

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS & CULTURE

VOL. XXIII NO. 2 \$5.00

Eminent Domain

Taking Land . . .

In the National Defense

To Power Urban America

For Recreation and Tourism

And the "Wise Use"
Movement

The Great Smokies The Way We Weren't

A restored home in Cades Cove, in the
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

ALSO

For Whom The Bell Curve Tolls

The Seduction of Junebug



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Community protest against hazardous waste incinerator in Iredell-Rowan counties in North Carolina shows strong feelings by property owners about land taking and land use.

A special section on eminent domain beginning on page 18 explores land taking in the South.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

THE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN STUDIES is a non-profit center working for progressive change in the region. Since its founding in 1970, the Institute has sponsored research, education, and organizing programs to (1) empower grassroots organizations and communities with strong local leadership and well-informed strategies, (2) provide the information, ideas, and historical understanding

of Southern social struggles necessary for long-term fundamental change, and (3) nourish communication, cooperation, and understanding among diverse cultural groups.

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COVER DESIGN by Hillhouse
Graphic Design, Kingsport,
Tennessee.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

Coastal Conservation League, Jane Fish, Sally Gregory, Betty Meeler, Aquanetta Patterson, Haila Rusch, Al Sawyer, Sierra Club, Deb Sunick, Michelle Ugochukwu, Mrs. Barbee's class at Riverside High School

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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE is published quarterly by the Institute for Southern Studies, and is available with a membership in the Institute for \$24 per year. Manuscripts and photos may be submitted if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Address correspondence to P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702. Telephone 919-419-8311 or FAX 919-419-8315.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE is indexed in *Alternative Press Index*, *The American Humanities Index*, and *Access: The Supplementary Index to Periodicals*, and is available on microfilm from University Microfilm, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Second-class postage is paid at Durham, NC 27702 and additional offices. ISSN: 0146-809X. Post Office No. 053470.

POSTMASTER: Send form 3579 with address changes to *Southern Exposure*, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

From the Editor

When I moved here last year, someone reminded me of an old joke — How does a left-wing group organize a firing squad? They form a circle. That piece of gal-lows humor keeps coming to mind as I learn more about social change movements.

Handling differences is something groups always face. Some issues have been raised in recent weeks that indicate to me that this movement needs to revisit methods of communication.

"As far as I'm concerned, anyone who says they're pro-pornography is not a feminist," said a University of North Carolina student recently. She had organized a demonstration at the Women's Center at UNC where Nadine Strossen, president of the American Civil Liberties Union and a feminist was speaking about her new book, *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex and the Fight for Women's Rights*.

Besides advocating freedom of expression, Strossen argues that legal sanction against pornography reinforces women as weak and in need of protection.

Other feminists believe that pornography leads directly to violence against women. It should be suppressed. The debate over pornography has become so rancorous over the past few years that the feminist community is becoming seriously divided.

In our own magazine a controversy has erupted over last issue's cover featuring basketball star Charles Barkley — "Next Republican Governor of Alabama?" Illustrating the special section on "Image of the South," the cover pictures of Barkley and of an outhouse were meant to explore how stereotyped images are used and how damaging they can be.

Some said that the cover did further damage. We were guilty of doing what we were supposed to be analyzing and criticizing. Portraying Barkley throwing a basketball exploits a stereotype of the black male athlete. Black men are used like commodities in this society, and we used this picture as a commodity. It was insulting and degrading and a particular slap in the face coming from a magazine readers trust.

Others defended the image. It served as a warning and brought attention to the growing black right wing (which was what one of the featured articles was about). Barkley has used his basketball image to gain a political voice and has allied himself with Rush Limbaugh and Clarence Thomas.

In this disagreement about the cover — and in the pornography debate — there are good arguments on both sides. But feelings run high on matters of principle. The trick is to figure out how to have the arguments without either side feeling trivialized, disrespected, or dismissed. With liberalism so eroded, we can't afford to send anyone off in a huff.

In upcoming issues, we hope to air the debate about images and explore ways to disagree among ourselves in the progressive community and keep on working toward a progressive agenda. We'll discuss the systemic basis for injustice and conflict and how to develop and engage fundamental values that guide our work. We'll feature groups that have learned how to work through differences and some spectacular failures — to learn what to avoid.

Something that ACLU's Strossen said about the pornography debate in the feminist community may provide a good launching point. *The Independent*, a North Carolina weekly, reported that "she's . . . worried that . . . in-fighting damages the feminist movement. By focusing their energy on 'words and pictures rather than the actual causes and manifestations' of sexism and violence against women, Strossen says, feminists are not making any progress.

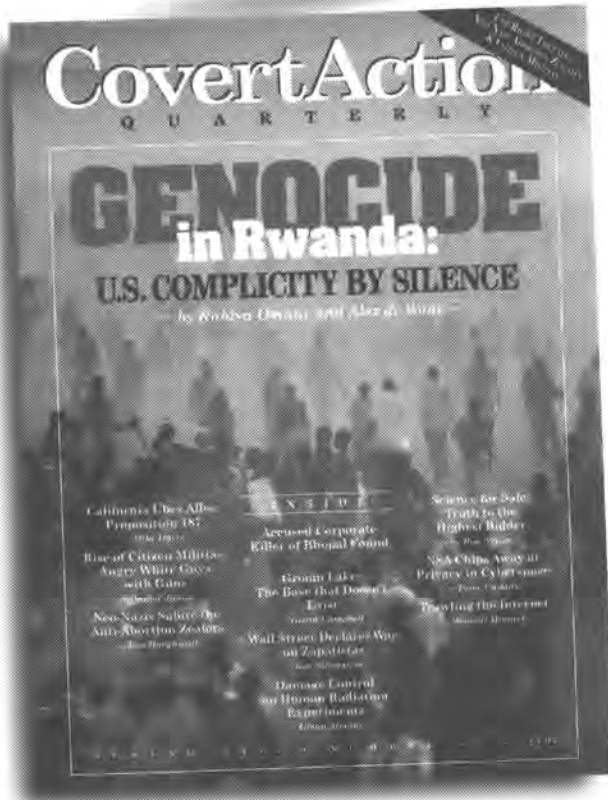
"I think it is dangerous," she says. "I would rather emphasize what we have in common rather than what separates us."

If we can do that, maybe we can learn to avoid friendly fire.

We can't afford to send anyone off in a huff.

— Pat Arnow

CAQ is Hot!



Again, CAQ's current issue scooped today's headlines with a pre-Oklahoma bombing exposé:

"The Rise of Citizen Militias: Angry White Guys with Guns."

Join the thousands of in-the-know, new readers who more than doubled CAQ's circulation last year.

In just this past year CAQ has...

- uncovered the role of U.S. intelligence interventions in Mexico, the former U.S.S.R, Japan, Italy, Haiti, and the inner-cities of the U.S.
- analyzed the structure of repression in the; FBI, NRO, NED, World Bank, IMF, GATT, NAFTA, and CIA.
- reported on the environment and health issues focusing on; Rocky Flats, Gulf War Syndrome, radiation testing on humans, and the Brookhaven Labs breast cancer connection.
- covered extensively; Sudan, Rwanda, South Africa, Paraguay, Mexico, Armenia, Canada, Guatemala, and Russia.

- presented cutting reports at home on the; Christian right, Crime Bill, trial of the LA-8, Proposition 187, and neo-Nazis in the anti-abortion movement.

- featured a who's who of savvy investigative journalists, activists, and whistleblowers around the world including:

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL / WALDEN BELLÓ / PHYLLIS BENNIS / CHIP BERLET / WILLIAM BLUM / JOHN CANHAM-CLYNE / WARD CHURCHILL / DAVE DELLINGER / ALEX DE WAAL / DOLIA ESTÉVEZ / LAURA FLANDERS / ALLEN GINSBERG / GUSTAVO GORRITI / DANIEL JUNAS / WILLIAM KUNSTLER / CLARENCE LUSANE / RAKIYA OMAAR / ISRAEL SHAHAK / KEN SILVERSTEIN / FRANK SMITH / DOUG VAUGHAN / FRED WEIR / HOWARD ZINN

CovertAction Quarterly • \$22 year / 4 Issues

1500 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., #732, Washington D.C. 20005

I FELT LIKE AN IMPOSTOR

As I read Jo Carson's delightful article, "Revenge is Sweet," I was reminded of countless similar episodes in my own experience. I am from Jefferson City, an hour south of Johnson City, which is cosmopolitan by our standards. Even though I attend the University of the South at Sewanee, I have been ridiculed daily for my mountain accent — by fellow Southerners.

Although the ridicule is entirely lighthearted, my accent has drawn just enough attention that I tried to shake it. The more I tried to enunciate like everyone else, the phonier I felt; I felt like an impostor not only because I sounded like a different person but also because I was betraying my roots. My carpetbagger imitation lasted only about two weeks, but in that two weeks I realized that I sound different for one simple reason: I *am* different.

Being raised in the mountains is not necessarily any better or worse than being raised in a city, but no one can deny that the two different environments breed two distinct sorts of people. I talk more slowly than most of my friends, say "ain't" unapologetically, and my "i"s sound like "ah"s until you get to know me. This does not make me more tuned in to the earth mother goddess nor does it mean that I am any less capable of discussing Dante's pilgrimage as a metaphor for every soul's journey to Grace.

My accent alone does not make me better or worse, but the mountains which branded those inflections into my tongue do make me different. I cannot exactly quantify the difference between mountain and city folk in 1995, but I suspect that it lurks somewhere between the rockers on our front porches, the Sabbaths we respected, the switches we cut ourselves, and the quilts our grandmothers made.

In closing, I'll leave you with my mother's thoughts on revenge (what self-respecting, Oedipus-abiding Southern boy wouldn't?); she declares that the sweetest revenge is to live a good life.

*James David Collins
Signal Mountain, Tennessee*

SOMETHING IN COMMON

Thank you for publishing my story, "Unfortunate Son." It looks wonderful, as does the issue. I never guessed I might wind up in the same magazine as Charles Barkley.

*Marc Vassallo
Charlottesville, Virginia*

*We're still in shock over it, too, Marc.
— ed.*

We appreciate comments and ideas and will print letters as often as we can.

R O U N D U P

GEORGIA'S VISIONARY — No, NOT NEWT

Like spectators at a game, the faithful draw lawn chairs from the farm's outbuildings and gather around the front porch. Scattered in uneven rows around Nancy Fowler's house in Conyers, Georgia, white Southern Catholics and dissident evangelicals, Latin pilgrims and German tourists — the excommunicated and the confirmed — listen over the loudspeaker as the rosary is performed in Vietnamese, Polish, Spanish, French, and Croatian. Children and old people peer out toward the house from behind the windshields of warm cars, receiving the broadcast prayers on AM radio.

Since the Catholic homemaker first began relaying visions of Jesus and the Virgin Mary five years ago, well over 100,000 people — from El Salvador to the Philippines — have made the pilgrimage.

On the 13th of every month, Nancy Fowler closes herself in her apparition room and waits for the visions. Fowler says the Lord

CHAIN REACTIONARIES

No, that's not the set to a sequel to *Cool Hand Luke* you'll be seeing as you drive along Alabama's highways. Alabama's prison commissioner, Ron Jones, has followed Republican Governor Fob James' mandates to toughen up prison life by purchasing 300 sets of leg irons.

Besides denying inmates TV and other privileges, the state is planning on reinstating chain gangs, a phenomenon most Americans have only seen in old movies. "I find it fascinating the corrections system is turning back the hands of time," says Rob Hoelter, of the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives.

Chain gangs became popular after the Civil War, when convicts were leased to private contractors as a source of cheap labor. Chain gangs were the chief form of convict labor in eight southern states by 1886, and they were maintained long after the practice was abolished in the North and West. Throughout the history of the chain gang, a disproportionate number of convicts sentenced to this form of labor have been black: 846 out of 952 in a survey conducted in 1878; 2,113 out of 2,221 in Georgia in 1902.



But since the 1932 movie *I Am a Fugitive From A Chain Gang* exposed the abuses rampant in work camps — no medical attention, rotten food, inhuman treatment during transport and while on the job — the practice slowly died out. Even so, small groups of inmates could be seen at work until the early 1960s. Georgia was the last state to abolish chain gangs.

But Alabama's Governor James, hoping to ensure that the first impression of prison is so unpleasant offenders do their best to never return, is turning inmates out on the roadsides to pick up litter.

has chosen to "set Conyers apart" in a country that has turned away

Photo by Lorraine Strauss



The faithful gather outside of Nancy Fowler's home in Conyers, Georgia, awaiting divine guidance.

from God. The messages she claims to receive range from advice on preparing for the end of time to admonitions against abortion to tips concerning her interior decorating activities on the farm. Each message is distributed to her "little children" all over the world by Our Loving Mother's Children, a nonprofit organization in Newington, Virginia. Our Loving Mother's Network, aside from publishing a monthly journal of Conyers' messages, has brought heaven on-line to the many souls who travel the Internet. There is even a 24-hour hotline one can call to receive the latest word from Georgia's visionary.

As Nancy Fowler kneels in her apparition room, the pilgrims outside wander the grounds

looking for signs. Some report experiencing an overwhelming smell of roses during the apparitions. Others testify that the body of Christ on the large wooden cross on Nancy Fowler's Holy Hill has come alive during their visits and been captured in animate poses on film. As the afternoon wanes, the pilgrims turn their eyes skyward where the sun has been said to spin under the hand of Jesus and the figure of the cross reportedly appears in the clouds.

Sitting in wheelchairs or resting on canes, the men and women in the yard pull holy medals, religious figurines, sunglasses, and cameras from backpacks and purses and arrange them on the arms of their chairs like bingo cards. A man rises

from his kneeling cloth to lay a note on one of the farm's many altars: "Dear Lord, I pray that your love cures my father's Lupus and purifies his kidneys, lungs and bone marrow." In the back row, a woman's beads fall to her lap as she points her Polaroid toward heaven.

Nancy Fowler emerges from the apparition room to greet her pilgrims in a small, childlike voice. She reminds them to keep sending their testimonies of healings and conversions, their apparitional photographs, and the sacred medals turned from silver to gold to the Archbishop's office in Atlanta.

"It is not easy to try to be a saint," Fowler once confessed to Jesus in her apparition room. It's not easy to gain official papal endorsement of apparitions — the last one recognized by the Vatican took place in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. That doesn't stop the faithful. Signs on the fence posts and outbuildings of the farm warn visitors not to accept literature handed out by anyone but Nancy Fowler's official representatives. Fowler has even requested the aid of local police at times, to keep the messages of other, "false" prophets from circulating on her farm.

As Nancy Fowler descends from her porch to lay hands on those in the front row, people in back begin to stack lawn chairs and make their way to the farm's Holy Hill. Perhaps some smell roses as they reach the well where believers are said to have been healed, been made younger, and restored. People line up and bend to dip their buckets and milk jugs beneath a sign reading: "Holy Water: One Gallon Per Person Please."

— Molly Chilson

CADILLAC LANDFILL CRASHES

Warren County, North Carolina, residents have had their worst fears realized. Sixteen years ago, Warren County became home to one of the largest toxic landfills

in the nation. It is now leaking 17 different dioxins into groundwater and a nearby creek. Recent tests show that not only have state officials dragged their feet, they've also grossly misrepresented the facts.

Back in 1982, Warren County became one of the nation's first communities to struggle for environmental justice in the country. The poorest county in the state, Warren is home to a predominantly black population who vehemently opposed state plans for a landfill which was to contain some 7,000 truckloads of PCB-laden soil on a site which scientists and EPA admitted was intrinsically un-

protect them, local citizens took matters into their own hands and spent six weeks blocking the dump trucks by, among other things, sitting on and lying down in the road. National civil rights leaders joined the peaceful protest. The state spent over \$700,000 on police and National Guard forces and more than 500 demonstrators were arrested over the course of the protests.

Though the protest became a national news story that embarrassed the governor, the dump couldn't be stopped. It went in at a cost of nearly \$8 million. Four monitoring wells circled the site designed as an early warning system to detect the leakage of

dents did their homework and found that decontamination technologies which could safely destroy the poisons were now available. They demanded Hunt keep his promise to clean up the dump.

Local citizens — blacks and whites, church leaders and environmentalists — began meeting with state officials in a working group. Last fall, state officials announced test results which showed that the dump contains not only PCBs, but much more toxic dioxins as well. Officials attempted to allay residents' fears by assuring the public that only two of the four wells showed any sign of contamination — and those only "trace amounts." Dioxin levels were nonetheless five times over North Carolina's "acceptable level" for drinking water.

Over the next five months state officials offered six successive reasons, aside from the presence of the landfill, for the appearance of the toxins in the wells — all of which were later discredited by their own data along with those of independent scientists. When the working group finally received complete data from the summer's testing, they got an ugly surprise: Three of the four wells showed dangerous levels of contamination by 17 different dioxins. Likewise seepage on the side of the landfill contaminated nearby Richneck Creek.

State officials want to continue studying the situation, maintaining there is "no danger to the public." Nonetheless, they've approved the search for a company to clean up the mess — when they feel the time is right and if Hunt and the new Republican legislature appropriates the money.

That could be a long time — but tension is building as Warren County residents are determined to keep the state from further stalling.

— Jim Warren

Jim Warren is executive director of NC WARN (North Carolina Waste Awareness and Reduction Network) and a member of the Working Group.



Courtesy of Ken Ferruccio

Warren County residents started protesting against a huge toxic landfill when it was barely a glimmer in a bureaucrat's eye. Marching in the first protest against the dump in 1982 were (left to right) Rev. Donald Jarboe, Rev. Leon White, and Ken Ferruccio, co-chairperson of The Joint Warren County/State PCB Landfill Working Group. The protesters' fears are being realized.

safe.

The state, however, informed Warren County residents that the dump would be sited in their community "regardless of public sentiment." The EPA discarded regulations that would have prevented the site from being used at all. Members of the community were left with promises for a "Cadillac, state-of-the-art landfill" which Jim Hunt, Governor then and now, promised would be detoxified "when a feasible technology is developed."

After the courts failed to

PCBs. The package also included a vinyl liner which had sustained dozens of slashes by vandals during construction; the liner was repaired with glue and the poisonous dirt buried inside it.

In the spring of 1993, the people announced a crisis Warren Countians had feared from the start: up to 1.5 million gallons of contaminated water was trapped in the "dry tomb" landfill. State officials proposed to pump the water out, claiming 40,000 cubic yards of chemical-laced soil was floating on top of the water. Resi-

WHY KILL AFFIRMATIVE ACTION? (IT'S ALREADY DEAD)

If the city of Asheville, North Carolina is typical of American employers, Republicans who want to kill affirmative action needn't bother.

Affirmative action is already dead in Asheville.

Asheville's Affirmative Action Plan has been gathering dust since 1991, the date of the latest report. Meanwhile, women and minorities still get fewer jobs and lower pay:

• White men on top:

More than two-thirds of city employees are white men. Of the 36 city employees who earn \$43,000 or more annually, 29 are white males. Of the nine who earn \$60,000+, only two are female, none minorities. White males make up 71 percent of employees earning from \$25,000 to \$43,000 (second-highest pay in the city).

• **Minorities overlooked, underpaid:** At the blue-collar end of the pay scale, minorities make up one-third of the employees earning between \$12,000 and \$16,000 annually (even though minorities make up only 13 percent of the total city workforce). Most work in Parks and Recreation, at the Civic Center, in the Water or Sanitation departments or in Parking Services. The percentage of minority workers employed by the city dropped from 19 percent in 1988 to 14 percent in 1991.

• **Women hired mostly for low pay:** The percentage of female workers rose 1 percent (from 22 percent to 23 percent) between 1988 and 1991. Only for low-paying, administrative-support jobs, where most females are employed, did the city meet its affirmative action goals. White females are hired less often, even though they apply in numbers, for almost every job. Women are likely to earn the second lowest pay, between \$16,000 and \$20,000 annually.

White men clearly have the most and best jobs in the city workforce, despite six years of "affirmative action" and despite the Civil Service Law, in force since 1931 for police and

firefighters and since 1951 for other city workers."

Although Asheville's voluntary Affirmative Action Plan, adopted in 1988, calls for quar-



terly reports, none have been written except for ones in 1989 and 1991. Asked why reports were not produced, Asheville Personnel Director Pam McGrayne blamed budget cuts and said the personnel department wasn't asked.

"It's just a ruse to get rid of civil service," said one employee. "If they really wanted to hire women and minorities, they could get serious about their affirmative action plan."

Employees worry that their rights are already limited in North Carolina, where collective bargaining by public workers is illegal. The most skeptical workers argue that corrupt managers will manipulate any system to hire their favorites, including civil service. They say bosses ask the Civil Service Board to waive testing for a position, allowing a manager to promote or hire a relative or friend. The Civil Service Board approved 22 of 23 requests for test waiving in 1994, according to board minutes.

If the city would hire managers who were committed to diversifying the workforce, it wouldn't need civil service and affirmative action, say workers contacted for this story. An employee of color put it this way: "You don't need studies or laws if you are committed to fairness."

—Calvin H. Allen
Fund for Investigative Reporting

This story was funded by a grant from the Fund for Investigative Reporting, a Western North Carolina research and reporting organization.

JUSTICE DELAYED

Butler, Georgia, held elections for the first time in 10 years in May. The town of 1,673, which is 46 percent black, has been ordered to open the polls after the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta upheld a decision that Butler's voting system was racist.

The town never before had a black official. In 1986, residents filed charges saying that the voting system at the time allowed the white majority to elect all the officials. "I thank God," said the Rev. Clarence Lawson, who heads the Taylor County NAACP. "We'll finally have a voice."

When the charges were initially filed, U.S. District Judge Robert Elliott put a hold on all elections until the matter could be decided. The appeals court found Elliott's decade-long wait an abuse of his discretion, saying it could find "no logical explanation" for the delay.

James L. Spillers, the city's mayor of 14 years, says he'll run again. "This decision's not right," Spillers says. "This don't sound good."

But Laughlin McDonald, an American Civil Liberties Union lawyer, says the new system should guarantee that at least two city council members will be an African American. "The court has sent a clear message to an all-white city council that has made the democratic process a joke, and to a district court that indulged it," says McDonald.

LOFTY DIVIDENDS

In all of Nashville there was one place — for a short time at least — where you could bank on *not* hearing "Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound," even if you wanted to.

Nearly 4,000 Christians descended for the annual National Religious Broadcaster's convention. And they were singing the sweet songs of faith — and success.

With the taint of fallen televangelists Jimmy Swaggart

and Jim Bakker receding in the American mind, Christian broadcasters are making a comeback. And this time they mean business.

"I call them the not-so-silent majority," Rev. Warren Duffy told reporters. Duffy's Los Angeles talk show is about to be picked up by Salem Broadcasting's satellite network, which will carry his voice to Washington and New York markets. "Christians have finally decided that they are not going to have a siege mentality,"

E. Brandt Gustavson, president of the National Religious Broadcasters, agrees. "Many people feel that they have been the butt of jokes, and they're tired of that. The scandals are in the past. It's time to move forward."

If the number of exhibitors was any sign, with nearly 200 vendors filling 70,000 square feet, they're moving fast. Christian television and radio stations across the country are taking advantage of new technology — as well as new marketing techniques — to spread their message far and wide. The four states with the highest number of Christian radio stations were all located in the South: Texas,



Paul and Jan Crouch of Trinity Broadcasting

Florida, North Carolina, and Georgia.

Tennessee's own Paul and Jan Crouch have risen from relative obscurity to the head of their own Christian broadcasting empire, the Trinity Broadcasting Network, over a number of years. TBN programs air on more than 400 television stations and over 3,000 cable affili-

ates, and have stations in 24 countries. The network recently acquired Twitty City and Music Village USA. Plans are under way to turn Conway Twitty's old home and the 1,700-seat theater complex next to it into a Christian entertainment theme park.

The convention in Nashville seemed geared towards others who aspire to such lofty dividends. Along with the prayer

and hymn sessions, a variety of workshops were offered which addressed concerns everyone in the broadcast business has, but with a Christian angle: how to lure young listeners, be a good manager, sell a station effectively. And of course, the opportunity to "Learn new strategies for dealing with ethical issues and problems in the workplace — yes, even those that occur in Christian organizations!"

Tune in to Jesus

Religious radio stations by state. Full & part time AM/FM

Across the nation, especially in the South, stations are burgeoning.

State	1975	1985	1995
Alabama	15	29	42
Arkansas	14	29	28
Florida	32	46	80
Georgia	16	47	71
Kentucky	21	33	44
Louisiana	10	23	26
Mississippi	8	34	37
N. Carolina	24	58	78
S. Carolina	20	25	34
Tennessee	23	45	54
Texas	17	55	91
Virginia	18	41	59
W. Virginia	5	18	14
U.S. Total	640	1034	1379

Source: National Religious Broadcaster's Director of Religious Media

SUCKING UP, OR JUST SUCKERS?

When the Alabama Legislature rushed through a major business tax breaks bill in August 1993, nobody gave much thought to the long-term consequences. The state, after all, was in a wild bidding war for the nation's first Mercedes-Benz assembly plant; the bill was the basis of a massive incentives package that eventually helped persuade the German automaker to locate in Tuscaloosa County.

The early partying that surrounded that catch has since yielded to a serious hangover. State and local governments are struggling to meet their enormous financial

obligations to Mercedes. And the so-called "Mercedes" tax breaks law itself is now legally threatened.

More than 80 other businesses have now gotten at least tentative approval to take advan-

Cartoon by Steven Cragg



tage of that law, which follows in a venerable Alabama tradition of giving away scarce tax dollars for feverishly sought investment. The state has long handed out business abatements on already rock bottom property taxes. Under the Mercedes law, however, companies may also use corporate workers' income tax payments to pay off state-financed construction debt.

Problem is, the law may be partly illegal. The powerful state teachers' union has threatened a lawsuit, alleging that the law violates a constitutional provision earmarking personal income tax payments for teachers' salaries. Also mulling a legal challenge is the city of Fairfield near Birmingham. Home to a large steel plant, the city is worried about the impact of state-subsidized competition from a North Alabama steel mill to be built using the Mercedes breaks.

Recently elected Republican Gov. Fob Jones — no fan of the law — has assembled an ad hoc committee to suggest a compromise. As teachers' union chief Paul Hubbert explains, with some draft changes, the diversion of workers' state income taxes (euphemistically known as a "job development fee") would end entirely. And instead of industries getting approval to use the breaks before they've even broken ground or created a single job, they would receive tax credits once they actually make those investments.

What kind of reception the revised package will get from the state legislature is uncertain. Although Mercedes and other firms already approved to use the breaks would probably be grandfathered, new applicants would have to play by new rules. Key lawmakers have already balked, claiming that the incentives bring growth that would not have otherwise occurred.

But there's no hard proof for that assumption, and a new study commissioned by the anti-poverty coalition, Alabama Arise, flatly challenges it. Even before the Mercedes bill passed, the report found, Alabama was easily outpacing the nation in at-

tracting new manufacturing jobs and capital investment. And over 25 years, researchers estimated that Mercedes will get \$107 million more in tax breaks and up-front subsidies than it pays back. Should the venture ultimately fall through, the company can simply walk away.

In the hoopla that first followed the deal, state officials brushed off worries that Alabama had given away too much. To others, the moral now seems obvious.

"I think it's looking hard at what the impact is going to be and looking at all the costs," says Angie Wright, grassroots policy analyst for Alabama Arise. "If Mercedes shuts down or backs out, there's no way we'll get that money back."

— Sean Reilly

CATFISH JOHN AND STARVIN' MARVIN ON ENDANGERED LIST

"WMMT, 88.7 — Radio that turns your cobwebs to golden lace..." The station identification fades into announcements for an upcoming water quality forum and the next square dance at Carcassone. Catfish John, one of the volunteer announcers at WMMT radio in Whitesburg, Kentucky, comes on the air to remind listeners of upcoming bluegrass festivals.

Like the other 109 community radio stations across the Southeast, WMMT provides programming that commercial radio — and even public radio — can't begin to produce.

"Community radio stations are really the only broadcasters which service local issues, local culture, and local needs," says Lynn Chadwick, director of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters. Those services are threatened by the proposed cuts to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

"We could still offer some

"MOTIVATIONAL" SPEAKER INSPIRES DISMISSAL

A "motivational" speaker addressing a Wheeler High School assembly in Cobb County, Georgia, was removed from the podium after he called for the audience to come to Jesus.

"He started off quoting the New Testament book of John," said Karen Israeli, a junior. "He said, 'My message to you today is God — capital G-O-D.'"

Dwayne Redding, a salesman for a Christian publishing company, was invited to the east Cobb school to address a school-wide assembly that included presentation of the Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Awards. School officials said they expected a "motivational and inspirational" speech.

After speaking for more than 20 minutes, Redding called for those who had not accepted Christ as their savior to stand up. At that point, a faculty member walked up to the podium and told him to stop. "I regret that I was inappropriately interrupted," Redding said.

Principal Earl Holliday apologized to students and faculty and sent a letter to parents saying Redding "had greatly strayed from the topic and became embroiled in religious issues."

— Doug Payne and Gayle White

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services," says WMMT's programming director, Tom Hansell. "But no news production, no live remotes from community centers. The cuts would

etbook, however. When news of the potential cuts came, station staff and volunteers alike saw trouble. "A lot of the DJs, like Verlin Sanders, who does the

Photo by Jeff Whetstone



Produced by Appalshop, Eastern Kentucky's media production center, the station has been in operation since 1986.

have the biggest impact on local public affairs programming. Currently, 90 percent of programming is local."

The station has been nationally recognized for the quality of its programming, and listeners admire its loose, humorous style and local focus. That doesn't translate into a fat pock-

Bluegrass Express, and Catfish John, think there's just not enough money in the community to fill the gaping holes the cuts would leave in financial resources," says Hansell.

WMMT relies on federal monies for 40 percent of its budget — approximately \$89,000 annually. That funding is espe-

cially important to a station which serves one of the poorest regions in the country. WMMT reaches listeners in eastern Kentucky, southwest Virginia, and parts of North Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia. It would be hard for the low-income residents to replace the government help.

Though, even 100 percent cuts wouldn't spell the end for the station, whose second largest source of funding is the community it serves. Volunteer staff already broadcast most of the programs each week, from Starvin' Marvin's Saturday night rock 'n' roll show to Alligator John's environmental news to Dirty Harry's country slot.

All that would stay. But, Hansell says, "WMMT would basically become an entertainment service instead of an information service. Which would be fine, if there was anything to fill the gap."

Unfortunately, as Chadwick

points out, there isn't. And the station can rely on only so much support from local businesses. Many are tied to the coal industry or others with vested interests. But as long as the radio station continues to do what it does best — providing challenges to the business-as-usual attitudes of politicians and industry operators in the region — more business support is unlikely.

"How do you sell it [so that businesses will support it]?" asks Hansell. "Bluegrass and rock 'n' roll, sure. But housing and water quality?"

RAPE IS NOT A CONTRACEPTIVE

Fifty years after graduating high school, North Carolina State Rep. Henry Aldridge finally learned his sex ed. He had maintained that women who are raped can't get pregnant.

During a discussion of North Carolina's abortion funding, Aldridge implied that rape and incest victims are sexually promiscuous. Aldridge defended his statements to the General Assembly: "The facts show that people who are raped, who are truly raped, the juices don't flow, the body functions don't work, and they don't get pregnant."

Aldridge, 71, received his information from an Greensboro obstetrician, who assured him that the number of pregnancies resulting from incidents of rape

is tiny.

"It's not only possible, it happens," says Stephen C. Green, M.D., a physician at East Carolina University's maternal and fetal medical center in Aldridge's district.

Aldridge, backed by his wife, Susu, maintained his position until he realized that it damaged his image. "I hope I haven't dug myself a hole I can't get out of. This is not the kind of publicity you run around seeking."

He made a formal apology, saying that his original comments were stupid.

LADYBUG, LADYBUG

Though the Japanese may consider it an honor if a ladybug enters their house, Southerners from Georgia to Kentucky have been bestowed with just about all the honors they'd care to receive. Ladybugs have been plaguing homeowners in increasing numbers for the past three years. This year eastern Kentucky, West Virginia, and parts of Tennessee and Alabama bore the brunt of the invasion.

The ladybugs were originally released by south Georgia entomologist Louis Tedders in an effort to combat aphids, which had been destroying pecan and apple trees. In Georgia alone, scientists released 88,000 of the beetles. The experiment, begun over 15 years ago, successfully cut down on the need for dangerous pesticides.

Instead of aphids, mid-Southerners now contend with hosts of ladybugs every winter. "Evidently they adapted and sort of exploded three years ago," John McVay, an entomologist at Auburn University told *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. McVay added that the bugs seem to like the sunny south and west sides of wood houses.

"We are very sorry they got into the houses," says Tedders. "We didn't realize they would be a problem for anybody. You can't win."

Jim Blair, of Staffordsville, Kentucky, would agree. He's been battling with the ladybugs for the past two years. He favors his vacuum cleaner as his weapon of choice; scientists as well as other Kentuckians have found this a reliable — if somewhat onerous — method. "Sometimes we have hundreds, and you can't vacuum them quick enough," says Blair. He also noted that, if they get too close to the kitchen stove, "They make lumpy gravy."

Ladybugs, or *harmonia axyridis*, don't eat food, carry diseases, or chew on wood. But, complains Bruce Harris, of Morehead, Kentucky, "The darn things get in your bed-clothes and gnaw on you during the night."

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SENSITIVE MARSH TEED OFF

The head of the Jekyll Island Authority resigned abruptly this spring after reports came in that he'd allowed 20- to 65-foot-wide swaths in or near sensitive marsh wetlands to be bulldozed for a golf course.

Though he was ostensibly in charge of protecting the Georgia island, George Chambliss, the director of the authority, ordered the bulldozing without obtaining the proper state and county permits.

"It has become apparent to me that the state desires a change in direction from Jekyll's present course," Chambliss wrote in his letter of resignation.

The golf course construction project is part of a longer battle between

Cartoon by Steven Cragg



conservation groups, who feel Jekyll and other barrier islands should be kept as pristine as possible, and developers, who see the islands as future tourist attractions.

While officials won't say whether or not Chambliss was forced to quit, Governor Zell Miller and state environmental regulators were highly critical of the former director's actions. Joe Tanner, commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, said he was "very disappointed they chose to proceed with the project prior to obtaining the necessary permits. I think state government is supposed to set the example."

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More Tales from the Trough

Photo by Pat Arnow



Residents of Tillery protest corporate farms invading their community at a rally in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Even though a large man wore a furry pink pig costume and a speaker yelled “Suey! Suey! Suey!” the atmosphere was serious. Angry citizens from eastern North Carolina gathered in front of the legislative building in the capital to protest the huge — and still growing — hog farms near their homes (see “Hog Wild,” *Southern Exposure*, Fall, 1992).

Clutching their signs against the blustery February breezes, protesters listened carefully as speakers told them what they knew all too well: corporate hog farms pollute the water and cause a stench in these rural, often predominantly black communities.

“The locating of intensive hog operations in communities of color is yet another example of environmental racism,” said Gary Grant, executive director of Concerned Citizens of Tillery, a community invaded by several large hog operations. He added that half of his county’s population is African Ameri-

can, and the operations are in a part of the county where the most African Americans live.

“They’re forcing feces and urine into our nostrils, rivers, sounds, and drinking water,” said Don Webb, a leader of the Alliance for a Responsible Swine Industry, to the crowd of about 60 supporters. “You are here to defend your homes, your churches from corporate hog bullies.”

The protesters came to a legislature that hasn’t provided relief. Hog magnate Wendell Murphy, a former state senator, passed a bill preventing local zoning of corporate operations. Citizen efforts to pass a bill setting tougher environmental standards two years ago were punted to a Hog Odor Task Force charged with studying ways to lessen odor problems.

Meanwhile, regulations governing North Carolina’s billion-dollar-a-year industry are among the weakest in the nation. An esti-

mated 6.6 million hogs produce more solid waste per day than the state’s 6.8 million people.

Yet despite the Raleigh protest and a national rally in Missouri featuring FarmAid star Willie Nelson, both intended to alert the public and lawmakers to the seriousness of the corporate takeover of the hog industry, the North Carolina legislature has only responded with token gestures. Governor Jim Hunt and senate and house leaders have recommended establishing a blue-ribbon commission to study pollution problems.

To activists like Grant and Webb, however, the plan is a way of postponing a detailed hog bill they pushed into the legislature. As Grant writes in a letter to legislators, “We ask you to support the current legislation to regulate this industry. It is the people who go to the polls on election day, not pigs.”

S

Sterilization Survivors Speak Out

**What happens when scientists and politicians decide that certain people are genetically inferior?
Eugenics survivors show for whom *The Bell Curve* tolls.**

By Mary Bishop

Worldview Pictures



These four unidentified children were sexually sterilized at the Lynchburg Colony in Virginia in 1944.

“...the basic principles of the eugenics debate, even its most discredited aspects, are resurfacing in the 1990’s. To revisit the eugenics movement of the early twentieth century is to be reminded of the harm the movement intended toward those members of society least able to defend themselves. History, in this case, may help to provide an antidote to contemporary manifestations of eugenicist arguments — the I.Q. Debate and the Right’s anti-immigrant campaign.”

— Margaret Quigley
The Public Eye

Sallie Ann Johnson Wilcher was 16 when a brother-in-law seduced her in a woodshed behind her home during a thunderstorm. She delivered a baby boy from that brief union. People called him illegitimate; Wilcher called him William Lee Johnson.

It was 1927, and people in the mountainous terrain of Natural Bridge, Virginia, did not look kindly on unwed mothers. When her father, a farmer and brickyard worker, took ill two years later, Wilcher's grandmother accused her of moral looseness. County social workers were called in.

Papers on file at the Rockbridge County Courthouse show that two county physicians examined Wilcher in April 1929. It is unclear whether they gave her a formal intelligence test, but Wilcher remembered them asking her questions. "They asked me what a mud hole was," she recalled. "I didn't take it too seriously. I thought it was foolish, was what I thought."

On a form entitled "Proceeding for the Commitment of Feeble-Minded and Epileptic Persons," the doctors and a social worker recorded that they had found Wilcher to be mentally dull and disobedient. They noted that she had an illegitimate son and "no home or family able to care for her." They said she exhibited "flagrantly guilty moral delinquency." They estimated her IQ at 56. They declared her feeble-minded.

Later that spring, two women came to Wilcher's house and told her to get into their car. They left with Wilcher and Billy, then two. "They told me they was taking me to a home," she said. "They didn't tell me what kind."

The women deposited Wilcher at the Virginia Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded at Madison Heights, near Lynchburg. They drove Billy to the Children's Home Society in Richmond.

Wilcher never saw him again. At the colony, she was forcibly

Eugenicists believed that sexual appetites and an inclination toward prostitution were inherited. Sterilization would reduce the sex drive of women who had sex outside of marriage and prevent the births of promiscuous offspring.

sterilized — ensuring that she would bear no more children who might be "feeble-minded."

During more than half of this century, 60,000 Americans like Sallie Wilcher were rounded up, judged genetically inferior, held in government asylums, and sterilized against

their wills. Some were mentally retarded; many were not. Most were poor, uneducated country people — orphans, petty criminals, juvenile delinquents, epileptics, and sexually active single women. All were people that those in power, from social workers to legislators and judges, saw as threats to the nation's gene supply.

Today a public debate is once again raging over who should and should not have children. Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein have resurrected long-discredited claims of racial differences in intelligence with their book *The Bell Curve*, giving a new voice to the persistent belief that poor people and minorities are a drain on society. Newt Gingrich has suggested cutting welfare to unwed mothers and putting their children in "orphanages." In some countries, prenatal screening is being used to weed out female fetuses. And scientists with the Human Genome Project are mapping each of the approximately 100,000 genes

in human DNA, creating a technology that could be used to deny jobs, insurance — even life itself — to those with genetic portfolios deemed socially undesirable.

Renewed interest in genetic forms of social control calls for a re-examination of an important chapter in our own history. Beginning in the last century and continuing in some states until the 1970s, a powerful alliance of American scientists and politicians who supported theories known as eugenics set out to sterilize poor people on a massive scale. The experiences of survivors like Sallie Wilcher offer a reminder of what happens when a small elite decides that certain people are not wanted in the future of the human race.

"They Took My Baby Away"

England birthed the eugenics movement in the 1860s. Led by Mary Frances Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, some scientists began applying Mendelian genetics to human beings.

Worldview Pictures



The Virginia colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded at Madison Heights, near Lynchburg, housed the so-called "feeble-minded."

Great Britain, they believed, was being overrun by immigrants and others of defective bloodlines. Education, health care, and decent wages only served to encourage the begetting of more "degenerates." The solution, they insisted, was to use genetics to breed tramps, prostitutes, alcoholics, troubled kids, and other riffraff out of the human race.

The British lacked the muster to forcibly sterilize people on a wide scale, but their American counterparts put their theories into action. Pennsylvania castrated so-called "feeble-minded" children in the 1880s, and Indiana became the first state on the books with a compulsory sterilization law in 1907.

Thirty-two states followed, using tubal ligations and vasectomies to control the gene pool. During the 1930s and '40s, California targeted Chinese immigrants and others for sterilization and became the most prolific eugenics practitioner, reportedly sterilizing more than 17,000 people.

Virginia, the cradle of the Southern aristocracy and long obsessed with white racial purity, was second behind California with 8,300 forced sterilizations. The Old Dominion embraced eugenics with a fervor akin to the Confederate cause, sterilizing grade-school children and adopting a 1924 statute that served as a prototype for other states. Three years later, when the law was challenged on behalf of a young sterilization victim named Carrie Buck and her illegitimate daughter, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the act. "Three generations of imbeciles are enough," Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes declared in the landmark *Buck v. Bell*.

Evidence unearthed in later years indicates that Carrie Buck and many others sterilized in the name of science were not retarded at all. Yet the ruling in the Virginia case cleared the way for widespread sterilization. The Nazis were soon using the law as a legal framework for sterilizing hundreds of thousands in the years immediately preceding the Holo-

"Three generations of imbeciles are enough," Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes declared.

caust. Virginia continued the practice long after the war; the state did not repeal its law until 1974.

Sexually active unmarried women — especially those like Sallie Wilcher who were in their teens — were prime targets of Virginia eugenicists. They believed that sexual appetites and an inclination



Sallie Wilcher

toward prostitution were inherited. Women who had sex outside marriage were considered feeble-minded. Sterilization, it was thought, would reduce their sex drive and prevent the births of promiscuous offspring.

Before Sallie Wilcher was confined to the Virginia Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded, she enjoyed a healthy enthusiasm for sex. "I always did like mens," she recalled during an interview in her 70s. Wilcher never finished the second grade, and her speech was flavored with the kind of casual use of tenses, plurals, and pronouns that has often been mistaken for a lack of intelli-

gence. But in her later years she showed no signs of mental retardation, exhibiting a nimble wit, clear memory, and piercing sense of humor.

The colony is a collection of handsome brick buildings and expansive lawns on 200 acres along the James River. It was built as a private hospital for epileptics early in the century and became a state institution in 1914. On the outside, it looks like a college campus. On the inside, Wilcher said, life was hell.

Soon after she arrived, she sat in a corner and wept. She was put to work picking strawberries on the farm that fed the colony's patients. She labored in the laundry, a job she said was given only to patients thought to be of the highest mental grade. She did not flee because runaways were hunted down and put in solitary cells lit only by a tiny, barred window. "They locked you up in the dark if you run away," she said. "Give 'em some cornbread and water to drink. They keep 'em in there two or three weeks." Captives slept on a thin mattress on the floor. Women recaptured after an escape were given vaginal douches to "clean 'em out," Wilcher said. "They might have been with a man."

It was people like Wilcher, without anyone to speak on their behalf, who were most likely to be sterilized. "Those who were wealthy enough to afford legal assistance or raised a big enough stink usually didn't get sterilized," says Paul Lombardo, an associate professor of law at the University of Virginia who has researched the state's eugenics practices.

Wilcher's suffering at the hands of the state did not end with her surgery. As a kind of parole, she and other eugenics victims were handed over as cheap labor to affluent families. Sterilized women were especially desired as servants, says Lombardo. Not only did they work free, but there was no chance they could get pregnant and cause a scandal. Some women were used as concubines; Wilcher said she was spared that form of

exploitation.

She cooked, cleaned, and lived in people's homes, earning no pay. "They just fed me and gave me what clothes I had." When she was sent home after a year, she thought she was finally free. But once more, she said, someone "told lies" to social workers about some alleged sexual shenanigans and they took her to a Lexington boarding house where she cooked for 17 male boarders building a gas pipeline. She finally took the only escape society considered acceptable: matrimony. "I married to get out of the welfare's hands," she said. The marriage lasted 11 months. "He was brutish. I left him." A few years later, in her early 30s, she married timber cutter Voyd "Toad" Wilcher. She was his wife the rest of her life.

The Wilchers settled in Arnolds Valley, where they took in homeless children and reared the daughter of one of Wilcher's nieces as their own. In her old age, neighborhood children called her "Aunt Sallie" and flocked to her front porch.

"I wouldn't have minded having more children," she said. "Like I said, they took my baby away from me and made it so I couldn't have no more."

For 56 years, she worried about what had happened to her only child, Billy. In 1985, she found out. Her lawyer learned that her son had been adopted in 1932 by a couple named Lamkin in Raleigh, North Carolina. Like the old eugenicists, they were uncomfortable with the facts of his birth, and told him that his birth mother was a college student and his father a professor.

Billy eventually became a concrete plant foreman, and died in 1973. From his widow, Wilcher learned that she had three grandsons in Tidewater Virginia. She carefully trimmed photos of the boys and the adult Billy to fit into her billfold. Though worn thin by arteriosclerosis and heart disease at age 76, she was determined to make the long trip across the state to meet the boys. Before she could, she died of a heart attack in January 1987.

**"I don't know no Pat,"
Margie said, prepar-
ing to hang up.
"I'm your daughter," the
caller said.**

"For Your Own Health"

Courthouses across Virginia contain the fading commitment papers of thousands of eugenics victims like Sallie Wilcher. The Amherst County Courthouse, closest to the colony where Wilcher was confined, houses hundreds of records of those who were sterilized. The social judgments contained in the documents are uniformly damning. Taken together, they represent a mountain of devalued lives.

A 25-year-old housewife named Lillian was accused in 1908 of a "lack of virtue and spells of swearing." Commitment papers on other people mentioned dirty teeth, "silly conduct," and "stupid" expressions on their faces. A man declared feeble-minded was said to dress and behave effeminately.

Poverty seemed present in all the lives documented by the files. There were as many men as women, and more whites than blacks — perhaps because there was no state institution for blacks judged to be epileptic or feeble-minded until a separate colony was established in Petersburg during the 1930s.

Among the papers are those of Mary Frances Corbin Donald. She was sent to the Virginia Colony with two sisters and a brother in the 1940s, at a time when their mountain family was locked in poverty. Donald remained for 16 years.

She remembers a shot to the spine to numb her from the waist down right before she was sterilized. "It's for your

own health," the doctors told her. She was 11 years old. The operation nearly killed her, and she was in a coma for almost two weeks.

Donald, like many of those sterilized, wasn't told the purpose of her operation. Many young women grew up believing they had appendectomies. Some didn't learn the truth until years later, when they were unable to conceive a child. Some still do not know they were sterilized.

As a child, Donald was put to work

Worldview Picture



Jesse Meadows

bathing so-called "low grade" patients with severe disabilities. Her punishment for misbehavior was to sleep between two of those patients, who she said would urinate and defecate on her. She saw patients shoved into the solitary cells called "blind rooms." One woman's arms were tied behind her back. "The next morning, she was

dead," Mary Frances said. "I don't know what happened to her."

Eventually, Donald got a job in the colony dining hall, cutting eyes from potatoes and doing other chores. She earned a dollar a month. Released in 1958 from what was by then called the Lynchburg Training School and Hospital, she went to work cleaning homes in the area, but her past at the institution was ever-present. If she failed to do her work as ordered, she said, employers would warn, "I'm going to send you back to the training school."

Now 61, Mary Frances Donald still lives in Lynchburg, in an old neighborhood just across the James River from the colony. Nearby are

A 25-year-old housewife was accused in 1908 of a "lack of virtue and spells of swearing."

For some reason, Margie escaped the sterilizing knife for the first nine years of her incarceration. Officials arranged a series of live-in domestic jobs for her in the Lynchburg area. She cared for the children of prosperous couples, including doctors at the training school.

When she was 21, Margie became pregnant by her boyfriend, Ollie Brown. Sent back to the training school, she

gave birth in September 1964 to a five-pound baby girl she named Tammy. Doctors took the child from her immediately and gave it to a couple from western Virginia for adoption. Under the state system of social controls, the still-unmarried Margie was deemed unfit to be a mother.

"They had let me out to take care of other people's children," she recalled. "I felt like I could take care of my

own."

The doctors also pressured Margie to undergo sterilization. "They said if I wanted out of that place, I'd have to be sterile; and if I didn't, I'd have to stay there a lifetime." She chose surgery and a life with her boyfriend free of the institution. She and Ollie married and tried for years to find their daughter, but a welfare worker told them they would never be allowed to see her.

Ollie Brown died last year. A month later, Margie, now 54, got a call from a young woman who identified herself as "Pat."

"I don't know no Pat," Margie said, preparing to hang up.

"I'm your daughter," the caller said.

Her adoptive parents had renamed her Patty. After they died when she was a child, she was raised by her adoptive brother and his wife, who eventually told her she was adopted. Last summer Patty Emrick drove from her Alabama home with her husband and three children to meet her mother. Margie loaded her dining room table with dolls and stuffed animals for grandchildren she never thought she would know. She was pleased: Patty looks like Ollie.

"I Still Feel Ashamed"

Some people have spent years trying to forget the Lynchburg colony. Others have waited half a century for someone to ask about it.

Jesse Frank Meadows, 72, is a shy man with a round, fleshy face and blue eyes that register delight in the small pleasures of life — his overprotective chihuahua and the stray cats he feeds outside his government-subsidized apartment in Lynchburg. A lonely widower, he won't go to senior citizen events because he is afraid someone will recognize him as a former patient and treat him with the stigma he says he lives with to this day. For the past few years, however, he has been talking and writing about his life, hoping to exorcise the sadness and prevent someone else from being mistreated in the future.

Meadows grew up on the eastern ridge of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Madison County, Virginia. Many of his kin were forced out of their homes of several generations to make way for the Shenandoah National Park. His mother had died in childbirth when he was 12, and his father and stepmother did not want to raise him. They kept sending him to relatives, reform schools, and camps run by the Civilian Conservation Corps to get rid of him, but he kept coming home. Finally, after he was falsely blamed for setting a forest fire, Meadows was sent to the colony.

It was June 6, 1940. Meadows still recites the date with dread. Attached to



Mary Frances Donald

hundreds of other former patients who settled into marriages and jobs close to the institution, bonded by shame and anger at what was done to them. Decades later, they still talk as if the colony might reach across the river and capture them again if anyone questions their behavior.

Margie Robinson Brown lives just a few blocks from Donald. She, too, was just a girl when she and her little sister, Betty, were committed to the training school after their mother was sent to a state farm for women in the 1950s. Margie was 13; Betty was 10.

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his colony admissions card is a small, dark photograph of him, thin and sad-faced. He was 17. Patient #4930.

His earliest records describe him as feeble-minded and a "moron" with a psychopathic personality. Colony officials wrote in his file that he had little to say in those first days, except to ask when he could go home. They warned he was a "pyromaniac," but within months, doctors and nurses were revising their assessment. "Patient has been in the institution for six months," they noted, "and so far has been very quiet and well-behaved, and has caused absolutely no trouble."

At first Meadows lived and worked on a locked ward, changing beds and cleaning rooms. "It was more like a prison than a hospital," he said. Some patients were helpless, mentally or physically, but others were able-bodied, mentally capable people who had been abandoned there as children. One of his friends, a boy named Stanley, was locked up for stealing a three-cent stamp. Meadows remembered seeing an infant left on the colony's front steps one morning.

"They had people there because they had no education, some for drinking, some girls for staying out late at night, anything to get slave labor there," he said. Patients earned a dime a month working on the farm that fed the colony; Meadows eventually made a dollar a month painting the colony's large buildings.

A few months after his arrival, doctors set a date for his sterilization. Some families hired lawyers to block the colony from sterilizing their children, but no one came to Meadows' defense. His father signed papers authorizing the surgery, and a local lawyer was appointed to serve as his legal guardian. Meadows has no recollection of meeting him. Guardianships of colony patients were a legal industry for Lynchburg attorneys, who collected tidy sums representing patients at quick, *pro-forma* sterilization proceedings. After such a hearing in late October 1940, Meadows was given a bilateral vasectomy.

"I was so mixed up. Once you've been there, your life ain't the same anymore."

Meadows ran away from the colony several times. Each time, he was apprehended and put into a "blind room." Sometimes he stayed as long as 60 days, with only a pot to contain his waste. Patients were "looked down on and treated like wild beasts and locked up like animals," he said. "I used to pray for death."

For lesser offenses than escape, patients were made to push brooms called "rubbers" weighted with a 20-pound block of wood. "That's how they'd make you shine the floor and punish you at the same time," Meadows said.

When the governor made his annual visit, the brooms were tucked away and all the blind rooms cleared. "One boy tried to talk to the governor to tell him how he was treated," Meadows said. "They punished him severely for trying to tell what was going on" and kept him locked in a blind room for several weeks.

Finally, two years after he was locked up, Meadows' uncle pressed federal authorities and won his release. On the outside, Meadows had trouble finding work. "I didn't have any home, and Mother's people wasn't able to keep me," he said. "I was so mixed up. Once you've been there, your life ain't the same anymore."

Meadows voluntarily checked back into the only place he knew would take him — the colony. This time around, he thought, he could come and go at will. Unwittingly, however, he had re-upped for 10 more years of institutionalization. It was, he says, "the worst mistake of my life."

He painted colony buildings all day and the homes of colony staff and their families at night. In 1952, Superintendent Dr. D.L. Harrell Jr. finally arranged

for his release. "He said I just got a wrong start in life, that I didn't have no business being there in the first place," Meadows recalled.

Life on the outside wasn't much better. Meadows said people around Lynchburg had a low opinion of anyone who was at the colony. "People looked down on you . . . acted like you had the plague." He earned \$5 a day and use of a trailer for maintaining a mobile home park, and later made \$40 a month painting the homes of prominent Lynchburg citizens. He was afraid to demand more money, fearful he would be sent back to the colony.

In his late 30s, he fell in love and married. He helped his wife, Trudy, raise her seven children. Finally, Meadows had a home. When Trudy got emphysema after years of chain smoking, he served as her home nurse, cleaning her oxygen tank and monitoring her respiration and medication. She died in 1989.

Unable to drive and ashamed to go out, Meadows spends most of his time alone in his apartment. He watches wrestling on television, sends notes and birthday cards to friends, and writes sheaves of recollections about his family, his life at the colony, and his happy years with Trudy. "Right today," he said, "I still feel ashamed for being in a place like that."

Still, he is determined to tell his story. He calls his longest autobiographical essay, "God's Truth: My Life Since 1935, My Painful Past." In it he writes, "If this story will help some poor person, it will all be worth coming out in the open. And I hope and pray to God no one will ever have to go through what I have. May God bless all the others that's been there. May God be with them always. They have had their hell on this earth."

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Mary Bishop is a reporter with the Roanoke Times & World-News. She is continuing to locate and interview eugenics survivors for a book on how the movement affected their lives.

em'inent do-main the right of a government to appropriate private property for a perceived public use, usually but not always with compensation to the owner.

EMINENT DOMAIN CARVES UP A NEW SOUTH

By Margaret Lynn Brown

Last summer my neighbors dolefully watched as Oglethorpe Power carved up a piece of their property for a high-voltage power line.

With the power of eminent domain behind them, this private company purchased lands from their Rocky Mountain power plant to Atlanta, slicing Northwest Georgia into a wedge and pretty much erasing the Kinneys' backyard in the process. First a timber contractor clear-cut the trees up Turkey Mountain, then the power company erected an enormous fence along the road ways. Finally, the towers arrived. Tied together by taut lines, they marched up and down the landscape like gargantuan creatures from outer space.

Some people sued; some people were reimbursed for the "inconvenience," but most of us were left wondering about the long-term effects of these unwanted invaders. In addition to generating electromagnetic fields (EMFs), the power lines and towers changed forever the long unbroken ridge residents here recognize as home. One of our friends mourns a magnificent stand of pink ladyslippers bulldozed with the trees. Others worry about the herbicides the company will use to keep the corridor free of undergrowth and what that will mean for their springs, their wells. . . and their health.

Unfortunately, this story is being re-

peated through the rural South. As the Southern states race to industrialize and improve their infrastructures, the accompanying power lines, pipelines, and highways have begun to crisscross the countryside, aimed at major urban centers. All of this is possible, I discovered, because the power of eminent domain—once the exclusive privilege of government—is now being wielded by large corporations for private profit.

This special section of *Soouthern Exposure* looks at how the use of eminent domain has been expanded by government and private interests over the past 70 years. Although scholars and journalists have discussed in detail the role of federal spending in the creation of a New South, most have ignored the use of federal authority to force residents off their land. Although much has been written about the rise of a Sunbelt serving the residential preferences of a new middle class, the effect of industrializing cities on the surrounding rural environment receives little attention. Although anyone could be affected by corporate use of eminent domain, conservative politicians have distracted public debate on this important topic by advancing a sideways discussion of the "takings power" of environmental regulations and a construed reading of the Constitution.

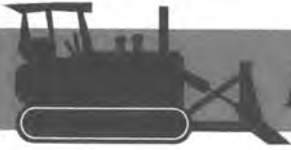
The U.S. Constitution guarantees private individuals "just compensation" for

property taken or condemned for federal road construction and other "public goods." In the 20th century, a National Forest system was interpreted as a "public good" for which eminent domain could be used. Later, national parks became a "public good" for which government might usurp private property. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) received the power of eminent domain for the "public goods" of flood control and navigation, though the agency used it primarily to generate electric power.

Today, the undemocratic use of government power is being extended to private power line, pipeline, and communication companies for the creation of their transmission corridors. Whereas TVA received the power of eminent domain under an act of the U.S. Congress, a private electric company can now take land through the simple administrative process of a state utility board. Not surprisingly, the people most likely to lose their property without any benefit of public process are those like my neighbors, who do not have the financial resources to resist.

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Margaret Lynn Brown just received her doctorate from the University of Kentucky. She has spent the past six years studying the removal of residents for the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Fontana Dam. Her book, Smoky Mountain Story, will be ready for publication later this year.



Taking the land . . .
To Power Urban America

DRAWING THE LINES IN WEST VIRGINIA

By Charlotte Pritt

HONEY, I'LL TELL YOU. I'M AN OLD WOMAN AND I'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT TO KEEP MY LAND. I'VE BEEN THROUGH THE DEPRESSION AND NEAR STARVATION TO HOLD ON TO WHAT MY FAMILY PASSED TO ME. YOU SEE MY AUNT OVER THERE, SHE'S IN HER 90S AND SHE COMES TO ALL THESE MEETINGS WITH ME. WE DON'T INTEND TO LET THEM TAKE OUR PROPERTY. WE'LL FIGHT TO THE DEATH TO KEEP OUR LAND, BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO LIVE FOR WITHOUT IT.

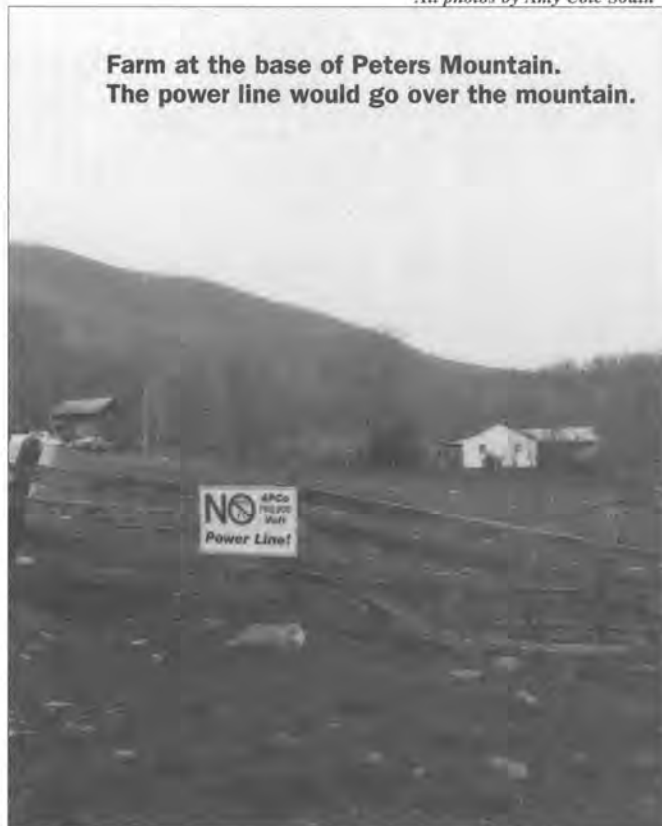
—Thelma Boothe

If you've ever traveled along Peters Mountain or through the New River Valley of West Virginia, you'll understand something about the powerful sense of place that Thelma Boothe feels. Small farms scattered below long forested ridges look like scenes from a 1920s postcard. A general store and gas station mark the center of each small community, and people here still sit on their front porches at night. The gentle beauty of the place makes you believe that a truly good way of life is still being lived somewhere in the world.

For the past five years, though, Boothe and her Monroe County neighbors have engaged in a fierce battle over who has the rights to this corner of southeastern West Virginia: the

All photos by Amy Cole South

**Farm at the base of Peters Mountain.
The power line would go over the mountain.**



people who call this place home or American Electric Power (AEP). Since 1990, AEP, through its subsidiary Appalachian Power Company (APCO) has tried to gain the power of eminent domain in order to take land for the construction of a 765-kilovolt electric transmission line right through Mercer, Summers, Raleigh, and Monroe counties in West Virginia and on to Roanoke, Virginia.

The corridor — the company's term for the swath of land it wants to use — not only involves taking people's land, but, in some cases, destroying the environment and, as a result, landowners' livelihoods. The \$5 billion dollar-a-year corporation wants to sell cheap electricity from its power plants in the Midwest to East Coast

markets. Power from the line will not benefit West Virginians at all.

Transmission line struggles such as this one are likely to increase. Both sides are lining up. In the coming decades, power companies will increasingly engage in "wheeling and dealing" electricity (a phrase used by the industry) across state lines. The National EMR Alliance, an organization that tries to help local groups, has grown to 350 grassroots affiliates (including ones in every state in the South) in just four and a half years, according to representative Cathy Bergman. As the Southeast continues to be the fastest-growing region of the country, battles between rural landowners and corporations serving urban industrial centers are likely to grow.

The struggle in West Virginia is unique, however, because in this case rural communities have resisted a multinational corporation's attempt to gain power over the landscape. But residents have become discouraged about the length of their fight and the ease with which this private company can still gain the immense power of eminent domain. Yet these southeast West Virginians are determined to protect their land and culture.

The controversy started for Mary Pearl Compton in 1990, when she received a letter about a public meeting in Hinton, West Virginia. Compton, who represents the 26th district (Mercer and Summers counties) in the West Virginia legislature, drove to Hinton, where the power company had set up a huge display about the power line. The meeting troubled Compton because almost no one showed up for it. As she drove home that night, she grew deeply worried. "I believed that people didn't know about the meeting, or they would've been there," she remembers.

When she got a letter about another "public" meeting at the Mercer County courthouse, Compton made sure 15 people she knew showed up. "It was the same speeches and everything," she recalls, but this time the people who attended expressed their distress.

Bob Zacker, a Monroe County potter and jewelry maker, was covered with wood shavings that night when his

"IRRATIONAL NIMBYs" VS. THE TECHNOCRATS What to do when guys with computer-generated displays come for your land.

By Jim McNeely

Jim McNeely, an avid backpacker and Appalachian trail hiker, is a country lawyer from West Virginia. When AEP tried to build a power line across the mountain that he calls home, he became involved in representing Common Ground. We asked him to tell us what he's learned so far, or what advice he would give to communities facing similar threats.

On any sleepy day in a rural community, they can show up . . . the folks in business suits and Italian loafers, who explain why they
1) need your land for a highway, a power line, a pipeline, or a lake, and
2) why opposing them is hopeless.

The corporation intent on benefiting from this "progress" will bring with them a university "study team" or "big name consultants," who show, with the help of studies sponsored by the corporation, the benefits of the project. Slick researchers will then produce computer-generated geographic information system (GIS) maps, which explain (in four-color) the advantages of your land as the "least impact" location for their project. Before you know about it, local officials have granted the power line or pipeline company the power to take land through eminent domain. They can condemn and take property. And once they have condemnation power, it's too late.

As citizens begin to object to the loss of their property, these technocrats dismiss them as irrational "NIMBYs" (Not in My Back Yard!) who won't, unfortunately, accept their loss as being best for the "public good" — the economy, the community, and even the environment. In this way, technocrats with a strong profit motive effectively paint small landowners as the "selfish ones." They have rationality on their side, and you, in effect, are arguing with a computer.

So it's not a fair fight, to be sure. This unequal conflict between the citizenry and those who would use government power to further private interest has been with us since the Industrial Revolution. Computerization simply delivers a new and powerful weapon into the hands of corporate interests, but this same weapon can also provide an opportunity for rural citizens to question the need and location of such projects.

Based on my experience as an attorney, this is what you need to do when those guys show up with their computer-generated displays:

FIRST, don't be intimidated by the technology or by your lack of comparable maps. Dig into the subject, read up on these maps, and **educate yourself on how to "walk the walk and talk the talk"** of the technocrats. Most importantly, use your knowledge of the on-the-ground landscape to question their fancy maps.

SECOND, don't assume that the maps are correct. The fundamental problem with computerized studies is that the impressive analysis and fancy display capabilities of a computer program usually outstrip data collection and verification. How did they get their information? Data collection is often costly and requires tedious fieldwork, which is unattractive to planners, landscape architects, and geographers. They will pretend that their incomplete and inaccurate data is

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neighbor drove up and said he needed to go to the meeting. "I'll never forget the date — November 11, 1990," he says, because the meeting forever changed his life. "The information was cleverly disguised, but we figured out they wanted to build the largest power line in the U.S.A. right through our county."

Over the next few months, every county in this corner of West Virginia organized as a group. Zacker helped start Common Ground (Monroe County), and across the ridge in Mercer County residents organized Citizens Against the High-Voltage Powerline. A third group called itself A Coordinated Voice for Summers County.

THE X-LETTERS

Neither AEP nor APCO yet had a permit from the West Virginia Public Utilities Commission. Such a permit from a state administrative office would give them full power of eminent domain, the right to "take" people's land for the project. Although it still had no such power, the company proceeded to send residents letters which declared that their land would be taken and how much they would be paid for it. Thelma Boothe received such a letter, which included a map crossing out large portions of her property. The "x letters," as Boothe and her neighbors now refer to them, gave everyone a shock and inspired many other members of the community to join the grassroots organizations.

"They say that they will pay you for the piece of land they use," explains Jeanette Justice, a schoolteacher in Mercer County and member of Citizens Against the High-Voltage Powerline. "But taking a piece of my land is like coming in with a carpet knife and slicing a one-foot square in the middle of my living room rug. When they do that, they've ruined the whole thing. Who wants to own — or buy — a house or land with a hole in it?"

Each group began circulating petitions and educating themselves about the power line company and its plans for their community. Joe and Arna Neel, Monroe County farmers and founders of Common Ground, traveled with a group

of their neighbors to Floyd County, Virginia, to look at a similar power line built there. They interviewed farmers like themselves and discovered that the voltage was so strong that residents there had to ground their tractors. When Floyd county farmers get on a roof to paint or maintain it, they are often mildly shocked. The most distressing part of the story, said Neel, was that most of them first heard about the power line after the company had the power of eminent domain, "after it was too late to stop the bulldozers from rolling over their land."

Once a corporation gains the power of eminent domain from state authorities, there is almost nothing that can be done, according to Jim McNeely, a lawyer who began working with Common Ground. "People need to get involved in the administrative procedure, because otherwise their rights may expire there," says McNeely. It is not unusual for the only "public meeting" held by power companies to be the kind of poorly announced proceeding held in Hinton, he explains.

"How could this happen in a democracy?" asks Amy Cole, a leader in the Border Conservancy, another community

group. Both the United States and the West Virginia Constitutions guarantee that private property cannot be taken by the government without "due process" and "adequate compensation," but how does a private company so easily gain this power? "It seems so un-American," Cole comments.

GIVING AWAY OUR SOVEREIGNTY

Since the Industrial Revolution, corporations have sought to gain the powers of government while retaining the privileges of individuals. In

"WE FIGURED OUT THEY WANTED TO BUILD THE LARGEST POWER LINE IN THE U.S.A. RIGHT THROUGH OUR COUNTY."



The Zenith store has been a gathering place for years in Monroe County. In recent years, it has become a center for the groups fighting the power line. The power companies had failed to note the community of Zenith on their maps, and their proposed corridor went right through the store.

West Virginia during the late 19th century, the legislature granted extremely broad powers to railroads, which took land to construct lines for the coal companies. "Giving the rights of government to the railroads was very controversial at the time," says Richard Grossman, head of the Program on Corporations, Law, and Democracy.

Yet, Grossman points out, today few people are challenging the right of private gas, telephone, and electric companies to take land for their own purposes. "If we, the people, give corporations this power, to what degree are we giving away our sovereignty as a free people? And if we give them power," Grossman adds, "to what extent should [these corporations] continue to be responsible to the public interest?"

To keep their land, the community groups in West Virginia found that they have to tackle such heady questions. The answer to their dilemma was not found by simply hiring a lawyer or getting a powerful politician to help them. They had to become directly involved in the political process.

The groups gathered 10,000 signatures on petitions and traveled to the West Virginia legislature to gain political attention for their cause. With the help of Compton, they passed House Concurrent Resolution 41 in 1992, which expressed concern about the economic, cultural, and environmental impact of the proposed high-voltage power line on the community. HCR 41, the community group's first victory, helped send a message to the state Public Service Commission that laws and regulations protecting West Virginians from such projects should be enforced.

The groups also began collecting information about why the AEP/APCO power line was not necessarily in the public interest. Bob Zacker, whose land would *not* be taken by the power company, was especially disturbed about the potential environmental damage to the beautiful valley in which he lives. Peters Mountain, which the corridor would intersect, is a 61-mile limestone karst containing more than 1,000 small springs. This fractured limestone purifies the water of two Monroe County mineral spring

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correct and manage to fool themselves along with the public. This map does not show my pond, you tell them, and where have you placed our community meeting center on your display? "Ground truthing," the process of comparing the results of computer-generated studies to the "real world" on the ground, will often reveal substantial errors that can slow up if not derail the entire project.

THIRD, remember that computer displays and maps are meaningless without knowledge of the methodology. Find out how they defined and weighted each factor in their analysis. Computers work in numbers, so **somebody had to turn factors, such as land use, history, quality of life, and other values, into a number. How did the computer program define "least impact?"** How much "weight" did it give agricultural use, a residence, or a church? Did the computer program consider aesthetic concerns? Despite the importance of methodology, technocrats will attempt not to reveal these critical facts. Insist on details in writing — a description of the methodology — for it is in these details that the prejudices and biases of the study will be found.

FOURTH, use every resource — human, technical, and financial — to first identify issues not considered by the power line company or highway department. **A very common mistake of citizen groups is to over-research issues identified by their opponent.** Collateral attacks from unexpected directions can take advantage of overconfidence and lack of flexibility in the management structure of large institutions. Did they consider, for example, that the power line will have to go through an old-growth stand in a National Forest, which contains several endangered species? With the demand for documentation in environmental impact processes, a poorly done computer study may look impressive but quickly collapse when challenged on the right basis.

FIFTH, develop and carry out your own integrated strategy. In struggles over development, citizens must battle political, technical, and legal fronts all at once. You must educate other members of the community, put pressure on local officials, find someone to give technical and legal advice, and keep up good communication with all members of your group. This can't be done alone. **Bring together everyone you know who will help.**

SIXTH, pick your paid assistance carefully. Often the first reaction of a community is to hire a lawyer and thereafter concentrate on raising money for fees and expenses. Unless the attorney is attuned to technical and political issues, however, he or she may not be able to accomplish all that you hope. When confronted with a technically oriented administrative process, **a better and less expensive first-hire might be a geographer, a landscape architect, or other technical consultant.** For example, if you need to question an environmental assessment, a person with credentials in biology might help you more than an attorney.

On any sleepy day in a rural community, they are liable to show up. . . . But if citizen groups can avoid the intimidation and confusion that comes with computers and business suits, they can beat them at their own game. By working smarter and understanding the strengths and vulnerabilities of computer studies, the "natives" can effectively challenge the "cannons" of modern technology.

companies, New Mint Springs and Sweet Springs Valley Company, as well as that of a Roanoke-based company, Quibell. Sweet Springs has won three of the five last international testing competitions held in West Virginia.

Because AEP would have to maintain the power line corridor by spraying herbicides on the land, the groups worry about the effect on the mineral springs, the health of area residents, and the endangered species that live in the Jefferson National Forest through which the corridor would pass.

"It's going to hurt the water-bottling business on Peters Mountain. This water is supposed to be the best in the world," says Bill Mitchell, a school bus driver from Summers County. "Those boys over there are going to be real upset about this power line and the spraying that'll go on if it's strung up."

"I'm 49 years old, and I've been concerned about the environment most of my life," says Zacker, who moved to the valley 20 years ago to raise his family. "But when it's right in front of you, you have got to *do* something. That's what consciousness *is*. If folks don't want corporations to steal their private property and their public rights, then they've got to take a stand."

Zacker became the executive director of ARCS, a bi-state group dedicated to coordinating the efforts of 10 different county groups opposing the power line. ARCS, which gets its name from the luminous glow resulting from a broken electric current, received a small three-year grant from the Catholic Church's Campaign for Human Development in Washington, D.C.

Zacker and the community members researched whether or not the power line was really needed and who stood to ben-



The Border Conservancy meets regularly at the Zenith store in Monroe County, West Virginia.

"I USUALLY HATE ENVIRONMENTALISTS," THE TREASURER SAID.

efit from it. "Why does a small state like West Virginia need one of the largest transmission lines in the world running through it?" asks Zacker. The groups discovered that AEP could gross as much as \$100,000 an hour on such a transmission line and increase their profitability by 10 percent. "We have all the power we need right here in the mountains," says Zacker. "Why should we suffer because AEP wants to make more money transferring power from the west to the east?"

As Bill Mitchell, a retired railroad engineer, put it, "It's nothing but an electric interstate in the sky that's going to dump cheap Midwest electricity into the East Coast market."

But Mitchell takes the issue one step further. Not only did AEP stand to gain, but because the cheap Midwest power could depress local coal producers, the West Virginia economy could suffer, according to Mitchell. A member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, Mitchell helped develop a resolution against the power line from that group as well as one from the United Mine Workers.

STRANGE
BEDFELLOWS; THE
ECO-NRA

Because of all this organization and communication, the power line controversy has caused some unusual coalitions to form in West Virginia counties. The treasurer of Common Ground, for one, is a member of the National Rifle Association, and another prominent member is on the board of the National Committee for the New River, an environmental group. "I usually hate environmentalists," the treasurer reportedly said. But now they are united by the same purpose.

The National Committee for the New River proved to be a powerful ally. The power company proposed an alternative corridor for the power line, which would pass across the lovely New River valley just south of the New River Gorge, which is administered by the National Park Service. Community groups, along with the National Committee for the New River, gained the support of other environmental groups, including the Sierra Club and Ducks Unlimited, which passed resolutions against the power line. In 1992, legislation was passed to place the section of the New River upstream from Bluestone Lake under study as a potential Wild and Scenic River.

For several years, the National Committee for the New River has been trying to get this designation, which would make a power line pretty much impossible to take through the land. Because of the power line fight, many community members finally saw the importance of the designation and participated in federal hearings about the river. Patricia "Cookie" Cole, a Monroe County farmer who painted "Just Say No to APCO" on her barn, testified in 1993 before a Congressional hearing on the federal Wild and Scenic River status: "Since 1990,

I've been fighting a power line. But what I have learned is that we can't wait on a threat to appear: We must get our mountains, our rivers, our landscape, and our way of life the recognition and protection they deserve. Our mountains, our rivers, our land . . . have all become endangered species which we must fight to protect."

These gargantuan political efforts finally paid off on May 10, 1993, when the West Virginia Public Service Commission dismissed the AEP/APCO high-voltage power line application. But the company did not by any means give up. Instead, they hired a New Jersey consultant to help write an environmental assessment of the power line corridor and planned a new round of public meetings. In 1994, the company held another round of public meetings in southeastern West Virginia, this time armed with maps. Back in 1991 when AEP had constructed the original siting map for the power line corridor, the company hired landscape architects from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and West Virginia University. Virginia Tech researchers collected data about the geography of the region, and West Virginia University generated computerized, four-color maps of the region. With the "objective science" of university studies behind them, the experts offered a slick presentation of why the power line had to go through southeastern West Virginia.

"The burden is on rural communities to fight corporations with tens of thousands of dollars to spend on presentations," complains McNeely. "With the prestige of the universities behind them, it's easy to be persuaded." But the community groups had done their research. They knew they had to do more than say they didn't want their land taken; they needed to question the basis on which the siting had been done. The place was packed, according to Compton, and people questioned almost every premise



Monroe County, West Virginia, craftsman Bob Zacker (left), and farmer Joe Neel (right), a founder of Common Ground, attend a meeting at the Zenith store.

THE VOLTAGE WAS SO STRONG THAT RESIDENTS HAD TO GROUND THEIR TRACTORS.

under which the map was created. How much weight was given to churches, they demanded to know. What values were given to agricultural land in the computer program? The communities of Waiteville and Zenith were not even on the maps, someone else pointed out, and the corridor went right through the Zenith general store, where Common Ground held its meetings. "It was obvious that to AEP these communities were just an empty spot on the map," said Compton.

At one public hearing, an unknown community member stood up and said, "Let me get this straight. If we had divided up our land for profit, a subdivision or something, you wouldn't have considered us [taking that land]. But because we kept our land together, pro-

ected our homeplace for a hundred years, you're coming right at us?"

The company did not convince anyone in the community that the power line was in their best interest. In fact, since then, AEP has also been turned down by the Virginia Public Service Commission, which was influenced by the decision made by West Virginia. At present, the power company is trying to obtain the right to cross the Jefferson National Forest, and the community groups are trying to get the National Forest Service to hear their concerns. After five years, they don't expect any fight to be easy.

It is clear in West Virginia that a battle is emerging over the balance of power in this country. For real change to happen, citizens must challenge what Richard Grossman calls the "judicial edicts beginning in the 1880s," which granted corporations far-reaching constitutional powers, such as the use of eminent domain, and protection, such as free speech. He also reminds us that regulating and controlling corporations is the responsibility of the citizens through the voice in their legislatures. To win the battles of eminent domain, citizens must insist that legislatures, judges, and corporations be accountable to the communities they affect.

On Peters Mountain, where residents hear the roar of the land, feel the pulse of its energy, and see its spectacular beauty, this is about more than a piece of property: The land is a living symbol for the spirit of the place and people. As "Cookie" Cole put it: "On Peters Mountain people believe that only God has eminent domain!"

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Charlotte Pritt worked as a consulting community organizer with groups in West Virginia fighting the AEP/APCO power line. In 1992, she ran as a grassroots candidate for governor of the state, and in six weeks, with a \$115,000 budget, nearly unseated the incumbent. This fall, she will be the democratic candidate for governor of West Virginia.

*Taking the land . . .
For Tourism and Recreation*

RE-CREATION OF THE WILDERNESS

By Margaret Lynn Brown

THE MOUNTAIN FARMERS CLEARED THE LAND IN THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS; THE PARK SERVICE PUT IT BACK THE WAY IT HAD BEEN — AND THEN SOME.

On any summer day, you can join bumper-to-bumper traffic snaking through the center of Cades Cove, Tennessee, on the western end of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Campers and tourists in air-conditioned cars stop traffic to take a photograph of a deer or to visit the Cable Mill for film and souvenirs. The unmistakable odor of brake fluid fills the air as you gaze across the open fields toward the dramatic wall of forested mountains rising above grazing cattle. Along the loop road, log cabins resting on neat green lawns — carefully labeled with family names — give you the impression that this popular tourist site was once, very long ago, a frontier community.

What most visitors don't realize is that almost every watershed in the Smoky Mountains was once somebody's home, just like Cades Cove. Until 1934, the Sugarlands, Copeland Creek, Cosby Creek, Big Creek, Cataloochee, Oconaluftee, Noland Creek, Forney Creek, and Hazel Creek were all etched

*Taken from
"My Mountain Home,"
a poem by Louisa Walker*

*They coax they wheedle
They fret they bark
Saying we have to have this place
For a national park*

*For us poor mountain people
They don't have a care
But must a home for
The wolf the lion and the bear*

into pasture, cornfield, wood lot, and homes. Sixty-odd years ago, this pastoral landscape, which extended up to 3,000 feet, supported an estimated 5,700 people.

To be sure, the Smoky Mountains residents did have ancestors who came as frontier settlers. John and Lucretia Oliver settled Cades Cove in 1818, and their grandson, John W. Oliver still farmed the same homeplace in the early decades of the 20th century, according to

Durwood Dunn, author of a richly detailed community study, *Cades Cove*. Like many Smoky Mountains residents, John W. Oliver replaced the log cabin of his forebears with a framed farm house (others built less expensive "boxed houses"). Several farmers, including Oliver, ran guest lodges for hunters and fishermen. Many owned trucks and tractors, and at least one resident ran a gas station out of his general store.

Large farmers living in the fertile bottomlands raised corn and cattle for regional markets. Small upland farmers, who, in their words, "raised what we ate and ate what we raised," made their living on small corn-and-vegetable gardens, plants gathered in the woods, and hogs grazed in the common woodlands above their homes. "We didn't have to buy a thing, only just coffee," Newton Ownby, a resident, told an interviewer in 1938. These rural Americans were not in any sense pre-modern or "backward," but they lived a life intrinsically connected with the out-of-doors. Their hikes were excursions to find berries and dig ramps (a variety of wild onion); their



Cataloochee homeplace, today completely wooded.

camping trips involved fishing, hunting squirrels, or “salting” the cattle that grazed on the mountain-tops.

TOURISTS EYE THE MOUNTAINS

As the South urbanized, however, city residents longed for rural retreats, such as the very mountains the Smokies’ residents enjoyed. In the western United States, tourists promoted the construction of national parks out of public lands, but in

the Southeast, almost all the land rested in private hands. Because the National Park Service did not yet possess land acquisition funds, Southern states purchased land or gained the power of eminent domain and then donated land to the federal government to create national parks. The first of these, the Great Smokies, resulted when the states of North Carolina and Tennessee bought or condemned 1,100 small farms and the property of 18 timber and mining companies. A few years later, Virginia took

“THEY THOUGHT IT WAS AWFUL, TO JUST DRIVE PEOPLE OUT OF THEIR HOMES LIKE THEY DROVE THE INDIANS OUT AT ONE TIME. PEOPLE DIDN’T UNDERSTAND ABOUT PRESERVING A FOREST. . . . THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE JUST BEING DROVE OUT.”

as many farms and mining interests to create Shenandoah National Park, and during the 1940s Texas dispossessed about 50 cattle ranchers to initiate Big Bend National Park.

Civic boosters from Knoxville, Tennessee, and Asheville, North Carolina, pushed a national park in the Smokies not for preservation so much as to bring their region publicity and income through tourism. In 1925, David C. Chapman, president of a drug company in Knoxville, founded the Great Smoky

Mountains Conservation Association to raise money for purchasing the large acreage needed for a natural monument. Chapman himself was so gifted in hyperbole that he almost single-handedly got the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission to list the Smoky Mountains as a potential site. Within months, the Conservation Association had attracted teams of journalists and travel writers to promote the Great Smokies.

Throughout the publicity campaign, Chapman and his promoters dodged the issue of whether anyone lived in the area where the new national park would be. They emphasized greedy corporate lumber companies, which were rapidly clear-cutting the ridge tops, and the destruction lent urgency to their cause. When rumors arose about condemning farms, Tennessee Governor Austin Peay traveled to the Smokies to reassure the permanent residents that their land would not be needed for the park.

At the same time, though, the omnipresent journalists who visited the region were charmed by the local residents. In addition to fantastic descriptions of scenery, newspapermen and women wrote about encounters with local people. “They are fascinating people these mountaineers,” wrote one journalist. “[T]hey are descended from pre-revolutionary backwoodsmen and still live in the eighteenth century.” Despite plentiful

evidence to the contrary, writers described mountain residents living in log cabins without windows with families of 15 children, having “practically no contact with the outside world.” Chapman’s own group published a brochure claiming that farmers would “retain possession of their abodes within the park,” and “enjoy their new dignity, if such it is, of being objects of interest to millions of tourists.”

Whether the stereotypes were conscious or not, they certainly indicated a

lack of concern for the future of those who considered the mountains home. An attorney for the lumber companies, James B. Wright, first raised the issue of forcing people off their land and started rumors among the mountain people that their lands could be "taken." Knoxville newspapers ridiculed Wright, naming him the "foe of the park" for raising a cry of "spare the mountaineers' homes!" When signs saying "We Don't Want Our Homes Condemned" appeared in the Smokies, the newspapers blamed Wright for putting mountain people up to it. Although Wright probably did use concern for local people to aid his own interests, he put his finger on a problem park promoters didn't want to face. The Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution states, "... nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." Is a national park a "public use" important enough to override private property rights?

THE SENTIMENTAL

—UH, NO, GRASPING— MOUNTAINEER

The first director of the National Park Service, Stephen Mather, did not think that park lands could be gained through condemnation. Assistant Park Service director Arno Cammerer, however, encouraged individual states to gain condemnation power and then donate the land to the federal government. When Cammerer drew a map of proposed boundaries for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, he included 704,000 acres and well over 10,000 people and their homes.

Wright, the "park foe," joined several large landowners, local judges, and a state representative in opposition to the "Cammerer line" and the power of eminent domain that the state sought. A Knoxville labor publication came out in support of the park, but opposed condemnation power, because it "will put a hardship upon innocent people, yes, even upon unsuspecting people." The editor also reprinted Governor Austin Peay's promises that the mountain people's homes "would be held sacred." Park promoters knew what a volatile issue this

could be, when another small publication declared, "We want the park. We must have the park. But we will not be party to visiting upon the people in the park area such a cold-blooded fate as that planned to deprive them of the only home they know."

The major newspapers in the city, however, accused Wright and his group of "wrecking the greatest asset ever offered Sevier County." One judge who opposed the park received threatening telegrams; all were treated with contempt by reporters. With the help of Wright, "park foes" struck a deal with state politicians. Large orchard and nursery owners around Gatlinburg and Wear's Valley as well as the major hotels were left out of the "taking line." The power of eminent domain could not be used on "improved property" unless the Secretary of Interior notified the park commission, in writing, that the land was essential. Even then, "all reasonable efforts to purchase the land" had to be exhausted before condemnation applied. With these changes, the state representative declared himself "staunchly for the bill."

Park promoter David C. Chapman, for his part, continued proclaiming — long after the bill passed in both North Carolina and Tennessee — that power of eminent domain would not be used. Wright continued to needle the park promoters, and in 1929 he convinced the state legislature to investigate the buying procedures of the Tennessee Park Commission.

The North Carolina Park Commission, which was procuring lands in that state, had been staffed with Congressmen, a National Forest representative, and public officials from other parts of the state to ensure impartiality. Tennessee, however, appointed Chapman and other local individuals — including owners of a real estate firm that stood to profit from land sales — to the state park commission. Wright challenged Chapman's power, the "propaganda" in the newspapers, and the method of land buying.

At one point, the investigators interviewed Cammerer, who explained why Cades Cove was "absolutely necessary"

The Cherokees and the Park

As many people know, more than 20,000 Cherokees were forced to leave the Southeast in 1838, because of the Indian Removal Act.

Marched at gunpoint, they walked to Oklahoma and more than one-fourth died along the route, known as the Trail of Tears. A group of Cherokees living in Western North Carolina were allowed to remain, in part because they had separated from the Cherokee Nation and could claim a different legal status. They were joined by other Cherokees, who escaped into the mountains when the soldiers came. It took almost 100 years for the members of the Eastern Band to gain the full rights and privileges of citizenship guaranteed residents of the United States.

When the Great Smoky Mountains was created in the 1920s, an official at the National Park Service drew a "takings" line on a map that included all of Big Cove, the most traditional community on the Quallah Boundary. A bureaucratic brouhaha followed, as the Bureau of Indian Affairs did not believe that this would be an appropriate transfer of authority. This time the Cherokees were spared, ironically, because the two agencies did not agree on what was "best" for them. Today, tourism is the number one industry in Cherokee, North Carolina, the Southern entrance to the park.

for the park: "You can't put tourists on mountain tops. You must give them conveniences." He dismissed talk about a "condemnation threat" against the mountain people: "Why call it a threat? It's a power we already have."



Pupils of the Little Greenbrier School, which continued to hold classes in the National Park even after many community members were removed.

The investigating committee was unimpressed by Wright and those who testified and released a statement praising Chapman in April 1929. Chapman privately told people he was perturbed to have suffered this inconvenience. Newspapers echoed his disgust. Knoxville residents attended a “mass meeting” (actual number of attendees not given) denouncing the “sob stuff” Wright offered. One citizen attacked Wright for protecting the “sentimental mountaineer,” who, in reality, was “grasping at golden opportunities to enlarge his pocketbook with gains from vast golf courses, snobbish hotels, and hot dog stands.”

Although a few families did benefit from the new park economy, most community members did not want to move. According to Alie Newman Maples, the younger people wanted to sell, but older, more established farmers did not. “Like anyone who has a home where you’re happy, you hate to give it up and sell it,” she explained. Winfred Cagle, who grew up in Deep Creek, said, “At that time people didn’t know anything about parks. They thought it was awful, to just drive people out of their homes like they drove the Indians out at one time. People didn’t understand about preserving a forest. . . . They

thought they were just being drove out.”

BUILDING A MOUNTAIN OUT OF A CONDEMNATION

The Tennessee Park Commission filed its first major condemnation suit in July 1929. The year before, when park land buyers offered Cades Cove landowner John W. Oliver \$20 per acre, he asserted that “real estate here sells for \$40 to \$50 per acre.” One of the largest landowners in the Cove, Oliver held over 337 acres of fine bottomland. Until it became clear that the park commission wanted to take his land, Oliver actually deplored the destructive logging practices and supported the national park. The farmer first appealed to the land agent’s conscience. “When this is all over,” Oliver wrote, “you will want to remember that you acted perfectly square with people who have been dispossessed of their homes in order that city people might have a playground.”

Well-known to Knoxville residents, Oliver’s predicament brought the mountain residents some of their first positive media attention. “While this territory is miles from any railroad connections and is beyond the reach of telephone and telegraph, many of the farmers residing

within the coves are progressive,” reported the *Knoxville Journal*, “in many instances the farms being equipped with power tractors, lime pulverizers, and other modern machinery.” This more realistic description came too late to stop the overwhelming media impression created with the help of the same newspaper that these were poor mountain people in need of “uplift” — or removal.

Cade’s Cove resident Oliver challenged the state’s right to exercise the power of eminent domain on behalf of another sovereignty, the federal government. Although the Blount County Circuit Court agreed with Oliver, the Tennessee State Supreme Court overturned the decision. The court saw no reason that the power of eminent domain “be exclusively the necessity of the particular sovereignty seeking to condemn.” This case and a similar one lost by Mack Hannah of

Cataloochee in North Carolina courts, greatly discouraged others from defending their homes and communities. In the words of Zenith Whaley, a resident of Greenbrier, “With the big dog gone, they knew they couldn’t handle the bear.”

Sharp traders and those who could afford lawsuits got a more favorable price for their land. Mack Hannah, for example, was heartbroken not to retain his home, but the “jury of view” did assign \$11,000 to his 152-acre farm. Oliver, who contested the “jury of view” price, received \$17,000. Public officials complained bitterly that such prices were too high, and as a result the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) later sought more sweeping condemnation powers (See TVA article, page 30).

But Hannah and Oliver’s prices were neither exorbitant nor even representative of what happened to most mountain residents. In the Big Creek community, for example, small farmers received approximately 1.6 times the tax valuation of their property. An estimated 300 tenant farmers received nothing at all, and neither tenants nor landlords were compensated for relocation nor aided in the removal process in any way.

The year 1929 turned out to be a poor one for converting land to cash, and

many people, including Cagle and Whaley's fathers, lost their money in bank failures. "[People] felt pretty well when they first got to buying," said Ownby, who moved to Wears Valley. "By the time it was done they hated [the park], all the people pretty generally hated it." In addition to losing investments in bank failures, some former residents took a lease in part consideration for the price and then found it difficult to buy land with the remaining capital.

THEIR 15 MINUTES OF FAME — ENOUGH ALREADY!

A special arrangement ordered by Congress allowed elderly people to remain on their land for the rest of their lives. Much as the park promoters predicted, the "lifetime lessees" became celebrities to the tourists, who flocked to their doors. "But [older people] couldn't be happy up there all by themselves," said Lucinda Ogle, who grew up in Greenbrier but lives in Gatlinburg today.

The most famous lifetime lessees, the Walker sisters, lived together in Little Greenbrier. Although one sister sold her poems to the tourists, the women eventually got tired of the steady stream of visitors — sometimes hundreds a day — interrupting their work and asked park officials to take the sign down that identified their home.

The same lifetime lease agreement also provided a "loophole" for 72 summer home owners to retain their property in the Elkmont area. Here, the park provided police protection and maintenance crews until 1993, when the summer home community was finally forced to leave. David Chapman, the "father of the park," owned a summer home in Elkmont under this arrangement. When controversy arose over his special privilege, he transferred the lease to a relative living in Panama.

CREWS REHABILITATED OLD LOG CABINS AND BUILT SPLIT-RAIL FENCES TO MAKE THE SITE LOOK MORE "HISTORIC." IF THE DISPOSSESSED FARMERS DID NOT DISMANTLE FRAMED OR BOX HOUSES AS THEY LEFT, PARK RANGERS TORCHED THE "MODERN-LOOKING" BUILDINGS.

Although the Great Smoky Mountains was a "preserve" for Nature's wonders, early tourists clearly preferred pastoral, human-created scenery. Before the land even came under the jurisdiction of the federal government, visitors flocked to Cades Cove. Because of this popularity, the first park superintendent reluctantly agreed to continue "meadowland maintenance," or mowing, to prevent the forest from invading the fields. During the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps crews rehabilitated old log cabins and built split-rail fences to make the site look more "historic." If the dispossessed farmers did not dismantle framed or box houses as they left, park rangers torched the "modern-looking" buildings.

Other communities, such as Copeland Creek, Noland Creek, and Deep Creek, were completely cleared, and the land slowly returned to forest. In some cases, a foundation or chimney remains to this day. In a few places, the only sign that this was once a homesite is a clump of jonquils that appears each spring where a resident had planted them. "The memories that I have of living in the mountains really mean so much to me," said Maples, who lives in Gatlinburg. "You don't know too much about the mountains until you get with someone who used to live up there. You'll find that the love they have for the mountains overcomes any that they have for land they got anywhere else."

Not until 1965 did the National Park

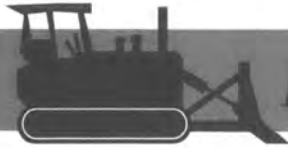
Service gain funds to acquire land without the help of states, and the agency is now authorized to use condemnation on a case-by-case basis. According to Howard Miller of the Land Resources Division, the Park Service prefers to buy land from willing sellers and tries to limit condemnation to property where the land is threatened, such as the 400-acre tract near Manasses Battlefield, where an investor wanted to build a housing development. During

the 1970s, however, the agency condemned a high percentage of 35,000 half-acre lots purchased to create Big Cypress in Florida. Miller does not believe, however, that a complete removal of permanent rural communities, as was done in the Smokies and Shenandoah, could be accomplished today. "There'd be an outcry," he said. Miller, whose grandparents lost their homes for the creation of Shenandoah National Park, hopes that visitors will remember and appreciate the sacrifice of those who had to leave these beautiful places.

The tourists who crowd Cades Cove today, I suspect, don't always realize this melancholy note to a historic site. Like the earliest visitors, they want to escape a hectic schedule and imagine a simpler, back-to-the-land existence. When I first started researching the Smokies six years ago, I resented the traffic, the video recorders, and the brightly dressed people gawking at the scenery. I felt they did not appreciate what the land once meant to the former residents here. Over the years, however, I have developed a wistful fondness for the mass of humanity that visits the cove each day. I see them as sojourners, pilgrims in Winnebagoes and Explorers, searching for their lost rural heritage on a national park loop road.

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*Taking the land . . .
To Supply Industry with power*

DAMMING THE VALLEY

By Wayne Moore

IN 1933, TVA PLANNERS SAW THE PROBLEMS OF THE SOUTH IN TERMS OF TOO MANY RURAL-LIVING PEOPLE AND NOT ENOUGH INDUSTRY.

THE SOLUTION LOOKED SIMPLE—IF THEY COULD DISREGARD THE PROPERTY RIGHTS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES.

Courtesy of Tennessee State Library and Archives



Fontana Dam on the Little Tennessee River, completed in 1944, was, at the time, the highest dam east of the Mississippi and resulted in the removal of 1,311 families.

With the exception of federal armies led by Grant and Sherman, no other government institution has matched the impact of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) on the region of the Tennessee River. Between 1933 and 1945, TVA gained some 1.3 million acres from private hands and displaced an estimated 82,000 people from their homes in order to build 16 hydroelectric dams. That's an area larger than the state of Delaware and a population that in 1930 was the same as North Carolina's largest city, Charlotte. In just 12 years, the agency turned America's fourth largest river into a series of slack water reservoirs and transformed the physical landscape of the middle South.

At its creation in 1933, TVA received a sweeping mandate from Congress to improve navigation and flood control, to contribute to the nation's defense, and to carry out whatever measures it deemed necessary to promote "the economic and social well-being" of the people living in the river basin. Generating and selling electricity was mentioned only peripherally by New Deal legislators, but the agency quickly made this its chief focus. To expand the regional market for electric power through the construction of hydroelectric dams, the agency made heavy use of eminent domain — the taking of private property for "public use."

WOULD FARMERS UNDERMINE PROGRESS?

There is a great temptation to develop a kind of Alexander-the-Great complex among those of us who are carrying on the project," wrote David Lilienthal, the TVA board member in charge of land policy. "We are constantly looking at maps with a great

area marked on them and blocking out this and that on these maps." Although the Army Corps of Engineers proposed a series of low dams in the Tennessee Valley for flood control and navigation, Lilienthal's grand designs favored a multipurpose high dam system. The high dams required much greater population removal,

and that most of the South's economic problems could be laid at the doorstep of a "surplus farm population." To remedy this, TVA sought to make these people available for employment in industries attracted by the cheap electric power.

Historians Michael J. McDonald and John Muldowny have studied the first TVA project, Norris Dam, which displaced over 3,000 families and transferred some 153,000 acres into government hands. Rather than a "surplus farm population," they argue in *TVA and the Dispossessed*, some of those people living in the Norris Basin were "returnees." During the early 20th century, residents of farming communities migrated to regional centers, such as Knoxville, Tennessee, to work in textile mills. When the Great Depression hit the mill town, they returned to rural areas like Norris to live with relatives or to work on an old homeplace, where they could at least raise enough food to survive.

With the clout of President Roosevelt behind it, however, TVA blunted all opposition. The federal government, after all, was pumping large amounts of capital into an historically neglected region, and holding up massive projects for the sake of rural communities seemed tantamount to undermining Progress. Once World War II began, TVA cloaked

itself in the mantle of "national defense," and resistance, in this case, looked downright unpatriotic.

Still, in these early years, TVA needed to justify both itself and the usefulness of its dam projects to Congress and the American public. It was obliged, therefore, to paint a dim picture of the farms it was going to flood and residents of the region. In films, books, and speeches, TVA pointed to poor farming practices and erosion as the chief culprits in the region's poverty. Poverty and environmental problems had more to do

continued on page 34



Courtesy of TVA

The Tennessee Valley Authority dam system shows lakes and dams built by 1945 in the massive federal project started in the 1930s.

but they would fulfill the board's desire to create the pre-eminent electric utility in the South.

Agency officials such as Lilienthal were well aware that removing 1.3 million acres and 16,500 families would have a "detrimental" effect on local communities and would force even larger numbers of farmers off the land. To TVA officials, loss of community was an acceptable price to pay for modernization. In fact, planners and government sociologists held that too many Southerners were living on the land

When the Valley

Engineer's conception of the Watauga Dam, around 1940, shows how a mountain river in East Tennessee would be transformed into a lake for one of the Depression-era recovery projects, Tennessee Valley Authority.



Sherman Hartley, age 12, plays at the "Fish Springs" on the bank of the Watauga River, around 1936.

Portrait of

The story of the Watauga starts back before the revolutionary War. The first settlers in Tennessee made homes in the Watauga Valley as early as 1769. They were called the Overmountain Men. They achieved notoriety by declaring independence from English rule in 1774. When the Revolutionary War began, the Wataugans joined the Patriots and scored the first major victor against the Loyalists by annihilating Patrick Ferguson's army at King's Mountain.

Many of the people who relocated from the Watauga Valley during the building of the Watauga reservoir by the Tennessee Valley Authority were direct descendants of the Overmountain Men. Glen Elliot was born on the same plot of land his forebears homesteaded in the 1770s. He says, "The land was in our family for seven generations prior to the TVA moving us out. We lost our homeplace. It is erased off the map, so to speak . . . I tell people that I'm from a little town in Tennessee called Carden's Bluff, it is all under water now."

Photographer Jeff Whetstone works at the media workshop, Appalshop, which partially funded this project, and for the weekly newspaper The Mountain Eagle, both in Whitesburg, Kentucky. Originally from Chattanooga, he is "kin to everybody" in the Lake Watauga area.



Became a Lake

By Jeff Whetstone



The Watauga Dam, completed in 1947, created a 70,000-acre lake for recreation and a source of inexpensive power. The lake displaced almost 1,000 families.

An exhibit, "Before the Flood—Watauga Recollection," showed the pictures and stories of the East Tennessee communities obliterated by the lake. Jeff Whetstone put together the exhibit which was shown at Appalshop National Folk Festival, and in East Tennessee in 1993 and '94.

Watauga

"The 1940 flood was one of the leading influences of the building of the dam. The TVA were wanting to build all the dams they could to keep as many people working as they could. It brought a lot of prosperity to this part of the country we'd have never known. But it's not fun to get run out of your home.

"We were willing to take a flood every 15 years for what we had. We would take our chances. We would have never sold out. There wasn't enough money that could have ever brought our old heritage and our land there in Fish Springs. Of course we were just country people, but we could raise all that we wanted; we had all the fish we wanted, had all the wild ducks, and everything that goes with the river.

"You could buy places relatively cheap, but you couldn't replace that bottom ground, and you couldn't replace that spring, or the sentimental value of that. You couldn't replace that with any amount of money. See, they'd take your property at their price. They'd just tell

Hobart Smith and family the day they moved from Carden's Bluff within a quarter mile of the dam.



you what they were going to give you for it. We didn't dare try to fight them in court because we couldn't afford to, and we'd lose if we did. They had the law and all the lawyers on their side."

—Sherman Hartley

continued from page 31

with lumber and mining industries, which extracted natural resources and deserted the mountains. But TVA depicted the valleys as “wasted land, wasted people,” as if farmers themselves were to blame. TVA’s stock newsreel image — the grizzled hillbilly farmer scratching out a bare subsistence — made farmers look so backward that federal intervention would be their only hope.

TVA LIKES HIGH-PRICED SPREADS

For the most part, the bottom lands that TVA sought to inundate were the highest-priced farmland in the region. River bottom farmers practiced the most technologically advanced soil-conserving methods of agriculture on land made rich by the silt left behind by the river’s seasonal floods. The bottom lands around the mouth of Duck River, Tennessee, produced some of the highest corn yields in the South. TVA’s determination to erect high dams to produce the maximum amount of hydroelectricity meant a much higher cost to Valley residents in terms of flooded farmland.

To achieve these ends, Congress gave TVA free rein to exercise the power of eminent domain. Whereas the Department of Justice handled condemnation proceedings for other agencies, Section 25 of the 1933 TVA Act empowered the agency to conduct its own land condemnations. By statute, TVA could decide which lands were necessary, use its own appraisers, and make a non-negotiable offer to landowners. If an owner refused to accept this one-time offer, his property was condemned and a “declaration of taking” was issued that allowed the Authority to take immediate possession. Despite the fact that nearly all challenges to eminent domain in the United States went before a jury, TVA was specifically authorized to forego jury trials as a means of determining fair compensation. During the Norris project, the head land buyer was somewhat reluctant to exercise these broad powers, and some landowners were able to haggle over the price of their land. Landowners who protested the valuation on their property

were sent to U.S. District Court, which appointed three commissioners for each reservoir area to investigate and determine property values. Their decision could be appealed before three federal district judges, and, ultimately, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Concerned about the few people who received higher payments for Norris basin lands and the slow land-buying process, TVA took action. The Authority hired attorney John Snyder, fresh from large-scale condemnation work in New York City, with orders to obtain reservoir property as quickly and cheaply as possible. To eliminate any price haggling, Snyder explained that he did not wish to favor “sharp traders” over those farmers who might not be able to conclude a favorable sale of their land. “We work on a non-trading basis, a price is set and we buy at that price or we condemn,” he said simply. This non-market approach certainly expedited land acquisition, but it tended to ignore not only the owner’s assessment of land value but also the sales value the property would command from a private buyer.

TVA’s own economists estimated that the agency’s condemnation power enabled it to obtain land at roughly 60 percent of what it would cost a private buyer. The actual number of properties that TVA had to condemn was small, around five percent for the largest projects, because landowners soon learned that Snyder’s policy would be enforced. A study of TVA appraisals, however, shows cursory field work, a questionable method of pricing land by soil type instead of evaluating the individual tract, and land buyers’ general unfamiliarity with local agriculture.

TO TVA OFFICIALS, LOSS OF COMMUNITY WAS AN ACCEPTABLE PRICE TO PAY FOR MODERNIZATION.

photo courtesy of the Nashville Tennessean



A TVA mock-up of Timberlake Village, the “model community” that the agency promoted as part of the justification for Tellico Dam.

Only after 1959 did TVA appraisers consider such criteria as earnings potential, replacement value, or comparable sales value — all standard measures for appraising real estate.

TVA’s land agents followed a divide-and-conquer strategy in their approach to landowners. They first dealt with out-of-state banks and insurance companies, which were anxious to unload farms they had foreclosed on during the preceding decade. Next they sought absentee owners and those whose farms were heavily mortgaged. Then, in the words of TVA Chairman A.E. Morgan, agents were instructed to “go around and pick up all the land from the people that would sell easy, pick that up at a low price.” By buying off large sections of the community, the agency increased the pressure on the remaining farmers, who most likely felt a deeper attachment to their land. The agency bought much of its land

at Depression-era prices based on appraisals that had been done in the mid-1930s when farm commodity and real estate values were at all-time lows. By the time displaced owners went to look for another farm, they faced a rising land market. Prices were being driven upwards by wartime inflation and TVA's own land-buying. This "extraordinary market" made it difficult for those who lost a farm to buy another at a comparable price. Since displaced farmers preferred to stay in the county near their families, they piled onto the remaining marginal lands, thereby exacerbating the very problem that TVA was supposed to solve.

In addition, the land-buying program did almost nothing to assist residents in relocation. With a budget in the tens of millions of dollars, TVA devoted just \$8,000 and 13 staffers to resettlement efforts. Almost as many tenants as landowners were evicted by TVA, and for this class of "adversely affected" farmers, the agency assumed even less obligation. "It is the very necessity of the tenants having to go which will make them find their own solution to their difficulties," wrote one TVA staff member.

FARMERS ALREADY SAW THE LIGHT

Although TVA retained unprecedented powers of eminent domain and commanded a remarkable public consensus, landowners did confront the agency. Congressional hearings in 1938 and 1942 focused on the problems and complaints arising from TVA's land policies. Those who testified challenged steamroller buying practices and the fact that lakes inundated fertile land with water and left the uplands intact. As one resident of Birchwood, Tennessee, asked, how could people "make a living" after bottomlands were taken? "We already have light, we have modern conveniences," he added, challenging the notion that TVA would in any way benefit farmers.

"We have been shoved back off of the

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SCHOOLHOUSES."

fertile river lands. We are losing our best citizens. The lands that are left us by TVA are not fertile," J.W. Davis, a farmer displaced by the Chickamauga project, complained before Congress. Davis thus raised the troublesome question of "secondary losses." In the Valley region, farmers often lived upland from their most fertile fields. By flooding only the productive bottom land, TVA drastically reduced the value of the remaining tract. The agency stuck to a strict legal interpretation of its liability, however. For Davis, this meant remaining on a small acreage upon which he could not make a living.

Few farmers could afford the travel and expense of litigation, particularly in the face of a large and well-financed government legal staff. "I am 71 years old, I am not going to be here long, and I don't want to get involved in any lawsuit," J.M. Gass of Meigs County, Tennessee, told Congress. "I am going to sign your contract, knowing at the time I am not getting a fair deal."

Senator George Norris, the Nebraskan who sponsored TVA's legislative mandate, criticized those who complained about their appraisals for bringing negative publicity to the agency. In his journals, Lilienthal called those who contested TVA's offers "greedy swine,"

who were "stirring up evil." Lilienthal argued against jury trials, which, he said, would add \$20 million to the cost of land-buying. Because of strong kinship networks in the South, he claimed, it would be hard to find an impartial jury in the region.

Congressional leaders also criticized the fact that TVA acquired considerably more land than was actually flooded. The agency's "heavy purchase" policy cleared families from a wide belt around the reservoir, so that TVA could experiment with malaria control, practice land conservation, or promote lakeshore industrial development. Outcry against this land-grabbing policy forced the agency to forego the "heavy purchase" policy in 1942, but by then land for most of the dams was already purchased.

When land above the high water mark became an expensive management problem, the Authority transferred the property to other agencies, such as the Department of Interior.

Six farmers from the Hazel Creek Valley of North Carolina challenged broad powers and the "heavy purchase" policy during the construction of Fontana Dam. Because floodwaters would isolate Hazel Creek farms and force the government to construct an expensive road, TVA condemned the remote valley with plans to donate the land to the adjacent Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The angry farmers took their case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In *Welch vs. TVA*, rendered in 1946, the Court sanctioned TVA's self-regulating system of land acquisition. In the unanimous decision, written by Justice Hugo Black, the court endorsed TVA's land-buying procedures. TVA's actions were all directed, the judge wrote, toward "the general purpose of fostering an orderly and proper physical, economic, and social development of [these] areas."

SNAIL DARTERS TRY TO SAVE FARMERS

After World War II, TVA found it harder and harder to justify aggressive land-taking in the region. During the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, however, the agency promoted two projects that would bring them the greatest public criticism they were to receive. Land Between the Lakes, a 170,000-acre "national demonstration" in recreation and "resource development" removed 949 families from three Kentucky and Tennessee counties already gutted by the Kentucky and Barkley reservoirs. Built near the river's mouth at Paducah, Kentucky, the dam flooded the most land of all. Because of the gentle gradient of the lower Tennessee River, the backwater of the Kentucky Dam reached 185 miles into Alabama, took 316,000 acres, and displaced 2,600 families.

Between 1967 and 1979, TVA became embroiled in controversy over another project, the Tellico Dam on the Little Tennessee River. The media played up a last-minute legal maneuver by environmentalists, who tried to stop the dam by protecting a potentially rare species of fish called the snail darter. The story untold by newspaper headlines was that Tellico Dam also required flooding 43,000 acres, dispossessing 350 families, and destroying acres of historic Cherokee archeological sites.

For both these projects, TVA expanded its mandate from electricity and national defense to include building a huge public recreation area and a "planned" community for industry. Residents refused to roll over just because TVA said it needed more land to demonstrate conservation practices, or, in the case of Tellico, build "Timberlake," the "model" Appalachian city. Litigation dragged on for years and finally gave the agency a media black eye for running

roughshod over the very people it was supposed to help.

Jean Ritchey, a Little Tennessee River resident, fought to keep her home for 10 years. Her drive to resist TVA was intensified by the fact that her father lost his property in 1940 for the Watts Bar project. After years of court battles and watching the media focus on the "snail darter issue," Ritchey watched in November 1979 as construction crews bull-



Photo courtesy of Knoxville News Sentinel Company

In 1979, Jean Ritchey lost her battle to save her home from the TVA's Tellico Dam project. Her father had lost his property to the TVA in 1940.

dozed her house and barn into a hole and buried the remnants. "I always thought eminent domain was for building something that was going to make everybody better off, things like roads and schoolhouses," Ritchey told a reporter. "They took our land for development." Development, she might have added, that never materialized. No industry chose to locate on the shores of Tellico Lake, so the planned community was not built. Chastened by the storm of controversy, TVA has not pursued land acquisition since the Tellico Dam.

Clearly, TVA's unquestioned power in the South lies in the past. Today, most Southerners regard it as an overgrown government bureaucracy, but as long as it keeps utility rates down, they don't think much about it one way or another. The agency's legacy continues, though, as TVA can claim significant impact at the international level. Long admired by central planners and foreign technocrats, the agency has served as a model of big-scale engineering for other countries.

"What we have done in the Tennessee Valley, we can do elsewhere," President Harry Truman said in 1948. Dam projects undertaken by Turkey, India, Ghana, Egypt, Brazil, China, and the old Soviet Union dwarf in size the removals done in the Tennessee Valley. In many cases, these governments displaced millions of inhabitants in order to modernize rural river valleys.

By dispossessing river bottom farmers and promoting a high-cost, high-tech vision of development, TVA played a major role in curtailing small farm operations in the Tennessee River Valley. As planners predicted, the agency was responsible for enormous out-migration. In the Kentucky reservoir region, for example, some counties lost up to 32 percent of their population between 1940 and 1950. After dam-building was complete, high unemployment typically persisted and sometimes

worsened in reservoir areas. TVA, in short, failed to live up to its own dictum — "to leave the area in which a reservoir is built and the people who lived in the area at least as well off as they were before TVA entered the picture." Heavy out-migration and a drastic decline in the number of farmers, in the end, seems a curious legacy for an agency supposedly committed to revitalizing a farm region.

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Wayne Moore, Ph.D., is an archivist at Tennessee State Library and Archives who teaches history at Tennessee State University. His dissertation, "TVA and Farm Communities of the Lower Tennessee Valley," was written under Christopher Lasch at the University of Rochester. Moore's father, Robert Leslie Moore, was forced to sell his farmland in "Big Bottom," near Hustburg, Tennessee, to TVA in 1942.



*Taking the land . . .
In the National Defense*

THE HOME FRONT'S DISPOSSESSED

By David Cecelski

IN THE PATRIOTIC RUSH OF WORLD WAR II, HOMES, AND EVEN ENTIRE COMMUNITIES — INCLUDING THOSE OF RURAL AFRICAN AMERICANS — WERE LEVELED TO BUILD MILITARY BASES.

In 1941 the United States military evicted several hundred people near Havelock, North Carolina, which then consisted of not much more than a railroad depot and general store near the south shore of the Neuse River. Construction of the Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station began immediately. Forty-thousand soldiers and construction workers arrived almost overnight. Soon a bustling town and one of the world's largest airfields rose out of the swamps and forests. The citizens evacuated to build Cherry Point — most of whom were black — were swiftly forgotten. To this day, they remain separated from their former homes by barbed-wire fences.

What happened at Havelock in 1941 was not an isolated incident. During World War II, the federal government acquired

well over a million acres of land in the Southeast and displaced as many as 50,000 persons in order to build military bases and defense factories. Disproportionately, the military's land condemnation fell on rural black communities.

Those wartime evictions remain a forgotten chapter in America's home front experience. How and why they occurred, whom they affected most, and what happened to the dislocated communities have been an untold story for 50 years. Moreover, the ramifications of those long-ago events continue to be felt.

IN MIDWAY, FLORIDA, AND HARRIS NECK, GEORGIA, UPROOTED BLACK RESIDENTS STILL BATTLED TO REGAIN ANCESTRAL LANDS 50 YEARS AFTER V-J DAY.

FROM NELSON TOWN TO TOON NECK

Emma Davis grew up in Nelson Town, a black community evacuated to build the Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station. A retired schoolteacher, she remembers her abandoned home vividly. She also recalls the nearby communities of Toon Neck and Tar Neck. There were 40 black families in all, plus two white families living down on the Neuse River. Most farmed their own land. Davis's extended family had owned a hundred-acre farm in Nelson Town since Reconstruction.

The Davis family grew cotton, peanuts, corn, and tobacco. They raised hogs and cattle. They fished on the Neuse River. As a girl, Davis reveled in fruit trees and grapevines cultivated since her great-grandfather's day. Nobody had much money, but unlike most Craven County

blacks, they owned land. "It was tough," she recalls today, "because nobody had anything, but as I think back we were well off by having the farm and being able to have something to eat."

Located in dense piney woods 20 miles down a muddy road from the county seat at New Bern, Nelson Town and its neighboring communities maintained a school, the Melvin School, and a church, the Little Witness Baptist Church. A few local men worked at sawmills, but they relied mostly on their own land for food, timber, and — in every sense of the word — security.

Until the spring of 1941. In May a government agent visited every home between Slocumb and Hancock creeks. He informed the residents that the War Department had chosen their land to build a Marine Corps air base. By summer's end, Nelson Town, Tar Neck, and Toon Neck all disappeared. The local people left their farms, homes, cemeteries, church, and school — everything they had built over the generations.

"That was one devastating time," Emma Davis remembers. "It was awful to pull up and take everything you need."

The dispossessed families received only the undervalued tax assessment for their land, and even that small sum was slow in coming. Local families received no payment for several years and had to scrounge to find new farms and homes. Most became wage laborers and sharecroppers. The federal government did not even help with the evacuation costs. The people of Nelson Town, Tar Neck, and Toon Neck — the Nelsons, Hills, Johnsons, Berrys, Hollands, Fishers, Toons, Wests, Richards, Turners, and a few others — scattered across Craven County.

Several families later moved back as close to their former homes as they could get. Now living along Highway 101, they have worked hard and successfully to build new lives. But, as Emma Davis says, "When you're shoved out of your house with nothing, it's a setback for life."

"WHEN YOU'RE SHOVED OUT OF YOUR HOUSE WITH NOTHING, IT'S A SETBACK FOR LIFE."

Patriotism muted their outrage during World War II, but the people dispossessed by Cherry Point gained new reasons for anger as the years went by. In every corner of Craven County, black-owned land gave way to what local political leaders called Progress. Near New Bern, an airfield paved over a black cemetery. An urban renewal project later gutted a town's black business district. Two highway projects razed neighborhoods in James City, the site where Civil War refugees built some of the first black schools and churches in the South. New bridges, roads, and housing developments all hit black communities hardest. Even Cherry Point's recent flight easements passed directly over black neighborhoods, including former residents from Nelson Town. "Of course," said one, "that's how they treat people of color."

PART OF A LARGER STORY

Some years ago, at the request of local leaders, I began to inquire into the military's eviction of Nelson Town and other black communities at Cherry Point. I had a personal interest in the fate of these communities. As a child, I had lived for several years on the Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station. Exploring its vast woodlands, my friends and I often stumbled onto old graveyards and wondered who lived there before us.

As I began my research, Tom Schlesinger, then at the Highlander Center, volunteered to help. A talented investigative reporter, Schlesinger had written *Our Own Worst Enemy*, an important critique of the defense industry's impact on the Southeast. Dee Dee Risher, then an editor at *Southern Exposure*, also lent her skills to our inquiry.

A review of Congressional hearings and military reports from World War II quickly revealed a startling number of

other black communities displaced by military bases and defense factories. A visit to the National Archives confirmed the trend. There the records of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), which provided relief to farmers

uprooted by the war effort, pointed to many more cases. Inquiries to friends elsewhere in the South turned up yet more. In Midway, Florida, and Harris Neck, Georgia, uprooted black residents were still battling to regain ancestral lands, 50 years after V-J Day.

Among the most striking cases we found:

- In 1942 the Army gave 85 Gullah families in Harris Neck, Georgia, 48 hours before bulldozing their homes and cemetery and burning their crops. "We had two or three sheets that we had to make a lean-to against a tree," recalled local resident James Campbell, "and we stayed there two years." Founded by former slaves in 1865, Harris Neck was a bustling fishing community until the army arrived. After the war, the military converted the land into a wildlife refuge, much to the dismay of residents who had wanted to return.
- In Seminole County, Florida, north of Lake Okeechobee, the Navy condemned the all-black town of Midway. Reputedly Florida's most prosperous black municipality, Midway claimed between 2,500 and 3,000 citizens. Until removed by the Sanford Naval Air Base, the town had been a powerful model of successful black enterprise and self-government. Rather than returning the land to the former residents after the war, the Navy allowed Midway to become a municipal airfield.
- In Huntsville, Alabama, construction of the Seibert Arsenal displaced two thriving communities of black farmers, Pond Beat and Sand Flat. The regional FSA director reported that "children from these Negro families have helped to build up Alabama



Government officials present a check to a farmer for purchase of the first land sold to the United States Government for Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, 1942. Along with Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station nearby, Camp Lejeune and other military installations across the South displaced thousands of African-American families during World War II.

State Normal [College] . . . and have formed the bulk of a small but very stable Negro middle class group in Huntsville.” Some African Americans found jobs temporarily building the arsenal, but the dislodged farmers had little hope of making a living on the small displacement subsidy granted by the government.

- In Childersburg, Alabama, the construction of a DuPont powder plant and the expansion of Fort McClellan resulted in the removal of 342 families. Blacks, roughly a third of Talladega County’s population, comprised 73 percent of the evicted farmers. The plant displaced a full one-fifth of the county’s black farm owners.
- In the Santee-Cooper River basin, the federal government evacuated 841

South Carolina families. Predominantly rural black landowners and squatters, their ancestors had farmed on that land since the Civil War.

From Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, to Fort Stewart, Georgia, dispossessed black communities emerged in our search through the historical record.

THE HOME FRONT

The rush of war mobilization, the politics of defense spending, and the military’s land acquisition process all conspired against black farming communities. Below the Mason-Dixon line, those factors also became entangled with Jim Crow and white supremacy.

President Franklin Roosevelt’s War Department did not intend a mass upheaval for black communities. In the frenzied panic after the bombing of Pearl

Harbor, military planners cared only about moving quickly. They had a small army that was ill-prepared to train more than eight million recruits, much less fight a global conflict. They wanted unprecedented numbers of military bases and defense factories built — and built overnight, no matter what the cost.

The War Department targeted the South for 60 of the Army’s 100 new camps. This was true for three reasons. First, in the U.S. Congress, Bourbon Democrats had the power to bring military bases South. They chaired the four House committees and two of the four Senate committees concerned with defense planning. Elected from one-party states where incumbents were rarely challenged, the Southern Democrats had accumulated extraordinary seniority. Without them, Roosevelt could never have passed his early war mobilization bills. Second, their power dovetailed

with FDR's interest in spreading the defense boom's largess into the areas hardest hit by the Great Depression. Finally, the South's temperate climate was ideal for training and maneuvers. From Tidewater Virginia to Texas' piney woods, small towns and rural byways soon hummed with activity, and armies of laborers swarmed from base site to base site.

Military officials had certain minimal requirements for base locations. Coastlines had to be guarded; Marines had to have beaches; pilots required air space; and anti-aircraft gunners needed large practice fields. Access to deep water ports and railroads was often important, as was proximity to recreational facilities. But within these broad parameters, the War and Navy Departments allowed Southern leaders to influence decisions over the siting of military installations. At times this occurred, by military planners' own admissions, at the expense of the most fundamental considerations of topography, locale, and soil.

The problem rested in the South's Jim Crow society and in the U.S. military's customary willingness to bolster it. During the Second World War, the Armed Forces maintained segregated military units and bases not only in the South, but at all facilities in the United States and abroad. The Marine Corps, in fact, did not permit black soldiers into combat during the war, despite the overwhelming success of black Army units. It was not surprising, then, that African Americans did not sit on the civilian or military boards that selected base sites or that military officials did not consult local black leaders. Defense planners worked instead with elected officials who felt

PATRIOTISM MUTED THEIR OUTRAGE DURING WORLD WAR II, BUT THE PEOPLE DISPOSSESSED BY CHERRY POINT GAINED NEW REASONS FOR ANGER AS THE YEARS WENT BY.

little accountability to disfranchised black constituents. They also cooperated closely with white business leaders who welcomed the possibility of federal dol-

was as much a part of Jim Crow as separate drinking fountains. As a result, when military planners surveyed sites for potential bases, they often found underde-

veloped black farm communities most appealing. The large number of Southern blacks in the eastern portions of the Carolinas and Georgia, a legacy of plantation days, also placed heavy concentrations of African Americans close to the coastal locations desired by Marine and Navy planners.

The problems of black landowners did not end with their evacuation. Large numbers of rural blacks lived on land without clear titles. Rural blacks often did not register deeds because of the

expense, the scarcity of black lawyers, and a deep distrust of the county courthouse, long perceived as a symbol of white corruption. Understaffed war agencies proved slow to confirm land titles, which postponed reimbursement for years. Unclear titles did not deter the military's land condemnations; in fact, Congress and the courts expedited them. But black families were on their own to find new homes. Land profiteering and housing shortages near the new military bases aggravated the dispossessed people's problems. Their only compensation was that some found jobs at the new camps as land grubbers, domestics, builders, and laundresses.

Photo courtesy of North Carolina collection, UNC library at Chapel Hill.



Tents for GI's immediately went up at Camp Lejeune, 1942.

lars pouring into their local economies.

While business leaders protected their own lands, they frequently showed a willingness to sacrifice their black neighbors' lands for what they perceived as the wider community's prosperity. In the worst cases, they even steered war planners toward black-owned sites that local whites considered economic threats or obstacles to white business plans. At bottom, they harnessed to white supremacy the unlimited powers of a wartime federal government to confiscate private citizens' land in the name of national security.

The racial geography of the South did not help. In general, military planners

APPALACHIAN MILITARY BASES

Military land condemnations hit African Americans hardest, but many thousands of white families also lost land for the war effort. During the first stage of military mobilization from 1939 to 1941 — before Pearl Harbor — military installations had already displaced 25,000 people in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. By 1943, a conservative estimate is that 40,000 to 50,000 persons lost their land and homes in the South. The Army alone condemned more than one million acres in Southern states; the Navy, another 200,000 acres.

For many Southern whites, poverty, not race, led to their downfall. None felt the wartime tidal wave more than Appalachian people of Black Oak Ridge, Tennessee. In October 1942, the Army condemned 92 square miles in this East Tennessee valley and removed 1,000 families in four communities. These mountain farm-lands gave way to a top-secret plant, code-named the Clinton Engineering Works, where the first atomic bomb was built. After the war, the facility was renamed the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

More powerful whites resisted base sitings with greater success. The most notorious case involved Key Biscayne, Florida. Though the military clearly identified that site best-suited for a naval air base, opposition from the Key Biscayne Yacht Club and Miami's tourism-oriented business leaders persuaded the War Department to build at Jacksonville instead. A significant part of the South's development since World War II has revolved around such wartime decisions. Military decisions to bulldoze, dredge harbors, and provide housing has shaped the South's urban landscape.



This aerial view of Camp Davis, North Carolina, shows the amount of construction just three months after it began in 1941.

Compared with the terrible scale of human displacement wrought elsewhere during the war years, the Southern experience and the injustices inflicted upon African Americans may seem small. Certainly it cannot be likened to what happened in many parts of Europe, Asia, or North Africa. Yet the evacuation and lack of compensation of the least powerful communities throughout the South was a significant social injustice visited upon thousands of people, and it has received little attention. Like the internment of Japanese-American citizens and resident aliens during World War II, which has received attention only in recent years, it is important to accept moral responsibility for the displacement of minority communities in the South.

World War II transformed race relations in the South in a hundred ways, and the uprooting of black communities has remained an untold story for too long. Especially for black communities still seeking justice, exposing what happened to them during World War II remains critical.

Those events 50 years ago bear re-

membering for another reason. For the last decade, the Pentagon has been increasing the size of military reservations on a scale unprecedented since World War II. Even as the military reduces the number of bases in the United States, the remaining installations are claiming tens of thousands of new acres and enacting restrictive ordinances on civilian activities in far larger areas. Based on what happened during World War II, the public would be well advised to monitor closely whether current military growth is necessary, how it will occur, who will profit from it, and who will pay its price.

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"... nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation."
United States Constitution, Amendment V

A NEW "TAKE" ON TAKINGS

By Ron Nixon

PROTECTION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS WAS BUILT INTO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION. BUT HISTORICALLY, MOST GOVERNMENT CONDEMNATIONS — OR LAND-TAKINGS — FELL ON THOSE WITH FEW RESOURCES TO PROTECT THESE RIGHTS. STILL, THIS CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION ENSURED AT LEAST SOME PROTECTION FOR SMALL LANDOWNERS.

IN RECENT YEARS, A NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE CONSTITUTION HAS EMERGED, AND CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS HAVE EMBRACED IT. LAW PROFESSOR RICHARD EPSTEIN IN *TAKINGS: PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE POWER OF EMINENT DOMAIN* DESCRIBES THE IDEA: ANY TIME THE GOVERNMENT IMPOSES REGULATIONS, IT, IN EFFECT, "TAKES" YOUR PROPERTY RIGHTS.

AS AUTHOR RON NIXON SHOWS IN THIS ARTICLE, LARGE LANDOWNERS ARE USING THIS ARGUMENT TO CLAIM THAT THEY SHOULD BE COMPENSATED ANY TIME FEDERAL REGULATIONS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT COST THEM MONEY. THE SO-CALLED PROPERTY RIGHTS MOVEMENT DOES NOT PROTECT SMALL LANDOWNERS FROM AGGRESSIVE GOVERNMENT OR CORPORATE TAKINGS. RATHER, IT SEEKS TO GUT LEGISLATION, SUCH AS THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT AND THE CLEAN WATER ACT.

Charleston, South Carolina, real estate developer David Lucas has been a busy man since his landmark private property case before the U.S. Supreme Court. For the past three years, he has testified against environmental regulations, spoken before groups such as the Society of Environmental Journalists, and raised money to build a national group called

the Council on Private Property Rights.

Lucas is positioning himself as the poster boy for a new "property rights movement" — or the "wise use" movement — which claims to advocate less government regulation and greater rights for property owners. "I'm just the tip of the iceberg," Lucas said in a recent interview. Indeed, *USA Today* estimates that as many as 500 such groups already exist

across the country. In the past year, 32 states have introduced bills advocated by these groups. Mississippi, West Virginia, and Tennessee have all passed so-called property rights legislation, which requires governments to pay landowners if a regulation affects the value of their property.

"I like pristine areas," Lucas says. "I like to walk on the beach, but the



Homes crowd the South Carolina beachfront. To protect the environment, the state may have to pay developers not to build.

question is: Are we going to ruin thousands, maybe millions of people across the country, do damage to our economy, lose jobs, and lose productivity because of regulations?" This "us versus the government regulators" attitude gets to the heart of the property rights movement. Proponents seek to expand greatly constitutional protection for wealthy corporations and individuals who want to escape responsibility for the environment.

Lucas began his crusade in 1986 when he bought two pieces of property on the South Carolina coast. He intended to build a home for himself on one of the lots and sell the other. In 1988, however, environmental advocates pressured the South Carolina Assembly to pass the Beachfront Management Act to protect the fragile, rapidly eroding coastline. The legislation barred Lucas from building on his property. He sued, and the state granted him a variance so that he

could build. The variance still involved restrictions, however, and Lucas alleged that his land had lost all economic value.

Under the Fifth Amendment, governments are prohibited from taking private property for a public use, such as a road, without paying "just compensation to the owner." Lucas' lawyer interpreted the decreased economic value of his land as a "lost property right." A lower court accepted this argument and awarded the developer damages. But the state Supreme Court reversed the decision, so Lucas took his case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

By a six to three vote, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Lucas' expansion of property rights. Writing for the majority, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote, "As we have said on numerous occasions, the Fifth Amendment is violated when land use regulations do not substantially advance legitimate state interest or deny an owner economically viable use of his land." This opinion represents a contra-

diction in the new Supreme Court, which prides itself in stepping away from judicial activism, or broad interpretations of the Constitution.

Capitalizing on the momentum of the Lucas case and endorsed by the Republican "Contract with America," property rights advocates are pushing for "takings" legislation across the nation. Such legislation would make court cases like Lucas' unnecessary, according to Glen Sugameli, an attorney with the National Wildlife Federation. "Essentially, [under takings legislation] we have to pay someone *not* to pollute or *not* to destroy someone else's property," says Sheila Holbrook-White, member of the Alabama Sierra Club. "If these bills pass, we're going to see the regulations we're fighting to hold onto now, gutted."

Property rights advocates claim that they are just trying to battle a hopelessly bureaucratic government. "These bills are designed so that when government regulation goes too far, the property

Photo by Nancy Vinson



Dana Beach of the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League describes government subsidies to industries as "givings."

owner is compensated," says Bob Scott of the South Carolina Forestry Association. "Landowners should not have to bear the full burden of protecting a bird if it's in the public interest."

How far is too far? The M & J Coal Company of West Virginia last year claimed that it lost "property rights" when the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) attempted to enforce mining regulations. Although company practices resulted in ruptured gas lines, collapsed highways, and destroyed homes, M & J argued that OSM violated its "rights" by attempting to correct the situation. In another case, a chemical company in Guilford County, North Carolina, sued the county government when they were denied a permit to operate a hazardous waste facility. The company said that because the area was already contaminated, the only economic use of the property would be a hazardous waste facility. To deny them the income from hazardous waste denied their

"property rights," they claimed. Lower courts threw out both cases, but new legislation and the Lucas decision by the Supreme Court to back it up could make a difference. "If 'takings' bills were enacted, there could be a different result," said National Wildlife Federation attorney Glen Sugameli.

"We've been telling Congress for years that federal agencies are stealing private property when they come in and tell owners, 'that's now a wetland, and you can't build a house on it,' or 'we've found a spotted owl in your tree, and now you can't do anything with your land,'" says Margaret Ann Reigle, Chairperson of the Fairness to Landowners Committee in Cambridge, Maryland. "With the Republican sweep of Congress we're going to get a fair hearing."

Private property rights advocates, such as Reigle, deny that they want to curb the "legitimate" authority of government. "We're not looking to undo zoning laws,

local land use, or any nuisance laws," says Jon Doggett of the Farm Bureau in Washington, D.C. "But what we're looking for is the addressment of the very important issue of how much authority the federal government has in telling you what you can and can't do. And at what point does the regulatory activity become so egregious that there is a violation of the Fifth Amendment of

"THEY HAVE BASICALLY BASTARDIZED THE FIFTH AMENDMENT."

the Constitution?"

In spite of such comments, there is no reason to think that this legislation would be limited to undoing red tape. In a letter to the governor of Alabama, State Attorney General Jimmy Evans wrote that such legislation would have "a devastating effect" on the ability of the Alabama government to exercise the most

basic police powers. "The practical effect," he argues, "would be to end effective zoning, environmental, health regulation, and land use planning in the state of Alabama."

"The goal of this property rights movement is to paralyze the government or bankrupt it," adds Louie Miller, a member of the Sierra Club in Mississippi who has lobbied against the state takings bills. "They have basically bastardized the Fifth Amendment."

The enormous potential cost of takings legislation has helped marshal some powerful opposition to it. According to the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, these laws could cost between \$10 and \$15 billion and would threaten the ability of the government to regulate business. For these reasons, both the National League of Cities and the National Conference of State Legislators have adopted resolutions opposing takings legislation. A letter from 28 state attorneys general states that the laws are based on the "dubious principle" that the government "must pay polluters not to pollute, pay property owners not to harm their neighbors or the public, and pay companies *not* to damage the health, safety, or welfare of others."

"The irony is that these bills costing billions of dollars are being introduced by people who were elected as fiscal conservatives," comments Holbrook White.

Whatever the cost, the biggest beneficiaries of the movement are large corporations. Observers confirm that groups such as the Maryland Fairness for Landowners Committee, the Wetlands Awareness Committee in Mississippi, and the Alabama Stewards of Family Farms, Forest, and Ranches, are little more than fronts for corporate interests. An investigation by the environmental group Greenpeace found that corporate and industry trade organizations provide the bulk of the funding for property rights groups. Exxon, Monsanto, Dupont, Coors, oil and gas interests, lumber companies, the

American Farm Bureau, and others not only contribute money but also place board members in these organizations. Although the Farm Bureau claims that property rights legislation will help rural residents, investigations by Prairie Fire, a farm research group, show that less than half of Farm Bureau members are actually farmers.

Property rights groups also benefit tremendously from the service of conservative legal institutions. The Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF), with headquarters in San Francisco, filed an *amicus* brief (friend of the court) in the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of Lucas, the South Carolina developer. According to its newsletter, the group also assisted the counsel for Lucas in preparation of oral arguments. Since it was founded in the 1970s, the PLF has been a vocal opponent of environmental regulations, rent control, and civil rights laws.

Another group that supported Lucas in his case was the Institute for Justice, the same group that got President Clinton's nominee for assistant attorney general, Lani Guinier, smeared as a "quota queen." In the wake of the Lucas decision, the Institute for Justice vowed "to employ this favorable case precedent in future challenges to government intrusion on the rights of property owners."

In addition, other conservative groups, like the Defenders of Property Rights, have assisted the growing property rights movement in the South. Defenders of Property Rights, a Washington, D.C.-based organization, was founded by Roger Marzulla, assistant attorney general under the Reagan administration. Marzulla and his wife Nancie prepared a pamphlet for the South Carolina Forestry Association called *10 Reasons to Support the South Carolina Private Property Rights Act*. During this legislative session, the Forestry Association is using the pamphlet to create a favorable environment for a takings bill. Defenders of Property Rights also helped draft takings legisla-

tion in Mississippi.

Yet another resource for the property rights movement is the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a conservative think tank. ALEC provides "model legislation" for the 2,400 "pro free enterprise" legislators it claims as members. Funded by Philip Morris, Coors, Texaco, and other large corporations, ALEC has sent legislation to politicians across the South.

"The guys who are pushing this legislation are not known for their concern for protecting the public or small business people," comments Bill Holman, a lobbyist for the Sierra Club in North Carolina.

On the other hand, warns Dana Beach of the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League, property rights advocates should not be dismissed as merely a front for corporate interests. There are bona fide grassroots constituents for some of these bills, according to Beach. "In many areas, support comes from people who have never had to deal with land use issues," Beach says.

Other advocates are property owners and businesses that have for years complained of restrictions they feel are imposed on them by regulations. "We're reasonable people," says Kim English, of Mars Hill, North Carolina, who fought

"WE'RE NOT ANARCHISTS. WE TRY TO LIVE UNDER THE RULES. BUT SOME OF THESE ENVIRONMENTAL RULES ARE EXCESSIVE."

the state's 1991 watershed protection law. "We're not anarchists. We try to live under the rules. But some of these [environmental] rules are excessive."

At the same time, most people still want the environment and their health protected from polluters. According to a

Photo by Wade Speer/The Post and Courier



South Carolina developer David Lucas won his property rights case in the U.S. Supreme Court.

1994 Times-Mirror poll, for example, 51 percent of people surveyed thought regulations to protect endangered species had not gone far enough. A full 76 percent thought that regulations to prevent water pollution did not do enough to protect them; only 4 percent thought water pollution regulations were excessive.

To revise laws that might be overly complex requires "a detailed analysis," according to Beach, "to decide which laws should be enacted, modified, or stricken." In the meantime, property rights advocates offer an appealingly simple alternative: do away with regulation altogether.

No one denies that there are legitimate concerns in the struggle to balance the needs of society with those of the individual property owner, comments an editorial in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*. Arguments being put forth by conservative think tanks and business groups, though, represent "pure hypocrisy," the

editorial writer maintains. "Those who scream the loudest about government regulation are usually those who benefit the most from government investments."

The example cited by the editorial is the taxpayer-subsidized National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Established by Congress in 1968, the original intent of NFIP was to steer development away from risky areas. Instead, a 1982 General Accounting Office (GAO) report found that the NFIP has provided a "safety net" for shoreline development. Under the program, the average policyholder pays only \$252 per year for flood insurance and can make unlimited claims without a rate increase. According to another GAO study, the program operated at a deficit of \$650 million between 1978 and 1987. To bail out the nearly bankrupt program, Congress appropriated more than \$1 billion to NFIP during the 1980s.

"Without this kind of support from taxpayers, takings proponents like Lucas would not have been able to build in a coastal area," says Louie Miller of the Mississippi Sierra Club.

To control costs, the 1993 Congress tried to limit the availability of federally backed insurance, but the National Association of Homebuilders campaigned against cuts to the program. The Homebuilders, also a major proponent of property rights legislation, actually argued that limits on subsidized insurance would diminish property rights. Without subsidized insurance, developers couldn't get loans to build in sensitive areas.

"It would certainly be more expensive if people had to buy flood insurance based on risk," says Walter Clark, a coastal law specialist at North Carolina State University. But more expensive insurance, Clark points out, also would have the positive effect of discouraging development along the ocean front, "where it shouldn't be taking place, anyway."

Another major advocate of property

rights, the logging industry, benefits enormously from government subsidies. Because lands managed according to state forestry laws receive tax exemptions, private landowners dodge billions of dollars in property taxes every year. In the state of Alabama alone, for instance, the forestry industry saves more than \$77 million through tax exemptions. When asked to comply with voluntary standards for buffer zones along streams to prevent erosion, though, the Alabama Forestry Association objects. "Laws and regulations that purport to protect the environment," argues the Alabama trade association,

"THOSE WHO SCREAM THE LOUDEST ABOUT GOVERNMENT REGULATION ARE USUALLY THOSE WHO BENEFIT THE MOST FROM GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS."

"cause economic hardship that amounts to a violation of the Constitution."

And farm industry groups, who also advocate private property rights, collect billions of dollars in subsidy programs each year. A Pulitzer prize-winning series by the *Kansas City Star* on U.S. Department of Agriculture subsidies revealed that these programs are rife with abuse by corporate farmers. In one case, an individual farmer collected nearly \$5 million by claiming fraudulent subsidies.

Government subsidies for farming, forestry, and development industries could be described essentially as a "giving," argues Dana Beach of the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League. "If taxpayers have to compensate property owners when their property is devalued by government regulation, then why shouldn't property owners compensate the public when the government *increases* the value of their property?"

The bottom line, Beach said, echoing one of the founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin, is that private property rights are, in fact, a creation of the government and society. Franklin wrote, "Private

property is a creature of society and is subject to the calls of that society."

James Madison, the father of the Constitution and the principal author of the Fifth Amendment, realized the necessity of prohibiting certain activities on private property. The Fifth Amendment does not give property owners permission to harm others, or, in the words of Madison, remove from "everyone else the like advantage."

This is also not the first time in history that conservative groups have tried to hide from community responsibility under a cloak of property rights. For example, when the federal government passed the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Heart of Atlanta Motel sued under the Fifth Amendment. The motel claimed that the federal government violated their "property rights" by forcing the facility to allow

entrance to black customers. This strained interpretation of property rights, however, was rejected by the U.S. Supreme Court.

"The new debate about takings attempts to impose a radical interpretation of the Fifth Amendment that would curtail the government's ability to protect the common good," says Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ. Campbell testified before a recent Congressional hearing on takings legislation. "It would take us back to an age of excessive individualism where the interest of the greedy override the public's well being," she says. "While we respect the legitimate rights of individuals, we at the same time expect every property owner to respect the covenants that we have made as a society to work for the common good."

§

Ron Nixon is a research associate for the Institute for Southern Studies. He last wrote for *Southern Exposure* (Spring 1995) on black conservatives, in an article called "Plantation Politics?"



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ORGANIZATIONS

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- SOUTH CAROLINA COASTAL CONSERVATION LEAGUE**
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How To

PAMPHLET TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS: CITIZENSHIP AND THE CHARTER OF INCORPORATION, send \$4 plus a self-addressed envelope (52 cents postage) to Charter, Ink. CSSP, P.O. Box 806, Cambridge, MA 02140.

ACTIVISTS PACKET
The Midwest Office of Sierra Club is offering activists a useful packet of information and resources for fighting "the war on the environment." Materials include "The Message," a series of articles about "takings" legislation, and "The Tools," materials on organizing, lobbying, and working with the media. Request the packet from **Carl Zichella, Midwest Staff Director, Sierra Club, 214 N. Henry St., Suite 203, Madison, WI 53703. (603) 257-4994.**

Water

By Janet Hearne

He seduced me with water. I was six years old, landlocked, moved inland from the Georgia seacoast to Atlanta. Around me there were only houses and woods. I searched our backyard for water, the trace of rain down a red clay hill. Perhaps this is the beginning of a stream. I dug at our hillsides with my fingernails, sticks, broken rocks. I created reservoirs. I collected water in tin cans. It was never enough.

And so I was thirsty, open to seduction. The day before Christmas 1958. It was a shirt-sleeve day and I was wearing my red corduroy bedroom slippers. My mother said I could wear them outside if I stayed on the flagstone walk. But I wandered. Down the hill to the street to check the gutters for water and down the street to the voices I heard four houses down in a neighbor's yard. These were the big boys, forbidden.

I was lonely. We'd lived here only three months and the neighborhood children, there were so many of us then, had not yet let me into their circle. They would each play with me alone, but when the gang gathered they merged and became an angry animal. I was the littlest, the quietest, and one first spotted by predators. I had no friends and I had no father.

There was a father, true, but he worked. He left the house before I got up in the morning and came home at dinner time and at the supper table he talked about work. After dinner he went into his office and didn't come out. Each night before I went to bed, I stood next to his desk and offered him my cheek and he kissed me goodnight. He did not take me in his lap and ask me how my day had been. He did not bend his ear to the whisperings of his child. He didn't know what I wanted for Christmas. He didn't know

where I got the scab on my knee or that I thirsted for water,

I saw the big boys and thought they would not play with me so I turned to walk back up the hill.

"Wait, wait," one of the boys, Roger, called out to me. He was thirteen, tall with some acne and black-rimmed glasses. My parents said to stay away from him. He went to a special school. He lived alone with his father because his mother had left.

Roger stepped away from the others. "We were just talking about the pond. I wanted to go there but they won't go with me. Will you?"

I stopped, three feet tall in red corduroy slippers.

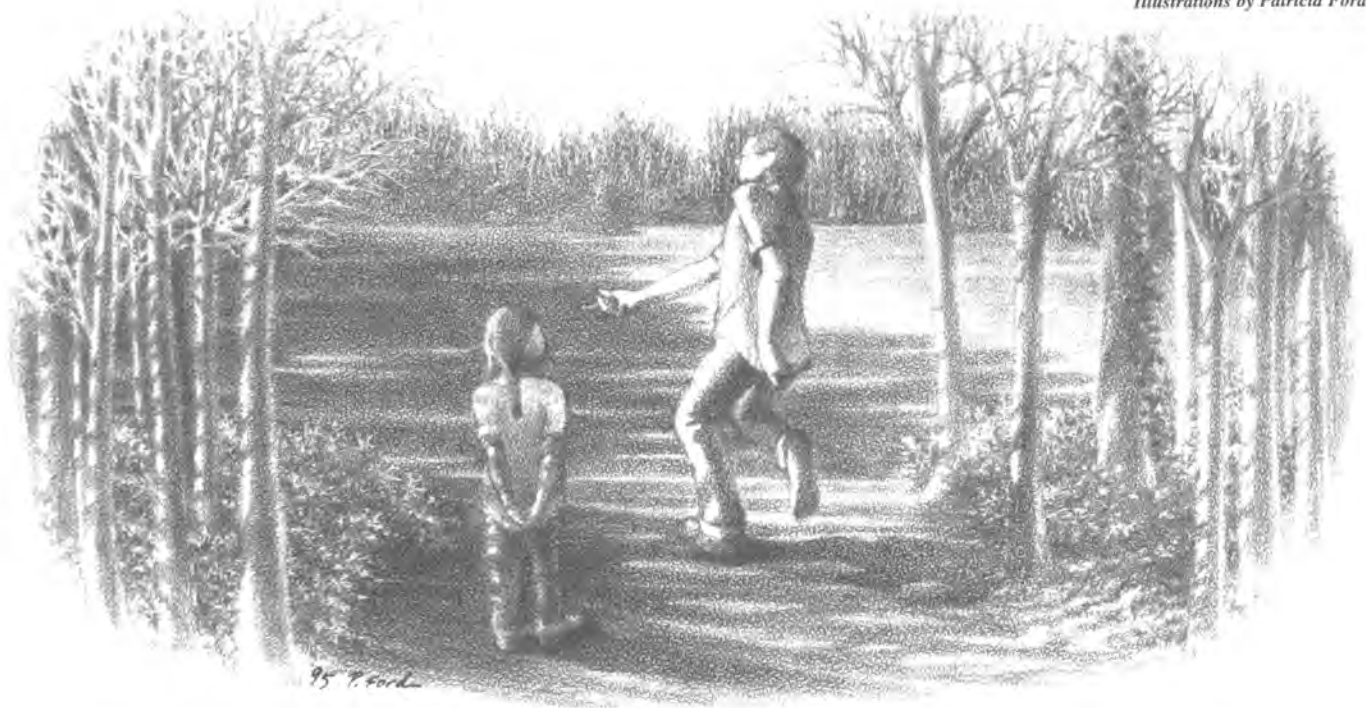
"There's a pond?"

"Yeah, at the end of the road. There's a creek and a pond. C'mon, I'll show you."

I followed him, forgetting the limits of the flagstone path. We passed six houses on either side of the street. The mothers were inside, talking on their telephones, pulling laundry from their new dryers. They no longer hung their clothes outside to dry. Any one of the mothers, had they been standing at the clothesline, would have stopped us. They would have sent me home.

Our street dead-ended at the black-and-white striped barricade studded with red reflector lights, the same as those on our bicycles. Here we roller skated in the cul-de-sac. The big boys rode their go-carts down the hill, jerking the steering bar as they skimmed past the barricade. Until now it had been the end of the street. I was six years old; it might as well have been the end of the world.

**He didn't know
where I got the
scab on my knee or
that I thirsted for
water.**



I followed Roger past the barricade and into the woods. There was a footpath laid with fall leaves turned brown. The path led to the pond and around it. I followed Roger quietly — he didn't talk to me — to the other side. For a child who longed for water this pond was a gift, a Christmas miracle of the sort the nuns proclaimed at school. I smiled at Roger but he didn't smile back.

He picked up a smooth flat stone and tossed it with a quick snap of his wrist, hand palm up. We watched together as the stone skipped once, twice, again, then sank into the pond.

"Is the water deep?"

"Over your head. It's over mine. It's so deep you can't measure it."

Roger never looked at me when he spoke, he stared straight ahead, and I stared at him wondering if his red raw acne hurt.

"There's whole cars down there and there's skeletons in them. If you try to cross, they reach up with their bony hands and they pull you under. They suck the air out of your lungs and you drown."

I wasn't afraid of water but I was afraid of skeletons. When I was three, I dreamt a skeleton was chasing me down a long

dark corridor. The only way out was through a keyhole. I've carried the memory of that dream for 38 years — when I was six, it was vivid and dangerous. I moved closer to Roger, hoping he would take my hand. As I brushed up against him, he stiffened.

The pond no longer drew me. It was something ugly, unlike the ocean at Tybee Beach, buoyant with salt water, warm as a bath. I began to feel homesick. My mother would be missing me by now. I should have been on the flagstone walk.

"I'd better go. My mom's going to be mad."

Roger looked at me.

"You can't go home. You can't ever go home again."

Something started pressing on my chest, it pressed from the inside.

"I can too. I can go back through the woods."

"The way we came? It doesn't take you back. There's only two ways to get back home. You can swim across the pond, or you can stay with me and I might show you the way back."

"My mother will come get me. I'm going to stay here."

He turned his back to me. "Suit yourself, but your mother's

For a child who longed for water this pond was a gift, a Christmas miracle of the sort the nuns proclaimed at school.

not coming down here. You're a good little girl. Why would she think you'd come down here when you're not even supposed to leave your yard?"

Roger started to walk away; he was following the path up a rise. In a minute or two he would top the hill and start downward and he would be out of sight. I followed him.

My soft bedroom slippers padded in the leaves behind him. I followed him head down. The leaves beneath my feet were matted and wet and mangled by insects. I watched my red slippers take one stop and then another. I watched the red turn dark with water and mud. They were my Christmas present, wheedled early from my mother. If I never got home, they would be my only Christmas present and the woods were ruining them.

Head down, I didn't see the rise of the hill, I merely felt it in my legs, the straining of my calves and thighs, the stretching of my hamstrings. We walked like this for some time, I couldn't say how long. When you are six, time lurches, speeds up, slows down. My legs ached. I walked head down, my eyes on my red shoes, until Roger stopped in front of me.

The hillside disappeared in front of us. We stood on a rock ledge overlooking a chasm cut out by the stream. My curiosity overtook my fear. I walked to the rim of the ledge and looked down. The drop to the rock bed below would be, I imagined, like falling from the roof of our house.

"I'm going to push you off. You're going to fall and you're going to die," Roger said.

Roger took one step forward. I had no fear of death — I had no idea what it was. Death was a turquoise parakeet named Sal buried in the zinnia bed at our house in Savannah. Death was on television.

I looked up at Roger. "I wish Rin Tin Tin were here. He'd save me."

Roger's face relaxed. He turned and walked away from the ledge back to the path in the woods. I followed him.

I walked on Roger's shadow and wondered where I would sleep tonight and if I would wake in the morning. I missed my mother, but I would not cry.

The path flattened out and ran alongside the stream, which had dwindled to a trickle. I had to go to the bathroom and I was tired.

"I want to go home."

"I told you, you're not going home, not ever. You'll never

see your mother again."

"I will too. She'll find me. She'll look for me until she finds me."

"No she won't. She's mad at you by now. You're not supposed to be here. You're not supposed to be with me, and now she doesn't care if you ever come home."

I believed him. I was alone in the woods with an ugly boy who would keep me from my mother until I died. I would hardly bear the weight of my arms and legs. Roger walked and I followed him.

The sun had set and the tree limbs against the sky looked like pleading arms. I was hungry and thirsty and I had to pee. I walked in the trickle of the stream now, soaking my feet and the corduroy slippers through. If I had to stay with Roger, I would do everything I could to die.

I peed in my pants and felt the warm run down my legs and into my socks and shoes. Roger stopped and I looked up.

Ahead through the trees I saw a black and white barricade.

"That's our street, Roger."

"No, it's not. It's another street. We're a long way from home."

"It's our street. I'm going home."

The barricade was ahead, down the hill and across a small sinkhole covered with leaves. I started walking and Roger called out after me.

"There are dragons in that hole. You can't cross it unless you know the password or they'll eat you."

I didn't care. I ran, I scrambled across the hole. I ran to the barricade and around it and I was in the cul-de-sac. My

thirteen-year-old sister was walking down the hill, sent by mother to look for me. My mother had been wrapping gifts, my sister watching soap operas, and they hadn't noticed I was gone until over two hours had past.

My mother peeled off my clothes and put me in the bathtub. She kept asking, "Did he touch you?" He hadn't.

"Did he hurt you?" I didn't think so and I shook my head.

My mother left me soaking in the tub while she, and then my father, talked to Roger's father on the telephone. My stomach was an island surrounded by the hot, clear water as I lay on my back in the tub. I made waves with my body and swamped the island. I watched the skin on my fingers pucker I kept running the hot water.

After a while my father came and stood at the door. "Did he hurt you?"

**I looked up at
Roger. "I wish Rin
Tin Tin were here.
He'd save me."**



"No," I said and my father walked away. I thought at least he would kiss me on the top of my head.

course not. I don't want everyone in the neighborhood talking about this."

There were voices in the living room. My parents and Roger's father. I heard him say, "His mother, it's been hard." I towed myself off and dressed in the pajamas my mother had laid out. They were periwinkle blue. I followed the voices into the living room.

My parents were sitting with their backs to me. Roger's father was on the couch. They were so intent on their words that they did not see Roger, crouched among the bushes, staring in the picture window at the end of the room.

He saw me and he smirked.

I looked at my parents, their mouths were moving. My father was saying, "I don't think it's necessary to involve the police."

My mother turned on him in amazement. "The police? Of

**I knew then my
parents could not
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because they
thought their words
were enough.**

Roger's father nodded. The three of them talked on, caught up in their words, while Roger's face watched through the window like a red and angry moon.

I knew then my parents could not protect me, because they thought their words were enough.

I felt as if I were shrinking, collapsing in on myself until I was as small and hard as the stones that lay at the edge of the pond, just beyond the water's reach.

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Janet Hearne is author of Only in California: Fabulous Facts, Weird Happenings, and Eccentric Ephemera from America's Most Altered State. She lives in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Bo Willie Redd and Princess Geraldine II

The storyteller cooks up some barbeque and his own goose.

By Junebug Jabbo Jones

Bo Willie Redd had his bleary eyes on me from the time he stumbled over the defunctified streetcar tracks at Rampart and Desire. I bent into the baby back ribs of beef I had on the grill acting like I hadn't seen him. I was getting ready for my big date with Betty Jean Shivers and was not in no mood for small talk with this lightweight hustler who seemed more at home in Orleans Parish Prison than he did here in the neighborhood that he'd grown up in and where his family had owned a corner bar for three generations. It was almost 6 p.m. I still had to take my bath, get dressed, and try to calm my nerves before the woman I'd been dreaming about ever since I'd gotten back from the military would have her knees folded beneath my Japanese table. So I definitely had no time for Bo Willie.

"Say, Brother Man, *que pasa?*" Bo Willie said as he leaned down to rest his arm from toting the used car battery he had carried clamped in the bite of heavy-duty locking pliers. "You got everybody in the neighborhood slobbering at the mouth. I know you didn't learn to cook like that in Korea. Dig it Bro', if you want to get into business, I know we could make grand theft *dineros* selling 'Bo Willie and Junebug's Special Barbeque.' Just imagine that, Bro. We could use my old man's bar and everything."

"Bo Willie—"

"All right, all right, I'll give you top

billing, but remember it was my idea, and it is my old man's building we talking about."

"Bo Willie, I'm not interested in going into business with you or anybody else. I'm a nurse."

"That's why I mentioned it, Bro. Who ever heard of a male nurse? Come to think of it that could be a pretty hip getover. I bet you're the only man in that nursing school over there at Flint-Goodridge hospital. Hmm, I hadn't thought of that. That's hip, Bro. That's hip!"

"I thought it would be a good way to use the medical experience I got as a medic in Korea, plus the fact that nurses can get work anywhere. They got plenty of scholarships for the program. As smart as you are, Bo Willie, I know you could qualify."

"No, no, no, no, no! I'm allergic to W-O-R-K, Bro'. I can't even say the word. I'm an entrepreneur."

"Oh yeah? There's not a lot of buying and selling going on in the Orleans Parish Prison, huh?"

"Hey, Bro', OPP ain't no big thing. When people with money take a risk and lose it, it cost them a little money. When I miss on a bet, I lose a little time. It's just the cost of doing business. I bet you didn't run into no Rockefellers fighting in the trenches with you in Korea."

"You're right about that. But I'm sorry, Bo, I've got some special company coming over for dinner, and I have to get ready."

"Dig it! I'm standing here jaw jacking, and you trying to take care of some serious business." He squatted to get a grip on the makeshift handle to the battery. "Say, Junebug, you interested in a good used battery with plenty of fire in it? Lookahere ..." He clicked the lock on the vise grip and turned the metal tool so that it stretched between the poles of the battery. As he connected the two poles a bright, hard spark flared up. "See that! That's the sign of a real good battery. I can give it to you at a very good price."

"No thank you, Bo, but I got to go. I've been working on this lady since school started in September, so I don't want to blow it."

"For you, Junebug, I'll knock five dollars off the price."

"No thanks, Bo, I got to go."

I heard Bo Willie call as he walked down the block toward his family bar, "Junebug's Bar-B-Q at the House of Redd. Think about it, Junebug. It's a natural winner."

Everything was ready when Betty Jean got there at 7. I had a stack of LPs playing on the box: Dinah Washington, Billie Holiday, Arthur Prysock, Billy Eckstine, and that new jam by Johnny Hartman singing with Coltrane.

Betty Jean, or "Miss Shivers" as I had to call her at work, was the Director of Nursing at the black hospital where I was on a special work/study program. Technically speaking, we weren't supposed to

be seeing each other, but there was no way I was going to let this lady get away. She moved gracefully and smoothly like a willow. Although she was gentle when she spoke, you could tell that she was as firm and strong as oak and that the passion in her was like the deep and fierce fire that makes lava flow. I had never known a woman like Betty Jean before. My temperature went up when she just walked in the room.

My little two-room apartment was decorated Asian style. You had to take your shoes off when you stepped in the door. I had waxed the wooden floor to a glossy shine. A full-sized futon covered by a beautiful quilt my family handed down from slavery days was folded up, sofa-style, in front of the fireplace. I kept a bunch of pillows around the large double parlor for people to sit on. I had a batch of silk cloth from China which I used for curtains and covers and accents of different types.

At the far end of the room, before you got to the bathroom and the kitchen, was an old-fashioned player piano, and off to the right was a black lacquered Japanese table. It was set in white with lavender napkins, purple candles, and an arrangement of star gazer lilies that I had worked on for two hours. A Yoruba fertility figure, highlighted by the glow of the candles from the table, sat in front of the fireplace.

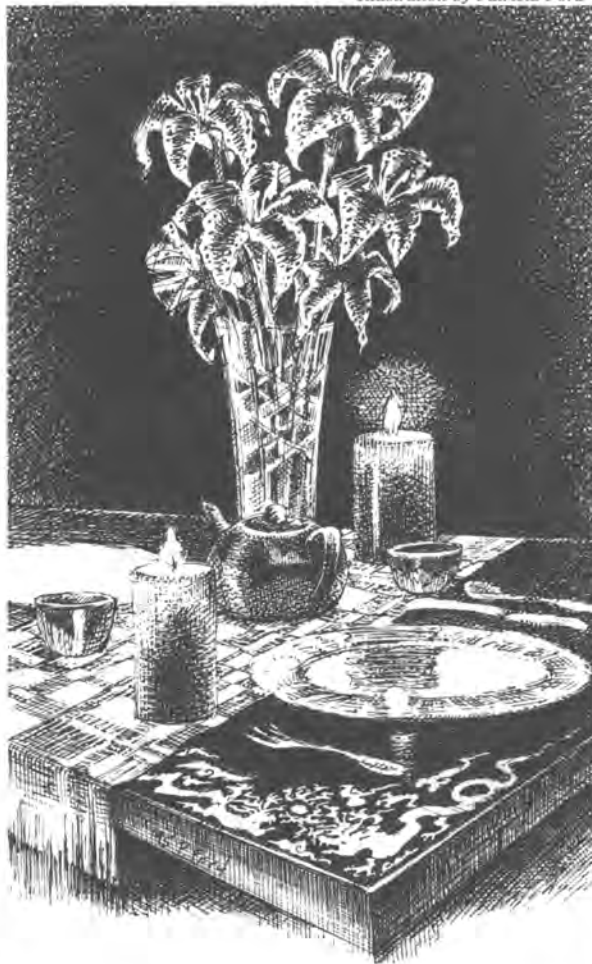
Ms. Shivers didn't drink or smoke and was determined not to have sex before she got married. I didn't mind about her not drinking and not smoking, but I did not like her idea of doing without sex. Being a man with some experience of the world, I believed then, as I do now, that regular sex with someone you truly love can be really good for you as well as good to you. Not that I didn't respect her opinion, but that particular night I had made up my mind that I was going to do everything in my power to convince her that I was right.

I was serious about trying to seduce this woman. I served oyster and artichoke soup, a watercress salad, barbe-

cue, (neatly trimmed but still stuck to the bone so that we had to eat it with our fingers), Korean sauerkraut (which they call *kim chee*) rice, and a special tea made of

*...her finger-nails
suddenly seemed
like talons on my
thigh and (by now)
bare chest.*

Illustration by Patricia Ford



ginger, donqui, and ginseng which was sweetened with royal jelly honeycomb. I had pulled out every trick I knew.

I thought it was working. During dinner we laughed a lot. She complimented me for my taste in food, said she admired my simple, manly, but still sexy home, and we often found ourselves in long

dreamy-eyed silences. We chatted late into the night about our interests, our work, my experience in the military, her life growing up in Natchez and living in New Orleans.

I got up to turn the LPs over, and we moved to the futon. Billy Eckstine was singing, "When I Fall in Love." It got to the point where tender little kisses turned into long passionate ones and the buttons on both of our shirts had come undone. Betty Jean might have been a virgin at the time but she didn't kiss like one. She had a knowledge of the body that she'd gained in nurse's training and was very curious in her innocent sort of way about the erotic things I'd learned in Asia.

I was trying to convince her that it would be safe for her to spend the night, that I wouldn't even try to do anything that she didn't want to do. She had almost decided to stay. I was caressing her passionately, but politely, whispering sweet nothings as I nibbled on the soft fleshy part of her ear and tried the deeper part with the tip of my tongue, when her fingernails suddenly seemed like talons on my thigh and (by now) bare chest.

"Mary Ann?" she said.

"Mary Ann? Who's she?" says I, trying to conceal my discomfort because I did recognize this name.

"That's what I want to know."

"Did I say 'Mary Ann?'"

"I thought I was the only person you were dating."

"Of course, you're the only person I'm dating, baby —"

"Don't you 'baby' me! Who is this 'Mary Ann' that you can't stop thinking about when you're kissing and rubbing on me?"

"It's no big thing, Betty

Jean —"

"Then you won't mind telling me why you're thinking about her when you're trying to get in bed with me."

Hoping to cut my losses, I said, "Mary Ann was one of my girlfriends a long time ago — before I went to Korea —"

"I'd better go now. I need to take some time to think things over."

The next day she called to tell me she was going to spend some time with her family in Natchez. Three weeks later, she was still in Natchez ... thinking.

Finally, I decided to drive up to Natchez. It turned out that the first black doctor to be admitted to practice at St. Mary's General Hospital there was very impressed with Betty Jean ... her skills as a nurse and all.

I said, "Betty Jean, I want you to come back to New Orleans so we can ... get to know each other better."

"You sure you don't mean Mary Ann?"

"Come on, baby. You can't hold one little slip of the lip against me for the rest of my life."

"I wanted you to have enough time to think it over. You haven't started seeing anyone else have you?"

Six months later I got an invitation to Betty Jean's wedding to Dr. Horace Whatchamacallit. After that, one of the first things I would do whenever I felt like I might be falling in love, I would say, "Baby, do you mind if I call you 'Princess Geraldine?' See, my grandmama was named Geraldine, and she carried herself with such pride and grace that everyone called her 'Princess Geraldine.'

"My grandmother is the one who taught me what love is all about and you remind me of her. Do you mind if I call you "'Princess Geraldine' after my grandmama?" Almost always they would smile and say, "Yes, of course, Junebug, that would be a great honor." I haven't ever had the problem of calling anyone out of their names ever since.

In memory of the second Princess Geraldine I made up this little song.

Ode for Princess Geraldine II (Shades of Pharaoh Sanders)

Baby,

I just want you to tell me this one thing:

How I'm going to be true to you when you so busy being true to someone else?

You see what it is I'm saying?

*I tell you I loves you
place no one above you
and you smiles and says,
"Be patient, while I makes up my
mind."*

*So I take my aching head in one hand
and my aching heart in the other
goes somewhere to sing some blues to
keep from crying.*

*Just about then, this sweet young
thing
goes sashaying by
and I jumps up to see
if the light is shining in her eyes like
yours used to be
and Boom!*

*What happens?
You got an attitude.*

*Damn, Baby!
How patient am I supposed to be?*

*Lord knows I wish I had the master
plan.
Try as hard as I can
I just can't understand how I'm sup-
posed to be true to you
when you so busy being true to some-
one else!*

*"The Creator has a master plan,
Peace and happiness for every man..."*

Oh, by the way: the next morning after that fateful dinner, I got in my car to go to work and my car wouldn't turn over. When I raised the hood, Ray Charles could have seen what the problem was... Somebody had ripped off my battery!

S

Junebug Jabbo Jones sends along stories from his home in New Orleans through his good friend, storyteller and performer, John O'Neal.

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Slow Burn in Louisiana

Residents are giving some heat to the EPA over an incinerator that was built to clean up a hazardous waste Superfund site.

By Sara Shipley

When Carl Helwig toured a "state-of-the-art" incinerator near Long Island, New York, in 1988, he was deeply impressed. The high-tech, computer-monitored facility swiftly transformed stacks of used mattresses and junked refrigerators into electricity. Helwig watched in awe as the town turned other people's trash into its treasure chest by importing waste and mining local dumps.

"It looked like a win-win situation to me," says Helwig, a mechanical engineer. "I thought incineration was the answer."

So did city officials in Helwig's hometown of Slidell, Louisiana, 25 miles northeast of New Orleans. They welcomed the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) plans for a toxic waste incinerator in the middle of town. The incinerator would burn polluted materials from an EPA Superfund site nearby — an old wood-treatment plant on scenic Bayou Bonfouca. Incineration was a favorite method for treating creosote, an oily wood preservative suspected of causing cancer. The \$112 million contract awarded to a joint venture of industrial giants Ohio Materials, Inc., and International Technologies, would pump money and jobs into the local economy.

At first Helwig did not worry about

environmental damage. As a retiree of the oil field diving industry, "I thought Greenpeace was just a bunch of wild people running around plugging up plant outfalls," he says.

changes in agency regulations and cleanup strategies had transformed the Bayou Bonfouca incinerator into a noisy 100-foot tall mammoth that residents complained looked like an oil refinery. The project had become the most expensive Superfund cleanup in the the nation's history.

"Until the incinerator went up, nobody really knew what was going on," Helwig says. "There were no more public hearings, even though the scope of the project changed dramatically."

Problems began to emerge. Lucy Tierney, a Slidell homemaker, often saw the incinerator's steam plume drift over her house. She told the Slidell City Council that the incinerator reminded her of a dragon; it belows, snorts steam and breathes fire. "I'm concerned that instead of just having water pollution, now we have air and noise pollution," Tierney says. She also complains of respiratory problems.

Helwig began to worry about the safety of incineration when his nephew, an environmental engineer connected

with the New York "waste-to-energy" incinerator, told him about dioxin, a by-product of burning chlorinated compounds that has been linked with cancer, immune system deficiencies and birth

Photo by Arthur D. Lauck



Superfund cleanup incinerator looms over Slidell, Louisiana.

Bayou dredging began and the incinerator appeared in 1993, just off Front Street, a major city thoroughfare. Rather than the portable kilns that were described in early public meetings,

defects. Helwig also learned about other unwanted byproducts of incinerators, including unburned heavy metals and new toxic chemicals that form as stack gases cool.

In the spring of 1994, Tierney, Helwig and about 35 other concerned citizens revived a group that had originally formed to protest the expansion of a bleach plant in a low-income neighborhood — Slidell Working Against Major Pollution, or SWAMP. Helwig is now president, and Tierney is on the board of directors. The group teamed up with Tulane University's Environmental Law Clinic and the Louisiana Environmental Action Network to sponsor a series of public discussions.

One of the first speakers the groups invited was Paul Connett, a chemistry professor at St. Lawrence University in New York who is considered an international expert on dioxin. "How many times have you been told that a well-designed incinerator poses no health threats? A scientific statement, right? Wrong!" Connett told SWAMP members. "Incineration is an experiment that you should not tolerate."

Connett said he wouldn't worry too much if the Bayou Bonfouca incinerator were burning only creosote. But, he said, the contaminated soil contained low levels of some heavy metals and chlorinated compounds that wouldn't normally be associated with creosote. "If you have chlorine going in, you have dioxin coming out," he says.

Slidell residents realized that no one had been critically monitoring cleanup plans. "Things are going on in your community that no one is aware of, is participating in, or is commenting on," says Wilma Subra, a chemist and environmental activist from New Iberia, Louisiana, who listened to residents complain about nosebleeds, respiratory problems and strange odors at another forum. "You need to be part of the process at every step," she says.

SWAMP members began poring over

EPA documents in the public library, seeking technical information about exactly what the incinerator was burning and what was coming out of its stack. At an EPA open house in April, group members bombarded officials with questions

stack. EPA project manager Bert Griswold replied that stack emissions were tested for hazardous materials during a trial burn and that other parameters, such as carbon dioxide, are continuously monitored. "There's no equipment on the market to monitor that continuously," Griswold says.

That wasn't an adequate answer for SWAMP, which holds that even the best incinerators may not be good enough. "If an incinerator can't be continuously monitored, it should not be used in a city," Helwig says, to the applause of about 70 people.

SWAMP members decided that they needed their own technical expert to make sure that the site complied with safety standards. They agreed to apply for a \$50,000 community grant from the EPA, which could be used to hire an independent scientist to interpret and monitor Superfund data.

SWAMP then began the process of legally incorporating, achieving non-profit status, and filling out the grant application. The group received critical help and advice from Tracy Kuhns Sugasti, who had worked with a Texas group that shut down the incinerator at the notorious Brio Superfund site near Houston, Texas. When she felt her work was completed, Sugasti moved to Lafitte, Louisiana. She helped SWAMP, she says, because she couldn't forget Brio.

After SWAMP received the grant, a more serious problem arose. Just one and a half miles down the bayou from the old wood-treatment plant, EPA was investigating two earthen pits at the defunct Southern Shipbuilding Corporation. The pits, filled with creosote, benzene compounds, pesticides, and other toxic waste from an old barge cleaning operation, were slowly leaching into the bayou.

The Slidell City Council, pleased with the operation of the current Superfund site, requested that EPA consider burning the shipyard waste at the Bayou Bonfouca incinerator. Councilman Richard Van Sandt said that combining the sites would save taxpayers



TOOLBOX

For more information about groups working against incineration, contact:

Slidell Working Against Major Pollution (SWAMP)
215 Michigan Ave., Slidell, LA 70458
(504) 649-7870

Tulane Environmental Law Clinic
6329 Freret St., New Orleans, LA 70118
(504) 865-5789

Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste
Stop Dioxin Campaign, P.O. Box 6806,
Falls Church, VA 22040 (703) 237-2249

Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN)
P.O. Box 66323, Baton Rouge, LA 70896-
6323 (504) 928-1315

Greenpeace Toxics Campaign
1436 U St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009
(202) 319-2477

Two other broad environmental justice groups in the South are:

Southern Environmental Law Center
201 West Main St., Suite 14,
Charlottesville, VA 22901-5064
(804) 977-4090

Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation (LEAF)
1115 North Gadsden St., Suite 5,
Tallahassee, FL 32303-6327

about the operation's safety.

Jim Ryan, an engineer and member of SWAMP, says that he was concerned that there was no continuous testing of the steam rolling from the incinerator

millions.

Many community members were appalled, recalling an EPA promise that the incinerator would be dismantled as soon as the creosote cleanup was finished. Residents crowded an EPA open house in August 1994 where project manager Griswold sought to assure residents that the agency had not yet decided how to deal with the pits at Southern Shipbuilding. He said that EPA was considering a range of options, including incineration both on-site and at Bayou Bonfouca; soil washing, which would separate the pollution from the dirt for separate treatment; solidification, or encapsulating the waste; and bioremediation, which uses microbes to eat the waste.

But quietly at first, and then more openly, Griswold and other EPA officials began to favor hauling the waste to Bayou Bonfouca to burn it there. SWAMP members had pushed for bioremediation, but tests showed that it could take up to 10 years and may not work as effectively as incineration, Griswold said. Other options, such as taking the waste to a land farm near Baton Rouge, were slowly crossed off the list. Additionally, the Bayou Bonfouca cleanup could be completed as early as May — more than a year ahead of schedule — and agency officials wanted to make a decision quickly to keep that option open.

Combining the two sites would require “public approval,” but some in the community were already skeptical that their voices would be heard. SWAMP members requested that they be permitted to use their \$50,000 Bayou Bonfouca grant to investigate Southern Shipbuilding as well, but EPA refused.

“It’s a done deal. There’s nothing anyone can do about it,” laments Mark Hardy, who lives near the Bayou Bonfouca incinerator.

SWAMP members grew increasingly fearful of burning the Southern Shipbuilding muck. Helwig only became more convinced of the dangers of incin-

eration in December when he attended Dallas hearings on the draft version of EPA’s long-awaited dioxin reassess-

“How many times have you been told that a well-designed incinerator poses no health threats? A scientific statement, right? Wrong!” Connett told SWAMP members. “Incineration is an experiment that you should not tolerate.”

ment. He listened to tale after tragic tale from people who lived in the shadow of incinerators and other dioxin-producing industries, such as paper bleaching plants.

“No conference ever got my attention more,” Helwig says. “Children being born deformed, miscarriages. We are paying a price for our modern conveniences, and that price is that a portion of our population is expendable.”

While EPA appears to be favoring incineration more and more, SWAMP gathered evidence from other Superfund sites to demonstrate that incineration was dangerous, and that there were alternatives. SWAMP found out that a proposed incinerator at the Texarkana Wood Preserving Superfund site had been delayed through the work of a group called Friends United for a Safe Environment (FUSE). After the EPA overrode public opposition and decided to burn the waste, FUSE teamed up with Arkansas Attorney General Winston Bryant and filed suit against the EPA, FUSE vice president James Presley says. Now, Presley said, EPA has promised to delay the cleanup until the federal Office of

Technology Assessment completes a comprehensive study on the safety of incineration, and the results of that

study are likely to include EPA’s own damning dioxin assessment.

Presley also told SWAMP about what he called EPA’s “smoking gun” — a North Carolina wood preserving site being cleaned up with a new technology that EPA itself developed. Called base catalyzed composition, or BCD, the method uses baking soda and heat to decontaminate soil. It even costs less than incineration.

So far, SWAMP’s findings have had little effect on the Slidell sites. EPA officials dismissed the Texarkana case, saying that the Slidell incinerator was very safe. Griswold also says that the waste at Southern Shipbuilding would not be well-treated by BCD, which was designed for chlorinated com-

pounds.

SWAMP members don’t feel defeated, however. The group has gained some concessions. EPA spent about \$4 million to add a muffler to quiet the noisy Bayou Bonfouca incinerator. EPA also brought out a mobile monitoring van one week in August to test for some air pollutants in the community, although that testing fell short of the permanent air monitors that SWAMP had demanded for nearby schools.

SWAMP members are determined to win at Southern Shipbuilding. They want to make sure that EPA investigates every alternative to incineration so that the Bayou Bonfouca burner will close as soon as the creosote cleanup is finished this summer.

“It might end up with signs and marching, the whole bit,” Helwig says. “We are adamant about [stopping] incineration.”

§

Sara Shipley is a staff writer with the Times-Picayune in Slidell, Louisiana.

The

Upon their commencements, a young black man and an old white

Conscious Excursions of a 23-year-old Black Man

by Berthron L X Mock

News clip after news clip, police arrest after police arrest — all telling of negative conditions surrounding black youths. Are black youth in trouble in America? What is to become of them? These questions warrant tough answers. As a black youth, *I do believe* we have a fighting chance to realize our full potential as contributing men and women of value to present and future society.

The larger question is whether we, the society as a whole, will come to realize why black youths tend to think and act the way they do. In order to manifest the “fighting chance” I speak of, we must arrive at the root of the problem.

It should not be a mystery that slavery severely damaged the psychological oneness of the Afrikan-American. No other people in history have more fully experienced the harshest form of slavery, the most violently insane and most wretched holocaust ever committed upon one group of people by another. Today, oppression continues to bear witness to the heinous acts of slave traders, slave holders, and slave masters whose barbaric antics caused the murders of more than 600 million Afrikans.

There can never be a finite or detailed summation of the effects of slavery upon the Afrikan psyche because much of the innumerable damage remains locked in the inner confines of the Afrikan mind and spirit. Yet, we must consider the psychological dysfunctions and sociological



Illustrations by Jennifer Miller

violations caused by slavery because they are at the root of the challenges to black youth.

To begin with, this “peculiar” institution created seemingly irreversible disorder and disunity in our once traditional “kin-based” societies. As described by Dr. Dona Marimba Richards in *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (Richards, 1980), slavery ripped families apart and distributed relatives according to the selfish and materialistic needs of slave masters. Attempts by enslaved Afrikans to pass on meaningful values and customs to their offspring were effectively and brutally disassembled if detected. By destroying ancient communal structures, ancestral contacts, and family and friendship ties, slavery not only demolished our love of self but further decapitated the Afrikan belief in a spiritually ordered Universe expressed here by a 1960s griot:

I came into being from unformed matter, as Khepera, I grew in the form of plants, I am

hidden in the Tortoise, I am of the atoms of God every . . . I have come, I am crowned, I am glorious, I am mighty . . . I am strong among the gods. I am Khensu repulsing all.

Though a major part of our pain was physical, most of our suffering has been psychological, stemming from an utter and deep hatred of Self. One form of the reinforcement of this self hate has been and is the role of playing societal clowns. Narrating *Black His-*

story: Lost, Stolen, or Strayed, a video documentary, Dr. Bill Cosby asserts that Hollywood added to our plight by depicting blacks in films as “lazy, stupid, or afraid of everything, with their eyes popping out of their sockets, and always stealing and shooting a game of craps.”

Using the disguises of slick-talking vibes, feeble-mindedness, and subtle racial jokes, many (though not all) black comedians have perpetrated mental slavery. Just as a joker or court jester entertains his king with laughter to avoid anger from him, the miseducated comedian grins, pats his head, and rubs his stomach to please the HOIC (Head Oppressor In Charge).

Even today, as black comedians make jokes about prejudice and injustices, they are essentially unable to resolve the dilemma because their work and its airing is at the mercy of a corporate America that continues to bathe in and prosper from our downfalls.

We use laughter and “ho-hopping”

continued on page 60

Graduates

woman reflect on possibilities for growth, change, and learning.

“My Age Was No Handicap . . .”

By Jo Dale Mistilis

Oda Bland always wished for a high school diploma. Now 82 and known by family and friends as Granny, she earned her Graduate Equivalent Diploma just last year.

Born the 10th of 11 children, she dropped out of high school in her junior year.

“Back then,” she recalls, “education didn’t seem so important for girls. Getting this diploma was something I thought about several times a week for 66 years.”

For three months Bland attended classes and studied for her GED. “I enjoyed every minute of it, and I probably learned a great deal that I wouldn’t have learned in an ordinary classroom situation. My age was no handicap, and the other students were a joy.” Her daughter and son-in-law, Ellen and Jack Ferrell, encouraged and helped her, and her teacher, Beverly Dannahy, “was so supportive and inspiring.”

She now wants to be an advocate for the GED, advising high school dropouts to “go to classes for the GED, study hard, and get that diploma. It will increase your self-confidence and have a positive impact on your life.”

Earning a GED is unusual for someone her age, but Bland has never been exactly like everyone else. As a child she felt different from her siblings. “This was a time when fair skin was in vogue here in the South, and women wore gloves and hats to protect themselves from the sun. I had naturally dark skin, so I thought I was ugly. My brothers and sisters were good at hoeing cotton, but I wasn’t. So I knew I had to make my mark at something else.”

Bland did make her mark — as a pro-



fessional seamstress. She created patterns from pictures in the Sears catalog and measurements of her customers. In her hometown of Oxford, Mississippi, she is now well-known as the co-owner of The Fabric Center, which she and daughter Ellen opened 29 years ago on the town square.

Starting the business, she says, made her nervous and apprehensive. “My husband wasn’t exactly enthusiastic about me borrowing money. When I went to the bank for a loan, I was told that a fabric store would never be successful here. All the business experts discouraged me, but I borrowed the money anyway and opened the store. From the beginning the store has thrived. Sewing and running the store never seemed like a real job to me. It was more like playing and having fun.”

Eight years ago, The Fabric Center moved to a larger building and increased inventory. When the staff isn’t busy selling sewing supplies, they make costumes for the University of Mississippi theater department, special clothes for sororities and fraternities, pageant dresses, wed-

ding dresses, and clothing for people in the area.

“The store is where my heart is,” Bland says, “so I still try to visit there a few hours every day. The customers became my friends, and I really enjoy seeing them.”

Bland remembers learning to sew when she was small and sitting on a wooden box making doll clothes. “For as long as I can remember I’ve been a perfectionist, thinking no one else could do it right.”

She now sews for her 10 great-grandchildren, making everything from tiny pageant dresses to machine washable quilts. At Christmas time, she made 250 elegant beaded icicles.

Last October, Bland and her husband John, a retired farmer, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Their formula for a long and happy marriage: “Well,” Bland says, “both of us are Christians who try to live as God wants us to live, and church is a significant part of our lives. We both had caring families who got along well with their in-laws, and that certainly helped. And John has been the most wonderful husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather.”

When she was in her 70s, Bland began painting lessons and still paints occasionally in oils. Recently she took up china painting. Health problems never slowed Bland, who remains cheerful and maintains her quest for knowledge. “I’m determined to learn something new every day,” she says.

SE

Jo Dale Mistilis writes a weekly column for The Oxford Eagle in Oxford, Mississippi, and contributes to other magazines as a freelancer.

continued from page 58

antics to disguise the truth of how we feel and as substitutes for a true and justifiable anger. We fall victim to the stereotypes and to weak and slave-like forms of expression. With our backsides out, our breasts exposed, our genitals held, and our sparkling teeth showing, comedy is used to cloud a true expression of self-worth. These comical forms of human humiliation continue to damage the psyche of Afrikan Americans, creating a sense of inferiority and disrespect for social morals and damaging the possibility of fostering a positive mind in today's youth.

Out of the turbulent history, "mysterious trees" (black parents) have brought forth "bitter fruit" (black children) mutated by environmental stress, psychological fear, and dietary abuse. In 1978 writer Haki Madhubuti described how, as conditions deepened and darkened, so did consequences for the ex-slave:

We, black people, continue to die like roaches underfoot in white sugar traps. This is a new death and unlike the obvious death, attacks the control center of one's body, the brain. . . . This is the ultimate deed, to kill the Black people, if not bodily, most certainly mentally and to do it as painlessly and antiseptically as possible so as not to interrupt the blank faces on the six o'clock news.

Now, in the 1990s, Afrikan-American youth face a mental and spiritual dilemma. In provoked frustration and blind envy, we commit acts of violence and crime. We attack our own because we hate ourselves for not living up to values established by others. Between our birth and early death, we are not being properly taught to deal with those who seek to manipulate our desires emotionally. Too many times, Afrikan-American families pacify their children by catering to their material desires. Too often, everyone, including our strong

grandmother figures, fail to enable us to purposefully choose right over wrong. When not quenched early, this material urge proliferates into a "narcotic" mental fit.

Today's black youth are locked into a web of paradoxes. We are encouraged to be strong, to endure, to stand up. Yet we are also encouraged to retreat for our

The miseducated comedian grins, pats his head, and rubs his stomach to please the HOIC (Head Oppressor In Charge).

very lives if our enemy ambushes. We have become the object of scorn and false propaganda calculated to identify, isolate, and annihilate us. Each of us possesses within ourselves forces so powerfully positive if but used for the righteous benefits of ourselves and others. We also possess forces so demonically destructive if manipulated on the basis of naked emotions.

*We have the minds of gods,
the bodies of warriors
and the passion of exploding nuclear
bombs.*

Contrary to popular opinion, there is a torchlight at the end of the tunnel of despair, a secret escape plan, so to speak. Despite a 400-plus year and a 9,000-mile separation from the Afrikan continent, Afrikans in America have maintained cultural and spiritual ties with Afrika, or as some explain, a retention of the Afrikan Spirit, *nyama nommo*.

Evidence of retention can be found in the remnants of Afrikan traditions heard,

seen, and felt in the conscious and improvised music, drama, and dance of black America. We, the youth, as much and perhaps more than any Afrikan-American generation, reflect these traditions. They can be heard in the deep, hard bass line and hypnotic rhythms in our music. The rapid hip-jerking and gyrating movements of our contemporary hip-hop dances echo Afrikan ritual dances. In our rap music and "street" poetry, we improvise with new words. We compensate for the lack of spiritual, poetic, and emotional substance in the English language and deepen the meaning and expression of our songs to match our needs.

The bold and aggressive attitude of Afrikan American youth today shows the retention of the Afrikan spirit and culture. As generations of Afrikan-Americans have drawn upon it for survival, we also draw upon it for strength. If properly utilized and applied, it can represent the secret escape plan for us, the youth, to redirect our plight.

My intent is to fuel interest in the plight of black youths. Though we are passed off as ignorant, criminal, and "invisible," society cannot continue to curse the fruit and ignore the tree from which it came. We must look to the root of the problem. We, black youth, must realize that we are what we take into our bodies and minds. We must be permitted our "fighting chance" and we must be prepared to seize our opportunities, to seize them with the minds of gods, in the Spirit of *nyama nommo*, and in the name of Almighty God.

S

Berthron LX Mock is a 1994 graduate of Tougaloo College in Mississippi. As president of the graduating class, he delivered the commencement speech from which this article is drawn. He works with Southern Echo, a leadership training and development organization and is a special administrative assistant with Muhammad's Mosque #78 in Jackson. He plans to attend Meharry Medical School in the fall.

Life in Two Worlds

Two Tennessee authors explore the circuitous — and scientific — way to Cherokee dreams.

By Ashley Byrd

SELU: SEEKING THE CORN MOTHER'S WISDOM

By Marilou Awiakta
Fulcrum Publishing, 1995
\$14.95 hardback

RETURNING TO THE HOMELAND

By MariJo Moore
Worldcomm and Alexander Books, 1994
\$9.95 paper

Two Cherokee writers from Tennessee have recently chronicled their journeys to find their ancestry. Marilou Awiakta and MariJo Moore have lived in both the mainstream American culture and in the Cherokee world. In their writings and in their oral reflections, each has much to say about how these worlds live together.

Marilou Awiakta grew up in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, the town created almost overnight during World War II to develop the nuclear bomb. Today it is an area with more Ph.D.s per square mile than most college campuses. While living in Oak Ridge, Awiakta was also a student of her grandfather's Cherokee teachings. In her book, *Selu: Seeking the Corn Mother's Wisdom*, she describes growing up in what she calls "an atomic frontier . . . in an ancient environment." As an adult, she has melded the philosophies of both worlds. "The Corn Mother and Einstein teach the same law," she writes, "except the Cherokee, and the Celts as well, believe that the Creator instilled the laws into the universe. Energy and Spirit are both invisible and real."

Awiakta says it's natural for her to

consider the two worlds compatible. "It's the way I think and write." Her poem, "Where Mountain and Atom Meet," illustrates this melding process:

*Ancient haze lies on the mountain
smoke-blue, strange and still
a presence that eludes the mind and
moves through a deeper kind of
knowing*

*It is nature's breath and more —
an aura from the great I Am
that gathers to its own
spirits that have gone before.*

*Deep below the valley waters
eerie and hid from view
the atom splits without a sound
its only trace a fine blue glow
rising from the fissioned whole
and at its core
power that commands the will
quiet that strikes the soul*

"Be still and know . . . I Am."

Awiakta has laced this logic throughout the book "like a Cherokee woven basket." These baskets are intricate with sometimes confusing patterns. But out of the intricate and seemingly chaotic designs, the patterns of the beginning finally reemerge. The baskets are beautiful and balanced.

So it is with *Selu*. The best way to read this book is simply to follow the flow of the writing and let the patterns emerge. These stories were meant to be read aloud, tapping into a part of the consciousness not purely intellectual.

Awiakta introduces us to themes that

do not conflict with science, but complement it. For instance, she tells of Barbara McClintock, winner of the 1983 Nobel Prize in medicine, who based her genetic studies on what we know as "Indian corn." Awiakta explains that McClintock "developed and conclusively proved that what she called 'transposition' takes place in genetic material. That genes, in short, 'jump.' Equally startling was the discovery that the organism itself controls the genetic changes. Awiakta then adds a sociological dimension to the interpretation of McClintock's work: "This is what indigenous people have been saying about the Corn Mother from time immemorial. . . . But McClintock's great work — her interpretation . . . and her integrated language have created a path for understanding among Americans of all races and have provided ways for us to make connections as human beings. The Corn Mother has been talking to us for a long time."

Awiakta notes that McClintock said she did not base her findings on her connections with the indigenous peoples of America. "As so many Americans do who have not been educated in Native American thought," she writes, "Barbara McClintock connected her unified way of thinking only with the East (Tibet and China)." Awiakta explains — with some irony — that McClintock herself suffered marginalization from the scientific community. She did not use "the almost mathematical vocabulary scientists were used to hearing. Many stonewalled her. There were years when she couldn't communicate with the scientific community as a whole, years of lonely, solitary

— and brilliant — work.”

The failure to recognize the wisdom of Native American teachings has been a problem ever since Europeans settled this continent, says Awiakta.

They brought with them a dual attitude of “companionship and corn borers.” By companionship she means an acceptance of coexistence. By corn borers she connotes how the newcomers used and consumed anything they found. Awiakta describes how the corn borer attitude eventually overcame the kinder, gentler way. In her own gentle way, Awiakta lets history tell its own story of colonial selfishness. “The colonists, who took the grain only, didn’t understand the sacred link between the corn and the Law.”

Like her Cherokee ancestors, however, Awiakta and the survivors keep watch for something better. Informing Awiakta’s hopeful thinking is Selu herself — the old grandmother of Cherokee lore who personifies the corn, the wisdom of nature, and its generosity. Awiakta says, “Cinitsi Selu is in the Law.” She means that order, balance, and resilience are in the corn, and the United States Constitution is just as alive as the corn — with as much potential to grow and adapt. These are the same truths discovered by Barbara McClintock; Awiakta weaves us back to the beginning.

Awiakta finds another historical connection between the infamous “Trail of Tears” and what she calls the “Tellico Dam controversy.” The Trail of Tears was the forced wholesale removal of five Southeastern tribes to the other side of the Mississippi River in the 1830s. In the move, thousands of Native Americans died. Among those who fled to the Appalachian mountains to escape removal were Awiakta’s (and Moore’s) ancestors. But when the Tennessee Valley Authority built the Tellico Dam in the

1930s, it destroyed 12,000 years of Native American History. The worst part, the echo of the past, she notes, was the forced removal of the Native Americans who lived there and the removal of the bones of their people.

It was at this point in reading *Selu* that I realized that Awiakta’s book should be read along with MariJo Moore’s *Returning to the Homeland*. Moore also revisits the Trail of Tears, but in the form of poetry “remembering” the pain of her ancestors. Her “Waterless Tears on the Trail” speaks of “a

gentle man with a generous mind . . . and a wounded heart.” The “trail” winds throughout this collection of poems, short stories and musings. *Returning to the Homeland* is the beginning of Moore’s journey to find her heritage.

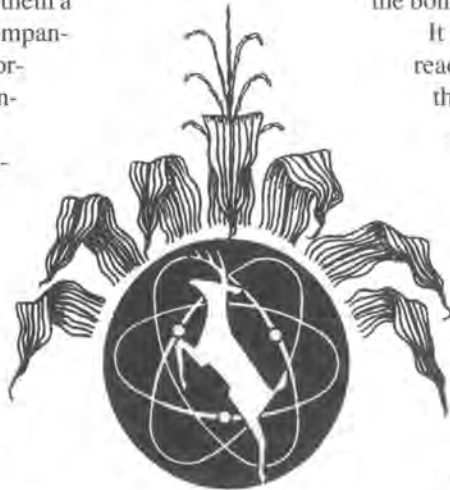
Moore, like Awiakta, grew up in Tennessee with her full-blooded Cherokee grandfather as her family history teacher. But her inheritance was more ambiguous: her grandfather told her “not to tell people you are Indian” for fear his land would be taken away. This dichotomy of kinship, humiliation and eventual pride emerges in Moore’s poems, “Old Cherokee Heart,” and “Beautiful Cherokee Women.” Though as a young adult, her Cherokee identity was submerged. Moore nevertheless lived the Indian way by intuition, even while she resided in England pursuing a writing career. It was her dreams which finally led Moore to research her roots, ironically, well before Moore learned the importance of dreams in Cherokee spirituality. I asked her how she discerns what is memory and what is imagination. She replied that what is truth “won’t leave me alone.”

Moore is not alone in this intuitive calling. She and Marilou Awiakta are being joined by scores of Southerners who are chronicling how, in today’s world, their Native American background tempers their thinking . . . and

their dreams.

I suggest reading these books together. Enjoy Awiakta’s storytelling which can be — paradoxically — both circuitous and scientific. At the same time, hear the voices of Moore’s ancestors in her poetry. Perhaps she dreamed these voices. The sounds of their anguish, however, are real.

Ashley Byrd is the producer of Southwords, a regional public radio magazine of the newest Southern writings. She also does feature reporting for South Carolina Educational Radio and National Public Radio News. Illustration by Mary Adair. Courtesy of Fulcrum Publishing.



BUILDING A NEW SOUTH: A GUIDE TO SOUTHERN SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS

Edited by Hayward Wilkerson,
Steve Stolz, Scott Richards,
Lisa Cox
Denali Press, 1994
\$40 paper

This directory of 513 groups in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia gives a sense of the scope of organizations working for social change in the South. Their issues range from AIDS to Appalachia, environment, immigration, hunger, economic development, and, of course, civil rights.

Listings provide information about purpose, issue focus, recent activities and accomplishments, important dates and events, publications, funding sources, staff size, and opportunities for employment, volunteers, and internships. This information, along with the all-important addresses, phone, and fax numbers, provides a valuable resource for activists, journalists, and librarians.

More Personal Journeys

“The pain, the sympathy, and the fumbling mistakes of well-intentioned people trying to bridge the apartness of race” are movingly depicted in four books.

By Kevin O’Kelly

TAFT

By Ann Patchett
Houghton Mifflin, 1994
\$21.95 hardback

This very contemporary novel contains echoes of traditional class and race issues. Patchett has woven these issues into the plot without a hint of cliché. John Nickel is a black man, a former blues musician approaching middle age. He has little in his life besides his job (managing a Memphis bar), his regrets (not marrying the mother of his son), and long-distance phone calls to his son and son’s mother in Miami. Then he hires a new waitress, Fay Taft. Fay is white, personable, and probably underage. She and her cagey younger brother, Carl, live with an aunt and uncle in the wealthy section of town, but spend an unaccountable amount of their free time in John’s bar.

Emotional complications ensue. John doesn’t mind occasionally easing his loneliness with a willing female acquaintance, but when Fay gives him looks of a kind he recognizes all too well he is torn between an intense physical attraction and a culturally ingrained fear of lynching.

Parallel strands of the narrative show John’s agonized maintenance of a relationship with his son and flashbacks to the last few months in the life of Carl and Fay’s father, as he is beset by financial worries, resentful of his wife’s wealthy relatives, and in a bewildering pain at the deepening unknowability of his children.

GAL: A TRUE LIFE

By Ruthie Bolton
Harcourt Brace, 1994
\$19.95 hardback

This South Carolina black woman’s autobiography is a moving study of human survival as well as a horrifying account of misogyny, child abuse, and selfishness. The author’s step-grandfather beat her grandmother to death and constantly abused Bolton from early childhood well into adolescence. Her mother was also murdered by the man in her life. Somehow, the narrator survived physical brutality, poverty, life in the drug culture, and constant betrayal by her immediate family to become a sane, shrewd, and loving person.

CROSSING BLOOD

By Nanci Kincaid
G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1992
\$21.95 hardback, \$10 paper

This novel about interracial love is exquisitely written. Lucy Conyers is growing up in the 1960s in a working-class neighborhood in Tallahassee. Her family lives just inside the white section of town. Her mother, Sarah, is sympathetic to the stirrings of the civil rights movement. Her stepfather, Walter, won’t even stay in the room when Martin Luther King Jr. is on the news. Their attitudes are complicated by the fact that a black family lives next door. The two members they see most are Melvina, their part-time maid, and Skippy, Melvina’s son and Walter’s handyman.

Melvina sometimes wishes Sarah wouldn’t be so helpful. Walter wishes Sarah would act like a “normal” wife. Most of all, Lucy wishes Skippy would pay attention to her. The pain, the sympathy, and the fumbling mistakes of well-intentioned people trying to bridge

the apartness of race are movingly depicted in an eloquent, entirely believable voice.

THE HARD TO CATCH MERCY

By William Baldwin
Algonquin Books, 1993; Fawcett, 1995
\$19.95 hardback, \$11 paper

It is 1916 in South Carolina. Willie T. Allson, white, aged 14, lives with his mother, whose memory is almost nonexistent, his one-armed grandfather, whose memory is highly selective, and his one-armed father, who is deaf. They also live with a black servant, Maum Anna, who is much smarter than she lets anyone know.

The novel begins as a picaresque, with a set of fairly well-worn situations and a style of humor familiar to readers of early Mark Twain. However, the novel soon takes on surprising power as the plot darkens: The roughness underlying the frontier-style humor flowers into brutality. Willie learns to question some of his traditional allegiances, partly because he begins to see their human cost, and partly because the thread of events simply discourages certainty about anything. Elements of magical realism add much-needed whimsy and wonder to the intense physical action.

The themes are commonplace: the decay of a Southern family’s fortunes, the hypocrisy behind small-town respectability, and the presumption and injustice masked by white benevolence. The book Baldwin creates from such unpromising material is at once funny, horrifying, and intensely sad. In spite of some unfinished characters and patches of incompleteness, the author, like the servant Maum Anna, clearly knows a lot more than he lets on at first.



Air Conditioning

The South keeps getting cooler — in so many ways.

By Raymond Arsenault

Ask Southerners over 40 years of age to talk about how the South has changed in recent decades, and eventually they'll talk about air conditioning. Some will wonder how they ever lived without it. Others will argue that the modern, air-cooled South has sold its soul to a technological devil. As one Florida woman complained in the mid-1980s, "I hate air conditioning; it's a damnfool invention of the Yankees. If they don't like it hot, they can move back up North where they belong."

In truth, air conditioning is at least partly a Southern invention. The age of air conditioning, in the broadest sense, began in Florida in the 1830s when an Apalachicola physician named John Gorrie attempted to lower the body temperatures of malaria and yellow fever victims by blowing forced air over buckets of ice suspended from the ceiling. This medical experiment yielded mixed results but left Gorrie obsessed with the healing potential of chilled air. His use of a steam-driven compressor to cool air led to an 1851 patent for the first ice-making machine.

In the late 1860s, the invention of the refrigerated tank car revolutionized the meat-packing industry and spurred new interest in the science of temperature control. A number of inventors, including several Southerners, set out to prove that a technology capable of preserving dead animals could be used for other purposes, including the cooling of live humans.

To tame the Southern climate, it would take more than fans and blocks of ice; it would take a true "air conditioner" — a machine that would simultaneously cool, circulate, dehumidify, and cleanse the air. The first such machine was invented by a New Yorker, Willis Haviland Carrier, in 1902, but most of the new technology's early applications took place in the South, thanks to the efforts of two Southern textile engineers, Stuart Cramer and I. H. Hardeman. Cramer, who actually coined the term "air conditioning" in 1906, when they adapted Carrier's invention as a means of controlling the moisture content in sensitive cotton and rayon fibers. By the end of the First World War, air conditioning as a quality-control device had spread to Southern tobacco warehouses, paper mills, breweries, and bakeries.

In the South, as elsewhere, the 1920s brought the age of



Scott Hiestand, *St. Petersburg Times*

"comfort cooling," primarily in theaters and movie palaces which often enticed customers with frost-covered signs boasting "20 degrees cooler inside." Later, in the 1930s, air conditioning slowly blew its way into an increasing number of Southern banks, railway cars, hotels, government offices, hospital operating rooms, shops, and even into a few homes. In the 1950s, the introduction of inexpensive window units and "factory air" finally made air conditioning almost commonplace in Southern homes and automobiles. From the 1960s onward the development of "central air" made push-button climate control a reality for millions of Southerners. As late as 1960, only 18.2 percent of Southern homes were air-conditioned, but by 1990 the figure has risen to more than 90 percent. What had once been a curiosity has become an immutable part of Southern life and a virtual requirement

for "civilized" living.

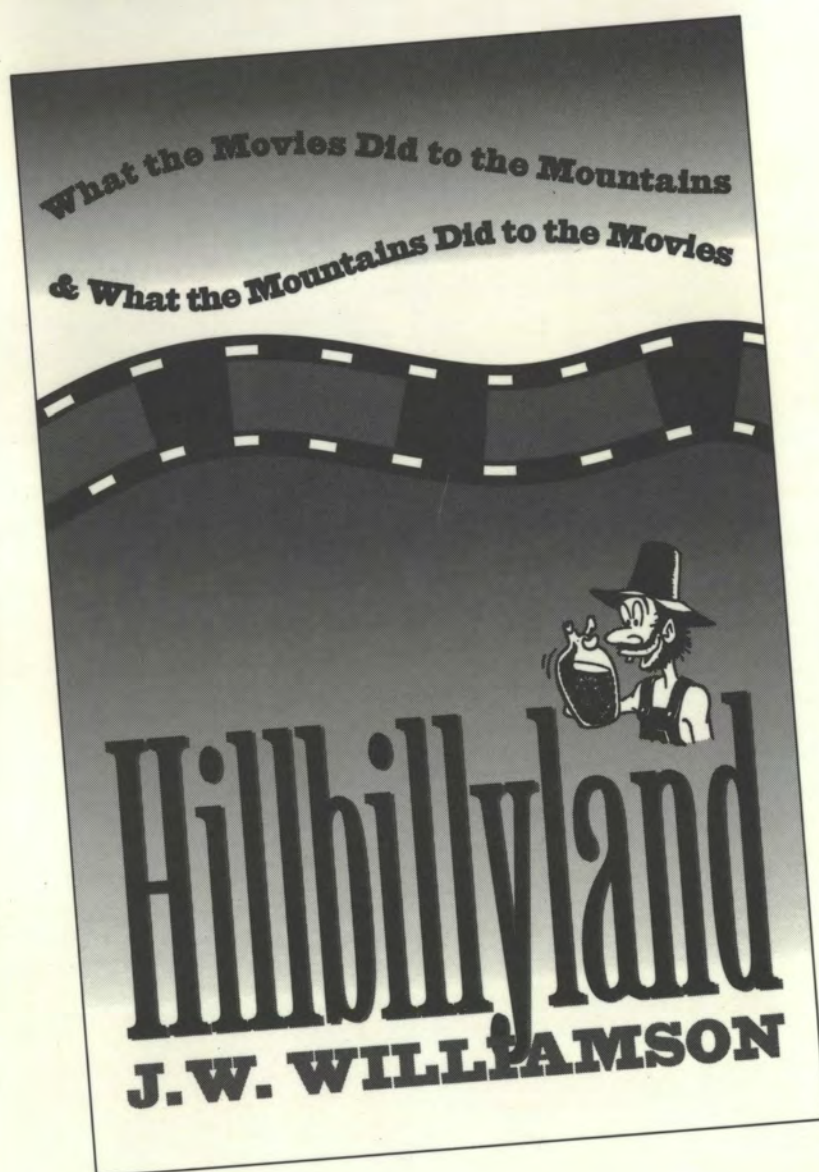
While the air conditioning revolution has had a significant influence on almost every aspect of Southern life, it has been a mixed blessing. Air conditioning has boosted the regional economy, brought personal comfort and improved health to millions of residents, and opened the region to demographic diversity, tourism, and new ideas. But, on the negative side, it has taken a heavy toll on some of the more pleasing aspects of Southern life, such as the tea-sipping, porch-sitting, neighborly folk culture of open-air living.

As Southerners have retreated behind closed doors and windows into a world of whirring compressors, they have lost much of what made them distinctive and interesting, weakening that traditional sense of place and perhaps even loosening the bond between nature and humanity. As one Southern gardener confessed in 1961, "We [still] enjoy gardening, but even more we enjoy being able to sit indoors comfortably and look out at our garden." Such are the bitter-sweet ironies of life in the South.

S
E

Raymond Arsenault is a Professor of History at the University of South Florida. Updated from The Journal of Southern History, Vol. L, No. 4, November 1984, pp.597-628. Copyright 1984 by the Southern Historical Association. Reprinted by permission.

Having mined more than 800 movies, from early nickelodeon one-reelers to contemporary films such as *Thelma and Louise* and *Raising Arizona*, J. W. Williamson explains why hillbilly images are so pervasive in our culture and what purposes they serve.



<http://sunsite.unc.edu/uncpress/home.html>

"Williamson reminds us that the themes in the hillbilly movies are versions of universals; and because the movies mirror, create, and are culture, the symbols and myths they employ are not just the stuff of literature or literary criticism but the stuff of life. As Pogo used to say, We have met the sub-text, and she is us."

—Henry D. Shapiro, author of *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness*

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