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DATELINE: THE SOUTH

ALEXANDER CITY, Ala. (Feb. 22) — A jury in this rural textile town took less than an hour to acquit a local record store owner charged with selling a rap music tape that violated state obscenity laws. The recording by Miami rap group 2 Live Crew has sold over a million copies, but Florida Governor Bob Martinez announced after the acquittal that he will oversee a statewide investigation into the sale of 2 Live Crew music.

DALLAS, Texas (March 1) — An all-white jury convicted five white supremacist Skinheads of conspiring to harass minorities. The men — members of the Confederate Hammer-skins — were found guilty of vandalizing a Jewish synagogue and assaulting blacks and Hispanics in Robert E. Lee Park. The men face sentences of up to 25 years.

LUDOWICI, Ga. (March 1) — Mayor Sammy Stapleton testified in a voting rights hearing today that he saw no reason why his in-laws should not be allowed to vote in town elections — even though they live in Ohio and are registered to vote there. The state is suing town officials who have allowed former residents who moved away as long as 20 years ago to continue voting in Ludowici elections.

TAMPA, Fla. (March 1) — Many of the most powerful lobbyists in Florida formed their own trade organization today to defend their interests in the state legislature. The move came after Governor Bob Martinez called for reforms in lobbying practices. There is no word yet on whether the lobbyists will hire a lobbyist.

DALLAS, Texas (March 1) — Local residents attended a city park board meeting in force today to protest plans to put a road through Freedman's Cemetery, saying the black graveyard should be protected as a historical site. Some of the first freed slaves in Dallas were buried in the cemetery from 1861 to 1925.

SARASOTA, Fla. (March 2) — Borden Inc. and The Southland Corp. pleaded guilty to federal charges and agreed to pay \$11.5 million for rigging bids for milk sold to Florida schools and Southern military bases. Federal officials said the firms have rigged milk contracts since the early 1970s, resulting in "the cynical bilking of our nation's armed forces and the outrageous theft of millions of dollars from Florida's school-milk programs."

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (March 13) — Recycling advocates scored a victory today when the city council voted to spend \$3.3 million to build a methane-recovery plant. The plant, which is expected to save \$1.7 million annually by using the gas produced by sewage sludge to generate power, will be the first of its kind built by a municipal government.

DALLAS, Texas (March 14) — Ann Marie Lindsay, a 41-year-old topless dancer, is suing the Cabaret Royale nightclub for age discrimination in refusing to hire her. Lindsay, now a successful dancer at another club, claims she had the same qualifications as younger women competing for the job.



MEDART, Fla. (March 15) — More than 50 black students boycotted classes at Wakulla High School after their white principal banned an original rap song critical of the white community from a school assembly. The students were suspended for their protest action, and parents began raising money for a legal defense fund to have them reinstated.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (April 12) — Responding to overwhelming public outcry, state legislators unanimously rescinded a 43 percent hike in their own pension benefits just two days after they voted it into law. The increase, a surprise amendment to an unrelated bill, would have raised annual benefits to \$33,600. The governor's office received over 2,000 calls protesting the hike.

MOSESSES, Ala. (April 2) — The Census Bureau dubbed this town the poorest in Alabama, saying its 1,000 residents averaged only \$1,473 in income last year — barely a tenth of the national average. Mayor Joe Bell, who has raised \$2.5 million in grants to pave streets and build homes, took the ranking in stride. "We've got the best-looking homes of any community of our level of poverty," he said. "It's not our goal to be at the bottom."

BEAUFORT, S.C. (April 5) — Members of the National Council of Churches toured the Sea Islands and denounced developers and officials for practicing "cultural genocide." Long-time black residents say they have been pushed aside by government agencies that cater to high-priced resorts and are insulted by the crass marketing of the islands' "beautiful plantation homes."

COLLIERVILLE, Tenn. (April 14) — High-school officials came under fire here after a teacher paddled student Michael Nicholds for using the word "hell" in a short story he wrote for class. Nicholds said his teacher gave him no opportunity to remove the word, and his mother demanded an apology, but administrators stood by their action.

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (April 25) — After asking game wardens to arrest him for breaking a state law against hunting on Sunday, Joe Ficarra asked a judge to convict him so he can challenge the the law in court. Ficarra admitted having a financial interest in overturning the law: He makes his living as a taxidermist.

GEORGETOWN, S.C. (April 26) — State health officials renewed their 1989 warning against eating fish from the Sampit River, saying the water is still polluted with cancer-causing dioxin from an International Paper Company mill. A federal EPA study last year found that the mill was emitting the highest levels of dioxin in the nation.

JACKSON, Miss. (May 2) — Jackson State University held a day-long service to commemorate the 20th anniversary of a police attack that killed two black students and wounded more than a dozen others. Organizers said few remember the shooting, which took place just 11 days after the killings at Kent State in Ohio. "It's almost like my brother died for nothing, like no one even cares or remembers," said Gloria Green, whose brother James was killed when he cut through the campus on his way home from work.

COLUMBIA, S.C. (May 8) — Ridiculed by the press and public, Fifth Circuit Solicitor James Anders has backed off from his threat to prosecute Henry McMaster, a Republican candidate for lieutenant governor who admitted during a debate that he had smoked marijuana 20 years ago. Anders, a Democrat with his eye on a congressional seat, had vowed to take McMaster's admission to a grand jury.

JACKSON, Miss. (May 14) — Honduran President Rafael Callejas said today that Mississippi, the poorest of the United States, will be a key to the economic development of his nation. The port at Gulfport receives 60 percent of all Honduran imports, and Callejas predicted that "a lot of our bananas will come through Mississippi." Callejas graduated from Mississippi State University with both a bachelor's and a master's degree in 1965.



JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (April 20) — An unidentified homeless man was crushed to death when the dumpster he was sleeping in was emptied into a garbage compactor. An official for BFI Waste Systems said people without homes often sleep in the dumpsters during cool weather to keep warm.

WELLSBURG, W.Va. (May 15) — Two years after their town was dubbed "Fat City," 1,000 residents here have completed a health program that helped them lose weight and significantly lower their cholesterol levels. The Bayer Co. spent \$3.3 million on the pilot program, one of the first privately funded health education efforts in a rural area. Organizers chose Wellsburg after a 1986 federal study showed West Virginia had the nation's highest obesity rate — 24 percent.

HARRISONBURG, Va. (May 18) — A federal judge ordered a public elementary school to stop holding private Bible study classes on school property. The restraining order was issued after parents complained that teachers had pressured students to enroll in the classes, which were held in buses on school grounds.

TAYLOR MILL, Ky. (May 23) — Principal Lonnie Watts has forbidden students to wear a T-shirt that shows animated TV-star Bart Simpson proclaiming himself an "Underachiever: And Proud of It, Man." Watts said the Bart character promotes low self-esteem by "saying it's OK to be stupid." Bart declined comment, saying "My folks taught me to respect elementary school

principals, even the ones who have nothing better to do than tell kids what to wear."



LAWRENCEVILLE, Ga. (May 25) — Judge Howard Cook struck down a 1952 state law forbidding Ku Klux Klan members from wearing masks in public. Calling the Klan "a persecuted group," Cook ruled that masks might be the only way for Klansmen to express their "unpopular but constitutionally protected views."

Illustrations by Steven Cragg.

Readers are encouraged to submit articles to Dateline: The South. Please send original clippings or photocopies and give name and date of publication.

BIG BANKS GET GOOD S&L LAND

When Congress created the Resolution Trust Corp. last summer, it ordered the new federal agency to sell off land, homes, and commercial property held by hundreds of failed savings and loans. In January, the RTC released a 3,000-page, three-volume list detailing the first 30,000 properties for sale.

Buyers jumped at the bonanza, but those who called the toll-free number provided by the RTC were met with a recorded message. "Due to the extraordinary request for inventory," a reassuring voice instructed callers, "please hold for the next agent."

Today, more than six months later, many of the properties are still on hold. Real estate values have fallen, sticking the federal government with thousands of vacant homes, apartments, and office build-

ings. According to RTC figures, nearly three fourths of the repossessed property is in the South — more than half of it in Texas, where the savings and loan scandal first unraveled.

And that's just the beginning. The RTC is in the process of overseeing the largest property transfer in world history. By the time it's all over, more than 300,000 pieces of property — an estimated \$400 billion in assets — will have changed hands.

So far, though, slow sales have sent the price tag for this giant land swap soaring. When President Bush announced the S&L bailout last year, he put the cost at \$50 billion. The real cost is now estimated at \$300 billion, and could go as high as \$500 billion.

The Bush administration's response to the mounting crisis has been to pressure the RTC to sell, sell, sell — to get rid of the properties at any price. As a result, the feds are not only giving away property, they have actually paid some

banks and wealthy buyers to take it off their hands.

In March, for example, the RTC paid the North Carolina National Bank \$700,000 to take \$104 million in federally insured deposits from a defunct S&L in Galveston, Texas. The RTC allows banks and other wealthy buyers to keep the valuable assets from the S&Ls and dump junk bonds, toxic-waste dumps, and other dangerous or debt-ridden properties back on the government.

Nobody knows for sure just how much costly "junk" the big buyers are returning to the government. The banks have up to two years to return any property they don't want, and no government agency can keep up with the growing stockpile.

Very little of the property from failed S&Ls has ended up in the hands of moderate- and low-income families who are footing most of the bailout bill. Congress ordered the RTC to sell 18,000 homes to families most in need of housing, but in its first 10 months the agency sold only 30.

Affordable housing advocates have expressed anger that the RTC is giving great deals to big banks while refusing to offer discounts or subsidized financing to low-income buyers.

"We had hoped that out of the S&L mess, some people who otherwise couldn't buy a house would be able to get one," said John McEvoy, executive director of the National Council of State Housing Agencies. "So far, that just hasn't happened."

—Eric Bates



The federal government is selling property repossessed from failed savings and loans — and nearly three fourths of it is in the South. States shaded have the largest number of residential and commercial properties offered for sale.

Source: Resolution Trust Corp.

DELTA REPORT DRAWS SOME CRITICAL FIRE

The federal Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission has been studying poverty in 219 Southern counties for the past 18 months, drafting solutions to the region's economic problems. When the commission released its final

Photo by Russell Honicker/Impact Visuals



CRITICS SAY A NEW COMMISSION REPORT FAILS TO ADDRESS THE ROOTS OF POVERTY IN THE DELTA, ONE OF THE POOREST REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY.

report in May, however, many who had been awaiting its findings expressed disappointment.

The report, a 186-page effort packed with more than 400 recommendations, was supposed to provide an economic road map for a 10-year recovery in Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Illinois. The counties that line the Mississippi River constitute the poorest section in America, with per capita income 34 percent below the national average.

The report is broad, calling for a multitude of programs to improve education, community development, race relations, health care, infrastructure, and the environment. But critics say the study offers little but band-aids for a gushing wound — not the kind of sweeping change needed in a region that has been ground down by 200 years of racially skewed policies.

“The key is changing the plantation structure,” said Debbie Bell, a University of Mississippi law professor and housing expert. “People in the Delta have to have equal access to political and economic power.”

The report assigns responsibilities to virtually everyone — citizens, businesses, and local, state and federal governments. It calls for volunteers to help improve education, highways, ports, health care, and race relations. It also calls for creating a Delta development bank and economic cooperatives, designating the region as a “national laboratory” for improving race relations, mandating more minority defense contracts, and relying on foreign medical students and midwives for health care.

Some observers like the recommendations. “I think they’re on target,” said Roosevelt Sanders, a Mississippi Valley State University economics professor.

“I’ve never seen any type of study calling on everyone to get involved — especially in this area — and dealing with the plight of poor people.”

Sanders said the burden is now on communities and governments to implement the recommendations — and to do so by including the poor in the planning. He added, however, that the 10-year time frame outlined in the report is “a little too ambitious, with our budget.”

The report dodges the question of who will pay for the programs. Going into the study, several of the commissioners, including the governors of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, said they wouldn’t rely on a federal bailout of the region. But the report includes hundreds of requests for congressional aid, and fails to estimate the costs.

The two lawmakers responsible for the commission, Arkansas Senator Dale Bumpers and Mississippi Representative Mike Espy, conceded that it will be difficult to pay for the initiatives. “The real problem is that the federal government and the states and the cities are all in a terrible fiscal crisis,” Bumpers said.

The report also fails to settle the issue of a follow-up agency, similar to the Appalachian Regional Commission that has been in place for 25 years to help that region. The Delta report recommends an interim “advocacy” group to replace the commission when it dissolves September 30, and leaves Congress to decide whether a permanent body will be created.

Sanders said he hopes the report will lead to grassroots development. “Up to this point, we have been planning for poor people,” he said. “We need to plan with people.”

—Clay Hathorn

WILDER: CONSERVATIVE IN LIBERAL CLOTHES?

Since taking office in January, Virginia Governor Doug Wilder has astonished friends and foes alike.

First, he delighted Republicans —

and discomfited some Democrats — by using a projected budget shortfall to push legislators to cut state spending and approve a modest tax cut.

Then, as soon as the legislature adjourned, Wilder set off to stump the country and tell fellow Democrats that the way to regain the White House was to follow his example. Practice “fiscal discipline.” Free themselves from “special interests.” Join him in a fiscally conservative but socially progressive “New Mainstream.”

Could it be the nation’s first black elected governor is a conservative? Or is he simply looking out for Number One?

Moderate Democrats have expressed delight at Wilder’s middle-of-the-road rhetoric. In what many saw as a slap at Jesse Jackson, Wilder blamed the party’s presidential troubles on losing candidates who failed to rally behind the nominee. Some are now touting Wilder as a potential vice presidential or even presidential candidate in 1992 — and a way to ward off Jackson.

But Wilder’s call for “party unity” apparently doesn’t apply to himself. Although he ran as the logical heir to two Democratic governors, he has purged Democrats aligned with those governors from state boards and replaced them with Wilder loyalists.

The purge has earned Wilder’s chief of staff the title of “minister of revenge.” A common joke in Richmond is, “What bodies will wash up out of the New Mainstream today?”

Wilder raised the most eyebrows when he removed a key ally of U.S. Senator Chuck Robb — and replaced her with the editorial page editor of the arch-conservative *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, a paper that endorsed Wilder’s opponent for governor. Some noted, though, that in one stroke Wilder showed Robb who’s in charge and defanged the paper that would normally be a Democratic governor’s sharpest critic.

Indeed, most of Wilder’s critics are on his left, which is where he wants to keep them. Teachers say that Wilder didn’t give them as big a pay raise as they deserve. Liberals complain that Wilder seems to have no agenda beyond retribution and self-advancement. And some blacks contend that Wilder hasn’t paid sufficient attention to their concerns.

Most notably, Wilder came out against proposals to create a black-majority congressional district in rural Southside when Virginia receives an additional House seat next year. If his

election meant anything, Wilder insisted, it’s that blacks can win in white-majority districts.

But Wilder’s move was also practical politics. Southside is currently represented by a liberal white Democrat; Wilder would rather carve a new Democratic district out of the Washington suburbs, which are currently represented by two Republicans.

Wilder has tried to assuage blacks by ordering state institutions to divest themselves of stocks in South Africa. He also ordered state colleges to limit tuition increases to 5.5 percent, winning cheers from parents and students.

But while Wilder hasn’t been reluctant to tell colleges to curb tuition or divest in apartheid, there’s one college matter he has refused to get involved in — the federal suit to end the all-male admissions policy at Virginia Military Institute.

The U.S. Justice Department has named Wilder as a defendant on the grounds that he appoints the VMI governing board. Wilder, seeing no profit in antagonizing powerful VMI alumni, steadfastly refuses to say how he feels. Curiously, opponents point out, it’s the one state board where Wilder has let the appointees of former Governor Gerald Baliles keep their positions of power.

—Dwayne Yancey

KENTUCKY ENACTS SCHOOL REFORMS

In April, Kentucky Governor Wallace Wilkinson signed into law a 950-page educational reform package which he called the most important legislation enacted by the state since adoption of its constitution. The sweeping changes are the product of a decade of citizen pressure at every level of government.

The \$1.3 billion bill includes most of the proposals of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, which built support by holding town forums around the state and by forming an alliance of grassroots education activists and teachers. Strong backing came from the coalfields of eastern Kentucky, where the influence of the powerful coal industry has kept taxes low and schools broke for generations.

Eventually 66 school districts filed suit against the state, and last year the Kentucky Supreme Court declared the education system unconstitutional be-

cause of disparities between poor and rich districts. The court also ordered the state to reform the entire system to bring its instruction closer to national norms.

The reform package represents “striking progress, opening the door for radical changes in schools,” according to Prichard Committee director Robert Sexton.

The new law establishes a simplified financing system under which every district will receive at least \$2,420 in state funds per pupil each year. At present, spending varies from \$1,800 to \$4,200 a year per student depending on the wealth or poverty of each district. Teachers will be placed on a uniform, statewide salary schedule and will receive a 15 percent raise over two years.

The massive changes will be financed by an increase in sales taxes, a minimum local property tax, and better assessment and collection of property taxes. The emphasis on taxes marks a victory for coalfield residents, who have struggled for years to achieve fair taxation of mineral owners and mining companies.

Unlike similar reforms in other states, the Kentucky law also completely restructures the state school board and gives local districts unprecedented control over curricula and other day-to-day operations.

Each district will have to achieve broad learning goals for all children — but how they reach those goals will be decided by individual schools. Those that improve the performance of their students will be rewarded with additional state funding; those that fail could face teacher layoffs and state-mandated closings.

The Kentucky reforms will also address the roots of the gap between rich and poor schools by increasing state spending for child care, health care, and social services in areas where at least 20 percent of the students live in poverty.

The reforms come at a time of increasing regional scrutiny of school disparities. Arkansas, Texas, and West Virginia are all under court orders to equalize their school systems. West Virginia teachers struck for eight days in March to demand higher salaries and more education funds, and Virginia teachers have increased pressure on their state to correct a two-to-one disparity in funding between wealthy metropolitan schools and poor rural districts.

—John Enagonio

CATAWBAS FIGHT FOR TREATY LAND

Forced off their land and onto a hardscrabble reservation 150 years ago, the Catawba Indian Nation today is enjoying some sweet revenge. The Indians have laid claim to 144,000 acres of prime land in upper South Carolina, scaring away an estimated \$200 million in potential economic development.

Catawba leaders say they hope their lawsuit will generate enough economic pressure to force landowners and local officials to settle their claim for an estimated \$4 billion in land granted the tribe under a 1760 treaty.

"The economy might get a little nasty, but they've had a chance to settle," said tribal leader Carson Blue, who still lives on the impoverished Catawba reservation in York County, South Carolina.

The Catawbas claim that a 1760 treaty with the King of England guaranteed them the land, taking precedence over an 1840 agreement with South Carolina that stripped them of rich soil along the river that bears their name and relegated them to 600 acres of some of the poorest land in the area.

Although illiterate tribal leaders signed the state treaty with an "X," the Catawbas contend the agreement is invalid because it was never ratified by the U.S. government.

Since a federal appeals court ruled last year that the Catawbas have a right to sue for title to the land, dozens of local real estate transactions have been killed or delayed. The lawsuit has made insurance companies reluctant to cover lenders against ownership claims, which in turn has made banks unwilling to make large construction and real estate loans. So far, plans for a major shopping mall and a factory have been cancelled.

Local development has continued, but no one knows exactly how many projects have been spooked away. "That's the ones that hurt you the most — the ones you can't talk to," said developer Lamar Williams, who lost money when plans for a shopping center fell through because of the lack of title insurance.

Homeowners and businesses in the huge, diamond-shaped claim area have been fighting the lawsuit ever since a \$32 million settlement collapsed in 1978. More than 17,000 landowners — including some major industries — are affected by the claim.



CATAWBA LEADER CARSON BLUE TALKS TO SCHOOL CHILDREN ABOUT TRIBAL HISTORY AND CUSTOMS.

Area residents have made fun of the Catawbas in local parades, and one landowner recently forbade them to dig for clay on his property, one of the few sites where the clay for making traditional Catawba pottery can still be found.

Before it's over, though, landowners could be forced to pay thousands of dollars each in compensation and return some land to the Catawbas, a scattered tribe of 1,200 people. The tribe plans to use any settlement money it receives to create an education fund and to build a new community center on the reservation.

"If we have to settle this through the courts, it could take another 10, 20, 30

years," warned Don Miller, attorney for the tribe. "If we settle it outside court, it could be done tomorrow."

Tribal leader Carson Blue vowed to fight for as long as it takes. "We've been waiting for justice for 150 years," he said. "I guess we can wait another five or ten."

— Will Rabb

News departments compiled by John James.

Readers are encouraged to submit news articles to Southern News Roundup. Please send original clippings or photocopies with name and date of publication, or articles of no more than 300 words.

Dark

Days at Gulf Power

PENSACOLA, FLA. — It was late 1983 when the anonymous letters about the city's leading corporate citizen, Gulf Power Company, turned up in politicians' offices, newsrooms, and board rooms.

The letters were crudely typed. Ungrammatical. The allegations were bizarre.

Northwest Florida's electric company was a hotbed of corruption, the letters said, alleging everything from executives hiring prostitutes for a party to employees robbing the utility warehouse.

At first, the allegations seemed incredible, too ridiculous to believe. But Douglas McCrary, Gulf's newly appointed president, ordered an in-house investigation.

And, gradually, Gulf Power began to unravel.

Over the next six years, both the Internal Revenue Service and the FBI put Gulf under a microscope. Grand juries in two cities conducted probes. The utility's sins spilled from its imposing \$25 million building on Pensacola's waterfront,

A burly warehouse boss, a charming president, death threats, a mysterious plane crash — could all this be happening at a public utility?

creating a daily front-page soap opera. Eventually, nothing was too strange to believe.

The scandal ranged from burly Gulf warehouse supervisor Kyle Croft to the utility's handsome, outgoing president Edward Addison, who was promoted to head Gulf's huge Atlanta-based parent Southern Co. in 1983. It implicated scores of utility employees, top community and business leaders, and politicians, most notably state Senator W.D. Childers of Pensacola.

One bizarre event followed another:

▼ A key grand jury witness, Ray Howell, vanished for a year after a desperate call threatening suicide.

By Ginny Graybiel

▼ Gulf's senior vice president, Jacob Horton, a 33-year employee set for indictment, died in a fiery company plane crash an hour after he was told he would be ousted for his role in the scandal. Many believe he set the on-board fire that caused the plane to crash.

▼ A Gulf attorney and Horton pal, Fred Levin,

found four canaries with broken backs on his doorstep — a sign he interpreted as a warning not to “sing” to investigators.

The strange tale of Gulf Power provides a rare glimpse into the inner workings of a giant public utility. Gulf is one of five Southern Co. subsidiaries that supply electricity to over 3.2 million customers in Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. Granted a lucrative monopoly on a basic necessity and guaranteed a profit on its operations, the company used its power to steal from ratepayers, cheat on its taxes, and subvert the electoral process by creating a secret slush fund to conceal campaign contributions.

So far, Gulf has pleaded guilty to two felonies, and two ex-employees and a

interviewed numerous employees and decided that Kyle Croft, the warehouse and repair shop manager, was a major thief.

Croft himself admitted that he ran the warehouse like his own fiefdom, helping himself to what he wanted. He stole transformers and other equipment for a company in which he held an interest. He sent his employees to help build his new home. He arranged for Gulf suppliers to provide wood for his kitchen cabinets and cement for his driveway, and then to send the utility a padded invoice. Croft's total tab: more than \$300,000.

The investigators told McCrary what they had uncovered, and on January 29 he fired Croft.

But Croft, a self-described redneck, decided he wasn't going down alone. In a twist that has haunted the utility ever since, he revealed that company executives had ordered him to perform services and steal materials on their behalf. Sometimes he used utility employees to do the dirty work; sometimes he used company vendors.

“I did so many favors for the executives that I felt it was only fair that I get something for myself, too,” he said.

In his moment of need, Croft called on two buddies for whom he'd done a few favors: Senior

Vice President Jacob Horton, a man who had his fingers in every civic pie in Pensacola, and state Senator W.D. Childers, a tough good ol' boy with a reputation as one of the master political manipulators in the state.

Horton and Childers, in turn, called on their buddy Fred Levin, an attorney and political pawnbroker who represented Gulf Power. The powerful trio, fast friends, met with McCrary and came up with an agreement: Croft was allowed to

resign, keeping his pension and health insurance. In return, he signed a note to the company for \$15,000; Horton gave him a note for the same amount.

But Croft wasn't satisfied with the deal. In June 1986, he filed a state civil suit charging Gulf executives with libel, slander, and extortion. He claimed they forced him to steal on their behalf, then made him resign as a scapegoat.

Croft said he'd done numerous favors for top executives at company expense. He arranged for remodeling at the beach house of Edward Addison, then-president of Gulf. He arranged for painting and wallpapering at the home of Ben Kickliter, a company vice president. He had Horton's house washed down and got him lawn sprinklers. Croft also said he had delivered briefcases of cash to various executives in parking lots. The list went on and on.

Similar allegations had surfaced during the internal company investigation in 1984. “So many special jobs have been done for company executives . . . the nickname for the repair shop is ‘The Hobby Shop,’” repairman Michael Box had said. “The men called the special jobs ‘007 work.’”

EXECUTIVE THEFT

Levin orchestrated the defense for the utility executives. They acknowledged that Croft provided them with “normal company perquisites,” but they denied he had been forced to conceal his activities.

At the same time, the company revealed that Levin had set up an “amnesty program” after Croft's thievery came to light. It was a chance for employees, their identities known only to Levin, to repay what they had stolen and clear their consciences.

Levin said the amnesty program generated about \$13,000, a fraction of what had been taken. What he didn't say was that Edward Addison — by then the president of Southern Co. — had paid almost all of the amnesty.

Addison, whose annual salary is almost \$800,000, paid almost \$10,000 in amnesty for what a Southern Co. spokesman called “everything that might possibly be viewed as being of more personal than corporate benefit.”

Addison also paid Gulf another \$7,907 for appliances he'd had for more than a year. He said he hadn't noticed that he had never been billed.

Despite the amnesty revelations, Croft lost his lawsuit. The judge who dismissed it

Photos courtesy Pensacola News Journal



AN ONLOOKER PHOTOGRAPHS THE WRECKAGE OF THE PLANE CRASH THAT KILLED JACOB HORTON, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF GULF POWER. SOME SAY THE UTILITY EXECUTIVE SET OFF A BOMB ON BOARD THE PLANE.

company supplier have gone to prison. And by all indications, there is much more to come.

FROM WAREHOUSE TO BOARD ROOM

After the anonymous letters became public in January 1984, Gulf Power President Douglas McCrary hired two investigators from another Southern Co. subsidiary to conduct an internal probe. They

in July 1988 said Gulf "had a right, even a duty . . . to fire a thief." But he added that he was making no judgment about the allegations of executive theft.

While his suit was pending, however, Croft went to the IRS and cut himself a deal. In February 1988, he pleaded guilty to a single count of impeding tax collection through a phony billing scheme. He was sentenced to a token four months and fined \$10,000. In return, he gave the government information which led to the indictment of Lamar Brazwell, a former Gulf support services supervisor.

In April 1988, Brazwell was charged with three counts of income tax evasion. According to the charges, he had received at least \$131,319 in goods and services from Gulf Power vendors, many of whom had billed the utility for the expenses. He also owed \$64,024 in taxes.

Brazwell pleaded guilty to the three counts, which involved at least 13 different schemes with four vendors. He was sentenced to nine years and fined \$30,000, and one of the vendors was convicted of perjury for lying about his role in the scam.

And how did the company respond to revelations that vendors were billing the utility for kickbacks to employees? Instead of showing outrage, Gulf maintained contracts with most of the firms that took part in the schemes. Assistant U.S. Attorney Steve Preisser, who prosecuted the cases, said he'd never seen a victim less concerned about its losses.

Finally, in mid-1988, the Pensacola grand jury probe came to a standstill. But for Gulf the greatest agony lay ahead.

TESTIFY OR RUN

In Atlanta, home of the Southern Co. parent operation, a federal grand jury investigation cranked up in August 1988. Initially the panel looked into allegations that Southern and its accounting firm hid \$61 million in spare parts to avoid paying millions of dollars in taxes.

Within a few months, however, the jury began reexamining the Gulf theft allegations and investigating charges that Gulf was making illegal political contributions.

According to the allegations, Vice President Jacob Horton was secretly funneling campaign contributions through company vendors without the knowledge of president Douglas McCrary.

Graphic artist Ray Howell, who had

worked under contract for Gulf for 10 years, was subpoenaed to appear on December 8, 1988 — one of the first witnesses from Gulf.

He never showed up.

The night before, Howell had called Gulf public relations director Charles Lambert and said he had three options: Testify, run, or shoot himself.

"He was extremely upset, frightened . . . incoherent," Lambert recalled. The next day, Howell simply disappeared.

Howell's one-man company, Design Associates, had only two significant clients: Gulf and state Senator Childers. He designed brochures and ads for both.

Gulf employees said they couldn't imagine what connection the genial

"GULF POWER DOESN'T HAVE A SPECK OF PROOF," INSISTS STATE SENATOR W.D. CHILDERS, WHO HAS BEEN IMPLICATED IN THE SCANDAL.



Howell could have with the investigation. Childers, who had paid Howell \$133,000 during his fall campaign, said the same thing.

But Gulf auditors subsequently reviewed Howell's accounts and discovered astronomical, rising billings. In 1987, Gulf paid him \$205,661; in 1988, \$379,891.

Other odd bits of information emerged. Howell had served a year in prison in 1977 for mail fraud. He also had a bank account in Austria.

A magistrate issued a warrant for Howell's arrest, charging unlawful flight. For the next year, IRS agents searched unsuccessfully for him, even staking out his mother's funeral.

THE SECRET PAC

The Atlanta grand jury also heard a tale of two political action committees at Gulf Power.

One — the Gulf Power Employees' Committee for Responsible Legislation — was the utility's legally registered PAC.

The other — dubbed PAC II — was something else, and it raised eyebrows on the grand jury.

The executive committee for the secret fund, which included Vice President Jacob Horton, decided which candidates were "good for Gulf Power." About 100 upper-management employees then contributed designated amounts, depending on their rank in the company. Some mailed checks directly to the candidates; others turned them over to their bosses.

Every two years, the company used the unregistered fund to make political donations totaling about \$11,000. Contributions were made in the names of individual employees, concealing the utility's hand.

Some employees complained of coercion. "You have to contribute to keep your job," said one.

Gulf officials, however, contended no one was forced to participate — even though 95 percent of eligible employees did. In fact, they added, PAC II wasn't really a PAC. "It's kind of a non-PAC," said a company official. "It's employee involvement."

Government attorneys said otherwise. According to a federal statement, Gulf Power used PAC II to coerce employees to make political contributions to candidates backed by the utility.

"A PANDORA'S BOX"

As the grand jury worked from the outside, one Gulf Power employee continued to probe company wrongdoings from the inside. Tom Baker had been promoted to corporate security manager after he uncovered the Croft warehouse scandal in 1984. He was a loyal company man who had worked for Southern Co. for 19 years. But his persistent inquiries into illegal activities higher up the corporate ladder were getting him in trouble with top management.

Vice President Jacob Horton was particularly concerned about what Baker was learning. At one point, Horton admonished him, "I can't operate in an atmosphere where security or anyone else is looking over my shoulder."

As Baker later recalled, "Horton told me that he was the most powerful man in Pensacola, the most powerful man in

Florida, that he was Gulf Power and could run me out of town."

Finally, Baker was removed as security chief and relegated to an outlying office as an investigator. He was told not to expect a raise for five or six years. Gulf insisted the transfer was part of a company-wide move to "decentralize" security, but Baker was equally adamant that he was demoted for learning too much about wrongdoing.

In October 1988, Baker presented Gulf's four-member audit committee, composed of the outside directors, with a 37-page report listing numerous allegations of illegal activities.

"I love this company, and I have put it before everything in my life," he told the directors, pleading for his old job.

The audit committee decided Baker hadn't been unfairly demoted — but it did investigate his allegations of wrongdoing, many involving Horton. What they found contradicted management reassurances that Gulf had been clean since the days of Croft.

"Baker, as far as most of us are concerned, did us a favor," said Dr. Reed Bell, a Pensacola pediatrician who chaired the audit committee. "He opened a Pandora's box."

Bell and two other committee members became convinced that Horton had to go. The fourth member, Pensacola Mayor Vince Whibbs, defended Horton.

On Friday, April 7, 1989, with Whibbs out of town, the audit committee voted 3-0 to recommend Horton's ousting to the board of directors. The committee had the support of Gulf President Douglas McCrary, ensuring a majority on the seven-member board. Horton would be allowed to retire, but would be fired if necessary.

McCrary and Bell decided to tell Horton of the decision the following Monday. McCrary also asked Gulf attorney Fred Levin, a close friend of Horton, "to talk with Jake and get him to take a reasonable approach."

THE WEDDING RING

Horton's weekend was unremarkable. He got a haircut, visited his mother, did yardwork, tinkered with his antique cars, and made a routine visit to his office to pay bills.

At about 9:25 a.m. Monday, Horton went to Levin's office.

Twenty minutes later, still in Levin's office, he called the Southern Co. aircraft

coordinator to say he wanted to go to Atlanta that afternoon for an hour-long meeting. The coordinator arranged a 1:00 p.m. take-off.

Horton's secretary called him at 10:20 and told him McCrary and Bell wanted to meet with him. Horton arrived at McCrary's office at 11:30 and was told of the audit committee's decision.

McCrary said Horton took the news "very calmly" and said he'd get back with him that afternoon. It was obvious Levin had warned him.

Horton went home around noon and told his wife, Frances, he was going to Atlanta to see Southern Co. President Edward Addison, his long-time friend and supporter. He didn't say he was being ousted, and she didn't ask any questions.

He washed up, removing his Auburn University ring, watch, and wedding band. He didn't put them back on. Sometime that morning, he also wrote a \$7,700 check paying off all but \$74 of his home mortgage.

He packed clothes for overnight but told Frances he'd try to get back so they could watch the country music awards on television that night.

BOWLING BAG FIRE

Horton drove up to the Southern Co. hangar at the Pensacola Regional Airport just as the Beech King Air 200 taxied in.

Southern Co. pilots Mike Holmes and John Major, both 45, had made an uneventful flight from their home base in Gulfport, Mississippi, to pick up Horton. Holmes stayed on board; Major went into the hangar briefly.

Horton handed luggage to an attendant, then went back to his car. He carried a bowling ball-like bag on board himself.

The plane took off into drizzling, overcast skies at 12:57:52 p.m.

At 12:59:17, Major asked, "What the hell was that?"

At 12:59:19, Horton exclaimed, "Fire!"

At 12:59:22, Major confirmed, "We gotta fire in back." Two seconds later, he radioed, "Gotta emergency."

At 12:59:28, Holmes instructed Major to "dump the pressure."

There were no more transmissions.

Witnesses watched the plane, trailing dark smoke, crash into a Pensacola apartment complex. Horton, 57, and the pilots died on impact. The seven people in the apartments escaped.

Horton hadn't told McCrary or Levin he had ordered the plane. Nor had he told

anyone at Southern Co. he was on his way.

Within hours, rumors swirled. Some people were convinced Horton had committed suicide. Others thought a Horton enemy had planted a fire bomb.

Three hours after the crash, the sheriff's department taped an anonymous telephone call. "Yeah, you can stop investigating Gulf Power," the male caller said. "We took care of that for them this afternoon."

An investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board concluded that there had been a fire in the passenger cabin. The agency said Horton's "bowling bag" contained a Mason jar ring and cap and a t-shirt with traces of sulphuric and hydrochloric acids. Glass from the jar was scattered in the aisle. A book of matches was adhered to the outside of the bag.

Eight hundred people packed the church for Jake Horton's funeral. Pensacola Mayor Vince Whibbs delivered the eulogy.

DEAD SONGBIRDS

Fred Levin, a close friend of Horton, assumed center stage after the crash, seemingly relishing the role. He hinted he could shed light on the mystery, but insisted he couldn't violate his confidential attorney-client relationship with Gulf and needed the utility's permission to talk about his final conversation with Horton.

By this time, however, Gulf and Levin were clearly on the outs. Levin's loyalty was to Horton, and now, even with incriminating evidence, Levin was staunchly defending him.

The company refused to release him from the attorney-client relationship, except to tell the grand jury and the FBI about his final conversation with Horton. Levin bellyached that Gulf was muzzling him. But he still managed to say plenty.

He said he had found four dead canaries at his two homes and office. He assumed they were Mafia-type warnings not "to sing" about what he knew. He also announced that ex-heavyweight champion Tony Tubbs was moving into his home as a bodyguard.

Finally, Levin announced his firm was quitting its \$500,000-a-year job with Gulf because the utility had abandoned Horton.

The grand jury subpoenaed Levin to its May session, and the FBI warned Levin that an informant had reported he would be "hit" before he testified. Levin made it to the grand jury, but a new death threat came in as he testified. A man with a raspy

HOW GULF BOUGHT POWER



voice called an Atlanta attorney's office to say Levin "would be blown away" as he left the courthouse. Five agents in bulletproof vests escorted Levin until he was delivered to the airport the next day.

Levin said he told the grand jury Horton and Addison hadn't done anything illegal.

BUYING CLOUT

As the grand jury probe dragged on, it took a heavy toll on Gulf Power employees. Lineman Larry Woody said his barber told him, "You Gulf Power people, you got a mess. You're right up there with the television evangelists."

Gulf executives and lawyers knew a trial would be lengthy, expensive, and demoralizing — and they didn't believe they could win. So last October, the utility pleaded guilty to two felonies: conspiring to make illegal political contributions and to evade tax collectors through the creation of false invoices. The utility paid a \$500,000 fine, taken from its stockholders.

Without the plea, Gulf could have faced more than 100 separate charges and a potential fine of more than \$50 million.

The plea agreement listed 123 illegal acts. It said Gulf illegally contributed about \$43,000 to 20 politicians and about \$23,000 to community events and groups, from a professional golf tournament to a junior college foundation.

The plea said Horton masterminded a plan to force outside vendors, mainly four

ad agencies, to make contributions to pet politicians and groups, and then to pad invoices to cover up the gifts.

The plea agreement also revealed:

▼ The Appleyard Agency, a Pensacola ad firm, used utility funds to pay a country singing group to perform at political and social events. Agency employees also cashed numerous checks and gave the money to a Gulf manager.

▼ Gulf provided a television studio and equipment for several candidates.

▼ Gulf channeled money through the Design Associates ad firm to state Senator Childers' 1988 re-election campaign.

▼ Horton told a Pensacola billboard executive that Gulf needed money for political campaigns, but that the IRS was watching too closely. The executive, who had a contract with Gulf, solicited \$30,000 in cash after Horton told him he could submit inflated invoices.

U.S. Attorney Robert Barr said Gulf had "subverted the electoral process" by concealing the true source of campaign financing. Restrictions on political contributions, he pointed out, are designed to prevent individuals or groups from obtaining undue influence with politicians.

Southern Co. officials blamed the illegal deals on Horton. "For many years, Jake Horton was a trusted employee of Gulf and, as a result, was given a great deal of latitude," a utility spokesman explained. "If someone who has earned trust fails that trust, then all the systems in the world won't help."

If Horton did act on his own behalf,

however, he was a highly unusual thief. After all, he never lined his own pockets — he simply used Gulf Power to do favors for friends and politicians and to buy clout for the company.

"He was an angel, but a little bit of a devil, too," said a friend. "He was really a super-great person, but in order to be that way, he had to be a little bit corrupt."

Having confessed to a little corruption of its own, Gulf moved quickly to seek forgiveness. In November — a month after pleading guilty to two felonies — the utility filed for a \$25.8 million rate increase with the Florida public service commission.

RETURN OF THE FUGITIVE

On December 27, 1989, Ray Howell — the graphic artist who had vanished the day he was scheduled to appear before the grand jury — walked into the county jail in Pensacola. He didn't say where he'd been for the last year.

Federal marshals hustled him off to a series of undisclosed jails and finally to the maximum-security U.S. Penitentiary in Atlanta.

In April, Howell pleaded guilty to contempt for fleeing and to a single tax-fraud charge and promised to help the government. When he gets out of prison, prosecutors have promised to submit his application to the witness relocation and protection program.

But the reappearance of Howell has sparked another probe into the trail of illegal political contributions at Gulf Power. After talking to Howell for two days, IRS agents are reportedly involved in a full-scale investigation of state Senator Childers, a prominent powerbroker in the Florida legislature for 20 years.

If the new investigation is any indication, the story of Gulf Power and its political machinations may be far from over. Childers says he has done nothing wrong and has vowed to fight any allegations. In fact, he still insists that Gulf never funneled money to him through Howell's company — even though the utility has pleaded guilty to the charge.

"Gulf Power doesn't have a speck of proof," Childers said. "They better put up or shut up." □

Ginny Graybiel has investigated the Gulf Power scandal for five years as a reporter for the Pensacola News Journal. Her stories won a 1989 Southern Journalism Award for investigative reporting from the Institute for Southern Studies.



Birth Rights

"You know I don't want any more children! I never wanted any at all. Every time things are going right with me I have to have a baby. I won't have it, I tell you, I won't! There are things to do. I'm not the stupid country fool I used to be. Now, I know a woman doesn't have to have children if she doesn't want them."

— Scarlett O'Hara
Gone With the Wind

Abortion is not a new issue in the South. Across the region, women have always understood the choices involved in childbirth, and they have long fought for the freedom to make their own decisions. After all, Scarlett knew she would be on her own after the big love scene — Rhett, frankly, didn't give a damn.

What has changed in the past few decades is that abortion has become the focal point of a heated and increasingly violent public debate over what women will — and won't — be allowed to do with their own bodies. Issues of birth control and sexuality and parental leave and who changes the diapers have all been combined into one essential question: When a woman becomes pregnant, what choices does she have?

Since the Supreme Court ruled last summer that states can drastically limit abortion, the South has emerged as a central battleground in the fight for reproductive rights. The first and most explosive legislative session to consider restrictions on abortion took place in Florida, and the region is home to anti-choice groups like Operation Rescue that are using fear tactics and violence reminiscent of white supremacy groups like the Klan to intimidate patients and staff at Southern abortion clinics.

Despite the renewed assault on reproductive rights, the South has not proven to be the anti-choice monolith described by the media. In Florida, legislators refused to pass any of the restrictive measures proposed by Governor Bob Martinez. In Virginia, the country's first black governor was elected by swaying many traditionally Republican voters with his pro-choice stance. And across the region, conservative politicians gearing up for the fall elections are recognizing the power of the pro-choice vote, as polls repeatedly show that Southerners support a woman's right to choose an abortion.

As pro-choice groups have been galvanized by the struggle, they have also recognized that the battle for reproductive rights is part of a broader campaign for basic civil rights and adequate health care. As the articles in this special section of *Southern Exposure* remind us, the legislative restrictions and organized intimidation are part and parcel of a broader economic and social reality that systematically denies women the resources they need to give birth safely and care for their children.

Because the South is disproportionately poor and rural, the region has always suffered from severely limited access to birth control and basic obstetric care. More than one in four families in the region live in poverty, and two-thirds of all women who choose abortion report that they simply cannot afford another child.

If women do choose to give birth — or are forced to because they cannot afford an abortion — their infants face a scary start in the world. Southern children are more likely to die, to suffer from poor health, to become teenage parents, and to lack access to adequate medical care than babies in any other region.

Just as workers should have greater control over what one

philosopher called "the means of production," those who perform the labor of childbirth should have greater control over the means of reproduction. What does it mean to deny abortions to women, and then refuse to give them time off from work when they give birth? To force them to bear children, and then make it impossible for them to find a doctor? To refuse to educate teenagers about birth control, and then deem them "unfit" to be parents when they have babies?

In short, what does it mean to claim to be "pro-life" in a world in which 40,000 children under the age of five die each day from preventable illness and starvation?

If we are to secure true reproductive freedom, we must have access to the necessities that allow us to control our own lives — affordable birth control and abortion, basic health care, safe jobs that pay a living wage, and fundamental social services like day care, education, and housing. These are more than matters of individual choice. They are our birthrights, and we must expand our vision of reproductive freedom to encompass them all. □

— Eric Bates

Photo by Russel Honicker/Impact Visuals





ANTI-ABORTION FORCES DEMONSTRATE NEAR AN ATLANTA HEALTH CLINIC.



Killing Kittens, Bombing Clinics

ATLANTA, GA. — Every evening when Lynne Randall returns home from work, she immediately looks for her cats. And when she goes to sleep at night, she is haunted by recurring nightmares.

"I fear for my safety a lot," says the director of the Feminist Women's Health Center. "They all know who I am. It's not like I have any opportunity for anonymity. When people get up in your face and tell you they wish you were dead, that they are praying for your death, it's hard not to be shaken up at times."

Since 1988, when the Democratic National Convention was held here, Randall's clinic has been the target of constant harassment by Operation Rescue, the nation's most visible and virulent anti-abortion organization. The clinic has

been the scene of violent protests designed to physically bar women from entering, and its workers have been subjected to repeated terrorist tactics.

One clinic employee who was fol-

lowed home by anti-choice activists emerged for work the next morning to find two dead kittens on her front porch with a note attached. "Try killing something besides babies," the scrawled message said.

A clinic doctor who left Atlanta for a weekend getaway was followed for 200 miles by anti-choice vigilantes. Doctors now have to be driven to and from the clinic by workers so protesters cannot vandalize their cars and trace their license numbers.

Another clinic worker who was pregnant took her

maternity leave three months early because the constant threats and jostling

from protesters made her fear a miscarriage.

"They always deliver the death threats to the women's families, to their husbands instead of directly to them," Randall explains. "It's very intentional, to upset their husbands so their families will put pressure on them to quit."

In addition to the routine harassment of doctors and other staff, the clinic was the object of anti-choice protests 18 of the 27 days it was open in March. Protesters follow workers to their cars and pursue them to their homes, where they continue to harass the women and their families. Several local governments have passed ordinances banning such tactics.

"It's been pretty devastating," Randall continues. "We've done a remarkable job of holding ourselves together, but it certainly has caused a lot of stress on our employees and their families. We had a psychologist coming in for group counseling sessions. We've done a number of different things to deal with the stress, but it has caused a number of people to quit."

From New Orleans to Norfolk, abortion clinics all over the South have come under siege. In cities large and small, these facilities have been assaulted by protesters determined to harass their staff and patients and prevent women from receiving health care. Worst of all, scores of clinics have been the targets of violent attacks — bombings, vandalism, and arson — that have destroyed millions of dollars in property and created a climate of fear and intimidation not unlike the racial terror provoked by the Ku Klux Klan.

According to law enforcement authorities, clinics have been the targets of eight bombings, 28 arsons, 28 attempted bombings or arsons, and 170 acts of vandalism. Some of the most violent attacks have taken place in the South. Clinics like the Feminist Women's Health Center have been chosen as particular targets by anti-choice demonstrators, who flock from the surrounding region with the express purpose of keeping the clinics from delivering health care to women.

Anti-abortion vigilantes have targeted health clinics across the South, creating a climate of fear and intimidation.

By Julie B. Hairston

"The clinics are really a symbol of women's sexuality," says Randall. "You can't go out on the street and ask who is sexually active and target those women. But you know when women are coming into our clinic, they are seeking some type of reproductive health care, whether it is abortion or birth control or pregnancy tests. The protesters see these women as evil. I've always felt that they may not like abortion, but they really hate feminism."

NO KEYS NEEDED

For Kathy Olsen, former director of the All Women's Health Center in Ocala, Florida, the worst nightmare became real — not just once but twice in a month. One night last year she was roused from sleep at 2 a.m. by a call from police, who had been summoned by the clinic's alarm. She grabbed her keys and headed for the clinic, believing the alarm had gone off by mistake — but she discovered that no keys were necessary to get inside.

The entire back of the building had been blown open by an explosion from a firebomb. Smoke had poured through the building and the intensity of the heat had melted all the light fixtures.

"You just never thought it would ever really happen," Olsen says. "It was like a violation."

After rerouting 25 clients scheduled for appointments that day, Olsen and her staff began the task of cleaning up the clinic and restoring it to operational order. Salvaging what they could from the heat and smoke, they managed to get the clinic back in business within a few weeks. Then came the second firebomb.

"That was when they burned us completely to the ground," she recalls. "Then, I was really scared."

After the second bombing, the site was abandoned and the clinic moved to a more secure location in a nearby shopping center. Olsen has since moved to Gainesville to work in a clinic there. No suspect has been arrested for the bombings.

THREE-MONTH SIEGE

For some clinics, the protests have become so common, they seem almost routine. "I drive up to the clinic every morning and wonder what I'm going to

find," shrugs Beth Petzelt, the lanky sophisticated who directs the staff of the Atlanta Surgi-Center, another favorite target of Operation Rescue. "The worst is when they get into the clinic. It's a real violation for us."

On several occasions, anti-choice protesters have posed as would-be clients to get into the waiting rooms at both the Surgi-Center and the Feminist Clinic. Once inside, they harass the real patients, screaming abusive remarks and calling them "baby killers."

But there is little to compare with the assault on Atlanta clinics staged by Opera-

*"It's very,
very scary
for a woman
to be confronted
by these hordes
of protesters,"
says one
pro-choice activist.*

tion Rescue during the Democratic National Convention in July 1988. More than 1,200 protesters were arrested during the three-month siege, clogging Atlanta jails and costing the city millions of dollars. According to Atlanta public safety officials, just one week of police presence at the protests in October cost more than \$100,000 — not including detention and court costs for those arrested.

Many of those arrested refused to give their names, which meant they remained in the city jail for weeks or even months. Despite a permanent injunction banning the protesters from coming within 50 feet of clinic property, the arrests have continued.

On more than one occasion, Petzelt has arrived at the Surgi-Center to find some type of vandalism — glass doors shattered by bricks, graffiti scrawled on the outer walls, her locks epoxied shut.

The Atlanta demonstrations soon

spread across the region. "Sometimes fights have broken out among demonstrators and they yell so loud you can hear them inside the building," says Kathleen O'Donohue, director of the Women's Community Health Center in Huntsville, Alabama. "They tell lies — things like the clinic has no real doctor, that the staff isn't licensed, that the patients are going to die. There has been some vandalism, throwing of eggs, paint, tarred locks. And they have slashed tires and damaged vehicles. Bomb threats were regular events — we got at least a half-dozen of them."

In many cities, the siege has actually helped to foster a sense of camaraderie among clinics. In Atlanta last year, the health centers formed an association to wage a legal battle for reproductive rights and assist each other in times of stress.

"In a backhanded way, the Operation Rescue picketing of Atlanta was the best thing that ever happened to choice," says Kathy Collumb of the Georgia Abortion Rights Action League (GARAL). "The clinics weren't activists. They would support a woman's right to choose, but they were very passive about it. What happened with Operation Rescue and the television and newspaper reports shook a lot of people up. It got a lot of people angry. At that point, GARAL was deluged with calls from people who wanted to help."

FREAKED OUT

One way that people offered to help was to volunteer to escort patients into the clinics. Organized and trained by GARAL during the 1988 Operation Rescue assault, the escorts continue to move dozens of women through the gauntlet of threats, epithets, and intimidation every week.

"The patients are freaked out," explains Collumb, who trains the escorts. "No matter how clear and centered and focused they are on their decision to have this procedure, it's very, very scary for a woman to be confronted by these hordes of protesters."

"I have a counseling background," she continues. "I have worked in abortion facilities before and I know what some of the psychic stresses are on women in this whole process. A woman having to go through a group of anti-choice picketers is subjected to an emotional rape in terms of how it impacts on her, in terms of the vio-

"THE FANATIC FRINGE"

On May 14 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a Georgia injunction barring the anti-abortion group Operation Rescue from blocking access to abortion clinics in Atlanta.

The next morning, five Operation Rescue vigilantes invaded the waiting room of the Atlanta Surgi-Center, a favorite target. Ignoring the court order, the men chained themselves together in a hallway, blocking the entrance to the clinic. Each of the men had been arrested before for similar crimes.

Such tactics have made Operation Rescue the guerrilla arm of the anti-choice crusade, its members prepared to ignore the law and intimidate any woman seeking reproductive health care at local clinics.

But two years after it launched its campaign against Atlanta clinics, there are signs that Operation Rescue is faltering. Jane Shepard, executive director of the group, admits that its numbers are shrinking — and that more drastic action is now necessary to make its presence felt.

"I believe they're trying to buy more time to save more babies," she said of the protesters. "When you have fewer numbers, that's what you've got to do."

The group has renamed itself Atlanta Pro-Life Ministries, but those most affected by its harassment say the change has done little to stem its dwindling membership.

"I think they're dying," says Lynne Randall, director of the Feminist

Women's Health Center. "They are down to the hard-core fanatics. The more moderate people who agree with their ideology that abortion is wrong were sold a bad bag of goods. They were told by Randall Terry that nothing was going to happen — they weren't going to get arrested, there weren't going to be any fines — and they found out otherwise. These people have stopped. So they are down to a small number, but the remaining people are extremely fanatic. They don't seem to have anything else to do."

For the past two years, Operation Rescue has made Atlanta its working headquarters. The group began as an outgrowth of the early 1980s effort to galvanize conservative Southern Christians as political operatives. Randall Terry founded the organization during a 1987 conference of the Pro-Life Action League, a group led by Atlanta anti-choice activist Joseph Scheidler.

When the Reverend Jerry Falwell, founder of the now-defunct Moral Majority, came to Atlanta during the Democratic National Convention in July 1988, he appeared with Terry to encourage Operation Rescue protests and presented the organization with a \$10,000 check. Other support may be forthcoming from the newly-formed Christian Coalition, founded by Pat Robertson.

Nevertheless, many Southern Christians who are devoutly anti-choice remain opposed to the terrorist tactics employed by Operation Rescue. Many anti-abortion activists in Atlanta, for example, work with a non-denominational group called Birthright which helps pregnant women locate adoption services, jobs, and prenatal care. Unlike Opera-

tion Rescue, which seeks to frighten pregnant women, Birthright forbids its volunteers from threatening women who are considering abortion.

Birthright leaders say they agree with Operation Rescue's ends, but do not support its means. "We don't picket or get involved in Operation Rescue," said founder Louise Summerhill. "The problem with anything like this is, they don't have any standard rules or training, so you get the fanatic fringe coming in that can spoil a movement."

While Operation Rescue attacks clinics, other right-wing organizations have targeted funding for non-profit groups that support a woman's right to choose abortion. The arch-conservative Heritage Foundation has pressured corporate leaders to withhold support from health advocacy groups like Planned Parenthood, the Children's Defense Fund, and People for the American Way. AT&T recently cut its support for a program for teenage mothers after a write-in campaign orchestrated by the Christian Action Council.

Some pro-choice leaders fear that such funding attacks may prove more dangerous than right-wing harassment at individual clinics. "What scares us is that a corporation would allow itself to be bullied like this," said Peter Wilderotter, vice president of Planned Parenthood. "It has created a debate over whether corporations are going to fund social problems in this country." □

—J.H.

Photo by Michael A. Schwarz/Atlanta Constitution



**FIVE PROTESTERS
BLOCKED A HALLWAY AT
THE ATLANTA SURGI-
CENTER, ONE DAY AFTER
THE U.S. SUPREME
COURT BANNED SUCH
DEMONSTRATIONS.**

lation of her privacy, in terms of taking something away from her by force. That is basically what the protesters do, the more aggressive and hostile ones."

The strategy is simple. Escorts — trained not to interact with the protesters in any way — surround the patient and shield her from physical and verbal abuse. One person is assigned specifically to touch and talk gently to the patient as she makes her way into the clinic. If she is accompanied, another escort team is assigned to her partner to diminish the chance for confrontation.

"Every time we are successful in getting a patient into the clinic, it escalates the protesters," Collumb says. "It just shows them they have failed. You can walk 20 feet and it feels like 200 yards. They call us 'death-scorts.' They bait us. They try to engage us in arguments. Their tactics are just slimy, in my opinion. They will write down the license plates from the cars so they can call the woman up at home and try to harass her even after the abortion."

In the two years the escort program has been operating, no confrontations have occurred between an escort and a protester. GARAL has trained more than 300 escorts and provides the service weekly to the Feminist Women's Health Center and the Atlanta Surgi-Center, the two clinics most often attacked by protesters.

CLOSING RANKS

After the Operation Rescue harassment began, local clinics formed cooperative agreements to take patients turned away from other clinics by the protests. They also organized to defeat a flurry of anti-choice bills in the 1990 session of the Georgia legislature, and organizers say individual contributions to GARAL, the Feminist Women's Health Center, and other pro-choice organizations are up.

But the protests have caused other types of financial problems. Corporate funding for Planned Parenthood and other actively pro-choice organizations is in jeopardy, reportedly targeted by the anti-choice network for pressure, threatened boycotts and lobbying campaigns. (See sidebar, page 17.)

Keeping the Feminist clinic open throughout the protests has been so demanding, Randall says, that new programs have been put on hold indefinitely.

An AIDS prevention project, for example, lost its government grant and has been postponed because Randall has had no time to look for other grants or corporate sponsors.

To top it off, the clinic had its insurance canceled. "Nobody would say specifically it was because of the anti-abortion activity," Randall explains, "but everybody knows it is."

First, the clinic lost its property insurance. Then, its liability insurance was canceled. "Our insurance agent feels certain it was because of the presence and the exposure of the antis, that people were going to be pushed and shoved and there was more likelihood that somebody would fall down and sue."

*The number
of protesters
around the clinics
has dwindled,
but the terror
continues.*

Nor has Operation Rescue limited its intimidation to the clinics. Fulton County Solicitor Lee O'Brien has endured a barrage of harassment from anti-choice advocates for his role in prosecuting Randall Terry and other Operation Rescue protesters. After the 1988 protests and arrests, O'Brien's office telephone was clogged for weeks with threatening phone calls from anti-choice demonstrators. They even picketed his home.

In addition, anti-choice groups have threatened to boycott any major pharmaceutical company that attempts to market RU486, the so-called "abortion pill." According to *The New York Times*, drug company executives are so fearful of anti-abortion groups, that they have hung back

on efforts to get the drug approved for distribution in the United States.

Throughout its campaign of illegal intimidation, Operation Rescue has complained of unfair coverage in the media. On May 19, the group orchestrated a national protest of newspapers for their "distortion and censorship" of news on anti-choice activities. During the protest, Operation Rescue ignored repeated requests for interviews from *Southern Exposure*. (See sidebar, next page.)

Randall and Petzelt say they tried to talk to protesters during the first few pickets at their clinics, but soon became frustrated with their inability to reason with the demonstrators. Now, they simply go about their business as best as they can and leave interaction to the police.

"One of the most disturbing things that happened to me during the protests in 1988, was just feeling very alienated from people," Randall says. "I always thought there was something in common I could discuss with just about anybody — I could have a conversation at some level with just about any person I met. But I had absolutely nothing I could talk about with them. They would just stare at me and think I was going to hell and that was the end of the discussion. All they wanted to do was pray for me and condemn me to hell. I found that really disturbing."

Petzelt agrees. "I don't interact with them at all," she says. "You don't have a discussion with fanatics like that. The only way to survive is to pretend they don't exist."

Easier said than done. Clinic staff throughout the South manage to live with the death threats and daily harassment that make their jobs harder and their private lives less secure, but the broader effect of the protests is simply too large to ignore. Despite the recent Supreme Court ruling banning clinic protests, anti-abortion zealots remain determined to use whatever means they can find to limit reproductive options for women.

The number of protesters around the clinics has dwindled, but the terror continues. Kathy Collumb says she still needs new volunteer clinic escorts. And Lynne Randall still looks for her cats when she gets home from work. □

Julie Hairston is a staff writer for Business Atlanta.

INSIDE THE OPERATION

By Molly McGuire

I thought all it would take to sign on as a volunteer at Operation Rescue was a simple phone call. The next day, I would be spending my afternoons typing letters and stuffing envelopes. I had no intention of disrupting the organization. I just wanted to meet the folks who make Operation Rescue what it is today.

But volunteering to help harass pregnant women turned out to be harder than I thought.

I called the Operation Rescue number listed in the phone book, but all I got was a recorded message telling me which clinic was being picketed that day. I left my name and number. Nothing happened. I called again. Same thing. No one returned my repeated calls — but I did receive some colorful pamphlets and a letter informing me that “the abortion holocaust continues in our society in part because the secular media refuses to reveal the truth.” The letter was signed, “In Christ, Jonathon.”

Finally, after two weeks of phone calls, Operation Rescue director Jane Shepard spoke with me. Her sole question was: “What church do you belong to?”

I said that I was non-affiliated, but added that if I found a church that I liked, I would certainly attend. She scheduled an appointment with me for the following week.

The Operation Rescue office stands on Windy Hill Road in Marietta, a traditionally conservative, Bible-belt town north of Atlanta. The reception-

ist, clad in a jogging suit, asked me to sit down. The waiting room was austere — a few pamphlets on a table, a few plaques on the walls attesting to the operation’s fundamentalist leanings.

A dark-haired man in his early thirties came in and introduced himself as Ed Schultz. He informed me that all initial interviews of volunteers were conducted off the premises — “to prevent infiltration,” he explained.

Schultz drove me to a nearby Hardee’s, ordered coffee, pulled out his briefcase, and took out a tape recorder and a desk-top computer. I must have looked surprised. “We review the tapes and notes as part of the volunteer screening procedure,” he said.

He then launched into a gentle but pointed interrogation. Name and age? Marital status? How many children? How long had I lived at my present address? Did my husband approve of my volunteering for Operation Rescue? What church did I attend?

I offered a scrambled explanation of why I chose Operation Rescue instead of another anti-abortion organization. He queried my political affiliations, and what I would be willing to do as a volunteer. Would I walk a picket line? Did I feel comfortable “counseling” women entering abortion clinics? Had I written any letters to the media on abortion? How many? What was my opinion of the media’s “bias and distortion” of the abortion issue? Did I feel abortions should be performed for economic reasons? What about in cases of rape and incest?

After about 30 minutes of questioning, Schultz asked to see a Social Secu-

rity card and picture I.D. I was silently grateful that I had had the foresight to have given my real name.

Driving back to where my car was parked, Schultz pulled out a Polaroid camera and took my photograph. “A precaution against infiltrators,” he explained again. I smiled and squinted into the morning sunlight. He assured me that he would call me the next week to let me know if I had passed. Having worked for a family planning program and a birth control organization, I figured I would never hear from him again.

A week came and went, and I heard nothing. I called the office, but neither Shepard nor Schultz returned my calls. A few days later I tried one last time, and Schultz took my call, apologizing for having been out of town.

“You passed,” he said. “As part of your orientation, we’d like you to walk a picket line at a clinic. It’s standard procedure for new volunteers — just for two or three months. Then you can move on to other things.”

He told me to call the Operation Rescue hotline to find out where the group was picketing that day. I did — and I got the same recorded message I had heard the first time I’d called a month earlier.

Oh well. At least when I get to the picket line, I’ll know that the guy next to me shouting “Baby killer!” at a pregnant woman has been very, very thoroughly screened. □

Molly McGuire is a freelance writer living in Atlanta.

Photo by Michael A. Schwarz/Atlanta Constitution



THE OPERATION RESCUE SIEGE OF ATLANTA CLINICS HAS COST TAXPAYERS HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS.



Of Babies & Ballots

RALEIGH, N.C.—At first glance, it looked like a church dinner or a family reunion picnic. Women and men sat in the grass on a sunny afternoon, relaxed, rocking babies and humming along with a string band that played under a blue-and-white canopy. Friends hugged each other, exchanged pleasantries about the warm weather, speculated as to the chances of rain.

But the crowd of 5,000 hadn't come to relive old times. They had come to revile old times and talk about the future—the future of legalized abortion and other reproductive rights.

"Nineteen-ninety is the year we have to flex our electoral muscle, and we will," said Ruth Ziegler, executive director of the North Carolina chapter of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL).

"The next chapter of our struggle will be written with the ballot, and we are the authors," said state Representative Anne Barnes.

The speakers and demonstrators at the "Stand Up for Choice" rally congregated near the General Assembly building to send a message to the state's lawmakers: If you pass laws that restrict abortion now, we'll remember in the November elections.

Across the South, pro-choice groups have been sending the same message. And legislators are listening.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled last summer that states may limit abortion, some 35 state legislatures have debated the abortion issue. And despite its conservative reputation, the South has proved to be a stronghold for the pro-choice movement. In fact, Southern states have handed the movement some of its most significant victories:

▼ In Virginia, voters elected Doug Wilder governor after he ran on a strong pro-choice platform.

▼ In Florida, state lawmakers stunned

Governor Bob Martinez by walking away from a special session he called without

passing a single restriction on abortion.

▼ In Alabama, the legislature adjourned without passing any of the restrictive abortion measures anti-choice forces had lobbied for.

▼ In Mississippi, Governor Ray Mabus vetoed anti-choice legislation, calling it too restrictive.

▼ In Georgia, the legislature defeated five anti-abortion measures, including a bill to prohibit public spending on abortion except when the mother's life was in jeopardy.

Pro-choice activists attribute such victories to a growing emphasis on electoral politics. Polls show that many Southerners resent the prospect of government interference in their personal lives, and pro-choice forces across the region are working to harness that outrage in the November elections. Slowly but surely, they have pushed abortion to the top of the political agenda, forcing candidates in state and federal elections to state their views. Voters are learning that decisions they make at the ballot box affect decisions they make in their bedrooms.

"Politicians can no longer duck it or evade it or flip-flop back and forth," said Robin Davis of the North Carolina chapter of the National Organization for Women. "We need to know what their stand will be before we vote."

CHOICE = CONSERVATIVE

The shift to an electoral strategy gained momentum on July 3, 1989, when the Supreme Court issued its ruling in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*. The decision gave states the authority to restrict abortions, undermining the historic *Roe v. Wade* ruling that legalized abortion in 1973.

When the *Webster* decision was handed down, anti-abortion forces looked to the South, hoping to translate the region's tradition of religious fundamentalism and conservative politics into anti-abortion laws. But a year later, the coveted defeats have not materialized. Instead, Southerners have mobilized overwhelming grassroots opposition to changes in abortion laws.

"What's happened in the pro-choice movement since *Webster* is unbelievable grassroots support in the South," said Loretta Ucelli of the national NARAL office in Washington, D.C. "I think there has been some sense that because the

Faced with a Supreme Court setback, Southerners have organized a pro-choice groundswell at the ballot box.

By Barbara Barnett

South is conservative it would not be pro-choice. But pro-choice *is* conservative. People don't want government making decisions in their personal lives."

Kerri Milam, executive director of the Georgia chapter of NARAL, agreed. "It's a civil liberties issue to a lot of people in the pro-choice movement. I've heard a lot of people say, 'If I had to make a decision, I wouldn't have an abortion, but I believe in a person's right to choose.' That is a historically conservative Southern attitude—there are some decisions that were constitutionally intended to be left to the individual."

Despite the widespread support, pro-choice forces in the South knew they faced a tough fight after *Webster*. A 1989 NARAL report showed that only North Carolina and Virginia had pro-choice majorities in both legislative houses, and only Virginia had a pro-choice governor. Eleven states required minors to obtain parental consent before abortion, and ten provided funds for abortion only if the mother's life was threatened.

State by state, organizers began to target key races and build grassroots support. The first signs of energy came from Virginia, where abortion proved a key issue in the governor's race last fall.

Even before *Webster* strategists for Democratic candidate Doug Wilder had planned to contrast his pro-choice stance to Republican Marshall Coleman's anti-abortion mindset. They knew abortion would generate heated rhetoric, but they were unaware the Supreme Court was about to totally reconstruct the political landscape.

"In terms of strategy, it was an issue we had looked at," said Paul Goldman, Democratic Party chair in Virginia. "We saw the GOP positioning itself as dictating to the woman—that the woman, the doctor, the family had no right in the decision. What the Supreme Court decision did was bring the issue right to the forefront of the public political debate. Nobody could have predicted that."

Wilder's margin of victory was narrow—6,741 votes out of 1.8 million—but strategists are convinced his abortion stance drew support from Republicans and Democrats, young and old, and residents from the suburbs to the Appalachians. Wilder appeared to champion growth and progress, while Coleman voiced vehement opposition to abortion, even in cases of rape or incest.

"Abortion became symbolic of 'Do

you want to go forward, or do you want to go back?'" Goldman said. "Our basic plan was the future versus the past—the new mainstream versus extremism."

SUNSHINE VICTORY

The first legislative showdown following *Webster* took place in Florida—and it provided an unexpected pro-choice victory. Governor Robert Martinez, a Roman Catholic, called a special session of the legislature, openly acknowledging his desire to kill legalized abortion.

At first, pro-choice advocates in Florida reckoned they had two enemies to combat: Martinez and public apathy. "We figured we'd have to go out and blow horns and beat drums to convince people of why the *Webster* decision was important," said Janis Compton, executive director of the Florida Abortion Rights Action League (FARAL). "That wasn't the case."

Instead, pro-choice support erupted

"What we saw happening in Florida was grassroots," said Compton. "We saw ad hoc pro-choice groups springing up in areas where there were literally nothing but cows and trees. Thousands of phone calls went to the governor's mansion. It was very spontaneous. It caught us all by surprise."

Pro-choice supporters volunteered to go to Tallahassee to talk to legislators, and professional lobbyists offered to work without salary. Community residents staged house meetings to educate their neighbors about the issue. "The message was the same," Compton said. "Who is going to decide? Is it going to be the politicians or is it going to be you?"

A week before the legislative session began, FARAL mailed 12,000 pink postcards to supporters. The message: call your representatives. Tell them you're watching, and you want the law left alone.

When the legislature convened on October 10, everyone predicted a down-and-dirty fight that might drag on for

Photo by Ernie Brooks



PRO-CHOICE BABY BOOMERS ARE BEING JOINED BY GRANDMOTHERS AND GRANDSONS WHO WANT TO KEEP ABORTION SAFE AND LEGAL.

within hours after *Webster* was announced. People called the FARAL office late into the night to express their outrage and offer to volunteer. Within three days, Compton had 150 phone messages to return. When Martinez called the special session, the volume of calls increased, and public anger intensified.

weeks. The governor's allies introduced seven separate bills to restrict abortion rights. All seven promptly died in committee, and lawmakers headed home on October 11.

"The session was supposed to be heated and ugly," said Compton. "Everybody went home stunned."

Seven months later, Martinez delivered his State of the State message. He talked about drugs, transportation, economic development, and workers compensation. He never mentioned abortion.

NO BAN

In Alabama, abortion opponents also expected legislators to quickly and overwhelmingly approve a law banning abortions. They introduced an "Unborn Children's Life Act" specifying that "each human life begins at conception" and an "Abortion Regulatory Act" requiring that women seeking abortions be given materials urging them to "consider carrying your child to term... before making a final decision about abortion."

As in Florida, however, the measures failed. Five bills died, and one was postponed indefinitely after emotional debate the last day of the session. On April 23 the legislature adjourned without declaring that life begins at conception.

Edward Higginbotham, a NARAL organizer in Alabama, credits a vocal grassroots movement for the victory. "Some legislators, especially rural legislators who imagined they never had any depth of pro-choice in their district, began to get a lot of pro-choice letters," he said. "I think that made some people uncomfortable about voting for anything really restrictive."

Alabama's refusal to adopt restrictive legislation sent a signal nationwide. "The thinking was that Alabama would buy into it right away," said Loretta Ucelli of NARAL, "but that didn't happen."

Ucelli and others also note, however, that the pro-choice movement has suffered some setbacks in the South. North Carolina slashed its abortion fund for poor women in half last year. West Virginia lawmakers voted to end state-funded abortions for poor women, except in cases where the mother's life is in danger. And South Carolina passed a bill requiring parental consent for abortions for women under 17.

Nevertheless, pro-choice advocates say such measures might have been worse. In South Carolina, for instance, the legislature modified the parental consent bill to force parents who deny their daughters an abortion to bear financial responsibility for the child until age 19. Lawmakers also killed a bill that would have forbidden a woman to have an abortion without her husband's consent.

BALANCE OF POWER

With the November elections approaching, Southerners are blueprinting plans to elect more pro-choice candidates and more women.

The National Organization for Women calls its campaign the "feminization of power"—encouraging women to run for every state office in the nation. "The reality is that government is controlled by men," said Patricia Ireland, NOW vice president. "Women make up less than 17 percent of the state legislatures. We must have better representation in the legislature to protect our rights."

Florida will be a key state in the 1990 elections—not just because it was the center of one of the first pro-choice victories, but also because it boasts 21 electoral votes. NOW has organized a special effort to recruit female candidates to run for state offices, and FARAL has targeted Governor Martinez for defeat. "We're working to get Martinez out," said FARAL director Janis Compton. "You cannot do what he did and stay in office."

In addition to fighting its enemies, FARAL is supporting its friends. The group is backing Elaine Gordon, a Miami state legislator who helped defeat the abortion bills in the 1989 legislative session, and Leander Shaw, a judge who wrote the opinion that state privacy laws protect women's decisions on abortion.

Other Southern states are constructing strategies of their own to defeat anti-abortion candidates:

▼ In Tennessee, pro-choice activists are using paid organizers to recruit female candidates to run for office.

▼ Alabama pro-choice leaders are encouraging voters to oust legislators who supported abortion restrictions in the 1990 session.

▼ In Arkansas, the Committee for Reproductive Choice is gathering signatures to place a proposition on the 1992 ballot forbidding the state to "interfere with any woman's personal reproductive decisions."

ON THE PHONE

Some of the most comprehensive electoral groundwork has been laid in Georgia, where a coalition of eight pro-choice groups is recruiting candidates to run against state lawmakers who oppose abortion.

"We can't change the entire general assembly in one year," said Mary Hickey, director of the elections project. "But if you are on the anti-choice side, we can target you and will, in some cases, beat you. Races can be determined on this issue. We are organized and can make a difference."

To identify where candidates stand on abortion, the Georgia NARAL chapter (GARAL) plans to conduct one-on-one interviews and mail questionnaires to the 256 candidates in state races. Those who claim to be pro-choice will be asked to clarify whether they support public funding of abortion for poor women and the right to choose abortion under all circumstances. "We're not going to accept at face value that they're pro-choice," said Kerri Milam of GARAL.

Candidates who support choice can count on financial backing from pro-choice forces, said Hickey. The Vote Choice Political Action Committee raised \$30,000 in its first two months, and hopes to contribute \$100,000 to pro-choice candidates this fall.

Georgia organizers are also working to identify voters likely to support abortion rights. The effort is patterned after programs in New York and Minnesota that identified potential pro-choice voters based on party affiliation and voting history, and then educated them on the views of each candidate.

In North Carolina, pro-choice organizers are conducting an extensive voter identification drive in a single district. The goal: defeat state Representative Paul Stam Jr. of Apex.

Elected to the legislature in 1988, Stam sponsored a bill restricting abortions and engineered an effort to slash the state abortion fund for poor women. The North Carolina NARAL chapter calls him "the ring-leader of the anti-choice movement in the legislature and across the state." The Independent, a weekly Durham newspaper, dubbed him "the prince of pelvic politics."

NARAL is convinced Stam can be defeated. He was the first Republican representative elected from District 62, a 200-square-mile area of farms and upscale subdivisions where Democrats outnumber Republicans by a 2-to-1 margin.

To defeat Stam, NARAL volunteers have worked a phone bank since January, personally contacting more than 5,000 of the 33,171 registered voters in District 62—especially Republican women, GOP baby boomers, and newly registered Democrats. NARAL believes a Stam defeat will

send a clear message to anti-abortion forces nationwide.

Although campaigns in each state use different methods to ascertain which voters and candidates are pro-choice, the strategy for getting out the message is the same nationwide: urging pro-choice voters to contact their representatives as often as possible.

"I want you to commit today to talk to your legislators," Patricia Tyson, executive director of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, told the crowd at the pro-choice rally in North Carolina. "Talk to

evident at the North Carolina rally, where college students stood under a banner made from a bedsheet and signed by dozens of their friends. Nearby a blond woman in her thirties balanced a baby on one hip and a sign reading "Another Woman for Choice" on the other. A gray-haired woman in a neat striped shirt and denim skirt held a sign that read "Menopausal Women Nostalgic for Choice." An elderly gentleman wiped sweat from his forehead with a white cotton handkerchief, while a young man in camouflage pants and a Durham Bulls baseball cap

sity of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, is one who became angry and vocal. She helped organize a campus pro-choice rally that drew more than 1,000 participants and celebrity speakers, including actor Richard Dreyfus. The rally rivaled the Vietnam protests of the 1960s in enthusiasm and size. Afterward, 200 people registered to vote.

"We as students are probably the most inactive voting constituency in the country and probably the constituency that has the most to lose if abortion becomes illegal," said Guthrie. "Students have surprised the people organizing on the choice issue. This is an issue that is really moving students. When I take a petition around, I have people overhearing me and coming up to sign."

Students like Guthrie see abortion in its wider context. "To me, I make a connection between abortion as an issue of women's health and reproductive freedom," she said. "This is one link in a chain—and when I see one of those links in danger, it shakes the whole system. We've had many rights that we've taken for granted. I don't think we can afford to become complacent."

Despite the growing grassroots support and the string of legislative victories, pro-choice organizers say they won't become complacent. Every time an election is held, they say, women's lives and individual liberties are at stake.

"The only way we're going to protect the right to choose is through the electoral process," said Loretta Ucelli of NARAL. "Since *Webster* handed this issue to the politicians, we've got to elect pro-choice legislators, governors, congressmen, and a president who will appoint pro-choice Supreme Court justices. Until we do that, the right to choose is in jeopardy.

"We've been extremely successful, but we live every day with the reality that because of *Webster*, all it takes is one anti-choice bill out of one anti-choice legislature and signed by one anti-choice governor, and pro-choice starts to unravel," Ucelli added. "We've had victory after victory, but the other side only needs one victory. The greatest victory we can achieve is to maintain the status quo." □

Barbara Barnett is a freelance writer in Raleigh, N.C.

Photo by Jerome Friar



PRO-CHOICE ACTIVISTS ARE BEGINNING TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR CLOUT AT THE BALLOT BOX, WINNING ELECTORAL BATTLES ACROSS THE SOUTH.

them at their offices. If they're not there, talk to them at church. If they're not there, talk to them at home. If it means getting on their front porch, then come to their home. If that doesn't work, do what people did to my husband when he was an Alabama legislator—talk to their mother."

GRANDMOTHERS AND GRANDSONS

As they comb the South for support, they are finding it in some unusual places. Pro-choice baby boomers are now being joined by grandmothers who remember when some states outlawed birth control for married couples and by grandsons who can't remember when abortion wasn't legal.

The diversity of the movement was

listened attentively to speakers.

Pro-choice activists are accustomed to the support of older women who still remember the days when abortions were performed on kitchen tables with coathangers. But the support of younger men and women comes as a surprise.

"It used to be much harder to get younger women involved in this," said Janis Compton of Florida. "It was not something they could identify with on a gut level. Women under 30 have grown up with abortion as an option. No matter how they felt about it, they knew if worse came to worst, they could have an abortion. When they were really confronted with the possibility in July of losing that right, they became real angry and real vocal."

Polly Guthrie, a student at the Univer-



A BLACK ANTI-ABORTION DEMONSTRATOR ARGUED WITH A WHITE PRO-CHOICE ACTIVIST ON THE STEPS OF THE SUPREME COURT WHILE JUSTICES HEARD ORAL ARGUMENTS IN *WEBSTER V. REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES*.



“Why Weren’t You There?”

Cheryl Bostic, a grassroots organizer in Atlanta who reminds me of a powerful Amazon warrior, challenged me to tell it like it is. “African-American writers need to start writing the truth,” she said.

And because I believe that she is what all African-American women must become—practical visionaries—I will write the truth. My truth.

My truth being how difficult it is for African-American women working in reproductive rights organizations to move away from “the issues” and bring it home to our personal truths. How the realities of class and religion still present fiery barriers to unity with white women on an issue of survival. How hard it is, years later, to recall the pain and fear of a backroom abortion in a small, Southern town...

On April 9, 1989, more than 300,000 people converged on the White House in what has been called the largest women’s rights march in history. On that day, feminists, lesbians, grandmothers, flight attendants, and movie stars

stood shoulder to shoulder, demanding full reproductive rights for all women.

It was a landmark day—but it did not take a pollster to see that something was missing. The sea of women that washed over the city was overwhelmingly white and middle class. Where were the women of color?

Many in the news media wondered about this “no-show” status. Perhaps, some suggested, black women stayed away because they oppose legalized abortion. As *Newsweek*

concluded, “Some leaders doubt that blacks will ever become pro-choice activists in large numbers.” Or perhaps, others

said, black women simply have no position on the issue.

But I had a position and I wasn’t there. While I was in high school, cradled in the lap of a middle-class Southern black family, I had an illegal abortion.

I was 16 and two months pregnant. My mother made the decision, and I endorsed it by climbing on top of a table in the basement of a house in Reidsville, North Carolina. It was a pretty house with flowers and a white picket fence.

The woman who lived there inserted a rubber, coiled, snake-like instrument into my body. It didn’t hurt until later. Then the pain was excruciating. I was delirious. My grandmother gave me castor oil and a laxative called Black Draught and sat with me for two days until the placenta came out. She never left my side.

The memory of that day haunted me for years in a nightmare of that snake-like instrument, but I continued to feel that no one had the right to withhold that choice from me then... or now.

Yet I was not at the march on Washington last April. I was among the tens of thousands of black women who stayed home, kept quiet, despite our support for reproductive rights. So as I set out to ask other African-American women, “Why weren’t you there?” I asked myself that same question.

STATISTICS AND SURVIVAL

Naima Major was there that day. The development director of the Black Women’s Health Project in Atlanta, Major cautions against overlooking the many black women who struggle for reproductive rights every day.

“The media ignored the presence of those of us who were there,” she says. “For instance, reporters failed to note that this was the largest gathering of black women in any abortion rights march. Each one of us represented at least a hundred African-American women who couldn’t be there. And not one of the journalists mentioned the African-American men marching—with their families.”

Nevertheless, Major and other women at the Health Project concede that the reproductive rights movement remains primarily white and middle class. “Where black women are—mentally, physically, and emotionally—on the issue of reproductive rights is not a new question,” says Loretta

Why aren’t there more black women in the reproductive rights movement? The answer depends on how you ask the question.

By Evelyn Coleman

Ross, program director at the project. "The reason it still lingers unanswered is it has not been adequately addressed."

Ultimately, the answer to the question depends on how the question is asked. White women ask, "Why aren't more black women involved in the movement?" Black women ask, "Why doesn't the movement involve more black women?"

No one disputes the need to involve more women of color, but many fail to realize that any genuine effort to expand African-American participation will have to take into account the reality of our everyday lives. Most black women have not read the statistics on abortion — they have lived them.

According to recent studies, about three percent of American women aged 15 to 44 end unwanted pregnancy in abortion. Of those, minority women are more than twice as likely as white women to have an abortion. The figures also show that nearly half of all black females become pregnant as teenagers — 90 percent of them while they are unmarried.

Black women know the reality of giving birth and raising families, but many know little about the issue of reproductive rights. Mention the name Webster and a black woman will more likely think of the short, wise-cracking black kid of the television series than the Supreme Court decision that opened the door to state restrictions on abortion rights.

For these women, every waking thought involves the survival of their families — for food, clothing, and shelter. Most often, when they contemplate abortion, it is a choice they face out of desperation, out of concern for the living.

Contrary to any stereotype, an abortion has never been a decision of convenience for most black women. The death of a fetus never takes place without our guilt, shame, and emotional upheaval, especially confronted as we are with the very survival of our race. We have not forgotten the days when abortion was illegal, and those memories have forced us into a conspiracy of silence. Abortion is seldom discussed in our communities, even among families who know a relative or neighbor who has had an abortion.

CAROLYN'S STORY

One day I ask Carolyn, a 40-year-old nurse I know, if she knows anyone who

"BREAKING THE CODE OF SILENCE"

ATLANTA, GA. — Robbie Bowman did not slowly sink into the ranks of the homeless. She plummeted.

First, she lost her suburban home when she walked out on a bad marriage. Then she injured her neck and back last August at work. The disability laid her up and her boss laid her off.

Unable to pay the rent, the 36-year-old mother of two lost her apartment and was forced to move into a homeless shelter.

"I felt like it was the end of the world," she recalled. "It was devastating not being able to do something for myself and my children."

But in November Bowman joined a self-help group organized by the National Black Women's Health Project, an advocacy group dedicated to empowering low-income women. "The women in the group didn't ridicule me for what I'd been through," Bowman said. "In a sense it turned my life around."

In its first decade, the Health Project has empowered tens of thousands of women like Bowman, underscoring just how active black women have become in the movement for reproductive rights.

The project's self-help model is based on the tradition of "mutual aid societies" which blacks formed following the Civil War to address community needs. Working in small groups, women build the self-esteem and health awareness they need to

exercise their reproductive rights and make changes in their lives.

Byllye Avery founded the project in 1981 after working with black teenage mothers. "They didn't have someone to talk to openly about what was going on," she said. "They didn't talk about sex and birth control, so they couldn't talk about choices."

To reach residents in public housing, the project set up the Center for Black Women's Wellness to provide pregnancy tests and doctor referrals. Residents meet in small groups to focus on their own health problems — anything from poverty and racism to teen pregnancy of the stress of life in high-crime neighborhoods.

"We have a broad definition of health," said Loretta Ross, director of national programs for the Health Project. "Anything that has a negative or positive impact on the mental, physical or spiritual state is health. Even employment — not having a job — has obvious health implications."

Personal change often leads the women to work for social change. "A homeless woman immediately becomes impatient with shelter rules," said Ross. "She'll say, 'I'm not coming in at 9 p.m. I'm 42 years old!' There's a trickle-up effect as it evolves into advocacy at the local and national level."

The project now runs 130 self-help centers in 24 states. "We're slowly breaking the code of silence," said Bowman. □

Photo by Johnny Crawford



BYLLYE AVERY,
FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH PROJECT.

almost died as a result of an illegal abortion. She pauses, and then sighs deeply, lost in thought. Her long silence is finally broken by a whisper. "If you don't use my name," she says, "I'll tell you my story."

Then she begins to sob, her words ripping from her soul like a torn piece of flesh, still painful after 22 years.

At 18, Carolyn was living with her husband and their first child when she discovered she was pregnant again. Her husband was a college student, born to a mother of seven on welfare, and he believed deeply that his only escape from poverty was through education. He and Carolyn decided they could not afford another child — not yet.

Together, through the underground abortion railroad, they found someone in a neighboring town who was willing to perform the illegal procedure. Carolyn permitted her uterus to be punctured by an alien wire, which left her hemorrhaging. Terrified, she got medical attention at a local hospital. When the doctor questioned her, she lied about what happened.

Carolyn survived the ordeal physically, but to this day she and her husband have never talked about the trauma. Consequently she considers the abortion "a sinful murder," one that is still hemorrhaging, one that has left her convinced that abortion is not the answer to unwanted pregnancies.

Yet as a nurse, witnessing the lack of health care black women receive when they give birth, Carolyn cannot say she would like the option of legal abortions to be taken away. She supports giving women a choice, but she cannot bring herself to say it . . . not out loud.

SILENCE AND DAMNATION

This painful conspiracy of silence pervades the black community, stifling our voices, denying us the shared wisdom of our own experiences. "How can a silent community be a committed one?" asks Loretta Ross at the Black Women's Health Project.

Many women active in the reproductive rights movement blame the black church for playing a conspiratorial role in promoting this silence. Denouncing abortion even when it was illegal, black ministers preached warnings of hell and brimstone from their pulpits while member after member of their congregations — often members of their own immediate families

— sought abortions in the still of the night. Now, in the era of legal abortion, the church continues its warnings of eternal damnation, laying the burden of sin at the feet of its poorest parishioners.

"The black church played a major conspiratorial role in women's silence," says Lillie Allen, a pro-choice activist who provides leadership training for women's groups.

Allen and other black activists point out, however, that the church gave birth to the civil rights movement, and it should be at the forefront once again in the struggle for freedom of choice.

BLACK PAIN, WHITE AGENDAS

With or without the church, black activists say they will continue to fight for their human rights — including their reproductive rights. But the question remains: How can we break our silence and join ranks with white women in the struggle for freedom of choice?

Part of the answer lies in the success of the civil rights movement, which brought blacks and whites together in the '60s. Brownie Ledbetter, a white civil rights activist in Arkansas who founded the first Planned Parenthood chapter in Little Rock, says whites need to work harder to understand the reality facing blacks.

"Inherent in the problem today is that younger women don't know about each other's history," Ledbetter says. "Many white women come into the pro-choice movement out of their own reactions and may not see the unique pains of black women."

Ledbetter adds that white women need to "be aware of how black women and men have been treated in this country. Prejudice is a disease — you have to recognize it to be effective in changing anything."

Many black women echo Ledbetter's sentiments. "The bottom line for many Americans is they don't feel good about sexually active women," says Naima Majors of the Women's Health Project. "Most white Americans' response to pregnancy for women of color is: 'You don't need to have any children.'"

African-American activists also say they sometimes feel that white women who invite them to join multi-racial coalitions have already set the agenda and hand-picked the leaders.

In 1985, for example, the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights established a

Women of Color Partnership Program to involve more minorities in the reproductive rights movement. Many black organizers were outraged, however, saying the coalition should have funded an existing black organization to set an agenda and select leaders.

"Don't invite us to join your agenda — support us to find an agenda of our own," says Cheryl Boykins, director of a self-help group called the Wellness Center in Atlanta. "Help us fight for quality lives for ourselves and all our children."

But unity is a two-way street, and black women themselves will have to struggle with their own prejudices and insecurities. Lillie Allen, who leads training workshops for women, says black women must learn to be "present" — to deal with their fears and sense of powerlessness until they can feel secure.

If black women want more respect and understanding, they will also have to be more accepting of who white women are. An African-American friend of mine who attended a national women's conference, for example, was enjoying the interaction with white activists until the last day of the conference. During the final session, women who were living "alternative lifestyles" were asked to stand.

"I was shocked," my friend said. "Myself and three other people were the only ones who didn't stand up. After that, I was afraid and I wanted to leave." She left the conference immediately, refusing to attend a going-away party with the very women with whom she had bonded for the past three days.

In the end, however, personal differences may not be as big an obstacle to coalition-building as the way the issue is framed. Above all, black activists stress that whites who genuinely want to work with them must place abortion and reproductive rights in a wider context — a context that addresses the reality of black lives.

"White organizations will have to offer broader issues that directly affect us, and then offer position statements that are relevant," says Brenda Williamson, former director of the North Carolina Religious Coalition for Abortion. "Those issues must demand more than the right to abortion. They must demand the right of a woman to have a healthy baby if she chooses, a decent job, and a good education." □

Evelyn Coleman, a mother of two grown women, is a freelance writer living in Atlanta.



Baby Boycott

ATHENS, ALA. — It was a new job as assistant manager at the Huntsville Home Depot that lured Kenneth Issacs and his wife Kandy here from their native Kentucky last year. They were barely settled in their new home when Kandy found out she was pregnant with twins.

"We were really excited ... and a little scared," recalled Kandy, a lanky 26-year-old. Kenneth had a steady income — but that, the couple discovered, was a problem. They were making too much money to qualify for Medicaid, but nowhere near enough to afford private health insurance.

When the Issacs set out to find a local doctor to provide maternity care, they were in for another shock — there were none. The last two physicians who delivered babies in

Athens had dropped obstetrics from their practices, citing high malpractice insurance premiums.

Huntsville, the closest city, was little better. The only clinic for uninsured pregnant women had a six-month waiting list just to get an appointment, and the public hospital required a \$1,200 downpayment for out-of-county patients like Kandy Isaacs.

Finally, the couple found the Athens Maternity Center, a new clinic set up by the local hospital to avoid losing revenues from pregnant patients abandoned by local doctors. The Issacs managed to come up with the \$665 downpayment, and their twins — Aaron and Elizabeth — arrived by C-section on January 17.

The \$6,000 bill arrived later. "We're in debt up to our necks now," Kandy said

Alabama doctors refuse to deliver babies for uninsured mothers, putting poor women and their children at risk.

By Sandy Smith

with a wry grin as she changed Aaron's diaper. "It'll take us 20 years to pay it off."

The obstacle course the Issacs faced in their search for maternity care has become all-too-common for pregnant women in the South. In fact, things in Alabama are so bad that the U.S. Government Accounting Office branded the state "the worst place in the country to have a baby."

Alabama has the highest rate of hospital closures in the nation, and doctors are quitting obstetrics and turning away from poor women in droves. Twenty-nine counties currently have no doctors who deliver babies, and pregnant women in rural areas who go into labor often have to race 50 miles to a hospital emergency room to find a physician willing to attend their births.

The epidemic of doctors refusing to deliver babies has left uninsured women and their children at risk. Deprived of adequate prenatal care, hundreds of Alabama infants die each year. A baby born in Singapore or Bulgaria today has a better chance of living to see its first birthday than a black child in rural Alabama.

CLOSING THE DOORS

Access to maternity care in Alabama has not always been so bad. During the 1970s, the number of doctors in rural areas actually increased, thanks to federal programs that subsidized rural hospitals and provided low-interest educational loans to medical students planning to work in underserved areas.

But all that changed when Ronald Reagan became president. Instead of backing national health insurance — a system enjoyed by every other industrial nation in the world except South Africa — Reagan pushed doctors and hospitals to compete even harder for privately insured patients. He gutted rural health-care programs and cut hospital reimbursements for elderly Medicare patients.

Rural hospitals, long reimbursed at lower rates than their urban counterparts, suffered the most. Some sold out to private hospital chains, which promptly began turning away poor patients and closing rural facilities that failed to turn a profit. In Alabama, 10 hospitals closed their doors in 1987 and 1988 alone; eight of them were rural.

At the same time, doctors began complaining about the rising cost of malprac-

tice insurance. Obstetricians get sued more than any other medical specialists, and insurance companies began to jack up their premiums.

Before long, the number of rural doctors delivering babies also began to plummet. According to a report by the Institute of Medicine, the states hardest hit by the loss of obstetric services were Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and West Virginia.

In Alabama, state medical surveys show that a third of all doctors who delivered babies quit obstetrics between 1980 and 1986. Since then, health researchers estimate that more than half of the remaining rural practitioners have dropped out, leaving pregnant mothers in the northeastern Appalachians and the central "black-belt" farm counties without any maternity care.

Dr. Bryan Perry held out longer than most of his colleagues. By 1986 he was the only doctor still delivering babies in the impoverished mountain region of Cherokee County. His caseload soared to 68 births a month — more than two deliveries a day.

"It pins me down. I'm working myself to death. But I don't want to give it up," he said at the time.

But the pressure was too much. A year later Perry quit obstetrics, leaving pregnant women in Cherokee County without a single doctor willing to deliver their babies.

EMERGENCY-ROOM SHUFFLE

The drought of rural doctors and hospitals had an immediate effect on expectant mothers and their babies. Between 1980 and 1987, studies show, the number of pregnant women receiving no prenatal care increased by 50 percent. Without insurance or a family doctor, many working-class women were forced to rush to hospital emergency rooms after they went into labor.

Emergency-room doctors in Montgomery soon noted a three-fold increase in the number of high-risk "walk-in deliveries" they were handling for poor women with inadequate prenatal care. Fearing lawsuits and further hikes in their malpractice rates, local obstetricians threatened to boycott deliveries of indigent babies until public officials addressed the problem.

The health department responded by setting up a program to rotate "ER" service

among the three hospitals in the city. The plan spread the malpractice risk around — but it did nothing to provide better maternity care.

"Pregnant women were basically being shoved in and out of the health department," said Doris Barnette, acting director of the state Bureau of Family Health Services. "They listened to the radio to see what was the 'ER-of-the-day.' The only thing they could be sure of was that they would be delivered by a physician they'd never seen before."

Sherry Thomas, a 23-year-old Montgomery resident, was pregnant with her second child when the emergency-room

took her to her car, but to no avail. After she got home Thomas called the assistant to the private doctor she'd seen earlier in her pregnancy. He first told her to return to Baptist, but then called back to say the "ER-of-the-day" had been switched at 7 a.m. She would have to go to Jackson Hospital — 11 miles away.

She didn't make it. Her son was born in the car on the way to Jackson.

BAD MEDICINE

Dr. Joseph Ferlisi, who treated Thomas after she arrived at Jackson Hospital,

Photo by Robert Fox/Impact Visuals



A PREGNANT WOMAN AND HER CHILD IN A CHURCH-RUN SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS IN BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA.

shuffle was established. She saw a private doctor for a while, but then she changed jobs and lost her insurance. After that, she went to a public clinic for prenatal care.

When Thomas went into labor the morning of January 18, 1986, she waited until the contractions were two minutes apart before rushing to nearby Baptist Medical Center, the "ER-of-the-day." The doctor on duty was attentive — until he discovered that she was not a private patient.

"I told him I was in labor because I was hurting so bad," Thomas recalled. "But he told me there was nothing he could do; to go home."

She pleaded with the nurses as they

is also the spokesman for the Montgomery County Obstetrical Society. He defended the physician threat to strike and expressed frustration over the lack of official concern over the state's incomplete system of health care.

"At no time have we asked for more pay," Ferlisi said. "What we're asking for is a change in the system."

The "change" Ferlisi and other physicians wanted, however, had nothing to do with better access to health care. Instead, doctors lobbied for a state-imposed limit on the amount of damages awarded to patients harmed by doctor malpractice. If malpractice awards were smaller, the doc-



DEPRIVED OF ADEQUATE PRENATAL CARE, HUNDREDS OF ALABAMA INFANTS NEVER LIVE TO SEE THEIR FIRST BIRTHDAY.

tors said, insurance rates would go down — and physicians would start delivering babies again.

In 1988 doctors got what they wanted. The state legislature passed a ceiling on malpractice damages — but the problem didn't go away.

"Two years later have their premiums gone down? No way," said Jane Patton, a Montgomery attorney and a consumer advocate on the state Task Force on Infant Mortality. Insurance companies, she explained, won't lower their rates until

the malpractice limits have been tested in court.

The real problem, many health-care professionals say, lies with the control doctors exercise over who receives care. "This is a conflict between private medicine and public health," said Dr. Robert Goldenberg, an obstetrician with the University of Alabama School of Medicine.

"Unlike most state health departments, which are controlled by public health professionals, our board of health

is controlled by the Alabama Medical Association," Dr. Goldenberg added. "Since doctors make up the board, it has been less aggressive than it should have been in making public health policies."

TWIN CASUALTIES

As Alabama doctors lobbied for lower penalties for their own malpractice, health-care options for poor women continued to dwindle — and statistics on infant deaths continued to rise.

Josephine Lewis watched her twin daughters become two of those statistics. A 22-year-old native of Greene County, Lewis had dropped out of school and was already a mother of five when she became pregnant again in 1985.

Although problems with previous pregnancies made Lewis a high-risk patient, she did not seek medical care until her sixth month. One reason was lack of transportation — she had no car and depended on friends to drive her to the clinic in nearby Eutaw.

Then, in her 24th week, she delivered prematurely. She was so far along in labor when she arrived at the hospital that she gave birth in a hallway.

One twin, Tarneisha, died shortly after the birth. The other, Starneisha, spent two months in a newborn nursery gaining weight. She was up to five pounds when she was released from the hospital.

Two weeks later, Lewis was unable to wake the infant at feeding time.

"I thought she was just sleeping," Lewis later told the *Alabama Journal*. "I couldn't believe this could happen to me." The cause of death was unknown.

When infant mortality statistics were released the following year, Alabama ranked last in the nation with 13 deaths for every 1,000 births. Each year, at least 10 Southern states consistently report higher infant death rates than the rest of the country.

The U.S. currently ranks 18th among developed nations for its infant death rate, and babies in many rural counties of the Deep South are more likely to die than newborns in many Third World nations.

The reason: Southern women are more likely to receive inadequate prenatal care and to give birth to underweight babies. What's more, the gap between black women and white women has widened. According to a 1989 study by the Children's Defense Fund, the birth risks

for Southern black women are roughly twice as high as for whites.

Southern politicians continue to plead poverty, saying they cannot afford public programs to protect mothers and infants. Ironically, though, studies show that every \$1 invested in better care for pregnant women saves \$3 in long-term costs for newborn intensive care and rehabilitation of handicapped children.

STINGY POLICY

As publicity over high infant death rates spread, public health advocates began to push for expanding insurance to cover more poor mothers and their infants. Alabama had the stingiest public insurance program in the country, with only 15 percent of all patients in county health clinics covered by Medicaid.

Doctors in the Alabama Perinatal Association joined forces with the Foundation for Women's Health to form a new lobbying group known as Partners, which won the support of State Health Officer Earl Fox.

The group also found an unexpected ally in the federal government, which in 1988 required states to extend Medicaid coverage to all pregnant women living below the federal poverty level. In April 1990, another federal mandate expanded coverage to women with incomes up to 33 percent above the poverty line.

In addition, Partners succeeded in pushing the state to increase Medicaid payments for deliveries from \$450 to \$718.

Dr. Fox and the new group also tackled the doctor shortage in Montgomery by establishing a "Gift of Life" program to handle prenatal care and deliveries for poor women in the city. The program recruited three out-of-state obstetricians to share the caseload with seven nurse-midwives.

A friend told Annette Posey about the program last fall when she began to bleed during her third month of pregnancy. The 23-year-old Montgomery resident lost her first baby four years ago, and she feared another miscarriage. Posey visited nurse-midwives at the clinic 18 times before giving birth to Stephen, a healthy 6-pound, 14-ounce boy, on March 8.

"I was so glad. I felt like the nurse-midwives did more than my other doctor did," said Posey, who depended on Medicaid for care in both pregnancies. "Everybody at the Gift of Life was friendly and they

knew me by name when I came in. I felt like they understood me better."

Doris Barnette, an assistant to Dr. Fox, said the success of the program has created a rising demand. "I'd like to have 100 nurse-midwives," she said. "I could place them all in jobs in one afternoon."

But the city clinic and the expanded Medicaid coverage were of little help to Kandy Issacs and other rural women. Many in the ranks of the working poor still do not qualify for Medicaid—and still cannot find a doctor even if they do qualify. According to the Southern Growth Policies Board, more than a fifth of all Southerners under the age of 65 are without health insurance.

LOOK HOMEWARD

Along the backroads of Alabama, health advocates are taking a hard look at the refusal of doctors to deliver babies, and they are asking a deceptively simple question: Do we really need a doctor for every birth?

The question strikes at the most basic assumptions of the medical establishment, and opens up a range of alternatives that go beyond expanding health insurance and lowering malpractice rates. If birth is seen as a natural family process rather than an illness that must be treated in a high-tech hospital, then perhaps babies can be delivered by someone other than a doctor.

In Greene County, where Josephine Lewis lost her newborn twins because of inadequate care, Dr. Sandral Hullett is trying an alternative. Hullett, one of the few black woman doctors in the region, delivered Josephine's twins in a hospital hallway. She knows first-hand how desperate women are for prenatal care.

To fill the void left by malpractice-minded doctors, Hullett has turned to lay "home visitors" to promote prenatal care for pregnant women. For the past five years, she has recruited and trained dozens of elderly black women to serve as role models for pregnant teenagers.

"Lay women were delivering health care in homes hundreds of years before professionals got into the act," Hullett observed.

There are plenty of signs that the plan is working. Angela Young, unmarried and still in school at age 17, never told a soul that she was pregnant—that is, not until a

lay home visitor named Margaret Means heard a rumor and came to visit her.

"I didn't even tell Mrs. Means at first," Angela recalled with a grin. "We were sitting on the sofa talking and then she asked me, 'How many months along are you?' She encouraged me to go to a doctor."

Angela smiled and showed off her seven-month-old daughter Lucretia. "I needed someone to talk to," she added. "I don't know what I'd have done without her."

Means, a soft-spoken 67-year-old whose living room overflows with photos of her grandchildren, says home visitors are gaining the trust of local women. She likes to tell the story of a young woman who called her to report that she was in labor before she told her own mother in the next room. "That's when I knew I'd made it," said Means.

Such personal stories are backed up by a recent study which indicates that women in the program who received home visits gave birth to babies that needed significantly less intensive care than women who were left to find their own way through the health system. None of the 105 babies tracked by the study has died.

The grassroots success in Greene County has won supporters in state government. State Health Officer Earl Fox called it "an excellent example of programs that should exist all over the state."

People-oriented efforts like the home-visitor program prove that poor women can be given greater access to reproductive health care—and that reducing the need for expensive neonatal intensive care will actually reduce state health costs.

Alabama public health advocates agree, however, that such programs will only be implemented on a large scale when health-care workers and consumers challenge the control over health priorities so long enjoyed by physicians.

"There is an unwillingness to admit that we have a two-or three-tiered medical system," said Suzanne Ticheli, a researcher at the University of Alabama School of Public Health. "Until we look at these realities we're not going to come up with integrated solutions." □

Sandy Smith is an investigative reporter with the Institute for Southern Studies.



Grannies & Granolas

SUMMERTOWN, TENN. — Pamela Hunt got the call at The Farm around 11 a.m. the morning of April 23. "Lydia's baby is coming," the caller said. Hunt knew Lydia well — after all, she had delivered three of Lydia's children — but she didn't recognize the voice on the phone. Then she realized the father-to-be, an Amish farmer named Rudy, must have asked an "English" neighbor to call.

Hunt checked to make sure her birthing kit, oxygen tank and scales were in the car, and then took off on the 10-mile drive. "I've learned that if I don't go immediately sometimes I'll miss the baby," she said. "We just don't get enough information in those phone calls to make a judgment."

Hunt found Lydia in a rocking chair in

the living room of the family's modest farmhouse. She checked the mother's blood pressure and the baby's heartbeat.

Two hours later an eight-pound, seven-ounce boy "came out crying." There was

no fetal monitor, no anesthesia, no forceps. Rudy stayed at Lydia's side throughout the birth.

The newborn spent his first five minutes on the mother's belly, then was passed to his grandmother to be cleaned up while the placenta was delivered.

"After that I handed the baby back to the mother to begin nursing," Hunt said. "I never leave until the baby is on the breast and everything is stable."

Hunt is one of four lay midwives at a clinic run by The Farm, a rural collective that handles home

births for the growing number of women seeking an alternative to the high costs and

excessive medical interventions of doctor-attended hospital births.

She is also one of the small handful of Southern midwives who are permitted to deliver babies unrestricted. Beginning in the late 1970s, many Southern states either outlawed midwifery outright or imposed licensing restrictions designed to phase out elderly black midwives who have long practiced in impoverished rural areas.

The restrictions worked, forcing many "granny" midwives out of business or underground. But today, a new generation of young, mostly white "granola" midwives are treading in the footsteps of their black predecessors, lobbying for legal status and emerging as powerful advocates for poor pregnant women across the region.

Some of the new midwives have won professional recognition, but most still struggle with legal and bureaucratic obstacles. Despite a wealth of statistics demonstrating that lay midwifery gives birth to healthier infants, many doctors continue to treat the centuries-old tradition of maternity care as a threat to their power — and their pocketbooks.

"Many physicians fear competition — losing patients to midwives because they're cheaper," said Dr. B.C. Merkle, who has practiced medicine in Perry County, Alabama for 22 years. "But what I'm concerned about are the people who can't afford a doctor, who need to be followed and who aren't at present."

"SO LITTLE BRAINS"

When male doctors first launched their campaign to seize control of the health care industry a century ago, they attacked midwives as backwards and dangerous. Dr. Joseph DeLee, a leading advocate for banning lay practice, blamed midwives for the slow acceptance of obstetrics as a medical specialty.

"Do you wonder that a young man will not adopt it as his special work?" Dr. DeLee wrote in 1895. "If a delivery requires so little brains and skill that a midwife can conduct it, there is not the place for him."

Despite the assault, "granny" midwives flourished in the South long after they became extinct in other parts of the country. Excluded from modern hospitals by segregation, poor black women drew on the experience of grandmothers to help them give birth. Even after integration, rural black women who lacked the money for a hospital birth continued to rely on the grannies.

Midwives offer a safe, low-cost alternative to hospital births. So why is it illegal to catch babies in most states?

By Sandy Smith

Many Southern states, faced with large numbers of poor women unable to receive care, promoted lay midwives in the 1940s and '50s by establishing programs to train them and issue licenses.

In the 1970s, however, the medical lobby finally convinced states to replace lay midwives with certified "nurse-midwives." In Florida, for example, a nurse-midwife apprenticed for a time with a granny midwife, who was then pressured to turn over her black bag or "grip" to the younger woman and retire.

By 1980 all but a handful of grannies had been forced to quit. Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia outlawed lay midwives altogether, and Mississippi and Georgia effectively prohibited them by refusing to issue them licenses. The nurse-midwives who replaced them are closely supervised by physicians and are often forbidden to handle home births.

Ina Mae Gaskin, editor of *The Birth Gazette* and founder of The Farm midwifery service, estimates there are approximately 2,000 lay midwives practicing nationwide. She thinks the United States could use as many as 200,000.

"England has far fewer people than the States, but has eight times as many midwives," Gaskin said. "The U.S. and Canada have fewer than any other country."

Only five Southern states currently have laws that permit lay midwives to practice—Florida, South Carolina, Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana. In Tennessee, only a "gray area" in the law allows the women at The Farm to run their midwifery service.

In addition to a health clinic and laboratory, The Farm has equipped a maternity center with an incubator, oxygen tanks, and operating lights for high-risk births. Dr. John Williams, a local general practitioner, provided the midwives with medical backup for 10 years and helped them win the respect of other doctors.

"I feel confident in the midwives," Dr.



INA MAE GASKIN AND A GUATEMALAN MIDWIFE JOIN A MOTHER AND CHILD IN TENNESSEE, ONE OF THE FEW SOUTHERN STATES WHERE MIDWIVES CAN DELIVER BABIES WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS. TODAY THERE ARE ONLY 2,000 LAY MIDWIVES NATIONWIDE.

Williams said. "They know what they're doing and there are occasions when they need help. It's part of the ethical responsibility of any physician to provide these people support."

The statistics are impressive. In the past decade, midwives at The Farm have "caught" 1,723 babies. Seventy-one percent of the mothers did not need episiotomies, a common hospital practice in which the vulva is cut to enlarge the birth opening. Only two percent received Cesarean sections, compared with 20 percent of all mothers who give birth in hospitals. And the newborn death rate was 5.8 per 1,000 births—compared with a rate of 6.9 deaths in Tennessee hospitals.

Linda Holmes, a health-care worker who spent seven months studying granny midwives in Alabama, said such figures underscore just how "natural" childbirth really is. "The total dominance of medicine in the baby-delivery business obscures the fact that healthy, spontaneous birth is the norm in the overwhelming majority of childbirth cases, with minimum or no technological intervention required."

FAILING BY 0.1

Unfortunately, midwives at The Farm say, the acceptance they enjoy is an exception in the South. Texas is the only other state in the region with a large number of midwives and an established tradition of lay practice.

The experience of women in Florida illustrates the obstacles midwives must overcome to provide maternity care for poor women. In 1982, the state established two training schools for midwives and issued licenses. Three years later, after heavy lobbying by medical societies, the legislature rescinded its support and limited practice to a small number of midwives already licensed.

Gladys Milton, an elderly black midwife, had been catching babies for 30 years in the Florida panhandle town of Crestview. When she refused to retire, the state health board charged her with incompetence, alleging that she had failed to repair a vaginal tear on a pregnant mother she assisted.

"The girl herself said she'd had no symptoms and that she'd come back to me if she had another baby," recalled Milton.

At a hearing last year, a judge recommended that Milton be suspended from practice for a year, but the state health board overruled him and revoked her license. Demonstrators, carrying babies Milton had delivered, greeted the decision with picket lines.

"The Lord is using me for his purpose to focus attention on the needs of his people," said Milton, who is appealing the ruling.

The state has also prevented Milton's 32-year-old daughter Maria from practicing midwifery. Although she graduated from the North Florida School of Midwifery before it was forced to close in 1988, Maria was denied a license after she scored a 79.9 on a state exam. The passing grade was 80.

Maria notes that the test included essay questions that were subjectively graded. "I know it's foul play," she said.

Maria is also critical of state officials in charge of the lay midwifery program, saying their real agenda is to phase out midwives. "It's like the fox guarding the henhouse," she said. "When you go to look for the chickens they're not gonna be there: They'll be eaten up."

While she appeals the denial of her license, Maria works in a birthing center her family runs. There she helps her brother, a physician, provide maternity care for local women.

Florida Medicaid covers most extremely poor women, but many don't qualify for public aid. "I call them those who are too rich to be poor and too poor to be rich," Maria said. She noted, for example, that an unemployed pregnant woman with two children whose husband makes eight dollars an hour will be turned away by a doctor because she doesn't have \$4,000 for prenatal care and a hospital delivery.

The Miltons charge \$750 for prenatal visits and delivery. The next closest clinic is 80 miles away.

SECRET DELIVERIES

In many Southern states, midwives determined to carry on the tradition have gone underground, delivering babies in secret to avoid prosecution. Experience has made them wary of strangers, unwill-

ing to discuss their practice with anyone outside their close-knit circles.

On the telephone, a woman who asked to be referred to as Jessie Barnes insisted she was not practicing. In a person-to-person meeting in a Decatur restaurant, however, she loosened up enough to talk about her underground midwifery practice in northern Alabama, where lay midwifery is illegal.

Barnes said many of her clients are middle-class women who get "a rude awakening" when they attend childbirth classes at the local community college.

Photo by Martha Tabor/Impact Visuals



A MIDWIFE CARES FOR A PREGNANT WOMAN AT A CLINIC IN BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS.

"Basically they teach you to be a good patient," said Barnes, who reported that Decatur hospitals insist on fetal monitors and IVs during labor and administer anesthetics to most women.

"A lot of clients just want to have some say-so in their births," Barnes said. "If they could get it in a hospital setting they might not seek out midwives."

But most women in Alabama who go looking for an alternative to the hospital won't find it unless they know who to ask. Like other lay midwives in the state,

Barnes only accepts patients referred by people she trusts. Often the referrals come from instructors of birthing classes or nurses who encounter women unable to afford a hospital birth.

"I like to know who I'm dealing with since our legal status is shaky," she said. "I probably should take more precautions."

Barnes blamed physicians for most of the discrimination against midwives. In one case, she said, a certified nurse-midwife in Montgomery drew the wrath of local obstetricians when their paying patients began asking about her. "If midwives only delivered indigent patients no one would ever say anything," said Barnes.

Barnes trained in Texas—"a midwives' haven"—and dreams of returning there to practice one day. In her two-and-a-half years in Decatur, she has performed five home births and three labor sittings, in which she monitors women in labor until just before the birth to minimize their time in the hospital.

Asked what she would do if the authorities crack down on lay midwives, Barnes said, "I guess I would just do labor sittings. I can't go to jail. I'm not a political activist."

FACING JAIL

Just before Christmas Day 1985, Ana Mary Sikes of West Helena, Arkansas, got a desperate phone call from a neighbor whose wife was pregnant. "Miss Ana Mary you just got to come,"

begged the man. He could not afford the \$1,300 delivery fees at Helena Hospital, and his wife was too far along in labor for him to drive her to another town. Sikes knew she'd be breaking the law if she went to help.

A 73-year-old black midwife, Sikes had been delivering babies since the age of 19. In 1942 she received training from the state and obtained her first permit to practice. "I renewed my permit each year until 1979, when they wrote us a letter saying they weren't going to use

lay midwives anymore," she recalled.

Sikes, who was ill the day of the phone call, coached the father on what to do. He washed his hands in alcohol and water and caught the baby himself while the couple's frightened children looked on from the doorway. Then he called Sikes and she came over to cut the cord.

That year, the elderly midwife delivered three babies in similar emergency situations. She handled four others in 1987 and 1988. "One midwife told me, 'They'll put you in jail,'" recalled Sikes. "I said, 'If they want to put me in jail they can do it. I'm not going to turn down no emergency case.'"

"I believe that poor women are having more trouble now having babies than in the old days when midwives did all the deliveries," said Sikes.

"OUT OF THE CLOSET"

Without Carolyn Vogler, lay midwifery would probably still be illegal in Arkansas. After training in Texas and practicing underground in central Arkansas for a few years, Vogler moved to impoverished Chicot County and opened the Delta Maternity Center in 1982, openly defying the state's ban on lay midwifery.

She moved to the Delta area because of the need. Infant mortality was high and the closest public hospital where an indigent mother could deliver a baby was in Little Rock, 115 miles away. Vogler charged \$300 for a birth in an area where urban hospitals charged \$2,000. Within days the State Medical Board filed suit against Vogler, accusing her of practicing medicine without a license.

"I wanted to come out of the closet," said Vogler. Going to jail would be worthwhile, she felt, if it would prod the state into establishing criteria for licensing midwives.

The suit never came to trial, but the controversy helped push the state legislature to address the issue in 1983. The result was a compromise law permitting lay midwives to practice in six of the state's poorest counties.

Midwives were not satisfied with the deal, however. Many poor women lived outside the designated area, and some midwives apparently felt obliged to

cross county lines to help women in labor.

Two years later authorities in Independence County arrested a lay midwife and her assistant, confiscated their equipment and records, and charged them with practicing medicine without a license. Independence County was not one of the six counties where lay practice was legal.

The trial of Dixie Stone, a midwife and a part-time nurse, and her assistant Terry Davis was a watershed event, generating daily media coverage and scores of letters to local papers in support of the two women. Eighty-five percent of people

lifted its six-county limit and established licensing for lay midwifery statewide.

ANTI-TRUST DOCTORS

Yet the legal status proved to be only a partial victory. To receive a license, a midwife had to have the signature of a physician committed to backing her up. But the rift between midwives and doctors was deep, and few physicians were willing to risk the censure of their colleagues by supporting midwives. Defiant, the midwives vowed to continue practicing without state licenses.

"Doctors are required to treat anyone who needs them in an emergency," Vogler pointed out. "The same is true for us when a pregnant woman needs care."

Wearied of the battle, the state health department finally conceded last year and agreed to require an emergency back-up plan instead of a physician's signature. Midwives were jubilant. "We've been kind of like the health department's Vietnam," said Vogler.

The ruling, however, came too late for Vogler. She was forced to close her maternity center in 1988 when her three back-up physicians withdrew their support after she filed for approval as a Medicaid provider. She has filed an anti-trust suit against several local obstetricians, charging that they intimidated her back-up physicians to protect their Medicaid business. The suit, she hopes, will set a precedent establishing the right of midwives to practice.

Despite the gains made by lay midwives, many believe it will take a revolutionary change in the American medical system before midwives gain the universal acceptance they enjoy in Europe.

"It won't happen until we have a national health plan in which midwives play an integral role," said Ina Mae Gaskin, the founder of The Farm in Tennessee. "I'm looking for the South to take the lead in that. It's here where the tradition has been kept alive the longest."

"And it won't happen," she added, "until women understand that much of their power resides in motherhood." □

Sandy Smith is an investigative reporter with the Institute for Southern Studies.

Photo courtesy Florida State Archives



"GRANNY" MIDWIVES IN FLORIDA DELIVERED THOUSANDS OF BABIES BEFORE DOCTORS FORCED THEM TO SURRENDER THEIR "GRIPS."

polled by the *Arkansas Democrat* said midwifery should be legal.

Dr. Joe Verser, secretary of the State Medical Board since 1949, took the stand for the prosecution to reject the notion that midwives can handle normal births. "I don't think there is any such thing as a normal delivery of a baby," he said, adding that he considered cutting the umbilical cord a surgical procedure.

The trial ended in a hung jury, but it was widely viewed as a victory for the midwifery movement. In 1987 the state





Children of the Mines

TAZEWELL, VA. — The year her daughter got sick, Cosby Totten's Thursdays became a grueling seven-hour marathon from her home in Virginia to her coal mining job in West Virginia and the doctors at Duke University in North Carolina.

"I'd go to work at four o'clock of an evening, get off at midnight and go get Goldie Carol," recalled Totten, a divorced mother of six. "We'd drive to my sister's house in North Carolina, and she'd take her on to the hospital while I rested up for the drive back."

Like many single parents, Totten found herself caught between the demands of her job and the needs of her children.

"People shouldn't have to make that choice," she says.

Totten was among the first women to go to work underground, but her reasons had more to do with the paycheck than a feminist assault on male tradition. "I really wanted to stay at home with my six,"

she said. "But a woman can't stay at home and take abuse from a man just to raise your kids.

"I had six good reasons to go to work in the mines."

In 1982, when her daughter Goldie began experiencing mysterious seizures at school, Totten worked at the Consolidation Coal Co. Bishop Complex in McDowell County, West Virginia. It was one of the best jobs available in rural Appalachia, bringing her wages of up to \$12 an hour and good health insurance under the national coal

contract negotiated by the United Mine Workers.

Why has one of the unions with the fewest female members been the strongest advocate for family rights?

By Martha Hodel

The contract also gave Totten five "personal leave days" that she could use any way she chose. But once the leave was exhausted, a punitive absenteeism policy allowed the company to fire her if she missed two "unexcused absences" in a row for any reason other than her own "proven" sickness. When Goldie got sick, Totten was forced to juggle doctor appointments around her work schedule, and thus began the marathon Thursdays that blurred into Fridays.

"God forbid, you take two days and get fired," Totten said. "Then where are you? A sick kid, no job and no insurance."

Unlike some, this story had a happy ending: Goldie Carol, whose mysterious illness proved relatively easy to cure once a correct diagnosis was made, is now a robust 22-year-old, Totten's "fourth one down." And Totten turned her experience into a successful campaign to get one of the nation's bastions of blue-collar masculinity — the United Mine Workers of America — (UMWA) actively involved in the national fight for family leave.

Those who lobbied for the family leave bill that recently passed the House of Representatives say the support of the Mine Workers was one of the keys to their first real congressional victory. On May 10 — five years after the measure was first introduced — the House voted 237 to 187 to require companies with 50 or more employees to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave a year to care for newborn or newly adopted children or seriously ill family members. The measure was sent to the Senate.

"The Mine Workers were instrumental in getting it to this point," said Donna Lenhoff of the Women's Legal Defense Fund in Washington, D.C. "We could not have gotten it to this stage without the serious support of the AFL-CIO and the

entire labor movement, and we wouldn't have gotten that without the Mine Workers.

"They educated the rest of the labor movement—and not just those unions with predominantly female memberships, but also all those macho, male unions."

FATHERS AND HEARTS

If any union qualifies as male-oriented and "macho," it's the Mine Workers, which remained unassailably male until the mid-1970s. By the early 1980s, the union had about 3,000 women members; today, after the most recent coalfield recession, there are fewer than 1,500 active women members. They amount to about one percent of the union's membership.

Despite those daunting numbers, Totten and other miners—male and female—who became involved in the family leave campaign say they found an extremely receptive audience among international officers and rank-and-file members alike.

"It was easy to convince them, because they're all fathers," said Totten.

"They've got hearts, too; the Mine Workers have got the best hearts in the world. If they didn't care about their wives and children, they wouldn't work in the coal mines."

The initial goal of Totten and her co-workers was to have the UMWA make parental leave a collective bargaining issue. One of their first steps in 1983 was the union's international offices in Washington, D.C., where they talked with UMWA Vice President Cecil Roberts and, later, with President Richard Trumka. Trumka said the issue was a natural one for the UMWA.

"Unlike a lot of unions, the whole concept of the Mine Workers is built around the family—not the shop floor," said Trumka. He points to a variety of national contract provisions aimed at miners' families, like a training and education fund that provides benefits not

only to unemployed miners but also to their spouses and dependents. "We've always looked on our jobs as a way to provide for our families," Trumka said.

Those attitudes are the result of a combination of cultural attributes that may be unique to the Mine Workers. The members, many of them second- and third-generation miners, live almost exclusively in rural areas, often alongside their parents and grandparents. It's a situation where family is bound to play an important role.

"Once they choose somewhere to set down roots, they stay in that area," Trumka said of his members. "They go into the mines the way my dad took me into the mines, the way he was taken into the mines by both my grandfathers.

"They identify their support system as their family first, their extended family

*"The role of the father
was beginning to change,"
said one organizer,
"even in working-class families."*

and then their union," he said.

It was concern for their families, for example, that finally forced miners to end their bitter contract strike of 1977, which focused in part on health care issues. Without a dollar in strike benefits, the miners stayed out for a record 111 days, ultimately stifling coal production enough to dry up pension funds that ran on production royalties. When the pension checks stopped coming, the reaction was swift: miners willing to do without for themselves returned to work for their parents and grandparents.

MEN AT THE TOP

Despite this emphasis on family, female members of the union were rare until the mid-1970s, when women began to

insist on their right to work underground alongside men. By 1979, when 1,500 UMWA members met in a constitutional convention in Denver, they were joined by the first 10 women delegates ever elected to represent their local unions.

"That first time in Denver, most of the women really didn't want to draw too much attention to themselves," recalled Betty Jean Hall of the Occupational Safety and Health Law Center in Washington, D.C. "But there were some who felt they were making history whether they wanted to or not, and that they had some obligation to make a statement as women, as a group.

"The one thing they could agree on was that they didn't want anything for themselves that they couldn't get for their union brothers," said Hall, who at the time was director of the Coal Employment Project, a group she founded in 1977 to help women gain jobs in coal mining and other non-traditional industries.

According to Hall, nothing much came out of the women's Denver discussions—"except for the idea of maternity-paternity leave, that this would be the obvious issue for us, something that was of importance to the men as

well as the women, something that we could work together on."

June Rostan, a former Coal Employment Project staffer who now directs the Southern Empowerment Project in Knoxville, Tennessee, recalls that the discussion at first focused on how hard it was for female miners to get maternity leave. "But they realized that you couldn't win it on that basis, and that times were right to think of it as maternity-paternity leave," Rostan said.

"As they talked to the men, the women found that the receptiveness by their male co-workers was much more positive than they expected. I think it was because it came at a time when the role of the father was beginning to change, even in working-class families.

"A lot of the men had experienced trouble in caring for a sick child," Rostan

added. "Miners live in rural areas, and regional medical centers tend to be out of the coalfields, involving long travel.

"The proposal just never met the opposition that I expected it would get—I think because the campaign was pitched to men," she said. "It addressed their self-interest, too."

Interest was also evident on the part of the international union and its top officers. Several international staff members had been granted leaves to take care of family matters, including the birth of children.

"Part of the reason was that the union's top officers are younger men, and Trumka put a real priority on hiring miners for the staff," said Rostan. "They had a different idea of family roles. They were part of that generation that had begun to re-examine the roles we grew up with."

PLANNING A PICNIC

With the support of the Coal Employment Project, women miners held several conferences to devise a strategy for bringing the issue to the attention of the UMWA rank and file.

They studied the union's constitution to learn how collective bargaining issues are determined; Rostan said the UMWA is unusual in having a constitution that clearly spells out the rules for rank-and-file miners to bring issues to the attention of their leaders.

"They learned the rules of the game and they followed the rules," Rostan said of the women.

That was the start of a carefully organized and detailed grassroots campaign. In each of the union's 21 districts, women went to work, approaching their male co-workers in creative ways. One woman volunteered to coordinate a company picnic just so she could talk about parental leave with her male co-workers as she planned the picnic.

"In the beginning, we just generated discussions among the members," said Steve Webber, a West Virginia representative on the UWMA governing board

who was among the first union officials approached by the women. "But those discussions quickly brought out a number of male miners who had had problems with family and couldn't get time off when they needed it. After the discussion got started, it was easily recognized as a problem that everyone had—not just women."

In every district, the women found male and female miners who had been unable to get family leave when they needed it:

▼ To keep from losing his job, Fred Decker of rural Wyoming County in West Virginia regularly drove 400 miles round-trip to take his son for leukemia treatments.

▼ Nancy Bowen of Williamson, West Virginia was forced to quit her job to take care of a comatose son, only to be denied unemployment benefits because

Unable to get time off from work, West Virginia miner Fred Decker had to drive 400 miles to take his son for leukemia treatments.

she missed work while her son was ill.

▼ James Callor of Helper, Utah was denied permission to take a week off from work to spend with his six-year-old daughter just before her death from cancer of the nervous system.

Nationwide, the parental leave campaign gathered momentum as a collective bargaining issue for the UMWA. Success became apparent at the union's next constitutional convention, which convened in Pittsburgh in 1983. When the collective bargaining resolutions proposed by local unions were tallied, parental leave was third on the list behind pensions and health insurance.

"Not only was it number three in the number of resolutions, but the resolutions were evenly distributed geographically—so there really was a groundswell," said Rostan.

As a result, parental leave had a prominent place at the bargaining table when the union sat down with the nation's coal operators in 1984. At a time when other unions were being forced to accept concessions, the UMWA adopted a bargaining stance of "no backward steps"—and added a contract demand for parental leave.

According to Webber, the parental leave demand was the last issue to come off the table before the union settled its 1984 contract with the Bituminous Coal Operators Association. After difficult negotiations, the two sides agreed to establish a special Parental Leave Study Committee. An even tougher round of negotiations in 1988 allowed for no further progress on the issue, Webber said.

Despite the lack of progress at the bargaining table, the UMWA has continued its emphasis on family leave, playing a major role in the congressional fight. Although her children are grown now, Totten still fights for parental leave and thinks the time will come when government or industry will have to recognize the importance of family health.

Most other industrial nations already accept the need for family leave.

Italy, Germany, and Sweden all provide at least 14 weeks of paid leave for new mothers. In Canada, mothers can get up to 41 weeks of parental leave at 60 percent of pay, while in Chile either parent is eligible for 18 weeks of parental leave at full pay.

"These U.S. companies who are fighting this thing—where in the hell do they think the future workers come from?" demanded Totten. "I think people ought to say 'no more children' until we get some of these things worked out. That ought to be one of our strategies." □

Martha Hodel is on sabbatical from the Associated Press in Charleston, West Virginia, where she has worked since 1976.



The “Good” Mother

Nearly half of the 2,300 women who give birth in Gaston County, North Carolina each year cannot afford to pay for their own obstetric care. When local doctors threatened to stop deliveries last September unless the county paid the bills, County Commissioner Porter McAteer proposed a final solution to the problem: Women who live in poverty and can't pay for their own prenatal care and delivery should be forcibly sterilized.

“If I lose the election by saying that, then fine,” McAteer said. “You can laugh, but most of the public feels that way.”

Although McAteer stated that he didn't think such forced sterilizations would ever happen, history suggests otherwise. His words echo over a

century of societal efforts to promote compulsory or coercive sterilization and

limit the reproductive freedom of poor or otherwise disenfranchised women.

His words also reflect the stark reality of national policy. If Gaston County did actively promote sterilization, the federal

Medicaid program would currently pay for 90 percent of the cost. When a poor woman in Gaston County seeks health care for her children, however, Medicaid picks up only 50 percent of the bill.

These funding policies belie current pro-family rhetoric. Although the Bush administration argues that it has a legitimate interest in outlawing abortion to promote childbirth, history shows that for the past century the state has generally played a much more active role in de-

fining who should be prohibited from bearing society's children.

From North Carolina to Nazi Germany, governments have long dictated who is “good enough” to bear society's children.

By Siobán Harlow

GENETIC SUPERIORITY

Forcible sterilization has been practiced in this country since at least 1889, initially for the purpose of ending the hereditary lines of retarded people or others presumed to be somehow “unfit” to reproduce. At that time, feeble-mindedness, mental illness, and “moral degeneracy” were commonly thought to be hereditary conditions, and preventing procreation was viewed as an appropriate social “cure.”

Around the same time the eugenics movement began to flourish. Eugenics basically posits that some people are innately superior to others, and proponents advocated measures to “improve” the human race by encouraging procreation among persons with “good” genes and by legally proscribing procreation of persons with “inferior” genes.

The movement pushed for legislation to restrict immigration and marriage and to segregate or sterilize “mental defectives.” The theory of eugenics was promoted by many prominent Americans, including Theodore Roosevelt and birth control advocate Margaret Sanger.

In 1914 a “Model Eugenical Sterilization Law” drafted by Harry Laughlin, who later became the Expert Eugenics Agent of the U.S. House of Representatives, called for compulsory sterilization of all “social inadequates.” By 1932, 32 of the 48 states had passed compulsory sterilization laws—including Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia.

The laws generally provided for sterilization of inmates of state hospitals and prisons, and some made it mandatory before discharge. Over 30 different categories justifying sterilization were listed, from insanity and idiocy to epileptics, drug fiends, moral and sexual perverts, and persons with “criminal tendencies.”

The list left a lot of room for interpretation. Even a superficially medical diagnosis such as idiocy in practice reflected a judgment against individuals who, in the eyes of more powerful members of society, were unable to perform as economically self-sufficient citizens. From the beginning, state-sanctioned restrictions of reproductive freedom were conceived of as a punitive solution to a wide array of social problems.

The new laws did not go unchallenged, and the major test came in the South. In 1927, Dr. A.S. Priddy, superintendent of the State Colony for the Feebleminded in Lynchburg, Virginia, tried to sterilize Carrie Buck, the 18-year-old child of a poor single mother and a single mother herself. Her lawyer fought the sterilization all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In the now-infamous decision of *Buck v. Bell*, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes upheld the Virginia statute.

"It is better for the whole world . . . [if] society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind," Holmes wrote. "The principle that sustains compulsory vaccination is broad enough to cover cutting of the Fallopian tubes. . . . Three generations of imbeciles are enough."

HOLMES AND HITLER

Records of state institutions indicate that between 1907 and 1963, nearly 70,000 people were forcibly sterilized—one out of five in either Virginia or North Carolina. Many were never told what had been done to them. Carrie Buck's 16-year-old half-sister Doris was told she was having an appendectomy and only found out the true nature of her operation 50 years later.

These practices found a powerful admirer in Adolf Hitler. In 1933, the Nazi regime passed a sterilization statute that was based in part on the U.S. model. Abortion, however, was outlawed, effectively forbidding women from making individual decisions about motherhood. "Good" women were supposed to bear children; "bad" women were sterilized. During the Nuremberg trials, the Holmes decision in *Bell v. Buck* was cited in the defense of Nazi atrocities.

After the horror of the Holocaust became clear, the theory of eugenics began to fall into disrepute. Sterilization declined nationwide, but continued at high rates in Georgia and Virginia through the 1950s and in North Carolina into the 1960s. In 1963, more than half of the 467 forcible sterilizations in the U.S. were performed in North Carolina.

Many of those sterilized in the postwar period were poor teenage girls. Of the 1,620 people sterilized by state statute between 1960 and 1968 in North Carolina, 1,583 were female, 1,023 were black, and 907 were teenagers.

FELONY CHILDBIRTH

The eventual repeal of many eugenic sterilization statutes, however, did not diminish the social acceptance of efforts to restrict the reproductive autonomy of disenfranchised members of society. During the late '50s and early '60s, some states considered forcibly sterilizing unmarried women who bore children—especially if they were welfare recipients. Such proposals were generally justified using a category of "fitness for parenthood," with fitness determined by marital and economic status.

One Mississippi proposal suggested that having a child out of wedlock be considered a felony and that a three-year minimum sentence be imposed for second "offenses." Most proposals for criminalizing unwed motherhood contained clauses allowing for a sentence reduction after sterilization or marriage.

Although only Louisiana and Mississippi actually made unwed parenthood a crime, the pervasive attitude that society can legitimately dictate who should be parents created a climate which fostered coercive and punitive sterilization practices in government-funded social services. Coercion often came in the form of a threat: submit to surgical sterilization or lose your welfare benefits and medical care.

Once again, poor women and minorities were the most frequent targets of abuse. In 1970, when access to abortion usually required approval by a hospital board, many teaching hospitals had a policy called the "Package Deal" that approved abortions on the condition that women also submit to sterilization.

In 1972, a survey of obstetricians found that six percent favored sterilization for private patients, 14 percent favored it for welfare patients, and 97 percent favored it for unwed mothers on welfare. The following year, three obstetricians in Aiken County, South Carolina refused to care for pregnant women on Medicaid who had two or more children unless they agreed to be sterilized.

The extent of abusive practices came to national attention in 1974 through the case of *Relf v. Weinberger*. At the age of 12 and 14, two black sisters were sterilized at an Alabama hospital through a federally funded program without their or their parents' knowledge or consent. At least 11 minors were sterilized at the clinic, 10 of whom were black.

"Over the past few years, an estimated

100,000 to 150,000 low-income persons have been sterilized under federally funded programs," concluded Judge Gerhard Gesell. "There is uncontroverted evidence in the record that minors and other incompetents have been sterilized with federal funds and that an indefinite number of poor people have been improperly coerced into accepting a sterilization operation under the threat that various welfare benefits would be withdrawn unless they submitted to irreversible sterilization."

WHO DECIDES

Although such blatantly abusive practices have diminished over the past 15 years, the attitude that forcible sterilization is an appropriate remedy for social problems remains strongly rooted in our society. A regional task force considering the "problem" of teenage pregnancy recently suggested that retributive policies—including sterilization—might need to be considered.

In some states, lawmakers even seem to view state-funded abortion as a useful tool to implement a *de facto* eugenics policy. Whenever the state abortion fund in North Carolina is threatened, funding is usually won not only by arguing that poor women deserve equal access to health care, but also by convincing legislators that it is cheaper to abort a poor woman than to provide her and her child with medical care and social services.

The connection between sterilization abuse and access to abortion is more than superficial. When courts accept the argument that it serves the national interest to ban abortion and force women to give birth, they justify government efforts to narrow the range of reproductive options, opening the door to further limits on reproductive freedoms. If a state can define legitimate reasons for promoting childbirth, it can also define legitimate reasons for promoting sterility.

Whenever government steps in to limit reproductive autonomy, we need to remember that the theme of "Who Decides" has a very long and unpleasant history. In the past, we have been only too ready to define who is "good enough" to become a parent—and to allow the state to rob disenfranchised women of the possibility of motherhood. □

Siobán Harlow is a reproductive epidemiologist at the University of North Carolina. The research and analysis of Adele Clark, medical sociologist at the University of California, were invaluable in writing this article.



Hard Labor

CHARLESTON, S.C. — When Hurricane Hugo blasted the coast last September, LaVeme Singleton lost her home. A single mother of three children and pregnant with her fourth, she moved in with her sister and struggled to care for her family on \$224 a month in welfare payments.

"It was crowded, and everyone was under a lot of stress," she recalled. "I kept vomiting food — I just couldn't keep anything down."

On November 9, Singleton went into labor. She checked into the hospital at the Medical University of South Carolina, and several hours later she gave birth to a boy. He weighed 4 pounds and 11 ounces, and she named him Arneal.

The next day, while she was recovering from the delivery, the hospital called the police.

"They didn't even wait until I was healed," Singleton said. "I didn't have any clothes on. I was sitting in a wheelchair with a sheet over it, and there was blood all over my hospital gown. A lady

detective read the arrest form to me, and then handcuffed me and took me around the back of the hospital and put me into a cruiser. I had never been arrested before, and I was scared.

"They took me right to the jail. I got mug shots taken off me, and they took me into a sleazy cell. It was filthy there, very rough and nasty. My sister came to the jailhouse and brought me some clothes. But they would not let me see my baby. I cried many nights.

When I finally did see him, he was one month old."

Without knowing it, Singleton had

Expectant mothers who check into public hospitals risk being busted by the pregnancy police.

By Eric Bates

become a target in a nationwide campaign to prosecute expectant mothers accused of using drugs during their pregnancy. Instead of offering care and treatment, some public hospitals are now turning patients over to the police, who take away the children and charge the mothers with "delivering drugs to a minor through the umbilical cord."

According to court records, at least 45 women were arrested nationwide on such charges during the past year — 32 of them in the South. Texas, Georgia, and North and South Carolina have all arrested mothers on drug-related charges, and Florida has convicted two women and sent one to prison.

More of the arrests have occurred in South Carolina than in any other state. Both Charleston and Greenville, at opposite ends of South Carolina, have decided to crack down on "crack moms." So far, the two cities have accused 18 mothers of passing cocaine to their children during pregnancy. All of the women are poor, and all but a few are black.

The wave of arrests has many health care advocates worried that officials are singling out poor black mothers for prosecution, punishing them for a medical condition for which many are unable to get treatment. They also fear that the "get tough" policies will deter poor women from seeking what little health care is available to them during pregnancy.

"This is not about drugs or protecting children," said Efa Nwangaza, a Greenville attorney who represented a Georgia woman charged with child neglect after she tested positive for cocaine. "This is just another attempt to maintain control over women. It is a war against human rights under the guise of a war on drugs."

PRENATAL POLICE

The push to punish pregnant women who are addicted to drugs took an alarming turn last year when Jennifer Johnson, a 23-year-old black mother in Florida, became the first woman in the nation convicted of pushing drugs to her newborn child.

A slim, bespectacled woman, Johnson had given birth to two children with cocaine in their blood streams and was pregnant with a third. Unemployed, often

forced to live on the streets of Altamonte Springs, she sometimes smoked crack as often as four times a day.

She was addicted — but she was also concerned about her unborn child. On December 22, 1988, she called an ambulance. “I thought that if I tell ‘em I use drugs they would send me to a drug place or something,” she said. “I really didn’t have nowhere to stay. I just wanted to get some help.”

But instead of offering Johnson treatment for her addiction, officials turned her plea for help against her. After she gave birth, she was arrested and charged with being a drug pusher — a felony punishable by 30 years in prison.

Prosecutors wanted to make Johnson a test case, but they had a small problem. Because Florida law does not recognize a fetus as a person, there was legally no one to whom Johnson could have passed the drugs. To get around this dilemma, prosecutors simply stretched the meaning of the state drug trafficking law. They argued that Johnson “delivered” cocaine to her baby through the umbilical cord during the seconds *after* it was born, but *before* the cord was cut.

The court agreed, and Johnson was convicted on July 13 last year. She was sentenced to 15 years probation and ordered to perform 200 hours of community service. She was also forbidden to go to any bars or to associate with anyone who uses drugs or alcohol — for 15 years.

“We need to ensure that this woman does not give birth to another cocaine baby,” Prosecutor Jeff Dean said. “The message is that this community cannot afford to have two or three cocaine babies from the same person.”

Lynn Paltrow, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union, heard a different message. “These cases lead to a prenatal police state,” she said. “They are punishing a woman for a non-existent crime, controlling her for 15 years of life for misbehaving during pregnancy.”

“BROWN CARS”

The conviction of Jennifer Johnson impressed law enforcement officials across the country. In Charleston, doc-

tors at Medical University of South Carolina had been noticing a dramatic rise in the number of “cocaine mothers.” When they referred the women to a drug treatment program, most never showed up.

“We were doing everything we could to teach that ‘this is bad — cut it out,’ but we weren’t getting anywhere,” said Dr. Ed Horger, professor of obstetrics and gynecology. “So we met with police and the solicitor and decided to put some teeth in the counseling procedures.”

Officials agreed that any pregnant

*After she gave birth,
she was arrested
and charged with being
a drug pusher.*

woman coming into the hospital who had received “incomplete prenatal care” would be tested for drugs. Any woman who turned up positive would be shown a video about how drugs could harm her fetus, referred to a drug treatment program, and forced to sign a form acknowledging that she would be arrested if she missed her counseling appointments.

“When we put the teeth in it or said you gotta show up or you’re subject to arrest, it worked beautifully,” Dr. Horger said. “The month before we started this program, there were 25 positive drug screens. Since then, there have been only two or three a month.”

Horger discounted objections to putting patients behind bars. “I don’t see the program as wrong,” he said. “The mother is in the wrong. My proper role is to take care of the fetus, because no one else is sticking up for it. The baby’s rights are being violated every time the momma uses cocaine. The only reason for any arrest is to get mother away from street drugs, to force her into proper care.”

But such concern strikes some as less than genuine. Like most hospitals, the Medical University offers no drug treatment program for pregnant women or

their infants. Although national studies indicate that one of every nine babies has been exposed to illegal drugs in the womb, a congressional committee found that only 50 of the 5,000 drug treatment programs it surveyed offer care to expectant mothers.

One of the first pregnant women arrested in Charleston was Monica Young, a 19-year-old black mother who tested positive for cocaine during a hospital stay last year. When she was released on October 4, she was met by three uniformed officers and taken to the county jail. Bond was set at \$75,000 — a figure out of reach for an unemployed teenager on welfare.

Young sat in jail for six weeks before her bond was reduced to \$5,000. Her family used federal emergency relief money they had received after Hurricane Hugo to get her out, but she was placed under house arrest and forbidden to leave her home until she gave birth.

A week before Christmas, Young delivered her child. It was healthy, and showed no signs of drug dependency.

When the case came before Judge Brian Rawl, he ruled there was no evidence that Young had delivered cocaine to a minor and dismissed the charges. “The solicitor didn’t produce any drugs, and they didn’t even test the child,” he said.

Rawl also said the case raised the issue of whether poor black women are being singled out for prosecution. “I don’t personally feel that everybody is being turned in — it’s only the indigent patients,” he said. “It’s kind of like inspecting traffic on the highway. You can stop every car or every fourth car, but you can’t just stop brown cars or cars with female drivers. You can’t be selective — it has to be all or none.”

Patricia Kennedy, a lawyer who volunteered to represent Young, also expressed outrage at the arrest policy. “In these cases, rehabilitation should be addressed first,” she said. “These folks need help and their babies need protection — but there are better ways to do it than using our jails as laying-in rooms for pregnant women.”



AT LEAST 45 PREGNANT WOMEN HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AND CHARGED WITH "DELIVERING" DRUGS TO THEIR FETUSES. ALL THE WOMEN ARE POOR, AND ALMOST ALL ARE BLACK.

STOOL PIGEONS

Monica Young got out of jail before she gave birth to her baby — but another Charleston mother was not so lucky. She was arrested at Medical University hospital after she tested positive for cocaine and was kept in jail under a \$75,000 bond until she gave birth.

"If you had set bond at \$100 for this lady, she couldn't have got out of jail," said Michael O'Connell, the public defender. "She kept bleeding and having minor contractions, and she was in jail three weeks before she gave birth. I think they were treading on thin ice when they put a woman in such an advanced state of pregnancy in jail. In this case it worked out, but everybody was lucky that nothing really tragic happened."

Charles Condon, the Charleston solicitor who is prosecuting pregnant women, denied that the policy discriminates against the poor. "We're not really interested in convicting women and sending them to jail," he said. "We're just interested in getting them to stop using drugs before they do something horrible to their babies."

But others fear that arresting pregnant women will have horrible consequences for newborn babies. If mothers with drug problems see doctors and other caretakers acting like stool pi-

geons, they may be less likely to seek prenatal care.

"I think you're putting people in a position where they're scared to go to a doctor for medical care," said Bobby Howe, an attorney who represented one of the women arrested in Charleston. "This is a medical problem, not a legal problem. These people need counseling, not jail time."

There is already some evidence that the South Carolina crackdown is scaring away pregnant women who need medical attention. According to a preliminary investigation conducted by the American Civil Liberties Union, more women in Charleston are waiting until the last minute to seek medical care — or are giving birth in taxis or bathrooms without any medical supervision.

"I just think it's the wrong message to be sending out that if you're on drugs and you come into the Medical University to get prenatal care, you're going to be arrested," said Michael O'Connell, the public defender. "Any desire women have to get prenatal care is obviously going to be squelched by the knowledge that they may go to jail."

According to drug counselors, arresting women with drug problems also makes them resistant to treatment. "It was really disturbing for the mothers we saw, to say the least," said Dale Duncan,

director of adult outpatient treatment at the county substance abuse center. "All of a sudden they not only have a drug problem — now they have a legal problem. They're arrested, fingerprinted, put in jail. It made them hostile to the system, and made it hard for them to focus on treatment."

LaVerne Singleton, the mother arrested the day after she gave birth, said treatment taught her "that there are other alternatives to drugs. But I didn't have the time or money to go back and forth to all those classes, to show up in court, to meet with the social workers. I have kids at home, and I didn't want

to leave them alone — I might get charged with neglect again."

Singleton said she would not have agreed to a urine test if she had known the hospital was going to turn her over to the police. "Nobody gave me a choice," she said. "It was just thrown at me blindly. I never had a chance to decide. You are supposed to have your own privacy — that's our freedom. But they didn't allow that for me. If they really want to help women on drugs, they need to tell them to get help, not just lock them up."

Many of those fighting to protect single mothers like Singleton say they fear the arrests may be the first step in a larger campaign against the reproductive rights of women.

"This is being directed toward the weakest and most vulnerable people in our society," said Efia Nwangaza, the Greenville attorney. "That is exactly how fascism rose in Italy and Germany. Everybody else thinks, 'It's not me, it's those people — women, the poor.' Unless those of us who recognize it do something about it, this is just going to continue undaunted." □

Eric Bates is managing editor of Southern Exposure.

“It’s Hard Emotions”

By Jonathan Eig

Fourteen hours before his scheduled execution last November, Dalton Prejean’s life story was staged like theater in a bright, white-tiled room in an administration building at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola.

I was in the audience, playing the bit role of a newspaper reporter. The stars were Prejean, his family, the family of his victim, and the five-member pardon board that would decide whether to recommend death or life in prison. If it came to an execution that night, I was to be a witness.

Prejean was a 14-year-old black boy when he shot and killed a white cab driver. He was 17 when he did the same to Donald Cleveland, a white state trooper. For the latter crime, he was sentenced in 1979 to be executed. As we all came together 10 years later, Prejean’s lawyers expressed little hope that their client would live into the next day.

I came prepared to witness our government’s most controversial social service: the death penalty.

The first person I met in the hearing room that morning was Ann Forbes, mother of the dead state trooper. She wore a soft white dress that glowed in the sunlight shining through heavily barred windows. She had a gentle smile and kind words. “I’ve lived and breathed this ever since it happened,” she said, and explained that she only wanted Dalton Prejean dead because that’s what she had been promised.

Mrs. Forbes sat flanked by her daughter, her daughter-in-law, and her two grandchildren. Donald Cleveland Jr., a pudgy 13-year-old with a fresh crew cut, showed none of the same emotion as the women.

Across the aisle sat the friends and family of Dalton Prejean. Bernadette Prejean said she married Dalton and conceived his child after his arrest but before his consignment to Death Row. They later divorced.

She sat with her nine-year-old son, Dalton Jr., who wore a sweater almost identical to the one worn by the victim’s son. The two never looked at each other. Both stared at the floor a lot. I stared a lot

at them, looking for clues of emotion. It seemed painfully obvious that victims filled both sides of the room, their emotions overlapping in the aisle.

I found myself growing anxious for events to unfold. I wanted to stop fretting over whether I would be sickened — or worse, unmoved — by the execution.

I wondered what Prejean would be thinking at the moment he sat in “Old Sparky,” as the warden calls the electric chair. How amazing, I thought, that one minute his brain would be firing messages to his nerve endings telling his body to sit, breathe, clench his teeth, and perspire, and the next minute he would be dead. Gone.

ST. JUDE

Then Dalton Prejean walked into the room. I jotted these notes:

“Short. Shorter than me”

“Hair in two pony-tails”

“White Converse high-tops”

“Gray sweatshirt. Jeans”

“Shackled feet make him seem to saunter”

“Long goatee”

“Smiles at family”

He took his seat without a word. I moved to get a better view of his face as the testimony began.

A childhood friend, her voice crackling, said Prejean had been abused by the aunt that raised him. She said children teased him for his big ears and slow, soft speech.

His mother said “he wasn’t a normal child.” She said her son once attacked her with a two-by-four while she was nine months pregnant. “I say these things being I’m his mother, and I believe Dalton needs some help.”

Prejean wiped his eyes, but otherwise showed little emotion. Even as his brother retold the events of the night of Cleveland’s shooting, Prejean sat still. He wept a little at what was sad. He smiled a little at pleasant memories. And every few minutes, he checked his watch.

After three hours of testimony, pardon board officials broke for lunch.

Prejean's friends and family gathered around him. He spoke in a hushed voice, mentioned that everyone except him seemed to be gaining weight. He seemed relaxed, almost as if he were unaware or unconcerned about his impending execution, now less than 11 hours away. It was almost as if he were trying to make it easier for his family. Or maybe he really didn't care.

When he stepped away from his family to talk to a prison guard, I approached him and introduced myself.

"What is that you're wearing around your neck?" I asked, pointing to a silver medallion.

"The cross of St. Jude," he said, identifying the patron saint of lost causes.

"Is it tough sitting here, listening and waiting? What do you think about?"

"It's just hard emotions being a human being," he said. "It just is. I just don't like seeing my family go through all of this."

"Do you have a feeling about how it's going to turn out?"

"I'm being neutral. I'm just presenting my case with all the facts."

I thanked him and he returned to his family. We all ate the same prison lunch — baked chicken, stuffing, yams, and lima beans. I made a note to find out what his final meal would be and include that in my story. For some reason, readers always want to know the last meal, as if it reveals something inherently human about someone we otherwise deem inhuman.

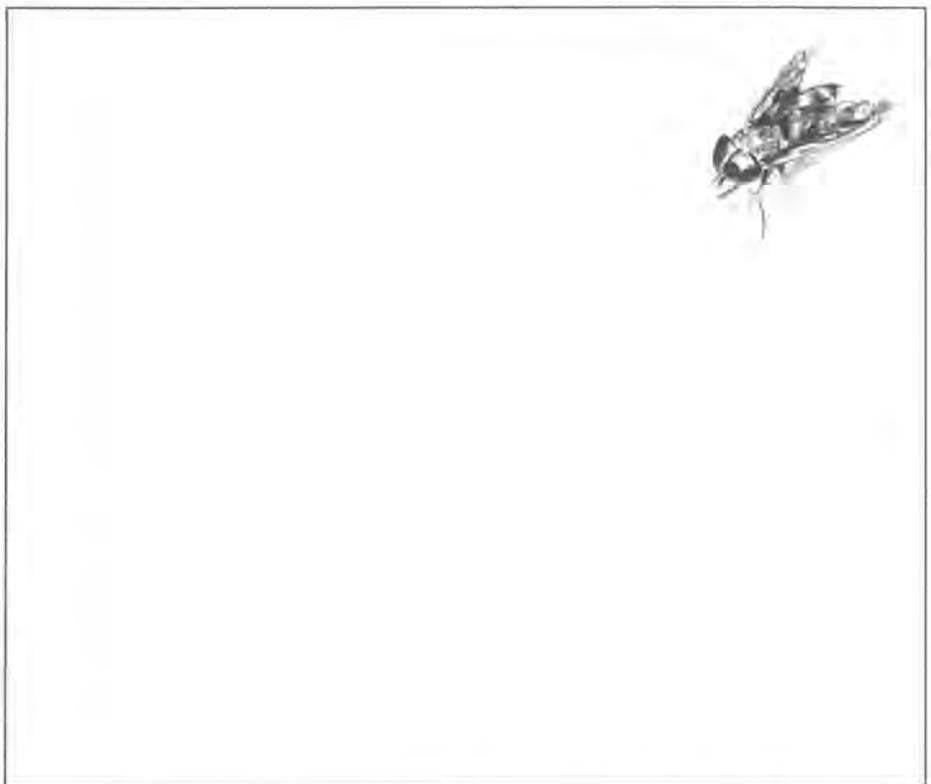
I was beginning to think of Dalton Prejean as dead.

ANOTHER REPRIEVE

After lunch, the hearings seemed likely to continue for several hours. I took out my portable computer, went to the back of the room, and began writing a story for our early editions. It said Prejean was on his way to almost certain execution.

At the witness stand was Nancy Goodwin, Prejean's spiritual counselor, who said Prejean had grown a lot in his 10 years on Death Row. She said many people were touched by his life and many would suffer if he died.

Next was Sharona Hill, a former California convict who became Prejean's pen pal last year. She said she was in love with Prejean; that his letters had helped her turn her life around. By now, most of the reporters and television crews had



gone, and those who remained were fidgeting and talking among themselves.

At 2:08, the testimony came to an abrupt halt. The prison warden whispered in the ear of the pardon board chairman and a 10-minute recess was announced. The room buzzed with a rumor that soon proved accurate: A federal judge had issued Prejean's ninth stay of execution. Suddenly all bureaucratic decorum exploded in a thundering wave of emotion.

"It's not fair," Donald Cleveland's daughter screamed.

Donald Jr.'s face turned red. He shook his head back and forth, as if he could make the tears go away. He couldn't, and ran out of the room.

Someone dropped a can of Coke and it fizzed across the floor. Spectators stood up abruptly, dropping coffee cups.

Prejean's family tried to rush toward him, but so did two prison guards. While the relatives reached to hug him, the guards handcuffed him and hurried him out of the room. He said nothing, but a single tear rolled down his face and disappeared into his beard.

The Prejeans wept in joy and the Clevelands wept in sorrow. I think I breathed a sigh of relief.

When everyone had gone home and

Prejean was back in his cell, I sat in the grass outside the prison gates and wrote my article for the next day's first edition. I included the quote from Prejean:

"It's hard emotions being a human being."

SWATTING A FLY

Six months later, on May 18, I found myself back at the prison. This time there would be no stay of execution. This time Dalton Prejean was going to die.

The cinderblock walls of the Death House were yellow and smelled as if they'd just been painted. Prejean walked into the place barefoot. The distance from the door to the electric chair was about five paces, and he took them without pause.

Prejean moved smoothly from the white formica floor to the black rubber mat under the chair. The chains around his legs, arms and waist had just been removed, but without the shackles, he took the same small, shuffling strides.

He didn't look at the electric chair, except for a quick glance to judge its distance. He just stopped, pivoted, and slid into the seat like a commuter taking a place on a bus.

In the seconds it took for his body to

turn and his knees to bend, I thought I saw strain in his eyes. Before I could double-check, the look was gone and Prejean stared calmly into the face of the man strapping him to the chair.

Then he looked at the warden in the corner of the room. The warden gazed at the clock over Prejean's head.

The condemned man was wearing a white short-sleeve undershirt and blue jeans. The left leg of his pants had been cut off below the knee and his calf had been shaved to make for a better electrical contact. His odd-looking ponytails had been cut off, too, revealing gangly ears on a small, pointy head.

When the guards fastened him in the chair, they had to pull the wide, leather straps extra tight to secure his scrawny body. His toes barely reached the floor.

Prejean craned his neck as a guard attached the main electrode to the top of his head. Here, for the first and only time, he grimaced. When that was done, he looked forward again, this time through a window into the witness pool.

That's where I sat, along with two wire service reporters, three state troopers, a defense lawyer, a longtime friend and counselor of Prejean's, a doctor, and a coroner. All of us were silent, except the two wire service reporters, each of whom had seen several executions. One of them tried to swat a fly on the window facing the death chamber. "Here comes the first execution of the night," he said, missing the insect with his notebook.

2,000 VOLTS

When Prejean was all strapped in, he stared at his attorney, who held up a small wooden cross. Then one of the guards dropped a hood over his face. It happened so quickly he had no time for a parting expression. He could no more control the dropping of the mask than he could steady the motion of the second hand on the clock behind his head or the darkness yet to come.

When the clock reached five minutes past midnight, an electrician checked all the connections to be sure the hardware would work. Then he switched on an exhaust fan to keep the room from filling with the smell of Prejean's burning flesh. The fan started up with a loud clack, but Prejean didn't flinch.

His fists were clenched, his chest

heaved rapidly. I looked for clues to what might be going on in his mind. It was something I'd pondered often in the months before the execution.

How could I hope to understand a mind like Prejean's? I knew he had done some unthinkable things at a remarkably early age. What was going on in his mind when he attacked his pregnant mother with a two-by-four? What was he thinking when he killed the cab driver when he was 14?

After the murder of the cabbie, doctors determined Prejean was mildly retarded and potentially dangerous. Nevertheless, they turned him loose, without supervision, and Prejean eventually killed again, his mind bent by drugs, alcohol, and cough syrup.

His brain damage seemed to have left Prejean unable to inhibit himself. Like a top, he spun with speed and force, but usually without direction. Give him drugs and a gun and it was a pretty good bet someone would get hurt. Sober him up and surround him with authority figures and he never strayed from proper behavior.

Unchecked, it was a frightening, dangerous mind. Shackled and institutionalized, it was gentle and predictable.

With a mask over his head and extermination only seconds away, Prejean's mind was still functioning, still firing thousands of orders to the rest of his body with the miraculous speed of thought. I marveled over it, remembering how George Orwell once marveled at a man who stepped around a puddle on his way to the gallows.

Prejean's fists remained clenched, heeding his mind's message. Unconsciously, his lungs responded to the orders from his brain to breathe. His nostrils took in air and probably smelled the same fresh paint that I did.

His heart pumped blood more quickly than usual. His arms, legs, and chest felt the pressure of the tightly drawn leather straps. He decided not to scream, not to writhe, not to resist.

While all this and a thousand things more were going on in Prejean's brain, the warden softly nodded and the executioner threw a switch. Two thousand volts of electricity hit Prejean, snuffing out all brain activity and causing his body to jerk violently. His body seemed to try to rise from the chair, only to press against the straps. Then came 500 volts more and another spasm. Then 2,000 volts again. A spark shot from Prejean's left leg. After one more jolt of 500 volts, he was still.

We stared at Prejean for exactly five minutes before the coroner and prison doctor approached to examine the body. The coroner was wearing a tuxedo. They lifted the hood, peered into half-open eyes, and checked for a heart-beat. They declared him dead at 12:17 a.m.

"ONE WORLD LESS"

I left the witness room and walked down the same white-tiled hallway Prejean had just crossed.

Before we could leave the Death House, each witness had to

sign three copies of a form letter verifying that we had seen a man die. As the papers went around the table, one state trooper smiled; another ate a cookie; Prejean's counselor wept.

All I could think of was something Orwell wrote after the execution of the man who sidestepped the puddle:

"He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone — one mind less, one world less." □

Jonathan Eig is a staff writer with the New Orleans Times-Picayune.



The
coroner
was
wearing
a
tuxedo.

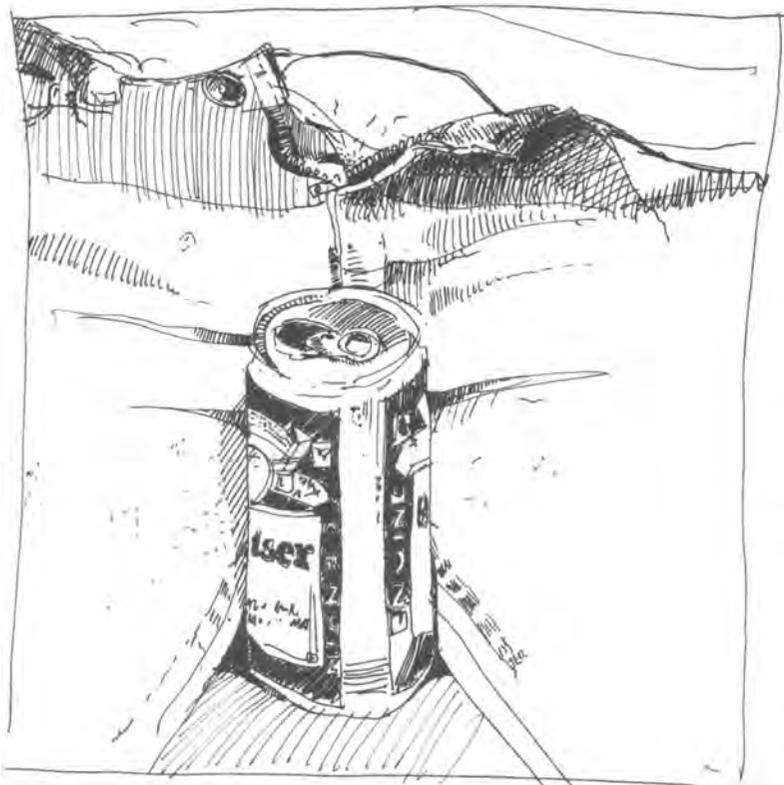
My wife come home crying from the dumpsters, said there was some

pervert over there jerked down his pants and showed her his schlong. I asked her how long this particular pecker was, I was drinking beer, not taking it half seriously, and she said it sort of resembled a half-grown snail, or slug, she said, a little hairy. It was so *disgusting*, she said, and gave off this little shiver, doing her shoulders the way she does.

Well, a sudden unreasonable anger suddenly came over me, and I slammed my beer down. I'd already slammed several down. I said by God I'd go take care of the son of bitch, I said, If it ain't safe for women and kids to walk the roads, what'll you think'll happen when lawlessness takes over, and crime sets in, and the sick and the sexually deviated can sling their penises out in front of what might be some little kid the next time? She was just too tore up to talk about it any more. Had to go lay down and hold one forearm over her eyes. That sort of made me mad. This unknown guy getting his own personal tiny rocks off had messed up my own sexual gratification, and besides that by God it just wasn't right. Here I was

Waiting for the Ladies

By Larry Brown



a working man, or had been, and come to find out it ain't even safe to lay over here in your own bed and let your wife take the garbage out.

I didn't figure I'd need no gun or anything, but I did take my beer. I figured since he's already dropped his drawers he'd done hit the bushes, and I thought I could ride around some and listen to country music songs about drinking and cheating and losing love and finding it, since it looked like I wasn't going to be pumping any red-hot baby batter into my own favorite womb any time soon.

Riding over there I thought about the injustice of how a few people could fuck up everything. I'd heard about these people sucking toes and stuff. I didn't want it around me. I even devised a plan. I left out a few details early on there but my wife had gone on to say that she'd seen this guy sitting there in his pickup before, when she'd been going down the road to some other place, just sitting there, not dumping any garbage or anything. Waiting on his next victim, I supposed, some innocent person he could terrorize. I said well I'd just start keeping my shotgun in my truck and ride over that way about every day and the next time I saw that pickup (she said it was a blue Ford) I'd just stop and haul it out and peck up his paintjob a little bit until he decided to get his ass back to wherever he come from in the first place.

I got over there and of course there was nothing there. Just a bunch of trash and garbage on the ground right in front of the dumpsters, and treetops people had dropped off, and wet magazines on the ground, and a little thin sad puppy scared of me somebody'd dropped off, so hungry he couldn't decide whether to stay or run. A son of a bitch who'll drop his pants in front of some woman he's not familiar with is the same kind of son of a bitch'll drop off a puppy like that, thinking somebody'll give him a good home. Good home my ass. Some of these Vietnamese around here'll eat him.

I didn't know how far this perversion thing had spread, how much word of it had got around. I didn't want to sit there in my pickup thinking people driving by had already heard of the pervert and might think I was him. I tried to call up that puppy. I got down on my heels and clicked and whistled and snapped my fingers and talked nice to him, but all he'd do was roll over with his legs up in the air and his tail between his legs, peeing on himself in little spurts. Somebody had ruined him, beat him, stomped him, him roughly the age of an eighteen-month-old human baby in dog years. I knew some Humaner would come by and capture him and take him to the pound. I should have gone on and killed him. How would the gas be any better than a knock in the head to him? That might've been Napoleon Bonaparte reincarnated running around there, sniffing coffee grounds.

I took off down the road there and rode around a while. What would have to be wrong with a guy to make him flang his thang out in front of women? It had to be some kind of guy who couldn't get any pussy, was too messed up in some way to get some from anybody, even for money, wanted some bad, and had developed this overpowering urge to gratificate himself, ergo, like the mirror is to the image, himself twinned in their eyes, what he imagined to be his big penis, his brutal, killing penis, bigheaded and swinging like a nine-pound hammer, suspended out there for all womanhood to draw back and gasp from, which, in his opinion, was what was happening.

I felt sort of bad for the guy. I didn't know if I needed to go talk to Daddy about it or not. I figured the guy was hollow-eyed, sat in a dark room with his mother watching tv all day long, eating popcorn, and waited for late evening before he started stalking his lusts. I was beginning to get a pretty good mental picture of him already. He was about fifty, with wattle skin around his neck, shaky hands, maybe a dirty cap pulled down low over his eyes and white stubbly

whiskers on his jaws, weak chin, bad shoes, one of those belts about ten inches too long for him with the excess hanging loose. Yeah, he was starting to form up in my mind. He was a wimpy sumbitch from back yonder. His had not been an easy life, and he might not have all his mental faculties. He might stand in line at the welfare office every Wednesday, holding his mother's hand, and she might have cared for him like this since he was a baby. She might've had bad love, or love run off, or he might've been in the womb too long. They had some little awful house way back up in the woods around London Hill or somewhere, with tin cans out in the yard and mud on the porch, and bleak was a word they didn't understand, since that was the world as they knew it. She didn't know why he took off like that in the evenings sometimes, and she'd never recognized that he might have secret needs he was too scared to tell anybody about, or maybe she didn't even think about stuff like that.

I made one long slow circle around through Potlockney and DeLay and came back up through the Crocker Woods, cut through to Paris and back through the Webb Graveyard Road, but I didn't see a blue Ford pickup parked anywhere. I knew he was back home by then, sitting on the floor in a dark room right in front of the television, his eyes blank, his hand cramming popcorn in his mouth, the lights of the *Bill Cosby Show* flickering across his face, his mother asleep on the couch behind him, unaware of the twisted needs in him, a mindless, drooling idiot, someone without enough sense to turn the television off, chewing, thinking about where to try it tomorrow, and my wife, a motherfucker you could crush.



ater on that night I wound up at Daddy's, s usual, when I went over there, him laying up there all by himself waiting for me, patient, never looking when you walked in like he was even expecting company. We never argued any. I always told him something or asked him something and he gave me some advice and I took it. It wasn't any different this time.

He turned his old flat gray eyes over to me real slow, his eyes as gray as his gray flattop, smoking one Camel after another on that old Army cot twenty years after the doctors told him lung cancer had killed him, a glass of whiskey nearby, Humphrey Bogart on the tv. *The Caine Mutiny*. One of his favorites. Laying there in his long underwear without a shave in a week, indomitable, old boxer, warrior, lover, father.

I told him somebody'd showed his dick to my wife.

He wanted to know how big a dick it was.

I told him she said it was just a small one. He paused. We watched Humphrey measure out some sand with a spoon. I felt almost out of control.

Then he looked back around to me, swung his old flat gray eyes up there on my face and said, Son, a little dick's sort of like a Volkswagen. It's all right around the house but you don't want to get out on the road with it. I didn't know what to say. He told me to bring him some whiskey sometime. I left soon after.



'd quit my job after sixteen years and drawn that state requirement money out, way over ten thousand dollars. Back in those days I thought that money would last forever. I was just laying around the house drinking beer, poking Dorothea soon as she walked in the door. I did the same thing the guy at the dumpsters did, only behind closed doors. I had a woman who looked good, who liked to wear a garter belt and black stockings and keep the light on.

But that insult to her wore on me. I'd get in the truck to ride around and I'd get to thinking about it. I'd get to thinking about the humiliation she felt when that guy did that. I even called the sheriff's department one day and reported it, and talked to a deputy about it. They knew who it

was, and I like to fell over. They knew his name. They told me his name. I said Well if this sick son of a bitch is running around out here jerking his pants down in front of people why in the hell don't y'all do something about it? They said he was harmless, that he'd already been arrested six times for doing it, twice in front of Kroger's uptown when ladies tried to load up their groceries. I said You think a son of a bitch like that is harmless? They said Believe me, he's harmless. They said Believe me, there's a lot worse than that going on that you don't know nothing about. They said, If you did know what all was going on, you wouldn't sleep at night.

That made me uneasy and I decided to get in my truck and ride around some more. That money was stacked up inside that bank account drawing six-and-a-half percent interest. I had beer and cigarettes unlimited. Dorothea had gotten that promotion and her boss liked her, took her out to lunch so she wouldn't have to spend her own money. She had a real future in head of her.

I put my gun in the truck. Squirrel season was open, and that meant rabbit, too, and once in a while after dark you'd see the green eyes standing out in the cut fields that meant deer. Hamburger meat was \$1.89 a pound. Double-ought buckshot was thirty-three cents. Some nights I was Have Truck, Will Kill, Palladin with a scattergun.

Those nights back then out on those country roads with that sweet music playing and that beer cold between my legs and an endless supply of cigarettes and the knowledge that Dorothea was waiting back at home with her warm moist pussy hairs curling around her cleft sometimes made me prolong the sheer pleasure of getting back to it, just riding around thinking about how good it was going to be when I got back. And then there was a little son of a bitch who didn't have any, who'd never know what it was like or the heat that was in it, like a glove that fit you like a fist but better, warmer, wetter, no wonder he wanted some so bad it drove him to have one-way sex with strangers. Dorothea hadn't said, but since she'd commented on the size of it, I figured his meat was down when he did it, not up. I wondered what he'd have done if some woman had walked over and grabbed him by the balls.

I puzzled over it and puzzled over it and drove for nights on end looking for that blue pickup, but if there was one in the country I didn't see it. I took back roads and side roads and pig trails that buzzards couldn't hardly fly over when it rained, and I decided he'd done decided to take his goobergrabbing on down the road somewhere else. By then I wasn't even mad and just wanted to talk to him, tell him calmly that he couldn't run around doing stuff like that. I was sure by then that he'd been raised without a father and I could imagine what their lives were like, him and his mother, eating their powdered eggs, and I couldn't imagine how we could spend 1.5 billion dollars on a probe to look at Jupiter and yet couldn't feed and clothe the people in our own country. I wanted a kinder, gentler world like everybody else, but I knew we couldn't get it blasting it all off in space, or not providing for people like him. Who was to say that if he got cleaned up with some fresh duds, a little education, some new Reeboks, he couldn't get a blowjob in Atlanta? Hell. Why not educate? Defumigate? Have changes we could instigate? Why couldn't everybody, the whole country, participate?

Then I saw his truck.

It was backed up between some bushes on the side of the road. A cold feeling washed over me, made me lose all compassion. I said here this son of a bitch is sitting by the side of the road waiting for some innocent woman like my wife to come along and have car trouble and instead of helping her change her tire he's going to run out in the road flonging his dong, whipping his mule, and it gave me a bad case of the creeps. I said I'm fixing to tell this son of a bitch a thing or two. I thought of Boo Radley, how sweet he turned out to be. But I knew this wasn't nothing like that. I went on up to the end of the road and I turned around and came back. My shotgun was loaded. I pulled it over next to me. It was warm, the stock smooth, like Shane said a tool only as good or as bad as the man who uses it, and I wondered if I could kill that man for what he'd done to my wife.

He'd already pulled out, and you can tell when somebody wants you to pass. They'll slow down,

maybe because they're drinking beer and don't want to turn one up in front of you because they don't know if you're the law or not, since all they can see is your headlights. They'll poke along and poke along, waiting for you to pass, slowing down to a crawl in the straightaways, and it's maddening if it's happening to you, if you're riding around wondering why your wife's boss keeps driving by the house and waving out the window, almost as if he's looking to see who's home, if you're riding around wondering if you're riding around a little too much.

I got right on his bumper and rode that busted set of taillights and watched that stiff neck and that cap pulled down low over his eyes, that head turning every five seconds to the rearview mirror for eight or nine miles, him crawling, me crawling along behind him, letting him know that somebody was onto his game and following him all the way home. I went all the way down through Yocona bottom behind him, where it's straight for three miles, nothing coming, him speeding up a little, me speeding up too, getting another beer out of the cooler and thinking You son of a bitch. Pull your dick out in front of her now. Swing that dick like a billy club now. You sick perverted piece of shit.

I kept drinking and following him and he started weaving and I did, too, and we almost ran off the road a few times, but I stayed right on his ass until he got down to Twin Bridges and tried to outrun me, stayed right with him or pulled up beside him and then eased off thinking he might have a wreck. I didn't want to kill him. I just wanted to talk to him. I kept telling myself that. I kept drinking. Everybody wanted pussy and pussy was good. I knew that because the worst I'd ever had was wonderful. I laid there right on his ass and when he turned around in George Fenway's driveway I turned right around with him and followed him almost all the way to Bobo.

I let him get a little ahead of me. I knew where he lived. Deputy sheriff had told me, and his name was on the mailbox. I knew he was trying to run, hide, I knew by then that he knew he was caught somehow, I knew there had to be a whole lot of fear going through his mind, who was after him, what'd they want, all that kind of stuff. He just hadn't thought about any of that when he flicked his Bic, when he goosed his moose, when he opened it up to where the sun don't shine.

When I got to where he lived, the truck was behind the house and there wasn't a light on. I coasted by twice with the headlights off. Then I killed it by the side of the road and listened for a while. It was quiet. Some light wires were humming. That was it. Dorothea and her boss had taken some awful long lunches. I got out with the shotgun and a beer and closed the door. The law wasn't there, and I was the law. *Vigilante Justice*. Patrick Swayze and somebody else. *Dirty Dancing*. But he never flashed his trash.

The yard was mud, the house was almost dark. I could just see that one little light inside that was Johnny Carson saying goodnight. I knew he might have a gun, and might be scared enough to use it. In my state I thought I could holler self-defense in his front yard.

I hope I didn't ruin their lives.

The door was open, and the knob turned under my hand. The barrel of the gun was slanted down from under my arm, and I tracked their mud on their floor. He didn't have his cap on, and his hair wasn't like what I imagined. It was gray, but neatly combed, and his mother was sobbing silently into a pillow in her mouth on the couch.

He said one thing, quietly: "Are you fixing to kill us?"

Their eyes got me.

I sat down, asked first if I could, and started telling both of them what my life then was like. □

Larry Brown lives with his wife and three children in Oxford, Mississippi. "Waiting for the Ladies" will be published this fall in a collection entitled Big Bad Love (Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill).

Tales of Testosterone

A WALL STREET FEEDING FRENZY

BARBARIANS AT THE GATE
The Fall of RJR Nabisco
 by Bryan Burrough and John Helyar.
 Harper and Row.
 528 pages, \$22.95.

Right now the North Carolina General Assembly is staring a \$550 million budget deficit square in the face. State revenue projections have proved wildly optimistic, and opponents of many social programs are preparing to wield some fairly hefty axes.

In the midst of the budget-cutting fervor, no one has definitively stated why the budget projections were so far off. But state treasurer Harlan Boyles has laid the blame for a good chunk of the massive deficit on the biggest corporate maneuver in history: the leveraged buyout of RJR Nabisco by the Wall Street firm of Kohlberg Kravis and Roberts.

According to Boyles, the state has taken a double whammy as a result of the buyout. First, its RJR bonds have slumped in value some \$75 million. Second, loopholes have allowed RJR to write off its interest on the junk bonds that financed the buyout, leaving fewer profits and stockholder dividends for the state to tax.

Boyles has estimated the buyout has drained state coffers of hundreds of millions of dollars. In short, a feeding frenzy by a group of Wall Street bozos threatens to rob North Carolina children of a decent education, adequate social services, and essential health care.

It is the behind-the-scenes story of this devastating financial deal that is documented in *Barbarians at the Gate*—the exhaustive “we were there” history of the RJR buyout. Reporters Bryan Burrough and John Helyar devote most of the book to the antics of the investment brokers who oversee the takeover, and who evidence all the tact and self-restraint of a fraternity toga party. Esteemed characters like Salomon Brothers’ chairman John Gutfreund stomp their way through the book doing bad John Belushi imitations, questioning other bankers’ manhood, bragging about their own financial prowess, and trashing the psyches of their subordinates.

It’s tempting to recount such antics in detail, for Burrough and Helyar lay bare the intellectual bankruptcy of the Wall Street establishment.

Unfortunately, missing from their book—and consequently from much of the ensuing public debate—is detailed analysis of the long-range economic impact of the junk-bond-funded takeovers. For all its repertorial virtuosity, *Barbarians* doesn’t offer much sense of why we should care about the antics it so extensively documents.

To summarize the story line: high-flying young RJR chairman Ross Johnson is worried about the slumping stock price the firm commands on Wall Street. With very little detailed investigation, he decides to lead a corporate management team in buying up the outstanding corporate stock and converting the massive tobacco and food conglomerate into a privately held company.

Once the buyout attempt becomes public, the Wall Street buyout artists start making counter offers, bidding the price up from \$75 a share until Kohlberg Kravis and Roberts finally

win the bidding war by offering a package valued at \$109 a share—and walk away with the world’s largest food processing company for the modest price tag of \$25 billion.

Burrough and Helyar graft two very separate books into one staggeringly long narrative. The first is a biography of Ross Johnson, woven into the history of the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. This



RJR CHAIRMAN ROSS JOHNSON FUELED THE BUYOUT.



Black Votes Count

Political Empowerment in
Mississippi after 1965

by Frank R. Parker

Foreword by Eddie N. Williams

"A fascinating account by one of America's leading civil rights lawyers of the historic struggle for the right to vote."—Senator Edward M. Kennedy

When the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was enacted, black voter registration in Mississippi soared. Few black candidates won office, however. In *Black Votes Count* Frank Parker describes black Mississippians' battle for meaningful voting rights, bringing the story up to 1986, when Mike Espy was elected as Mississippi's first black member of Congress in this century.

272 pp., \$29.95 cloth, \$12.95 paper

available at bookstores or from

**The University of
North Carolina Press**

Post Office Box 2288
Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2288

Toll-free orders: 1-800-848-6224

book takes us up to the beginning of the buyout, offering a very readable history of the transitions that have taken place in corporate management over the past 80 years. However despotic and paternalistic the old-style corporate leaders might have been, at least they were directly connected to their communities and the lives of their workers.

In their place we get Ross Johnson, a self-aggrandizing salesman from Canada with a knack for late-night partying and insincere flattery of his elders, who quickly rises to the top of the RJR corporate ladder. For Johnson, each worker seems to have less value than the average widget. As one local wag portrays Johnson's life story, "It all started with a small lemonade stand in Manitoba. The next thing I knew I had sold my mother. The rest was easy."

At this point, the authors shift to the story of the buyout process itself—and the book suddenly becomes a tedious recitation of endless maneuvers among investment bankers. Virtually no one exhibits enough intelligence to justify his lofty position, and the seemingly shrewd financial negotiations behind the buyout degenerate into a litany of obscenities and exposed egos. By the time Henry Kravis tops the bid tendered by Ross Johnson, most readers will have trouble remembering why they started reading the book in the first place.

Burrough and Helyar don't offer much help on this score. For two people who have dissected and examined the world's most celebrated buyout, they offer surprisingly little diagnosis of the health or illness of the patient. They offer no sense of how history will judge the leveraged buyout, and no summation of how such buyouts will affect our economy.

For starters, the stories presented in the book suggest that we should all be picketing investment banking headquarters with placards screaming, "Take the Toys Away From the Boys!" Though they draw little attention to the fact, the authors present the most compelling evidence I've ever seen of the dangerous effects of combining excessive levels of testosterone with obscene amounts of money. The book takes us into the private little world of the investment bankers and gives us a good picture of the economic damage their all-male clique

can wreak. Not a single woman—and for that matter, seemingly no blacks—has penetrated the inner circles of Wall Street.

In the larger analysis, we need to start documenting the long-range effects of leveraged buyouts like RJR. Combined with the spiraling price tag of the savings-and-loan bailout, such figures could provide a powerful club to press for re-regulation of our financial system.

Many of the more tragic elements of the RJR fiasco didn't result directly from the buyout. RJR has long been a fat and sloppy corporation, owning enough corporate jets to set up its own commuter-plane sideline and offering executive perks that would embarrass even Donald Trump. At some point, a savvy management team would have stepped in and started cutting jobs and trimming excesses in swift fashion.

But leaving this surgery to a wheeler-dealer like Ross Johnson and later to the vagaries of a leveraged buyout meant that the transitions became much more vicious and shocking. Rather than a slow and steady healing process, the operation occurred at the end of a meat cleaver.

Public programs have also suffered. While Ross Johnson enjoys his \$53 million settlement package, North Carolina is debating massive cuts in public education funding. While Kravis and his pals in New York enjoy millions in transaction fees from the bailout, the state is drastically reducing food and baby formula for mothers and infants.

Barbarians provides lots of interesting data on the excesses of the Wall Street boys. But it's all shenanigans and sordid tales, and not much instruction for how to avoid such idiocy in the future.

So until someone writes a book that steps back from the carnage and charts a plan for how we can keep these fast-buck innovations from further crippling our economy, we need to keep trumpeting the themes articulated by groups like the Financial Democracy Campaign. In short, we need to get the rich boys out of the trough and structure our financial system to meet the needs of the entire community.

—Jim Overton

Jim Overton is a board member of the Institute for Southern Studies and marketing director with the Self-Help Credit Union in Durham, North Carolina.

A RADICAL HILLBILLY

THE LONG HAUL

An Autobiography of Myles Horton
With Judith Kohl and Herbert Kohl.
Doubleday.
231 pages, \$21.95.

When he was 27 years old, Myles Horton made a personal vow to start a school for working adults in the rural South. No ordinary school, it would be a place where poor people, drawing on their life experiences, could learn how to make decisions, solve problems, and improve society.

The year was 1932, and Horton, himself the son of a Tennessee sharecropper, could hardly have expected his simple plan of pragmatic idealism to be taken seriously. The nation, after all, was mired in the worst depression in its history, and the South was at the bottom of the bottom.

With a few like-minded friends, Horton started the Highlander Folk School that year at a donated site near the village of Monteagle, Tennessee. Franklin Roosevelt had not yet completed his first triumphant run for the White House, and George Bush was an eight-year-old Connecticut schoolboy.

Now, 10 presidents later, Highlander is still an active center of progressive adult education in another Tennessee precinct east of Knoxville. Even more remarkable is the fact that Myles Horton remained closely associated with the school until his death at the age of 84 last January.

It was altogether characteristic of this indefatigable social activist and self-styled "radical hillbilly" that he was busily proofreading *The Long Haul* and planning his 1990 agenda when cancer finally stopped him. He was busy but not hurried, insistent but not impatient, precisely because he was able from the 1930s onward to see his work as a lifetime commitment.

He had only one job, and he knew that it would be impossible to finish. There were no short cuts, no quick fixes. There was only the long haul, and he pursued it with serenity and humor.

Herbert and Judith Kohl, noted for their volumes on educational and economic reform, first set out to write a



book about Myles Horton's educational and philosophical ideas. Instead, what emerged most strongly from the hours of interviews and other materials they accumulated was Horton's own voice, telling in his informal and anecdotal style the story of his long and eventful life.

Wisely, the Kohls decided to edit the material into a first-person narrative that Horton then reviewed and modified. The result is a breezy and colloquial autobiography that sounds like the man talking. His idealism is there, his pragmatism, his humor; in short, this is vintage Horton, and it's a

pleasure and an inspiration to read.

As a companion piece to two earlier studies of Highlander — *Unearthing Seeds of Fire* by Frank Adams and *Highlander: No Ordinary School* by John Glen — *The Long Haul* completes an important trilogy on one of the most remarkable American reformist institutions of this century. A fourth volume, based on oral history interviews with dozens of people who have been involved with the school, is due to be published next year. —John Egerton

John Egerton is a freelance writer in Nashville, Tennessee.



BLACKS MARCHED IN FRONT OF ATLANTA CITY HALL IN 1945 TO DEMAND MINORITIES BE HIRED AS POLICE OFFICERS.

VOICES OF HISTORY

LIVING ATLANTA
 edited by Clifford M. Kuhn,
 Harlon E. Joye and E. Bernard West.
 University of Georgia Press.
 399 pages, \$35.00

Living Atlanta presents a rare and important collection of oral histories of Georgia's capital city during the first half of this century. The period covered spans two world wars and the Great Depression, stopping just short of the economic boom which propelled the city into its present status as commercial and cultural capital of the "New South."

The interviews from which *Living Atlanta* is crafted were originally presented as a series on Radio Free Georgia, the city's underfunded community radio station. The series gave Atlantans the chance to become familiar with their city in a captivating fashion—by hearing the voices of those who made its history and those who were made by it.

The book offers a similar opportunity, but like all published oral history,

it entails editing. The flow of recorded speech generally makes for poor reading—not simply because of pauses and needless repetitions, but because the concise economy of prose is seldom characteristic of utterance, particularly the prompted speech elicited by an oral history interview.

Such editing has traditionally been confined to "cleaning up" individual interviews or to weaving oral materials into an independent narrative. In *Living Atlanta*, however, the editors have chosen an alternative method. By incorporating interviews into topical essays which read almost like conversations, the editors allow the true "authors"—the people they interviewed—to tell their stories, that is, the history of Atlanta.

As a result, the material is presented within an explanatory framework which supplies the necessary specialized or historical information. The richness of voice and experience is enhanced rather than subsumed, and the narrative flows easily.

Living Atlanta is popular history in the sense that it is plainly "of the people," and it ought to be popular in

terms of its accessibility. Such history can be both entertaining and useful. Anyone contemplating the implications of the current "war on drugs," for instance, ought to be acquainted with Prohibition Atlanta.

According to an essay on that era, a 1937 survey revealed that 40 percent of the city police force was "on the take" from moonshine operators. A comment by Kate McTell, widow of the great Georgia musician Blind Willie McTell, is also revealing: "Back in those days the policemen drank a whole lot, nearly all of them did."

It is in documenting the lives of black residents, however, that *Living Atlanta* obtains its greatest value. Like its radio predecessor, the book has been produced with an acute sensitivity to the black Atlanta majority that has been deliberately omitted or ignored in conventional booster-oriented histories.

Here, the people who built the place and kept it running tell their own stories. Through their voices, we learn of the history of black financial achievement and the political force that grew from that economic base. We watch black Atlanta as it builds its own charitable

institutions and political culture — often against the opposition of the city's white leadership.

As barriers to black voting were slowly removed, Atlantans led the move toward greater participation by the disenfranchised. In 1946, black leaders launched a drive to register voters. "This effort lasted for 51 days," remembers Clarence Bocote. "We were able to increase the registration of blacks in Fulton County from about 7,000 to 24,750. And that's when we were going to be recognized."

That same year, black leaders threw their support behind Helen Mankin, the only candidate for Congress who had even acknowledged the existence of the black community. The way they announced their decision speaks volumes about how they managed to mobilize black voters without alarming whites.

"In the end we decided to support the woman —she was the only woman in the race," Bocote remembers. "We made our announcement ... at 11:15. Why did we make it at 11:15? The news had gone off ... the radio news had gone off. Consequently they wouldn't be able to put it on the air. We didn't want to kill Mrs. Mankin. And right then it spread like wildfire: 'Vote for the woman.'"

Of equal historical interest is the portrait of white working-class politics in the interwar period, when racist but union-oriented white workers exercised greater political power than at any other time. The book presents the subject with all its many warts, from Ku Kluxism and cronyism in municipal employment to the political struggles based on personalities rather than policies.

Even though *Living Atlanta* is certainly lengthy enough to cover its subject, it deserves a book's highest accolade: it ought to be even longer. The only way to get a better "feel" for the historic roots of modern Atlanta would be to live in the past. *Living Atlanta* makes real the difference between the "big town" of its era and today's metropolis of over two million people, and it provides a much-needed understanding of how such change came to be.

—Neill Herring

Neill Herring, a lobbyist in the Georgia state legislature, lives in Jessup, Georgia.

FLORIDA AS IT WAS

PALMETTO COUNTRY

by Stetson Kennedy.

Florida A&M University Press.

354 pages, \$14.95.

Stetson Kennedy has devoted a remarkable lifetime both to understanding Southern culture and to the struggle for human rights in the South, especially in his native Florida. His often controversial books have been out of print for three decades, but fortunately the University Presses of Florida are republishing them—including *Palmetto Country*, first published in 1942.

In all his work, Kennedy never waxed poetic about Southern poverty (*a la Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*), nor did he settle for merely documenting harsh social conditions and inequality. In his classic *Southern Exposure* (1946), Kennedy did discuss the living reality of poverty and underdevelopment in the "New South." But he also meticulously chronicled the doings of corrupt political bosses, the dirty deeds of reactionary corporations, and the brutal rules of tenant and plantation life that lay behind the poverty and undermined democracy.

In *The Klan Unmasked* (1954), Kennedy risked his life to go undercover as a Klansman in central Florida, exposing the inner workings of the KKK and lenient law enforcement officials. And in the *Jim Crow Guide* (1959), Kennedy adopted an almost Emily Post format (with chapters entitled "Who May Live Where" and "Who May Study Where") to powerfully articulate the etiquette, social mores, and political and economic barriers, from the most foolish to the cruelest, that were racial segregation in the South.

Written before his human rights books, *Palmetto Country* was originally published as part of the American Folkway Series edited by Erskine Caldwell. Drawing on five years of traversing Florida collecting folklore and oral histories for the Florida Writers Project (a WPA program), this splendid book is equal parts ethnology, natural history, social history, and political expose of Florida during the latter part of the Depression.

The heart of the book explores the rich diversity of cultures in the Sunshine State. Often in their own words, we hear about the lives of Cuban and Italian cigar workers in Tampa and Ybor City, of black turpentiners in the pine forests north of Lake Okeechobee, about the Concher fishermen (whites of Bahaman descent) on the Keys, of "Cracker" cowboys in the Kissimmere Valley and Greek spongers in Tarpon Springs. We tour county prisons, brothels, and backwoods jook joints. We learn about the Yoruba gods of the Afro-Cubans and the obeah of Bahaman blacks, hear elderly African-Americans tell of slave days, and meet the revolutionary descendants of Jose Marti.

By the end of *Palmetto Country* we can recognize the wellsprings of Kennedy's later struggles against social injustice—not in any rejection of Florida, but rather in his profound knowledge of and love for the state. He evidently cared enough for Florida to stay and fight to make it a more humane and just home for all Floridians.

As Kennedy wrote in a brief prologue to the 1946 edition of *Southern Exposure*, "I like much of what the South is, and still more what it is to be." He shows similar optimism in a new afterword to *Palmetto Country*, written last year at his home in Beluthahatchee, where he reflects without nostalgia on the many changes that have occurred in Florida since he wrote the book and affirms the need for all Floridians to continue the struggles.

Palmetto Country is a book well worth discovering. It offers great insight into Florida during the Depression, providing an essential non-fiction counterpart to such classic literary accounts as Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' *The Yearling* and *Cross Creek*.

—David Cecelski

David Cecelski, a native of coastal North Carolina, chairs the board of directors of the Institute for Southern Studies.

RUFFLING FEATHERS

One year after our special report on the poultry industry, workers and farmers have won some landmark battles in their struggles for better working conditions and safer food.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Lillie Ruth Watson stood before the microphone, speaking to reporters from the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, television networks, and dozens of newspapers from across the country. She showed them the surgical scars on her wrists and hands, and she described how cutting up millions of chickens on a brutally fast production line had crippled her. She said her hands still hurt too much to clap at church revivals or comb her granddaughter's hair.

Watson was permanently injured while working for Frank Perdue, the wealthy poultry producer best known for his televised boast that "it takes a tough man to make a tender chicken." Perdue was certainly tough with Watson. When she got hurt after 13 years on the job, she said, the company "treated me just like a worn-out pair of shoes."

"I kept going to the nurse complaining about my hands," Watson said. "She give me liniment and sent me back to work on the line. My hands got worse." After each of her three operations, she faithfully returned to the plant but was refused light duty. "I couldn't stop work. I had five kids to support."

When she finally took her complaint

to the personnel manager, he told her, "I can't stop your hands from hurting. You just don't want to work."

Recounting this story at the July press conference last year marked a dramatic turning point for Watson. Only two months before, when interviewed for a *Southern Exposure* special report entitled "Ruling the Roost," she had asked that her name be changed to protect her from reprisals. Now, she was speaking out on national television, telling a story that has become painfully familiar to thousands of poultry workers.

A year later, little has changed in the way poultry companies go about their business. Farmers under contract to the big processors are still being driven deep into debt. Workers who gut and cut chickens still describe their work as "modern slavery." And consumers who eat poultry are still being exposed to millions of sick birds every day.

But thanks to people like Lillie Ruth Watson cracks are starting to appear in the system.

In small yet significant numbers, farmers and workers are fighting back — and they are beginning to score some major victories. In the past year, state and federal agencies have levied unprec-

edented fines against poultry firms. Courts have penalized companies for treating farmers unfairly. And policymakers are considering rules that would force processors to slow down production lines and safeguard workers who report health hazards.

"We measure success one person at a time," said Sarah Fields-Davis, director of the Center for Women's Economic Alternatives (CWEA), which helped Watson gain self-confidence, seek workers compensation, and become an advocate for industry-wide reforms.

"The national attention has helped," Fields-Davis continued. "We see the change in the attitude of people inside the plants, in how people feel about themselves and what they're willing to do. They know someone cares. They know Perdue is being watched."

"THE GIG IS UP"

The horror of the modern poultry industry came into national focus last summer when the Institute for Southern Studies, the research and education center that publishes *Southern Exposure*, released "Ruling the Roost" at a press conference at the National Press Club.

That's where Lillie Watson told her

story. David Mayer, an unassuming chicken farmer from North Carolina, also overcame his fear of public speaking to report how heavily mortgaged farmers are trapped into one-sided contracts that pay less than minimum wage. And microbiologist Gerald Kuester revealed that chicken on grocery-store shelves is now contaminated at twice the rate certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The press conference resulted in a flurry of media coverage, and the feathers have been flying ever since. *Meat and Poultry*, the leading industry trade journal, grouched that the "thoroughly researched and documented" report in *Southern Exposure* was influencing public opinion.

"Desperate times call for desperate measures," wrote the editor, who advised poultry companies to counter the bad news by inviting local TV reporters into their plants.

After unsuccessfully fending off the media, Perdue Farms took the advice and permitted a crew from the ABC program 20/20 into its slaughterhouse in Lewiston, North Carolina. Working closely with CWEA and the Institute, the 20/20 staff gave millions of consumers a firsthand look at the high-speed processing line on which hundreds of black women risk permanent injury gutting, cutting, trimming, and deboning more than 30,000 chickens a day.

"When people hurt their hands and arms they take them off the line for a brief period, then put them right back," said Grace Valentine, a former Perdue worker interviewed on the show. Her words were echoed by a group of workers interviewed in the company lunch room — even though Perdue officials hovered just behind the ABC cameras.

For exposing the travesty of the modern poultry jungle, *Southern Exposure* earned the 1990 National Magazine Award for public interest reporting in April. In presenting the award, the judges called the pioneering report "the very human story of an industry that feeds millions of Americans every week and reportedly makes far too many of its customers and workers sick."

Two weeks later, Watson won a major victory of her own when the Social Security Administration awarded her total disability benefits. The unusual ruling

acknowledges that Watson has been permanently disabled by her work. "My hands still hurt — they hurt whether I use them or not," Watson said. "There's no other kind of work I can do, what with my education, without using my hands."

The decision signals a growing awareness of the dangers of repetitive motion injuries. "It's becoming more and more apparent that these injuries affect a person's life more than we previously thought," said Steve Edelstein, an attorney for Watson and other disabled Perdue workers. "They can literally make a person unemployable."

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently released new workplace safety guidelines for the red-meat industry, and Edelstein predicted the new procedures would become a model for repetitive tasks in chicken processing.

"Industry knows the gig is up," said Edelstein. "Instead of denying these injuries are work related, they're now disputing the degree of a person's disability. That's why the decision in Lillie's case is so significant."

91 BIRDS A MINUTE

Poultry companies have also been put on the defensive by a wave of OSHA fines. Since "Ruling the Roost" was published, state and federal officials have cited five chicken processing plants for violating OSHA's "general duty clause" that requires workplaces to be free of serious health hazards. In October, the North Carolina Department of Labor fined two



LILLIE WATSON SHOWS THE SCARS LEFT BY SURGERY FOR HER CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME, A PAINFUL HAND DISORDER CAUSED BY THE HIGH-SPEED MOTION OF A POULTRY PROCESSING LINE.

Perdue plants \$40,000 for hazardous conditions that cause repetitive injuries and for not reporting the injuries on OSHA logs. It was the largest OSHA fine ever handed down in the state — and the first ever for repetitive motion trauma.

To protect workers, OSHA recommended that Perdue slow down the processing line, provide sharpened cutting tools, install machinery that minimizes stress, and rotate workers who perform highly repetitive tasks.

Two weeks later — in response to months of pressure from the Retail, Wholesale & Department Store Union — federal OSHA fined a Cargill plant in Georgia \$242,000 for 113 violations, charging that the poultry company "knowingly and willfully" kept workers in repetitive motion jobs that caused hand and wrist disorders. In November, OSHA also fined two Missouri turkey plants owned by Cargill and ConAgra a total of \$1.75 million.

Perdue appealed the North Carolina



ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS TOOK OUT A FULL-PAGE AD IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES* LAST OCTOBER TO BLAST PERDUE FOR MISTREATING HIS CHICKENS — AND HIS WORKERS.

OSHA fine, arguing that as long as no specific standard exists for line speeds, it doesn't have to change its production process. State officials fear they will lose, but a group of Perdue workers organized by CWEA are now official parties in the case and are fighting the appeal. Attorneys from the Occupational Safety & Health Law Center in Washington pressed for an immediate line slowdown during the appeal, but Perdue has fought such "interim relief."

In May the company took matters a step further by trying to block the release of an in-depth investigation by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The federal study of conditions in the two plants confirms accounts by workers and directly contradicts Perdue's claims that less than one percent of its workers suffer from cumulative trauma disorders (CTD).

According to the report:

▼ 36 percent of Perdue workers in jobs requiring repetitive motions have symptoms of CTD, and one in five suffers serious CTD problems.

▼ 99.5 percent of the workers in those high-risk jobs are black, while whites hold half the non-repetitive jobs.

▼ Nearly a quarter of workers with CTD symptoms in one plant were not allowed to leave their work stations to see the company nurse. Two-thirds reported that they were forced to work with dull scissors or knives.

When the report's principal author attempted to present his findings at a meeting of the Centers for Disease Con-

trol in Atlanta, Perdue lawyers argued that the report could not be made public while the company appeals the OSHA fine. Both the North Carolina attorney general and the state Department of Labor — which is responsible for protecting workers — sided with Perdue.

NIOSH rejected the censorship effort, but the judge hearing Perdue's OSHA appeal ruled that the company could maintain its current line speed of 91 birds a minute throughout the appeals process — which could extend into 1991.

Workers and their advocates were angered by the decision. "I'm hopeful that OSHA won't back off and will actually do something," said Sarah Fields-Davis of CWEA. "But we can't really claim victory until they reduce the line speed. That's the one thing that would cut down on CTD injuries."

Although more poultry workers are speaking out, their fear of losing their jobs remains high. Less than one-fourth of poultry workers are covered by labor contracts, and union locals must fight hard for every gain they achieve. Last fall 530 poultry workers in Macon, Georgia won a four-week strike against Cagle Inc., securing their first pension, a wage increase, better sick leave, and a company promise to have medical personnel on hand during each shift.

WHOSE CHICKEN?

Like slaughterhouse workers, farmers who grow chickens on contract fear losing their livelihoods if they confront poultry

companies. Since the publication of "Ruling the Roost," poultry farmers from nine states have called the Institute for Southern Studies to express their frustration with the contract system.

"In my opinion the poultry grower is presently the most oppressed agricultural worker since the times of slavery," wrote one farmer. "The poultry companies strive to keep growers mortgaged, isolated, and uninformed."

He closed his letter with "sorry, but I can't sign my name yet."

Nearly all chicken farmers today contract directly with a poultry processing company, which supplies the birds, the feed, and rigid requirements on the design and equipment of chicken houses. Thousands of Southern

farmers, enticed by promises of lucrative pay, have mortgaged their homes and land to build \$100,000 chicken houses. But most have found themselves plunged deeper into debt, as companies require them to upgrade equipment or lose their contract.

Mary Clouse and her husband raised breeder hens for 12 years. Last summer she decided to speak out. "You are like a serf on your own land," she told *Southern Exposure* in a line that was picked up by many newspapers.

Shortly after the interview appeared, the Clouses received a call informing them that their hens would be picked up in three days and no new ones would be delivered.

"I feel it was because of the article, but it would be difficult to prove it in court," said Clouse. "The contract system is skewed against the farmer. There's no guarantee beyond the next flock of birds — and for a broiler grower that's only seven weeks."

"After you've invested hundreds of thousands of dollars you can't take it or leave it," she added. "You have to take it because you have to meet your mortgage payments on those chicken houses."

Working with the Institute and the United Farmers Organization, Clouse and other poultry farmers have started a newsletter to keep growers abreast of organizing battles. "The main thing poultry growers need right now is a means to communicate," Clouse said. "Most farmers don't realize that they are not the only ones suffering these indignities."

Through the newsletter, farmers are learning for the first time that growers in several states have won major legal victories that challenge the industry's power to unilaterally define contract terms.

▼ In southern Alabama, 268 growers recently won the largest cash award in history against a poultry company — \$13.5 million. The jury found ConAgra guilty of fraud and breach of contract for short-changing farmers by routinely misweighing truckloads of birds. ConAgra is appealing the case, but the evidence is overwhelming.

▼ A few weeks later, ConAgra paid a large out-of-court settlement to 18 farmers in northwest Louisiana who had charged the company with arbitrarily cutting off their flocks. The growers contended that the company bound them to "contracts of adhesion," which gave them no rights and amounted to involuntary servitude. Rather than let such a fundamental issue go before a jury, ConAgra settled the case in exchange for a promise that the growers would keep quiet about the deal.

▼ In the year's most significant case, a federal judge in Florida ruled that growers who organize and complain about their contracts are protected from company retaliation. The case began when 38 growers sued Cargill for systematically underweighing their birds. The company responded by terminating its contract with Arthur Gaskins, the lead plaintiff and president of the Northeast Florida Broilers Association.

Gaskins, who has raised chickens for 21 years, decided to fight back. He sued Cargill for unlawful retaliation, got the U.S. Justice Department to enter the case on his side, and in April won a temporary restraining order that forced Cargill to put birds back on his farm. The federal judge said Gaskins — and all other Cargill growers — are protected from retaliation under the Packers & Stockyards Act, Agricultural Fair Labor Practices Act of 1967 and state and federal anti-racketeering statutes.

"Cargill's position, much like that of other poultry processors, was that the contract could be terminated 'at will' — for any reason, or for no reason at all," said Jim Grippando, the attorney who represented Gaskins. "This decision is good news for all poultry farmers because it interprets federal statutes to mean processors are prohibited from treating growers unfairly."

Grippando's law firm, one of Florida's largest and most politically active, took the case a step further. At their urging, the chair of the state senate agriculture committee proposed a bill that would make it a state crime for poultry companies to terminate farmers without just cause and due notice. The unprecedented legislation drew such vigorous protest from the poultry and egg industry that the sponsor withdrew the bill, settling for a state investigation of contract abuses. The investigation could provide the basis for reintroducing the law next year, and provide a model for other states to follow.

TOXIC TECHNOLOGY

As farmers and workers push for better working conditions, safe food advocates have been fighting to protect consumers from contaminated chicken. The USDA admits that up to 37 percent of all chickens approved by government inspectors are tainted by salmonella, a deadly bacteria which poisons an estimated four million Americans each year and kills thousands.

Instead of beefing up its inspections, USDA actually cut back the number of slaughterhouse inspectors during the 1980s and adopted a "Streamlined Inspection System" that rejects fewer sick birds. At one plant using the new system, a USDA study showed that more than three-quarters of the birds leaving the facility were contaminated with salmonella.

The Government Accountability Project (GAP) in Washington has collected 130 affidavits from inspectors blowing the whistle on lax regulation. One inspector complained that he is only permitted to condemn 40 percent of the chickens he condemned 10 years ago.

This year, Congress responded to the growing public outrage by authorizing an additional 320 inspectors, but consumer advocates say more inspectors may not be enough.

"It would be premature to say that more inspectors on the line would solve the problem," said Tom Devine, legal director of GAP. It's a step in the right direction, he noted, but "inspectors complain that the fast line speeds and the loss of authority they've experienced in recent years have tied their hands and reduced them to the role of window dressing."

As GAP and safe food proponents

focus on changing the fast-paced production systems that spread filth among birds, the Food and Drug Administration took a different approach in May. The federal agency announced that poultry could safely be treated with three times the levels of radiation allowed for other foods in order to kill salmonella and other troublesome bacteria.

Consumer advocates and scientists immediately criticized the FDA action. "Treating toxic chicken with a toxic technology is not the way to improve the safety of poultry," said Michael Colby, director of Food & Water, a consumer research group in New York.

Studies of food irradiation have shown that the process creates cancer-causing byproducts, exposes workers and communities to serious hazards, and kills organisms that produce the bad odor and color which warn consumers their meat is rotting. So far, no poultry company has said it will irradiate its chickens, but Food & Water is organizing opposition to a proposed processing plant in central Florida which would house an irradiation facility.

"The irradiation proposal illustrates how the poultry industry embodies what's in store for us in matters related to food, the farm, or the factory," said Bob Hall, the Institute's research director. "Other industries are making proposals — from synthetic additives to biotech engineering — that would mask unsafe food rather than treat the problem at its source. They want to use untested technological fixes to overcome deficiencies that naturally arise because of bad processing or growing methods."

In farming, he added, "the contract system is moving so quickly into hogs and cattle that people are talking about 'the chickenization of beef and pork.' And repetitive trauma — already the nation's fastest growing occupational illness — promises to escalate in the coming years, especially in workplaces with unorganized, often isolated workers.

"All that means the struggle in poultry is both very specific and very broad," Hall said. "There are people in pain, and at risk, right now — and there are also big consequences for the struggles of other consumers, farmers, workers, for all of us. It's a helluva fight." □

For more information contact the Institute for Southern Studies, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

T H E

Who built the pyramids? Elvis!
— Mojo Nixon
“Elvis is Everywhere”

NEVEH ILAN, ISRAEL — Here in the Holy Land, on the road between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, stands the largest statue of the King in the world. Resplendent in white, He is tall and majestic, much as He must have appeared to His followers in life.

The King has risen. The King of Rock 'n' Roll — Elvis.

Yea, verily, here in the Land of Milk and Honey the hip grinding god from Memphis stands immortalized in fiberglass outside a gas station and restaurant known as the Elvis Inn. It's the fifth larger-than-life image of Presley in the world, the crown jewel in a collection of Elvis memorabilia unsurpassed anywhere in the world.

The person behind this shrine is Uri Yoeli, a seventh-generation Jerusalem businessman and head of the local Presley fan club.

The walls and ceiling of Yoeli's restaurant are covered with photographs, posters, flags, and other Presley mementos. There are a staggering 728 pieces in all, a number Yoeli says surpasses even that of Graceland, the Elvis mansion in Memphis.

“Elvis came from a poor family, so there are only about 10 pictures from his youth, but I have them all,” Yoeli says.

The faithful journey from all over to see the 13-foot-high statue of the world-famous son of the South. Yoeli eagerly awaits the day when the King's daughter, 25-year-old Lisa, will honor him with a visit. A friend who knows the manager of Graceland gave her an invitation from



Yoeli, and she reportedly promised that one day she would make the trip to Israel.

ELVIS WHO?

The 43-year-old fan was 14 when he first discovered Elvis. His high-school girlfriend gave him Presley's picture and told him Elvis was a big star in America. It was a moment that would change his life forever.

“I couldn't even pronounce his name but I thought he was so beautiful,” Yoeli recalls. He hung the photo in his room where friends came often to admire it. Soon he was dressing like Elvis — collar turned up, hair brushed back, even imitating the famous smile.

Getting an Elvis album was no easy matter, however. In those days Jerusalem had only one small record shop. When Yoeli asked for an Elvis Presley disc, the puzzled salesman said, “Elvis who?” The young fan was sent to Tel Aviv — the big city — but even there, orders took months to cross the Atlantic.

A few months later Yoeli finally received his first Presley record: *One Night*. “I suddenly became a big man in Jerusalem,”

Yoeli beams. “I had the first record of a new American singer — Elvis Presley.”

He and his buddies glued themselves to the phonograph and listened to the songs a thousand times. “We used to have dance parties where all we played were Elvis's songs,”

Yoeli sighs. “Those were the days.”

But not everyone shared Yoeli's adoration of Elvis. Popular music-lovers in small-town Jerusalem were split between Elvis and Cliff Richards. “The Elvis guys were tough — very ‘macho’.” The Richards group was more conserva-

COMING

How a poor boy from Memphis has the Holy Land all shook up.

By Rhoda Elovitz

tive. Elvis fans grew up to be merchants and businessmen. Richards followers became doctors and lawyers.

The word on the Uri-Elvis love affair got out, and it wasn't long before people were giving Yoeli whatever they had of the King — records, pictures, news clippings. "I was the address for Elvis in Jerusalem," he recalls. "I collected everything I could find."

GOOD FOR BUSINESS

When Yoeli took his first trip out of Israel in 1972, he headed for New York — to see Elvis. An Israeli friend living there told him his hero would be performing in Salt Lake City the next day.

"I didn't know where that was," says Yoeli. "I thought maybe a few miles from New York. So I said, 'I'm going there. No problem!'"

Even when he learned Salt Lake City was hours away by plane, Yoeli wasn't thrown. "I'll be there," he repeated — and he was. He and his friend reserved two tickets for Presley's performance at the Salt Lake Palace.

Yoeli recalls his reaction to the concert. "I was like in a state of shock. I don't remember anything specific about the show — only that it was fantastic. I couldn't speak when I saw him."

The two young men learned Elvis would be in Memphis a few days later and decided to go there too. They spent five or six hours in a hamburger joint known to be an Elvis favorite.

"Suddenly there came a big car." Yoeli's face lights up with the memory. "Elvis and his bodyguards — just 100 meters away. I begged them to let me shake his hand — that I had come all the way from Jerusalem to see him. Nothing doing. No one would let me get anywhere near him." Heartbroken, Yoeli returned to Israel with only a picture to show for his efforts.

Life continued for Yoeli. He filled his room with a few hundred Presley photos. He married. His wife, not sharing his passion for Elvis, said "Take all your beautiful pictures and put them down in the basement. We're going to start a new

life." The collection went into storage — but not for long.

Fifteen years ago when his restaurant

To fulfill his dream, Yoeli asked British sculptor Lance Hunter to fashion an image of Elvis. The artist liked the idea. He and his team worked with fiberglass and steel for two months, and last fall, there it was — a statue of the King, his hips thrust forward, his hair flipped back, a guitar leaning against one leg. It cost Yoeli a lot of money — "but it was worth it."

"You can't imagine how the public reacted the day we put it up," he says. "It was unbelievable!" Newlyweds, following an Israeli custom that they have their picture taken at a famous place, flocked to the Inn to be photographed with Elvis.

Yoeli was thrilled. "A month ago, a woman came and put a lit candle at the base of the statue. I said, 'Lady, please, we have a gas station here.'" She told him it was her dream to see Elvis.

Stories on Yoeli and his inn have appeared several times in *Elvisly Yours*, a British fan magazine. "Though Elvis has been dead 12 years, every month they publish pictures and stories of the King. I get letters from all over the world. Everyone likes to share their memories."

"We have thousands of fans in Israel," says Yoeli, "and two Elvis imitators — Ya'acov Tubi and Aryeh Golan — who come here with guitars and sing his songs. We get people without even any publicity. It's all by

word of mouth. We just sit around and talk Elvis. All my childhood friends as well as tourists pop in."

Even the U.S. Marines know the hangout. "When they come to Israel, their first stop is the Elvis Inn. They take pictures of the rock star and listen to his records, which we play around the clock."

Why so much attention to someone who has been dead for over a decade? Yoeli shakes his head. "Elvis isn't dead," he says. "He's alive! He was something special. He returns us to the days of our youth!" □

Rhoda Elovitz is a freelance writer living in Jerusalem.



URI YOELI WITH HIS STATUE OF THE KING OUTSIDE THE ELVIS INN NEAR JERUSALEM.

was half its present size, Yoeli hung up three Presley posters. As customers admired them, he gradually added more. Soon he heard truck drivers telling each other, "I'll meet you at the Elvis place." It was called the Mountain Inn then. The people themselves changed the name.

"I saw I was not the only crazy person. There were more," Yoeli laughs. Soon his whole collection was on display. Business was good and he doubled the size of the restaurant.

NEWLYWEDS AND MARINES

Still, Yoeli wasn't satisfied. "My dream had always been to see Elvis larger than life," he says. "That's how I viewed him."

THE LAST WORD

STILL UNDER ATTACK

In response to your article "Look Away" (Summer 1990): harping on an issue incessantly does not make it true. Slavery was certainly one of the issues in the Civil War, and certainly one of the most dramatic and visible, but according to many scholars, not the only or even most important cause of the war between the states.

Less easily definable conflicts are often cited as being of deeper significance — the collision course between the agricultural South and the industrial North, the conflict between alien cultures, differing views as to the respective roles of the local versus the federal governments.

No disputing that the incidence of slavery was wrong, that we are better off as a nation and a people without it, but in some ways slavery was a more important issue to the North than to the South. The issue of race — that is, the Southern racial position, however admittedly wrong — has been used by Northerners to beat and subdue the South time and time again.

The real issue in the War was not race but power, survival of one region from the domination of another. It is in this sense that the Southerners you interviewed referred to the Confederate flag as more than a symbol of one restrictive issue, but rather as a representation of a distinctive culture and people that is, if your magazine is any example, even to this day under attack.

— Michael McIntyre
Los Angeles, Calif.

PAST AND PRESENT

Congratulations on your spring issue: "The War Within." Your "Green Scorecard" contained all the clear graphics and hard numbers I associate with *Southern Exposure* special reports. Thanks for putting on the hip boots and leading us into the swamp.

Thanks too for leading us back into the past. As a history teacher, I always appreciate it when you reach back over your shoulder and help us untangle the wisteria from some portion of Southern

history. This spring I observed the 125th anniversary of Appomattox by reading your suggestive array of articles on the Civil War.

I agree that our region "still struggles with its misremembered past," and I would like to share two recent experiences that suggest to me that a new generation of Southerners are rising up to reclaim their collective past in fresh ways. My encounters occurred in eastern North Carolina, an area featured in several of your Civil War articles, and they involved people from local museums, historical sites, and elementary schools — folks who are on the front lines in terms of interpreting the Southern past.

In April the director of a county historical museum in the lower Cape Fear region called me to talk about revising a display on Wilmington before and during the Civil War. She read me their proposed text, which called the port a "vibrant and happy town" in 1840. I reminded her that the ancestors of Michael Jordan (now the city's most famous son) did not find the city especially joyful 150 years ago.

She grasped the point and continued to the text for a panel on 1860: "When the Civil War came, Wilmington rallied behind the Confederacy." I asked her how many of Wilmington's 7,000 residents at that time were black, and when she allowed more than half, I suggested — having just read "The War Within" — that there must have been considerable division of opinion within the town. "I see what you mean," she replied. "That makes the situation considerably more dramatic, doesn't it?"

It is this hidden drama of Civil War history that *Southern Exposure* underlined so well, and that I encountered again several weeks later, while working with Dorothy Redford at Somerset Place Plantation near Edenton. Mrs. Redford, director of the state historical site at the plantation, is a descendant of Somerset slaves and the author of a book called *Somerset Homecoming*.

The North Carolina Center for the

Advancement of Teaching, a lively organization that works with public school teachers, had asked Dorothy and me to direct a week-long workshop at Somerset on the plantation experience of black North Carolinians. On the first day Dorothy assumed the dress, manner, and outlook of Old Elsie, an African-American recently emancipated by the war.

The response of 20 primary and secondary school teachers, black and white, to this roleplaying was intense. They immediately sensed the same hidden drama of slavery times that had struck the museum curator. Though all had been steeped in tales of the Civil War, few had considered the complexity and interrelatedness of the war's human events.

For the rest of the week I watched the unfolding of ideas and emotions, as sharp educators came to terms with the painful, real-life drama of the plantation past. At first almost the only historical meeting ground for black and white was found in such bits of shared tradition as the Br'er Rabbit tales and some of the better-known "Negro spirituals." But by week's end the contrasting threads of plantation life had been drawn together at a deeper level.

Driving home, a copy of "The War Within" beside me on the seat, I thought of how many local museums, plantation sites and public school classrooms across the region are waking up to the fresh historical themes you have presented. Three decades of social change in the South have put us on the brink of revising three centuries of Southern history, so that it will include all of the people, all of the time. Thanks again for helping us to clear up the past as we clean up our present.

— Peter Wood
Hillsborough, N.C.

We welcome letters from our readers. Send your comments and criticisms to *The Last Word*, Southern Exposure, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702. Please include your name, address, and daytime telephone number, and try to hold letters to no more than 250 words. Long letters may be edited for length.

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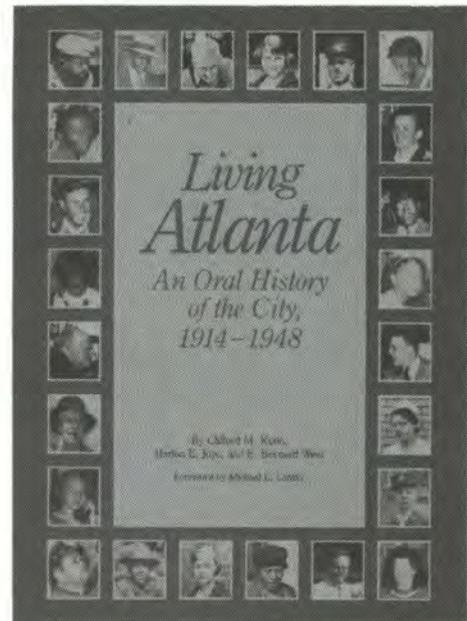
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Foreword by Michael L. Lomax



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