

# Southern Exposure

Through  
the Hoop



\$4.00



The front-cover painting, entitled "Two On Two," is by Ernest Barnes, Jr., a former pro football player from Durham, North Carolina. Barnes' paintings have been used on the television show "Good Times," and he recently had a one-man exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh. His work is available through Are-Pro Unlimited, P.O. Box 27, Soul City, N.C. 27589.

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The photographs on the back cover were made by Cindy Lewis, a native of West Virginia who specializes in aerial photography and experimental phototinting. These color images were taken during several recent trips to the arcades and recreational vehicle camps around Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Ms. Lewis currently works with Photographia, Box 2763, Durham N.C. 27705.

# Through the Hoop

To arc a jump shot through the orange rim . . . to tap in a rebound . . . putting the ball through the hoop represents a transcendent moment in basketball for player, team, and crowd.

Such a moment exists in every sport. But to enjoy it, fans and athletes alike are often forced through other kinds of hoops. Sports can be violent, lonely, poetic, painful, uplifting. It can breed fitness or injury, sufficiency or dependence, pride or prejudice, friendship or hostility. When does the discipline of sport become dangerous obedience? When does self-mastery become self-aggrandizement? When does athletic activity cease to be empowering for the participants and fans to become an exercise of power over us?

Answers to such questions are hard to find. Sports, unlike most topics previously addressed in special issues of *Southern Exposure* – labor, women, folklife, health, prisons – has never had a network of informed progressives working outside the established channels, posing critical questions, offering insightful direction for our thinking and doing. Trusted commentators and friends who know where they stand and why with regard to other central aspects of our culture shy away from giving serious thought to sport.

As a result, many of us are left with personal confusions brought on by alternating experiences of frustration and fulfillment: How do we talk about a subject that on the one hand can be so easily criticized for abuses and on the other hand remains so compelling? How do we effectively criticize the sports establishment that manages ACC basketball or NFL football when we find ourselves glued to the set at playoff time?

To deal with this paradox we must recognize that sports, like other issues addressed in *Southern Exposure*, cannot be separated from its social context. It is too liable to economic, political and social pressures. Writer Roger Kahn remarked: "Sports tell anyone who watches intelligently about the time in which we live: about managed news and corporate politics, about race and terror and what the process of aging does. . . . If that sounds grim, there is courage and high humor too."

In the South, the relationship of sports to culture is especially strong. After all, this is the football-basketball belt as well as the Bible belt. As Randall Williams notes, half of all fans of professional wrestling – the nation's largest spectator sport – are in the South. And as Mark Naison tells us, the top five states for per capita production of pro football players are all in the deep South. And "blood sports" – cockfighting, hunting – all have a special place in the rural South not evident in most of the more urban North.

The sheer variety of sporting experiences in the South has necessitated many omissions, but the range of material included here between Ernie Barnes' wide-open front cover painting and Cindy Lewis' vivid back cover photographs should challenge every reader's opinions about the role of sports in our society, past and present. Can someone who shares William Atwill's surge of joy at surfing appreciate the cultural background and continuing significance of "blood sports" to the Southern working class? Can the pro wrestling fan relate to runner Ruth Laney's elation at just staying in there? We think so.

Useful discussions about the crucial links between sport and society are still at a primitive stage. The spate of "serious" sports books written in the last few years has only begun to scratch the surface. But here's a chance to explore the rich, contradictory, inspiring, consuming domain of sports in the South and to examine and question our own feelings about play. Whatever your relation to the South, and to sports, we hope you will be pleased and provoked by the contents of "Through the Hoop."

– Tema Okun and Peter Wood,  
Special Issue Coordinating Editors

*Tema Okun is Assistant Aquatic Director of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro YMCA and is completing a masters degree in physical education. Peter Wood teaches history at Duke University and chairs the board of the Highlander Center.*

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# Southern Exposure

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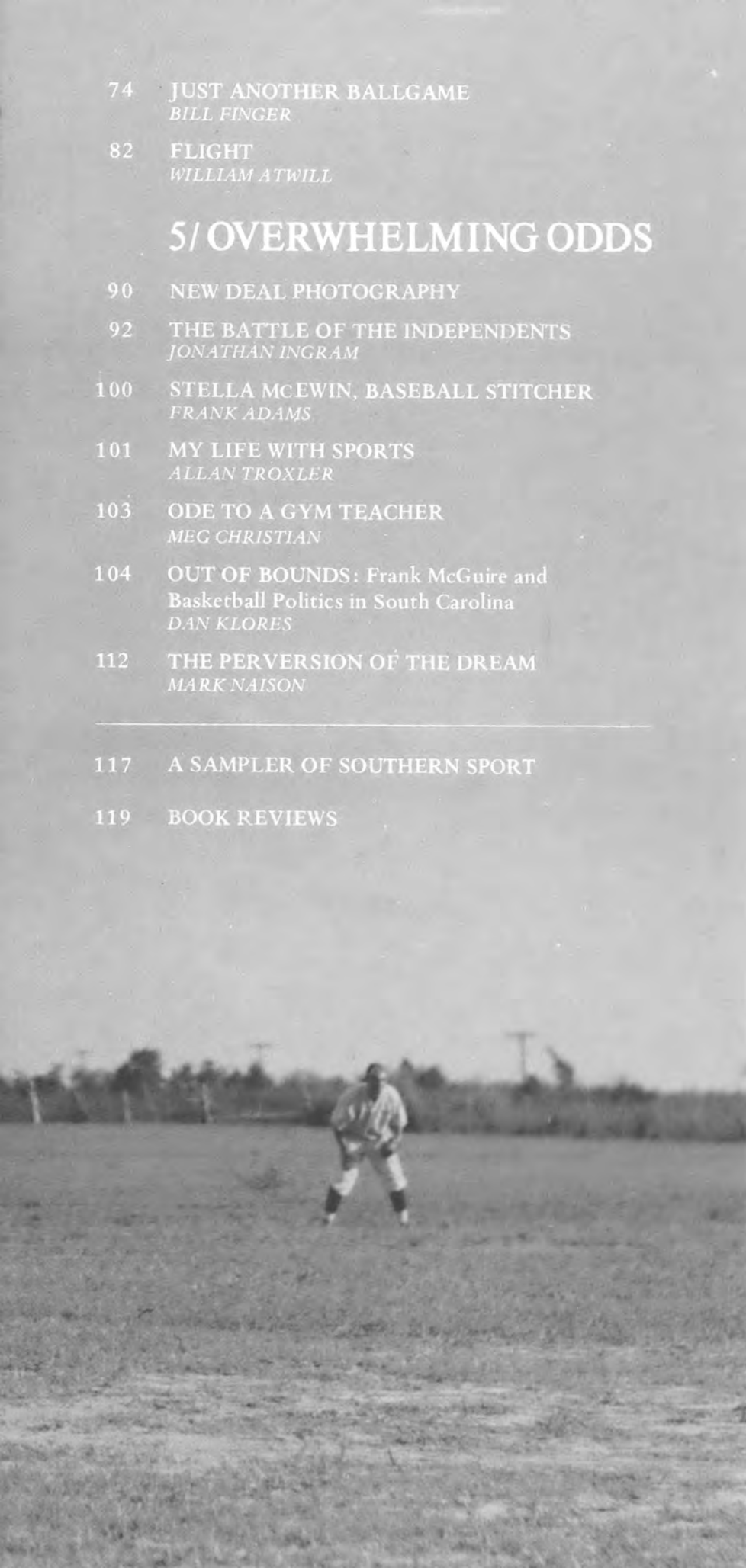
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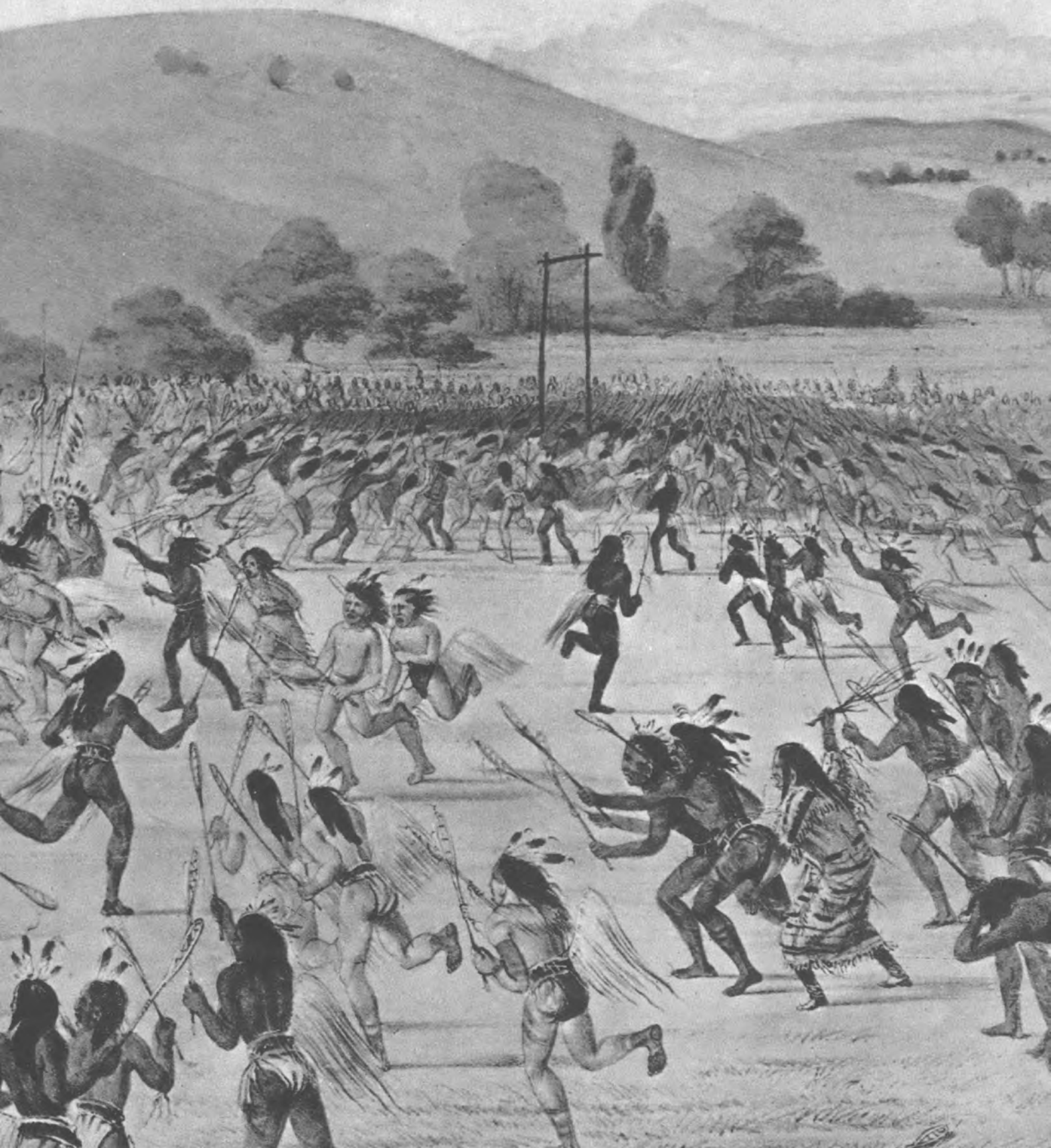
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# Part 1 / WAR GAMES



# The Great Ball-Play and Fight between the Creeks and Choctaws in Noxubee County, Mississippi, 1790

In the fall of 1836, there died in the Southern part of Noxubee County an aged Indian warrior named Stonie Hadjo. He was a Creek by birth, a Choctaw by adoption. This old warrior would often tell of a great ball-play and fight which occurred between the Creeks and Choctaws in Noxubee County. This event, from dates given by him, must have occurred about the year 1790.

On Noxubee River there was anciently a large beaver pond, about which the Creeks and Choctaws had a violent dispute. The Creeks claimed it by priority of discovery, while the Choctaws asserted their right to it because it lay in their own territory. As the fur trade at Mobile and Pensacola was lucrative, each party was loath to renounce the right to the beavers. The two Nations finally agreed to settle the matter by a ball-play. A given number of the best players were accordingly selected from each Nation, who were to decide, by the result of the game, to which Nation the exclusive right to the beaver pond should belong. Great preparations were made by each party for this important event. They commenced preparing on the new moon, and it took them two whole moons and until the full of the third to complete preparations. Great quantities of provisions had to be procured, and the ball players had to subject themselves meanwhile to the usual requirement of practice, the athletic exercises customary on such occasions. Finally the day came, and Stonie Hadjo said that there were ten thousand Indians, Creeks and Choctaws, camped around the ball ground on Noxubee River.

Everything being now ready, the play commenced, and it was admitted on all sides to have been the closest and most evenly matched game ever witnessed by either nation. Fortune vacillated from Creeks to Choctaws and then from Choctaws to Creeks. At last, it was a tied game, both parties standing even. One more game remained to be played which would decide the contest. Then occurred a long and terrible struggle lasting for four hours. Every Creek and every Choctaw strained himself to his utmost bent. Finally after prodigious feats of strength and agility displayed on both sides, fortune at last declared in favor

of the Creeks. The victors immediately began to shout and sing! The Choctaws were greatly humiliated. At length a high-spirited Choctaw player, unable longer to endure the exultant shouts of the victorious party, made an insulting remark to a Creek player. (Who, in retaliation, Choctaws state, threw a petticoat on the Choctaw – the greatest insult that can be offered to an Indian.) The latter resented it, and the two instantly clutched each other in deadly combat. The contagion spread, and a general fight with sticks, knives, guns, tomahawks and bows and arrows, began among the ball players. The warriors from each tribe commenced joining in the fight until all were engaged in bloody strife.

The fight continued from an hour by the sun in the evening with but little intermission during the night, until two hours by the sun the next morning. At this juncture the great chiefs of the Creeks and the Choctaws arrived upon the ground and at once put a stop to the combat, runners having been dispatched at the beginning of the fight to these two leaders to inform them of the affair. The combatants, upon desisting from the fight, spent the remainder of the day in taking care of the wounded, the women watching over the dead. The next day the dead were buried; their money, silver ornaments and other articles of value being deposited with them in their graves. The third day a council convened. The Creek and the Choctaw chiefs made “talks” expressing their regrets that their people should have given way to such a wild storm of passion resulting in the death of so many brave warriors. There was no war or cause for war between the two Nations and they counseled that all forget the unhappy strife, make peace and be friends as before. This advice was heeded. The pipe of peace was smoked, all shook hands and departed to their homes.

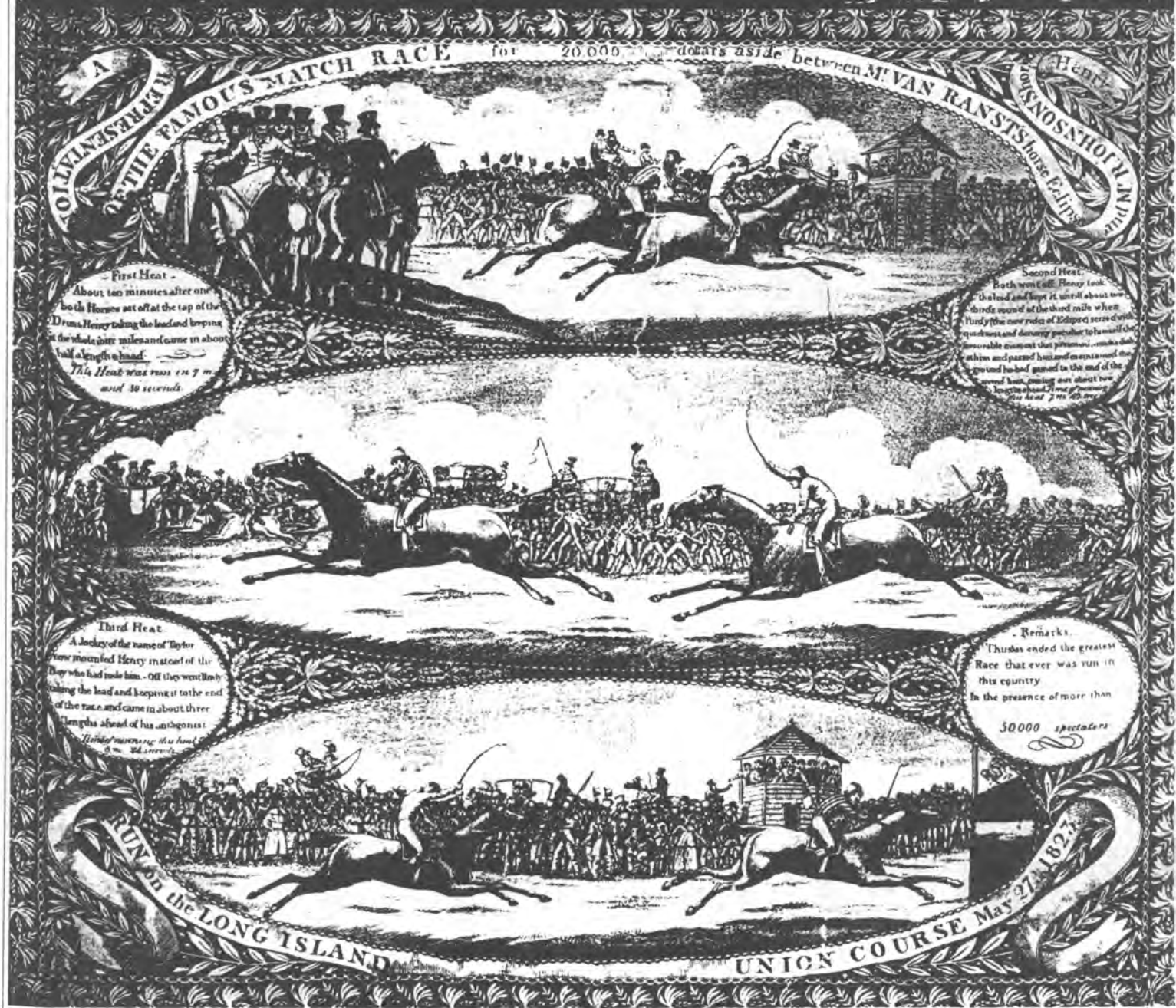
Stonie Hadjo stated that five hundred warriors were killed outright in this fight and that a great many of the wounded afterward died. The Creeks and Choctaws had had several wars with each other, had fought many bloody battles, but no battle was as disastrous as this fight at the ball ground. For many long years the Creeks and Choctaws looked back to this event with emotions of terror and sorrow. For here, their picked men, their ball players, who were the flower of the two Nations, almost to a man perished. Scarcely was there a Creek or Choctaw family but had to mourn the death of some kinsman slain. For several years the Creeks made annual pilgrimages to this ball ground to weep over the graves of their dead. The Choctaws kept up this Indian custom much longer. Even down to the time of their emigration in 1832, they had not ceased to make similar lamentations.

After the fight, by tacit consent, the beaver pond was left in the undisputed possession of the Choctaws; but it is said that soon afterwards, the beaver entirely abandoned the pond.

– H. S. Halbert in H. B. Cushman's *History of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians* (Greenville, Texas, 1899)







In the New York *Evening Post* of October 12, 1822, Virginian James Harrison, owner of the race horse Sir Charles, issued a "Bold Challenge" to the owner of American Eclipse, New Yorker Cornelius Van Ranst. This colorfully worded challenge, to meet on the Washington race course on "the 15th or 20th November next, for Five or Ten Thousand Dollars," precipitated a sequence of sectional horse races which proved vastly entertaining; it also inflamed sectional allegiances and emotions.

The challenge appealed to both racing and political rivalries. In the years preceding the race, the halls of Congress resounded to the fiercely sectional debates over the admission of Missouri as a slave state. North-South antagonism on the slavery question was so intense that Savannah rejected a gift of \$10,000 from New York City to help alleviate the sufferings caused by a terrible fire: New York City had stipulated that the gift be distributed without regard to race. These tensions were reflected on the race track.

# Racing to War

Antebellum Match Races  
between the North and the South

by Duncan MacLeod

As the challenge implied, American Eclipse had already earned a lofty reputation. A year before when New York became the first Northern state since the Revolution to permit horse racing, American Eclipse had been withdrawn from stud to participate in the opening of the new Union Course near fashionable Jamaica, Long Island. The principal contest of that afternoon in November, 1821, matched Eclipse with Lady Lightfoot, the undefeated champion of Virginia and the South.

Attendance was good, and the New York *Evening Post* exclaimed, "Expectations had never been raised so highly, or rather I should say, solicitude, for on the event hung the sporting honor of New York and of the Southern States." After Eclipse's victory, "The air resounded with New York Forever!" In a spring meeting, Eclipse was again to prove too fast for the opposition.

Meanwhile, in Virginia, Sir Charles was putting together a string of victories which prompted Harrison to make his public challenge. The 1822 match race generated an enormous degree of interest, drawing over 10,000 spectators including President James Monroe and three of his cabinet members. Betting was substantial. But, alas, the race itself proved disappointing. Sir Charles became lame shortly before the race date, and Harrison was forced to forfeit; he did agree to run a single heat for a separate purse of \$1,500, and Eclipse was an easy winner.

Despite its anti-climactic outcome, the match provoked quite a stir among journalists who recognized its importance beyond the world of sports. Not all approved of the proceedings. In Baltimore, *Niles Weekly Register* was disturbed because, during this period of widespread economic hardship, vast sums were being laid out in risky bets. The *National Intelligencer*, published in Washington, agreed but argued it was better "to witness a contest of this nature between the horses of Virginia and New York than any kind of political strife between the citizens of the two states." The reference could not have been lost on any of the paper's readers since the bitter Missouri Crisis of 1820 had pitted New York's Congressional delegation, led by anti-slavery cham-

pion Senator Rufus King, against the Virginia legislators, who assumed the mantle of Southern leadership normally worn in debates about slavery by representatives of South Carolina and Georgia.

Not surprisingly, when a group of Virginia sportsmen issued a new challenge to race a Southern horse against Eclipse on the Union Course the following year, Eclipse's backers quickly accepted. From a sporting point of view, Sir Charles vs. Eclipse had proved a false start. The events which followed quickly erased the memory of that first race: its sequel – for a staggering purse of \$20,000 – was to be one of the greatest races in nineteenth-century America – and its most political.

Because of the size of the purse, the second race was promoted by a group of backers, although two individuals dominated the proceedings. The Southern lead was taken by Colonel William Ransom Johnson, a planter and state legislator from Chesterfield County, Virginia. Johnson's dedication to racing had earned him the nickname "Napoleon of the Turf." For the North the leading figure was John C. Stevens, a member of the famous Hoboken, New Jersey, engineering and steamship family. Equally committed to sport, Stevens' interests ranged more widely than those of Johnson; he eventually switched his loyalties to yachting, setting in motion the events which led to the establishment of the America Cup.

The match races followed an unusual format. Years after they had been abandoned in England, long races continued to dominate the racing calendar in the United States. The races paired two horses in events of increasing distance over several days, climaxing on four-mile heats on the last day. The horse which first won two heats won the match. The schedule was demanding, with a rest period of only 30 minutes allowed between four-mile heats. The rules made it impossible for a trailing horse to seek to conserve energy by dropping out or finishing slowly: if the winner of a heat led by over 185 yards at the finish, he was declared the overall winner. When the racing was good, this

format provided an excellent spectacle; but with only two horses to a race, should one forfeit a match, or be distanced in the first heat, the day's racing was an anti-climax. Interest stayed high in the sectional races partly because, with the exception of the one between Sir Charles and Eclipse, all the races were fiercely contested.

Given the task of preparing a new Southern challenger, Colonel Johnson maintained a number of possible contenders in training until the very last moment, naming Sir Henry as his entry just before the race itself. Eclipse and Henry were closely related, sharing the same great grandsire in Diomed, winner of the first English Derby in 1780, and three of the same grandparents. The sectional character of the races attached to the owners and backers of the horses, not to the horses themselves.

The suspense surrounding Colonel Johnson's choice no doubt heightened interest in the race. But there were also political factors at work. Sectional and regional rivalries, allied to states' rights controversies, had been stimulated by the debates leading up to the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and by recurrent squabbles over tariffs and banks. The forthcoming presidential election was already assuming clear sectional overtones, with newspapers stressing the analogy between horse races and presidential races. The most explicit comparison appeared in the *Nashville Gazette*, and, according to the practice of the times, the statement was soon reprinted in other papers. It characterized the participants in the "political sweepstakes" (John Quincy Adams, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay and William Henry Crawford) as horses and described their points in equine terms.

When the great day dawned, on May 27, 1823, vastly expanded ferry services to Brooklyn were unable to cope with the demand. As many as 20,000 Southerners had made the journey; their numbers alone were sufficient to swamp the facilities in the city. The road to the Union Course, some eight miles from the ferry terminals, was thronged by more than 1,000 carriages and innumerable pedestrians. New York businessman John Pintard wrote to his daughter



describing the conditions.

Literally the city of N York that is the gay, the idle, & the curious, has poured out its population on L. Island. I went to the 2 ferries at 6, to witness the carriages, who thronged the avenues to the Ferry houses. At 10, I went again, and Fulton to Pearl Street was blocked up with coaches, stages, double & single horse wagons, stages, Barouches, & Gigs, 4 & 8 abreast all filled with Ladies & Dandies, high & low life, waiting their turns for 2 Steam Boats & 2 Horse Boats, incessantly plying across the Ferry, with row boats of all sorts & sizes, carrying over foot pads innumerable.

Rumors circulated of vast bets being laid; a relay system of horses and signal flags was established to transmit the news of the result rapidly from the course to the city. Business in New York City came to a standstill, while in Washington race news overshadowed the President's messages to Congress and his transmission of papers on foreign policy.

Though estimates differ, probably more than 50,000 people attended in all, at a time when the city's entire population was no more than 200,000. Spectators crowded the start so closely that the commencement of the race was delayed, and during the race they formed a narrow channel through which the horses had to plunge. The enormous size of the crowd gives the lie to historians who insist that mass spectator sports developed only after the middle of the century.

At last, the excitement came to a head. The tap of a drum set the first heat in motion, and Henry immediately plunged to the front and set a furious pace, with Eclipse closely contesting the lead throughout. Henry won by half a length; the time — 7 minutes, 37 seconds — was considerably faster than any previously recorded in America for a four-mile heat. Punters, as bettors were then called, had previously favored Eclipse, but now they switched their allegiance and made Henry a three-to-one favorite. The New York contingent grew silent and apprehensive, but its mood lightened when it was announced that Eclipse's jockey would give way to the horse's regular rider, Mr. Purdy. Under Purdy's control the horse had never before lost a heat; he had declined initially to ride the horse on

this occasion because of an argument with the owner.

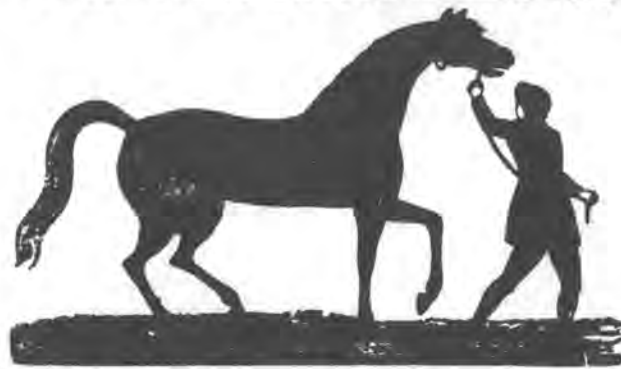
Henry again took the lead in the second heat but was compelled by Eclipse's intense pressure to set a searing pace. By the end of the third mile the younger horse began to flag, and Eclipse led throughout the final mile, winning by about 30 feet: the time was 7 minutes, 49 seconds, a remarkable pace for a second heat. Now it was Henry who got a new rider: Arthur Taylor, a famous senior jockey and trainer from Virginia. But the switch accomplished nothing. In the final heat, Eclipse took the lead from the drum and maintained it throughout, winning in 8 minutes, 24 seconds. Eclipse was declared the victor, and his backers claimed the \$20,000.

The race was reported everywhere, usually in the form of reprinted articles from New York and Virginia papers. It received generous allotments of space in papers from Vermont to Louisiana; New York to Cincinnati; Richmond to Little Rock — even though Arkansas was not to achieve statehood for another decade.

For many years to come, debate raged as to whether the race was fairly conducted. Southerners argued that the New York Jockey Club's rules regarding weights were biased against younger horses. (Henry was four years old and Eclipse nine.) They charged that Henry was alarmed and put off by crowds which hemmed in the course so closely on the approach to the finish line. They also pointed out that Henry had been less well managed than might have been expected, because Colonel Johnson, suffering from food poisoning contracted at a banquet on the eve of the race, could not attend. Lastly, Southerners were piqued that Eclipse's owners refused further challenges. Eclipse was returned to stud, to enjoy a career as successful as his first.

The occasion seemed to inflame sectional feelings so much that many lamented that the race had taken place at all. The New York *National Advertiser* stated that, "These contests of North against South lay the foundation of sectional jealousies, and create a spirit of rivalry when there should be union." A writer to the *Baltimore*

## The Celebrated Horse



# SIR ARCHIE

Will stand the ensuing season at my stable, in Northampton county, North-Carolina, about 3 miles from the Court House, 9 miles from the town of Halifax, and 21 miles from Beltsfield, Va. He will cover mares at 75 dollars the season, payable on the 1st of January next, with one dollar to the groom in all cases. Such of Sir Archie's friends that live at a distance will send their notes with the mares, payable on the first of January; also feeding of the mares to be paid for when taken away. The season will commence on the first of February, and terminate on the first of August.

Extensive fields of small grain and clover are sown for the benefit of mares, which may be left with the horse, with the addition of grain feeding, at 23 1/2 cents per day. Separate enclosures are provided for mares with colts. No pains will be spared in taking the best possible care of mares, &c which may be left, but no responsibility for escapes or accidents.

— Sir Archie's blood, great size, performance on the turf, and celebrity as a foal getter, are sufficient recommendations.

JOHN D. AMIS.

*Patriot* expressed the

hope that this is the last sectional race we shall ever have of any kind in this country – and this view I am much pleased to find is very generally expressed here. Horses may run – and candidates for office will appear on the political turf – but let not the contest be between the men and horses of the south, of the east and west – but between merit and talents. We Marylanders, placed in the centre, wish to cherish union.

Other writers suggested their relief that things had gone peacefully by stressing the good humor and sportsmanship that had prevailed among the principals. Indeed, the protagonists enjoyed a friendly dinner on the evening following the race. On the other hand, it was hard to discount the economic aspects of the race. It appears that probably \$100,000 in wagers changed hands on the occasion, and great sums were spent on travel, accommodations and food. Even if Eclipse had lost, New York City would have won.

Over the next 20-odd years, there were a number of other sectional horse races. One observer calculated in 1835, for instance, that there had been 131 sectional horse races since Sir Charles vs. Eclipse. Although most carried no explicit political overtones, there were, nevertheless, a number of match races for \$20,000 purses which were widely promoted as North vs. South affairs and which attracted great followings and much newspaper comment. In an 1825 race, Flirtilla, the Southern horse, “eclipsed” Ariel, the Northern. In 1836 it was Post Boy vs. Boscombe; in 1842 Boston vs. Fashion and in 1845 Peytona vs. Fashion, all run on the same – perhaps ill-named – Union Course. Of these four races, the South won three and the North one. Many people argued that sporting events such as these created and cemented friendships, while others maintained that they sharpened sectional rivalries.

Peytona vs. Fashion, run in 1845, was the last of the major North-South match races. It was a politically tense time with the annexation of Texas, where slavery was legal, foremost on the political agenda. The Texas debate gave rise to fierce antagonisms in Congress over the so-called Wilmot Proviso, aimed at preventing the spread of slavery into any territories

acquired as a result of the war with Mexico. Strong sectional feelings generated a surge of support in town after town as Peytona walked all the way from her stables in Alabama to the famous Union Course.

This was the last such trek. After 1845, the mounting national rivalry would be tested and acted out in other ways, but contemporaries took note of the role which horse racing had already played in dramatizing and exacerbating sectional tensions. Such awareness was summarized by the fiery editor of the *New York Courier and Enquirer*, James Watson Webb. Writing in the summer of 1847, on the occasion of the death of Eclipse, and in the midst of the war with Mexico, Webb suggested:

There is no one who witnessed the great Eclipse race on Long Island in the year 1823 . . . who will ever forget the clear and distinct manifestation of a feeling known before to exist, but called forth and embodied by that contest, in a manner quite as unmistakable as unprecedented – of North and South. The agitation over the Missouri question, and of the discussion relative to slavery, had indeed often and after provoked, as well among philanthropists as among politicians, the expression of earnest and conflicting views; but the horse race – this match between a Southern and a Northern champion of the Turf, took the popular fancy – and the hurra which rang through the air, as Purdy, the favorite rider of Eclipse, mounted him for the second heat . . . attested at once the depth and intensity of the feeling with which the race was watched, and the confidence that the North, properly guided at least, could not be beat.

Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts later drew other parallels. With the Civil War already come and gone, Quincy commented in his memoirs on the race he himself had observed:

It seems to have foreshadowed the sterner conflict that occurred forty years afterwards. The victory resulted in both cases from the same cause – the power of endurance. It was, in the language of the turf, bottom against speed. The North had no braver men than were found in the Confederate ranks; it had no abler generals than Lee and Jackson. It had only greater resources. □

*Duncan MacLeod teaches American History at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, England. He is the author of Slavery, Race and the American Revolution.*

In addition to a large quantity of daily newspapers, the major sources consulted for this article were the *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*, which began its life in Baltimore in 1829 under the editorship of J. S. Skinner, and *Spirit of the Times and Life in New York*, which was started in New York in 1832 under the editorship of William T. Porter. Fairfax Harrison, doyen of writers on American turf history, described Trotter of the *Spirit of the Times* as “a reporter of racing none has ever surpassed.” The *Turf Register* came eventually under the control of the *Spirit of the Times*, which, by the way, had its major circulation in the South. The *Turf Register* printed in September, 1830, a long and detailed account of Henry vs. Eclipse, written by Cadwallader Colden, which is a classic piece of sports reporting.

For additional material on early Southern horseracing, see Allen E. Begnaud, “Hoofbeats in Colonial Maryland,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 65 (Fall, 1970), 207-238; Laura D.S. Harrell, “Horse Racing in the Old Natchez District, 1783-1830,” *Journal of Mississippi History*, 13 (July, 1951), 123-127; Henry W. Lewis, “Horses and Horsemen in Northampton Before 1900,” *North Carolina Historical Review*, 51 (Spring, 1974), 125-148; W.G.S., “Racing in Colonial Virginia,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 2 (January, 1895), 293-305. See also the unpublished M.A. theses of Arville Taylor, “Horse Racing in the Lower Mississippi Valley Prior to 1860” (Univ. of Texas, 1953), and Alexander Young, “Pre-Civil War Horseracing in Maryland” (Univ. of Maryland, 1963).



# A Snowball's Chance

by Lawrence W. Fielding

For the hopeful and naive soldiers who promised their families a speedy victory and hasty return home, the Civil War proved a sobering nightmare. The bloodshed, on a scale previously unknown to Americans, was terrifying and constant. Only winter camp allowed the armies of the North and the South a desperately needed retreat from the carnage, a chance to rest and re-organize. But each year, commanding officers faced the difficult task of maintaining morale, asserting discipline and promoting physical fitness among their exhausted and homesick men. As a result, "sport of all kinds became the order of the day" during winter camps.

A Virginia officer wrote that the men indulged in "all forms of sports" which served "to break the monotony of confinement." Enlisted men from each army also reported home that "ball games and other sports . . . were going on all the time" and that on "any pleasant day there was ball playing, running, jumping, wrestling, and scuffling." Soldiers who learned a taste for early versions of football and baseball during these winter camps

carried back knowledge of the new sports to their own communities.

Predictably, spectator sports like horse racing and cockfighting had broad appeal. But nothing suited the needs of winter soldiers better than spontaneous mass activities which could be regularized as interest spread. Rabbit chases, for example, became extremely popular and were eventually conducted under established rules. By far the most novel and remarkable winter camp activity, especially for soldiers from the deep South, were huge snowball fights. Snow added to the discomforts of winter, but whenever the snow was right for packing, a battle was inevitable. Contests began spontaneously. A New York soldier recorded such an instance. A group of soldiers "who were the most belligerent" piled out of their tents one morning and for no apparent reason started to shell the company street next to them. Other soldiers retaliated and soon the whole camp was in an uproar.

Once begun, battles spread quickly. A truce might be declared between the original combat-



ants in order to join forces and “shell out” a third party. As more and more recruits entered the contest, organization became necessary. Snowball generals arranged troops into regiments, brigades and occasionally divisions, employed military tactics and led charges and counter-charges. Soldiers took and paroled prisoners, confiscated war booty in the form of pots and pans (and occasionally breakfast). Drums and bugles accompanied by huzzas and rebel yells marked the opening of campaigns. On some occasions, the battles were pre-arranged and soldiers spent sleepless nights devising complicated tactics and amassing piles of ammunition.



▲ RABBIT IN A CONFEDERATE CAMP.

Some units took their battle flags into the fight, guarding them zealously since their capture meant dishonor. One beaten Confederate believed that his antagonists intended to record their snowball victory on their battle flag as if it had been a real battle! Some units used improvised battle flags. One set of flags included a red flannel shirt and a pair of grey drawers, each strapped to a pole and carried into the storm of snowballs with unflinching loyalty. On another occasion an unlucky youth returning from furlough had his white shirt stripped from his back by a group of Fort Texas soldiers who hoisted the “oddity” as their battle flag.

This sort of activity frequently got out of hand. In December of 1862, a Tennessee regiment got into a heated contest with another unit. The battle raged back and forth across a small field as charges were disrupted by counter-charges. Arguments developed. Both sides “got so worked up and incensed over it that they got their rifles,” so that they could settle the matter permanently. Part of the army had to be called out to quiet them.

The massive snowball battles of 1862-63 created

problems for the Confederate high command. Not only did the battles obliterate military discipline, but soldiers frequently got hurt. After one particularly disruptive battle in early January, 1863, General Longstreet decided that snowball battles would have to stop. General Lee issued a similar order a month later. Both men emphasized, with no success, the dangers of snowballing to life and limb. Soldiers seemed not to be content with merely throwing ordinary snowballs. Frequently, they allowed their ammunition to freeze overnight to increase its destructive force. Other incorrigibles increased hitting power by packing stones and snow together. Beyond this, soldiers, apparently believing that retreat meant dishonor, seldom left the battlefield when ammunition had been exhausted. Instead they stood toe to toe and slugged it out with their fists.

Perhaps the largest single snowball fight in the entire war, if not in all history, occurred less than a month after Lee’s order. It began in Stonewall Jackson’s corps, spread quickly into Longstreet’s camp, and before it ended most of the soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia had participated. The fray started casually enough in the morning, with only a few soldiers involved. But by noon four brigades were at each other’s throats. In the afternoon the cavalry got into the act, and finally a fifth brigade entered the fight. As one observer noted, “Never did any cause inspire its champions with more excitement, zeal, exertion and courage.” One officer described the battlefield as covered with a cloud of snow. So much snow was thrown, in fact, that he wondered how soldiers could distinguish friend from foe.

Finally, just as the sun was setting, the valiant Stonewall Brigade, which had been instrumental in starting all the trouble, succeeded in driving the enemy into their tents. It was estimated that the battle had involved over 24,000 soldiers, spread across an area of 10 square miles. While the scale of this contest appears unprecedented, skirmishes which engaged 6,000 to 10,000 men became almost commonplace.

Union commanders also faced discipline problems. Enthused snowballers refused intervention, as an officer in the 28th New York found out the hard way. He decided that the men were getting “too serious in their play.” In an attempt to quiet the disturbance he mounted a stump and addressed the combatants. He was rewarded for his attempt by a shower of snowballs and was compelled to



“beat a hasty retreat.”

When the snow fell, rank had no privileges. Like some other games, snowballing permitted the settling of old scores between officers and their men, and those officers who didn't accept their share of snow in the face were paid off in less harmless ways. Irvine Walker, a South Carolina officer, although “not fond of such frolics,” found it necessary to join. “The men did not let off anyone in the Brigade” with the exception of the commanding general. This officer noted that “all distinctions were levelled and the higher an officer, the more snowballing he received.” Many popular officers found it impossible not to participate. On December 4, 1862, shortly before the Battle of Fredericksburg, Jeb Stuart and his whole command post were surrounded and captured by his own troops for fun, an accomplishment which the Union Cavalry would have loved to duplicate.

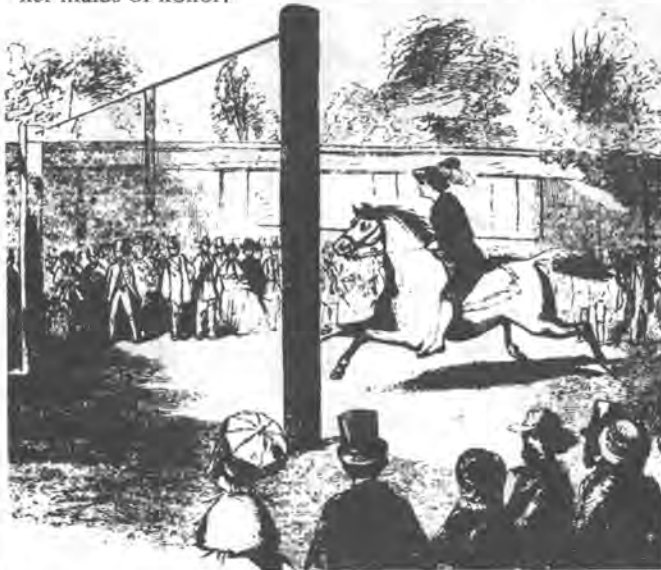
Stuart was, of course, partly responsible for his predicament. The combatants had not originally intended to include Stuart's headquarters in their list of objectives. Unfortunately, headquarters lay in the direct path of the contending armies. Stuart and his staff, chilled and weary from a recent journey to Port Royal, had at first taken every precaution to ensure the neutrality of their position. In a final symbolic effort they hoisted a white flag. But as the battle raged back and forth near his command post, Stuart's curiosity was aroused. To get a better view of the struggle, he and a fellow officer mounted a huge supply box.

Merely watching, however, was not enough for the energetic, fun-loving Stuart. He began to shout encouragement and advice to the defenders. Stuart's exposed position was irresistible. He very quickly became the target of well-directed shots. When the defenses finally collapsed before the weight of Hood's Texas Brigade, part of the war booty was a wet, but feisty, Jeb Stuart. But he did not remain a captive for long. A counter-charge swept back through the camp and he was once again free.

Such snowball battles lifted many sagging spirits. A New York artilleryman recalled a battle at Brandy Station in the winter of 1864. “It certainly did me a service, for I have been so blue lately, and have been so confined, and felt so discouraged, that the effect of a hearty laugh was beneficial.” But more than this, the snowball battle had made him feel young again. “I am beginning to feel very old — older every day.” A member of the 113th

New York echoed the sentiments of many when he said, “There were bloody noses and cracked crowns on the occasion; but after the battle there were no gallant fellows lying dead in the snow. . . . It is to be wished that all fights were like it — the bloody and brutal farce of war no more a tragedy than this battle of snowballs.” □

An extraordinary outgrowth of the myth of chivalry among the Southern elite of the nineteenth century was the fascination with “ring tournaments” before, during and after the Civil War. In the spring of 1864, for example, the officers of the Confederate Third Corps sponsored a Grand Tournament and Coronation Ball. Fifty “knights” competed in a series of contests to determine skill and horsemanship. Each, carrying the rosette of his chosen lady, rode at full speed through a course requiring specific maneuvers. The tasks were to cut off a fake head on a post, take a ring, cut a “head” on the ground, and take a bag of straw about the size of a man's head off a post. The contest required five passes, a sabre being the implement of destruction. Judges declared the most successful knight champion while grading the others in order of their finish. The top 12 knights then contested for horsemanship. Competition involved jumping a high fence with riders graded on form. On the following evening, contestants and spectators attended a Coronation Ball, presided over by the Queen of Love and Beauty and her maids of honor.



On this minor but revealing tradition, see William G. Dodd, “Ring Tournaments in Tallahassee,” *Apalachee*, 6 (1950), 55-70; G. Harrison Orsans, “The Origin of the Ring Tournament in the United States,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 36 (Spring, 1941), 263-277; Hanson Hiss, “The Knights of the Lance in the South,” *Outing*, 31 (January, 1898), 338-344; Joseph C. Roberts, ed., “A Ring Tournament in 1864: A Letter from a Mississippian in the Army of Northern Virginia,” *Journal of Mississippi History*, 3 (Oct. 1941), 289-296.

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GREAT GRANDDADDY



by John Head

“Ain’t that Jackie Robinson?”

Granddaddy would ask the same question every time a black player was shown during the television baseball game of the week. And if he had forgotten his glasses again or if the television’s picture was a bit fuzzy, he would ask it for the white players too. Granddaddy asked the question long after Robinson, the Dodger second baseman and first black player in the big leagues, had retired from baseball and was going blind.

It was the same with almost all the old black men who came to watch us play in the youth league. As we raised clouds of dust on fields scraped out of the red Georgia clay or tore up the turf of someone’s freshly mowed pasture pretending we were the men we wanted to be, the men we were likely to become stood on the sidelines in their work-stained clothes. Whenever one of us made a good play in the field, the old men would whoop and holler, and invariably someone would yell, “Just like Jackie Robinson!” It didn’t matter that the player being praised was playing a position Jackie Robinson never played. The cry would build into a chorus and all the old men would be yelling, “Yes suh! Just like ol’ Jackie Robinson!”

Among ourselves – the young players – we tried to be present-day heroes, men like Willie Mays, Elston Howard, Ernie Banks, Al Downing, Roberto Clemente, Bob Gibson and Maury Wills. But to the old men, who had been robbed of the chance for such idols in their childhoods, baseball began and lived through one person: Jackie Robinson. He was the game incarnate. All the old men worshiped him.

All except Big Granddaddy William, that is. He was Granddaddy’s daddy, and a mild rage would come over him at the mention of Jackie Robinson. His rage was inevitably followed by his baseball story. It was Big Granddaddy William’s best story; like all the rest, it happened so long ago that there was no one around old enough to have been there and dispute the facts. And no one could say whether Big Granddaddy really was old enough to have done all the things he claimed because no one knew how old he was.

“Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson,” he always would say, his anger sharpening his memory for the story. “Why is all I ever hear is Jackie Robinson?”

“He broke the color line in baseball, Big Granddaddy,” I would say, playing the straight man. This was before the old Negro League and the exploits of men like Cool Papa Bell, Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Sam Jethroe and Buck Leonard had been resurrected from the obscurity of neglected black history, so I would add: “He was the first colored man to play professional baseball.”

“No he weren’t,” Big Granddaddy would say indignantly, “I remember back in eighteen and sixty-four at Fort Po’laski at Savannah. We played baseball there and it sho’ was professional.”

His story begun, he would lean back in his rocking chair in the evening coolness of the big front porch. I would sit Indian-style at his feet and watch as his still-nimble fingers rolled a cigarette from some of his Prince Albert Tobacco. Big Granddaddy William was a small man, and his hands looked delicate as they handled the cigarette. They were boney and veined, and the skin on them was like wet wax paper wrapped around raw chicken.

# VS. JACKIE ROBINSON

While he prepared to smoke, I pictured Fort Pulaski, the scene of his story. There really is such a place; my class went there on a field trip once. It sits on the marshy Georgia coast where it unsuccessfully guarded the entrance to the state's most important port during the Civil War.

My classmates thought the place was dead, like the rest of history, and that it would have been better off buried and forgotten so they wouldn't have to write reports on it for homework. But for me it was alive. My great-grandfather's stories made it so. I could imagine him standing guard atop the parapet or marching on the parade ground with members of his all-black regiment or walking, torch in hand, through the fort's dark storage tunnels.

But most vividly of all I could visualize the baseball game. The high wall surrounding the parade ground gave the fort the appearance of the major league stadiums I had seen on television. The pool table smoothness of the lush green grass of the parade ground was what I imagined the carefully manicured playing fields of the big leagues were like. And as I stood on top of the wall and looked down at the inside of the fort, the configuration reminded me of aerial views of major league ball parks I had seen in books.

"We was members of the 27th Regiment of U.S. Colored Troops," Big Granddaddy would say. "At the start of the war everybody up North thought it was goin' to be a easy fight and they wouldn't really need no help from us colored folks to whip a bunch of upstart, backwoods rebs. But they thought that by lettin' us have some colored regiments we would learn us some responsibility. I 'spect they also figured it would aggravate the South some too. They wouldn't let us do much fightin' though, mainly 'cause most of the gen'ral's didn't think we had military fightin' in us.

"'Bout the only time we got into battle was when the situation had done got hopeless. Then they would let us go in and fight, and when we would get our tails naturally whipped, then them gen'ral's would say to each other, 'See, I told you they ain't got it in 'em.' And when by some miracle of God Almighty we went into a hopeless situation and come out with a victory of some sort, they always laid it to the inspired leadership of our commanding officer, who always happened to be white.

"But we didn't do that much fightin' a-tall. Mainly we just marched. I swear I marched enough to give a mountain goat bad feet. When we wasn't marchin' we was just sittin' round waitin' for the next hopeless situation to develop. I was awful young at the time, like most of the other fellas in the regiment. Just about every one of us was too young to be in the war, but white folks didn't have no talent a-tall for guessin' the age of colored folks by lookin' at 'em, so we got in all right.

"Like I say, we was all young and naturally restless. It would come up a long time between tailwhippin's and we would be just a-fidgetin' for somethin' to do besides march. So we played baseball, and child, I want to tell you we played enough of it to be good. Yes suh, we even got us a reputation that spread through the Union Army.

"'They can't fight,' folks started sayin', 'but they sho can play theyselves some baseball.'

"And I tell you, child, that I ain't braggin' but just statin' the facts when I say I was one of the stars of the team. You can ask anybody," Big Granddaddy would say, knowing full well that there was nobody to ask, "Me and another soldier name of Joshua.

"Lord, that Joshua was some kind of man. He had done the work of a full-fledged blacksmith since he was 15, and he had been big and strong enough to do it since he was 12. Good God, that man was big! And black. We used to joke with Josh and say he had done spent so much time round that blacksmith's hearth that he had done burnt hisself to soot. He always would say it come natural that he was black as midnight in a cave.

"Joshua was one proud man. When he walked down the street he'd step aside for no man, black nor white. Folks just naturally stepped aside for him. He weren't no bully; he just felt like he had as much right to walkin' space as anybody else.

"That man Joshua was a sight to see playin' some baseball, 'specially hittin'. Lord God Almighty, that man could naturally knock a baseball from here to yonder every day of the week and twice that on Sunday. Them teams what we played learnt to just get a head start on looking for the ball whenever Josh come to bat.

"I wasn't much in size compared to Joshua. In fact, I was small compared to just about all the other fellas. But I was the second best hitter on the team next to Joshua, and didn't nobody argue the point. I wasn't that strong, but I used my head a lot better'n the others when it come to hittin' that baseball.

"You see, I had done a little taste of lumberjackin' before I sneaked into the army. That was up in the Northwest. One of the things I learnt was the proper way to swing a axe. And that's the way I swung that baseball bat. All the other fellas held the bat with they hands a ways apart from each other. Even Joshua did, but he was so strong that it didn't make that much difference. I held my bat with my hands close together.

"And another thing I done was I changed up on which side of the home base I hit from. All the other players stood on the same side all the time, but I figured that if I learnt to hit from both sides, why I'd just get half as tired from all that hittin'.

"We could naturally play ourselves some baseball, and a lot of folks heard about us. One of them folks was the Union colonel who had took charge of Fort Po'laski and who went through special trouble to have our regiment sent to his command there.

"Colonel Aldridge was his name. He was a man not much bigger'n I was back then, but he had the biggest hunger for winnin' than anybody you ever would want to see. He was known as a hard man who drilled his troops and pushed 'em and worked 'em 'til they was ready to do nothin' but fight and win. So we figured that we was 'bout to do more marchin' than we ever done before.

"But when we got there the colonel hisself greeted us and he didn't say nothin' 'bout drillin' and marchin'. He just said, 'I hear you boys play some baseball. Our parade ground out there is a perfect ball yard. Why don't you go out and practice and play some?' That's all he said do and that was just 'bout all we did for a solid week.



"Whenever we was out there Colonel Aldridge would be standin' round real watchful-like, and sometimes a sort of secret smile would come from behind his beard. In fact, everybody was watchin' us, includin' the Confederate prisoners of war who was allowed out in the parade grounds from time to time.

"One day, I happened to be standin' close to where Colonel Aldridge was. He had sent for a Confederate prisoner, a sergeant. His name was Cobb and I found out he was from right here in Georgia, north of Atlanta. This Sergeant Cobb come up to Colonel Aldridge and says, 'Y'all wanted to see me Cap'n?' He said it real sassy-like, like he knowed perfect and well Aldridge was a colonel but he wanted to show that he didn't have to admit it.

"Aldridge, he just let the insult pass. He says to Cobb, 'Sergeant Cobb, you said your team would be willin' to play another game of baseball anytime I wanted.'

"I reckon we'll play for the usual stakes against any of your men you want to put up,' Cobb says.

"What about these men?" Colonel Aldridge asks, noddin' his head toward our regiment team.

"I said any *men* you got,' Cobb says, 'not niggers.'

"These are Union soldiers,' Aldridge says. 'We consider 'em men.'

"That's just two marks against 'em instead of one,' Cobb says, real smart-like.

"Will you play 'em or won't you?' Aldridge says. He was gettin' madder'n a bumblebee in a bottle.

"I reckon we whipped all the men you can put up, and I reckon we can whip your darkies too,' Cobb says. And then he says, 'Let's make the stakes a little more innerestin'. Instead of just sayin' the winner gets a extra supper ration for a week, let's also say the loser goes without supper rations for a week.'

"That's fine,' Colonel Aldridge says, and he walks off.

"And so the game was set, and Lord, they was makin' a big to-do 'bout the thing. Everybody in the fort was talkin' 'bout it. Most fuss I ever seen over a little ol' ball game. They decided to have it on a Saturday, the day they always invited the ladies from Savannah to come over to the fort for a evening dance. So the ladies and some of the men folk from the town was goin' to be at the game. Child, that game was workin' up into a natural occasion, and none of us on the team knowed why at first.

"It didn't take long for word of why to get to us, though. We found out that this was to be the fifth game that a team from the Union army would play the rebs, and each time before the rebs had won. Colonel Aldridge had arranged the games for the fun of it, at first, but when the Union teams lost, he got madder 'n madder. The first time he put up a team from his original command. When they lost, he took it out on 'em by drillin' and workin' and marchin' 'em until they practically dropped. After that he brung in teams from other Union regiments. When those lost he had 'em shipped off to duty in the area of Tennessee that was controlled by a band of rebs called Johnson's Raiders. If we lost we likely would be gettin' the same duty.

"Now that was particular bad news for us 'cause everybody had done heard of Johnson's Raiders and knowed they was the meanest, toughest, most dirty-fightin' bunch that the Confederate Army had. They wasn't particular 'bout how they shot you as long as you got shot. They would ambush you and shoot you in the back; they would come howlin' out of the hills and attack at the most God-awful time of night. They would even stoop to dressin' up like women and come strollin' towards a encampment and suddenly pull guns out from under they dresses when they got close enough. Any regiment that got sent up against 'em stood to lose a lot of good men. So we started takin' a special interest in winnin' that game.

"We got word that it weren't goin' to be no easy matter. Everybody who had seen 'em play said the rebel boys was some kind of good. That Sergeant Cobb was supposed to be the best of 'em. He was a natural terror on that field. While all the other players would always run into the bases standin' up no matter what, this Cobb would come slidin' in on his backside if the play was goin' to be close. And sometime if it was goin' to be real close he would come floppin' in on his belly.

"That man didn't have no limits. He drove nails through the soles of his boots so the points stuck out the bottoms. He said it was cause it made him run faster, but anybody that seen him play could tell you that weren't the only reason. It didn't take many basemen to be carried off the field bleedin' before the others learnt to step aside and let the sergeant have his base."

Just about that point in his story, Big Granddaddy William's throat would get dry.

"Child," he would say to me, "go look in the ice box and bring me a bottle of dope."

"Dope" was what Big Granddaddy William and all the old folks called Coca-Cola out of a belief that it had cocaine in it. After a few sips, Big Granddaddy would rock back, belch, and go on with his story.

"It come the day of the game and there was a feelin' in the air like the first day of 10 county fairs rolled into one. It was a cool, sunny day in the early fall. A nice breeze was blowin' in from the sea, comin' over the high marsh grass to the fort. There was a lot of folks from Savannah there. Some of 'em stood back along the baselines and some stood up on top of the wall 'round the parade ground. It was a sight, what with all the ladies dressed up real fancy and each of 'em with a different color parasol held over her head.

"The first thing we done was to settle on the rules. Them rebs wanted to play that countrified ball, the kind where you can put a man out by hittin' him with the ball if he's off the base. But we weren't havin' none of that stuff. We said we was goin' to play by civilized rules and that's the way it was.

"Once we got started things was real tight. Them rebs wasn't much as hitters, but they was scrappers. Our team jumped out to the lead right away, mainly by the work of Joshua and me. I would get a hit and Joshua would come up behind me and knock the ball over the wall. Them rebels had never seen nothin' like it and the first time Joshua did it they was a big argument.

"The rebs said that since hittin' the ball over the wall cause so much trouble, what with havin' to go find it and all, then when it was done it ought to be a out. But Colonel Aldridge settled the argument by sayin' that if the object of the game was to hit the ball, then you can't penalize a man for doin' it better'n anybody else.

"I had noticed that the wall I would be hittin' towards if I was standin' on my left-handed side of the home base was a lot closer than the other side. So I determined that I would hit from that side. And I be danged if I didn't hit one over the wall. It sho did aggravate them rebs to see a little biddy thing like me knock the ball over that wall.

"Between me and Josh and what help we got from the rest of the team we would build some sizeable leads. But them rebs wouldn't never give up and they was always peckin' away, comin' back to make it tight. Every time they scored a run the reb prisoners and the folks from Savannah — even the ladies — would let out one of them ear-piercin' rebel yells. The Union soldiers would give a cheer whenever we scored, not so much 'cause they wanted us to win, but 'cause they knowed Colonel Aldridge wanted us to win.

"It soon became apparent that this was one game that was goin' right down to the wire. The rebs was gettin' scrappier by the minute and was doin' all they could to catch us. Sergeant Cobb was livin' up to his reputation for playin' hard and dirty. But me and Joshua kept doin' the job.

"One time late in the game I bounced one off that wall and made it into second base. That Sergeant Cobb come trottin' over and he says real quiet-like, 'Nigger, next time you hit the ball you ain't goin' to be able to run 'round these bases.'

"I looked at him real hard and I says, 'What you say, white man?' I was tryin' to sound like I wasn't scared, but Lord knows I was.

"He says, 'Next time you hit that ball and try to run 'round these bases you liable to get kilt along the way.'

"I says to him, 'You try to do anything to me and Colonel Aldridge goin' to take care of you.'

"And he gets a real wicked grin on his face and says, 'What he goin' to do, put us in jail?'

"I had to admit that the cracker had a point. They weren't much could be done to 'em that weren't already bein' done. I was worried, real worried.

"Well, child, it come down to our last time at bat and danged if we didn't find ourselves two runs behind. Them rebs had done scrapped back and took the lead. Our first two men at bat went out, and I could just hear Johnson's Raiders comin' down at me in the middle of the night. But our next man got a hit and it was my turn at bat. I remembered what Cobb told me, and I told the other fellas.

"'What I goin' to do?' I asked 'em. 'What you mean?' they asked me. Then they answered their own question. They says, 'You goin' to get up there and help win this game lessin you wants your back in the sights of Johnson's Raiders.'

"So I found myself up there caught between two bad situations. I decided to just do my best and let the rest take care of itself. Well, child, I hit that ball and it went to the furthest part of that parade ground, straight up the center of the ball field. It was a mighty hit, and it just barely missed clearin' the wall. It landed up there on top and stayed there. The folks standin' on that part of the wall stepped aside and you could see the ball just sittin' up there. I was about to run the bases when I looked up and seen three of the biggest and meanest lookin' of them rebs. Each one of 'em was standin' on top of a base, glarin' at me and darin' me to come his way. At the same time the rebel outfielders was runnin' 'round tryin' to climb up ladders to the wall so they could fetch that ball and throw me out.

"Well suh, I just stood there. Didn't know what to do. The other fella had come 'round the bases and scored, but we still was one run short. I had to score to tie it up. If I didn't run soon I'd be thrown out for sho. The fellas was yellin', 'Run William! Run William!' Like it already was Johnson's Raiders behind me and them. And Colonel Aldridge was yellin', 'Run you damned fool! Run!' Like he could see another defeat sneakin' up 'bout to grab holt to him. I just stood there lookin' at three of the meanest lookin' peckerwoods I ever did lay eyes on. I couldn't do nothin'.

"All of a sudden, Joshua ran out there with the meanest look on his face that I even seen on a human bein'. He grab me up just as easy as I was a dollar sack of groceries. He carried me down to first base and that big reb saw the biggest, blackest, *meanest* lookin' man he ever saw comin' chargin' down on him like a angry bull, and he just stepped aside. Joshua touched me down on that base and then picked me up again. He went chargin' down to second base. The rebel stepped aside and Joshua touched me down again. He charged down to third base and the reb looked like he wasn't goin' to step aside, but the look lasted for just a second. He stepped aside and Josh touched me down and then carried me on in to home base.

"There weren't no other way I coulda made it 'round them bases and tied the score. Joshua was next up to bat. He was so riled up at what them rebs had tried to do that he knocked that ball clean away. They ain't never found that one yet. When Josh come 'round them bases we had won. We was so happy that we wasn't goin' to have to face Johnson's Raiders, not to mention not havin' to go without supper, that we went out and tried to pick Joshua up on our shoulders. We should have knowed better. That man was too big for all of us put together to carry.

"Yes, child, that's the way it was," Big Granddaddy William would say, rocking slowly in his chair as if to ease the last of the story out of himself. "All I know is we was playin' for our supper and for our lives and you can't get no more professional than that. So I don't see what is all the fuss 'bout no Jackie Robinson." □

*John Head, a 28-year-old writer living in Atlanta, learned the joys of baseball on makeshift fields around his hometown of Jackson, Georgia. His short story is based on a tale related to him by his grandfather.*





# Part 2 / BLOOD SPORTS



**A Desperate and Fatal Contest between a Party of Hunters and Gang of Grizzly Bears.**

# Just everybody's not a bear hunter



edited by Jeff Fears

**D**addy said, "Too late now. He's gone."

I said, "Maybe not." I said, "I could track him." I just wheeled and went back up there where he went off that log, and there, where he'd jumped off, was a track so big your hat wouldn't cover it. You could see it just like a cow's track, you know, where he'd jumped off. And when he went to walking, why you could see his track right on around through there just the same as a cow track.

The dogs had quit, so I just took its sign and was tracking it just like tracking a dog or a cow. I just left Dad. I never paid no more attention to him. And first thing I knowed, I walked right in on it! And he was in laurel as thick as your fingers. He was going right around the side of the hill from me. I pulled out my pistol and fired. That's all I had was a pistol. A 38-special is what it was. Held nine shots. Well, when I done that, he just threw his head up, turned, and was coming towards me.

I fell down and emptied the gun. I didn't have time but to put two more back in the magazine. I had a pocket full of shells, but didn't have time to put them in. That thing was a-getting so close I didn't feel good waiting to put in any more. So I had two more shots, and the last shot that I fired, he jerked his head thataway and I hit him right in the lock of the jaw, and his mouth flew open, and you could have set a small dog in his mouth without a bit of trouble. And the blood just a-gushing.

I didn't have sense enough to shoot over his head. He had his head down. If I'd gone over his head, I'd done good. But I didn't. You just as well spit out there in the yard for all the good that'll do to shoot one in the head. But when you're in a laurel patch and you're going in on him and he's coming out at you, you don't feel good. That's the way that one was. He was close as that chair there to me, and I'd done made the will to run when Daddy slipped up behind me and said, "Where's it at?"

And I said, "If you look right there, you'd see where it's at!" And that bear's mouth was open that big. You could have thrown a dog in his mouth.

Dad had a .30-.30. He jerked that .30-.30 in to his face, and when the gun fired, the bear just wheeled and right off the side of the hill he went and went over a cliff about 40 foot high.

When Mike Clark, the director of the Highlander Center in New Market, Tennessee, and one of the members of the *Foxfire* Advisory Board, found out that some of us were interested in meeting some bear hunters, he offered to meet me, Danny Brown and Eddie Brown at his home place in the Cruso Valley outside Waynesville, North Carolina, and introduce us to some. His ancestors had been bear hunters, and so he had met many men in the area who hunted for sport and for the meat. He took us to meet Bob Burress, Glenn Griffin and Lenoir "Bear Hunter" Pless.

Several weeks later, Eliot Wigginton and I were on the road again, this time to check out some bear hunting information that had been gathered by another *Foxfire* student several years ago from Taylor Crockett, who lives near Franklin, North Carolina.

The bears that live in the Southern Appalachians are all black bears. Jerald Cogdill told us, "The average weight of the bears we kill is 200 to 250 pounds. A lot of people see one, you know, and their eyes get big and then the bear gets big too."

The bear's main source of food is the "mast" of the forest – hickory nuts, acorns and so on. They also eat worms, berries, grapes and insects in season; if hungry, they will sometimes venture down into communities to visit apple orchards or garbage cans and dumps. They rarely kill stock like sheep or cattle. Jerald said, "There's one that killed a cow on I-40 the other day because this year there ain't much in the woods for them to eat. If they can get things to eat, they won't generally bother animals."

In the fall of the year, they do their main feeding for the long winter months, raking back the leaves to find mast, or even climbing up into the oak and hickory trees to break off nut-bearing limbs. Jerald said, "Before the apples start falling, if there isn't a lot of mast in the woods, a lot of times you can check an apple tree and find where he's climbed it by the claw marks. But usually they stay in the woods and hunt. They rake the leaves in there. Just looks like a bunch of hogs have been in there rooting around."

The female will go to den in November or December if she has enough

fat stored up to last her through the winter. If not, she'll generally keep hunting, sometimes being forced to eat bark in the worst part of the winter. The male does not go to den, but keeps prowling. "In bad weather," Bear Hunter said, "he'll crawl under something or another – under a tree or a limb or something. Or if they ain't nothing for him to get under, he'll break laurel and ivy like a hog and make him a bed. I've found several of them in the summertime. Be a huckleberry picking or something and find them in them laurel thickets where they've just broke them and made them a pile as big as – well, I bet you can't get what they break and pile it in this room right here. And they just crawl right in the middle of it and lay down there just quilled up. Maybe lay two or three days and get up and go on. Maybe another bad spell come and they do the same thing again. Never go to den.

"But the female always goes to den when she's fat enough. Her cubs are born there in February and March. The mother will go out during these first spring months to get water and food, but she usually doesn't bring the cubs out until up in April when it's warm enough for them to follow." By hunting season, the cub is usually ready to take care of itself and weighs about 50 pounds.

In the spring and summer while the cub is still following its mother, the mother is very protective. Bear Hunter said, "You better *watch* when they've cubs or little ones. They're like a dog or a wildcat or anything else. They fight for their little ones. If you ever find a little one, don't never try to catch him without you *know* it has got away from the mother. If he ever makes a squall [and she's around], she'll be there in a minute."

A bear will range for miles hunting mast, but will generally stay in the same area where he was raised. Jerald said, "They sometimes range as far as 20 miles in one night. A lot of people won't believe it, but they will. Bears will move until they find food. They have to." Bears are not territorial in the sense that they fight to keep other bears out of their area. Sometimes there will be six or eight or 10 bears all feeding in one area.

Every hunter that we talked to agreed that the first step in any hunt

was the location of fresh signs that would show where the bears had been feeding. Some hunters go into the woods around October first and locate signs in order to be ready to take their parties in when the season opens on October 15. The oldest hunters, however, would just go to the woods and camp, find signs and do their hunting all at the same time.

On the morning of the hunt, "standers" are put out on ridges overlooking gaps that the bear is likely to pass through once the dogs start chasing it. Once they're in place, the dogs are put on the trail, and hopefully the bear is located, then either killed by one of the standers as it flees by, or treed by the dogs and held in one place until the hunters can get there and kill it.

The signs the hunters look for are such things as places where the bears raked back leaves looking for mast. If the nuts haven't started falling yet, the hunter might find places where the bears have climbed up into oak trees and broken limbs trying to get to them. Bob Burress said, "We call it 'lapping.' I reckon what give it that name is a bear'll just reach out and lap em in."

Once the feeding area is located, the hunters are ready to begin. Taylor Crockett described the oldest style of hunting as follows:

"The younger men, they did the hard work. They got in the woods and made camp; and the older men, they furnished the brains for the hunt. [After camp was made] the younger men, or the men that were able, would go out and hunt signs the first day and come back and report. Then the older members of the party would plan the strategy of the hunt – that is, decide which way to drive with the dogs and where to place the standers. [The bear might] be laying up in a woolly head up a ridge. Well, he'd say, 'We'll jump it there in the morning; and if we come in from above, why, he'll run west. If we come in from below, he'll run north. And so we'll put standers in such and such a gap that he's likely to go through.' And before they took the dogs out, they would send the standers on ahead to be there waiting.

"Now they might send the standers out five miles, and maybe the dogs would go the other way. [That stander] might never hear a dog all day. But he was supposed to stay there till up in



the evening so if the bear happened to come that way, he'd be there. And if he left his stand or did something he wasn't supposed to do, why, they wouldn't take him hunting again. He had to go according to the rules.

"And then the drivers — they were the men that led the dogs through the woods to pick up the track — generally they'd have one dog that was bolder, better trained, and more experienced. They'd turn him loose first and let him get it straightened out, and then they'd turn the younger dogs loose one or two at a time on the track so they wouldn't fight. They were so high-keyed that they just wanted to jump on anything they might run across. They'd jump on each other they were so excited and wanting to go so bad.

"But the older, more experienced dog is your strike dog. He generally has a little better nose and can smell a colder track. He's maybe a little smarter. Won't get excited and get off the track and lose it. And they use him to start the other dogs. And sometimes they'll have a dog or two that just barks big mostly and doesn't fight much. He just chases the bear, but they can hear him a long ways. Then maybe there'll be another dog — sometimes they'll use a mixed-up [breed of] dog — that doesn't bark much, but he fights hard and tends to stop the bear. You need both kinds. A dog that won't stop the bear is not much good, and one that'll stop him but you don't know where he is is not too good. So you use a combination — a team — gathered in a pack of six or 12 or 15. Seven or eight is enough, but sometimes you get men with you, and they all want to bring their own dogs, and you just keep adding on until you get, really, more than you need. I used to do better with just five or six old dogs that knew just exactly what they were doing. I'd hardly ever lose a bear.

"Some hunters will use their dogs such a long time that they won't run anything *but* bear. You want them to lead the young dogs because the young dogs want to run deer or coon or just pretty near anything they can get after.

"Then the drivers, of course, fall in behind the dogs in case they stop the bear long enough for them to catch up — tree him. And the standers, they could tell by listening at the dogs coming if they were going to come

close. If they were, they'd try to run in and cut him off — try to kill the bear.

"And it would generally take them a week for a hunt. Now, why, they just jump in a jeep and run out here, you know, 10 or 15 miles to hunt, and come back that same day. Not the same as it used to be. That's the reason that the game is getting scarce. Too accessible."

Jerald Cogdill is one of a number of bear hunters that represents a bridge between old and new hunting techniques. He and his partners begin scouting for signs two weeks before the season opens in the fall, and return home in the evenings since most of them have to be at work the next morning. When the season opens, they head for the most likely spot



they have found [it is common for a man to set up his job at a local plant so that his vacations fall at the beginning of bear season], put out their standers, and bring in their dogs.

"And we use radios. With a radio, you can tell a man which way the bear's going; and the man that's like the stander up here, why, if it's going through yonder, he'll be listening on his radio and he might come back down here to where we turned loose at and get a vehicle and go around and cut that bear off.

"We use 11 dogs in all, and they know what they're doing. You need six good dogs to get ahold of the bear — not ones to run along behind it and bark at it. You'll never tree a bear that way. They've got to get ahold of it [and aggravate it until it stops running and trees]."

Bob Burress, like Jerald, begins looking for signs about the first of October. "You've got to go way back. The rougher the country, the better the bear likes it." Glenn agreed, saying, "A bear can run within 20 feet of you in that ivy [laurel and rhododendron] and you can't see him. You can hear him a-slashing it down, but you can't see him. He likes that kind of country. He'll just run through it just like a horse."

The men who are following the dogs, if they can keep up with them, have a better chance at getting the bear. They are really the ones who are in the middle of everything, and often they look down on those who prefer to be standers. As Bear Hunter said, "If you really bear hunt, you'll run with the dogs unless you do like a lot of them does — get out [in a stand] and pile up and lay there while everybody else does the work. They'll go to a stand and then they'll stay a little bit and they'll leave it, and maybe if you jump one, right through there he goes and gets away. I used to, when I could get about, when the dogs would strike one, that's the way I went. I followed them. I stayed with the dogs."

Taylor Crockett, who also runs with the dogs, said, "Bear hunting is the most rugged sport we have in the hunting line. To do it right, you have to be in good physical condition. You find the bear generally in the very roughest place that he can find. Calls for a lot of endurance and determina-

tion and perseverance. Just *everybody's* not a bear hunter. Now there are a good many would-be bear hunters, but they just go out somewhere and park their jeeps on the road and listen to the dogs is about all they do. A real bear hunter likes to get in there with the dogs and find the track and turn loose on him. That separates the men from the boys is the old saying."

If there are a large number of men on the hunt, then a decision has to be made as to how the bear is going to be divided up. Bob Burress told us of several methods:

"First we skin it out. We usually lay it out on a piece of paper and skin him out on the ground — just split him down the legs and start skinning him out. Sometimes we hang him to skin him. We start at his heels and skin

plumb on out down to his head. Most of the time we don't skin his feet. We just put a ring around his back legs and split it right on out. Skin right up his legs to his chin and then peel that off.

"Then however many men we got on the hunt — say there's 10 men — we cut that bear's hams up into 10 pieces and put them in 10 piles. [Then we cut the rest of the bear up the same way and distribute it among the 10 piles.] It's divided just as equal as we can divide it, and then put into bags. Each man just goes and gets him a bag of meat.

"But now we used to just face a man against a wall there, and another man would put his hand on a pile and say, 'Whose is this?'

"And [the man facing the wall



would say], 'That's Stewart's.' He'd have a list in front of him and just call out the names [as the other men went from pile to pile].

"They said that 75 years ago, they put the meat in piles. Then they'd take a man, blindfold him, spin him around a couple of times; and he would point with that stick and say, 'This is Joe's,' or somebody's, so no one would be cheated. We've done that."

Bob said, "A lot of the boys has tanned them bear hides and made them a rug. And we've sold a lot of hides. And we could sell them teeth, them tushes, for 50 cents apiece. And we'd take them claws and sell every one of them for 35 cents apiece. You'd be surprised at the amount of money that adds up to. We put it back in the treasury in the club and kept a

little money ahead that way. But now it's illegal to sell the hide. A lot of these tourists around Maggie Valley coming in, they was the ones buying them."

After the bear is killed, one of the problems is to keep the dogs, who are highly keyed and excited, from fighting among each other. Bob deals with that problem this way: "We let them dogs wool the bear for about five minutes. Then we get the dogs off. You can easily get your dogs in a fight right there when you've killed the bear. It has happened. The dogs is mad. I mean they're *mad* when they're fighting a bear. When you pull the dogs loose, you have to watch out or they'll snap at you. So after about five

or 10 minutes, we start pulling the dogs back out and tying them up. Some of them you have to separate and put single because they'll fight right there."

As Jerald said, "For a hog dog, you want one that will catch and hold on because if he turns loose, that hog'll cut him to pieces. But for a bear dog, you want one that will go in, snap, turn loose and come back. If he holds on, he gets killed because that old bear can reach around and get him.

"My brother had a dog that got his heart and liver knocked an inch and a quarter out of place. It took a 300 dollar doctor bill and it still ain't no count. And I've seen dogs get slapped so hard they were addled for days; and another dog I saw got cut up like you were making shoestrings out of him. Of course, the only dogs you get killed are your best dogs. The sorry dogs hang back.

"We've had several dogs killed. Never had a man get hurt, but we've had a bear bite his gun strap. We'll shoot one, and maybe the dogs'll have it down, and it'll get one of the dogs and start to bite it or something and we have to run in there and kick it loose and stick the gun right down against its head and shoot it so it won't kill the dogs. I've seen them get a dog up and start to lay the teeth to them. Just pick the whole dog up and pull him right on in and pop the teeth to him. If they get ahold of one, they'll tear one apart. That bear hunting's rough. I like it though."

Though there are many dangers involved, and a very real chance that dogs that have been worked with and trained for years will never hunt again, the excitement of the chase and the fight still makes it worthwhile for those men that have it in their blood. They get a good scare once in a while, but that's all part of it. Taylor Crockett just laughs at the times he's seen men scared:

"Of course, if you come in and the bear and the dogs are fighting, it's more exciting because maybe you're crawling through the ivy and you can't see over 10 feet ahead, but you can hear the bear growling and popping his teeth, and the dogs hollering; and maybe you'll see one get slapped and fly up over the laurel — bear'll







hit one and it'll just throw it.

"I've gotten a pretty good kick now and then out of people I have taken hunting. One time I took some young men who were inexperienced but enthusiastic, and I said, 'Well, now, boys, you all are young and stout. You can outrun me. So if we get after a bear, I want you to take after him just as hard as you can and catch up and kill him!'"

"And so we turned on a bear and they lit out in good style, and oh, they left me behind pretty quick. But I soon noticed that I was gaining on the boys. The closer we got to the bear, the slower they got. Just before we got to the bear, I had caught up with them. I could hear the dogs and it sounded like one hell of a fight. You could hear the dogs barking and the bear growling and the brush popping. And I came around a little turn in the trail, and there stood the boys. I said, 'Boys, why don't you get gone in there and kill that bear?'"

"Well," they said, 'we believe you better kill it for us!' What happened was they got there and it kindly killed their nerve!"

"And another old boy, I took him. He says, 'Crockett,' he says, 'I just thought all my life about killing a bear.' Says, 'That's my greatest ambition.' Said, 'If you'll see that I get to kill a bear,' says, 'I'll pay you extra.'"

"Well," I says, 'we'll see what we can do.'

"And so that day we got after a big bear, and we had a good race, and the dogs stopped him in a little narrow ravine — just real steep-sided. Just ran up a little holler, and then he couldn't climb out. He just run up against a rock cliff like, and the brush and ivy and rhododendron was real thick in there.

"And this boy that was helping me with the dogs, we caught up and we could hear the bear down in there and the dogs fighting and the bear popping his teeth, and I said, 'Get that old boy and we'll let him kill this bear!'"

"He ran back and got him and brought him up there. It was kinda open out in front of the ravine, but you couldn't see back in there very well. That fellow ran up and down the bank a little bit, and he *looked* in here; and he ran up and he *looked* in there, and he listened a little, and he says, 'Crockett,' says, 'I guess you

better kill this bear.' He just didn't quite have the nerve to crawl in there!"

"So that's kinda the way you feel when you get there. Your hair seems like it just sorta rises up on the back of your neck a little bit, you know, and you get goose pimples. Of course, that's the charge you get out of hunting. The excitement. If they wasn't some excitement to it, why, there wouldn't be any point in going.

"Couple of years ago, a young man went with me boar hunting. Hunting one that had been committing depredations to a cornfield. He could really get through the woods, and I told him to go ahead and try to get the boar, and he did. I heard him shoot, 'Bang, bang, bang!' I was pretty close. I went on. He owled [made a sound like an owl as a signal to let Taylor know where he was. A man would owl once if he wanted to know where you were, or three times if he wanted you to come]. I answered him. When you kill a boar, you shoot two shots about five seconds apart a few minutes after you've killed it so they'll know you've killed it. He didn't shoot any shots in the air. I got to him and the first thing he said to me was, 'I guess I did something you won't like.'

"I said, 'What? Kill an old sow?' We had not planned to kill any sows that trip.

"Says, 'No.' What he'd done was kill a bear. He was up there crawling around looking for a boar on the ground, and this bear jumped out right by him — lit right by him — out of a tree. And he shot all his shells up and killed him, and that's the reason he thought he'd done something I wouldn't like because it was out of season for bear.

"And I said, 'Well, did it scare you a little bit?'"

"And he rared back and says, 'No-o-o-o-o! Not a bit!'"

"And I just thought, 'Well, now, that's a lie.'"

"And then after a while, he said, 'Well,' he said, 'it did sorta excite me a little bit.'

"I can imagine." □

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ONLY GRAVEYARD OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD, the sign says. I already knew that, and Amos Powers knew it, and just about everybody in Franklin County knew it. They put the sign up, Amos explained, "for to tell the public." That's fair. The public has a right to know when it stumbles onto anything that is "the onliest one of its kind in the world." But Key Underwood Memorial Park, deep in the Oak-Hickory-Pine forest wilderness of Tennessee Valley, Alabama, at a site formerly called Nancy's Old Wash Place, is hardly the kind of spot sightseers and tourists accidentally bump into.

Some of the markers are simple, a painted wooden cross with REST IN PEACE. Some are concrete, lettered with a strong finger before the mix hardened. Others are marble, with sandblasted dates reading JUNE 11, 1940 – AUG. 17, 1964. Some have relief carvings on the face or the top of the stones, or laminated photographs. And there is one granite marker, with a bronze plaque that says, OWNER GRANT WHEELER, B'HAM, ALA.

These markers cost from a few dollars to probably \$400. Commemorating them all is a monument said to have cost \$5,000, "cut by one of them boys over there at Rockwood – Rockwood, Alabama," and donated by the Tennessee Valley Coon Hunter's Club. Erected in 1962, the milk-white statue shows two dogs treeing a coon.

There are no bumper stickers or fancy signs pointing the way to the Park. The cemetery is nestled deep in the wilderness of the hills on purpose, and anybody who would make a pilgrimage must first find a Valley resident to vouch for him, to lead the way into the hidden place. I was shown the way by Amos Powers, who owns and operates Vina Sundries, a grocery-drug-toys-drygoods-hardware store.

"A world of people stop off at that park," Amos said, but we met no traffic. He stopped twice for directions himself before coming to the dirt road he remembered. When we arrived, seven or eight cars full of folks were already there, and Amos went among them, paving my way, and soon introduced me to John Nance. Though he now lives in Ohatchee, Alabama, John was born and raised in Franklin



# COON DOG GRAVEYARD

by Jim Salem

County 67 years ago and had hunted with many of the dogs buried at the cemetery. "There's Red and there's Queen," he pointed out. "I've hunted with that dog right there, Troop. He was a c-o-l-d trailer, boy, I'm telling you. He'd trail one that'd been gone along for a long time. He'd pick it up and just walk here and yonder and..."

What's clear every time someone begins talking about their particular dog is this: coon dogs are work dogs. The relationship of owner to dog is a professional one before it's a personal one. The dogs have to perform before they earn affection. If Old Blue quits easily, occasionally tracks a rabbit or possum, or barks at the foot of a tree that is coon-empty – he gets kicked, swatted, cussed at (maybe even shot) and then sold, traded or given away. Barking up an empty tree is called, appropriately, lying. And everybody hates a lying coon dog.

"This feller," John told me, pointing to a grave, "he was a big coon hunter. And he heard about a feller having a monkey who could take his pistol and go up a tree and shoot a coon out, you know. And they'd save cutting the timber and everything. And this feller got awful interested in that monkey, and he called the guy and asked him would he bring his monkey and go coon hunting with him. And he said yeah. So they went, and the dogs treed, and he give his monkey the pistol. He climbed the tree and went up there and POP! Out rolled the coon. They got him and went on, and this feller he was s-o-o-o interested in that monkey. Did he want to sell him? Feller told him he'd sell it to him. He said, 'Will you guarantee that monkey to go up every tree that a dog trees up and shoot the coon out?' Says, 'Yes sir, I'll guarantee you.' Well, he bought him. He went up, went a-coon hunting that night with him, you know, and carried the monkey. And the dog treed, and he handed him his pistol, and up that tree that monkey went. Stayed about 10 minutes. He come down, walked down with this pistol in his hand, and shot this feller's dog. So this feller called the guy he bought the monkey from and told him. He said, 'That damn monkey!' He said, 'I carried him out and the dog treed.' Said, 'He climbed that tree and went about 10 minutes

up there and come down and shot my coon dog.' Other feller said, 'Oh, I forgot to tell you about that.' Said, 'That monkey just hates a damn lying coon dog!'"

A simple hand-painted sign marks one of the special sites in the graveyard: "TROOP," FIRST DOG LAID TO REST HERE SEPT. 4, 1937. "When I was hunting with ole Troop," John Nance recalled, "H. E. Files owned him. He'd bought him from Tom Hall. And H. E. Files said that feller cried when he bought Troop from that feller, from Tom Hall, H. E. and Ben Devaney went over there and went a-hunting with Tom and Troop, and the ole dog struck one of them cold coons. Took him about four or five hours, but he treed him. And H. E. Files said, 'Tom, would you sell that dog?' He said, 'No, I don't want to sell him a-tall.' H. E. said, 'Well, you *would* sell him, wouldn't you?' Tom said, 'Yeah, I'd take two hundred dollars for him if anybody had little enough sense to give it.' That was back when two hundred dollars was about like a thousand now. H. E. counted him out two hundred dollars. Led Troop home. Tom Hall cried, and he made H. E. promise then that he'd let him have him back if he ever wanted to get shed of him."

Apparently Files never did. The two traveled together for six years, staying in the woods for days and sometimes weeks at a time, until the revenuers found Files' place of business. H. E. went to the pen, and Troop was pawned to Dr. Key Underwood of Tuscumbia for \$75. Files bought him back after he served his prison sentence, so he could keep his promise and return Troop to Tom Hall.

"And Key requested that when Troop died he wanted him. He was gonna mount his hide, you know. So Tom told him he'd let him have him, and bout a year after that the hair went to coming off of him. He was old – bout 13, I believe. So Tom Hall gave him back to Key Underwood. Key didn't want to kill him, or put him to sleep or something. So all the hair come off of him and he couldn't mount him. And when he died, why he brought him over here and buried him. Key's the one donated the land."

There's a special story attached to this particular place – one that has to

do with Troop and a near-legendary Supercoon. "They'd been running this coon, you see," John told me. "Lot of coon hunters had dogs down here, and they'd run em down to Rock Creek. That coon'd come down by the creek, and that's as far as they could get him. And the dogs'd hunt and wear themselves down, and the hunt'd be over. And they got where they'd go around here, because it'd ruin their night's hunt. They didn't want to strike that coon."

"Key Underwood told em he was gonna catch this coon – he had a dog that'd tree him. So they come over here, and they was all laughing, and he said I want ole Troop to strike him now, y'all keep your dogs tied til Troop strikes. And they turned loose right here on the hill of this branch, and ole Troop struck him. Run him right into Rock Creek, right down where they'd always lose him, you know, like he flew away. And the rest of the dogs all hunted for an hour or two for him and never could find him. But Troop never did quit. He just kept going up and down the creek, up and down the creek. And next morning at four o'clock Troop found him. There's an old log that was stuck up out of a little old island out there, and that damn coon would swim under water and climb up and get in that log, and that's where he'd go on em every time. And Troop found him, four o'clock the next morning. That's the reason Key Underwood brought him here to the head of this branch and buried him here."

Below the park, behind the concrete picnic tables and a few hundred feet down the hill in the back, the crystal clear spring that furnished water for Nancy's Old Wash Place and hiding places for Depression coons still runs aimlessly and lazily around the hills. Folks who like their whiskey, I was told, find this a good place to take a swallow. "They say ain't nothing better'n the world than whiskey and that branch water." It was here that John Nance told me about the role hunting played in his life.

"It's changed up so much, these roads and everything, and all that clearing back in here. I've walked from Pleasant Site over in through here coon hunting at night, where I could get in the next day sometime, you know. Boy, I recall them days." He





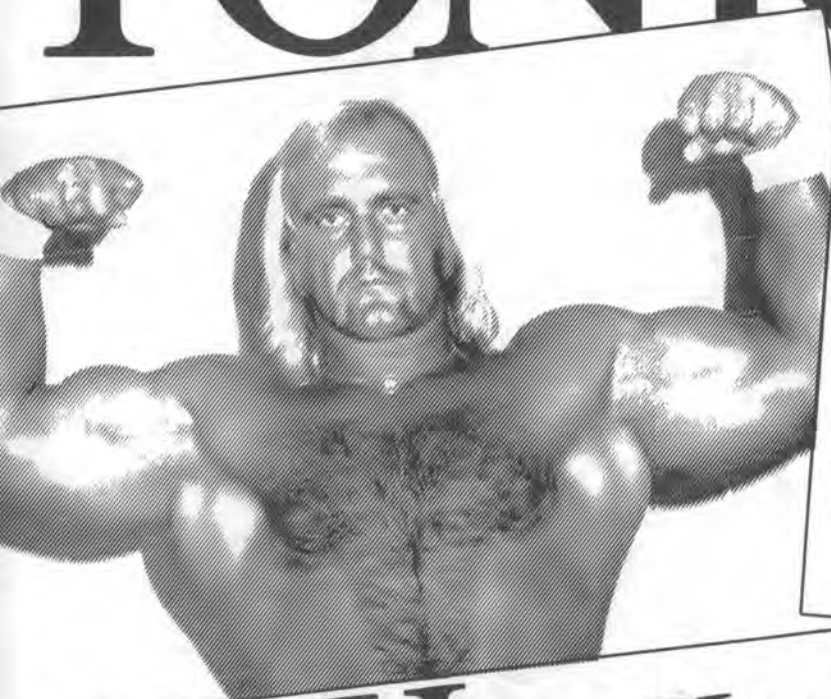
laughed and shook his head. "Can't do it now, can't make it. I quit, gave up all my dogs. I deer hunt. All my best deer dogs, we was out there and somebody stole em where we run a deer across the river. And I just quit having dogs. I still hunt deer, turkey. Didn't get one this time. Year before last I got two good gobblers with one shot. I called and didn't even hear a turkey gobble or nothing, but I called.

Thought I might get an answer. And I sat there a good little bit. Always when I call I sit there long enough that one might come on in — I've had em do that and never gobble and come in. And I'll be durned if there wasn't five in one drove come up to me, and they walked up as far as the edge of the woods right there, and two of em got right together and stuck their heads up, and I shot and got both of

em. There was three more and I could have killed another one, but I wouldn't do it. I seen I killed both of em. Oh, that's my ruin. . . . I've hunted. . . ." He shook his head for all he'd hunted and whispered, "God-a-mighty." □

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# TONIGHT!



## THE HULK vs. OX BAKER

*"I love action. I love fighting.*

*I just ain't big enough. If I was, I'd be in there with em. I believe it's mostly fake, about 75 percent. They get mad at each other every once in a while, but I think a lot of it is strictly put-on. But I just like the action, just to see em get whopped, the bad ones. I'm here every week. This is my reserved seat right here."*

*— Mike Broughton, professional wrestling fan from Wetumpka, Alabama*

### by Randall Williams

DOTHAN, ALA. — This is the wiregrass region, gently rolling farmland with sandy soil and a tropical sun — the Gulf of Mexico is only 90 miles away. Peanuts are the main crop, and the National Peanut Festival is celebrated here every fall. Many of the region's people still make their living farming, and on Friday nights they may come into town to the Houston County Farm Center for an evening of entertainment.

The Center is a giant barn, windowless, unair-conditioned and hot. On two sides, banks of concrete bleachers reach to the roof. The center of the arena is open, with a dull red-dirt floor mottled by tobacco spit and spilled Cokes and littered with cigarette butts and peanut hulls. A layer of blue

smoke drifts across the room. Several rows of folding metal chairs are arranged in a square out on the dirt floor. This much of the setting is drab — concrete, dirt and metal. All the color is concentrated in the middle of the arena, in a wrestling ring of blue canvas and red, white and blue ropes, brilliantly lighted by a row of television lamps.

For 18 years, the farmers from the Dothan area have been coming to this ring on Friday nights to watch professional wrestling; in the years before that, reaching back to the 1930s, they came to older arenas. Part athletic competition and part soap opera, pro wrestling is the only sport many of these fans know, and they are intensely loyal and enthusiastic. The Farm Center will seat about 5,000 fans, and on a May night earlier this

year, 1,500 more who wanted in to see Andre the Giant — 7'4", 485 pounds — were turned away at the door by fire marshals. The fans had come that night to cheer Andre, whom some call the Gentle Giant, because he is a good guy. In the wrestling ring, good and evil are distinct, and the fans pour into the arena to cheer the good guys and to jeer and curse the bad ones.

Generalizations are dangerous, admits wrestling promoter Dick Steinborn of Montgomery, but "it is mostly your blacks and your poor whites who come out here." On a given night the audience may include a handful of white-collar types, such as Houston County Probate Judge R. J. Stembriidge, a front row regular, and the two women from Panama City, Florida, who drive up every Friday night, come to ringside wearing

evening dresses, check into the motel where some of the wrestlers stay, and spend Saturday poolside chatting with the behemoths who were pounding opponents in the ring the night before. But these are exceptions, and the average wrestling crowd is made up of the kind of working people whose pickups in the parking lot wear bumper stickers with messages such as, I FIGHT POVERTY, I WORK.

Dothan's fans are probably typical in these respects, and nationally millions more share their passion. The National Wrestling Alliance claims that for the six years from 1972 to 1977, professional wrestling drew 219 million paying customers. In that same period, the NWA says, college football drew 198 million; major league baseball, 195 million; pro football, 83 million; and pro basketball, 57 million. The wrestling season, of course, is 52 weeks long, and matches are promoted in countless towns and cities so small other sports would never give them a second thought. An estimated 60 percent of the national attendance is in the South, in arenas like Dothan's.

The price of an average wrestling ticket is \$4, and the annual paid gate for the industry is estimated at between \$100 million and \$150 million. Whether sport or entertainment, professional wrestling is big business. It is also a closed business, in many ways a family business. At one time, promoters in almost every city in north Alabama and Tennessee were related by blood or marriage, and many of the wrestlers and promoters active today got into the business through their families or in-laws.

Dick Steinborn, for example, is the son of Milo Steinborn, who is a living legend in the wrestling world. A German, Milo went to sea as a young boy and was in Australia when World War I began. He was interned there with other German nationals in a prisoner-of-war camp. There was nothing else to do, so the men organized themselves into prison intramurals. Every day, the prisoners wrestled and lifted weights; when the war was over and Milo Steinborn was released, he was a perfectly proportioned and perfectly developed young man of tremendous strength. In 1920, he stowed away on a ship

for New York City and eventually made his way to Philadelphia, penniless and friendless.

In Philly one day, Milo visited a gym where a weight-lifting contest was in progress. Milo realized he had been picking up more weight in the POW camp than these world champions were handling. So he entered the competition and astounded the other lifters, the spectators and the press, which had a field day with the man off the streets with the superman strength. Milo Steinborn was discovered.

The giddy '20s and depressed '30s were years for spectacles, and entrepreneur wrestling promoters were always looking for new attractions. Milo Steinborn, the young superman, was enticed into wrestling, and it soon made him wealthy and famous. In those days, big-name wrestlers, like the great boxers, got their names and pictures on the front pages of the newspapers, reporters met them at train stations, and they made lots of money, sometimes 50 percent of the house — Madison Square Garden was selling out for wrestling even at the worst of the Depression. It was a business of hand-shake contracts and cash payoffs; Milo would be standing at the dressing room urinal when the promoter came in, stood at the urinal next to him, and peeled off \$1,200 for a typical night's work — a new car sold for \$700 then.

The promoters were also looking for new markets, and there were none more promising than in the South. Big names like Milo Steinborn drew the fans in, and he became well-known in Richmond, Charlotte, Birmingham and Nashville. In Atlanta, he met and married a Southern belle who came with her sister to watch him wrestle. Her name was Vivian Baxter, the daughter of a plumbing contractor.

Milo and Vivian had two sons, Henry and Dick. Both became successful amateur wrestlers, won scholarships to Columbia University in New York, and lived and breathed the world of professional wrestling. Later, after the father had retired from the ring and taken up promoting in Orlando, Florida, the sons learned that, too. (When Milo retired from promoting — in 1979 at age 86 — Henry also got out of the business. He is now a professional musician.)

Dick was the son who loved

wrestling, loved the stink and sweat of filthy dressing rooms, and, like his proud German father, loved the discipline of the gymnasium. Dick is 45 now, but on a Saturday morning in Dothan, he will be in Garry's Gym, working out with other wrestlers and offering a local kid his technical advice and anatomical knowledge. A Steinborn workout tests and exploits every major muscle in the body. Sweat pours from him as he works out on the bench, and one notices the peculiar breathing pattern of the weightlifter: suck the lungs full, grunt the weight up, explode the breath out at the peak of the lift. The idea in building strength is to take the muscles to their limit and a little beyond in every workout, stretching the muscle fibers so that next time they can do just a little more.

The fact that some wrestlers work out regularly and vigorously while others don't makes it even harder to answer the question most often asked by non-wrestling fans: Are these guys athletes or entertainers? A fair answer is that they are both, that most of them have the skills, stamina and strength for legitimate wrestling. But the wrestlers say that the fans, especially in the South, want to see "catch as catch can" competition, replete with exaggerated falls, wild punches and frenzied action.

"A wrestling fan is not like a football fan," says Ox Baker. "They are more vicious, more sadistic. They want to see the bad guys out there ranting and raving. They won't come to see anything else. You can have the NCAA finals in college wrestling and you can't even get a crowd; it won't even make the papers in most places. People want action and we're professionals, we're geared to it, so we give it to them. But when there's blood out there, it's real blood, it's our blood. I've had teeth knocked out, my knees are boogered up, my wrist has been broken — and I've had a chair broken over my head by a fan."

(Fans can do worse. In Hogansville, Georgia, one night, a fan leaped into the ring and stabbed wrestler Sonny Myers with a knife. In the words of another wrestler, "He stuck the knife in Sonny and then walked around him." Myers survived; he is now a wrestling referee in Tampa, Florida.)



Steinborn was attacked once by a senior citizen wielding a cane. He suffered severe cuts to the head, but retaliated by punching the old man out.)

Still, Baker acknowledges that there are limits to the slugging wrestlers can do to one another night after night. "We do have agreement among ourselves. Wrestlers know they have to restrain themselves." Wrestlers say this means not that matches are prearranged and rehearsed, but that to fit the schedule and to please the crowd the wrestling may be mixed with soap opera. "Say we're on TV and it's an hour program. Now I can beat my opponent in 45 seconds," says Baker. "But the promoter may tell me, 'Ox, I need seven minutes.' So I'll entertain the people for seven minutes before I put the man down."

Wrestlers also have an incentive to win consistently and to build up a reputation because their earnings depend on it. A wrestler can do preliminary bouts every night and he may earn as much as \$40,000 a year if he is willing to travel enough. But a main event wrestler like Ox Baker will earn \$300-\$700 for 15 minutes of work at the Houston County Farm Center; before a bigger crowd his evening's pay may run as high as \$2,000.

It is the money, Baker says, that is

in the back of every wrestler's mind when all the ranting and raving and posturing for the crowd has ended. "That's why wrestlers don't get together after matches. We're like magnets coming at each other and the fans wouldn't understand it if they saw us later being friendly." At the Farm Center, for example, there are two dressing rooms (with the word "White" painted out but still visible over the door to each) and the "good guys" use one and the "bad guys" use the other. The wrestlers who stay at the Sheraton Motor Inn in Dothan all take rooms on the same wing, but a "good guy" generally will associate only with other wrestlers of the same image.

Some wrestlers, then, work out and stay in shape and try to get stronger so they can be more effective in the ring and at the bank. Some work out because they like it. Back at Garry's Gym, Steinborn's face is twisted with pain as he finishes a "set of reps" and leaps up. "The body wants it, the body says 'thank you' every time you do it, the body loves it," he says.

Across the room, Terry "The Hulk" Bolder is in pain, too. He is sitting on a bench with his arms on a little padded shelf built for curling. Terry has reached the sixth of 10 repetitions in this set of curls, and he is almost crying in his effort to finish. Wrestler

Ron Slinker, Bolder's friend and road roommate, is counting, yelling encouragement and standing ready to take the weight if needed.

Weightlifting can be done to increase strength or to increase what bodybuilders call "definition," or the prominent appearance of the muscles. Bolder does a little of both. Steinborn's chest, arms and thighs ripple with hardness and power, but Bolder's body bulges and swells with knots of muscle. During his workout, Bolder constantly watches himself in the mirrors which line the gymnasium walls. He flexes his great tanned body and studies it, deciding which exercise he needs to do next to bring out some muscle not quite as defined as the rest. His body and his ring nickname, The Hulk, are Bolder's trademarks, and they have made him a crowd favorite and a main event wrestler in only four years. The sign outside the Farm Center flashes with his name: "Tonight - The Hulk vs. Ox Baker."

Terry is 6'3" and weighs 300 pounds. His blond hair is shoulder-length and he wears a sweeping mustache. The hair on his chest is shaved into a geometric pattern which tapers to a point and disappears into his wrestling trunks. In the arena before his matches, Terry will stand in the corridor near the dressing room, surrounded by young women, some of



them girls, really, who flirt with him and who sometimes reach out furtively to stroke the muscles in his arms and back.

"Young girls come up and say, 'How can I marry a wrestler?' They think the wrestlers are gods, they really do," says Sheila Steinborn. "You wonder if your husband pays attention when these women get dressed up in their Sunday best week after week and sit at ringside hoping to be noticed. But that's just part of the business. The older guys are used to it. It's nothing to them so they let the young guys get the glory. But the ones who are just getting in the business, sometimes it goes to their heads. You wonder how well they can handle it."

Wrestling wives must also cope with the pressures of frequent moves and the regular absences of their husbands, sometimes as much as four or five days a week. The wives of athletes in other sports — baseball, for example — frequently band together for support, but Mrs. Steinborn says that rarely happens with the wives of wrestlers. "I finally learned to make friends with neighbors. At first I wouldn't want to say what Dick did for a living, because you never know how people will react. In the dentist's office, even, when you have to put down your husband's occupation, I've had

them look at me as if they were saying, 'Oh, one of those.' But once people get to know Dick, they find out he's just like anyone else.

"Wrestling has been good for us. The traveling and getting to know people and other places may be the best part. Sometimes I wonder a little if wrestling may have held Dick back. I wonder what he could have done with his energy and ability in other things — and Brad [the Steinborns' three-year-old] loves wrestling! You want your son to be a doctor or a lawyer, not a wrestler. But Dick loves wrestling. It's his life," she says.

There are thought to be about 3,000 professional wrestlers in the United States, and only a handful of new faces break in each year. Those who do usually make it with some kind of gimmick, like Bolder's body and his cultivated "good guy" image, to attract either the adoration or the hatred of the fans. It doesn't matter which, because both sell at the box office.

A good promoter instinctively knows what will sell and when to introduce something new. Steinborn, for example, has found a pair of strapping black twins. Because they are black, they will go over well in heavily black south Alabama, and because they are polite and have "good guy" images (partly because they are matched against known "bad guys") they will be popular the white fans as well. And in Dothan, Steinborn has been opening the card in recent weeks with a "challenge" issued by a young wrestler named Herb Calvert, who is trying to break in.

Calvert has offered \$500 of his own money to anyone in the audience who can stay in the ring 10 minutes with

him. A former standout at the University of Oklahoma, Calvert was an Olympic-class amateur wrestler before he left college to turn pro. At 6'4" and 255 very solid pounds, he could be expected to scare away anyone who has had a good look at him. Two fans at ringside on this night are recalling how Calvert rubbed a challenger's nose on the canvas until the poor guy gave up last week. Two weeks earlier in Montgomery, he broke a man's arm.

Still, 10 eager applicants line up, and Steinborn herds them off to the side. "All right, fellows. Now I'm going to pick three of you, but before I pick listen good. This paper is a release form. It's two pages of legal stuff and I'll read it if I have to, but I won't bother as long as you guys understand that it means you can't sue me, this building, Herb Calvert or anybody else if you get hurt or killed."

Everyone nods and Steinborn quickly picks the three challengers who appear to be the stoutest of the lot. They are David Matthews, 21, 245 pounds, a farmer; Joey Matthews, 22, 202 pounds, a mechanic; and John Hagans, 19, 260 pounds, a student. None is taller than six feet. Steinborn gives them a final warning: "No biting, no trying to pull his eyes out, no punching. You try any of that and you'll release the animal in friend Herb." David and Joey have serious looks, and John looks as if he wonders what he is doing here.

David lasts 45 seconds before giving up. John lasts only 30. Joey is agile and mobile and quite strong and Calvert works him for three minutes. At the back of the arena a man in overalls, his face leathery from the sun, cries out encouragement to his son: "Hold 'im, boy!" Joey does hold on, but Calvert quickly maneuvers him into what the wrestlers call a "sugar" hold. Steinborn climbs into the ring with the microphone and shoves it right up next to Joey so that the crowd can hear Calvert shouting "Give up?" at him. Joey is stubborn and he hears the crowd cheering him so he mutters "No" a few times, weakly, before finally submitting.

Three nights later in Montgomery, Calvert will demolish two more challengers, and pro-wrestler Ron Slinker, a crowd favorite, will show up



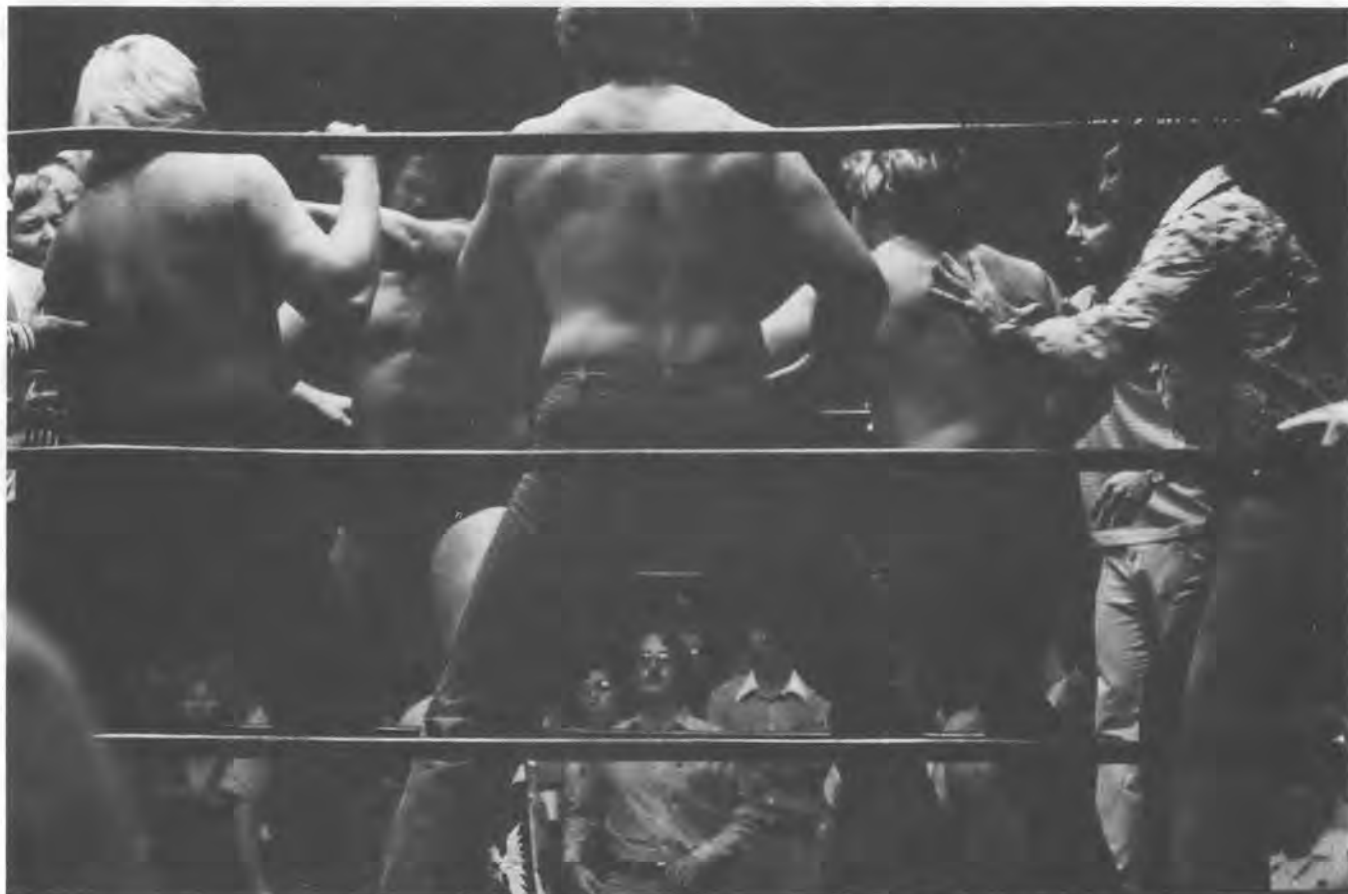
at ringside with \$500 of his own money asking Calvert why, if he's so tough, he won't take on another wrestler. But the audience challenge is Calvert's gimmick, and he is making the fans hate him, which is a guarantee that they will pay to see him. Calvert brushes Slinker off, and as he leaves the ring the fans are on their feet, some of them right in his face, calling

buddies in the stands, and one, grinning broadly, speaks up: "Hell, boy, why didn't you call me? I'd a thrown you my knife or pistol or something. Shit. We could've used that \$500 in the race car. Could have bought a new radiator. You gonna try him again next week?"

"I'm seriously considering it," Joey says.

"Well, I'll work you out all week

Coast Championship Wrestling, and Dick Steinborn, who owns Montgomery and oversees operations in Dothan, is one of the promoters who owns a percentage of the action. Dothan and Montgomery are two of the seven Alabama and Florida cities on the Gulf Coast circuit. It is the matchmaker's job to decide which pairings of wrestlers, because of reputation or



him a coward and worse. Calvert snarls at them, asking why they don't get in the ring with him. As the abuse mounts, Calvert turns to the crowd and roars, "I love it!" Two policemen escort him from the arena, but a young black man follows screaming insults. Finally, Calvert turns to him and yells, "I want you. Why isn't your black ass in there? I want you nigger." The young man laughs and runs back to his seat; his friends slap his hands and laugh with him.

But that is in Montgomery. On this night in Dothan, the three challengers, despite the ease with which they were defeated, are congratulated by others in the crowd. Joey Matthews joins his

so you'll be in shape this time, boy. Shit. I'm thinking about trying that mother myself."

Whether Joey or his friend wrestle Calvert next week doesn't matter (in fact, neither does) because there will be other fans who will, and the rest will be screaming for them. Calvert excites the fans and that's what they pay for. Keeping the fans excited week after week, however, takes more effort than it might seem. This responsibility belongs partly to the promoter and partly to a "matchmaker," who is employed by the individual or group sponsoring the matches in a region. In the case of Dothan, that group is called Gulf

chemistry or whatever, are likely to please and excite the crowd.

Because basically the same dozen or so wrestlers will be competing against each other in Dothan tonight, Montgomery two nights later, then Mobile and so on around the circuit, and then repeating it next week, the pairings have to be adjusted to maintain interest. Once the matchmaker gives out the assignments to the wrestlers, it is up to them to build up as much interest as possible before the match and then to make the match itself as exciting as possible.

The pre-match buildup is accomplished partly with a one-hour television show taped each Saturday



at a Dothan station and then shown in each of the cities on the circuit a couple of days in advance of the live wrestling. The promoters pay for the television time, and the hour will include some wrestling and a generous amount of interview time in which the wrestlers describe what they are going to do to their opponents next week.

The matchmaker will also try to bring in outside wrestlers like Ox Baker (who is from Texas) to increase attendance. Baker is well known around the country partly because of his size and strength – 6'5", 318 pounds – and partly because of his legendary heart punch, with which, the promos say, he has killed two wrestlers.

Baker is the picture-book bad man. "I was not the best-looking guy in the world, see. So the fans were going to dislike me from the beginning and I figured why not take advantage of it," he says. So he shaved his head and grew a mustache which makes him look even fiercer, and he cultivated an image as a killer. (He also has pink painted toenails, but to know it a fan would have to visit the Ox's hotel room while the big guy was sitting around in his boxer shorts eating pizza.)

"I don't really believe he killed those wrestlers," says fan Mike Broughton. "Think about it. Would they let him keep on wrestling if that had happened? He better watch out tonight, though. Terry has got a heart punch of his own now."

One of Baker's two alleged victims was Ray Gunkel, who died after a match in Savannah, Georgia, in 1973. Ox Baker says, "It was a hard match and he broke my wrist in the course of it. He died right after the match. The autopsy showed he had received a vicious punch to the heart."

But Savannah promoter Aaron K. Newman was with Gunkel when he died. "Ray won the match, you know. It was a brass knucks fight [in which the wrestlers' fists are heavily taped] and it lasted seven or eight minutes. He came out and went to the dressing room to take a shower. After that he was sitting in a chair, nude, asking about the house, about how well we did. He didn't seem to be acting just right. He had eaten real heavy that day about two p.m. I asked

him if anything was wrong. He put his hand up to his chest and heaved sideways. Ray just had a massive heart attack. He was 48 years old."

The other wrestler who died after fighting Baker was Alberto Torrez, in 1970 in Omaha, Nebraska. Torrez had been warned by doctors that continued wrestling was a great risk for him because of a pancreatic condition. In the match with Baker, he received a blow to the pancreas; he died four days later.

Newman thinks it is wrong for Baker to capitalize on the coincidence that two wrestlers died after matches with him, but the Baker image nevertheless lives on. Wrestling is a sport which depends on image; it may matter to the wrestlers themselves whether they win or lose, but the fans stay loyal regardless. Psychologists periodically publish treatises on the symbolism and ritual significance of football, but it is professional wrestling which is really a modern morality

play. If the good guy wins his match, that is simple justice, and if he loses, that's life.

Baker probably couldn't change his image if he wanted to because it is so well set in the minds of the fans. Mellonee Kapner of Daleville is 67 and has been an institution at the Dothan arena for two decades. She gives Ox Baker hell from the minute he enters the arena. She gets up from her ringside seat and walks up right next to the ropes, calling Baker profane names – names she would never utter outside this arena – until he leans over the ropes and shakes his giant fist at her. The sight is almost comical: the huge man towering over the little white-haired woman. Later, Mrs. Kapner is telling some other people what she thinks of Ox Baker.

"You know, he's killed two men," she says solemnly. □

*Randall Williams is a staff member of the Institute for Southern Studies.*

## TROUT FISHING IN VIRGINIA

The Exxon man tugs his CATerpillar cap  
rams a nozzle in my tank  
and talks of fishing –  
says he waded creeks all day  
til heading for Baltimore at seventeen:

"Never needed hook 'n line."

I picture a farm kid with fast hands,  
ask about technique:

"Simple.

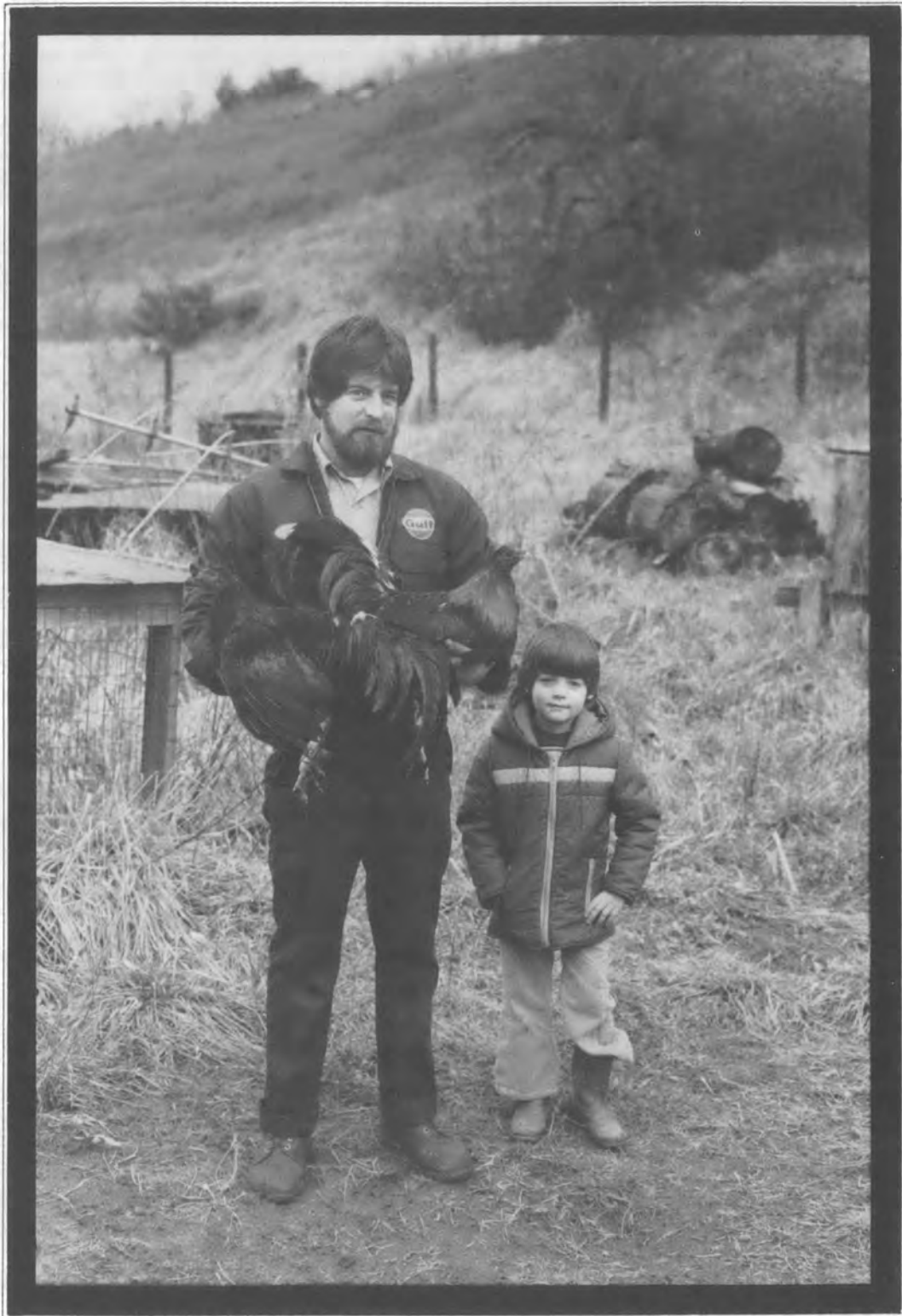
Ya heft a boulder high's yer head  
womp all the rocks in the water –  
fish down under float to the top  
goofy as hell."

Overflow gas gags the tank,  
stains my VA plate.

"Cash er charge?"

– Michael Beirne McMahon

# GRIT AND STEEL



## The Anatomy of Cockfighting

by Harold Herzog and Pauline B. Cheek

**B**ehind a small frame house on a secondary road in the mountains of Appalachia stand 30 or 40 wire coops, each with a tin roof and a plastic milk-jug feeder. "Chickens," comments the observant passer-by. Only the initiated know that the roosters are gamecocks and that their owner is a cocker, a participant in the ancient sport of cockfighting.

Known as the Sport of Kings, cockfighting is popular throughout the world, especially in Latin America, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. Each culture has its own set of rules, trappings and gambling structure, jargon, accoutrements and memorabilia.

Within the United States, cockers can be found in every corner of the country, even though cockfighting is prohibited in almost all states. But it is in the rural communities throughout the South, from Virginia to New Mexico, that the sport has its deepest and oldest roots.

One can get a glimpse into this world by reading one of the three major periodicals addressed to American cockers: *Grit and Steel*, *The Feathered Warrior* and *The Gamecock*. These magazines announce derbies, advertise game fowl and display the wealth of veterinary supplies and other paraphernalia on the market — gaffs priced at \$50 to \$60 a set, spurs, saws, scales, even belt buckles and automobile tags bearing pictures of cocks. In addition, each issue contains articles and columns with information and advice on all aspects of cockfighting. Titles of recent articles in *Grit and Steel*, for example, include "Histories of Gamecocks," "Meet Our Young Cockers," "Nutrition of the Gamecock," and "How Gamefowl Has Helped My Life."

Popular notion holds that cockfighters are cruel, barbarous and psychologically deviant. Recently, however, this belief has been refuted by Clifton Bryant of VPI and the late William C. Capel of Clemson University. Through the auspices of *Grit and Steel*, they distributed a questionnaire designed to obtain a variety of information on the psychology and sociology of cockfighting. Cockers, they found, are an amazingly diverse lot in terms of the standard demographic vari-

ables; there is no "typical cockfighter."

More significantly, as a group cockers are not psychopathic but instead are psychologically similar in attitudes and personality patterns to others in their socio-economic groups.

An estimated half-million Americans have some contact with cockfighting each year. Many individuals go to a single fight out of curiosity or attend fights periodically for purposes of gambling. A few are professional gamecock breeders and fighters who ship gamefowl throughout the world and travel thousands of miles annually to attend fights at major pits. The majority, however, are hobbyists who maintain a relatively small number of roosters, perhaps 30 or 40, and fight them once or twice a month during the cockfighting season.

Even for these amateur cockers, the breeding and care of the gamefowl is a major concern. For thousands of years, gamefowl have been selectively bred for aggressiveness and fighting ability. In fact, some scientists claim that chickens were originally domesticated from wild jungle fowl for recreational use rather than for food production. By now there are many strains of gamefowl, such as Arkansas Travelers, Clarets, Madigan Greys, Butchers, Allen Roundheads and White Hackels. Southern cockers frequently interbreed two strains of gamecocks in search of a "gamer" rooster. A cock may, for example, be three-fourths Claret and one-fourth Madigan Grey.

Although breeders often do not maintain the purity of the strain, they make every effort to keep gamefowl reproductively separate from common domestic strains of chickens. They point out that "gameness" — the elusive quality of bravery that makes a cock continue fighting, even when seriously injured and dying — is of prime importance. If a cock fails to demonstrate this quality, especially if it runs in the pit, it is called a "dunghill," meaning that it is part commercial chicken. Such behavior on the part of the cock is a source of embarrassment to the owner, and there are tales, though unsubstantiated, of the angry owner who wrung the neck of a cowardly cock.

There are several tasks involved in preparing a cock for fighting. If the rooster has never been fought, its

comb and wattles must be "dubbed" (see photograph). The cock's natural spurs, which may be several inches long, are also removed with a "spur saw," a modified hack saw. A stump about one-half inch long is left to enable the artificial spur to be anchored firmly on the leg.

Some of the cock's feathers are also removed prior to a fight, especially in hot weather. Typically, this "trimming out" includes shortening the long feathers of the tail and the wing primaries and removing some plumage from the saddle or back and around the vent. Trimming helps reduce overheating in the bird and, by lightening it, may enable it to fight against a lighter opponent.

When roosters are molting, or shedding feathers, during the late summer and early fall, they do not fight well, so no matches are held. But the long cockfighting season covers the rest of the year, lasting roughly from Thanksgiving to the Fourth of July.

During the two-week conditioning period prior to each fight the cock is "put on a keep," a regimen designed to get the bird in top fighting form. The keep usually involves limiting the cock's water and giving it special exercises, such as throwing it up in the air to make its wings flap. Ordinarily a cocker has his own keep, which may be a complex and well-guarded secret, including special foods and vitamin supplements.

**T**he most common type of organized cockfight in the United States today is the derby, in which a number of cockers, usually between 10 and 30, enter a pre-set number of roosters, usually four, five or six. Each cocker pays an entry fee, most often \$50 or \$100, which goes into the common pot. The cocks are fought round robin, and the cocker whose roosters win the most fights triumphs. This individual generally takes home the pot, although sometimes the pot is divided between the first- and second-place winners.

The derby is of relatively recent origin, probably dating from about 1929. It has been suggested that it emerged as the dominant form of cockfighting because it allowed an individual with a fairly small number



of roosters to compete at least several times a year. Many older types of fights, in contrast, require each participant to enter far more cocks, with the result that in the past cocking was largely a rich man's sport.

Cockpits in the United States vary from simple barns to portable pits that can be set up in the woods to elaborate, specially designed buildings with air conditioning, theatre seats, public address systems and snack bars. A typical pit in Southern Appalachia is located out of view of the road, with parking space for perhaps 50 or 100 cars. Surrounding the pit area are cockhouses, where the roosters are prepared before the fight. The pit usually has a bleacher capacity of 200 to 300 spectators, a refreshment stand, a booth for the score keepers and two pits. The "main pit," where all fights are begun, has either fluorescent or incandescent bulbs for night fights and is the center of attention for most spectators. If it appears that the fight will be a long one or if others are waiting their turn to fight, the cocks are moved to a secondary or "drag pit," so that a new match can get underway.

The pit owner charges spectators and cockers an admission fee, usually about \$5. From this he must pay such expenses as the fees for the referees (as much as \$100 per day plus expenses at major pits) and upkeep of the pits, including disposal of the dead birds. It is important that the pit owner maintain a good relationship with the local community, and he is often assisted in this effort by the regular participants. For example, at one pit in western North Carolina patrons periodically contribute to the upkeep of a nearby church.

At the pit, the cocker is assigned a room in a cockhouse where he places each cock in a separate compartment. After he has selected his "entry" of roosters, he fills out a "weight sheet" with the weight of each rooster and turns it in to the scorekeeper, who then seals a numbered metal band on the leg of each cock. Next the score-

keeper matches up all the entries by weight, with each cock within two ounces of his opponent. The exception to this rule is that "shakes" — cocks weighing over six pounds — are matched regardless of exact weight.

The scorekeeper then makes an announcement like this: "Numbers 2 and 14, pick up your weights." In response, derby entrants number 2 and 14 pick up slips of paper from the scorekeeper telling which roosters they are to fight next. They then return to



the cockhouse to "heel" the roosters specified. This procedure, which takes 15 or 20 minutes, is quite intricate: the cocker ties the gaffs on the stubs of the rooster's natural spurs with waxed string, so that they are firmly attached at the desired angle. Lest the cocker substitute a rooster for the one called, the referee reweighs each cock at the pit area and checks its numbered band.

**T**he actual pit in which the fights are staged measures about 15 feet in diameter and is surrounded by a three-foot-high fence. During the fight two handlers, the referee and two cocks are in the pit. The referee's job is to tell the handlers when to fight the roosters, when to "handle" or pull them apart, and when to rest them. He also keeps "the

count" and ensures that both handlers abide by the rules. The rules of cock-fighting are quite complex and vary from pit to pit, but most fights follow a basic pattern.

The match begins with a procedure called "billing up." In order to incite the roosters to attack, the "handlers" cradle them in their arms and allow them to peck at one another. With his foot or a stick the referee then draws two parallel "score lines" six to eight feet apart in the dirt or clay floor

of the pit. The handlers place the roosters at their respective score lines and release them at the referee's command, "Pit 'em!" The cocks then fight until the gaffs of one become entangled in the body of the other. The referee stops the pitting with the command, "Handle!" and the handlers disentangle the cocks. After a 20-second rest period, the cocks are again pitted. This procedure continues until there is a winner.

A fight ends in one of three ways: one of the cocks dies, one of the handlers concedes the fight, or a cock fails to attack for three successive pittings of 10 seconds and one pitting of 20 seconds. (This "count" is a good example of rule

variation: in some pits a cock loses after only three 10-second counts.) The referee cannot initiate the count. When a cock stops pecking or spurring, whether because of injury, exhaustion or lack of gameness, the opposing handler says, "Count me."

The referee then begins a count of 10 seconds. If the cock does not attack within the 10-second period, the other rooster is said to have the count.

Subsequent pittings are then initiated at the "short score" lines, which are two feet apart and increase the probability of attack. If the cock with the count against him attacks by a peck or a spur, even if it is not directed at the opponent, as in the case of a rooster that has been blinded, the referee calls, "Broke!" indicating that the count has been broken.

Although a fight averages about 10

minutes in length, it may be over in as little as 10 seconds, if a cock is killed in the first pitting, or it may last over an hour. The number of pittings is extremely variable also, ranging from one to over 100 but averaging about 20. Pitting length averages 15 seconds but varies from one second to over 60.

Cockfighting is a lethal sport. We asked several cockers to keep records on how often their roosters died during or soon after a fight. Only five percent of the winners died from injuries sustained in fights, they reported, whereas almost 80 percent of the losers died. Despite the violent nature of the sport, cockfighting is not as visibly gory as many suppose. There is little overt bloodshed. The puncture wounds made by artificial spurs do not bleed much externally, and the cock's feathers tend to conceal bleeding. (As a result of breeding, the blood of a game rooster clots more quickly than a commercial chicken's.)

Still, roosters "take a lot of steel," meaning that they receive many wounds. An autopsy performed on one cock revealed that it had 18 holes in its body in addition to the fatal blow, which was to its throat so that it choked on its own blood. Common injuries are described with special terms. A rooster which has had its lungs punctured, for example, emits a low rasping sound as it breathes and is said to be "rattled." A rooster which has sustained an injury to the spinal cord and is therefore unable to use its legs is said to be "uncoupled."

Regardless of the length of a derby, the spectators are an active part of the scene. They arrive early — before six, for example, when a match is scheduled for 10 at night, and they await the outcome even when the fight runs on till four in the morning. A typical crowd in North Carolina may include both blacks and whites, men and women of all ages, perhaps mothers with infants. Although cockfighting is considered a man's sport, *Grit and Steel* has one female cocker as a

regular columnist; like many cockers, she acquired her interest through her family.

At least in rural communities, where cockfighting is not perceived as a serious violation of community standards, cockers appear not to feel threatened by local law enforcement agents. They make no attempt to conceal their involvement in the sport. In fact, they identify themselves by forming local clubs, and they eagerly exchange tales and information. Fur-



thermore, spectators develop a sense of camaraderie with one another, and while waiting for a match to begin they sit around talking and joking. Some shoot craps or pitch pennies; others go outside the pit to drink beer.

Because of the presence of gambling, alcohol and sometimes weapons, cockfights are potentially violent situations. As a safeguard, therefore, pit operators often ban alcoholic beverages from the pit, and they maintain some degree of control over the fights. Consequently, serious disputes between cockers or against a referee's decision are rare, and violence is far more frequent at informal neighborhood "brush fights" than at permanent pits.

Nevertheless, cockfighting is a colorful and rowdy affair. The action of the pitting is so fast as to seem blurred and almost choreographic as

the cocks leap into the air, spur, peck and feint in a series of synchronized moves. The handlers develop a certain amount of showmanship, employing some ritualistic treatment to an injured cock, such as blowing into its mouth or wiping its face with water. Spectators are also caught up in the excitement and yell out advice, especially to novice cockers. Those close enough to hear "rattles" announce the fact and may change their bets. Should a cock turn and flee from its adversary, the spectators are quick to express their derision.

Gambling is an important part of the scene. In a derby the major amount of money to exchange hands is the pot, which is composed of the entry fees of all the participants. Since there may be 30 or 40 entrants in a large derby, each paying \$50 or \$100, this sum can be considerable. In addition, cockers usually make side bets on their own roosters, and spectators engage in betting throughout the fight. At some pits there may be a third form of gambling: a lottery based on the number arbitrarily given to each cocker when he pays his entry fee. Prior to the derby each number is auctioned off to the highest bidder. The money from the raffle goes into a separate pot, and the person who purchased the number of the winning cocker wins the lottery.

As soon as the cocks are brought into the pit area spectators begin to call out odds, which may be accepted by any other spectator. For example, a spectator may shout, "I'll lay a 25-to-20 on the gray," meaning that he is offering \$25 against \$20 that the grey cock will win. To accept the bet someone calls out, "You're on" or "You and me." The odds are often based more on the reputation of the handler than on the appearance of the cock; however, the odds can be shifted when a cock is noticeably superior or injured. Social pressure dictates that bets be paid off promptly and without malice. Some bets are paid off even before the referee has made his de-

cision. And considering the informal nature of the gambling system, disputes over the payments of bets are surprisingly rare.

**T**o the people involved in cockfighting, it is a traditional, dramatic and thoroughly legitimate sport. They point out that the behavior of a spectator at a Tennessee or South Carolina cockfight on a Saturday night is amazingly similar to that of a "Big Orange" or "Fighting Gamecocks" football fan on a Saturday afternoon. To the larger society, however, the legitimacy of cockfighting remains questionable. Should such an activity be suppressed? Should it be tolerated as a folkway which falls outside the law? Or should it in fact be legalized and supervised, as has been the case for countless other violent

activities from spear fishing and turkey shoots to boxing and football?

In the states where cockfights are currently legal, there already exists a variety of restrictions. In Florida, for example, artificial gaffs, the hardened steel spurs attached to the stubs of the cock's natural spurs, are illegal, and gambling is prohibited. In Kansas, cockfights are barred on Sunday. And on the national level, Congress enacted a law in 1976 forbidding the interstate transfer of dogs or chickens for the purpose of fighting. The effect of this law, which provides for fines up to \$5,000 and one-year imprisonment for violators, remains to be seen.

Early in 1978, the night after a dramatic episode of *Roots* had exposed a huge national TV audience to the colorful customs of antebellum cockfighting, police arrested scores of

North Carolina residents — businessmen and farm hands — at an illegal cockfight. Ironically, the raid was conducted not far from the spot where [the real] Chicken George, Alex Haley's slave ancestor, once lived and raised fighting cocks. □

*Harold Herzog, an assistant professor of psychology at Mars Hill College, has studied the behavior of snakes, alligators and tropical bats, as well as gamecocks. Pauline B. Cheek is a Mars Hill-based free-lance writer who describes herself "as wife of a college professor whose light reading includes the encyclopedia, mother of three children who raise questions like mushrooms in monsoon season, and a student who aspires to remain one through age 99."*







## Part 3 / HOME TEAMS



# WONDER AND GLORY

**M**y childhood memories of Virginia don't seem to count. Some formative process doubtless was at work, but

it was soft and effortless, as in a cocoon. The only thing about the years in Virginia that comes to mind is that my father, an army officer, always disagreed with other army officers about two things. The first was about Roosevelt. My father loved Franklin Roosevelt. The second was that in the next war America wasn't going to fight the Bolshevik Russians. The U.S. Army officer corps was pretty serious about fighting the Bolsheviks. But my father said we were going to fight the Fascists — Germany, Italy and Japan.

One or the other of these two topics, the New Deal and the Coming War, was usually the center of discussion at dinner all through our Virginia years in the early 1930s. Not that I grasped these matters with great subtlety. For me personally, the first fragile awakening of self into the surrounding world of one's provincial origins did not come in Virginia; it came when we moved to Texas in 1936. At the age of eight, I discovered football, Texas-style.

The first thing I learned about those Texans was that they liked *crowds*. Many years later, as an editor of the *Texas Observer*, I would realize that the crowds were mere effect, a manifestation of a much more organic tribal folkway that was central to the very way of life of the state. Football was no mere two- or three-hour pageant on an autumn weekend: it was an instrument of psychic survival and, as such, a centerpiece of the regional culture.

In places like Brownwood and Odessa and Big Springs, and even in small places like Olney and Rockdale and Sonora, the Friday night high school football game was a civic celebration, a rite of passage not merely for the male teenagers on the

field or the female cheerleaders on the sidelines, but for the whole society. Towns of 5,000 population had football stadiums that seated 6,000 and regularly bulged with 7,000. Middle-aged parents, men and women in Western shirts and blue jeans, helped Grandpa and Grandma up the steps to the thirtieth row, the barefooted kids running ahead, the last-born in Mama's arms or hanging tightly to her hand. The mayor was there and the town banker and the local wildcatter, indistinguishable in their stetsons and boots from the clerks and ranchers and roughnecks who worked for them or were mortgaged to them.

In the eastern part of the state — the piney woods — the cast and the power relationships were the same, though the ranchers there were mostly farmers. In the east, though, the ritual was a little less intense, a little less transcendent, for there were other things to do sometimes. Friday night at the high school stadium was still the high point, but it wasn't everything. Fishing and hunting in the creeks and pine forests offered additional varieties of ritual.

But in West Texas — in the world of the Great Plains beyond the Edwards Plateau — the streams and forests had shriveled into dry arroyos and trackless land marked only with scrawny mesquites. In this stark country, the wind blew endlessly and the sand beat against clapboard, sifted under the sills and into the furniture and even into the food. Mostly the sand and the wind beat against the people and into their skin pores, a silent unseen intimidation that produced leathery faces and a fear in the soul. The plains wind haunted the women, gnawed at the men, as if to insist endlessly that they had no business being there, that this was the land of the Comanche if it belonged to any humans at all.

You had to move through this world slowly, live in it awhile, to know that the loud shouts and rowdiness of the people were more than some kind of peculiar regional heartiness. At root, it was a desperate defense, a fragile assertion of hope and defiance



against the plains wind and the searing, dry summers and the dry raw cold of the winters. Here, football had become the collective defense, the celebration of community, a ritual proclamation not only that "We are here!" but that "We are prevailing!" In Plano and Rawls, in Jackboro and Montague, the Friday night game and the aston-

by Larry Goodwyn



photos from Life magazine, 1941

ishing pageantry that surrounded it represented a tribal assertion that the people were winning their struggle against the land and the wind.

You had to know this to understand the uneasiness that settled over a West Texas community whose high school team was having a bad season. I remember a time in the 1950s when,

# IN ANOTHER CENTURY

on a trip for the *Observer*, I discovered in one of these West Texas hamlets — I think it was Childress — a kind of pervasive lethargy. It was as if the local economy had endured one too many years of drought, as if the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression had never really ended for these people. Cautious outsider, I gently inquired about how things were. The answer, from a druggist, from an old rancher, from a filling station attendant, was that the team was no good. “We got stomped 39 to 0 Friday night. It was plum pitiful. Them boys couldn’t wrestle a damn nanny goat to the ground.”

In such a setting, one couldn’t get down on “them boys” too hard, for “them boys” constituted the next generation in the struggle against the wind and the land. So what the visitor heard was, “Them boys ain’t been taught proper” and “They gettin’ off the ball too slow.” The answer — the iron law of autumn politics in West Texas — was: “We got to git us a new coach.”

**I**knew none of this in 1936 when the family came to Texas, the soft rhythms of Virginia still informing my ways of thinking. But the attempt at socialization, the effort to turn Southerners into Texans, began, I now understand, right away. In the very first year, the Austin Maroons became a principal focus of my leisure. The tailback had the marvelous name of Travis Raven. (Ah, the names were regional statements: Kyle Rote and Yale Lary and Chal Daniel and Doak Walker — names for *football* players.)

Truly, these were the magic years of my childhood, from 1936 to 1941, from eight to 13. Horatio Alger, I came to understand, was real. Let me recount the story and you, too, will believe.

It needs to be said at the outset that there is not too much Wonder associated with the Austin Maroons. Glory, yes, but not Wonder. The Austin Maroons were already at the top when I found them in 1936 — at the absolute top, like second-

generation robber barons. When Travis Raven graduated and went off to college, somebody found a boy out in the countryside who was big and strong and fast. Somebody else gave his daddy, a tenant farmer, a job in Austin and the boy moved into Travis Raven’s slot at tailback. A fitting anonymity surrounded all this: the new star was named “Jones.” The Austin Maroons clobbered everybody with Raven and they clobbered everybody with Jones. For years, they ruled effortlessly as champions of District 15-AA. Glory, but not Wonder.

Horatio Alger lived on the other side of town — at the University of Texas.

Friends and neighbors, we started in rags. Winless. Absolutely winless. The forces of the culture beat down on us poor folks. SMU and TCU and Rice and Baylor all manhandled the state university. The Eyes of Texas weren’t on anybody. We looked at the ground in front of us, heads bowed in weekly humiliation. You people at Notre Dame and USC and Michigan don’t know how it was, in poverty. Let me tell you, it was diminishing. It made you feel poorly. It made you edgy. You got laughed at and people patronized you. It wasn’t nothin’ to be a Longhorn.

The story really begins in late November, 1936, the last game of the year. Thanksgiving Day. The Traditional Game against the “other” state university, the Aggies of Texas A&M. It is very important that you understand about “the Tradition.” The Tradition was that the Aggies had never won in Austin. Not since Memorial Stadium was built and dedicated, in a game against the Aggies, way back in 1924. Now then — when you are eight years old — that is some Tradition. The Aggies never won in Austin. Never!

But they sure were favored in 1936 because, as everybody knew, the Longhorns couldn’t beat *anybody*.

Well they did this time. I was there that day when old tradition just kept rolling along. Kern Tips of the Humble Radio Network said it just right: “When the long November shadows lengthened across Memorial Stadium, the scoreboard read Texas 7, Texas



A&M 0.” That’s the way Kern Tips usually talked.

You know, of course, that the way up from rags isn’t all that easy. There were still plenty of hard times ahead. The Longhorns couldn’t win anything all through 1937. Nine straight defeats, culminating on Thanksgiving Day in Aggieland. Still on the bottom.

A float made of paper flowers said it best, in the spring Roundup Parade on the campus in 1938. I saw it. It had a Bible made of black paper flowers and a brown flower football and a student standing between them in a football uniform. On the side of the float were the words, “The Answer to Our Prayers.”

The answer, you see, was Dana X. Bible, the famous football coach, who had been lured away from Nebraska to bring the University of Texas out of the wilderness. There was

a lot of talk about it because they gave him a 10-year contract at \$15,000 per year and a lifetime contract as Athletic Director after that at \$5,000 per year. In the Depression they did this. The only problem was that the President of the University didn’t make that much, so they raised him, too.

Boy, it was like a lightning bolt. Ole Dana Bible stirred up the alumni (they were pretty stirred up going in), and Bible and everybody else combed Texas and let me tell you they got some football players in there in 1938. That freshman team made everybody sit up and take notice. They had a big guy at fullback named Pete Layden and a tricky little guy at tailback named Jack Crain and they had a rangy end named Malcolm Kutner and they just beat up on folks. Everybody just couldn’t wait until 1939 when those freshmen would be

eligible to play varsity football.

Especially after what happened to the varsity in that year of 1938. It was terrible – they just kept right on losing. Every week. As September turned into October and then into November, that victory over the Aggies in 1936 was all we could look back on. We hadn’t won a game in two years!

**T**he Southwest Conference was real big in those days, of course. Everybody in America knew that. When unbeaten SMU played TCU, the winner got to go to the Rose Bowl and the loser went to the Sugar Bowl. Slinging Sammy Baugh and his TCU team lost, but you can bet they won that Sugar Bowl game. And then in 1938, TCU had another great passer, Davey O’Brien, and all he did was take ’em to the National Championship. The Southwest Conference was the best there was. Everybody knew that.

For a losing team, you’d be surprised how good the Texas Longhorns played. Everybody said we had a starting lineup that could play with anybody in the country, including SMU and TCU. We didn’t have any substitutes, though. We could hold everybody to 0-0 through the half, or even through the third quarter, and then our boys would get tired and the other team would score. We lost a lot of games that way. But the worst trouble was we couldn’t kick any extra points. We scored in the very last minute against Kansas, but we lost 19-18. Missed three extra points! SMU, the same thing. We played a tremendous game, but we lost, 7 to 6.

That was the situation when we came down to that Traditional Game against the Aggies in Austin in 1938. You have to understand that there is a real villain here. His name is Harry Viner, and his part of the story started in 1937 when Rice Institute came to town. Texas had it won late in the game when this Rice guy threw a long pass that bounced in the end zone and then into the hands of a Rice player named Frank Steen. It was incomplete – the ball bounced on the ground just before this guy Steen picked it up. But the referee



**Mother and father** of Jack (“Cowboy”) Crain, star back, enjoy Texas’s 48-14 defeat of Arkansas. Crains live in Nocona, Texas, “boot capital of the world,” never miss their son’s games.

ruled it complete! The referee was Harry Viner. They almost had a riot that afternoon. The papers next day called the Rice end "One Bounce" Steen. But that wasn't anything compared to what everybody called Viner. We'd have won a game in 1937 if it hadn't been for Harry Viner.

That was how things stood on Thanksgiving Day in 1938. We were worried. Burt Newlove, who lived next door to me, said there wasn't any way Texas could win cause the Aggies had a real good team, not quite as good as TCU, the national champions, but right up there. Rexito Hopper and his brother, Jackie, were like me. They were hoping. But Garland Smith was with Burt. Garland said that old Tradition was going down for sure this time. Course, they hoped it wouldn't, you understand. We *all* were for the Longhorns. That was like being for Roosevelt. It was just too bad those marvelous freshmen that Dana Bible had couldn't play. We really needed them.

**H**ere's what happened. Burt and Rexito and I were in the 25-cent Knot Hole Gang section, in the end zone, and saw it all. That stadium was packed. Forty thousand people. And Texas played inspired football. They drove down to the Aggie five-yard line. They drove down to the eight. They drove down to the six.

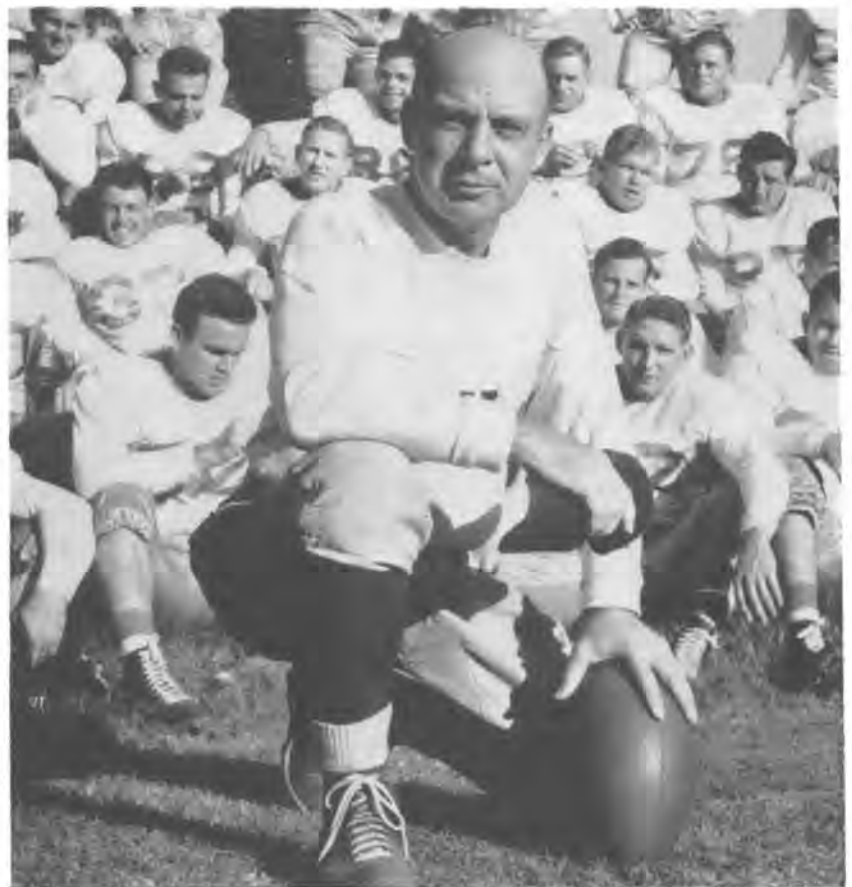
But they couldn't score.

Once, after Texas had been stopped short on fourth down, somebody said they should have tried to kick a field goal. But that didn't make any sense at all because everybody knew that Texas couldn't even kick an extra point, let alone a field goal.

Anyway, in the second half, Texas was just as inspired. The Longhorns stopped the Aggies cold, but they still couldn't manage to score. One of the troubles was the reverse to Puett. We had this player in the backfield named Puett. He only carried the ball on a reverse, which was not often. Most times he didn't even get back to the line of scrimmage. They'd just see that old reverse coming and they would clobber poor Puett. Especially on

fourth down around the Aggie goal line. Well, late in the game, we made one last drive down to their ten-yard line. The fullback made two. Then the tailback made five. I remember it exactly. I felt pretty good because we were down on the three-yard line, and we had two more plays to buck it over. One to get it right down to the goal line and another one to buck it right on over. I remember thinking that, while standing there (believe me, we were all standing!) in the Knot Hole Gang section in the end zone.

You know what happened? On third down they gave the ball to Puett on a reverse. He started to swing outside like he always did, but then he cut right upfield. I could see the hole. From the end zone, you can see holes easy, even when the teams are at the other end of the field. When he got to the line of scrimmage he just dove. High. He was three feet in the air, his body all strung out parallel to the ground. Touchdown! There's a newspaper picture of that, Puett soaring high with that Aggie goal line right under him! It was in every paper in



**Dana Xenophon Bible**, Texas football coach, wields seemingly effortless but iron-clad discipline over his team, seldom relaxes his dignity on or off the field.

Texas next day.

And they kicked the extra point, too! It just went right on up there, not exactly "splitting the uprights" like they say, but almost, and it was way up there, not just barely getting over the crossbar or anything like that. Texas 7, Aggies 0. Old Burt Newlove and Rexito Hopper and I just went wild, jumping up and down. Everybody went wild. The Tradition was going to make it!

But it wasn't over. In fact, something really crazy and unbelievable happened.

With about a minute to go, Texas had the ball at midfield and the punter aimed the ball for the coffin corner and hit it. It bounced just inside the sideline at the one-yard line and went straight on out of bounds. Aggies on the one, with 99 yards of Memorial Stadium Tradition looking them right square in the face. They were whipped! But you know what? The referee ruled that the ball had *not* gone out of bounds. He waved his hands and said it had gone in the end zone. Dana Bible had a fit. Players ran off the

bench and things got pretty hot where that referee was. That referee was Harry Viner!

There was a kind of scuffle — at least Harry Viner later claimed somebody pushed him — and he just marched that ball up to the 20-yard line and he kept right on marching. Harry Viner penalized Texas half the distance to our goal line. Crazy! Half of 80 yards is 40 yards! The place almost came apart. It must have been the longest penalty in the history of football.

But Texas stayed right in there. They rushed that Aggie passer off his feet and made him throw three wild, incomplete passes. The Aggies had to punt. The ball just hung up there lazily and came down and got killed on the Texas five-yard line. Less than 30 seconds to go.

Well, Dana Bible put ole Bobby Moers in there. He was an All-American, Bobby Moers was. But it was in basketball. He played guard. He was the greatest dribbler the Southwest Conference had ever had. And they put him in there at tailback and centered the ball to him.

Bobby dribbled it. On the ground. In the Texas end zone. And an Aggie fell on it! Can you believe that? In the Traditional Game. In Memorial Stadium. Where the Aggies have never won or tied even.

And so, of course, the Aggies kicked the extra point. *But it never got there.* The University of Texas blocked that extra point on Thanksgiving Day in 1938 on the last play of the Traditional Game. About four guys just poured in and one of them leaped up high on the backs of the others and put both hands out and that ball smashed into those two hands and rocketed right back upfield, right past the kicker.

We couldn't kick an extra point but on Thanksgiving Day in 1938 we beat those Aggies 7 to 6 in Memorial Stadium. "We only won one game all year but those Aggies haven't won in Memorial Stadium yet." It was Golden.

Nobody left, of course. It couldn't be allowed to end. People just stayed. The Longhorn band played "The Eyes of Texas," and Burt and Rexito and I squared our shoulders and sang that song like we never sang it before. "All the live long day." Yes Sir!

And walking home, across Speedway Boulevard and across the campus and then up the drag and over to Rio Grande Street and up to Washington Square where we lived, visions swam in our heads and our lips gave wings to poems. Puett on a reverse. Puett on the Reverse for three yards, soaring into history, high over that Aggie goal line. Did you see old Puett fly, Rexito? Yeah, boy, I saw it! Boy, what a play! Boy, what a Game!

Can life ever again approach such a moment of ecstasy? Will there ever be a sight like that Texas line smothering that extra point? On the Last Play of the Traditional Game? Let TCU have the National Championship. We have the greatest tradition in the world: the Aggies do not win in Memorial Stadium.

And Harry Viner. A new tradition. Harry Viner does not referee University of Texas football games. Ever again. The end, Harry Viner. There is, in 1938, no question in our minds that there is a just God and that the American Republic is under the rule of law.

**T**hat was how it started. It marked the beginning of all the magic still to come over the next three years. The fabulous freshmen who could not play that day became the sensational, erratic sophomores of 1939, the maturing juniors of 1940 and what *Life Magazine* called the American "Wonder Team" of 1941. It was "the greatest college football team ever assembled." The Wonder Team simply crushed people. They beat the fifth-ranked team in the nation, SMU, 34-7. Rice went down 40-0 and Arkansas 48-14. The Oklahoma Sooners surrendered 40-7. The magnetic moments, so many of them, fuse in my memory into a luminous hue, so that in harmony with the rising Rooseveltian economy we all seemed to be riding a special rainbow to the Good Life, Rexito and Burt and Garland and Larry, blessed children of this most blessed land.

History provides such concrete and persuasive evidence for our illusions. Did it not begin the right way in 1939, in the first game, in the first quarter, indeed, on the very first time Cowboy

Jack Crain ever carried the ball in a varsity game — when "The Nocona Nugget" circled right end behind crunching blacking and ran 45 yards for a touchdown? Did it not begin that way, Horatio? The string of victories after that appeared to us like the predictable milestones of a Chosen People. Were not the unbeaten Minnesota Golden Gophers merely the nation's number *two* team behind the Wonder Team? Was that not Crain and Layden and Kutner and Daniel on the cover of *Life Magazine*? Was it not our own intimate little neighborhood that the whole world looked to and honored? Bow down, Henry Luce, to Washington Square in Austin, Texas. Was not everything, absolutely everything, possible?

Yes.

All of the humiliations of bygone years had been erased, all the Harry Viners dispatched to the dustbins of history. Horatio Alger was real, all right. There was no justification for skepticism because the evidence that we were annointed was simply overwhelming.

But even the elect must labor at their calling, especially during a Depression. In the Knot Hole Gang, you could pick up empty Coke bottles off the concrete tiers and take them to a drug store not too far away from the stadium. You got two cents a bottle. Burt and Rexito and I used to pick up Coke bottles at the end of games, as many as we could carry, eight or nine if you worked at it carefully, and with this we mobilized enough capital for a post-game malted milk — if you didn't drop too many on the concrete tiers. It is mid-October of 1939 — the sophomore year — and the Texas Longhorns, though now obviously on the road back, are losing to Arkansas 13-7 with 30 seconds to play. I am distracting myself from total despair by scavenging relentlessly. I now have a record number of 14 Coke bottles in my arms.

Suddenly there goes Crain, Jack Crain, Cowboy Crain, the Nocona Nugget, breaking to the outside, his 170-pound frame flashing past the secondary, skipping around those last two men, into the open — 70 yards for a touchdown. After frenzied spectators are cleared from the field, Crain "calmly" (that's what the paper said) calmly kicks the extra point



that brings Texas a 14-13 victory. On the way up, Horatio!

What I remember is that when Cowboy Jack started upfield, I had all 14 Coke bottles in my arms. I may have had them when he blurred past the last two Arkansas players. Then Burt Newlove is leaping on the seats in front of us and letting go a wild cry of utter triumph, and Rexito and I are jumping up and down in each other's arms. When they tried to clear the field for the extra point, I discovered we were standing in about two inches of broken Coke bottles. It didn't matter. Glory and Wonder in your eleventh year on the planet has not room for 28-cent setbacks. Our tragedies were subsumed in our blessedness.

Our childhood began to come to an end on a November day in 1941 when the impossible happened, when the Wonder Team, the *Life Magazine*

cover team, was upset 14-7 by TCU, a day when Malcolm Kutner dropped a Pete Layden pass on the goal line, when Jack Crain slipped while breaking into the open. A jagged tear in the lining, one November afternoon in another century.

In the fading moments of that game, I remember learning something about religion, a subject in which I had not had much prior training. You prayed when things were out of your hands. "Catch it, Malcolm," I prayed; then, that he would catch the next one. I prayed for Pete Layden to throw the next one. "Oh Lord, if You'll just let Texas win, I promise I'll . . ." The passionate bargains of the powerless. Horatio?

The end, the very end, was full of meaning that we did not recognize. While the Wonder Team was thrashing almost everybody, and losing to TCU and tying Baylor, the little old Aggies

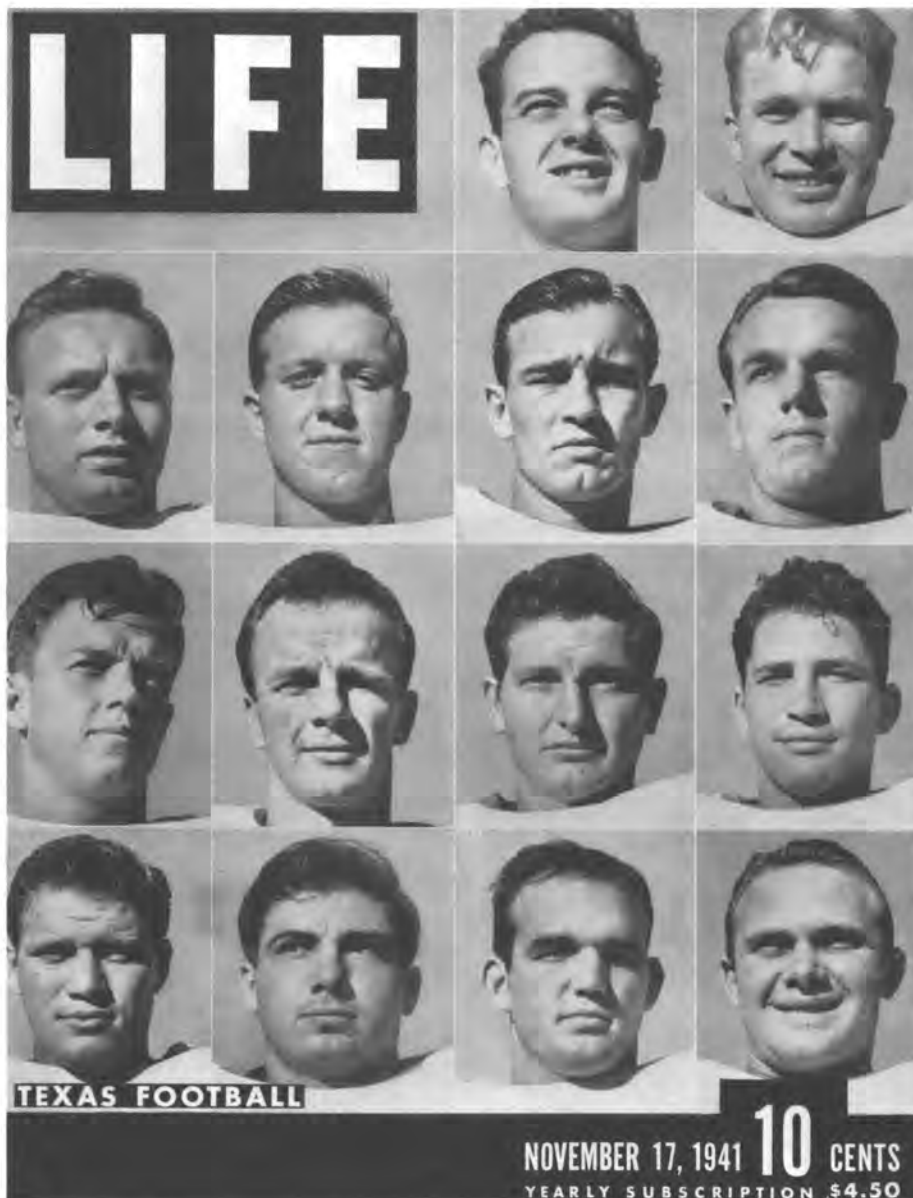
were edging by people so that when we met them on Thanksgiving Day, the unbeaten Aggies were already champions. They were the number two team in the nation, right behind Minnesota. It left us all a bit dazed. So the 23-0 Texas win over A&M was not the high moment of celebration it might have been. We were still only second in our own conference. It seemed impossible. It was like a soaring glider had come to rest in the middle of the sky. Things are just not supposed to end that way.

**T**here was a fateful postscript. Texas, breaking precedent, had scheduled a game after Thanksgiving. It came against Oregon, a team that had just missed going to the Rose Bowl. At the end, in that final performance, the Longhorns were never more magnificent. It was as if the shattered dreams were somehow, for an instant, reassembled through one last blinding display of pure artistry and excellence. The Wonder Team was breathtaking. The final score was 71-7. From the Knot Hole Gang, it looked — and was — awesome. Yet it was not enough. The season was over and the ultimate glory of the National Championship had slipped away somehow. The Play had Closed, to disappointed theatre-goers. In Sonora and Rawls and in Jack Crain's hometown of Nocona, where West Texas boys had made the cover of *Life Magazine*, the people sat around and speculated about what *should* have been. And in Austin, Rexito and Burt and Garland and I would start sentences, "If only Kutner had . . ."

On the night the season ended, when the might-have-beens began, my father consoled us that "in the larger perspective" our difficulty was manageable. We learned, rather soon, that he was right.

The date of the Oregon game was December 6, 1941. We were 13. □

*Larry Goodwyn teaches history at Duke University. His son, Wade, born in Austin during the family's years with the Texas Observer, is currently a member of the Longhorn Marching Band.*



## by Steve Hoffius

The invitation was a little vague. A friend of mine, Frank, was asked to fill in for the regular announcer at a Western Carolina League double-header between the Charleston Pirates and the Spartanburg Phillies. "Come on up if you feel like it," he said. "Give me a hand with the outfield scoreboard." Sure. It was a fan's dream.

When I arrived, near the end of the first game, Frank's five-year-old son Adam was working the scoreboard in the pressbox, pushing the buttons when he remembered or when Frank directed him. The buttons stuck, so he had to work them several times to move from one strike to two, and he invariably pushed too much. The numbers circled, one, two, zero, one, two. Frank sat at the microphone, sheets of statistics scattered around the table in front of him. Before the game, he had gathered information on all the players' records for the year. At first, when he announced a new hitter, Frank had mentioned his batting average and any other pertinent information about his time at the plate. But the players had asked him to stop. They said it was embarrassing — not many had averages much over .230. Frank's research lay around him, discarded. Adam willingly surrendered his job on the scoreboard to me.

The pressbox view took in all the players, the pitchers warming up out along the foul lines, even the pick-up game on the field across the street. And every sound in the rickety wooden ballpark, every conversation, seemed distinct. I had to shake myself to stay on top of the task at hand. All my baseball-watching life, I had always relied on being able to get the correct count from an occasional glance at an electric scoreboard being controlled by someone else. I wasn't used to watching every pitch, identifying each as ball or strike. I missed a lot, but a fan would always offer assistance: "Hey ya idiot, it's *two* strikes!" When the count was correct on the scoreboard, the umpire took it for granted. When I had it wrong, he identified the true count with his fingers. His hands were up a lot at the beginning. But I got better.

As the second game got underway, it became clear that there was more to the scoreboard than I had expected — I didn't discover the switch to

indicate hits and another for errors until the second inning. But it didn't really matter since neither team had had a baserunner.

Soon, though, a Spartanburg batter hit a hard line drive straight at second base. The Charleston shortstop ran to his left, and when he was directly in front of the ball, it hit his mitt and bounced away. He had had the ball, and he blew it. I pushed the error button. A clear call.

When Charleston got the side out and came to bat, the shortstop was the second hitter. He looked up at us from the on-deck circle and shook his head. "That was a hit," he said. He held out his arms, as if to plead. He was 18, and baseball, I realized, was his whole life. I began to see the muffed grounder in a new light.

"You know," I said to Frank, now struggling with Adam over control of the microphone, "the regular announcer never calls errors. Even when it's the crummiest game imaginable, he never calls more than two or three errors."

Frank nodded. "He'll let almost anything through. I heard that the manager sends a report up to the parent club every game. So they can see who's doing what. That's what they use to advance or cut people."

"Like if somebody makes too many errors," I said, "they'll cut the guy." Frank agreed. We felt awful. We'd just ruined the poor kid's life.

The shortstop was still scowling, and we knew he was right. Was it so important that we call every ball with firm accuracy? Or shouldn't we loosen up and admit that only a monstrously bad play was an error in Class A ball?

In the sixth, with the Pirates at the plate, a Charleston batter hit a rifle shot past second base. The Spartanburg second baseman raced to his right, stretched, and backhanded the ball. The momentum of his run took him a step or two towards left field, but he spun while off-balance and weakly threw the ball to first. It arrived too late. The batter was on. Frank and I looked at each other.

"Tough play."

"Man, if he'd gotten that one it would have been incredible."

"Nobody could've gotten it."

Hit, we both agreed. We had learned our lesson.

# If you can't take the heat,

The Charleston fans, desperate for a good sign, shouted out their agreement when we pushed the hit button.

Two minutes later we heard a voice behind us. "What the hell're you doing, a hit?" We turned around. A fan had climbed into the pressbox with us. "That was no hit," he said. "That was the second baseman's fault."

We both turned full around, ignoring the game, and looked at him: "Are you crazy? That was hit hard, the second baseman was lucky to get his glove on the ball."

"Shit," the guy spat out. He was big, and obviously mad. He wore a Spartanburg T-shirt. "That guy's an All-Star. He makes plays like that every night."

We looked at each other. He does? An All-Star? We didn't know what to do.

"One strike," somebody shouted up from the stands. I pushed one strike.

"We agree it was a close play," I said. "Might've gone either way. But he was really lucky . . ."

"Ball," shouted a fan. I pushed the button.

". . . to get to it. It was a hit."

"Error," insisted the Spartanburg fan. "He could've gotten it." He shook his head. "So on a play like that you take away a guy's no-hitter?"

No-hitter?

We looked back at our own scoring. Sure enough, that had been the first Charleston hit of the game. If we had judged the play an error, the no-hitter would be intact. Instead we had hurt another young player's record. We felt awful again, and I held out my hands apologetically. "I'm sorry, man," I said.

"You're sorry," he cried. "What's that do for a pitcher who . . ." He was interrupted by a Charleston batter who cracked a pitch solidly into left field, and took off for first. We all turned back to the field. He rounded first without a pause and ran on to second standing up.

Frank smirked. He turned to the Spartanburg fan. "That was an error, too, I suppose?" he asked. The fan shrugged. "Moot point," he said.

We didn't call another error the rest of the game, but we didn't call much of anything else either. Too dangerous. In the eighth inning Spartanburg busted out in a big rally. "Is a fielder's choice

marked as a hit?" I asked. Each play left us puzzled, and for once we were relieved when the ballgame ended. Our efforts, we agreed, had been something of a failure – a valuable experience, perhaps, but also sure proof that fans should never try to step into the scorer's seat. The record book looked like three games had been recorded simultaneously.

Frank left immediately after the game, after Adam had shouted good night to all the fans. I waited for them to leave, for the stadium to empty, before I climbed down. But before I could, the reporter from the local paper appeared to pick up the box score. I showed him the notes I had taken, the five sheets of paper and arrowed diagrams. He looked at it and glanced around nervously. "Yeah, but where's the official score?" I shrugged and pointed back to my scribbles. "Sit down," I said. "Let's see if we can figure this thing out." □

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# get out of the press box.



The tarnished trophies, proudly hung photographs and sparkling eyes — still excited more than 25 years later — all tell the same story.

“Eckie and I would have gone to the moon to play in a basketball game.”

“Sure we would.”

As it happened, Eunies “Eunie” Futch and Evelyn “Eckie” Jordan went to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in the late 1940s to play basketball for the Hanes “Hosiery Girls.” Before they were through, Jordan had become a five-time All-American and Futch had won the same honor three times. The rules, and the rewards, have changed since Hanes Hosiery, the last of the great industrial women’s basketball teams, won three straight national championships and ran up an incredible 102-game winning streak. Women are allowed to dribble more than once now, to win scholarships and to play in the Olympics. But few have ever wanted to play more, or been better at it, than the women who “ate, slept and drank” basketball while working for Hanes Mills after World War II.

High caliber women’s basketball in the South wasn’t born in the 1970s; it merely got its second wind.

Eckie Jordan grew up in Pelzer, South Carolina, during the Depression and learned to play basketball because her father and brothers and sisters played. Pelzer was a cotton mill town, which like many other mill towns in North and South Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee, boasted outstanding men’s and women’s basketball teams competing in the Southern Textile League.

“You were bred and grew up teething a basketball in that area back then,” she says. “We lived at the gym.” Eckie remembers clearly that girls received the same encouragement, and financial support, as boys did.

After helping her high school team win the state championship, Eckie went to work in the local mill, playing basketball intermittently during the war years. After World War II, she was recruited by the Chatham Blanketeers of Elkin, North Carolina, a leading textile team. But Eckie had seen Hanes play at cavernous Textile Hall in Greenville, South Carolina, the site of yearly tournaments for both sexes, and went to try out for Hanes instead in 1948. She had been engaged to a

# Shooting

## The Heyday of Industrial

sailor who had “jilted” her after the war, and she was ready to go on to “bigger things.”

At 5’2½”, Eckie is short for a basketball player. So the Hanes coach, Virgil Yow, told her that there was no way she could make the team. She would, of course, prove him wrong. She became his quarterback, his playmaker, controlling the tempo of the Hanes women’s team on the way to their championships. “He lived to eat his words,” Eckie says.

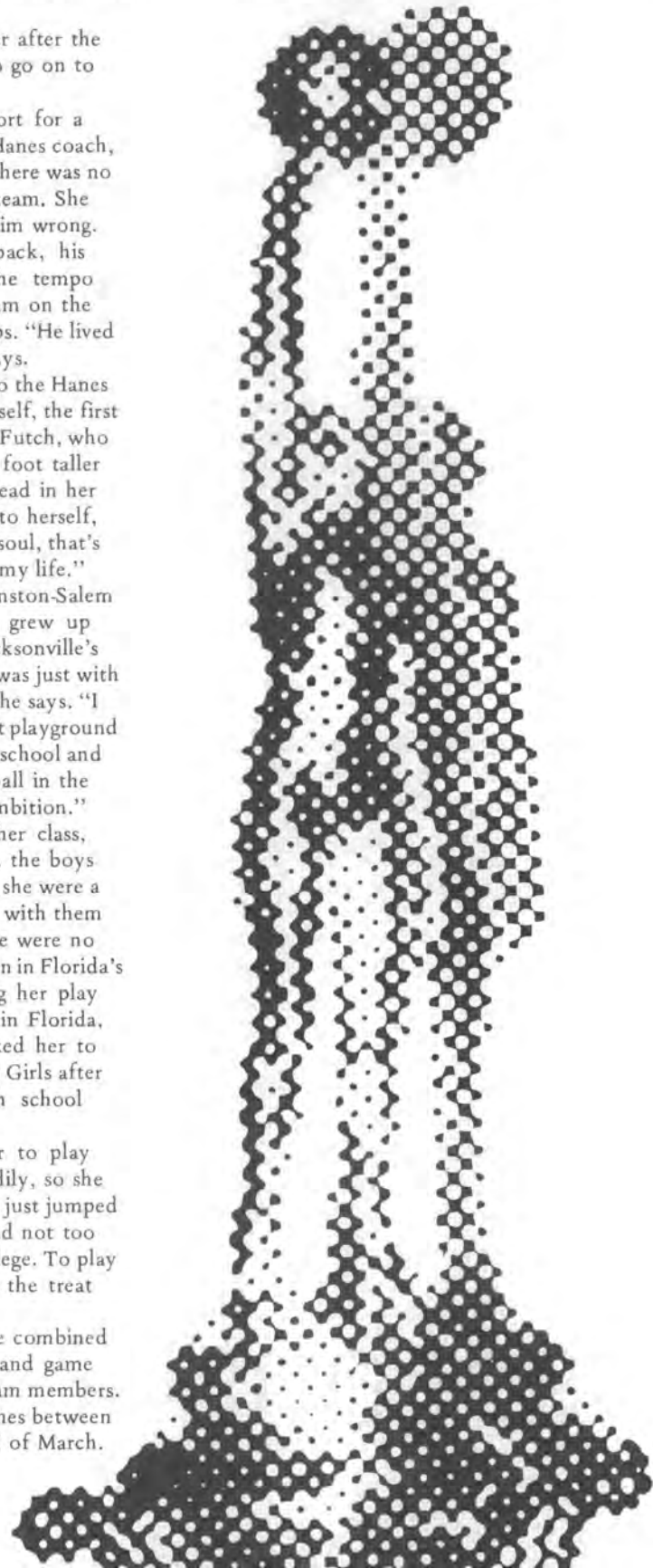
When Eckie walked into the Hanes gym intent on proving herself, the first person she saw was Eunie Futch, who at 6’2½” tall — exactly a foot taller than she — stopped her dead in her tracks. She recalls saying to herself, “Lord have mercy on my soul, that’s the tallest girl I’ve seen in my life.”

Eunie had come to Winston-Salem from Florida, where she grew up playing basketball on Jacksonville’s playgrounds. “Basketball was just with me from the beginning,” she says. “I can remember going to that playground when I was in elementary school and could not get the basketball in the goal. That was my life’s ambition.”

Always the tallest in her class, Eunie played mostly with the boys and found herself wishing she were a boy so she could compete with them on organized teams. There were no basketball teams for women in Florida’s high schools. After seeing her play for an independent team in Florida, however, Coach Yow asked her to come play for the Hosiery Girls after she graduated from high school in 1947.

The offer allowed her to play basketball and work steadily, so she accepted. “Back then you just jumped at a job,” she recalls, “and not too many women went to college. To play basketball and work was the treat of all treats.”

Duties at the mill were combined with a rigorous practice and game schedule for the dozen team members. They played about 30 games between Thanksgiving and the end of March.



# Stars

by Elva Bishop  
and Katherine Fulton

## Women's Basketball

The women worked regular shifts except when traveling for games and were paid straight time for the work days they missed. The company assigned them to different areas of the plant so that no one function would be affected too greatly during their absence. Coach Yow insisted that they were not to miss their regular shifts at any other times, even if the team had returned from a trip at three a.m. the previous morning.

Practices were tough. Yow coached the Hanes men's team as well as the women's, and Eckie recalls that he "wanted us to be as tough as the boys." The women would get off work about five p.m. and sometimes practice until nine p.m. "It didn't bother us," says Eunie. "It was what we came for." Back then, she recalls, "Basketball was my life."

Yow's persistence, and the women's desire, paid off in the team's performance, especially at the free-throw line. His method for teaching shooting included an adjustable basket, which he would set up first at six feet and then move gradually up to 10 feet. His players would shoot at each level until they hit 1,000 shots, while Yow checked for form, spin and follow-through. The players kept records of 50-shot sequences, shooting as many as 10,000 times. As a result, Hanes dominated the yearly national free-throw shooting contest, winning the title four straight years between 1948 and 1952. The 1952 champion, Hazel Starrett Phillips, won by making 47 of 50 attempts at the line. Unfortunately, no records of game percentages were kept, but it is noteworthy that in the newspaper box scores of Hanes' games, the only other statistic kept besides points scored was free throws missed.

The game the Hanes women played, Eckie says, can't be compared to the game women play today, which is virtually the same as the men's game. The basic concepts of basketball have not changed since James Naismith first threw a soccerball into a peach

basket in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1891, but basketball has taken many different forms, including the six-player version Eckie and Eunie played.

Scores were low compared to today, in part because the teams played only four eight-minute quarters (as opposed to two 20-minute halves now), and in part because the players' mobility was quite limited. "It took forever to get the ball down the court," Eunie explains, because players could dribble only once. Occasionally the women were allowed to let loose and play boy's rules. "We went wild," says Eunie. "I would have given anything to play men's rules. But the



people over in Greensboro (professional educators) said it was too hard on us."

Despite the handicaps women played under, their brand of basketball was very popular among the mill's employees and the residents of Winston-Salem. The Hanes gym's 2,000 seats were sold out each time they played,

with employees paying 25 cents and outsiders 75 cents. When the team won its first national championship in the Midwest, the players received more than 300 telegrams from plant employees.

At Hanes, just as in Eckie's hometown, basketball was "a community project." Eunie believes, "It was good for morale. It gave everybody in the company something to talk about and look forward to. . . . Back then, that was the thing to do — to go watch the Hanes Hosiery boys and girls play." Eunie also reasons that the timing was right for basketball to be a popular leisure activity: television sets and cars were not widely owned among mill employees.

It goes without saying that the Hosiery Girls also received the unqualified support of the Hanes management during their heyday. The company built a new gym in 1940, paid all the team's expenses, and

provided a chaperone, a business manager and a nurse (often Mrs. J. N. Weeks, wife of the company president) to assist with the women's program. "Mr. Hanes and Mr. Weeks," says Eckie, "did it because they loved the sport and the people."

The team brought favorable press attention to Hanes Industries, receiv-

# NBC – The Greatest Ever

O.K., basketball fans . . . what amateur team has won more major national championships than any other? No . . . it's not the UCLA men or the Wayland Baptist College women's team, both holding 10 titles. It's Nashville Business College, known in basketball circles as NBC. In its 20-year existence, the team from Nashville, Tennessee, won the AAU women's championship 11 times, in 1950, '58, '60 and '62-'69.

Herman O. Balls, president of Nashville Business College and a longtime sponsor of "Girls' AAU Basketball," organized the club in 1949. Players could attend his school and then continue on the team by taking a job with NBC or a related concern owned by Balls. Long-term stars included Alline Banks Sprouse, who also played for the Atlanta Blues; Joan Crawford of Van Buren, Arkansas, a 13-time All-American; Sue Gunter, a 1960 All-American from Walnut Grove, Mississippi, who will coach the U.S. women's basketball team at the 1980 Moscow Olympics; and Nera White, a 15-time All-American from Lafayette, Tennessee, considered by many to be the greatest female player of all time. Gunter, who was also assistant coach in the 1976 Montreal Olympics, the first year the Games included women's basketball, claims that Nera White "would definitely be a superstar today. She could do things on that court that I thought were impossible."

The chance to play top-level ball was incentive enough to keep these athletes working under less than ideal circumstances. "We worked for NBC on the poverty plan," says six-time All-American Doris Rogers, who now coaches at Nashville's McGavock High. She points out that men playing for AAU teams got well-paid "executive" jobs from sponsoring companies like Phillips and Goodyear. Rogers remembers that when these men asked about women's salaries, "we wouldn't answer because we were ashamed to tell them."

The coach of the team from 1949 onward was John Head, who compiled a career record of 689 wins and only 85 losses. At a time when most people were completely unaware of women's basketball, Head led American players to success in international competition. He coached a U.S. team, with five Nashville women, to the world championship in Rio de Janeiro in 1957, edging the Soviet Union in the finals, 51-48, before 40,000 spectators. (The Brazilian government even issued a stamp that year with a woman

basketball player on it.) "As far as I'm concerned," says Gunter, who now coaches at Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas, "John Head was a genius. Half of what I use now, I learned from him."

With Mrs. Head serving as the official chaperone, the NBC team traveled widely. In 1962 they journeyed to Madison Square Garden to play the powerful Soviet national team and then returned to play them in Nashville, losing both times. But in 1964 NBC defeated the Mexican national team in two games in Mexico City. NBC provided half the players and the coach for the U.S. team which toured the Soviet Union, winning four of six games, in 1958. ("I was leery," Coach Head recalls of the cold war visit. "I thought we'd have to climb over an Iron Curtain to get in.") And in 1965 Nashville formed the nucleus of a team that toured France, Germany and the USSR. As an NBC recruiting brochure put it, "The educational value of travel becomes a reality to club members."

In the late 1960s, even though his NBC club had been successful playing international rules, sponsor Balls remained totally opposed to the AAU's change to the five-player, full-court game. After announcing the end of the team in 1969, he said, "There are several things that entered into my decision. However, it is well known that my team will never play men's rules. I think it is fundamentally wrong, and if persisted in, will eventually destroy girls' basketball."

Herman Balls died at the age of 93 in 1977, the same year a lawsuit was filed against the Tennessee High School Athletic Association for its continuation of the half-court rules in girls' basketball. Those suing argued that use of the old rules discriminated against a player trying to get a college scholarship. The case was lost in court, but Tennessee coaches have recently voted to change to the new rules.

The rise of the collegiate sport since 1972 has brought new attention to women's basketball, but some of the old-timers have mixed feelings about the shift. Nera White points out that women players, like men, don't peak until well after their college years, but with so little top-flight post-graduate amateur or professional competition, women's college basketball remains something of a dead-end street for the best performers. It wasn't that way when NBC dominated the hardwood. □

— Elva Bishop





ing praise from both the local press and industrial publications. A column in the loyal local paper referred to President Weeks by saying, "Every community needs more men like Jim Weeks and his associates at Hanes to make it a worthwhile place in which to live." Thus, whether intended or not, industrial sports in Winston-Salem, as in countless other factory towns, became a crucial bridge between workers and management, between company and community.

**B**y 1947, after competing for many years in the Southern Textile League, the Hanes women's team was testing itself against national competition regularly and taking part in the only annual national playoff for women, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) tournament. The AAU had held a title tournament for women every year since 1926, with independent, industrial and college teams participating. (Not until 1972, when the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women [IAIW] organized a second championship for women, would the colleges have a national playoff of their own.)

The Hosiery Girls did not "fast break" their way to the top of the women's basketball world; it was a slow process as they inched their way closer to the time when the Winston-Salem newspapers would call their city the "New Women's Cage Capitol."

The team improved its showing in the AAU tournament gradually from 1947 to 1950. At first, they came away empty-handed, unless you count the bouquet of roses presented to Cornelia Lineberry when she was named Tournament Queen in 1947. A year later in St. Joseph, Missouri, with Lineberry's picture featured prominently in the red, white and blue official program, the Winston-Salem club did better, losing in the quarter-finals to a team representing Nashville Business College (see box). It is notable that while the 32 competing teams in 1948 were from all parts of the country (including Milwaukee, Wisconsin, East Chicago, Indiana, and Acworth, New Hampshire) six of the eight quarter-finalists were teams from North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee — signaling the dominance by Southern teams which would continue through the 1950s and '60s.

At the 1949 and 1950 tournaments,

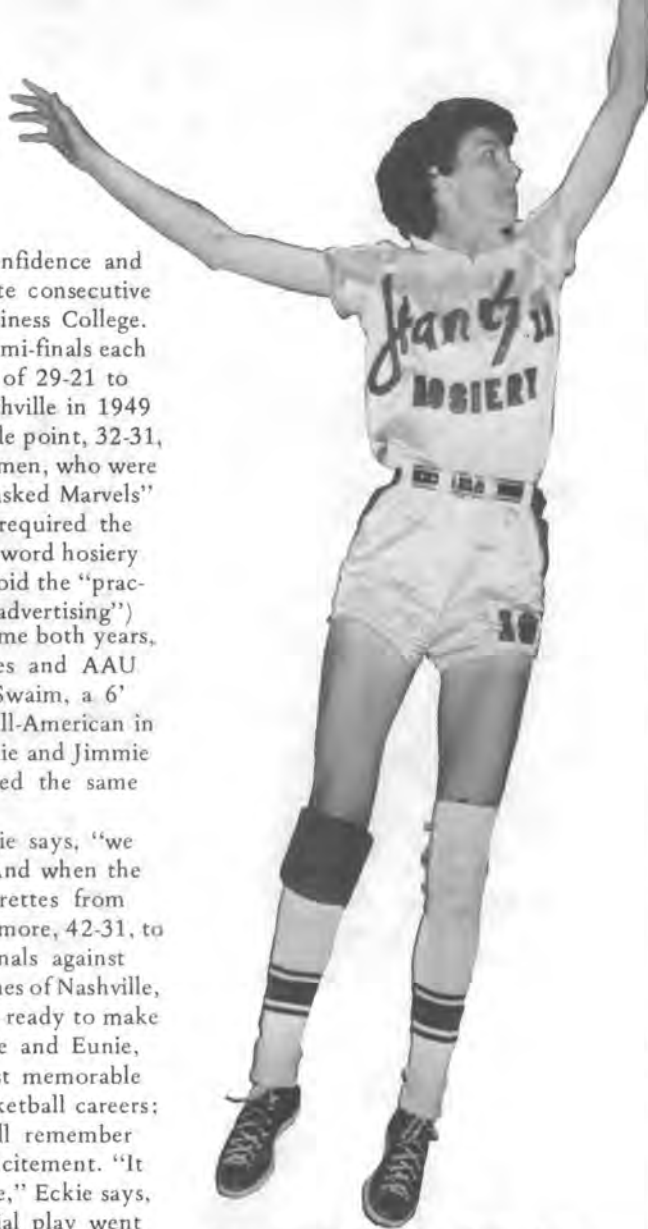


the Hanes women's confidence and reputation grew, despite consecutive losses to Nashville Business College. They moved into the semi-finals each year, losing by a score of 29-21 to their nemesis from Nashville in 1949 and then only by a single point, 32-31, in 1950. The Hanes women, who were by then called the "Masked Marvels" (an AAU official had required the players to cover up the word hosiery on their uniforms to avoid the "practice of seeking cheap advertising") won the consolation game both years, finishing third. Coaches and AAU officials made Jackie Swaim, a 6' forward, Hanes' first All-American in 1949, and in 1950, Eckie and Jimmie Maxine Vaughn received the same honor.

The next year, Eckie says, "we knew was our year." And when the team beat the Bomberettes from Martin Aircraft in Baltimore, 42-31, to move into the semi-finals against Cook's Beer's Goldblumes of Nashville, Eckie recalls, "We were ready to make our charge." For Eckie and Eunie, the game was the most memorable one in their entire basketball careers; they say they can still remember every minute of the excitement. "It was anybody's ballgame," Eckie says, but after a controversial play went Hanes' way and the best player on Cook's fouled out, the Hosiery Girls prevailed, 41-38.

For the first time ever, the Hanes women moved into the finals. Their opponents were the Flying Queens of Waylands College, one of the few schools which had already begun to stress women's basketball and offer athletic scholarships, under the sponsorship of a wealthy Texas rancher named Claude Hutcherson. Wayland's day, however, would come later; 1951 belonged soundly to Hanes by a score of 50-34. As usual, Eunie dominated with her defense and rebounding, assuring victory by holding Wayland star Marie Wales to only nine points.

Before the 1952 season, Hanes lost eight players, according to Mary Garber of the *Winston-Salem Sentinel*, because "they either got married or were already married and their



husbands didn't want them playing ball." However, Coach Yow added several players, including five-time All-American Lurlyne Greer, formerly with Cook's Goldblumes. The Arkansas native had starred for the Nashville team, which was losing its sponsorship, so she applied for a job at Hanes and, to no one's surprise, was accepted.

In an item fit for the sports page or the business page, the local press reported triumphantly, "Greer has a deadly hook shot and a jumpshot that is hard to stop. So far she likes her job fine. She has a lot of nice things to say about the people in the mill. Says they are friendly, and have been mighty nice to her. Seems like it's both ways because her foreman has told B. C. Hall, Hosiery athletic business manager, that he'll take all the girls like Greer he can provide."

The 1952 tournament was held in Wichita, Kansas, and the rebuilt Hanes

team proved mightier than ever. They moved into the semi-finals with a 57-30 win over the Jackson, Mississippi, Magnolia Whips. Greer scored 35 points, a tournament record. (Her season high had been 41 points — on 16 of 22 field goals and nine for nine at the free-throw line.) The Hosiery women were too much for perennial powers from the corn belt; they rolled over Iowa Wesleyan, 61-25, and then coasted through the championship game against Davenport, Iowa, American Institute of Commerce, 49-23. Jordan, Futch, Greer and Sarah Parker of Hanes won All-American honors.

During the 1953 season, the Hanes women broke the AAU record for most consecutive wins by taking their 60th triumph in a row in February against the Kansas City Dons. A month later, at the AAU tourney, they won their third straight national title by beating Wayland once again, 36-28. Not since Tulsa Business College triumphed in 1934, 1935 and 1936 had a team won the championships three straight years. Eckie, Eunie and Lurlyne were again named All-Americans.

The 1953 victory marked a high point the Hanes women would not reach again. Coach Yow retired after the 1953 season, and though the new coach, Hugh Hampton, led the team to a successful 1954 season, the unbeaten string could not go on forever. The team lost to the Kansas City Dons by three points in the semi-finals of the 1954 tournament, breaking their remarkable streak at 102 games. Hanes held onto third place by beating the Denver Viners, and in a victory which augured the later rise of intercollegiate over industrial women's basketball, Wayland College took the national title. Never again would the AAU champion be a team which required all the players to work for the sponsoring company.

The Wayland victory also intensified the team's rivalry with Hanes. Wayland teams went on to win four national titles and to claim a 131-game winning streak. But later in 1954, playing men's rules during the tryouts for the Pan-American Games, the Hanes women beat Wayland, 46-39. Since the loss was not counted in Wayland's streak, any true Hanes fan still claims the longest win streak in women's



basketball for the Hosiery women. "We whipped em good, boy's rules," Eckie says.

Eckie, Eunie and Lurlyne Greer Mealhouse went on to play in the Pan-American Games in Mexico City that year, the first time women's basketball was included in the international competition. Despite the fact that the South American teams played with a soccer-type ball, the U.S. team swept the Games undefeated.

For Eckie and Eunie, the sweet victory over Wayland and the trip to Mexico City marked the end of an era. The Hanes team disbanded after the 1954 season. Eunie had seen the end coming; she had taken a long look around at the AAU tournament, she remembers now, knowing it would probably be her last. "I could have bawled a river."

**E**ckie, Eunie and other observers can only speculate about the reasons industrial basketball faded out. Hanes had dropped its men's program in 1952, saying "the practice and travel required of players during the regular season interferes with the work schedule of those players holding supervisory positions with the company." Eckie recalls that the women too had begun to catch some flak from other employees for missing work. The company was growing, and there were more workers who were not followers of the team. In addition, their principal booster, Mr. Weeks, had retired.

The Hanes women were the last of the area's textile teams to throw in the

towel. Mary Garber, a local sports-writer, argued that fan support had fallen off due to the disappearance of local rivals, such as perennial textile champions, the Chatham Blanketeers, who dropped their women's program in 1949. "Several years ago," she pointed out, "the balance of AAU basketball power was in the East. There were a number of fine teams in this section, the Atlanta Blues, Nashville, Chatham and others. But now the basketball interest has moved West."

Changing attitudes likely played an equally important role in the shrinking opportunities for women. In 1953, when the Hanes team was at the peak of its reign, the North Carolina state legislature took action to stop the increasingly popular state high school tournament for girls. Responding to pressure from educators, and ignoring the pleas from the tournament's organizer for "equal privileges for girls under their own rules," the legislature restricted the girls' teams to one playoff each year. The bill effectively eliminated the state tournament, since most high school teams played a local or county-level tournament. The loss of the state playoff as a proving ground for the best players affected not only the feeder system which had benefited Hanes and other industrial teams, but also affected the level of girls' and women's programs for years. Not until 1972 did North Carolina again start up its girls' high school

tournament.

As Rosie the Riveter of World War II and Korean War years returned to the kitchen during the mid-'50s, the prevailing philosophy of women's physical education was again coming to stress, as it had in times past, the virtues of widespread participation over high-level skilled competition. This attitude usually was defended in professional journals with a combination of arguments regarding proper female conduct and the possible threat posed by competitive sports to a young woman's physical and psychological health. Actually, it was based as much on the assumption that "ladies don't sweat" as on genuine professional concerns about what would benefit the many, rather than the few talented competitors.

Eckie had played for Hanes for seven years, Eunie for eight, and along the way, Winston-Salem had come to seem like home to them. Like some of Yow's other championship players, they stayed on at the mill, and at least four of them still work for Hanes. Eckie, now 53, works in distribution, and Eunie, 50, works in the corporate tax office. Though many of them married, or moved away, Eunie and Eckie never did and have shared an apartment for the last 25 years. People still walk up to them on the street and talk to them about the days when industrial basketball, as opposed to the Atlantic Coast Conference college ball, reigned in Winston-Salem.

Several Hanes players were able to take advantage of the gradual shift of women's basketball away from Southern industries and into the colleges, using the transition to further their own educations. Lu Nell "Tex" Selle went to Wayland College in Plainview, Texas, and is now a missionary. Hazel Starrett Phillips attended nearby High Point College and presently coaches in Winston-Salem. At least one player — Lurlyne Greer Mealhouse — played professionally. Mealhouse moved back to her native Arkansas after the team disbanded, where she played for at least a year for Hazel Walker's touring professional team, the Arkansas Travellers.

Coach Virgil Yow also continued to play a role in encouraging and improving women's basketball throughout the region. He instituted a number of rules changes that were accepted by





the AAU rules committee, making the women's game faster. His camp, PLA-MOR in Windy Hill Beach, South Carolina, begun in 1951, was the first sports camp in the South or anywhere else to include women's basketball. Yow is the only living person to be selected to the Helms Sports Hall of Fame for contributions to both men's and women's basketball.

Eckie and Eunie coached basketball for a couple of years in Winston-Salem's recreational league, and both play other sports, such as golf and tennis. However, neither has played basketball on a competitive basis since the Hanes team disbanded. Now the recent revival of high-quality women's basketball has awakened old memories and rekindled the desire to play once more. "I'm not a good spectator," Eunie says. "I'd rather be playing."

The two say that today's young women are no better than they were 25 years ago, though the playing style is very different. They contend that previous rules forced more finesse and better passing. What has not changed is the dominance of the Southern teams. In the first eight years of the AIAW championship, Southern teams have taken the title four years and grabbed



more than their share of the other spots in the tournament.

In a move that knits together the distant but related parts of women's

basketball history, Hanes now sponsors a special game for All-Americans called the Hanes Underalls Classic. Hanes officials enlisted Eunie's and Eckie's help to promote and organize the game, and the two women have been involved with the undertaking since it was conceived three years ago.

Eckie and Eunie stopped playing before many of today's generation of players were born, so it is only natural that the new stars like to refer to themselves as the generation who broke the ice for women's basketball. They are often surprised to meet and to talk to Eckie and Eunie, who by all rights should have been their role models. "I didn't know they grew em that tall back then," one young player recently said to Eunie.

That tall, or that good. □

*Elva Bishop is an alumna of Camp PLA-MOR and competes today in the Carrboro (North Carolina) basketball and softball city leagues. She is finishing a masters in Physical Education at the University of North Carolina. Katherine Fulton, now a reporter with the Greensboro Record, is the former captain of the Harvard University women's basketball team.*





# Addicted to playing ball

by Bob Maguire



## Birth of the Junkies

It is any weekend of the long, sultry south Louisiana summer. The Stone Junkies have just won top place in a slow-pitch softball tournament in their hometown of Parks, Louisiana, southwest of Baton Rouge. After the presentation of trophies and a post-game meeting and celebration, the pride and joy of Parks' 850 black residents meet at the Snowball Stand, the team's headquarters, where friends and neighbors join them for a lively analysis of the latest triumph. Since forming nine years ago, the Stone Junkies have given Parks an important sense of identity.

Nearly every black household in Parks, whether or not a member of the immediate family is on the team, displays at least one trophy won by the Junkies. Men in their forties and fifties wear Stone Junkies gold and black baseball caps with "S. J." stamped on the front. Kids too little to swing a softball bat wear oversized windbreakers that belong to their uncle or brother and that boldly proclaim "Stone Junkies — Parks, La." on the back. And girls and women of all ages wear gold and black T-shirts emblazoned "Junkettes" or "Property of the Junkies" on the front. As one player proudly remarked, "We have given our community a name."

It hasn't always been that way. For

a long time, the Stone Junkies had a hard time convincing their neighbors that softball deserved their attention and enthusiasm. And for an even longer time, the black community in Parks was split down the middle by the Bayou Teche, the slow-moving stream that divides the established families from the relative newcomers. The older black residents of Parks have lived on the west side of the bayou since at least the turn of the century. For decades, family members labored as domestics, railroad workers, farmers or sharecroppers. Some worked part-time on local construction jobs while others earned meager wages at the nearby sugar mill or cotton gin.

On the east side of the bayou, other black families took up residence, starting in the late 1930s, when mechanization in agriculture began pushing sharecroppers looking for work into towns and cities. But over the next 30 years, the increased mechanization and automation in traditional places of employment, such as the sugar mill, made it increasingly difficult for both the older and newer residents to find or keep jobs. Large numbers of young adults, even entire families, packed up and left the area, while other families continued to move to the east side community, called Promised Land, in hopes of finding work.

These once-distinct groups have largely merged to become the single black community that now exists in Parks. Through pride and dedication, not only to a sport, but to the concept of a community, the Stone Junkies have been an instrumental force in unifying the Parks black community.

In 1970, Alton "Brose" Ambrose returned home from Viet Nam to his mother's house in Promised Land. Having lost a leg in the war and with dim hopes of finding a good job, Alton decided to go into business for himself. He bought a small shack, had it hauled next to his mother's house, and established the now-legendary Ambrose Snowball Stand. Offering ice cream, soda water, cigarettes, snacks and beer in addition to snowballs, the "Stand" quickly became a meeting place for all ages where sports was a favorite topic of conversation.

Alton remembers that, in the beginning, even though people from both sides of the bayou stopped by his place, sales were not that great. "Nobody had money," he recalls. "Most of the guys who are now on the team were still in school. The older guys didn't have no jobs. Most of them would 'job around,' you know, hustle whatever they could get. They worked at the pepper factory, planted sugarcane and worked at the mill during harvest. And a lot of the young guys were planning to go over to Houston to find jobs as soon as they finished school. Times were tough."

Dave "Ku-Nook" Thibodeaux, 29-year-old coach of the Junkies, comes from a family long-established in the town. An avid sports fan like Alton and the others, out of school and unemployed, Ku-Nook remembers spending many hours at the Stand talking sports after playing hardball or football on the empty lot across the street.

Ku-Nook recalls that now-historic evening in the spring of 1971 when the Stone Junkies were born. "It was funny," he laughs. "We were all at the Stand and this guy just came here and said, 'Hey, y'all want to play? We got a softball tournament.' We actually didn't know what softball was at the time, cause we were so used to playing hardball around here. So he asked us, 'Would you be interested in playing for two or three cases of beer?' We said, 'Sure, fine.' So we went in with



the idea of playing for beer. We won two games and some beer . . . and we just kept on playing ever since."

That was all it took. The dozen or so who made up the first group decided to form a team and enter tournaments regularly. During this first part of their career, the Junkies played other black teams — usually from small rural communities or from plantations. Like these teams, the Junkies had very little money.

Regardless, to keep on playing, they surely needed a manager and a name. The choice for manager was immediately clear. Dave explains, "Brose came in, well, he couldn't play no more, so he just ran the team." The name came next. Ku-Nook laughingly remembers how it was selected, "Oh,

we were all talking in front of the Snowball Stand and one of the guys started singing 'Stone Soul Junkies,' the Curtis Mayfield song, and he just decided to give us that name. Now people ask why we picked Junkies, cause it's supposed to be something that means you're on drugs, but actually Junkie to us is that we are addicted to playing ball."

Their addiction to playing ball was enough to bring together the group of young guys who were either still in school or marginally employed in part-time or seasonal jobs, but they quickly realized that to play in tournaments they would need gloves, bats, balls, caps, team T-shirts, expense money and entry fees. To get the needed cash posed their first major obstacle.

sport in Parks in the early '70s. Miles "Wild Child" Potier recalls that this posed a problem for the Junkies.

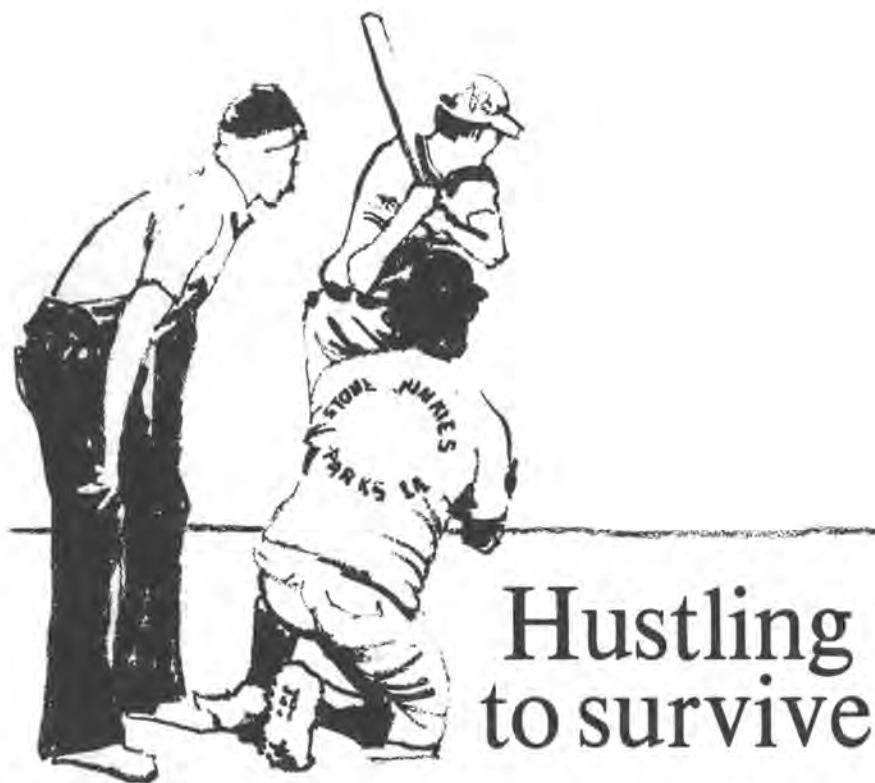
"When we first started," he explains, "the elderly people, especially, looked at softball as something that took away from, you know, the hot dog, apple pie, baseball trend. Even though softball was a form of ball, they figured that baseball was the real, true measure of a kid's ability. They looked at softball as something that took away from the tradition of baseball."

But the Junkies, stubborn in their enthusiasm for the game and dedicated to their survival as a team, were able to chip away at the reluctance of their elders. Wild Child, a former All-American hardball player at Southern University and now the most gung-ho of the Junkies, talks about that critical period: "After we went on for a while, the old people saw how much softball meant to people interested in it, and they started to have no other choice but to stick with it from that standpoint and like it. Softball was something that had to be accepted. There was more involvement in softball than in hardball, which was steadily declining in the area. Softball was a fun thing, you know. Everybody could get involved, even some of the mediocre players who couldn't hit a baseball. It was something to do over the summer days and the weekends. And it started to catch on."

During that first year, the Junkies started to "catch on" in a big way. As "Junkie Fever" grew, people from Parks began bringing lawn chairs and coolers to any ballfield where the team was playing, settling in for an exciting game of softball. As one young lady put it, "It came to be that without the Junkies, nobody would be doing nothing."

With this growing community interest, the team was able to sponsor various successful benefits, raising just enough to get the equipment they needed with a few dollars left over for the next season's tournaments. But nothing came easily. Junkies' president, Julius "Big Boy" Ambrose, smiles when he thinks back to those hectic and pressured first days.

"I remember, we used to get up at two or three in the morning. I used to hustle some hogsheads and some



## Hustling to survive

Hustling to survive was a way of life and practiced art for the impoverished black folks in the Parks area. Whenever money was needed, family and friends organized fund-raising activities ranging from benefit dances and dinners to selling local delicacies such as gumbo or homemade boudin (a delectable sausage of pork, rice and seasoning). The Junkies, unemployed, without a sponsor and in desperate need of cash,

had a range of tried and true fund-raising activities to choose from. The problem was that, traditionally, funds were raised, and raised willingly, to assist a family in times of death, sickness or disaster, but a group of young men sponsoring benefits and selling food to raise money for a softball team was unheard of! And to make matters worse, softball was virtually unknown as an organized

seasoning. We'd buy a head for two, three dollars and make boudin. Then we'd get on the street and sell it all over. We'd make us about \$150 and put that in our treasury. That's how we got our first T-shirts.

"A lot of times we would just go to Dave's house at night and try to figure out a way to keep the thing going. 'Who thinks we can make money doing this and doing that?' It takes up a lot of time, but we enjoy it. Remember, we're a self-supported team, and we have to raise all the money ourselves."

Toward the end of their first season, the guys struck upon a novel way of raising that needed cash: sponsoring their own tournament. In 1971 they invited several area black teams to compete in "The First Annual S.J. Classic" at the hardball field in Parks. In the past six years the Stone Junkies have not played in their own tournament. They work full-time organizing the schedule, coordinating activities, umpiring and selling drinks and food, while the invited teams vie for tournament trophies. The Classic has become the Junkies' biggest fundraiser, played for three days on three adjacent fields in the nearby town of Breaux Bridge, involving over 20 teams, some from as far away as Houston. Last year's tournament netted over \$1,500 for the treasury.

The team soon learned that to sponsor such an affair annually and to compete regularly in other tournaments, they would have to form themselves into an organization. Big Boy describes it this way: "We got ourselves a president, business manager, manager, coach, treasurer and field captains, you know, infield and outfield captains. And we even got ourselves a team cook — Walter Phillips. He has a Junkies jersey with 'Cook' on it." The addition of Mr. Phillips, a retired sharecropper and patriarch of one of the largest and most active families in Parks, cemented the growing love affair between the team and the community. The Stone Junkies were steadily becoming a cornerstone of the entire Parks community.

Big Boy recalls the team's first major road trip. "We went to Houston by school bus. We had this guy we used to hire who'd charge us something like \$200, and we used to charge

\$10 a head. We'd bring all the players, plus outsiders. And we used to get a school bus full! We'd leave Parks Saturday morning about three. The bus went all night. Everybody would be all excited. They had taken their naps and everybody was up. We'd get there, stop at a station, and people'd go call their relatives to come pick them up. And we'd come back Monday or something like that." Wild Child quickly adds, "Everybody went there like we was going for the World Series!"

A trip to a city as far away as Houston gave the people from Parks, particularly the youngsters, experiences that they probably would not have had without the Junkies. Ku-Nook explains, "Through us they got opportunities, you know, that we didn't have, cause through softball, when we go to Houston, everybody goes to Houston. They got guys who probably would never have gone to Houston if it wouldn't be for softball. They got guys who would probably never have gone to Lake Charles, who never slept in a hotel, that have experienced it. Sometimes we go and take them on the beach. Spend the whole day on the beach."

Coach Dave continues, "By being with softball, you get to meet and know a lot of people. We walk around with our caps and our shirts and our jackets on, and a lot of people say, 'He's a Stone Junkie, you know!' The name Junkies has carried us through a lot of different phases." Miles adds how Dave, himself, once got a special boost. "One time," he recalls, "Dave went into a department store in Lafayette. He was going to get something and 'Say, aren't you the Coach of the Junkies?' And the guy gave Ku-Nook a 50 percent discount on a suit!"

For a large part, though, the team plays in the tournaments for the status that it gives the town. As Miles explains, "To be known that the team is bringing some kind of glamor, some limelight to Parks! This might bring somebody, or something might accidentally be noticed through the Junkies. The name has brought not only prestige, but a lot of exposure to our community."

Ku-Nook adds: "Our team is mostly a home team. The guys on the team grew up together. When we play,

we play with pride and dedication. When you're winning and having people there praising you, and you're getting trophies, it makes you feel good. You see, we ain't got no sponsor. We depend on ourselves and there ain't nobody who can come out there and say, 'Well, y'all got to do this and that.' We have guys on the team that graduated from college. They could've gotten jobs out of state, but tried their best to get jobs around here to keep it together. A lot of people are proud to be a Junkie. We have a name and we call ourselves a legend."

No one relates bits of the legend better than Miles, who loves to tell of the team's greatest tournament comebacks. "One time we were playing in Lafayette. The Machines were supposed to be a powerhouse. They were more mature, bigger and older players. They knew the game. We got to the finals with the Machines, and they were tough. We had to beat them twice to win. They had a lead on us, and we started chipping away. I came to bat with runners at first and second. There were two outs. We needed runs. It was one and one on me. The pitch came, and I hit a shot. The ball was gone the minute I hit it! The guy went to the fence, tried to climb the fence, and he just hung on the fence and watched the ball go. Brose and them were jumping for joy! That demoralized the Machines; we broke their backs. We went on to the next game. We came up there and just pounded them to death. It was almost, what, two, three in the morning when the second game ended. Then, man, we started dancing, man, on the field. Just dancing!"

Dancing on the field after a spectacular comeback victory is only one aspect of the Junkie legend. Another is singing. From a team born with the name of a song, what else can you expect! Dave explains: "Well, they'd be singing. Charlie would come up there and make up a few lines like:

Everywhere we go, people want to know  
who we are.  
We say, we're the mighty Junkies,  
Mighty, mighty Junkies, and we go,  
Ou, ah, cha, cha, cha,  
Ou, ah, cha, cha, cha.

And everybody would sing, you know, they would just love that. And we sang before, after and during the game. People used to come out just to see

us sing!"

Wild Child thinks back and is amazed at how the legend evolved. "We just started as guys getting together and just wanting to have a common goal of playing together. Then it started as a pride thing, which it still is, as well as fun. But the pride grew, and it kept on growing. And the Junkies turned out to be fun. It was fun and strong competition, like you were playing for the cup for your town. You know, who's the biggest and the baddest, and you have

to live up to that."

It didn't take long for the Junkies to become the "biggest and baddest" black softball team locally. They were still playing under-financed local black teams. Ku-Nook remembers when the team was winning steadily after three seasons, and "Everybody said, 'Well, why don't y'all go big time?' By big time, it means instead of playing St. John's Plantation and Cypress Island, 'why don't y'all go to Lafayette and try to play against, you know, the white boys!'"

## The big time



asking. You know, we'd go around and we'd say, 'Well, why can't we play here?' We were just dumbfounded by the people saying, hey, cause we're black, we can't play there."

Shut out of the local white league, the Junkies sought out leagues and tournaments in nearby cities where the atmosphere was more hospitable. By 1974, they were playing in both

When they did try to go "big time," the team had a rude awakening. In 1974, it took more than community support, organization, talent and desire for a black softball team to be able to break into all-white leagues and tournaments. The white leagues were generally highly organized and firmly established. Their teams had financial support and good equipment.

Coach Dave describes what happened when the team tried to enter established tournaments in their own parish: "Now the St. Martin Parish League, they didn't have no blacks. You see, they didn't allow blacks to play. They would give a tournament in Breaux Bridge and we'd call and say, 'Look, we want to get in.' 'Oh yeah, Dave Thibodeaux, Stone Junkies. . . . Oh, we're full,' they'd always say. 'We're full' or 'We don't think it would be right for you to come here.' But we'd just keep

all-black and integrated tournaments in Lafayette, Lake Charles, New Iberia and Houston. But even then, things did not always go smoothly. Ku-Nook explains: "We'd go to tournaments and we'd be THE black team. People expected us to fight and argue, but we were going there as we should, with respect. If the umpire would make a bad call, regardless if he was white or black, we wouldn't argue. And if somebody *would* argue, I would argue," asserts the usually calm coach. "In 1975, we joined a white league in New Iberia. It was a hassle for us to go way down there to play, but we just joined it to say, 'They're gonna have a black team.' It took a while, but now we're accepted. In fact, we have quite a few white players who back us now."

"When we first got to New Iberia," Miles recollects, "they wouldn't let us

get in those tournaments on weekends because we were black. So when we did get in there, we had turmoil with calls. A lot of the calls would go against us, especially in the close games and when we were beating teams that were supposed to win. But through guidance by Coach Dave and Alton and Julius, we were able to keep our cool and maintain that athletic style. Like diplomacy, you know, maintain our cool and just play our game and beat them with the sticks and the gloves.

"Like, one time we were coming back and beating a pretty strong team. We had a call at second base. Hypolite was running and he'd thrown a beautiful hook slide on the guy, and he completely eluded the tag. The umpire kinda turned his head and made the call. It was so obvious, even to the fans. All the guys started to get up and Dave told us to keep our cool and he said, 'Let me argue.' So he went up to them and talked to them in a mild-mannered way, because we weren't established and we couldn't afford to get anybody thrown out of the game or the tournament. Then Dave came back. He said, 'We just got to go out there. We're not gonna win anything close, so we just gotta go out there and put it out of reach.' Eventually, we won that game."

In 1975, the Stone Junkies were invited to participate in the Louisiana State Slow-Pitch Softball Championship Tournament — the first time an all-black team had won such a distinction. Although they finished somewhere in the middle of the pack of the state's 39 best teams, the trophy won at "State" is the most cherished of all. Added to the growing collection of the other team trophies on display, this one proved to them and their fans that the Junkies could play with the best.

"You know," Wild Child comments philosophically, "there's personal pleasure in life. There's more to life than monetary value. When people are happy and like what they're doing and love the surroundings like I love the Junkies, well . . . you've ridden the low tides with them, from when they were just a pond of water. And now you've dug a bigger hole and made it a river. And now you've dug it again and now we're riding the wave of an ocean!"



# The challenge today

Toward the end of 1975, a sudden economic swing gave the people of Parks an extraordinary lift — with implications for the Junkies both as individual players and as a team. A textile mill just five miles from Parks, established locally in 1972 as a division of the Union Underwear Company, began in 1975 to expand its work force from several hundred to nearly 2,000 workers. Suddenly, and for the first time ever, regular, full-time employment, paying at least the minimum wage, was available close to home. Never mind the hectic pace of work and the round-the-clock shifts; it was guaranteed work, rain or shine, and for a people down so long, this was up.

As rapidly as jobs were secured, the face of the community changed. Consumer credit became widely available to Parks residents. Houses were renovated and a host of consumer goods ranging from cars and motorcycles to furniture and household appliances were purchased. Cars meant unaccustomed individual mobility and cash-on-hand meant enjoying things long available but not accessible. By early 1976, the stunned community began to feel its way along the dizzying path of relative prosperity. Good times had arrived.

At the same time, equal job opportunity laws and booming local growth in general opened up jobs in other critical employment sectors such as the oil industry, resulting in a phenomenon that no one in Parks would have believed could have existed: virtual full employment.

This incredible change affected the Stone Junkies deeply. By the 1976 season, all the players, except the few still in school, were working. Two players who had previously left the team to work in Houston rejoined the Junkies when they procured jobs at the textile mill. Today, all of the 22-member Stone Junkie organization hold down full-time jobs, and almost all own cars.

The changes of jobs, money and mobility have had positive and negative effects on the team. Certainly, the Junkies still have to hustle for money

to meet team expenses, but, as Dave puts it, "Right now, we got it. It's still not the way we want it, but at least now I'm working and everybody's working. A lot has changed."

There's more money in the treasury now to back up the sense of pride and friendship known locally as "Junkie Style." The same ballclub that cares about winning has also built a tradition of caring off the field. "Whenever a relative of a player is sick, we send a bouquet of flowers to them," explains 23-year-old Rodney "Port" Potier, the Junkies second baseman. "When there's a wake in Parks, the Junkies are always there and always send flowers. I remember when my mother was sick. The team got together and sent a lovely bouquet to her. It really made her happy. If there's not enough money in the treasury for something, we all chip in from our pockets."

The days of renting the school bus to go to Houston are over. "Everybody has a car," Dave comments, "and we can get up and go to Houston in cars. We can stay at a hotel and put up \$25." The Junkies and their fans ride in a car caravan now and can go to tournaments more easily and more often. "It's a little different in a way," Wild Child says, "but we still travel together like one big, happy family."

Still, the changes have left their impact on the team in other ways, too. The Stone Junkies once again went to "State" in 1978; but Miles admits, "Since the latter part of the '76 season, we have been in the middle of a decline." Wild Child and his brother Rodney see a definite link between the new wealth and the team's decline. In the early years, the team practiced at least three or four times a week. Nowadays, says Miles, "We haven't practiced often, and the practices haven't been taken that serious and as a team. We have the best talent we've ever had, but no matter how good you are and how much talent you have, once you don't keep in time with your skills, you're gonna lose the sharpness you have."

Rodney carries the explanation a little further. "In the early years, the guys didn't have much to do, so we

were almost always by the Stand in the afternoon, ready to practice. Now, a lot of times, work schedules conflict with practice. And guys have other stuff to do, too. A lot of the guys are married now, which puts more complications into it, since they have family obligations. Sometimes, some of the guys are just hard to find! Some of the guys are not as ready to go all out now because they're afraid if they get hurt and miss work, it'll mess them up."

For the players who work offshore on an oil rig, seven days on and seven days off, work schedules keep them from games as well as practices. Milton "Frenchie" Potier, one of three players in this position, complains, "Every darn time we have to play in District or State Tournaments, it's when I'm stuck out on that oil rig. Every time! I've never made it to State yet!"

Ironically, prosperity threatens the continued success of the Junkies today more than the obstacles of adversity in the past. But Joseph "Choc" Carnell, at 21 one of the youngest Junkies, sees the team becoming an even stronger force in the community. "A lot of the kids in Parks have talent, but they never have an opportunity to use it," he explains. "Now is the time for us to establish a scholarship fund so we can send some of those kids through college. Guys on the team who have kids now should be real interested in that, cause maybe if we get this thing going by, you know, putting so much in an account every month, when their kids are ready for college, the Stone Junkies scholarship will be there."

And most players, including Wild Child, feel that the future is bright for the Junkies. After all, Miles reasons, "When you can ride the high and low tide with individuals this long, you have a certain attachment that you get, and even through all the turmoil you have, you manage to stick together. A lot of us now see the real significance of surviving through all this. Don't worry, we're coming back." □

*Bob Maguire lived near Parks for two years while conducting field research for his dissertation in geography from McGill University in Canada. Although not much of a softball player, he is now an "Honorary Junkie," a title he holds with great pride.*



Part 4 / SPORTING LIVES

# Crossing the line

## WOMEN WHO RUN

Martha Klopfer looks very much like an Andrew Wyeth character. She maintains an evenness which brings a sense of calm to those around her. As thoughts are shared, she makes agreeable murmurs and listens attentively.

Klopfer, a 43-year-old mother of three, is married to a university zoologist and lives on a farm near Durham, North Carolina. What sets Martha Klopfer apart is the fact that she has become one of the finest women master's runners in the nation. In the past several years, she has won one marathon and run in a half dozen others.

"Running is a way of finding real limits," Klopfer says. "It's a kind of reality that you can't deny or understand. It's there. It's real. Running has been a self-discovery for me, never having done team



sports. There are a lot of runners who have a sense of mastering themselves. The Carolina Track Club's motto is 'He Conquers Who Conquers Himself.' I don't have a lot of that in my nature."

At one time, Klopfer held the national record in the mile for women over 40. In 1976 she won a gold and a bronze medal at the World Masters Championships, and she has been featured on the cover of *womenSports*. Last year in Atlanta, she was among the 186 runners to compete in the Avon International, the largest all-women marathon race ever held. She also rode and ran in Levi's 33-mile Ride & Tie, a strenuous team event where partners switch riding ahead on horseback as the other runs to catch up. This year she plans to attend the Ride & Tie in Wales, as well as the World Masters Championship in Germany.

Nonetheless, Klopfer views competitive running with uncertainty. "I'm at that stage of being very ambivalent about competition because I've worked through the improving stage," she said recently. "I'm at a plateau right now where all the fairly easy improvements have happened. So I don't have this thing of finding out what I can do. Sometimes I think, 'Phooey on competition - I'll just run for the run.'

"I am not much of a fanatic; in fact, reason and moderation are my middle names. I find myself thinking of a literary/historical-type woman who is very quiet, a drudge - dull as dishwater, which she's in most of the time - but when a crisis comes along, she proves to have more grit and ability to endure than anyone else. . . . Perhaps through running I've found some challenge which I have, thank heaven, been spared in real life. It's been something of a trip to discover that I am pretty tough when necessary. I don't think I'm an exceptional athlete. I'm healthy and fit and have chosen to take the time necessary for proper training. Most women over 40 have made a different choice."

- J.M.M

**"A kind of reality that you can't deny..."**





# The Marathon

by Joanne Marshall Mauldin

There will be no 3000-meter women's race and no women's marathon at the 1980 Moscow Olympics. The all-male International Olympic Committee feels 3000 meters is "a little too strenuous for women." The 87 members must near apoplexy when a 26-mile event is broached. The longest race for women at the Games will remain 1500 meters, less than a mile.

The practice of blackballing women from athletic competition began as early as 776 B.C. During the original Olympics, any woman discovered watching naked Greek males compete was chucked over a cliff. At the first modern Olympics, held in Athens in 1896, a woman named Melpomene requested entry into the marathon. The Olympic Committee declined, and the modern Games' founder, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, commented, "Women have but one task, that of crowning the winner with garlands."

Unpersuaded, Melpomene began women's long-standing custom of

jumping into a race welcomed or not. She finished in four hours and 30 minutes.

Thirty-two years later, a limited track program for women was finally included in the 1928 Amsterdam Games. But American women physical educators, in one of many misguided and destructive actions, asked the IOC to omit women's track from the 1932 Los Angeles Games. The 800-meter race was dropped as a result of their appeal, but nothing else. Although reinstatement was often petitioned, it wasn't until 1960 that the race returned.

Multimillionaire Avery Brundage, president of the IOC for 20 years, had frequently suggested that women be omitted from the Games altogether — or, if they remained, that their events and sports be reduced, rather than expanded. Before the IOC will even consider allowing a women's marathon, it wants the race held in 26 participating nations. Jacqueline Hansen, twice former world-record

holder in the women's marathon, pointed out the absurdity of such a demand in a *Runner's World* column. In the 1972 Games, she said, only eight countries entered teams in women's volleyball, six in men's field hockey, and 16 each in water polo and team handball.

"How many nations participated in the white water canoeing in Munich?" asked Hansen. "How many African and Arab countries, often cast as the villainous objectors to women's distance running, support the Winter Olympics or yachting? The IOC would appear to feel terribly threatened by the women's running movement. Perhaps beneath all of the physiological and political arguments lie cultural and psychological problems of male dominance and ego protection."

Leal-Ann Reinhart, 1977 women's AAU national marathon champion, wrote a letter with Tom Sturak to *Runner's World* about the lack of a women's marathon in the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Reinhart submitted that Jacqueline Hansen's 1975 world marathon record of 2:38:19 would have placed her — had she been male — on every American Olympic squad up to the 1960 Games. Furthermore, she would have placed among the top six finishers in seven Olympic marathons — and she would have won five of those races. In future Games, Reinhart continued, each nation should enter three qualified women — those who have run under three hours — to compete in an integrated marathon. "And odds are that no official or spectator would have to wait for one of them to stagger into the stadium dead last." This letter drew boos from some male readers.

The AAU was itself slow to recognize women's marathon as a legitimate field of competition. As late as 1970, Dr. Nell Jackson, then head of the AAU's women's track and field committee, said, "If they want to run marathons, they should do them by themselves or in some other program. They don't need to be in the AAU. We're not concerned about those who want to run long distances. There aren't many of them. . . . Our concern

is with hundreds of little girls running cross-country rather than a few older women out for a lark."

That year, 1970, only one woman entered the New York City marathon. Eight years later, there were 1,100 in the New York City marathon out for a lark. The AAU by then was convinced of its error. But others remained skeptical.

Hoping to demonstrate again the need for women's marathons in the Olympics, Avon Products sponsored the Avon International Marathon in Atlanta in March 1978. It was the first international all-women marathon held in the U.S., and the largest run anywhere. Nine countries were represented, with Avon inviting and footing the bill for all foreign and many American competitors. The 186 starters included 14 of the 24 fastest women marathoners in the world.

Racing conditions tested their endurance. Instead of Atlanta's ideal March weather, the temperature reached 75° by the 1 p.m. starting time. The morning had been quite cool, but Avon obviously wanted midday media coverage. To make things worse, most of the 13-mile loop was in direct sunlight. The hilly course had been touted as a possible setting for a new world's record, yet it had a mile-long 250-foot climb at the nine- and 23-mile mark. The streets were bumpy and an occasional car crossed more than one runner's path. Atlanta proved that the most progressive city in the South was in this instance a mistle. In spite of the city's and the sponsor's self-congratulations, Avon was not truly top-notch.

Media coverage, at least, was excellent. ABC-TV interviewed several of the best runners for "Wide World of Sports." Filming from a helicopter, it carried live coverage of the start. Kenny Moore wrote a first-rate account of the event for *Sports Illustrated*, free of the emphasis which magazines often put on women runners as attractive objects rather than as proficient athletes.

At the pre-race clinic, the first 27 runners — all invited and financed by Avon — were introduced. The 28th runner was an unknown from California named Marty Cooksey, who paid her own expenses. The next day, Cooksey, 23, won Avon in 2:46:16. Second-place winner Sarolta Monspart of Budapest was more than five minutes

behind her. Monspart was the first runner from a Communist bloc country to compete in an American women's distance race. Among the others who withstood the heat and rough course were the famous, like hometown favorite Gayle Barron — 1978 women's winner of the Boston Marathon — who finished fifth, and the unknown, like Martha Klopfer (see box), who came in 40th.

The organizers of the Avon International Marathon hoped the event would draw the attention of the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF, the governing body of running) and the International Olympic Committee to women's long distance racing. They partially succeeded. Before the race began, Aldo Scandurra, an IAAF official, bluntly said, "This is

not an international world championship. This is a race where international athletes are competing." Seven months later, the Technical Committee of the IAAF met and passed a request that a women's marathon be added to the IAAF-recognized World Championships.

But the 87 men on the International Olympic Committee still refuse to give the event their blessing. If women want to enter the marathon in Moscow, they'll have to follow the model of Melpomene and jump in without anyone's permission. □

*Joanne Marshall Mauldin, a runner and free-lance writer, is currently at work on a book about women marathoners. Her articles have appeared in Runner's World, Running Times and Racing South.*

# SWEET HOME: Willye B. White

by Pat Jordan

"Pull over here," she says. There is a sign by the side of the road — MONEY, MISSISSIPPI. Across the highway, pointing down a dirt lane, is another sign — SWEET HOME PLANTATION. Up ahead on a sagging, unpainted, wood-frame building are the hand-lettered words GROCERY STORE. Farther on is a mobile home propped on cinder blocks. POST OFFICE. And finally, at the edge of Money, the tallest building, THE COTTON MILL.

A railroad track runs alongside the highway, and beyond are rows of green bushy plants flecked with white. A morning mist hovers over the plants. "I was born out there," she says, pointing out the car window toward the cotton fields. "On the plantation. We lived way down in the fields. Now they build the houses closer to the road, but in those days, before anyone had an automobile, they built them in the middle of the fields. My first memory is of my uncle leaving home. My mother stood in the yard and

watched him walk through the fields. You could see the top of his head moving between the rows. When he reached the road and turned left, my mother said, 'Well, your uncle's leaving home.' He lives in Oakland now.

"I started chopping cotton when I was 10. We used a long hoe called 'the ignorant stick.' At five in the morning the plants were cold and wet and they soaked your clothes as you moved down the rows. It was a terrible kind of chill. But by late morning the sun would be hot. Lord, it was hot! You could see the heat waves simmering behind you. 'Hurry up,' someone would shout, 'The monkey's coming!' And then others would pick up the shout, 'The monkey's coming, the monkey's coming!'

"Lord, those rows were long! You could chop for a whole week and never finish a row. I got paid \$2.50 a day for 12 hours. I never understood why my father made me chop until now. He wanted me to be independent, and it worked. I call him my father,

but he really was my grandfather. I was born with red hair, gray-green eyes, and skin so pale you could see my veins. My real father looked at me and told my mother I was not his child. Three days later he took a boat across the Tallahatchie River from Racetrack Plantation, picked me from my mother's arms and carried me 15 miles to my grandparents'. They raised me. I hold no animosity toward my father. It was just ignorance. Later on he realized that I *was* his child.

"We can go now."

It is nine in the morning and the temperature is 92° as the car heads south to Greenwood. Inside, however, the only sound is the hum of the air-conditioner. The road runs through fields of cotton. Occasionally, there is a shack alongside the highway.

"They painted sharecropper homes all one color, according to the plantation," she says. The ones along here are a faded red. "Plantation life was not bad, really. Every holiday there would be a picnic. They would dig a hole in the ground and start a fire, then throw a fence over the top and roast a pig on it. The owners supplied the food. Each plantation would have its own baseball team and the men would play against each other. If someone died on the plantation everyone would stock that person's house with chickens and greens and stuff, and if it was a woman who was left, they would come and pick her crops for her. It was a warm relationship. The hardest adjustment to make when I moved to the city was learning I could not be friendly, that you did not sit beside someone on the bus and talk.

"This was a dirt road when I was a child. There were always people walking up and down, usually couples holding hands. They walked from Money to Greenwood and back, a distance of 20 miles. They were courting. Now that is heavy courting. Then people got automobiles, and the Ku Klux Klan started riding again. Right over there is where Emmett Till was lynched. You remember Emmett Till, in the '50s? He was the 14-year-old black boy who supposedly whistled at a white woman in a grocery store. That night they dragged him from his uncle's home, tortured and shot him and dumped his body in the Tallahatchie. I remember once my

cousin came to visit, and she got off the bus at the wrong stop. It was already dark so she started to walk. Two white men drove by. They turned around and came back toward her. She knew what was going to happen so she ran into the cotton fields and lay down. They searched for her for hours but couldn't find her. It was the most frightening experience in her life, she said. I imagine it was. I never had any experiences like that. I try not to put myself in that kind of position."

The car crosses the Tallahatchie River into Greenwood's city limits. A tree-lined esplanade divides the main thoroughfare, Grand Boulevard. On both sides are massive mansions, aging and untended. From the second-floor balcony of one hangs a Confederate flag.

"They raised me well," she says.

"My grandparents, I mean. It was not the same as having parents, of course. They were not affectionate. I never remember any warmth, any feeling

that they really cared, but I never wanted for necessities. And they were strict. Very strict. Why, they would not even let me receive company until I was 16. Whenever a boy called the house and asked to speak to Miss White, my mother — my *grandmother* — would answer the phone and say, 'I'm the only lady in this house who receives company, and I am sure you are not calling me because I am a married woman.' And they would hang up quick. I appreciate that kind of thing now. It taught me self-respect. But then I just wanted to get out of the house. That was why I turned to sports. It was the only way I could stay out past five o'clock. And I was good at it, too.

"When I was in the fifth grade I played on the high school's varsity basketball team, and when I was 16 I was running track for Tennessee State. Sports was another kind of escape, too. As a child I was an outcast. Blacks were prejudiced against me because I was so light-complexioned. Parents





would not let their kids play with me. They said horrible things about me. In school, whenever there was a play or a dance, the instructors would choose the black girls with wavy black hair, starched dresses and patent leather shoes. It did not matter that I could sing and dance better. I was too light and had this funky red hair, and I was always running around in overalls with a dirty face and no shoes. The only way I could get any recognition was through sports. Now those same parents want me to stop by their house to visit a spell whenever I return to Greenwood. I can't do it. I feel funny. I remember things. Lord, I had a miserable childhood. But I survived. Baby . . . I have . . . survived."

The car passes over another river, the Yazoo, which is the color of mud. It smells of mud. It barely flows. A twig floats without moving. Greenwood (pop. 22,500) lies at the confluence of the Yazoo and Tallahatchie in the green heart of the Mississippi Delta. The city still bills itself as "The Cotton Capital of the World" and is building on the outskirts of town a replica of a pre-Civil War plantation. Downtown, the city's streets and sidewalks are littered with balls of cotton that have spilled out of trucks and warehouses. Although cotton is no longer the only crop harvested here (soybeans and rice are increasingly popular), it remains a dominant force in the area, and the attitudes of the Old South endure.

Blacks cross the railroad tracks that divide the black and white communities in order to shop, and they can dine and dance without incident at the Ramada Inn out on U.S. 82 and Park Avenue. Still, there are plenty of white-owned restaurants and bars where blacks do not venture — which is why it is so noteworthy that the city, not to mention the entire state, declared March 12, 1972, "Willye B. White Day" in honor of a 32-year-old black woman who had passed her youth on a nearby plantation pulling "the ignorant stick."

On that day the city was festooned with banners and bunting and larger-than-life photographs of Miss White. There was a motorcade. Miss White rode in a shiny Buick and waved to the townspeople lining the streets and shouting her name. The mayor gave a speech in which he claimed that the

city of Greenwood was proud to have once been the home of Miss White. She was ushered into the town library, the same library for which her grandfather had once been the gardener and where she could never have gone years before. Inside, the walls were papered with her photograph.

Willye had warranted such an occasion because of her athletic achievements — she has been one of this country's premier competitors in track and field for 20 years. She first won notice in 1956 when, as a 16-year-old, she surprised the experts by winning a silver medal in the long jump at the Melbourne Olympics. Her mark of 19 feet, 11¼ inches was bettered only by Elzbieta Krezinska of Poland. This would be her best Olympic showing, but she made every Olympic team for the next 16 years, finishing twelfth at Rome, twelfth at Tokyo, eleventh at Mexico City. At Munich she was eliminated in the qualifying round.

In 1964 she won a silver medal at the Tokyo Games as a member of the 400-meter relay team. In that same year she broke Wilma Rudolph's indoor 60-yard-dash record of 6.8 seconds with a 6.7. It was not until she was 28 that she gave up sprinting. She won four medals in the 1959, 1963 and 1967 Pan-American Games, and has 17 national indoor and outdoor track titles to her credit. Her 17th and last U.S. title came in 1972 when she won the long jump with a leap of 20 feet, 6¼ inches.

Willye's fame lies less with any single achievement, record or medal than it does with the longevity of her career. The mere fact of having competed all those years is overwhelming. Willye says of herself, "I am the grand old lady of track." On April 30, 1971, a story in the *New York Times* suggested that "women's track and field began with Willye B. White."

She traveled around the world twice and has competed in scores of foreign countries. She has been better remembered as a goodwill ambassador to these countries than as a victorious athlete. In the People's Republic of China she was a favorite of both its athletes and citizens, and in Moscow she taught the male Russian athletes how to rock'n'roll. She has dated an Italian nobleman, whom she almost



*The Indoor National, Oakland,*

married, and American movie actors like Bernie Casey, who was once a professional football star. Among her good friends were some of the Israeli Olympians murdered in Munich. In 1966 she was cited for "fair play" by UNESCO and, along with other athletes, received her award in Paris amid much pomp and circumstance. The ceremony took place at UNESCO headquarters. A UNESCO official said, "Her poise and charm made her the star of the ceremony." She has been elected to the Black Hall of Fame in Las Vegas and served on the President's Commission on Olympic Sports.

For the last 19 years, Willye White has lived in an apartment on the South Side of Chicago instead of Greenwood. She holds a position as a health center administrator with the city and trains less often now. At age 39, she leads the cosmopolitan yet subdued life of an attractive, independent bachelor woman. She says, "I can go anywhere, talk about anything. My whole personality has been affected by my travels. My travels have broadened me. When you're confined to one area you think the whole world is the same."

Miss Willye B., wearing cut-off jeans and a loose-fitting white blouse, sits on a straight-backed chair on the front porch of her grandparents' home and sips from a can of Tab. She had come



California, 1967: Lane 4 – Willye White, Lane 3 – Wyomia Tyus

to Greenwood thinking it might be for good. She was prepared to surrender her apartment in Chicago, quit her job, abandon her ambition of competing in another Olympics, give up sports, give up her lifestyle, in order to nurse back to health the 83-year-old grandfather who had raised her and who was dying in a small house on East Percy Street. She raises a hand to adjust the kerchief around her head. Her hair has been corn-rowed. She stares at the street and says, "Whenever I would talk to him I would say, 'Now Daddy, don't you die while I'm gone, you hear.' These old people, you know, they're like children. He had lost the will to live. I had come back to give him the will. He had been in the hospital and not moved for days. He had a 105° fever. I stayed up all night washing him with cold towels to bring down the fever. The next day he was sitting up, smiling, laughing with me."

She sips from the can, staring blankly at the street. There is only a dirt curb for a sidewalk. The houses are set close together and close to the road, some of them separated by picket fences, and are alike – long, narrow, some unpainted, some sagging this way and that like the deserted barracks of an army. Their fronts are dominated by porches, often screened. Now, in the afternoon of a scorchingly hot day, almost every porch is occu-

ped, mostly by older men and women with dark skin and steely white hair. They stare at the street as if expecting, at any moment, an event. A passing car. Children returning from school. A dump truck delivering dirt.

Parked in front of the house where Miss Willye B. sits are a late-model Buick and a Cadillac, both with California license plates. They belong to her uncles, the Buick to the uncle she had seen leave home when she was two years old and whom she'd seen only once since. He is a husky man with a gold tooth. Hanging on the wall between them is a flyswatter. Inside the house there is the slapping of backless slippers against a linoleum floor. There is the sound of women's voices, hushed, and then the dialing of a telephone, and now a man's voice inquiring about a telephone.

"He was a man's man," says Miss Willye B. "In the South, you know, when older blacks are talking to whites they have a habit of taking off their hats. They shuffle their feet a lot and look down or off to the side, but never at a white man's eyes. My father, now – my grandfather, I mean – he never took off his hat and he always looked white people in the eye. When I realized what he did – I was only a child – I began to practice it in front of a mirror. We didn't get along then. He was a stubborn man, but as I got

older I realized how similar we were. When he got sick I started commuting between Chicago and Greenwood.

"I could live in Greenwood, you know. Yes I could. It is not the same as it was during the freedom marches. You don't fear personal injury anymore. And the other kind of thing I can handle. For example, when my grandfather passed I went to the doctor's office to find out the exact cause of death. The receptionist there was hostile. Finally, I said to her, 'Now listen, Miss, I think we have a misunderstanding here and we had best straighten it out.' We did.

"I *would* have come back to live here. I feel I am what I am today because of my grandparents. If I could give them some happiness by coming home, I was willing to do it. I have roots. It does not matter how far I have traveled and where I live. Sometimes I envy the younger athletes. They just take off anytime they want. They never worry about returning home. I would like to be like that sometimes, and then other times I am thankful I do have roots."

She flicks a fly with her hand and her silver bracelets jingle. Her fingers are long and thin and adorned with sparkling rings, metals and precious stones of various hues. Her nails are frosted pink. Around her neck she wears assorted gold and silver chains and pendants.

"God has it all planned," she says. "He does not give you burdens you cannot bear. I was only home a few days when my grandfather passed. And then my brother came home and had a seizure right on the kitchen floor. He would have died, too, if it had not been for me. And I said, 'Oh Father! Oh Father! what have you in store for me next!' All I could think of was getting out on the track again and running and running and running and letting the tears come."

Ah . . . Willye . . . leaps . . . hangs . . . lands in a spray of sand. She sits in the sand like a child, legs outstretched.

Behind her, Rosetta Brown, dark, plump, wearing slacks and a jersey, gets down laboriously on all fours and begins to measure the jump with a tape.

Two blacks in their late teens watch from the cinder track that surrounds the football field and long-jump pit

# Being two different people...

by Willye White

I competed in athletics for over 26 years and I have loved every minute of it.

To me the greatest gift I could have received was my athletic ability. Being an athlete has given me inner peace and has made me in tune to myself and people. Most of all because of athletics, I am a whole person. I am somewhat of a perfectionist, because sports is one of the avenues of mankind that never ceases to strive for excellence.

Athletics has enabled me to accept reality. I can accept the whole and not overlook the unpleasant.

Athletics has helped me mentally, physically and morally. Through athletics I have experienced confusion, struggle, pain, failure, anxiety as well as success.

I had the pleasure of experiencing success and failure which I found to be an essential element of communicating with oneself, thus meaning freedom from insecurity.

I derived values from athletics that I have molded into my personality and my everyday life.

At the present time I am employed by the Chicago Department of Health as the Administrator of the Woodlawn Neighborhood Health Center. I feel I am a good administrator because of my athletic background, which has provided me with the tools necessary to make just decisions.

As an athlete I was looked upon as being very different from other women. It was almost as though I was a freak of nature. As an athlete you take on certain masculine qualities in the "weight room" and on the practice field. It was impossible to look like Farah Fawcett lifting 400 pounds of weight or running back-to-back 440s.

The girls would tell me how muscular I looked; the boys would tell me how hard I was. As I grew older, I had difficulty with men who were non-athletes; these men could not understand why I

had to always be at the practice track training three times a day, six to seven days a week. Or why I was always going to the "smelly weight room" three times a week and lifting weights and not sitting at a bar all night all "dolloed up and smelling pretty."

Later on, I had difficulty dating other athletes because they expected me to idolize them and since I was an athlete too, I didn't think they were so great. I find some female athletes to be too independent for most male athletes. A male athlete can be the same all the time. He doesn't have to defend his masculinity. A female athlete must always be two different people. She takes on certain masculine qualities on the field. Off the field she must become ultra-feminine because of the stigma attached to being a female athlete.

I am the only American female athlete who has ever placed or been in five Olympic Games with two Olympic Medals. Yet, I am not known in Chicago or the U.S. as well as I am in other countries.

I have spent many years fighting bitterness and defeat. I can honestly say I have succeeded. I have gained so much from sports, that without it, I would not be what I am today. I am truly thankful for such a lovely gift for I am one female athlete that is most richly blessed. □



at Greenwood High School. Home of the Bulldogs. One of the youths is muscular, athletic-looking, the other thin, knowing, wearing purple shades. The athletic-looking youth says, "I heard Miss Willy B. was back so I come to watch."

Willye takes off her track shoes and stands up. She is five feet, four inches tall, 130 pounds. The muscles in the front of her thighs are so developed they partially obscure her kneecaps. Her stomach is flat. She is wearing a kerchief, a Pan-American Games T-shirt

that has been cut off just below the bust, exposing her navel, and tight-fitting track shorts. Her toenails are painted pink. The youth with the purple shades stares as she dusts the sand off her rump and the backs of her thighs. He says, "My main interest is Miss Willye B., too."

Whenever Willye works out, she is watched by boys. They follow her to the weight room, where she can squat upward of 380 pounds; then to the football field, where she sprints from goalpost to goalpost, her thick thighs

writhing and her knees rising almost to her chin; then to the track where she takes each of the 10 hurdles with an effortless leap and a rhythmic crunch of her feet; and finally to the long-jump pit where she concludes her workout. After she leaves a segment of her workout, a few boys remain behind to imitate her just-completed feats. They try to heft the weights she had mastered, or leap the hurdles she had cleared, and when their feet get tangled and they tumble to the cinders they are jeered and hooted at by their



friends. They laugh at themselves, too, when they fall, because in their mimicry of Miss Willye B. there is no desire to equal or surpass her efforts. They are merely trying to show how inadequate they are by comparison.

Willye resumed training shortly after the death of her grandfather. Since she promised her grandmother, a gaunt woman with quivering hands, that she would not leave Greenwood until a tombstone had been arranged for, she is conducting her workouts at Greenwood High. She could never have used its facilities years ago. But the school has been integrated, and now as she works she can see on the practice field the Bulldogs' integrated football team going through its paces under the watchful eyes of black assistant coaches and a white coach, heavy men. The head coach, dressed in shorts, is only too happy to make available the school's facilities for Miss Willye B. He seems to have little choice in the matter. Willye approaches him during a coaches' meeting and says, "Coach, I want to use the weight room now."

Walking toward the weight room with the coach, Willye smiles and says with only a hint of a drawl, "Say, Coach, didn't you play at Mississippi College?"

The coach lowers his head and says, "Yes, I did, Miss Willye."

"I heard you were *some* kind of football player."

Watching from a distance, Rosetta Brown laughs. "That Red, she's something else. She gonna have him all over her in another minute."

Willye's workouts are conducted during the hottest part of the afternoon, and when she is in Greenwood, Rosetta, her childhood friend, always comes along. Rosetta sets up the hurdles on the track, spacing them just so at Willye's instruction, and then Rosetta rakes and hoes the sand in the long-jump pit as Willye prepares her jump. Finally, at Willye's urging, Rosetta may begin to train, too. Not for any international competition, but merely to lose weight. She begins to jog. While Willye lopes gracefully over the hurdles, Rosetta huffs and puffs around the field with tiny steps. Passing Willye, Rosetta calls out in a high voice, "Oh, Red! I'm gonna be a traffic stopper again!" and plows on. Willye smiles.

Their lives, once concentric, have long since branched off on different tangents. Willye pursued sports, traveled, became famous, while Rosetta remained at home, married, had five children, saw her husband leave, and took a job as a supervisor in the cafeteria at Mississippi Valley State University. Once Willye invited her to Chicago. Rosetta stayed only a few days and returned to Greenwood. "I didn't like the city," she says.

"Rosetta has never traveled," says Willye. "I've experienced things in my life she would never see in her world. Whenever I get the chance I like her to share in some of those things. They are not big things, but they are experiences she can talk about for the rest of her life."

Although Willye's life may have been a succession of victories, Rosetta's has not been entirely devoid of them. She has raised her children and participated in civil-rights protests in Greenwood. "She was a freedom marcher," says Willye. "On one occasion she was attacked by police dogs.

"I look at Rosetta sometimes and think, that could have been me. Sports gave me an escape. My mother — my grandmother — was against my being in sports. But it kept me off the street. The time I spent at practice wore me out. If I needed 20 hours of sleep to compete successfully then I got it. And I learned early that to survive in sport I had to be a thinker. I was better organized than most girls my age. I knew what was best for myself. That is one reason why I turned from sprinting to the long jump. It is very technical. It requires strategy, thinking, not just power. The other reason was that I saw for every 500 sprinters there were only two long jumpers. I played the odds. It was easier. Long-jumping is something I could do successfully when I became older. When I was younger I had the talent, the determination, the hard work — and no coaching. I have learned more in the last few years than I did in the previous 25. That is why I am still competing. But nothing is forever. I do not expect to jump forever.

"The hardest thing for me to do when I quit will be to find some way to fill the hours between four and seven p.m. Those are the workout hours. But I will be able to quit when the time comes. Some people say I am

afraid, that time has passed me by and I am still hanging on. I see athletes I once competed with, and they say, 'Willye, when you gonna quit? You're too old.' And I say, 'You are the same age as me, why did you quit?' And they say, 'Well, I got married and I had kids.' 'Well, I am not married,' I tell them, 'and I don't have kids and I am not 50 pounds overweight like you are.' I know my body and its capabilities."

When Willye completes her final workout before returning to Chicago, she walks over to the football coach to thank him for his kindness. The coach is standing among uniformed players. He is shouting instructions to the part of the squad that is scrimmaging. A few parents, all white, are standing on the sidelines. Willye, wearing shorts and her cut-off T-shirt, slips between the players, is dwarfed by them and their grotesque shoulder pads. She taps the coach on the back; he whirls around and seeing her there smiles. She says something, shakes his hand firmly and gives him that dazzling smile. She slips out from between the players and walks toward the car. The eyes of everyone — players, coaches, parents — are on her.

"They are so friendly in the South," says Willye. "In Chicago I always make sure I've got protection. Eventually, I will come back to Greenwood. I can see myself as an old lady living on East Percy Street. I will get up at five o'clock and go stand on the porch to watch for the garbage truck. Maybe I will go out to my garden and sprinkle dust on the beans and then go inside to prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner, all at the same time. Then I will go back outside to take care of everybody's business on the street. I will sit on a straight-backed chair on the porch and nod. My head will nod down to my chest until I am asleep. That is it. My life." □

*Pat Jordan is an experienced writer who once played for the McCook Braves, a Class D baseball team in the Nebraska State League. This article, originally written for Sports Illustrated in 1975, appears in the excellent new anthology on women's sports entitled Out of the Bleachers, published by The Feminist Press. It is reprinted here by permission of Dodd, Mead & Company.*

# I'll just keep going...

by Ruth Laney

April 17, 1977. It is 9:00 a.m. on a cloudy spring morning, the temperature and humidity both hovering at 70. I am in Opelousas, Louisiana, toeing the starting line for a 10-mile road race with 35 other hopefuls.

Hardly awake, I wonder what I'm doing here — a four-mile-a-day runner (I hate the word jogger) who accepted my friends' invitation to drive up from Baton Rouge for the race. But my friends are marathoners and former collegiate track stars. This is just another run for them. For me, used to circling an asphalt track in a city park with my dog bounding at my heels, it is a marathon.

Opelousas is a sleepy little Cajun town whose only claim to running fame is high hurdler Rodney Milburn, gold medalist in the 1972 Olympics. Milburn, in fact, is on hand for the race, which is sponsored by the Opelousas state troopers.

The troopers obviously lack experience in putting on races. They serve coffee and doughnuts as a pre-race snack but have provided no toilets to accommodate pre-race jitters. They have, however, invited another Olympic hurdler, Willie Davenport, to fire the starter's pistol.

"Aren't you going to run, Willie?" I ask, hoping for sterling company in my maiden 10-miler.

"Hell," drawls Davenport, "put together all my races and I may have run 10 miles."

The race starts near the highway, which appears to be in the legendary middle of nowhere. I stand well back of the pack and assess my rear-guard companions. A middle-aged man in cut-off dress pants, a T-shirt that reads *Cajun Power*, leather workboots and red bandana already complains of blisters. He'll ride to the finish, I silently predict, thankful the troopers will be patrolling the course.

A black man in football pants and abbreviated T-shirt looks like a grid star gone to fat; a junior-high trackster in black high-top sneakers cracks his knuckles. And then there's me, former devoted creampuff and athletic outcast who two years ago discovered running and has preached and practiced with the zeal of the convert ever since. We are the motley crew.

Davenport fires the gun and the pack leaps forward. I plod forth at my eight-minute pace, the last one past the starting line. Davenport catches my eye. "Bye," he says, heading for the

doughnuts. Did I detect a note of irony?

Assaulted by a stitch in my side, I reach Mile Two in 16 minutes. The junior-high kid, puffing along beside me, says he's never gone more than two miles consecutively. My pain sharpens, and I slow to a walk and let him go.

I resign myself to an invalid's pace. After all, I didn't come here to win the race, or even to finish it. At 9:30, the day is still cloudy, with sporadic light rainfall. The asphalt country road is disturbed by few motorcars; this is the hour when good Cajun people are singing hymns in church or sleeping off the rigors of last night's sortie to Webb's in Lafayette.

Barbed-wire fences thick with honeysuckle line pastures on either side of me. Hollandaise-colored buttercups sprout from ditches. Cows and new calves blink at me, and three horses stare from a rise. After a mile, I resume running. The smell of honeysuckle makes breathing seem easier. At Mile Five, I pass Cajun Power.

"I saw you resting back there, cher," he scolds. "Now, here you come again."

"Yeah," I gasp. "It's the tortoise and the hare all over again."

"Well, you better not stop again, no," he warns in his thick patois.

I picture him climbing over my back in a mile or so, but I press on. In a curve of the road dark with the shade of pin oaks, I pass a black family — grandfather and three kids — leaning on a wooden gate. They gaze at me unmoving. "Good morning!" I call, and they raise their hands in tentative greeting.

I catch up with Junior High, and we fall into a companionable stride as he tells me he runs the quarter-mile and he throws the discus for the Arnauville Junior High track team, a crew that hasn't won a meet this year. I ask his best time in the quarter. "Oh, about a minute and a half," he says. Pondering that information (perhaps he runs the quarter while carrying the discus?), I notice his breathing is labored. Now it's his turn to drop back.

A half-mile later, I pass Mr. Touchdown. He huffs and puffs fiercely but looks strong. I've passed three men (well, two men and a boy), but I can't expect this to last. Nevertheless, here I am at the six-mile mark, feeling pretty good. No more

side stitch. I've never run more than six miles before. I think I'll just keep going.

Matter of fact, I'd better. I haven't seen a trooper in three miles. I'm thirsty, too, but I've seen no aid stations throughout the race. Did the troopers think coffee and doughnuts would suffice?

At Mile Eight, momentarily menaced by a german shepherd, I lose some time. My right heel stings with blisters. My body gradually adopts an "old-person" stride: steps cut short, arms pulled in close, chest sagging, as though to protect me from my growing fatigue.

The last two miles seem endless; I don't know how far I still have to go. I check the road behind me: Cajun Power, Mr. Touchdown and Junior High are nowhere in sight. I contemplate tears: too much effort. I've come too far to quit now.

I spot a police car. A trooper directs me to turn right. "How much farther?" I gasp. "Three tenths of a mile." Aw riiiiight! A piece of cake. I urge my

numb legs into a sprint. The road is full of potholes, each one a ravine ready to swallow me. The troopers at the finish line yell, "Kick! Kick!" You fools, I mutter, I *am* kicking.

I lunge across the finish line. My friends stand there, grinning like idiots. They don't believe I've done it. Neither do I. Thirst overpowers me. Someone gives me Gatorade, but it tastes like pure salt. I grab for water, can't stop guzzling it. Has champagne ever tasted so sweet – or so richly deserved? I feel like I've won a gold medal. Down the road, I spot Cajun Power, beginning his kick. His red bandana bobs like a victory flag. I stand at the finish line, cheering him on. □

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# JUST ANOTHER

by Bill Finger

In 1950, three years after Jackie Robinson cracked the color line in major league baseball, a little-noticed black man named Chuck Cooper did the same for pro basketball. College recruiting followed slowly and then exploded over Wilt Chamberlain. By the late 1950s, aggressive college coaches like UCLA's John Wooden were actively searching for black ballplayers at the now-famous Rucker's playground in Harlem and at the National Negro High School Championships in Nashville, Tennessee.

In 1960, Loyola of Chicago's coach George Ireland recruited 6'6" Vic Rouse and 6'7" Les Hunter from the winning team at the Nashville Championships, all-black Pearl High School in Nashville itself. "Loyola had a so-so basketball team," Hunter recalls. "We were highly touted to improve things right from the first, not because we had any high school All-Americans, no big names, but because we were all real big." When Hunter was a sophomore, his team nearly won the 1962 National Invitation Tournament (NIT) in Madison Square Garden, and the following year they ranked third in the nation when the NCAA post-season tournament began.

The draw pitted Loyola, with four black starters, against the Bulldogs of Mississippi State, champions of the all-white Southeastern Conference. When the Mississippi team eluded legal restrictions against leaving the state to play in a racially integrated game, the national press gave the

contest special attention. In Chicago, Loyola's coach Ireland intercepted most of the postcards sent to his players signed "KKK" and worse, but he let the mail from Southside soul brothers pour in. John Bibb, sports-writer for the Nashville Tennessean who traveled to Ann Arbor to cover the game, recalls that "there were rows and rows of curtains to the interview area. You had to keep showing tickets every other minute to get in, as if they were expecting all kinds of trouble."

After trailing briefly, 7-0, Loyola came back to beat Mississippi State and went on to top another all-white Southern team, Duke, in the semifinals at Louisville's "Freedom Hall." In the NCAA finals, Loyola trailed top-ranked Cincinnati by 10 points with four minutes remaining but came back to tie on Jerry Harkness' left-hander at the buzzer. They went on to win the national championship by two points in overtime. The team went home as conquerors to parade down Sheridan Avenue.

But when the cheering stopped, Loyola's stars were like millions of black Americans. Two years later, as Harkness now recalls, "I couldn't get an apartment on the same street where I was a hero." In the nation's schools, however, conditions were slowly changing. In the mid-60s, Les Hunter's alma mater, Pearl High School, integrated, and in 1967, at neighboring Vanderbilt, another Pearl graduate, Perry Wallace, became the first black player to start for a Southeastern Conference basketball team.

Now a Columbia law graduate working at George Washington University, Wallace recalls the hostility he faced at other SEC schools. "I heard a lot of racial jokes," he told Nashville reporter Dwight Lewis recently. "At Ole Miss they waved the rebel flag. They yelled a lot of things I'd as soon forget. It was tough. Mississippi State was bad, too."

Black players from the South who have now left basketball, like Pearl High School's Les Hunter and Perry Wallace, are still watching intently for the changes which remain ahead. Wallace, for example, feels:

There may be a black head coach in the SEC someday, but presently there just aren't many anywhere in college. A coaching job is an important leadership role, and universities put a lot of trust and money in that leadership role. It will require more faith than people often have in blacks today before a black person is chosen to be a head coach.

Hunter is also observant of steps made, and still to be taken, in athletic and social integration. But he still remembers his endless workouts with hoop greats like Dick Barnett at the gym of all-black Tennessee State, and the three successive National Negro Championships he helped bring to Pearl High School in 1958-1960. "I was national champion four times," he says proudly, "three times at Pearl and once at Loyola." For Les Hunter, relaxing on the patio of his condominium in Overland Park, Kansas, the details of his basketball career are still vivid.

When I started playing ball — the fifth or sixth grade — I was real clumsy, kind of fat. Guys used to laugh at me falling all over everything. But I wanted to play so bad and I tried hard. I went to Washington Junior High School in North Nashville, about four miles from home. It was considered extremely rough over there. We'd

get \$1.50 a week to buy tokens for the bus, but I'd spend that. I'd end up walking or thumbing a ride. My mother didn't like me to stay in North Nashville after dark. So she wouldn't let me play in junior high school.

I did go out in the ninth grade, but I got cut by Mr. Tearsdale. He said I couldn't develop because I was in the ninth grade already and he couldn't use me. He told me to try out for

Pearl's team the next year because that way you've got three years to work with. Which I didn't agree with.

So I started going out to Tennessee State and playing ball every day. They probably had the best basketball team in the country, but being an all-black school, were really restricted. They had Dick Barnett, Porter Merriweather, Johnny Barnhill — all ended up going pro. I went out there and

# BALL GAME

played with them every day in the summers. We played three-man whole court with no ventilation whatsoever. Coach McClendon would leave all the doors locked, all the windows closed, to get you in real good shape. He chose the teams, and if you lost on one court — they had three courts going all the time — you went on over to another and played right away. I can remember really being misused, elbowed. I was very timid. My folks had kind of sheltered me pretty much, and I couldn't do a lot of things that the other kids could do. Looking back on it, I probably shouldn't have been doing a lot of things.

The older I get and the more responsibility I have, I realize how much my parents really did for us at the time. They were born and raised right here in Nashville. They were uneducated, and my grandmother lived with us. At that time, we were middle class by any standards for blacks in the South. We owned our own home and had some income property from two other houses next door. My mother was in the mother patrol, the crossing guards, and was a housewife. My father worked at a chemical company as a laborer for 22 years before he got into ill health. I have two older sisters, and all of us were educated. Both sisters teach at Tennessee State. My parents have passed, my mother just last January. I'm really proud of them.

But I got over being timid. I was starting to get big, was able to bluff somebody. I learned how to fight back. Guys were getting a little scared. That gave me a little confidence. From then on, I think I was alright. Basketball is a combination of, first, talent. You need some talent: be able to shoot, play defense, be quick or something. But more than that, it's a matter of developing pride. It's something you have to feel. It's got to be within you.

By my junior year in high school, I thought I had the starting center job nailed down. I could dunk. That's when you're starting to come around,

when they know you can dunk. But Vic (Vic Rouse, another Loyola starter) moved here from East St. Louis, Illinois. He started at center and they moved another guy to forward that could shoot better than I could. I didn't feel any animosity or anything. I played a lot, was even high point man quite a few games. Then my senior year, they moved Vic to forward and me to center. And we were winning.

We were really a family, unlike professional ball where you get a new friend every year. By being segregated, everybody was channeled straight

They talk about the speech Knute Rockne made. Gupton gave a speech that I think's unparalleled in the history of sports. It was 1959. We were playing (pro all-star) Eddie Miles' team, Jones High School from Little Rock, in the finals of the National Negro Championship. We were at Tennessee State's gym; the place was packed. The only whites there were a few scouts — George Ireland (Loyola of Chicago), Ted Owens (Kansas) and Johnny Wooden (UCLA). Down something like 16 points at halftime, we were playing real badly. There was a guy on our team who was very, very



*All-Tournament Team at the 1959 National Negro High School Championships, holding their medals. Vic Rouse is at left; Eddie Miles of Arkansas is in middle.*

into the same schools. We'd been together for 10 years. West and North Nashville had the best ballplayers. We ended up winning everything.

Gupton, our coach, well, he's a real fair guy. I don't think there's anybody in my entire life that has had more of an impact on me. He just seemed to be exactly what I needed at the time. If I went around and tried to sulk and mope, he'd come right there and kick me in the ass. He would hit you, pop you. He wouldn't slug you in the face or anything. He'd maybe hit you in the chest or kick me in the tail. When he'd finished talking to you, you knew exactly what he meant.

temperamental. He would sulk and wanted to fight a lot. His name was Harry Gilmore.

Gupton came in the dressing room and got real quiet. You couldn't hear anything, just a loud silence. He sat there, and then he jumped up and just started talking. "I want to see one guy in this room smile. I don't care how many points we're down," he said. "We're gonna win." He raised the level of his voice with each word. "I want to win by 10 points because we're 10 points better than this team." He was talking like in a roar. You could tell he believed so much in what he was saying that tears started coming

out of his eyes. "And we're here in Nashville and we've got everybody in the gym for us." It wasn't any uhs or buts or stutters. Words just flowing real eloquently out of his mouth at a real high pitch. "I want to win by 10 points. But I want to see this one guy smile." We would have gone through the wall if he had said it right then and there. "I want to see this one guy smile." We all knew who it was and we turned around and looked at Harry. And Harry broke out in a big grin. We went out there and came back just like that. Pop, pop, pop. The game went into overtime, and we ended up winning by four points, 81-77. Never will forget it. Won the national championship. I'm positive it was a direct result of that speech. I wish somebody could have gotten that on tape. There's nothing, nothing to compare to it. We won the national championship all three years at Pearl — '58, '59 and '60.

## We were probably the best team in the South, black or white.

There's another thing that bothers me about the history books. They just completely ignore the things that blacks won when they were segregated. All the records are concerning whites. In Nashville, they talk about the state champion in '59 or '60 was Montgomery Bell Academy (white prep school) or something like that. We were probably the best team in the South, black or white. The year they integrated, '64 or '65, Ted McClain and those guys (Pearl team) went undefeated. Nobody came within 10 points of them. Just walked with it.

The key to our success was that we got along so well together. Our trips were by car, personal cars of the coaches. We split up the team and there'd be six guys in each car. We went all the way to Arkansas, and you know the size of basketball players. We had a lot of fun.

It was all segregation back then. But we played a game at the Central High School gym in Little Rock against that same Jones High team with Eddie Miles. Lots of white kids in the stands. Then we played in their gym. Jones High had the worst gym I had ever seen. If you shot from 25 feet

out, your ball might hit the rafters. I betcha I saw 10 balls hit the rafters. I found out that's how Eddie Miles learned to shoot his line drives, to miss those rafters. We played in gyms where if you went out of bounds on certain ends, you could run into a hot stove.

That's one of the reasons I'm pro-busing. I don't want to see anybody compelled in a free society to do any particular thing, but I think it's a necessary evil. You've got so many facilities that blacks did not have access to that they have now. Even just a desk. How can you like somebody that you don't even know? If it doesn't work after you get to know people, then they've got a true opinion rather than something they've heard, some stereotype planted in their minds through childhood. You can't ever really have integration unless a black kid knows a white kid. That's one of the reasons why I left, why I didn't go to Tennessee State.

We wanted to play on an integrated team. I didn't want to go to an all-black school. I had been playing ball at Tennessee State every day. I felt I owed them something for giving me the opportunity to play at a level much higher than my talent, a chance to develop. But I thought of college as being a new experience, an opportunity to really get your teeth into life. I didn't feel that I knew anything. Sitting in my house, if I turned the TV on, all you saw was white people. But you don't know anything about them, how to mix or mingle with them. I never played against a white kid until my senior year in high school, didn't even know any. I knew some people that my grandmother had worked for at a church but never any athletes. I think it was curiosity as well as figuring that, hey, here I've got an opportunity to get a good education, to find out more about how different people live.

Vic and I decided we were going to stick together because we felt we could make the nucleus of a pretty good team. If you want to call it boasting or bragging, we just felt that wherever we went, if we were together, we knew we had strong rebounding and good inside scoring. We were best friends, real close. We didn't want to go to schools where we didn't get as much publicity or play a big-time schedule against white teams. Coming

from East St. Louis, Vic had played on an all-black team, but he still had access to a lot of different things. He was more mature at 17 than I was, and I think I leaned on him a little bit to help us make decisions. I had never been away from home prior to that.

I wanted to go to UCLA. Coach Wooden offered me a scholarship, but he wouldn't pay my way back and forth to California. I found out later that they would have, but they couldn't tell us that. This was right when the schools started giving the big money. As soon as white schools opened up for blacks, they started competing, offering under-the-table cash, cars, houses and all that. Houses for the family, you know. George Ireland had been coming to the National Negro Tournament, too. He's a good salesman, sold my folks more than he sold me. Loyola was fairly close to my home. We could afford the bus fare back and forth. Vic's parents were in East St. Louis — he lived with his relatives here — in Illinois, same as Loyola. I went up to see the campus, a very pretty school, a lot of ivy and all that. A small, personable campus. It was a total turnaround. The only blacks at Loyola were on athletic scholarship. There were a few others, but I'd say the school was 98-99 percent white. And Catholic. I was neither. It was a little drastic going to Loyola, because I still only saw one side, and that was the white side.

Two days after I got there, I started regretting it. I packed to go home a whole lot of times. I changed my mind cause I knew I'd have to sit out a basketball season at another school. I really had a miserable time. The only way I endured it was that we were able to ride around, from one end of the city to the other. All the blacks. The train — subway, the "El" — made a stop right in front of the school. We'd get on the train and go all over the city, just back and forth all night, just laughing at people. Get off and walk up and down the streets. Just to go through a black neighborhood is really what we wanted. We had 14 on that freshman team, averaged 6'7". But only four of us made it, four out of 14. Guys fell by the wayside or quit school or got kicked out or flunked.

Even though you were an athlete out at school, there was a lot of



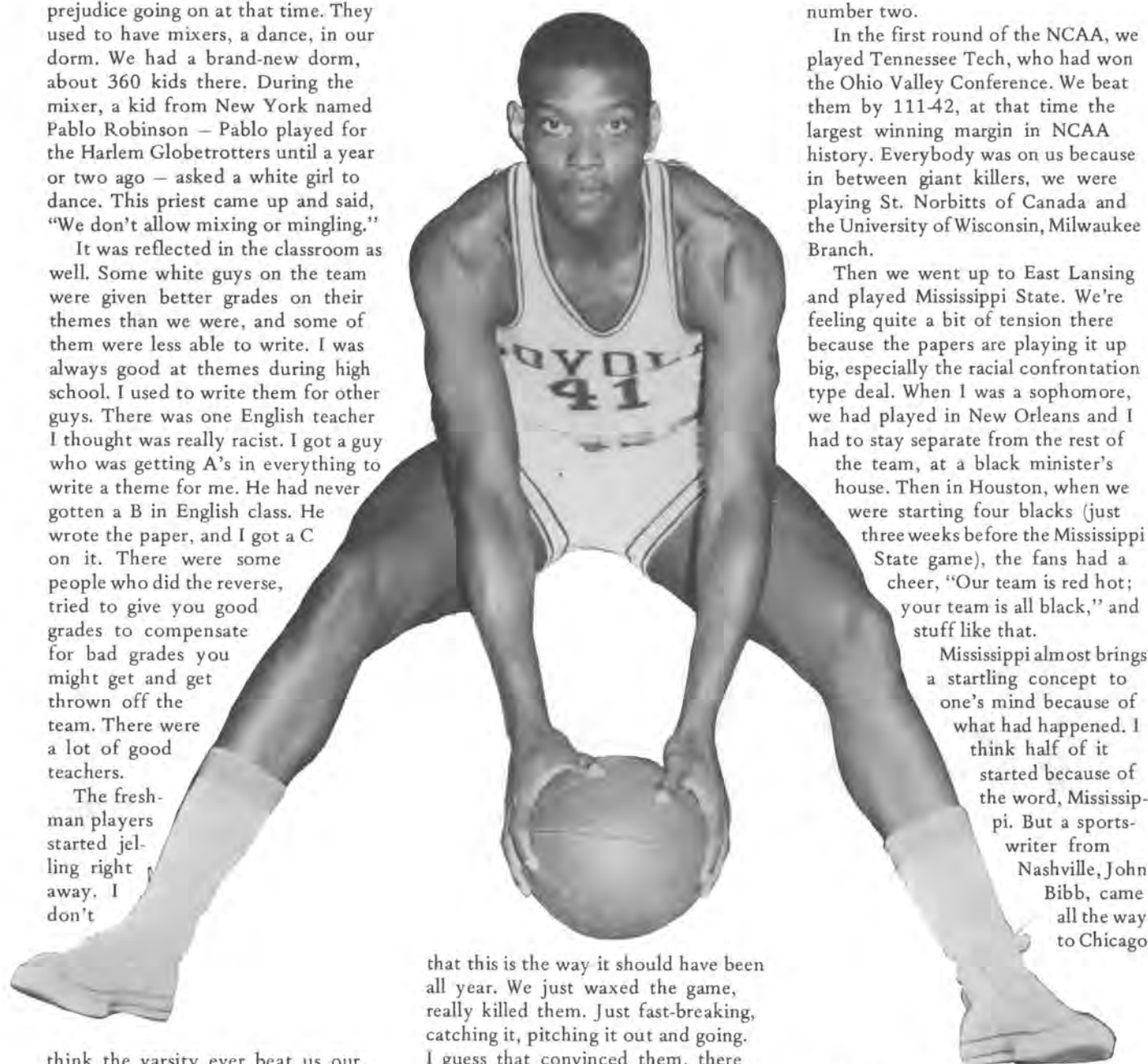
prejudice going on at that time. They used to have mixers, a dance, in our dorm. We had a brand-new dorm, about 360 kids there. During the mixer, a kid from New York named Pablo Robinson — Pablo played for the Harlem Globetrotters until a year or two ago — asked a white girl to dance. This priest came up and said, "We don't allow mixing or mingling."

It was reflected in the classroom as well. Some white guys on the team were given better grades on their themes than we were, and some of them were less able to write. I was always good at themes during high school. I used to write them for other guys. There was one English teacher I thought was really racist. I got a guy who was getting A's in everything to write a theme for me. He had never gotten a B in English class. He wrote the paper, and I got a C on it. There were some people who did the reverse, tried to give you good grades to compensate for bad grades you might get and get thrown off the team. There were a lot of good teachers.

The freshman players started jelling right away. I don't

think the varsity ever beat us our freshman year. Then our sophomore year, we would have won the NIT if there wasn't a certain law or rule that even Loyola had. They would never play four blacks at one time, never put four blacks on the floor. Coach Ireland must've felt too much pressure on the school from the board of directors, the Dean, all that. We lost to Dayton, who then won the tournament with a real big guy named Bill Chmielewski.

In the consolation game, we played Duquesne with Willie Somerset. Ireland started four blacks for the first time. He put me back at center, Vic at forward and moved Ronny Miller to guard. We were out to show them



that this is the way it should have been all year. We just waxed the game, really killed them. Just fast-breaking, catching it, pitching it out and going. I guess that convinced them, there was no question.

The following year (1962-1963), he just said to heck with all this addition. We played a lot of rag-time teams, and we played some real good schools. I think we ended up playing everybody that was rated in the Top 10. We lost at Bowling Green, with Howard Komives and Nate Thurmond, and we lost to Wichita in the last game of the season by one. We were 25-1 when we lost to Wichita and ranked number two behind Cincinnati. Then we dropped to number three and Duke, with the All-Americans Art Heyman and Jeff Mullins, moved up to

number two.

In the first round of the NCAA, we played Tennessee Tech, who had won the Ohio Valley Conference. We beat them by 111-42, at that time the largest winning margin in NCAA history. Everybody was on us because in between giant killers, we were playing St. Norbitts of Canada and the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Branch.

Then we went up to East Lansing and played Mississippi State. We're feeling quite a bit of tension there because the papers are playing it up big, especially the racial confrontation type deal. When I was a sophomore, we had played in New Orleans and I had to stay separate from the rest of the team, at a black minister's house. Then in Houston, when we were starting four blacks (just three weeks before the Mississippi State game), the fans had a cheer, "Our team is red hot; your team is all black," and stuff like that.

Mississippi almost brings a startling concept to one's mind because of what had happened. I think half of it started because of the word, Mississippi. But a sports-writer from Nashville, John Bibb, came all the way to Chicago

to interview us. He didn't ask about my basketball ability. He just asked, "What do you think about playing a team from Mississippi?" He let me know that it was a bigger issue than I ever imagined, a lot bigger than an NCAA game. So going into the game, I'm thinking, "This is like history." At the time, I told Bibb, "Well, it's just another ball game." But I really expected to be cursed, spat at and all of this. I expected the worst, and I was a little hesitant to do anything out of the way. I didn't want to cause an incident. I think that really affected us somewhat. We're playing four blacks.

Once you see that these guys are

# The sheriff was a basketball fan too.

In September, 1962, Governor Ross Barnett appointed himself registrar of the University of Mississippi in Jackson and refused admission to a black man, James Meredith. Encouraged by such leadership from above, white resistance to integration escalated rapidly, and on the night of September 30, federal troops and guardsmen, called out by President Kennedy, fought raucous students and Klansmen. Two people were killed, scores injured. Meredith started classes safely, but tensions within the state were high.

When the race issue flared again the following spring, Mississippi State University at Starkville became the focus of attention, and this time the white student body lined up in opposition to Barnett. Their high-flying basketball team had just won the title in the strong but segregated Southeastern Conference (SEC) for the third straight year, and the Bulldogs of Coach "Babe" McCarthy were eager to go to the post-season National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Tournament — even if it meant competing against black opponents for the first time.

"Our going to the NCAA," the team captain told a newspaper, "would make the whole state of Mississippi look less prejudiced."

Suddenly the underlying links between sports and politics had risen to the surface for all to see. "If Miss. State U. plays against a Negro outside the state, what would be greatly different in bringing the integrated teams into the state?" asked the Jackson Clarion Ledger on March 6, 1963. Invoking the domino theory so familiar in racist editorials of the time, the paper continued: "And why not recruit a Negro of special basketball ability to play on the Miss. State team? This is the road we seem to be traveling."

It was not a road Governor Barnett was willing to accept. Limited by the

legal aftermath of riots at Ole Miss, he was depending on his handpicked Trustees of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning to keep the team at home and the state safe from integration. But Mississippi State President Dean Colvard, responding to campus pressure and bolstered by petitions from alumni and fans across the state, broke tradition and announced the team could go to the NCAA, beginning with a regional playoff game at Michigan State against Loyola of Chicago. When Barnett's cronies demanded a hearing before the statewide Institutions of Higher Learning, picketers appeared at the meeting with signs reading, "Don't confuse the NAACP with the NCAA," and white resistance was defeated by a vote of eight to three.

With time running out, the powerful segregationists resorted to a familiar tactic. "We were all listening to the radio," one player recalls, "when a bulletin said a state senator had got a court injunction. I will never forget Mitchell saying, 'Who all wants to get in my car and let's drive to Michigan State? By golly, I'm going.'" Though white undergraduates had violently protested against integration at Ole Miss six months before, students in Starkville now hung in effigy those who dared enjoin their ball-club against leaving the state.

When the show-down came on Thursday morning, March 14, the Oktibeha County sheriff failed to serve an injunction on the group of tall young men with crewcuts and flat-tops who boarded the Southern Airlines plane in Starkville. Newspaper accounts referred to a late flight and schedule

mixups at the airport, but recent sleuthing reveals another explanation: the sheriff too was a basketball fan and had graciously left the airport in time for the players to make their plane without a fight!

The Mississippi State starters making the historic trip were all small-town boys from low-income families. Red Stroud (6'1"), the SEC's most valuable player, was the son of a bricklayer from Forest, Mississippi. Doug Hutton, the 5'10" guard with a behind-the-head dunk, had grown up in Clinton, where his father worked as a janitor. Bobby Shows, the 6'8" son of a teacher, hailed from the metropolis of Brookhaven, a town of 10,000. Captain Joe Dan Gold (6'5") came from farthest away, having grown up on a farm near Fairdealing, Kentucky. The fifth tournament starter was number 44, 6'4" Leland Mitchell from Kilm, Mississippi.

Until he fouled out with six minutes and forty-seven sec-



onds to go, Mitchell guarded Loyola's Les Hunter, edging him in rebounds, 11 to 10, and in points, 14-12. But Loyola, a run-and-gun team averaging 100 points a game, proved too tall and fast for the slowdown specialists of Mississippi State, who depended on the now-famous four corners stall and shuffle offense. The Chicago quintet broke the game open in the final minutes, winning 61-51, and went on to upset Cincinnati for the NCAA title. Despite defeat, the Bulldogs returned to a cheering homecoming, participants in one of the least-remembered, but most ironic and highly significant, episodes in Mississippi's civil-rights revolution.

Now, more than 16 years later, there are black players on the Bulldog basketball team, and black students make up 13 percent of the 8,700 undergraduate student body at Mississippi State. "I think there are more blacks at Mississippi State than at any other SEC school," says Ray White, a current Bulldog starter from Gulfport.

As for the starters on the 1963 team, most are now active in coaching or recreational work in the area. One of them, Leland Mitchell, has become a successful Starkville developer. He began an aggressive real estate practice, turned a cotton field into a high-class suburb, and now lives in a \$200,000 home. Here, sitting on a plush couch, he reminisced recently about his trip to the NCAA.

**T**here wasn't any problem about us not wanting to play. There were some petitions circulated around.



A lot of signatures for us to go. We weren't asked our opinion. We all wanted to go and the coach knew that.

The two state senators filed an injunction to stop us from going. We didn't really understand what an injunction was. We were going to play if we were allowed to play and we weren't if we weren't allowed to.

### **We didn't really understand what an injunction was. The fans, the people that supported basketball in Mississippi, wanted us to play. We all wanted to go.**

It wasn't a question of us trying to break the law. I'm sure that there weren't any of us on the team that knew what an injunction was to start with. The fans, the people that supported basketball in Mississippi, wanted us to play.

Loyola was a good ball club, obviously. I think it hurt us a little bit, not practicing and not playing any games prior to the tournament. The indecision about whether we were going hurt us. We were a little rusty. We had as good a ball club as they had. But in a tournament like that where you got one time to go, you know, that's it.

We didn't shoot well. Joe Dan got his arm broke, a small bone. He didn't know it until after the game. They had a good, quick ball club. We were told they pressed all over the court and we'd have trouble getting the ball downcourt. We didn't think we would. Nobody'd been able to press us before. We had so much speed and quickness. They pressed us the whole game, but they never once caused a turnover, not once. Doug Hutton could go either way, left or right hand. They'd overplay everybody to the right, so Doug would just go left.

We were in the ballgame all the way, led most of the first half. We slowed it down some in the first half, and then went back playing. We could play either way. It didn't matter. If we got behind, we could run. They were bigger than we were. They had Rouse and Hunter, big men. We were 6'3" and 6'4", and they were 6'7". They were bigger than we were, but we were quicker than they were.

Not much difference, you know, in a close ballgame. One shot missed or a bad pass or something. With about eight minutes to go, it seemed like —

I forget how much time it was — I got the ball and turned to shoot and took a dribble off to the side. A guy came into me and they called an offensive foul. My fifth foul. We were one point ahead or behind when I fouled out. It was a close game right to the last minute.

In the consolation game, we beat Bowling Green, who had Nate Thurmond and Howard Komives. Bowling Green had beaten Loyola that year.

I played against Jerry Harkness and Les Hunter in the ABA. We didn't get to know them, but we remembered each other. We knew their names.

I think that whenever anybody excels at something, you're looking at an individual. The fans are supporting the school and whoever represents the school — the individual player. On my Little League All-Stars, I had two black players and they both played. They're both good little athletes. One played on my regular-season team. I just looked on them as an athlete and not whether they were black or not.

I see sports as having some impact. One thing that has happened, the white players aren't participating like they used to. When they integrated, the little white boys quit participating, especially in basketball. We're just now seeing it at the college level. That's why Mississippi State has mostly black players. Most of the high school teams are black. Athletics is something you can participate in for recognition in your teen years. Some get recognized by wearing nice clothes or driving a nice car or something like that. The poor families that live in the country. . . . Athletics gives blacks a place to go. Today, the white children ride everywhere. If they got to go three blocks, they ride. Little black children, they don't have cars. They walk or run.

It's an economic thing. Most of your good athletes in my lifetime came from poor families. White athletes came from poor families. Your good black players came from poor families, too. It's no different. Good, well-to-do whites might have participated in athletics, but they had a car to drive when they were 15. They had other things to do, activities other than athletics. It's economics still. □





Loyola's Les Hunter (41) has ball knocked away while shooting by Mississippi State's Leland Mitchell (44) during their NCAA Regional Tournament game, March 15, 1963. "They were bigger than we were," recalls Mitchell, "but we were quicker."

here just to play ball and try to beat you, you get all that out – probably like going on stage and performing. You're nervous and tight from the start, but once you get into the natural flow of things, you don't even think of the nervousness. You just concentrate on what you have to do to win. Mississippi State was one of the most physical teams I played

guys to play good position because we don't ever get to squat to jump, or make the dramatic leap. He was physical, a lot of strong arm and pushing around, but nothing ever got dirty. When we found a white boy that could jump, that was strong, that was physical, we'd say, "Man, it's rough playing against some country white boy." I guarded their center, but

white team, especially at that time.

I was really amazed at the politeness that the Mississippi State players showed us. I think a lot of it can be attributed to Babe McCarthy, a fine gentleman in my opinion. Babe's the kind of guy that always said what he felt and could put it in such a way that you wish you had said it. He was humorous, but he could get serious. Babe coached in the ABA, and we used to get together after games and have a few drinks. Country boys could put things so simple, not like doctors or professors who use 50,000 different words. Babe could say things with 10 words – one sentence.

I don't think the Mississippi State game really had anything that significant as far as I was concerned. I was allowed to play against both black and white. The impact had to be on Mississippi State and their players, and what they had to face going back home. I want to find out their reaction to what happened when they went back.

The game and the situation did mean a lot to me though, because

**Going into to the game, I'm thinking, "This is like history." At the time, I told Bibb, "Well, it's just another ball game." But I really expected to be cursed, spat at and all of this. I expected the worst.**

during the year. They were extremely physical, but nothing dirty. Nothing at all dirty. They played real hard ball.

I remember Leland Mitchell. He was probably stronger than anybody on the team. He wasn't that big, something like 6'4", but he was solid. He was kind of like the Bailey Howell type – strong, persistent, played a lot of position. At that time, we were considered great jumpers. We hated

Mitchell guarded me.

They played a combination – switched zone and man-to-man. I didn't play a good game against them. I had a good rebounding game, but only about 12 or 13 points. A low-scoring game. They hung in there. We were surprised that they would be that good. We didn't pull the game out until the second half. I guess you always think a good black team can beat a good

John Bibb had the balls to play it up in the Nashville papers. He put it in the headlines about Rouse and Hunter. Unless you were Wilma Rudolph (the Tennessee State track star and heroine of the 1960 Olympics) and had won three gold medals, it was the first time blacks had been in the headlines. When we won the national high school championships, there was a little clip, maybe 10 lines. John Bibb really opened up a lot. I was really proud of that. I've still got that article.

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## **When we found a white boy that could jump, that was strong, that was physical, we'd say, "Man, it's rough playing against some country white boy."**

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My senior year, we would have won if we had gotten by Michigan. We missed that on a controversial call, a traveling call on a basket that could have tied it and sent it into overtime. But instead, Cazzie Russell sank two free throws or a layup or something and we lost by four. Then I was drafted by the Detroit Pistons. They traded my rights to Baltimore, ironically in the same trade with Bailey Howell. I played at Baltimore one year; they wouldn't give me a no-cut contract. So I went back to Chicago and finished up school, graduated. I was a case worker supervisor at a juvenile detention home in Chicago, the Audy Home. Counseled, set up daily schedules for kids that were awaiting disposition by the courts for some offense. When the ABA started up, I called Babe. He said he didn't need anybody else, already had 40 guys. So I went with Minnesota and made the All-Star team the first three years of the league.

It was rough, but I wouldn't trade it for anything. My first year in the pros, I didn't know anybody, and guys would be moving back because they were afraid that I'd hit them with an elbow or something. But then you get to know a guy and nobody's backing off. Once I got to know people in the league, just knowing them personally, you weren't as intimidating to some guy. He knows that you might be a gentle guy. You just lose your

effectiveness.

It was rough just carrying your clothes. You get up in the morning, pull off your pajamas and put on your clothes. You go and get on a plane, takes you right there so you can rest before the game. You pull off your clothes and jump into bed. Get back and put your clothes on just in time to go to the gym. You get there and take them off and put on your uniform. After the game you pull off your uniform and put your clothes back on. And you go to the motel and pull off your clothes and you go to bed. Next day, start all over and do the same thing. I ought to write a book named "Changing Clothes."

I had different roommates, Artis Gilmore, some others. I always went back to New York during the summers. I lived right down the street from Julius Erving. We used to play ball every day at Nassau Community College. That's when he was still in college. For a couple of years, I played in the Rucker League (Harlem league named for a community worker, the late Holcomb Rucker, and nationally famous for its high caliber of play and wide-open style). There's nothing in the country that can parallel that. Maybe the dust bowl in Indianapolis where all the pros used to play, an outside court. You know Hoosier country is a big basketball area. At the Rucker League just about every game there'd be three or four thousand people there. People sitting in trees, vendors all over the place selling popcorn and hotdogs. It's just a big event.

After the pros, I sold insurance for Prudential in Memphis. Sold a lot of insurance but wasn't cut out for it. So I went into the restaurant business. Still selling, but I'm in one place, not running all over town. A friend and I went into the Steak and Ale training program for two years, to learn the restaurant business and invest our money. We got out, had hopes of opening our own restaurant. But promises were made that weren't kept. I'm trying to get a group together to open up a restaurant out in Overland Park now. Black barbeque. If you can get it and franchise it, man, you got a gold mine.

A lot of whites think if you get a black you're going to be instant winners – because "Man, blacks can play basketball." Especially the first

black athlete at a school, like Perry Wallace. Even though Wallace was a good player at Vanderbilt, they didn't win. In general, I think the white public is getting an opportunity to see graceful athletes in action. I think they really appreciate it. Contrary to what some owners feel – that they've got to glamorize the white kid and make him a superstar. When a white star comes along, it's money in the bank because the general public is white. When you get a Paul Westphal or Rick Barry, it's gold. The problem I see is trying to glamorize a white boy for the money when he doesn't have that kind of talent or when there's enough talent that's as good already on the team.

Basketball is a matter of developing pride. I think that athletes have a certain amount of pride and a certain amount of concentration on what they are trying to achieve in that particular sport. I think they are looking at performance rather than who they are participating against. Even if it's black against white, they look at trying to pit their talents against someone else's talents. I don't think you can find any better friend or any better way to talk to each other than to be on a team with somebody because you're striving for a common goal.

I think the sports arena is just that, a sports arena, not a political arena. Sports should be the one institution that should stand religiously above all this other. It should be the one point in time when nations get together and piss on politics and just go for pure physical and mental exertion. Sports has done more than any institution anywhere – more than any civil rights movement or anything – to break down racial barriers all over the world. Racial and political barriers. If you've got some players, come on, let's play. Let's compete. I would play South Africa as soon as I would play somebody from Missouri. And I'm from Kansas. Come on, let's go. Bring your ball and uniform, and let's play. □

*In 1963, the year Mississippi State faced Loyola in the NCAA, Bill Finger was playing high school basketball in Jackson. He is now a free-lance writer in Raleigh, N.C., and at work on a book about the players of those historic teams.*

# FLIGHT

A STORY BY BILL ATWILL

Will Gracey was flying! There was no time, no space, no dimension beyond this emerald roaring wet chamber in which he crouched, hurtling toward a sunlit opening that promised golden diamonds on bright blue water. Only this moment existed, now, where his right hand traced exquisite lines along the liquid wall that rushed up, out, and over his head in such fluid perfection that Will thought his heart would burst. Never in all his conscious memory had he felt such a surging joy as this. In that instant of detachment, the wave pitched quickly higher and collapsed into a five-foot wall of whitewater that pounded Will against the bottom and carried his surfboard to shore like a strip of shiny driftwood.

"To hold infinity in the palm of your hand," Will muttered, as he sat scooping up the coarse wet sand and dropping it aimlessly on his feet. His breathing was back to normal, but his arms still felt too weak to even raise beyond his waist, so there was nothing to do but sit there and squint into the early morning sun that sparkled off the smooth blue swells, or carefully study the color and texture of the billions of sand grains lying in a four-foot radius around him. At that moment, he did not want to watch the ocean — partly because he knew the glare would give him a headache, but mostly because he needed to hold the image of that last ride awhile longer before being distracted by other waves and other riders.

He'd come so close that time. From the moment he chose the wave, Will knew that something was really right about it. Perhaps it was the feathering peak, the long moment of hesitation when the wave started to lift the tail of the board before it began its downward slide, or perhaps it was the way the wall tapered to the right; at any rate, Will had carved a smooth powerful bottom turn, come racing back up the face of the wave and neatly tucked under the curl just as it began to pitch out. Crouched as he was on the nose of his board, his right leg bearing the weight, his left extended forward for balance, he could see nothing but sunlight and water. His feet read the vibrations,

fed impulses to the brain and received corrections of weight displacement and trim as subtle as any attitude thrusters ever designed.

The constant descent of his board had been perfectly matched to the upwelling of the water, so he remained locked into the hollow chamber that formed just ahead of the collapsing wave. At first, the sensation of speed was incredible because the water was rushing by, the board dropping, and the air forced out by the collapsing sections behind made a steady roar. Then, with everything lined up exactly, all motion seemed to stop and everything hung suspended in the diffused green-amber light of the liquid cylinder. The emerald eternity lasted less than three seconds.

Will dusted the last grains of sand off his hands and laughed at himself. Here he was, reveling in the same mystic mother ocean, cosmic mumbo-jumbo that he had always detested in others. Granted, he'd had a few seconds where the linear sequence had been suspended and he had felt completely alive in that very moment, but that sort of peak experience was hardly the exclusive property of surfing. Almost all religions and almost every other sport promised the same moments of illumination if pursued with fervor. Hell, hadn't he been part of a generation that abused perhaps the widest variety of drugs ever conceived in search of a shortcut to that same feeling? If there was a mystery here, it had to be the timing of this experience; it was nearly 10 years too late.

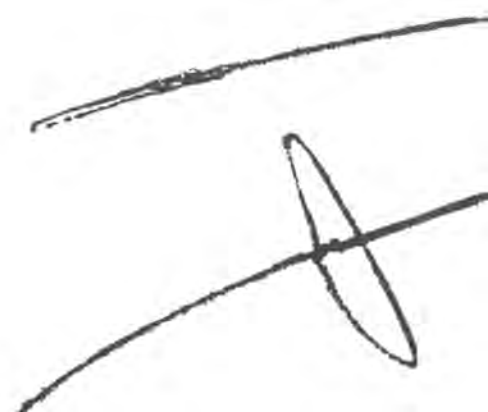
Will Gracey was 31, and, up until a month before, had lived in Charlotte, been a high school history teacher and a part-time insurance salesman. He had also been married. Except for brief holiday visits to his parents' house in Florida, this was the first time he had been to the coast in nearly five years. Louise had always preferred the cool mountains of western North Carolina to the thick heat of the Outer Banks in August.

He had rented the beach house at Buxton for many unclear reasons, but most of them centered around memories of a happier time. Throughout his childhood and even into

college, the beach had always been Will's refuge. For all he knew he'd been born knowing how to swim — at least he couldn't remember learning to swim — and his parents had always let him roam the beach unsupervised. These last two weeks had almost been like that again. Walking across the cool textured crust of a rain-soaked dune in the first light of morning, he had been washed by overlapping memories of other times and other beaches, all pleasant.

If he didn't think about it too much, Will could sometimes go for hours believing that it could all be like that again. He found it hard to imagine how he'd ever brought himself to leave it. He could blame it on Louise, whose beachcomber fantasy quickly melted in the sticky heat of summer, but it was really the developers who were most responsible. From Patrick Air Force base to Cape Canaveral, hardly a scrub tree stood after the land speculators and dream sellers were through peddling their wares. Overcrowding, erosion of the beach, and a depressed job market finally drove him inland and eventually delivered him to Charlotte. But his dreams were always of the ocean.

Now, sitting beneath the looming bulk of the Hatteras Light, Will watched the powerful groundswells march in. Somewhere far west and north of the Cape Verde Islands, a hurricane named Elisa was churning through the mid-Atlantic at a steady six knots, gaining force and sending out these waves like so many skirmishers. It was too early to be more than slightly apprehensive about it, so these first few days were a surfer's delight. The wind blew cleanly offshore, keeping the waves smooth and hollow, and they had not yet gotten much over four to six feet. In this type of surf, Will was still relaxed and confident, even if his paddling muscles were slow to recover from their five years' atrophy. If he timed the sets right, he could paddle out without





getting his hair wet, but if he timed it poorly, he exhausted vital energy punching through breakers. A lost board meant a long tiring swim and another long paddle, so he rode conservatively, choosing only those waves with promising walls. The borderline closeouts would have to wait.

From that first day when he had strolled as inconspicuously as possible into the local surfshop and laid out \$60 of his rapidly dwindling state retirement money for the vintage 7-foot-2-inch Bing "Foil," he had surprised himself with how much ability he still retained. For sure, the timing was gone for things like going backside, or jamming a hard cutback, but the bread and butter stroke-into-the-wave-drive-off-the-bottom-and-line-up-the-wall moves were still there. Only his poor upper body conditioning and sensitivity to the sun prevented him from staying out all day. Gradually, over the last two weeks, his skin had darkened and his back and shoulders began to feel taut.

Last night, when the sound of the surf booming woke him sometime before dawn, Will knew that the morning light would reveal the first tentative probings of what promised to be the first major Atlantic hurricane in 15 years. He'd felt the adrenalin rush up his neck two nights ago when the news reported the hurricane's formation. Hurricanes, too, were peak experiences, and Will surveyed the sturdy cypress stilt house, perched eight feet above the ground and a half-mile back off the ocean, with a sense of satisfaction. It had remained standing through other hard blows, so if Elisa should home in on the Outer Banks, he was certain it could withstand full-force winds. Only the shake roof worried him, but he knew

the rationale: let the wind have as many shingles as it wants so long as the roof stays on. If the blow should come, he would ride it out right there in the house.

He had prayed for hurricanes in the early days, right after the first surfboards were unpacked with the household belongings of NASA engineers transferred from California. The sneering children of these transplanted specialists were unimpressed with the three-foot wind swells that broke most of the year and did not believe the stories of 10-foot storm surf. Since he was local (born and raised on the swelling fortunes of Indian River Citrus), Will felt he had to defend the area. He even disdained the California boards in favor of a 9-foot-6-inch James & O'Hare, carefully crafted in Cape Canaveral, just north of the new pier.

Even then, in 1963-64, surfing had been a quest of sorts. In those days, the search for better wave breaks sent Will and his friends up and down the length of A1A. The pattern was always the same: they drove down in the early morning coolness whenever Cocoa Beach was flat and began to explore the overgrown sandy trails that cut through the dense palmetto-covered dune. Sometimes, they would walk over the dune and look down to see excellent four-foot waves popping up off a submerged coquina reef, peeling smoothly left and right.

At times like this, they felt like Balboa and would name the place after some notable feature. To the south some 20 miles, they found Shark Pit, Spanish House and Sebastian. To the north they found Pig Farm and the Jetties. And beyond the Jetties, wavering in the salty haze,

was the tip of Cape Canaveral, isolated by three miles of Strictly Off-Limits Government property. The shady grove of Australian pines, the white beach, the empty waves that wrapped riderless around the point still haunted Will's memory. He hadn't been out there since he was seven years old, but he remembered that the place was more beautiful than anywhere he had imagined. The pines offered shade, the breezes were cool, and the tidal pools held many treasures. His father used to put him on his shoulders and wade out into the surf where Will could dive into the incoming swells.

He always remembered the first five years as a time when the mornings were clear and warm, the surf smooth and hollow, and the surfers all friendly in the awareness of this shared experience. It was all fused into one image of a Saturday morning sometime in the spring of 1965, when he and two friends were driving south toward Shark Pit. The morning sun was dancing along the periphery of his left eye, in and out of the Australian pines, as he drove his beloved green '55 Ford stationwagon to the tune of the Beatles' "Eight Days A Week." In Melbourne Beach, a surfer walking beside the road grinned and gave them the thumbs-up assurance that there were good waves. They were not disappointed, and that day Will had come very close to the feeling he'd experienced this morning. Later that same afternoon, lying in the sand with the sun beating down on his back, he couldn't think of anywhere in the world he would rather have been.



But there were also the dark days. Part of his mind worked constantly to blot out the memory of cold gray November storms. He'd nearly drowned in the churning indifference of those unmakeable peaks; only the desire not to be a horrible limp blue body like the one he'd seen washed up when he was six gave him the strength to make it ashore.

And now, sitting here 15 years after his first exhilarating slide to shore, standing on a borrowed surfboard Will wondered how he had ever drifted away from the sport. Certainly, it had been the focus of his life throughout the '60s, to the extent that it influenced every lifestyle decision he made. The automobiles that he lusted after were not the full-blown GTO's that blipped through the burger parlors, but rather VW minibuses and fixed-up Falcon Vans. You could cruise to California in a van, sleeping shifts, driving non-stop, and be there in a little over two days. You could camp self-contained along the Outer Banks.

It was the same with clothes: comfort won out over style every time, until it became style. Blue canvas boat shoes, sand-colored corduroys, and Penney's T-shirt with the pocket constituted formal dress. Canvas baggies, or quick-drying nylon ones, a Hawaiian-print shirt and 39-cent flip-flops took care of all other occasions.

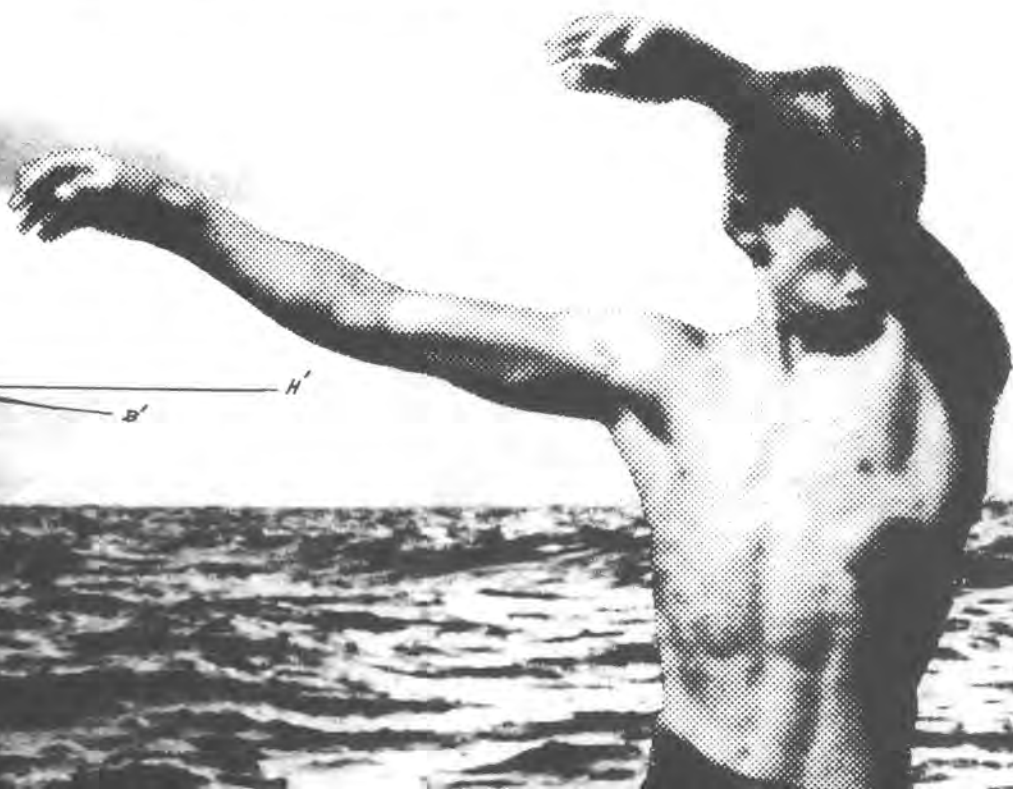
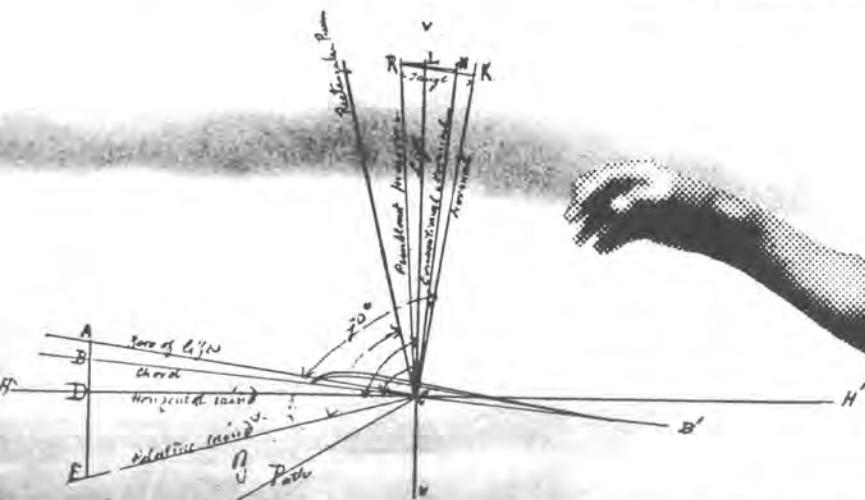
Those were simpler times all around, Will thought, shuffling back toward the house, his board tucked under his arm. The surf was getting bigger, he could tell, and he knew his limitations. He decided to thumb up to Kitty Hawk for the afternoon.

Standing in front of the full-scale replica of the Wright Brothers' Flyer, Will felt a sudden shiver of recognition. This, too, was a product of a simpler time, yet it represented state-of-the-art technology on a blustery day in 1903 when it flew that pitifully short distance marked outside at the base of Kill Devil Hill. A mile or two south, at Jockey's Ridge, children were staying aloft for hours on delta-winged air foils designed by a NASA engineer named Rogallo for the specific purpose of bringing home the astronauts — heirs to the Wright Brothers' dreams.

Will studied the curved fabric-covered wings. This is truly a craft designed for flight, he thought, a lifting body that would enable a person to soar off the wind currents like some graceful seabird, rising and dipping from thermal to thermal. The motor was mere expedience — a means to propel the plane fast enough to get it airborne, to let it break free of the earth, but still to glide on the natural currents. He mused at how far flight technology had come over the last 75 years; propellers become propellants, pilots become projectiles, until now humans were thrust off this

planet in devices that, if the power failed, would not glide an inch, but rather plummet like Icarus, wings melting, into the ocean.

Perhaps the Wright Brothers' tools were only toys now, but the essence of flight lived more surely in them than in anything produced by the aerospace industry. Surfing held to that spirit also, and that accounted for its attraction to the children of nose-cone re-entry specialists, propulsion engineers and systems analysts. While the parents were sweating out the mathematical calculations for another imprecise mid-Atlantic recovery, their children were gleefully harnessing the wave-form energy produced by wind on water, and riding it easily to shore. Will felt vaguely as though he were standing in front of a shrine to something more than flight — or perhaps to *real* flight in whatever form. After all, the technology of this first airplane eventually brought NASA families to Cape Canaveral, and they brought surfboards from California. And, to close the circle, the same wind forces that brought the Wrights to the Outer Banks now drew the surfers. Nowhere on the East Coast do the waves approach the magnitude of Hatteras. And Hatteras was about to put on a show.



The sun rose red and diffused on the morning of August 23rd. A high strata of grayish cloud covered the sky from horizon to horizon. The barometer read 29.80 and dropping. Hurricane Elisa was stalled at 32°N75, with maximum winds of 115 mph and strengthening. The Eastern seaboard from Savannah to Norfolk was on hurricane alert. Twelve-foot waves roared across Diamond Shoals and wrapped around the tip of Cape Hatteras, where Will stood gaping in slack-jawed awe. He'd seen films of bigger surf than this in Hawaii, but nothing prepared him for the raw power of these waves.

They came in like freights, one after another, gray, thick and swift, shaking the beach with the force of their concussion. He hadn't even brought his board down with him because he knew that from here on out he was back to being a spectator. He would leave hurricane surf to those who had made the narrow commitment to excellence that he had never been willing to justify. And there were more than a few of them there that day.

A quarter mile out, they bobbed, perched like pelicans on the sleek shapes of their big-wave boards. This was grim sport today. Each wave was carefully chosen, because in surf this heavy it was suicide to use a leash and a lost board meant an hour and a half swimming in and then trying to fight back out. A person could easily drown

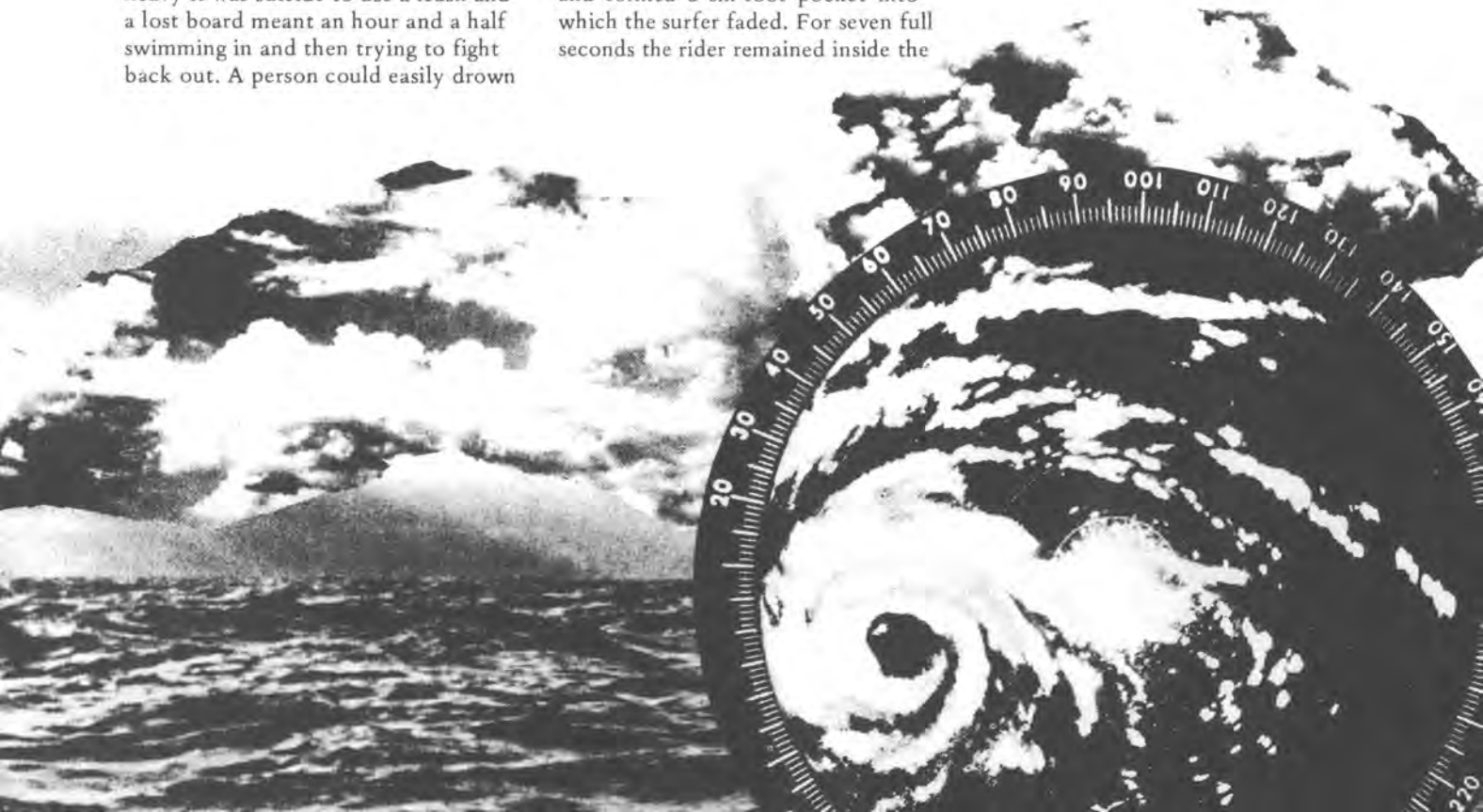
in the arm-numbing fatigue of two consecutive miscalculations. But, if your conditioning was good, your attitude right and your skills sharp, these waves offered mind-altering experiences.

Will watched one of the surfers stroke into a huge wall, fighting the incredible updraft created by the offshore winds. Too much time passed and the wave went vertical as the surfer finally stood up, only to free-fall eight feet and be crunched by a collapsing wall of whitewater. His board shot spinning high into the air, landing fin up in the trough, while Will counted to 20 waiting for the surfer's head to pop up. Finally, it did, some 30 yards closer to shore than his board. Will wanted to cry out and point, or something, to tell this stunned waverider that his board was behind him, but it was too late anyhow. The next wave picked the board up like a chip and sent it flipping to shore, churning carelessly over the weary swimmer.

Outside, another rider paddled smoothly into a large peak, stood quickly, bottom-turned, and drove hard for the shoulder. Incredibly, Will watched the figure standing erect, back slightly arched, as the lip of the wave threw out over his head and formed a six-foot pocket into which the surfer faded. For seven full seconds the rider remained inside the

tube while Will danced a jig on the dunes. As the wave began to close out, the surfer dropped, then jammed up hard, popping out the back of the wave still standing, with both arms raised, exultant.

Will was beginning to understand just exactly what it was that drove people to dedicate their lives to the act of doing one thing in this world better than anyone thought possible. All the hours, all the practice, all the other pleasures sacrificed could, he began to believe, be cancelled out by the utter joy of approaching perfection. He thought of all the things in which he'd dabbled — sports, education, job, even marriage — up to that point of diminishing returns, where the additional time spent resulted in only the most marginal improvements, and he wondered if he had the courage just once to take something to the limit of his ability. Could he, at this late date, make that narrow commitment from which he'd shied so long? It didn't have to be surfing, but it did have to be some pursuit that enabled him to finally break through the feeling of waste that had been closing in on him for the last few years. A shiver of excitement danced along his spine.





Elisa began to move west-northwest at eight knots, and all residents and visitors of Dare County were urged to evacuate the Outer Banks immediately. Will looked over at the dining room table where two grocery bags full of canned goods waited to be put away. A gallon of Coleman fuel, two boxes of candles, and a five-gallon thermos sat beside them. If the hurricane maintained its present course he would be sitting in the middle of it this time tomorrow. His heart beat rapidly.

The sunset that evening was fiery and foreboding, but the sky to the southeast was awesome. Barely above the horizon out over Diamond Shoals, where the high strata clouds seemed to converge, Will could see the whitish bar of thick cloud layer that marked the outer fringes of this massive storm. Low scud clouds moved at rapid angles to the higher wisps, tinged with pink in the early dusk. The wind was backing again northwest, going northerly, and he knew tonight would be oppressive. He would hold off as long as possible nailing tight the heavy wooden shutters. At least he could sleep in the hammock and not be bathed in his own sweat. For a moment he felt very lonely.

There was no dawn. At least, there was no discernible lightening of the eerie world outside that hurled wind and rain heavy as slate against the battened walls of the beach house. All night the gusts became stronger and the heavy squalls that roared across the dunes had finally come so close together that only occasional shifts in intensity modulated the steady wail. The force that howled at the pilings and pried at the windows was greater than anything Will could remember from childhood.

He realized now that he'd slept through most of the previous hurricanes, secure in the trust of his father's watchful care. Only in this moment did the memory of his father pacing in the night from window to window, flashlight in hand, come back to him. They'd had a boathouse once when he

was very young. One day it sat in the Indian River, its red tin walls radiating heat like a stove, and the next day it was gone without a trace, leaving only some twisted pilings.

Hour by hour the intensity grew. The house shuddered and groaned under the sudden gusts that shrieked full-on for interminable minutes. In those moments, Will fought his panic any way he could. He was sure now that the sea was running up under the house and he knew what a strange vision this must be — a lone beach house, stilted gray survivor in a whirling wasteland of surf and spume, waiting. . . .

Will forced himself to think of something other than the hurricane. He tried to think how he'd come to lose touch with the beach, with surfing, with himself. It had to do with the times, he decided.

Back then, he had managed to drift through the first two years of college while staying out of the draft, managed to surf most every weekend, and had occasionally lent his body to the anti-war movement. He'd quit the track team after his sophomore year, once he'd realized he would never be faster than a 10.3 sprinter without a whole lot more work than he was willing to give it. Even though the

assassinations of King and Kennedy left him a little numb, they didn't really affect him as much as he would have pretended if asked. But short surf boards, Chicago and the Apollo missions did.

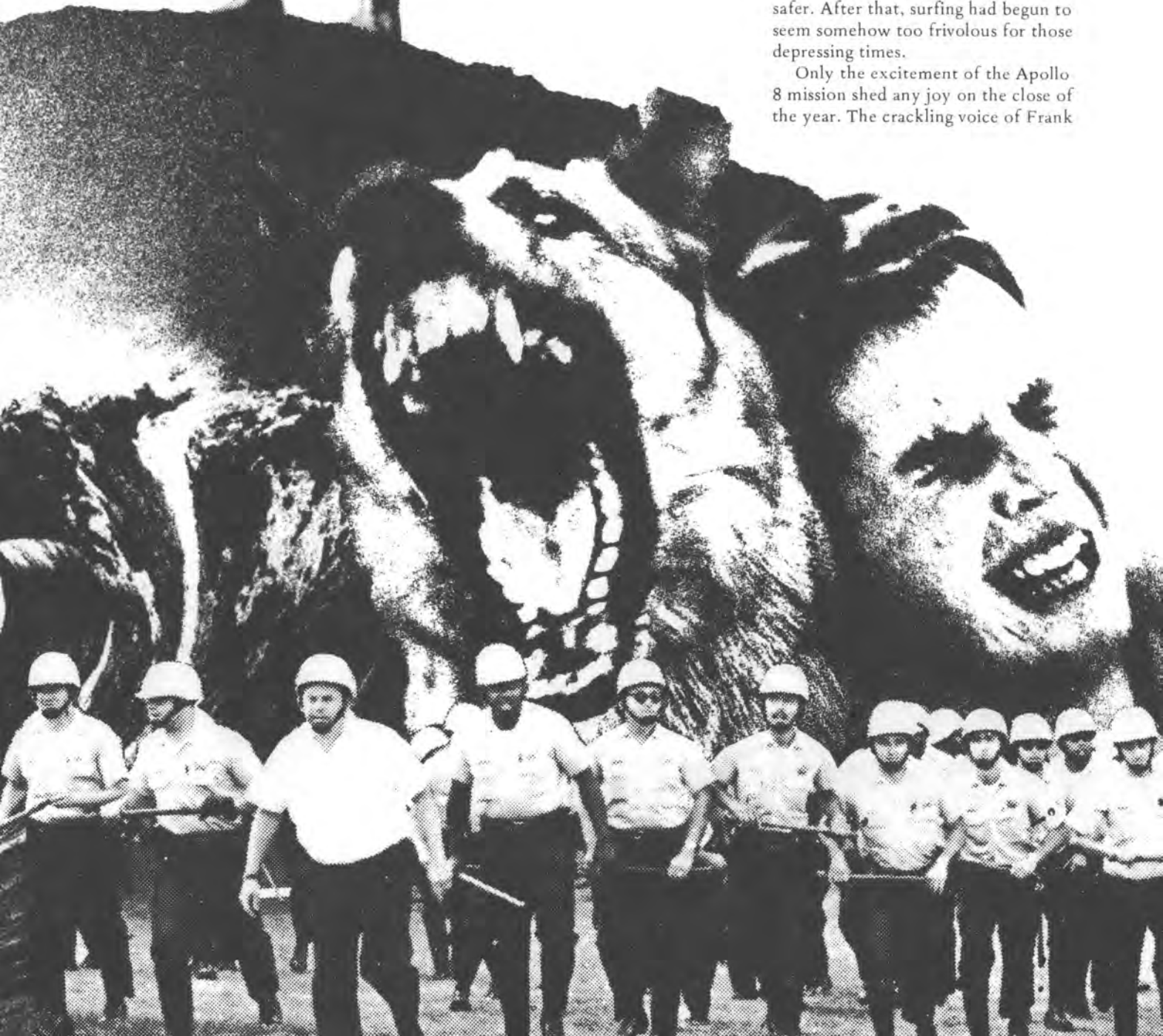
Since the Spring of '68, when the first V-Bottoms had made his 9-foot-4-inch nose-rider obsolete, Will had been fighting a losing battle. The lower volume of those high performance boards meant less flotation and more critical takeoffs. This required better conditioning on the part of the surfer, and he couldn't maintain it as a weekend rider. With the long nose-riders that he'd owned before, Will had become a competent water dancer, as he liked to think of it. The board was a moving platform, a stage upon which to perform. Now the 14-year-olds were giving him lessons in the new harmony between board and rider. He couldn't stand it.





Things had improved for awhile that summer when he had time to surf everyday and get the new boards wired. He even toyed briefly with the idea of laying out of school a semester and heading out to California with some of his friends, but the thought of Viet Nam hung too heavily in the air. He had watched the Democratic Convention on TV, hoping to see some of his friends from school who were McCarthy delegates. It was awful. He couldn't believe the barbed wire, the armored personnel carriers, the tear gas, the troops and the beatings. Will seethed at the smug delegates who sat safely inside while the storm of protest raged outside, but he was really sick at the thought of all those like himself who sat at home, even safer. After that, surfing had begun to seem somehow too frivolous for those depressing times.

Only the excitement of the Apollo 8 mission shed any joy on the close of the year. The crackling voice of Frank



Borman and the stunning vision of the Earth from 20,000 miles in space had left him awed. The sheer logistics of this feat baffled him and rocked Cocoa Beach like Mardi Gras. Three men had fled this planet atop a streaming cylinder of fire, and they had carried that fire, that light, to the dark side of the moon and returned. Will felt buoyant, but this feat and the lunar landing later the next year were only isolated bright moments in black times.

The wind shook the house and he moaned suddenly out loud, scaring himself with the sound of his own strange voice. Something struck hard against a piling, sending the shock up through the floor, and his heart quailed. Had he ever been alive when the wind did not beat in madness against the house? Did the sun ever shine bright and quiet upon a stretch of beach that moved in languid ease through each day? Was the ocean ever green? Please let it end. Please, please, no more.

Suddenly the wind subsided and the rain abated. A deadly silence fell over everything and light streamed through the cracks in the shutters. Will was stunned by the change, and he sat on the bed for fully five minutes before he realized what was happening. The eye was passing.

Nothing in his life had prepared him for the spectacle that he viewed from the porch. The debris, the piles of flotsam wedged here and there, the sea oats flattened atop the dunes he had expected; but the sky was another thing altogether. From horizon

to zenith in every direction, it was fiery-red, the Earth an inferno of diffused crimson with Will alone in its center. Directly above him, where the clouds almost thinned completely, it burned bright copper. Gentle winds gusted lightly from all quarters and he almost expected birds to be singing. Will very nearly felt reprieved in the magnificence of this sunset's flaming vortex. He found it difficult to believe that the hurricane wasn't really over.

More suddenly than it eased, the storm slammed back against the house, this time attacking from the northwest with redoubled fury. Night fell like black rain and Will's spirit cracked like a spar.

Somewhere outside, a high keening shriek rose and fell, with the wind turning his insides to ice. Will had been beaten helpless by the storm for over 11 hours. In his heart he knew, now, that it would never end — that it would go on, endless, with no day, no sky, no earth, no silence, nothing but this roaring, howling, driving wind and water for all black eternity.

He thought of all the things he'd meant to do and had not. He thought of the disappointments and pain he'd caused others, and he wished with all his heart that he could live his life over. He prayed and made promises, and finally slept, exhausted and without hope. Will dreamed. He distinctly heard his father's quiet footsteps in the living room, crossing toward the hallway to his room, the beam of the flashlight swinging its yellow arc before him. Overjoyed at the thought of seeing his father, whom he'd thought to be long dead, Will struggled to sit

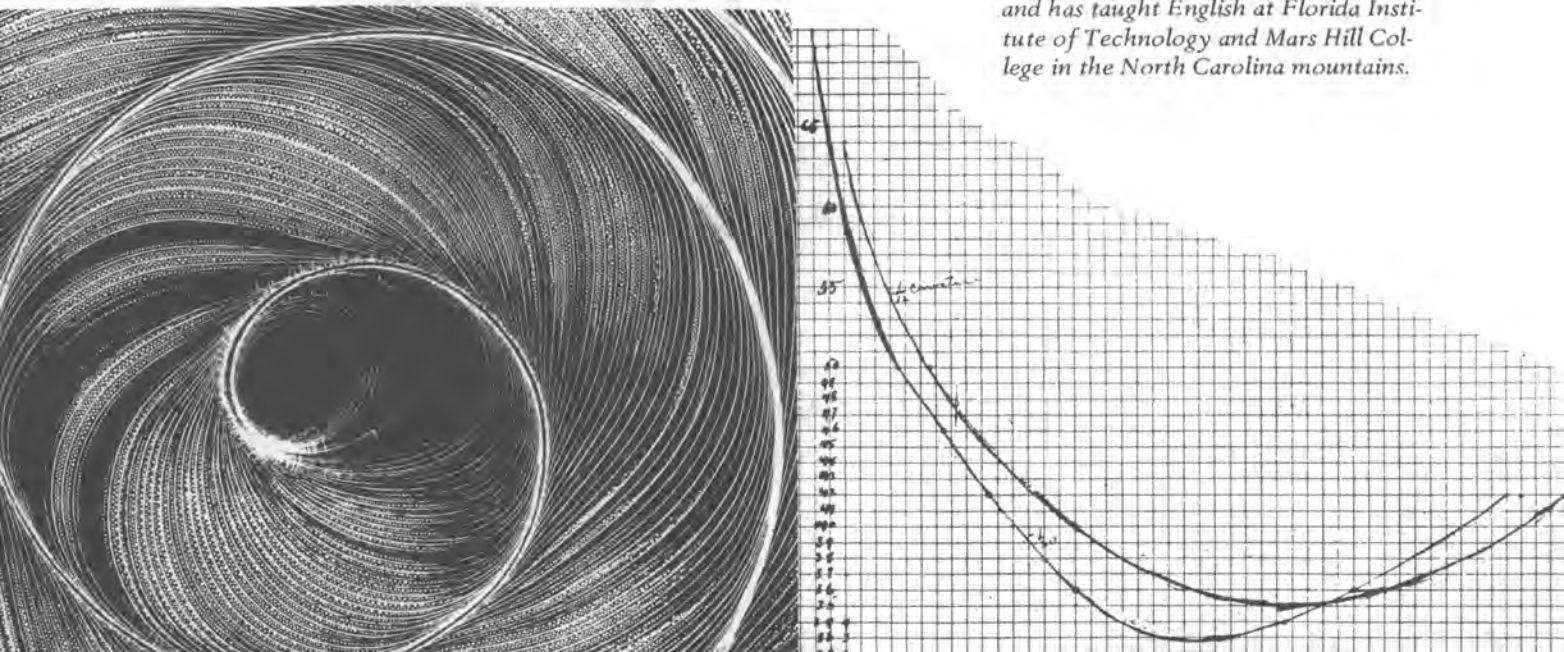
up, but could not. He felt paralyzed between sleep and consciousness, and he had the sudden panicky fear that it wasn't his father coming down the hall, that instead he was dying.

He strained and tried to cry out, but he was held mute by an incredible heaviness. Tears ran from the corners of his eyes. But it was his father, quietly checking the window before pausing beside the bed to look down at him with mild eyes. Will quit struggling and was instantly awake. He looked about the room in quiet desperation, remembered where he was, and realized, suddenly, that the storm had finally passed. Only occasional gusts pressed against the house and the rain was intermittent. Glancing at his watch he saw it was a quarter to five.

Dressed in an old flannel shirt and shorts, Will walked barefoot in the deep cut between the dunes. The sky was just growing light over the Gulf Stream where the waves jumped up jagged as shark's teeth. Will was elated. He looked at the altered landscape of eroded dunes, endless seaweed and jumbled driftwood with no feeling of desolation, but instead a sense of seeing the world transformed. Every shell, every glinting particle of sand had significance — shifting, eroding, replenishing and then deserting this fragile strand in an endless cycle in which nothing was actually destroyed. He saw it all as so many small gestures, ebbing and flowing with the wind and tide, day in and day out, always mutable, always affirmative.

Will thought about the night before. He remembered his promises. □

*Bill Atwill was born in Cocoa, Fla., and has taught English at Florida Institute of Technology and Mars Hill College in the North Carolina mountains.*







Part 5 / OVERWHELMING ODDS

1



2



## NEW DEAL PHOTOGRAPHY

*In 1936 Roy Stryker, Chief of the Historical Section of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), urged his staff of documentary photographers to keep an eye out for "The baseball diamond as an important part of our general landscape." They found ball fields (see pages 2 and 3) and much more. George Abbott White, a teacher and clinical psychologist, recently selected some of these striking but little known sports-related photographs from the FSA collection for Southern Exposure. Their appearance here and elsewhere in the issue is an eloquent statement of the variety and contrasts of Southern sporting life.*

3



1. Delacroix Island, St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana, January, 1941: Spanish muskrat trappers drinking wine and playing cache, a form of poker, in their camp in the marshes. *Marion Post Wolcott.*
  2. Sarasota, Florida, January, 1941: Guests at a trailer camp enjoying an evening of "bingo." *Marion Post Wolcott.*
  3. Belle Glade, Florida, February, 1941: Migratory workers playing checkers in front of a "juke joint" during a slack season. *Marion Post Wolcott.*
  4. Miami Beach, Florida, January, 1939. A group of men playing backgammon outside a wealthy beach house. *Marion Post Wolcott.*
  5. Greene County, Georgia, October, 1941: The White Plains bridge club. *Jack Delano.*
- 
- p. 2: Terrebonne, a Farm Security Administration project in Shriever, Louisiana, undated: A baseball game. *Marion Post Wolcott.*
- p. 41: Daytona Beach, Florida, February, 1943: Bethune-Cookman College physical education classes. *Gordon Parks.*
- p. 41: Irwinville Farms, a U.S. resettlement administration project, Georgia, May, 1938: A baseball team. *John Vachon.*
- p. 63: Atlanta, Georgia, July, 1942: Mrs. J. L. Tuggle, of 885 Gilbert Street, with a nine-pound bass she caught, using catawba worm bait on a no. 10 hook. This was her first experience as a fisherman. *O.S. Welch.*
- p. 89: Lauderdale County, Alabama, June, 1942: Tennessee Valley Authority, Julian H. Case and his wife pitching horseshoes on their farm. *Arthur Rothstein.*
- p. 89: Warrenton, Virginia, May, 1941: One of the judges at the horse races. *Marion Post Wolcott.*
- p. 114: Clarksdale, Mississippi, 1936: Plantation owner. *Dorothea Lange.*





# The Battle

*"I worked my butt off preparing for that race. A year later I didn't have no trailer, no truck, no car, no tools, no nothing. I was history. I was historied in 24 weeks."*

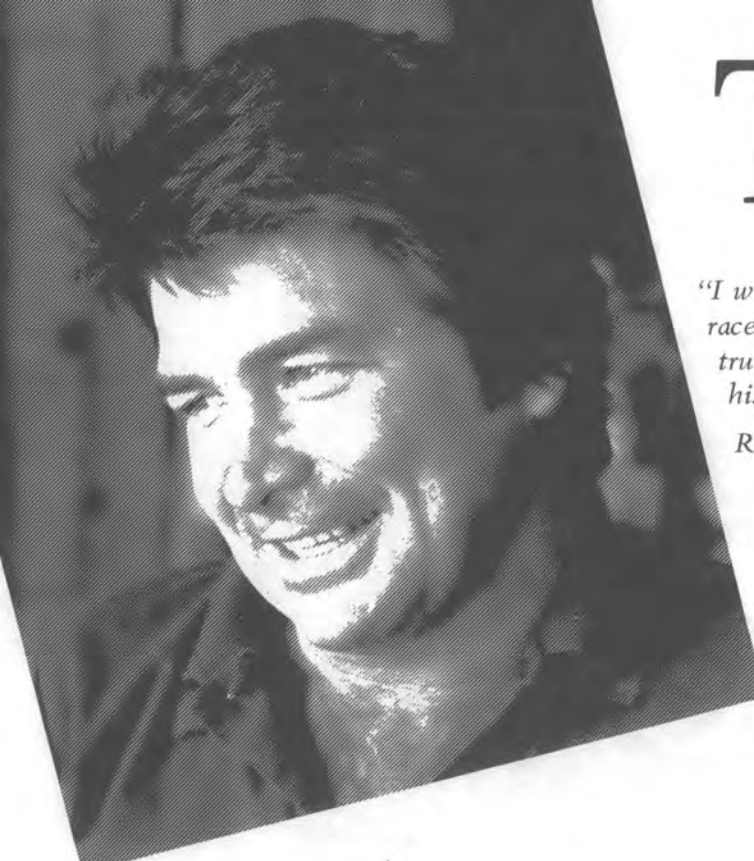
RAYMOND WILLIAMS

Williams does his racing now from memory and from behind the bar in his "Silver Bucket" oyster house in Orange County, North Carolina. It's been five years since he last raced regularly, and there are those who say Williams' fearlessness eventually got him into trouble.

It's not that he smashed through a guard rail on one of the Grand National tracks. Instead, his "mistake" was attempting to organize drivers on a minor oval near tiny Rougemont, North Carolina, in 1973. His racing revolt had a noble beginning and a glorious title — "The Independent 250 Stock Car Race." It was the first, last and only outlaw stock car race involving established Grand National independent drivers.

The 20 men who accepted the challenge were, by NASCAR's definition, losers. Ranging in age from 32 to 52, they had logged over 100 seasons of racing between them. Yet only three had ever won Grand National races, and only five could claim victories of any kind in thousands of miles of racing. Putting these strapped-for-money, winless, glory-starved drivers on the same tiny three-eighths-mile, high-banked track became the automobile equivalent of a shark frenzy. Beeeooooooooooooo!

The race signaled a reversal in Williams' view of NASCAR



As far as Raymond Williams was concerned, racing a NASCAR Grand National stock car was a magnificent and beautiful idea, and a fast way to get rich. Rushing down concrete-walled straightaways bordered by the blur of cheering thousands, taking off through the steep-banked black asphalt turns, rising quickly as if to meet the sun's glare halfway. Always turning left, left, on oval tracks from Daytona Beach, Florida, to Ontario, California. Boring holes through the air with a 4,000-pound thunder machine. Williams lived for those injections of life at 200 miles per hour. Beeeooooooooooooo!



# of the Independents

by Jonathan Ingram

racing. Once he had thought the races were contests proving who was the smartest, most courageous and hardest-working driver on the track. With a little luck, one determined man could win a kiss from the gal in victory lane and the bulk of the purse. The races were noisy, exciting, sensuous, demanding celebrations of the American dream. But after four years of Grand National racing as an independent driver, Williams had serious doubts and invited his fellow independents to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

The true drama of the "Independent 250" was not in the contest of men and their machines. The real challenge was in stepping out from under the sanction of NASCAR and its all-powerful founder and head, Bill France. "People thought the drivers would be afraid to run because of reprisals from NASCAR," recalls Williams. In light of NASCAR's history, the "Independent 250" seemed an outrageous folly.

Bill France is an imposing six-foot, five-inch man who speaks with the combination of ease and authority of men accustomed to power. He first realized the business potential of organizing stock car drivers when he took over Daytona Beach's stock car race in the late '30s. Although the city's booster clubs lost money in the inaugural events, France made the races along the shoreline profitable. That was the first step eventually leading to the National Association for Stock Car Automobile Racing, founded in a smoke-filled Daytona hotel lobby in 1948. Now, three decades and countless controversies later, NASCAR is a family-owned and -operated multimillion dollar business of untold (as in no one knows just how much the big guy is worth) riches.

France succeeded where others failed in harnessing one

of the South's most powerful natural resources — passionate men and their racing machines. He drove hard bargains with track owners, kept the irascible knot of previously disorganized drivers together and shrewdly perceived racing not as a sport but as entertainment. France constantly juggled the rules to keep his sanctioned races interesting and close. Caution flags flew mysteriously if a driver got too far out front.

According to France, organizing the fiercely competitive drivers of the rural South — men of an independent bent often ready and willing to cheat — was made easier by the fact that he had started out as a driver. "Because I was one of them, I think they tended to listen to me a little more than an outsider," he says. "I was able to talk to them and make some sense." His pitch was not unusual: stick with me boys, and we'll be rich. France's ability to back up his words, however, was uncommon.



**INDEPENDENT 250**  
**RACING**

Featuring: NASCAR'S FINEST

James HILTON  
Elmo LANGLEY  
Bill CHAMPION  
MANY OTHERS

Dave MARCIS  
Cecil GORDON  
Ray WILLIAMS

All Late Model Stock Cars  
No Restriction On Engine Size

Qualifying All Day Sat. Nov. 24th  
RACE TIME:  
1 P. M. - Sunday, Nov. 25th

**TRICO SPEEDWAY**  
Rougemont, N. C.

France's organization acted as a go-between for the various drivers and independent track owners. Drivers joined with France, who negotiated guaranteed purses and insurance with track owners, for mutual benefit. In addition to establishing a full schedule of races, NASCAR made sure that track owners and promoters would not get out the back door with the fans' and drivers' money before races were over. France's sanction included the right to make and enforce rules; he forced track owners to contribute to the championship point fund and to establish safety standards. All this was accomplished by France's dogged refusal to compromise. When things didn't go the way he liked, France wholeheartedly endorsed the Southern boys' code of conduct: don't get mad, get even.

It was not until the early '60s that a handful of home-grown stars, NASCAR and various track owners began to get rich. France's first-hand understanding of stock car racing and his unyielding ambition were reflected in the Daytona International Speedway. Built and completed by France in 1959, it was an immediate popular and financial success. The first high-banked superspeedway had been built at Darlington, South Carolina, by Harold Brasington; following France's Daytona success, high-banked superspeedways were built by other businessmen in Atlanta and Charlotte, North Carolina. The replacement of the early half-mile dirt tracks (known as "bull rings") by such speed showcases helped lift the sport to Major League status. The 500-mile races came into vogue along with higher ticket prices and outside investors named Ford and Chrysler.

NASCAR's second generation of drivers, coupled with the sometimes audacious influence of major factory sponsorships (including investments reported at over \$40 million a year), ushered in the roaring '60s. Leading the way was Richard Petty, son of the first Daytona 500 winner and three-time National Champion, Lee Petty. "The King" won 10 straight races in 1967, and his popularity did for stock car racing in the '60s what Babe Ruth's did for baseball in the '20s. The attention and money invested in the sport grew along with the legend of the handsome, humble, smiling good ol' star.

Death was a constant factor in this high-speed decade; but by the '70s the construction of cars' roll cages, driver seats and fuel tanks had been perfected, dramatically reducing the risk of death and serious injury in accidents. And speeds were eventually reduced, though only after a driver strike over safety conditions in 1969. These improvements meant that many of the stars of the late '60s — Petty, David Pearson, Cale Yarborough, Buddy Baker, Donnie and Bobby Allison — survived accidents to remain heroes in the '70s.

There are now more than 50 drivers in NASCAR's Grand National division of NASCAR, but few of them trust its decision-making process, particularly regarding rules. Rules are "the secret of France's power," says Humpy Wheeler, Charlotte Motor Speedway's promoter. "By controlling the garage area — i.e. the rules under which the cars run and how he enforces those rules — he can exert tremendous influence over who wins and who loses. You can't slow down Houston McTear in the 100-yard dash, but it's easy to do with Richard Petty in a 500-mile race by controlling the

specifications of his car."

The changes in player-team-owner relationships which swept through America's other major pro sports in the '60s did not occur in NASCAR racing: the relationship between the still-contentious drivers and Bill France, succeeded now by his son, has altered little in 31 years. Grand National racing remains as much politics as sport and entertainment, and bickering about the unfair applications of the rules is a mainstay. The drivers and their mechanics continue to cheat, and NASCAR continues to manipulate the rules.

Yet the source of France's power, ironically, is the drivers themselves. By guaranteeing the drivers' appearance at various independently owned tracks on appointed dates, France and his sanctioning body of NASCAR can exact fees from the track owners *plus* retain the right to administer the rules. The drivers' commitment to NASCAR is always on a race-to-race basis, but they show up regularly because no other stock car organization offers a driver the chance to make as much money.

France himself has always been able to stay ahead of even the biggest stars financially. And like many drivers, he knows how to keep his winnings in the family: NASCAR's treasurer is wife Anne; the secretary and vice-president is son Jim; and the eldest son, Bill, took over the day-to-day operations of the business in 1972. The France family's holdings go under the name of the International Speedway Corporation, a separate entity from NASCAR, yet closely aligned. The ISC owns Daytona, Talladega (the Alabama International Speedway) and 50 percent interest in tracks at North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, and Martinsville, Virginia. Nearly one-third of the 30-race NASCAR season is run on those tracks. The ISC has the radio rights for almost half of the Grand National races. In 1979, for the first time ever, the Daytona 500 was broadcast live on television for its entirety. The race earned the highest rating for each half-hour it was broadcast. Unlike other major sports, where players' organizations have cashed in on television money, any profit from television at NASCAR is kept by the individual track owner, except for a small percentage which must be added to the race's purse.

The family's corporation also owns 25 percent of the International Motor Sports Association, which is regarded as the successor to Sports Car Club of America as the most popular professional sanctioning body for U.S. road racing.

NASCAR also sanctions a West Coast circuit, plus Modified and Late Model Sportsman racing, a sort of minor league to the Grand National circuit. All in all, NASCAR has become one big, vertically integrated bonanza for the France family.

This was the institutional windmill that "charger" Raymond Williams took on in 1973. Driving his red, white and blue Ford Talladega emblazoned with white stars, Williams went by the nickname of Captain America. In light of France's free enterprise accomplishments, Williams' nickname seems most ironic.

Raymond Williams grew up in Durham, North Carolina, between two cigarette factories. His mother worked at the American Tobacco Company and his father at Liggett & Myers. While at Durham High School, Williams was once asked by a guest speaker what he wanted to be when he





*"I used to believe in the American Dream, but I guess I don't anymore."*  
BILL DENNIS

grew up. He stood up and shouted, "Any damn thing but poor!" His classmates cheered.

As he grew up, Williams learned to resent two things in life. One was authority. He once begged an assistant principal who had caught him gambling not to suspend him from school for a week. The principal was about to give in to Williams' demands when he blurted, "Give me two weeks, I'd like to go to Florida!"

Poverty was the other. "When I went into business I didn't have a nickel," he says. "I was working at Britton's Shoe Store in Raleigh and Wright's Machinery in Durham — I worked two full-time jobs for two years. When I first opened Farm Fresh (a drive-in convenience store he built) I worked from 7 a.m. until 12 p.m. for 27 months for seven days a week until I got it paid for." He then opened a very successful bar near the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. In 1970, at age 29, Williams took some time off and went racing.

He had seen his first race in Charlotte in the fall of 1969 and decided his next Grand National event would be viewed from behind a steering wheel. With the help of racing veteran Bill Seifert, Williams first appeared in the pits of Daytona International Speedway in February of 1970. "The fastest I'd ever been in a race car before Daytona was 60 or 65 miles per hour," he said. "At Daytona I was doing 160. I never told anybody. They just thought I had raced before."

From the beginning, Williams was bothersome to NASCAR. He bragged to reporters about the particular ease of his entrance — bad public relations in an era when some inexperienced drivers died in horrifying crashes at Daytona. Dauntless, hard-working yet easy-going, Williams stood out from the beginning. "I'll say one thing for

Raymond," says driver Dave Marcis, "he's not afraid to stick his neck out and try something different." Williams had grit, guts, talent, looks, desire and personality — all the elements to make him a star driver. In racing though, nothing can be taken for granted. Drivers with similar attributes had come and gone without notice.

Williams became an "independent driver" — that is, one of the pilots *not* backed by Ford or Chrysler as "factory drivers." In a sport so dependent on mechanical equipment, the factory-backed drivers were almost always the winners. Even when the factories dropped their overt support of racing in 1972 for public relations reasons, the upper echelon remained virtually unchanged. The winning factory drivers joined with racing teams (which owned the cars) that had commercial sponsors. At this point, the term "independent" was applied to those drivers who owned the cars they raced. The dividing line remained clear. The independents still had the same problem: not enough financial — hence mechanical — power.

Like most young independents, Williams' goal was to reach the top, to catch a fast ride. He was not alone. But racing is like most ventures under capitalism: it takes money to make money. Lacking the huge financial boosts from winning, Williams and the other independents counted on amateur crew members and hand-me-down parts from the leading teams to sustain themselves. The object was not necessarily to win but just to earn enough points from each of the season's Grand National races to finish with a high standing at season's end. (The point standings determine the national champion as well as the top 20 drivers; each top 20 driver is paid a bonus at season's end from the point fund, which is financed by track owners.)

Operating on limited budgets, independents often didn't run their cars "flat out" against the better teams, because a mechanical breakdown would mean a low finish in the points and a low payout from the day's purse. Independents often end up racing each other for the second echelon of positions and points.

Sometimes the independent ranks serve as the stepping stone to a faster, well-financed ride with an established racing team, but not often. "When all you can afford to do is stroke," said one independent, "the people who make the decisions don't pay much attention to you. If good rides become available and they pass you over a time or two, then you're stuck. That's where you'll stay, too. You stop dreaming after awhile."

Why did independents such as Elmo Langley, Ed Negre, Buddy Arrington and Coo Marlin continue to race? It was a livelihood that allowed them to be their own boss. "I ain't worked for nobody else since I was 10 years old," says Arrington. But no retirement plan existed: the drivers always re-invested most of their money in equipment and had to keep racing. "You can't use the car for a plow," comments James Hylton.

The physical demands of racing are different from other sports, allowing careers to last much longer. But the emotional involvement is similar: competitors don't know when to quit. "Racing is kind of an addictive thing," says Williams. "Once you get into it, it's hard to get out."

"There aren't too many retired drivers who are happy," notes Wheeler. "There's always the question of what do I do after this is over?"

In 1970, Williams' rookie year, James Hylton, driving as an independent, gave factory-sponsored Bobby Isaac a run for the Grand National championship. Hylton won one race and finished second in the points. But by 1972, the Grand National season had been shortened from approximately 50 races to 31, further reducing the independents' already slim chances of winning. The change was made in an effort to nationalize the Southern-dominated sport. Superspeedways in Michigan, Texas, California, Delaware and Pennsylvania began to figure heavily in the schedule, along with the traditional Southern tracks. In effect, the new schedule gave Grand National racing a Major League aura and encouraged commercial sponsorships by large corporations.

With more time between races, the leading teams began to perfect endurance. This meant that during a race there was less chance for the independents to advance, because fewer cars driven by the "hot dogs" would fall out. Almost all the races became either 500 laps or 500 miles, in place of the 250-lap races on the "local" tracks; this further complicated the independents' problems of mechanical endurance. Finally, many of the races on shorter tracks were dropped from the schedule. Offering smaller purses, they had been ignored by many of the top drivers: this had allowed independents to finish higher and pick up more points. Now even that chance was gone.

The independents, nevertheless, continued to be a

crucial factor in the success of Grand National racing. Races are just not as interesting, let alone spectacular, with only seven or eight fast cars on the track. "If you didn't have those slower cars out there," explains Petty, "then you couldn't tell them other cats were going so fast."

Ironically, the very independence of spirit these drivers shared discouraged group movements designed to improve their lot. They were "just like a pack of wolves running through the woods," says James Hylton. "If a hunter comes along and picks off one of the wolves, the rest of the wolves don't stop running after their prey."

It took serious political and economic upheaval in Grand National racing – beginning in late 1969 and lasting until 1976 – to bring about any group actions. The first such effort included all drivers; the independents' own movement came later.

The political problem involved the high speeds on France's new Alabama International Speedway at Talladega. There were multiple economic problems: rising gasoline prices, general inflation and the withdrawal of factories from overt support of racing.

The Professional Drivers' Association, secretly formed in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in the spring of 1969, became a political force when all the Grand National drivers save two refused to race at the first event on France's 2.66-mile behemoth of blazing speed, Talladega. They refused to race for safety reasons: in tests, tires had repeatedly torn apart because of the track's capability for such high speeds.

Although the drivers maintained their solidarity for that one race at Talladega, the PDA eventually folded. Richard Petty and Bobby Allison, among others, had formed the leadership of the Association. They had made substantial donations and expressed interest in a re-alignment of purses to help out the lower finishers. But ranks were constantly broken by those same low finishers. According to a former officer of the PDA, France was able to buy out the allegiance of some "needy" independent drivers, dividing the independents from the "hot dogs," disrupting the organization's attempt to build purses, improve safety and provide a retirement plan.

France prevented a repeat of the Talladega walkout by requiring a carburetor restrictor plate to slow speeds there. In 1971, he decided to invoke a carburetor restrictor plate in *all* races. (Speeds were approaching 200 m.p.h. on the large superspeedways.) Because different size plates were required for different engines in the various makes of cars, it became difficult, if not impossible, to administer the rule fairly.

In late 1973, France ended the plate controversy (and anticipated the gas shortage) with a rule change limiting engine sizes to 350 cubic inches of displacement. This created a particular hardship on the financially strapped independents, since it forced them to buy new and expensive engines before the 1974 season. Besides that, the independents faced the end of 1973 knowing they



*"The battle of the independents is going down the drain. We work on such a low budget, not one of us could afford to get out of line now."*

JAMES HYLTON

would have to travel all over the country to race the next season, just as inflation was getting worse and gas prices were soaring.

Meanwhile, the auto factories had pulled out of overt support for racing in 1971. "They gave all their mechanical pieces to the leading teams," recalls Charlotte's Wheeler. "There was a great financial crisis from '72 through '76. Even the top teams had trouble keeping their heads above water. They didn't start getting the big sponsors until around 1976. The afterbirth of the strike at Talladega and the factory pullout sent all of Grand National racing into serious mental depression."

The withdrawal of factory money, the example of the PDA's group action, and France's rule-juggling and schedule-changing all helped create an atmosphere in which the independents decided to join together without the blessing of NASCAR. Leading the way was Williams, whose belief in group action had been spurred by the ill-fated PDA.

The focus of Williams' urge to win had gradually shifted from beating the competition on the track to beating those organizers who appeared responsible for the ongoing disadvantages faced by independents.

"I joined the PDA just as soon as I started racing," says Williams. "I went to the first meeting in '70 before I had ever been in a race. I thought it was the thing to do. I looked up to these guys all my life. If they had said, 'Let's go rob a bank,' I'd have been right there with em."

"I had been brainwashed from the first day. We were going to form a union and get something done. I thought after a while that I was going to be the savior. I told the press I felt like Don Quixote, but don't quote me on that because I didn't think too many people in racing knew who he was.

"I was crying for all those people," Williams remembers. "I can't think of anybody in the world who works harder for more hours and makes less money than racers."

The idea of having an "Independent 250" race was first aired publicly in a meeting at a beer hall and pool room in Darlington just before the 1973 Southern 500. "We were talking about money," says Williams. "I said what we ought to do is go get our cars and go up the road and rent ourselves a track and run the same day as the Southern 500. In my mind, it was going to be a union-type deal. We were stretched for money."

That same day at the track NASCAR officials told Williams to get his car out of line before qualifying, adding that NASCAR was going to revoke his license. "We walked on down the track and I told them that I would have to have a lawyer and that I would sue. Ten minutes later they came back and said, 'Forget it. Go ahead and qualify.'"

It was no surprise to Williams that NASCAR officials had found out about the meeting of the independents so quickly. "Bill France knew about everything that was happening," he comments. "Bill France owns more than a few race cars, or he has super mortgages on them. The independents driving in those cars told him what was going on."

Williams' pitch to his fellow drivers was the same one France had made in the formation of NASCAR. "I told the other drivers we would make all kinds of money and I really thought we would. It was designed not to hurt

NASCAR — it was just for us."

But NASCAR didn't see it that way. An insider later said France ranked the "Independent 250" with the Talladega uprising and Curtis Turner's attempt to start his own racing circuit in the early '60s. At a time when NASCAR was trying to woo back corporate sponsorships, an attempt by the independents to start their own circuit posed a direct threat to France's control of racing in the South. In essence, it was a palace revolt. And behind it the monarch sensed the prospect of a competing circuit which would link together the independents and the Late Model Sportsman stars who ran on the short tracks Friday and Saturday nights. Bobby Allison predicted, "Raymond Williams will never finish another Grand National race."

There was little NASCAR could do, however, between October 21, when Williams got commitments from the other drivers at the last Grand National race of the season at Rockingham, and the "Independent 250" on November 25. To oppose the race publicly would only increase the attendance, and crowd size was a critical factor to all involved.

"I worked my butt off preparing for that race," says Williams. "I worked day and night for weeks. My phone bill was horrendous." He rented Trico Speedway at Rougemont, North Carolina, for the event. He arranged for insurance, hauled racing fuel in from Rockingham by the barrel, secured a tire representative and initiated publicity with a press luncheon in nearby Durham. He drove all over the North Carolina and Virginia Piedmont nailing up posters.

The rules were simple: qualify Saturday, race Sunday; Grand National cars and independent drivers only; "run what ya bring." This meant no carburetor restrictor plates would be used. There were hardly any restrictions at all, for that matter. NASCAR had a stick, for example, to measure the distance of a car's chassis from the ground. (It's an aerodynamic advantage to have a low-slung car and thus it's regulated by rules.) The drivers asked Williams what kind of stick he was going to use. He pointed to a bump on pit road and said, "If you can drive over that, you can race."

A festive atmosphere prevailed the night before race, as the drivers gathered at Williams' bar 20 miles down the road in Chapel Hill. "Everybody got drunk on beer," said Williams. "It was a fun thing, it really was." The drivers decided that the purse — to come directly from gate receipts after Williams' expenses were taken out — would be split on a percentage basis.

The other topics of conversation that night were the weather and what kind of turnout to expect. A good crowd could mean another race that same winter. Jabe Thomas, a 43-year-old veteran of eight Grand National seasons, summed up the drivers' attitude: "I feel like I'm committed to run flat out and I believe everybody else feels the same way. And if that's the case, it will be the first time in years we've done that."

They had hoped for a crowd of 5,000 to 6,000, but at most 2,000 people showed up on a cool, slate-grey day. Veteran NASCAR track announcer Bill Melton, always a friend of the independents, stood in the ramshackle scoring



stand overlooking the three-eighths-mile paved bowl, surrounded by a crooked and bent steel guard rail with a front straight lined by a wall of oak boards. He called out the names of 20 drivers who had taken the green flag nearly 4,000 times on the Grand National circuit: Dave Marcis, James Hylton, Cecil Gordon, Raymond Williams, Bill Champion, Henley Grey, Richard Brown, Elmo Langley, Ed Negre, Jabe Thomas, J.D. McDuffie, Bill Seifert, Walter Ballard, Richard Childress, Dean Dalton, Wendell Scott, Earl Brooks, Bill Hollar, Charlie Roberts and Bill Dennis.

Only Langley, Hylton and Scott had ever won a Grand National race; when the drivers started their engines and rumbled around the paved banks in their brightly painted cars before the start, few of them were thinking about the size of the crowd. "Everybody there felt like they could win; that about made the race. You could tell everybody was running to win," says Williams. "It wasn't like a NASCAR race."

The green flag dropped promptly at 1 p.m.

Beeeeoooooooooooooooooooo!

Raleigh *News and Observer* writer Gerald Martin described the race like this: "What the crowd saw was the old-timers, Langley and Champion, careening side by side, lap after lap, around the high-banked, three-eighths-mile asphalt oval, personal pride dictating that neither give an inch.

"There was Ed Negre, the lumberjack from Kelso, Washington, barreling off the fourth turn, with his foot in the carburetor, his Dodge smoking and everybody wondering when it would come unglued.

"I don't know what the crowd thought," Negre said, "but from where I was sitting, it was a great show. I had the best seat in the house at 90 m.p.h."

"Marcis and Bill Dennis started the race with a classic duel. Dennis riding Marcis' bumper lap after lap, looking for a gap to squeeze through. He never found it. The engine in his Mercury broke while he challenged.

"Then came Elmo, who counts two wins among almost 500 races he has entered since 1956. He slid through the field like an eel on a binge, edged alongside Marcis and after a three-lap duel went to the front. . . ."

The eventual winner was a young man from Horse Shoe, North Carolina — 32-year-old Cecil Gordon, who pulled away from Marcis in his Chevrolet at the finish. In the makeshift winner's cricle, a happy and relieved Gordon clutched a trophy to his chest and declared, "The money doesn't concern me. I won a race today."

It was Gordon's first and last "Grand National" victory; he won \$500. Despite the small purse and some arguments about how the race had been scored, the drivers all felt something had been achieved. "We done it and there ain't been a better race all year," remarked Thomas.

Unfortunately, the "Independent 250" had failed where it could least afford to — at the gate. "It was a good race run at a bad time of the year," says Marcis. "It looked like it was going to rain, too. There was not a lot of publicity and the fans thought the race wouldn't be that good because the big drivers were not there."

Others blamed the gas shortage and the track's poor location. "If we had had the race at Hickory (North Carolina), Southside (a track near Richmond) or South Boston

(Virginia) we would have knocked them dead," says Williams. "But that's stuff you look back on and say if. . . I still think it was a success. It gave those guys who always run in the back a feeling of what it's like to race to win."

For some drivers — Scott, Brooks, Thomas, Champion, Dennis and Seifert — the "Independent 250" was a last hurrah. Dennis, a former Grand National rookie of the year who won three straight Permatex 300s, now sells used cars in Richmond, Virginia, and races a Late Model Sportsman on weekends. "I used to believe in the American Dream," he says, "but I guess I don't anymore." Gordon, Hylton, Langley, Negre, McDuffie and Childress continued as Grand National independents. Marcis joined the esteemed team of Harry Hyde in 1975 and eventually won four races. Williams himself never returned to stock car racing full-time.

In the spring of 1974, determined to raise enough money to stage a second "Independent 250," Williams leased Trico Speedway to promote Late Model Sportsman races. He financed the effort by selling his racing equipment.

"When I had the first Grand National race," he says, "I had a truck, a trailer, two cars and no engines (because of the rule change). A year later I didn't have no trailer, no truck, no car, no tools, no nothing. I was history. I was historied in 24 weeks."

Location was once again a problem. Like the promoters at Trico Speedway who had preceded him, Williams could not attract enough big-name Late Model circuit stars to his track, and local drivers did not draw enough people to make money. (The Grand National independents owned no Late Model cars and thus could not help out.)

One long-time insider of racing in the Piedmont claims NASCAR officials gave the neighboring tracks an assist in their competition with Williams by arranging for appearance money. But Mike Poston, a track steward for Southside Speedway for 21 years, says such a move by NASCAR was unlikely. "NASCAR don't give ya nothing," he observes. "They're not in the business of giving anything away."

Williams' plans for staging a second "Independent 250" faded after he had sat out the Grand National season and lost all his equipment. Instead, he became concerned with returning to NASCAR racing. He began to regret having ever staged the first independent race. "You can't fight City Hall," he says, "and, in racing, NASCAR is City Hall. I should have absolutely kept my mouth shut."

This reversal by Williams illustrates how independents' convictions often become subordinate to the desire to continue racing. "I should have gone to Bill France and seen if I could have helped him and if he could have helped me," he says now. But it was too late for Williams to get on France's good side. As Bobby Allison had prophesied, Williams would never finish another Grand National race.

The last race Williams promoted at Trico was cancelled by a September thunderstorm. "I was holding a chain, getting ready to close the gate," he relates, "and lightning hit that chain link fence and knocked the living *shit* out of me." Lying on his back in the orange mud of Trico, Williams decided to quit race promotion. It was just two months before the first anniversary of the "Independent 250." When Dave Marcis heard this story, he laughed and said, "That was Bill France getting him right there."

The most effective independent group action came after Williams left the Grand National scene. Again, the dire need for money and an outspoken leader — this time James Hylton — brought the independents together. In the spring of 1976 an independent strike was said to be in the offing. Hylton was able to convince Bill France, Jr., however, that drivers needed more money than was available in the purses, and France agreed to help them. “Plan C” was formulated, making more money available through special purse bonuses and guaranteed appearance money for all non-winning top 20 drivers.

Still, the big race winners can earn almost \$100,000 in appearance money in one season, while Plan C racers make only \$15,000. When the negotiations started, Hylton was asking for \$45,000 in appearance money per year, \$1,500 a race, or “half of what the big guys were getting.” In effect, Plan C allowed the independents to keep up with inflation, but did little to alter their relative status in racing.

Plan C is regarded by many track owners as welfare, although they don’t consider the “hot dog” drivers’ larger bonuses as giveaways. The philosophy of a man making his own way, always at the heart of Grand National racing, remains intact. In the beginning, racing was seen as a testing ground for the product of a man’s own work. It symbolized pride, industry, determination, courage, intelligence and, above all, independence. To some, it represented a last frontier for the individual.

In the mind of Bill France, Sr., it still does. Remembering his own part as a driver, France says, “I enjoyed seeing people come to the races with more money and better equipment than I had. I enjoyed beating people like that.” Some 30 years later, that is easier said than done. The cost difference in 1979 between an independent’s equipment and that of a top driver is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. The difference in crew is four or five full-time members. Independents may own two cars; most top teams have four or five at their disposal. Richard Petty’s crew works in a garage big enough to be a tobacco warehouse; less than 50 miles away J. D. McDuffie works in a two-car shed of corrugated tin held up with two-by-fours. McDuffie works there from morning until night, except Sundays. “I’m glad when we get to the racetrack because I can’t

work on the car at night,” he says. “I can go back to the motel and get some rest.”

No doubt, the great divide was the factories’ involvement in the early ’60s. At that time, the formula for success in Grand National stock car racing became the combination of a corporate sponsor, a factory team and a driver. Three times since then — with the PDA, the “Independent 250” and the threatened strike in 1976 — the independents have been part of a group action to close the money gap between themselves and top races. Each time they have failed to improve their chances of winning.

“The battle of the independents is going down the drain,” said Hylton in a recent interview. “Now there are several new teams backed by wealthy individuals who are just in racing for fun. They show up with a boatload of money, and each new car that shows up with money behind it just pushes us one more farther back.

“We work on such a low budget, not one of us could afford to get out of line now. I would say that if one of us started talking to France about how things were, he’d break that driver’s back before he could even step out of line. If you had a meeting, only seven drivers would show up, and they’d be too scared to do anything anyway.”

“You’ll never get all the drivers together,” agrees Childress. “It’s just not the nature of the guys.”

But it’s not the nature of the independents to quit, either. Jabe Thomas was son Ronnie’s crew chief as the second-generation independent won the 1978 Grand National rookie of the year title. Despite the fact that independents have won only two races since 1972, Negre’s son Norman, Marlin’s son Sterlin and Arrington’s son Joey will soon be driving the family cars, backed by small commercial sponsorships. When they get on the Grand National tracks, they’ll be racing against Richard Petty’s son Kyle and the young stars who recently jumped from the Late Model Sportsman circuit to some of those new rides backed by wealthy individuals. A new generation will be participating in this symbolic, and ironic, re-enactment of the American Dream every racing Sunday, even though the odds will remain about the same.

“I’m always dreaming of being a winner,” says Childress. “That may be living in a dream world, but that’s what most of the guys are doing. If you work hard enough, for long enough, you’ll eventually win one.” □

*Jonathan Ingram is a free-lance writer living in Durham, North Carolina. All the photographs are by Jay Anderson.*



# Stella McEwin, Baseball Stitcher

Baseball buffs don't keep up with such statistical matters as balls per hour or stitches per minute, but Mrs. Stella McEwin does. To earn \$2.30 an hour, she must sew the horsehide covers on at least six baseballs or seven softballs. The more she sews, the more she's paid.

She's been sewing up baseballs for the Worth Manufacturing Company of Tullahoma, Tennessee, for 32 years. They are now the nation's largest producer of baseballs, softballs, bats, base bags and leather for other sporting goods. The company started out years ago making horse collars. A machine to stitch the balls has eluded the firm's inventiveness.

So every ball is hand-sewn, and Mrs. McEwin is one of their premier sewers, doing many of the company's special orders. When she's finished with a ball, the hide is taut, the stitches even and the seam all but invisible beneath the cross-hatched pattern. She frets when a ball doesn't look or feel just right.

Most of the company's balls are sewn on a piece-work basis in private homes around Tullahoma. The sewers pick up in canvas bags containing 10 dozen balls at the factory, then return the finished product later. Mrs. McEwin, however, sews in the factory.

"I was raised on a farm outside Lynchburg," she said recently. "My aunt was living up here and I came up looking for a job. I was raised on a farm. My aunt called Mr. Parrish — Chuck Parrish. He hired me and sent me to learn how to sew with Mrs. Mollie Lynch. She was getting up in years."

The thread-wound balls and white covers arrive at Mrs. McEwin's bench in bags or piles. She dampens the backs of two pre-cut hides with water, then snaps and pulls the leather between her hands to soften it. She lets the hides sit a minute while she sets the ball in a clamp between her legs and cuts and waxes the thread. Two needles are used in the process.

Next she quickly daubs rubber cement on the backs of the hides and carefully places them on the clamped sphere. Staples hold the hides in place as she stitches, first running each thread through the ball's windings, then into pre-punched holes in the hide.

Each hide has 92 holes, and the needles are cross- or double-stitched until all 184 holes are pulled together. Then the needles are carefully threaded back through the ball's windings at the seams and tied off.

"I never was a fast sewer," Mrs. McEwin declared, having finished the ball in less than three minutes.

"Back when I started, you only sewed four an hour. I can't remember how much we were paid. I think it was 30 cents. But the NRA, or some government law, came in after I started working and that raised our wages.

"When the government would raise the minimum wages, they would increase the number of balls we had to sew up to where we are now. They gave us tests, you know. They used the tests to average out how many balls we had to sew.

"The most I ever sewed was 66 softballs in eight hours. That was some years ago."

She starts work every morning at 6:30 a.m. The shift ends at 3 p.m. "Then I go home and start another shift," she said with a soft laugh. Only one of her five children is at home now, but her husband is totally disabled with a back injury.

"I like to sew balls. I'd rather do this than anything else in the plant. I've heard ladies say they would sit down and crochet to relax their nerves. That's the way I am sewing balls. I relax my nerves. But I just never could make much money at it.

"I work with em until I get each one the best I can. It gets pretty tiresome, especially when you stay with it a steady eight hours."

Back in 1945 when she got the job, there were about 500 persons around Tullahoma stitching balls in their homes. Today the number is fewer than 100. The firm now has plants in Haiti, Nicaragua and Jamaica.

In those days, every ball had a leather cover. Today many are plastic. "The leather and everything is different today," she explained. Back when baseball first became popular, horses were a central part of American life, city and country. Tanneries still use horse "butts" to make cordovan shoes, but most of the hides come from overseas. Not as many horses end up in the tannery upon death nowadays.

Does she ever wonder if a ball which leaves the plant to become a part of baseball lore is one she has stitched? "No, not really. I've never gotten interested. I'm not much of a ball fan. I should be, I guess, but I'm not. I don't have the time, what with working and a family." □

*Frank Adams interviewed Mrs. McEwin while traveling through the South for the Institute for Southern Studies' syndicated column, Facing South.*



by Frank Adams



# MY LIFE WITH SPORTS



boy dances in the feverish shade under the trees. He glistens as he turns and turns and turns. Beethoven blares from the house. The boy wears baggy shorts with an elastic waistband. It's 1955. He's about to take a long, painful journey from which he's still returning.

Home movie: blue-shadowed children play on glaring sand. Susan frolics with seaweed on her head, Becky smiles uneasy smile of youngest, Nancy looks up from sand castle, scowls, speaks, Chris jumps around in surf, I hold up a shell. Angel wing, scallop, conch, baby's ear, coral, cockle.

I wandered many hours on Long Beach those summers, looking, looking. Bags full of shells. In the dark, heat lightning flashed and waves rumbled and hissed. "Shrimp boats are a-comin' their sails are in sight, shrimp boats are a-comin' there's dancin' tonight," I sang bravely as I walked at night on the squeaking sand. Riding waves once, suddenly there was nothing under my feet. Thrashing, screaming, going under. My brother pulled me in.

In Greensboro in the evening suffused with honeysuckle and clematis we played croquet. When it got too dark to see the balls we tossed sticks high as we could and watched bats streak across the dim sky. When it got too dark for that we watched the lightning bugs blink and slowly rise. I lived comfortably in my body then.

Daddy would take us bowling. In the event that I knocked over any pins, a colored man appeared from nowhere and set them back up.

In the woods – the climbing tree, the owl tree, the hide-out under the eleagnus below the ballfield, the big hole in the base of a tulip poplar, full of black water that wiggled. Forever, on autumn afternoons, I journeyed from island to island in that sea of sibilant leaves. Now I reach up easily to touch the dogwood branches where I used to climb, fearless and dizzy, and sit until called for supper.

Before play became sports, before my friends and I graduated to the sexual strife of our adolescent elders, there was sling-the-statue and mother-may-I in the backyard, red-light and roller-bat. I painted and drew and sculpted exuberantly. We went fishing out at Cousin Lizzie's. Richard Taliaferro and I roller-skated to school, to the great chagrin of Mrs. Sears, policelady. "Stop the cars!" we'd holler, careening down Dellwood and past her station at Cornwallis, unable to brake. I dawdled in the locker room at Lindley Park Pool to watch the naked bodies of the older boys and the men. Eventually, they closed the pool to keep the Negroes out.

Then, one summer, I went to Y camp. I thought I'd make friends and do arts and crafts and play in the lake. Instead, I struggled to be promoted from Guppy to Minnow, or Minnow to Guppy, and wasn't. I became afraid of the water. On carnival day, in a sweltering tent, a handsome counselor brandished a jockstrap, which was the punch line

to a joke I didn't understand. By the campfire one night, the boy who was It never guessed right and ended stripped of all but the paper bag over his head. Then in the dwindling light, we all sang The Old Rugged Cross. In the Chapel in the Woods, we learned about the Lake of Fire and the Seven Trumpets. On Parents' Day I fled to the toilet labeled "His'n" and wept.

A snapshot: I wear a somber dress that hangs limply around my ankles. Navy blue, at best, with tiny dots. Probably from Miss Effie, grandmother, Methodist preacher's wife. Heavy black heels, small black hat with net, menacing pocketbook, serious face. I am seven or eight.

The old footlocker filled with mildewed clothing from female relatives was a magic place, just as the backyard ballfield was for my brother. I chugged around in high heels as easily as sneakers. Pants and shirts, and a suit on Sunday, were uniforms. Dress-ups were expression and amplification. But then on the playground at school someone told me I ran like a girl. Douglas Banner peed in the dress-up box, and one afternoon when I saw some friends coming up the driveway, I ran to my room, slammed the door, and tore off my costume.

Home movie, 1956: On the terrace behind the house, boys eat hotdogs. My birthday. Andy Steele, Jimmy Morris, Ed Moore, Wesley Graves, others. They would rather play baseball than run relay races, but it's my party and the testing is only about to begin. Somebody gives me a baseball bat.

The summer of '58, I painted my violin case silver and went to the String Institute over at the Women's College. Ed, Wesley, Jimmy and Andy went off to sports camp at the coast. I had a vague image of Episcopalians in sailboats. That was the year I threw up on home plate and walked home from school crying.

Saturday morning recently, at the farmer's market in the dreary armory. A young man in white work pants has bought an extravagant armful of flowers. I smile. He smiles back. May Day mornings in the Irving Park Elementary School Auditorium. Peonies, iris, sweet Williams, pansies, and roses in Mason jars and tin cans spread across the waxed wood floor. Garden club ladies arranged bouquets for the Sixth Grade girls. I waited in the cool, fragrant half-light, in case they might need some help. They never did.

The young man at the farmers' market and I each searched for the very spot in the outfield where balls would never land and where you wouldn't be noticed when the teams changed. "Throw it! Throw it!" I'd run as fast as I could with the ball – "Throw it!" – and then heave it (Oh lord do I look right?) and it would wobble in toward the diamond. I no longer danced under the trees.

My first role with the Recreation Department's children's theatre was Tweedledum, followed by many princes and kings, since the other boys were even sissier than I. On a float in the Christmas parade, I had to kiss Brenda Kay Huffines' hand all the way down Greene Street to the old train station, and back up Elm. Schoolmates jeered.

In 1959, Junior High hit. I wonder sometimes what would have happened if I had loosened my grip. Then, annihilation seemed the only alternative to wrestling against a brutal, faceless future. What if my fears had floored me?

by Allan Troxler

As it was, I was 20 years breaking the hold, and only then with the help of another man's strong and gentle arm.

I made A's in Social Studies because I couldn't throw the football to where Mr. Thompson started measuring from in the Phys. Ed. proficiency test. I had to win the science fair or Mr. Griffin would smirk at my unmanly lapses. Every time I missed a free throw I'd shake my head in exasperation or, in later years, shrug comically. Both responses were faked, and tore into my muscle and bone. I wanted no part of their sports, neither beating nor getting beat. Seemingly, I withstood the stomach aches, the bad dreams, the anxiety waiting my turn at bat. But my capacity to feel was going. The neurons wore out, and I went numb. In English class, Mrs. Crisp assigned an essay on a Familiar Emotion; she was startled by mine on Hate.

I was elected school president, won awards for service, and prizes for musical, artistic and theatrical accomplishments, and appeared quite popular. My first week in Senior High, I waited and waited for an invitation to join the Junior Civitans or the Key Club, but of course it never came and I was officially out of the running. They knew I was not going to fulfill the destiny of my class and sex. I would never again eat hotdogs with Wesley, Andy, Jimmy or Ed, who now wore service club jackets, played football, basketball, or at least tennis, and dated.

In North Carolina, sports attain the numinous, and religion gets right down there on the gridiron and the court. Preachers lard their sermons with basketball jokes, and when they want to deliver a real punch, refer to "muscular Christianity." "Christian athletes" huddle in prayer before football games, and with bull-necks bulging at collars and ties, they speak to youth groups. I sat through pep rallies with a few stone-faced friends, and went to none of the games. I wore neither a Duke nor a Carolina button. One Sunday school teacher, a Carolina man, threw me out of his class for talking about conscientious objection.

Music and theatre provided refuge for the life-force that had been trampled by physical education. Breathing deep, I swung through Beethoven quartets and Brahms symphonies. I went off to Terry Sanford's Governor's School the summer of my sophomore year where I, too, was cruel to my ballet-dancing roommate (forgive me, David, brother). My second summer, I lay in bed one night and listened in horror as my roommate Clyde, a baseball star from Shelby, debated in the hall with his friends whether I was queer or not. "Yeah. Well, he's got a girlfriend." Five years later, she would be the first person I told. But music, too, could be made competitive. I was chosen concertmaster of the All-State Orchestra, which meant I'd have to play a solo. I was terrified. Couldn't I be second chair instead? ("Throw it! Throw it!") In the concert my bow wobbled helpless and alone. I decided against music as a career.

Michael Mandrano was from somewhere else. He had long fingernails as well, a peroxidized streak, and he *moved* when he walked. In drama class, he talked in a high, exaggerated voice about faraway places from which he'd come, and to which he aimed to go. We snickered and led him on. When he entered the auditorium with his homeroom for assembly programs, the general racket exploded into catcalls and whistles. One day, toward the end of my senior year, the catcalls seemed to be for me. I got out just in time.

I escaped to a Quaker college in Pennsylvania. Their

pacifism allowed for mandatory football and wrestling. To avoid combat, I tried managing the lacrosse team, but got confused keeping score and watching the clock and was fired. I flunked my swimming test, and for the rest of the term stood shivering with the other failures by the pool while Coach barked at us. There was nothing sensual about our quaking, bluish bodies. My libido found no quarter (Eros was an unwelcome guest in those puritanic halls), unfinished papers backed up, and I got kicked out. Last fall, 10 years later, a college classmate lay in my arms and cried about those years.

Into the maw of the draft. I feared the military as I had feared Phys. Ed. But unlike my school years, when there was no outlet for my corrosive anger, now there was the anti-war movement. Every Wednesday I stood with the other protesters outside the Federal Building in Greensboro. Once, a car loaded with young men about my age swerved around the corner, and shouts of "Hippycommiefaggot!" clawed at our silence. When the clock on the Jefferson Standard Building finally blinked from "98°" to "1:00," Anne Deagon turned to me and said, "You're the nicest 'hippycommiefaggot' I know." I tried to laugh.

The draft board classified me 1-O; I went off to Boston for two years' alternative service. No longer would I have to dread the orders to run, throw, fight or kill. When my C.O. job was over, the first thing to do was come out. Allan and I lay in bed after lovemaking and laughed for joy.

The literature of sports overlooks one important character. The sissie. The traditional foil for masculine bravado, the one who saves all the others from being chosen last. How powerless boys would be without the accusation, "Faggot!" And coaches and drill sergeants. We are the taboo that enforces order, the outside that shapes inside. Outsiders. One night in the early spring a couple of years ago, Carl and I found ourselves on Franklin Street, the main drag in Chapel Hill, the night Carolina was playing the national championship game. Car horns and sharp voices tore the buzzing air. Word was that victory would see store windows smashed and the streets awash with Carolina blue paint. That we were not visibly queer was slight comfort, and we hurried to get away.

The threat of getting beat up lay just beyond the bruising jostle of football in Junior High. There seemed to be nowhere between combat and weakness. Recently, I went to a conference in Norfolk for gay men and lesbians from across the South. Toward the end of a workshop on Play for Men, a friend said he needed to explore further. He pushed his fists together and frowned. So, locked together in threes first, and then as nine, we writhed on the floor — nine men, black and white, grappling to wrest our bodies and spirits from exile. Afterwards, we lay in a sweaty tangle, still and breathing. And then we all hugged each other.

I can dance again now, easy and graceful and strong. Sometimes it's folk-dancing with friends, leaving behind the men's and women's parts, dancing wherever we choose. And then sometimes I dance alone.

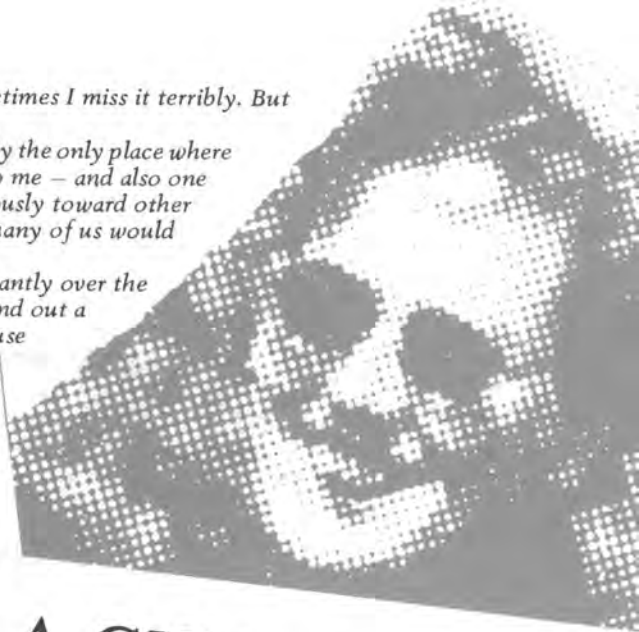
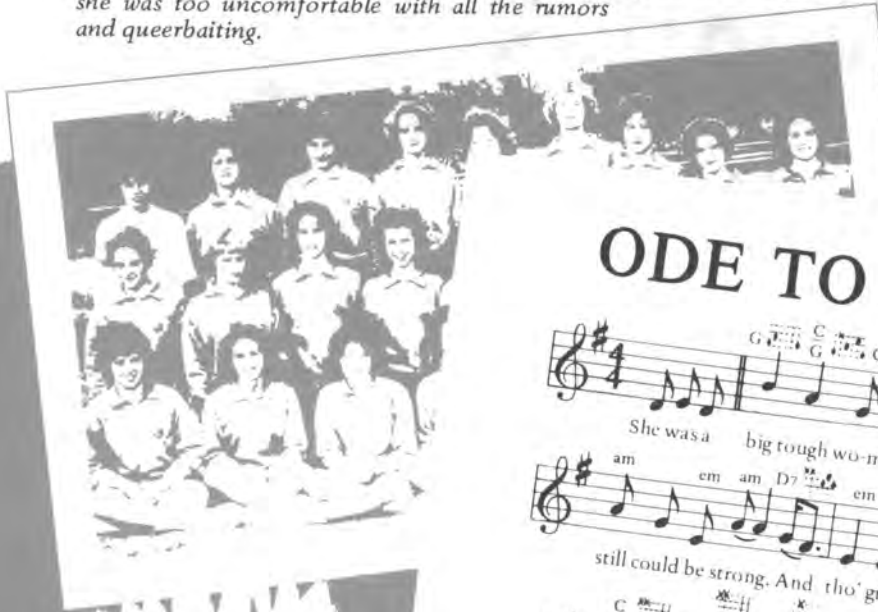
Out in the barn, shafts of sun slant down from the high windows. A man sways in the quiet light. He turns and turns and turns. He opens his eyes and takes a step. I am almost home. □

*Allan Troxler is a staff member of the Institute for Southern Studies.*

The South sits heavy in my soul. So full of love, nostalgia and pain. Sometimes I miss it terribly. But I don't know if I'll ever be able to return to live.

I think of my years as a high school/college jock – gym class was practically the only place where I was completely free to move physically in ways that were most natural to me – and also one of the only places where it was OK to express physical affection spontaneously toward other women. I think wistfully of some of the great athletes I knew then. How many of us would be professionals now if that had been an option?

Then of course there was the other side – the suspicion that hung constantly over the heads of my gym teachers. Oh, they had to be so careful all the time. I found out a few years ago that one of my favorites finally quit her gym-teaching job because she was too uncomfortable with all the rumors and queerbaiting.



# ODE TO A GYM TEACHER

She was a big tough wo-man, the first to come a-long that showed me be-ing fe-male meant you still could be strong. And tho' grad-u-a-tion meant that we had to part, she'll al-ways be a play-er on the ball-field of my heart!

(ummm) I wrote her name on my note pad and inked it on my dress And I etched it on my lock-er and I carved it on my desk And I paint-ed big red hearts with her i-ni-tials on my books And I nev-er knew 'til lat-er why I got those fun-ny looks.

Chorus

She was a big tough woman  
The first to come along  
That showed me being female  
meant you still could be strong  
And though graduation meant  
that we had to part  
She'll always be a player on the  
ballfield of my heart.

I wrote her name on my note-pad  
And I inked it on my dress  
And I etched it on my locker  
And I carved it on my desk  
And I painted big red hearts  
with her initials on my books  
And I never knew til later why  
I got those funny looks.

Chorus

Well, in gym class while the others  
Talked of boys that they loved  
I'd be thinking of new aches  
and pains  
The teacher had to rub  
And when other girls went to  
the prom  
I languished by the phone  
Calling up and hanging up if I  
found out she was home.

Chorus

So you just go to any gym class  
And you'll be sure to see  
One girl who sticks to teacher  
Like a leaf sticks to a tree  
One girl who runs the errands  
And who chases all the balls  
One girl who may grow up to  
be the gayest of all.

Chorus

I sang her songs by Johnny Mathis  
I gave her everything –  
A new chain for her whistle  
And some daisies in the spring  
Some suggestive poems for  
Christmas  
By Miss Edna Millay  
And a lacy, lacy card for  
Valentine's day.

Chorus

Meg Christian was raised in Virginia and sings about her Eighth Grade gym teacher and other women for Olivia Records, a women's recording company, 4400 Market St., Oakland, Cal. 94608.

(Meg Christian, Thumbelina Music BMI)  
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# OUT OF BOUNDS

## Frank McGuire and Basketball Politics in South Carolina

by Daniel Klores

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**D**uring the summer of 1974, the University of South Carolina lowered its mandatory faculty retirement age from 70 to 65. Several eminent professors filed suit in protest, but the university's trustees implied that faculty members who reach age 65 are less competent than younger men and women. The issues at stake were hardly unusual for America in the 1970s. But an unseen figure in this case made it crucial not only for a few professors, but for thousands of Carolinians: Frank McGuire, the university's legendary basketball coach, was approaching 65. He was not ready to retire, but his numerous political enemies wanted him out. "Everybody knew that Frank McGuire was inextricably tied to the case," said the professors' attorney. "You could hear the basketballs bouncing in the courtroom."

In August, 1978, three months before McGuire's 65th birthday, a decision was due at last from the state's Supreme Court. The coach felt confident. After all, he had lifted the state and its university into national prominence as a center of championship basketball. South Carolinians praised him as their savior in the sports-conscious South, and they adored the way he and his teams bullied their way into the national

limelight. But in building his basketball dynasty, McGuire stepped on many toes, and now his fate in South Carolina, a state known for patronage and political corruption, was not quite certain.

**F**rank McGuire was born in New York's Greenwich Village on November 8, 1913, and grew up in the Irish-Italian ghettos of lower Manhattan, the youngest of 13 children. His 6'4" father, Robert, was a traffic cop on the corner of Canal and West Streets



for over 20 years; "Big Bob," as he was called, died when little Frank was three years old. The McGuire clan was then headed by their sturdy, devout Irish Catholic mother, Anna. Her demands were simple: the children must attend church; wear hand-me-downs; listen to their oldest brother, Willie; and speak one at a time while seated at the crowded dinner table.

Young Frank was a handsome, broad-shouldered, tough guy. He was hot-tempered and athletic. His playmates on the street called him "Red" or "McGoo;" his high school newspaper nicknamed him "Elbows." Like his friends, McGuire seemed headed for the West Side piers or, at best, a job with the New York Police Department.

When Red was out of school, or playing hooky, he spent hour upon hour at Greenwich House, a settlement home organized by turn-of-the-century social workers. There, under the tutelage of Ted Carroll — a tall, black Columbia University graduate — McGuire began to box and play basketball. He was well liked as a hard-nosed competitor who stood up for the underdog. By the time he was 18, McGuire had formed his basic stance toward life: it's give and take, favors and returns; a guy has to know who his friends are and be loyal to them.

At St. John's University in Brooklyn, McGuire captained the baseball and basketball teams under the legendary James "Buck" Freeman. A gutsy and aggressive competitor,



McGuire was never afraid of firing a brush-back pitch or slugging it out with a rival center. On more than one occasion he marched into an adversary's locker room offering to fight them on the spot because of their anti-Semitic smears against his teammates. "That wasn't as bad," he recalls, "as going back to my own neighborhood and explaining to my friends why I let those little Yids shoot all the time."

After graduating from St. John's in 1936, Frank played professional basketball for five seasons in the old American League, until a knee injury ended his career. When he wasn't running up and down the floor, McGuire taught history and coached at his alma mater, Xavier Academy. He also worked as the greeter and bouncer at Julius', a lower West Side bar and restaurant. If he could not handle a troublemaker, McGuire always knew someone else could. Trying once to calm a drunk heavyweight contender, Frank faced a tough battle.

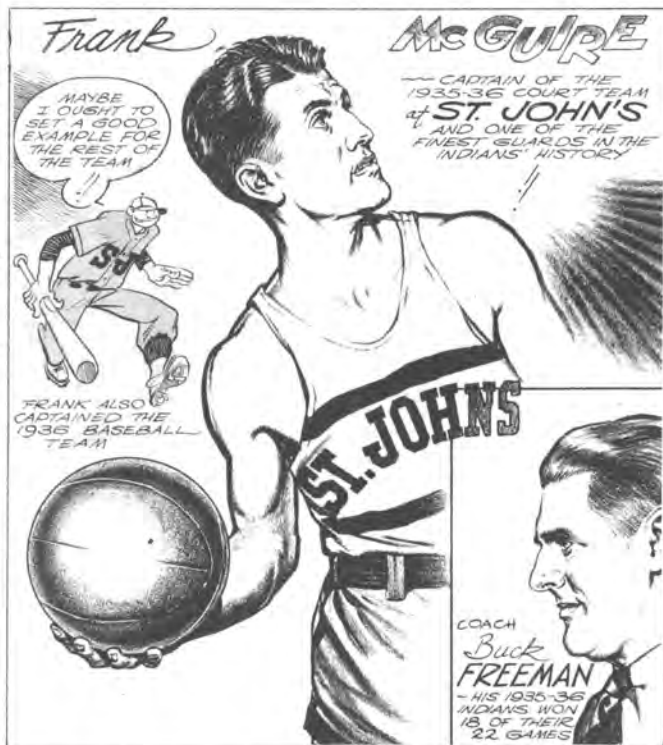
"I could handle myself," boasts McGuire, "but that guy was a pro. So I went to the phone and made a call. About five minutes later, three of the fellas from the docks came in and they whisper to this big bum, 'Frank doesn't want you here anymore.' And he never came back."

After he was discharged from the U.S. Navy in 1946, McGuire became the young head coach at St. John's. Within three years, he was one of New York's most celebrated heroes. He was dapper, handsome, quotable, and his teams won with alarming regularity.

By the early 1950s, Frank began to establish himself not only as a successful basketball coach, but as the kid who grew out of the ghetto. He was friends with politicians, entertainers, racketeers, policemen and priests. Harry Gotkin, one of his closest companions, says, "With



Frank's contacts, he could have made millions." Yet all of McGuire's energy



and charm, all his amazing network of contacts from the Hudson River docks to the White House, were committed from the start to the politics of basketball and the creation of his own reputation. McGuire learned to talk and to listen with the ease of a ward boss and became one of the nation's most popular after-dinner speakers. He could charm people when he needed to and threaten them when he had to.

In 1952 McGuire accepted the University of North Carolina's challenge to lead their team to a level of parity with Everett Case's fine N.C. State clubs. Within five short seasons, he brought an undefeated national championship to Chapel Hill, starting four New York City Catholics and a Jew. His real achievement was convincing Northeastern parents to let their sons spend four years in what they saw as the hot, oppressive, bigoted South. McGuire made the cover of *Look Magazine* and *Sports Illustrated*, was mentioned as a future candidate for governor and placed on everybody's "Man of the Year" list.

Four years later, the charismatic and still controversial Irishman moved on to the big leagues. With the Philadelphia Warriors, he became the first coach to co-exist with the young, 7'2", 290-pound Wilt Chamberlain. Frank, a master psychologist schooled

in the streets of New York City, motivated his temperamental Goliath to average an incredible 50 points per game.

Meanwhile, the University of South Carolina hoopsters were suffering from a succession of mediocre coaches and miserable teams. Between 1953 and 1963, as a charter member of the Atlantic Coast Conference, the university's basketball team compiled a 108-172 won-lost record. In 1963-64, USC's Fighting Gamecocks were in the midst of a better than average 10-14 season. Unfortunately, Coach Chuck Noe suffered a nervous breakdown at mid-year and had to be replaced by Dwane Morrison, a 26-year-old assistant coach. More than a year before Noe's collapse, however, the university's hierarchy had already formed a "search committee," made up of President Robert L. Sumwalt, Athletic Director Marvin Bass and influential State House Speaker Sol Blatt, Sr. Their objective was to lure Frank McGuire to Columbia.

The Blatts of Barnwell were one of South Carolina's most powerful political families. In 1937, Sol had been elected Speaker of the House, an office he held for the next 25 years. Blatt proved an adept backroom politician, a persistent segregationist and an unwavering champion of fiscal conservatism. In a short time, everybody owed a favor to "Mr. Sol," as he enjoyed being called, and Blatt knew exactly how and when to ask for its return. He called in many IOUs when he spearheaded a campaign to improve the reputation of the University of South Carolina, aided by his politician son, Sol Jr. Soon USC became Blatt's special stepchild, and the school's athletic program his primary toy. At 83, victim of deafness and other medical problems, Blatt is now Speaker Emeritus – but he is still a member of the state house and with neighboring legislator Marion Gressette is considered one of the two most powerful members of the legislature.

In the early 1960s, Sol Blatt wanted Frank McGuire and the national acclaim he would bring the university. But McGuire was not certain he wanted to live in Columbia, or come to a "backward" school with a poor program. Blatt was persistent,

and eventually swayed McGuire and his wife, in part tempting them with the advantages of South Carolina's climate for their son, who had cerebral palsy.



On March 10, 1964, McGuire signed a five-year contract. The news came as a shock to the veterans of the East Coast sportsworld. "Frank McGuire at South Carolina," recalls his long-time assistant coach Donnie Walsh, "would be like hearing John Wooden took the job at Mississippi State." Nevertheless, the McGuires moved to the Deep South. Frank brought his old coach, Buck Freeman, with him, hired a young recruiter and called on his New York contacts to help locate players. His friends were glad to scout for him, but their job was tough, given the school's facilities and reputation in academics and athletics. The only drawing card was McGuire himself.

The new coach faced one task even more difficult than recruiting: to generate interest and excitement in a community which understood little and cared less about his sport. Frank traveled across the state, urging civic and business groups to support his program. He sought out individuals to contribute to his new Tip-Off Club and to help his Northeastern players adjust to Southern culture. McGuire was the consummate politician: he remembered names, sent birthday cards, visited hospitals, raised money

for charities and never forgot the Greek Easter or Jewish New Year. He told South Carolinians that they had been treated unfairly, maligned and laughed at; he promised to make them a winner and make Columbia "the basketball capitol of the world."

Like a ward boss during an election, McGuire enlisted legions of loyal followers to cheer avidly for the boys and cry over their losses. Some South Carolinians remained hesitant over the school's roundball future, but elsewhere expectations grew more quickly. People in North Carolina and New York had seen McGuire work his magic before.

Frank McGuire finished his first season at South Carolina with the worst season of his coaching career, but that spring he recruited one of the nation's best high school players. Mike Grosso was a 6'9", 225-pound all-around athlete from Raritan, New Jersey. He had sprinter's speed, great strength and fine upper-body mobility. In the first round of his high school state championship, Mike scored 45 points and snared 43 rebounds!

The battle for Grosso was fierce. But Frank McGuire was the first coach to enter the Grossos' lower-middle-class Italian home, and from that moment Mike hardly considered playing for anyone else. The South Carolina coach promised the family one thing – "I'll take care of him" – and according to the youngster, "He was the only guy who *never* offered me money under the table."

In late April, 1965, Mike made a special concession to the persistent coach at the University of Miami and agreed to visit the Coral Gables school. "When I got off the plane," recalls Mike, "I was on television. Shoulder cameras were following me step by step; everywhere I looked there were pictures of me shooting a basketball. My name was on all the restaurants I went to. They said, 'You want money, here's money, go gamble on jai alai. Your parents can be flown down here. We have an airplane; anytime they want to come see a game, they can. You want a scholarship for your oldest brother to play football, you got it; your girlfriend a scholarship, you got it.' They offered me \$125 a week spending money, an expense account



in a clothing store, a place on campus I'm supposed to have but an apartment off campus if I want. Hey, you know this was all in two days. When I left I told Hale, "Thank you very much, I saw your place, but I'm still going to South Carolina."

That was the beginning of Mike Grosso's basketball career, and the start of Frank McGuire's most painful defeat. McGuire's first recruits, who entered South Carolina a year before Mike Grosso, were a gifted group. As sophomores (in their first year as varsity players under then-existing NCAA rules), they upset number-one-ranked Duke, topped Ivy League

scheduled to play N.C. State, then on NCAA probation, in the championship round. Frank rested his starters and played five subs. Cameron was irate. The two battled again when Duke signed Art Heyman, an All-American Long Island schoolboy McGuire thought he had locked up. And then one more time, when a UNC-Duke brawl resulted in the suspension of three players. Cameron accused McGuire of telling his squad "to get Heyman, that no-good Jew!" Frank especially resented the slander, since the leader of the fight was UNC's Larry Brown, Jewish himself.

Cameron began his attack against

freshman year, Eddie Cameron was still disturbed. He unsuccessfully urged the ACC to pass a new rule requiring that even non-scholarship performers score at least 800 on their entrance exams in order to participate in league games. Then, in early October, with Grosso practicing as the Gamecock's starting center, Cameron pulled out his last trump. He called for another ACC executive committee meeting.

"We have seen where Grosso lives in New Jersey," he told reporters, "and we don't think circumstances indicate that the family can pay the bills." It was then revealed that indeed his parents had not paid for their son's college education, and that his uncle, who did pay, unwittingly used a check from his place of business, The Grosso Bar & Grill. Cameron, along with UNC athletic director Chuck Erickson, immediately accused Grosso of illegally accepting finances from a corporation.

On October 29, after a closed session, the ACC executive committee declared Mike Grosso ineligible. McGuire was furious and had to be physically restrained from attacking a committee member. He announced that he would appeal and that he intended to play Mike in spite of the ACC's ruling. He charged his adversaries with conducting a personal vendetta against him at the expense of a 19-year-old youth: "They are discriminating against this boy. There are so many other players in the conference with scores lower than Mike's and they are playing."

Mike Grosso, bewildered, continued to work out with the team and tried to keep up with his studies. But at a late November scrimmage, one week before the Gamecocks were scheduled to open their regular season, Grosso tore his knee. He was operated on in mid-December.

From then on the situation only got worse for McGuire. One week before Christmas, conference officials approved new legislation granting all members the right to cancel games with USC if they considered such contests "inadvisable." One day later, Duke announced it would not play basketball with South Carolina. The six other institutions decided to honor their commitments. Paul Dietzel, South Carolina's newly hired athletic director and football coach, accepted the ACC position, which infuriated



champion Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and gave NYU a run for their money at Madison Square Garden. It did not take an expert to realize that the next season, with the addition of Grosso, these same youths would dominate the league and possibly the entire country. Many coaches were alarmed.

Chief among those most concerned about McGuire's new talent was Eddie Cameron, athletic director at Duke and a founder of the ACC. Cameron had worked hard to build the ACC into the most competitive basketball conference in the country. Ceremonies and tradition were important to Eddie; to McGuire, even the ACC tournament meant little. Once his North Carolina team was guaranteed a spot in the NCAA Eastern regionals and was

McGuire and Grosso with an innocent observation: "I couldn't understand how he (Grosso) could be admitted into USC and rejected by Duke when we are both in the same conference." Though Grosso took the college entrance exams five times, he failed to achieve a combined score of at least 800 on his SATs – the minimum requirement for an ACC athletic grant-in-aid. Cameron obviously hoped Grosso would be disqualified, but under the ACC rules, he was eligible to compete as a non-scholarship athlete. Intent on playing for a man he trusted and idolized, Grosso passed up full scholarships from other schools and convinced his uncle to pay his tuition and expenses at USC.

In May, 1966, at the end of Mike's

McGuire. Dietzel called the Duke decision "regrettable," but said he understood they were "within their rights."

On January 9, 1967, a 23-man board of the NCAA met in Houston, Texas, and cited USC for one infraction involving academic standards and three dealing with financial aid. The school was prohibited from playing in post-season tournaments and from appearing on a television network sanctioned by the NCAA. And Mike Grosso was declared ineligible to play basketball at South Carolina. Grosso eventually enrolled at Louisville University. Once again he damaged his knee; it never healed properly. "Basketball was never the same anyway," reflects Mike. "I'd look over to the bench and big Frank wasn't there."

McGuire was embittered, angry and helpless. He viewed the entire episode as a vendetta by "weaker men" who were jealous of him. He called Eddie Cameron "a skunk" and in private he blasted Dietzel for not supporting the basketball program. Petitions cropped up throughout the state for the university to withdraw from the conference, but McGuire asked that they be discarded.

University of South Carolina officials had hired Paul Dietzel as their new football coach and athletic director in the midst of the Grosso affair. At one time Dietzel had the brightest future of any gridiron coach in America. When still in his mid-30s, he had led the LSU Tigers to a national championship. He was a man of precision, organization and assertiveness, with a mind for detail and a glib tongue. Dietzel had dubbed his stalwart Tiger defense "the Chinese Bandits," and the following season every protective 11 from the Pop Warner League to the NFL had its own clever nickname.

Columbians were ecstatic about having Dietzel and McGuire on their side — two men who had been to the top. The morning after Dietzel signed his lucrative contract, a picture appeared in the *Columbia State* depicting the two national celebrities beaming and clasping their arms. The caption read, "Two Old Friends Reunited." But when Dietzel moved McGuire's offices from the Roundhouse complex to the dingy trailer outside the Field

House, the brief honeymoon was over.

Frank did not know about Dietzel's secret contract demands: three columns of requests with 11 listings in each, as if he was already planning for his offense, defense and special teams; one included McGuire's removal as associate athletic director. Dietzel received whatever he asked for, down to "the right of Anne to use the University's airplane." (To this, however, President Jones had appended, "Yes, providing Anne is his wife.") When McGuire later voiced his dissatisfaction with Dietzel's attitude toward Grosso, the new athletic director had Jones write him a letter of censure. It read, "The impression must not be given to friends, alumni, or the public that there is friction and strife within the department, the University, or the Conference."

McGuire refused to have anything to do with Dietzel; he decided to concentrate on rebuilding his already once-rebuilt program. Winning proved to be the prescription that would satisfy Columbia's sports enthusiasts together with Blatt's multimillion-dollar, 12,700-seat arena to replace the school's small and delapidated field house.

The USC quintet was built around

four sophomores and a junior (John Roche, Billy Walsh, Tom Owens, John Ribock and Bobby Cremins) who soon captured the heart of every Gamecock fan. The experts picked the 1968-69 team to finish sixth in the conference, but by the end of the regular season they were rated eighth in the country. The inexperienced group won 21 of 28 games, defeated national powerhouses North Carolina, Duke and LaSalle and went to the NIT. Roche was voted the ACC's Player of the Year and McGuire, the league's outstanding coach.

The young Gamecocks romped through the 1969-70 regular ACC season undefeated, only the third team in conference history to accomplish such a feat. (McGuire's Tar Heels in 1957 and Duke's 1963 club were the others.) Even in victory, Frank and his hoopsters remained arrogant and never refrained from hurling thrown objects back at the crowd or answering a heckler. They infuriated ACC fans and officials when, after a loss to N.C. State in the tournament finals, they refused to accept their runner-up trophies. Cameron was again steaming, but McGuire was boiling mad: "I wouldn't shake that skunk's hand anyway."



USC All-Americans John Roche (11) and Tom Owens (24) attack Wake Forest. The New York City duo led McGuire's Gamecocks to a 70-16 record in 1969-71.

During the 1970 and 1971 seasons, McGuire's teams were among the nation's best, winning 48 games and losing only nine. Though they never won the national championship, as some sports magazines predicted they would, fan interest remained strong. Columbians idolized McGuire and his New York imports. Backboards sprouted in the yards of private homes, jerseys with Roche's familiar number 11 were sold out in every sporting goods store, and youngsters stood at the foul line crossing themselves as their Catholic heroes had done. Each player had at least one fan club, the governor began to meet recruits, and portraits of the imported athletes appeared like mushrooms on the walls of local lounges. McGuire was given a television show, a weekly newspaper column and the rights to use university facilities for his summer basketball camps. "McGuire for Governor" bumper stickers and "McGuire Power" buttons were all over town.

**F**rank was easily the most popular man in the university and state; even in defeat his supporters were devoted to him. Blue-collar folk loved his outspokenness and independence. Once, in a game at Clemson, McGuire was hit with thrown objects, had his seat pulled from under him and was taunted by a heckler's chant of "Your wife is dead, your wife is dead." When the contest was over, Frank challenged any of the loudmouths, who were mostly football players, to fight him. He had no takers, but he was still scheduled to appear on announcer Bob Fulton's post-game show. "At least 500 Clemson fans circled around us," recalls Fulton. "All of them were waiting to hear what Frank had to say. They were silent, and he was incredible. Frank said exactly what was on his mind. He was fearless." The affluent also loved McGuire. He was a celebrity, a gentleman who had paid his dues and delivered. Frank would drink, dine and occasionally play golf with some of his new supporters. He admired their fortunes; they thirsted for his fame.

Meanwhile, Dietzel, distraught over his own inability to recruit "top-notch athletes" under existing academic guidelines, convinced the Blatts, Presi-

dent Jones and the board of trustees to secede from the ACC. McGuire acquiesced. Going along with Dietzel's plan would prove to be a significant political error. However, Frank felt sure his program would continue to prosper regardless of the school's affiliation. In addition, he looked forward to more peaceful days outside the ACC. Secession was not a new concept in South Carolina.

Time proved McGuire and Dietzel wrong. The latter could not win no

re-entry into the ACC.

Soon Frank McGuire was being criticized by people who had previously been devoted to him — in particular, the Blatts. In order to please them, Frank committed a second political mistake. In July, 1975, he appointed Greg Blatt, Mr. Sol's grandson, to his staff.

Greg Blatt, then in his mid-20s, had been a non-scholarship performer on one of Buck Freeman's freshman squads, later served as the varsity's



*Paul Dietzel with two prep school stars, Freddie Solomon and C.A. Wilson, who plan to enroll at USC. But Solomon's SAT scores ultimately block his admission.*

matter how many blue-chip athletes he recruited, and though McGuire's teams continued to win, produce All-Americans, play a nationally representative schedule and go to post-season tournaments, basketball fervor subsided. Local fans loved the frenetic atmosphere surrounding ACC games. The new schedule, which omitted neighboring rivals, did not afford them the same release. McGuire's recruiting was also damaged because opposing coaches would convince high school stars of the ACC's merits (fantastic media exposure, community support and better competition). Frank became an outsider looking in, and in spite of his team's top-10 performances, attendance declined every single year. In 1975, when McGuire's quintet failed to win 20 games for the first time in seven years, he began to lobby actively for

team manager and then coached for two years at a small rural high school. McGuire chose Greg over more qualified applicants (former Gamecock players Bob Carver, Jimmy Powell, Jim Walsh and George Felton), rationalizing he would not have to worry about losing Blatt's support.

Greg's role, though, was less than interesting to the young man. With two expert tacticians in Donnie Walsh and Ben Jobe — a black former head coach at three universities — McGuire relegated Blatt to scouting and recruiting. The Blatts resented the fact that Greg was not more involved, but Frank had absolutely no intention of using him other than as "a road man," the usual position for a young coach. Friction began to develop within the USC basketball office.

Meanwhile, a hunt was underway to find a replacement for Paul Dietzel,



who had been pressured into resigning by the school's trustees. Any new mentor would need a record of winning regularly on Saturday and going to church regularly on Sunday. Most of all, he would have to be approved of by the Blatts. After several candidates declined or were discarded, the board's search committee proposed Jim Carlen, the head man at Texas Tech, a successful builder, good teacher, organizer, talker and Christian. Carlen was a proven winner plagued with his own inter-departmental troubles at the Southwestern Conference school. He agreed to accept the job, if he would be named athletic director as well. Since the Blatts did not think McGuire would make a very good athletic director, Carlen got the job.



*Jim Carlen*

As soon as he moved to Columbia with his loyal Texas Tech staff, Carlen began making changes in the university's athletic department. He fired the veteran sports information director and hired a new business manager to oversee the department's finances. McGuire hungered for the ACC, but when Coach Jim led his first USC football team to a 7-5 record and an invitation to the Tangerine Bowl, permanent independence seemed a real possibility. Since McGuire was also disappointed that he had not been named athletic director, friction increased. The two men soon refused to speak to one another unless confined to a conference room.

Finances became another source of mounting tension. After the first gridiron season, Carlen gave raises to all football assistant coaches but none to roundballers. Later, McGuire and his assistant coach, Donnie Walsh, were called before the board of trustees "to explain certain unneces-

sary items" on their expense accounts; they fumed and blamed Carlen. Frank faced accusations that he had incurred lavish expenses in on-the-road recruiting and was asked to justify even minor notations for liquor, food and hotel accommodations. Though they refuted every charge, Walsh and McGuire were struggling against a new alliance: Sol Blatt, Sr., board chairman T. Eston Marchant, influential trustee Michael J. Mungo and Jim Carlen.

The Blatt-McGuire feud raged into an open conflict during the early months of 1977. At a Gamecock Club banquet, held to honor the school's new president, Dr. James T. Holderman, Mr. Sol, the guest speaker, praised all the athletic mentors who were present except Frank McGuire. The basketball coach sneered at the old man and whispered, "I'll get you for that!" Later Blatt apologized to McGuire, claiming he was old and forgetful. In private, he said it was because he had drunk one too many, but the damage was done.

**B**y the time the 1976-77 season was about to begin, Frank McGuire was unsure about his tenure at the university. Frank's squad was inexperienced and erratic, his worst in over a decade. In addition, the USC hoopsters played one of the nation's toughest schedules, meeting nationally ranked Alabama, Kentucky, Michigan, Marquette and Notre Dame. The fans were anxious, as were the trustees, and McGuire needed to find another winning formula — fast.

In early February, while the Gamecocks were struggling with a break-even record, McGuire discovered he was on the verge of capturing a landmark 500th career victory, a feat shared by only a handful of coaches. McGuire lost little opportunity in turning the achievement into a mammoth celebration — just the spark the sagging season needed. In February, McGuire also became the third active coach in basketball history to be elected to the Hall of Fame. South Carolina's coach had become "a living legend." Celebrities from a myriad of professions came to Columbia to honor McGuire at a black-tie banquet. Priests, writers, cops, jocks, longshoremen, politicians and matinee idols stood to applaud their trusted friend. The Gamecocks finished the

season with a 14-13 record, but it was their coach's year. By an overwhelming majority, the state legislature voted to name Carolina Coliseum after the man who built it, Frank McGuire.

The Blatts, Marchant and Carlen obviously could not force McGuire out at this moment. Instead, they worked silently to undermine his position. When Frank went to Springfield, Massachusetts, to attend the Hall of Fame ceremonies, not a single USC official or Carolina notable appeared at the event or even sent a message. "That was lousy and painful," remarked Donnie Walsh. "We used to hate Dietzel, but when he went to a bowl game we sent him a telegram."

When he returned to Columbia, Frank was confronted with more bad news. The board of trustees had tabled the motion to rename the Coliseum after him, claiming that the school's faculty would not accept the change. The board did, however, consent to name the arena after McGuire. "Isn't that ridiculous," Frank quipped. "Did they name the pool or the whole physical education center after Sol Blatt?"

Prior to the start of the 1977-78 season, as McGuire was approaching his 65th year, the roof caved in. Donnie Walsh left to take the assistant coaching job with the NBA's Denver Nuggets. Walsh had been a devoted friend and confidant, and it was assumed that he would succeed Frank whenever the head man retired. Yet Donnie knew the trustees would never hire another New Yorker, especially one who had acted as McGuire's mouthpiece. "When I left," said Walsh, "I told the press I had not been assured I would get the job; what I didn't tell them was that I had been assured I wouldn't get it."

Then Greg Blatt surprised everybody by taking an assistant's position at the Citadel in Charleston. Two days later, university president Holderman announced Frank would become athletic director in charge of USC's regional campuses and would be expected to assume these duties immediately after the basketball season. It was the proverbial boot upstairs. Publicly, McGuire shouted that he was not ready to retire; in private, he berated Holderman for "selling out" to the Blatts. Frank wanted to coach for at least two more

seasons; his opponents, however, asserted they were doing him a favor, since the university's new mandatory retirement age was 65 and Frank was 64. "Let the courts decide that," Frank countered.

Lacking the support of large contributors, USC's board of trustees, president and athletic director, and the Blatts, McGuire had to appeal to his grassroots constituents to maintain his position. The day after Holderman's offer, the press flooded into McGuire's office. Hurt and dismayed, Frank informed them it was the bigwigs against him. He claimed it was not a coincidence that after young Blatt departed the bomb had finally exploded. "How can I compete against Carlen?" he asked. "The guy has access to the president, the trustees and the school's business manager."

McGuire was tired of defending his integrity in front of the trustees, and he chose the football team's forthcoming trip to Hawaii as ammunition in his counterattack. "Do you know why he's got these people in his corner?" Frank quizzed reporters. "Because he can afford to take them all to Hawaii for free, and what the hell can we do — take em to Buffalo?" A McGuire aide concurred and said, "Even the school's cheerleaders have to pay to go to Hawaii, but the board members and other school officials go for free." McGuire then asked another question: "Do you think some of these old Southern leaders are worried about having Ben Jobe, a black, so close to the top?"

It was a brilliant performance by an old ward politician. McGuire instantly won the media and the public to his corner. Few people relished the idea of one family running the state university, and the black community, which previously had paid little attention to USC athletics, was also compelled to stick up for Frank and Ben Jobe. "God Bless McGuire" stickers appeared, and a group of wealthy Tip-Off Club members took out full-page ads in the state's newspapers seeking signatures and contributions for their Save McGuire movement. The response was overwhelming. Former players, friends and associates called to offer whatever support they could. Though still worried, and aware his recruiting for the next season was torn to shreds,

Frank grew more and more confident. He was angry, but his constituents were even more irate. Frank McGuire had treated them fairly. He had delivered, and whenever he wanted to step down was good enough for them.

The battle moved into the 1977-78 season. Carlen suddenly found himself on the defensive. His recruitment of Steve Swinehardt, a highly touted Ohio schoolboy, came under an NCAA probe. Meanwhile, McGuire's support steadily solidified. At one home game, fans honored Frank with an Appreciation Night ceremony with the theme, "If you support the Irishman, then wear green." Few looked as verdant as USC President Holderman. Whatever his feelings about big-time athletics, the resourceful university head had recognized his tactical error immediately after the regional campus offer was made public.

Meanwhile, Carlen refrained from making any public anti-McGuire statements, but he did try to bolster his own position. Investigators cleared him of any wrongdoing in the Swinehardt affair. He boosted his standing with the trustees by donating over \$200,000 from his athletic department's profits to the academic wing of the university. And he donated to charity the proceeds from a well-publicized Hollywood-style "Roast" given by admirers, including Gerald Ford.

While the 1977-78 basketball season narrowed to its final weeks, Holderman announced the appointment of Dr. James Morris to the newly created position of Vice President of Athletic Affairs. Morris was an old friend of McGuire. The move prompted Carlen to contemplate a possible law suit against the university since he felt Morris' vaguely defined duties would usurp his own authority.

When the regular season ended, McGuire was a smiling Irishman and a self-assured political victor. His quintet surprised everybody and finished with a 16-11 record, good enough for an NIT bid. Meanwhile, Carlen was becoming embroiled in a series of embarrassing financial controversies: two men who were contracted by his department to own and operate the food concessions at USC football and baseball games were convicted of embezzling \$95,000; a state Law Enforcement Division audit showed

that \$17,000 in cash was missing from the past season's gridiron receipts; and a North Carolina travel agency filed a suit against the Gamecock Club for breach of contract concerning the football team's Hawaiian excursion.

By the summer of 1978, it seemed everybody but Frank McGuire was tainted. Sol Blatt, Sr., had lost much of his colleagues' respect because of his active role in the dump-McGuire movement, as well as his involvement in a scandalous argument within the state legislature over the status of his female House Clerk. Holderman's indecision in the lengthy athletic department feud tarnished his image. Carlen, about to direct the least successful Carolina football campaign in five years, was judged too abrasive by the Columbia press. The board of trustees, as the fans saw them, were a group of men who turned their backs on the one individual who brought a sense of pride to the state.

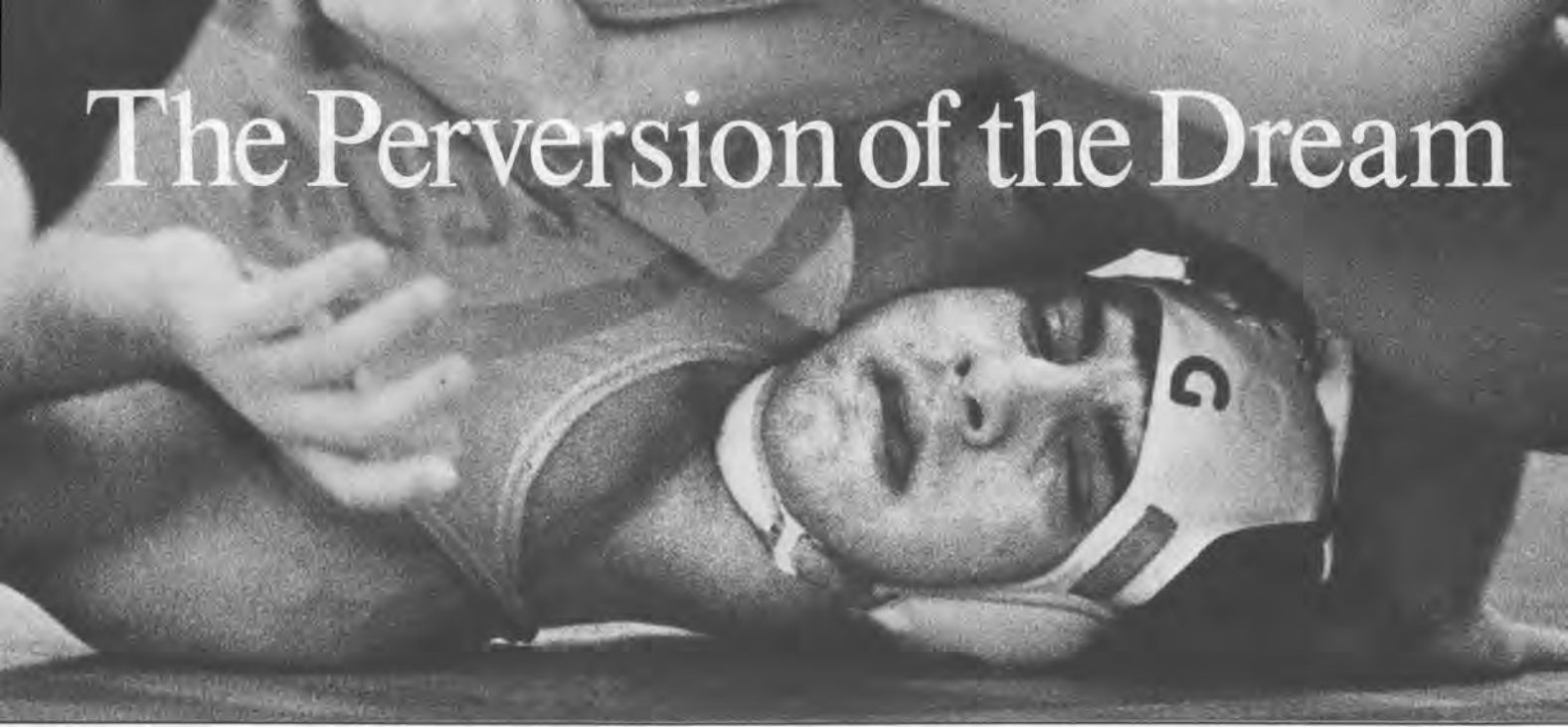
Try as he might, there was simply nothing Sol Blatt, Sr., could do to get rid of Frank McGuire. One moment the Speaker Emeritus would ramble on about how bringing McGuire to USC was "the biggest mistake I ever made," but seconds later he would proclaim, "I want to be friends with him, I want to be Frank McGuire's friend."

**I**n August, 1978, the State Supreme Court ruled that the University of South Carolina must comply with the state's mandatory retirement age of 70. Basketball coach and old ward politician Frank McGuire had five more years at the helm. "I'm the only guy they tried to get rid of and couldn't," remarked McGuire.

Frank McGuire had remembered his boyhood lessons of survival. Although he had proven once again that he was a remarkable in-fighter and had saved his own position, Gamecock basketball was again floundering. The coalition of strong ballplayers, loyal fans and friendly state officials that ward boss McGuire had built up so diligently over more than a decade could never be the same. □

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# The Perversion of the Dream



Throughout the South, as in the rest of the nation, sports is one of the most important sources of popular entertainment. For most men and a growing number of women, sports provide opportunities to experience a sense of artistry and skill, profound emotional satisfaction and feelings of social solidarity that few other activities can match. People fishing from a rowboat or playing weekend tennis, people engaged in neighborhood softball leagues or following high school teams, whole cities and regions caught up in the fever of a pennant race or a bowl game — all know the kinds of community feeling sports can engender. For more than a few people, sporting activities have become a highlight of life.

Yet within this world, many destructive tendencies are at work, such as:

- the growing inequalities in the treatment of spectators;
- the undeniable “health and safety” hazards in modern organized-from-above sports; and
- the ongoing exploitation of athletes at the collegiate level.

Too often the hope of enjoying a weekend ballgame becomes a struggle to procure scarce and overpriced tickets or evade a local TV blackout engineered by promoters. Too often the ideal of fair competition becomes

by Mark Naison

a credo of win-at-all-costs which can leave young athletes crippled, or even dead. Too often the American dream of success leaves thousands of hopefuls with shattered dreams and nothing to show for a childhood of practicing jumpshots or chasing fly balls.

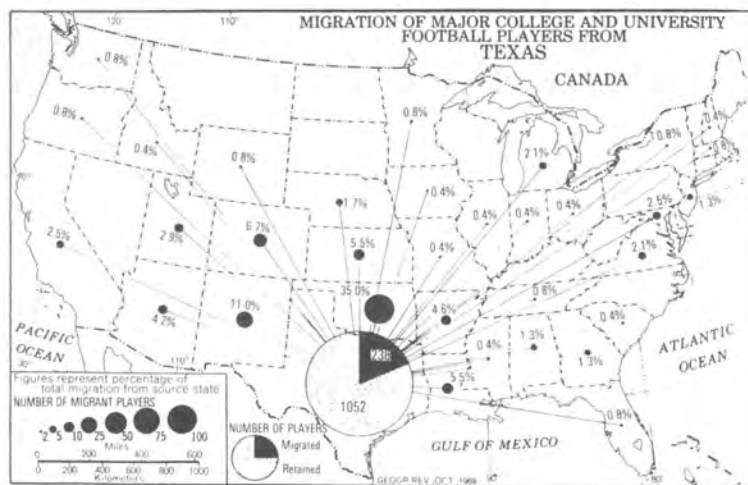
## DEMOCRATIC ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPORTS EVENTS

Sports in the United States, whatever their origins, have always been enthusiastically adopted by lower-income people. Baseball began as a genteel game, but urban workers and farmhands embraced it wholesale after the Civil War. Football, at first an exclusive pastime of elite Eastern colleges, spread to high schools and sandlots until it became a symbol of working-class toughness and endurance.

As a result, the bulk of professional and college athletes in our most popular team sports are from working-class and poor families. And nowhere is this more apparent than in the South. A disproportionate number of college football players come from the coal and steel towns of Alabama and the cattle and oil towns of Texas. According to a survey made in the late '60s, the five

leading states in per capita production of professional football players were *all* in the deep South (Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Alabama and Georgia; Arkansas ranked eighth).

But if college and professional teams are drawn disproportionately from among the poor and the black, the audiences for their games are overwhelmingly white and upper middle class. Football and basketball seats often cost in double figures — too expensive for most blue-collar families, especially when the high costs of parking, scorecards, hot dogs and soda are added. The poorer fan is further excluded by the preferential treatment given season ticket holders, a practice which may violate the 1964 Civil Rights Act requiring equal access to places of public accommodation. Washington's Robert F. Kennedy Stadium sells nothing but season tickets for Redskin football games,





and patrons have been known to pass on choice seats through their wills like private property, even though the stadiums are publicly owned. At the exciting Atlantic Coast Conference basketball tournament each winter, the lion's share of good seats go to boosters who contribute \$100 or more to the athletic programs of member schools. In baseball, more than three quarters of all big-league season tickets are owned by companies. And in almost every spectator sport, most of the good seats, especially for important games, are purchased by corporations to hand out as "perks" to executives and visiting businessmen. Time and again the average fan, even if he or she wants to spend the money, can't get near the action.

Moreover, a whole structure of social privilege is increasingly embodied in the design of arenas themselves. When St. Louis beer baron Gussy Busch first renovated Sportsman's Park in the 1950s, he installed fancy "loge boxes" for wealthy corporate customers. Later, when Houston built the country's first sports dome, the city fathers approved glass-enclosed boxes, with cocktail and restaurant service, where the rich could relax while watching a game. Other new stadiums have special restaurants and clubs for the wealthy, who — for a sizeable annual fee — can avoid mingling with the *hoi polloi* in the stands.

If there was ever a time when watching a sports event was a leveling experience, when the businessman and the bus driver rubbed shoulders and cheered together, that time is gone. Now the bus driver watches the game at home on TV while the boss is sitting in his executive box. The social dynamic of today's arena makes a mockery of the democratic rhetoric that has always surrounded American sports.

Some persons have begun to mobilize for reform. With the help of the Nader-inspired sports consumer group, FANS (Fight to Advance the Nation's Sports), the finances of professional sports franchises have become a major public issue. Groups can now work to eliminate or reduce season ticket sales, provide access to seats on a first-come first-serve basis and prevent the construction of special boxes, restaurants and clubs in sta-

diums built at public expense. Few such movements have arisen yet, but activists in Minneapolis recently prevented the construction of a new domed facility when a perfectly adequate stadium already existed. Residents of New Orleans, strapped with huge overhead costs for the extravagant Super Dome, may wish they had organized sooner. Wherever stadium construction is presently planned, as with the expansion of the University of Tennessee football facility at Knoxville, sports enthusiasts should demand an accounting of who will foot the costs and who will reap the benefits.

#### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR ATHLETES

Our sports organizations, whether collegiate, professional or amateur, have tended to take the most talented youngsters out of the working-class community and thrust them into a playing field where — if they are lucky — they can achieve fame, money and a secure place in the middle class. This process, occurring over 100 years, has reinforced a sense of the openness of American society. Our great athletic heroes, with few exceptions, are people from modest backgrounds, colorful, unpolished and enormously appealing: such Southerners as "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, Wilma Rudolph, Sam Snead and Willie Mays all fit this mold. Their success tells every young person that he or she can "make it" too, whether in sports or some other aspect of life.

But the triumphs of Joe Namath, Muhammad Ali and Cale Yarborough also teach the lesson that success comes from individual skill, ruthless competition and an unsentimental willingness to live with pain. Athletes who are the products of this system learn to become accustomed to hostile and competitive relations with their peers and to define success almost exclusively in terms of cash. Though shrewd about individual money matters, such athletes have little experience in collective action and are often naive in other ways. Even if they successfully protect their pocketbooks in the short run, many outstanding athletes seem powerless to prevent the permanent damage of their own bodies.

The health and safety problems

#### "I CAN'T MAKE IT"

Ernie Barnes, the 260 pound line-man-turned-artist (see cover), recently told a *New York Times* reporter of his own encounter with death in the pro gridiron trenches. In 1960, playing for the New York Titans against the Houston Oilers in 100° heat, the guard playing beside him, Howard Glenn, began to wobble in the huddle.

"His body was giving off a terrible odor. He kept saying, 'I can't make it. I can't make it.' We told him to go to the bench and he started off, but Sammy Baugh (the Titan coach) waved him back on the field and he came back. I always wondered why, but I guess it's the commitment a kid makes to himself to do what the coach says, no matter what.

"After the game we were in the locker room and he looked awful. He was sitting in a metal chair. I remember leaving and going to the locker. I can still hear the sound of his metal chair scraping the cement floor as he fell. He had collapsed. By the time we got on the plane to come home, he had died.

"I remember looking out the window at the sunset and thinking we were leaving our friend behind. They said he died of a broken neck, but I think he died of heat exhaustion and improper care." □

connected with organized sports start young. Some players shouldn't even be on the field, like 15-year-old Timothy Young of Greenville, South Carolina, who collapsed and died last August after running "punishment laps" for the junior varsity football coach. His weak heart, caused by chronic pericarditis, had not been diagnosed in the routine physical at Carolina High School. Other players are the victims of poor equipment or improper training. Florida student Greg Stead had his neck broken in a high school football game in 1971, the same year that a precedent-setting liability suit was filed against one of the country's 14 helmet manufacturers. Since then six companies have gone out of business, and the nation's producers of football helmets face damage suits of well over \$100 million.

The scale of destruction in football alone is staggering. Literally thousands of college players will be injured this

season, some of them permanently, but the pattern of protest is often as futile as it is old. Georgia outlawed football as far back as 1897, after the death of quarterback Von Gammon. But the ban was only temporary, and since then as many as 18 Americans have lost their lives playing college football in a single season. Improved equipment and better training has only led to greater violence; two years ago Georgia lost *five* quarterbacks to injury in the course of the season.

It doesn't get any safer as the players move higher up. Boston Patriot Darryl Stingley was paralyzed in a game last August. Later, while bargaining with the club owners on safety issues, NFL player representative Randy Vataha (a former teammate of Stingley's) observed, "They're afraid to take the violence out of pro football. After all, it's a business, and when you are in business, your priorities aren't always what they should be. It is characteristic of our society."

"Coaches see helmets and shoulder pads," observes ex-Dallas Cowboy Pete Gent. "The bodies are just stuffing. And they can fill in more stuffing whenever they need it." The players take steroids to gain weight and pop amphetamines to stimulate artificial levels of aggression; they suffer concussions, broken bones and repeated shocks to internal organs year after year. It is not surprising, therefore, that according to a Canadian physician quoted in *Sports Illustrated*, professional football players have a life expectancy of 58 years as compared to 70 for a normal American male.

The situation isn't confined to football. As Bill Walton pointed out during his dispute with the Portland Trailblazers, the use of amphetamines, pain killers and muscle relaxers is also common in basketball. At too many levels in too many games, players are nursing major injuries by the end of the season.

So far very few sports veterans have found ways to overcome their individual cynicism, fatalism and frustration regarding injuries. But like others who earn a living through physical labor, athletes have begun to consider issues of occupational health and safety as fair and important grounds for organizing in the future. Fancier pre-conditioning programs, novel equipment design and expensive medical supervision are not entirely the answer. Instead, athletes need greater involvement in planning, workout and game schedules, a greater say in determining all the athletic rules and requirements which affect their physical and mental health, and a greater knowledge of their own bodies.

## THE COLLEGE ATHLETE AS HIRED HAND

At what point do people who enjoy the competition and comradeship, the self-mastery and sheer physical joy of sport, become "workers"? At what point does play become labor? The answer is complicated, and varies greatly from person to person. But nowadays most people who try to get ahead by using their bodies begin — and end — that career in college.

For every athlete who uses the university as a bridge to a big-league contract, Wheaties commercials or a degree in law or medicine, there are dozens of others for whom the bridge collapses. When the rainbow fades, they discover they have been ripped off of the educational opportunity they were promised and have earned.

"College sports is professional sports in disguise," says two-time All-American Dean Meminger, whose first hoop was a wire coathanger in rural South Carolina. "You bring them



## WHEN THE RECRUITER CALLS

Any high school athlete being recruited by a college should raise the following questions, not just with eager coaches and committed players, but also with deans, with non-athletes, and with people who may have left the team and the school for physical, financial or educational reasons.

- What percentage of scholarship athletes in my sport graduate in four years? What percentage graduate at all?
- How many hours per week will I be expected to practice before, during and after the season that my sport is played? How many classes will I be required to miss each semester as a result of travel time?
- What kind of academic support services are available at the school? Will I be able to get

individual tutoring in all subjects? Take remedial courses free of charge?

- Does my scholarship last until I receive my degree, or only during my four years of eligibility? Will the school pay for my education until I graduate, even if I am injured or dropped from the team, irrespective of how long it takes?
- What is the profile of academic majors among scholarship athletes in my sport? Will I be encouraged to take "mickey mouse courses," live in a separate athletic dorm, and major in fields like physical education and recreation?
- What career counseling services does the school offer to the athletes? What is the career

profile of athletes in my sport who have graduated in the last four years?

If recruiters can't – or won't – answer these questions, keep away from the school. If they answer them quickly and positively, dig beneath the public relations facade. Once you have tentatively selected a school, have the coach give answers to the questions in writing, and have his or her statements notarized.

A 15-page "Guide for the College-Bound Student Athlete" is available from the National Collegiate Athletic Association, PO Box 1906, Shawnee Mission, KS 66222. If you're good enough to be offered gifts and other improper inducements by an NCAA school (as many athletes are), report it to the NCAA: your college eligibility could be endangered. □



fame and notoriety, you bring them capital, and you provide entertainment for all those people, so why shouldn't you get a share of the profits?"

Supposedly, the payoff is in the valuable education and the coveted B.A. degree which caps it off, but many college athletes, after four years of unpaid service, end up with neither. As of 1978, according to the *Washington Post*, only nine of the 20 players whom Lefty Driesell had recruited for the University of Maryland basketball team had graduated from the school after playing for four years. At the University of Arkansas, according to a lawyer for three black athletes suspended from the football team in 1977, only one of 25 black athletes who had used up their eligibility received their degrees.

This betrayal of the purposes of the athletic scholarship – common throughout the United States – seems particularly severe in Southern state universities which recently desegregated. At the University of Texas at El Paso, not one of the five starters – all black – on the 1966 national championship basketball team received their degrees. According to 1978 statistics, two-thirds of the black athletes in the Southwest Conference majored in Physical Education and two-thirds never graduated, while among white athletes one-fourth majored in Phys. Ed., and one out of four failed to graduate.

In recognition of this problem, seven black athletes from California State-Los Angeles recently sued the school for \$14 million on the grounds that their athletic scholarships were a fraud. Transcripts were allegedly forged, SATs and exams taken by third parties and professors pressured in order to get the players through. As a result, several were still functional illiterates after four years of college. Their lawyer, Michelle Washington, told reporters, "We lose out both ways, since the athletes didn't get their promised



Young athletes can't depend on administrators or coaches to make sure they get an adequate education. "Most guys going to college on sports scholarships lose the best chance they'll ever have to prepare themselves for a rewarding job," says sociology professor Harry Edwards. "They fall into the trap of planning their life around an unrealistic assumption that they'll make it into the pros." According to Edwards, a former college basketball captain and Olympic track star, black youngsters are especially vulnerable to the myth of sports being an escalator from poverty to the good life. Instead of being an escalator, sports is far more often "a treadmill to nowhere. You can work out the odds with a pencil and paper," says Edwards. "Less than 900 black athletes are earning a living in sports — and not more than 1,500 overall, including coaches and trainers. By comparison, there are perhaps three million black youth between the ages of 13 and 22 who dream of a career as an athlete. The odds are 20,000 to 1 or worse. Statistically, you have a better chance of getting hit by a meteorite in the next 10 years than getting work as an athlete." A youngster has a better chance of becoming a surgeon or an architect than a professional athlete — and he or she should plan an education accordingly. "Individually," Edwards says, "I think every youngster with some athletic talent should give it a shot. But you should do it intelligently. If by your senior year, you're not a high school All-American — and if after one season of college sports, you're not an All-American of some kind, second team, third team or honorable mention — you should forget a professional sports career. The great athletes all show class early. You can find out early if you've got it. And if you haven't, there's no point in wasting the rest of your teens and 20s struggling for something that will never be. You have time to concentrate on books and a different kind of life that will be more rewarding anyway."

— from the *Los Angeles Times*

education, and other students whose places they took never reached the college doors."

Universities which derive revenues from their sports programs — and

this includes most Southern state universities — will resist being held accountable to high academic standards and proper teaching for their athletes. To get such institutions to make a commitment to graduate their athletes requires massive political pressure from coalitions that include faculty and student organizations, civil liberties groups and sympathetic state legislators.

#### A LEGACY OF DISCRIMINATION

The problems mentioned here only scratch the surface, and solutions are not easily found. But the troubling dilemmas of sports, like the political problems in the wider society which they reflect, can be addressed through individual commitment and collective action. As Jackie Robinson showed a generation ago, changes in athletics can help change the culture. And this generation has its own unfinished sports agenda.

The struggle for full participation of women in sports, for example, centers on the enforcement of Title IX, federal legislation requiring equal opportunity for women in the distribution of athletic resources. Although athletic directors from the university "sports factories" are making a concerted effort to water down Title IX's impact, women have been able to use this legislation to force universities to expand greatly their intercollegiate and intramural programs for women.

Right now there are two main fronts to fight on: putting pressure on the Congress to strengthen, rather than dilute, Title IX and initiating lawsuits on a local level to force compliance with the statutes. Feminist organizations and their allies have an excellent record in winning such suits. If you're ready to help and can spare four dollars, the Women's Equity Action League (733 15th St. NW, Washington, DC 20005) has put together a loose-leaf kit on "Women in Sports" with articles, charts, laws and facts that makes a great place to start. This is an opportune time to set up Title IX enforcement committees in local communities, both to aid the federal lobbying effort and to improve women's access to athletic facilities in schools and neighborhoods.

Opportunities to stand up against racism may seem less straightforward now than when Jackie Robinson

was a schoolboy in Cairo, Georgia, but the struggle is far from over. Michael Washington has shown recently that the percentage of blacks in big-league baseball has declined markedly — overall and at every separate position — over the past decade.

#### PERCENTAGE OF BLACKS IN MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

Position	1960	1968	1977
Pitcher	3%	9%	5%
Catcher	11	12	4
Shortstop, 2nd and 3rd Base	11	23	10
First Base	17	40	21
Outfield	24	53	44
Total Players	12	22	16
Managers	0	0	0

So you might begin by ordering a copy of Washington's excellent pamphlet, *The Locker Room is the Ghetto*, from Equal Rights Congress, PO Box 2488, Loop Station, Chicago, IL 60690 (\$1.50). Then tear out its back page, which invites you to write down your personal experiences with racism in sports. Or contact ARENA, the Institute for Sport and Social Analysis (PO Box 518, New York, NY 10025), which publishes the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*. ARENA members were active in last year's important boycott of a Davis Cup tennis match in Nashville against representatives of South Africa's white supremacist majority regime. Racism continues to infect sports on an international scale, and they will need help from all of us in the future.

All these issues may seem vast and intractable. But they are also issues where change is both necessary and possible, and where people have begun to organize to prove it. All around the country, organizations like Sports for the People (391 E. 149th St., Room 216, Bronx, NY 10455) may be stronger and more numerous by the 1980s. And Southerners, as they rediscover, explore and criticize their own rich sporting heritage, may find themselves in the thick of yet another movement for human rights. □

Mark Naison was a varsity athlete in college; he now teaches at Fordham University and writes on sports for *In These Times*.

# A Sampler of Southern Sport



Thanksgiving Day, 1938: Texas Longhorns vs. Texas A&M Aggies. "Texas gave the ball to Nelson Peunt and when he got to the line of scrimmage he just dove. Touchdown! His picture was in every newspaper in Texas the next day. . . ." (see Larry Goodwyn, p. 45.)

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# BOOK REVIEWS



## RISE GONNA RISE

By Mimi Conway, photographs by Earl Dotter. Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979. 228 pp. \$10.95.

By Chip Hughes

*"Some day, our children may even be reading about us in their school books."  
—woman textile worker at a brown lung demonstration*

Developing a sense of "rights denied" and building the power of oppressed and impoverished groups has never been an easy task. Occasionally, wide-spread, almost spontaneous recognition of class oppression may arise, as in the 1934 general strike of 400,000 textile workers. But in most times, the demanding humdrum of day-to-day mill work is silently tolerated; militance and hope for a better future quietly smolder, kept alive by the tireless nurturing of a few strong souls.

The rekindled struggle of Southern textile workers in the 1970s has been fostered more by slow, plodding one-to-one organizing than by the resentment-filled mass explosions which characterized the '30s. What is that flashpoint — when resentment becomes

rebellion, when dreams and hopes outweigh the risks of potential losses?

If there is one major lesson that is gently woven through the pages of *Rise Gonna Rise*, it is that the dilemma of risking jobs or lives or futures for greater gains — be it for higher wages, more dignity, or better working conditions — is a central gnawing question that workers grapple and struggle with day after day, year after year. As the lives of Louis Harrell, Otis Edwards, Lucy Taylor, Maurine Hedgepeth and others unfold, individual destinies become intertwined and wrapped up in the never-ending dust and din of the mill. Lives and hopes are ground up, just as the mill's wire-toothed card grinders comb and crush the ever-rushing cotton thread. Death beckons ever so quietly to some, like Louis, too soon, while the burden on the survivors never lessens.

For many textile workers, involvement in the union struggle and the brown lung fight during the past few years has thrust them for the first time into the public spotlight. Organizing conflicts and the battle for recognition focus not only on a recalcitrant textile industry, but on a reluctant media establishment, both local and national, which has never before chosen to legitimize the simple

words of uneducated "lintheads." As the quote at the beginning of this review indicates, media attention not only has an effect on its watchers and observers, but also on the self-esteem and self-awareness of those who are caught up in the glare of its roving eye.

The publication of *Rise Gonna Rise* by Doubleday, as well as the release of the movie *Norma Rae* by Twentieth Century-Fox, represents a triumph of sorts in the battle to gain recognition for the plight of Southern textile workers, both as a national political issue and as a legitimate literary concern. The contrasts between the two efforts is a good example of the strengths and weaknesses of print versus visual media as well as the differing viewpoints and perspectives of authors and producers. *Norma Rae* can oversimplify and romanticize the Roanoke Rapids workers into a television-like instant victory; *Rise Gonna Rise*, at a slower print pace, chronicles the complexities of cotton mill organizing, where resolutions to conflict have always been elusive and victories few and far between. In spite of its rousing climax, *Norma Rae* perpetuates the myth of the docile and uneducated textile worker — who is as likely to be swayed by false promises of company bosses as by tempting visions of an outside union organizer on a white horse. *Rise Gonna Rise*, on the other hand, presents through its lengthy narratives and interviews a painfully honest and skeptical world view, staunch in its rugged individualism, philosophical, detached and suspicious of easy answers and short-term solutions. People whose lives almost never have happy endings are the guts and soul of *Rise Gonna Rise*.

As the world around the Southern textile workers moves into the twenty-first century, they follow a daily mill-whistle routine remarkably similar to that of their nineteenth-century forebears. But having struggled and survived "through the mill" gives these workers great toughness and ability to love. As the future swallows up the past, a certainty of what in life is really valuable — what to discard and what to preserve — lies at the heart of cotton mill wisdom. It is the hopefulness that still permeates the weary eyes of Louis Harrell, just five days from death. It is the patience of Maurine Hedgepeth, who knows that no matter how many times the company stabs her in the

back, she and the union she loves will win in the end. It is the quiet dignity of Otis Edwards, who labored away his life and lungs in the white man's mill, holding out for his compensation, defying J.P. Stevens and their lawyers to the bitter end. And Lucy Taylor, ever gushing forth love for her friends and fellow victims, but never fearful of speaking bitterness at those who steal life, insulated from remorse.

*Rise Gonna Rise* is a portrait that has been crafted with love and respect. It is about the rising of a caste and class of people, survivors from another era. No defeat is too painful to swallow; no victory too elusive to strive for. They labor decades without ceasing for the lowest industrial wages in the land and become servants to machines that outlive them. But they harbor a humanness that no machine can ever match. They carry on a tradition that no bossman can ever crush. □

*Chip Hughes is an organizer for the Carolina Brown Lung Association.*

## COLONIALISM IN MODERN AMERICA

By Helen M. Lewis, Linda Johnson and Don Askins. Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978. 370 pp. \$6.95.

By Curtis Seltzer

*Colonialism in Modern America* assembles in one volume a great deal of useful social science information and analysis that emerged from central Appalachia in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is a valuable collection, and the Appalachian Consortium Press, which is sponsored by a network of relatively conservative mountain colleges, deserves considerable credit for publishing it. Essay after essay traces the economic and social processes by which the land, coal and culture of nineteenth century subsistence mountaineers were ripped off. It is not a pretty story, and it doesn't have a happy ending.

Unfortunately, instead of settling for a loose-knit anthology of expose and outrage, *Colonialism* attempts to lay out a coherent theory for understanding the region's economic and social problems: the "internal colonialism model." Two introductory expositions lay out the broad themes of the model, but this analytical thread is not pulled tightly enough through the fabric of each essay and through the volume itself to make a clean stitch. As a result, the model has a lot of frayed edges.

The colonialism model maintains that the socio-economic problems of Appalachia are caused by

the process through which dominant outside industrial interests establish control, exploit the region and maintain their domination and subjugation of the region. [Appalachian history] also demonstrates the concerted efforts of the exploiters to label their work "progress" and to blame any of the obvious problems it causes on the ignorance or deficiencies of the Appalachian people.

*Colonialism* rejects the "culture of poverty" interpretation which finds the cause of Appalachian poverty in the genes, values or culture of the impoverished. Blaming the victim, these essays argue, leads to a terribly wrong conclusion: that insofar as the people and culture of Appalachia cause poverty, the people and culture must be changed. The culture of poverty analysis has led to plagues of misguided missionaries, VISTAs, social workers and Wars on Poverty being visited on the mountains. Meanwhile, the true villains – the absentee landowners, the out-of-state corporations, the policymakers in Washington – wriggle off the hook.

Essay collections are usually broader than deep. This is their virtue. They are tied together loosely by a common theme or subject. Rarely do they try to lay out a new theory. Stringing together essays that attempt to illustrate a single analytical perspective – the anthology format – weakens this book's argument. The essays are forced to bear too heavy an analytical load. The book is like an unmortared stone wall: the stones themselves are solid, but without cement they don't hang together and can't do the job.

Most of the essays were not originally written to illuminate different aspects of Appalachian colonialism. If they embrace this view, it is casually rather than rigorously thought out. The authors do not share a set of common definitions about how colonialism works – who are the "enemies," who are "allies," what kind of political bases need to be developed to alter the status quo, and so on. Without a common perspective, their argument cannot be made clearly or strongly.

A better case for the colonialism model might be made. When it is, some person or group will have to write it carefully and systematically. Each component of Appalachian colonialism would have to be linked to the logic of the model. Hard questions about the role of the native bourgeoisie, the State and resistance movements (anti-strip mining, union reform, wel-

fare rights, community unions, etc.) would have to be asked and answered.

Differences between internal colonialism would have to be faced squarely. For example, Appalachia is not a single political unit and lacks the sovereignty that comes with being a nation-state, or even the potential sovereignty that comes with being a colony. People who live in the mountains rarely share an Appalachian identity: their loyalties tie more with their country, state, occupation or class. (As much as I dislike saying so, I believe regionalism based on "Appalachian-ness" is mostly a make-believe creation of pork-barrel politicians and left-wing theoreticians. Identifying oneself as being "from the mountains" is not the same as a self-conscious identity as an "Appalachian.") Appalachian social reform movements do not share a common anti-colonial ideology as have most successful anti-colonial movements in the Third World. Finally, a clear set of anti-colonial goals and a strategy for achieving them has never been articulated. Anti-colonial "demands" usually read like a list of more of this, less of that, and don't administer programs dumbly. Surely there can be more vitality to anti-colonial analysis than that.

Two of the most important questions left to be faced are: what is the role of the State (that is, the federal government) in Appalachian colonialism; and what kind of relationships exist between anti-colonial movements and the State? *Colonialism in Modern America* defines Appalachia's enemy as "giant, multinational corporations in league with irresponsible government bureaucracies." That is a more benign view of the role of the State than students of international colonialism generally find. This view of the federal bureaucracies is basically that they act irresponsibly; that is, the interests of "the people" are not served. *Colonialism* fails to explain why federal bureaucracies so consistently act irresponsibly. Is it perhaps that they are inevitably responsible to constituencies other than "the people?" If so, the federal government can never be a real ally of the colonized. For that reason, anti-colonialists should tap federal resources with great caution and political intelligence.

Several essays do detail the federal government's contribution to Appalachian troubles – such as TVA strip mining and the U.S. Forest Service's ownership of more than five million Appalachian acres – but the book does not consistently depict the State as the political arm of the colonizers.

Failure to examine the federal role

leads to very ambivalent political attitudes toward Washington. Often, the federal government is seen as the problem; and equally often, it is seen as the solution. Demands for economic and political change in Appalachia often focus not on the industrial colonizers but on the federal government, as though the national government can somehow upset the political economy of Appalachia without disturbing the political economy of America. Consequently, Appalachian political movements have edged away from direct confrontations with outside corporations in favor of demanding federal *regulation* of those corporations (e.g., mine safety and strip mining laws) and *compensation* for victims (black lung benefits, welfare payments, flood aid).

The demands made by anti-colonial organizations on Washington are usually appeals for more humane treatment for those in the coal colony. They often lack a companion demand for redistribution of the economic and political power (which, of course, Washington would not grant even if it were articulated). But by not having a genuine anti-colonial program, anti-colonial organizations water down their own ideas to mainstream liberalism. And the effect of making liberal appeals is to generate responses in Washington that alleviate the political pressure from the coalfields but do not solve the problems.

Anti-colonialists often end up winning concessions from the federal government that undercut their organizing momentum and leave them frustrated with the way "irresponsible" bureaucracies administer their victories. This self-defeating pattern of pressure and response has been repeated on mine safety, black lung compensation and strip mining. Unfortunately, this seems to be the model now embraced by brown lung activists. When Appalachian movements funnel themselves into demanding legislative reform, the partial remedies they win — after years of struggle — never eliminate the root problems but do dissipate the political pressure that's been mobilized.

A more relevant model of political action would enable current Appalachian political movements to refocus the demands they make on the federal government. It would also lead to strategies for making demands for compensation and "no-more-business-as-usual" on the big corporations in the region. This approach emphasizes mobilizing coal miners around collective bargaining demands. Community activists and environmentalists also have to carry their fights straight at

the corporations by forcing them into "collective bargaining," that is, negotiations between community activists and the corporations. Whatever restraint or retribution can be drawn from the companies through such negotiations becomes a victory won by the colonized, who must then stay involved to assure enforcement of their gains. Victories of this sort build grass-roots political movements rather than sap them.

It's apparent that the colonialism model does not lead to a coherent set of political and economic objectives. If it could, I suspect that Appalachian radicals of this persuasion would have issued a political program years earlier. This has never happened. The closest version of a program appeared when the Appalachian Alliance, many of whose members accept the colonialism model in an informal way, issued *Appalachia 1978: A Protest from the Colony*. This booklet, a moving chronicle of Appalachian problems, is embarrassingly short on *anti-colonial* solutions. Absentee corporations "must be broken up," but no plan is suggested about who is to do it, how it is to be done and what is to replace them. Are the small, native coal operators in Pike County, Kentucky, any more responsible than Consolidated Coal? Have we forgotten Scotia, St. Charles and Hurricane Creek?

The failure of the colonialism model to generate a genuine anti-colonial political program brings me to conclude that it is capable of *describing* some Appalachian social and economic patterns, but it is incapable of *analyzing* them in useful ways.

Apart from these considerations of structure and concept, the main weakness of the model presented in *Colonialism in Modern America* is the lack of evaluation of Appalachian grass-roots movements that have stirred things up for the last 15 years.

By its silence, *Colonialism in Modern America* makes it appear as if over a decade of political change and turbulence in the coalfields over the UMW, anti-strip mining, black lung, TVA, tax policies, land ownership and culture had never occurred. Mountain radicals, including these writers, have yet to develop much of a theory for the kinds of organizing they have done or do, other than it seemed right at the time or events forced them to react (e.g., Buffalo Creek, Lincoln County strip mining, Tug Valley floods, Brookside and so on.)

After 300 pages of making a case for the internal colonialism model, *Colonialism in Modern America* reverses gears, acknowledging its own

weaknesses. Three essays are appended that question the model, fortunately without resurrecting the culture of poverty model. The gist of the critiques is that Appalachia is less a distinct system that must be explained in special terms (i.e., colonialism) and more that it is a subsystem of how business works across the board. The most comprehensive critique is that of David Walls, "Internal Colony or Internal Periphery? A Critique of Current Models and An Alternative Formulation." Walls says:

The analogy between the situation of Central Appalachia and that of colonized countries . . . has focused attention on the acquisition of raw materials of the region by outside corporate interests and on the exploitation of the local work force and community at large resulting from the removal of the region's natural resources for the benefit of absentee owners. But analogies, while providing insights into some aspects of reality, can obscure or distort others. A loose analogy is no substitute, in the long run, for a precise theory that can lead to more detailed investigations. In this sense the internal colonialism model applied to Central Appalachia needs to be superseded by a model of peripheral regions within an advanced capitalist society.

Walls faults the model for not developing "goals and strategy" of a movement for social change. Since the internal colonialism model argues for neither secession nor bourgeois decolonization (ownership of coal by a local elite of "hillbilly millionaires,") Walls asks whether the "heart of the problem" may not be private ownership of the coal industry or, in a broader sense, capitalist regions of production. Different political strategies and goals would follow from theoretical models that begin with private ownership or capitalist relations as their starting points, Walls suggests.

*Colonialism in Modern America* is to be commended for sticking burrs under its own saddle. But the self-doubts that the editors vent leave the reader hanging. The internal colonialism model is not made strongly; its critiques are not faced; the alternatives are not spelled out. This anthology is a good first step in challenging the conventional wisdoms many hold about Appalachia; hopefully, first steps will be followed by others. □

*Curtis Seltzer writes on coal policy and occupational health and safety. He lived in West Virginia for six years and continues to stay in touch with Appalachian affairs.*



# CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION

By Jonathan Kozol. Delacorte Press, 1978. 245 pp. \$9.95.

By Frank Adams

Illiteracy has been a part of Southern life so long that its crippling impact seems to have taken on the inevitable sting of death or taxes. Take Patrick County, Virginia, for example, the birthplace of R. J. Reynolds, founder of the tobacco empire. Back in 1929-1930, when the county's school expenditures per child were \$13 annually, over 14 percent of the white population 10 years or older was illiterate. About one-third of the county's black population was unable to read or write. In 1977-1978, the county was spending \$969 per child, just \$16 above what Virginia law demanded. That year fewer than half of the county's adults, black and white, were able to read above the fifth-grade level.

For these citizens, and hundreds of thousands like them across the rapidly industrializing South, their inability to read cuts them off from the ebb and flow shaping their lives. Worse, but not surprisingly, they often make the short dollar. In Patrick County, 62.5 percent of the county's 2,400 families have incomes of less than \$10,000 annually.

These present conditions in Patrick County, and the history from which they derive, are typical of dozens of Southern counties. The situation underscores the importance for Southerners of Jonathan Kozol's popular account of how Cuba, within 36 months after Fidel Castro had taken power from Batista, successfully completed a comprehensive national campaign against adult illiteracy.

Cuba's success hinged on many factors; chief among them, however, was the fact that the cultural revolution, of which the literacy campaign was a part, was not divorced from the political and economic revolution. The teaching-learning process was aimed at higher production rates but also at recreating the learner, and inculcating a critical consciousness with which the learner could view the world anew. Literacy was more than a skill to be imparted. It was a means to evolve among impoverished campesinos a positive sense of self, a sense of nation, a commitment to others in Latin America who experienced the oppression from which Cuban people had liberated themselves.

*Children of the Revolution* is the story of Kozol's discovery of the revolution in Cuba's educational system, as much as it is a history of that transformation. His style is sensitive, personal and sometimes analytical. He vividly evokes the fear, the pain, the effort of the Great Literacy Campaign which began in 1961.

Unfortunately, Kozol ignores much that is important in Cuban history before 1961, especially the interaction among American corporations, unemployment and the massive illiteracy on the island. He inadvertently entraps the reader and himself in the myth of individualism, inferring that Castro alone spawned and carried out the revolutionary literacy campaign.

Much did rest on Castro's charisma and his determination that the campaign succeed. In truth, however,

success resulted from a collective effort which had begun with the rebel army in the Sierra Maestra mountains during the armed struggle for liberation. Soldiers, when not in combat, often taught campesinos how to read and write. The National Institute for Agrarian Reform, founded in the first months of the revolution, included literacy in its programs of rural development. Students from the National Institute had already reached many isolated villages when Castro made his famous speech at the UN announcing the Great Literacy Campaign. The people *wanted* to read. Reading was an act of liberation. Castro pointed to the collective nature of the undertaking during his UN speech on January 1, 1961, when he said, "We shall organize an army of teachers and send them to every

## A RETURN VISIT: CAROLINE GORDON'S ALECK MAURY

By Bob Brinkmeyer

If you think Hemingway's Nick Adams was the greatest hunter and fisher in twentieth-century American literature, you're wrong. That honor belongs to Aleck Maury, the fictional creation of Kentucky author and critic Caroline Gordon. Maury's exploits can be found in one novel, *Aleck Maury, Sportsman*, published in 1934, and in several short stories from the same period which are now included in the collection *Old Red and Other Stories*.

Whether he is catching bream or shooting dove, Aleck Maury knows his craft in every detail. He more than holds his own in the long line of fictional hunters — Cooper's Leatherstocking, Melville's Captain Ahab, Faulkner's Isaac McCaslin — who have thrived in the American imagination.

European settlement of America began in and moved through the woods. As a result, hunters have always been important figures in the American mythos. Opening the way west through what the white settlers thought of as dark and dangerous forests, the hunters possessed seemingly magical woods lore. They stood, along with military heroes, larger than life, representative of America's manifest destiny.

But even though they have been admired and glorified by Americans, hunters have never stood at the center

of society, and it is easy to see why: the hunters of old did not live in society, but made way for it. And when the last frontiers fell, the hunter lost his role in the American scheme of things, and became a focus of nostalgia. In the twentieth century, most hunters are sportsmen, not epic heroes but embodiments of our primitivistic urge for a simpler life and a communion with nature.

All of which leads to Aleck Maury and to his compatriot, Faulkner's Ike McCaslin, seen in "The Bear." Both of these figures are skilled huntsmen who take to the woods when they can to escape — at least for a time — both the ills and the responsibilities of life in society. Both in many ways cut admirable figures: they follow the strict codes and rituals of the hunt, respecting and communing with the natural world. They appear noble, and we sense that if everyone could be like them the world would be a better place. But, of course, everyone can't be like them; this is the twentieth century, for better or worse, and to escape to the woods is just that — an escape: an evasion of the historical situation and one's responsibilities in society. Ike McCaslin, as a sportsman, repudiates his family inheritance, arguing that no one really owns the land. He mistakenly hopes that the repudiation of his past will cut him free from, and rectify, his ancestors' lust and greed. But Faulkner

corner of the country so that, if every last illiterate needs a teacher, we shall give him one."

This army of teachers — the learned and still learning — set out in May with two texts: *Alfabetizamos* (*Let's Alphabetize*), which was the instructor's manual, and *Venceremos* (*We Shall Triumph*), the student's textbook. Each brigadista, as the teachers were called, was given two uniforms, three pairs of boots, a beret, a haversack, one blanket, a hammock and a paraffin lamp. They were to live with the families they were instructing, sharing their work, food and shelter. Castro sent the first of them off with these revealing and critically important words:

You are going to teach, but as you teach you will also learn. You are going to learn much more than you can possibly teach and in the end you

will feel as grateful to the campesinos as the campesinos will feel to you for teaching them to read and write. Because while you teach them what you have learned in school, they will be teaching you what they have learned from the hard life they have led. They will teach you the WHY of the revolution better than any speech, better than any book.

Learning was to be a two-way process, a collaboration. Students left schools. Factory workers who could read left their jobs for four months. Their comrades worked overtime to fill their slots. All told, nearly 280,000 literacy teachers reached nearly 800,000 illiterate adults. Kozol dramatically relates, through interviews with both volunteers and illiterates, how the campaign progressed.

On December 23, 1961, Castro

declared the Year of Education ended. There was a massive rally in Havana attended by the brigadistas, other teachers and administrators. Four years later, the United Nations reported, after surveying the Great Campaign, that only four percent of the adult population remained illiterate, and this number included those who could not achieve such skills because of physical or mental problems. One of the revolution's promises had been kept. And, in the doing, many of Cuba's social, racial and sexual barriers were broken.

Would such a program work in the South? The managers of the three J. P. Stevens mills in Patrick County are lauded as civic-minded businessmen for the role they play in public schools. But do they seek to influence policy and decisions out of a spirit of justice

depicts Ike's action as senseless, and his point is that one must live within history, not outside it. A person must do his best with the inheritance he is stuck with and establish his place within society. Being just a hunter is a dead end: both Ike and his mentor, Sam Fathers, die childless, leaving nothing for the future.

Aleck Maury also repudiates his responsibilities as a member of family and society. His overpowering need to hunt and fish progressively cuts him off from his wife and children. Instead of trying to understand what effect his continual absence on sporting expeditions has on his family, he focuses all his attention on himself and the success of his sport. His wife, to him, is chiefly an antagonist who continually lays snares to keep him in the house; he doesn't wonder much about what type of life he is forcing her to live. Furthermore, his teaching career means little to him; what he likes most about teaching is that he can have his afternoons free to hunt and fish. He chooses which school to move to next by the quality of fishing in the river nearby.

There is something a little out of kilter with Aleck Maury. His placing sport above everything else makes him do unusual things. The novel, *Aleck Maury, Sportsman*, is his narration as an old man of his life story; and in it he sees his life structured around hunting events and the ages of his dogs, his most prized possessions — barring nothing. For instance, he dates his daughter's birth as: "It was when Gy [one of his dogs] was in his third season that our little girl was born." When his son is nine months old, Maury puts him through an obedience

lesson, as if he were training one of his trusted bird dogs:

I thought this was a good time to teach him to "down charge" as it were. As his hand went out for the rattle, I spoke, sternly, as I would have spoken to a dog:

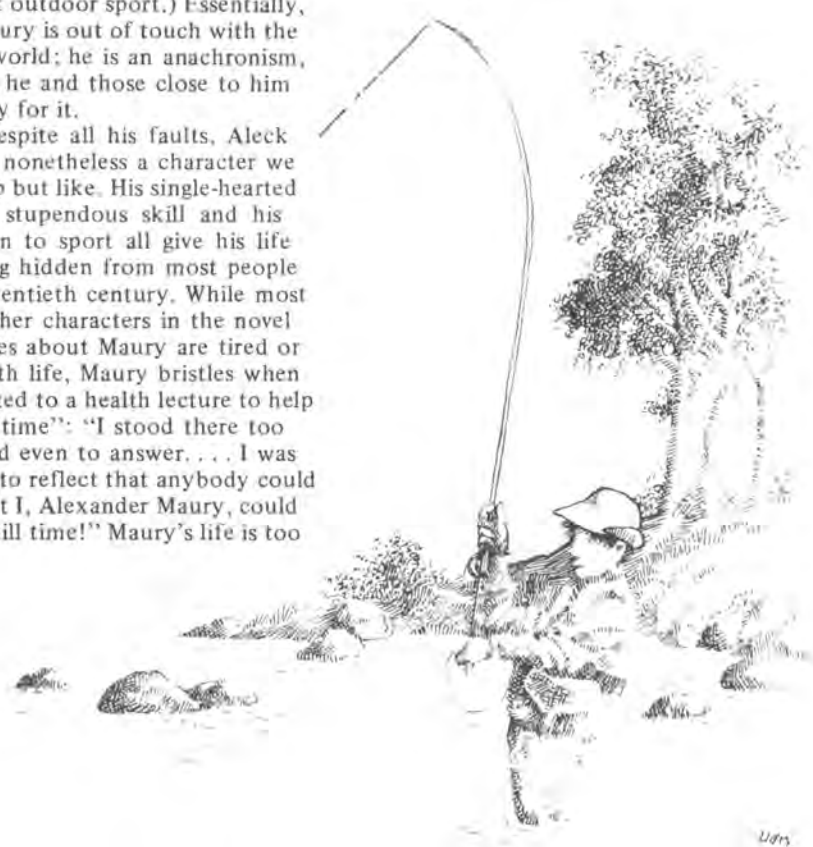
"Down, sir. . . . Down!"

Later on Maury's only son dies in a drowning accident. Like Ike McCaslin, Aleck Maury must die with no one to be heir to all his wonderful lore. (His daughter survives but couldn't care less about outdoor sport.) Essentially, Aleck Maury is out of touch with the modern world; he is an anachronism, and both he and those close to him pay dearly for it.

But despite all his faults, Aleck Maury is nonetheless a character we can't help but like. His single-hearted zest, his stupendous skill and his dedication to sport all give his life a meaning hidden from most people in the twentieth century. While most of the other characters in the novel and stories about Maury are tired or bored with life, Maury bristles when he is invited to a health lecture to help "kill the time": "I stood there too astounded even to answer. . . . I was annoyed to reflect that anybody could think that I, Alexander Maury, could need to kill time!" Maury's life is too

full, too meaningful to be slowed down by others' wishes; in the last scene in the novel we see him an old man, lighting out for the river, like his forebear, Huck Finn, to escape from the snares of civilization — in this case from his daughter and son-in-law who want him to live with them. We're glad he makes his escape. □

*Bob Brinkmeyer is currently on leave from North Carolina Central University.*



and equality? They have sponsored an adult literacy campaign recently. The results were disastrous. The very few who enrolled quit before the third lesson. The aim was only to increase productivity rather than to add to each person's sense of self-worth, independence and self-empowerment.

Literacy is power. In Patrick County, as elsewhere in the South, for as long as most can recall, the power to determine who is literate and who is not rests in the same hands as those which controlled Cuba's education before the revolution. □

*Frank Adams is a teacher and writer and a long-time friend of the Institute.*

## SOUTHERN GOTHIC

*Half in Shadow*, by Mary Elizabeth Counselman. Arkham House, 1978. 212 pp. \$8.95.

*Set in Motion*, by Valerie Martin. Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1978. 210 pp. \$8.95.

By Chris Mayfield

On these hot summer nights it's sometimes nice to curl up by a window and read a scary book, while the heat lightning flickers over the pages. I have two to recommend — both by Southern women, and both about evil, fear and the unknown.

*Set in Motion* is a terrifically good first novel by young New Orleans writer Valerie Martin; *Half in Shadow* is a re-issued collection of ghost stories, originally published during the 1930s and '40s, by Mary Elizabeth Counselman, a lady from Gadsden, Alabama.

Most of the *Half in Shadow* stories were first published in *Weird Tales*, a pulp fiction magazine enormously popular during the depression and war years — the golden age of popular magazine fiction. Other regular contributors to *Weird Tales* included H. P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard and Ray Bradbury. Ms. Counselman may have cranked these stories out at a frantic pace, but she obviously enjoyed writing them, and latter-day readers will share her glee at each eerie detail and bizarre coincidence. Though the plots are somewhat corny, through the passage of time they've acquired a campy sort of appeal, and Ms. Counselman spins out the suspense with a masterly hand.

Many of the stories are rooted in old Southern legends and folklore. For instance, "The Tree's Wife" builds

on a folktale about a marriage between a girl and a great white oak. The spirit of the girl's dead lover lives on in the tree, which catches rabbits and doves for her and their baby to live on, and even snatches hats off snooping neighbor-women to adorn the head of its pretty bride! Most of these old legend stories are set, for contrast, in the contemporary South, and get much of their dramatic appeal from the reactions of smart, skeptical young Nancy Drew-Hardy Boys types who run up against the reality of the spirit world they'd always scoffed at.

One rather different story is "The Seventh Sister" (written in 1941) which Ms. Counselman's agent considered too shocking to handle. This story centers on a small albino child — the "seventh sister" in a dirt-poor black tenant-farming family — who is afflicted from the time she's a tiny baby with mysterious witch-like powers. Everybody fears and shuns the child, except the (god-like) white plantation owner, who comes by every now and then with a kind word or present. The story ends in tragedy, as the child kills "Cap'm Jim's" wife in a voodoo mistake and runs headlong into the deep icy waters of a creek fleeing from the bloodhounds of the big white man she adores.

Ms. Counselman gets furthest beyond the pulp fiction conventions — and closest to the sense of existential fear and doom which Valerie Martin explores — in "The Green Window." Here the bright young skeptics bring their own fate upon themselves: they are not simply innocent victims of the occult. The story ends with the enigmatic green mirror-window prophesying that one of them — the narrator — will someday chop two of the others, whom she dearly loves, into tiny pieces. ("Yes, I saw the face. Liz . . . it was *you!*") The young folks' doom here is not death, but a future rotten with introspective fears and remorse.

Helene Thatcher, the narrator of Valerie Martin's *Set in Motion*, inhales the stifling atmosphere of guilt and fear with almost every breath she takes. The tensions in the novel build until, by the end, the world appears to be a nightmare in which a person's every word or gesture — however casual — can plunge untold numbers of other people into pain or even madness. Helene reaches no startling answers or new pinnacles of wisdom through her ordeal; she does manage to hang onto her own — not wholly satisfactory — form of sanity.

Valerie Martin writes with a straightforward matter-of-factness, which



effectively structures the complexity of the story. And complex it is — because Helene has involved herself in such a tangle of predicaments. She's mixed up with three men, all of whom are unbalanced to one degree or another. Towards the end of the book, Helene sees one in a mental hospital: "He was so riddled with insanity. It was in every line of his face, in the pathetic curve of his back and arms, and in the tremulous hands he held out to me." She sees the same shadows which have overwhelmed him; her way of maintaining balance is to stay in motion, not always retreating from danger but sometimes, compelled by curiosity or sympathy, even rushing to meet it. For her, it's movement that counts. The crucial difference between herself and this patient, Helene concludes, is "his willingness to give himself up to strangers. I blessed my own sanity . . . my determination never to give up my freedom. I would never, never give up the option to walk away."



That option is essential to Helene's survival; yet she often feels very guilty about exercising it. She works in the New Orleans welfare office where the very nature of her job necessitates walking away from people and their desperation. Valerie Martin evokes vividly the circle of fear, pain and anger which traps everybody who comes into the office:

I looked at the form in front of me and tried to think of a question that he wouldn't be able to evade. When I looked up he produced something from his pocket and set it down carefully on the table between us. It was small, crusty and brown. At first I thought it was a date. I glanced at it, returned my eyes to the form, and then realized that I had seen, at one end of the date, the pale inset of a nail. I looked at Mr. Bodely, who was mysteriously calm. "Is that your toe?" I asked.

There is more than a touch of humor in Valerie Martin's use of the bizarre.

Gradually, Helene becomes overwhelmed by her feeling that she is dangerous to everyone she meets, and that they are all dangerous to her. She lies awake night after night in the heavy New Orleans summer heat. The beauty and poverty and color and decadence of the city intensify Helene's plight; she is ringed round by named and nameless terrors. Unlike most of the bogies in Mary Elizabeth Counselman's stories, however, all the horrifying forces in *Set in Motion* come from inside people, and from the society people have created.

Counselman explores the horrors and fascinations of the occult; Valerie Martin delves into the shadows of our own minds - Conrad's heart of darkness. Both books are good and scary. □

*Chris Mayfield is a novelist and staff member of the Institute for Southern Studies.*

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## REVOLT AGAINST CHIVALRY

By Jacquelyn Dowd Hall. Columbia University Press, 1979. 373 pp. \$14.95.

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By Marie Stokes Jemison

The written history of Southern women is shamefully lacking. Any school history book will testify to that sad fact. But we can take heart that, with the publication of *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching*,

a new South wind might be blowing. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall has written a stunning account of a remarkable Southern woman and the highly unlikely movement she led called "Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching."

The history of the vicious practice of lynching discloses that in periods of depression in the South, lynchings increased. Under tension and fear accompanying crop failure and low prices, mob violence seemed to ease the emotional pressures of despair for poor, uneducated whites while frightening the blacks off the land. The brutal custom of lynching also served to enforce in the white consciousness the inferiority of the Negro race and the knowledge of just who was boss.

The brutal, lustful image of the black male was central to the national mythology. Politicians built their careers around "the Crime of Rape." The press and even Southern historians were instrumental in keeping alive the picture of the black brute lusting after the fragile, weak, but alluring white woman. Southerners of all persuasions justified lynching for the crime of sexual assault.

Jessie Daniel Ames arrived in Atlanta to become Director of Women's Work for the Commission on Interracial Cooperation in 1929. Lynchings had begun an upward spiral in response to the onset of Depression, and Ames recognized an immediate need to organize women to fight "the evil done in our name."

She turned to middle-class church women, the class of women with whom she had learned organizational skills in the Texas women's suffrage movement. Armed with facts, appealing to the Christian upbringing and sense of decency, Ames led thousands in a crusade to stamp out lynching. She forced women to confront the historical roots of racial violence. By discovering the association between lynching, sex roles and sexual attitudes, the women found the courage to defy family and community disapproval.

Because the issue was an explosive one for white women, Ames and her church women participated in a movement which should dispel forever the myth of the scatterbrained, man-eating Southern belle on the one hand and the sainted, self-denying, revered mother on the other. The women who marched all through the '30s in their white gloves and navy silks into sheriff's offices to ask for their pledges not to lynch, who left dinner on the stove to go and watch the horror in order to report accurately what happened, were at odds with

either stereotype.

Jessie Daniel was born in 1883 in the east Texas black belt railroad village of Palestine, where her father was stationmaster. The third of four children born to transplanted "Yankees," Jessie early on felt like an outsider. Her recollections of small-town life at the turn of the century were not romanticized. The barren poverty of Overton, where Jessie grew up, etched her memory and provided for her instant recall of life lived on the edge of survival. Epidemics of diphtheria, smallpox and typhoid, devastating the communities, impressed on her an awareness of mortality and a fear of eternal damnation. Her father, a tragic Victorian figure, was alone in the community, an articulate non-believer. He taught his children that a God who willed such pain as the suffering of the disease-ridden small town was "inhumanly cruel." Laura Daniel served as the guardian of family morality, shielding her children from their father's harshness and upholding the values of evangelical religion. Working beside the one town doctor, she nursed the victims of each summer's epidemics. Torn between her father's atheism and her own sense of personal sin, Jessie learned guilt as she learned dissent.

The author paints in broad strokes the other family members, both sibling and adult. Her searchlight plays on the faintly incestuous love of the father for his older daughter and the loneliness and rejection that afflicted Jessie. She sensitively discusses the sexual problems that Jessie suffered in a marriage to a man 13 years her senior, and his untimely death, which left her with two children and another on the way. The author traces Jessie's subsequent career in woman's suffrage, politics, and as a strong protagonist for black rights. She has carefully researched the influences and culture, both religious and social, which shaped her subject, and sympathetically probes Jessie's personality conflicts and personal tragedies.

Jacquelyn Hall has given us a fascinating and valuable account of a lost chapter in women's history. She has written the story of real Southern women at a difficult time in history, performing a non-traditional and dangerous task. She has given us Jessie Daniel Ames, the extraordinary leader, as a complete person. □

*Marie Stokes Jemison has been working for the passage of ERA in Alabama. Her article on the women's suffrage movement in Alabama appeared in Southern Exposure's "Behind Closed Doors." (Spring, 1979).*

# BOOKS ON THE SOUTH

This list consists of books published since March, 1979. Book entries include works up to September, 1979. All books published in 1979, Dissertations appeared in the *Dissertation Abstracts Index* during February, 1979 - May, 1979.

The entries are grouped under several broad categories for your convenience. Mention of a book here does not preclude its being reviewed in a future issue. Unsolicited reviews of publications of general interest to our readers are welcome. Recent works are preferred.

Copies of the dissertations are available from: Xerox University Microfilms, Dissertation Copies, P.O. Box 1764, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. The cost is \$7.50 for microfilm and \$15 for xerographic.

## ECONOMICS, HISTORY AND POLITICS

"Back Door to the Land of Plenty: New Orleans as an Immigrant Port, 1820-1860," by Frederick M. Speltz. Dissertation. Louisiana State University, 1978.

"Black Migration in the United States With Emphasis on Selected Central Cities," by Marcus E. Jones. Dissertation. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1978.

"Blacks, Regional Planning and the TVA," by Nancy Louise Grant. Dissertation. University of Chicago, 1978.

"Bosses Under Siege: The Politics of South Texas During the Progressive Era," by Evan M. Anders. Dissertation. University of Texas at Austin, 1978.

"But There Was No Peace: Violence and Reconstruction Politics," by George C. Rable. Dissertation. LSU, 1978.

"A Challenge to Planter Rule: The Controversy Over the Ad Valorem Taxation of Slaves in North Carolina: 1858-1862," by Donald C. Butts. Dissertation. Duke, 1978.

*Citizen's Guide to Desegregation: A Study of Social and Legal Change in American Life*, by Herbert Hill and Jack Greenburg (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press). Reprint of 1955 edition. \$16.00.

*Civil Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism: The Democratic Party, 1945-1976*, by John F. Martin (Boulder: Westview Press). \$17.50.

"The Civil War in East Tennessee: A Social, Political and Economic Study," by Charles F. Bryan, Jr. Dissertation. University of Tennessee, 1978.

*Colonial Records of the State of Georgia: Original Papers of Governor Wright, President Habersham and Others, 1764-1782*, Vol. 28, ed. by Kenneth Coleman and Milton Ready (Athens: U. of Ga. Press). \$20.

*The Confederate Nation Eighteen Sixty-One to Eighteen Sixty-Five*, by Thomas M. Emory (Scranton: Harper & Row). \$5.95.

"The Cost of Being Mexican American and Black in Texas, 1960-1970," by Tatcho Mindilo, Jr. Dissertation. Brown U., 1978.

"Determinants, Characteristics and Prospects of Return and Non-Return Migration to Eight Southeastern States, 1965-1975: A Socioeconomic Analysis," by Robert A. Nakosteen. Dissertation. University of Tennessee, 1978.

"The Development of Louisiana's Public Mental Health Institutions, 1735-1940," by Richard L. Gordon. Dissertation. LSU, 1978.

*The Development of State Legislation Concerning the Free Negro*, by Franklin Johnson. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press).

Reprint of 1919 edition. \$16.00.

"The Economics of the U.S. Metallurgical Coal Industry," by James E. Spearman. Dissertation. West Virginia University, 1978.

"The Effects of Foreign Direct Investment on the Level of Human Capital Employed in the Southeast," by Walter T. Schubert. Dissertation. Rutgers, 1978.

"El Dorado or Eden: The Search for the Carolina Political Aesthetic," by Marquita Choate Diamant Williams. Dissertation. University of North Carolina, 1978.

"The Election of 1896 in the Tenth Congressional District of Tennessee," by Marilyn J. Hutton. Dissertation. Memphis State University, 1978.

*Enclave: Vicksburg and Her Plantations, 1863-1870*, by James Currie (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi). \$12.50.

"The Erosion of Public Highways: A Policy Analysis of the Eastern Kentucky Coal-Haul Road Problem," by Ronald J. Oakerson. Dissertation. Indiana U., 1978.

*The First One Hundred Years of Town Planning in Georgia*, by Joan N. Sears (Covington, GA: Cherokee Publishing Co.). Price not set.

"The First Reconstruction: Presidential Initiative and Southern Response," by Daniel J. Kraska. Dissertation. Case Western Reserve University, 1979.

"The Florida Seminole Polity, 1858-1978," by Robert T. King. Dissertation. University of Florida, 1978.

*Fort Smith: Little Gibraltar on the Arkansas*, by Edwin C. Bearss and A.M. Gibson (Norman: U. of Okla. Press). \$7.95.

*From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee: A Study in Frontier Democracy*, by Thomas P. Abernethy (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press). \$24.50.

*Have We Overcome? Race Relations Since Brown*, ed. by Michael V. Namorato (Jackson: University Press of Miss.). \$10.00.

*History of Dodge County, Georgia*, by Mrs. Wilton P. Cobb (Spartanburg: Reprint Co.). Reprint of 1932 edition. \$15.00.

*History of Macon County, Georgia*, by Louise F. Hays (Spartanburg: Reprint Co.). Reprint of 1933 edition. \$30.00.

*History of Turner County, Georgia*, by John B. Pate (Spartanburg: Reprint Co.). Reprint of 1932 edition. \$15.00.

*The Honor and Dignity of the Profession: A History of the Mississippi Bar Association, 1906-1976*, by Michael Landon (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi). \$17.00.

"The Impact of Industrialization on the Private Sector and Public Sector Economies of Wichita Falls, Texas," by Mike C. Patterson. Dissertation. North Texas State University, 1978.

"An Investigation of the Combined Effects of Property Taxes and Local Public Spending on Property Values: The Case of Virginia," by Gary R. Allen. Dissertation. University of Virginia, 1978.

*Journals of the South Carolina House of Representatives, 1785-1786*, ed. by Lark E. Adams and Rosa S. Lumpkin (Columbia: University of SC Press). \$27.50.

"Lancaster County, Virginia, 1650-1750: The Evolution of a Southern Tidewater Community," by Robert A. Wheeler. Dissertation. Brown University, 1972.

"Louisville at Large: Industrial-Urban Organization, Inner-City Migration and Occupational Mobility in the Central United States, 1865-1906," by Gary P. Kocolowski. Dissertation. University of

Cincinnati, 1978.

"Migration in Early America: The Virginia Quaker Experience," by Larry D. Gragg. Dissertation. University of Missouri-Columbia, 1978.

"The Negro Creole Community in New Orleans, 1880-1920: An Oral History," by Arthe Agnes Anthony. Dissertation. University of California-Irvine, 1978.

"The New Deal and the Urban South: The Advancement of a Southern Urban Consciousness During the Depression Decade," by Douglas L. Smith. Dissertation. University of Southern Mississippi, 1978.

"The New Orleans Riot of 1866: The Anatomy of a Tragedy," by Gilles Vandal. Dissertation. William and Mary, 1978.

*The Old South: A Psychohistory*, by Earl E. Thorpe (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press). Reprint of 1972 edition. \$19.75.

"Personal Violence as a Theme: Notable Incidents of Upper-Class Violence in Nineteenth Century Tennessee, A Teaching Guide," by Jerome G. Taylor. Dissertation. Middle Tennessee State University, 1978.

"The Political Role of Lower Federal Courts: Race Relations Cases in the Fifth Circuit, 1954-1967," by Ann Mari Buitrago y Goodall. Dissertation. City University of New York, 1978.

"'Poor Carolina': Society and Politics in North Carolina, 1729-1771," by Arthur E. Kirch. Dissertation. Johns Hopkins, 1979.

"A Power Structure of a Selected County in South Carolina," by Flora Carmichael Hopkins. Dissertation. Univ. of SC, 1978.

"Race, Civil Rights and the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Judicial Circuit," by John M. Spivack. Dissertation. University of Florida, 1978.

*Racial Pride and Prejudice*, by Eric J. Dingwall (Westport: Greenwood Press). Reprint of 1946 edition. \$19.25.

"Racism and Racial Classification: A Case Study of the Virginia Racial Integrity Legislation," by Brian W. Thomson. Dissertation. U. of California-Riverside, 1978.

"A Regional Test of Comparative Advantage: The Case of the North and South Regions of the United States, 1960-1971," by Prachark Sakuntalaska. Dissertation. University of Iowa, 1978.

"The Relations Between the French of Colonial Louisiana and the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Natchez Indians, 1699-1762," by Patricia Dillon Woods. Dissertation. Louisiana State University, 1978.

"The Sacred South: Postwar Confederates and the Sacralization of Southern Culture," by Lloyd A. Hunter. Dissertation. St. Louis University, 1978.

*Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820*, by Donald Robinson (NY: W.W. Norton & Co.). \$7.95.

*Southeastern Indians Since the Removal Era*, ed. by Walter L. Williams (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press). \$8.50.

"Spartan Slaves: A Documentary Account of Blacks on Trial in Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1830 to 1865," by William Cinque Henderson. Dissertation. Northwestern University, 1978.

"A Study of Attitudes of Louisiana Consumers and Louisiana Business Persons Regarding the State Office of Consumer Protection of Louisiana," by Marsha Dawn Griffin. Dissertation. Louisiana Tech University, 1978.

"A Study of the Organizational Effectiveness of South Carolina's Regional Councils of Government," by Donald E.

Kelley, Dissertation, Univ. of SC, 1978.

"Tennessee's 'Model' Open Meetings Law: A History," by Jerry Lee Hilliard. Dissertation. University of Tennessee, 1978.  
**The Texas Revolution**, by William C. Binkley (Austin, TX: Texas State Historical Association). Price not set.

"To Live and Die in Dixie: Reconstruction Race Riots in the South," by Melinda M. Hennessey. Dissertation. Kent State, 1978.  
"Town and Country: Race Relations and Urban Development in Arkansas, 1865-1905," by John W. Graves. Dissertation. University of Virginia, 1978.

"The Virginia Supreme Court, Blacks and the Law, 1870-1902," by Samuel N. Pincus. Dissertation. Univ. of Va., 1978.

**White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction**, by Allen Trelease (Westport: Greenwood Press). \$34.

## BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

"Alexander H. Stephens: Antebellum Statesman," by Thomas E. Schott. Dissertation. Louisiana State University, 1978.

**The Atlanteans**, by David Hyatt (Virginia Beach: Downing Co. Pubs.). \$4.95.

**Billy Graham: Evangelist to the World**, by John Pollock (Seranton: Harper & Row). \$10.  
**Black Slave Woman: Protagonist For Freedom**, by A. Faulkner Watts (New York, NY: Edward W. Blyden Press). \$3.50.

**The Booker T. Washington Papers, 1904-6, Vol. 8**, ed. by Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press). \$17.50.

"The Ceremonial Speaking of Benjamin Elijah Mays: Spokesman for Social Change, 1954-1975," by Doris Levy Gavins. Dissertation. Louisiana State University, 1978.

**The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes, 1861-1866**, by Emma Holmes (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press). \$35.00.

**Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, Vol. 1: A-C**, ed. by William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: Univ. of NC Press). \$45.00.

"Dr. James Frederick Walker: A Biography," by Robert P. McBee. Dissertation. University of Southern Mississippi, 1978.

**The Guthery Family of Cullman County, Alabama**, by Ima G. Boyd (Akron, OH: Ima Gene Boyd). \$10.00.

"James Hamilton Couper, Georgia Rice Planter," by James E. Bagwell. Dissertation. University of Southern Mississippi, 1978.

**Lachlan MacIntosh and the Politics of Revolutionary Georgia**, by Harvey H. Jackson (Athens: Univ. of Ga Press). \$16.00.

**The Life of Henry Clay**, by Glendon G. Van Deusen (Westport: Greenwood Press). Reprint of 1937 edition. \$31.25.

**Mean Things Happening in This Land: The Life and Times of H.L. Mitchell**, by H.L. Mitchell (Montclair, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun & Co.). \$10.95.

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