His condition brought on a sudden sharp stab of loneliness. When Lewis saw his nephew in the headlights, marching on the side of the road like a soldier to his death, he felt compassion for the boy. He had wronged him. He pulled over and waited with the motor running, breathless and bent on compromise. The road gleamed in his headlights and grass hissed against a sign that read "Railroad Crossing." He had the sensation, not altogether unpleasant, that he was floating.

"You gonna get in?" he called through the open window, an irrational joy rising in his chest to his mouth. He needed someone to know, to witness this peculiar lightness. "Travis! Get over here."

The nephew marched past. Stony, intent, eyes on the road. Lewis smiled — here was a challenge — and tapped the gas pedal. He was laughing uncontrollably as he screeched to a stop beside him. An eighteen wheeler thundered past, and its wake sent the boy's hair fluttering forward.

It shocked him to see that Travis had tears in his eyes. "Hey, kid, come on now, get in here."

After considering a moment, Travis climbed into the cab without acknowledging his uncle. When the door slapped shut Lewis roared off, craning his neck to peer into his cracked side mirror. Nothing, wonderful not to be pursued, racing on to your purpose till the end. The boy put his sneakered feet up on the dash and remained mute as Lewis pulled into the lot at the Liquor Mart. He rushed inside, ignoring the chirp of young voices that molested him from shadows by the lot's dumpster, and grabbed two six packs from the glass icebox. He slapped a twenty on the counter, saluted the clerk and raced out again with his change, blood pounding in his ears, the nip of sudden purpose at his heels.

"Here," he told Travis in the truck. "Drink up. I know it ain't a Saturday, but you and your old uncle are taking a ride."

Travis obeyed, not looking any too enthusiastic about it. "Where're we going?" He gazed forward at the long road. They were twisting past the squat houses and unkempt fields lining the two lanes of Route 20 like children shunning insignificant items in the aisles of a toy store.

"Name it," said Lewis, swigging his beer. "What's your pleasure?"

The nephew stared into the hole on his beer can and blinked. "I don't care."

"Me neither, kid. That's the beauty of it."

Travis looked at him like he might be crazy, and maybe he was. "You get beat up a lot?" he called over the noise of the old engine. "At home, I mean?" It seemed as good a way to start a conversation as any.

Travis dropped his empty beer can peeled another from its plastic loop. "Now and then."

Lewis liked this boy, had misjudged him. They had some things in common, and Lewis had a purpose, at least for now. He wasn't going to apologize flat out for what he'd done or left undone, but by the time he was through, Travis would know his intentions were sound.

He raced up beside a yellow Volkswagen packed with children and saw the mother frown as she edged over toward the guard rail to let them pass.

"I'll tell you something in strictest confidence," said Lewis, hoping to draw the boy close in complicity. "When I was nine or so I found a body, a dead one."

Travis took the bait, glancing sideways almost imperceptibly.

"There were these old wine heads lived by the tracks. They slept in weeds and greasy mechanics' blankets behind the chapel in summertime. They were like phantoms," Lewis said — because it had seemed that way when he was a child; he saw them always out of the corner of one eye, a blur of covert speed rattling brambles.

"I was in a warehouse alley near my house that morning looking for crates on account of the Depression was still on and my mother thought we had to move closer to the city. It hadn't been there long," he said. "The body. I was in that same spot the day before."

He told how he bent down to have a look — had never seen anybody dead before — when a shadow passed abruptly on the sooty brick behind him. He'd felt a sudden, sharp pain in his neck, then blow after blow as a boot kicked him until he couldn't see straight for the pain. At first he thought it was a monster, Lewis said, relieved that Travis had straightened up in his seat to listen.

He had watched his persecutor descend and retreat that day in a shaggy mass, squealing with broken teeth. "But once it stopped hitting me, and my eyes focused I saw more clearly," he said. "And guess. You guess who it was."

Travis pinched the side of his can so the aluminum wrinkled, made snapping sounds. "Who?"

"It was a woman. A goddamn skinny woman. His girlfriend or something and she was miffed, crying because I'd touched it."

"What'd you do?"

"I ran, what else? Ran like hell."

The boy held his beer in one hand and used the other to fiddle absently with his fat lip. Lewis watched and after a moment smiled fondly at the memory. "A damn skinny woman. Beat me within an inch of my life."

Travis looked panicked. "Uncle Lew?" he asked. "Aunt Margaret said — "

Lewis snatched the can of beer from between his legs and drank from it. "What's your game, Travis? I take you out to forget about all that, women fussing and such, and this is my reward?"

"Sorry."

Lewis wedged his beer back in place. "How many were there?"

"What?"

"How many kids beat up on you?"

"Five, maybe six."

"Goddamn pansies, can't even manage a fair fight."

"It was my fault."

"Come on, how could it be your fault?"

They were held up behind a crawling yellow taxicab that seemed strangely out of place in this landscape. Lewis tapped the horn, his voice excited and deep. "Come on nickel pusher, hustle." In a moment the highway blossomed, two lanes became four, and Lewis watched the taxi's headlights recede in his mirror. The last of the year's wild flowers — purple, yellow, the occasional swath of white — swayed gently beside the dark granite walls.

Travis steadied his own voice as if to dull its insistence. "It was. It was my fault."

"How d'you figure?"

"I was nervous when they came up beside me. People can tell that. And I smiled. I shouldn't have smiled."

"You shouldn't have smiled?" Lewis licked his dry lips and stared forward at the road. "If that's not the damnedest thing I ever heard."

But even as he spoke, even as the mother in the Volkswagen appeared out of nowhere and passed them on the left — her kids bobbing in the back seat, three raucous boys in Sox caps, steaming up the windows — Lewis supposed his nephew was right. He shouldn't have smiled. For the sake of simplicity he should have looked away, kept going. But it was too late for that now. "What say we check out the batting cages in Fiskdale? I'll bet you've got an okay swing for a bookworm."

"Yeah, well. Better than my left hook."

Lewis laughed soundlessly and floored the gas pedal, feeling the vibration somewhere deep inside his chest. ❑

Deborah Noyes' fiction has appeared in Stories, Seventeen, The Bloomsbury Review, *and other publications. "A Moment of Gratitude" is one of 10 stories she is compiling for a collection,* Leading a Charmed Life.

JUNEBUG

Elmer Fudge's Fingers

By Junebug Jabbo Jones

"The average man would sooner die and go to hell than to spend 10 minutes cutting sugarcane on the prison plantation down in Angola, Louisiana. I'll tell you what it's like at Angola State Prison, but I warn you, it's not a pretty picture. The only place I ever heard of that might be worse is Parchman Prison Farm up in the Mississippi Delta."

> *One of the meanest dudes there was this little chocolate brown, bald-headed, muscle-bound killer that looked like Elmer Fudd.*

I was talking to this guy I know about prison stories. I believe that anywhere you got people with time on their hands, you are going to find people telling some good stories. Where else you going to find so many people with so much time on their hands? I know there has to be a good bunch of prison stories.

I have had my time in jail, but most the times I had to go to jail it was somebody standing there waiting to bail me out if I wanted to. But I did see enough while I was on the inside to recognize that most of the people in jail have been there before. That ought to tell you something right there. I've been trying my best to figure out how people who are supposed to be intelligent figure that putting people in jail is the best way to solve the crime problem. Jail is more like a school for crooks than anything else — and expensive, too. It costs three times more for a person to go to jail than it does to go to one of those fancy colleges. Not only do people who go to jail cost us more money while they're in jail, they usually cost even more when they get out — partly because of what they learned in jail. People who get educated in regular schools and colleges usually *make* money for themselves *and* their communities. "Three strikes and you're out" sounds like a dumb idea for anybody who really wants to solve the crime problem. I want all the people who believe that such a dim-witted policy will work to send me a check and a sealed bid to the Brooklyn Bridge.

We've already got more young black men between the ages of 15 and 30 in jail than we've got in college. No wonder our national debt is growing. I guess the fact that they're building more jails than schools means that they're planning to use those cells for something.

Matter of fact, during the time when there was so much rioting going on in the cities, most of the schools and public buildings that were built in "high-risk," "inner-city" — better known as black — neighborhoods were built in such a way that with a chain-link fence and a couple of guards, you could turn them into concentration camps — or what they more politely call detention centers. If you think I'm lying, check it out for yourself. The next time you pass a school, office building, or other public building (especially federal property built since 1965), you'll see that it could easily be converted into a jail. The windows — if they have any at all — are so skinny that the light has to turn a corner to get in.

But I was going to tell you the story my friend told me that day. I call it "Elmer Fudge's Fingers" because I had to change the names to protect the innocent. My friend I'll just call Rudie Toot Toot the Saxophone Man. Rudie Toot Toot is the type of fellow you wouldn't expect to find in a state prison. "Federal prison . . . maybe, but I have too much class to be stuck in a joint like that," he told me. When he got busted, he already had a college education, a good job, a good wife, kids, and connections. The way he put it was, "One day I was zigging when I should have been zagging, and it cost me seven good years of my life.

"Due to the fact that I was a pretty good horn player, they put me in the prison band the first week I was there. Which made me look like a big shot to the other prisoners because I went into the joint with the right to go out from time to time. It's a good thing they gave me that privilege, too, because I don't know how I would have dealt with those big muscle-building thugs that started smiling and talking about the fresh new meat on the yard as soon as I walked in the gates.

"One of the meanest dudes there was this little chocolate brown, bald-headed, muscle-bound killer that looked like Elmer Fudd. (You remember the little bald-headed dude from the comic strips?) Elmer Fudge was only about five feet five inches tall, but he was built like a Sherman tank. I knew he was a killer before anyone told me because he had cold, unblinking eyes like a fish, a shark, or something like that. He was sitting across from me at dinner soon after I got there. He wouldn't eat like other people, by chewing his food. No matter what it was — government surplus horse meat or stringy green beans — he'd just suck it down.

"On the day in question he'd already finished his half-cooked rice and watered-down red beans before anyone else had finished complaining about how dry the cornbread was or how much sugar and saltpeter was in the Kool-Aid. He banged his plate on the table, belched, and said, 'Gimme your beans.' I looked around to see who he was talking to.

"He belched again and said, 'Gimme your goddamn beans, bitch.' Three dudes slid their plates over to the evil little man. I'd have given him mine, too, if I'd thought he wanted it, but he never looked at me. See, it was already out on the prison grapevine that I was in the band. The fact that I had the privilege to go out from time to time made the other inmates think that I had some pull with the warden or something, so they gave me a little room. There's no way I could have beat him in a fight.

"Most of the fights happened on the way to or from meals. That's when it was easiest for people to get together and hardest for the guards to stop them. To tell the truth, the guards didn't give a damn long as the prisoners only beat up on each other.

"Toward the end of my second month at Angola, I was on the way home from dinner and came up on this big fight. It was Elmer Fudge and this guy they called Big Mack. The day before, Elmer had reached to get a piece of pickled pork fat off Big Mack's plate, and without even looking to see who it was, Big Mack had backhanded Elmer, knocking him across the dining room floor.

"Big Mack was a nice guy. He stood about six foot eight and must have weighed about 350 pounds. For anyone else, it would have been a badge of honor that they survived a lick even from the back of Big Mack's hand, but for Elmer Fudge, it might as well have been the kiss of death. See, in the joint, a man is no better than his reputation, and Elmer Fudge had the reputation of a killer. If he ever backed down from a backhand slap, even from Big Mack, he was dead meat, so everybody knew Elmer Fudge had no choice.

"Elmer had been laying for Big Mack at the corner where the wooden walk turned to go from the mess hall to the recreation area at the back of the main yard. He had made a knife by filing down a spoon handle and wrapping the end with newspaper and shoelaces. When Elmer Fudge jumped Big Mack, Big Mack blocked him and got a scratch on his left shoulder. It was a lot of blood, but he wasn't hardly hurt at all. When Big Mack saw Elmer's knife, he pulled a big cane-cutting knife that looked like a machete. Somehow he'd managed to hide it down his pant leg. Seeing Mack head for him swinging that machete, Elmer pulled a length of two-by-four from the wooden sidewalk to block the blows from that knife.

Illustration by Jacob Roquet

"By the time I got there, Elmer was getting the best of the fight. He had Big Mack's back up against the wall. You could see the fear in Big Mack's eyes. Elmer was moving in for the kill. Big Mack made a mighty swing with his machete. Elmer ducked and moved to block the blow with his two-by-four. I can still hear the soft sound of the machete as it sliced through the flesh and bone of the bottom two fingers of Fudge's left hand. The blood spurted out as his fingers flopped a bit before they fell off — and Fudge continued to fight. Big Mack's mouth dropped open. He must have been surprised by the fearsome force that Fudge continued to fight with.

"That little pause was all that Elmer Fudge needed. He was into Big Mack's midsection with that homemade knife — once, twice. On the third time, the flimsy blade bent. I don't know if he struck a rib or what. Before Elmer could kill Big Mack, the guards came and broke it up. They got them over to the infirmary, and life went on.

"The next day on the way to lunch, there was another fight at the same spot. The guards broke that up pretty fast. It was two dudes that worked in the kitchen. They were fighting over which one of them would get Elmer Fudge's fingers. They wanted to use the meat to season their beans that day."

I was shocked by what Tootie had told me, and the off-the-cuff way he had of telling it. I asked him how he felt about what had happened. "In prison," he said, "you can't afford to feel." He thought about it for another minute, and then added, "It's not all that different than it is in the world outside. You can't afford to stop and think about what's going on, or you won't be able to make it." The silence between us was hard to take, but I could think of nothing more to say. After a moment Tootie sort of laughed to himself and said, "That next week, we wrote a real wild jazz tune — it was really out, man, outside the scales, outside the harmonies, outside the rhythm, I mean OUT. You should have heard it. It was wild. We called it 'Elmer Fudge's Fingers.' It wasn't long after that we were taken to play for a reception at the Governor's Mansion. We used the tune to close the last set." Tootie giggled to himself again and said, as if he wasn't talking to me any more at all. "It was a heavy tune, Junebug. When we got through, half the crowd just sat there until we got done packing up." ❑

Junebug Jabbo Jones has been learning about American history ever since the turbulent days of the civil rights movement. He sends along stories from his home in New Orleans through his good friend John O'Neal.

Hunting Hate

By Loretta Ross

On New Year's Day 1993, a tourist visiting Florida for the Christmas holidays was kidnapped from a mall parking lot by three men. They drove the victim out to a lonely part of town where they called him names and robbed him. The men then doused the victim with gasoline and set him on fire. The tourist, a black stockbroker from New York, was left to die. The white kidnappers congratulated each other and openly bragged about what they had done "for the white race." The tourist, Christopher Wilson, fortunately lived through his ordeal and a year later saw his assailants convicted of attempted murder.

Wilson's assault was one of more than 7,000 hate crimes reported to the police in 1993. Some experts estimate that only one in 10 hate crimes is reported to the police. Still, according to federal statistics in 1993, there were more than 20 murders, 100 cross burnings, and thousands of assaults and acts of vandalism reported as hate crimes. Victims were members of many racial, ethnic, and religious groups. Fifty percent were black, 35 percent white, and 8 percent belonged to other ethnic groups. Religious minorities reported 18 percent of the hate crimes and gays and lesbians 12 percent.

The impetus for these crimes varies. Sometimes a wave of hate crimes occurs after a Ku Klux Klan rally or a concert that draws a large number of neo-Nazis. In some cases, such as the Los Angeles riots, hate crimes are sparked by distrust, anger, and alienation. Hate crimes may also be influenced by political rhetoric — gay-bashing might crop up in the midst of a political campaign either adding or removing civil rights protection for lesbians and gays.

Most of those who commit hate crimes are between the ages of 14 and 26. If they are white, homophobia and resentment towards minorities, combined with perceptions of reverse discrimination, form the core of hatred. For youth of color it is anger at racism generalized towards anyone white. Homophobia and gang violence play a part, too. Perpetrators of hate crimes are generally armed with guns, knives, and — the most-favored weapon — baseball bats. Frequently, alcohol and drugs free people's inhibitions to commit hate crimes. But crimes are also committed in the cold sobriety of hatred.

Courtesy of the Center for Democratic Renewal

USING A COMBINATION OF TACTICS, COMMUNITIES CAN MAKE HATE GROUPS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS "MIGHTY UNCOMFORTABLE." THIS WAS AN ANNUAL RALLY OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE KKK, PULASKI, TENNESSEE, JANUARY 1992.

The Center for Democratic Renewal, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, works to stem the epidemic of hate crimes. We were first established as the National Anti-Klan Network by community activists outraged by the 1979 killings of five anti-Klan protesters in Greensboro, North Carolina. (See *Southern Exposure's* "Mark of the Beast," Fall 1981). The center has since grown into a national research center on hate groups. We have helped thousands of victims and many communities. Our work includes helping to get laws passed, conducting training, and offering dependable analyses of hate groups and bigoted activity in the United States.

The center has developed and refined its process of assisting people over the years. When we get a call about a hate crime committed in a community or against a person, the first thing we do is get as many facts as possible about the situation. Since most hate crimes are not reported to the police or covered by the media, we often have to start the documentation process. We match reports from the victims with our research on hate activity in the area.

Sometimes victims are re-victimized by insensitive treatment by authorities. We counsel victims about their rights, offering to intervene with the police if necessary. We can serve as a bridge between the victim and the police, who often don't see eye to eye.

The center can help establish links to the community. Often victims need support from their neighbors. The media need background information on hate crimes and groups in the area. And local leaders need specific advice on how to respond appropriately.

No formula exists for every situation.

The community would not take the same action for a racist elected official as it would for a robe-wearing Klansman. The center helps each community develop a combination of tactics including research, lawsuits, public rallies, op-ed pieces, press conferences, and community forums.

Credible and detail-oriented research is especially important. Whether dealing with a hate group or a racist politician, the community group must find out everything that is available about the person or groups involved. To facilitate this work, we offer training on how to follow paper trails of legal and government documents, how to keep tabs on elected officials, and how to use the Freedom of Information Act to look at reports of investigations on individuals and institutions.

This kind of legwork proved important when the center was called in to assist in investigating suspicious deaths of prisoners in Mississippi jails. We were able to provide information on hate groups in the counties under scrutiny.

Involving the community is a key part of our work. The center sees hate crimes as injurious to the entire community regardless of who the victim is. To address only the immediate hate crime is like putting a bandage on a cancerous skin tumor. It may cover the sore, but it does nothing to heal the problem. The actual crimes merely bring to a head long-simmering feelings of hate and resentment. Our strategy is to turn a crisis created by the crime into an opportunity for long-term community action and healing.

That strategy has been effective in Screven County, Georgia. The center was called because of Klan activity there. During the course of our investigation, we helped a local group, the Positive Action Committee of Screven County, document discrimination in the public school system. The center then helped the committee file a formal complaint with the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Education. When the probe by the government didn't satisfy the community, an effort to get the principal dismissed followed. The principal is now on the local school board, and activists have begun a voter registration drive and are seeking a candidate to run for the school board to counter the destructive presence that is now on the board. The Positive Action Committee now works on police brutality, economic development, and a host of other pressing concerns. Their work shows what can happen when the community becomes involved. In this case, a limited, short-term project of looking into Klan activity led to long-term community renewal and participation in the democratic process.

TOOLBOX

For more information contact:

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People for the American Way
2000 M Street NW
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(202) 467-4999

North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence
P.O. 240
Durham, NC 27702
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Unfortunately, as the center has honed its skills over the years, so have hate groups. They have become more sophisticated, organizing their assaults less on individuals and more on civil rights laws, enforcement agencies, and programs and policies for the poor and underserved. Using a seemingly reasonable tone in the literature and speeches, they now organize in mainstream society, not just the margins.

To respond to this shift in tactics by hate groups, the center has adjusted its programs and policies to speak to the issues of racism and white supremacy in its larger social context. We have extended our activities to include women's rights, gay rights, the environment, and immigration, all of which are under assault from hate groups and their allies in the extreme right. In this fashion we have stepped out of the business of counting hate crimes into the business of prevention and policy work.

In the field of women's rights, we have taken on two major incursions of white supremacy. We created Women's Watch in 1992, an anti-abortion monitoring project. Monitoring and research by Women's Watch has proved that the Klan and neo-Nazi groups are involved in the anti-abortion movement. Such findings may help explain the assassinations and bombings by anti-abortionists, and also help to discredit and expose these radical elements within the movement.

The second project involves examining the current thrust of governments to establish population and development policies for their countries. This is most significant for western countries. Because of their history of racism and colonialism they may fall prey to tendencies to re-invent certain eugenical and genocidal practices towards immigrants, refugees, and people of color. This is particularly relevant for the United States, where local officials may blame immigration for current economic and social problems.

In the environmental area, the center participates in examining the issue of environmental racism — the practice of locating toxic and hazardous facilities in communities of color. This is a pressing issue considering the fact that people of color are 50 percent more likely to live in areas with toxic facilities than their white counterparts. In more than one case local activists have found that many of these decisions are not made randomly.

Can these efforts stop hate crimes and hate groups? No, but our vigilance can make it uncomfortable for those who might consider such tactics and for those whose silence signals acceptance of these tactics. We are not able to be everywhere we are needed. Our limited resources and staff prohibit us from sending an organizer to every town or traveling to meet with every victim. What we can offer is a buffer of support for those who need it. We help communities address increasingly complex solutions for problems of racism and injustice. The real change doesn't come overnight. But it doesn't have to wait, either. ☐

Loretta Ross is National Program Director with the Center for Democratic Renewal.

Homecoming to Freedom Summer

By Julian Bond

**LOCAL PEOPLE:
THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN MISSISSIPPI**
By John Dittmer
University of Illinois Press, 560 pp.
$29.95

The gathering in Jackson, Mississippi, June 23-26, 1994, was billed as a "homecoming," a chance to see old friends, compare waistlines and grandchildren's pictures, and renew old fights and old friendships. It was also a chance for participants to recall, with pride, what they had won together. Attending were blacks and whites who had struggled to register black voters in Mississippi in the early '60s, together with the largely white volunteers who joined them in 1964. It was the 30th Anniversary of Freedom Summer in Mississippi.

The history of no other Southern state calls up such memories of brutality and resistance to change. The names of Emmett Till and Mack Charles Parker are enshrined in the memories of every black American over 50; Andrew Goodman, Mickey Schwerner, and James Chaney hold a similar place in baby boomers' minds. Perhaps it was only fitting that the reunion also celebrated the debut of what is likely to become the definitive account of the modern civil rights movement in the nation's most resistant state.

Local People, by John Dittmer, was a best seller at the summer's "homecoming." In this wonderful book, Dittmer tells the stories of the unknown heroes and heroines, black and white, who made the Mississippi movement, and the villains, white and black, who tried to hold it back. For many returning veterans, and for the local people of Mississippi who sheltered them, the book placed Freedom Summer in a larger context, providing background and explanation for the difficulties they faced.

Courtesy of Film, Freedom on My Mind

VOTE
the vote
OREGON

DEMONSTRATORS MARCH FOR THE VOTE IN MISSISSIPPI, 1964

Now at DePauw University in Indiana, but formerly at Mississippi's Tougaloo University, Dittmer knows the Mississippi movement firsthand. With sure scholarship, analysis, and interpretation, he describes Freedom Summer as the culmination of a much larger struggle extending back almost 50 years.

Photo courtesy of Chuck McDew

Veterans of Freedom Summer, 1964, reunite in Mississippi, 1994. Left to right: Julian Bond, Phil Robinson, Chuck McDew, and Sean Daniel.

The book begins in Decatur, Mississippi, in 1946, where Medgar Evers, fresh from defending democracy in France and Germany, led a group of veterans to their county courthouse to vote in their Democratic primary. His efforts were duplicated in Mississippi by other lesser-known figures: Vernando R. Collier in Gulfport, Nathaniel Lewis in McComb, and Etoy Fletcher in Rankin County. While Evers and his comrades failed to register to vote that day, the actions of this early generation provided a crucial underpinning for the movement that would develop in the early 1960s.

Dittmer also outlines a rich heritage of community-based organizations in Mississippi which were involved in voter registration before the 1960s. Most important was the Regional Council of Negro Leadership (RCNL), founded in 1951 by Dr. T.R.M. Howard, which directed civil rights efforts for most of the decade. Other local groups such as the Natchez Business and Civic League and the Mississippi Progressive Voters' League — also urged their members to register to vote.

These homegrown organizations attracted Mississippi blacks fearful of aligning themselves with the hated, infamous New York-based NAACP. In fact, *Local People* is especially valuable in delineating the different strategic approaches of moderate and militant factions, and in describing jealousies between the NAACP and other groups it viewed as rivals. The RCNL's Dr. Howard, for example, attracted 7,000 to his hometown of Mound Bayou to hear Chicago Congressman William Dawson in 1951; in 1953, 10,000 massed to hear NAACP Chief Counsel Thurgood Marshall.

No matter what political stripe, however, civil rights groups of all types came under searing attack upon the announcement of the 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, outlawing segregation in public schools. The decision was a "wake-up call" for whites, Dittmer writes. "Preserving the southern way of life assumed all the trappings of a holy crusade." Less than two months after *Brown*, the first chapter of the Citizens Council, a kind of white-collar Ku Klux Klan, was organized in Indianola, Mississippi. By October, it had 25,000 members across the state.

The impact on the black community was immediate. NAACP leaders, drawn largely from Mississippi's small black middle class, now faced death and ruin. Dr. Howard's draft board reclassified him 1-A, despite the fact that he was 47. He was eventually driven from the state. Belzoni grocer Gus Courts surrendered the NAACP presidency when he lost his credit at the local bank. Later Courts would lose his life when someone shotgunned him to death in his store. NAACP and Regional Council of Negro Leadership activist George Lee was also killed in Belzoni. Emmett Till's famous kidnapping and murder was only the best-publicized of a long line of deaths in the summer of 1955. "By the end of 1955," Dittmer writes, "the black freedom movement was in disarray."

Yet while representing the nadir of the movement, the Till case was also the beginning of the political education of black teenagers in Mississippi. Encouraged by Medgar Evers' patient statewide organizing, teenagers formed an NAACP youth organization and eventually joined the southwide student sit-in movement in March 1960. Others, like World War II veteran Amzie Moore, were uninterested in sit-ins, seeking instead to recruit youth for a voter registration project. He was able to convince civil rights worker Robert Moses to set up a voter registration project in Mississippi. Moses' recruits settled in McComb. Their efforts were given a boost when five of the 1961 Freedom Riders, who had been arrested in Jackson that summer, decided to stay and set up an office there. Together, Mississippi youth and volunteers from the newly formed Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee formed the backbone of the movement that eventually culminated in 1964's Freedom Summer.

The movement's subsequent development across the state has been told many times before, but never in such detail and never with Dittmer's sensitivity to the roles played by local and national organizational interests. Dittmer carefully documents the perfidy of the federal government and nominal liberals, who acted as much to protect themselves and their closeness to power as they did to advance the interests of Mississippi's blacks. The reader learns, for example, of Brown University's role in getting Tougaloo's president fired; of Allard Lowenstein's attempts to control the Mississippi movement from afar; of FBI spying on Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegates at the 1964 Democratic Convention.

Dittmer also pays close attention to

the continuing presence of Mississippi's black moderate faction, beginning with the patronage practiced by Mississippi Black and Tan Republicans before the New Deal, and continuing in the early infighting between moderates and militants in the 1950s.

The tension between moderate and militant factions emerged into open conflict in the 1960s. The reader witnesses Charles Evers building personal power while thwarting movement opponents; Office of Economic Opportunity officials caving in to Mississippi's white and black moderates to kill a successful community-based poverty program; and the takeover of the Mississippi Freedom Democractic Party's 1968 convention challenge by moderate forces.

And what of today? At the reunion some younger Mississippians justifiably complained that the job Dittmer describes so well still remains unfinished. Yet most of the returnees and the Mississippians who greeted them seemed satisfied that they had succeeded in bringing the state into the rest of the nation.

The successes of the movement were made plain when reunion participants took busses back to the communities where they had spent the summer of 1964 — Hattiesburg, Philadelphia, McComb, Greenwood, and Greenville. The Philadelphia bus was escorted by a black state trooper into Neshoba County, where Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney had been murdered. As the McComb bus pulled away to return to Jackson, a black policeman stood by the roadside and saluted. In Hattiesburg, four women, pre-teenagers in the movement's Freedom School, displayed the doctoral and medical degrees they said Freedom Summer had made possible. And on Saturday night, Mississippi's black elected officials, the nation's largest cohort, thanked the volunteers, civil rights workers, and local people who made their elections possible.

Local People, too, never forgets the people who made the Mississippi movement: E. W. Banks, Clarie Collins Harvey, Aylene Quinn, T.R. M. Howard, Amzie Moore, Annie Devine, Henry Kirksey, Emmett J. Stringer, Joyce and Dorie Ladner and many more. Both the book and the reunion are powerful reminders that the greatest of struggles begin with ordinary, unknown men and women. The book and reunion also remind us that, despite great odds, popular struggle can succeed. ❑

Julian Bond is distinguished adjunct professor in the school of government at American University and a lecturer in history at the University of Virginia.

RESOURCES

More on Mississippi Freedom Summer

By Janet Irons

FILM

The 30th anniversary of Freedom Summer has also been the occasion of the release of a remarkable film about the Mississippi movement, *Freedom on My Mind*. Produced and directed by Connie Field, who produced *Rosie the Riveter*, and Marilyn Mulford, who directed *Chicano Park*, it won this year's Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival for best documentary. It would seem difficult to produce a more gripping and powerful account of that dramatic summer than *Eyes on the Prize*, yet *Freedom on My Mind* adds a powerful dimension to the story by examining the personal and emotional impact on its participants both black and white.

Vivid portrayals of black Mississippians sear into the viewer's memory the dehumanizing impact of white rule, especially for children and youths. A young boy who joins a public protest with an American flag has his dignity literally wrested away from him by a Southern law enforcement officer. Still, the young became the Mississippi movement's most enthusiastic recruits. The film also powerfully portrays the activism of Mississippi's older black women. As the camera films them slowly climbing the steps of a government building to register to vote, participant Ida Mae Holland recalls how she found so much courage in "that heavy step they use; it looked like the earth would move."

Woven into the story is also the perspective of the white participants in Freedom Summer. The experience was such an important personal turning point that they continue today to search for a way to re-create its spirit. Equally illuminating, the film brings to life the elusive and private Robert Moses, who, after 30 years, has found a voice with which to reflect on and draw lessons from the struggle.

But the most important character in *Freedom on My Mind* is the movement itself, portrayed here as a creation not only of power but of great beauty, a work of democratic art. It was destroyed by Lyndon Johnson and his cronies as surely as Diego Rivera's famous mural was by Nelson Rockefeller a generation earlier. After viewing the film, one appreciates completely why it took its architect, Robert Moses, 10 years of exile in Tanzania to come to terms with the tragic consequences of its failure. Yet ultimately the film brings a message of hope, for it convinces even the most cynical that the idealism expressed in that movement was a pure good, something even the most savage racist or diabolical politician cannot take away.

FREEDOM ON MY MIND
Produced and Directed by
Connie Field and Marilyn Mulford
Written and Edited by Michael Chandler
105 minutes
For information on theater showings call 800-995-6068

NO MORE
POLICE

POLICEMAN WRESTS AMERICAN FLAG FROM YOUNG DEMONSTRATOR DURING FREEDOM SUMMER IN MISSISSIPPI, 1964, FROM *FREEDOM ON MY MIND*, A FILM BY CONNIE FIELD AND MARILYN MULFORD.

BIOGRAPHY

In *This Little Light of Mine*, journalist Kay Mills portrays the life of Fannie Lou Hamer, member of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegation which attempted to be seated at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. Hamer is remembered most for her challenge to the credentials committee: "If the MFDP is not seated now, I question America." Her deep anger combined with a profound religious faith made her uniquely equipped to speak the truth to power. It is this ability which emerges in Mills' account as Hamer's most important survival strategy in a life full of dehumanizing and debilitating experiences. Indeed, by making it possible for the truth to be heard, Mississippi Summer elevated local women like Hamer to national prominence. At the same time the book conveys the tragedy of Hamer's life: After the eclipse of the radical Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party by more moderate forces in the late 1960s, her devastating and unrelenting articulation of injustice became — in the eyes of those attempting to lead the movement — as much a liability as an asset. An outspoken advocate of larger roles for women as well as blacks in politics, Hamer found herself increasingly forgotten and alone as poor health prevented her from participating as much as she wished. In this lively account, Mills gives full dimension to a woman too often portrayed as a mere symbol of the Mississippi movement.

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE: THE LIFE OF FANNIE LOU HAMER
By Kay Mills
New York: Dutton, 390pp. $24

BIOGRAPHY

In *And Gently He Shall Lead Them*, Eric Burner attempts to write another biography that needs to be written — that of Mississippi Summer's revered young leader, Robert Parris Moses. Using simple but elegant prose, Burner follows Moses from childhood through his involvement in the student civil rights movement and his work on voting rights in Mississippi in the early 1960s. Burner also reminds us that Moses' story did not end with Freedom Summer — he now heads the Algebra Project, which teaches mathematics to black children in Boston and many other communities as a means of empowerment.

But Burner's inability to gain access to private sources — including Moses himself — limits his work to that of an analysis of the man's public philosophy. The book is remote from its subject rather than intimate, awed rather than evocative. The result is something of an intellectual history of the man and the movement, revealing little that is new. Still, the book is of value in that it highlights the spirit of self-effacement Moses brought to his organizing. As Moses said in 1990, "one of the characteristics of organizers is that their work emerges, and they themselves subside. . ."

AND GENTLY HE SHALL LEAD THEM: ROBERT PARRIS MOSES AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN MISSISSIPPI
By Eric Burner
New York University Press. 224pp. $24.95

The Old South

By Mary Lee Kerr

Whether they are the "gray peril" feared by some or "the growth industry" courted by others, retirees are heading South in large numbers, giving the term "Old South" a whole new meaning.

In centuries past Southerners died younger, so there were fewer elderly than in other regions. Few social services were available for aging people, so old Southerners tended to stay at home or with adult children. Elderly native Southerners are still the poorest old people in the country. According to census figures, the 10 states with the highest percentage of poor people over age 65 were in the South. Mississippi topped the list with 29 percent poor elderly.

Migration is changing the profile of the Southern elderly population. "Migrants tend to be upper income, healthy, well-educated, and between the ages of 55 and 75," says Graham Rowles, professor and associate director of the Sanders-Brown Center on Aging at the University of Kentucky. They often move, he says, to places where they've had vacation homes or to areas where friends or family have moved.

Florida, with its balmy climate, seaside retirement complexes, and thriving service industry, has long been a favorite destination of the aged, but things are changing. "Florida is still the most popular, but now you have this flow of people back out," says Rowles. While Florida still attracts more retirees than any other Southern state, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia are also rapidly becoming popular destinations for old people seeking a more moderate climate and sparser population.

"Florida is so flat and full of concrete and cars. It wasn't for me," says Edna Arnow. After living her entire life in Chicago, Arnow looked for a place to retire. She chose North Carolina. "I loved the climate. I wanted to be near a university, and when I read about it in the *Places Rated Almanac*, it had everything I wanted."

Places Rated Almanac is just one of many books and articles on retirement promoting the South as a temperate and inexpensive haven for the retiree. The authors of *The Retirement Book*, a guide for planning retirement, say southeastern mountain towns "are centers of lively cultural and social activity." The southern coastline, they write, "is lovely, with hundreds of offshore islands."

The region's charms have succeeded in drawing old people to settle. The Southern elderly population increased 49 percent between 1970 and 1982 and continues to grow. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of residents over 65 in Florida alone increased 40 percent, in South Carolina 38 percent, and in North Carolina 33 percent. While better health care accounts for some of the increase, scholars are finding that much of the change is from immigration, either of newcomers or former residents returning home after spending their working lives elsewhere.

This influx has had a dramatic impact on local residents and their communities. "Older people bring great resources into a community," says Graham Rowles. "They'll move their bank account, purchase housing, and generate jobs." He adds that instead of burdening health services, the elderly attract physicians to rural areas.

Courtesy of Carol Woods

RETIREMENT HAS BECOME THE NUMBER ONE INDUSTRY IN MANY AREAS OF THE SOUTH. THIS COUPLE STROLLS THROUGH THE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY OF CAROL WOODS, CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA.

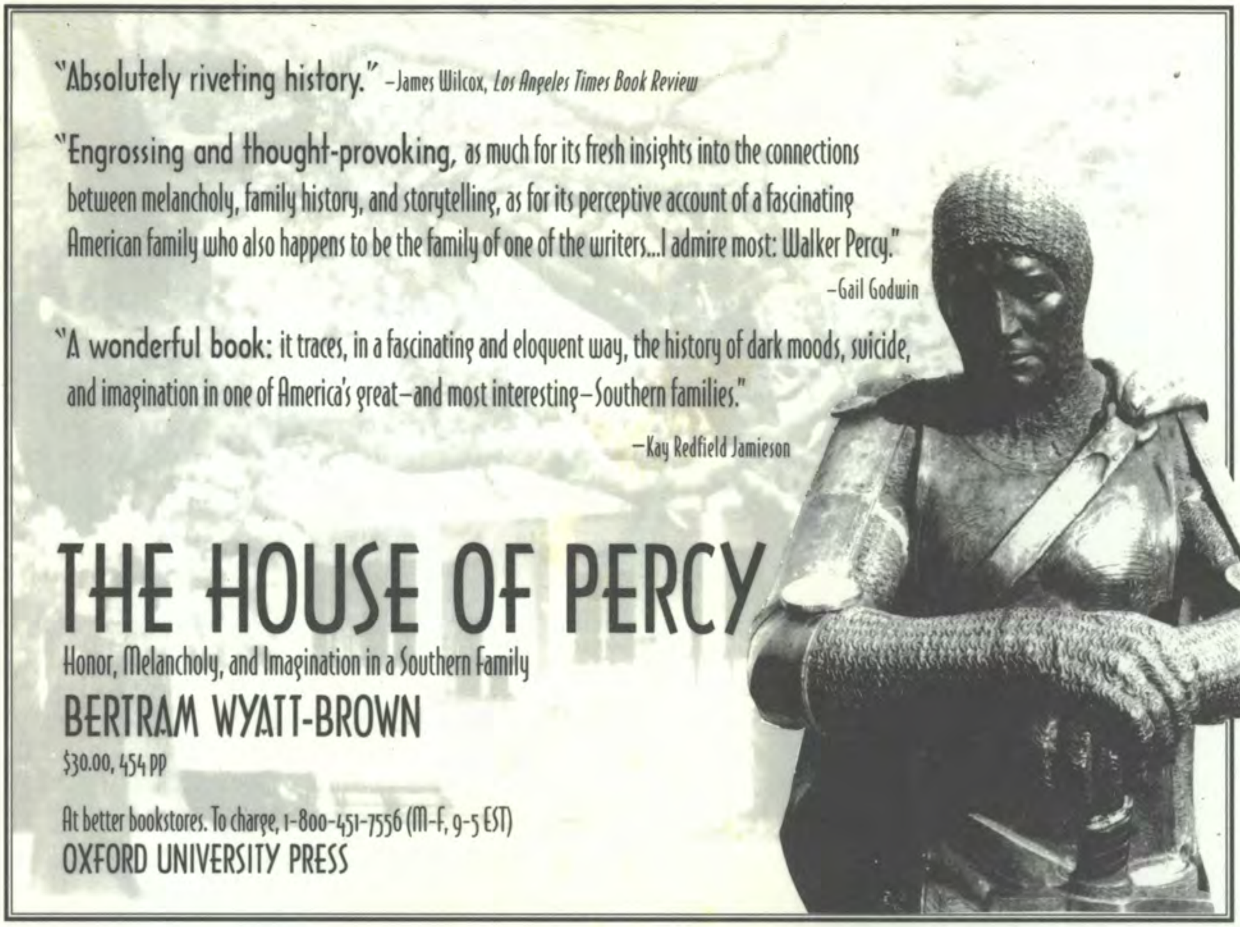
Older people also enrich local culture and contribute to the community. "There's a tendency to think of these people as the ugly outsider coming in and exploiting our folks, but many of these migrants are very concerned about the community," says Rowles. In Hendersonville, North Carolina, a town of just 7,000 people, retirees helped launch an orchestra, and 80 percent of the county's volunteers are retired.

While some communities are actively recruiting retired people, others see the retirement industry as harmful. Housing prices and property taxes may rise, pricing local residents out of the market. The jobs generated may be low-paying service jobs, and retirees may come into conflict with local people over land use and services.

In South Carolina's sea islands, poor African-American communities have clashed with residents of Hilton Head and other wealthy retirement communities. "Retirement communities get basic services like water, sewage, police protection, and the poor communities adjacent to them don't have such services," says Emory Campbell, director of the Penn Center, a former freedmen's school which aims to preserve and develop the black communities of the sea islands. "They say, 'Look, I've got my water and sewage and private road, and I'm not going to pay taxes for yours.' There's no sense of responsibility for the total community."

Whether communities like it or not, old people are a potent force in the South. With more retirees moving here every day, as one Southerner says, "We'd better learn to deal with it." ☐

Mary Lee Kerr is a research associate with the Institute for Southern Studies.



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