

“WE’LL NEVER QUIT”

*Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens
fight for clean water*



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Reflections on My Fight for the ERA

By Carrie J. Knowles

June 3, 1982: It is hot. It is humid. We are late. We were told to meet at a church in downtown Raleigh for a briefing before lobbying. As we unload the children, three anti-ERA women walk past us. I have been in dozens of other ERA rallies and marches, but I have never encountered as large or as vociferous a group of anti-ERA people as in North Carolina. I usually laugh and say there's a whole world out there that I would not invite into my home for dinner.

But this morning something snaps — maybe all the years of wanting something, demanding something be done for women's rights — and all of a sudden I'm yelling at the women. I try to make my mouth stop, my throat close, but I cannot. I hear myself asking them how they can be so stupid. I am embarrassed. I want to call the words back, but they are gone.

The briefing is well organized and professional. All our supporters have shown up in green and white. Everyone is neatly dressed; some are even wearing nylons and heels although it's 90 degrees and it's going to be a long hot day of standing and walking.

Dress is important in North Carolina. People get nervous when you talk about things like women's rights and the ERA. The image of the radical-hippie-liberal lesbian lingers on like an ugly specter. It is important that everyone look good, straight and narrow, well groomed and not crazy.

The leaders ask us not to get into any confrontations with the opposition. I apologize to my friend for acting crazy in the parking lot. She laughs and tells me she expects as much from me but that I need to be careful.

We're asked to try to fill the galleries in the House and Senate, but we decide that's out because of the children: it's not worth the risk of them acting up,

getting tired, wanting to eat. We're also asked not to eat at the snack bars; the state senators and representatives complained that there were too many people in green and white standing in the concession lines yesterday and that they had to wait to eat. We need to go to great lengths not to anger them or make them annoyed at us.

Also on the agenda for the day are lobbying, a press conference and a silent vigil at noon. We plan to do them all but don't think we can stay



photo by Seny Norasingh

much past noon because of the children. Enough is enough.

We visit the one representative in our county known to be against the ERA. About a dozen women are standing outside his office wearing STOP ERA signs. We get in line behind them and wait our turn. Several of them begin to sing: "I Enjoy Being A Girl."

There are STOP ERA people everywhere. I am shaken by them, and am struck by how mean, how ugly they appear. They come by the busloads, shepherding hundreds of teen-agers dressed in blue and white, with huge red STOP ERA signs pinned to their chests. The teen-agers do not know what to do. They mill about the building and talk with each other. They cluster here and there and, as the after-

noon wears on, appear to huddle closer and closer together.

11:30: We have visited our legislators and attended the press conference. We decide to stay for the noon vigil. There is no place to sit. The children are restless. Outside the building, in the midst of a group of anti-ERA people, we find a spot to sit down and feed the children Cheerios and juice.

It's a strange feeling being surrounded by the opposition. I begin to see them as enemies, people I cannot or would not want to talk to.

The anti-ERA people have a large number of men with them. Men count more. I know that. It makes me angry, but at the same time I wish there were more men walking around wearing buttons supporting the ERA.

The men carry homemade signs. The largest and most elaborate one is being paraded up and down the street by a short man with a huge beer belly. The front reads: Eve Ruined Adam. The back has some long Bible quote about the man being the head of the household and the head of the wife.

Some anti-ERA women are sitting about five feet away from me. One takes a small cigar out of her purse and lights it. I want to laugh. What I really want to do is walk over and tell her that, when the ERA doesn't pass, some man is going to come along and snatch that thing right out of her mouth.

There are clusters of women everywhere. I am tired, angry and annoyed, but all of a sudden I am scared. I'm not scared that ERA isn't going to pass or that it might be tabled, I am scared because I know these women.

I am shaken when I realize that I easily could have been one of those high school girls wearing a STOP ERA sign not really knowing what I was doing there. I also could have been one of those women watching my husband carry a banner proclaiming that Eve Ruined Adam. A long-buried part of me is touched and squirms a little with life.

I was raised in a fundamentalist church and believed — truly believed —

READERS CORNER

in the long list of don'ts, in men being the decision makers and heads of the house, and in blind obedience.

I could have married Raymond Williams. He was the only boy in my church who asked me out. He believed in the same things I thought I believed in and he wanted to be the head of the household. He took good care of me and he always opened my door. I believed that I should want what I was being told to want: a good life with a good man, being a good, obedient wife.

I went away to college. Ray joined the army and was shipped to Korea. When he came back, everyone was too caught up in Vietnam to talk about Korea and I was too caught up in college to talk about marriage.

Things had changed for me. I didn't know it then, but they had. I had continued to write long letters to Ray every day. I told him about my classes, the things I was doing. I didn't date anyone. I waited, as expected, for him to return. But when he came home, things were different for me.

I wore the same clothes. My hair was the same. I didn't smoke dope or drink or do any of the other things my classmates did. I was a fair student. I did the assignments. I didn't necessarily rebel. I didn't see my world opening up like some great juicy cosmic orange, but I did change. I wanted more.

I wanted to write. I wanted to express myself.

Soon after Ray came home, we decided to celebrate with dinner and a play. I made a long, pale pink skirt out of taffeta to wear with a ruffled white blouse, and belted it with a bright magenta satin sash. It was the prettiest outfit I had ever owned. It made me feel beautiful, it made me feel like me, like who I had become since leaving home and going to college.

When Ray came to pick me up he laughed and asked me who I thought I was dressed in that ridiculous outfit. I was stunned. He pinned a corsage on my shoulder, and we didn't talk about it anymore. I never wore the skirt again.

A few weeks later Ray asked me to marry him. I said no. I don't know why. I had planned to marry him. It had never occurred to me that I wouldn't marry him. It was what we were expected to do.

My father was furious. At one point

he almost demanded that I marry Ray. I asked him why and he said because of all the years that Ray had dated me, taken me out.

I boldly informed my father that Ray had not purchased me dinner by dinner on the installment plan.

I don't know what made me say that. I hadn't consciously thought about it until I said it, but that was how I felt. I felt purchased, one meal, one silver charm at a time. I felt I was owned. I was not free. I was not liberated.

Liberated: what a strange word for me then. I gave it lip service because I was caught up in a rather militant atmosphere at one of those radical/liberal universities that made the '60s famous. However, I was not really political, or radical, at least not then.

Ray would not take no for an answer. He sent flowers. He camped on my doorstep. He followed me around. One night he begged me to go out with him just one more time so we could talk. I agreed.

Again he asked me to marry him. He wanted me to leave the university. Detroit was a dangerous place, he said; Wayne State was a radical militant campus, I might get hurt. He loved me, he wanted to take care of me, spend his life with me.

I told him that I wasn't ready to get married yet but that I was willing to give him a chance. Would he live with me? Would he move to Detroit and take an apartment with me and maybe enroll in classes? I had a job. It didn't pay well, but it paid my room and board; my tuition was covered by a scholarship. We wouldn't be rich, but we would survive.

He was shocked. He refused to live with me. It was marriage or nothing; and whatever it was, it was not going to be in Detroit. I was moving back home. He would see to that.

I exploded. I made it clear that it wasn't going to be marriage and it sure as hell was going to be Detroit because he was not in charge of my life.

He tried to calm me. He told me he thought it was nice that I wrote or



wanted to write. He would be supportive of what I was doing after we got married; he thought it was good for a woman to have a hobby.

I could have been one of those women dressed in red believing with all my heart that the ERA would destroy the family, send my daughter to war, wreck the American way of life.

But I did not marry Raymond and I'm not a "good, obedient" wife. I have a temper. I want things, not material things, but equal things. I want my husband to take a major part in the childrearing, in the housework. I want a job that pays me what I'm worth, I want a chance to be independent. I want my son *and* my daughter to have an equal shot at things. I don't want my son *or* my daughter to have to fight in a war. I also want laws that will see me and my husband and children as individuals, each equal under the law. I believe that, although the ERA alone won't make a perfect world, it will at least give us a fighting chance at a better life.

Back in 1970 when I last saw Raymond, I never thought I would become liberated or radical; never imagined I would some day be sitting on the lawn of the North Carolina legislative building feeding my child Cheerios and apple juice while trying once again to get the ERA passed; never thought I'd spend the rest of my life fighting for equal rights. But if I have to, I will. □

Our readers often write us about a unique experience or neglected issue, or to share personal ideas and ideals. We've set aside this space to let you speak out. Send submissions to us c/o Readers Corner. Manuscripts should not exceed 1,000 words and must be typed, double-spaced. We'll pay \$50 upon publication.

FROM OUR READERS

Dear SE:

Your May/June issue of *Coastal Affair* was passed on to me recently, and I must say I was very impressed with it — from the caliber and depth of the articles right down to the clean layout and graphics.

One aspect of it, however, bothered me — the use of the term “fisher” for “fisherman” throughout. This is a bastardization of the word, as “fisherman” is a *title*, regardless of sex. A woman who fishes is a fisherman. That is simply the word for that occupation, regardless of the fact that it ends in “man.” It is a term that has been used for centuries, and is a part of the language we use, and speak.

The main problem is that you are using a term, “fisher,” that *nobody* else uses. The average person uses the word “fisherman” as a label for a person in that occupation; fishermen, both sport and commercial, refer to themselves as “fishermen.” Female commercial fishermen will reply “I’m a fisherman” when asked what they do for a living. Never have I heard anyone who was remotely connected with the commercial fishing industry use the term “fisher” for fisherman.

I have a feeling you are trying to de-genderize the term “fisherman,” which is as silly as changing “chairman” to “chairperson,” and so on *ad nauseam*.

The term “fisherman” should be left alone until those involved in the industry make it known that they’d rather be called something else. Until such time, the word is incorrect as far as usage goes, may actually be insulting to the fisherman himself, and destroys a good deal of the credibility of your otherwise fine publication. This last-mentioned aspect, I fear, may be the most damaging.

If the truth be known, when I first read “Fishers and Engineers” in your table of contents, I thought North Carolina was having some sort of trouble with *Martes pennanti*.

— Barry Gibson
Editor, Salt Water Sportsman
Boston, MA

Editor’s note: The dictionary we use as our standard reference and style manual, The American Heritage Dic-

tionary, first defines the word “fisher” as “one who fishes;” second, as the *furry critter*, *Martes pennanti*.

However, our use of the term “fisher” was neither determined by the dictionary nor by the fact that people who fish customarily refer to themselves as “fishermen.” Whenever possible, we do not use terms which deny the existence of more than half the population. It is a matter of accuracy — and respect.

Dear SE:

The *Radical History Review* is planning an issue on the South to explore Southern development. We hope to address institutions and social movements and their legacies. While we’ll touch on times from the colonial to the present, we especially hope to lay groundwork for a revision of twentieth century Southern history. Abstracts should be submitted by March 1 to me at the History Department, UNC, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

— Jacquelyn Hall

Dear SE:

I am a disabled textile worker. In November, 1928, I was taken out of school and put in a cotton mill before I was 16 years old. At that time, the rich had white children in the sweat shops working 55 hours a week for less than \$10. The blacks were in the cotton fields working for pinto beans, hot buttermilk and no money at all.

More than 25 years ago, the rich mill owners handed out pencils and told the mill workers to write in racist Strom Thurmond to the U.S. Senate. Many had been in the mills since they were 10 years old and could not write so they had someone write for them.

In 1960, they asked the workers at Inman Mill to go to Greenville and hear Goldwater speak for Nixon. Later a man was promoted on a job with not one day’s experience over a man with 10 years’ experience.

I worked in a mill in Woodruff, South Carolina for a number of years — Mills Mill and Abney — now closed. They picked candidates for the city council. If a rumor got out that someone else would run, they were fired. One precinct became heavily black populated. They changed the system. Now they vote at large to keep a black

off council. When it looked like Max Heller would go to Congress, they got all the workers to vote for Campbell in Spartanburg and Greenville counties.

There are thousands of workers that are not even registered, both black and white. Very few retired and disabled people are registered, enough to be the swing vote, any year.

This raises a question — will we check as many relatives and friends and get them registered and see that they go to the polls. That is the only way to keep more from losing their rights. We don’t want a “Moscow” here in the land that we love.

— J. Dayton Norwood
Spartanburg, SC

Dear SE:

I am an inmate incarcerated in the Texas Department of Corrections. I am also an artist and draw cartoons. Since I’ve been incarcerated, another convict artist named Macedonio Garcia has been having “mini-comics” published by Comix World of California with the help of Mr. Clay Geerdes. In the last three or four months I teamed with Macedonio to draw comics for “Tales From the Inside.” “Tales” is a publication in which Macedonio and myself have done our very best to tell the story of prison life as it actually exists in a cartoon-image.

Our work has recently come to a standstill cause we need buyers for the old issues of the “Tales,” which are numbers 1 through 7. I understand you’re a prisoner-related organization and I have to know whether you’ll help us by printing the 3x5 cartoon plug on the “Tales” publication so we can get buyers to move our old stuff so we can have number 8 and 9 printed. We have them ready, just can’t get nothing done.

Thanks for any help at all.

— James Waltman
Rosharon, TX

YA REALLY WANNA KNOW ABOUT PRISON LIFE? READ THE TALES FROM THE INSIDE ON PRISON LIFE AS IT IS INTERPRETED BY CONVICT ARTISTS. IT'S AVAILABLE FROM Comix World for 75¢ + postage paid. Just send cash, check or M.O. to Mr. Clay Geerdes, Comix World, Box 7081, Berkeley, California 94709, and HELLO a poor old convict - PLEASE.

Atlanta Freeze strong despite rightwing suit

Voters in Dade County (Miami), Florida chose by a 58 percent majority to endorse the bilateral nuclear freeze proposal on their November 2 ballot, and an "exit poll" conducted by 600 volunteers in Austin, Texas, showed that 70 percent of the voters in that city supported the freeze. But a last-minute lawsuit filed by the Southeastern Legal Foundation (SELF) blocked an official referendum of Atlanta voters on a joint Nuclear Freeze/ Jobs with Peace proposal.

SELF, headed by former U.S. Representative Ben Blackburn, is affiliated with James Watt's Mountain States Legal Foundation and has sponsored a number of pro-business, anti-civil-rights lawsuits. Two of the anti-freeze plaintiffs, Dillard Mumford and Robert Redfean, are also members of the Loose Group, a political action committee best known for its contributions to such right-wing politicians as Georgia Representative and John Birch Society member Larry McDonald of Marietta.

The controversial proposal, which called for a U.S.-Soviet freeze on nuclear weapons and a transfer of funds from the military budget to productive jobs and human services, won enough allies on the Atlanta City Council to overcome parliamentary maneuvers that threatened to keep it off the ballot. SELF's lawsuit, however, successfully questioned the council's authority to put such a non-binding resolution before the voters.

Pointing to a history of citywide referenda, attorneys for the City of Atlanta and the ACLU argued that the peace proposal should stay on the ballot while the technical legal issues were resolved; but members of the Georgia Supreme Court finally upheld a lower court's restraining order three days before the election.

Campaign leaders anticipated the decision and softened its blow by pre-

paring an alternative strategy modeled on the work of the Austin peace activists. Using an exit poll designed by statistician Carrie Miles, 40 volunteers surveyed 1,034 people after they voted on November 30 — the date for the delayed election of representatives from Georgia's redrawn fourth and fifth congressional districts. More than 70 percent of the voters questioned said they wanted to see the Nuclear Freeze/ Jobs with Peace proposal on the ballot, and 60 percent of those surveyed said they would vote in its favor.

The positive showing, combined with the press coverage generated by the legal challenge and a festive post-election rally at Pascal's (a traditional meeting place for civil-rights activists), gave campaign leaders reason to believe they gained strength despite SELF's legal challenge. "One court ruling will not break our campaign," said city council member and former SNCC chairperson John Lewis. "We faced many such setbacks during the Civil Rights Movement, but we moved on to victory, just as we will with the campaign to reverse the arms race."

Other campaign leaders, who said the issue galvanized a progressive core within Atlanta's new city council, vowed to keep the network of volunteers and support organizations together for future activities, including a project aimed at shifting public funds from civil defense planning to school programs on peace and human needs.

— *Thanks to William Reynolds,*
Atlanta

GOP clout in Senate may hinge on South

Looking ahead to the U.S. Senate races in 1984, the nonpartisan *Southern Political Report* concludes, "It will be a year of opportunity for the Democratic Party. Not only



Robert Neuberger

will six Republican-held seats have to be defended, but the GOP senators up for election in the South in 1984 are considerably more vulnerable than the Democrats."

Hastings Wyman, Jr., editor of the biweekly newsletter, points out that only five Southern senators were up for election in November, 1982; the Republicans picked up one of those — the Virginia seat held by Independent Harry Byrd — to offset a loss outside the region and preserve their 54-46 majority in the Senate. With 10 seats open in 1984, the South will likely get significant attention from both parties, which have long stopped assuming the region is a Democratic stronghold when it comes to statewide or presidential elections.

The hardest-fought races, Wyman reports, will be John Tower in Texas (he may even retire), John Warner in Virginia (if the black and white Democrats unite behind a strong candidate) Jesse Helms in North Carolina (Governor James Hunt's machine matches Helms's Congressional Club), and Thad Cochran in Mississippi (if Governor William Winter decides to run). South Carolina's Strom Thurmond, who will be 81, may give Democrats another opportunity by retiring (but it's unlikely).

The other Southern Republican is Howard Baker of Tennessee who, barring scandal or serious blunder, looks secure. The most vulnerable Democrat appears to be Alabama's first-term Senator Howell Heflin, who has a "moderately liberal voting rec-

ord" and will likely face challengers from within his own party.

For a sample copy of Wyman's newsletter, write *Southern Political Report*, 514 Constitution Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20002.

Pulpwood cutters win strike, but yard closes

Pulpwood cutters in Coffeeville, Mississippi, won a strike against dealers for the giant International Paper Company (IP) last fall. But on January 1, the company closed its woodyard in an apparent move to "teach the woodhaulers a lesson," said one local resident.

The racially mixed group, a local of the United Woodcutters Association (UWA), stayed out on strike for three weeks in October and finally won a \$1.50 per ton increase in the price of the pulpwood they delivered to IP's woodyard. The dispute arose when the company shifted to paying woodhaulers by the weight of their wood rather than by the old method of measuring its size with a rod. In the spring, the UWA had waged a successful legislative battle to stop the "short-sticking" of wood brought to the dozens of woodyards in the state. UWA members said IP's shift, on the day the new law came into effect, cost them about \$20 per truckload, or \$1.50 to \$2.00 per ton.

When IP dealers refused to negotiate a higher price, about 35 woodcutters began the strike and started gathering support from the area's small timberland owners, who would also lose money under the new system of payment. The day after 100 residents and woodhaulers showed up on the picket line at IP's woodyard, the dealers began negotiating and finally settled on a \$1.50 per ton increase. A committee of two black and two white woodhaulers steered the strikers to victory and foiled repeated attempts by the company to spread false rumors that might split the white haulers from the blacks or create general confusion and mistrust.

Community support is now playing a crucial role in UWA's effort to blunt IP's move to close the Coffeeville woodyard. With the help of the mayor and Yalobusha County Board of Supervisors, a new cooperative woodyard may soon open and be managed by one of the former IP dealers. Like many others in this timber-dependent area, the dealer is now hostile to the huge paper company, which has earned a reputation for callous treatment of local landowners and public officials. If a paper mill can be located to contract with the new yard for its wood, UWA leaders say, "We may just teach International Paper a lesson about how people can organize against intimidation instead of letting the company use this closing as a symbol of their power."

— Thanks to Rich Peppers,
Philadelphia, Mississippi

Can hard times spur a change in education?

Universities and especially private colleges could face hard times in the next decade if they don't reorient their recruiting and educational programs. Nationally, the number of graduating high school seniors peaked in 1979 and will decline through 1994. The number of 18-to-22-year-olds in the population — those of traditional college age — will drop 25 percent in these same years for the nation as a whole and nine percent or more in all the Southern states except Texas, where the population boom offset the national baby bust of the 1960s, giving the state a projected 10 percent increase in its college-age



RONALD REDBAITER IGNORED. The FBI and CIA have each issued reports confirming the lack of Soviet influence in the U.S. Nuclear Freeze movement, but President Reagan still insists foreign agents are lurking behind the scenes. On December 10, he clarified his original charges by declaring that the freeze idea originated from a Soviet-front organization (the World Peace Council) and those who supported it, "well-intentioned though they may be," are "carrying water" for the Soviet Union.

As if to dramatize the irrelevance of the president's remarks, the National Conference of State Legislators on the same day voted 29 to 8 to support a bilateral freeze and seek a shift of funds from weapons production to programs helping "needy Americans and state and local governments." Unfortunately, the South showed the most support for Reagan. The eight opposing votes included Alabama, Georgia, North and South Carolina, and the 13 states that abstained from voting included Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.

SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

youth over the next dozen years.

"Ironically, few educators relate these declines to their own campuses," says Robert Gale, president of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. Instead of relying on white high school seniors, colleges that want to keep up enrollment will have to step up efforts to recruit black and Hispanic students, as well as initiate new adult education programs, say experts. High unemployment may encourage people to enroll in a variety of vocational and general educational programs, but government aid to help lower-income students seems unlikely to expand.

The challenge for Southern schools will be compounded by prestigious colleges outside the region accepting more Southern students. Black colleges face an even tougher future as more colleges bid for the smartest and richest black students. Some educators suggest the combined pressures of economic woes and population decline may spawn a host of innovative programs that serve the broader educational needs of the communities surrounding a college. But others fear many smaller colleges will go bankrupt in the next decade, allowing the bigger ones to maintain enough enrollment to survive through cost-cutting measures rather than through changing their generally conservative curricula.

South's prisons need major policy reforms

Southern states continue to rely on throwing more people in prison as the chief solution to the volatile issue of rising crime. As a consequence, the South's incarceration rate is double that of the Northeast and 70 percent higher than the Central and Western states. Because of the South, the United States has the third highest incarceration rate among the industrialized nations — 250 people per 100,000 are locked inside state and federal prisons or local jails.

The fact that the Union of South Africa and the Soviet Union are the

two countries which surpass the U.S. might suggest that politics, not crime, accounts for a high incarceration rate. Indeed, Southern states lead other parts of this nation because they more often pursue a policy of imprisoning people for nonviolent crimes. A new report by the North Carolina Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration points out that although that state's crime rate is among the 15 lowest in the U.S., a North Carolinian is 3.3 times more likely to wind up behind bars than a resident of another state regardless of the crime rate.

Rather than channel misdemeanants and felons convicted of nonviolent fraud, drug or property crimes into community-based alternatives to incarceration, North Carolina simply dumps them into an already bulging prison system. Fully three-fourths of the new admissions in 1980, the report says, were nonviolent offenders who, in states like Minnesota, Oregon, Kansas and Virginia, are screened for placement in restitution, community-service, drug abuse treatment, work-release and other programs.

Another political reality explains the South's high incarceration rate: racism. Figures from the U.S. Justice Department show that blacks are imprisoned at a rate 8.5 times that of whites, and that blacks and the poor receive harsher sentences than others committing the same crimes. North Carolina again illustrates this pattern: although nonwhites constitute only one fourth of the state's population, 56 percent of the state's prison population is nonwhite.

As more people have swelled Southern prisons in the last decade, conditions have steadily deteriorated. Overcrowded, unsanitary, violent and poorly staffed prisons are not unique to the South; federal courts have declared at least one penal institution in each of 33 states to be operating in violation of constitutional protections of "due process under the law" or against "cruel and unusual punishment." But of the 11 states where federal judges have ordered sweeping changes in entire prison systems, eight are in the South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi, Kentucky, Louisiana, Tennessee and Texas.

Even with federal mandates, efforts

to reform state prison policies have met stiff resistance. Alabama, the first state ordered to follow a judge's plan for systematic changes in 1972, moved so slowly that in July, 1981, a second judge ordered the immediate release of 277 inmates from overcrowded state institutions; when that order was still not obeyed five months later, he ordered a second release of 352 prisoners.

Despite a 1975 federal order to relieve overcrowding in Louisiana's Angola prison farm, state officials seem determined to hold as many people as possible behind bars. In his first 30 months in office, Governor David G. Treen has granted only 19 pardons out of the 340 recommended to him by the state Pardons Board; meanwhile, the legislature has stiffened the punishment for many crimes, so the average sentence being served by an Angola prisoner has doubled in the last seven years, and the number serving

1981 INCARCERATION RATE AND NUMBER OF PRISONERS SERVING SENTENCES OF 1 YEAR OR MORE IN STATE OR FEDERAL PRISONS
(excludes county or city jails)

State	Number of 1981 prisoners	Prisoners per 100,000 pop. of state
So. Carolina	8,527	253
Nevada	2,141	253
No. Carolina	15,791	250
Georgia	14,030	246
Florida	23,238	222
Louisiana	9,405	218
Texas	31,502	214
Delaware	1,716	214
Maryland	9,335	209
Alabama	7,441	186
Arizona	5,211	186
Mississippi	4,624	178
Alaska	1,019	172
Tennessee	7,883	171
United States	369,009	154
Census South (16 states)	160,259	202

life sentences without chance of probation or parole has tripled.

When U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice ordered radical changes in the Texas prison system in December, 1980, about 7,500 of the state's 32,000 inmates were being housed three to a cell measuring nine-by-five feet. Seventeen months later, the state

had spent over \$1 million to have the Houston law firm of Leon Jaworski appeal the judge's order and handle other prison legal disputes. Republican Governor William Clements still refused to approve 1,200 pardons sent to him by the state Board of Pardons and Paroles. And his Democratic successor, then attorney general Mark White, bitterly accused Judge Justice of "excessive" interference and of forcing the state to use army tents to house its steadily growing prison population.

Advocates of prison reform say it costs between \$9,500 and \$16,000 a year to imprison one offender. Placing the same offender on parole or in an alternative program to incarceration would cost the taxpayer 20 to 50 percent less. Nevertheless, state officials still choose to relieve overcrowded prisons either by storing more prisoners in county jails (which are routinely more unhealthy and poorly staffed) or by building new prisons (which cost between \$30,000 and \$60,000 per cell).

Last year, Virginia opened two new prisons, each costing \$23.6 million; instead of expanding successful restitution and community-service programs, the state legislature has authorized building two more prisons with price tags of \$30 million each. In Arkansas, the overcrowding of county jails got so bad that Sheriff Tom Robinson took 14 of the felons the state sent to his jail and chained them to the fence of a nearby state prison. "They were tearing the place up," he complained. "I had to do something to alleviate, to defuse a riotous situation."

After the Mississippi prison system was declared unconstitutional in 1976, overcrowding at county jails worsened and eventually peaked at 1,500 extra prisoners. The federal judge then extended his ruling to cover county jails, and he ordered the U.S. Justice Department to identify and recommend changes for many of them. "The Justice Department is absolutely and totally out of order trying to tell local county jails what to have in their systems," bellowed Congressman Trent Lott of the state's Gulf Coast district. "It's a fundamental federalist question," he said in the code language for states' rights.

For months, Congressman Lott was

instrumental in preventing federal experts from inspecting the jails — including the one in Biloxi where a November, 1982, fire in a polyurethane-padded cell caused 29 prisoners to die from toxic fume inhalation. "If we had had the experts inspecting the jails, we may have found the polyurethane foam in the cell padding," said Ron Welch, head of the Mississippi Prisoners Defense Committee. The substance had been banned by a previous federal court order.

Popular outcry about prison conditions is still the exception, and groups like the Southern Coalition on Jails and Prisons and the Southern Prisoners Defense Committee (which is suing South Carolina's prison system, now bulging at 138 percent of capacity) must contend with politicians who score easy points by railing against criminals. Even moderate Southern governors are reluctant to cast off the shortsighted warehousing mentality that undergirds prison policy in the region. In response to the August, 1982, ruling by Judge L. Clure Morton that Tennessee prisons are "unfit for human habitation," Governor Lamar Alexander vowed that the state "would go to work immediately to appeal or to develop a plan to meet the court's order at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers." It took arch-conservative House Speaker Ned Ray McWherter to finally admit that "it would be more responsible to use state dollars to make some of the corrections that the court order indicated than it would be to spend money in a courtroom appealing it."

In North Carolina, moderate Governor James Hunt reacted cautiously to the detailed plan presented by the Citizens Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration. The commission offered 26 comprehensive legislative and administrative changes in the state penal system that would save taxpayers money and incorporate the experience of several other states' programs to steer offenders back into society instead of behind bars. Said the governor: "My primary concern is not in saving the public's money, but in doing what is best to maintain the public's safety."

Whether based on an understanding of constitutional rights, or on a concern for wasted taxes, or on a disgust

with the plain inhumanity of prisons, a groundswell of public opinion will still be required to get political leaders to design a different system for public safety than the current policy of "out of sight, out of mind." The failure of politicians to deal head-on with prison problems, writes Catherine Hancock of the Nashville *Tennessean*, is not unlike the attitude of lawbreakers: "Just as criminals hope to avoid the consequences of their actions, state government officials appear to believe they can carry out corrections policy as they have for years without having to face the consequences."

Mexican condo buyer in Texas-sized trouble

Over the last three years, thousands of wealthy Mexicans have bought about 40 percent of the condominiums on South Padre Island at the southern tip of Texas. Their pesos, then overvalued, made the purchase of U.S. property look like a good investment, so they joined the rich of many other nations who believe owning a piece of the United States is among the best ways to gain security. Foreign-owned assets in the U.S. are now valued at over \$550 billion. But in the wake of Mexico's steep peso devaluation and restrictions on currency controls, the Texas condos may turn out to be millstones around their buyers' necks.

The Mexican government estimates the U.S. property holdings of its citizens at \$30 billion, with much of it in second homes from Florida to California. Because many affluent Mexicans can no longer keep up mortgage payments that require five times as many pesos per dollar, "for sale" signs are appearing by the hundreds. On South Padre Island, 10 percent of the 4,000 condos along a four-mile stretch of beachfront are on the block, and many are priced at 40 percent below last year's levels.

While the big banks worry about Mexico's \$80 billion debt, savings and loan associations along the Texas bor-



der are foreclosing on property worth millions of dollars. The Mexican government says it may force its citizens to sell all their U.S. property and return the money to their homeland to help pay off the national debt. But many wealthy Mexicans have accounts in U.S. banks, and from that base they are swapping pesos and dollars to keep even, if not ahead, of the currency game that has thrown millions of Mexicans into deeper poverty.

On South Padre Island, the international money crisis means a glutted market for condominiums, an end to construction projects and a sharp drop for businesses catering to resort guests. Many U.S. condo owners, however, are just as happy. "Things moved too quickly," Mary Lou Campbell told the *Wall Street Journal*. "It's good to have the beach to oneself again."

Censors spread evil in Virginia Tidewater

Norfolk, Virginia, once earned a reputation as a sailor's town, with more honky tonks than most Virginia bluebloods cared to acknowledge. A few years ago, an aggressive city administration launched a major crackdown, but the fallout may be spreading farther than anticipated.

In the fall, the city attorney seized

the film *Taxi Zum Klo* after its one-night showing at an alternative theater, the Naro Expanded Cinema. The film, whose English title is *Taxi to the Toilet*, has won acclaim internationally as well as the Boston Society of Film Critics Award and a prize at the Chicago Film Festival. But within its 92 minutes are three minutes and 15 seconds of explicit sexual contact between two homosexual men.

That was enough for the police corporal and chief magistrate in the audience to swear out warrants against the theater for violating the city's new obscenity laws. The head of the state ACLU, Chan Kendrick, offered the owners legal assistance. "The atmosphere in the country right now favors . . . seizing films and banning books. It must be fought vigilantly and properly." But the theater owners decided a legal fight "would have meant time, money and agonizing." So they pled guilty to a misdemeanor charge and paid a \$250 fine. Now they admit they "don't know what is obscene at this point," and they have begun censoring themselves by canceling films they *think* might get them in trouble.

In another obscenity case, Arturo Holmes, a student at the city's Old Dominion University, showed his poem "Nocturnal Emissions" to Virginia McGowan, a fellow student at the school. In broken images, the poem describes a woman's arousal by an imaginary lover. After returning the poem to Holmes, McGowan says she thought about it over the weekend, as well as the reports of sexual assaults on the campus, and then called the campus police. They helped her swear out a warrant for Holmes's arrest on obscenity charges.

Holmes was taken from a library to spend a night in jail before facing Judge Joseph A. Jordan, Jr. He had no attorney, and the judge refused to let him recite his poem before handing down a sentence of 30 days in jail (suspended) and a \$50 fine. Holmes's English professors say the poem is far from obscene, and he is now vigorously appealing the case. "They know they're wrong. I know they're wrong. And I want everyone else to know it, too," he says. "It is a grave injustice what they've done to me."

—Thanks to Gordon Ball, Norfolk

Women, blacks flex muscle for candidates

Blacks and women gained 22 and 21 seats respectively in the state legislatures of the Old Confederacy. Hispanics in Texas also increased their representation from 17 to 21 house seats, while holding on to four seats in the state senate.

Out of 1,777 Southern state legislators, blacks now occupy 149 seats (eight percent) and women are in 127 (seven percent) — far less than their fair share. Newly created single-member districts and other reforms consistent with the Voting Rights Act helped to some degree, but for nonwhite candidates, the biggest obstacle to victory is still the reluctance of whites to vote for a person of color.

Massive voter registration and voter turnout campaigns gave Mark White, a moderate-to-conservative Democrat, an upset victory over incumbent William Clements in the Texas race for governor. The same effort was instrumental in defeating the slate of North Carolina congressional candidates backed by Jesse Helms's Congressional Club. And blacks voted for Alabama's George Wallace against his rightwing opponent by a margin of five-to-one.

But white racism in the primary runoff blocked Mickey Michaux in his effort to become the first black in the U.S. House of Representatives from North

STATE LEGISLATORS IN THE SOUTH AND CHANGES FROM 1982 ELECTION IN SEATS HELD BY BLACKS, WOMEN

State	Number of state legislators	Black legislators #& change	Women legislators #& change
AL.	140	20 +4	6
AR.	135	5	7 +2
FL.	160	12 +7	28 +11
GA.	236	23 +1	19 +2
LA.*	144	12	2
MS.*	172	17	2
NC.	170	12 +8	24 +2
SC.	170	20 +5	11
TN.	131	11 -2	8 +2
TX.	181	12 -1	13 +1
VA.	138	5	11 +1
South	1,777	149 +22	127 +21

*no legislative races in even-years

Carolina since 1901; and in Mississippi, even after Robert Clarke, a black moderate, won the Democratic primary, whites voted in a bloc for Republican Webb Franklin, who won with the slogan, "A Congressman For Us."

Women also turned out in huge numbers to give male Democrats in several important races the margin of victory; but in many Southern state house races, they could not get men to reciprocate. The largest gain in the number of female state legislators came in Florida, where a pivotal defeat of the ERA spurred intensive campaigning to throw the good ole boys out.

Case in Mississippi divides Methodists

Eddie James Carthan became the first black elected mayor of a biracial Mississippi Delta town since Reconstruction. That was in 1977, when Carthan was 28. His home town of Tchula — 80 percent black — is located in the tenth poorest county in the nation. Official figures show that its unemployment rate hovers at 30 percent and that 47 percent of the homes lack plumbing.

Carthan entered politics at age 24, winning a seat on the school board and proving himself an independent voice in the community. "I thought I could represent those who had gone through slavery, knowing nothing about voting, about sitting in the front of the bus or eating in a restaurant," he said.

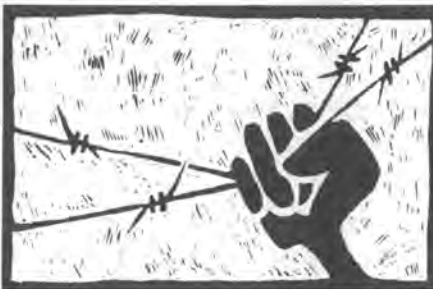
As mayor, Carthan actively sought federal funds, initiating 34 development projects during the Carter administration. Among the changes for the town of 3,000 were 100 new housing units, a program to remodel and repair existing homes, a health clinic, 80 new jobs and a nutrition project providing meals for the elderly and handicapped.

The white merchants and planters who had always run Tchula did not take kindly to Eddie Carthan; nor did the handful of black "leaders" they had proclaimed acceptable. Soon after Carthan refused a \$10,000 bribe to "do things the way they had always

been done," his enemies began their counterattack. City aldermen blocked his new programs, cut his salary 90 percent and changed the locks on City Hall.

When opposing aldermen "appointed" a new police chief to replace the one installed by Carthan, a showdown occurred in which Carthan, five of his deputized police officers and a friendly city alderman were arrested for simple assault of a police officer, namely the new chief. Following a hasty trial, the Tchula 7 were sentenced to three years in the state penitentiary by a judge who is also the chief's sister-in-law. Two jurors have since publicly recanted their verdict, saying they were "confused and misled" by the judge.

Carthan was also handed, and is currently appealing, a second three-year sentence and a \$5,000 fine for giving false information to a federally insured bank while he was mayor. He allegedly gave permission to a day-care equipment supplier and a former Mississippi Minority Affairs officer to sign his name to a fictitious delivery receipt used as collateral for a bank loan. Based on their testimony, Carthan was convicted; the two swindlers received much lighter sentences, although one admitted to bilking the state out of more than \$1 million.



In November, 1982, Carthan was acquitted on a third charge, potentially the most severe. He had faced possible execution on a charge of capital murder of one of the city aldermen who opposed him. That person, Roosevelt Granderson, was killed in a 1981 robbery of the store in which he worked. The prosecutor claimed Carthan and his brother Joe had hired two men to commit the robbery and murder. It took the jury less than an hour to find the Carthan brothers innocent.

Despite the acquittal, Carthan re-

mains in jail on the simple assault conviction, and in an unprecedented move, the state courts have denied him bond while the case is being appealed. Supporters inside Holmes County had raised a \$230,000 bond for the Carthan brothers in the murder case, and when Eddie Carthan was not released, he began a hunger strike that he finally ended on the day of the acquittal.

The plantation politics behind the cases has generated broad national support for Carthan, including a rally of nearly 3,000 people in Jackson on October 16, the eve of his murder trial. Now some of his supporters, who range from Ossie Davis to the National Council of Churches, are being attacked. The United League of Holmes County had the insurance on its vehicles cancelled, and its funding is in jeopardy. One of the jurors in the murder trial was fired from his job. And in a major controversy, three people active in assisting the United League and in defending the Tchula 7 are under fire from the national United Methodist Church, for whom they work.

The three — Sheila Collins, John Jordan and Bill Rollins — were all suspended from their positions with the United Methodist Voluntary Services (UMVS) for three months following the rally in Jackson. The reason given for the suspension was that they had used UMVS funds improperly to help several people attend the rally — they had allegedly failed to consult with the North Mississippi Annual Conference, the official Methodist body in the area, before spending the funds.

Immediate and loud criticism of this action prompted national Methodist leaders to change the punishment to reassignment for Collins and Jordan and a return to regular duties for Rollins, who was only peripherally involved in the Carthan case while Collins was on health leave. Rene Bideaux, associate general secretary of the National Board of the Methodists, contends that the United Methodist Church still stands behind its October, 1982, resolution "in which we very clearly supported the cause of Eddie James Carthan and challenged the church to be responsive to that."

All sides agree on one thing: the move against UMVS originated from

complaints by white Mississippians. Early in 1982, the North Mississippi Annual Conference denounced UMVS's involvement with the Carthan case and later called the National Board's support statement "contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ and harmful to the missionary work of the Church." A compromise was reached in which the North Mississippi Annual Conference would be consulted on how the National Board spent money, but its approval would not be necessary.

Collins says she consistently conferred with the Mississippi Methodists, who steadfastly opposed the UMVS's actions. Her supporters believe her removal from an agency she built into a national network of grassroots, church-supported organizations will effectively prevent the church from playing the strong role mandated by the national resolution. Appeals of the Collins-Jordan case now continue, as do those for Eddie Carthan.

Tennessee finally hits Expo consumer fraud

Knoxville's Energy Expo '82 posted over 11 million people-visits, and its promoters were quick to proclaim its six-month life a complete success. S.H. (Bo) Roberts, president of the Knoxville International Energy Exposition (KIEE), the non-profit firm that put on the fair, noted that \$30 million in debt to 43 banks was repaid and that the fair generated \$500 million in consumer spending and \$295 million in federal highway and urban development money for the city.

Critics have long claimed the chief winners for the fair would be its principal backer, banker Jake Butcher, and his close associates whose companies took in 80 percent of the \$48 million spent on erecting pavilions, hotels, parking garages and other fair properties. Joseph Dodd, a political science professor at the University of Tennessee, says Knoxville itself wound up with a \$35 million debt for new property, buildings and roadways related to the fair, and the city's budget is so strapped

it recently laid off more than 50 fire fighters and police officers.

Many tourists will remember the fair because of the exorbitant prices charged by motel operators and landlords who evicted their tenants to convert apartments into rooms to rent by the day or week. The Tennessee consumer protection agency has received over 13,000 complaints, apparently too many to ignore any longer. In December, one month after Butcher's friend, Knoxville Mayor Randy Tyree, lost his race as the Democratic candidate for governor, the state's chief prosecutor finally took action.

Attorney General William M. Leech, Jr., also a Democrat, filed a million-dollar lawsuit on behalf of nearly 4,000 visitors whose motel and hotel deposits were not refunded after their



reservations were lost, or their rooms were more expensive or of inferior quality to what they were promised. The suit names Knoxvisit, a city tourist bureau, and Property Leasing Management (PLM), a private reservation system begun by associates of Butcher, as well as KIEE, which "encouraged tourists to use the agencies."

A few months ago, the owners of PLM sold out and the present owner has filed for bankruptcy; the state has intervened in the bankruptcy case to seek refunds for the aggrieved hotel and motel customers. Thousands of other consumer complaints filed with state officials and the Knoxville Better Business Bureau deal with rental apartments, mobile homes and camp sites. Their future, like that of a Federal Trade Commission investigation into consumer fraud, is still unknown.

Unemployment rises, could be permanent

With the exception of Alabama and its hard-hit steel and auto-dependent economy, the South nervously watched from afar as the Reagan depression took its toll on the North and Midwest. But by November, double-digit unemployment rates prevailed across the region, and now it looks like a significant proportion of the layoffs in such traditional Southern industries as textiles, apparel, wood and paper products and food production will be permanent.

Once again, manufacturers are using the economy as an excuse to close down aging plants and channel investment into modernized operations (read: fewer jobs, more automated machines). In the 1974-75 recession, the textile industry laid off 142,000 workers and eventually hired back only 52,000. Says Robert Coleman, president of the American Textile Manufacturers Institute, "What we're going through now is much bigger. It's the biggest shakeup since I started in the business in 1941." In November, textile employment was down 100,000 from the previous year.

A new Louis Harris survey of major companies shows that 90 percent plan to respond to a recovery, once it does begin, by raising output without hiring more workers. More than 70 percent say they will devote investment to labor-saving equipment on the factory floor and for clerical, sales and other white-collar functions. And the vast majority of textile and other executives in the survey say they will keep profits growing by boosting prices rather than by adding new production capacity.

Meanwhile the gap between executive and other workers continues to widen. *Business Week* reports that last year the total take-home pay of company executives it surveyed rose 16 percent, compared to a gain in wages for unionized workers of 10 percent. Nonunion workers posted smaller gains, while 45 percent of the top executives in the nearly 300 large companies surveyed earned more than \$400,000 a year.

United Nations

Sea Changes

A major philosophical conflict over the great expanses of ocean that lie outside national jurisdictions has been building ever since the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) began considering their fate in 1973. Third World nations maintain that the seabed, like air, is part of the "common heritage" of humanity. U.S. lobbyists, however, have worked hard to defeat any global accord that would involve sharing seabed minerals with poorer nations.

A treaty was adopted by UNCLOS over strong U.S. objections on May 2, 1982, and was signed by 117 countries in December. Other industrial nations that rejected the document include Britain, West Germany, Japan, Spain, Italy and Belgium. France and the Soviet Union joined 115 countries — primarily from Asia, Africa and Latin America — in signing the treaty, but it is unclear if their national assemblies will ratify the agreement if the U.S. does not join in sharing its expenses and ensuring that no country breaks its terms.

What the treaty does is establish a 200-mile "exclusive economic zone" for each coastal nation's fishers and an oil-and-gas preserve for 350 miles along the continental shelf. The treaty also empowers ships of any flag to navigate the world's narrow straits and to approach up to 12 miles from any coast. And an international seabed authority will be empowered to regulate seabed mining.

Many nations consider the treaty particularly useful because it has provisions to defuse potentially explosive conflicts by defining navigation and overflight rights and establishing rules for marine research and environmental protection.

Third World nations see the new treaty as a major step toward global economic controls and as a direct chal-

lenge to the ability of transnational companies to plunder the seabeds of the world at will. A number of U.S. corporations lobbied heavily against the UN-led plan for a seabed authority. This lobby, said a *New York Times* editorial, would prefer "the right of unilateral exploration of billions of dollars' worth of nickel, cobalt and manganese that are thought to lie beneath the oceans. They would like to scramble for the riches, with only a hunting license from Congress."

The United States participated in the sea law talks from the very beginning, but withdrew its delegation in March, 1981. At that time, President



Gulf Oil Operation in Angola

photo by Angola-Comite/Africa News

Ronald Reagan stated his opposition to the idea of placing deep-sea mining under an international authority in which the U.S. was not accorded a role that "fairly reflects and effectively protects the U.S. political and economic interests and financial contribution."

In 1982 the American delegation returned to the conference with a list of proposed treaty amendments. Failing to win acceptance of his final demands, Reagan announced that the United States would not sign the document. But the treaty signing conference in December was a surprising success. "The world is ready to show we can do without the overbearing attitudes of the superpowers," said Satya Nandan of Fiji, a major architect of the document. "In April, when we adopted the treaty at the UN, we didn't think we could get 50 signatures. This is a big blow to the U.S."

Since only 60 nations need ratify the Law of the Sea Treaty for it to go into force, U.S. efforts to talk other industrial nations out of signing seemed designed to deprive the treaty enforcers of financing and support from wealthy nations. □

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Italy

Of Mafia and Missiles

The Italian government's decision to allow the U.S. to install 112 Cruise missiles at an abandoned airfield in the southeastern Sicilian town of Comiso has set the stage for a dramatic confrontation with the country's peace movement. The deployment of the new NATO missiles is scheduled for late 1983, but already activists in Italy are organizing to block construction of the base.

Comiso, a thriving city of 25,000, would be the first site for Cruise missiles on the European continent. (A concurrent deployment is planned for England.) The Schmidt government stated Germany will accept the NATO missiles only if one other continental nation does; since Belgium and the Netherlands are shaky at best, this puts Italy in a key position. If the missiles can be stopped at Comiso, there might not be anywhere else for them to go. A September, 1982, American fact-finding delegation from Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC) reported, "It is our unanimous judgment that Comiso is indeed a crucial focus of the struggle against deployment of Pershing II and Cruise missiles, which in turn has a very direct bearing on the success or failure of U.S. efforts to achieve a nuclear weapons freeze."

VOICES OF OUR NEIGHBORS

In October, 1981, and then again in April, 1982, tens of thousands of people gathered in Comiso to protest the planned development of nuclear weapons on Sicilian soil. More recently, there have been smaller sit-in demonstrations at the gates to the abandoned Magliocco airport. And peace groups on the island have collected one million signatures, representing more than half the adult population of Sicily, calling for a halt to construction of the base. Efforts are underway to have a national referendum on the missiles.

Although the Communist Party has been in the forefront of the campaign at Comiso and is widely seen as the driving force behind the Italian peace movement, opposition to the deployment of Cruise missiles comes from a broad spectrum of Italian society. A number of religious groups, including the United Committee for Disarmament and Peace (CUDIP) and the Italian Ecumenical Center are particularly active.

After the government announced its decision to proceed with the NATO installation, Catholics began flocking to the movement. "The desire to say no to war was so enormous it finally exploded," explains Luigi Batazzi, president of the international Catholic association, Pax Christi. "The peace movement has grown because there has been greater maturity among the Catholics."

To keep Cruise missiles out of Comiso, CUDIP has planned five areas of activity. Giacomo Cagnes, CUDIP chairperson and former mayor of Comiso for 22 years, led a hunger strike by 800 people from five countries. The strike lasted 13 days and ended when the Italian government agreed to grant one hour of prime time on Italian state television to present the case against the missiles, plus a meeting with the president of Italy.

The four other CUDIP projects all aim at building ties between Comiso and the international peace movement. The largest activity will be a major demonstration in mid-1983, with wide participation expected from the U.S. and Western Europe.



photo courtesy Nuclear Times

30,000 demonstrate against Cruise missiles, Comiso, Italy, October 11, 1981

The planned NATO installation has its local boosters. The Socialist mayor of Comiso, the town council and many of the region's businesspeople eagerly await the influx of money that would accompany the construction and operation of the base. Five thousand military personnel and technicians, many of them Americans paid in U.S. dollars, will reportedly be stationed there. Not surprisingly, the Businessmen's Association of Comiso unanimously approved a resolution calling the base "necessary for the development of the area's economy."

The Mafia is equally interested in the spoils of the new site. The 6,500 American soldiers stationed at the NATO bases near Catania on Sicily's west coast give the Mafia a ready market for drugs and prostitution. Up until now, Comiso has been one of the few areas in Sicily to successfully resist Mafia influence. The prospect of tapping such revenues in Comiso may be connected with the assassination of Pio La Torre, the Communist Party secretary for the region and a leading crusader against the base. La Torre was gunned down by men who police sources say were paid by the Mafia.

One reason so many Italians may oppose a missile base in Comiso — 54 percent of the population according to a 1981 poll — is its curious location. The stated purpose of placing medium-range missiles in Western Europe is to counter already existing

Soviet SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe. But Comiso is about as far as it is possible to be from the Soviet Union and still be in Italy; a Cruise missile fired from there wouldn't reach Moscow.

Why didn't NATO choose a site further north? One theory, advanced by Pio La Torre before his murder, is that the missiles at Comiso won't be aimed at the Soviet Union. "Everyone knows the Mediterranean is one of the world's hot spots," La Torre said. "These missiles are not going to be pointed north, but toward the south, toward Libya and the Mediterranean over which Reagan wants to maintain supremacy." Others speculate that the U.S. might use Comiso as a staging point for the Rapid Deployment Force.

Whether the missiles are to be aimed to the north or south, the Italian government will face considerable opposition from its own citizens. Prime Minister Giovanni Spadolini vowed the base will be built by the end of 1983. But the *guerrieri della pace* — the guerrillas of peace, as they are called in Comiso — promise to make their home an international symbol. □

For more information, contact Clergy and Laity Concerned, 198 Broadway, New York, NY 10038 (212) 964-6730. This report was adapted from an article in Nuclear Times and from information supplied by CALC.

Facing South

a syndicated column:
voices of tradition
in a changing region

Subtropical Mobile

MOBILE, AL — Downtown Mobile looks like a North African city after a bombardment, with gaping spaces, white light cruelly reflected from plastered walls, desolate parking lots unrelieved by even a solitary oleander or chinaberry tree. But 'twas not always so.

Well into the 1930s, downtown Dauphin Street was a long arcade of galleries and balconies, with deep cool shadows on hot days. There were more palm trees then, and oleanders. There were vendors with huge oyster-white umbrellas on their wagons or carts. Every garden downtown had its Grand Duke Jessamine, a charming and obliging shrubby plant which can be bush, climber, pot plant or standard, according to your whim. The candy sweetness of its perfume pervaded the downtown neighborhoods.

Mobile looked to be what it is in fact: a subtropical city, much more Caribbean than it is now. Men wore white suits and hard "straw katys" or soft Panama hats. Ladies carried parasols, not umbrellas — though some old-fashioned ladies, both black and white, carried huge white silk umbrellas in sun or rain. There was an influx of Chinese waxed or lacquered paper parasols in the 1920s, which lent a note of exotic color to downtown streets.

The elevators in downtown buildings were not the sealed space capsules of today, but open fretwork iron cages which rattled up and down, presenting an alarming view of dangling cables and chains, and sometimes an exhilarating vista of the wharves, the river, the bay. There was a definite reason for this kind of elevator. I speak of the days before air conditioning. Both men and women dressed for the heat: cotton, linens, seersucker, dotted



Illustration by Frank Holyfield

swiss, eyeletting. But despite their best efforts (a dash of Florida water or witch hazel after the morning shave, a dusting of talc under their clothes), men who had spent a summer day working in the office usually achieved a definite doggy or goaty presence by late afternoon. There was no way to conceal that acrid odor of heated flesh in a subtropical climate: hence the open elevators.

Mobile was subtropical. People honored the siesta. Men came home for a big noon dinner and an afternoon nap. Shutters were closed tight, sometimes windows too: they were opened around midnight, in "the cool of the evening." Verandas or front galleries, and some store-fronts, which received the morning or afternoon sun in full blaze, were fitted out with huge striped awnings. These were raised and lowered in a daily ritual, with a clanking and flapping which often echoed down the street, sounding like the mating dance of some congress of grey herons.

Then there were the watermelon vendors. I think they fell victim to health department regulations in the 1930s, but my, what a sight they were. They displayed the crimson melon sections arranged on ice, sometimes with halved lemons for ornament. The melons were covered with red or pink cheesecloth, and a slow-grinding, oscillating electric fan waved long crepe paper streamers over the display to

discourage flies.

But the final subtropical touch, which I've missed since way back, is the smell of ripe figs. Downtown courts and kitchen gardens all had a fig tree or two, and at least one lemon. The smell of ripe figs on the tree and a few fermenting on the ground was the essence of a Mobile summer, especially when mingled with the perfume of the honeysuckle. Once, in the oasis of Khibele in the Sahara desert, I suddenly was overwhelmed with a powerful pang of something: what? At last I realized I was smelling ripe figs and honeysuckle together.

My tale doesn't end there: on a bus moving across the white sands, heading back to El Dieb, I saw a solitary palm tree. I convinced the driver to stop the bus so I could plod ankle-deep through the white grains to see the poster on the trunk of this palm in the middle of nowhere. It was in French and announced a concert of the "Swingle Singers" in Tunis the next night. Ward Swingle is of course a Mobile product, as I myself am. Subtropical he; subtropical I. Subtropical Mobile.

— EUGENE WALTER
novelist, actor, poet
Mobile, AL

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

RESOURCES

Clearing Out the Prisons

High on the national list of states with overcrowded prisons (see news item, page seven) is North Carolina — and the problem has inspired a response from a private citizens' group that concerned people in other states would do well to examine. The Citizens' Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration spent two years researching and studying the possibilities for alleviating the overcrowding and using punishments other than prison wherever appropriate. The result is a report released in late November, 1982, that presents the group's findings and strongly recommends a new system using non-prison, community-based, individually devised sentencing plans for all misdemeanants and for most felons convicted of nonviolent offenses. The group also recommends reforms of existing components of the correctional system.

The commission's staff — which is also the staff of the North Carolina Prison and Jail Project — has produced a full analysis of the costs of imprisonment, the origins of the overcrowding, the characteristics of the state's prisoners and of all currently and potentially available alternatives to prison. Its usefulness is not limited to North Carolina, for the reasoning that led to the commission's conclusions would likely apply anywhere, and the study itself — fully documented in the 150-page report — is a model of how citizens can do policy research. While they last, copies are available free of charge from the Prison and Jail Project, 604 W. Chapel Hill St., Durham, NC 27701.

The Nitty-Gritty of Leaflets

How to Do Leaflets, Newsletters and Newspapers tells you everything — and we mean everything — its title leads you to expect. It's a down-to-earth, practical guide with step-by-step instructions, covering things like how to paste up copy, how to get a second- or third-class mailing permit and how to decide what kinds of printing and typesetting are best for you. It also has sections on editing and photojournalism, doing interviews, fundraising, distribution, libel and copyright law —

and many other items that even people who already know the basics will find useful. Clear drawings and examples illustrate the text on every page.

The audience for this book is *anyone* faced with the task of putting something in print, but especially one who isn't sure how to proceed or what to do first. (The table of contents is helpfully marked with asterisks by the sections that constitute a "crash course for beginners.") Produced primarily by Nancy Brigham, who teaches workshops and coordinates the activities of the International UAW Local Union Press Association, it's available for \$7.95 from PEP Publishers, PO Box 289, Essex Station, Boston, MA 02112.



We stole this graphic from *How to Do Leaflets, Newsletters and Newspapers*

Newsletters

We recently read a copy of the newsletter of the Mississippi Gay Alliance (MGA) that impressed us with its quality, and we thought our readers in other states might like to get in touch. It's called *TMM* ("This Month in Mississippi"). The issue we read had news stories, a calendar, poetry, an introspective column on gay relationships, an article on homosexuality and religion, a piece on understanding the Ku Klux Klan and its current fascist manifestation — a well-rounded mix. Write MGA at PO Box 8342, Jackson, MS 39204.

Another newsletter worth noting: *Behind the Cotton Curtain*, the publication of the Southern Democratic Socialists, has temporarily disappeared from view but hopes to be back again in January, 1983. A dispute with the postal service over its bulk mailing permit has kept the latest issue boxed

up and unmailed for months, but editor William Johnson reports that matters are being straightened out. If past performance is any indication, the paper is well worth the attention of progressive-minded Southerners. There's thorough coverage of Democratic Socialist chapters in the South, of course; also news stories on events like the Voting Rights March, the Eddie Carthan case, the Women's Labor School, religion and unionism, etc. Though the newsletter was bi-monthly in the past, the Democratic Socialists plan to publish monthly in the future. Subscriptions are \$5 a year; write PO Box 5479-Kreole, Moss Point, MS 39563.

Sue the Bastards

If your citizen organization is contemplating a lawsuit, you need *Contemplating a Lawsuit?*, a 1981 publication of the Northern Rockies Action Group (NRAG). In 31 pages of practical advice, Idaho public-interest attorney Scott W. Reed first lays out the pitfalls of litigation, discussing questions your group should answer satisfactorily before it even thinks of calling in the law. Then, if you have decided to sue the bastards, he advises how to choose a lawyer, what to do about fees, how to direct and control the suit, how to understand legal jargon and much more.

Reed brings to this report an understanding of the lawyer's side, of course, and he admits to frustrations and genuine problems he's had in representing citizens groups in court. But here he is writing for citizen group members, and reflects the point of view of Mary Lou Reed, his wife. A long-time activist, she complained that "the legal process in general and lawyers in particular seemed to be continually getting in the way of the citizens' efforts to put across [their] cause."

Though Reed's anecdotes and examples are localized to his Northern Rockies turf, the lessons are universal — and we don't know of anything like this with a Southern base, so try it on for size. It's one of a series of useful resources available from NRAG at 9 Placer, Helena, MT 59601. Write for a list; this one costs \$3.

I ain't lying

Getting in touch with our roots. Exploring our heritage. These have become something of a fad in recent years. But their popularity just means more people are sharing in the personal enrichment - and fun - that comes from digging into history.

Among the more enthusiastic new historians is a group of high school students in Port Gibson, Mississippi, who have been interviewing and photographing their neighbors and relatives and sharing what they discover in a magazine called *I Ain't Lying*. They've borrowed its name from a phrase they encounter over and over again in their interviewing, a standard, passionate disclaimer that signals the start of a good story.

The students' work is part of a project called "Mississippi: Cultural Crossroads" (MCC), begun in 1979 to offer cultural and educational opportunities for local children in their out-of-school time and to provide opportunities for black and white children in this majority-black community to get to know one another.

I Ain't Lying started out with some help from friends at *Foxfire*, which it resembles. But there are important differences, the most important being that it's not based in the schools. Instead it is privately run under the guidance of Patricia Crosby, who has raised money from foundations and the National Endowment for the Humanities — and lately even the county board of supervisors — to buy equipment, pay the printing costs and so forth.

Based in an office across the street from the nearly-all-black public high school, and a block away from the mostly white private military academy, the magazine staff comes from both schools. Both school principals allow students to schedule their afternoon study halls for the same time period and to spend it off campus at the MCC office working on *I Ain't Lying*.

Over the past few years, the students of Port Gibson have managed to preserve the stories of dozens of local people and inform themselves about ways of life now gone forever — but not, thanks to their efforts, lost to history.

Here *Southern Exposure* shares pieces of the stories they have found. Then on page 18, we reproduce portions of a conversation between Della Davenport and her story-telling uncle, Robert Mobley. And on page 21, Vincent Goods reports the answers to his questions about home remedies for various ailments.



Octavis Davis recorded the reminiscences of Janie Clara Breckinridge, better known as Mama Janie, who was Port Gibson's favorite midwife — as Davis says, “She delivered my brothers and sisters, many cousins and me.” Breckinridge was well-loved for her charity work, for helping to start a health clinic in town and especially for her thoroughgoing belief in cleanliness. Davis writes, “When she went to deliver a baby, she went prepared to clean, wash, cook, sew, iron and do whatever was necessary.”

Now 83 and retired, Mama Janie recalls starting working life on a farm, but “I just wanted to be a midwife.” Here is part of her story:

“I started back in May 28, 1925. I midwifed 47 years and I delivered 1,500 babies.

“Well, I tell you darling, I never was scared. We had a Mrs. Mary Oliver that was our instructor, and Mrs. Jackson. She would come bout every two months. And then we had books to read on delivering and everything like that. Back in them days then, I had taken a great step.

“I tell you about working. I didn't

get nothing for my work when I started working. They barely paid \$7, and as the years passed on it went up to \$15, and from \$15 to \$25.

“Well now, see \$7 was the price after my mother-in-law give up. She'd give me training and all like a that. Sometimes for pay I'd take nothing, and I'd walk right out. I could walk up to a house — no porch, no steps, no yard around it — and I knew it was charity work. I knew there wasn't no pay. You see, they give me hogs, cows, cow peas, sorghum molasses, all that for just pay. Stuff like that.

“Sometimes I needed rest. I never had it. Sometimes my husband said I was gonna fall dead one of these days. If he'd come home, I'd rest for three hours at home. I'd stay for three days after they'd call me, to help with the housework.

“Some of the homes I went in they didn't even own pine oil or Lysol. I took that stuff out of my bag and washed them things. Hang em out and let em dry. Other midwives thought I was crazy — say they oughta had their own stuff. But see, I couldn't work like that. See, I'd have to put my mother to bed clean.”

Julia Jones is a former school teacher who has been circuit clerk in Claiborne County since 1971, one of the first blacks elected to public office there. She described for interviewer Marhea Farmer the coming of the Civil Rights Movement to the county



and how she came to her decision to run for office.

“I had thought about running in 1967 or '68. That first year after civil-rights marches came into town, a lot of people started to thinking politically. Basically I ran because blacks were kept out of the political structure a lot. Earlier, a lot of blacks came to register to vote and could not. They hadn't passed the Voting Rights Act at that time, and a lot of them were turned around because of the severe test that they had to undergo.

“I think everybody should vote. I don't think one person ought to be turned away and another let vote. That is for white and black.”

Now, it is Jones's job to register voters, and she takes great pleasure in it: “Seeing people come in freely and register, that's one of the excitements I've seen. I've seen a lot of people come in, pleased with the office, and see smiles on their faces. They come in and sit down and they are definitely at home. I like that. I think they should come by their elected offices and check in at least once in a while and say how do you do, or how are things going, and just be part of the office. I think they should be, because they put us there.”



Elvin Jenkins learned something about survival when he interviewed Frances Pearl Lucas, who's been taking care of herself since she ran away to the Delta at age 12 to pick cotton and

corn. In the fields, or working in someone else's kitchen, she learned how to sew, make quilts, preserve fruits and vegetables, plant a garden and raise animals. She married at 18 and raised eight daughters and a son.

Now in her sixties, Lucas is alone again and, reports magazine editor Octavis Davis, "When there is work around her house such as gardening, cropping, slaughtering hogs and housework, she does it all." In her interview she passed on detailed instructions for making her specialties and described how she learned all she knows:

"I never did no public work. I never did no nothing but housework. Cook for different people. They'd pay you. I would come in your house and see you do something, and come back home and do just what you did. I seen other people. I used to sew a long time ago, make overalls, T-shirts, pants and all of that. I done got old now. I can't see too good, but I piece quilts. Piece em at home, and we'd go round and have quiltings.

"I used to preserve peaches, pears, apples, blackberries, meats, sweet potatoes, beans, peas, all that. Make tomato ketchup when I feel like it, and hot sauce. And I made green tomato pickles. I used to can a jar of fruit for every day of the year. Nobody but me now — I don't have to do that. Nobody learned me how to do this. I'd go to your house, help you out, and I'd go back home and do it too."

A Conversation with Robert Mobley

by Della Davenport

I wanted to interview my uncle because, when I was about nine years old, he used to sit down and tell me bedtime stories and jokes. I enjoyed them very much. I was so used to him telling me stories that I wanted to hear a story every time I was with him because he would make me laugh no matter what kind of mood I was in.

He is very funny and every time I see him he has some kind of riddles or stories to tell. He still makes me laugh



from the time I am with him till the time I leave, I enjoy him very much.

— Della Davenport

I was born in a place call Carlisle, on the Richmond place.

How old are you?

Well, I'll tell you when I was born, I won't tell you my age, but I'll tell you when I was born: 1905, March the third. Now you count that.

Did you all play games?

Oh, plenty of em. We played ball games, basketball, football and then played ring play.

Do you believe in ghosts?

Yeah, I believe it. Well, I know it musta been something, cause wasn't

nobody else around, but couldn't been none. I didn't see nothing else but that.

What happened?

Well, I coming home one night and I got off my horse — gon open the gap and something told me, say, "I dare you!" Told me, "I dare you." And I looked and I didn't see nothing. The moon shining just as pretty and bright, and all. It was a big opening. I stood there a few minutes; didn't say no more. I didn't take time to put my foot in the stirrup. I jumped up on it, so went on home.

So next when I got to home something come round to the house with a lot of chains and I thought it was my daddy. He was in there in the bed. And I went back, turn my horse loose and all them chains, and I broke and run back in the house. And I knew wasn't nobody there. Now that's the truth. Yeah, it was — you could hear them things.

Me and another boy was coming long one night and a big old shabby dog, just bout that tall — moon shining just as pretty and bright — just walked between me and him. Walked bout from that door there, disappeared. Ain't seen it no more.

Do you know any stories?

I got so many. Well, there was an old preacher once, he went home with the deacon's wife. He got there and they all went to bed. The deacon had a little old boy — he laying down on the floor — and the little old boy say, "Papa been stealing old Jones's hogs." And Jones was the preacher, you know. "Papa been stealing old Jones's hogs, and Jones know nothing bout it." Kept a-saying it. So the old preacher told the deacon's wife, say, "You carry that boy to church tomorrow. We want him to sing that song."

So she got the boy ready and she carried him on to church that night. The old preacher got up in the pulpit. "I got a little boy here, he sings a song here." His daddy was there too, you know. He say, "Boy, come down, I want you to sing this song." The little boy got up, "Papa been stealing old Jones's hogs, and Jones don't know nothing bout it." His daddy say, "Boy,

hush!" The old preacher say, "Sing it, boy!" The little boy tried it down again. "Papa been stealing old Jones's hogs, and Jones know nothing bout it!" His daddy say, "Hush, boy!" The old preacher say, "Sing it, boy!" The little boy turned it around, you know, say, "Jones been sleeping with papa's wife and papa . . ." The old preacher told him, "Shut up, boy, don't sing!" His daddy say, "Sing it, boy!"

Well, I can tell you again on the preacher. It was an old preacher once. He was a great big preacher. He just come in and he told em he could call Gabriel and tell him to blow his trumpet, and Gabriel blow his trumpet. Everybody wanted to hear that preacher that night. Two boys – they was awful devils – they slipped in the church fore anybody come there and got in the loft of the church.

The old preacher didn't know the boys was up there. He say, "Oh, Gabriel, blow your trumpet, Gabriel." The boy say, "Umm, umm." Everybody looked. "Oh, Gabriel, why don't you blow your trumpet, Gabriel." The boy, "Umm, umm." The boys had gone up in the church. The old preacher walked down out the stand, you know, and walked in the alleyway. He said, "Oh, Gabriel, blow your trumpet, Gabriel." The boys went to blowing.

Everybody broke and ran out the church, come cross the church lawn. Old preacher was last one out. Big old hog on the lawn and he run into it. He say, "Look out, Gabriel, god damn it. I'm in my own church and I'll do it."



I want to ask you a question. If it's a hundred ears of corn was in a corn crib, and a rat was going in there totting three ears out at night, how many

nights will it take to take that hundred ears out that crib?

A hundred ears of corn? Three a night?

He carry three out at night. How many it'll take him to carry that hundred ears out? I'm asking all of y'all. Asking that lady over yonder in the corner, asking her too.



Well, I have this suspicion that he wouldn't get to take three out a night. But if he did it would be 33 nights to get him 99, but I have a feeling that there's a catch somewhere. But I don't know what it is. He can't carry that much.

Oh, yeah he can.

Unless he eat it up. Take it off the cob.

No, no he won't. It wouldn't take him but a hundred nights. He take one ear out – ear of corn in his mouth and carry his own two ears out.

Well, you got us that time. You got another riddle?

What is this: got eyes and can't see, a mouth and can't talk, a tongue and can't talk, and a soul you can't save?

I don't know.

Ain't your shoe got a tongue, got an eye, and a mouth?

What is this here? Round as a biscuit, busy as a bee, and carry his hands before his face all the time?

Ain't you got a watch?

We're not doing real well.

No, but I can tell you what, you can get a black cat's bone and put it in your purse and you'll have good luck.

In your purse?

Yeah, you'll have good luck if you put a black cat's bone in your purse.

Where you gon get one from?

You have to kill it and get the black cat's bone.

I ain't killing nothing.

Why, you'll be getting good luck, and you can just sit at home. You wouldn't have to worry bout your boyfriend. When he come he'll tell you where he been. Black cat bone make him tell you where he been.

Well, let me see. I wanted to ask you something too. What this: got four legs, wears an apron and smokes a pipe, and got four eyes?

A stove?

That's what it is. Somebody told. Well, tell me this. How come you go to bed at night?

To go to sleep, I guess?

No, you don't. Cause the bed can't come to you.

Do you know any songs?

Let's see now. I got two, three different ones on my mind. Now let's see which one must I sing.

Shining Billy, Shining Billy,
Did she ask me in?

Yes, ask me in,
And she rest my hat
And she hung it on the rack.
She's a young girl,
Too young to leave her mother.

Sing me another one.

Let me see:

This train don't carry no liars,
This train.
This train don't carry no liars,
This train is bound for glory,
This train.

This train don't carry no drunkards,
This train.
This train don't carry no drunkards,
This train.
This train don't carry no drunkards,
This train is bound for glory,
This train.

Sing us some blues.

Nah, we never did sing no blues.
Cause you get to singing them blues,
get you stirred up and you wouldn't
stay at home then.

*I wonder why you don't like to sing
the blues?*

Well, the blues will put you to
studying. Get your mind all tore up. I
get to singing them blues, I may walk
off and leave my wife sitting here. See,
my wife don't like me to sing that
cause she know em. Think I'll be going
somewhere watching them young gals
there.

Just sing one.

One? One will call for another one.
Better not sing no blues here.

How did you meet your wife?

When I met her I thought she was
the best looking girl I ever saw, you
know. I hadn't courted many girls, and
so I run up to her. First time I asked
her about coming to see her, she said,
"Now, I'll see bout it." I said, "Well,
now, how long it gon take you?" She
say, "I don't know." I said, "Well,
take you three or four days?" She
said, "I don't know!" I said, "You gon
tell me?" She said, "Yeah." I said,

"What you gon tell me, no or yeah?"
She dropped her head. I said I was
about to burn her now. She said,
"Don't hurry me now." I said, "I'm
gon let you take your time. I'll be over
there tomorrow night." I said, "You
gon tell me?" She said, "Yeah."

I didn't go that night. Wait till the
next night. I was trying to find did she
have another boyfriend. So the next
night I went. She said, "I thought you
was coming last night." Say, "Well," I
say, "I didn't get here last night." Say,
"Was you looking for me?" She said,
"Yeah, I was looking for you." I said,
"Well, you ready to tell me what I
asked you?" She says, "Ah, I woulda
told you if you'd have come last night.
But you didn't come." I said, "Well,
you ain't gon tell me?" She said,
"No." I said, "Now listen, baby, I'm
gon tell you like this. Now, I want you
to do this:

I want you to go up on that
mountain,
And fall down in the deep blue sea.
You won't fall in no water
Till you fall in love with me.

Take my picture, baby,
Hang it up side the wall.
Every time you look at it,
You say that's my all and all.

Set my table high,
And set my table low,
Set my table in the middle of the
floor
So I can eat some more.

The times done got hard,
And the money done got scarce,
If the times don't get no better,
Baby, I'm bound to leave this place.

See, she know I was gon leave then,
I told her, I say:

Peaches in the summertime,
And apples in the fall,
If I don't get you now, baby,
I don't want you at all.
Going away, baby,
I won't be back till fall.
If I don't get no hint from you,
I won't be back at all.

What I told her, you see, I told her
like this:

Paper is paper, and tin is tin.
Baby, the way I love you is a dog
gone sin.

*What did she say? Did she give you
an answer?*

Oh yeah, she told me, she said,
"Baby, let me tell you one thing," she
says, "I have loved a many one, but I
ain't love nar' and I fell in love like I
did with you." I said, "Baby, look,"
say, "I'm a tell you what I'm gon do."
She said, "What?" I said:

Sugar is sugar, and tin is tin.
Now sure as the grass grow round
right on the stump,
You oughta be my sugar lump.
Sure as the grass grow right on the
ladder,
You oughta be the girl God sent me
after.

My first wife, she kind of wild. I let
her went, you see. We stayed together
about a year. I told her, I say:

Gee you got a little slow,
I got to bundle up and go.

I told her, I said, "Now listen," I
said, "Listen now, I'm gon tell you
right now." I said, "You gone, ain't
you?" She said, "Yeah." I said:

Your shoes gon wear out,
And you gon come walking back.
Baby, please don't wear black,
Cause I ain't gon take you back.

Well, it's another gal right over the
road that way. If somebody got that
one there's another one right up the
road from her. Cause the train I ride
18 coaches long, and baby, I can love
em. I maybe just now leaving home. I
know I got 30 more years here. I know
that. Yeah, I got to court a hundred
womens.

See my mama told me six months
before I was born I was gonna be a
boy child and I wasn't gonna stay at
home. So I gots to steady go. Now,
you better not fool round. You better
bundle up and let's go.

Maybe you all come back again. I
got a whole lot of stories. I just don't
want to put em all out today, better
save some.

Fixing What Ails You

by Vincent Goods

Just as I got off the bus early one Friday morning, my grandmother came and hugged my neck. As she turned me loose, she heard me sneeze and said, "You have a cold." So as soon as we got home, she got some weeds, boiled them and gave them to me. She said they would cure a cold.

I thought *she* was sick, me being from the city and her giving me weeds. I was used to doctors. But they worked. I was feeling good the next day. And I'd thought that weeds were to be cut and thrown away.

I decided to ask several women in our community about the remedies they used.

Mrs. Buck told me her cold remedy: "You take tallow and put turpentine and a little coal oil, and grease that child from head to toe, and next give him some castor oil." She also recommended nine swallows of water for hiccups. In case of a bee-sting, she said, take some tobacco juices and put it on along with some tallow.

Mrs. Gaines told me for a cold, "You give him some peppermint and whiskey or bathe your child down with some hog hoof tea. And when you get a rash, you take a watermelon rind with all the red out of it, rub the

rind all around your neck and back." Mrs. Gaines also said that rabbit ear — "a little fine root that grows flat down on the ground, and when it dries up it has a flower on it" — is good for diarrhea. For chapped skin, she suggested the leaf of a blackberry bush. "Take that and put it in your pocket, and you will never be chapped again." (That is, as long as you carry the leaf.)

Several women had remedies for measles and mumps, "those trouble-



makers." Mrs. Woodard said her parents would give her some warm lemon tea for measles. Mrs. Breckinridge said, "Just like we had hog jowls, we'd tie a rag around they head and that'd get rid of mumps." Mrs. Gaines's mumps remedy was similar: "You take some sardines and rub them on your jaws and get the oil out of the sardines and then tie a rag around your face."

After school one day a group of us students got together under a big oak tree and started talking about cures we had heard of from parents, grandparents and other people.

Octavis Davis said you could boil pine straw, add a little sugar for taste and drink it for a cold. Or you could sniff a lemon.

I said all you need to do for a headache is put a hat on your head.

Charles Ham said for an earache you put urine from a baby in your ear to stop the hurt, or put three baby maggots in the ear to eat the infection. And dab vanilla flavor on your tooth for a toothache.

We heard other old remedies. For red bugs (chiggers) and ticks you take an alcohol bath. If you step on a nail, put a patch of salt meat on it and put coal oil on it. If you get a serious burn, put molasses on it. It cools the burn and reduces the swelling. You could also put baking soda on a burn.

As time passes, people are slowly moving away from old cures. But even if most people shy away from things like that, others will still believe in them. I believe that more people would be feeling better if they were still using old remedies. □

Copies of the first two issues of *I Ain't Lying* are available for \$3.50 each from Mississippi: Cultural Crossroads, Box 89 ASU, Lorman, MS 39096.

photo by Marheia Farmer



photo by Julie Fowles

At left: Roderick Red (l) and Derwin Moore work on ink sketches to accompany interviews in the second issue of *I Ain't Lying*. Above: Sarah Crosby (l) and Marheia Farmer work on the layout for the final article in the same issue.

By Jim Overton

TAKING ON TVA

TENNESSEE VALLEY RATEPAYERS PROTEST SOARING ELECTRIC UTILITY CHARGES.

Comer Robinson is a humble man who insists on understating his personal accomplishments. A lifetime resident of the Knoxville area, he retired from his job at a church in 1977 and “fished from April to August, sometimes twice a day.” But, as he says, “I like to stay busy at all times doing something,” so he got a job in the Senior Aides program of Knoxville’s Community Action Committee, working with children in kindergartens. He also became active in the Knoxville chapter of the National Council of Senior Citizens.

In 1979, he recalls, “Bill Troy came to a meeting and started talking about the Tennessee Valley Energy Coalition. I got concerned about it right then because of my own electric bills.” Robinson’s combined light, gas and water and sewage bills often come to over \$165 a month, a weighty sum he has to pay from Social Security and

his small income from Senior Aides.

“I was already aware electric rates were a real problem for people,” he says. “The way I saw it, they’re building these new plants and the light bills keep going up. It was clear to me that construction was the problem.”

So Robinson became a member of the Tennessee Valley Energy Coalition (TVEC), a broad-based ratepayer coalition fighting the soaring electric rates of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). As he reflects, “I started doing what little bit I could, which wasn’t much, but after all I was doing something” (to which Bill Troy responds, “You did a lot”). Robinson circulated petitions opposing the Construction Work in Progress charges TVA was tacking onto its rates to churches, to the schools he was working in and also to folks lined up at the courthouse to sign up for Christmas baskets — low-

and fixed-income people like himself who could not pay their massive power bills. Soon Robinson had accounted for a hefty chunk of the signatures TVEC gathered.

Now a TVEC board member, Robinson feels the group gives the average consumer the chance to fight unfair power bills. "I used to hear people complaining, but it was just a small group, like you and I talking. We could complain about it, but there was no one to get a group together to do anything. As a group we can get someplace, and I think we have with TVEC."

Robinson smilingly adds: "United we stand, but otherwise we're in bad shape."

Comer Robinson is but one of many dedicated folks who have joined the Tennessee Valley Energy Coalition since its founding in 1979. TVEC defines itself as "the first area-wide citizens' organization to stand up for the average consumer against the soaring price of energy." Based primarily in the Knoxville area but including folks from throughout the TVA region, the group weds both individuals and organizations in fighting TVA and its skyrocketing electric bills.

Taking on TVA is no easy effort. Founded in 1933, this massive federal agency supplies power to around seven million people through 160 municipal and cooperative electric systems in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. Besides providing power, the agency runs an array of programs in recreation, flood control, industrial development and the like — all popular items of political pork for politicians in these seven states.

Since it is a federal agency, none of these states has any effective regulatory control over TVA; no public service commissions regulate its actions as they do in areas served by private utilities. Furthermore, since it supplies power through distributors rather than direct-

ly to ratepayers, the consumer does not deal with TVA directly. What little oversight of the agency does exist is parceled out among various congressional committees, many headed by politicians who have reaped the rewards of TVA pork-barrel projects. In essence, the operations of this \$4-billion-a-year agency rest in the hands of a three-

I can remember back to TVA's beginning — course you can't reach back that far. I lived in north Georgia and of course TVA gave us power through an electric cooperative. At that time TVA had in mind giving power to the needy and to the valley here.

Since the 1930s, they had begun spreading out, and they had forgotten about what they were created for. They were created for the good of the valley, for the good of the people, and they had begun spreading out too much and had begun to charge exorbitant prices for their power.

Bill Troy would come to my senior citizens meetings, and I just saw what a go-getter he was and that TVEC was an organization that was working for people. I saw it as an organization that we needed all over the valley. We never had had it, and we needed an organization that could stand up for people.

— Oren Nichols

member board of directors appointed by the president and approved by the Senate. The consumer's only effective weapon against TVA is to mobilize public opposition to its actions.

TVEC has tried to do just that by organizing several key constituencies — senior citizens, organized labor, environmentalists and community organizations. Members have testified before Congress and the TVA board, passed out petitions, marched through the streets of Knoxville — in short, taken every opportunity to publicize their complaints against TVA and gain support for their proposed reforms.

Their work has paid off: TVEC has produced a steady stream of ratepayer victories and opened up the traditionally secretive agency to unprecedented public scrutiny and pressure. "I think TVEC has done a wonderful job of speaking up for consumers," says

newly elected president Lucille Thornburgh. "TVA knows we're watching them, and that's worth something."

The Origins of TVEC

At the center of much of TVEC's work has been Bill Troy, the group's director. A 41-year-old East Tennessee native, Troy has been fighting TVA for nearly 10 years. He recalls the slow path that led to TVEC's formation.

"In the early '70s, a group of us in Knoxville started surveying the most important local issues. There were a variety of energy and environmentally related matters going on — all focused on TVA. We found they were committed to the largest nuclear program in the country, which few people knew at that point. Because of our Appalachian contacts, we found out that TVA was almost singlehandedly responsible for strip mining in Appalachia. Many different issues focused on this giant agency headquartered here in town. And, aside from Jim Branscome of the *Mountain Eagle*, hardly anybody had ever really

taken them on about anything. We decided to try it."

In 1974, they organized the East Tennessee Energy Group to deal with the impact of the energy crisis on low-income and working-class people. The group's major target was TVA — particularly its massive nuclear construction program. Convinced that nuclear power would be cheap and that energy demand would flourish in the valley as it had through the 1960s, the agency in the early 1970s planned a massive construction program of completing 17 nuclear reactors by the 1990s, at a cost of \$6.8 billion.

The energy group enjoyed modest success, particularly in raising public awareness about the implications of this construction schedule. But, as early member Bob Allen laughingly recalls, the energy group was, for the most part, "a broad-based group of

about 12 people.” TVA rates had not started skyrocketing, and it was hard to sustain organizing efforts. After a few years, the energy group became dormant.

These conditions changed dramatically. Says Troy: “In 1979, what we had predicted all along began to happen: the interest costs on TVA’s borrowing got so huge that TVA could no longer hide its rate increases.” The increases quickly angered valley residents, who were unaccustomed to TVA rate hikes. They consumed half again as much electricity as the average American, and over 50 percent of them heated with electricity, so these constant rate increases gouged their pocketbooks, particularly in winter.

TVA was also facing immense public pressure. Journalist Jim Branscome had forced the TVA board to open its meetings to the public. Save Our Cumberland Mountains (SOCM) was challenging strip mining. Various anti-nuclear organizations were opposing the massive construction program. These and other efforts combined with ratepayer dissatisfaction to make TVA the hottest political issue in the valley.

The agency itself was in a period of transition. President Jimmy Carter appointed alternative energy enthusiast David Freeman and like-minded Richard Freeman (no relation) to the TVA board. The Freemans started promoting innovative alternative energy and conservation programs within the agency, but they received substantial opposition from the pro-growth, pro-power plant, pro-construction forces of the agency’s power supply division and its allies amongst the cities and electric cooperatives to whom the agency supplied power.

Glaringly absent among the powerful influences on the board was the voice of the average ratepayer. In 1979, the first steps were taken to make that voice heard throughout the valley.

“The Citizen Labor Energy Coalition held a regional meeting on energy issues in Atlanta in December, 1978,” recalls Troy, “and folks came back here determined to do something around TVA. We called a meeting at the University of Tennessee in January, 1979, and about 40 people showed up. It was a broader group of people than had ever gotten together around electric rates — anti-nuke and clean-energy activists, senior citizens, community organizers, SOCM and various church people.

“TVEC was created that day. We agreed we were all concerned about the impact of rising energy costs on moderate-, low- and fixed-income people in the Tennessee Valley. We decided to go after TVA rates as a broad-based coalition.

“There were three new things about this. First, we were going to focus on electric rates — not on environmental issues or the nuclear program, but on electric rates. Second, we were going to look at it strictly from a cost basis, as a pocketbook issue. Third, we were going to try to broaden our forces beyond the traditional energy community.”

The central issue confronting TVEC remained getting TVA’s construction program under control. By 1979, TVA had borrowed \$11 billion to finance its reactors, and paying off its interest costs was the major cause of the soaring rates. “In a sense everything we did was aimed at stopping some of the construction,” recalls Troy. “We tried to point out very clearly that expensive, centralized generating capacity was increasingly unnecessary and injurious to ratepayers and had to be stopped.”

The group consciously avoided attacking nuclear power. “We’ve never been an anti-nuclear organization per

se,” says Troy. “We’ve always said that if they were burning sunflower seeds in those plants, people still couldn’t afford it.”

The group slowly started building support. Troy, then working for the Southern Appalachian Ministry, spearheaded these efforts. “I’d always been interested in this stuff,” he recalls. “But I also saw it as a chance to build a progressive organization which could get people from various constituencies and both races — people as different as environmentalists and labor people — working together. That’s been an interesting part of the whole experience. One board member will say, ‘I never really knew any labor people.’ And the black folks don’t hang around anybody from the Sierra Club. It builds good experience.”

Troy quickly found some sympathetic supporters. Oren Nichols, a 72-year-old retired teacher, was the president of the Knoxville chapter of the National Council of Senior Citizens when Troy first sought support for the newly formed coalition. He quickly became a TVEC activist.

“Bill and I would visit families and find out their problems,” he says. “They told us how they’d made a living



BILL TROY, SPORTING TVEC RIBBON

all the way back, and they hadn't had much difficulty, but now TVA had raised things too high. They had it planned how they would live, but now the living has just flown away from them and they were kinda disrupted."

Others hailed from totally different constituencies. Bob Allen, a 33-year-old University of Tennessee planning student, describes himself as "the environmental extremist at large" of the organization. He got involved with the energy group out of concern over environmental issues like the Tellico Dam and the Clinch River Breeder Reactor, but he strongly supported the grassroots approach of fighting around the issue of cost. In fact, he feels TVEC's efforts mesh with his interests well: "We see environmentally safe energy as being compatible with low-cost energy — particularly in conservation and alternative energy programs."

TVEC also garnered support from Knoxville's sizable labor movement and from community-based organizations in Knoxville and the surrounding rural area. SOCM played a valuable role in helping the organization get off the ground. With this diverse support lined up, the group was ready to tackle the mammoth TVA bureaucracy.

TVEC Begins

TVEC's first public exposure was testifying at a Senate subcommittee hearing on TVA chaired by Tennessee Senator Jim Sasser. In April, 1979, it hosted a conference on TVA rates and energy growth which attracted 75 people and focused increased attention on TVA's massive construction program. Still, TVEC needed a forum in which it could win some ratepayer victories. It soon found one.

In 1978, Congress passed the Public Utilities Review Practices Act (PURPA), which required state regulatory agencies to hold hearings on how their states' utilities were handling rate reforms like winter shutoff procedures and conservation-oriented rate structures. Under the bill, TVA was required to hold hearings in its service territory.

TVA's rates had not been significantly restructured since the agency's beginning. Under the influence of the valley's pro-construction forces, the agency had maintained a declining block rate pricing system in which the per-unit price of electricity declined as customers consumed more electricity, which encouraged wasteful consump-

Comer Robinson smilingly adds:
"United we stand, but other than that we're in bad shape."

tion of electricity and the construction of more power plants. There were other inequities which consumers had never had the chance to challenge.

Sensitive to the mounting anger of valley ratepayers, the TVA board wanted the public to feel they could fully participate in the PURPA hearings and so designed an elaborate hearing process. They also hired a team of electricity rate experts to advise them on rate issues; among them was George Sterzinger, who had previously helped the energy group.

These moves played right into the coalition's hands. Troy — now working full-time for the coalition — worked with Sterzinger to lay out some basic consumer-oriented rate reforms. "We also tried to get large numbers of people behind our reforms," he says, "by emphasizing that the reforms would make rates more equal."

The coalition finally stressed three major reforms. One proposed changes in the existing cost-of-service methodology, which discriminated against residential ratepayers. A more important reform was eliminating the declining block rate system in favor of a conservation-oriented pricing scheme.

The third demand was especially innovative. The coalition recommended that the lower costs of TVA's hydroelectric plants be factored into the first 500 kilowatt-hours of consumption per month, except during the winter when they would apply to the first 2,000 kilowatt-hours, thus helping keep down mounting heating costs. The



TVEC MEMBERS ON THE WAY TO DELIVER CWIP PETITIONS, MARCH 18, 1982

resulting lowered rate would serve as a “lifeline” rate — a reduced rate for the block of power essential to each customer, like lights and appliances.

Armed with these arguments, Troy talked to more than 25 groups between September, 1979, and March, 1980, encouraging them to participate in the Knoxville PURPA hearing planned for March 18, 1980. He found that people “were hot about electric rates” and received widespread support for the coalition’s goals.

Still, TVA rate hearings were a new thing, and “We went down there on March 18 and waited to see if anybody would show up,” says Troy. In fact, more than 200 people overflowed the tiny hearing room as 14 witnesses told TVA how hard it was to pay their electric bills. “It was a great success,” says Troy. “It’s really the way we built TVEC.”

Though it took until April, 1981, most of TVEC’s proposed reforms became TVA policy. TVA eliminated declining block rates, made its cost-of-service methodology more equitable to residential ratepayers and implemented a revised form of the lifeline rates TVEC advocated — the first substantive changes in TVA’s rates in 50 years.

Until March, 1980, the coalition had been a looseknit group. It now formalized its structure. Says Bill Troy: “One month after the hearing we invited everybody who had been there and a number of other people to come to an organizing meeting. We adopted a simple set of principles: people would join the coalition for \$5 or less, and organizations would affiliate for particular actions. An elected board of directors would be in charge. In December, 1980, we had our first formal TVEC meeting. We elected a board representing all our active constituencies: senior citizens, community organizations, environmentalists and organized labor. I was made the director.”

Soon the organization raised funds, expanded its staff and started spending more time on organizing. TVEC members became familiar faces around TVA board meetings, often testifying against the agency’s ever-more-frequent rate hikes. Recalls Troy: “The issues were so hot you could come to the office planning to do one thing, and the phone would ring and you just had to drop everything for a week. It was such a roller coaster, it was unreal. We just tried to keep up with everything.”

When Senator Howard Baker set up hearings on TVA in February, 1981, TVEC was eager to testify. But several days before the hearing, Baker’s staff released a list of the scheduled witnesses — and TVEC wasn’t on it.

“I was furious,” says Troy. “I called Ed Gregory at the Nashville *Tennessean* and told him the story. The next day he reported that we’d been left out.”

Baker’s staff immediately backtracked, and the next day’s headline read: “Baker Says It’s All A Mistake.” Troy laughingly adds: “Jim Range, the Baker staffer who was setting the whole thing up and who I had been trying to reach for two months, called me up and talked for 45 minutes; ‘It was all a big mistake, Mr. Troy.’”

Oren Nichols testified for TVEC: “In my little speech I told them that a lot of people didn’t want to go live in high-rise apartments and whatnot, that they wanted to live on their own, and for that reason we wanted TVA’s rates to be more reasonable.” He attracted extensive press coverage because, Troy laughingly recalls, “He was the only real person there.”

TVEC was able to air its demands that TVA back off on some of its proposed power plants. The hearing also allowed the group to raise another

important issue: Construction Work in Progress (CWIP).

CWIP is an accounting technique whereby customers pay the interest on money borrowed for plant construction *before* the plant begins operation. Because customers pay for construction even if the plants aren’t needed, CWIP generally removes a utility’s incentive to keep from overbuilding. It is particularly inequitable for senior citizens, who pay for plants from which they never receive any benefit.

TVA had already charged its customers over \$1 billion in CWIP the previous three years; TVEC’s research showed the charges had raised bills about 10 percent. “It was enough to really get people mad,” says Troy, “even though it was complicated to explain.” To simplify matters, TVEC renamed CWIP; the campaign focused on “Unfair Interest Charges.”

TVEC members like Comer Robinson netted over 16,000 signatures on petitions opposing CWIP charges. The group filed a lawsuit against TVA and, on March 17, about 75 TVEC members handed the petitions to the TVA board, then marched to the Federal Building, where they delivered copies to representatives of Senators Howard Baker and Jim Sasser and Representative



LUCILLE THORNBURGH, BILL TROY & OREN NICHOLS AT TVA, MARCH 18, 1982

John Duncan. At this writing, TVEC is waiting for Judge Tom Wiseman to decide if TVA can charge CWIP to its customers.

Power Plants Postponed

All these campaigns relate back to one central issue: construction. By January, 1982, five of TVA's 17 planned reactors were operating, but TVA had quietly deferred construction on four units in June, 1980, and costs were skyrocketing. From \$7 billion in the early '70s, the price tag for all 17 plants had risen to \$18 billion in 1981 and to \$33 billion by January, 1982.

TVA already had 50 percent more generating capacity than it needed, and demand had slumped by five percent during 1981. Studies showed that TVA had enough capacity on hand to meet its needs without completing any more plants before 1990. TVEC had long questioned the need for the eight plants still being constructed; they were now joined by groups ranging from TVA's industrial customers to the League of Women Voters.

Heatedly opposing any further deferrals were the local and state politicians and TVA distributors who had traditionally supported the con-

struction program. Building trades unions also vociferously backed completing the plants.

Despite this powerful opposition, TVA had no real choice: the indebtedness from the construction program was driving it towards bankruptcy. In February, 1982, by a two-to-one vote (Reagan appointee Chili Dean opposed the move), the board cancelled the four plants deferred in 1980, deferred four more under construction and left the remaining four on a slowed-down construction schedule.

Naturally, TVEC members claim a lot of the credit for this action. "I think we were instrumental in closing down the construction," says Lucille Thornburgh. But the decision left a bitter aftertaste: more than 11,000 TVA employees were laid off, worsening an already severe unemployment crisis in the region.

Bill Troy reflects, "We had a lot of discussion about pushing construction cancellations as a solution, but we finally did because there was no other way. We just tried to make people understand that it was TVA's poor planning that put the workers and the region in the bind they're in now.

"The analogy to Vietnam came back to me over and over. There was

an instinctive reaction: if you've started something, you ought to finish it. But if we said it should never have been started in the first place, people would agree with us. It's difficult for people to see it as a victory, and in a lot of ways it's not. But it had to be done, or there would have been ruin right down the road."

The move will slow down rate increases, but the agency still predicts 4-to-10-percent hikes for each of the next 10 years. The fate of the four reactors still being built remains unclear.

Bob Allen perhaps best summarizes TVEC's role in this crucial step: "If anything, we don't deserve the credit or the blame. It was something they had to do. But we raised some crucial questions. When it came to the point where they had to move towards cancellation, it was easier for them because of the political climate we had created through the rate issues."

TVEC Faces the Future

TVEC has grown steadily over the years. There are now several hundred members as well as a number of organizations which affiliate with the group for particular campaigns. The staff has now expanded to include a researcher, Paul DeLeon, organizers Eldora Parr and Mike Nolan, and office manager Melody Reeves. TVEC has also set up a canvassing operation which is both raising funds and broadening public support for TVEC's activities.

More importantly, TVEC's leadership is now well seasoned on often murky energy issues. "You have to be very conscious not to let people get overwhelmed," says Troy, "when the issues are so complicated that only people who are paid to do it can spend the time to master them. I think we've come along enough that the staff doesn't play the decisive role they used to." A fall retreat gave the board, staff and members a weekend to sit down and chart out some future courses. And in December, 1982, the board decided to concentrate on several major projects for the upcoming year: halting natural gas decontrol, monitoring TVA's distributors and continuing to be a watchdog over TVA's policies.

"We're very interested in gas control — not taking the price controls off natural gas," says Lucille Thornburgh. The group demonstrated its feelings with a mid-December rally opposing



TVEC MEMBERS AT TVA HEADQUARTERS, MARCH 18, 1982

the city gas service's recent 30 percent rate hike. "Gas prices will be a problem for years to come," says Troy. Since many inner-city Tennesseans heat with gas, the issue is almost as important to consumers as electric rates, particularly in winter.

Halting gas increases would involve a different sort of work for TVEC, because the major arena for stopping gas decontrol is Congress. But, says Troy, "We could play an important role in the national stop-decontrol campaign because the Tennessee congressional delegation is so important to that effort."

TVEC has also launched a program aimed at TVA's distributors and their occasionally questionable practices. Says Troy, "We know of one Tennessee distributor which changed its late billing date in the middle of last winter so that everybody living on government checks automatically ended up paying the late fee."

TVEC is organizing local groups to monitor their distributors' practices, to democratize decision making in these publicly controlled institutions and to make sure the distributors offer their customers the multitude of energy-saving programs TVA makes available. "Nobody's ever really tackled that stuff before," says Troy.

"The distributors are the strongest interest group in TVA affairs," says Troy. "They see themselves as the representatives of the ratepayers, but on every major issue they've been on the other side." For instance, still angry over the plant cancellations, the distributors got the PURPA hearings reopened in May, 1982. Because the TVA board did not wish to rankle them further, the distributors got the agency to drop the modified lifeline program proposed by TVEC.

Of course, the main focus of TVEC remains TVA itself. Rate issues like CWIP will keep the group busy, but TVEC has a long-range concern about TVA: implementing some form of citizen oversight. "TVA doesn't have a boss," says Lucille Thornburgh. "When I worked at TVA 40 years ago, the board sat up in their ivory tower, and nobody ever knew what they were going to do. Now I think they listen, but we still need more public participation in the decision making up there."

Bob Allen is writing his thesis on public oversight of TVA. "TVA has become nothing more than a power company," he says. "The original

vision of TVA was a lot broader than that. How do you make TVA the grassroots democracy it was supposed to be? We're trying to think of a way we can get TVA back to its original mission."

Bill Troy feels TVA has made some strides towards reclaiming their pro-

Linthead

a gold watch,
the Twenty-five Year Club,
the Provident Fund,
were all company ways
of naming the nothing
she died with
at seventy-six,
alone in the last light
of the ward.

"Leola, don't be a linthead
for the rest of your life,"
her mama said.
the night shift was hers
for forty-nine years.

for the last ten years,
or maybe twenty,
she got off at six
and went by her old mother's
house
to read her the Bible,
to fry her some bacon.
"Leola," said Mama,
"the kingdom of heaven is
at hand."
her gold watch
shone like a chariot;
lint was an angel on her hair.

"linthead" is the milltown way
of saying
that heaven may help you
eventually,
but now you are on your own,
carding, drawing,
spinning, and weaving
this low-grade, short-staple
light
alone.

— Paul Rice

gressive mission. "They have signed the largest Clean Air Act settlement in history, they are at least making an attempt to clean up the water around here, and they have the largest energy conservation program in the country. There are criticisms you can make of these programs, but we think they deserve support." Still, he feels citizen oversight of TVA's action is necessary.

One turning point will be the appointment of a new TVA director to replace David Freeman in 1984. "We view Reagan's opportunity to appoint a second person to the three-member board as a real threat," says Allen, "so we're trying to figure out how to get a handle on that appointment."

However, the main focus for TVEC is building increased support. "After all, that 'C' is for coalition," stresses Thornburgh. Others feel there are still many folks who could benefit from TVEC's help. "It's not just elderly people like me," says Comer Robinson. "Some of these youngsters are in the same category I am: they got a limited income — some are trying to work and some are not working at all — but they still got to use electricity, gas or something, and they can't pay those rates like they are now."

In fact, if anything at all can characterize the interests of both TVEC staff and members, it is this deep sense of concern for the people of the region — and for each other. There is an unusual sense of respect and friendship between members and staff, as evidenced in this exchange between Comer Robinson and Bill Troy.

"It's an honor to spend time with you, Mr. Troy."

"It's an honor for me to spend time with you. Somebody with all the experience you've got in this community and somebody that cares about people as much as you do, you're the kind of people I want to hang around with."

Oren Nichols, an early TVEC member who's been forced to curtail some of his activities temporarily due to a recent heart operation, sums up what TVEC has meant for many of its members: "I'm still part of the coalition; I wouldn't be anything else. I've seen a lot of groups, but I've never found a better organization in all my doings. It's something for us older people to be part of, and I feel we're just investing in the future for young people." □

Jim Overton is a staff member of the Institute for Southern Studies.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAVIS BELISLE

You Don't Have To Be Grim To Be Serious

By Sam Totten and Martha Wescoat Totten



MAVIS BELISLE WITH LEWIS PITTS AT 1979 OCCUPATION OF COMANCHE PEAK.

photo by Fred Baldwin

In February of 1981 we began working on *Beyond Quixote*, a book of oral histories focusing on the personal stories of social activists in myriad fields. We wanted to talk with about 300 people across the country to ascertain what prompted them to become “involved” citizens.

We began our interviewing in northern California and by the time we set out on our cross-country journey, we had interviewed more than 50 activists working on nuclear disarmament, nuclear power, child abuse, wife battering, world hunger, human rights, peace and so forth. Some were well-known and many were not, but as we interviewed more and more people, we began to recognize definite, if somewhat loose, networks of activists across the nation. Quite often a person in one state would insist that we interview someone else in another state. Such networks proved vital to us as we sought out activists in places where we had no contacts. Texas, as it happened, was one of those states.

After four months of interviewing in California, Arizona and New Mexico, we arrived in Texas in mid-June. Our first stop was Dallas, and our first interviewee was Mavis Belisle, an ardent opponent of nuclear power

and weapons and just as ardent a proponent of civil disobedience as a means of social protest.

We met Belisle early one morning in the kitchen of her ranch-style home. Sleepy and exhausted from a long meeting of one of her groups the night before, she collected her thoughts over several cups of tea. Her voice is soft, with a native Texan's drawl, and her story involves a lifetime of social activism rooted in deep thought and great concern.

Born in Corpus Christi in 1944, Belisle has a childhood memory she connects to her feelings about war. As she tells it:

"We were moving from one house to another when I was about eight years old, and I was helping clean out the garage and I stumbled across a book, a serious propaganda piece from World War II. It had an explanation of how to tell a Japanese from a Chinese person. It had pictures of the Chinese with little round smiling faces and their little pointy hats and described them as industrious, hardworking and honest, thrifty, etc., etc. And the Japanese with their long, sinister mustaches were described as sinister and evil and dark. And of course, at this time, which was after the Korean War, it was clear that that didn't fit reality — that the Japanese were not all evil and sinister and that the Chinese were not all friendly and smiling. But it was a totally serious propaganda piece, and I think that it put a real skepticism in my mind about war being a good guy/bad guy kind of conflict."

Ten or so years later, arriving at the University of Texas in the early 1960s, Belisle soon got into the picket lines and battles to integrate Austin's restaurants and theaters, as well as campus dormitories. After college she was off to the Peace Corps, and there she picks up the story.

I spent three years in Micronesia, a United Nations Trust Territory taken over from Japan at the end of the war. Administered by the U.S., it was also the site of the nuclear bomb testing in the Pacific, although I was at the opposite end of the group of islands.

I was teaching in a little rural school, and one of the science books in the school library was a little hand-prepared mimeographed booklet on the local sealife. It had little drawings of fish and sealife common to the area, and I kept running across this phrase that certain fish and certain forms of sealife were edible, except in certain areas of the Marshall Islands.

It took a long time for me to figure that out, but it became clear that certain areas in the Marshalls were contaminated by the atomic testing. And it happened that most of the forms of marine life the island people depended on for their basic food supply were among the most contaminated because they were the forms living in shallow waters, recycling, time and time again, through their bodies, the radioactive elements. So that was my first understanding of the real long-lasting effects of radiation and what it does to people and the environment even long after the bomb tests had been stopped.

Another incident took place while I was in the Peace Corps that had a profound effect on me. The village where I was teaching school had been fairly heavily bombed by Americans during World War II, and one of the bomb craters on the fringes of the village somehow or another got covered over with grass. It was filled with water and it had a coral rock bottom. No one remembered it was there. A child of about three, just wandering around, stumbled into that hole through the grass covering and drowned.

That showed me the really long-lasting effects of war. To see a three-year-old child, who hadn't even been born until nearly 20 years after the end of the war, die from its effects stunned me. It's something that Americans don't comprehend very well because we've never been bombed. We don't have bomb craters in our landscape.

In 1976, the bicentennial year, I got involved in a group called the Dallas-Fort Worth Peace Community. We were participating, in a small way, in the Continental Walk for Disarmament. We had several activities in this area, including the first protest — a tiny handful of people — at a nuclear power plant construction site in Glen Rose, 45 miles southwest of Fort Worth.

But it was written material that came with the Continental Walk program that first made me aware that the same kinds of radiation effects that

came from nuclear weapons also came, more subtly, from nuclear power plants, and that the long-lasting effects on people and the environment would be essentially the same as from fallout.

I think that nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants are intimately related. Obviously, the nuclear power industry is an outgrowth of the weapons development program, providing something socially useful or what was thought to be socially useful.

I think the recent Israeli raid on the Iraqi reactor is a dramatic example of the clear tie — nuclear power plants can make the fuel that makes nuclear weapons.

TWIN NUCLEAR REACTOR TOWERS



I became involved with the Armadillo Coalition shortly after that, a Texas anti-nuclear organization, and since then I have merged peace-related and anti-nuclear activities. Within a couple of years the Armadillo Coalition had tried a wide range of legal kinds of protest, everything from vigils

to balloon releases to picketing and leafleting in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and down at Comanche Peak, the plant site in Glen Rose. Some of us felt it was necessary for our protests to include civil disobedience, and we formed another organization in the spring of 1979 which we named the Comanche Peak Life Force.

We sent out a mailing to every anti-nuclear group in the country whose address we could find, asking about their experiences with civil disobedience — what came out of it and what the effects had been on the group and the communities. We got *not one single* negative response from

fence in a programmed, prearranged act of civil disobedience and were arrested.

It sent shock waves through the state. It was a successful action, and the response was positive in the press and in the community. Many people here in Texas see rallies and pickets as very radical kinds of political activity, and a lot of them weren't prepared to add civil disobedience to that. But on the whole, again, it was a positive action and a positive response. We scheduled another one for November and more than doubled the number of people involved.

I was arrested in the first action. We

of our acts of civil disobedience and protests. Glen Rose is a very conservative, rural community. All of the people just assumed we were guilty. Our attorneys, because we wanted to go through the trial so much, waived our right to challenge the conviction on the basis of a prejudiced jury. The jury was pretty much blown away by Dr. Sternglass and Sister Bertell and ended up hung after hours and hours of deliberation, voting four to two in our favor. So a mistrial was declared, and that in itself was a tremendous victory for us.

For the retrial they divided us up to try us one person at a time, and I was the first defendant to be tried. That was by chance more than anything else. In the retrial we had another fine expert witness, Dr. Michio Kaku, an expert on nuclear accidents and plant design as it relates to nuclear accidents. But I was convicted and assessed the maximum sentence, which was a \$200 fine. I chose not to pay it and spent 36 days in jail.

The second defendant was also tried and convicted and assessed the maximum fine. She was a nun, Sister Patricia Ridgely, and so had virtually no income of her own. She wanted to refuse to pay the fine and go to jail, but all the lawyers involved and some of the rest of us sat down and decided that the best legal strategy would be for her to appeal as a pauper. That would force the county to pay the court costs, which would be well over \$1,000 for the appeal.

Because of things that were being said and going on in the courtroom, we felt the county had decided the anti-nuclear protesters were a great way to raise the county's income by assessing and collecting maximum fines. I don't think many of us would have objected to reasonable fines, but the normal fine in Glen Rose for trespassing is \$37. So we felt there was a clear discriminatory intent against the protesters, and that this was the time to put a stop to it. So Sister Ridgely filed the appeal and I went to jail. Two other people were scheduled for trial, but their trials were delayed. And there hasn't been another trial because the time for prosecution on the rest of the 48 has run out.

In November, 1979, at the second civil disobedience act, 100 people were arrested, but the charges were never formally filed. County officials just flatly said they couldn't afford to

ARE A PERMANENT FIXTURE BELOW THE RIDGE KNOWN AS COMANCHE PEAK.



photo by Fred Baldwin

a group that had done civil disobedience. Negative responses came only from groups who had not done it.

We began a study group on non-violence. Before we did our first act of civil disobedience we had training in nonviolence. We had 17 or 18 people at the training session, and then we started conducting our own training sessions and recruiting people. By June 10, the date we set to trespass at the Comanche Peak construction site, there were 100 people involved, including 48 who crossed over the

had a group trial, and attorneys Lewis Pitts and Tom Mills conducted a trial that was even more successful than the action itself in terms of positive response and positive press feedback. We brought down Sister Rosalie Bertell from New York and Dr. Ernest Sternglass from Pennsylvania as expert witnesses. Both are experts on the health effects of low-level radiation.

We had trouble seating a jury because everyone at the beginning of the trial basically disqualified themselves as being prejudiced against us because

Comanche Peak by Betty Brink

Despite the best efforts of Mavis Belisle and hundreds of other Texas activists working against construction of the nuclear-powered Comanche Peak Steam Electric Generating Plant, work proceeds apace. And, although it is way behind schedule — a situation now the rule rather than the exception in the nuclear industry — owner Texas Utilities, Inc., expects one unit to come on line in 1984 and another in 1986, about four years late. Conforming to another industry "rule," it is also over budget. When ground was broken in 1973 the budget totaled \$779 million; the official estimate is now \$3.44 billion, with unofficial estimates topping \$5 billion.

As costly as the delays and overruns promise to be for the ratepayers — millions of people in 87 counties across the northern half of Texas — they are nothing compared to the personal price area people will pay if a group of citizen investigators are right about the plant's safety.

Hearings before the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board in June, July and September, 1982, produced damaging evidence of safety violations, coverups and illegal firings of quality control personnel who blew the whistle on Brown & Root (B&R), the construction firm building the plant. The evidence came not from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), which chose to ignore or forgive B&R's sins, but from Citizens Associated for Sound Energy (CASE), a Dallas-based volunteer consumer group that is an intervenor in the hearings to determine whether Comanche Peak should be granted a license to operate.

Former and current employees of B&R or its subcontractors testified to unsafe engineering and construction practices — defective welds, counterfeit pipe hanger supports, improper lug sizing, illegal physical alteration of lugs, illegal

splicing of cables, faulty grounding, patching of damaged cables, too-high wire tension, poor protection of cables during thermal welding, vandalism. There is even a fracture crack running through the entire seven-foot-thick concrete base holding the reactor in Unit 1. Almost any one of the defects CASE found could, they say, trigger an accident or prevent safe shutdown in the event of an accident sequence, leading to a meltdown.

Workers who tried to alert the NRC have mostly been ignored. And most have been either fired or driven away from their jobs at the site. In the case of Charles Atchison, a fired inspector who found all too many defective welds and refused to ignore them, the regional office of the U.S. Department of Labor has ruled that Brown & Root engaged in a conspiracy to prevent him from testifying at the licensing hearings. Darlene Stiner, another inspector who has testified for CASE, still has a job but is ostracized and tormented by her fellow workers. Now pregnant, she does not expect to be rehired after her maternity leave.

The three-member licensing panel will resume its hearings in early 1983, and all of the concerned intervenors have said they will continue their opposition. Their hope is that others will now come forward, but the price they have paid may make that wish no more than a fond hope. There is no doubt the utility and B&R will do all in their power to encourage silence.

Meanwhile, the nuclear reactors' twin towers are permanent fixtures below the ridge known as Comanche Peak. Whether they ever become radioactive or not will be decided by three men in Washington who have never set foot in Glen Rose, Texas. □

Betty Brink is a free-lance writer who was actively involved in the licensing hearings with a Fort Worth-based intervenor group that dropped out in 1982 for lack of funds. This article is condensed from a complete report on the safety of Comanche Peak she wrote for The Texas Observer of November 12, 1982.

prosecute. Since then there have been two major acts of civil disobedience, with no convictions either time.

I think civil disobedience is a necessary component of social change because so many people in our society seem so anesthetized by television. It takes a dramatic action to break through into their consciousness, and I think civil disobedience does that better than any other kind of protest. Somehow we have to break into the state of apathy that people are living in. Civil disobedience sometimes forces re-evaluation, and it moves people a step further.



have been really influenced in my activism by certain individuals. Of the people that I've had personal contact with, I think it is Dan Berrigan who made a really radical change in my life. He was here for part of the Continental Walk activities and he joined us to leaflet military personnel leaving Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth. We went into that aware that we could be arrested, but we weren't. Afterward he and another friend came to my house for dinner. In some way — not from anything he said, but for what he is — he was a real challenge to authenticity.

It seemed to me that my previous involvement was somehow "playing radical," but without a true commitment of myself to the issues, kind of standing with one foot in the water and one foot out so I could step back anytime it started getting too hot. Berrigan's integrity and the depth of his own commitment were a serious challenge to that attitude. After he left I was very afraid, but I also knew that I would have to strive in the direction of authenticity if I wanted to keep living with myself.

Shortly after that Igal Roodenko, a long-time organizer for the War Resisters League, came through. And the impact of my first meeting with him was to lessen that fear. Roodenko's enthusiastic embrace of life and sense of joy and celebration — with his own total commitment — showed me, as he says, "You don't have to be grim to be serious." He gave me a vision that a life of

activism is a very joyful and enthusiastic way of living. He came at a good point because I knew that I had no choice internally but to become more and more deeply involved in political activity, but I hadn't seen it as a very happy thing.

In combination, I think Berrigan and Roodenko moved me toward a willingness to do whatever needs to be done to bring about the changes needed for our survival, making sacrifices when they are needed and finding happiness and joy where I can. It has involved a long, slow (and still incomplete) process of disentanglement from a lifestyle that would keep me from doing things that should be done, developing a freedom to act and a nurturing of the kind of friendships that support that choice — a support community of sorts.

Another thing that made a really deep impression on me was reading some transcripts from the Nuremberg trials. To me struggling for justice, struggling for social change and struggling for peace are part of how I define myself as a human being regardless of whether the struggling has any effect or not. I would *like* it to have an effect, but either way it's necessary for my own self-definition for me to do this.

In a sense I feel sometimes in my anti-nuclear and peace work like a German standing outside Auschwitz protesting the construction of the ovens. Whether I'm effective or not, it establishes for me my own credentials as a non-collaborator in the destruction of the world. That is, it didn't happen because I accepted that it was okay for it to happen.

In a way, it's a kind of existential approach. That doesn't mean it is a despairing thing, because it's not; it's not related to hope or despair. It's just a necessary component of what I am. □

Sam and Martha Totten are New York-based freelance writers. They are currently completing Atomic Activists, a book of oral histories focusing on the personal stories of people in the anti-nuclear-weapons movement.

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COME KEEP THE SABBATH

You squirm and wiggle on my lap
sweaty as I, your cotton skirt, like mine,
clinging to legs and thighs, your hair
a wet blur across your scalp, your spirit
strangely weighted by the atmosphere.
Your eyes take in the rows and rows of people.
Families with mannered kids and cooing babes
old men who wheeze, women whose palsied heads
are bowed in prayer or raised in praise.
You will bring questions to me.
The singing, broken harmony, uneven unison
the words so unfamiliar you make no attempt to follow,
listening, instead, as my strange alto confidently moves
with organ's plain, slow steps, piano's bright accompaniment.
Your eyes most often go that way.
The hands that play those keys are hands whose warmth you know.
The sermon, spoken by a man younger than I
yet years more fervent, the sermon bores you
so you squirm and bounce and do the things
no four-year-old who's used to church would do
and I, knowing you've given my secret out
contemplate the comments that will
buzz along the rows of butterbeans
rustle in the cornfields
and flit around the corners of Cox's grocery.
The invitation hymn begins,
oozing around us as we cling
to what is still familiar — just each other.
I find one hand touching your shoulder
feel my knees tighten around your legs
only the limp cotton of our skirts
knowing the desperation of my grip.

— Linda Peavy

By the way of morning fire

BY MICHAEL WEAVER



Brunswick County,
Virginia, 1968

In the winter, the large, black, wood-burning stove downstairs in the kitchen, a pot-bellied stove, and the fireplace in the front bedroom were the only sources of heat, the only places to go and take the stiff chill out of their toes. Before going to school in the mornings, they would take time to go into the yard and chop the short logs of dry wood into smaller, slender pieces to feed the dimming fire in the stove. Holding the logs with one hand while placing the axe in the top side, the children took turns banging the wood against the huge trunk which served as a table until the log split neatly down the middle. On those cold winter mornings the only sound was that of the wood banging against the makeshift table, and their grandfather working the phlegm out of his throat with long, hacking coughs. Once they were making their way through the woods to school, they could look back at their house and see the smoke spiralling upwards from the chimney by the kitchen stove.

Moses Lee was in charge of his younger brother and sister. When they reached the one-lane highway that snaked through the county, Moses Lee was the one to take their hands in his whether they could hear cars approaching the hidden curves or not. He was responsible for them. In the

warm days of late spring when the shrubby growth made it difficult to see the black snakes that habitually made their way through the pine forests, Moses Lee was the one who carried the long stick and steered the babies away from the serpents. Moses Lee answered questions, parceled out the syrup and honey biscuits, found shelter in unexpected rain, and suffered the wrath of his mother for failing to obey. Of all his duties, the questions were the most difficult, and his sister Elvira the most inquisitive.

“Moses Lee, why our Daddy got to be still using mules



photo by Stephen March

when everybody else's papa got tractors? He gonna kill hisself."

"Daddy just like workin hard, Vira. You know that."

"That ain't no excuse, Moses Lee. You just tryin to ignore me. I ain't no fool."

"You ain't old enough to be nothin, Vira, fool or otherwise. You know what Mama told you about usin that word."

"I'm just talkin bout myself. Ain't no wrong or right in that."

"I ought to tell Mama."

"I sure hope we don get stuck wit you fore we get grown. You one contrary colored boy!"

"By the time y'all get grown, I'll be grown and gone, thank the Lord."

Although he never openly admitted it, Moses Lee too felt his father was an embarrassment, an accident which defied logical explanation. Summers, when everyone else had long departed the field and returned to the house for the afternoon break, they could look out into the long rows of tobacco and see Lincoln Thomas winding his way around the end of the row, turning the mule slowly and positioning the sled to make another trip down the row, catching the leaves his younger son, Jesse, threw in playfully. Moses Lee too wondered why he kept mules in a time when men looked forward confidently to traveling to other stars. Sometimes, he felt a deepening urge to leave his limited world and step forward in time to the real world that had long since marched on. He'd sit on the porch and pour water on his naked feet to wash away the stain of the clay, and mourn his security.

Summer afforded the luxury of wishing, but winter forced a painful pragmatism. If the wood was not prepared properly and in an ample supply before they left for school, it severely hampered their mother's work of cooking and cleaning. If the hog slop wasn't thickened and taken down to be thrown in the troughs, the chore became another in a long list of overly physical tasks for Lincoln, who was already addicted to exhaustion. If they didn't go to school, they might be denied the chance to know, to understand, to perceive.



The forest was Moses Lee's confidant. He took long, solitary walks to sort and straighten out the questions that grew to burrs inside him — sticking prickly, indecipherable prods against the routine of working, schooling and thanking God for the opportunities that had come to his life. Walking along, kicking the twigs and fallen pine needles, the wondering would bunch inside his stomach as he cursed the air whistling coldly about his ears. He kicked trees, sent small stones hurtling into the air with makeshift bats, and stoned squirrels shooting past; all the while pondering alternatives to becoming an adult in the same forest,

trapped by the questions that brought him there now. The world of televisions and power steering, of foreign languages and vastly different people, of distinctly different and beautiful ways of living — all the possibilities were becoming rapidly more inviting and inaccessible, more troubling.

Then he would turn to see the spiralling smoke from his mother's stove where she prepared the Sunday dinner. She hummed a tune and occasionally sang one, moved back and forth between the steaming pots on the stove and the dining room table where she placed the dishes and Bible. As she worked, Lincoln Thomas sat in the living room with his father filling rolling paper with Prince Albert tobacco. Moses Lee saw them in his aborted dreams in the forest, and turned homeward to the hot food.



At the end of a narrow path through the woods bordering the corn field, there was a small store with a single gas pump in the middle of a dirt lot. The store was owned by the Ingrams, a white family that also owned a feed store nearby and controlled most of the public offices in the county. Moses Lee and his father would occasionally walk to the store together. Lincoln Thomas made these walks opportunities to educate his son about the perils of becoming a man.

One day in the spring of the last year Moses Lee spent with his family, he and his father walked to the store to buy a new box of Prince Albert tobacco and two Coca-Colas. Old Man Ingram was sitting out front on the cement ledge facing the gasoline pump.

"Good evening, Lincoln."

"How you, Mr. Ingram sir?"

"Weren't for the gout and this crazy government, I'd be all right. Y'all go on in, Lonnie'll take care of you."

Lonnie Ingram was the dullest of the six boys of Old Man Ingram. The other five were well established in their own lines of work, either some profession or government office in the county. Moses Lee had heard that one of them had a statewide office. But Lonnie was hateful as a snake and extremely moody. He would often lash out against whoever happened along when he was low. Sometimes it was his father, but more often the victim was a poor soul who could ill afford to retaliate. After Lonnie had placed the Prince Albert on the counter, Lincoln Thomas asked him about the two Coca-Colas.

Leaning over the counter on his fists, Lonnie slowly reminded him, "Lincoln, you know damn well that's a white man's drink."

Lincoln was taken aback. He had been concentrating on the lecture he was preparing to deliver to Moses Lee about the importance of the company a young man keeps, how there were many different kinds of women, and about the important power money wielded in most circles. He had

been busy sorting all the thoughts that swirled inside him when Lonnie wiped the slate absolutely clean. It had been a good five years since Old Man Ingram had stopped insisting that blacks buy orange or grape — anything but a Coca-Cola. He looked immediately at the door and saw the shadow of the old monarch brushing a freckled hand past his face.

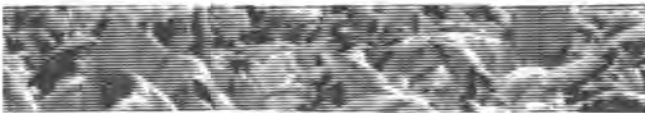
“What you lookin out there for, boy? I asked you a question, damn it!”

“You didn’t ask nothin, Lonnie. You just told me.”

That said, Lincoln turned to leave when he heard the old man say, “Now go on, Lincoln. You know how the boy is. Just go on over to the soda chest and get you and your boy two grape sodas. We’s all out of orange.”

Lincoln motioned Moses Lee to the chest. Inside there were three dozen orange sodas freshly packed in ice. Moses fished for two grape sodas and opened them with the bottle opener fastened on the corner of the chest just above the Coke logo written in white, cursive lettering. Without saying a word, Lincoln paid Lonnie and left.

On the way home there was nothing either of them could find to say. For Moses Lee every word was conjured, then caught in a feverish bubbling that started in the corner of his eyes and filtered down to his stomach where it curled and struck out at his heart with a long, poisonous tongue. Halfway down the dirt path, Lincoln picked up the pace and left Moses behind. He looked up to see his father’s overalls flapping against the dirt and raising small clouds of dust around his feet.



May was the time for Moses Lee to get used to the sun again, time to write letters to his cousin in Washington and ask him to bring a fresh batch of books, time to watch the ground for the first bursting of new crops in the fields and the multicolored flowers in his mother’s garden. It was time to forget that an ordered world could be woefully upset by such small things as Cokes and privilege.

That time past, another came, and in June, Moses Lee’s uncle, William Thomas, came to visit. As he knelt with his family around the dining room table to say their Sunday prayer, Moses Lee heard the occasional grinding bump of a rear chassis against the high, grassy sections of the path that led to their house. He was almost sure. Then he peeked through clasped hands to see a shiny automobile approaching the house.

Excitement overruled propriety.

“Daddy, here come Uncle William wit a new car.”

His father pinched him behind the ear to remind him that his grandfather was still saying grace. The eldest of the Thomases had not broken his stride a bit. He was thanking God for everything.

“For the strength Dear God against all kinds of trials. The crops planted safely in the field, the glory of a bright

mornin, Lord for the patience we thank you. As we are about to partake of this meal Jesus . . .”

Lincoln held his son’s ear tightly, and Moses knew from experience that he dare not scream or cry out. When Uncle William walked into the house, he knew instinctively what was taking place and held his family at the doorway with bowed heads until Grandfather finished.

After they had finished dinner, Lincoln and his brother walked out to the yard to examine the new car, a 1968 Buick Electra. They walked around the car several times before popping the hood to examine the car’s heart — the engine.

Moses Lee sat on the back porch and talked with his cousin Bobby, a tall, lean muscular boy of 18 years, just two months older than Moses. He was wearing a pair of expensive-looking trousers and a cotton shirt with a large collar and blue cuff links at the end of long, starched sleeves.

Moses Lee questioned him about the long-sleeved shirt. “Mighty hot for that shirt, ain’t it, Bobby?”

“No. Well, it’s cool up North. Don’t you know nothin, boy? The further north you go, the cooler it gets. Damn, boy, you just about 18 and nearly retarded.”

“No such thing, goddamn it. Why didn’t you answer my letter?”

“What letter?”

“I wrote you two or three weeks ago about some more books.”

“That mail got a long way to go too, you know. Washington is a long way off. You ought to read some more mature shit anyway.”

“Why you cuss so much, Bobby? Mama is right there in the house, and you out here tryin to be mannish. Our papas will cut us too short to shit wit them straps they carry. Even though we is 18.”

In the past Moses Lee had enjoyed Bobby’s visits, but now his cousin bored and angered him. As Bobby explained how he was making headway with a senator’s niece, Moses Lee stared meekly at the ground in front of him, making designs in the dirt with a small twig. It was one lie after another — a college scholarship, wealthy friends, liquor-drinking sprees and more. Moses Lee took a deep breath, swelling his chest till it seemed it would burst, and



then walked away leaving Bobby to boast to the chickens and the huge, gray cats snoozing in the afternoon shade.

Bobby shouted after him, "You dummy, big country dummy!"

Moses Lee turned immediately and replied, "This country dummy'll lay a whippin on your black ass you'll never get over."

"Well then, do it, dummy."

"Bring your black city ass down here and get it."

Moses Lee was standing near the wood pile, and as Bobby approached, he grabbed the big axe that stood lodged in the tree stump. With his cousin chasing him down toward the pine forest, Bobby screamed for his father.

"Help! Daddy! Moses Lee done lost his mind!"

When they reached the edge of the woods, Moses Lee took a wild swing at his cousin and missed. The axe hit a tree instead and stuck there so tightly that Moses Lee lost sight of his prey as he fought to remove it. Still struggling with the axe, Moses Lee felt a sudden, sharp, cutting sensation across his back. It was his father applying discipline. His Uncle William shot past him into the woods after Bobby with his belt swinging wildly beside him.



Moses Lee hollered to Bobby, "Motherfucker!" and his father slapped him alongside his cheek so hard his mouth began to bleed — an outburst of his father's anger he had never known.

The remainder of the visit was torment for the two cousins. For two weeks Uncle William's family remained at the farm, helping Lincoln in the fields during the day and riding down the dirt path in the Electra to seek out other kin in the evening. Moses disowned the whole crew, scornfully referring to them as the DC bunch. Almost daily, Vira would approach him as he sulked on the back porch or under the apple tree on the side of the house.

"Moses Lee, if you hadn't been so hot on being a man, you wouldn't a got your hind whooped so bad in front of everybody. You such a fool even though you my brother. Moses Lee, you listenin to me, fool?"

But Moses Lee had stopped talking. Now all he did was

sit and consider the meaning of Coca-Colas, climate control and power windows, the lofty arrogance of white skin and distance — the space between here and the North, the space between what ran through his heart and the jumbled mush that came from his mouth when he had tried to speak of his feelings. He had hidden his true emotions about so many things for so long that he had difficulty understanding such awesome and fearful things as the hate and lust he felt when he wanted to kill his cousin — to good feelings that surged through him without legitimate provocation. Moses Lee wanted to be free of restraint, to leave.



In August Lincoln Thomas began preparations for the tobacco harvest. He assembled his makeshift sleds that were used to haul the large, waxy leaves back to the barn where they were hung to dry. From the family of a neighbor, he hired two teen-aged boys to help him with the work. It was the first time he'd had to resort to outside labor. In the past Moses Lee had been able to do the work of three boys like them, but now he just sat around the edges of the house, chasing the shade and staring quietly out into space. Lincoln and his wife consulted a midwife who examined Moses Lee and declared him insane.

But she was wrong. A vibrant host of images flashed across the forefront of Moses Lee's mind — images that he now gave all the attention he had denied them for years. Behind the blank stare was a soul that smiled vengefully and plotted its escape.

It came that same August. His family trusted him as they would have a small child. Once he was fed and clothed for the day, they left him to his own devices as they went about the work of maintaining the farm. He just walked away quietly in the heat of one routine workday, unseen. He didn't bother to take anything but the 20 dollars he'd saved working for Old Man Ingram. After making his way to the highway which connected the county with the North Carolina state line, he turned southward, and hailed a pickup that approached him after he had gone nearly two miles. There was a small light-skinned black man sitting behind the wheel.

He asked Moses Lee slowly, "Where you goin, boy?"

Moses Lee hadn't talked in two months and it was a strange sensation to form his mouth for something other than eating or blowing leaves across the water in the huge tubs his mother kept filled in the back of their house. But he answered, "South. I'm goin south."

"You in the South, boy."

"I know, but I'm goin deeper — where it's a little richer. Closer to the fire." □

Michael S. Weaver is a Baltimore writer and poet who runs a small press, Seventh Son Press.



Santiago Jimenez and Lorenzo Caballero play at Jimmy's Cantina. Caballero is a flamboyant accompanist who has been known to burn his guitar in performance.

LA MUSICA NORTENA

Photography by Scott Van Osdol

Friday night in San Antonio brought a crowd to Jimmy's Restaurant and Cantina. By nine o'clock the people had cleared out of the restaurant and moved into the big back room, the cantina part of Jimmy's. It was Jimmy's birthday, and friends, family and *compadres* had come to help celebrate. Out came a birthday cake, and a couple dressed in elegant *trajes de charro* (Mexican cowboy outfits) climbed onto the small stage to make short speeches. The beer flowed freely, as did the lively talk. And, finally, couples took to the floor for the main enjoyment of the evening: dancing to



Three generations of *acordeonistas*: Flaco, David and Santiago Jimenez.



Flaco's fans come in all ages and sizes – listening here at Mutualista Hall in Waco.



the familiar polkas and *rancheras* (ranch songs) of Santiago Jimenez and his button accordion.

In Central and South Texas, weekends are the times for *Tejanos* (Texas Mexicans) to gather – in cantinas like Jimmy's or in ice houses, dance halls, outdoor fiestas or homes. *La gente* (the people) – middle-aged couples, young couples, *los abuelos* (the grandparents) and children of all ages come together to eat, drink and, especially, to dance to the Tex-Mex accordion music.

Santiago Jimenez represents the second of four generations of Jimenez family musicians who, for 80 years, have provided the music for these weekend events around San Antonio and Central Texas. The family has created and popularized *La Musica Norteña*, a musical style that blends nineteenth century dances like the polka and the waltz with twentieth century Latin-Caribbean rhythms, the sound of the German button accordion and a Texas-Mexican *sentimiento* (feeling). It's a style that Tejanos may truly call their own.

The Jimenez musical dynasty began with Patricio Jimenez who learned the button accordion

Smiling for the camera at Jimmy's.



Waitresses and cashiers pause for the camera at Jimmy's.



from local German Texans and played for house dances in the *barrios* of San Antonio in the early 1900s. His son Santiago pioneered the *Norteña* accordion style in San Antonio by performing on radio broadcasts and recordings beginning in the early 1930s. Since the 1950s, Santiago's son, Leonardo "Flaco" (Skinny) Jimenez, has developed *Musica Norteña* to heights of artistic virtuosity and gained international renown. Now Flaco's teen-aged son David is continuing the tradition.

As the tradition continues for the Jimenez family so do the weekend celebrations for the

Sitting one out at Jimmy's.



Dancing the polka at Jimmy's cantina.



Flaco con el sentimiento Tejano, Flaco Jimenez with the Tejano feeling, plays at La Feria de las Flores in Austin.

Tejano community. If it is at Jimmy's cantina, Santiago pleases the crowd with his smooth, well-seasoned polkas – tunes like “La Piedrera” and “Viva Seguin” that he made popular in his earlier days. If it is at a local dance hall, Flaco shows off his fast, flashy style in his own hit songs. He twists, bends and draws out notes to animate the crowd on the dance floor. But the feeling from place to place, father to son, is the same. The spirit of *alegría* (happiness) and the common bond of Texas-Mexican culture is in the music, dancing and celebrating. As couples dance away into the night and grandparents cradle sleeping grandchildren, the family and community, music and tradition are united. □

– Dan W. Dickey



“We’ll never quit it!”

By Michael Staub

Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens combat creekbed catastrophe

TED SMITH



I stood on the banks and I’d see fish. You don’t find them now. We had a fish kill here a few years back and it just cleaned that creek out.

I’ve seen this creek get worse every day in the last 15 years. I’ve passed it at times when you couldn’t bear the smell of it. Tears in your eyes. Throat burning. I’ve known all my life there’s been a problem over there. This just didn’t happen yesterday. ”

“My mother was born on this creek — and I mean on it. She’s told me how her father used to pull his team down in the creek and let the horses drink out of it. Pretty, clear water.

But all of my life that creek’s been black. Not every day. I’ve seen days when you could swim in it, way back when they only turned that stuff loose at certain times, like Friday afternoons, and that creek would run black until Monday. Then they’d shut it off. You’d have three or four days when the water was pretty clear. We’d fish and swim. I waded in it and played in it all my life.

It’s got a hell of a lot worse since 1967. I remember when I plowed corn in them bottoms along that creek. You’d see muskrats and mink in that creek. Now you couldn’t find a trace of one. They’re not there. They’ve either been killed or they left.

In July, 1980, three couples — Larry and Sheila Wilson, Gene and Viola Hurst and Don and Dovie Rose — met at Sugar Run National Park in Bell County, Kentucky, to discuss their common problem: Yellow Creek, a stream that runs through their land, was so polluted that something had to be done to protect their health.

All three couples live on the stream. They had seen their drinking water polluted and their neighbors’ health deteriorate. That same year, the Wilsons’ well ran dry and they were forced to let their animals drink Yellow Creek water. Soon thereafter, 33 pigs, four goats and seven head of cattle died — apparently from drinking creek water.

These six people decided that they had had enough: they formed the



photo by Scott Vahrodian

Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens — the first organized effort to combat the long-present “black ooze” running through Yellow Creek.

Larry Wilson comments: “There was no real feat in organizing — just getting the word out that somebody was finally going to do something about Yellow Creek.” By October, 1980, the group claimed 200 members; now it has more than 400.

In its two-year history, the group has tackled the Middlesboro Tanning Company, the source of most of the creek’s pollution; the city of Middlesboro, which is supposed to treat the wastes now flowing into Yellow Creek at its sewage plant; and a host of state and federal officials who have moved slowly to clean up the black ooze. Now the Concerned Citizens have attracted widespread support — and started winning the battle to clean up Yellow Creek.

This is the history of the Yellow Creek residents' long struggle to gain justice and their refusal to give in when officials told them to quit and go home — of a community which has united to fight as a group what they could never successfully fight as individuals.

Winding through 14 miles of Appalachian hillside, Yellow Creek flows north through Bell County, in the southeastern tip of Kentucky, into the Cumberland River; over 1,200 people reside on its banks. For most of the residents of the three communities on the banks of the creek — Meldrum, Colmar and Williams Branch — Yellow Creek has been an integral part of their lives: they've drunk from it, swum in it and caught its fish. Unfortunately, they've also suffered from its pollution.

A better name for the stream might be Black Creek. For as long as anyone can remember, the creek's water has contained what has been described as a foul-smelling "black ooze" that has killed fish, made the water undrinkable and damaged the health of the creekbed dwellers.

Older folks claim they heard tales of black water in Yellow Creek dating back as far as the 1890s — about the time a tanning company opened up on the stream in Middlesboro, Kentucky. The tanning company repeatedly spewed its waste products into Yellow Creek.

Everyone is sure that the black ooze was a persistent reality by the 1920s. Folks grew accustomed to the black water, though they never knew just when to expect it. Maybe after a heavy rain, or when the creek was low and the dead fish began to pile up on the banks. Fish kills occurred regularly, and sometimes the creek would stink so bad that people left their homes.

Still, Yellow Creek was not totally dead, and it remained integral to the lives of the 300 families living on its banks. During the 1930s, the creek provided fish for families too poor to buy food. People bathed in it. Women recall doing the family wash in it. Livestock drank from it, and creek water seeped into wells along its banks.

As late as the 1940s, Yellow Creek had a reputation as an excellent fishing spot, but the technique of fishing was sometimes unique.

CLYDE SMITH



“I remember, when I was about 16 years old, the creek was running a little blacker than usual one night, and the catfish were swimming with their noses atop the water, gasping for breath. That's what it appeared like.

There was a stream of clear water coming off the mountain into Yellow Creek, and these catfish would gang up in its mouth and climb on top of one another, crowding in there fighting over this clear water.

We didn't know the fish weren't clean to eat. We thought the water was making them sick or something and we'd go catch em and eat em.

We'd get us a paper box and a boat. We'd start out to the mouth of this stream until we got up pretty close. We'd just let the boat coast in there. One of us would sit up front with the cardboard box and dip it full of catfish. There were all sizes — anywhere from eight to about 18 inches.

photo by Michael Staub



MIDDLESBORO SEWAGE PLANT EMPTYING INTO YELLOW CREEK

We got all the catfish we wanted in just a little while. We'd pick out what we wanted and throw the rest back in. Then wait a few minutes and they'd be back in there crowding in; we'd make another haul the same way.”

Yellow Creek residents have long tried to stop the black ooze. Older people recall that protests began when the tannery first opened in the late 1890s. But the combined might of the tannery owners and Middlesboro officials always thwarted any efforts at cleaning up the problem. The tannery had become the major employer in Middlesboro, a community of 11,000 situated near the mouth of Yellow Creek. Owned and operated by town residents, the tannery became the area's predominant political power.

Sometimes these local protests made a dent in the situation, but they were soon overcome by the sheer power of the tannery — as when a handful of people brought suit against the company in 1953.

CREED BARNETT



“We noticed the creeks were piled full of dead fish. We argued around about it. In a few days another big fish kill came and we all went before the grand jury in Middlesboro.

Every three months they called a circuit court. We couldn't get nothing from the city, so we went to the circuit court. We indicted the tannery company up there, but the company was made up of people from Middlesboro. They were in politics, too.

So when we came to the court, they brought in Fred Seals, the owner — a crippled man — in a wheelchair. Then they called the case. They tried one or two of the witnesses — the soft witnesses. But when it came to the hard core of it, the main proof, the judge said, 'Well, I'm gonna dismiss this case.' So he just dismissed us and

left us out in the cold.

We had jugs of water and we had pictures of the dead fish. We had plenty of witnesses there but the judge was just afraid of that man in the wheelchair — him the superintendent of the tannery and the man responsible for it.

That didn't stop us. We tried different times and different things, but we just failed in the county because of the politics. They could do without our vote, but they couldn't do without the city of Middlesboro. ”

One development held some promise for alleviating the problem: in the 1930s, the city of Middlesboro constructed a treatment plant for its sewage. The primary need for such a system was the tannery, which produces 65 percent of the volume handled by the treatment plant. Unfortunately, the chemicals in the tannery's waste damaged the plant's efficiency; eventually, both tannery waste and fecal matter were regularly flowing down Yellow Creek.

In 1965, the situation became much worse: the Middlesboro Tanning Company began a chrome tanning process which added even more toxic materials to Yellow Creek. The black ooze became a constant presence in the stream. Living next to the creek was like "having an open sewer in front of you," says Larry Wilson.

Soon thereafter, a new wave of protests began.



GENE HURST

“In 1970 we tried to get the public interest stirred up — myself and Wade Hurst and Duey Brock. By then it was practically a dead stream — no aquatic life.

We were kinda between generations. The older people had quit griping about it. They had never got anything done about it anyway.

We went about it a little differently. We got 142 names on a petition in two weeks. Then we got a hearing in front of a state hearing officer. They sum-

moned the city and the tannery, but the tannery — like always — failed to make an appearance.

The state had several witnesses there. Three of them recommended closing the tannery down right then. Mayor Chester Wolfe made the statement that the city officials would do all they could to ease the pollution, but they would under no circumstances close the tannery.

After that hearing the city received federal grants to upgrade the sewage plant, and in 1975 a new plant went on line. And the state issued a restraining order against the city with a possible fine of \$1,000 a day if they didn't straighten up. If there has been one day since that order was issued or the new plant went on line that the pollution was any less, it wasn't noticeable. We still had the stink and color, and the few fish left were dying. It ” was an open sewage ditch.

By 1980, the situation was totally out of control. The stream of chemicals from the tannery proved too much for the new sewage plant. Studies showed that Yellow Creek contained fecal matter, chromium, zinc and other metals toxic to human health. Soon wildlife biologist John Copeland confirmed a "drastic reduction" in aquatic life in Yellow Creek.

Officials of the tannery and the city refused to accept responsibility for the pollution. They maintained the sewage plant was effectively treating the tannery wastes and that many of the pollutants did not come from the tannery. They also claimed to be working hard to solve the problems. "We do whatever we can to help," stated tannery owner Bob Anderson.

But local residents were not impressed. And they had one more horrifying indication that something was wrong with Yellow Creek: their health seemed to be deteriorating rapidly. Tales of unusually high levels of cancer and other diseases abounded in the valley. Other events raised further concerns, like the death of Larry Wilson's animals. People were ready for another wave of protests.

GENE HURST



“I'd been involved with this thing off and on since 1969. But you take on the establishment one-on-one and you get your head beat in. I was tired of it. And I was ready to quit.

Larry Wilson's son and my daughter were running track. One day he needed a ride home, so Viola ran him by Larry's. She found out Larry was disturbed about what was happening. He had been losing a lot of livestock for no reason he could think of — except they were drinking creek water.

She suggested that I go talk to him. Like I said, I was disheartened — I didn't want to talk about it to anybody or get involved in it again.

One afternoon I went over and introduced myself to Larry. He said the only way to fight bureaucracy is to form a group. Incorporate as a non-profit organization and go with it from there. I wasn't familiar with that type thing, so I wasn't really interested in it.

I got to thinking about whether we could generate some pressure by a nonprofit organization. I had tried going one-on-one and knew it didn't work. So I got back with him and we decided we'd give it a try. We talked with several people and decided to have a meeting over at Sugar Run National Park. That was in July, 1980.

Larry outlined what he thought the groundwork should be. It sounded good. Everybody else decided it had possibilities. At least it looked better than what had happened before.

We set up a meeting for the next week; I believe we had 15 people. We passed the hat and came up with money to file for incorporation. The next meeting we had 31 people. Then ” it just snowballed.

The group took the name Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens (YCCC) and started working to end the stream's pollution. Elected president was Larry Wilson, a lifelong creek resident in his mid-forties who had clear ideas on what the group needed to do. They

quickly set out to get some action.

Their first step was to circulate petitions calling for a public hearing on the reissuance of the National Pollutant Discharge and Elimination System (NPDES) permit which regulated emissions from the Middlesboro Sewage Treatment Plant (MSTP). When the EPA held hearings on the permit in October, 1980, the Concerned Citizens had grown to 200 members. EPA representative Howard Zeller explained the agency's recommendation: revoke the old permit and issue a new one requiring pretreatment of material coming into the plant. The Concerned Citizens countered by urging that no permit be issued until the MSTP proved that it could filter waste effectively. The two sides reached an impasse, and the Concerned Citizens walked out on Zeller.

In November, the group got its first chance to take its case to television audiences: members testified at hearings in Frankfort concerning whether or not the tannery had violated state hazardous waste laws. The Concerned Citizens once again demanded relief from the black ooze.

The group kept pressuring the state. In February, 1981, 15 members returned to Frankfort to meet with state government officials. They came armed with eight-millimeter movies of a Yellow Creek fish kill and bottles of black creek water. The officials listened attentively but promised nothing.

YCCC also took on Middlesboro city hall. On March 17, with TV cam-

eras whirring, Larry Wilson leveled eight charges against the city:

"The city is illegally receiving toxic materials into the MSTP.

"The air around Middlesboro is being poisoned by formaldehyde [a claim supported by the National Forest Service].

"The effluent discharged into Yellow Creek is toxic.

"A private industry is being subsidized by local, state and federal tax dollars.

"The effluent contains high levels of heavy metals and other pollutants.

"Wells along the creek have proven to be contaminated — with toxic levels still increasing.

"The city has violated its NPDES permit.

"The city must bear all responsibility for adverse consequences caused by the MSTP's effluent."

The tannery and the city quickly tried to defuse the situation. Tannery vice-president Herb Weinstein passed the Concerned Citizens off as a group of former tannery employees with "some kind of grudge." (Many members had worked at the tannery.) He also raised a direct threat to the community: "The people [of Middlesboro] have to evaluate what's more important — a few carp or the livelihood of the community." Many tannery workers started actively opposing the YCCC's efforts.

The Middlesboro *Daily News* also rushed into the fray. In an editorial entitled, "'Concerned Citizens' and

the rest of us should be objective," the paper attacked the YCCC's efforts and defended the city and the tannery.

Viola Hurst promptly dashed off one of the letters she is famous for:



VIOLA HURST

"The objectivity in the editorial page of the *Middlesboro Daily News* leaves me filled with frustration and anger.

I, Viola Hurst, a member of the Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens, wish to give an unbiased word or two.

For 21 years, the City of Middlesboro, the State Offices and the Federal EPA have been working with the problems of pollution of Yellow Creek. The State Water Quality and Federal EPA have given Middlesboro Sanitation Department time for improvements. Now, year after year, we the people along Yellow Creek have been sitting and waiting for the proof of these improvements. The proof being no more pollution in Yellow Creek.

Now that we the people in and around Yellow Creek have come together to help with the problems of



photo by Terri Likens

A THOUSAND MIDDLESBOROITES CROWD A CITY COUNCIL MEETING, NOVEMBER, 1982

People are waking up

Larry Wilson has been the president of the Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens since the very beginning. Here he gives his views on how the group works, what has made it successful and what the future holds.

We like to act more than react. We like to force the city council and the tannery and so on to react to something we've done, surprise them — come at them from different directions, using facts, figures and their own statements. Get them to explain those in public. The vast majority of the time they stonewall. We also try to put pressure on the political people like the governor and the regulatory agencies. Sort of shame them into doing something, you know? That's what brought us to where we are and I think it's been slow but effective.

The other option is to go straight into the courts — cast the future of the Yellow Creek Valley on the roll of the dice. If the numbers come up in our favor, we've won. If they're against us, we've lost. Both solutions permanent. That seems like too big a gamble. We want to try it in the court of public opinion rather than the judicial system. Because we can win — and have won — that way.

We're getting stronger all the time. We've shown a steady growth rate over two years. People take pride in being members of YCCC.

It's persistence. And to be persistent somebody's got to tell your story. So we have to generate activity that's more or less newsworthy. If we see a TV camera, we jump in front of it.

We don't have any paid staff — it's all a volunteer effort. That puts everybody on an equal footing. We insist on a democratic process. Everybody has a direct voice. They're intimately involved every step of the way.

Education is very important. Every day we are more educated. We've found that we know more about the problem than the officials trying to deal with it, because we've worked hard at it. Our members may not be able to quote chemical formulas to you, but they understand what they're about. A group is never educated as well as they need to be, but I think we're effective with it.



photos by Michael Staub

LARRY WILSON AND OTHER YCCC FOLKS LOBBY THE CONGRESS, WASHINGTON, JULY, 1982

We use the old accounting principle of understatement rather than overstatement. When people start investigating what we said, most of the time they'll find it's worse than the way we stated it. When we first got up in meetings, they'd laugh at us. Now we get up in a meeting and everybody listens.

I gave a city council member a piece of information and told her where she could check it. She said, "We don't have to check it. We haven't caught you saying anything wrong in two years." Credibility is one of the basic building blocks of any group.

We're in a situation where we could become the power structure in this county. We're close to it. That's a dangerous role that I'd hate to see us in. I'd like to see the system work as it should work. I'd hate to see us become the Moral Majority of Bell County.

My whole philosophy on life has changed. Back in the '60s when all the demonstrations were going on, anybody who told me that one day I'd be carrying a sign in front of a government building probably would have had to fight right there. Now I'm doing it and encouraging others to do it. I've got a better understanding of our political system and it scares the hell out of me.

We've got the best political system in the world, but it's got one-sided. Our government revolves around huge corporations; sometimes I think when they tell you to pray to your God, they get down on their knees and say, "Dear General Motors." That scares me, but it can be corrected.

My personal values have changed. Best thing I can leave my kids and my grandkids is a better society. Before it was money. Money doesn't mean a thing to me now. Peace of mind, a happy society where people are doing *for* instead of *to* is what it's all about.

If this is radical, then we'd be better off if the whole world was radical.

History will tell you that you can't organize mountain folks. But you can — if the problem is flagrant, if it affects everyone and everybody wants something done about it. It was done back in the '30s when the United Mine Workers were organizing. The situation dictated some sort of drastic action, and they organized quite successfully.

That's the other thing about mountain folks: once they do organize, look out! They stay there — almost forever. It's been 50 years since they organized the United Mine Workers in Bell and Harlan Counties. You still don't dare walk up and down the hollows and speak bad of John L. Lewis. It is something almost sacred.

Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens is becoming that way after two years. As long as we can keep the thing above-board and don't get away from our goals and objectives, we can continue.

People are waking up. They're seeing the results of decisions made 20 years ago. They're beginning to rebel against it. This groundswell won't go away. As long as we can have some successes, it will continue to grow and get stronger. The people can't lose. That's been proven everywhere.

the pollution we are 'disgruntled tannery workers of the past.'

We are working within the law to do our best to help stop pollution that has been proven harmful to our health and welfare.

How anyone that is objective to this problem and looks at all the proof and can still remain objective is beyond any human feelings.

I say, if Middlesboro is still improving the sanitation plant, tell me why it isn't the best sanitation plant in the U.S.A.

All the people of Yellow Creek want is the pollution stopped. The only way it will stop is:

First — the people become educated about the laws and regulations on pollution;

Second — the people become educated on what the pollution is, what it can and will do;

Third — See and hear what city, state and federal regulations are and watch all the red tape attached to problems of the people.

Fourth — Informed people are the kind of people who can stand up and fight for their lives and for the future lives of their children.

A parent cannot sit back day in and day out waiting for the agents of our city, state and federal governments to act.

This pollution should not have gone on this long. I'm sure if it was in and around you personally, your livelihood would be more important than a job for someone else.

We the people must unite and fight for the laws to be upheld.

We the citizens of Yellow Creek will go on fighting for our lives.

No one should be allowed to put another person's life in danger. I say now the pollution will stop when the law is obeyed.

The law is for the people — by the people — and is for all the people to uphold no matter who they are.

Arguments like these appealed to local people; the group grew steadily. They were soon buoyed by their first significant victory. In May, 1981, the Concerned Citizens got the Bell County Health Board to post signs along the creek reading: "No Fishing. No Water Contact. Polluted Water." The group also tried out new tactics. It sponsored a 10-mile protest walk from the mouth of the creek to the sewage plant, focus-

ing attention on the city's responsibility to clean up the creek.

It soon appeared that these tactics would pay off. On May 19, the Middlesboro city council passed a new sewage use ordinance limiting the levels of toxic materials that could be pumped into the creek and prohibiting MSTP from accepting any waste that would hamper its operations. Then on June 2, the city voted to supply fresh water to the 1,200 Yellow Creek residents. Mayor Chester Wolfe appointed a committee to work out the financing and delivery of the water.

The next day the Middlesboro Red Cross and the Bell County Rescue Squad hauled a 500-gallon water trailer to creek residents and announced they would keep supplying water until the city council finished its plan. It looked as if the Concerned Citizens would finally have clean drinking water.

However, they quickly found out that the city did not intend to follow through on its promises. The municipal water company informed the rescue squad and the Red Cross, which had received free water for 25 years, that they would have to pay for their water if they kept delivering to Yellow Creek.

Despite the city's action, the two groups soon lined up another water source and kept up their shipments. This show of support meant a lot to the YCCC. "It showed that somebody really did care besides the people that were affected," recalls Sharon Wilson.

THE BATTLE WAGES ON

"It's like never putting oil in your car," said EPA inspector Herbert Bardin as he announced that his agency had found 13 inadequacies in maintenance and operation at MSTP in July, 1981. The Concerned Citizens focused their efforts on getting the plant shut down or repaired.

They once again asked the state for assistance. At an August, 1981, meeting, Jackie Swigart, secretary of the Kentucky Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection (DNREP), confessed that Yellow Creek was the worst pollution problem her department faced, but she rankled the Concerned Citizens with her flippant attitude toward their health concerns.

SHARON WILSON



“We have an unusual number of hysterectomies and miscarriages and stuff like that along the creek. I asked her if I got married if she could guarantee my kids would be healthy. She said no, she couldn't guarantee that, nobody could. Her recommendation to me would be not to get married. I got slightly heated. She asked me what I would do if I was in her place. I told her I'd enforce the law.

She made quite a few people angry. We mentioned that the food in our gardens was contaminated. She said, 'Don't have gardens. Go to the store and buy it.' People around here are not rich. That's why we have gardens, to save money. And I think it is a bit . . . out of place for her to say that. What state official has the right to get up and say, 'Okay, you have problems. Don't get married. Don't have a garden.' You know, quit your normal everyday life.”

Undaunted by such insensitivity, the Concerned Citizens soon further demonstrated how insincere the city's promises were. At a September 1 city council meeting, Larry Wilson asked Mayor Wolfe if he intended to enforce the city's new sewage use ordinance.

LARRY WILSON



“We were very frustrated because they would never answer our questions. We were standing in the parking lot before the meeting trying to figure out what to do. I said, 'Why don't we say we're not gonna leave till we get an answer?' Everybody said,

“WE'LL NEVER QUIT” 47

Why in the hell do they go on killing us?

At the heart of the Yellow Creek problem has been the local tannery, for almost a century the area's largest employer. In operation under several different owners since the 1890s, the tannery employs more than 200 workers. It is located on the north side of town, directly across from the Middlesboro Sewage Treatment Plant.

For more than 60 years, it used a vegetable tanning process which did have an adverse effect on the creek, although the damage was apparently not permanent. The fish would die when the black ooze came, but more would return.

In 1960, the tannery was sold by its ailing owner, Fred Seals, to an outside interest which set up the Middlesboro Tanning Company. The new owners immediately started building a new facility with which it could alter its product line from hard leather products like shoe soles and belt and saddle leather to soft leather products like kid gloves and shoe uppers.

In 1965, this facility was set into operation, and blue chrome tanning was introduced to Bell County. It is a procedure that utilizes over 250 different chemicals, many of which are acids or carcinogens or both. The already hazardous workplace situation worsened considerably. The area's largest employer also became its most dangerous employer.

CLARENCE TURNER:

In 1965 they started using the chrome process. It used chrome, acids, and so forth, and from there it goes into the dyes and finishings. People are breathing a lot of chemicals. Lots of people are eat up with chrome. Looks like poison ivy, but it's a skin rash.

I don't have any chrome or skin damage and so far I don't have any lung damage — that I know of. I could have it and not know it.

I worked right in the chemicals — even stuck my hands right down in the pure chrome. Some people walk by it and get eat up. I saw people with solid sores when they raised their shirts — from the chrome.

The tannery has also proved a most dangerous neighbor.



MIDDLESBORO TANNING COMPANY

Photo by Michael Staub

TED SMITH:

I live in the shadows of the tannery. I'm sorta above it and all the fumes from the tannery and sewage plant.

I wake up in the middle of the night and I can't breathe. I just choke to death. The air not only smells bad. When your eyes water, your nose and throat burn and you're short of breath, there's something bad wrong.

I've had to get up in the middle of the night and take my children to the emergency room just smothering to death. Lots of times I took them out there for what I thought was a cold, but it was caused by whatever this is here in the air.

In fact, National Park Service studies have shown levels of formaldehyde as high as 5.34 parts per million in the air around Middlesboro — a potentially dangerous concentration. Though city officials blame other causes like automotive emissions, the formaldehyde levels dropped to zero when the tannery was on strike a few years back.

Another problem has cropped up: local people have used sludge from the plant as fertilizer for their yards. About 40 percent of the area's gardens have been fertilized by material containing toxic heavy metals.

TED SMITH:

Roughly six years ago I got 12 pickup truckloads of sludge for my garden. I ate vegetables from that garden for six years.

One night I got a call from Vanderbilt University, where they were running some tests on the stuff out here. They advised me not to use anything else out of my garden. At the time I had something like 144 quarts of

beans canned, peppers, tomatoes, other things we had already canned. But I'm certainly not gonna eat it.

We do know that chromium was one of the big things in the sludge. Lead. God only knows what damage that's already been done.

There's hardly a piece of ground around here that don't have the sludge on it. People are still putting it on their gardens. I saw a neighbor with a load of it two weeks ago.

The tannery also operated a hazardous waste landfill for many years. It was closed by the EPA in 1981. YCCC members claim it still drains regularly into Yellow Creek. In fact, the most dangerous aspect of the plant remains the steady stream of waste that flows into the creek.

CLARENCE TURNER:

When the sewage from the tannery is sent to the sewage plant it's dumped straight into the creek. It contains the chemicals I named before, plus a chemical from the old tannery they call tannin. Every bag has a tag on it that says, "Cancer-causing."

To clean up the creek the tannery would have to pretreat its waste. At one time they did. Then they stopped. As far as I know all they do now is pump it out in the ponds and let it settle. At one time they ran it through screens and took all the solids out. Now they don't.

The tannery also operates 10 acres of waste lagoons separated from the creek by a floodwall. They contain millions of gallons of semi-liquid toxic waste. During heavy rains, this material often overflows into the creek; there is now evidence it is also leaching through the floodwall.

The tannery officials have reacted to the Concerned Citizens with a mixture of indifference and hostility. On several occasions they have denied that a problem exists. But local residents refuse to accept their denials. As Ted Smith concludes, "These people have been in the tannery business since the beginning of time. They've got money to burn. Why in the hell do they go on killing us the way they are? Why?"

'That sounds good.' I said, 'But we've got to stay.' They said, 'That's fine.'

We occupied city hall for two weeks. Our numbers grew as we stayed. Soon we noticed all the people paying their sewage bills. Somebody said, 'Let's get a petition. See how many of these people support us.' We came up with 1,200 signatures of people entering city hall. We kinda embarrassed the city council. Their own people — citizens of the town — were supporting this group picketing city hall.

After the two weeks, Wilson again asked Wolfe: "Do you have any intention of enforcing your sewage ordinance?" Wolfe responded, "No, not yet." The group then left for home with further proof of the city's lack of commitment to a cleanup.

On October 7, the state government finally took what seemed a strong step against the pollution: it banned all new sewage connections until the treatment plant substantially improved its effluent quality. However, the city responded to this action as it had to all the others: it ignored the state government entirely. But the ban brought to a boil many of the tensions simmering since the Concerned Citizens first started organizing.

VIOLENCE ERUPTS

On October 8, reported the *Middlesboro Daily News*, "A bullet narrowly missed Mayor Chester H. Wolfe's head last night while he was sitting behind his desk at his business on North 19th Street." The Concerned Citizens were suspected of being the guilty parties, though many local folks claim that Wolfe was nowhere near his office at the time of the alleged incident.

The Concerned Citizens encountered serious retaliation. On the night after the Wolfe episode, YCCC member Ed Hunter was driving to a meeting with Larry Wilson.



"I had noticed a car following me several times before this. On my way to the meeting, the same car was sitting there with its back to me. As I came around this curve and got almost even with it, it flashed its park lights. Then a real bright light came on right in front of me across the road. It was so bright it put my eyes out and I fell in the seat. As I did there was a bullet.

I felt like I lost a couple of breaths. We called the sheriff's department, and they sent two men out. They said it was probably a .357 Magnum that shot my windshield. Probably would have hit me right between the eyes if it hadn't been for my reflexes.

In the next few days somebody shot at Larry [Wilson] and Gene [Hurst] with a shotgun while they were out driving. Shot their glass out.

Refusing to be intimidated by the violence, the Concerned Citizens kept up the pressure. On January 7, 1982, the state tried another solution: DNREP Secretary Jackie Swigart signed a new Agreed Order between the state and city requiring that MSTP totally comply with regulations by September 1 and that the plant control the waste coming from the tannery. On February 5 she issued an emergency order to "stop the discharge of inadequately treated waste water" into the creek. However, a week later, state hearing officer Victor Baltell dismissed the emergency order; he did rule the state should draft a new Agreed Order much stricter than the January 7 order.

Like most other state actions, these acts sparked little hope in the YCCC, because there was still no move to enforce the regulations. However, the group continued organizing, and by February had enrolled 341 members; YCCC was now gathering increased support from Middlesboro residents who did not live on the creek but who sympathized with their plight.



photo by Jackie Van Andu

TANK HOLDS PART OF THE TANNERY'S 750,000 GALLON-PER-DAY WASTEWATER DISCHARGE



“The only way this thing affects me is the air pollution. When the YCCC first got started I thought they were gonna close the tannery down. I thought we can't have that — there's gotta be a compromise so the creek can get cleaned up and the tannery can still run. Then the more I read about it, the more I thought, 'If the tannery has to go to clean up Yellow Creek, then the tannery has to go.'”

The group also looked for allies statewide. In May they hosted a two-day conference which revealed how strong and well-organized the group had become. It attracted a wide variety of participants ranging from city and county officials to Secretary Swigart to representatives of the Sierra Club and Audubon Society. Glaringly absent were tannery officials, but most of those who did show up pledged to work with the Concerned Citizens to clean up the pollution.

On July 26, 1982, YCCC members traveled to Washington to testify at hearings of the House Subcommittee on Water Resources concerning the Clean Water Act. They received extensive national media coverage and met with Ralph Nader's staff and other groups who pledged their support.

YCCC members also demanded a speedy cleanup in a special meeting with EPA officials. The officials said they planned to grant a NPDES permit to MSTP and to fund a new sewage plant; however, they refused to require compliance with regulations until after the plant was completed.

The Concerned Citizens instead proposed that EPA issue the permit and require immediate compliance. The group hoped to force the city to shut down the tannery until its wastes met the existing permit's restrictions, and to force the tannery to pay the costs of cleaning up its wastes rather than the city's water customers. The Concerned Citizens also questioned the need for a new facility. They

maintained that the existing sewage plant, with some improvements, could handle the city's waste load without a multi-million-dollar new facility — but only if the plant were not saddled with the tannery's highly toxic waste load. EPA set a November 18 hearing on the permit, and the Concerned Citizens started organizing to get people to the hearing.

The group also turned its attention to the most alarming aspect of the Yellow Creek peril: its effects on their health. With the technical help of volunteers from Vanderbilt University's Student Environmental Health Project, YCCC members went door to door through the community, interviewing more than 300 families about their health problems. The results were frightening.



“They all thought they had individual health problems — and they didn't. They were all in conjunction with one another. As astronomical as these problems are, it couldn't be coincidental.

To begin with my own: the doctors suggested I have a hysterectomy for a pre-cancerous condition. We doctored and did this and that for 10 years. Then our 34-year-old daughter came along with a complete hysterectomy.

The classic case is the only family that regularly swam in and ate fish out of the creek. They all have — even the 13-year-old girl — lumps in their breasts. They got one girl who's had a total mastectomy. She's got cancer — leukemia — spreading throughout her entire body. She's just waiting to die.

Her mother's had a hysterectomy for a pre-cancerous condition. She's had lumps taken out of her breasts. The father had heart surgery and has thyroid problems. Their children have deformities — eyes bad, parts of fingers missing, and this type of thing.

All down the creek you find women with miscarriages and total hysterectomies and so forth. You're

talking about young girls with problems. Mostly lumps in their breasts. Not only them, but their mothers also.

There isn't a family that's been missed by some type of cancer. That just doesn't happen. Diabetes is prevalent in almost every family. Why do so many people have diabetes?

The dividing line is 1965 [the year the tannery started its chrome tanning process]. After 1965 the percentage rate of disease is so much higher that there has to be some factor that's causing it. Cancer, breast lumps, birth defects, miscarriages — they're all noticeably higher.”

These horrifying findings prompted local health board official Dr. Emanuel Rader to ask the District Health Department to investigate the situation, and



the state government authorized a team from Atlanta's Center for Disease Control to investigate some of the diseases, particularly leukemia.

Shortly thereafter, the YCCC won another major victory: an unpolluted supply of water. In September, the state announced it would spend \$568,000 from a federal grant to construct a waterline to Yellow Creek by mid-1984; the Farmers Home Administration will fund the other \$285,000. Though hook-ups to the line will cost up to \$250, at least Yellow Creek residents will have a permanent supply of clean water.

Still, the Concerned Citizens knew the waterline would not end the pollution still spewing into the creek. The group continued to demand that the tannery foot its own waste bill. "The city's only in this mess because they

take the punishment for the tannery's irresponsibility," charged Larry Wilson.

Here the group had found an issue that united more Middlesboroites with the Concerned Citizens. The city had borrowed \$300,000 for repairs on its sewage plant, and the council had raised residential sewer rates an average of 400 percent; it had allegedly increased the tannery's bill only 100 percent, even though a consulting firm had found that the tannery was already paying far less than a fair sewage rate.

One thousand angry people packed an October 18 city council meeting to protest the new charges. City officials tried to blame the rate increase on the Concerned Citizens, but the crowd refused to buy their argument. A newly formed group — the Citizens for a Better Middlesboro — has gotten the

rate hike overturned in local court, but the city refuses to refund money collected under the new rate system.

With national attention riveted on Yellow Creek, irate Middlesboro citizens joined the Concerned Citizens for the November 18 EPA hearing on the sewage plant's NPDES permit. Hundreds of citizens packed a school cafeteria to demand that EPA finally clean up Yellow Creek. All the anger, fear and frustration YCCC members have felt during their long struggle spilled over. "If the existing permit had been *enforced*, we wouldn't be here tonight," snapped Gene Hurst.

To a standing ovation, YCCC members presented the following demands to EPA: that a new permit be issued and *enforced* within 90 days — with strict penalties for violations; that an



photo by Jackie Van Arda

MEMBERS OF YCCA INSPECT YELLOW CREEK, MAY, 1982

Dear City Councilmembers

I've asked you once or twice now
and I've asked you very nice now
to stop your durn pollution right away
But you ain't give me no answer
so I'd like to take this chance, sir
and I hope you'll sit and let me
have my say.

Now, I can't drink my water
and I really shouldn't oughta
use the stuff to wash my dishes or
my clothes

But since I ain't like you'uns
and I can't afford no new uns,
I'll just have to use the stuff and
hold my nose.

I'm the kind that loves a fishin'
and I've really been a missin'
Seeing catfish and them basses
big and fine
But if you saw a big un, one day,
you couldn't catch him no way
cause the water eats the hook right
off your line.

So my young'uns and my missis
have decided this is

the time for all of you to listen here
we're coming to your house
and will only leave when Yellow Creek
is clear.

— by Rick Huffman

Rick Huffman wrote this poem in the fall of 1981 when the Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens staged a sit-in and two-week picket at the Middlesboro City Hall to protest the city's inaction in enforcing its sewer use ordinance.

independent party be allowed to monitor the plant; and that an oversight committee including the Concerned Citizens monitor and study all testing. "If you cannot meet these requirements," concluded Larry Wilson, "then require the city to terminate the contract with the tannery and let it apply for its own NPDES permit."

On November 23, the EPA issued an order requiring the city to submit plans for cleaning up the creek and building a new treatment plant; violations of the order carried fines as high as \$10,000 and jail sentences of up to one year for city officials. Shortly thereafter, the agency also issued a new NPDES permit requiring more frequent monitoring; though the permit does not require an oversight committee, the EPA did offer to make all data from monitoring available to the YCCC.

Though for the most part pleased by what's now on paper — except for the fact that the EPA still isn't requiring the tannery to take care of its wastes — the Concerned Citizens are now waiting to see if EPA enforces its order. The city missed the first deadline for submitting plans for cleanup, and the Concerned Citizens want some action. "If EPA doesn't enforce the order, we're right back where we started," says Larry Wilson.

This time, however, the group has decided to pressure the EPA directly: it has filed a notice of intent to sue EPA if the agency doesn't prosecute the city for violating the November 23 deadline, and now must wait and see whether the EPA regional administrator finally takes strong action against the city. Meanwhile, the Concerned Citizens are continuing to organize and look for more allies in their multi-

faceted campaign to clean up Yellow Creek for good.

Though its saga is far from over, the Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens have maintained a positive spirit throughout their two-and-a-half-year-long struggle, refusing to give up despite the many delays, lengthy red tape and active opposition it has faced. One lifelong resident of the Yellow Creek community sums up what difference the Yellow Creek Concerned Citizens have made and how determined they are to carry on to victory.

HOTENSE QUILLEN



“This has been a longstanding issue. It has been handed down from one generation to the next. The foundation had already been laid, but I think it took this generation and its liberalism to bring us together.

People are saying, 'We're not gonna accept this any longer. We're gonna do something about it and this is the only way we can do it — to form a group and start to work on it.'

We've come an awful long way with Yellow Creek. Like the people we've been working with on the health survey. They had just accepted things. Now they're beginning to see that it doesn't have to be that way at all.

If you have a group like the YCCC, people start looking to you. They've had the desire all the time, but seems like you have to form a group before people come to you for help.

We're gonna win. We're not gonna quit, even if it takes us years. We need immediate relief, but we'll be fighting from now on — as long as I live. And hopefully if we don't get it straightened up somebody will be fighting beyond me. We'll never quit it. □

Michael Staub is a graduate student at Brown University. He spent the summer of 1982 living in Bell County working on an oral history project sponsored by the Student Environmental Health Project and the Center for Health Services of Vanderbilt University.

We also wish to thank Chris Nichols and Amy Eppler of Mountain Life and Work for their assistance in editing this article.

SOUTHERN BOOKS AT HOME ON CAMPUS

“These are all of my notes and jottings,” says the quixotic Ignatius J. Reilly near the end of *A Confederacy of Dunces*, the madcap novel by John Kennedy Toole that captured the 1980 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. “We must never let them fall into the hands of my mother. She may make a fortune from them. It would be too ironic.”

In the uncanny and inexplicable way in which life sometimes imitates art, Reilly’s “notes and jottings” — that is to say, Toole’s *Dunces* — did, in fact, fall into the hands of the author’s mother, and she did make a fortune of sorts from them, and that turn of events was indeed too ironic for words.

The story of the late and sudden rise of *Dunces* is familiar by now to most book lovers: Toole, frustrated and depressed by 10 years of failure in his search for a publisher, gave up in despair and committed suicide. His mother took up the cause and spent another fruitless decade continuing the search. Finally, she persuaded novelist Walker Percy to read the manuscript. He liked it, and after some frustrations of his own, he found a home for the



book — not in the family of prestigious New York publishers, but at Louisiana State University (LSU) Press, near Percy’s and the late Mr. Toole’s own Louisiana home.

The literary and financial success that followed the publication of Toole’s work was made all the more remarkable by the fact that neither LSU nor any other university press in the nation has built an impressive record of publishing fiction; most, in fact, have never published a single novel.

In the opinion of many university

press editors and publishers, what happened to *Dunces* was an anomaly, a stroke of beginner’s luck. Even Leslie Phillabaum, the director of LSU Press, candidly characterizes the book’s success as “a fluke.” Far from crowing about the victory of an institutional David over the Goliaths of the publishing industry, Phillabaum and his counterparts in the universities insist they don’t have the resources to compete with the big-league commercial publishers.

It is no doubt true that the so-called trade press — the commercial book industry in New York and elsewhere — has a corner on the fiction market, notwithstanding the achievements of an occasional novel like *Dunces*. But in the field of non-fiction, the dominance is not so complete. The university presses have always done rather well with non-fiction, winning some national awards and occasionally even posting impressive sales. In the marketplace, their share of the bookbuyer’s dollar still amounts to only pennies, but qualitatively, they are competitive with — and sometimes superior to — the commercial companies.

Now, with book publishing in

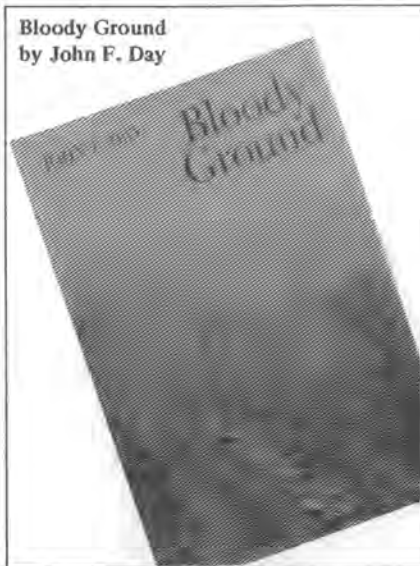
general suffering a severe depression, the university presses as a group seem relatively more stable than their commercial opposites; some, in fact, are doing quite well, and a few may actually be in better shape than ever.

There are some obvious explanations for this pattern. To begin with, most of the academic presses are small, subsidized operations that deal in modest numbers (whether titles or copies in print) — and on such a scale, even a little bit of improvement is very noticeable. Further, the presses clearly are moving toward more commercial or popular (as distinct from scholarly) books, and these, in combination with books of state and regional interest, have boosted sales. The university presses also are advertising, promoting and marketing their wares more aggressively than they have in the past — perhaps because the universities themselves are in financial straits and are thus unable to guarantee continued high subsidies to their publishing houses. (If university presses are in fact enjoying a measure of success, it is worth repeating that the improvement is relative; some are doing better than others, but none are doing well enough to prosper without support from their parent institutions.)

Increasingly, experienced writers of nonfiction whose works formerly were published in the commercial houses of New York and other cities are either being turned away there or are turning away themselves in search of calmer and more stable (though potentially less profitable) outlets. At bottom it is a case of numbers: many books that were considered marginal in the trade press are becoming sales leaders in the low-volume university press market.

These signs of change in the book publishing industry can be precisely illustrated by focusing on a single subject area; books about the South. While Southern subjects have been especially hard hit in the general decline of New York publishing, the Southern titles emanating from university presses appear to be rising in both quantity and commercial quality. Almost unnoticed, academic houses have become the primary publishers of nonfiction books about the South — and included on these contemporary lists are a number of books that would have been published with pride and some success in New York a few years ago.

Bloody Ground
by John F. Day



Academic publishing in the United States is principally a twentieth-century development; only four presses now in existence have operated continuously since before 1900. Johns Hopkins, the oldest, was begun in 1878, followed by Chicago, Columbia and California. By 1920 there were 12; by the end of World War II, 35. Included in the latter group were the first Southern university presses — at Duke, Georgia, LSU and North Carolina. Now, of the approximately 80 academic presses operating across the nation, about one fourth are in the South.

The traditional function of the presses has been to promote scholarship by publishing esoteric volumes with great academic merit but little sales potential. Universities have subsidized the enterprises, largely in recognition of their contributions to scholarly inquiry and to institutional prestige. Almost from the first, however, the presses have tended to include some non-scholarly titles on their lists — books of state and regional interest, and books for lay readers.

But the rising cost of producing expensive books that few people buy has put all university presses under a financial strain and put a small number of them out of business. For the survivors, the only logical response to the threat of extinction is to increase

revenues, and most of the presses have pursued that objective in two ways: by adding still more commercial titles to their lists and by promoting them more vigorously through the usual channels of book marketing.

By pure coincidence, the post-civil rights, post-Carter-era decline of trade books on Southern subjects has come about just as the university presses have gone looking for commercial titles to save them from financial jeopardy. The result is shaping up as a happy marriage of convenience between some experienced authors with new manuscripts but no publishers, and some nonprofit publishers unaccustomed to five-figure sales but stimulated by such prospects.

The commercial books bring in revenue which helps to replace declining subsidies and covers some of the losses from low-sales scholarly volumes. In return, the authors get quality editing and printing, books that stay in print, and occasionally enough income to make the undertaking seem worthwhile. In the midst of the book depression, these alliances are among the few signs of promise for the future.

“It’s not just books about the South that fall into this pattern,” says LSU’s Leslie Phillabaum. “This is a nationwide phenomenon. All kinds of books that would have been on the commercial trade lists a few years ago are not being taken on at all by the big houses now. But a sales volume that they would consider marginal or modest is very respectable in university press terms. We’re picking up some of these titles, and they help to carry the scholarly books that still make up about 85 percent of our catalog.”

Carol Orr, director of the University of Tennessee Press, sees this trend as a distinct benefit to all concerned. “We now have a chance to get authors and manuscripts that we couldn’t have attracted 10 years ago,” she says. “The commercial houses took more chances then than they do now — but they weren’t necessarily successful. Many of the books lost money, and many of the authors were unhappy. There’s a certain kind of book that university presses can handle better than commercial presses — and now, we’re getting more of them.”

One such book now on the Tennes-

see list is called *The Celluloid South: Hollywood and the Southern Myth*. Written by Edward D.C. Campbell, Jr., a Virginia historian, it examines the development of the "Hollywood Southern," which, like the "Western," was a genre based on romanticized mythology. The New York publishers to whom Campbell spoke about his manuscript "wanted a more popular version of the story," he says. On the advice of a friend, he took it instead to Tennessee, and now he considers himself "very fortunate" to have made that choice.

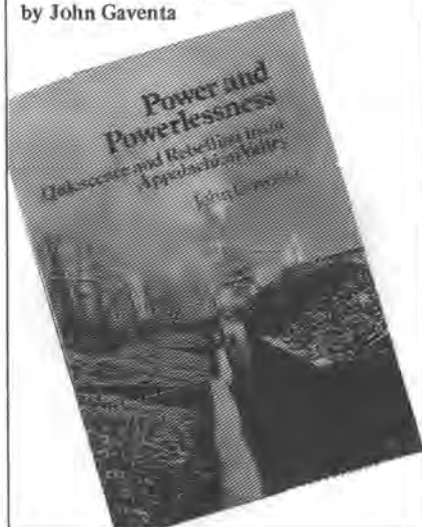
Since its publication in December, 1981, the book has sold more than half of its initial press run of 3,000 copies — not enough to have kept it alive on a New York list, but enough to make both Campbell and his Tennessee editors pleased with their relationship. "I couldn't have asked for more from them," he says — and Carol Orr happily returns the compliment.

Outside the region, one of several presses with a long-time interest in Southern subjects is at the University of Illinois. Director Richard Wentworth now has four country music books on his list, including biographies of three historic figures in the field: Bob Wills, Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams. The press also is reprinting *Voices from the Mountains*, a 1975 book on the music of Appalachia by Guy and Candie Carawan; in spite of hardcover and paperback sales totaling more than 12,000 copies, New York publisher Alfred A. Knopf allowed the book to go out of print.

Wentworth says three to five of the 50 titles Illinois publishes each year are sales leaders that help to offset losses incurred by most of the others. These manuscripts, variously labeled commercial, trade, regional, specialized or popular, are more accessible to university presses than they used to be. And, says Wentworth, "I think we do well with them — often better than the commercial houses."

Another Appalachian book that Wentworth is pleased to have is *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*, by John Gaventa. An incisive portrait of the Clear Fork Valley in the moun-

Power and Powerlessness
by John Gaventa



tains of Kentucky and Tennessee, the book has won four major honors, including the top award of the American Political Science Association. Originally published by Oxford University Press in England, it was picked up in this country by Illinois after the autonomous New York division of Oxford (and the University of Tennessee Press) turned it down. (The British Oxford Press was established in 1478; the American version still has "University" in its title, but it functions in essence as a commercial house, issuing several hundred titles each year.)

Gaventa, who is associated with the Highlander Center in Tennessee, is more pleased with the handling of his book by Illinois than by Oxford. Another book which Gaventa helped to compile and edit — a painstaking land ownership survey of 80 central Appalachian counties — will be published in 1983 by the University Press of Kentucky. (See excerpts in *Southern Exposure*, January/February 1982.)

One more book with commercial potential that has found its way to Illinois is a critical study of the eastern Kentucky coal industry by Harry Caudill, the well-known author of *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*. "Half a dozen years ago, this book would have gone to New York," says Wentworth. Caudill, now a professor of history at the University of Kentucky, did in fact seek a commercial publisher for his manuscript, only to find that Appalachia had become passe in the East.

He then took it to the University

Press of Kentucky, where after lengthy consideration a contractual agreement could not be reached. (One chapter of the Caudill book deals with the contemporary "moguls and power brokers" of Kentucky industry, including former Governor Bert T. Combs and William B. Sturgill, who happens to be the chair of the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees.) Caudill finally took the book to Illinois, where it will be published in 1983.

Unlike commercial houses, university presses do not customarily entrust to individual editors the responsibility for making contracts with authors. A peer-review method often is used, with outside readers or committees of scholars holding the power to make or break a manuscript. Says one anonymous writer who has viewed the process from both ends: "It's a bad system, an 'old boy' network that's manipulated all the time — but it cuts both ways. It can kill a controversial book one day and save one the next."

Seen in their institutional context, university presses probably would be considered foolhardy if they made a practice of going their own oxen; in any case, they seldom do. Harry Caudill insists that he holds no ill will toward the Kentucky press for denying him a contract. "They've got two of my books on their list," he says, "and I thoroughly enjoyed working with them. On the new book I'm happy to be associated with a fine press like Illinois."

Kentucky has a number of prized titles on Appalachia — including, most recently, John Day's *Bloody Ground*, a stark, grim portrait of Depression-era Appalachia written by a Lexington newspaper reporter in 1941. Originally published by Doubleday, Doran & Co. in New York, the book was lost in the turmoil of World War II. Forty years later, Kentucky resurrected the classic and sandwiched it between contemporary comments by two of the state's most respected historians and writers — Thomas D. Clark and the self-same Harry Caudill.

Another writer of Appalachian social and economic observations,

David E. Whisnant, has seen one of his books bounce from university to commercial presses and back for almost a decade. Now a professor of American studies at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County, Whisnant was living in North Carolina in the early 1970s when he reached an agreement with the University of Tennessee Press to write *Modernizing the Mountaineer*, a hard-hitting look at the exploitation of Appalachia by a succession of public and private individuals, groups and agencies. Whisnant spared no one, friend or foe, in his assessment of Appalachia's "saviors" — and not least the Tennessee Valley Authority, which has its headquarters in Knoxville, a few blocks from the University of Tennessee. After many months of delay, the author was told by UT Press officials (predecessors of Carol Orr) to take out his chapter on TVA. When he refused, his contract was canceled.

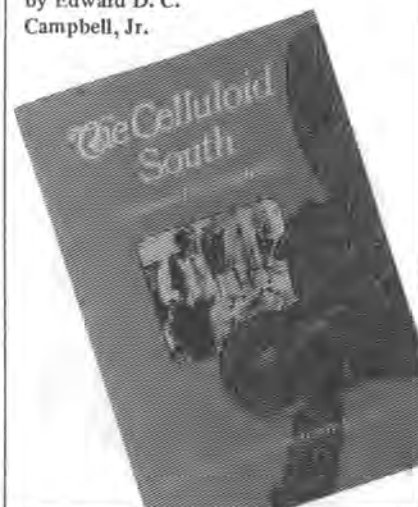
From there, Whisnant went to Bert Franklin, Inc., a New York publisher and reprint house. Another contract was negotiated and the book went into production, but for reasons that remain unclear, finished copies were never put on the market. On the advice of a lawyer, Whisnant finally withdrew the book and offered it to Appalachian Consortium Press in Boone, North Carolina.

After a delay of nearly six years, the book is at last available, thanks to the efforts of the consortium. For the past 11 years, this association of seven Appalachian colleges and universities, three state and federal agencies and a regional historical society has published an average of three titles a year as part of its diverse activities in behalf of regional advancement.

"The consortium has done all it could to save the book from total extinction," says Whisnant. "It never would have made it without them." In 1983, the University of North Carolina Press will publish a new book by Whisnant — a study of the politics of culture in Appalachia.

Appalachia is by no means the only Southern topic to capture the attention of university presses in recent years; scores of new books about the

The Celluloid South
by Edward D. C.
Campbell, Jr.



South appear annually. Most of them are noted briefly in the back pages of each issue of this magazine. Here, in short summary, is a random list of recent titles on a wide array of subjects:

- *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching*, by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (Columbia University Press, 1979). First as an award-winning dissertation and now as a book, this biography by a University of North Carolina historian and oral history program director illuminates the life of a courageous feminist of the 1920s and '30s who emboldened white women to join her in a movement to prevent lynching in the South. (Earlier, Columbia published *In Search of the Silent South: Southern Liberals and the Race Issue*, by Morton Sosna — a broader examination of white liberalism in the South in the early decades of this century.)

- *Tomorrow is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1936*, by Anne Goodwyn Jones (LSU Press, 1981). Combining biography and literary analysis, this book by an Allegheny College English professor examines the lives and works of seven white women writers of the South: Augusta Jane Evans, Grace King, Kate Chopin, Mary Johnston, Ellen Glasgow, Frances Newman and Margaret Mitchell. The conclusion: that they and the characters they created were shaped and bound by the unwritten code of Southern ladyhood. (A more recent issue from LSU is *One South: An Ethnic Approach to Re-*

gional Culture — a collection of essays on regional identity by University of North Carolina sociologist John Shelton Reed. LSU also published in 1982 *A Band of Prophets: The Vanderbilt Agrarians After Fifty Years* — proceedings from a 1980 conference on the Agrarian phenomenon, edited and introduced by Vanderbilt University professors William C. Havard and Walter Sullivan.)

- *Why the South Will Survive*, by 15 Southerners (University of Georgia Press, 1981). In self-conscious emulation of the style of the Agrarians' manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand*, another wave of Southern white men rise, in the words of editor Clyde N. Wilson, in "unembarrassed embrace of the notion that the South is a national asset, a priceless and irreplaceable treasure that must be conserved." (Former Mississippi representative and TVA director Frank E. Smith has edited and published a similar collection of essays at the Yazoo Press in Vicksburg, Mississippi. The book is called *I'll Take My Stand*, by 22 Southerners.)

- *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, by Clayborne Carson (Harvard University Press, 1981). Stanford University historian Carson spent almost 10 years pulling together the story of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, from its emergence at the end of the 1950s to its dissolution at the beginning of the 1970s. His analysis is sympathetic but even-handed and carefully researched.

- *Dixie's Forgotten People: The South's Poor Whites*, by J. Wayne Flynt (Indiana University Press, 1979). As a systematic search for definition and understanding of this Southern minority group, Auburn University historian Flynt's study uses oral history, statistics, synthesized research, photographs and the author's own sensitive interpretations to cover seldom-explored territory.

- *The Idea of the American South, 1920-1941*, by Michael O'Brien (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979). In the tradition of W.J. Cash's classic *The Mind of the South*, historian O'Brien pursues a variation on the same theme, examining in particular the conflict between the so-called liberal sociology of Chapel Hill and the conservative aesthetics of Nashville —

Howard W. Odum et al. versus the Agrarians and their descendants. It was — and is — a lively debate.

However much the university presses may have gained from the surrender by commercial houses of marginal books in general and Southern books in particular, it is unrealistic to expect that they will ever be able to do what the trade press did in its heyday. For one thing, the university presses generally lack the resources to produce and market books in great volume. For another — especially ironic in this “marketplace of ideas” — political realities sometimes place limits on their freedom of the press, limits that their commercial counterparts seldom face.

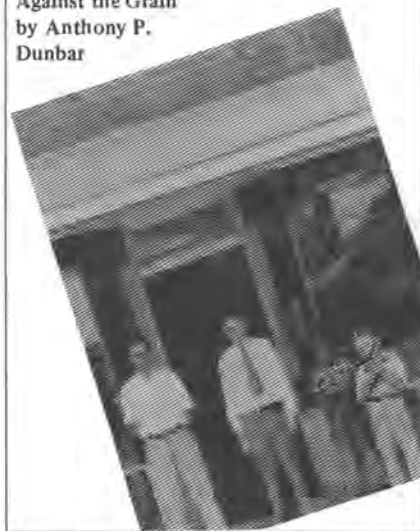
University presses also must continue to produce mostly scholarly works that are frequently expensive to issue and rarely pay for themselves. The combination of high production costs and low potential sales inevitably results in jacket prices that border on the prohibitive. Almost all of the hardcover nonfiction mentioned above is priced in excess of \$16. Two of the books — Jacquelyn Hall's *Revolt Against Chivalry* and Clayborne Carson's *In Struggle* — cost over \$20, and one — the book on women writers by Anne Jones — sells for \$37.50.

“Volume for volume, our prices are competitive with the commercial houses,” says Carol Orr of the University of Tennessee Press, “but there's no way we can get 1,000 or 2,000 copies of a book for the same unit price as someone who's producing 10,000 or 20,000.”

The experience of one more writer offers a good summary of both the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary university publishing.

Anthony P. Dunbar's *Against the Grain: Southern Radicals and Prophets, 1929-1959* was published in 1981 by the University Press of Virginia. Dunbar, whose two previous books were published commercially, began this book about 10 years ago as a moonlighting venture and kept pursuing it while working for a succession of civil-rights and social-action organizations in the South. He talked to Pantheon and Doubleday about his

Against the Grain
by Anthony P.
Dunbar



project, but neither was interested in buying it. LSU Press also turned it down. Finally, on the advice of an editor, he took it to Virginia.

In its first year, *Against the Grain* sold out its initial printing of 1,000 copies; an even smaller second printing was produced, and most of them have also been sold. Reviews have been uniformly favorable. The book has received an award from the Unitarian Universalist Church, and it was among three finalists for the 1982 Robert F. Kennedy book award. For a carefully documented book issued in very modest numbers by a small press, it hasn't done badly at all.

“I take some satisfaction from the fact that the University Press of Virginia published this book about some controversial people who were mistakenly rejected by Virginia and the South in their day,” says Dunbar, but he avoids any criticism of the press. “I assume a sharecropper mentality on that subject,” he explains with a smile. “The rule is, ‘Speak no ill of your publisher, or anyone else's publisher, because you might be going to them sometime with your hat in your hand.’”

But criticism from the author is not necessary to expose the Virginia press's green-eyeshade-and-arms-and-ambands approach to the contemporary practice of book publishing that virtually guarantees its authors — and, of course, the press itself — a poor showing in the marketplace.

Inexplicably, the dust jacket on Dunbar's book bears his name and the title only on the spine; the cover has a photograph but no words at all.

Inside, the book is well designed and edited, but the silence of the jacket more than offsets that good effect.

In the critical marketing area, most bookstores and distributors have shunned the book because Virginia offers a discount of only 20 percent — half the rate now considered standard. Review copies also have been scarce (a written request for one to aid in the preparation of this article brought no response), and promotional efforts by the publisher can only be described as extremely limited.

These shortcomings are in no sense limited to the University Press of Virginia; a good many other presses are also behind the times. Speaking generally, Dunbar summarizes the advantage still held by the commercial presses:

“If I had a new book to sell, I'd start again in New York, in the hope of reaching more readers. That's what people write books for; writing for the ages may yield some satisfaction, but not much. A book has to have lots of readers to be successful — and it's a rare thing, almost a fluke, for a university press to get a big audience.” □

John Egerton is a Nashville-based freelance writer. His fifth book, Generations: An American Family, will be published in 1983 by the University Press of Kentucky, after being turned down by more than a dozen commercial publishers.

The Plantation Mistress

Her working life

By Catherine Clinton

When Catherine Clinton studied history as an undergraduate at Harvard, she was intrigued and fascinated with the primary sources she read which shed light on the lives of women in the ante-bellum South — women who, she soon discovered, were ominously missing from virtually every page of recommended secondary sources and respected scholarship. As a graduate student faced with the task of choosing a dissertation topic, she felt a fierce desire to fill the stony silence. This January, Pantheon Books will publish Clinton's book on *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South*.

Concentrating on the seven seaboard states of the Deep South, and the years 1780 to 1835, Clinton drew from an abundance of sources to gather data. She examined some 500 manuscript collections in 24 archives across the U.S., in addition to preparing a statistical study of 750 members of the ante-bellum planter class. Diaries, personal letters and family correspondence are her most-used sources, for they allow us to share in the women's most private feelings and thoughts about their lives. Other sources include unpublished manuscripts, genealogies, reports, physicians' files, wills and the like. Her subjects form an elite group — women on plantations with at least 20 slaves — and her study is a counterpoint to the vast literature on the Southern planter.

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illustration by Jacob Roquet

The result is a well-researched, readable historical text that examines the abstract concept of "woman" in an attempt to explore and advance the theory that gender is as essential a factor as race in comprehending the complexity of social relations in the South. Moreover, Clinton reveals that plantation mistresses were in many ways as much an economic commodity for white males as slaves.

Of course, they had the precious advantage of being free in a slave society and were accorded the privileges of their color and class despite their gender. As Clinton says in her opening chapter, "Stereotypes and psychological stresses were severe handicaps, but one cannot equate the plight of the plantation mistress with the brutal dehumanization of slaves. Yet the nature and extent of women's oppression is revealing for the history of whites and blacks, since white slaveowners refined systematic and sometimes similar methods of keeping blacks and women excluded from spheres of power, and often employed near-identical ideological warfare against them."

Clinton's 12 chapters cover a broad range of topics. Having established early on that white women formed an oppressed group, Clinton explores such subjects as ante-bellum family relations in the aristocratic class; sex, marriage and the double standard; the dual moral code of Southern patriarchy; and women's health problems.

Southern Exposure here presents excerpts of her chapter exploring the working lives of plantation mistresses.

While visiting the home of an ante-bellum Southern planter, one visitor was charmed by the grace and hospitality of the mistress. She was warm, gentle and refined in her manner. He found her a genial hostess and a model of what he expected "the Southern lady" to be. Having gained the permission of his host to stroll around the plantation alone during his visit, the stranger one day spied his host's wife hard at work. The matron was considerably disarrayed; hoops removed from her skirt, she was bent over a salting barrel, up to her elbows in brine. As he was about to approach her, the gentleman realized he faced a delicate situation. To fail to greet her might seem rude, but to acknowledge her would put the woman in an awkward position. He had essentially caught his hostess behind the scenes, accidentally violating the rules by wandering backstage. Thus he ambled by without a direct glance. This would have been an insult in the normal course of events, but as an acceptable outcome it reveals the absurdity of the myth-ridden South. A guest passes by the mistress of the plantation, paying her less attention than he would a slave. Exalted imagery and an unwillingness to cope with reality when it conflicted with the ideal created this eccentric world.

Within the perimeters of the Cotton Kingdom, planters created their own moral and political universe, a biracial slave society whose symbols and values were vastly differ-

ent from those of the North. First and foremost, manual labor and physical work were disdained. The Southern lady was a symbol of gentility and refinement for plantation culture, designed to fill the requisites of chauvinist stereotype by embracing those qualities slaveowners wished to promote, even though the practical needs of plantation life cast her in quite a different role. The clash of myth and reality was monumental.

The stately, pillared mansion at the end of a winding, tree-lined road was another symbol of the plantation South. In addition to the Big House, most Southern estates also included extensive outbuildings: barns, stables, workshops and warehouses. Slave cabins were built at a convenient distance from the master's home. The Big House often had a detached kitchen, and on larger estates separate smokehouses and storehouses were erected. The "household" thus extended far beyond the walls of the Big House and required upkeep and daily work as well as the care and feeding of all those, both black and white, who lived and worked on the plantation. This was the plantation mistress's domain.

The planter's wife was in charge not merely of the two- or three-story mansion but of the entire spectrum of domestic operations throughout the estate, from food and clothing to the physical and spiritual care of both her white family and her husband's slaves. The borders of her domain might extend from the mansion's locked pantry to the slave-quarter hospital and the slaughtering pen for the hogs. Very little escaped the attention of the white mistress, and most plantation problems were brought to her unless, being crop-related, they fell within the sphere of the overseer.

And, generally, the larger the plantation, the more extensive the household cares and responsibilities that devolved upon the mistress. Most women began their careers as plantation mistresses in profound ignorance. Parents lectured daughters during their adolescent years on the necessity of being good housekeepers, but as young girls, Southern women were seldom trained to keep house; education at home and in academies instead emphasized intellectual and artistic accomplishments. When females were taught such rudimentary skills as sewing, they concentrated their efforts on samplers and other ornamental needlework rather than on the practical application of such ladylike accomplishments. One planter wrote to his recent-



"I will not recount all my troubles, you can well imagine them if you recall that hateful season, the putting up of Pork."

ly married daughter: "You will have to study house-keeping. You are too young to have learnt much of it. . . . It is a fault in female education housekeeping is not made more a part of it; book learning is not sufficient; the kitchen and dairy must be attended to as well as the drawing room."

The ante-bellum plantation mistress shared common work patterns with many other women of her era. Like all married women, she was subject to the demands of her husband on her time and energies. Like all mothers, she performed long and arduous tasks connected with child care. As a housekeeper, the plantation mistress undertook numerous chores similar to those of her Northern or urban or impoverished sister. Like her New England counterpart, the planter's wife managed a large household.

Even without the work created by their husbands' slaveowning, the numerous tasks of ante-bellum housekeeping kept plantation mistresses busy: gardening, dairy activities, salting pork, preserving fruits and vegetables, mixing medicines, making candles, soap, rugs, pillows, linen, bedding and so on. Women believed that their work was never done, and their assiduous daily activity, begun most often at dawn, testified in favor of such claims. Complaints flowed freely in family letters. Many women felt that plantation labors combined with family demands drove them to a state of near-collapse. One woman confessed: "I do not know if I have any positive disease, but I have my own proper share of nervousness, weakness, swimming in the head and a dull sleepy sensation. . . . My family claims untiring attention." Women's only respite came on the Sabbath; for six days of the week, a ceaseless stream of household activities overwhelmed them.

Care of slaves was the plantation mistress's constant chore. She distributed dairy foods and grain produced under her direction, often supervising the fields that supplied the Big House pantry and the storeroom for slave food. Even if the overseer supervised these plots, the final responsibility for feeding all those on the plantation still rested with the plantation mistress. Gardens were a major source of food for white and black, and women worked the family plots of fruits and vegetables diligently. Even though slaves tended their own gardens on many plantations, the planters were responsible for staples; their wives doled out milk, pork and corn to slaves in much the same way that they parceled out their own daily household supplies from the family storeroom.

Most plantations supported an extensive dairy operation. The mistress supervised all stock kept for food (as opposed to work animals). As few plantations boasted an ice house, the processing of dairy products was a constant and delicate operation.

Many women kept detailed records of their planting. Eliza Person Mitchell's gardening diary for 1834 contains 51 entries. Her listing for May gives some idea of the plan-

tation mistress's agenda:

May 4th planted out cabbage plants, 6th Strawberries for tea, 16th at night a killing frost, corn, cimbelines, cotton, snaps and everything killed, 17th planted early snaps, planted salsafa planted cimbelines, 22nd planted sugar beets planted snaps, 23rd Manured the Black Raspberry vines with Woodpile Manure, 23rd Strawberries dressed over grass and weeds taken out, 23rd the Weather very dry indeed, everything burning up in Garden.

In addition to growing the food, the plantation mistresses were preoccupied during summer and fall with preserving and pickling their gardens' yields.

The winter months were equally taxing. As one woman lamented in January, 1833: "I will not weary you by recounting all my solitary troubles, you can well imagine them if you will recall that hateful season to all housekeepers (the putting up of Pork)." December was the month set aside for hog killing. The mistress supervised the long and complicated series of jobs that the process entailed and actually performed certain tasks herself.

First, the animal was hit over the head with an ax to stun it, and its throat was slit. The hog was then hoisted up and dipped into a kettle of scalding water, after which the bristles were scraped off and saved for making brushes, and the carcass hung head down from a tree, to be disemboweled and halved. Male slaves did the dirty work of the slaughter; the mistress would take little part in these preliminary activities.

Once the carcass was prepared, however, the mistress took over. She emptied and scraped clean the small intestines, which were later stuffed with sausage. She processed the fat into lard, and chopped and seasoned the back meat, funneling it into skins for smoking. The ham shoulders and bacon flanks went into a barrel of brine to be corned. Thus the mistress processed each portion of the hog, down to the chitlings (intestines), into food. One plantation mistress complained that after salting meat for hours "all the skin was nearly off my hands" — a far cry from the privileged "lily-white hands" celebrated in plantation legend.

Candlemaking and soapmaking were time-consuming chores for the Southern housekeeper. Although slaves occasionally participated in the soapmaking, plantation mistresses thought the dipping of candles was too complex to trust to anyone but themselves. A skillful woman could produce in a day's work 30 dozen candles, which would provide a month's supply of candlelight. Mistresses spun the down from milkweed pods into wicks. Frugality led women to store their candles in boxes kept under lock and key.

Although many planters were able to purchase goods such as furniture, crystal, cutlery and lamps, many of the home furnishings and household necessities were handmade by the plantation mistress. A young wife commented in 1829: "Two years ago I commenced the mighty job of making a carpet — a rag carpet, without being at all aware of the difficulties of the task. It is the most unseemly object imaginable." Another homemaker exulted to a friend: "I have made an excellent Mattress which I am proud of, as being so much the work of my own hands, also made all my Pickles and catsup, preserves and different

kinds and drying Peaches in different ways and such like things." In early autumn, geese were killed and plucked. Women sorted the feathers — large ones for beds and small ones for pillows — then fashioned the quills into pens and the birds into Sunday dinners.

Though it surprises us to think of "sheltered" women grappling with such heavy burdens, women in agricultural societies throughout time have generally been charged with food production. The plantation may have been an expanded, near-industrial operation, but planters still expected women to fulfill this role. Despite wealth and status, plantation mistresses followed the tradition of their colonial forebears; almost all females isolated on rural farms learned to be inventive and thrifty, developing uses for everything and seeing that nothing was wasted. Planters constantly voiced their financial worries and looked to women to reduce them through efficient and innovative management.

With so many duties to perform and a multiplicity of roles to fulfill, the plantation mistress could easily be overwhelmed by responsibilities when she took up housekeeping. Mother and sisters often supplied goods as well as advice to the novice homemaker. A matron wrote to her newlywed sister:

I believe I forgot to tell you that I should give you two pairs of my linen pillowcases. You will find them with the beds, Supposing that a trunk might be useful to you I put the blankets up in one. Phill will give you the key. I put a dimity counterpane in it too. You will receive a box of candles, a box of hard soap, twelve hams, half a dozen brooms, and one of my low posted bedsteads.

Most young plantation mistresses depended upon their female relatives for actual assistance, as well. Mothers and aunts, more experienced housekeepers, paid visits to novice plantation mistresses to help them "settle in." Their help and encouragement proved invaluable. Friends and neighbors might also give aid, but an aunt's visit during the summer months when jars needed filling for the winter ahead, or a mother's help during the hog killing, rescued many a young housekeeper from dreadful straits.

Housecleaning was an unpleasant series of tasks. Although she had a staff of house slaves, sometimes headed by a black steward or housekeeper, the plantation mistress regularly inspected all activities that she did not herself supervise or perform. Wives of Southern planters did not participate in such basic tasks as laundering or dishwashing, but they took on other menial chores. Wives with husbands in business also supervised the care of their husbands' offices in town. An exasperated housekeeper reported: "It was a hard day's work for myself and three other servants, the dusting and sweeping of books, papers, inkstands, etc. etc."

In addition to furnishing and maintaining their homes, women supplied their own families and others on the plantation with clothing. Although mothers taught their daughters ornamental sewing as girls, few brides were accomplished seamstresses. Matrons soon learned from female relatives to knit and sew for their husbands and children, as well as their slaves. The production of linen, counterpanes and quilts was women's responsibility. Although the quilting bee afforded an entertaining diversion for the plantation mistress, it was but one of her many sewing activities in the midst of numerous domestic projects. The lament of the overworked seamstress was a common theme in letters. A North Carolina woman confided to her sister in 1837: "I have about two months sewing to do. I never was so tired of sewing in my life. My fingers are worn out."

Shoes and socks were less troublesome to produce than clothing. If slave artisans did not make shoes on the plantation, mistresses ordered footwear from local merchants for their husbands' slaves. Mistresses rarely purchased stockings, and instead knit them themselves. Virginia mistress Ann Cocke described her activities to her mother in 1811: "My hands are as full as possible. We have completed 25 out of the number of 40 pair of socks which are necessary for the crop hands." The Southern woman most often carried on her knitting at intervals during her many daily activities. A stocking took 185 stitches per row, on the average, and most plantation mistresses could manage to fit in 150 rows per day when knitting at a steady pace. At that rate, a single sock took six days; a housewife could complete a pair of stockings every two weeks. At the very least, each slave required one pair of stockings a year.

If a woman was mistress of a plantation with 30 slaves, she was able to manage all the knitting for her family and slaves herself, working at a relaxed pace. But if her husband owned more than 30 slaves, the mistress had to concentrate on knitting for prolonged periods of time or train the black women in the house to knit their own stockings and those of other slaves.

The recipe books left by Southern women reflect the industriousness of their lives. The record of Martha B. Eppes demonstrates her varied activities: included are how to make scarlet dye, the number of blankets distributed to slaves and recipes for grape wine and "instantaneous beer." Eliza Person Mitchell's housekeeping book contains 20 pages of recipes, notes on pickling and preserving, a record of soapmaking, a formula for furniture polish and instruction on the making of paint. But even more striking, all recipe books included, side by side with directions for mixing cakes and puddings, medical remedies.

On large plantations, certain areas were designated as hospitals and nurseries. Elderly slave women served as nurses and attendants. As their recipe books tell us, the



Most plantations supported an extensive dairy operation. The mistress supervised all stock kept for food (as opposed to work animals).

plantation mistress had to assume responsibility as ministering physician as well as housekeeper. She made daily rounds to the cabins of sick slaves or to the buildings set aside for the invalid and infant members of the slave community. Women frequently commented on and complained about the trouble of slave illnesses in their correspondence. They doctored the slaves both as humane plantation mistresses, seeing to the needs of their black charges, and in their capacity as slaveowners' wives, looking out for their husbands' property interests.

During the post-Revolutionary era, many planters elected to political office or forced to travel extensively on business confidently left the management of their estates to their wives, as well as to overseers. Although they continued to supervise plantation finances — at home or from abroad — many planters allowed their wives total discretion in business affairs during their absence. Even when masters maintained control over planting, crops and other concerns through postal directives, the daily decisions and business of farming were of necessity left in capable women's hands when planters were called away. A variety of sources suggest that plantation mistresses were familiar with all the facets of farm management. Without the interim management of females, Southern plantations would have suffered irreparable damage. Men expected and depended upon women's abilities.

A few women resisted the responsibilities shifted onto them by their absent husbands. Subjected to long periods of isolation on her husband's Louisiana plantation, Diana Dunbar made her own decisions about farming operations but did not shy away from expressing her complaints:

I am sorry you do not find my letters so pretty as they used to be; but if you knew, my love, how I am vex and plagu'd with a set of worthless servants you woul'd not be surpris'd at it, but I will make you uneasy with my complaints: I have told you already about the plantation & the Tobacco. Indeed my love there is too much to do for the few people you left. As I thought it woul'd be too long before I could get an answer from you, concerning hiring a hand to help in making up the Tobacco, I have hired one today.

Dunbar vacillated between anger at her husband's demands and the desire to please him with an efficient job:

You seem, my Dear, to expect we have a deal of time upon our hands, to do everything necessary about the plantation. I would not have you expect too much for fear you may be disappointed; tho' my love, if you will consider everything rightly I don't think you will complain. . . . I would willingly follow your advice and not go in the sun if I could avoid it, but there is many things to do about a place that you men don't think of.

The plantation mistress was often burdened by a husband's numerous directives, while being admonished not to exert herself. Most women accepted the inherent tensions of their role and struggled when necessary to manage successfully both the household and the plantation overall.

During the master's absence, financial concerns added to the burden of planting and often posed a more serious threat to the mistress's ability to cope. Most wives sent a list of questions as well as a flurry of complaints to their absent husbands, and it is clear that, despite their varying degrees of ability, many suffered a lack of confidence in their business acumen, particularly when questions involved areas outside the perimeters of the plantation itself. Law and social custom reinforced these psychological constraints. Socialization from birth trained women to defer to males; decision making outside the domestic sphere proved difficult for plantation mistresses. Some dealt masterfully, such as a matron who won her husband's approval in 1806: "What you mention concerning the purchase of pork and other matters meet with my approbation as indeed your transactions have always done." But more often the strain provoked husbands to discourage their wives from financial transactions during the master's absences.

If forced by circumstances, women could manage internal plantation affairs without the advice or consent of males. Daughters who inherited estates from their fathers or widows who were left to run plantations alone seemed to survive on the land without male intervention.

But even a mistress who demonstrated a clear ability to manage her plantation as a discrete economic unit and make it pay was not permitted by law to handle personal or business affairs in the public sphere. Women's inadequacies, real or perceived, were a direct result of the "sheltering" system that designated women as dependents, under the protection — and at the mercy — of men. While this system failed to keep women from exercising authority and demonstrating capability in daily routines, it effectively shackled them in any external dealing beyond plantation boundaries.

As a result, women rightly felt vulnerable in the world of legal finance. They held no power before the law, which provided for man's total control over woman: her property, her behavior, her very person.

All women in Southern society recognized the important financial and legal handicap under which they lived, and most accepted the limitations imposed by society as unalterable. Women did not resist as much as resent dependency. The psychological tensions — exacerbated by the enormous strain of physical chores — created depression, melancholy and a whole range of debilities for women. These women did not inhabit mythical estates, but rather productive working plantations: the routine was grueling, life was harsh. No wonder they complained of being themselves enslaved. The plantation mistress found herself trapped within a system over which she had no control, one from which she had no means of escape. Cotton was King, white men ruled, and both white women and slaves served the same master. □

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"Miss Susie Walker," Beat 4 Cooperative

Mashulaville, Mississippi

photo © Reesa Tansey, 1981

Farm Labor Photos

In the Fields, by Ken Light, Roger Minick and Reesa Tansey. Harvest Press (P.O. Box 3162, Oakland, CA 94609), 1982. un-paged. \$12.95.

In the Fields is a beautiful new book documenting the lives of the workers who bring you your food. It's nearly all photographs — three artists have col-

laborated to produce it — but they've added a wonderfully concise 14-page historical essay by Paul Schuster Taylor and Anne Loftis. The essay carries the story of American farm labor along from colonial times to the present — in outline, of course; what else could they do in 14 pages? — but with just the right kind of detail to bring the facts to life. This is *not* just another tract lamenting the plight of the migrant worker. The migrants are here, of course, but we are also treated to the history of unions and cooperatives,

immigration law and the effects of increasing mechanization. (A bonus treat: the essay is illustrated with Taylor's photographs of Texas and California farm laborers shot in the late 1920s).

The point of this book, though, is the photographs of Ken Light, Roger Minick and Reesa Tansey, and they are beautifully reproduced. Light has followed the migrant stream. Minick has documented work on a large Southern California farm. Tansey has sought out cooperatives in the South and Cali-

fornia. Rather than tell you more about the photos, we've used them to illustrate this whole review section of *Southern Exposure* — flip from here to page 69 and see for yourself. □

UnSouthern Times

In 1979, Microfilming Corporation of America, a subsidiary of *The New York Times*, began designing for the nation's high schools a new microfiche program — 50 Great American Writers. For each writer the program includes a biographical sketch, comprehension questions, and projects and activities — all based on the *Times* coverage of the writer and his or her work.

The original list of great writers was a slapdash, quixotic affair thrown together by an editor whose main qualification was that he had been an English major in college. Here are some of the writers who were *not* included: Richard Wright, Jean Toomer, Ellen Glasgow, Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, Walker Percy, Reynolds Price and William Styron — all Southerners. In their places were such notables as Horatio Alger, Paul Horgan, Ernie Pyle, Arthur Schlesinger, Edgar Rice Burroughs, E.A. Doctorow, Bernard de Voto and Charles Schulz.

The Southern writers included, beyond Poe and Twain, were James Agee, William Faulkner, Lillian Hellman, Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor, Tennessee Williams and Thomas Wolfe. Of these, only Faulkner and O'Connor spent their adult lives in the South. The list became more respectable while the editors were negotiating with freelancers. Warren, Porter and Welty were added and more obscure writers excluded, because of feedback from the freelancers.

Yet the 50 Great American Writers project points out an important fact: through such projects, and through its book reviews, *The New York Times* exercises considerable influence over the American literary canon — the agreed-on list of major writers. This *Times* canon tends to discriminate against many groups — most glaringly against women, blacks and poets. The *Times* also slights Southern writers, especially those who choose to contin-

ue living in the South.

My experiences as one of the project's freelancers pointed out some of the limitations of the *Times*'s view of Southern writers. The rules of research for the project were these: researchers were to find 40 to 60 listings for their writers in *The New York Times Index*, read these entries on the microfilm reels and prepare a sketch and exercises for the students. Other sources could be mentioned, but most of the material for each writer was to come from *The New York Times*.

I began with Flannery O'Connor, who lived and wrote her superb stories in Milledgeville, Georgia. Though she traveled and lectured across the country, and won numerous awards like the 1957 and 1963 O. Henry Awards, O'Connor was not a big newsmaker. Reviews of several posthumous collections of stories, essays, letters and books about O'Connor padded her *Times* coverage, but I could only come up with 22 entries under her name.

Even the capricious compiler of the original list had realized that Flannery O'Connor was one of the 50 Great American Writers. But the rules of the program required 40 to 60 entries. These rules meant that if a writer had been neglected by the *Times* in his or her lifetime, the wrong could not easily be righted later — a literary catch-22. We got around the rules by combining the O'Connor profile with one on Carson McCullers. Knowing O'Connor's low opinion of McCullers's writing, I felt she would have appreciated this ironic joke.

I persuaded my editor to add Eudora Welty to the list and assign me her profile. Welty received far more extensive coverage from the *Times*. All her books were reviewed, and she also submitted features of her own, including a delightful 1963 essay on fairy tales. However, by 1966, she had only appeared in the newspaper 29 times, and I began to worry again.

Fortunately, Welty has lived long enough for her reputation to catch up with her. When she was 63, the *Times* carried stories on her Pulitzer Prize and on "Eudora Welty Day," proclaimed by the governor in her home state of Mississippi. By 1979, Welty had appeared a few more than the minimum number of times required and was

safely ensconced in the 50 Great American Writers list.

Reasoning from the examples of O'Connor and Welty, I hypothesized that if a Southern writer chooses to live in the South and wishes to be included in the canon, he or she must be highly productive, win national and local honors, and live past 63. Unfortunately, it is more complicated than that.

Both O'Connor and Welty received favorable reviews in the *Times* — far more favorable than those afforded most Southern writers. In fact, both had a certain amount of "pull," or special influence with the *Times* book review section.

Because many people first experience Flannery O'Connor's fiction as difficult and frightening in its violence, I expected the early reviews to be negative or unintelligent. So I was surprised to find sentences like these in the review of *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*:

Miss O'Connor, for all her apparent preoccupation with the visible scene, is also fiercely concerned with moral, even theological problems. In these stories the rural South is, for the first time, viewed by a writer whose orthodoxy matches her talent. The results are revolutionary.

This intelligent review was written by Caroline Gordon, a distinguished Southern writer in her own right. Any reader of O'Connor's letters knows that Gordon was O'Connor's trusted reader, helping her revise her stories before publication. Gordon had actually edited most of the stories collected in the book she was reviewing. While such close relationships between those reviewing and those reviewed are common enough not to be considered unethical in the publishing business, they certainly represent an opportunity not available to most writers, who must wait to see what the critics say.

Eudora Welty also had special influence. The charm and lack of pretension she revealed in a 1942 interview so captivated Robert Van Gelder, the editor of the *Times* book review, that he hired her as a member of his staff. She reviewed books for Gelder for several years.

Since Welty served the *Times* book

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"Planting Strawberries"
Southern California

photo © Roger Minick, 1978



"Child of the Fields"
Rio Grande Valley, Texas

photo © Ken Light, 1979

review well, it is not surprising that all her books received favorable reviews in the Sunday paper. Occasionally, reviewers in the daily paper made rather accurate derogatory comments, perhaps because of a more impartial reading, or perhaps because of in-fighting between the daily and Sunday review staffs.

Adding further to my exercise in induction, I now had the theory that to be included in *The New York Times* canon, a non-emigrating Southerner must remain rather prolific, achieve recognition within a long lifetime and have special influence with the editors of the *Times* book review. I tested my hypothesis in two ways — one looking backward and the other looking forward.

The New York Times was late to mark William Faulkner as a great American writer. Perhaps because of the influence of supporters like Sherwood Anderson, the first reviews were kind — kinder than deserved. After that, Faulkner seems to have had no special protection. For instance, John Chamberlain commented in 1931 that because Faulkner was from "the backward South," which also gave us hookworm, he was "not primarily interested in ideas, moral or otherwise." After the publication of *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* and *Light in August*, Louis Kronenberger wrote, "But, granting that he has done some remarkable things in the past, certainly none of them is remarkable enough to live beyond his own generation."

William Faulkner did not make the

front page of the *Times* book review until 1946, when Caroline Gordon reviewed Malcolm Cowley's *Portable Faulkner*, the book which launched the Faulkner revival. After that, his out-of-print novels were reissued, he won the Nobel Prize, and his future reputation was assured. But there was little evidence in the *Times* prior to 1946 to indicate that Faulkner would ever be considered one of the 50 Great American Writers.

How are contemporary Southern writers faring? Is there any indication that the pattern of neglect is changing? I did *not* find, as I half expected, that *The New York Times* has failed to review the books of Southern writers. Even less well-known writers like James Alan McPherson, Doris Betts, Alice Walker and Guy Owen have had their books reviewed by the *Times*. The reviews may have been brief, buried on the inside pages, and occasionally ill-informed, but they have been there. And there are some indications that a few Southern writers may achieve greater recognition. For instance, in 1978, seven years after the publication of *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, Louisiana-born Ernest Gaines was given a full-page review and a long interview in the *Times*. And Anne Tyler, of Raleigh and Baltimore, has slowly gained the recognition she deserves.

But at present, these writers would appear to have only a slim chance of making the second package — 50 More Great American Writers — which Microfilm plans to issue if the first one sells

well. Even the more established Southern writers such as Reynolds Price, William Styron and Walker Percy fall short of the current list.

Noted literary critic Richard Gilman, in his 1975 review of Reynolds Price's *The Surface of Earth*, laid down the current *Times* view of Southern literature:

Essays and books continue to be written about Southern fiction, as though it were an ongoing cultural reality, inimitable and important. Yet the time is long past when Southern writers were either at the center of American literature or powerful influences on the flanks. . . . That there is no present Southern literary art of any distinctiveness, any special energy or elan, is part of the larger truth that there is no weighty, alluring regional literature being created anywhere in the United States today.

Such an outlook is shocking. But Southerners should be used to this kind of treatment. In 1849, Edgar Allan Poe was moved to protest, "It is a fashion among Mr. Lowell's set to affect a belief that there is *no such thing* as Southern literature." Gilman's view, though exaggerated, seems to represent the attitude of *The New York Times* book review staff.

It is impossible to improve upon the rebuttal given to Gilman two weeks later in a letter signed simply "Eudora Welty, Jackson, Mississippi." But a few further remarks might put Gilman's stance into perspective. Faulkner was

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"Planting the Crop"
Salinas, California

Cooperativa Central
photo © Reesa Tansey, 1976



"End of the Day"
Salinas, California

Cooperativa Central
photo © Reesa Tansey, 1979

important both for his stylistic innovations and for his sense of place, compelling characters and significant themes. Since his time, American fiction has split into two camps. The first group of writers seems more concerned with the telling than the tale, with style than substance. These writers are the only ones Gilman chose to praise. They represent, he said, "the more or less detached, ironic, cool and essentially unlocalized American literary intelligence and vision: Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, John Hawkes, Donald Barthelme, even Saul Bellow, Joseph Heller and John Updike, whose sense of place is real but incidental, a ground for their wit and passion but not an instigation or a sustenance."

But there is a second group of writers, more insistently present since the time Gilman thought he could close his eyes and pretend they didn't exist. Not exclusively Southern, but mostly non-New Yorkers, these writers are continuing the novelistic tradition of concern with place, with the influence of one generation on the next and, in Katha Pollit's words, with "the unfolding of character through brilliantly imagined and absolutely accurate detail." Yet Gilman — and perhaps the *Times* in general — regard a book like *The Surface of Earth* as a "great lumbering archaic beast, taking its place among our literary fauna with the stiff queer presence of the representative of a species thought to be extinct."

If a book is reviewed prominently in the *Times*, if the review is favorable and if a writer is included in the re-

view's opinion polls, there will be an immediate, tangible effect: the writer will sell more books. But this influence fades rather rapidly. After five years, it probably makes little difference at all.

The impact of the 50 Great American Writers is likely to be longer lasting. With its convenient packaging and sales appeal, the program will probably be used for a long time in high schools across the country. Whatever its designers intended, it will be an important formulation of the canon of American writers. Most likely, the generation of students exposed to it will carry Microfilm's conception of the approved writers into their old age.

Yet this too will change. The twenty-first century will re-evaluate twentieth century American literature as the twentieth century did the nineteenth's. In 1932, Carl Van Doren noted these changes:

Irving and Howells have shrunk and faded. Cooper has scarcely held his own. Mark Twain seems a great man of letters as well as a great man. . . . Herman Melville has thrust himself by main strength, and Emily Dickinson has gently slipped, into the canon.

So shall today's literary canon change with tomorrow's taste.

Meanwhile, before the passage of time separates the wheat from the chaff, we might do well not to take the pronouncements of *The New York*

Times too seriously. Why Gilman's list is 100 percent white and male, and why the Microfilming canon favors white males so heavily — these are questions worth asking. Why both lists discriminate against resident Southerners is probably more easily answered. It's a matter of New York regionalism.

My family tells the story of an older woman from Charleston who was given a subscription to the *Times*. She remarked to her friends, "That's very nice, but I don't know anyone in New York." We have always laughed at this woman for being so provincial. But she may have been smarter than we thought.

The New York Times is a metropolitan newspaper. The metropolis it serves is the economic and book-publishing center of the nation. The *Times* makes more effort than most local papers to cover events and opinions for the entire country. Our only daily paper indexed back to the Civil War, it is uniquely suitable for research.

Nevertheless, it does reflect the opinions of one particular American city. And those of us who read it in Charleston, Atlanta and Charlotte, as well as in Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles, might do well to remember that fact when we receive its opinions on such matters as who are the major American writers. □

—Grace W. Ellis

Overrated Accuracy

The Redneck Way of Knowledge: Down-Home Tales, by Blanche McCrary Boyd. Alfred A. Knopf, 1982. 160 pp. \$10.95.

"I feel like I'm getting half the facts wrong," I said.

"Maybe accuracy is overrated," Mindy said.

Wright held up the bourbon. "Here's to telling the story, not the way it happened, but the way it should be remembered."

And here's a Bronx cheer to Blanche McCrary Boyd, who's getting a good bit of media mileage out of a collection of her old *Village Voice* essays newly republished under the misnomer, *The Redneck Way of Knowledge: Down-Home Tales*.

I wouldn't bother reviewing this book if it weren't for the fact that Boyd has achieved somewhat of a reputation as a feminist writer. Her second book, *Nerves* (*Redneck* is her third), is required reading in some feminist studies programs. I wasn't particularly impressed with the overall quality of *Nerves*, but I was intrigued by Boyd's remarkable descriptive skill. That skill was honed to a fine edge in her *Voice* essay on the 1979 Klan/Nazi murders in Greensboro — one of the best analyses of the tragedy to date.

As a feminist and as one who spent the better part of a year studying and writing about the Greensboro murders, I had great expectations when I heard that Boyd had published a series of essays on the South. The book jacket, as well as Boyd's promotional forays on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" and the Public Broadcasting System's "Tony Brown's Journal," tell us that *Redneck* is a collection of "shimmering tales of Southern life and culture . . . a bold, brash revelation of the redneck way of knowledge."

Redneck is none of the above, except perhaps brash. It is, primarily, a cleverly worded, poorly reasoned diatribe against the South, and white Southerners in particular. Southerners think . . . Southerners do . . . Southerners are . . . ignorant, racist, hicks. If

the subject were women instead of Southerners, I would think this book was written by Phyllis Schlafly.

Throughout much of *Redneck*, Boyd and her aristocratic Charleston pals Mindy, Wright, Dixie and Shreve take us on a booze- and drug-clouded tour of the South Carolina low country they call home. We go to the Darlington 500, where, after popping her fifth beer, Boyd wonders how these crazy rednecks can stand all the noise. She talks to no one other than the people she came with.

Boyd is horrified at the crowd's brutality at a local Tough Man contest, especially when black opponents are pitted against whites. So she, Wright and Mindy retreat to the parking lot with a quart of bourbon and a fistful of joints to ponder the meaning of it all.

With Boyd, we drink, toke and snort our way through Charleston's Spoleto Festival, the 1980 Democratic Convention, the Pope's visit to Yankee Stadium and Hurricane David. The Greensboro essay is the notable exception; though flawed, it is perceptive, sensitive and above all sober.

Redneck is more Boyd's autobiography than it is a treatise on the South. The daughter of a wealthy, right-wing Charleston family, she grew up believing in the inherent inferiority of blacks. She was forced to confront her racist heritage after being involved in a car accident in which a black man was killed. Haunted by his agonized face, she was — and is — overwhelmed with guilt. Instead of dealing with her racism she suppresses it, only to transfer it from a race to a culture: "History had cut a hole in a white girl's mind, and everything I believed was rushing out. Maybe we'd been wrong about the Civil War, Maybe Russians were nice. Maybe Southerners were monsters."

Not all Southerners, of course, just white Southerners. Except for Mindy and the gang who, being genuine aristocrats, are witty, articulate and profound. Boyd's guilt-ridden perception of blacks confines them to the status of victims; she either pities or is in awe of them.

The only black she introduces us to is Willie, a Charleston roofer working at the estate where Boyd temporarily resides as a caretaker. She and Willie inhale the inevitable quota of joints

and proceed to exhale the philosophy of the stoned. "Scapegoating of Southerners is as common as it is comfortable," Boyd tells us. How true. But she goes on to say, "and if you're white, you may think my tale has nothing to do with you. If you're not, I think you'll recognize Willie's wisdom: 'White people is all the same story.'"

Get the picture? Boyd despises white Southern racists, but her guilt will not allow her to hear Willie's statement for what it is: not wise, racist.

Racism is a recurrent theme in *Redneck*, but rather than address the issue head-on, Boyd is obsessed with pointing the finger of blame at the South. She feels victimized herself: "Being a white Southerner is a bit like being Eichmann's daughter: people don't assume you're guilty, but they wonder how you've been affected."

Boyd fled the South at age 18 when "a dreadful truth came clear to me. Southerners were not normal people. I began to realize we were hicks." Not wanting to be a hick, she became a left-wing gadfly, flitting from one movement-of-the-era to the next: civil rights, anti-war, feminist, lesbian. She seemed genuinely astonished to find that racism was not uniquely Southern, and after sitting through a particularly painful workshop on racism in the women's movement she became convinced that "we were trying to move a mountain with teaspoons. White women seemed a swamp of ugly, hidden impulses. I couldn't stop being white, so I stopped being political."

This is the kind of convoluted reasoning that permeates Boyd's book. Apparently it never occurs to her that to confront racism we do not have to stop being either white or political, that being white Southerners does not necessarily mean that we are racist or ignorant or hicks. This is not to say that there aren't a lot of Southerners who exhibit these traits; on the contrary, racism, ignorance and hickdom are all too universal, in the South and anywhere else. But as with all people of this earth, Southerners are just as often humane, intelligent, humorous, generous, caring, feeling people.

I wish that Boyd would deal with her racist guilt and not heap it on the rest of us. I wish that she would take an honest look at the South, and at

white Southerners in particular, *not* in the way she wants to remember but in a way that distinguishes between myth and reality. I wish she would understand that when one is writing about people and cultures and complex social issues, accuracy is *not* overrated. It would probably help a whole lot if she would allow her creativity and writing talent to work, as she did in the Greensboro essay, without the influence of mind-altering substances.

Instead, in *Redneck*, Boyd transfers her own frailties to the people and land she claims to love: "I am aware that we Southerners do not lead with our intellects. Living here in South Carolina, I am afraid that the critical faculties I worked so hard to develop while I was in New York will turn blue and fall off."

Dear Blanche Boyd: you got half the facts wrong. □

— Liz Wheaton



"Pepper Picker" photo © Ken Light, 1981
North Carolina

Everyday Irradiation

Killing Our Own: The Disaster of America's Experience with Atomic Radiation, by Harvey Wasserman and Norman Solomon, with Robert Alvarez and Eleanor Walters. Delacorte Press, 1982. 368 pp. \$19.95.

Not long ago, as I was returning from a conference on nuclear issues and education in New York City, I met a friend in LaGuardia Airport. "You know," he said, after I had told

him what I'd been doing that weekend, "we're going to look so dumb to generations hence. We like to criticize Germany for letting the Nazis rise to power, but our handling of the development of nuclear power and weapons is going to make us look infinitely stupider. There's only one word for it: insanity."

Killing Our Own: The Disaster of America's Experience with Atomic Radiation is must reading for everyone, particularly those who doubt the truth of my friend's assertion. Though much of the history found in *Killing Our Own* has been told before and in greater depth elsewhere, nowhere else can one find in one book such a powerful overview of how, for the past 40-odd years, the nuclear industry has been poisoning our environment and each and every one of us — and, even more distressingly, our descendants for generations to come.

Several factors make *Killing Our Own* impressive. One is its scope. The radioactive hazards and the legacy of death and disease from four broad military and industrial sectors are explored: atomic bomb testing, x-rays and radioactive materials in the workplace, nuclear wastes and nuclear power stations. The authors present a wealth of information clearly and vigorously — and with conviction. Moreover, to aid further study (and to add to the book's credibility), the information is thoroughly documented; there are also several useful appendices, one of which — on the basics of radiation and health — is the clearest discussion of this topic I've seen yet.

The greatest strength of *Killing Our Own*, however, is its emphasis on the human history of atomic mishaps. Much of the book is oral history, told by atomic veterans and by relatives and friends of victims already dead. Many of their stories are utterly terrifying — like that of Lyman Quigley, one of the many soldiers sent into Nagasaki to clean up after the bombing. Quigley and the others drank from the contaminated city reservoir and worked without protective clothing or instrumentation to measure radiation exposure. Not long after he left Nagasaki, Quigley had running sores on his head and severe abdominal pains; he later developed stomach tumors; then

came a tumor on his head, another on his knee; chronic lung disease set in; and he suffered a series of heart attacks, the last of which proved fatal.

Quigley was not alone in his suffering. As he discovered through his own research (although the government refused to help him locate other soldiers present at the Nagasaki cleanup), there was an unusually high incidence of illnesses associated with radiation exposure — many of which were terminal — among the U.S. soldiers sent into Nagasaki. The Veterans Administration denied any responsibility, refusing to grant any service-connected benefits for the illnesses.

Stories similar to Quigley's abound in *Killing Our Own* — of people suffering and dying through governmental and industrial oversight and abuse of radiation safeguards. Many of these stories, like Quigley's, are ultimately inspiring, showing crippled individuals finally reaching an understanding of how their lives were abused and becoming determined to fight for compensation for themselves and their families, and for the safety of all of us. "Mother," said Bill Nunamaker, a bomb-test site construction employee who spoke from his deathbed while racked with leukemia, "you know what I died from. Go get them."

Interspersed with these personal histories is the historical background of nuclear policy and development. It's here that *Killing Our Own* occasionally stumbles, for this overview is sketchy and thin in places. Important issues are occasionally raised, only to be left hanging. An example: the authors mention that a number of the early movers and shakers of government nuclear policy had disturbing links to several Wall Street banking concerns. After some illustrative examples and a few words on the huge profit potential that was predicted for the nuclear industry, the authors drop the issue. Absent is any analysis of how government/corporate/military interlocks shaped the history of nuclear development in the United States.

Another problem is that the authors' flair for the dramatic at times clouds rather than clarifies the issues. While there has certainly been an abundance of connivance and downright crime in the history of nuclear power and weap-

ons development, the authors seem to want to find coverup and abuse just about everywhere. We sometimes find facts yoked together that *suggest* foul play but which do not by any means *prove* that it occurred. Here's an example dealing with poor radiation monitoring around nuclear plants: "In 1975, for example, excessive strontium 90 radiation was found in milk at a farm near the Shippingport plant. The following year, monitoring at that farm was discontinued." While there is every reason to hold the government responsible for the decision to cease monitoring at the farm, it's not good reporting simply to suggest malicious intent — merely for dramatic effect — and then to move on without exploring the problem and explaining exactly what took place.

These occasional flaws, however, are far outweighed by *Killing Our Own's* gripping account of America's involvement with atomic radiation. The case against nuclear power and nuclear weapons is overwhelming and no better book exists to make readers *understand* this on a level of reason and intellect — and *know* it on a gut level of instinct for survival. □

— Bob Brinkmeyer

Books on the South

This list consists of books published since June, 1982. Book entries include works through December, 1982. All books are to be published in 1982. Dissertations appeared in the Dissertation Abstracts Index from April to June, 1982. All dissertations are dated 1981 unless otherwise indicated.

The entries are grouped under several broad categories for your convenience. Mention of a book here does not preclude its being reviewed in a future issue. Unsolicited reviews of publications of general interest to our readers are welcome. Recent works are preferred.

Copies of the dissertations are available from: Xerox University Microfilms, Dissertation Copies, P.O. Box 1764, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

ECONOMICS, HISTORY AND POLITICS, 1865-1982

"The Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, 1872-1982," by Norwood Allen Kerr. Auburn Univ., 1982.

The Archaeology of Social Disintegration in Skunk Hollow: A Nineteenth-Century Rural Black Community, ed. by Joan H.

Geismar (New York: Academic Press). Price not set.

"Attitudes and Values of Appalachian Youth: Rural-Agricultural," by Margaret Blair Lawrence Price. Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities.

"Black Political Participation in Louisiana: The Cultural and Structural Determinants," by Frederick Douglass Wright. Princeton Univ., 1982.

Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia: A Splendid Failure, by Edmund L. Drago (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$16.95.

"Blacks in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1895-1920: Community Development in an Era of Benevolent Paternalism," by Bertha Hampton Miller. Duke Univ.

Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era, by Evan Anders (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press). \$19.95.

A Case of Black and White: Northern Volunteers and the Southern Freedom Summers, 1964-1965, by Mary A. Rothschild (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press). \$29.95.

Coastal Texas: Water, Land and Wildlife, by John T. Tveten (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press). \$29.95.

"Conditions of Rural Crime in Texas," by Jay David Jamieson. Sam Houston State Univ.

Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region, 1607 to 1980, by David R. Goldfield (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$20.00.

Early Louisiana and Arkansas Oil: A Photographic History, 1901-1946, by Kenny A. Franks and Paul F. Lambert (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press). \$27.95.

Elephants in the Cottonfields: Ronald Reagan and the New Republican South, by Wayne Greenhaw (New York: Macmillan). \$14.95.

"Guns, Murder and Southern Violence: A Theoretical Alternative to Gastil-Hackney," by Wendy Horowitz. Fla. State Univ., 1982.

"The History of Apparel Manufacturing in Texas, 1897-1981," by Dorothy Dell DeMoss. Texas Christian Univ.

"The History of the Black People of Franklin County, Tennessee," by Arthur Cyrus Hill. Univ. of Minnesota, 1982.

"Impact Analysis of the South Carolina Economy," by Thomas Neil Schaa. Univ. of South Carolina.

"Institutionalization and Rational Decision Making: The Louisiana Constitutional Convention of 1973," by Edward Donald Grant, III. Tulane Univ.

"Legislative Districts and Legislators' Perceptions of Interest Groups Among Members of the Arkansas House of Representatives in 1977," by Earl Wayne Cobill. Univ. of Mississippi.

"Like Banquo's Ghost": The Emergence of the Prohibition Issue in Kentucky Politics," by Thomas Howard Appleton, Jr. Univ. of Kentucky.

Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920, by David L. Carlton (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$14.95.

Mississippi, by Bern and Franke Keating (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi). \$35.00.

The New Americans: Cuban Boat People, by James Haskins (Hillside, NJ: Enslow

Pubs.). \$8.95.

"North Carolina and the New Deal," by Douglas Carl Abrams. Univ. of Maryland.

"Now Scratch or Die": The Genesis of Capitalistic Agricultural Labor in Georgia, 1865-1880," by Steven William Engstrand. Univ. of Georgia.

"On the White Man's Road? Acculturation and the Fort Marion Southern Plains Prisoners," by Pamela Holcomb Oestreicher. Michigan State Univ.

Patronage and Poverty in the Tobacco South: Louisa County, Virginia, 1860-1900, by Crandall A. Shiflett (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press). \$12.00.

"The Political Impact of Electoral Mobilization: The South and Universal Suffrage, 1952-1980," by Harold Watkins Stanley. Yale Univ.

Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930 to 1970, by Doug McAdam (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press). \$25.00.

"Poverty, Development and Quality of Life in a Texas Border City," by Michael Victor Miller. Texas A&M Univ.

"Reform and Politics in Tennessee, 1906-1914," by Joe Michael Shahan. Vanderbilt Univ.

"The Regulation and Conservation of Petroleum Resources in Louisiana, 1901-1940," by Brady Michael Banta. LSU.

"A Study of Black Aged Persons," by Roland Arville Harris, Jr. Univ. of Tennessee.

"Temperance Reform in the Cotton Kingdom," by Douglas Wiley Carlson. Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Texas Woollybacks: The Range Sheep and Goat Industry, by Paul H. Carlson (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press). \$17.50.

"The Turbulent Nineties: The Agrarian Revolt and Alabama Politics, 1887-1901," by Karl Louis Rodabaugh. UNC-CH.

"Urban Growth and Economic Change in the Nineteenth Century South: The Hinterland of Memphis, Tennessee, 1830-1900," by Russell Stephen Kirby. Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison.

The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945, by Daniel J. Singal (Chapel Hill: UNC Press). \$12.00.

ECONOMICS, HISTORY AND POLITICS — BEFORE 1865

The Bonds of Wickedness: American Evangelicals Against Slavery, 1770-1808, by James Essig (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press). \$22.50.

Capitalism, Slavery and Republican Values: Antebellum Political Economists, by Allen Kaufman (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press). \$25.00.

The Cause of the South: Selections from DeBow's Review, 1846 to 1867, ed. by Paul Paskoff and Daniel J. Wilson (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$8.95.

"Chickasaw Removal: Betrayal of the Beloved Warriors, 1794-1844," by Monte Ross Lewis. North Texas State Univ.

Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832, by Allison

REVIEWS

G. Freehling (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$32.50.

"'Either a Fool or a Fury': The Emergence of Paternalism in Colonial Virginia Slave Society," by Anthony S. Parent, Jr. UCLA, 1982.

Florida's French Revolution, 1793 to 1795, by Charles E. Bennett (Gainesville: Univ. Presses of Florida). \$16.00.

God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind, by Thomas Connelly and Barbara Bellows (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$12.95.

Oglethorpe's Folly: The Birth of Georgia, by Webb Garrison (Ossining, NY: Cople House). \$12.95.

"Race and Class in Colonial Virginia: Indians, Englishmen and Africans on the Eastern Shore During the Seventeenth Century," by Joseph Douglas Deal, III. Univ. of Rochester.

"The Second Great Awakening in Virginia and Slavery Reform, 1785-1837," by Arthur Dicken Thomas, Jr. Union Theological Seminary in Virginia.

Senator John Slidell and the Community He Represented in Washington, 1853-1861, by A.L. Diket (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America). \$11.00.

The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style, by David B. Davis (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$4.95.

A Source Book on the Early History of Cuthbert and Randolph County, Georgia, by Annette M. Suarez (Covington, GA: Cherokee Pub.). \$25.00.

Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South, by Bertram Wyatt-Brown (New York: Oxford Univ. Press). \$29.95.

"The Virginia Doctrines, the Commonwealth and the Republic: The Role of Fundamental Principles in Virginia Politics, 1798-1833," by Kathryn Ruth Malone. Univ. of Pennsylvania.

BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

"Alfred Eliab Buck: Carpetbagger in Alabama and Georgia," by Shyan Krishna Bhurtel. Auburn Univ.

The Belle of Ashby Street: Helen Douglas Minton and Georgia Politics, by Lorraine N. Spitzer (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press). \$16.95.

Black Personalities in the Era of the Slave Trade, ed. by James Walvin and Paul Edwards (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$27.50.

"Ellis Merton Coulter and the Southern Historiographic Tradition," by Michael Vaughan Woodward. Univ. of Georgia, 1982.

Freeman of Color: The Autobiography of Willis Augustus Hodges, ed. by Willard B. Gatewood (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press). \$11.95.

A Gallery of Southerners, by Louis D. Rubin, Jr. (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$16.95.

"In the Toils of War: Andrew Johnson and the Federal Occupation of Tennessee, 1862-1865," by Edwin T. Hardison. Univ. of Tennessee.

James Branch Cabell: Centennial Essays, ed. by M. Thomas Inge and Edgar E. MacDonald (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$15.95.

James Henry Hammond and the Old

South: A Design for Mastery, by Drew G. Faust (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$25.00.

John Bell Hood and the War for Southern Independence, by Richard M. McMurry (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky). \$19.50.

"John R. Lynch the Reconstruction Politician: A Historical Perspective," by James Harold McLaughlin. Ball State Univ.

Life in a Log Cabin, by Helen Moss (Burnet, TX: Eakin Pubs.). \$6.95.

Lucy Audubon: A Biography, by Carolyn Delatte (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$15.95.

Memoirs of a Texas Pioneer Grandmother, by Irma G. Guenther (Burnet, TX: Eakin Pubs.). \$14.95.

Southern Encounters, Southerners of Note in Ralph McGill's South, by Ralph McGill (Macon: Mercer Univ. Press). \$16.95.

Thomas R.R. Cobb: The Making of a Southern Nationalist, by William B. McCash (Macon: Mercer Univ. Press). \$14.95.

Walter Hines Page and the World's Work, by Robert J. Rusnak (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America). \$7.75.

EDUCATION

"Affirmative Action Employment Programs in Mississippi Public Universities, 1972-1979," by Erie Jean Bowen. Univ. of Mississippi.

"A History of the Desegregation of the Fayette County School System: Fayette County, Tennessee, 1954-1980," by Frankie L. Cunningham Hunt. Univ. of Mississippi.

"History of the Virginia Teachers Association, 1940-1965," by Alfred Kenneth Talbot, Jr. William and Mary.

Piney Woods School: An Oral History, by Alferdeen Harrison (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi). \$17.95.

"Progressives in the Kentucky Mountains: The Formative Years of the Pine Mountain Settlement School, 1913-1930," by James Greene, III. Ohio State Univ., 1982.

"The Status of Public School Finance in South Carolina," by Anderson Keith Bridges. Peabody College.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Aggies: Life Inside the Texas A&M Cadet Corps, by Will Van Overbeek (Austin: Texas Monthly Press). \$19.95.

Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion and Folklife in the City, by James Borchert (Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press). \$8.95.

"Benton MacKaye's Appalachian Trail as a Cultural Symbol," by Gerald Broughton Lowrey, Jr. Emory Univ.

The Chicken Ranch, by Jan Hudson (San Diego, CA: A.S. Barnes). \$5.95.

"Cultural Politics in an East Texas Community," by Jeannie Ricketts Stanley. Univ. of Texas at Austin.

Dinner at the Mansion, by Elise Winter (Oxford, MS: Yoknapatawpha Press). \$12.95.

Don't Go Up Kettle Creek: The Verbal Legacy of the Upper Cumberland, by William L. Montell (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press). \$16.50.

"Dress of the African American Woman in Slavery and Freedom: 1500 to 1935," by Lydia Jean Wares. Purdue Univ.

Plain Folk of the Old South, by Frank L. Owsley (Baton Rouge: LSU Press). \$6.95.

Roots of Black Music: The Vocal, Instrumental and Dance Heritage of Africa and Black America, by Ashenafi Kebede (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall). \$7.95.

Snowbird Gravy and Dishpan Pie: Mountain People Recall, by Patsy M. Ginns (Chapel Hill: UNC Press). \$12.95.

Walker Evans at Work, by Walker Evans (New York: Harper and Row). \$18.00.

Yesterday in the Hills, by Floyd C. and Charles H. Watkins (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press). \$5.95.

LITERATURE

"All the Names of Death: Allusion and the Theme of Suicide in the Novels of Walker Percy," by William Rodney Allen. Duke Univ., 1982.

"The *Caso*: A Study of an Emic Genre of Folk Narrative Among Mexican Americans of West Texas," by Joe Stanley Graham. Univ. of Texas at Austin.

From Mammies to Militants: Domesticity in Black American Literature, by Trudier Harris (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press). \$22.50.

"Imaginative Discovery in the Flannery O'Connor Typescripts," by Stephen Gause Driggers. Indiana Univ.

"The Literary Dialect in the Simon Suggs Stories of Johnson Jones Hooper," by Ann Wyatt Sharp. Univ. of Alabama.

"Melodramatic Form and Vision in Chestnut's *The House Behind the Cedars*, Dunbar's *The Sport of the Gods*, and Toomer's *Cane*," by Gregory Louis Candela. Univ. of New Mexico.

"The Natural History of a Vision: Distances and Starlight in the Poetry of Robert Penn Warren," by Ruth Douglas Fisher. Temple Univ., 1982.

"The Percys of Mississippi: Politics and Literature in the New South," by Lewis Turner Baker. LSU.

"Richard Wright's Depiction of the Black Experience: A Study in Stereotypes," by Charles J. Evans. Loyola Univ. of Chicago, 1982.

"A Technical Edition of Charles Chestnut's *Mandy Oxendine*," by Charles Hackenberry. Penn State Univ., 1982.

"The Thematic and Structural Design of William Faulkner's *Collected Stories*," by Jo Ann Weiner Bomze. Univ. of Pennsylvania.

"There Is a River," by Ellesa Clay High. Ohio Univ., 1981.

A Tissue of Lies: Eudora Welty and the Southern Romance, by Jennifer L. Randisi (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America). \$9.75.

"Walker Percy and Will Campbell: A Theological-Etiological Analysis," by Lynda Sue Weaver-Williams. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982.

"Where Tchoupitoulas Meets Annunciation: The Convergence of the American Dream and Spiritual Quest in the Novels of William Percy," by Carol Genevieve Dana. Georgia State Univ.

From the Frontline To the Color Line

When the treaty marking the end of the war with Spain was signed in December, 1898, cities across the country were alive with celebration. Atlanta's "Peace Jubilee" parade drew to the South such prestigious figures as President William McKinley and a number of top military officers and cabinet members.

When parade planners and city elites at the last moment refused to allow the black members of the Stone Quarryman's association to participate, black and white members of the American Federation of Trades responded with a boycott of the celebration. Led by Jerome Jones, labor-rights advocate and editor of Atlanta's Journal of Labor, the federation defied the virulent white supremacism of the times to embrace and realize higher ideals.

That day, the Atlanta Journal ran the following story, which includes the set of resolutions adopted in the quarry workers' behalf – resolutions of a rare interracial alliance of Southern working people.

The members of the Atlanta Federation of Trades are highly indignant on the ground that the color line was drawn in the jubilee parade today.

They have adopted a set of resolutions condemning the management of the jubilee because, as they allege, the negro members of the Stone Quarrymen's union were not allowed to participate. This action on the part of the management is said to be the reason the federation declined to appear in the parade.

The resolutions, adopted at an indignation meeting of the federation, are as follows:

"HALL OF ATLANTA FEDERATION OF TRADES, Dec. 15, 1898 – We your committee appointed to draft suitable resolutions on the refusal of the Peace Jubilee committee to allow a component part of this body representation in the Peace Jubilee parade on account of color, submit the following:

"Whereas, the Peace Jubilee is held to commemorate the ending of our recent war with Spain, which was inaugurated for the express purpose of aiding a cause in the name of humanity; and

"Whereas, the program for the said celebration was presumably arranged with a view to the appropriate commemoration of the ending of said war; and

"Whereas, the Atlanta Federation of Trades having received an official invitation to participate in the festivities of the Jubilee occasion, and, acting on said invitation, having made all necessary arrangements to appear today in the parade, at this late hour we are informed that we cannot carry out our arranged program, a portion of our delegation being excluded from the parade, owing to their color;

"Therefore, be it resolved, by the Atlanta Federation of Trades, in meeting assembled, that inasmuch as the color line was not drawn in the mustering of the volunteer or regular army and that it was the colored soldiers who did perhaps the greater part of the heroic fighting that won San Juan from the enemy, thereby hastening this early victory and peace which our city celebrates today, we affirm that it should not be drawn in the Peace Jubilee, and

"Be it further resolved, that the Stone Quarryman's association, being a part of the Atlanta Federation of Trades and a part of the American Federation of Labor, we feel this is a slight, irregardless of color, and

"Be it resolved further, that we stand by the National Stone Quarryman's association, and refuse to recognize the Peace Jubilee or parade, or to participate therein.

"Resolved further, that we are unanimously of the opinion that a labor organization, regardless of the color of its members, is entitled to our respect, confidence and esteem; and we request all labor organizations to refrain from entering public parades hereafter where the color line is drawn. Respectfully submitted,

JEROME JONES, Chairman
H.F. GARRETT, E.M. HAGERTY
Committee

At Southern Exposure we listen to the voices of many people for guidance and inspiration. We want to recapture in Voices From the Past the indomitable spirit of those who have spoken for human dignity, for egalitarianism and for collective social action. We want to celebrate those ideals, for which many have lived and died. We invite you to listen, to join with these voices which harmonize with our own.

We welcome submissions from our readers for this feature. Send ideas to: Voices From the Past, Southern Exposure, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

We thank Cliff Kuhn for submitting the information on which this article is based.

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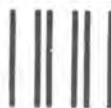
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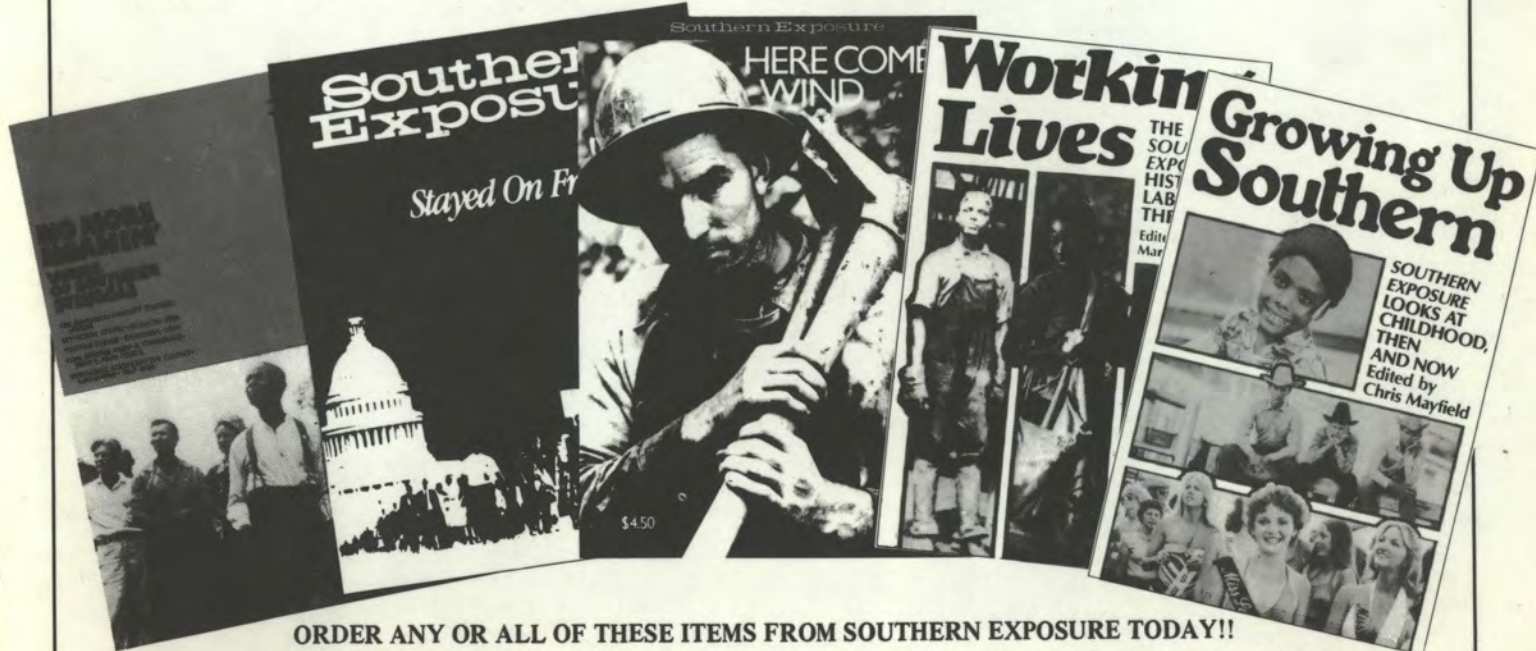
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